

THESIS

INTERSECTIONALITY AND INTELLIGIBILITY:
QUEER WORLDMAKING IN BODY POSITIVITY AND FAT ACTIVISM

Submitted by

Hailey Otis

Department of Communication Studies

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Summer 2017

Master's Committee:

Advisor: Thomas R. Dunn

Katie Gibson

Doug Cloud

Copyright by Hailey Nicole Otis 2017

All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

INTERSECTIONALITY AND INTELLIGIBILITY: QUEER WORLDMAKING IN BODY POSITIVITY AND FAT ACTIVISM

This thesis analyzes queer rhetoric produced by fat activists Tess Holliday and Ashleigh Shackelford to understand the larger worldmaking projects of body positivity and fat activism. This thesis uses perspectives and assumptions from the fields of queer theory, fat studies, and rhetoric to construct a queer critical framework and orientation for analyzing and understanding the rhetorical strategies employed by these rhetors. Not only does this thesis perform close readings of texts produced by both Holliday and Shackelford to understand and illuminate the queer worlds they rhetorically construct, it uses queer rhetorical criticism to take part in the larger worldmaking project of fat activism from the position of the critic. After performing queer rhetorical criticism on texts produced by Holliday and Shackelford, this thesis explores in theoretical depth the queer worlds created by these rhetors' fat activist rhetoric. After exploring their individual queer worlds, this thesis puts these two rhetors in conversation with one another to understand the larger queer worldmaking project of fat activism, particularly the role intersectionality plays in constituting political subjects of body positivity. The conclusion of this thesis cogitates on the implications of this project for theory and scholarship, for understanding the particulars of queer worldmaking, and for activism on a practical level. Ultimately, this thesis makes a strong case for the importance, the necessity, of intersectionality in queer rhetorical scholarship, the body positivity movement, and activism broadly.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to extend a sincere thank you to everyone who helped me with and through this project. I could not have done it without the unconditional love and support from so many different people in my life.

First, I want to express the utmost gratitude and appreciation for my committee. Each of you have been deeply invested in my project in different ways and you continuously push me to take my ideas and writing to the next level. That kind of support and encouragement is beautiful and rare. I especially want to thank my brilliant advisor, Dr. Tom Dunn, for taking my most absurd ideas seriously and urging me to embrace those ideas to produce quality work that I am truly proud of. I don't know how I got so lucky to get to work with someone who both believes in me and challenges me to achieve greatness. I also want to thank my inside member, Dr. Katie Gibson, for investing herself in every paper I wrote for her classes which became fundamental pieces of this project. Not only did I have an advisor that believed in and challenged me, I had an inside member that did the same. I am eternally indebted to you both for your roles in this thesis as well as in my graduate school experience. Finally, I want to thank my outside member, Dr. Doug Cloud, for his contagious enthusiasm for this project and his invaluable outside perspective.

Whether I knew it or not, my journey to this project began when I was sitting in a Queer Studies class during my undergraduate education at the University of Northern Colorado. Thank you to the professor of this class, Dr. Chris Talbot, for opening my mind to the fascinating and stimulating worlds of feminist and queer theory and for supporting and encouraging my choice to

go to graduate school. You ignited a fire of curiosity and passion within me that has carried me through my academic pursuits

There are so many people who kept that fire in me alive, particularly my graduate cohort. Thank you to Derek Lewis, Seth Willden, and Jed Chalupa for your part in my journey. A special thanks to Hillary, Rebecca, Sam, Clarence, Brooke, and Lydia for being the most fun, most inquisitive, most supportive, smartest, funniest, and all around most amazing group of people I could have ever wished to go through this journey with. I don't know what I would have done without you all. An extra special thanks to Jordin Clark for the countless hours of laughter, tears, and bouncing ideas off each other. Your friendship nourished my soul in ways that made my flame shine brighter than I knew it could.

I would not have even made it to graduate school without the love and support of my family. Thank you to my dad for his unwavering faith in me and my abilities. You have always believed in me and made me feel proud of my accomplishments. Thank you to my mom for pushing me when I needed it and reassuring me whenever I doubted myself. You always say you want to be like me when you grow up and therefore inspire me to be someone worth looking up to. A special thank you to my sister for exemplifying a kind of strength I have never seen in anyone else—a strength composed of both anger and compassion, passion and gentleness. Your strength inspires me every day. Another special thank you to the animals in my life, particularly Belle, Comet, and Penelope. I would not have made it through the emotional roller coaster that is graduate school without your love and kindness.

Finally, an extra special thank you to the person who has been by my side through it all—the person who has been my shoulder to cry on, my strongest support beam, and the best listener—my partner in life, Juan Silva. You support me in every endeavor and your love gives

me the strength to overcome every obstacle. I am eternally grateful to you for never giving up on me and never letting me give up. I will be able to conquer the world because I have you by my side.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
1. CHAPTER 1- INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW	7
2.1 QUEER THEORY	8
2.1.1 FOUNDATIONS OF QUEER THEORY	9
2.1.2 QUEERING QUEER THEORY.....	13
2.1.3 QUEER TOOLS AND FRAMEWORKS	14
2.1.4 THE FAT BODY AS QUEER	18
2.2 FAT STUDIES.....	22
2.2.1 DOMINANT DISCOURSES ABOUT THE BODY	23
2.2.2 CONSTRAINTS OF OBESITY DISCOURSE.....	24
2.2.3 UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS OF FAT DISCOURSE.....	25
2.2.4 THE FAT BODY AS NON/PARTIAL CITIZEN BODY	27
2.3 RHETORIC.....	30
2.3.1 RHETORIC, AGENCY, AND SUBJECTIVITY	31
2.3.2 QUEER RHETORICAL SCHOLARSHIP	32
2.3.3 QUEERING THE RHETORICAL CANON.....	35
3. CHAPTER 3 – TESS HOLLIDAY: BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS, BINARIES, AND QUEERING HEALTH.....	37
3.1 CRITICAL ORIENTATION.....	38
3.2 ARTIFACT	40
3.3 DISRUPTING ANTI-FAT BINARIES.....	43
3.3.1 FAT BODY AS ACTIVE BODY.....	44
3.3.2 FAT BODY AS REPRODUCTIVE BODY.....	58
3.4 CHALLENGING ESSENTIALIZED NOTIONS OF HEALTH.....	66
4. CHAPTER 4 – ASHLEIGH SHACKELFORD: QUEERING INTERSECTIONALITY AT THE INTERSECTIONS OF QUEERNESS.....	69
4.1 CRITICAL ORIENTATION	72
4.2 TEXTS	73
4.3 MAKING INTERSECTIONALITY VISIBLE	76
4.3.1 CENTRALIZING HER OWN INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITY	77
4.3.2 INTERSECTIONAL WORK OUTSIDE AND BEYOND.....	86
4.4 DECENTERING AND DE-ESSENTIALIZING IN THE NAME OF DIFFERENCE.....	93
5. CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION	95
5.1 QUEER WORLDMAKING.....	96
5.1.1 TESS HOLLIDAY’S QUEER WORLD: FAT IN PUBLIC.....	97
5.1.2 ASHLEIGH SHACKELFORD’S QUEER WORLD: POLITICAL INTELLIGIBILITY	101
5.1.3 MAKING A QUEER(ER) WORLD	104
5.2 IMPLICATIONS	108
6. NOTES.....	113

INTRODUCTION

In March of 2017, *The Curvy Fashionista*, a popular plus-size fashion lifestyle blog, published an article questioning the meaning and political efficacy of body positivity in 2017.¹ Body positivity is a movement and community, largely on social media, that promotes the message that all bodies are good bodies worthy of dignity, respect, and love. In *the Curvy Fashionista's* article, Alysse Dalessandro writes about the insight she gained on the current state of body positivity after interviewing “six activists and influencers in the plus size community.”² She ends the article with the question, “so what is body positivity in 2017?” Through synthesizing responses from the six activists and influencers interviewed, Dalessandro concludes that meaningful and critical considerations of intersectionality and structural oppression are missing from the body positive conversation.

Body positivity, or the body positive movement, follows from a long line of activism and social justice endeavors to promote social acceptance of fat and otherwise nonnormative bodies. The first instantiation of these endeavors can be traced back to the fat pride community, “often called the size acceptance movement, [which] began in the United States with the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance in 1969 and the powerful work of the Fat Underground in the 1970s.”³ In 1973, Judy Freespirit and Aldebaran, members of the Fat Underground, composed “The Fat Liberation Manifesto,” which included demands for equal rights as well as dignity and respect for fat people, criticisms of harmful diet industries, and a call to action that reads (in all capital letters): FAT PEOPLE OF THE WORLD, UNITE! YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE.⁴ Since then and up until the contemporary moment, the size acceptance movement has taken on the character of various grassroots groups that “have built resources for self-esteem,

fitness, fashion, socializing, medical advocacy, and defense from discrimination, while creating theater, dance, music, poetry, fiction, magazines, film, and art.”⁵

In 1996, Connie Sobczak and Elizabeth Scott founded The Body Positive, an organization that provides and promotes body positive resources to various communities, “because of their shared passion to create a lively, healing community that offers freedom from suffocating societal messages that keep people in a perpetual struggle with their bodies.”⁶ However, the language of body positivity did not permeate popular culture until more recently. Now we see body positivity manifesting on social media, especially through Instagram campaigns such as #effyourbeautystandards, #healthateverysize, #losehatenotweight, #pizzasisters4lyfe, and #honormycurves. In other words, if you use those phrases as terms in Instagram’s search function, you will see visual representations of body positivity in its current iteration, often in the form of individuals (mostly women) posting pictures of their fat or otherwise nonnormative bodies, highlighting and celebrating the aspects of their bodies deemed least acceptable by society and thincentric discourse.

Within today’s body positivity movement, there is a renewed vigor for fat acceptance. Indeed, many body positive activists, models, and social media figures have used the platform of body positivity to advocate specifically for the acceptance of fat bodies. A particular moment of victory for the fat acceptance facet of body positivity was in January of 2015 when Tess Holliday became the first model of her size (somewhere between a US size 22 and 26) to be signed with a major modeling agency.⁷ However, this moment of victory did not come without criticism. Another body positive and fat acceptance activist, Ashleigh Shackelford, published an article on *Buzzfeed* later that year entitled “The Body Positivity Movement Looks a Lot Like White Feminism: On Tess Holliday & Accountability,” where she criticized body positivity, as

represented by Holliday, for not being intersectional enough, that is, not paying adequate attention and energy to the ways in which bodies that are multiply marginalized experience different, and generally more severe, forms of fat oppression.⁸ Shackelford's critique sounds a lot like the ambivalence articulated by the six activists and influencers interviewed by Dalessandro in the *Curvy Fashionista's* article.

This thesis was, in part, inspired by a similar ambivalence—an ambivalence characterized by both a deep investment in the principals of body positivity, including radical self-love and political objection to thincentric, fatphobic ideals, as well as a deep concern for the lack of intersectionality within the movement. However, as a queer scholar and scholar of queer theory, I never seek to reconcile ambivalence. Instead, I aim to bask in ambivalence, uncertainty, and ambiguity and use those conflicting feelings to produce scholarship that figures new possibilities for identities and bodies.

Though I shared Shackelford's critique of body positivity, I also had reaped the benefits of this movement for my own identity and embodiment. The world of body positivity, particularly as enacted in online spaces, opened up new possibilities for my queer, fat body to become intelligible. In a society where my body fails to make sense, where it is read as problematic and somehow destructive, body positivity built something for me beyond community; it built a world where my body could be.

Thus, I came to this thesis with questions about the alternative world created by fat activist rhetors through body positivity. In one of their seminal pieces on queer theory, Berlant and Warner wrote about queer culture building and worldmaking.⁹ They wrote about something beyond community, “a public world of belonging and transformation” with new possibilities for intelligibility.¹⁰ I saw this worldmaking happening through body positivity and I wanted to

understand how fat activists were rhetorically constituting queer worlds full of promise and possibility.

Therefore, the following critical questions drive this thesis: what kinds of alternative queer worlds are constructed by fat activists? How do different fat activists use different rhetorical tools and strategies to construct different queer worlds? How does queer rhetorical criticism help understand and construct alternative queer worlds? What kind of world is made uniquely possible by fat activists' attention to intersectionality?

To answer these questions, I took a queer rhetorical orientation to analyzing texts produced by the two fat activist rhetors mentioned above, Tess Holliday and Ashleigh Shackelford. I chose these two rhetors because of their significance in the realm of body positivity, their distinct positions as fat activists within the body positive movement, and their differing voices and perspectives on issues related to body positivity. Holliday is one of the most significant figures in body positivity, being the first model of her size to be signed with a major modeling agency and being the founder of the popular #effyourbeautystandards Instagram campaign. Shackelford is a significant figure in a different way as a political organizer and writer for various feminist magazines and blogs. Both rhetors explicitly preach fat acceptance within the larger framework of body positivity but clearly differ in their approach to the cause, evidenced by Shackelford's *Buzzfeed* article criticizing Holliday for essentially doing body positivity inadequately.

I wanted to put these rhetors in conversation with one another to get a richer picture of the queer worlds constituted by fat activist rhetoric. Their methods of advancing the cause of fat acceptance were so starkly different yet, at the end of the day, both of them had a hand in creating worlds where my body becomes intelligible. I saw Holliday destabilizing binaries that

oppressively limit and define fat bodies and I saw Shackelford challenging the normative center of body positive activism. I saw both of them producing vastly different kinds of queer rhetoric, but I was most interested in how their differing queer rhetoric constituted different queer worlds “of belonging and transformation.”¹¹ By analyzing these two rhetors individually and comparatively, I sought to understand and explain the queer worlds produced by fat activist rhetoric as well as the impact of intersectionality on those worlds.

This thesis is an important endeavor in understanding fat activism, intersectionality, and the potentiality of queer rhetorical criticism. In the proceeding chapters, I not only perform close readings of texts produced by both Holliday and Shackelford to understand and illuminate the queer worlds they rhetorically construct, I use queer rhetorical criticism to take part in the larger worldmaking project of fat activism from my position as a critic. I also make a strong case for the importance, the necessity, of intersectionality in queer rhetorical scholarship, the body positivity movement, and activism broadly.

Thus, the remainder of this thesis unfolds as follows. The second chapter reviews relevant literature in the fields of queer theory, fat studies, and rhetoric/activism in order to ground the proceeding analyses in the tenets of queer theory, assumptions of fat studies, and general field of rhetoric and activism, while also explaining how these individual fields of study inform and are informed by one another. Through this survey of relevant literature, I also explicate how blending these fields together to create a particular rhetorical lens is necessary and appropriate for the texts I examine. Furthermore, in this chapter, I detail my queer, rhetorical methodology so as to be clear about the critical orientation I take to my texts.

In the third and fourth chapters, I use queer rhetorical criticism to analyze texts produced by Tess Holliday and Ashleigh Shackelford. In the third chapter, I analyze Holliday’s queer fat

activist rhetoric as enacted on Instagram through pictures and captions. In doing so, I seek to identify, understand, and explain the ways in which she de-essentializes normative notions of health by visually and textually disrupting binaries that define the fat body in opposition to health. In the fourth chapter, I analyze Ashleigh Shackelford's queer fat activist rhetoric to understand how she decenters the normative representation of fatness that has come to characterize the body positive movement by making intersectionality visible in articles she authored for the *Wear Your Voice* online intersectional feminist magazine.

The fifth and final chapter of this thesis explores in theoretical depth the queer worlds created by Holliday and Shackelford's queer fat activist rhetoric. First, I explore their individual queer worlds before putting these two rhetors in conversation with one another to understand the larger queer worldmaking project of fat activism, particularly the role intersectionality plays in constituting political subjects of body positivity. I conclude the final chapter and this thesis by cogitating on the implications of this project for theory and scholarship, for understanding the particulars of queer worldmaking, and for activism on a practical level.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are important reasons to pursue this project at the intersection of queer theory, fat studies, and rhetoric. First, while extant research already focuses on understanding the marginalization of fat bodies using a queer approach, the particularly rhetorical dimensions of these questions have been insufficiently addressed. Therefore, my goal is to use rhetorical theory and criticism specifically to add to scholarship that assesses fat activists and how they articulate arguments about their bodies. Second, and related, putting these three fields of study together is crucial for understanding the larger queer worldmaking project of fat activism. Fat studies illuminates the oppressive world that fat bodies exist in now, queer theory provides the tools for envisioning a different world free of fat oppression through queer worldmaking, and rhetoric allows me to identify and explain how such a queer world is constructed rhetorically by fat activists. Moreover, this continues both fat studies' and queer theory's interrogations of cultural limitations placed on certain bodies while also exposing the ways those limitations can be challenged. Finally, I seek to honor queer scholarship's tradition of refusing to theorize for the sake of theorizing by connecting emerging fat studies scholarship in the field with activism and social justice.¹² More specifically, this thesis has an explicitly activist agenda that seeks to advance the cause for those who inhabit fat bodies, not only by understanding how fat activist rhetoric functions, but also how it might be harnessed to make poignant political arguments. My hope, by the end of the thesis, is to make specific rhetorical resources and tactics available to fat activists while also inspiring scholars to appreciate (and study) the rhetorical ingenuity of this activist group.

In the next three sections, I survey extant relevant literature in queer theory, fat studies, and rhetoric while attending to how these three fields both inform and are informed by one another as well as inform the current study. I start with queer theory to establish the foundational assumptions about what constitutes queerness, how queers are disciplined, and how queer bodies can resist normativity. I then move to fat studies to illustrate how fat bodies are treated in dominant discourse, as well as to detail how fat studies work has disrupted and resisted those discourses. I finish with a focus on rhetoric, specifically how rhetoric speaks to, through, and about bodies as well as how queer rhetorical scholarship in particular does so in order to explicate the theoretical and critical resources I use in my queer rhetorical methodology.

Queer Theory

Fat bodies are queer bodies most evidently in that they fail to conform to normative standards constraining bodies, specifically in terms of what they should look like and who they should serve. However, I will also argue that fat bodies are queer bodies in that they are also subjected to other normative expectations about how these bodies should function, how they take up space and how much, and how these bodies fit (or do not fit) into the cultural imaginary. In order to make this argument, I must establish what normative understandings of the body are and, in turn, what disruptions to those understandings do or might look like. My depiction of these disruptions is first illustrated through queer theory which attempts to unsettle the fixity of identity categories. I choose to utilize queer theory broadly here, including theories and theorists that specifically attend to how normative bodies are constructed as well as theories and theorists that provide insight into how these normative constructions come/came to be, even if their subject of study is not specifically queer. For example, much of Michel Foucault's work *informs* how queer theorists have come to understand the body and normative expectations surrounding

it, however Foucault himself did not necessarily identify as a queer theorist and he does not necessarily fit in to the framework that queer theory has developed as a field of study. However, his work on things like docile bodies and biopower *inform* our understanding of how normative constructions of the body function and came to be, and therefore is useful (and is widely used) in performing queer readings and queer critiques of culture and texts.

Foundations of Queer Theory

A working understanding of queer theory is necessary for the study at hand, particularly for the sake of putting queer theory in conversation with the other two areas of scholarship employed herein, fat studies and rhetoric. However, queer theory is purposefully hard to define. In fact, its resistance to definition is intentionally one of its identifying characteristics.¹³ Nonetheless, a productive grappling with queer theory might begin with its roots.

Much of queer theory is rooted in the work of Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. While each of these germinal figures make their own particular insights in inspiring queer theory, they share interests revolving around disrupting, destabilizing, and de-essentializing norms surrounding the body in terms of gender and sexuality. Foucault, for instance, disrupts, destabilizes, and de-essentializes homosexuality (and sexuality more generally) by historicizing it within religious and medical discourses of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.¹⁴ For example, he traces the construction of homosexuality back to the christian confession and, furthermore, the psychiatrist replacing the priest in the role of confessional authority figure.¹⁵ The act of confessing sins, particularly sins of the flesh, allowed someone else (either the priest or the psychiatrist) to interpret and ultimately produce a “truth” about a person’s sexuality. This truth then “exists as knowledge within a particular discourse and is bound up with power.”¹⁶ The shift from priest to psychiatrist drastically changed the type of power with

which such a discourse is bound. Not only was sexuality a religious and political concern as deemed by the priest, it became a medical and economic concern as well. Foucault elaborates on the way sexuality, particularly “aberrant” sexualities are “imbedded in bodies, becoming deeply characteristic of individuals...[and] the oddities of sex relied on a technology of health and pathology.”¹⁷ He goes on to explain how the medicalization of sexuality forces individuals “to try and detect it— as a lesion, a dysfunction, or a symptom—in the depths of an organism, or on the surface of the skin, or among all the signs of behavior.”¹⁸ This medicalization of sexuality located it within certain parts of the body and, in turn, situated sexuality as something to eventually be internalized as an identity when articulated as an essential truth about oneself to the priest or psychiatrist. Sex was no longer something people did; it was something they were. By historicizing sexuality and locating the cultural and political forces that produced the very idea of “aberrant” sexualities such as homosexuality, Foucault illuminates how the very notion of sexuality (and the compulsory nature of heterosexuality) is not an essential part of one’s identity, rather a product of state, religious, and medical control.

Just as Foucault has been fundamental in denaturalizing/de-essentializing sexuality, Butler has been credited with doing the same for not just gender, but sex as well. Her theory of gender performativity argues that “gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory framework that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being.”¹⁹ This means that gender is not an essence or an inherent “truth” of the body by any means, but it is produced through material and discursive acts performed by the body. Butler also elucidates the way that, if gender is constructed, so is sex- in fact,

according to this view, the social construction of the natural presupposes the cancellation of the natural by the social. Insofar as it relies on this construal, the sex/gender

distinction founders along parallel lines; if gender is the social significance that sex assumes within a given culture...then what, if anything, is left of 'sex' once it has assumed its social character of gender?²⁰

Butler goes on to explain that “the regulatory norms of ‘sex’ work in a performative fashion to constitute the materiality of bodies and, more specifically, to materialize the body’s sex, to materialize sexual difference in the service of the consolidation of the heterosexual imperative.”²¹ Essentially, once gender is affirmed as performative and therefore constructed, the whole binary of sex and gender is deconstructed and sex can no longer be assumed natural. Though Butler’s theories about gender and sex have less to do directly with institutions and networks of power and more to do with individual performativities in relationship to identity, she still relies on notions of power having to do with compulsory heterosexuality as well as the discursive power of gender and sex to understand and deconstruct these notions of bodily “truths.”

Sedgwick continues this line of thought in various works that serve to denaturalize the relationship between sexuality and gender. Her work as a literary critic encourages readers to step outside their own heterosexual identifications to appreciate the queerness of literary texts, particularly within the grammatical structure of those texts.²² Additionally, she argues that “sexuality extends along so many dimensions that aren't well described in terms of the gender of object-choice at all.”²³ In other words, she complicates the relationship between sex, gender, and desire that seems to work in a linear direction to centralize heterosexuality (i.e. a person of one gender desires a person or persons of the opposite gender).

Sedgwick also argues that any understanding of western culture relies on analyzing the homo/heterosexual distinction that organizes much of western thought. She contends that this binary oversimplifies sexuality and, in turn, theorizes two views on sexuality, yet does not

subscribe completely to either one.²⁴ The first view, the minoritizing view, posits homosexuality as belonging to and of concern to a distinct minority population possessing an atypical sexuality. The universalizing view, on the other hand, accounts for homosexuality as something that informs all sexual subjectivities and therefore should be a concern for all subjects.²⁵ It is the existence of these two views in tandem, then, that illuminates the incoherency of the homo/heterosexual distinction.

Not only is the homo/heterosexual binary incoherent and constraining, it is also largely determined by language. Sedgwick draws on Foucault to discuss how the term “heterosexual,” under binary logic, depends on the term “homosexual” for its meaning. She elaborates that

categories presented in a culture as symmetrical binary oppositions—heterosexual/homosexual, in this case—actually subsist in a more unsettled and dynamic tacit relation according to which, first, term B is not symmetrical with but subordinated to term A; but, second, the ontologically valorized term A actually depends for its meaning on the simultaneous submission and exclusion of term B; hence, third, the question of priority between the supposed central and the supposed marginal category of each dyad is irresolvably unstable, an instability caused by the fact that term B is constituted as at once internal and external to term A.²⁶

This conception only further highlights the incoherency and futility of the homo/heterosexual binary by pointing out the inherent instability of the boundary between the two.

Clearly, early queer theory focused on disrupting, destabilizing, and de-essentializing the fixity of identity categories, specifically in relationship to gender and sexuality. However, queer theory has evolved and shifted its focus to examine the blurring of other identity categories beyond just that of gender and sexuality. What started out as primarily an attempt to locate and exploit “the incoherencies in those three terms [sex, gender, and desire] which stabilize heterosexuality,” eventually moved toward an endeavor to destabilize all categories and “truth regimes” that shape and constrain identity, particularly by locating the discursive formations

from which those categories and truth regimes emerge—discursive formations that falsely posit such things as “natural.”²⁷

Queering Queer Theory

In a 2005 introductory essay in *Social Text*, David L. Eng, J. Jack Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz posited the following question (and consequently titled their essay as such): “What’s queer about queer studies now?” As a sort of answer, or response rather, to this question, they make a case for “reorienting the field’s potential to engage with a wide field of normalization precisely through a critical reengagement with intersectionality in its manifold forms and locations.”²⁸ They also point queer scholars toward particular objects of study, including “public debates about the meaning of democracy and freedom, citizenship and immigration, family and community, and the alien and human in all their national and their global manifestations.”²⁹ In doing so, they highlight the importance, the urgency, in looking beyond sexuality to consider other sites of disciplinarity and “logics of knowledge production, the constitutive assumptions that form the foundation of disciplinary fields, rendering them internally coherent while giving social and political difference their discursive power.”³⁰ It is important to note that some queer scholars such as Noreen Giffney, Sedgwick, and Warner have resisted the idea of divorcing queerness and queer theory from sexuality explicitly, particularly out of concern for its political efficacy in doing so.³¹ Appreciating the validity of this concern, I choose to attend to the reorientations of the field articulated by Eng, Halberstam, and Esteban Muñoz in the spirit of intersectionality and with the goal of destabilizing logics of disciplinarity and logics of knowledge production broadly. Conceptualizing queer strictly in terms of sexuality not only sketches boundaries that then define queerness but it also privileges sexuality in the investigation of identity categories, both of which fall short of queer theory’s goal of

destabilizing identity categories and regimes of truth. Thus, to do queer studies now is to attend to reorientations of the field with an eye toward centering marginality and marginalizing that which is normatively centered.

