

WHAT SHE WORE: THE DIALECTICS OF PERSONAL STYLE BLOGGING

By

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Abstract

This research examines personal style blogging to understand the strategies women interested in personal style employ online to participate in fashion culture. In 2009 and 2010 I interviewed thirty-five personal style bloggers during two separate one-month periods about their experiences as bloggers, fashion community-members, and consumers. Bourdieu's theories of taste and social spaces, as well as Swidler's theory of strategic interaction were used to analyze the data. I found that personal style bloggers engage three strategies to navigate the social field of fashion online: opposition, conditional involvement, and buy-in. Personal style bloggers self-consciously position themselves vis-a-vis the fashion industry to respond to the pressures of consumerism and self-commodification, and illustrate that the Internet facilitates production as well as consumption of women's fashion.

Introduction

In this paper I explore how personal style bloggers have developed strategies for navigating the consumerist pressures put forth by the U.S. fashion industry. I first observed personal style blogging in Summer 2009 when I found the website of two women who were blogging weekly about what they wore. The blog posts each had a few pictures, a source list for the items worn, and some descriptive text about the clothes ([Figure 1](#)). These women were outsiders to the fashion industry engaging in public dialogue about their passion. During the next two years of participant observation I found hundreds of women keeping personal style blogs. I saw that they used their blogs to navigate the field of fashion, with its ever changing trends and its consumer demands. These (mostly women¹) bloggers had fashion-centric identities, but only a small number worked with the fashion industry. Many of the women bloggers resisted being defined as mindless shoppers, driven to consume the latest trends. Instead they actively engaged solutions that enabled them to be both fashion producers and conscious consumers.

I interviewed 35 personal style bloggers in 2009 and 2010 to better understand the interactions between style blogging and consumerism. Sociological research has shown that fashion can be used as a tool for maintaining personal identity and displaying taste. Fashionable taste production has historically been a top-down process dominated by fashion industry insiders (Bourdieu, 1984; Rantisi, 2004; Trebay, 2010). Rantisi (2004) documented the path-dependent rise of New York City as the hub of women's wear design and manufacture in the U.S. throughout the 19th and 20th Centuries, where fashion institutions

¹ Of the approximately three hundred personal style bloggers I encountered, only five were male. I was not able to engage a male personal style blogger to participate as an interviewee.

such as Vogue Magazine, the Bowery district, Parsons School of Design, and the Council of Fashion Designers (CFDA) were all established. Fashion culture has been linked with consumerism because the fashion industry in the U.S. markets a steady stream of "must-have" products and promotes the consumption of fashionable goods as crucial to maintaining fashionable identity (Crane, 2000). I connect this research with findings from media studies that indicate blogging can be a tool for connecting people who share similar tastes, like a love of fashion, and for facilitating both production and consumption of media and goods (Blakley, 2001; Jenkins, 2006). Personal style blogs (PSBs), personal style bloggers (PSBers), and personal style blogging (PSBing) reside at the nexus of fashion, consumerism and Internet technology. I contribute to the previous research with my findings that personal style bloggers pursue agency in the world of passive consumer fashion by employing three strategies, which I have termed *opposition*, *conditional involvement*, and *buy-in* to respond to fashion culture online and challenge the dominant paradigm of fashion consumer culture in the U.S. These women are producing fashion, allowing them to lay claims to taste in particular ways that challenge traditional consumer practices.

Taste

This is a study of how women interested in fashion use the Internet to mediate consumer culture through personal style blogging. I borrow from Bourdieu (1984, 1985, 1989, 1992) and Swidler (1986) to show how women use personal *taste* in online *social spaces* to execute *cultural strategies* to both participate in and oppose commercial fashion. Taste, as defined by Pierre Bourdieu (1984, pg. 170), is "the capacity to produce classifiable practices and works, and the capacity to differentiate and appreciate these practices and products." Taste is dependent on social recognition, because the capacity to produce must be affirmed by the people who engage in those practices or purchase those products. When an individual, for example a self-defined fashionista working as an editor at *Harper's Bazaar* magazine, is socially affirmed in her ability to distinguish the most culturally valuable practices and products, she can also be said to have a high aptitude for managing her cultural capital. This ability or aptitude is *distinction*. Bourdieu (1984) demonstrated that cultural positioning related to art or fashion correlates with class positioning and consumer identity. While one component of taste is individual inspiration, the social structure that allows expression of that knowledge is the economic market for processes and products.

Individuals demonstrate fashion taste with the clothing they purchase and the manner in which they dress.

Fashionable dress was briefly covered in Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1984), but other sociologists have shown that modes of dress allow people to outwardly communicate information about their identity (Veblen, 1899; Simmel, 1904; Blumer, 1969; Hebdige, 1979, Crane, 2000). Fashion is a system of consumable goods and the processes of wearing those goods to stay socially relevant. Classical sociologists hypothesized that a key process of fashion was *imitation*, where "upper circles of society" set the fashion, and the rest of society conformed to that fashion (Kawamura, 2005, pg. 20; Veblen, 1957[1899]; Simmel 1957[1904]). Bourdieu (1984) problematized this direct relationship by demonstrating that there are several class subsets within society and imitation occurs in each: high society conforms to the fashion of high society, middle class society conforms to the fashion of the middle class, and working class society conforms to the fashion of necessity (Bourdieu, 1984). Additional sociologists have shown that subcultures, or groups that deviate from the normative high, middle and working class, use fashion to signal tribal affiliation, and project subcultural identity (Blumer, 1969; Hebdige, 1979). Contrasting somewhat with Bourdieu's claim that tastes coalesce within class categories, I will show how the personal style blogging community resists a cohesive definition of fashion. Women in this community complicate the role of taste because they represent different classes yet do not organize themselves along class lines. Rather, some PSBers fit seamlessly into the dictates of the fashion industry, while others position themselves as outsiders to the fashion industry, yet still participants in the dialogue on fashion culture.

Social Spaces and Internet Media

Fashion is both a social signifier and a social product (Blumer, 1969, Crane, 2000), therefore fashion communities can be understood as Bourdieusian social spaces. A social space is created by the interactions of humans, and can take any form, from a material structure to imagined realities. Social spaces exist everywhere that conscious beings exist in the world (Bourdieu, 1985, pg. 724), including online communities. Individuals experience social spaces through variable degrees of their power disbursed through fields. "A field consists of a set of objective, historical relations between positions anchored in certain forms of power," (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, pg. 16). The theory of fields and

social spaces holds that an individual's social experience is always relative to his/her position in society, circumstance, and culture (Bourdieu, 1989, pg. 16). Social spaces are also relational, in that they are defined by the relationships between individuals, between individuals and institutions, and between institutions themselves.

The social spaces explored in this paper are the online relationships among personal style bloggers and between bloggers and the institutions of commercial fashion. Many personal style bloggers are online because the medium of the Internet facilitates connections with other like-minded individuals and challenges established institutions, like those of fashion culture. Scholars have observed the effects of electronic media on fashion culture: "In the late twentieth century... the development of powerful electronic media with enormous audience penetration and postmodern imagery changed the diffusion of fashion and redefined issues of democratization," (Crane, 2000, pg.132). Women accessing fashion through online social media have developed "taste communities", or social groups organized around shared interests, as opposed to traditional organizational categories such as demographics (Blakley, 2001, pg. 12). With the coalescence of online fashion communities, the relationship between the consumer and the fashion industry has been fundamentally altered such that the producer and consumer are no longer two distinct and exclusive categories (Jenkins, 2006; Robinson, 2006; Baym, 2006; Gotved, 2006).

The breakdown of the boundary between production and consumption roles among Internet users has been documented in several studies of online communities (Hodkinson, 2007; Magnet, 2007; vanDijck, 2008; Postill, 2008; Elm, 2009; Lehdonvirta, 2010; Sayre et al. 2010). Participatory culture is a key aspect of Internet society, and interactive technologies have facilitated this breakdown. Generosity and creativity go hand-in-hand online with people donating their time, energy, and knowledge to Internet community projects (Shirky, 2010, pg. 56). In addition to being a participatory culture, Internet community is distinct from traditional community because it is primarily "composed of ideas, language, and social relationships," (Lehdonvirta, 2010, pg. 885). It's possible that the Internet's reliance on ideas and language leads to more salient tribal definitions. From Goths in England, to teens in Sweden, to deviant sexualities in the U.S., the Internet is where subcultures thrive (Hodkinson, 2007; Elm, 2009, Magnet, 2007). Chittenden (2010) argues that fashion bloggers are mostly youths using fashion to build identity,

but that definition may be too limited. My research builds towards an alternative analysis of fashion communities online, one that shows the diversity of fashion bloggers and their active engagement with fashion industry expectations.

The social space of personal style blogging requires expertise in several intersecting Boudieusian fields. The four key PSB fields are: technology, photography, narrative, and style. Technology, because the women use computers, software, and the Internet, photography, because they take pictures of themselves, narrative, because they write about their style choices, and style, because the pictures and written component are evidence of the bloggers' knowledge of fashion. This paper will show that the personal style blogging community is generous with its time, energy, and fashion knowledge, confirming the findings of Shirky (2010).

