

# Online fat acceptance and the body beautiful

May 11 2015

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Media and healthcare institutions have long commanded that the ideal and desirable body shape should be thin. If you are fat are you irresponsibly risking your health? Will you ever be able to look or feel beautiful? Will you truly enjoy citizenship? New research published in *Journal of Gender Studies* explores the cultural and political marginalisation of fat women and their perceived moral failure to be healthy. It follows the rising tide of the online fat acceptance (FA) movement and their strategies for challenging societal conventions of body image and beauty.

Online bloggers have gathered apace to oppose anti-fat conceptions of fat as deviant, morally and politically weak, lazy, unattractive and medically irresponsible. Women suffer the stigma of 'fatphobia' disproportionately to men. The FA [movement](#), like civil rights movements before, have formed a collective to combat the dominant assumptions of gender and [body image](#) via shared personal narratives. Afful and Ricciardelli set out to examine how FA bloggers' discussions contest ideals, avert negative clinical judgements and promote body diversity, empowerment, social inclusion, well-being and self-esteem. The authors followed fat activism blogs for 6 months and categorised dialogues into 'beauty' and 'body image' with a further look at themes such as consumer advocacy, objectification, cultural visibility, sexuality, media and discrimination. They observe the 'fatosphere' as a means to protest and resistance through mutual support networks enabling women to 'come out' proudly, promote acceptance and self-love, fight the beauty/fashion industry and demand to be seen and catered for.

The authors note that fat people are targeted by government institutions as an 'ideological risk' that make poor lifestyle choices and constitute a drain on resources. The FA movement serves to bridge the gap between cultural ideals and new inclusive political consciousness for [fat](#) people to enjoy society equally without humiliation. As one blogger urged, "instead of trusting that what culture tells you about what is normal must be true: look around. Diversity is normal. It is just not culturally valued. We can change that."

**More information:** "Shaping the online fat acceptance movement: talking about body image and beauty standards." *Journal of Gender Studies*, [DOI: 10.1080/09589236.2015.1028523](https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2015.1028523)

Provided by Taylor & Francis

Citation: Online fat acceptance and the body beautiful (2015, May 11) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-05-online-fat-body-beautiful.html>

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