Queer Tools and Frameworks

Thus far, I have traced queer theory back to its roots in theorists such as Foucault, Butler, and Sedgwick and explicated reorientations of the field that allow queer scholars to attend to disciplinarity and logics of knowledge production broadly. Next, I elaborate on various other tools and frameworks that help set up the theoretical conversations between queer theory, fat studies, and rhetoric as well as the larger worldmaking project of this thesis.

Queer theory, fat studies, and rhetoric/activism all, in some way, address questions of agency. That is, each of these fields of study raise questions about how different bodies and identities enact agency as well as how agency is constrained for particular bodies and identities. Queer theory provides many frameworks and tools for understanding and discussing agency. One theoretical building block of queer worldmaking that also specifically addresses the agency of queerness is Michael Warner's concept of queer counterpublics. Warner articulates counterpublics as those publics that mark and organize themselves significantly differently from the way the dominant culture enacts and understands publics (with a public being broadly defined as a social totality and a concrete audience, a space of discourse organized by discourse itself).³² Warner's framework functions as a critique of Nancy Fraser's concept of "subaltern counterpublics," defined as "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs."³³ Fraser also articulates subaltern counterpublics as a widening of the space of discursive contestation.³⁴ Warner finds

this definition unable to attend to the complexities of what actually makes a public “counter.” In trying to articulate such complexities himself, he gets at the way counterpublics turn discourse on its head so that it does not constrain identity or speech in the same ways. He gives the example of a queer counterpublic where “no one is in the closet: the presumptive heterosexuality that constitutes the closet for individuals in ordinary speech is suspended.”³⁵ This counterdiscourse, this performativity of rational-critical discourse, can be practiced with the goal of transforming public space and world-making. It is also important to note that the circulation of discourse constitutes publics and therefore is also vital to the existence of counterpublics. It is through counterdiscourse that counterpublics engage in worldmaking, a process by which they make their own path and constitute their own culture as an alternate perspective from that which is determined by dominant discourses and publics.³⁶ Such public transformation and worldmaking explains the link between counterpublics and social movements which is manifested as agency.³⁷

While counterpublics help explain how agency is enacted by queer groups, Foucaultian notions of docility, biopower, and biopolitics help explain how agency is constrained by state control. These concepts get at the questions of what constitutes a normative body and how bodies are disciplined into normativity. Foucault defines the notion of docility as that “which joins the analyzable body to the manipulable body. A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved.”³⁸ Subjected and practiced bodies are thus produced through discipline, that is, control of the body manifested as “docility-utility.”³⁹ To frame this more directly within queer theory or, at least, queer approaches to the study of history, docility is a normative conception of the body in that proper docile bodies serve the state and are disciplined to do so through various coercions and manipulations that serve state and capitalist interest. To

not practice docility is, first, very difficult to do as it is reproduced as an imperative in many institutions such as the school, hospital, and military.⁴⁰ Secondly, it is to disrupt the “machinery of power” and create space for new subjectivity.⁴¹

Docility, the norm of the docile body, must be put in conversation with notions of biopower and biopolitics to understand how bodies are actually controlled or rather, disciplined, by mechanisms of power. Biopolitics are the practices of productive (rather than destructive) disciplinary power on whole populations. Biopower encompasses the techniques of biopolitics or, in Foucault’s words, “an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations.”⁴² Biopower inserts bodies into the machineries of capitalist production and is perpetuated in and through many institutions including the family, the police, and medicine. Foucault elaborates on this notion and it is worth quoting at length—he describes biopower as “the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power, or, in other words, how, starting from the eighteenth century, modern western societies took on board the fundamental biological fact that human beings are a species.”⁴³ Biopower and biopolitics thus explain the *practice* of docility and its folding into normativity. The disciplinary function of biopolitics through the tools of biopower constrains the body and its agency in ways that ensure the body’s docility or its continued discipline and punishment otherwise.

Counterpublics and biopolitics/power may seem too abstract and macro to help in any useful critique of bodies and activist articulation of bodies. They are important concepts that are employed again and again by queer theorists to understand how queer subjectivities are constrained and how they carve alternative public spaces to do bodies differently. However,

queer theory is not just useful in framing the macro control and discipline of bodies; it is also employed to understand how discourses of queerness are malleable and ever-changing and how those discourses can be used to account for a whole range of different subjectivities. Let us turn now to Puar's study of the turban wearing terrorist and suicide bomber to understand how different bodies and different subjectivities can be articulated as queer even without an explicit relationship to sex, sexuality, or desire.

In her very controversial piece on the relationship between queerness and terrorist corporealities, Puar rearticulates and reinscribes terrorist bodies as a queer assemblage that disturbs the constraining notion of queer as sexuality.⁴⁴ She gives the example of both the turban wearing terrorist and the suicide bomber as queer corporeal subjectivities. The terrorist is made queer through both the wearing of his turban and the turban being stripped from him. This is done, in part, through the legibility made possibly by the visibility of his turban. Puar elaborates:

Furthermore, the turban wearer, usually male, bears the typically female burden of safeguarding and transmitting culture and of symbolizing the purity of nation. But this does not automatically or only feminize him; instead, the fusion of hair, oil, cloth, skin, the organic with the nonorganic, renders the turban a queer part of the body. It is this assemblage of visibility, affect, feminized position, and bodily nonorganicity that accounts for its queer figuration in the execution of a hate crime.⁴⁵

The suicide bomber is made queer in a similar way, through his act of suicide/martyrdom and through the destabilization of the boundaries between his body and metal, his body/the Self and the Other. He is "a body machined together through metal and flesh, an assemblage of the organic and inorganic; a death not of the Self nor of the Other, but both simultaneously, and, perhaps more accurately, a death scene that obliterates the Hegelian self/other dialectic altogether."⁴⁶ His self-annihilation is not only the ultimate form of resistance, but also the ultimate form of self-preservation, "preservation of symbolic self enabled through the 'highest

cultural capital' of martyrdom, a giving of life to the future of political struggles."⁴⁷ Both the turban wearing terrorist and the suicide bomber destabilize material and discursive boundaries between the self and Other, the body of the self and foreign bodies and, the suicide bomber takes it a step further by destabilizing the boundary between life and death. In his incredibly violent death, he gives life to his culture, his country, through making possible a futurity of the two.

The broader notion of queer as the destabilization of (traditionally strictly defined) categories of and related to the body is mobilized by Puar in a very unique way. However, Puar was not the first scholar to expand the notion of queer beyond sexuality. Others have endeavored to do this to much controversy but did so to ensure that "queer" does not become an uncritical replacement for "gay" and to consider other important experiences of marginalization beyond those only related to sexuality.⁴⁸ It is this line of thought and specifically Puar's conception of queer that opens up a space to consider queer subjectivities as those that subvert normative ideals about the body, what it should look like, who it should serve, and what boundaries it should be constrained by.

The Fat Body as Queer

Thus far, I have explicated the necessary fragments of queer theory most productive for putting it in conversation with fat studies and rhetoric/activism. Next, I clarify how fat bodies *are* queer bodies in three ways: (1) through mobilizing Puar's conception of queer, (2) by explicating the relationship between fatness and compulsory heterosexuality, and (3) by paralleling queer and fat medicalization/ stigmatization. I use this conception of fat as queer to justify my use of queer theory in critiquing the normativity surrounding fat bodies.

1. *Fat bodies blur boundaries and destabilize categories constraining the body.*

Using Puar's significantly expanded notion of queer, the fat body is queer in that it destabilizes categories that define and constrain the body— for example, the boundary between feminine and unfeminine, between self and Other (through the physical taking up of space, sometimes the space of the Other), and desire and disgust. The appropriately masculine body as muscular and sharp seems to locate girth and softness within femininity but, at the same time, femininity is defined by thinness. Moreover, fat women are more often identified based on their fatness which seemingly links womanness and fatness but fatness is also a materialization of the failure to perform femininity properly as sacrifice and beauty. The fat body takes up too much space and impedes on the space of the Other. Take, for example, the space of an airplane or classroom (two spaces notoriously painful and humiliating for fat people). On the airplane, the bulk of one person spills into another's space. The Other no longer has their own space and the separateness of self and Other is no longer so separate. In the classroom, one's corpulence envelopes the desk into themselves and their own body. Their body is then shaped by and, briefly one with, the body of the desk. The delineation of one (human or foreign) body from another is unbounded when it comes to the fat body. Additionally, most discourse around fat publically and socially mocks the people who have too much of it but a significant fraction of people enjoy fat as a fetish. It constitutes both revulsion and yearning, sometimes even within the mind of the same person. Fat blurs material and discursive categories in curiously queer ways.

2. *Fat bodies are performative and are regulated by compulsory heterosexuality.*

Not only does fatness blur categories, fat bodies and subjects are also regulated by compulsory heterosexuality. In other words, "compulsory heterosexuality and compulsory thinness are mutually constitutive."⁴⁹ Since fat bodies blur the line between masculine and feminine, both men and women who are too fat are deemed less desirable within the heterosexual

economy of desire because they fail to fit neatly into their respective gendered roles. Compulsory heterosexuality therefore seeks to exclude sex involving one or more fat persons (not that it makes such sex impossible because fat sex does, indeed, happen). Fat bodies are also performative, in that they iterate themselves as fat only in particular “social, cultural, and spatial environments at particular times.”⁵⁰ It is fat’s destabilization of categories/subjectivities, its close conceptual proximity to compulsory heterosexuality, and its performative nature that makes it queer. Fat bodies are queer bodies because they do not serve the heterosexual economy desire, they destabilize roles within the patriarchy, and their performativity of fatness is culturally and historically bound.

3. *Fat bodies, like queer bodies, are medicalized, pathologized, and stigmatized.*

Popular and medical discourse has medicalized and pathologized both queerness and fatness in various, similar ways. The medical field has sought to determine “causes” of both aberrant sexuality and aberrant corpulence, which has manifested as a quest for both a “fat gene” and “gay gene.”⁵¹ Gay queers are not the only ones of their community medicalized and pathologized, so are those that fail to conform to gender expectations which explains the diagnosis of gender dysphoria, formerly referred to as gender identity disorder. Fatness is medicalized in a similar way through terminology and diagnosis and is framed as “obesity.” Moreover, just as intersex queers are “fixed” (often at birth) to conform to genital aesthetics of the typical male or female, fat bodies are “fixed” through surgeries such as gastric bypass and laparoscopic adjustable gastric banding to conform to overall bodily aesthetics under the guise of health. However, infant genital mutilation and Lap-Band surgeries are the not the only ways medical professionals have “treated” queerness and fatness. Often, both queer and fat people

undergo behavioral treatment to get to the root of and repair their aberrance, often in the form of conversion therapy for queers and general behavioral therapy for fat people.

Medicalization and pathologization of both queer and fat people inevitably leads to stigmatization which essentially obliges queers to pass as heteronormative in many situations and necessitates fat people to pass as on-the-way-to-thin.⁵² It is this passing requirement that constitutes the possibility for a “coming out” process for both queer and fat people. When queers come out, they iterate their existence as resistant to oppressive heteronormativity. When fat people come out, they articulate their existence as resistant to compulsory thinness. It is important to note that coming out always works differently for bodies that are hypervisible in their perceived deviance, such as in the case of fat bodies.⁵³ For fat bodies, rather than just revealing themselves as fat (because that information is already readily available), their coming out process “involves a person who is easily recognized as fat affirming to herself and others her fatness as a nonnegotiable aspect of self, rather than as a temporary state to be remedied through weight loss.”⁵⁴ It is in this coming out, as a response to stigmatization, that both queer and fat people define their bodies against normative discourses and expectations surrounding the body.

With these frameworks in mind, this thesis uses queer theory to understand and critique bodily normativity. Queer theory allows me to ask questions such as: what constitutes a queer fat counterpublic? What dominant discourses are disrupted by such a counterpublic? How do fat bodies evade the demands of biopolitics? How are fat bodies disciplined for being improperly docile? How do fat activists combat the dominant discourses that define their bodies and bodies like theirs in rigidly normative ways? A queer lens and a queer approach to criticism (as detailed later) is necessary to appreciate and attend to all the complexities of fat, queer bodies and the larger worldmaking project advanced by those who inhabit such bodies.

Fat Studies

Now that I have made the case for both the inclusion of queer theory in this study and the fat body as queer, I delve deep into the field of fat studies to ground this project in a tradition of investigating disciplinarity and knowledge production surrounding fat bodies. In order to understand how people read or can read fat bodies in any particular way and subsequently how fat activists embrace, contest, and/or re-envision those readings, a basic understanding of the field of fat studies is necessary. Marilyn Wann describes fat studies as a new interdisciplinary field that is “radical...in the sense that it goes to the root of weight-related belief systems.”⁵⁵ Fat studies challenges normative assumptions about body size such as thinness as the ultimate standard of beauty, fatness as disease, and fatness as a result of personal (read: bad) life choices rather than a product of an intricate system of power, discourse, and social constructions of health, beauty, and morality.⁵⁶ For the sake of this study, it is necessary to trace the field of fat studies in order to understand the social constructs upon which fat denigration is/was founded. In a very Foucaultian sense, the field of fat studies seeks to destabilize notions of truth about the body and unearth the historical, social, and political forces that have come to define the ideal body as thin (and white, able, etc). The main themes that emerge in this tracing of the field that inform my current study can be loosely categorized into the following: dominant discourses about the body, the constraints of “obesity” discourse, underlying assumptions informing discourse surrounding the fat body, and the fat body as non/partial citizen body. In the following, I ground fat studies in these themes to lay the foundation for understanding how fat bodies are disciplined and the creative ways they resist that discipline.

Dominant Discourses About the Body

Dominant discourses about the body present the fat body as abject, disabled, and in need of medicalization. Thinking of the fat body as abject is also to think about the fat body as a monster in that it scares and repulses us because it blurs cause and effect as well as what we come to think of as sharp lines between opposites—“think im/moral, over/consumption, a/sexuality” and the socially appropriate Self and the monstrous Other.⁵⁷ The fat body as monstrous also functions symbolically—since the current social order privileges the mind, the intellectual, and the social over the body and the biological, fat bodies symbolize the abnormal, the monster “that delineates the boundaries of normalcy.”⁵⁸ Another signifier of the abject, orifices, are also a cause for ambivalence and anxiety in the context of fat bodies due to the fact that fat bodies seem to have an exaggerated relationship with their orifices.⁵⁹ They sweat more, eat more, excrete more and just cannot seem to ignore their own orifices whether things are going in or out of them.⁶⁰

Fat bodies as monstrous and overly, disgustingly reliant on their orifices starts to underlie the relationship between fat bodies and disabled bodies—both their similarities to one another and the conflation of them. Charlotte Cooper locates many of these similarities, for example, their low social status and cultural invisibility, “lack of access in the physical environment,” the constant reminder that something is wrong with them stemming from a world not built for them, similar experiences of medicalization that include the “personal tragedy” model that absolutely requires rehabilitation and risky medical procedures that often do not work or even cause harm, and similar offering of charity whether by actual charities or commercial means.⁶¹ Beyond basic similarities of experience and treatment by the dominant culture, fat bodies are often also conflated with disabled bodies in that they are considered diseased and that fatness is classified

as illness in itself. Somehow fat has morphed from something that precedes and is linked to morbidity and mortality to the actual materialization of morbidity and mortality. The danger of this conflation of weight and illness is located as extremely problematic in fat studies in that it exemplifies how we have inappropriately medicalized human diversity and fueled anti-fat prejudice and discrimination across many aspects of social life.⁶²

Constraints of Obesity Discourse

It is these dominant discourses of fat as abject and disabled that produce and constrain knowledge surrounding the fat body and those that experience fat embodiment. A particularly constraining discourse not touched on thus far is that of “obesity” or the “obesity epidemic.” Deborah Lupton argues that it is “the medical term ‘obesity’ in itself [that] serves to medicalize fat embodiment, bringing it into the sphere of medical treatment as problematic: as a disease or as precursor to disease.”⁶³ “Obese” then often gets conflated with “overweight” which serves to discipline a larger group of people for their largeness. Lupton locates the emergence of the Body Mass Index as scale of bodily measurement as a major factor in the “obesity epidemic,” even though its cutoffs for various weight classifications are completely arbitrary.⁶⁴ She also notes the way in which “obesity epidemic” discourse reframes efforts concerning health as being predominantly about weight loss and control rather than an overall healthy lifestyle of physical fitness and healthy eating.⁶⁵

LeBesco notes how the actual word “*obese*, from the Latin *obesus*, meaning ‘having eaten well,’” has changed over time from positive/benign connotations to aiding in the more sinister goal of medical professionals policing bodies through language.⁶⁶ “Obesity” and “obesity epidemic” discourses do not produce and constrain knowledge neutrally for truth and knowledge are never neutral. These discourses function as both “technique[s] of neoliberal governance” and,

on a related note, have “helped to defined what it was and is to be ‘white’ or ‘American,’ just as [they have] helped to define what it...[is] to be nonwhite or ethnic.”⁶⁷ Therefore, not only are these discourses based on arbitrary cut-offs on arbitrary scales, they function as neoliberal and racist ways of defining and governing bodies. Fat studies research has made it a goal, then, to expose how these discourses came to be and how they constrain knowledge about fat bodies in problematic ways as well as who that constraint privileges.

Underlying Assumptions of Fat Discourse

Considering “obesity” as a tool of neoliberal governance ushers in the third theme of fat studies research important to the study at hand—the underlying assumptions of discourse surrounding fatness which largely have to do with morality/christianity, social inequalities and minorities, and neoliberalism and the responsabilization of the individual. Starting with christianity, thinness is linked to morality in western culture in that it signifies a body that has not been opened to corruption and gluttony. Where both eating and fasting are done in the name of god, overconsumption of food represents a damaged relationship with god.⁶⁸ Being able to deprive oneself or limit one’s consumption of food is a form of self-discipline and religious sacrifice especially because gluttony not only encompasses appetite for food but sexual appetite as well.⁶⁹ In short, thinness gets one closer to god.⁷⁰ Additionally, since godliness is next to cleanliness but fatness seems to be next to dirtiness (evidenced by the “fat slob” trope of modernity), fatness only serves to pollute the body and the potential relationship with god as a moral being.⁷¹

Not only are fat people immoral and fundamentally unchristian, they are also socially disadvantaged minorities. This is doubly true in that not only are fat people socially disadvantaged by their fatness, those that are socially disadvantaged for other reasons (whether

that be because they are poor, racially marked, or women) are the populations that are more likely to be fat.⁷² It is the “idealized contained and controlled thin body [that] is not only male, but also white and middle class” that all other bodies are contrasted against, subsequently, found lacking.⁷³ Many different underlying factors contribute to lower status groups being fatter, for example, the link between poverty and low-quality nutrition, limited access to health-care, and poor neighborhoods/urban planning.⁷⁴ However, under neoliberal governance, “social inequalities and other relations of power that are determining of body weight” are masked by the mantra of personal/private responsibility and agency.⁷⁵

Doubtless, then, racist anxieties play an immense role in informing and influencing fat denigration. Amy Erdman Farrell locates these racist anxieties as emerging from notions of civilization and primitivism which function to define women and people of color as primitive and only white men as always already evolved/civilized.⁷⁶ LeBesco adds that “fatness haunts as the spectre of disintegrating physical privilege” in that being fat aligns the white body with the racial/ethnic body.⁷⁷ The fat body as racial, ethnic, uncivilized, and primitive is bound up with notions of what it means to be white and posits fatness as a failure of whiteness.

A final underlying assumption of discourse surrounding fatness is the responsabilization of the individual under neoliberalism which is first notable in obesity discourse but also shows up in other way of framing the fat body. In other words, popular neoliberal discourse tends to ignore the systemic, corporate, and industrial influences on food consumption and body weight and, instead, contends that every individual can be of a “healthy” weight if only they eat right and exercise. Neoliberalism holds “free choice” in very high esteem, meaning that all citizen/consumers should have all the information they need to make informed choices about their consumption and lifestyle as well as the necessary access to obtain the products and

services they desire.⁷⁸ This puts all the responsibility on each individual (person, family, etc) to make the right choices for themselves and exhibit the appropriate amount of discipline so as to make those same right choices in the face of temptation and abundance. Therefore, a state of being such as “obesity” can only be read as failure on the part of the individual—they had all the opportunities to make the “right” choices for their bodies and they therefore deserve any punishment or suffering for their lack of self-discipline where such punishment comes in social, discursive, material, and violent forms.⁷⁹ This view completely ignores all of the structural and systemic factors that dictate what kinds of lifestyle choices are available to certain groups of people.

The Fat Body as Non/Partial Citizen Body

Considering these underlying assumptions that inform popular discourse surrounding fatness as well as how these discourses are taken up in fat studies research lays the groundwork for understanding the relationship between citizenship and the fat body. Fat studies scholars and scholars in other fields with a fat studies focus have begun to explicate this relationship and its implications. A foundational understanding of this relationship starts with the idea that thinness is linked to citizenship and fatness is linked to a failure to appropriately perform citizenship.⁸⁰ Not only does the signifier of the fat body (as a symbol of ill health) represent the failure on the part of the neoliberal citizen to “choose health,” it also signifies a failure to meet the ethical obligation of all citizens to stay within a certain range of pounds—a range that proves that they can and do enact embodied, docile citizenship correctly.⁸¹ The kind of embodied, docile citizenship requisite in this context is defined by national biopolitical discourses that praise thinness and “health” as ideal form for things like physically defending the nation in battle, raising children, performing in international competition, and making appropriate wartime

sacrifice for the sake of the nation. Staying appropriately thin also aligns one's body with the image of the upstanding (white) citizen as opposed to the "*fat...cheating, stupid, and coarse immigrant.*"⁸² Thus, citizenship is rigidly defined to privilege some (thin, white) body types over (fat, racially marked) others.

Fatness indicates failed citizenship in a number of ways. These ways coalesce around the idea that an individual is marked as a failed fat citizen in that they are not of the dominant social class and they are both an inadequate worker and consumer.⁸³ Not only are they unproductive to the workforce, they inappropriately consume mass quantities of things they do not need. Furthermore, after engaging in this inappropriate overconsumption, they choose to display their laziness by engaging in leisure behaviors rather than working off their own excess. Fat bodies function to "delineate the boundaries between good and bad citizenship" so as to prevent those bodies from successfully claiming the benefits and rights of full citizenship, as "bodies worthy of rights, respect, and freedom."⁸⁴

The neoliberal discourse of individual choice and responsibility also helps to delineate these boundaries. Such discourse justifies the blame, and subsequent punishment, placed upon (fat) individuals that do not measure up to standards of proper citizenship.⁸⁵ Furthermore, since citizenship is no longer necessarily defined by participation in the public sphere, and more specifically related to fulfilling one's role as citizen/consumer, "the perfect subject citizen" is defined by their ability "to achieve both eating and thinness, even if having it both ways entails eating non-foods of questionable health impact...or throwing up food that one does eat (the literal bulimic)."⁸⁶ This idea of bulimia is important because it represents one way that one can demonstrate proper citizenship even if they consume too much. Another way fat people can become citizens, effectively earning their citizenship, is through diet (and consuming diet-related

products). LeBesco cites this as support for the assertion that “fat oppression and capitalist culture are emphatically linked.”⁸⁷ The ideal consumer/citizen therefore must be able to consume properly, by exhibiting enough self-discipline to continue to consume in an environment of abundance without overconsuming.⁸⁸

Two other elements that frame citizenship through the body are stigma and docility. Fat bodies are stigmatized in their relationship to poverty and racial markedness and subsequent anxieties about being deprived of one’s rights as a citizen.⁸⁹ Docility, the idea of the docile body, frames the fat body as incompatible with a capitalist economy, predominantly through discourses of lessened worker productivity.⁹⁰ Consequently, “the apparatus of neoliberal state power... seeks to regulate, normalize and discipline its citizens to render them more productive,” through the imperative placed on “managing and reducing body weight” which are articulated by things like “government policy documents and state-sponsored health promotional materials.”⁹¹ Proper citizenship of the docile body is thus regulated by the state and discursively constructed through biopower and biopolitics.

The ways in which fat people are marked as failed citizens by popular neoliberal discourse and the demands of capitalism combined with the dominant discourses about the fat body as abject, monstrous, and tragic, constraints of obesity discourse, and the racist, morally-charged assumptions of discourse surrounding fat bodies represent the obstacles that fat activists have to maneuver in their quest to advance the cause of acceptance for their bodies and bodies like theirs as well as the need for a queer, fat world where such assumptions do not limit and marginalize the experience of fat embodiment. The field of fat studies outlines the main discourses surrounding fatness as well as different ways to think about how things like beauty, morality, health, ability, and citizenship operate in binary opposition to the fat body. It is through

these new ways of thinking that we can understand how fat activists rhetorically maneuver the thincentric, fatphobic context in which their bodies exist. It is also through these new ways of thinking that fat activists have come to know themselves in different ways, particularly ways that open up possibilities for resistance. As Lesleigh Owen notes, “fat bodies as constructed and enacted through dissonant discourses are inherently cast as contradictory and potentially resistant. It is this very plasticity of discourses (of rhetoric and performance) that allows for contradiction and offers opportunities for resistance.”⁹² Rhetoric, then, holds the key to resistance.