Cultural Strategies for Navigating Consumerism

Swidler's theory of a cultural understanding of societal mechanisms, or strategies, is a useful model for identifying patterns of interaction in the personal style blogging community. The term *strategy* indicates "a general way of organizing action... that might allow one to reach several different life goals," (Swidler, 1986, pg. 277). As personal style bloggers position themselves and their style knowledge in relation to fashion industry knowledge, they employ strategies to maintain individual identity, as well as inclusion in a fashion-centric community. Swidler's model for understanding culture, "rests on the fact that all real cultures contain diverse, often conflicting symbols, rituals, stories, and guides to action," (Swidler, 1986, pg. 277). Personal style blogging culture is situated at the intersection of conflicting stories and symbols. Is "pretty" good or evil? Does one have to spend extensively to be stylish? Are personal style bloggers fashionable feminists, misogynists, or something in between? Is consumerism good or bad for the community? These are some of the issues that personal style bloggers face with divergent opinions. Due to the variety of political possibilities, identifying the patterns that individuals fall within can bring clarity to cultural analysis.

When culture allows for a diversity of participants, it is at once both inclusive and unstable (Swidler, 1986; Surowiecki, 2004). Swidler argues that culture can also be settled or unsettled; unsettled lives are lived when "people are learning new ways of organizing individual and collective action,"

(Swidler, 1986, pg. 278). Personal style blogging has only recently become a cultural phenomenon. Some aspects of the community are beginning to show consistency, but most are still widely variable. The unsettled personal style blogging culture exists in relation to the hegemony of the U.S. fashion industry.

Kawamura (2005, pg. 9) argued that contemporary sociological analyses of fashion are rare because: "Fashion as a social phenomenon... is linked with outward appearance and women. Fashion is conceived as irrational because it changes constantly, has no content, works as an external decoration, and carries no intellectual elements." In spite of these normative assumptions, sociological studies of fashion consumerism reveal useful things about cultural dialectics. The market for consumable goods, specifically the fashion clothing market, has been shown to both dictate trend and respond to the desires of the consumer. "Industrial" fashion is mass market, manufacturer driven, and media responsive. "Street styles" are determined by urban subcultures (Crane, 2000), and, I argue, thrift store innovators.

Fashionable items are bought and sold in a variety of ways, some that conform to the classical consumer paradigm, and others that destabilize traditional consumerism, such as boycotts², discounted purchases made at outlet malls, merchandise that has been re-appropriated, and clothing that is used to signify unexpected messages about identity (Micheletti, 2003; Conroy, 1991; Fiske, 1989; Thompson and Haytko, 1997). In some fashion communities, such as those in the Japanese fashion districts of Shibuya and Harajuku, consumers take on the roles of trend promoters and clothing designers (Kawamura, 2006). Sociological studies such as these have shown that a consumer's trend forecasting ability and even consumer creativity can be valuable cultural capital. My research contributes to sociological studies of fashion consumerism by documenting some of the strategies that personal style bloggers use to respond to the consumer demands of the fashion industry.

Methods

Study Design

The study has three parts: one year of online ethnography in 2009 - 2010, a pilot study with seven interviewees in November 2009, and a full study with 28 interviewee members of the online personal style blogging community in August and September 2010 ([Appendix #2: Participant](#)

² A boycott is defined by Micheletti (2003) as an organized effort to patronize politically deserving retailers.

Demographics Table). For the participant observation portion of my online ethnography I followed over 80 PSBs (**Appendix #3: Personal Style Blogs and Fashion Websites Observed via RSS Feed**) and I frequently commented on the posts of community members. I kept RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds of blog subscriptions to stay informed about when style bloggers posted new content, usually within minutes of the post. I also kept a blog during the study, but I did not post pictures of what I was wearing. The majority of my blog content was concerned with my academic progress as a grad student.

For the interview portion of my online ethnography I interviewed 2 pools of participants. I recruited the first pool with a series of blog entries I posted to my blog: <http://radmephit.blogspot.com/>. PSBers tended to visit my blog in the spirit of reciprocity, because I left comments on their blog posts as a component of my online ethnography. If a blogger left a comment on my blog saying she was willing to be interviewed, I checked to make sure she met two required qualifications: each participant had to keep a blog and had to publish blog posts about what she had recently worn that included pictures. Some did not and were excluded from the study. For bloggers who qualified, email communication was used to set up the interview appointment. I recruited the second pool of participants directly by email. People in this pool were PSBers who met the qualifications, and had not volunteered to be in the study. If they replied to the email invitation indicating a willingness to participate, we continued with email communication until an appointment was set for the interview phone call.

My 2009 pilot study of 7 interviews served as the preliminary data source for the larger project. I interviewed bloggers in 45-minute blocks by telephone, asking them about themselves, their community, and their motivations for keeping personal style blogs. This audio-recorded data revealed emergent themes around which the interviewees expressed strong feelings, but only rarely discussed in the blogs themselves.

My 2010 interview data is my primary data source for understanding the strategic approaches of PSBers in the PSB social space. The audio-recorded interviews were done by telephone for practical purposes. Shuy (2002, pg. 540) offers a rationale for telephone interviewing: "If the research goal is limited to obtaining a completed interview in a short amount of time and in a cost effective manner, there is little reason to question that telephone interviewing should be favored over face-to-face interviews." For this study, time was not a constraint; cost efficiency was. Participants were located throughout the U.S.

and Canada, in a range of ages from 20 to 42, and in a range of occupations (Appendix 2)³. Face-to-face interviews were not feasible with the extremely small budget for this project.

Interview Philosophy

Though the study participants are prolific bloggers, posting at least weekly on average, I chose not to do written or online interviews. In my interactions with interviewees, I wanted to get off the screen and into an exchange of real time and real voice. Internet ethnographers note,

“Internet ethnographies are inherently multi-sited – even if you as the researcher stay onsite with a particular arena, and never follow links presented by community members. Although there are Internet groups/communities that limit communication to one online arena, one site, the network exchange itself is based on people sited in homes, offices, classrooms, public spaces, sitting in front of computers, and typing out their self-presentation from those dispersed sites,” (Gatson and Zweerink, 2004, pg. 180).

A few phone interviewees remarked, "It's nice to finally hear your voice," confirming the relationship built through computer-mediated communication is qualitatively different than voice or in-person communication. Computer-mediated and in-person communication also differed in that the PSBing community was characterized by positive affect. Telephone interviews permitted some distance from the norms governing online communication⁴. Recorded, anonymous phone interviews were chosen as the method for data collection in an attempt to engage women in free, extemporaneous conversation. As the interviewer I attempted to maintain a non-judgmental tone, to uphold the boundaries of safe space, yet push the discourse into uncharted territory.

³ Racial self-identification revealed 1 African American, 3 Asian Americans, 3 Hispanic, and 21 Caucasians among the respondents. Ranking the interviewees by highest completed education, there were 4 high school diplomas, 13 Bachelor's degrees, 8 Master's degrees, 1 Juris Doctorate, and 2 Doctorates. 8 interviewees were from the Eastern U.S., 9 from the Midwest, 4 from the South, 4 from the West and 2 from Canada. Two of my participants openly identify as gay/lesbian, one as bisexual, and the remainder as either straight or undeclared.

⁴ The desire to maintain positive community by resisting critique is a sensible strategy for the maintenance of group cohesion. This strategy is not good for research, since it has the effect of silencing talk about politically charged issues. Some issues, such as whether a blogging hierarchy exists, or whether style blogging encourages consumerism, are topics these women are aware of by the nature of their blogging activity, but rarely discuss online. Since areas of self-censorship reveal how women position themselves in relation to the community, it was important to get participants to open up about them.

Findings

The data I've gathered on personal style blogs reveals three strategies employed by bloggers in relation to the fashion industry's pressure on fashionable women to be consumers but not producers: *opposition*, *conditional involvement*, and *buy-in* to the fashion industry. Personal style blogger's patterns of participation can best be conceptualized as strategizing in an unsettled social space (Swidler, 1986). The personal style blog community is unsettled because it is a young and diverse community still in the process of self-definition. It contrasts with, and defines itself in relation to the well-established top-down hierarchy of the commercial fashion industry. Personal style blogging is a demonstration of taste, of claiming stylishness and appreciating the stylishness of others. I highlight the issue of consumerism in fashion, and the strategies women adopt for dealing with an advertising-saturated social space. Of the 28 women I interviewed, 16 hosted advertisements or sponsorships on their websites as of 12/9/10; 12 did not host advertisements. This split is one piece of evidence demonstrating that the interview participants manage the demands of commercial fashion in differing ways.

Personal style blogs, also known as "outfit of the day" blogs, rose to popularity in 2007 and have used the theme of fashion to expand beyond an audience of established friends and acquaintances. The genesis of personal style blogging was influenced by three factors. One factor was the founding of the wardrobe_remix group on Flickr.com. Flickr.com is a photo-hosting website, where users can choose from free or paid membership, depending on the level of functionality that is desired. The wardrobe_remix group (http://www.flickr.com/groups/wardrobe_remix/) had 16,433 members as of 10/11/10, and functions as a highly regulated online location where site members post pictures of what they're wearing. A second influential factor was the rise of street style blogs. Street style blogs are written by one or more photographers who roam a geographical location, taking pictures of people they judge to be stylish. One well-known street style blogger is Scott Schuman of The Sartorialist (<http://thesartorialist.blogspot.com/>); his site has been in operation since September of 2005. A third co-synchronous online phenomenon was that bloggers who included pictures of themselves in their general topic blogs began receiving feedback that posts about what they were wearing were of particularly high interest to their audiences.