Rhetoric

Rhetoric has evolved and progressed significantly from its roots in ancient Greece. Rhetoric, as a tradition, began as a way for those individuals that were not naturally eloquent speakers to advocate for themselves in a court of law and articulate their rights to their own property. From this line of thought, Aristotle defined rhetoric “as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion.”⁹³ Nevertheless, rhetoric, as a discipline, has changed, shifted, and evolved to encompass so much more than just persuasion. Rhetoric continues to treat persuasion as a central concern, but it also seriously considers the relationships between agency, discourse, power, language, materiality, and subjectivity (among many other related ideas that could never be fully summarized in one list) to understand how different social actors invite, persuade, and compel others to speak, think, and act in different ways.

This view of rhetoric is necessarily broad because rhetoric functions on multiple levels in multiple ways. For the sake of this study, I choose to narrow in on particular rhetorical tools and branches of thought that specifically inform my examination of (fat) bodies, fat activism, and

queerness. I conclude this section with an explication of the queer rhetorical methodological approach I take to my study of the fat body and fat activist rhetoric.

Rhetoric, Agency, and Subjectivity

As I mentioned above, the current study of rhetoric is intimately concerned with notions of agency and subjectivity and the field has much to offer in terms of investigating these concepts, specifically in their relationship to activism. Kevin DeLuca's theory of body rhetoric elucidates how bodies themselves enact agency from particularly vulnerable subjectivities. DeLuca locates bodies as the central argumentative force in body rhetoric.⁹⁴ He elaborates on the ways in which bodies, particularly vulnerable and therefore political bodies, "constitute a nascent body rhetoric that deploys bodies as a pivotal resources for the crucial practice of public argumentation...bodies, then, become not merely flags to attract attention for the argument but the site and substance of the argument itself."⁹⁵ DeLuca grounds his study of body rhetoric in three activist groups, two of those groups being ACT UP and Queer Nation, both generally considered queer activist groups. This use of bodies as rhetorical is a social movement strategy that decentralizes discursive forms of argumentation and offers the possibility of deconstructing and queering public places and normalizing vulnerable, taboo, and dangerous bodies.

Rhetoric also contributes to the specifically queer subject matter and approach I take in this project both implicitly and explicitly. Implicitly, it is important to note that many fundamental concepts of queer theory such as performativity, counterpublics/discourses, and binaries (such as that of homo/heterosexual) have deeply rhetorical resonances in that they are bound up with agency, discourse, power, language, materiality, and subjectivity and they invite, persuade, and compel social actors to think, speak, and act in different ways. To study something queerly often means to understand how it is constructed through discourse which is a major

theoretical tool made available through rhetoric. Explicitly, rhetorical scholars have taken up queer theory and produced a body of scholarship that centralizes underlying themes and assumptions of queer theory in rhetorical work. In the next section, I survey this field of queer rhetorical scholarship to pick out those main themes and demonstrate what constitutes a study as queer and rhetorical before finishing with an explanation of my queer rhetorical method.

Queer Rhetorical Scholarship

One way that rhetorical critics have attended to the “explicitly activist agenda” of queer criticism is by specifically examining queer activist groups and their corresponding rhetoric.⁹⁶ Note that queer activist rhetoric is not necessarily synonymous with gay and lesbian activist rhetoric (though queer rhetorical scholars such as Erin Rand warn against the dangers of forgetting queer rhetoric’s roots in groups like ACT UP and Queer Nation).⁹⁷ Not only is queer activist rhetoric employed by groups of queer activists, the actual rhetorical strategies deployed by those groups are queer themselves. Anthony Slagle has noted how traditional identity politics do not generally meet the needs of queer groups and therefore queer activist rhetoric, exemplified by his case study on Queer Nation, constructs a collective identity based on differences rather than similarities. This collective of difference then transcends the essentializing and totalizing nature of identity politics.⁹⁸

In attempting to understand the political and activist dimensions of queerness and queer groups, queer rhetorical scholarship has specifically attended to constructions of citizenship and how different queer groups perform activism to resist normative conceptions of citizenship. Jeffrey Bennett makes several astute observations about the nature of citizenship in relation to queerness, queer bodies, and queer blood more specifically in his study of the ban on gay men donating blood.⁹⁹ Early on, he notes that queers consistently and daily confront “a vanishing

point of citizenship.”¹⁰⁰ He examines the discourses that produce this vanishing point as well as the ways queers have resisted such discourses. He also specifically locates a point of contention in discourses of civil rights versus discourses of public “health.” “Health” is a western god-term with tremendous rhetorical and discursive force that “functions to reinforce mythic notions of the pure nation-state and the ‘biological responsibilities’ that accompany citizenship in that space.”¹⁰¹ Notions of “health” clash with notions of “civil rights” by constraining who deserves and is granted said rights. Ultimately, Bennet analyzes activists that disrupt these constraining discourses and makes a larger argument about citizenship and queer activism in the context of the blood ban.

Furthermore, queer rhetorical scholarship has specifically attended to the queer negotiation of visibility. In so doing, Rand has unearthed the ways in which visibility politics work differently for bodies that are “always already available for public scrutiny and consumption” due to their physical deviance being readily perceivable.¹⁰² In fact, visibility politics themselves are queered when queer activists have to deploy hyperembodiment as a tactic of queer excess in order to make their arguments about their bodies that are already visible and cannot reap the political benefits of introducing themselves into the public sphere. Not only does visibility work different for queer bodies that are visually marked by their queerness, it is also bound up with capitalism and can often be complicit in ideologies of late capitalist profit-enhancing strategies even in its queerest forms of deployment.¹⁰³

Just as rhetorical scholarship has considered negotiations of visibility, it has also investigated the political power of affect within queer activist groups. Rand has noted an “‘affective turn’ in academic discourse, often invoking potentiality and becoming, the body’s capacity to affect and be affected, and the vital forces and intensities that exceed linguistic

capture.”¹⁰⁴ Rand also notes how queer scholarship allows us to interrogate the ways in which deployment of “bad feelings” such as anger, unhappiness, depression, and shame are disciplined in public discourse. Much of Rand’s other work, as well as work by other queer rhetorical scholars such as Isaac West, focuses on the power of shame when deployed as a political rhetorical strategy. Rand contends that shame harbors “productive potential for activism”¹⁰⁵ however, queer politics and scholarship have a tendency to try to disconnect the affects of pride and shame in order to avoid engaging with shame. Margaret Morrison corroborates the productive potential of shame, claiming that “using queer shame creatively can ‘enlarge us’—by giving meaning to a ‘queerness’ associated with shame, by making a ‘space’ (not a fixed one) for identity, and by motivating cognition.”¹⁰⁶ West contends that the consubstantiality of shame can serve to challenge normativity of public spaces and places.¹⁰⁷ That is to say that reveling in shame can be productive in building a queer collective.

In addition to activism, visibility, and affect, examination of queer rhetoric has uncovered the possibility for queer forms of rhetorical agency. Rand argues that it is out of queerness that rhetorical agency emerges because agency is not “the ability to create intentionally a certain set of effects but [it emerges] as a process made possible by the very undecidability or riskiness of those effects.”¹⁰⁸ Rhetorical agency is queer because it cannot be constrained. It is limitless. The rhetor may have a particular intentionality, however the unfolding of the rhetoric and its subsequent effects are always in a state of perpetual unpredictability. Consequently, “rhetorical forms work as materializations of power through which discourse becomes intelligible” and therefore dominant texts must “effectively displace queerness in order to actualize agency.”¹⁰⁹ In other words, queerness is rhetorically powerful when it takes up the space that dominant discourses usually occupy and the ostensible binary between dominance and queerness is always

being renegotiated and reinscribed. Understanding rhetorical agency in this queer way allows us to consider the possibilities for queer groups to displace dominant discourses by harnessing their own queer rhetorical power.

The literature surveyed here demonstrates that queer rhetorical scholarship is particularly useful in examining the activist dimensions of rhetorical acts and strategies as well as theorizing the queerness of rhetoric beyond bodies and identities. Next, I explicate my queer rhetorical method which I employ in the analysis chapter proceeding this literature review.

Queering the Rhetorical Canon

Thus far, it has yet to be explicated what a queer rhetorical exploration of fatness, fat bodies, and fat activism entails. David Eng, J. Jack Halberstam, and José Muñoz remind us to critically interrogate what actually constitutes a study as queer. They also remind us how “queer studies has been a privileged site for the explicit reconsideration of disciplinarity and knowledge production.”¹¹⁰ Queer studies allows us to denaturalize various origin narratives in order to contest the privileged production of knowledge. Queer studies, as a field, has also made a relatively recent turn to “become a concerted site for the interrogation of the nation-state, citizenship, imperialism, and empire.”¹¹¹ Also important to note is queer studies’ ability to centralize others and to exercise an ethics of humility. My proposed study seeks to centralize, if only temporarily, those fat others who may not have warranted consideration in the queer realm in the past.

Not only does queer studies provide some of the tools to understand the privileged production of knowledge, the relationship between denaturalization and citizenship/imperialism, as well as the centralization of others, specific approaches to queer rhetorical criticism provide us with additional tools for interrogating normative assumptions about the body. Anthony Slagle

explains that “focusing on differences rather than similarities, queer critics seek to dismantle hierarchies by blurring the definitions of specific identity categories.”¹¹² He contends that queer approaches to criticism consider the following: dominant vs oppositional readings, challenges to essentialism, privacy and identity, heteronormativity, and assimilation. In so doing, the ultimate goal of queer criticism is social change and the centralizing of voices relegated to the margins. In fact,

...it is important to remember that queer criticism has an explicitly activist agenda; that is, queer criticism seeks to dismantle the existing social order that silences queer voices in our society. Queer critics attempt to construct a world in which...difference is not only acknowledged, but celebrated. Queer theorists argue that it is not sufficient to point out that oppression and domination merely exist; instead, a major goal of queer criticism is to point to the potential for progressive change in the social structure.¹¹³

Therefore, my current study does not simply seek to point out the oppression of fat bodies and the domination of thin-centric ideals; I also aim to uncover the queer rhetorical strategies deployed by fat activists to better understand how body positive and fat acceptance rhetoric can actually advance the cause for those who experience fat embodiment. Therefore, in the next two chapters, I use this queer critical orientation to analyze two very different fat activist rhetors, Tess Holliday and Ashleigh Shackelford, to understand their fat activist rhetoric as queer both in the actual rhetorical strategies they use as well as their roles in the larger queer worldmaking project of fat activism.

TESS HOLLIDAY: BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS, BINARIES, AND QUEERING HEALTH

In early 2015, Tess Holliday became the first model of her size to be signed with a major modeling agency. Later that year, she was featured on the cover of *People* magazine with a headline that read “The World’s First Size 22 Supermodel! From Bullied Teen to Plus-Size Star.”¹¹⁴ Holliday had already cultivated a strong social media presence with her Instagram hashtag campaign, #effyourbeautystandards, where women and men can tag pictures of themselves celebrating aspects of their bodies that do not necessarily conform to normative standards of beauty with a community that embraces such breaks from conformity. Though Holliday refers to herself as a “body positive ambassador,” she has received a lot of negative criticism from those who believe she is promoting an unhealthy lifestyle as a model at her weight.

Holliday is lauded for “breaking down barriers” for plus size women and this notion is more than an easy tagline for tabloids and online magazines.¹¹⁵ “Breaking down barriers” sounds suspiciously like the ever-worthy goals of queer theory and criticism to challenge essentialism and destabilize binaries.

In this chapter, I argue that Holliday does all the above. She breaks down the barriers which have traditionally kept people with her type of embodiment from being seen and advances a queer rhetoric surrounding fat bodies that destabilizes multiple binaries that render fat bodies as inherently unhealthy. The two binaries I specifically address in this chapter are those of thin as active vs fat as lazy and thin as reproductive vs fat as diseased. In demonstrating how Holliday contests these binaries through her queer rhetoric, I assert that Holliday challenges essentialized notions of health and ultimately reimagines that fat body as healthy in particular kinds of ways.

Critical Orientation

To understand how Holliday challenges essentialism through the destabilization of oppressive binaries, I take the role of the queer critic and apply a set of queer critical methods to my artifact. In this role, I know that queer criticism, much like queer theory, is intentionally difficult to limit and define. At the same time, as a growing subfield of rhetorical criticism, its methods are continually adapting and growing. Nonetheless, for the purposes of this chapter, I conduct queer criticism with two aims in mind: 1) disrupting binaries and categories and 2) building alternative queer worlds. In this chapter, I elaborate specifically on how Holliday disrupts binaries and I conclude this thesis with a discussion of the role she plays in building alternative queer worlds.

As explained by Anthony Slagle—with an understanding of the possibilities of rhetorical criticism for queerness as noted by Isaac West¹¹⁶—a goal of the queer critic is “to dismantle hierarchies by blurring the definitions of specific identity categories.”¹¹⁷ This entails highlighting the ways in which people rarely fit neatly into preconceived identity categories and using that ambiguity to tip the scales away from those identities that have historically been privileged. For some queer rhetorical scholars, this means blurring the category of homosexual and heterosexual to displace the privilege that accompanies the latter in its presumed rigid and defined form.¹¹⁸ For others, it means muddling normative conceptions of who “counts” as a citizen to demonstrate the ambiguity and contingency of such a category.¹¹⁹ Regardless of the particular category at hand, queer rhetorical scholars are particularly skilled at performing criticism that locates norms and normalization for the sake of deconstruction while considering possibilities for real structural social change.

Another task of the queer critic is to play a role in queer worldmaking. Though I discuss this concept in theoretical depth in the concluding chapter of this thesis, I employ queer worldmaking from the position as a queer critic and thus feel it is important to explain how it drives my mode of criticism. The spirit of queer worldmaking manifests in Slagle's work through his assertion that queer critics should "attempt to construct a world in which...difference is not only acknowledged, but celebrated."¹²⁰ As a queer critic, I take up this call to action in that I acknowledge and celebrate difference through the rhetors and texts I study and the orientation I take to those texts. I focus "on difference as a site of power and knowledge" and thus reimagine a world defined by difference that makes specific room for the celebration of queer (including fat) bodies and identities.¹²¹

The tasks of the queer critic to both dismantle binaries and to reimagine and reconstruct a world more accepting of difference encourages not only a particular mode of criticism, but also an eye toward particular rhetors. In other words, the queer critic both approaches texts with the goal of queering, denaturalizing, and destabilizing identity categories but also seeks out rhetors that do this queering themselves. Isaac West elaborates this idea when he argues that rhetors have something to teach us about theorizing corporeality and embodiment. He claims that "we should want something more from our work to help us create the worlds we want to live in as opposed to reinscribing at every turn the dominant order of things," and part of this task means attending to rhetors that already do the work of queering/denaturalizing/destabilizing.¹²² Attuning ourselves to what we can learn from the rhetor, in turn, allows us to "calibrate our critical assessments" in such a way that "recast[s] the question of normativity such that an act of queering is judged by the rhetors' ability to productively play the norms against one another and disrupt, even if only temporarily, their normative and normalizing authority."¹²³ West's refined

conceptualization of queer criticism effectively queers criticism in that it deters us from using theory as “a set of guarantees about cultural configurations” but, rather, encourages us to bask in the discomfort of engaging with rhetors and rhetorics that “exceed our extant explanatory frames.”¹²⁴

Tess Holliday is a rhetor that has so much to teach us about corporeality and embodiment. She is a fat woman thriving in a sphere that usually denies access to fat people, a sphere that defines itself against fatness. She is matter out of place. I choose to analyze Holliday because she is already creating a world that embraces different types of bodies by productively playing body norms against one another and disrupting the normative and normalizing authorities that govern both fashion and social media, effectively challenging, rather than reinscribing, the dominant order.¹²⁵

Artifact

To understand how Holliday challenges the dominant order of things, I turn to her Instagram posts from January of 2015 to present. Instagram is a free photo-sharing mobile application started by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger in 2010.¹²⁶ The application’s initial draw was that it allowed users to apply pre-made filters to their personal photos to give the photos a more vintage and/or professional quality feel. The app is set up so that users log in to view a newsfeed that consists of photos with optional captions and posting a photo to Instagram is as easy as snapping the photo on your mobile phone, selecting a filter, adding a caption, and pressing a button that says “share.” According to the Pew Research Center’s Social Media Update in 2016, “32% of internet users (28% of all U.S. adults) use Instagram,” making it the second most popular social media site next to Facebook.¹²⁷ The Pew Research Center reports that “Instagram use is especially high among younger adults,” noting that 59% of online adults

between the ages of 18 and 29 use the social media platform.¹²⁸ Additionally, 38% of online adult women use Instagram, which is significantly larger than the percentage of online men that use the application (26%).¹²⁹

Scholars across disciplines have started to turn to Instagram and Instagram posts specifically as objects of study.¹³⁰ Instagram is an important locus of study because it combines the rhetorical significance of social media and visual culture. Social media not only shapes identity, it is politically powerful and plays a role in shaping publics and counterpublics.¹³¹ Moreover, Sonja Foss argues that “visual artifacts constitute a major part of the rhetorical environment, and to ignore them to focus only on verbal discourse means we understand only a miniscule portion of the symbols that affect us daily” and studying visual artifacts opens up transformative possibilities for rhetorical theory.¹³² Studying Instagram falls within a larger turn in rhetorical criticism of examining visual rhetorics and culture and rhetorical critics can and should study Instagram posts as rhetorical artifacts to gain a deeper understanding of the relationships between symbol use, identity, politics, publics/counterpublics, discourse, and rhetorical theory.

In the case of Tess Holliday, Instagram is a valuable rhetorical artifact because it is the primary site of her activism. Her debut onto the scene of the body positivity movement/fat activism was the introduction of her Instagram campaign #effyourbeautystandards in 2012.¹³³ Holliday’s activism continues to unfold here as her #effyourbeautystandards campaign is still wildly popular, including over two million searchable posts available per day listed under the hashtag. On social media websites and applications such as Twitter and Instagram, a hashtag is recognizable as a word or group of words preceded by the pound (number) sign. Inserting the pound sign first “turns any word or group of words that directly follow it into a searchable link.

This allows you to organize content and track discussion topics based on those keywords.”¹³⁴

Thus, Holliday’s #effyourbeautystandards campaign allowed Instagram users interested in body positivity and fat activism to connect by posting images of themselves that defy normative standards of beauty and making those images searchable for one another. Holliday connects herself to her users in this way as well by tagging several of her personal Instagram pictures with the #effyourbeautystandards hashtag. Additionally, Holliday’s immense number of followers on Instagram (1.4 million) is a testament to the richness of this rhetorical text.

To make Holliday’s Instagram a manageable rhetorical artifact, I have made several decisions about how to define the scope of this text. First, I have limited my analysis to Holliday’s posts between January 2015 and the present. This is because January of 2015 is when MiLK Model Management signed Holliday to their agency. She thus became increasingly more significant in the realm of modeling and fashion and in the public eye broadly during this time. Analyzing her posts since then has much promise in terms of considering the contemporary moment. Second, I select these dates because the beginning of her professional modeling career also marks the beginning of her blurring the boundary between public/private which plays a significant role in my discussion of how she builds an alternative queer world in the concluding chapter of this thesis. Before Holliday was a professional model, she was much more like your average Instagram user. In other words, she did not have much significance to the public. However, once she inserted her professional modeling career into the same public space where elements of her private life were readily available for observation, public and private as separate organizational categories became much less distinct. Third, I confine my study to Holliday’s Instagram posts rather than from her Facebook or other social media outlets because almost everything that she posts to Instagram gets double-posted to her Facebook and Instagram makes

it much easier to view primarily visual artifacts. In other words, there is not a significant difference between what one would find on her Instagram and her Facebook (her two most followed social media outlets) and Instagram profiles are laid out as a collection of images and videos which is much easier to navigate through than the combination of pictures, videos, textual status updates, and sponsored advertisements that comprise Facebook profiles.

This collection of posts is a rich and apt text for study because, not only is it relevant to understanding Holliday in the contemporary moment, it allows me to keep my analysis immersed in her activism as well as centralize the visual elements of her rhetoric. Having established a manageable text for analyzing Holliday's queer rhetoric, I now turn to examining how this queer rhetoric unfolds in the online space of Instagram.

Disrupting Anti-Fat Binaries

To advance her fat activist agenda, Holliday engages in a set of queer rhetorical acts on her Instagram feed for disrupting false binaries that essentialize and stigmatize fat people. The overall binary she rhetorically disrupts is that of healthy vs unhealthy. As evidenced by the literature in fat studies, fat is a signifier of ill health, disease, morbidity, and mortality.¹³⁵ Conversely, thinness is linked with health, fitness, and ability.¹³⁶ However, Holliday refuses to let fatness be subsumed by a binary opposition between healthy and unhealthy. Instead, in several ways, she makes fat bodies intelligible as healthy bodies and thus provides a conceptualization of health that counters health as essentially thin.

Holliday's de-essentialization of health unfolds in two main ways: by presenting the fat body as an active body and by presenting the fat body as a reproductive body. She presents the fat body as both active and reproductive throughout the text I am analyzing; however, I will draw from specific textual examples in the form of individual Instagram posts that best and most

clearly illustrate how the active and reproductive fat body challenge essential notions of health. As made evident by what follows, Holliday visually asserts her body as both active and reproductive and, in doing so, queerly rearticulates her body as healthy in specific ways that serve to highlight the instability of binary discourses that frame health.

Fat Body as Active Body

Holliday's first rhetorical strategy for disrupting the binary between healthy and unhealthy—where fatness is read almost exclusively as unhealthy—is using her Instagram account to display images of herself as a fat person who is also physically active. Within popular culture and health discourses, fatness often signifies laziness and laziness is conceptually and materially linked to poor health. Co-chair of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity, Peter Gluckman highlighted the perceived link between fatness and laziness when, after contributing to a 2016 WHO report on childhood obesity, claimed "it's not the kids' fault. You can't blame a 2-year-old child for being fat and lazy and eating too much."¹³⁷ Both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery list on their website the "health consequences" or related health conditions of obesity, sanctioning the link between laziness, fatness, and poor health.¹³⁸ Health magazines, doctors, and even strangers at the grocery store may warn us of the dangers of sedentary lifestyles and encourage us to work in physical activity multiple times a week if we want to live longer and happier. Laziness becomes the enemy in the quest for health. Normalizing logic therefore confirms the widely-held assumption that fat people are just lazy and inactive, patiently awaiting their mortality on cushions of corpulence. This assumption is echoed frequently in the comments section of Holliday's Instagram pictures, particularly her

modeling photos, with sentiments such as “stop killing yourself,” “you deserve to die the death obesity will give you,” and “get off your ass and go to the gym before you die.”

Given this binaristic discourse that active people are healthy and fat people are unhealthy, Holliday seeks to shatter this binary by demonstrating in her Instagram feed that these categories are false. In other words, Holliday turns to Instagram to show that fat people can be active. In doing so, Holliday calls into question this binary for public audiences and reveals the disciplining discourse to the contrary as a sham.

Images to this effect appear frequently on Holliday’s Instagram between 2015 and the present. In these images, Holliday shows that her fat, body-positive lifestyle is anything but lazy. When she is not at the gym with her personal trainer, she is hiking, modeling, or otherwise out in the world doing things. Also, as she is doing things, she reminds her followers that she is an image of health and that health is not directly correlated to body size. The following picture demonstrates this queer rhetoric of exposing the instability of the normalizing logic of fat=lazy=unhealthy.



139

This image, posted on February 13th, 2016, depicts Holliday lifting weights in what appears to be a gym. The image is accompanied by the following caption:

@mackfit keeps me on my grind, & has customized my workouts to suit my pregnant body...It's hard enough to share my workouts with others because of the stigma that surrounds plus bodies & how people make our "health" their business. Don't worry though, It won't stop me & I won't back down. I live for proving skeptics wrong #effyourbeautystandards Song: "Won't back down" by Tom Petty & the [Heartbreakers]¹⁴⁰

In this photo, Holliday first offers performative contradiction to the active-thin/lazy-fat binary that renders fat people as unhealthy in the public sphere. The image is telling in that it certainly highlights Holliday in action. The blur surrounding the weight as Holliday lifts her left arm shows a body in motion and the weights in both arms depict anaerobic exercise. Holliday's face in this image is also clearly not of someone relaxed and lazy or doing professional work like on a photoshoot. Instead, her face is intense and focused, suggesting the kind of hard work, discipline, and dedication only assumed to characterize those that exist in thin bodies. Though she is sitting on a bench, Holliday is clearly engaging in physical activity. Location also signals Holliday as active. She is in what looks to be a gym which is, again, a public space not populated with fat bodies within the imagination constructed by popular and medical discourse. Similarly, Holliday's attire is consistent with someone living an active lifestyle. She is wearing a muscle shirt, exercise leggings or yoga pants, and tennis shoes. Each of these components of her outfit set her up for physical activity and, when worn together as in the picture above, they coalesce to epitomize a popular workout aesthetic, albeit on a much larger body than popularly envisioned. In all these ways, this image suggests that Holliday is a woman in motion, exercising as part of an active lifestyle.

Yet, simultaneous to showing Holliday as active, the photo also shows Holliday as a fat person, in appearance and identity. In the photo, Holliday's stomach rolls and fleshy arms are

visible to the viewer. She is wearing a tight, sleeveless top that puts her body on display in the space of a public gym even though bodies like hers are commonly not welcome in such spaces. This forces onlookers to confront the existence of a fat body out of place or, better yet, encourages them to reimagine what kinds of bodies can exist in such a space. The photo itself does little if anything to hide her corpulence, even as a black and white rendering. The photo is taken from the front, slightly angled but, for the most part, straight on. This allows the viewer to see her aforementioned fatness—stomach rolls, fleshy arms and all—as distinctly fat instead of hiding or only showing only a portion of her body, like so many headless torsos or hyper-cropped images that only seek to depict someone’s best features for the camera. Furthermore, and perhaps most pertinent in the image, Holliday wears a shirt that reads: “Forever Hungry.” This playful shirt speaks directly to Holliday’s position as a confident, self-assured fat activist in that it makes it clear that she is aware of her own fatness and confident enough to express her fat identity with humor. By wearing this shirt, Holliday takes the fat-shaming rhetoric of her critics and turns it on its head. That is, her critics condemn her for eating too much so she takes that criticism and wears it as a humorous tagline across her fat body. Furthermore, the “Forever Hungry” shirt aligns her with the body positive/fat acceptance movement in that it reinforces the body positive notion that one’s body—in her case, a perpetually fat and hungry body— is unproblematic. This shirt acknowledges her fatness and, in acknowledging it, implicitly suggests that her body is worthy of being seen and existing in public.

It is also important to note the significance of this image not being a selfie (a picture taken of oneself, by oneself and often posted to social media). Gym selfies are a very specific type of selfie—one where users take a picture of themselves going to, after, but usually at the gym, often in mirrors at the gym. If you perform a search of the hashtag “#gym” on Instagram,

you will find many gym selfies and you will probably notice how normative and thin-centric these gym selfies are. That is, the culturally imagined gym selfie is that of a fit person taking a photo of the evidence of their fitness in a mirror. Needless to say, Holliday does not possess the body type to be able to take a gym selfie without question. When “fit” people take selfies in gyms, there is no doubt they have been working out or are about to work out. For fat individuals such as Holliday though, there is not that sort of taken for granted assumption. She must prove that she makes sense in the space of the gym. Thus, the above picture *proves* that she is working out, that she is using the space for what it intended for. The fact that the image is not a selfie serves to disturb the binary logic that constructs thin bodies as active and fat bodies as lazy by providing visual evidence that she is working out and thus disconnecting fatness from laziness. While thin people are assumed to “fit” in this space, Holliday makes a space in the gym specifically for fat bodies like her own by using Instagram images to verify that she belongs in this particular space connoted with activity and health.

Not only does this image show Holliday as disrupting the active-thin/lazy-fat binary, the accompanying text also contributes to this queer rhetoric. First, by tagging @mackfit, that is, implicating him in the post and making his username searchable within the text of the post, and claiming that he “keeps me on my grind, & has customized my workouts to suit my pregnant body,” Holliday announces that she has a personal trainer that is ensuring she has a routine of rigorous workouts that are suited to her particular needs as a pregnant woman. Since it is the job of a personal trainer to push their clients to new bounds in terms of exercise and fitness, we can assume that Holliday is not only working out regularly, but rigorously. Tagging @mackfit in the caption of the photo constructs Holliday’s body as one that is regularly in motion. This disrupts the possible assumption that she may just be taking pictures in the gym to fool her followers into

thinking she exercises. Rather, Holliday demonstrates that exercising is a regular part of her life and, by implicating a well-known personal trainer, she develops some element of ethos in regard to fitness.

Not only does Holliday reinscribe her body as active by tagging her personal trainer in the caption, she also makes some very specifically queer moves within the text of the caption that contribute to her overall queer disruption of the thin-active/fat-lazy binary. First, she identifies the shame and difficulty of the binary in the text by discussing the stigma surrounding larger bodies and the tendency of others to make the “health” of those bodies their business. Furthermore, she actively claims to be breaking the binary with the statement, “don’t worry though, It won’t stop me & I won’t back down. I live for proving skeptics wrong.” By both identifying the struggle imposed upon her by the binary and, in turn, actively claiming to break that binary, Holliday positions herself as a particular type of queer rhetor. She is aware of the types of constraints placed upon her body, specifically social and cultural constraints, and she uses her platform as a fat activist to highlight the constructedness of those restraints by illuminating new ways of existing in a fat body. In the text of this caption, she recognizes that fat bodies are assumed to be lazy, inactive, and unable to do physical activity adequately. She then explicitly states that she will not back down from both the challenge of exercising in a fat body and the challenge of sharing her exercise publicly. This awareness of the binaries that constrain her and her active disruption of those binaries through the caption of her gym photo mark Holliday as both a fat activist and queer rhetor which, I would argue, is made possible, in part, by the queerness that defines fatness.

Finally, Holliday’s use of the #effyourbeautystandards hashtag in this caption is an important element of her queer rhetoric that, in itself, serves to disrupt fatphobic binaries but

does so in an especially profound way when paired with the above photo of Holliday lifting weights at the gym. Holliday's #effyourbeautystandards campaign is predicated on the notion that limiting and oppressive standards of beauty exist and that challenging those standards is a worthy body positive endeavor. The hashtag itself disturbs the binary that defines thin as beautiful and fat as ugly. By employing the hashtag, the user recognizes that such a fatphobic binary exists, and then challenges the binary by refusing to accept the oppressive beauty standards that label fat (or otherwise nonnormative bodies) as ugly. The user further contests the beautiful-thin/ugly-fat binary by offering a new, redefined image of beauty in whatever image accompanies the hashtag. In this way, the #effyourbeautystandards hashtag is always already doing queer work.

However, what is most profound in this case is the way that Holliday, through the #effyourbeautystandards hashtag performs queer disruption of the active-thin/lazy-fat binary. Health is not specifically inscribed in the #effyourbeautystandards hashtag. However, when the hashtag is paired with an image of Holliday exercising, the co-constitutive nature of health and beauty becomes apparent. By tagging the image with #effyourbeautystandards, Holliday is implicitly arguing that the image itself challenges normative constructions of beauty. By claiming that a photo of her exercising, a photo that offers performative contradiction to the active-thin/lazy-fat binary, challenges beauty standards, Holliday suggests that presenting the fat body as active reimagines beauty. This highlights the ways in which both beauty and health constitute one another, in part, by excluding fat as the definition of either. Holliday illuminates how health is defined by beauty and vice versa by claiming that her fat body in motion disturbs traditional conceptions of beauty. In doing so, Holliday both queerly and productively illuminates one of the most problematic aspects of the cultural definition of health—that it has

less to do with the actual well-being of one's body and mind and more to do with how somebody looks on the outside. Exposing the problems and contradictions of culturally defined notions of health is a primary aim of fat activism and exposing the ways in which normative conceptions of health exclude certain bodies is a primary aim of queer activism.¹⁴¹ By revealing the ways in which health and beauty rely on one another for their definition, Holliday aligns herself with the projects of both fat activism and queer activism and, moreover, positions herself as a decidedly queer fat activist rhetor.

In sum then, this image and text depict a fat body in motion. This post figures fatness as no longer incompatible with activity and fat embodiment as no longer antithetical to health. Simply put, this picture depicts a fat body performing an act that fat bodies are thought to avoid or refuse and the accompanying caption helps construct Holliday as a particular type of queer rhetor, one whose activist project lines up with the goals of both fat and queer activism.

Below, I offer another image that invokes many of the same techniques of de-essentializing health:



We again see an active body in motion. Even without the caption, which indicates that Holliday is doing post-workout stretches, we see a body stretching in a gym which signifies that this body has either already exercised or is about to begin exercise. We also see this active body in motion as explicitly fat once again. If you look closely, you can see the overhang of Holliday's stomach between her legs as she stretches. Her thick calves converge with plump thighs and, even in all her rotundity, she can touch her toes.

The presumed incompatibility of fatness and activeness rests on the assumption that those who exist in fat bodies cannot and/or will not participate in physical activity. The above image disrupts both components of this assumption. First, the image depicts Holliday overcoming assumed barriers of fatness to complete a stretch that not even all thin people can do (touching one's toes). In doing so, she provides visual evidence that a fat body can, indeed, perform this particular act of physical fitness if the person within that fat body so chooses. This gets to my next point that Holliday, in turn, challenges the assumption that fat people will not or choose not to do physical activity. Again, donning a popular gym aesthetic (t-shirt, leggings, tennis shoes, hair up), sitting in front of a cardiovascular workout machine (perhaps an elliptical), body splayed out in the form of a common stretch, Holliday visually meets all the requirements of "fitting in" the space of the gym except for her obvious fatness. Furthermore, unlike many celebrities whose career relies on their bodies being the pinnacle of physical fitness, Holliday is performing physical fitness out of her own free will. By depicting herself at the gym, ready to exercise in appearance and in form, Holliday effectively disturbs the notion that fat people simply refuse to be physically active.

The caption that accompanies the above photo reinforces some of these visual arguments as well as adds some depth to the queer rhetorical moves Holliday is making. The overall caption

is primarily centered around respecting all bodies regardless of size, gender, race, sexual orientation, ability, etc. However, the first couple of sentences of the caption make some very specific contentions about health: “Post workout stretches w/ my amazing trainer @mackfit...I stay active for me, & only me. It's not about proving anything or trying to lose weight, it's about what makes ME happy!”¹⁴³

When one sees an image of a body stretching in a gym, they can assume that body has either just exercised or is just about to. The text of the caption confirms that Holliday has just exercised by identifying the action in the image as “post workout stretches.” This reinforces many of the same arguments made by the first picture I analyzed that Holliday engages in regular and rigorous physical activity. This is further bolstered by Holliday, once again, tagging her trainer @mackfit in the text of the caption. Just having a personal trainer to tag suggests that Holliday exercises regularly but frequently tagging him in photos of her in the gym strengthens this claim. It is clear from her frequent tagging of @mackfit and plentiful photos of her working out that physical activity as a particular performance of health is a regular part of Holliday’s routine for her fat body.

Additionally, this sentiment reinforces the visual argument that Holliday is choosing to perform physical activity out of her own free will. This is then compounded by the claim that, not only is she choosing to exercise, she is choosing to do so for purely self-motivated reasons. That is, she is not exercising to lose weight or to prove anything about fat bodies, she is exercising purely for the sake of her own happiness. This further disrupts the assumption that those with fat bodies refuse to work out. Indeed, Holliday links physical activity to her happiness. Physical activity is no longer just a performance of health; it becomes something that

is central to her being. Physical activity as central to the being of a fat body emphatically queers the assumption that fat people choose not to or are not able to do physical fitness.

Additionally, the text of the caption serves to challenge two linear relationships that maintain an essentialized vision of health: first, it disrupts the seemingly linear relationship between weight loss and health. Instead of positioning weight loss as the means to health, this post invokes activity as the means to health. Health is momentarily redefined to privilege an active body rather than a body experiencing loss of weight. Second, it counters the notion that fatness is a roadblock to health and therefore happiness. Sometimes health and happiness are conflated but, at the very least, they tend to go conceptually hand-in-hand. The caption of this photo however reminds us that, through physical activity, happiness can be achieved and, as mentioned previously, the corresponding photo maintains that this happiness can come to someone in a fat body. By disturbing the logics that essentialize health and weight loss and assume fatness is linked to unhealthiness, Holliday's queer rhetoric disrupts binaries at multiple levels to challenge overall essentialized notions of health as defined by activeness.

The following image posted in January of 2015 serves as a final exemplar in Holliday's depiction of the fat body as active body and perhaps is the clearest in terms of its challenge of essentialized notions of health:



The above photo, depicting Holliday in a two-piece bathing suit at the top of a mountain while on a hike in Australia, is accompanied by the following caption:

This was taken yesterday after hiking in the #Buderim rainforest in Australia. It was tough for me because a) I wasn't prepared & had a bikini & #aldo sandals which wasn't the best outfit (but I looked hot TBH) & b) even though I'm active it was a strenuous hike! However I pushed myself because I'm stubborn & never quit. Don't let your size limit you on missing out on the wonders the world has for you. This has ZERO to do with health & all to do with believing in yourself #effyourbeautystandards¹⁴⁵

In the photo itself, we see a fat body standing at the top of a hike, looking relatively unfazed. Instead of looking sweaty, tired, and out of breath, Holliday looks composed and relaxed, as though hiking is an easy task and a normal part of her routine. The caption confirms that Holliday did, in fact, complete a hike and that said hike was physically strenuous. We are reminded of Holliday's physical ability and are able to put it into a frame of reference and comparison knowing she just did not just complete a hike, but a strenuous hike at that.

The photo, once again, refuses to delink Holliday's fatness from her performance of health and physical activity. Indeed, she dons a two-piece swimsuit which very clearly displays

her fleshy arms and thighs, her round, bounteous stomach, her thick calves, and her sizable breasts. Though her fatness is often visible in photos of her working out at the gym, the amount of what is visible does not compare to this image of her after hiking. Most her fat body (at least the front of it) is on display. Her fatness is central to this photo. Moreover, the way her pale skin contrasts against the dark, lush, green background makes her fat body stand out even more. By centralizing and highlighting her abundance, this photo disallows her followers from considering health, fitness, and especially physical activity as essentially linked to thin bodies. This photo is a stark reminder that the fat body can be and, in Holliday's case, is a body in motion, particularly the very difficult motion of a strenuous hike.

Just as the location of Holliday's gym workout photos is salient, so is the location of this photo. First, paired with the two previous photos I analyzed, this photo indicates that Holliday's physical activity is varied. Not only does she workout at the gym with her personal trainer regularly, but she exercises outdoors in the form of hiking mountains. Furthermore, by depicting physical activity as something one does outside of the gym, this image aligns with a recent turn in medical discourse to reframe health as a "lifestyle."¹⁴⁶ A gym is a specific location of exercise, a specific location of health. The outdoors, and specifically the lush and tropical rainforest setting of the above image, however, is not *necessarily* a space of exercise or health. However, Holliday's body in the image, having completed a hike up the mountain within the rainforest, indicates that Holliday has chosen to take advantage of this ambiguous space as a space of health and activity. She has worked this space into the framework of her healthy lifestyle. In doing so, she disrupts the thin-active/fat-lazy binary in a complex way. She reveals that, not only is she active, but also that she, in all her fatness, is active on various levels, in various places, and in

various ways. Thus, she takes the activeness of fatness to a whole new level—a level previously unimaginable due to limiting fatphobic discourses.

Furthermore, the caption of the image serves as an explicit assertion that Holliday's fat body is an active body. She tells us she is active and later proclaims that she is the type to push herself in physical activity. It is not difficult to believe that she is active in the context of her Instagram as a whole, with various images of her exercising and the frequent reminder that she works with a personal trainer. Furthermore, she recognizes that the hike was strenuous but associates her ability to complete it with her work ethic which is self-defined by stubbornness and perseverance. This kind of work ethic is easily associated with "fit" bodies, particularly those of athletes. Nevertheless, Holliday takes the stubborn, perseverant work ethic commonly refused to larger bodies and ties it to her specific fat body. This continues the project of constructing the fat body as active and de-essentializing normative conceptions of health.

Finally, it is important to understand the specific image of activity that Holliday paints with this caption. By encouraging her followers not to let their size limit them from exploring the wonders of the world, she suggests that all bodies of all types can reach the level of activeness they so desire so long as they demonstrate the same level of stubbornness and perseverance as herself. This lends agency to fat and otherwise non-normative bodies in the process of (re)defining health. Furthermore, Holliday explicitly delinks health from ability/activity with her statement that this—with "this" being defined as the ability to explore the world according to one's desires—"has ZERO to do with health & all to do with believing in yourself." This rhetorical move very clearly de-essentializes health in that it takes the assumed relationship between health and ability/activity, breaks it, and replaces it with a newly conceptualized relationship between ability/activity and a strong work ethic defined by stubbornness,

perseverance, and belief in oneself. In other words, within this caption, Holliday distinctly refuses to let oppressive discourses of health define what activity she can do. Ultimately, though the above picture and its accompanying text, activity and fatness are no longer incompatible with one another and the fat body is reimagined as one that can engage in strenuous physical activity and has the drive to push itself beyond limitations traditionally placed on such bodies.

These are just a few demonstrative examples of how Holliday's visual rhetoric, combined with her textual captions, break the active-thin/lazy-fat binary and queerly reimagine and rearticulate the fat body as an active healthy body. Though activeness is only one element of the normative conception of health, de-essentializing it is crucial to de-essentializing health overall. By presenting her fat body in motion and providing evidence of her body's ability to disrupt assumptions about what fat bodies can and cannot do, Holliday begins to highlight the instability of culturally defined notions of health that render the fat body as inherently unhealthy. Next, I consider a second defining element of health—reproduction—to further illustrate how Holliday reimagines health holistically and affords fat bodies a particular version of health that is queerly redefined through challenging oppressive binaries.

Fat Body as Reproductive Body

A second way in which Holliday uses her Instagram to disrupt anti-fat binaries is to explode the distinction between thin as reproductive and fat as diseased and thus incapable of reproduction. Women's health is often measured by and framed around reproductive health. Indeed, "the most commonly researched aspect of women's health is reproductive health."¹⁴⁷ A healthy woman's body is a body that can reproduce and this idea is produced and reproduced through popular medical discourse. Dr. Mahmoud F. Fathalla, member and former chair of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Advisory Committee on Health Research, in his statement

on *Health and Being a Woman* during the forty-third session of the United Nation's (UN) Commission on the Status of Women, noted that women's health needs "can be broadly classified under four categories," and the first of those categories are "related to the sexual and reproductive function."¹⁴⁸ His work centers around women's reproductive health which has shaped many of the WHO's and UN's women's health care initiatives over the past thirty to forty years, thus illustrating the centrality of reproduction in understandings and discourses of women's health overall.¹⁴⁹

However, fat bodies, through their codification as incompetent and diseased, are essentially incompatible with pregnancy for it is difficult to imagine a body that is already overstuffed with food encompassing a child as well. In western medical discourse, fat is explicitly linked with disease, whether it is considered the disease itself or a precursor, which is the opposite of life and thus reproduction. This is evident in the official website of Quebec's *National Report on the Health Status of the Population of Quebec: Producing Health*, which refers to fat as a "disease" as well as a "risk factor" or "determinant of disease."¹⁵⁰

Moreover, recall that the literature in fat studies illuminates that fatness is specifically medicalized through terminology and is framed diagnostically as "obesity." It is "the medical term 'obesity' in itself [that] serves to medicalize fat embodiment, bringing it into the sphere of medical treatment as problematic: as a disease or as precursor to disease."¹⁵¹ The linking of fat and disease through the medical framing of obesity also permeates western discourse. For example, on the British Columbia's Ministry of Health website, "'obesity' is defined as 'an ongoing disease, not a cosmetic problem,' and as a 'complicated disease' that can be treated in many ways."¹⁵² Additionally, a 2002 article in the *International Journal of Obesity* named obesity "the disease of the twenty-first century."¹⁵³ Furthermore, there is no shortage of

sensational news and medical articles reminding us that obesity is killing us and/or putting us at risk for whatever the new, trendy disease is.¹⁵⁴

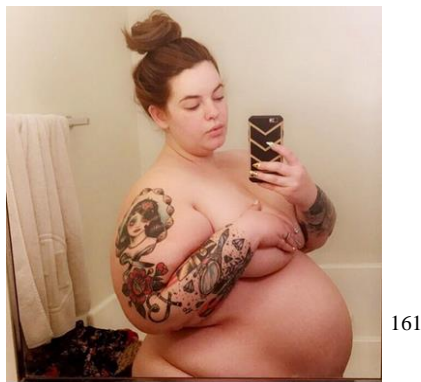
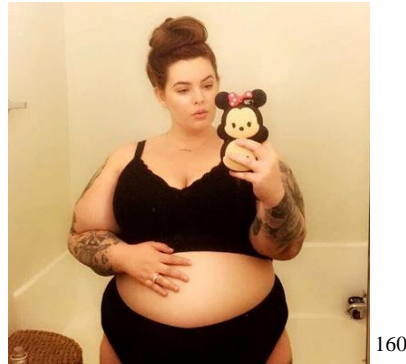
A more specific way fat bodies are explicitly defined against life, pregnancy, and reproduction is through popular and medical discourses that assert a link between obesity and infertility. Many medical journals and news sources perpetuate this discourse and construct the fat female body as a wasteland when it comes to growing and nourishing a baby.¹⁵⁵ The conception of fat bodies as infertile bodies has influenced policy decisions as well, which is illustrated the British Fertility Society's call for a ban on obese women from receiving fertility treatment.¹⁵⁶

It is no wonder, then, why so many women strive to define pregnancy in opposition to fat. That is, they work hard mentally and even physically to frame their pregnant bellies as only pregnant or, in other words, distinctly not fat.¹⁵⁷ In essence, just like cultural standards of beauty and health, "pregnancy is currently predicated on a monolithic slender body."¹⁵⁸ The imperative for this is further reinforced by the cultural and conceptual links between obesity and disease and the discursive delinking of obesity and pregnancy.

However, Holliday disrupted the link between pregnancy and slenderness (and simultaneous link between obesity and disease) by allowing her followers to witness her pregnancy on Instagram during 2016. After she announced her pregnancy in January 2016 via Instagram and *People* magazine, she began posting several pictures throughout the next year detailing her pregnancy and her second experience with motherhood. Through posting pictures of her pregnant body, her healthy baby, and her performing the act of breastfeeding, she portrayed her fat body as a reproductive body, a body capable of growing, birthing, and nurturing

a healthy child, and thus productively disturbed the binary that assumed thinness as necessary for reproduction and renders the fat body as essentially diseased and incapable of giving life.

First, take the following set of pictures for example:



These are just a few of the photos Holliday posted to her Instagram in 2016 that document her pregnancy journey. In each of the pictures, Holliday includes a hashtag that identifies where she was at in her pregnancy in weeks when the photo was taken/posted (e.g. #33weeks). This allows her followers to witness the growth of her child within her, thus advancing the notion that her body is not only healthy and capable enough to conceive, but healthy and capable enough to grow a child within her. This initially disrupts the binary that renders fat as diseased because the act of growing—that is, the act of a fetus progressing into a child over the course of weeks and months—is antithetical to disease, the act of decaying and withering. A diseased body, one that

is decaying and withering, is conceptually incompatible with the developing and flourishing body of a growing infant. To document the progress of the life growing inside her directly combats the notion that her body is the opposite of life (i.e. disease). Additionally, almost every photo depicting her pregnant body includes the hashtag #plussizepregnancy, which serves to remind us that plus size (read: fat) bodies can, indeed, be pregnant bodies. These are just two simple examples of how Holliday disrupts the dominant discourses surrounding fat bodies to reimagine them as capable of life, of reproduction, rather than disease and malady across Instagram posts.

Holliday also advances this queer disruption of the thin-reproductive/fat-diseased binary with the captions of specific posts on her Instagram. Indeed, some of the captions of these photos explicitly address her pregnancy outside of the hashtag indicating the number of weeks. For example, one image of her pregnant body is captioned with: “Another month, another bump photo...8 months, & kicking like crazy, he/she never stops moving #wigglegworm #babyhollidayontheway #plussizepregnancy #effyourbeautystandards.”¹⁶³ This reminds us that there is another body in motion within Holliday—the body of her unborn child. This body in motion reminds us of the activity of Holliday’s body but such activity gains new significance. Not only is her body an active one, it is a body that can grow and nourish the growing body of another active being. Thus, not only does the caption disturb the notion of the fat body as bearer of disease and reconstructs it as reproductive and capable of life, it further advances the queer rhetoric that reimagines the fat body as active rather than lazy as well as capable of reproducing activity. In this way, this caption is advancing Holliday’s queer rhetoric on multiple levels, highlighting the complexity necessary to pull apart and reconstruct popular and oppressive medical discourses that govern fat bodies.

Additionally, within the caption of the second image pictured above which depicts Holliday in a bralette and underwear with her right hand on her stomach, Holliday details many of the comments made toward her about her pregnancy, specifically her pregnant body, for example, “you don’t look pregnant,” “you must be having quadruplets”, and “you are putting your baby at risk.”¹⁶⁴ She goes on to describe how she will not have the same experience as “celebrities” who look glamorous throughout their whole pregnancy and then talk about how eager they are to shed their baby weight. She finishes this post with

However I’m part of a small minority that’s telling you it’s okay to not have a perfect baby bump, or not show at all, to be plus size & have a healthy child, & most importantly to find a care provider that doesn’t shame you about your size. It’s also okay to tell someone to fuck off when they give you unsolicited advice about what’s “best” for you & your baby. As women, we know what’s best & that’s our business.. No one else’s.¹⁶⁵

In this caption, Holliday explicitly calls out the statements made by her critics that create a barrier between her fat body and reproduction. She then both discursively and materially fashions a link between pregnancy and fatness. She does so discursively by validating plus size pregnancy as healthy and she does so materially by embodying a fat, reproductive, pregnant body. By the end of this post, her followers can imagine pregnancy and fatness as inextricably linked even after being reminded of comments that thwart such an image.

Important to note here is the visibility of Holliday’s fatness as she displays her pregnant, reproductive body in the above pictures. Never is her pregnancy made visible at the expense of her fatness. In each of these photos, we see her large, protruding belly but we are never fooled into thinking its mass is due simply to the child growing within her. Surrounded by her fleshy arms, rotund buttocks, and plump thighs, her stomach is clearly identifiable as fat. Therefore, fat and pregnant exist in the same space, within the same materiality of Holliday’s belly.

Holliday’s assertion of the fat body as reproductive does not stop with her pregnancy pictures. In fact, the images posted in 2016 soon after the birth of her second child provide her follower and critics with “proof” that her body can, in fact, carry a baby to term. Take the following pictures posted hastily after the birth of her second child in June of 2016:



166



167



68

These images, once and for all, affirm that Holliday’s body is a reproductive body. It can conceive, carry, birth, and thus reproduce a healthy child. We see this tiny, seemingly happy, and cared for infant that incubated in the space of Holliday’s body—a space coded to represent disease and illness. Instead of disease or illness, this body becomes a space of growth, of life.