The personal style blog genre is characterized by women's ownership of the means of production; individual women (and a few men) chronicle what they will wear and frame their style choices

with photography, blog design, and the written word. They are empowered to do so because of conviction that they possess the requisite fashion taste and distinction. PSBers maintain their blogs from their own computers, using their own cameras and self-obtained knowledge of blogging technology. The sole-ownership characteristic causes the work of PSBers to stand apart from conventional fashion reporting, wherein the following professions are held by separate entities: designer, retailer, model, stylist, photographer, hair and make-up artists, magazine art director, and fashion journalist. Historically fashion information was communicated uni-directionally, from the fashion professionals to the consumer. When individual women participate in personal style blogging they become both fashion trend producers and trend consumers.

Environment of Online Fashion

The four types of fashion websites commonly found online are: personal style blogs, *fashion insider websites*, *fashion social media websites*, and *street style blogs*. My findings deal only with personal style blogs, but a brief summary of other fashion websites can be helpful for understanding the environment of online fashion. The fashion industry's web presence is characterized by *fashion insider websites* such as [whowhatwear.com](http://www.whowhatwear.com), or [glamour.com](http://www.glamour.com). Fashion insider website content mimics or replicates fashion magazine content. Posts tend to be about clothing and beauty products that cost hundreds or thousands of dollars. *Social media websites*, like [Facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com), are all-in-one websites, where users can easily connect with like-minded people. The Facebook equivalent for online fashion would be one of multiple fashion social media websites: the [Flickr.com wardrobe_remix](http://www.flickr.com/groups/wardrobe_remix/) group, [chictopia.com](http://www.chictopia.com), [lookbook.nu](http://www.lookbook.nu), or [weardrobe.com](http://www.weardrobe.com). Each of these sites was created specifically as places for fashion devotees to congregate. A third type of fashion website is the *street style blog*, mentioned earlier as a contributing factor to the genesis of personal style blogging. Street style bloggers are essentially fashion "coolhunters" (Gladwell, 1997). They are photographers who take pictures of stylish people on the street, and then publish those pictures to their blogs. These blogs are uni-directional, like fashion magazines, with the photographer claiming a substantial amount of taste.

Personal style blogs are unique in the online fashion environment because they involve women writing about themselves, claiming taste often while wearing items from budget retailers such as Target,

Old Navy, Forever 21, and secondhand stores, where prices for individual items range from \$1.00 - \$40.00 (Appendix 3). The 2008 overall median individual income for U.S. females aged 16 and over in the United States with a Bachelor's degree was \$39,571, so it is likely that many of the women keeping PSBs are in income brackets with limited spending money (US Census Bureau, 2008). This was borne out in the interview data as well, with most interviewees working in middle to working class occupations such as administrative assistant, teacher, and college student (Appendix 2). They purchase clothing that approximates neither the quality, nor expense of the content on most fashion insider websites. Yet through their blogs, PSBers are contributors to the fashion field. This is one way that Bourdieu's (1984) conceptual frame of cultural and economic capital fails to fit. "The correlations Bourdieu draws between class and the consumption of fashion cannot account for the centrality of fashion in the life of working-class women," (Rocamora, 2002, pg.357). When personal style bloggers are not fashion industry affiliated, they demonstrate that members of the working class can also be knowledgeable members of the culture of fashion. Women of the upper, middle, and working class, both fashion industry affiliated and not, were all found to be strategically participating in fashion dialogue online.

Strategy #1: Opposition

One strategy that personal style bloggers employed for resisting the consumerist demands of commercial fashion via the fashion blogging community was opposition. The strategy of opposition consists of recognizing the power of the fashion industry to shape cultural practice while rejecting fashion industry values. Women using this strategy stated that the fashion industry was too trend-focused, too luxurious, too consumerist, and only valued a limited beauty ideal. In spite of these oppositions, these women still kept fashion blogs. The opposition strategy for community involvement maintains principled ideological critique alongside participation in the public fashion conversation.

Some women employing the opposition strategy for personal style blogging self identified as feminist. Feminists have critiqued fashion as overly concerned with personal beauty, "the norm for which is created by men in a male-dominated society," (Kawamura, 2005, pg. 11). Beauty norms observed in fashion magazines and on runways are almost uniformly young, white, emaciated, and wealthy. Opposition strategists that I spoke with seemed less concerned with the origins of these norms, or less

willing to attribute them wholly to a male-dominated society, and more focused on how they could employ activist strategy integrated within and around their personal style.

Several interviewees expressed that they were drawn to the community because they thought of themselves as stylish, but didn't see themselves represented in traditional fashion media channels.

Faith (on the topic of her blog): It became less about my life and more about fashion, I guess. I hate the word fashion.

Interviewer: Why do you hate the word fashion?

Faith: It seems just kinda higher-end than what I am. I don't know. I mean, I think everybody has a different definition of fashion. Like, I think style and fashion are different. I don't claim to be fashionable. I just, I have a style and I put it out on the Internet. I just feel like "fashion" seems like I should be some sort of pro and I would never claim that.

For Faith, the fashion industry represents the authority in the field of fashion. Fashion is aligned with professionalism and luxury. She sees herself as having a valuable opinion about personal aesthetics, but not necessarily about "fashion" because of these connotations.

The oppositional strategy was also evident in how some PSBers rejected consumerism. Lily stated her occupation as a writer, and professed a deep interest in fashion in spite of having a limited budget for clothing. She resolves the disjuncture between her cultural and economic capital by making most of her purchases at thrift and used clothing stores.

Lily: When I look through magazines, I never think 'oh I have to go get that jacket.' I'll be like 'oh, I see what that can look like and now I'm going to go find something for three dollars that I can wear that way.' And that's what's interesting about clothing to me. I would feel really kinda lame if I actually did that, if I just went out and bought the thing and was like 'wow, now I have it.' I mean it doesn't feel very creative to me.

She went on to state that her style changes constantly. Items she once loved will fall out of her favor in a matter of weeks. Clothing advertisers don't approach Lily with website sponsorship deals because she doesn't shop at their stores. Shopping only at used clothing stores challenges her to innovate, to create the fashionable outfits she wants to wear with used items for minimal cost. This is not uncommon among personal style bloggers, and reflects a broader social trend. Corresponding with the strained economic

climate in the U.S., the Salvation Army, a used clothing store, reported an eight percent increase in sales from 2007 to 2009 (Little, 2010).

Like Lily's, Rose's blog doesn't contain any ads. Instead it has a graphic that states, "Ad-Free Blog" (Figure 2). When the graphic is clicked on, the browser redirects to a site with the following content,

"By using this icon on my website I am stating...

1. That I am opposed to the use of corporate advertising on blogs.
2. That I feel the use of corporate advertising on blogs devalues the medium.
3. That I do not accept money in return for advertising space on my blog."

(adfreeblog.org, accessed 10/22/10).

For members of the ad-free network, the question of consumerism is fundamentally politicized, and these bloggers refuse to host ads as a method for anti-consumerist, anti-advertising action. Anti-consumerist fashion bloggers go ad-free and some participate in the Great American Apparel Diet (GAAD). The GAAD website represents an alliance of men and women who refuse to buy new clothing for a year. The GAAD is an extreme form of a boycott, while other bloggers boycotted a specific store like Target for backing a political candidate who opposes same-sex marriage (Micheletti, 2003; Montopoli 2010). Fashion bloggers who go ad-free or participate in boycotts are not exiled from the community. They are a socially active contingent within the personal style blogging network.

Personal style bloggers pointed out other ways they feel they do not fit within the "fashion industrial complex," as some have termed the old guard system of fashion designers, retailers, and media professionals (Drake, 2001). PSBers report there is no room for "real" women's bodies in that context. PSBers admit they find magazine content, and the high art evidenced in the most *avant garde* fashion, to be inspirational. However, for women who see themselves as fashionable, but taller, bigger, smaller, older, or in some way different than the hegemonic view of beauty presented on industry runways, mannequins and magazines, the personal style blogging community offers a richer vein of inspiration. Indeed personal style blogs range from a few that fit easily within the fashion industry norms, to many kept by women that are differently raced, sized, aged, and sexually oriented.

Hope is one such blogger. In this quote she relates how she was drawn to blogging after finding her first fashion blogger who unapologetically did not meet the fashion industry's size ideals:

Hope: I was so excited about her blog ([Figure 3](#)), because I had never seen a fashion blog before and it was just these pictures of what she wore... and she looked like a normal person. She's very beautiful, but you know, not like what you see in a magazine. She had a normal, there's no typical figure, but she wasn't like a supermodel, you know? So seeing someone with a real body rocking really cute vintage-y outfits was just so awesome and empowered. She made such a huge difference in my life. Just seeing that these women who didn't "measure up" to what the media wants you to believe is beautiful, really was awesome and inspired me.

Figure 3 is of the blogger that Hope refers to in this quote. Hope uses the words empowered and inspired to communicate how meaningful it was for her to see a "real" woman creating fashionable content online. She critiques fashion industry publications, implying that the use of "supermodel" bodies alienates most women. For Hope, getting dressed is about what works for all bodies, not just uniformly tall, thin models.

The opposition strategy can be liberating for the bloggers who use it. [Figure 4](#) shows a personal style blogger using the Ad-Free logo, talking about eating vegan lasagna, and linking to a project about "Sticking With Last Year's Model" that encourages people to use the electronics they own until they no longer work, rather than upgrading with each new product issue. These are all political claims the blogger is making alongside her claim to fashion-centric taste. It may have been difficult for opposition strategists to claim a fashionable subjectivity and simultaneously reject the hegemonic view of beauty, consumerism, or luxury. However, this strategy has been observed to attract a loyal audience amongst personal style bloggers. Lily, Faith, Rose, and Hope are idealists in their engagement with fashion culture. By opposing the fashion industry, yet claiming personal style, they maintain subjectivity that is passionate about fashion, as well as openly politically conscious.

Strategy #2: Conditional Involvement

The second strategy for active participation in fashion culture revealed in my interview data was conditional involvement with the fashion industry. Conditional involvement consists of the belief that the system is flawed, but ultimately acceptable. Women using this strategy are appreciative of the art and creativity of fashion, and only moderately critical of consumerism. They tend to feel that the marriage of

mass market and high fashion promotes trend accessibility, which compensates for the fashion industry's elitism. The affordability of on-trend clothing, known as "fast fashion" (Doeringer and Crean, 2006), makes it possible to maintain a fashion-forward identity, somewhat irrespective of class, race, sexual orientation, age, or size. These bloggers tended to be receptive to hosting advertising on their blogs, but constrained this decision within certain limits. **Figure 5** shows a "Fatshion" blogger, a personal style blogger who is critical of the industry's reliance on thinness as normative. This blogger also hosts a large advertisement on the right-hand side of her website, indicating her acceptance of some commercial aspects of fashion. Conditional involvement bloggers employed strategies like those in Figure 5 to adapt to some fashion norms while challenging others.

Kendi's kendieveryday.blogspot.com blog (**Figure 6**) is frequently referenced and linked to by the personal style bloggers and is a good example of the conditional involvement strategy. Her blog has advertisements and she makes commissions on purchases made with her sponsors. Her blog disclaimer says that her blog content is "never influenced by advertisers or an affiliate partnership, and never will be," and the blogging community seems to take her at her word. The ads, some corporate and some for independent companies, give the appearance that she is fully comfortable with the consumer mandates traditionally associated with the fashion industry. Yet there is another dimension to this blog apart from advertising and conspicuous consumption. Kendi has also organized a group-oriented online phenomenon that has more in common with the oppositional strategists (click on the title to open a browser and visit the website):

[Kendi's 30 for 30](#)

Here are the rules:

1. Pick 30 items or less from your closet. Shoes are included, but accessories and jewelry are not.
2. Remix the 30 items into 30 different outfits.

That's it! Well not entirely so...

3. Don't shop for 30 days.

Why in the world would I add insult to injury, you ask? Because of two reasons: 1) so you'll learn to shop your own closet and 2) so you'll appreciate it.

The “30 for 30 Remix Challenge” is a practice that Kendi first blogged about in Winter 2009. For 30 days she followed the rules she had set for herself, and reported her progress with regular blog posts. Many members of her blog audience left comments on her posts volunteering to join in the challenge if she decided to do it again. She held a Summer 2010 challenge with 70 blogger participants and a Fall 2010 “30 for 30 Remix Challenge” with 337 participants. Kendi fits within the conditional involvement strategy because she’s not opting out of consumer culture, but she does take periodic, structured breaks from consumer culture. These breaks serve as time for reflection and departure from the traditional consumer role.

Personal style bloggers employ conditional involvement strategies in a variety of ways. Some bloggers, like Eden, a manager in the Biotechnology industry, are critical of the tie between fashion advertising and consumerism yet they also benefit from the consumption of fashionable items. Eden has a small online shop where she sells handcrafted hats. Her personal style blog exposes her merchandise to an audience of fashionable women. Here’s what she said about Kendi’s 30 for 30, as it relates to balancing consumerism and fashionable identity:

Eden: The media and advertising just fills our heads with these notions of you know, you’re not adequate unless you have this... I think [the 30 for 30 is] a great way to kind of break us out of that thinking. I like a lot of these blogs where someone has set a budget or a challenge for themselves, or you know, not buying anything for a year or six months, or whatever it is. I think it’s good. It encourages people to play along, and it’s an interesting challenge, but also it encourages creativity with the stuff that you already own. Most of which is still wearable long after people tell you that the trend is over. Even though the industry does not want you to know that.

In this statement it’s clear that Eden is conscious of the power of media and the pressures of the fashion industry. On the other hand, with her side business of millinery, she appreciates creativity in fashion, and personal fashion challenges. She’s conditionally involved with the fashion industry because she is both a producer of fashionable items for sale, and a politicized consumer.

In the personal style blogging community Kendi asked some of the participating "remixers," as they are known, why they were motivated to follow the rules of her challenge. Here's what one remixer, Keira had to say:

Keira: I have a chronic bank-account-degenerating condition characterized by a nagging, insatiable need for new stuff. Even with a closet full of brand new clothes, I often find myself standing in my closet with that all too familiar feeling of having nothing to wear. I think to myself, "if I just had [insert item of the moment] my closet would finally be complete and I'd never need to shop again." But shortly after splurging on that missing piece, I discover another "must-have" and the inner-monologue-and-subsequent-retail-binge cycle starts all over again.

Kendi's challenge, and Keira's experience of participation, demonstrate awareness that the desire to maintain a fashionable identity is confluent with consumerist pressures. In this pressured space, personal style bloggers like Kendi innovate group challenges, which they can use to address perceived fashionable identity needs. Eden and Keira's statements reveal a structural problem with fashionable identity and consumerism, which they both counteract with the practice of remixing and re-wearing the items of clothing they own. However, while Eden discusses consumerism with an acknowledgment of structural forces, Keira has internalized the habits of consumerism and describes her relationship as one of entrapment and even disease. These are two differing permutations of the conditional involvement strategy, both of which balance critique with acceptance of the fashion industry.

Women like Keira reveal vulnerability to the pressures of consumerism on their blogs. The support of the personal style blogging community is particularly important in the context of this vulnerability. A supportive network is one of several reasons that personal style bloggers value community. These women also report that participation helps them stay connected to their friends and/or has helped them to make new friends. Haley claimed her main motivation for personal style blogging was the chance to read other people's blogs. Although people can read personal style blogs without keeping their own, this behavior is generally looked down upon in Internet communities. It's labeled with the derogatory term "lurking," which refers to reading without contributing original content. Haley's contribution to personal style blog network maintenance was to keep her own blog and comment on

others. Lily stated that interesting comments cause the feeling of community. Morgan, a parent and student from Frisco, TX said she would rather have one meaningful comment than a page full of comments that are just platitudes. For Haley, Lily, Morgan, and others, personal style blogging was important because it connected them with other fashionable women who they found inspiring, interesting and supportive. These connections may help sustain acceptance of the fashion industry, as shared appreciation for industry products is something the women have in common.

Many of the women I interviewed placed a premium on the experience of community as their reason for involvement with personal style blogs, and it's important to note that the community they honored was centered on a shared love of fashion, rather than a shared love of blogging. There are two ways to understand the appreciation of fashion community, and they both connect with Bourdieu's social spaces. By highly valuing the experience of community, study participants acknowledge the importance of participation in the group. Meaning for these women may be fortified by the fact that as they contribute blog posts, photos, and comments, they are constructing a shared social space. As Bourdieu notes, "the essential part of the experience of the social world and of the act of construction that it implies take place in practice, below the level of explicit representation and verbal expression," (Bourdieu, 1985, pg. 728). It is through PSBers recognition of one another that they re-affirm the social value of fashion. It is only through acknowledgment of the other that the social space can be perceived.

The second way that style bloggers might experience community is as an aid to self-definition. Bloggers formulate a degree of identity through inclusion (Chittenden, 2010). Identity is in flux, for, "The social world is, to a large extent, what the agents make of it, at each moment; but they have no chance of un-making and re-making it except on the basis of realistic knowledge of what it is and what they can do with it from the position they occupy within it," (Bourdieu, 1985, pg.734). Women like Eden, with her online store and her critique of fashion media, see the personal style blogging community as a place where they can both market goods and create fashionable identity through wardrobe remixes. Meaningful interaction holds importance for the bloggers because through that interaction they see their positionality, and better comprehend the strategies that are available. As Kendi saw her 30 for 30 Remix Challenge grow from 70 to 330 participants, it likely affected how she perceived her relative power and meaning with respect to the greater community. Interaction is the basis for possibilities to un-make and re-make the

social space of personal style blogging. Opportunities to further understand the self and the feeling of agency in defining the social space are two dialectical functions that community engagement serves.

Bloggers who were conditionally involved with the fashion industry also tended to be reservedly open to hosting advertisements on their blogs. Grace is a student in San Francisco, CA working on a Master's degree. Grace's stance on the increasing commercialization of style blogs was that it's only appropriate when the blogger is careful not to compromise her values. She said she lost respect for and stopped reading the posts of a fellow style blogger when that blogger began hosting ads for American Apparel on her site, because she judged the retailer to have unethical manufacturing practices, employment policies, and misogynistic advertisements. Grace was nonetheless open to a partnership with an advertiser on her own site, so long as the company had politically reputable business practices. Haley and Eden also hosted ads on their websites, but in keeping with the conditional involvement strategy, Haley's ads were only for independent jewelry and clothing designers, and Eden's single ad was for her own side business as a specialty milliner.