This connotation of growth, life, and health is only compounded by images of Holliday breastfeeding baby Bowie Juniper Holliday, as exemplified below:



169



170



171

In the above pictures, Holliday’s body is not only a space of life, it produces life itself. It feeds, nurtures, and provides life to a helpless, fragile being. The act of breastfeeding is particularly salient in the context of imagining new possibilities for the fat body as giving life rather than advancing disease.

Breastfeeding itself has specific connotations to the act of giving life. Indeed, a recent trend on social media, the “tree of life” breastfeeding selfie phenemona, illustrates this connotation. Recently, many women have taken to social media sites such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter to alter photos of them breastfeeding with photo-editing applications such as PicsArt to post “selfies that depict their breast...as a system of roots, branching out into a tree in their feeding baby's mouth.”¹⁷² Such visual depictions of breastfeeding provide a pictorial echo of popular wisdom that providing milk, especcally through breastfeeding, equates to “giving life” to infants.¹⁷³ Thus, if breastfeeding is an act of giving life, Holliday fashions herself as the ultimate life giver through frequent Instagram pictures of her breastfeeding baby Bowie.

Holliday's body, and specifically her breast (which is a particularly fat part of her body), becomes an instrument of life. Through the act of breastfeeding, the fat of Holliday's breast can no longer exist as a channel of disease for it is "giving life" in such a direct and material way to the body of an infant.

Additionally, the caption for the third photo of Holliday breastfeeding at work reads as follows: "...it reminded me of @gisele's iconic photo breastfeeding on... Working moms come in all shapes, sizes, colors & creeds! #normalizebreastfeeding #workingmom #whorunstheworld."¹⁷⁴ This caption asserts that breastfeeding is an act that belongs not only to thin women like Gisele Bündchen, but fat women like Holliday as well. By delinking the ability to breastfeed from body size, Holliday effectively destabilizes the relationship between health and body size by demonstrating that healthy bodies that nourish healthy babies can, indeed, come in fat form.

The progression of Holliday's pregnancy photos, moving from photos of her pregnant belly to images of baby Bowie immediately post-birth to various pictures of her breastfeeding her newborn baby boy, actively fractures the thin-reproductive/fat-diseased binary by demonstrating the fat body as, not only capable of reproduction, but also as a giver of life. Next, I consider the ways in which Holliday's disrupting of this binary works in tandem with her queering of the active-thin/lazy-fat binary to challenge essentialize notions of health and reimagine the fat body as a particular kind of healthy body.

Challenging Essentialized Notions of Health

By now, I have provided visual and textual evidence for my assertion that Tess Holliday presents the fat body as both an active and reproductive body and therefore offers a new image of health predicated on the fat body. As explored in the fat studies literature, fatness is coded as

the antithesis of health—it is laziness, disease, illness, and disability. However, by reimagining what the fat body can do and what it is capable of, Holliday delinks fatness from its unhealthy and diseased connotations and effectively subverts the notion that thinness is the basis of health.

Holliday visually evidences her body as an active body, a body in motion, by posting pictures to her Instagram of her exercising and engaging in physical activity in several different ways and contexts. In doing so, she directly combats the assumption that fat bodies are inherently inactive, lazy, and sedentary which breaks the active-thin/lazy-fat binary and thus queerly reimagines and rearticulates the fat body as a particular type of active body. However, activity is not the only marker of health. Reproduction, the ability to “give life,” is a significant part of what defines a woman’s body as a healthy body and Holliday’s queer rhetoric disrupts the binary logic that both assumes thinness as necessary for reproduction and renders the fat body as essentially diseased and incapable of giving life. By presenting a visual progression of her pregnancy—from photos of her round pregnant belly, to images of brand new baby Bowie, to pictures of her giving life through breastfeeding—Holliday provides confirmation that her fat body can, indeed, not only grow and birth life, but can also sustain and further give life through breastfeeding.

The text of Holliday’s Instagram photos reinforces each of her visual arguments—making very clear that Holliday is both aware of the binaries that restrict her body from being associated with health and aware of the potential for her queer, fat activist rhetoric to challenge those binaries. As she inscribes the fat body, both visually and textually, with the ability to engage in physical activity and reproduce, Holliday effectively queers normative conceptions of what health is and what qualifies as a healthy body.

Holliday's breaking of these binaries constitutes a queering of health in several interrelated and interwoven ways. First, recall that a primary goal of queer theory and criticism is to challenge essentialism. However, challenging essentialism need not necessarily just be performed by the theorist or critic themselves; indeed West contends that "an act of queering is judged by the rhetors' ability to productively play the norms against one another and disrupt, even if only temporarily, their normative and normalizing authority."¹⁷⁵ Thus, not only is Holliday's rhetoric queer in that it challenges essentialism, it also productively plays the norms of health against one another by destabilizing the binary logic that normative conceptions of health rely on and thus disrupts the normalizing authority of popular and medical discourses that define health in terms of thinness. Finally, a queer rhetor is one that theorizes "corporealities...and other embodiments in ways that exceed our extant explanatory frames."¹⁷⁶ Holliday inventively retheorizes the embodiment of health through a fat corporeality and, in doing so, expands the ways we can think about fatness, health, rhetoric, and queerness.

In the next chapter, I analyze another fat activist, Ashleigh Shackelford, and consider how she also advances a queer rhetoric in her performance of body positive/fat activism. After analyzing Shackelford's very different and uniquely productive queer activist rhetoric, I conclude this thesis by putting Holliday and Shackelford in conversation together to understand how they both imagine and construct queer worlds where particular kinds of fat bodies are made intelligible in distinct and creative ways.

ASHLEIGH SHACKELFORD: QUEERING INTERSECTIONALITY AT THE INTERSECTIONS OF QUEERNESS

In December of 2015, Ashleigh Shackelford wrote an article for *Buzzfeed* entitled “The Body Positivity Movement Looks a Lot Like White Feminism: On Tess Holliday & Accountability.”¹⁷⁷ In this article, Shackelford, a body positive/fat acceptance activist and writer, criticizes Holliday’s brand of body positivity for benefiting from white privilege and logics of white supremacy as well as Holliday’s personal failure to risk her image, career, and status to include and centralize fat femmes of color. On the surface, this article seems like an attack by Shackelford on Holliday; however, on a deeper level, what it functions to accomplish rhetorically is to make visible the invisibility of intersectionality in the body positive movement as it stands today. At the same time, the article functions to demand a change in body positivity that centers the needs of the intersectionally oppressed, particularly fat, Black women and femmes.

Sometimes, activists and scholars relegate intersectionality to the backburner of their attention. Often, those moments where intersectionality is decentralized tend to be the moments where it is needed the most. Shackelford, as an activist and writer, consistently centralizes intersectionality in ways that are not evident among others in the body positive movement, evidenced by her scathing critique of Holliday. Shackelford’s commitment to intersectionality seems to come, in part, from the intersections of her own complex identity. According to her website, Shackelford identifies as a “queer, nonbinary Black fat femme.”¹⁷⁸ Therefore, she¹⁷⁹ does not have the luxury of fitting the image of body positivity that has come to characterize the movement—that of a white, slightly larger than average woman who is assumed both heterosexual and ablebodied. Thus, Shackelford is uniquely positioned to critique the

movement—a movement that she is fervently committed to supporting and changing for the better even as it denies the urgency of attending to bodies like her own.

Shackelford uses social media, blogging, and other mediums of popular culture to advance her fat activist agenda and she does so in distinctly queer ways. Shackelford is a queer rhetor both in that she is a queer-identified person that advances an activist agenda from the position of embodied queerness and in that the rhetorical strategies she uses to advance this agenda are distinctly queer as well. For the purposes of this chapter, I hone in on the ways that Shackelford challenges essentialism and centralizes difference within body positive activism which are two distinctly queer rhetorical strategies that are part of an overall effort to decenter the essentialized representation of fatness that has come to characterize the body positive movement. What is inventive and unique about Shackelford’s deployment of these queer strategies is the way in which they are defined by and defining of intersectionality. That is, Shackelford’s fat activist rhetoric is both queer and intersectional and the queerness of her rhetoric is made possible by its intersectionality and the intersectionality of her rhetoric is what queers it. Thus, I firmly ground this chapter theoretically in intersectionality as articulated by Black feminist and other women of color feminist scholars.

Kimberle Crenshaw coined the term “intersectionality” in 1989 and, according to Patricia Hill Collins, the term “references the critical insight that race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but as reciprocally constructing phenomena that in turn shape complex social inequalities.”¹⁸⁰ However, it is important to note that many Black feminists and other women of color were performing intersectional work for decades before Crenshaw gave a name to the term.¹⁸¹ Nevertheless, Crenshaw’s specific contribution “further opened up a conceptual space through which to study

how various oppressions work together to produce something unique and distinct from any one form of discrimination standing alone.”¹⁸²

A particularly productive way to frame intersectionality is “as an analytic sensibility” where an intersectional analysis is defined by “its adoption of an intersectional way of thinking about the problem of sameness and difference and its relation to power.”¹⁸³ Furthermore, intersectional analysis should always focus on understanding how violence operates specifically at the intersections of marginalized identities. Crenshaw’s work focused on investigating specific forms of violence at the intersection of Blackness and womanness which seems to be the most popular intersection explored in intersectional work, especially early intersectional work.¹⁸⁴ This chapter is an example of intersectional analysis not only in that I analyze the intersectionality that defines Shackelford’s queer rhetoric but, more importantly, in that I illustrate the ways in which Shackelford performs intersectional analysis herself as part of her queer decentering rhetoric.

In this chapter, I first illustrate how Shackelford makes intersectionality visible in her online activism. I argue that she does so by consistently centralizing her own intersectional identity, by choosing the margins, and by rhetorically enacting intersectionality as well as moving beyond her own embodiment to detail how violence operates at the intersections of diverse subjugated identities. Ultimately, I contend that, by making intersectionality visible, Shackelford decenters the essentialized heteronormative, whitewashed representation of fatness that has come to characterize the body positive movement and, in doing so, necessitates an attention to difference in body positive and fat acceptance activism.

Critical Orientation

In this analysis chapter, I utilize theory on intersectionality to understand how Shackelford makes intersectionality visible. I realize that intersectionality is a set of theoretical frameworks emerging out of feminist theory, particularly Black feminist theory and women of color feminist theory. However, I still employ queer critical frameworks because, in the case of Ashleigh Shackelford, I argue that intersectionality becomes a rhetorical method for reaching queer ends. These queer critical methods, in conversation with intersectionality, help me identify, understand, and explain how Shackelford decenters, de-essentializes, and necessitates an attention to difference.

Queer theory is fundamentally a decentering project. Whether drawing from Foucault's decentering of the heterosexual through historicizing sexuality, or Butler's decentering of the "naturalness" of gender by positing all gender as performative, or even Sedgwick's decentering of the binaries that perpetuate the subjugation of certain identities, queer theory, activism, and criticism is deeply concerned with locating the center, then shifting, changing, moving, and eliminating it in order to consider other possibilities for bodies and identities.¹⁸⁵ Therefore, as I draw on the decentering performed by the queers before me and analyze how intersectionality works as a decentering mechanism, I elucidate intersectionality as decidedly queer.

Part of the larger project of rhetorical decentering is challenging essentialism. Slagle distinguishes challenges to essentialism as a fundamental premise of queer theory and, consequently, queer criticism, which encompasses first understanding how identities are essentialized in mainstream discourse and then challenging that essentialized, universalized conception of identity.¹⁸⁶ In this chapter, the rhetor and I challenge the essentialized heteronormative, whitewashed representation of fatness that has come to characterize the body

positive movement together. My method of challenging essentialism comes in the form of understanding and explaining the ways in which Shackelford decenters that which is essentialized.

Furthermore, to approach a text from a queer rhetorical orientation is to examine how the text—and the rhetor through the text—constitutes a politics of difference rather than identity politics.¹⁸⁷ Slagle argues that queer theory “forces theorists to examine the *differences* among individuals” and that “the principles of queer theory can be applied to the rhetorical processes of any group to develop an understanding of how collective and individual identities are played out.”¹⁸⁸ In this chapter, I have a very explicit focus on difference, specifically how an attention to difference is played out through the rhetorical choices of an individual to define a collective.

Finally, just like the previous chapter, this chapter begins to think through how Shackelford, through her decentering, de-essentializing, and attention to difference, constitutes an engagement in queer worldmaking. Slagle argues that “queer critics attempt to construct a world in which...difference is not only acknowledged, but celebrated” or what Berlant and Warner iterate in the context of queer worldmaking as “radical aspirations of queer culture building.”¹⁸⁹ This, combined with West’s charge to attend to rhetors that are doing the work of queering, guides the ultimate goal of this analysis—to understand how rhetors queerly reimagine and remake the world as well as participate in that reimagining and remaking of the world as a critic, all of which is elaborated on and put in conversation with my analysis of Tess Holliday in the following concluding chapter of this thesis.

Texts

Unlike the previous chapter, in the pages to follow, I turn to written rather than visual texts to understand how Shackelford makes intersectionality visible and pushes the boundaries of

body positivity. This is not to say that Shackelford's visual texts are unimportant. Indeed, Shackelford's own Instagram page is rich with visual arguments about fat Black bodies should certainly not be ignored in the broader context of her activism. However, there are two main reasons for my focus on her written texts. First, Shackelford often disengages from social media as a survival technique and sometimes that means deactivating her social media accounts. In fact, her Facebook account is currently deactivated and therefore inaccessible. To ensure that I would have continued access to the texts I need for adequate analysis, I purposefully left out artifacts from Shackelford's social media accounts that are often there one day and gone the next. Second, while Holliday's popularity and accessibility is primarily due to social media, Shackelford's activism occurs on many different levels and in many different cultural locations. The texts that she has authored for various feminist magazines and blogs are compelling and insightful interrogations of body positivity, racism, fatphobia, and intersectionality which advance nuanced arguments that spring forth from her unique positionality and voice. In other words, though Shackelford's visual rhetoric is doing important work, her positionality and voice that come through in her written articles are like nothing we see on the body positive cultural rhetorical landscape and I do not believe it would do Shackelford justice to shortchange the full articles she has written for magazines and blogs.

In order to make Shackelford's written texts manageable for the sake of this chapter, I specifically chose to analyze the articles she has authored for the *Wear Your Voice* online magazine which identifies itself as "an intersectional feminist media publication committed to deconstructing mainstream media's approach to news and culture."¹⁹⁰ Their "About Us" page elaborates that "unlike traditional media outlets, [*Wear Your Voice*] digs for the non-gendered truth and seeks to amplify the collective voices of today's generation."¹⁹¹ The magazine tackles

issues related to feminism, LGBTQ politics, ableism, and mental health, among others intersectional issues. *Wear Your Voice* was born out of founder Ravneet Vohra's desire to increase representation for different types of bodies/identities in media. Shackelford herself is listed on *Wear Your Voice* as part of the "WYV Team" as a contributing writer. Additionally, though Shackelford has written articles for various online opinion platforms including *Buzzfeed*, *Huffington Post*, *For Harriet*, and her personal blog on her website, *Wear Your Voice* includes the largest concentration of Shackelford's work on one website.¹⁹² Therefore, Shackelford's collection of articles available on *Wear Your Voice* is a rich area to mine for understanding her intersectional rhetorical significance.

To further manage and bound the texts I examine for this chapter, I only examined articles written by Shackelford for *Wear Your Voice* that explicitly address the intersections of oppression among fatness and at least one other aspect of identity/corporeality. For example, I did not include articles such as the one entitled "Nah, You Can't Support #NODAPL and Celebrate Thanksgiving" because, though Shackelford addresses intersections between race and class in relationship to capitalism within the article, she does not attend to how either of those identity markers/corporealities intersects with fatness.¹⁹³ Instead, I included articles such as the one entitled "Queer Like Me: Breaking The Chains of Femme Invisibility," because, within this article, Shackelford address the intersections between queerness, blackness, *and* fatness that create a "strange, violent place of oxymoronic visible erasure."¹⁹⁴ I bound my texts in this way in order to serve the larger thesis in that I focus on Shackelford as a body positive/fat acceptance activist primarily. This requires me to attend to and examine the texts in which she is *performing* fat activism which include those texts where she explicitly attends to fatness as part of a larger web of intersecting nodes of identity, corporeality, and oppression. By

limiting my artifacts according to the aforementioned conditions, I ended up with seventeen different articles for analysis, all published to *Wear Your Voice* over the course of 2016.

Making Intersectionality Visible

A critical piece of my argument for this chapter is that Shackelford decenters the essentialized heteronormative, whitewashed representation of fatness that has come to characterize the body positive movement. To advance this notion, I must first explicate what this essentialized heteronormative, whitewashed representation of fatness looks like. Such a depiction might sound close to describing the subject of the previous chapter, Tess Holliday. However, I note that this essentialized representation comes in the form of a white, slightly larger than average cisgender woman who is assumed both heterosexual and able-bodied. In other words, even Holliday is too excessive (read: too fat) to epitomize how the body positive movement has been popularly characterized.

In an interview with the *Revelist*, popular plus-size fashion blogger Stephanie Yeboah criticizes the body positivity movement remarking that, “for a movement that claims to be diverse, it seems to focus more on the exposure of conventionally attractive 'small-fat/chubby' white women.”¹⁹⁵ This sentiment is echoed by other members of the body positive community, particularly fat women and women of color. A recent *USA Today* article quotes feminist, fat activist, and author of the book *Shrill: Notes from a Loud Woman*, Lindy West lamenting

Putting a size 12, hourglass-shaped white woman on the cover of your magazine, who’s just microscopically bigger than the model that you would normally see on the cover, and then congratulating yourselves on being progressive? That proves nothing... That’s just a performance without actually risking or changing anything. And it gives people who aren’t actually invested in liberating bodies the opportunity to declare victory and then quit. I don’t find that particularly empowering or interesting.¹⁹⁶

Those plus-size bloggers, fat activists, and intersectional feminists that identify as part of the body positive community are finding that the movement is failing to live up to its liberatory

goals for one main reason: it has an essentialized subject. It is clear from the aforementioned critiques that this essentialized subject is white and hardly plus-size. Lindy West notes how this essentialized subject is also presumed heterosexual and ablebodied based on her statement about who is not included in/liberated by the body positive movement in its current iteration: “people who are a size 32 and queer and disabled and are outside of what we think of as a ‘normal person,’ people with compounded oppressions, those are the people who need visibility and positivity.”¹⁹⁷ The proceeding analysis, then, seeks to understand and explain how Ashleigh Shackelford decenters this essentialized subject through the rhetorical process of making intersectionality visible which, as her form of queer rhetoric, consists of choosing the margins as a productive space of intersectional criticism, rhetorical *enactment* of intersectionality, and performance of intersectional analysis that extends beyond one’s own embodied intersectionality.

Centralizing Her Own Intersectional Identity

This essentialized image of the body positive movement that serves to uplift and centralize white, slightly large than average, cisgender, heterosexual, ablebodied woman makes it much more difficult to attend to different types of bodies within the movement. When the movement is defined by one type of body, others lose representation at the expense of that centralized imaged. Shackelford combats this loss of representation and ignorance of difference by consistently centralizing her own intersectional identity in her work. She does this in two main ways—through choosing the margins as a productive space of criticism as well as rhetorical enactment of intersectionality.

Choosing the Margins

First, I specifically examine Shackelford's rhetorical choosing of the margins. I distinguish what it looks like to speak from the margin constructed at the intersection of multiply subjugated identities and hope to highlight the potentiality of rhetoric inherent at this conceptual social location for making intersectionality visible and thus necessitating an attention to difference in the body positivity movement.

By writing from her intersectional identity that places her at many margins in many different ways, Shackelford exemplifies what it means to “choose the margins” which, to bell hooks, essentially means speaking from pain and struggle as a rhetorical strategy.¹⁹⁸ hooks argues that the margin, the actual space and location of marginality, is a “site of radical possibility, a space of resistance.”¹⁹⁹ In fact, hooks' understanding of speaking from the margins is a way of speaking in the language of resistance.²⁰⁰ She identifies the margin as a place where she is different, a place where she sees things differently and, in turn, speaking from the margins allows her to speak about what she sees.²⁰¹ Additionally, speaking from the margin actually serves to delineate the margins of rhetoric itself—specifically, how rhetoric serves to amplify some voices and silence others.²⁰² Thus, Shackelford highlights the potentiality of rhetoric as she speaks from the margins, a space where the range of discourse is reimagined.²⁰³ In this way, choosing the margins is a particularly queer move in that it positions Shackelford to critique the center, the location of normativity, and it highlights and challenges the normativity that defines and delineates the margins of rhetoric.

One of the simplest ways Shackelford consistently centralizes her own intersectional identity by openly choosing the margins in her work in the *Wear Your Voice* online magazine is by including a description of her identity in the short bio included at the end of each of her *Wear*

Your Voice articles. Most articles I analyzed (with the exception of three) included this short bio at the end which states either “Ashleigh Shackelford is a queer, agender Black fat femme writer, artist, and cultural producer”²⁰⁴ (if it was published before June of 2016) or “Ashleigh Shackelford is a queer, nonbinary Black fat femme writer, artist and cultural producer”²⁰⁵ (if it was published after June of 2016). In either version, her readers are confronted with the fact that the author of the article they just read is a queer, gender-nonconforming, Black, fat femme. Additionally, Shackelford often makes a similar statement within the text of her articles to the same effect. For example, in the article “Queer Like Me: Breaking the Chains of Femme Invisibility,” Shackelford starts a sentence off with a positioning statement that reads, “as a Black, queer, nonbinary fat femme...” and in the article “Fuck You, Pay Me: Reparations for Fat Black Bitches,” she frequently references her “fat black femme existence.”²⁰⁶ In all of these examples, Shackelford identifies the margins—the space from which she has chosen to speak—so that her readers know the exact location her mode of fat activist resistance is coming from.

Furthermore, by consistently referencing and describing her own identity, the intersectionality of that identity becomes the center of Shackelford’s arguments—the point which every other claim revolves around. Her readers are always already intimately aware of her positionality, her political commitments, and the risks she is taking by writing from this very vulnerable place of identity and corporeality. The way in which this identity becomes the center of her argument is ironic in that the margins and center are generally conceptually antithetical. However, in Shackelford’s work, her identity markers that exist at the margins make their way to the center to make intersectionality visible in ways that are unique to her as a queer, Black, nonbinary, femme, fat activist rhetor. Thus, through Shackelford’s queer rhetoric, one that refuses to let binary logic define or limit the space from which she speaks, the margin becomes

the center. This does not mean, however, that the margin stops being the margin. The margin is centralized to allow the productive work at that space guide Shackelford's argument. This queer rearticulation of the margin as the center and simultaneous blurring of the binary that define the two against each other is evident in the following extended textual example.

On November 18th, 2016, *Wear Your Voice* published an article by Shackelford entitled "Black Girl Interrupted: My Body, the World, and Nonbinary Me." In the article, Shackelford details the complex corporeality of being fat, Black, and nonbinary or, in other words, the complex corporeality at the space of her particular margins. She uses this article to negotiate the complexities of being nonbinary while often being read as a Black woman/girl as well as her lifelong challenge to define and negotiate her femininity when it was denied to her at a young age as a fat Black girl. I offer selections from this entire article as one of the clearest examples of how Shackelford chooses the margins to centralize her own intersectional identity in order to make intersectionality visible.

In "Black Girl Interrupted," we are taken on Shackelford's journey of negotiating her complicated identity and corporeality throughout different times and contexts. I identify her identity and corporeality as complicated because, based on this article, it is clear that her body fails to become intelligible in certain contexts. In the following example, we get a peek into Shackelford's early negotiations of gender, Blackness, and fatness:

When I identified as a black fat girl, I had to create my femininity from nothingness because it was never granted to me. My fatness denied me girlhood/womanhood and the innocence, desirability and protection was never offered to my body. My blackness othered me, denying me humanity, gender conformity, sexual agency and autonomy. My girlhood was spent defending my body, my safety and fighting off prey of all genders who sought to silence and dehumanize me.²⁰⁷

Here, we get an intricate reading of Shackelford's identity by Shackelford herself—a reading only made possible by her location at the margins. Not only does she identify her intersectional

identity for her audience, she reads that identity in terms of how each individual part of her identity intersects with others while explicating for her audience what social and cultural effects those intersections produce. She first identifies the intersection between her fatness and blackness and illuminates how that specific intersection denied her access to the privilege of claiming femininity, of being a girl. To explain how this happens, she dissects the intersection between fatness and femininity to illustrate the compatibility between the two in large part because of the innocence, desirability, and protection that comes along with femininity that our culture refuses to afford fat bodies. Next, Shackelford compounds the access and privilege denied to her due to the contradictions between her fatness and femininity with the Otherness generated by her Blackness. She explicitly mentions how her Blackness, much like her fatness, disallows her gender conformity. By dissecting the implications of each of these intersections, Shackelford provides adequate explanation for her initial statement that she had to create her “femininity from nothingness because it was never granted to” her.²⁰⁸

What the above paragraph and the entire article “Black Girl Interrupted” functions to do is illuminate the complexity of intersectionality. Shackelford makes clear that intersectionality is not simply about possessing multiple marginalized identity markers that contain their own modes and forms of oppression. Instead, Shackelford illustrates that each marginalized identity marker intersects with others to produce particular forms of subjugation that are made even more complex depending on how many intersections are operating at once. She begins with detailing the challenges and subjugation caused by her fatness and gender. She then compounds those challenges with the challenges of being Black, in addition to being a fat girl, which produces an even more complex form of oppression which forced to her to spend her girlhood defending her

body and safety while “fighting off prey of all genders who sought to silence and dehumanize” her.²⁰⁹

If we can think about this in terms of math equations, her audience is disallowed from understanding intersectionality as addition. In other words, they are precluded from conceptualizing the oppression she experiences from existing as fat as added to her gender oppression which is then further added to her experiences of racial oppression. Instead, intersectionality becomes a matter of multiplication. Shackelford’s fat oppression and gender oppression multiply at their intersection to become a much larger social product and that product is thus multiplied by her racial oppression as well. This creates a significantly larger and much more complex social product in the form of oppression and marginalization than the result of simply adding these forms of subjugation together. Importantly, this insight is only made possible by Shackelford’s choice to theorize and speak from the margins. We do not gain this kind of insight from analyzing discourse that honors some kind of fixed center whether that center consists of whiteness, thinness, and/or heterosexuality. Not only does the social space of the margins allow Shackelford to make intersectionality visible in the article “Black Girl Interrupted,” the margins also allow Shackelford to texture her readers’ understanding of intersectionality with the complexity necessary for understanding its true social and cultural impact.