Grace, Haley, and Eden exercise some power as selective consumers. As previously shown, most personal style bloggers I interviewed and observed shop at middle to low-end retail shops (industrial fashion) and/or thrift stores (street style fashion) (Crane, 2000). Not incidentally, these are the two fashion markets that are most responsive to consumer demand. For example, when stylish consumers began wearing legwarmers on their blogs, some "fast fashion" retailers started carrying legwarmers. The street style consumer that wants legwarmers could make them by knitting or sewing a pair, modify some other item of clothing to create legwarmers, or find a pair at a thrift/used clothing store. Personal style blogs, by their public nature, provide a channel for retailers to understand how their products are being worn. The bloggers exercise power when they praise a highly functional skirt, or talk about feeling perfectly dressed in a pair of jeans. Unbiased product reviews, selective relationships with advertisers, and politically conscious consumer practices are three ways that personal style bloggers exercised power as consumers. [Figure 7](#) shows a personal style blogger praising the functionality of a dress that she styles four ways, giving Ross, the retail store where she bought the dress, some good press in the process. This supports Jenkins' (2006) claim that Internet users are both producers and consumers. Fashion trend creation, product reviews, and daily documentation of their outfits are all ways that personal style

bloggers produce fashion, as well as consuming it. Conditional involvement with fashion industry practices and products is a strategy for marshalling personal market power, in contrast to the buy-in strategy, which allows corporations more latitude in interactions with bloggers.

Women practicing the conditional involvement strategy in the personal style blogging community did so in consistent ways. They identified methods to mediate the pressures of consumerism, they valued friendships they made within the blogging network, and they formed relationships selectively with advertisers. The conditional involvement approach recognizes that not all advertisers/retailers are worth partnering with, and not all fashion industry values are agreeable, but that the industry is not universally bad either. These women were highly aware of a complex network of small and large brands, and carefully navigated which partnerships would damage or shore up the trust that they shared with the greater blogging community.

Strategy #3: Buy-In

Personal style bloggers using the buy-in strategy were satisfied with, and were either a part of, or were trying to gain entree into the fashion industry. They believed that the fashion industry was exclusive, but that they fit the criteria for entrance. These women were comfortable with corporate sponsorship of their blogs. In this way, the term "Buy-In" holds two meanings: these women bought into the authority of the fashion industry and they also accepted the industry's commercial rewards. Women using the buy-in strategy practiced Bourdieusian distinction (Bourdieu, 1984), with limited critique of class inequality. I report on personal style bloggers who were journalists, fashion designers and fashion models. They employed an individualized, control-oriented strategy towards personal style blogging.

When women engaged in the buy-in strategy were asked why they participate in personal style blogging they communicated that a passion for fashion was intrinsic to their identity, or that fashion blogging might have economic benefits. Lena, a student blogger from New Jersey said she has always been someone who dressed up and took pride in how she looked. Dressing up makes her feel better about herself and blogging about it seemed like a natural extension of that joy. Paige, working in marketing in Warrenton, VA stated that she aspires to blog as a part time job. She conceptualizes personal style blogging as a marketing tool; a blogger can show how to best wear an item of apparel, and

thus promote clothing trends to the benefit of both retailers and blogger. **Figure 8** is of a website that represents a network of personal style and lifestyle bloggers who are looking to partner with corporate sponsors.

Ava was another woman I encountered who used her blog to generate jobs as a personal stylist. Here's her story of how she became a personal style blogger:

Ava: I have been blogging for three years and I got involved because I'm a snappy dresser. I had a coworker who approached me and said, "You're a great dresser and I want you to make me over." And I said OK. So for starters I wrote up some basic guidelines that I thought she should be following and wasn't following, and I gave them to her. She read them and said, "These are really fantastic. You should put these on a blog." So I did.

Ava believed she knew about style and that her knowledge was a valuable commodity; she had taste. Her story shows that her authority on the topic of personal style, distinction, was relational. Accordingly, she has one of the highest subscription bases amongst the personal style blogs studied. Ava started blogging as a vehicle to amplify her voice and promote stylish processes.

Bloggers using all three strategies of opposition, conditional involvement, and buy-in confirmed the presence of a hierarchy in the personal style blogging community or a sense that there are "small, medium, and large blogs." The buy-in strategy is particularly conducive to an awareness of hierarchy. Personal style bloggers named several factors for hierarchical ordering in the social space, such as: blog design, presence or absence of ads, corporate sponsorships, length of time a blog had been in existence, photo quality, model quality, writing quality, responsiveness to audience, number of followers, number of average comments received, proximity to fashion industry, and frequency of sponsored giveaways. Buy-in strategy bloggers tended to excel in many of these categories. Ava, for example, has a well designed blog, one of the longest running blogs, a high number of followers, was an excellent writer, and frequently replied to comments on her posts.

Hierarchy also becomes especially salient when a charismatic leader can be identified within a community. Most of the women I interviewed mentioned Jessica Schroeder, the New York City blogger behind whatiwore.tumblr.com (**Figure 9**) as one of the first personal style bloggers they began following.

Her influential role in the proliferation of personal style blogs connects well with the concept of mystery of ministry put forth by Bourdieu.

“The mystery of ministry is one of those cases of social magic in which a thing or a person becomes something other than what it or the person is, so that a person... can identify, and be identified, with a set of persons. The mystery of ministry culminates when the group can only exist through delegation to a spokesperson who will make it exist by speaking for it, i.e., on its behalf and in its place. The circle is then complete: the group is made by the person who speaks in its name, who thus appears as the source of the power which he or she exerts on those who are its real source,” (Bourdieu, 1985, pg. 740).

The personal style blogging community has not yet coalesced into stability, so this circle is not yet complete for Jessica, although, she does otherwise fit the description of a charismatic leader. While she is not truly a pioneer like Susie Bubble of stylebubble.com, Jessica was one of the first women to popularize personal style blogging. Many bloggers credit her with providing the inspiration for starting their own style blogs, because although she's young, tall, thin, and white like most commercial fashion models, her beauty and style are accessible, which is weighty cultural capital in the style blogging community.

Jessica, as the blogger behind whatiwore.tumblr.com, publicly navigates many of the decisions the blogging community has to make, particularly with respect to advertising. In the early days of her blog she primarily wore vintage clothing, which empowered many bloggers to publicly acknowledge that they too shop at used, thrift and vintage clothing stores. Her advice on how to start a blog is filed under “Pro Tips” and begins from the assumption that all fashion bloggers will want to grow their blogs to have as many readers as possible. She was one of the organizers of the first ever Weardrobe.com conference, which was by invitation only. After she discontinued her alliance with Weardrobe.com, she formed partnerships with enough sponsors to become a full-time blogger by occupation; including lucrative relationships with Ann Taylor Loft, Tory Burch, Gap, Mavi, Fossil, and Coach. Smaller companies who have commercial relationships with whatiwore.tumblr.com include Market Publique, ModCloth.com,

ShopMamie.com, Beso.com, French Kande, and Lesley Evers. She is also publishing a book based on her blog.

One retailer that was an early adopter in forming sponsorship partnerships with personal style bloggers was modcloth.com (Figure 10). Modcloth.com is a women's clothing website that established brand identity by allying themselves with personal style bloggers. To facilitate this alliance, they have maintained a modcloth.com style blog as part of their website, co-sponsored style blogging conferences, and named dresses they sell after some of the notable personal style bloggers. As part of their web content, they do a series called "Blogger of the Moment" to profile personal style bloggers.

Whatiwore.tumblr.com was an early Modcloth.com Blogger of the Moment. Modcloth.com blogger Turi wrote about Jessica, "She's the kind of person who can figure out a way to style anything and make it look fabulous," (Turi, 2009). Turi's quote calls to mind Bourdieusian taste, where members of the personal style blogging community, in this case the blogger-friendly retailer, affirm the taste of others. Many bloggers I interviewed reported hearing about one initial style blogger like Jessica, going to visit that person's website, then finding other bloggers like her by clicking through links on her blog. Alternately, when bloggers found another blogger interviewed, either in a local news article or on a site like Modcloth.com's blog, they could use information from the interview to learn about the community. Here's what Jessica said about the online fashion sites she visited in September 2009:

"I'm a user at wardrobe.com, and they have daily style posts from girls all over the world (which is another great way to find new bloggers). I've been following Liebearlene Vintage and Sally Jane Vintage for over a year. Some other favorites are Kansas Couture, Style Pill, and Casey's Musings (great vintage style!). I also like The Sartorialist, Altamira and Stylesightings," (Jessica interviewed by Turi, 2009).

Finding the "blogroll" (a list of favorite sites) of a ministry of mystery like Jessica can be especially powerful in determining a blog community hierarchy. Jessica's taste for fashion has generated a wide and appreciative audience of bloggers, small businesses, and corporations. When she in turn recognizes the taste of other influential bloggers, her endorsement holds some authority, and it benefits Modcloth.com when they amplify Jessica's message.

In terms of recognition, for a personal style blogger employing the buy-in strategy to partner with a corporate sponsor would rank among the highest achievements. Partnership with a corporate sponsor (Figure 11) might enable blogging to become a full-time career, and a few of these partnerships have been documented in the fashion industry press:

“Jane Aldridge, the 17-year-old Texas debutante who writes Sea of Shoes, designed a capsule collection for Urban Outfitters; London-based 25-year-old Susie Lau of Susie Bubble, one of the earliest personal style blogs, is now an editor at Dazed & Confused; San Franciscan Liz Cherkasova of Late Afternoon has modeled for American Apparel, Nasty Gal Vintage and Tobi, and Krystal Simpson of What Is Reality Anyway, has guest designed for Quiksilver,” (Corcoran, 2010).

The buy-in strategy requires cooperation with fashion industry norms, the most dedicated approach to blogging, and a healthy amount of luck. On the one hand, the industry recognized that to stay current in 2010 they had to incorporate social media into their business practices. On the other hand, there are only so many seats at a runway show, and the fashion industry is by no means a meritocracy or a democracy.

Discussion and Conclusion

This research described several ways that women online strategically navigate the demands of commercial fashion: opposition, conditional involvement, and buy-in. Women who used the oppositional online strategy towards commercial fashion tended to be openly critical of the industry. They claimed the industry was too luxurious, consumerist, and/or sizeist. In response they bought used clothing, made their own clothing, had ad-free blogs, or blogged about how they didn't fit into the demands of commercial fashion. Women using the conditional involvement online strategy did some of these things as well, but they tended to be only moderately critical of commercial fashion. Conditional involvement strategists took periodic breaks from clothes shopping, but otherwise were steady consumers, and they tended to follow all different types of blogs, from very political to very commercial. They hosted ads on their blogs but only from small businesses. Some were frequent shoppers, but only from companies that practiced social responsibility. The buy-in online strategists embraced commercial fashion and either worked within the industry, or were in pursuit of better ties with the industry. These women hosted ads from small

businesses and large corporations, they tended to more aggressively pursue sponsorships, and they worked as journalists, marketers, models, or stylists.

My research supports Swidler's (1986) claims that individuals use cultural strategies to navigate aspects of life, and in this research the women were using the Internet to create personal style. The women I interviewed ranged from poor students to comparatively well-off lawyers, but all were motivated to pursue fashionable-identity, in contradiction to Bourdieu's (1984) claim that the working class wears the fashion of necessity. All of the women I interviewed had fashion taste. This finding seems to refute Bourdieu's claim that only a rare few in each class of society have taste. Bourdieu's (1984) basic model of taste was a good frame for my study, in that taste is the awareness and production of fashionable products and processes. I contribute to this framework with results indicating that it may be the case that many are capable of taste. My findings also confirm Bourdieu's (1985, 1992) model of social spaces and fields, as the women in the study were actively involved in defining the social space of personal style blogs, and each individual's authority in the fields of photography, design, narrative and style was variable relative to her position.

I refute the claim that women who maintain personal style blogs are mostly young and motivated by the need to define their personal identity (Chittenden, 2010). I observed personal style bloggers of various ages, actively engaged in problem solving the demands of fashion consumerism. My findings confirm that creativity is a form of capital in fashion culture and, as scholarship has increasingly demonstrated, Internet practice as well (Jenkins, 2006). Personal style bloggers are a particularly active group of producer/consumers. Blog maintenance as a barrier to community participation is a time consuming requirement. Particularly for those women who were critical of the fashion industry, monetary rewards were few and far between. Yet all the women I interviewed were active producers of new web content about fashion, as well as consumers of other personal style blog content, and consumers of fashionable clothing. In this way they support Jenkins' (2006) claim that Internet users are both producers and consumers, and that this user profile challenges traditional commercial institutions. Shirky's (2010) claim, "Amateur media is different from professional media. Services that help us share things thrive precisely because they make it easier and often cheaper for us to do things we're already inclined to do," seems particularly apt. The women I interviewed repeatedly stressed the desire to share the inspiration

they felt at times when they were putting together outfits or when they saw someone else whose fashion sparked their imagination.


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Appendix #1: Figures




 **BEHOLD, A LADY**



(Apologies to Andre 3000.)

I took advantage of last week's moisture-free pavements to break out my satin Talbots flats, and I'm sure the rest of the outfit followed from there. A pencil skirt AND a bow-neck blouse! Hot damn, I'm a

WHO?



Nat lives in Toronto. She plays in a **rock and roll band**. You can shop her **closet**, or send her mail at juxtaposingnat@gmail.com.

14 followers
VIA BLOGLOVIN'



STYLELAGS

- academichic
- barbarbarb
- calivintage
- chichichic
- dash dot dotty
- district of chic
- fancy fine
- kendi everyday
- little tin soldier
- my edit
- o my heart
- orchids in buttonholes

Figure 1: Example of a Personal Style Blog

(Click to return to **Introduction**)



Figure 2: Ad-Free Blog logo

(Click to return to **Strategy #1: Opposition**)

The screenshot shows a blog post from 'Frocks' dated November 25, 2009, titled 'FAIR-ISLE & MOSS'. The main image shows a woman in a white sweater, blue dress, red arm warmers, and red boots standing in a mossy forest. A list of clothing items is provided below the image. To the right, there is a Twitter widget for 'MsEmilyApple' and a 'Send Me an (Email) Letter' button. At the bottom right, there are two circular profile pictures: one with a green bird and one with a girl's face.

Frocks

November 25, 2009

FAIR-ISLE & MOSS



Sweater & Beret - Forever21
Dress, boots & Layering tee - Anthropologie
Arm warmers & Tights - Sock Dreams
Underskirt - vintage



TWITTERINGS



Emily Winfield
MsEmilyApple

@anjalous Enough to populate all of Atlantis. Also enough princesses to rule every kingdom ever imagined. ;)

17 hours ago · reply · retweet · favorite



Join the conversation



Send Me an (Email) Letter



Frocks



Figure 3: Personal Style Blog that inspired Hope

(Click to return to **Strategy #1: Opposition**)

jesse.anne.o


Home About Jesse Outfits

MONDAY, MARCH 7, 2011

Garfield

I wore this to:
- work for over 12 hours
- eat v-spot takeout lasagna (hence Garfield title)

This outfit has two secrets.



SUBSCRIBE TO JESSE.ANNE.O

Posts

Comments

AD-FREE BLOG

independent fashion bloggers

I'M STICKING WITH LAST YEAR'S MODEL

BLOG ARCHIVE

- 2011 (66)
 - April (9)
 - March (17)
 - Magickal Beans - End of Deal with Yo Plastic Month...
 - Shortie Jacket
 - The Black Cats
 - I pose with a girl with a dog on her back (and a m...
 - Life Emporium Thrift with Lili (the dog)
 - Brian Break

Figure 4: Opposition to commercial fashion

(Click to return to **Strategy #1: Opposition**)

348 / OOTD: BLACK & WHITE IN BLACK & WHITE | Musings of a Fatshionista

http://musingsofafatshionista.com/2011/02/348-ootd-black-white-in-black-white/

THE GIRL BEHIND THE BLOG CONTACT DESIGN SERVICES ADVERTISING PRESS

MUSINGS OF A FATSHIONISTA

348 / OOTD: BLACK & WHITE IN BLACK & WHITE

Posted on February 15, 2011 | Tags: [asos](#), [asos curve](#), [forever21](#), [ootd](#), [torrid](#) | [Jump To Comments](#)

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Let me tell you why I love the internet. When I first saw this dress at ASOS, I knew I had to have it. In case you didn't know, my life's goal is to be the fat, black version of Wednesday Addams and possessing this dress would get me one step closer to that coming true. By the time I was ready to order it, poof it was gone. By the magic of

Figure 5: Conditional involvement with commercial fashion

(Click to return to **Strategy #2: Conditional Involvement**)