These examples make it clear that the margins are a particularly productive place to theorize and speak about oppression. Shackelford uses the margins as the center of her arguments to make intersectionality visible and complicate her readers’ understanding of intersectionality. It is through her space at the margins, a distinctly queer space, that she is able to accomplish these rhetorical tasks. Next, I consider a second way in which Shackelford makes

intersectionality visible through centralizing her own intersectional identity, specifically through rhetorical *enactment* of intersectionality.

Rhetorical Enactment

As mentioned in the previous section, Shackelford’s method of centralizing her own intersectional identity to combat the loss of representation of different kinds of bodies in the body positivity movement unfolds in two main ways. Now that I have detailed the first way she does this, by choosing the margins as a productive space of critique and resistance, I now consider how she rhetorically *enacts* her argument or, in other words embodies the argument through her intersectional identity.

Shackelford rhetorically *enacts* her arguments about intersectionality by making her queer, fat, Black, nonbinary femme identity the central guiding force of her writing. Enactment is a reflexive rhetorical form “in which the speaker incarnates the argument, is the proof of the truth of what is said.”²¹⁰ Shackelford enacts her arguments by taking on the role of a cultural critic. However, she does not just critique culture and cultural artifacts from a distance. Instead, Shackelford critiques the cultural structures around her—structures that shape, influence, and constrain her identity in different ways. In doing so, she enacts her argument for the importance of attention to difference in body positive activism or, in other words, the importance of intersectional analysis/criticism regarding fat/non-normative bodies. In the following passage from Shackelford’s *Wear Your Voice* article “Fuck You, Pay Me: Reparations for Fat Black Bitches,” she enacts her argument in a particularly pointed way:

I can’t just walk out of the house and live my life. I have to prepare for allllll the different potential levels and aspects of violence I know I’ll face. From gender violence in which my body is sexualized and I’m threatened with rape or harm for ignoring them (primarily by masculine folks, especially presumably cisgender straight men), to random strangers taking videos of me walking with a limp due to my disability, or strangers taking pictures of me eating or existing as a fat Black femme. If I don’t wear a face full of makeup and a

lace front wig growing out my scalp, plus a clean outfit to match, people can't wait to tell me how all fat people are disgusting and sloppy. But if I slay too hard, people can't wait to tell me I'm a pig pretending in bad bitch aesthetics.²¹¹

In the above passage, we witness a high level of reflexivity—both of self-reflexivity and reflexivity about the cultural structures that Shackelford critiques. We witness her being self-reflexive about her position in the networks of power that influence and constrain her identity in public places. We also witness her being reflexive about those structures and how they intersect with one another to produce possibility and constraint for people like her. In this way, she becomes a cultural critic of those structures. She first critiques the gender violence she experiences that produces the oversexualization of and threat/harm toward her feminine body. She then critiques the abelist violence that produces the possibility for strangers to videotape her walking with a limp. Then, before addressing the intersections of these different structures of violence, she critiques the fatphobic violence that disallows her from eating or even existing in public with any level of comfortability.

However, it is not necessarily her cultural critique of these different structures of discursive and material violence that necessarily incarnates her argument. It is what occurs at the end of this passage, her analysis of intersectionality, which demonstrates the rhetorical form of enactment. Shackelford delves into an in-depth analysis of the intersection between femininity and fatness—an intersection that certainly constrains more than it produces. She details the futile effort of being fat and trying to perform femininity adequately. For her, performing femininity while fat equates to being told she is a “pig pretending in bad bitch aesthetics,” however it is unclear whether this is more or less violent than being fat and not performing adequate femininity and being told “how all fat people are disgusting and sloppy.”²¹² The

audience thus witnesses an intersectional analysis of Shackelford's identity by Shackelford herself which produces knowledge about the intersection of fat and femininity.

Shackelford's enactment of cultural criticism becomes her enactment of intersectionality; that is, she demonstrates what it means to perform intersectional analysis/criticism. She begins this passage by explicitly pointing out that there are multiple levels of violence, what she refers to as "allllll the different potential levels and aspects of violence," based on the marginalized identities that intersect to shape her corporeality.²¹³ Right from the beginning, her audience knows that Shackelford will be analyzing these intersections. She then proceeds in a familiar fashion—she takes on each structure of power and domination separately before coming to a final argument about the intersections of these structures and thus the intersections of her own subjugated identity. By the end of this passage, her audience learns specifics about the violence that occurs at the intersection of fatness and femininity and this knowledge is constructed and produced as an embodied knowledge from someone that directly experiences this violence. In this way, Shackelford becomes proof of her argument, "proof of the truth of what is said."²¹⁴ Her embodied experience becomes the proof of her argument about the way violence functions at the intersection of fatness and femininity.

This method of rhetorical enactment is fundamental to Shackelford's larger decentering project. Enactment allows Shackelford to produce knowledge about fatness, femininity, and queerness from her embodied experience. This method of knowledge production, and the knowledge thus produced, counters the normative disembodied and discursive knowledge that has shaped and essentialized the body positivity movement. This counter-knowledge is crucial to reframe fat activism based on the embodied experiences of those that are intersectionally marginalized. In other words, this counter-knowledge centralizes those are not already centered

by body positive discourse and thus necessitates an attention to difference in body positive activism.

Shackelford's consistent centralization of her intersectional identity is a rhetorical move that functions in many different, multi-layered ways to make intersectionality visible by bringing intersectionality from the margin to the center and thus texturing the audience's understanding of intersectionality with necessary complexity as well as positioning Shackelford's embodied experience as proof of her arguments about intersectionality. These strategies decenter the normative and make room for different kinds of bodies within body positive discourse. In the next section, I consider how Shackelford's queer rhetoric extends her intersectional analysis outside of herself to explain how violence operates at a whole host of different intersections.

Intersectional Work Outside and Beyond

Shackelford's consistent centralizing of her own intersectional identity through choosing the margins and rhetorical enactment are two integral elements of how she performs the larger rhetorical tactic of making intersectionality visible. The last element of this overall strategy I elucidate here is her explicit attention to the way in which violence operates for intersectionally oppressed bodies that are not necessarily identical to her own. In many ways, this builds upon the idea that Shackelford engages in intersectional analysis and criticism of culture and cultural artifacts. Not only does Shackelford use her embodied experiences to enact her intersectional analyses, however, she also extends her analyses beyond and outside of herself to promote the performance of intersectional work beyond one's own intersections of identity and oppression—something normative fact activism often fails to do.

In the previous section, I discussed how Shackelford's intersectional analysis is produced as an *enactment* of Shackelford's identity. However, in this section, I illustrate how

Shackelford's intersectional analysis does not necessarily have to operate as an enactment or product of her identity. Indeed, she performs intersectional analysis that addresses multiple and multifaceted nodes of privilege and oppression, access and subjugation, that are not necessarily tied to her embodied experiences. Though she often places herself in the argument by using the term "we," she also considers the "we" as representative of the Black community in multifaceted ways that are not necessarily embodied by Shackelford herself. This is to say that the rhetorical move I analyze here is like her performance, enactment, and centralization of her own identity but functions differently in that it engenders a much broader execution of intersectional analysis and criticism.

This element of the larger rhetorical strategy of making intersectionality visible depends, in many ways, on the other two elements. Centralizing her own intersectional identity through choosing the margins and rhetorically enacting and embodying her argument makes it much more persuasive when she makes claims about the ways in which violence operates for intersectionally oppressed bodies and identities. In this way, she displays an embodied ethos—a credibility afforded to her because of what she has learned from her position at the margins as well as her choice to speak from that place and rhetorically enact her arguments from there.

Recall that intersectionality is particularly productive "as an analytic sensibility" and that intersectional analysis should always focus on understanding how violence operates specifically at the intersections of marginalized identities.²¹⁵ In this section, through framing intersectionality as an analytic sensibility, I examine the compelling ways in which Ashleigh Shackelford explores violence at various intersections of oppressed identities and embodiments.

In August of 2016, Shackelford authored an article for *Wear Your Voice* entitled "#BodyPositiveWeek: Body Positivity Doesn't Exist Without Black Lives Matter," that serves as

a clear example of how she engages in this broader form of intersectional analysis that allows her to understand and explain violence at the intersections of diverse subjugated identities.²¹⁶ Her central claim in this article is that “Black Lives Matter is inherently a body positive movement,” but the body positive movement as a whole has failed to address violence against Black bodies—a concern that should be of utmost significance to a movement that seeks to eradicate violence against all bodies.²¹⁷ Toward the middle of the article, she explains

We live in a world where anti-blackness, rape culture, body terrorism, beauty standard hierarchies and white supremacist patriarchy operate together to destroy consent and humanity to deviant bodies in any capacity. These sociopolitical contexts shape an environment in which deviancy in beauty and humanity — all black bodies — fat, disabled, dark-skin, gender-nonconforming, trans, undocumented, poor, etc. — allows for the violent mindset that those bodies should be publicly and privately mocked, interrogated to the point of physical assault, stared at and investigated and sexually assaulted because they’re not seen as human, and also murdered. If we are not fitting within society’s beauty and humanity standards, we don’t count as people; we are pieces of property in white supremacist patriarchy. Being black in any capacity puts us in danger.²¹⁸

This paragraph, even though it is only technically four sentences long, is extremely complex and nuanced. Shackelford begins with identifying the exact intersection she seeks to examine for her audience, specifically the intersection of “anti-blackness, rape culture, body terrorism, beauty standard hierarchies and white supremacist patriarchy.”²¹⁹ This is already impressive because many conversations about intersectionality tend to reduce it to the intersection of just two or three identity markers—for example, the intersection between race and gender or between race, gender, and class. Shackelford, on the other hand, tackles five different oppressive forces and seeks to understand how violence operates at the social location where all five intersect.

By claiming that these oppressive forces “operate together to destroy consent and humanity to deviant bodies in any capacity,” Shackelford makes a nuanced argument about intersectional violence.²²⁰ She specifically identifies the destruction of consent and humanity of

deviant bodies as the product of the five intersectionally oppressive forces she identified just before. She then proceeds to identify how these oppressive forces and their consequent destruction of consent and humanity produce all Black bodies, and particularly “fat, disabled, dark-skin, gender-nonconforming, trans, undocumented, poor” Black bodies as deviant in both beauty and humanity. That is to say, she recognizes that, in order to claim that these deviant bodies’ consent and humanity are destroyed, she must first understand how these bodies are produced as deviant. She does, indeed, understand this process of making certain bodies deviant and she lays the process out for her audience to comprehend as well.

To differentiate this from the enactment described in a previous section, it is important to explain how Shackelford extends this moment of intersectional analysis outside of herself. That is, she speaks on the intersection of violence in ways that do not directly link back to her own specific intersectional identity. She addresses the stripping of humanity of “fat, disabled, dark-skin, gender-nonconforming, trans, undocumented, poor” Black bodies and, while Shackelford herself identifies as fat, disabled, gender-conforming/trans, and poor, one can discern that she is lighter-skinned from the various pictures on her blog and Instagram accounts and she has never given her readers any reason to think she is undocumented.²²¹ Thus, her intersectional analysis extends beyond her own embodied experience to make connections across margins through the intersections.

Next, and most crucial, Shackelford illustrates exactly how the intersecting forces of “anti-blackness, rape culture, body terrorism, beauty standard hierarchies and white supremacist patriarchy” operate together to produce specific forms of discursive and material violence including public and private mocking, bodily interrogation and investigation, physical assault, sexual assault, and even murder.²²² Instead of simply noting that violence occurs at the

intersections or that intersectionality increases violence, Shackelford illustrates for her audience precisely what violence at intersections looks like and traces this all back to the stripped humanity of deviant bodies.

Furthermore, when identifying these forms of violence, Shackelford recognizes them for what they are: violence. There is power in language, there is power naming, and there is power in calling violence by its name. To call violence anything other than violence might diminish its consequentiality. Words like power, domination, and subjugation, which get at some of the facets of violence, do not necessarily encompass the pain, damage, and destruction characteristic of violence. Shackelford thus exercises the agency she has as a rhetor to exploit the power of naming violence as violence thus disallowing her audience to turn a blind eye to the pain, damage, and destruction inherent in stripping deviant bodies of their humanity.

Shackelford circles back to beauty and humanity—two things never completely afforded to Black bodies. She may seem to reduce intersectionality to the two planes of race and gender in her final statements that “we are pieces of property in white supremacist patriarchy. Being black in any capacity puts us in danger.”²²³ However, based on the preceding analysis that progresses through identifying intersectionally oppressive forces, recognizing how they work together, and detailing their precise consequences, we are never far removed from her central argument that privileges multiplicitous intersectionality. We end up with a statement about race but we are able trace this statement back through a specific and genuine attention to violence in its intersectional forms.

Much of Shackelford’s writing follows this similar progression: (1) identifying particular intersections where violence occurs, (2) identifying the type of violence that occurs at these intersections, and (3) detailing what this violence looks like in material and discursive forms.

Her article, “Queer Like Me: Breaking The Chains of Femme Invisibility,” published to *Wear Your Voice* in November of 2016, engages this same progression in slightly different ways.²²⁴

The following passage depicts how she attends to violence at the specific intersection of fatness and Blackness:

Fatness + Blackness operates in a strange, violent place of oxymoronic visible erasure. We’re hypervisible to the thin white/non-black bodies we take space from, but invisible to humanity, body autonomy and sexual agency. Queerness is often denied to us; we’re read as non-sexual beings because we’re seen as undesirable and inhuman. And if we are unapologetically femme in our bodies, it reaffirms that if we do perform femininity — that if we’re going to be sexualized or in service for anyone — it could only be for the consumption and pandering of patriarchal cis-heteronormative gaze.²²⁵

Just as in the previous example, Shackelford first identifies the precise intersection at which violence occurs. In this case, it is the intersection of fatness and Blackness. She does eventually discuss how fatness and Blackness intersect with queerness, however the focus is always on the enactment of violence on fat Black bodies specifically.

Next, Shackelford identifies the specific type of violence that occurs at the intersection of fatness and Blackness. She describes this violence as “oxymoronic visible erasure” or, in other words, simultaneous hypervisibility and invisibility, depending on the context and depending on which affords more opportunity for violence.²²⁶ Again, to identify this violence, she calls it just that. She refers to the “oxymoronic visible erasure” as a “strange, violent place.”²²⁷ This emplacement of violence further exploits her rhetorical agency to call violence what it is and thus empowers her audience, many of them fat and Black themselves, to understand their own visible erasure as a particular form of violence.

Finally, Shackelford proceeds to detail what the violence of simultaneous hypervisibility and invisibility looks like, describing it as a place where bodies are robbed of both bodily autonomy and sexual agency. This robbing occurs through making fat Black bodies both

nonsexual and undesirable while simultaneously hypersexual, for sexual consumption by the heteronormative gaze. By the end of this passage, we have an exact picture of what violence looks like at the intersection of fatness and Blackness that is not necessarily rooted in her own embodied experiences but performed with the goal of informing and empowering her diverse audience.

Thus far, I have described the three elements that amalgamate to form Shackelford's larger rhetorical strategy of making intersectionality visible. She does so by consistently centralizing her own intersectional identity through choosing the margins and rhetorically enacting intersectionality as well as moving beyond her own embodiment to detail how violence operates at the intersections of diverse subjugated identities. It is important to note that she employs each of these elements in almost every single *Wear Your Voice* article focused on the intersection of fatness and other identity markers. Not only does she use each one of these in her writing, she also tends to move through each of them in complex ways, weaving in and out of each element from one paragraph to the next and even sometimes one sentence to the next. Additionally, some moments in her writing encompass two or three of these elements operating at once. That is to say that these are not explicitly bounded rhetorical moves. Indeed, each of the three elements I have identified as part of making intersectionality visible operate together, fluidly, weaving through, shaping, and influencing one another. Ashleigh Shackelford's deployment of this rhetorical strategy is thus decidedly complex.

Next, I examine how this rhetorical strategy of making intersectionality visible serves its queer purpose to decenter the essentialized heteronormative, whitewashed representation of fatness that has come to characterize the body positive movement before discussing how this decentering project necessitates an attention to difference in body positive discourse.

Decentering and De-essentializing in the Name of Difference

As Ashleigh Shackelford makes intersectionality visible, particularly in terms of the way fatness intersects with other marginalized identities/forms of embodiment, she is consistently decentering the essentialized, heteronormative, whitewashed representation of fatness that has come to characterize the body positive movement. Shackelford is a very particular voice in the body positive community, one that is blunt, unapologetic, and fiercely political and she never lets you forget who she is fighting for—fat Black women and femmes. In doing so, she makes it clear that the center of the body positive movement should not be white, slightly larger than average women who are assumed both heterosexual and ablebodied. Instead, she decenters this essentialized representation by consistently trying to shift the center and even eliminate the center altogether. In this way, her work is both truly intersectional and distinctly queer.

Shackelford's work is truly intersectional in that it focuses specifically on making intersectionality visible—intersectionality of identity and of oppression. This making visible of intersectionality, in turn, serves to decenter the essentialized representation of fatness that has come to characterize body positivity by never letting her audience forget that fat oppression (and the oppression of all non-normative bodies) is always textured by other forms of marginalization—racism, heteronormativity, ableism, etc. By declaring herself a body positive activist yet ensuring that her work never centers around whiteness, heteronormativity, or really any other form of normativizing logic, she consistently rethinks who body positivity can be for.

As Shackelford engages in this decentering project, she necessitates attention to difference within the body positive movement and thus makes a space within the movement for fat Black women and femmes to be acknowledged, considered, and prioritized. This attention to difference, in both theory and practice, is a fundamentally queer approach. Difference defines

queer theory and politics. Identity politics essentialize and, in doing so, delineate who counts and who does not count for a particular politics.²²⁸ This serves to exclude many more than it includes and thus further marginalizes those who are already severely marginalized by dominant normative structures. By necessitating an attention to difference through centralizing the intersectionality of particular bodies that are coded as especially different, Shackelford compels body positive activism to include fat Black women and femmes as political subjects and she makes a specific space for them in the movement.

Now that I have illustrated Shackelford's fat activist rhetoric as both productively intersectional and decidedly queer, I conclude this thesis in the next chapter by putting Shackelford's queer rhetoric in conversation with Holliday's to better understand how they both imagine and construct very different queer worlds where particular kinds of fat bodies are made intelligible in distinct and creative ways.

CONCLUSION

Body positive and fat acceptance activism are complex social justice endeavors that provide many ways of reimagining a world where fat (and otherwise nonnormative bodies) are tolerated, accepted, embraced, and loved. However, there is not one singular method or strategy of reimagining a more accepting world employed by fat activists. Rather, each fat activist rhetor possesses and utilizes different rhetorical resources in their quest for fat acceptance and these resources are, in many ways, determined by their experiences, embodiment, and their vision of the world as influenced by their experiences and embodiment. This thesis aimed to gain critical insight into how different fat activists use various rhetorical strategies to advance the cause of fat acceptance and reimagine alternative worlds. The first step to doing this was reviewing literature on queer theory, fat studies, and rhetorical theory/criticism to understand how the fat body constitutes a particular type of queer body as well as proffer a framework of queer rhetorical criticism for analyzing the rhetoric produced by fat activists, Tess Holliday and Ashleigh Shackelford. The next step was engaging in an analysis of these two queer, fat rhetors and the queer rhetorical strategies they use in the quest for fat acceptance which has laid the groundwork for understanding how they imagine and construct different queer worlds where fat bodies are made intelligible.

To conclude this thesis, I use my analyses of Holliday and Shackelford's queer rhetoric to understand the larger queer worldmaking project of body positivity/fat activism as differently articulated by these two fat activist rhetors. I first grapple with defining queer worldmaking to theorize about the queer worlds constructed by Holliday and Shackelford individually before putting them in conversation with each other to understand the very different queer worlds imagined and constructed by these rhetors as well as the particular kinds of fat bodies that are

made intelligible within these different queer worlds. Then, I explore the larger theoretical and practical implications of this thesis by cogitating on what we learn about theory, the particulars of worldmaking, and activism at a practical level by dedicating close attention to the queer rhetoric produced by fat activist rhetors such as Holliday and Shackelford.

Queer Worldmaking

Another aim of queer criticism that I have not yet explored in theoretical depth is what Berlant and Warner refer to as “queer worldmaking.” Queer worldmaking, just like any other truly queer concept, is difficult to define and constrain, however, a productive understanding of it might begin with Berlant and Warner’s definition followed by how it has been taken up in queer theoretical and rhetorical scholarship. Berlant and Warner describe the queer world as a “space of entrances, exits, unsystematized lines of acquaintance, projected horizons, typifying examples, alternate routes, blockages, incommensurate geographies.”²²⁹ Thus, they describe world making as “dispersed through incommensurate registers, by definition unrealizable as community.”²³⁰ The goal of queer worldmaking is to elaborate “a public world of belonging and transformation” by reimagining and redefining intimacy and affect.²³¹ These new intimacies and affects are thus “typical both of the inventiveness of queer world making and of the queer world's fragility.”²³² Queer world making is a way of creating space through intimacy by redefining intimate relations in public. The queer world emerges at the intersection of the intimate and the social.

Warner elaborates on his definition of worldmaking in an interview with Annamarie Jagose, detailing that

The idea is that the activity we undertake with each other, in a kind of agonistic performance in which what we become depends on the perspectives and interactions of others, brings into being the space of our world, which is then the background against which we understand ourselves and our belonging. I find this a compelling account because it stresses historical activity and human creativity, but without falling into a naive view of individual agency or intentionality.²³³

As mentioned in the previous analysis chapters, the framework of queer worldmaking has proven especially productive for queer rhetorical critics. Without necessarily calling it by its name, Slagle's work demonstrates a clear worldmaking influence in his assertion that queer critics should "attempt to construct a world in which...difference is not only acknowledged, but celebrated."²³⁴ Furthermore, Thomas K. Nakayama and Charles E. Morris III elaborate that "queer worldmaking takes place in all kinds of places, at all different times, involving all kinds of people, who work toward creating a different world. It is not a strategic plan, organized by anyone, but a bottom-up engagement with the everyday."²³⁵ Thus, queer worldmaking is clearly a dynamic means to engage matters of intimacy, difference, and creativity within texts, rhetors, and critics themselves.

Tess Holliday's Queer World: Fat in Public

In Berlant and Warner's original discussion of queer worldmaking, they argue that sex and intimacy are primary enforcers of the public/private binary in that they are relegated to the realm of the private only to uphold heteronormativity as the principal organizer of societal institutions and ideologies.²³⁶ Through heteronormative organizing logic, "sex in public" appears like matter out of place.²³⁷ Nevertheless, since sex and intimacy keep the public/private binary in place, it is precisely sex and intimacy that might disrupt the logics of heteronormativity that make intelligible some sex and some bodies while erasing others.²³⁸

Making sex public, then, becomes a promotion of the "radical aspirations of queer culture building" or, in other words, queer worldmaking.²³⁹ Berlant and Warner go on to explain that, by figuring what it means both denotationally and implicatively to make sex public, we not only make a safe zone for the space of queer sex, but we can also theorize "the changed possibilities

of identity, intelligibility, publics, culture, and sex that appear when the heterosexual couple is no longer the referent or the privileged example of sexuality.”²⁴⁰

I seek to take these conceptualizations of public/private, sex, intimacy, and queer culture building/worldmaking and apply them to fatness in a world organized by thin-centric logic. In doing so, I hope to illuminate how Tess Holliday makes fat public through her challenging of essentialized notions of health and thus makes fat bodies intelligible in public realms such as fashion and social media.

The separation of public and private is based on a presupposition of “a structural differentiation of ‘personal life’ from work, politics, and the public sphere.”²⁴¹ Since the public sphere is for work, politics, and the like, concerns of the body automatically belong in the realm of the private. The health of our body is deeply personal and the way we choose to deal with and think about our health happens in private. Just as health is private, so is fat. Indeed, fat is private *because* health is private. We avoid or silence conversations about our fat because of its link to disease, weakness, or an overall state of non-health. Yet Holliday manages to make both fat and health public by displaying her fat visually through images and stitching together a narrative through captions that reimagines the fat body as active, reproductive, and therefore healthy. Though her body may perform health in a different way, it still upholds an image of health through reimagining what health can be. By de-essentializing health and disrupting the logic that posits fatness as incompatible with health, Holliday makes it possible for fat to make its appearance in the public sphere—particularly in fashion and social media.

However, Holliday’s de-essentialization of health is not the only way she makes fat public. Though de-essentializing health does help make space for fat bodies in the public sphere by disassociating fatness from the privateness of ill health, Holliday’s fat public persona extends

beyond considerations of health in many ways. Indeed, her most popular and impactful form of body positive activism may very well be her #effyourbeautystandards Instagram campaign and, though beauty and health are always tied together when it comes to the fat body, to make the fat body public as a moment of resistance against oppressive beauty standards extends outside and beyond Holliday's rhetorical de-essentializing of health. Moreover, some #effyourbeautystandards posters even explicitly reject Holliday's de-essentialized version of health, recognizing that their fat body is decidedly unhealthy but asserting that, regardless of health status, theirs is a beautiful body worthy of dignity and love. In other words, even as Holliday's reimagining of the fat body as a particular type of healthy body has helped gain her access to make fat public, Holliday's activism does not necessarily need to link fat bodies to health to make them public. Indeed, through her #effyourbeautystandards campaign, Holliday has carved out a specific online space for all kinds of different fat and otherwise nonnormative bodies to be made public.