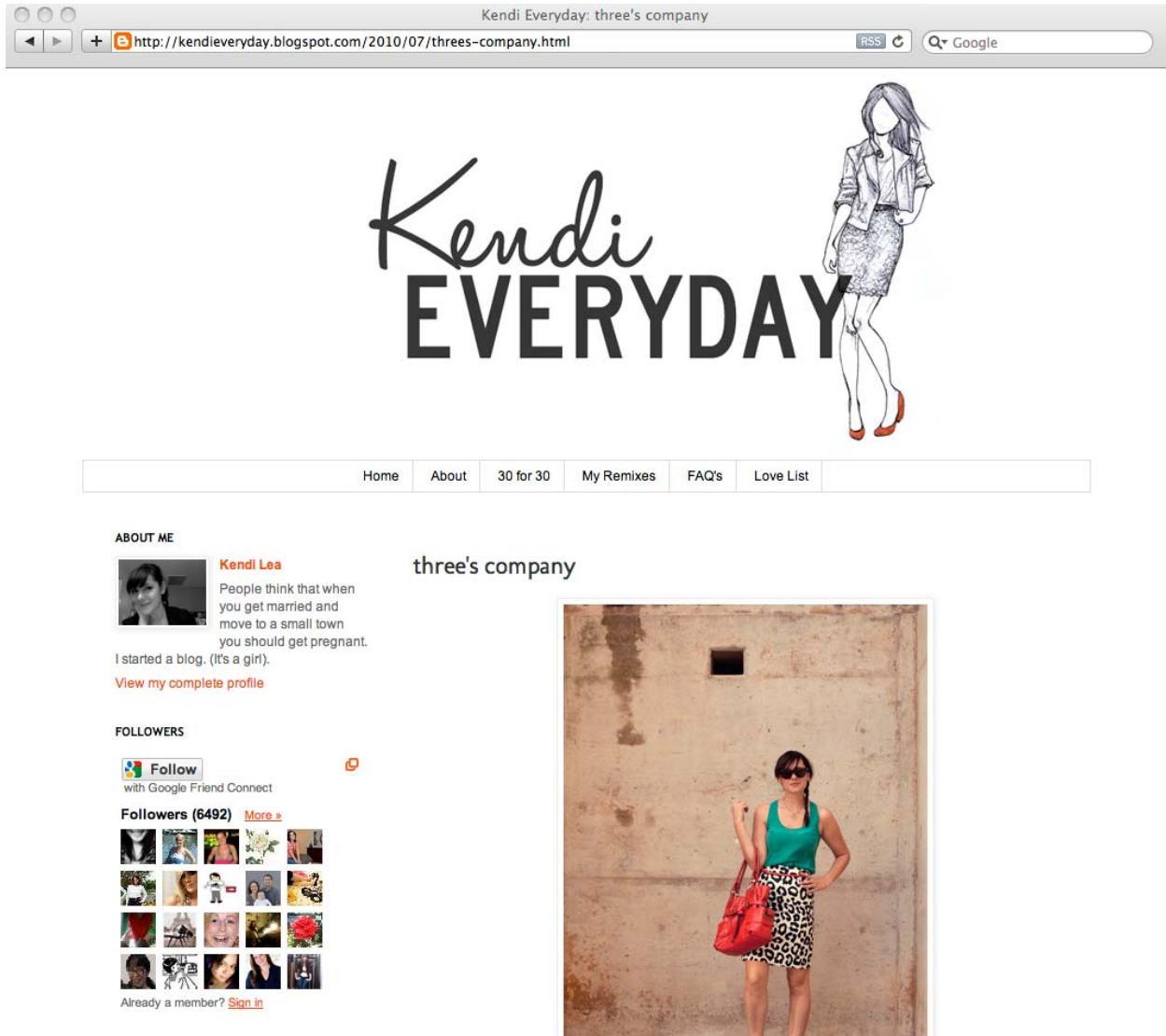
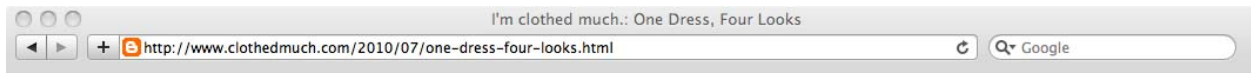


Figure 6: Kendi, organizer of the 30 for 30 Remix Challenge
(Click to return to *Strategy #2: Conditional Involvement*)



I'm clothed much.

I WEAR CLOTHES

LEARN TO DO STUFF

BUY MY STUFF

I LIKE THEM

One Dress, Four Looks

posted on friday, july 30, 2010 by elaine

I found this cute bohemianish dress a couple of days ago at Ross and had to get it. It was the last one...on sale...in my size. That's a sign, right? When I was trying to figure out my **three outfits**, these four came to my mind. I wanted to show you the outfit-picking process and my thinking behind it all...because my husband is tired of me talking to him like he's my girlfriend.

Look 1

This was the first outfit that popped into my head when I saw this dress. I don't want to carry around a hat all day while I'm out with my MIL and SIL so this outfit is out.



this is me



I'm Elaine and I'm a **Mormon**. I'm poor and I don't have a lot of **clothes** so this blog is here to help me be more creative with what I already have. [{more}](#)

Follow me  

this is my friend



My name is **Karl** and I live in LA with my hubby and puppy. I plan to share my sweet shopping finds, trends I'm loving, outfit posts, and whatever else! [{more}](#)

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giveaway



Win \$100 in **mineral makeup!**

Figure 7: Personal style blogger illustrating production and consumption

(Click to return to Strategy #2: Conditional Involvement)

The screenshot shows the 'Style Coalition - Showcase' website. The browser address bar displays 'http://stylecoalition.com/Network/'. The page features a navigation menu with 'OUR NETWORK', 'WORK WITH US', and 'ABOUT US'. Below this is a secondary menu with '>> SHOWCASE', 'PUBLISHERS', 'BENEFITS', 'REQUIREMENTS', and 'APPLY'. The main content area is divided into three sections: 'Welcome', 'Publishers (57)', and 'Videos'. The 'Welcome' section contains introductory text about the network. The 'Publishers (57)' section displays a grid of 57 small profile pictures of bloggers. The 'Videos' section features a video player showing two women on a city street, with the text 'AMERICAN LIVING' overlaid. Below the video player is a 'More Videos' link. To the right of the video player is a 'Tweets' section with three tweets, each accompanied by a small profile picture and a link to view the tweet.

Figure 8: Enterprising personal style bloggers for hire

(Click to return to Strategy #3: Buy-In)

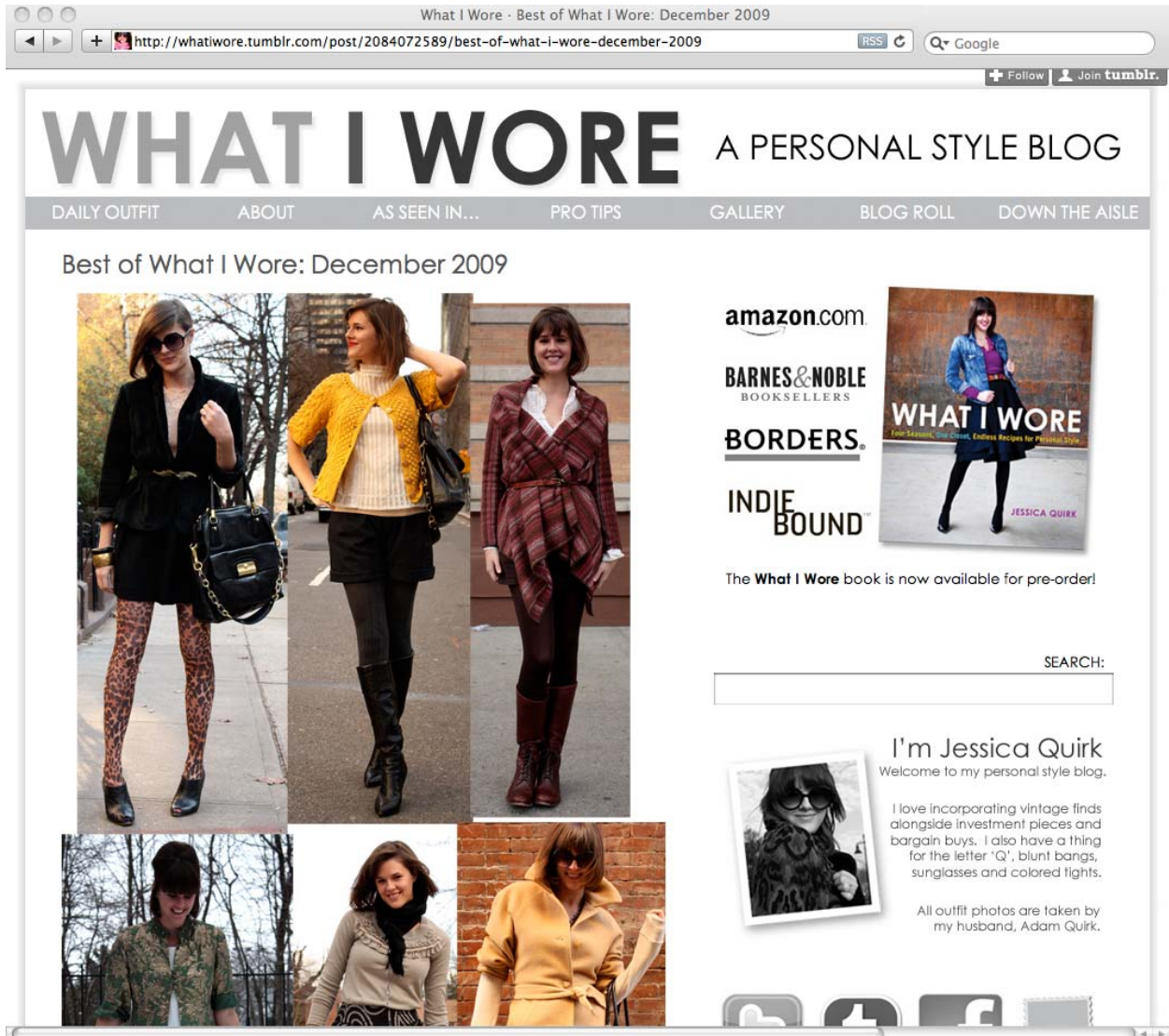


Figure 9: Buy-In to commercial fashion

(Click to return to *Strategy #3: Buy-In*)

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <http://blog.modcloth.com/2009-08-25-blogger-of-the-moment-keiko-lynn>. The page features the ModCloth logo and a navigation menu with links for Shop, Blog, Be the Buyer, My Account, About Us, and Help. Below the menu is a decorative banner with various fashion-related icons and the word 'BLOG' in large, colorful letters. A secondary navigation bar includes categories like Fashion, Culture, Crafts & Cooking, and Contest & News, along with a search bar. The main content area is titled 'Blogger of the Moment: Keiko Lynn' and includes a byline 'By Turl | 8/25/09 at 12:01 pm' and social media sharing options (Like, Tweet). The featured image shows Keiko Lynn in a blue dress and black jacket, with a large graphic overlay that reads 'BLOGGER OF THE MOMENT' and 'HTTP://KEIKOLYNN.BLOGSPOT.COM'. A short paragraph describes her as a 'Blogger of the Moment' who blends vintage and modern fashion. To the right, there is an 'About Us' section and a 'BE OUR FRIEND!' section with social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Pinterest. Below these are two smaller featured images: one of B. Jones Style and another of Denise Porcaro with the text '*BEST JOB EVER*'.