The question then becomes: how does making fat public constitutes a project of queer worldmaking? This all comes down to a consideration of intelligibility—that is, a consideration of “the changed possibilities of identity, intelligibility, publics, [and] culture...that appear” when compulsory thinness “is no longer the referent or the privileged example” of embodiment.²⁴² Making fat public forces people to think about fat—it can no longer be relegated to the personal and the private. Making fat public, made possible in part by disturbing the assumption of an obstacle between fatness and health, puts people in a position to check their own biases that influence the way they perceive fat embodiment.

In understanding Holliday as a queer worldmaker, it is important not to forget her significance as a professional model and especially the first model of her size to be signed with a

major modeling agency. To see a fat model in fashion is to see fat made public. One cannot continue to conceive of fat as private when it is right in front of their face, sporting next Spring's hottest trends. Fashion is a particular instantiation of the public sphere. Through Holliday's pioneering of the future of fat fashion, she opens a new space for fat bodies to inhabit (fashion) and a new way for fashion to be (fat). However, it is important to realize that this new space to inhabit and new way to be means something specific to fat acceptance culture because, after all, queer worldmaking is a project by and for a particular queer counterpublic. This marks a return to my initial discussion of how Holliday breaks down barriers. She discursively removes the obstacles that prevent other fat bodies from gaining visibility in the public realm of fashion.

I locate evidence of this queer counterpublic on social media and particularly on Instagram through Holliday's #effyourbeautystandards campaign. To see corpulent bodies on Instagram is to see fat made public and fat is never more public than after a search of the hashtag #effyourbeautystandards. After inserting this hashtag into the search bar on Instagram, one will see countless images of fat and otherwise nonnormative bodies effectively queering the space of Instagram. In other words, one will see bodies that may have once seemed out of place in a space where thin-centrism used to reign but, instead of seeming out of place, these bodies start to make perfect sense. They share a hashtag, an organizer, and connector of community. They come together to refashion what we think of in terms of what kinds of bodies can and should be on display. This making sense of fat bodies on Instagram is a move toward intelligibility. Holliday's activism is, thus, clearly "undertaken with the aim to expand and enhance a field of possibilities for bodily life."²⁴³ In response to "the abjection of certain kinds of bodies, their inadmissibility to codes of intelligibility," Holliday creates a space, a world, where fat bodies can be on display, where they make sense being on display, and thus become intelligible.²⁴⁴

Ashleigh Shackelford's Queer World: Political Intelligibility

Nakayama and Morris elaborate on their conception of queer worldmaking, explaining that it “is a messy enterprise driven by a vision of another world, another way of living, but it requires engaging the contemporary situation with its historical legacies, varying interests, and much more.”²⁴⁵ Shackelford is clearly driven by a vision of another world—a world where violence against fat bodies, Black bodies, and women/femmes’ bodies is no more. She is constantly imagining a different way of living that does not require her and people like her to always be on the defensive. But as she reimagines what the world can look like and what living in that world could be like, she never ignores its historical legacies and the varied interests that define it. The historicity of the violence against intersectionally oppressed bodies is a fundamental assumption of her work. She also consistently examines who has interests in maintaining oppression against different types of bodies as well as who has interests in a more just world. In short, Shackelford’s vision of the world is textured with the necessary complexity to give it enough realism to one day make it a reality.

At its core, worldmaking is about this vision of a different world, a more just world, a world where queer identities/bodies, which in this case includes fat bodies, are acknowledged, validated, and celebrated. Kevin Duong adds that there is a distinctly political dimension to queer worldmaking.²⁴⁶ He argues that intersectionality has a lot to learn from queer theory in terms of specifically politicizing its subjects. Shackelford bridges this gap between intersectionality and queer theory/politics by inscribing fat, Black women and femmes’ bodies with a political imperative. That is, she makes them the political subjects of body positive activism and, in doing so, makes the worldmaking leap between “individual subjectivity to politicized collectivity.”²⁴⁷ Shackelford makes a space for the celebration of fat, Black women and femmes’ bodies while

always recognizing the necessity of keeping them politically inscribed and prioritized. Queer worldmaking happens at the intersection of celebration and politicization and Ashleigh Shackelford demonstrates what the world can look like at this intersection for fat, Black women and femmes, among others.

Determining what a more just world can look like at the intersection of fatness, Blackness, and femininity is largely a matter of intelligibility. That is, making the bodies of fat, Black women and femmes intelligible as political subjects. Shackelford's larger decentering project, achieved through rhetorically making intersectionality visible, is a particular moment of intelligibility for fat, Black women and femmes within body positivity. When the body positivity movement is characterized by an essential political subject that is white, slightly larger than average, and inscribed with logics of heteronormativity, fat, Black women and femmes do not make sense within the movement; the movement cannot work for them. However, when that essential subject is no longer the center of body positivity, indeed, when the center is shifted, changed, moved, and even eliminated by Shackelford's queer intersectional rhetoric, fat, Black women and femmes' bodies come into being as comprehensible political subjects.

Shackelford's queer decentering project relies on two other moments of changed possibilities of intelligibility. The queer world she makes depends on her ability to make intersectionality intelligible by interrogating violence at the intersections as well as her ability to make intersectionality as written on bodies intelligible. As detailed in the previous chapter, Shackelford uses her online activism to identify and explain, in detail, the material and discursive violence that operates at the intersections of different marginalized identities. Without this kind of critical intersectional analysis, violence at the intersections can easily go unseen. Privilege and power operate so smoothly because they are able to go undetected, but Shackelford's work

disrupts this smooth operation.²⁴⁸ By interrogating violence at the intersections, Shackelford makes intersectionality intelligible; she gives her readers the tools and insight for understanding how it works.

Moreover, by making intersectionality intelligible, by making it comprehensible to her readers, she also gives them the tools and insight necessary for understanding how intersectionality is written on bodies. After reading Shackelford's work, one could easily go out into the world, see the body of a Black, fat woman or femme and have a deeper understanding of the networks of power that produce specific kinds of opportunities and constraints for that woman/femme and her body. Thus, if this particular reader was a fat activist, they might have a renewed sense of political imperative for that woman/femme within their activism. Shackelford's making visible of intersectionality makes it intelligible both in the realm of the abstract and discursive as well as the realm of the bodily and material.

Making fat, Black women and femmes' bodies intelligible as political subjects in body positive activism opens up space for them. No longer are they relegated to the backburner of body positivity; they are, instead, prioritized. They are allowed and encouraged to take up space rather than minimized when they try to do so. The queer world that Shackelford makes is for them. It is a world where fat, Black women and femmes matter, where their needs are ranked first on the list, and where their bodies make sense as the number one concern of body positivity and fat activism. For fat, Black, women and femmes' bodies to matter, they must be intelligible and for their bodies to become intelligible, it must be clear that their bodies matter. This intersection of intelligibility and priority is the space of Shackelford's queer world.

Making a Queer(er) World

Through Tess Holliday and Ashleigh Shackelford's queer worldmaking projects, we see the queerness of fat activism. We see fat activist rhetors' ability to disrupt norms and binaries that govern fatness and reimagine new possibilities of embodiment and corporeality. That is, we witness these rhetors' "ability to productively play the norms against one another and disrupt, even if only temporarily, their normative and normalizing authority."²⁴⁹ I would argue that their ability to disrupt the norms in such a way comes, at least in part, from the queerness of their own bodies. Recall that, in the second chapter, I delineated three ways in which fat bodies constitute a particular type of queer body in that they blur boundaries and destabilize categories constraining the body, they are performative and are regulated by compulsory heterosexuality, and they are medicalized, pathologized, and stigmatized like queer bodies. Although this queer embodiment produces significant constraints for the fat body, it also opens up all kinds of possibilities—the most important possibilities for this thesis being the ability of fat activists to advance different types of queer rhetorics that progress the cause of fat acceptance and their ability to create alternative queer worlds that make intelligible different kinds of fat bodies.

Both of the queer worlds that Holliday and Shackelford make are important and even vital to the success of fat activism. In many ways, their queer rhetorical strategies and consequent queer worlds are complimentary. Holliday is making a space for certain kinds of fat bodies and Shackelford is making space for other kinds of fat bodies. The aim of this thesis is not to devalue either form of fat activism or necessarily advocate for one over the other. Instead, in this section, my objective is to decipher what we can learn from putting these two rhetors in conversation with one another and figure out what aspects of each of their queer rhetoric are most productive for body positive and fat activism overall.

I argue that the main difference between Holliday and Shackelford's activism is the way in which they deal with intersectionality. This is not to say that Holliday's activism does not have an element of intersectionality to it. Indeed, her #effyourbeautystandards campaign has become a specific space to celebrate bodies that experience various intersections of identity and oppression. If you navigate to the official @effyourbeautystandards page on Instagram, which was originally created by Holliday herself, you will see a multitude of different kinds of bodies—white bodies, black bodies, brown bodies, able bodies, disabled/differently abled bodies, fat bodies, skinny bodies, skinny fat bodies, thick bodies, queer bodies, nonbinary bodies, etc. However, intersectionality, as advanced by Crenshaw and traced through the literature of Black and women of color feminism, is not simply about different identity markers that one holds or that are written on one's body. Instead, intersectionality is about the power inherent at those intersections.²⁵⁰ Intersectionality is not an account of personal identity, it is a structural account of how power operates to constrain bodies that are multiply marginalized.

Shackelford's work, then, honors the theoretical tradition of intersectionality through her rigorous intersectional analyses of culture and cultural artifacts. While Holliday integrates intersectionality as it has been taken up in popular discourse, Shackelford has attended to the theoretical nuances of intersectionality that give it its analytical value. Nevertheless, to say that Shackelford's activist rhetoric is more intersectional is not necessarily to say that it is queerer. However, I argue that that which drives Shackelford's intersectionality is what makes her rhetoric particularly queer. I also argue that much is lost from queer rhetoric when intersectionality is insufficiently attended to.

What drives Shackelford's nuanced intersectional approach to activism is her location at the margins. Recall that hooks describes the margin, the actual space and location of marginality,

as a “site of radical possibility, a space of resistance.”²⁵¹ For Shackelford, just like hooks, the margin is a place where she is different, a place where she sees things differently and, in turn, speaking from the margins allows her to speak about what she sees.²⁵² Furthermore, hooks claims that the space of marginality provides a special vantage point from which to critique dominant structures and envision a counter-hegemony.²⁵³ The margin is thus always uniquely positioned to critique the center. Just as the space of homosexuality is uniquely positioned to critique heterosexuality because of its location on the outside or the space of racial difference is uniquely positioned to critique whiteness because it can clearly see whiteness for what it is from its vantage point on the margins, Shackelford is uniquely positioned to critique the essentialized version of fatness that defines body positivity because of her space at the queer margins. Shackelford’s position at the margins of fatness, Blackness, femininity, and queerness gives her the unique rhetorical ability to question the center of body positive activism.

This questioning of the center is one of the queerest aspects of her rhetoric, because queer theory, activism, and criticism are deeply concerned with locating the center, then shifting, changing, moving, and eliminating it in order to consider other possibilities for bodies and identities.²⁵⁴ However, it is important that, even as Shackelford questions and even moves to eliminate the center, she never makes a move to eliminate the margins. Indeed, she embraces her location at the margins and uses that location to speak about what she sees. Her work demonstrates a clear valuing of the margins as she continuously identifies her location there and proceeds to write about what she sees from that vantage point. By questioning the center while valuing the margins, we see the rhetorical potentiality of blending queerness and intersectionality.

On the other hand, instead of necessarily questioning or critiquing the center, Holliday's activism tends to try to broaden the center to include more people, more bodies. Indeed, the whole purpose of #effyourbeautystandards is to expand the definition of beauty to include more, if not all, bodies as beautiful, particularly fat bodies. Holliday's de-essentialization of health works toward a similar goal in that it seeks to expand the definition of health to include fat bodies. Though this is decidedly queer in that it challenges oppressive binaries and disrupts the normalizing authority of popular and medical discourses that define health in terms of thinness, Holliday's fat activist rhetoric, because it does not explicitly question the center or value the margins, always risks the possibility of recentering—that is, making a new center that inevitably marginalizes some. Shackelford, on the other hand, continuously shifts the center with the ultimate goal of dismantling the entire system, or network of systems, rather, that legitimizes some bodies and not others. I would argue that this continuous questioning of the center paired with the overall goal of “dismantl[ing]...the existing social order” that renders some bodies unintelligible is what delineates Shackelford's fat activist rhetoric as essentially more queer.²⁵⁵

What is lost from queer rhetoric when intersectionality is not centralized is a structural understanding of queer identity as well as the political possibilities of queer worldmaking. Though Holliday's activism makes a space where fat, Black women can be made visible, she does not sufficiently interrogate the intersectionality of fatness, Blackness, and femininity. Though Holliday's activism allows for other bodies to be on public display, an understanding of structural power and domination at these intersections is lost in favor of visibility. Without an understanding of structural power, there can be no clear political subject or imperative within body positive and fat activism, for determining a queer political subject means addressing marginalization in its myriad and complex forms. Therefore, because Shackelford's activism

centralizes intersectionality and thus deeply understands the ways in which structural power produces specific kinds of possibilities and constraints for different kinds of bodies, her queer rhetoric constitutes a particularly fruitful worldmaking endeavor, especially in terms of the queer world's political dimension.

Implications

Now that I have made the argument that Ashleigh Shackelford's rhetoric constitutes a queerer and more politically fruitful worldmaking project, I finally explore the larger theoretical and practical implications of this thesis by cogitating on what we learn about theory and scholarship, the particulars of worldmaking, and activism at a practical level by dedicating close attention to the queer rhetoric produced by fat activist rhetors such as Holliday and Shackelford.

From the outset, this thesis sought to deepen the relationship between queer and fat. It attempted to clearly articulate how the fat body constitutes a particular type of queer body which allows for queer theory to play a significant role in theorizing fatness and the fat body. By deepening this relationship, I further highlight the value of theorizing queerness beyond sexuality with a broader goal of destabilizing logics of disciplinarity and knowledge production. I noted in the second chapter that conceptualizing queer strictly in terms of sexuality not only sketches boundaries that then define queerness but it also privileges sexuality in the investigation of identity categories, both of which fall short of queer theory's goal of destabilizing identity categories and regimes of truth. Thus, through this thesis, I have indicated how queerness can serve as a valuable analytical and theoretical tool for understanding bodies, corporeality, and criticism. In doing so, I have attended to the reorientations in the field of queer theory with an eye toward centering marginality and marginalizing that which is normatively centered.

However, it is important to clarify that never once was queerness divorced from embodiment in this thesis. My theoretical commitments are based on the belief that queerness is located in the body. To theorize queerness is to theorize *from* the body. In this case, I have theorized from the fat body which means that the fat body becomes the locus from which to destabilize logics of disciplinarity and knowledge production. Though other scholars have made strong cases for divorcing queerness from the body entirely—for example, Erin Rand theorizes queerness as characteristic of rhetorical agency²⁵⁶—I find queerness most theoretically and practically useful as it emerges from a sort of embodied knowledge. Perhaps this is because I approached this thesis theoretically and practically from my embodied knowledge as a queer person, a fat person, and a queer fat person, however, I would ultimately argue that there is value in imbuing an understanding of queerness with embodiment.

Beyond queerness and fatness, this thesis also sought to push the boundaries of queer rhetorical criticism and thus highlight its possibilities for approaching different kinds of texts. In Anthony Slagle's original iteration of the assumptions and implications of queer criticism, he conceptualized queer primarily in terms of sexuality.²⁵⁷ For example, Slagle explains that heteronormativity is one of the fundamental assumptions of queer criticism. He argues that "the force of queer criticism is that it illuminates normative heterosexual privilege in discourse. Put another way, queer criticism challenges the notion that traditional heterosexual relationships are the only normal sexual expression, to the exclusion of other sexual possibilities."²⁵⁸ I expand this assumption to include myriad forms of normativity, especially normative thinness. Thus, queer criticism has the potential to illuminate all kinds of different normative privilege in discourse and challenge that privilege to reveal other possibilities of bodily life.

Furthermore, this thesis serves as a call to action for queer rhetorical scholars. Though queerness and queer theory thrives on its refusal to be defined or limited, I argue that, for queer rhetorical scholarship to be theoretically, socially, and politically efficacious, it must be intersectional, regardless of which texts or rhetors critics apply it to. Slagle argues that “queer criticism has an explicitly activist agenda; that is, queer criticism seeks to dismantle the existing social order that silences queer voices in our society.”²⁵⁹ To truly dismantle the existing social order, the critic must deeply understand how violence against queer bodies and voices operates on intersectional planes. Does this complicate the task of the queer critic? Yes, indeed it does, but it is worth it to truly accomplish the activist agenda of queer criticism which is its most promising potentiality.

Not only does this thesis have implications for theory and scholarship broadly, it has much to teach us about the particulars of queer worldmaking. First of all, this thesis reveals how queer worldmaking, in part, happens through rhetorical criticism. That is, not only are the rhetors we study constructing alternative queer worlds, so too are we as critics. This thesis, just like the activist work of both Holliday and Shackelford, was “undertaken with the aim to expand and enhance a field of possibilities for bodily life.”²⁶⁰ In other words, as I selected Holliday and Shackelford as rhetors, analyzed their texts, and attempted to understand the queer worlds they were creating, my work participated in figuring new spaces and ways for bodies to be. Thus, not only did I explain the alternative queer worlds being constructed by my rhetors, I began to create another queer world—one that emerges from queer rhetorical scholarship.

Furthermore, this thesis seriously interrogates the political dimension of queer worldmaking. We learn, from Shackelford especially, that queer worldmaking has the potential to uplift previously marginalized and ignored political subjects. This not only honors Nakayama

and Morris's assertion that "collective action in the public sphere is...a key component of worldmaking" but also points to the queer world's ability to better the material lives of marginalized groups.²⁶¹ While worldmaking is, in many ways, a "bottom up engagement with the everyday," to ignore its political potential—to ignore its ability to uplift particular political subjects and make them the central focus of activism—is to pass up the opportunity to improve the material reality of those utmost marginalized by normative discourse.

Finally, in addition to what we learn about theory/scholarship and the particulars of queer worldmaking, this thesis provides important lessons for activists/activism at a practical level. Once again, the focus here is intersectionality. For activism, particularly body positive and fat activism, to be successful and to work toward truly eradicating violence against nonnormative bodies in all its myriad forms, it must display a commitment to interrogating violence as it operates intersectionally. As evidenced by the preceding investigation, when activists perform critical intersectional analysis from their location at the margins, they are better positioned to take advantage of the political dimension of queer worldmaking. Therefore, this thesis not only provides the rhetorical resources for body positive and fat activists necessary to understand the importance and political value of intersectionality, it also serves as a call to action to all activists to be more intersectional as they envision and construct alternative worlds complete with new spaces and ways for bodies to be.

Overall, this thesis sought to combine the critical perspectives and assumptions of queer theory and fat studies to understand the larger worldmaking project of fat activism through the process of queer rhetorical criticism. By analyzing texts produced by fat activist rhetors, I aimed to uncover the queer rhetorical strategies deployed by fat activists in order to better understand how body positive and fat acceptance rhetoric can actually advance the cause for those who

experience fat embodiment. In this sense, I got far more than I bargained for. Not only did I uncover all kinds of different queer rhetorical fat activist strategies, through queer rhetorical criticism, I helped envision and construct a queer world that makes space for and celebrates queer fat bodies.

NOTES

1. Alysse Dalessandro, “Body Positivity in 2017: Examining Body Positivity With Plus Size Activists and Influencers,” *The Curvy Fashionista*, March 18, 2017, <http://thecurvyfashionista.com/2017/03/body-positivity-plus-size-activists-influencers/>.
2. Ibid.
3. Marilyn Wann, “Foreword Fat Studies: An Invitation to Revolution,” in *The Fat Studies Reader*, ed. Esther D. Rothblum, Sondra Solovay, and Marilyn Wann (New York: New York University Press, 2009), x.
4. Judy Freespirit and Aldebaran, “Appendix A: Fat Liberation Manifesto, November 1973,” in *Fat Studies Reader*, ed. Esther Rothblum, Sondra Solovay, and Marilyn Wann (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 341–42.
5. Wann, “Foreword Fat Studies: An Invitation to Revolution,” x.
6. “About The Body Positive,” accessed April 11, 2017, <http://www.thebodypositive.org/about#Our-Team>.
7. Candace Amos, “Find Out How This Plus-Size Model Landed a Major Modeling Contract,” *Us Weekly*, accessed April 11, 2017, <http://www.usmagazine.com/celebrity-style/news/plus-size-tess-holliday-modeling-contract-photos-2015271>.
8. Ashleigh Shackelford, “Community Post: The Body Positivity Movement Looks A Lot Like White Feminism: On Tess Holliday & Accountability,” *BuzzFeed Community*, accessed February 26, 2017, <http://www.buzzfeed.com/ashleighshackelford/the-body-positivity-movement-looks-a-lot-like-white-feminism>.
9. Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, “Sex in Public,” *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2 (1998): 547–66.

Notes—*continued*

10. Ibid., 558, 548.
11. Ibid., 558.
12. R. Anthony Slagle, “Queer Criticism and Sexual Normativity,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 45, no. 2–4 (2003): 129–46.
13. Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (NYU Press, 1996), 2.
14. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*, vol. 1 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).
15. Ibid., 1:63–64.
16. Tasmin Spargo, *Foucault and Queer Theory*, Postmodern Encounters (New York: Totem Books, 1999), 15.
17. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*, 1:44.
18. Ibid.
19. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, Chapman, and Hall, Inc., 1990), 33.
20. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 5.
21. Ibid., 2.
22. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Queer Performativity: Henry James’s The Art of the Novel,” *GLQ* 1, no. 1 (1993): 1–16.
23. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet: Updated with a New Preface* (University of California Press, 2007), 35.
24. Ibid., 1.

Notes—*continued*

25. *Ibid.*, 20.

26. *Ibid.*, 10.

27. Jagose, *Queer Theory*, 3; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge, 2011); Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2012).

28. David L. Eng, Judith Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz, “Introduction: What’s Queer About Queer Studies Now?,” *Social Text* 23, no. 3-4-85 (September 21, 2005): 6.

29. *Ibid.*, 2.

30. *Ibid.*, 4–6.

31. Noreen Giffney, “Denormalizing Queer Theory More Than (Simply) Lesbian and Gay Studies,” *Feminist Theory* 5, no. 1 (April 1, 2004): 73; Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 8; Michael Warner, *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (U of Minnesota Press, 1993), viii–xi.

32. Michael Warner, “Publics and Counterpublics,” *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 81; 48-49.

33. Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” *Social Text*, no. 25/26 (1990): 67.

34. *Ibid.*

35. Warner, “Publics and Counterpublics,” 85.

36. Berlant and Warner, “Sex in Public,” 558.

37. Warner, “Publics and Counterpublics,” 89.

38. Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*, 136.

Notes—*continued*

39. *Ibid.*, 136–38.

40. *Ibid.*, 138.

41. *Ibid.*

42. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1990), 140.

43. Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977--1978* (Macmillan, 2009), 1.

44. Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

45. Jasbir K. Puar, “Queer Times, Queer Assemblages,” in *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 134.

46. *Ibid.*, 216.

47. *Ibid.*

48. Cherry Smith, *Lesbians Talk Queer Notions* (London, UK: Scarlet Press, n.d.), 25; Susan Stryker, “Transgender Studies: Queer Theory’s Evil Twin,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 10, no. 2 (2004): 214; Giffney, “Denormalizing Queer Theory More Than (Simply) Lesbian and Gay Studies,” 75; Thomas A. Dowson, “Why Queer Archaeology? An Introduction,” *World Archaeology* 32, no. 2 (2000): 163.

49. Jackie Wykes, “Introduction: Why Queering Fat Embodiment?,” in *Queering Fat Embodiment*, ed. Cat Pausé, Jackie Wykes, and Samantha Murray (Routledge, 2016), 1.

Notes—*continued*

50. Robyn Longhurst, “Queering Body Size and Shape: Performativity, the Closet, Shame and Orientation,” in *Queering Fat Embodiment*, ed. Cat Pausé, Jackie Wykes, and Samantha Murray (Routledge, 2016), 16.

51. Kathleen LeBesco, “Quest for a Cause: The Fat Gene, the Gay Gene, and New Eugenics,” in *The Fat Studies Reader*, ed. Esther D. Rothblum, Sondra Solovay, and Marilyn Wann (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 65–74.

52. Kathleen LeBesco, *Revolting Bodies?: The Struggle to Redefine Fat Identity* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 95.

53. Abigail C. Saguy and Anna Ward, “Coming Out as Fat: Rethinking Stigma,” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 74, no. 1 (March 1, 2011): 54.

54. *Ibid.*, 65.

55. Marilyn Wann, “Foreword Fat Studies: An Invitation to Revolution,” in *The Fat Studies Reader*, ed. Esther D. Rothblum, Sondra Solovay, and Marilyn Wann (New York: New York University Press, 2009), ix.

56. Wann, “Foreword Fat Studies: An Invitation to Revolution.”

57. Lesleigh J. Owen, “Monstrous Freedom: Charting Fat Ambivalence,” *Fat Studies* 4, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 2.

58. *Ibid.*, 4.

59. *Ibid.*, 5.

60. *Ibid.*, 6.

61. Charlotte Cooper, “Can a Fat Woman Call Herself Disabled?,” *Disability & Society* 12, no. 1 (February 1, 1997): 36–38.

Notes—*continued*

62. Wann, “Foreword Fat Studies: An Invitation to Revolution,” xiii–xiv.
63. Deborah Lupton, *Fat*, YBP Print DDA (New York: Routledge, 2013), 34.
64. *Ibid.*, 37.
65. *Ibid.*, 42.
66. LeBesco, *Revolting Bodies?*, 35.
67. Rothblum and Solovay, “Neoliberalism and the Constituion of Contemporary Bodies,” 194; Elena Levy-Navarro, “Fattening Queer History: Where Does Fat History Go from Here?,” in *The Fat Studies Reader*, ed. Esther D. Rothblum and Sondra Solovay (New York: New York Unviersity Press, 2009), 16.
68. Lupton, *Fat*, 51.
69. *Ibid.*
70. Amy Erdman Farrell, *Fat Shame: Stigma and the Fat Body in American Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 60.
71. LeBesco, *Revolting Bodies?*, 23–24.
72. *Ibid.*, 35.
73. Lupton, *Fat*, 46.
74. Paul Ernsberger, “Does Social Class Explain the Connection Between Weight and Health?,” in *The Fat Studies Reader*, ed. Esther D. Rothblum, Sondra Solovay, and Marilyn Wann (New York: New York Unviersity Press, 2009), ix–xxv.
75. George Parker, “Mothers at Large: Responsibilizing the Pregnant Self for the ‘Obesity Epidemic,’” *Fat Studies* 3, no. 2 (July 3, 2014): 105.
76. Farrell, *Fat Shame: Stigma and the Fat Body in American Culture*, 59–81.

Notes—*continued*

77. LeBesco, *Revolting Bodies?*, 56.
78. Lupton, *Fat*, 40.
79. *Ibid.*, 40–41.
80. Parker, “Mothers at Large”; Owen, “Monstrous Freedom”; Lupton, *Fat*, 41; Farrell, *Fat Shame: Stigma and the Fat Body in American Culture*, 77; LeBesco, *Revolting Bodies?*; *ibid.*, 54–64; Courtney Bailey, “Supersizing America: Fatness and Post-9/11 Cultural Anxieties,” *The Journal of Popular Culture* 43, no. 3 (June 1, 2010): 441–62; Charlotte Biltekoff, “The Terror Within: Obesity in Post 9/11 U.S. Life,” *American Studies* 48, no. 3 (2007): 29–48.
81. Parker, “Mothers at Large,” 105; Owen, “Monstrous Freedom,” 10; Lupton, *Fat*, 41.
82. Farrell, *Fat Shame: Stigma and the Fat Body in American Culture*, 77.
83. LeBesco, *Revolting Bodies?*, 58–59.
84. Owen, “Monstrous Freedom,” 4; Farrell, *Fat Shame: Stigma and the Fat Body in American Culture*, 81.
85. Parker, “Mothers at Large,” 105.
86. Rothblum and Solovay, “Neoliberalism and the Constituion of Contemporary Bodies,” 192–93.
87. LeBesco, *Revolting Bodies?*, 57.
88. Lupton, *Fat*, 40.
89. LeBesco, *Revolting Bodies?*, 63.
90. *Ibid.*, 55.
91. Lupton, *Fat*, 39.
92. Owen, “Monstrous Freedom,” 2.

Notes—*continued*

93. Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse* (Oxford University Press, 1991), 7.
94. Kevin Michael DeLuca, “Unruly Arguments: The Body Rhetoric of Earth First!, ACT UP, and Queer Nation,” *Argumentation and Advocacy* 26, no. 1 (1999): 9–21.
95. *Ibid.*, 10.
96. Slagle, “Queer Criticism and Sexual Normativity,” 137.
97. Erin J. Rand, *Reclaiming Queer: Activist and Academic Rhetorics of Resistance* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2014).
98. R. Anthony Slagle, “In Defense of Queer Nation: From Identity Politics to a Politics of Difference,” *Western Journal of Communication* 59, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 85–102.
99. Jeffrey A. Bennett, *Banning Queer Blood: Rhetorics of Citizenship, Contagion, and Resistance* (University of Alabama Press, 2015).
100. *Ibid.*, 3.
101. *Ibid.*, 13.
102. Erin J. Rand, “An Appetite for Activism: The Lesbian Avengers and the Queer Politics of Visibility,” *Women’s Studies in Communication* 36, no. 2 (June 1, 2013): 134.
103. Mary G. McDonald, “Rethinking Resistance: The Queer Play of the Women’s National Basketball Association, Visibility Politics and Late Capitalism,” *Leisure Studies* 27, no. 1 (January 1, 2008): 77–93.
104. Erin J. Rand, “Bad Feelings in Public: Rhetoric, Affect, and Emotion,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 18, no. 1 (2015): 161.

Notes—*continued*

105. Erin J. Rand, “Gay Pride and Its Queer Discontents: ACT UP and the Political Deployment of Affect,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 98, no. 1 (February 1, 2012): 79.

106. Margaret Morrison, “‘Some Things Are Better Left Unsaid’: The ‘Dignity of Queer Shame,’” *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 48, no. 1 (2015): 18.

107. Isaac West, “PISSAR’S Critically Queer and Disabled Politics,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 7, no. 2 (June 1, 2010): 156–75.

108. Rand, *Reclaiming Queer*, 25.

109. Ibid.

110. David L. Eng, Judith Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz, “Introduction: What’s Queer About Queer Studies Now?,” *Social Text* 23, no. 3–4 84–85 (September 21, 2005): 6.

111. Ibid., 7.

112. Slagle, “Queer Criticism and Sexual Normativity,” 129.

113. Ibid., 137.

114. Erin McKelle Fischer, “Tess Holliday Covers ‘People’ Magazine And Continues To Be A Shining Light For Size Acceptance,” *Bustle*, May 20, 2015, <https://www.bustle.com/articles/84646-tess-holliday-covers-people-magazine-and-continues-to-be-a-shining-light-for-size-acceptance>.

112. Cavan Sieczkowski, “Plus-Size Model Tess Holliday Debuts First Agency Shoot, And It’s Stunning,” *Huffington Post*, May 12, 2015, sec. Style, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/05/12/tess-holliday-milk-shoot-photos_n_7264856.html; “Tess Holliday, An Actual Plus-Sized Model, Is Breaking Down Walls,” accessed February 7,

Notes—*continued*

2017, <https://www.yahoo.com/style/tess-holliday-is-changing-plus-size-modeling-109302148963.html>.

116. R. Anthony Slagle, “Queer Criticism and Sexual Normativity,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 45, no. 2–4 (2003): 129–46; Isaac West, “Queer Generosities,” *Western Journal of Communication* 77, no. 5 (October 2013): 538–41.

117. Slagle, “Queer Criticism and Sexual Normativity,” 129.

118. Slagle, “Queer Criticism and Sexual Normativity.”

119. Bennett, *Banning Queer Blood*.

120. Slagle, “Queer Criticism and Sexual Normativity,” 137.

121. *Ibid.*, 143.

122. West, “Queer Generosities,” 540.

123. *Ibid.*

124. *Ibid.*

125. *Ibid.*

126. Christine Lagorio-Chafkin, “Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger, Founders of Instagram,” *Inc.com*, April 9, 2012, <http://www.inc.com/30under30/2011/profile-kevin-systrom-mike-krieger-founders-instagram.html>.

127. Shannon Greenwood, Andrew Perrin, and Maeve Duggan, “Social Media Update 2016,” *Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech*, November 11, 2016, <http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/11/11/social-media-update-2016/>.

128. *Ibid.*

129. *Ibid.*

Notes—*continued*

130. Leslie-Jean Thornton, “The Photo Is Live at Applifam: An Instagram Community Grapples With How Images Should Be Used,” *Visual Communication Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (April 3, 2014): 72–82; Magdalena Olszanowski, “Feminist Self-Imaging and Instagram: Tactics of Circumventing Sensorship,” *Visual Communication Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (April 3, 2014): 83–95; Lauren Reichart Smith and Jimmy Sanderson, “I’m Going to Instagram It! An Analysis of Athlete Self-Presentation on Instagram,” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 59, no. 2 (April 3, 2015): 342–58; Martin Gibbs et al., “#Funeral and Instagram: Death, Social Media, and Platform Vernacular,” *Information, Communication & Society* 18, no. 3 (March 4, 2015): 255–68.

131. Clay Shirky, “The Political Power of Social Media: Technology, the Public Sphere, and Political Change,” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 1 (2011): 28–41; Nathan Rambukkana, *Hashtag Publics: The Power and Politics of Discursive Networks* (Lang, Peter, 2015); Sarah J. Jackson and Brooke Foucault Welles, “Hijacking #myNYPD: Social Media Dissent and Networked Counterpublics,” *Journal of Communication* 65, no. 6 (December 1, 2015): 932–52; Michael Salter, “Justice and Revenge in Online Counter-Publics: Emerging Responses to Sexual Violence in the Age of Social Media,” *Crime, Media, Culture* 9, no. 3 (December 1, 2013): 225–42; José van Dijck, “‘You Have One Identity’: Performing the Self on Facebook and LinkedIn,” *Media, Culture & Society* 35, no. 2 (March 1, 2013): 199–215.

132. Sonja K. Foss, “Framing the Study of Visual Rhetoric: Toward a Transformation of Rhetorical Theory,” in *Defining Visual Rhetorics*, ed. Charles A. Hill and Marguerite Helmers (Routledge, 2012), 303.

Notes—*continued*

133. Bryony Gordon, “‘Eff Your Beauty Standards’: Meet the Size 26, Tattooed Supermodel Who Is Changing the Fashion Industry,” *The Telegraph*, 08:01, sec. people, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/fashion/people/eff-your-beauty-standards-meet-the-size-26-tattooed-supermodel-w/>.

134. Rebecca Hiscott, “The Beginner’s Guide to the Hashtag,” *Mashable*, accessed March 30, 2017, <http://mashable.com/2013/10/08/what-is-hashtag/>.

135. Parker, “Mothers at Large”; Owen, “Monstrous Freedom”; Lupton, *Fat*.

136. Wann, “Foreword Fat Studies: An Invitation to Revolution”; Farrell, *Fat Shame: Stigma and the Fat Body in American Culture*, 77.

137. “Childhood Obesity Panel: 40 Million Kids under 5 Overweight | The Big Story,” *The Associated Press*, accessed March 30, 2017, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/0817ebafc6d14fe3ad78e90273857569/childhood-obesity-panel-40-million-kids-under-5-overweight>; “Childhood Obesity ‘an Exploding Nightmare’, Says WHO,” *Council for International Development*, accessed March 30, 2017, <http://www.cid.org.nz/news/childhood-obesity-an-exploding-nightmare-says-health-expert/>.

138. “Adult Obesity Causes & Consequences,” *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, March 21, 2017, <https://www.cdc.gov/index.htm>; “Disease of Obesity,” *American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery*, accessed March 30, 2017, <https://asmbs.org/patients/disease-of-obesity>.

139. Tess Holliday, Instagram post, (February 13, 2016), <https://www.instagram.com/p/BBtaJjCvOUV/>.

140. *Ibid.*

Notes—*continued*

141. Wann, “Foreword Fat Studies: An Invitation to Revolution”; Bennett, *Banning Queer Blood*.
142. Tess Holliday, Instagram post, (March 1, 2016), <https://www.instagram.com/p/BCbQh0PvOcj/?hl=en>.
143. Ibid.
144. Tess Holliday, Instagram post, (January 9, 2015), <https://www.instagram.com/p/xoXijEvOTF/>.
145. Ibid.
146. Peter Korp, “Problems of the Healthy Lifestyle Discourse,” *Sociology Compass* 4, no. 9 (September 1, 2010): 800–810.
147. Roberto J. Velasquez, Leticia M. Arellano, and Brian W. McNeill, *The Handbook of Chicana/o Psychology and Mental Health* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004), 32.
148. Mahmoud F. Fathalla, “Health and Being a Woman,” On Women’s Health and Rights Lectures, Speeches and Statements (United Nations, New York: Forty-third session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women), accessed April 3, 2017, https://www.academia.edu/12175259/Health_and_being_a_woman.
149. Mahmoud F. Fathalla, “Women and the Burden of Human Reproduction: An Evolutionary Perspective,” *Journal of Reproductive Health and Medicine* 1, no. 2 (July 2015): 103–5.
150. Province of Quebec, “National Report on the Health Status of the Population of Québec: Producing Health,” 2005, <http://publications.msss.gouv.qc.ca/msss/en/document->

Notes—*continued*

001327/; Laura Jennings, “Public Fat: Canadian Provincial Governments and Fat on the Web,” in *The Fat Studies Reader*, ed. Esther D. Rothblum, Sondra Solovay, and Marilyn Wann (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 91.

151. Lupton, *Fat*, 34.

152. Province of British Columbia, “BC Health Guide Online,” accessed April 4, 2017, <http://www.bchealthguide.org/kbase/list/all/default.htm>; Jennings, “Public Fat: Canadian Provincial Governments and Fat on the Web,” 93.

153. S. Rössner, “Obesity: The Disease of the Twenty-First Century,” *International Journal of Obesity and Related Disorders; Hampshire* 26, no. S4 (December 2002): S2–4.

154. Becky McCall, “Weight History Links Overweight/Obesity and Mortality,” *Medscape*, April 4, 2017, <http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/878152>; Dennis Thompson, “As Weight Goes Up, So Does Death Risk,” *Lincoln Journal Star*, April 3, 2017, http://journalstar.com/lifestyles/health-med-fit/as-weight-goes-up-so-does-death-risk/article_3ed3eed2-74e6-51a3-9117-86b59c1eb01b.html; Shereen Lehman, “Overweight, Obese Young Men at Increased Risk of Liver Disease,” *KFGO-790*, accessed April 4, 2017, <http://kfgo.com/news/articles/2017/mar/31/overweight-obese-young-men-at-increased-risk-of-liver-disease/>; Csaba P. Kovesdy, MD, Susan Furth, MD, and Carmine Zoccali, MD, “Obesity and Kidney Disease: Hidden Consequences of the Epidemic,” *Renal and Urology News*, March 8, 2017, <http://www.renalandurologynews.com/chronic-kidney-disease-ckd/world-kidney-day-2017-obesity-and-kidney-disease-hidden-consequences/article/642598/>.

155. Salynn Boyles, “Obesity Linked to Infertility in Women,” *WebMD*, December 11, 2007, <http://www.webmd.com/infertility-and-reproduction/news/20071211/obesity-linked-to>

Notes—*continued*

infertility-in-women; Joan Stephenson, “Obesity and Fertility,” *JAMA* 299, no. 3 (January 23, 2008): 279–279; Van Der Steeg et al., “Obesity Affects Spontaneous Pregnancy Chances in Subfertile, Ovulatory Women,” *Human Reproduction* 23, no. 2 (February 1, 2008): 324–28.

156. “BBC NEWS | Health | Call for Fertility Ban for Obese,” accessed April 4, 2017, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/5296200.stm>; Stephanie Paterson, Francesca Scala, and Marlene K. Sokolon, eds., *Fertile Ground: Exploring Reproduction in Canada* (McGill-Queen’s Press, 2014).

157. Meredith Nash, *Making “Postmodern” Mothers: Pregnant Embodiment, Baby Bumps and Body Image* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 62.

158. Meredith Nash, “Weighty Matters: Negotiating ‘fatness’ and ‘in-Betweenness’ in Early Pregnancy,” *Feminism & Psychology* 22, no. 3 (August 1, 2012): 307.

159. Tess Holliday, Instagram post, (March 17, 2016), <https://www.instagram.com/p/BDD5txcvOUw/>.

160. Tess Holliday, Instagram post, (May 30, 2016), <https://www.instagram.com/p/BGCdRa8POZ1/>.

161. Tess Holliday, Instagram post, (April 19, 2016), <https://www.instagram.com/p/BEZfvFcPObx/>.

162. Tess Holliday, Instagram post, (May 19, 2016), <https://www.instagram.com/p/BFmD612POQC/>.

163. Tess Holliday, Instagram post, (April 14, 2016), <https://www.instagram.com/p/BEMkUPlvOSx/?hl=en>.

164. Holliday, May 30, 2016.

Notes—*continued*

165. *Ibid.*

166. Tess Holliday, Instagram post, (June 14, 2016),
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BGpTpM1POaD/>.

167. Tess Holliday, Instagram post, (June 17, 2016),
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BGvhbOQvOWb/>.

168. Tess Holliday, Instagram post, (June 21, 2016),
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BG5z6l1vOR-/>.

169. Tess Holliday, Instagram post, (June 28, 2016),
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BHNwDgehNVK/>.

170. Tess Holliday, Instagram post, (July 10, 2016),
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BHqi2rkhdzbz/>.

171. Tess Holliday, Instagram post, (July 13, 2016),
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BHyBYmlBhYh/>.

172. Terri Peters, “Moms Post ‘Tree of Life’ Breastfeeding Photos: Here’s How You Can, Too,” *TODAY.com*, December 20, 2016, <http://www.today.com/parents/moms-make-unique-tree-life-breastfeeding-selfies-app-t106210>.

173. Beverly Rossman et al., “‘I Have Faith in My Milk’: The Meaning of Milk for Mothers of Very Low Birth Weight Infants Hospitalized in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit,” *Journal of Human Lactation* 29, no. 3 (August 1, 2013): 364.

174. Holliday, July 13, 2016.

175. Isaac West, “Queer Generosities,” *Western Journal of Communication* 77, no. 5 (October 2013): 540.

Notes—*continued*

176. Ibid.

177. Shackelford, “Community Post.”

178. “About Ashleigh,” *HOOD FEMME / ASHLEIGH SHACKELFORD*, accessed November 18, 2016, <http://www.blackfatfemme.com/about-ashleigh/>.

179. See Ashleigh Shackelford, “Why I’m Nonbinary But Don’t Use ‘They/Them,’” *Wear Your Voice*, July 7, 2016, <http://wearyourvoicemag.com/identities/why-im-nonbinary-but-dont-use-theythem> for an explanation of why Shackelford elects to use she/her pronouns rather than they/them pronouns as a queer nonbinary femme.

180. Kimberle Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989 (1989): 139–68; Patricia Hill Collins, “Intersectionality’s Definitional Dilemmas,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 41, no. 1 (2015): 2.

181. bell hooks, *Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (South End Press, 1981); Combahee River Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement,” 1977; Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell-Scott, and Barbara Smith, *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women’s Studies* (New York City, NY: Feminist Press, 1982).

182. Rita Kaur Dhamoon, “Considerations on Mainstreaming Intersectionality,” *Political Research Quarterly* 64, no. 1 (March 1, 2011): 231.

183. Sumi Cho, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall, “Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38, no. 4 (June 1, 2013): 795.

Notes—*continued*

184. Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex”; Kimberle Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–99.

185. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*; Judith Butler and Maxine Elliot Professor of Comparative Literature and Critical Theory Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (Taylor & Francis, 2011); Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 2011; Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*.

186. Slagle, “Queer Criticism and Sexual Normativity,” 133.

187. Slagle, “In Defense of Queer Nation,” Spring 1995.

188. *Ibid.*, 99.

189. Slagle, “Queer Criticism and Sexual Normativity,” 137; Berlant and Warner, “Sex in Public,” 548.

190. “Our Story,” *Wear Your Voice*, accessed February 27, 2017, <http://wearyourvoicemag.com/our-story>.

191. *Ibid.*

192. Shackelford, “Community Post”; Ashleigh Shackelford, “Why I’m Non-Binary But Don’t Use ‘They/Them,’” *Huffington Post*, February 21, 2017, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/why-im-nonbinary-but-dont-use-they-them_us_58ac875ee4b05e6b9b192c07; Ashleigh Shackelford, “Hoes Be Winning: The Case for Blac Chyna and Amber Rose’s Intersectional Feminism,” *For Harriet | Celebrating the Fullness*

Notes—*continued*

of *Black Womanhood*, accessed February 27, 2017, <http://www.forharriet.com/2016/02/hoes-be-winning-case-for-blac-chyna-and.html>.

193. Ashleigh Shackelford, “Nah, You Can’t Support #NoDAPL and Celebrate Thanksgiving,” *Wear Your Voice*, November 23, 2016, <http://wearyourvoicemag.com/more/social-justice/no-boo-boo-cant-support-nodapl-celebrate-thanksgiving-doesnt-work-way>.

194. Ashleigh Shackelford, “Queer Like Me: Breaking the Chains of Femme Invisibility,” *Wear Your Voice*, November 22, 2016, <http://wearyourvoicemag.com/identities/queer-breaking-chains-femme>.

195. Evette Dionne, “Fat Activists Explain Why Body Positivity Is Becoming Meaningless,” *Revelist.com*, January 24, 2017, <http://www.revelist.com/ideas/fat-acceptance-body-positivity/6632>.

196. Jaleesa M. Jones, “Lindy West Explains What the Body-Positive Movement Is Missing,” *USA TODAY*, June 3, 2016, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/life/entertainthis/2016/07/01/lindy-west-limitations-of-body-positivity/86594878/>.

197. *Ibid.*

198. bell hooks, “Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness,” in *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 2014), 145–54.

199. *Ibid.*, 149.

200. *Ibid.*, 152.

201. *Ibid.*

Notes—*continued*

202. Lester C. Olson, “On the Margins of Rhetoric: Audre Lorde Transforming Silence into Language and Action,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 83, no. 1 (February 1, 1997): 49–70.

203. *Ibid.*, 65.

204. Ashleigh Shackelford, “Bittersweet Like Me: Lemonade and Fat Black Femme Erasure,” *Wear Your Voice*, April 27, 2016,

<http://wearyourvoicemag.com/more/entertainment/bittersweet-like-lemonade-aint-made-fat-black-women-femmes>.

205. Ashleigh Shackelford, “Black Girl Interrupted: My Body, the World, and Nonbinary Me,” *Wear Your Voice*, November 18, 2016, <http://wearyourvoicemag.com/identities/black-girl-interrupted-nonbinary>.

206. Shackelford, “Queer Like Me”; Ashleigh Shackelford, “Fuck You, Pay Me: Reparations for Fat Black Bitches and Everything We Provide,” *Wear Your Voice*, May 25, 2016, <http://wearyourvoicemag.com/body-politics/fuck-pay-reparations-fat-black-bitches-everything-provide>.

207. Shackelford, “Black Girl Interrupted.”

208. *Ibid.*

209. *Ibid.*

210. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, “Form and Genre in Rhetorical Criticism An Introduction,” in *Form and Genre: Shaping Rhetorical Action* (Falls Church, VA: Speech Communication Association, 1978), 5.

211. Shackelford, “Fuck You, Pay Me.”

212. *Ibid.*

Notes—*continued*

213. Ibid.

214. Campbell and Jamieson, “Form and Genre,” 5.

215. Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall, “Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies,” 795.

216. Ashleigh Shackelford, “#BodyPositiveWeek: Body Positivity Doesn’t Exist Without Black Lives Matter,” *Wear Your Voice*, August 14, 2016, <http://wearyourvoicemag.com/body-politics/body-positivity-black-lives-matter>.

217 Ibid.

218. Ibid.

219. Ibid.

220. Ibid.

221. Ibid.

222. Ibid.

223. Ibid.

224. Shackelford, “Queer Like Me.”

225. Ibid.

226. Ibid.

227. Ibid.

228. R. Anthony Slagle, “In Defense of Queer Nation: From Identity Politics to a Politics of Difference,” *Western Journal of Communication* 59, no. 2 (June 1, 1995): 85–102.

229. Berlant and Warner, “Sex in Public,” 558.

230. Ibid.

231. Ibid.

Notes—*continued*

232. Ibid.

233. Annamarie Jagose, “Queer World Making: Annamarie Jagose Interviews Michael Warner,” *Genders* 31 (2000),
https://web.archive.org/web/20130512201335/http://www.genders.org/g31/g31_jagose.html.

234. Slagle, “Queer Criticism and Sexual Normativity,” 137.

235. Thomas K. Nakayama and Charles E. Morris III, “Worldmaking and Everyday Interventions,” *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking* 2, no. 1 (February 20, 2015): v.

236. Berlant and Warner, “Sex in Public.”

237. Ibid., 553.

238. Ibid., 548.

239. Ibid., 548, 558.

240. Ibid., 548.

241. Ibid., 553.

242. Ibid., 548.

243. Irene Costera Meijer and Baukje Prins, “How Bodies Come to Matter: An Interview with Judith Butler,” *Signs* 23, no. 2 (1998): 277.

244. Ibid.

245. Nakayama and Morris III, “Worldmaking and Everyday Interventions,” vi–vii.

246. Kevin Duong, “What Does Queer Theory Teach Us about Intersectionality?,”
Politics and Gender 8 (2012): 370–86.

247. Ibid., 382.

Notes—*continued*

248. Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” *Independent School* 49, no. 2 (Winter 1990): 31.
249. Isaac West, “Queer Generosities,” *Western Journal of Communication* 77, no. 5 (October 2013): 540.
250. Brittney Cooper, “Intersectionality,” ed. Lisa Disch and Hawkesworth, *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, February 1, 2016; Kimberlé W. Crenshaw, “From Private Violence to Mass Incarceration: Thinking Intersectionally about Women, Race, and Social Control,” *UCLA Law Review* 59 (2011): 1419–72.
251. hooks, “Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness,” 149.
252. *Ibid.*, 152.
253. *Ibid.*, 16.
254. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*; Butler and Butler, *Bodies That Matter*; Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 2011; Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*; Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*.
255. Slagle, “Queer Criticism and Sexual Normativity,” 137.
256. Rand, *Reclaiming Queer*.
257. Slagle, “Queer Criticism and Sexual Normativity.”
258. *Ibid.*, 135.
259. *Ibid.*, 137.
260. Meijer and Prins, “How Bodies Come to Matter,” 277.
261. Nakayama and Morris III, “Worldmaking and Everyday Interventions,” v.