Figure 10: Modcloth.com Blogger of the Moment – Blog-friendly retail

(Click to return to *Strategy #3: Buy-In*)

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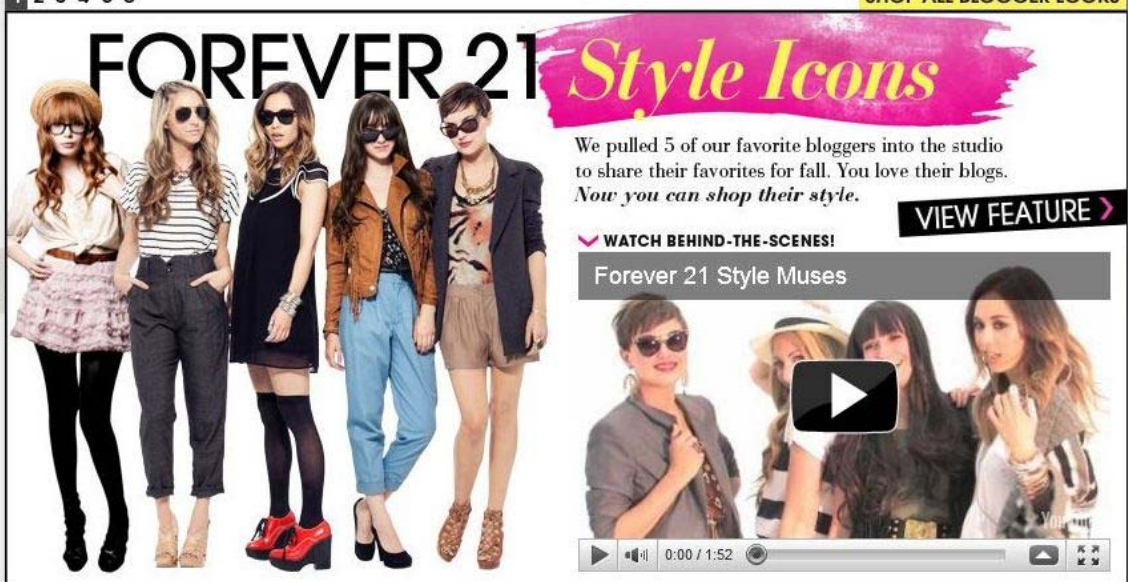
1 2 3 4 5 6 SHOP ALL BLOGGER LOOKS

FOREVER 21 Style Icons

We pulled 5 of our favorite bloggers into the studio to share their favorites for fall. You love their blogs. Now you can shop their style.

WATCH BEHIND-THE-SCENES!
Forever 21 Style Muses

VIEW FEATURE >



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Figure 11: Personal style bloggers working for commercial fashion

(Click to return to **Strategy #3: Buy-In**)

Appendix #2: Participant Demographics Table

(Click to return to **Methods**)

ID	Age	Occupation	Race	Location	Education	Blogging Software	Ads? 12/6/10
Claire	20	Student	Hispanic	Vancouver, WA	In progress BA	Blogger	Y - 1 JessLC
Ava	33	Communications Coordinator	Caucasian	Minneapolis, MN	BA	Blogger	Y - 10 BlogHer iVillage Scarpasa Value Village Solestruck UniqueCloset Bridal Shower... Etsy - AudraJ Karin Jacobson MC Marketplace
Olivia	28	Videogame Developer	Caucasian	Boston, MA	MA	Blogger	N
Sophia	20	Student	Asian American	West Lafayette, IN	In progress BA	Blogger	N
Ella	25	Marketing Coordinator	Caucasian	Kerrville, TX	BA	Blogger	Y - 8 Linkel We Love Colors Le Mode Shop Mamie Gaby Burger Jewel Valley Jewelscapes Lulus.com
Grace	22	Student / Nursing Home Activities Assistant	Mexican American	San Francisco, CA	In progress MA	Blogger	N
Rose	30	Assistant Professor	East Asian / Pacific Islander	Brooklyn, NY	PhD	Blogger	N
Paige	28	Sales and Marketing	Caucasian	Warrenton, VA	BA	Blogger	Y - 1 JessLC
Lily	28	Writer	Caucasian	Rochester, MN	MA	Blogger	N
Faith		Administrative Assistant	Caucasian	St. Paul, Minnesota	BA	Blogger	Y - 2 GlassesUSA 6PM.com
Jane	34	Teacher	African American	Eastland, TX	MA	Blogger	Y - 1 ShopItToMe
Lena	25	Student	Caucasian	Teaneck, NJ	BA	Blogger	N
Haley	24	GTA	Caucasian	Urbana, IL	In Progress PhD	Blogger	Y - 6 Spotted Moth Le Mode GlassesUSA Performance Leader Abazias Campmor
Eden	40	Manager in Biotechnology Industry	Caucasian	San Francisco, CA	BS	Blogger	Y - 2 Etsy-own eShakti
Morgan	22	Parent and	Caucasian	Frisco, TX	In	Blogger	N

ID	Age	Occupation	Race	Location	Education	Blogging Software	Ads? 12/6/10
		Student			progress AA		
Jade	29	Freelance Graphic Designer and Leader at Weight Watchers	Caucasian	State College, PA	BA	Blogger	Y - 4 Rag and Bone Misikko Comic Swap Ross-Simons
Ria	29	Librarian	Caucasian	Floyd, VA	MS	Blogger	N
Lucia	42	Applications System Manager	Caucasian	Glenview, IL	BA	Blogger	N
Hope	27	Program Assistant	Caucasian	Oakland, CA	BA	Blogger	Y - 1 Misikko
Gaby	35	Attorney	Caucasian	Dallas, TX	JD	Blogger	Y - 1 FashionToFigure
Carrie	26	Landscaper	Caucasian / Dutch	Hamilton, ON, Canada	BA	Blogger	N
Dominique	27	Student	Caucasian	Montreal, QB, Canada	In progress PhD	WordPress	N
Sonia	30	Assistant Professor	Caucasian	Mankato, MN	PhD	Blogger	Y - 1 Etsy shop
Zora	24	Researcher, Museum	Caucasian	New York, NY	BA	Blogger	Y - 2 Beso.com Ads by Google
Shawn	24	Writer	Caucasian	Lawrence, KS	BA	Blogger	Y - 6 Scarpasa ModCloth LoLa Spice Rack her Catwalk Le Mode
Katarina	21	Student	Hispanic	Towson, MD	In progress BA	Blogger	N
Dylan	28	Student	Caucasian	St. Louis, MO	In progress PhD	WordPress	Y - 1 Ads by Google
Pearl	28	Student	Asian American	St. Louis, MO	In progress PhD	WordPress	See Dylan

Appendix #3: Personal Style Blogs and Fashion Websites Observed via RSS Feed

(Click to return to **Methods**)

<http://alltumbledown.blogspot.com/>
<http://anniespandex.com/>
<http://asiancajuns.com/>
<http://backwoods-fashionista.blogspot.com/>
<http://blog.modcloth.com/>
<http://blonde-bedhead.blogspot.com/>
<http://brightsidedweller.blogspot.com/>
<http://charmalade.blogspot.com/>
<http://closet365.wordpress.com/>
<http://closetconfections.com/>
<http://cohabitatingcloset.blogspot.com/>
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<http://emilypanda.wordpress.com/>
<http://esmeandthelaneaway.blogspot.com/>
<http://everybodygetsdressed.blogspot.com/>
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<http://fashionista514.com/>
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<http://filledoutnice.blogspot.com/>
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<http://iheartthreadbared.wordpress.com/>
<http://infashionrehab.blogspot.com/>
<http://inprofessorialfashion.blogspot.com/>
<http://jayandelle.blogspot.com/>
<http://juxta-posing.tumblr.com/>
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<http://modern-daycharm.blogspot.com/>
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<http://thejoyoffashion.blogspot.com/>
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<http://www.alreadypretty.com/>
<http://www.austinstylewatch.com/blog/>
<http://www.befabulousdaily.us/>
<http://www.blogforbettersewing.com/>
<http://www.bluecollarcatwalk.com/>
<http://www.byhillary.com/>
<http://www.clothedmuch.com/>
<http://www.dressesandcake.com/>
<http://www.fashiontoast.com/>
<http://www.kansascouture.com/>
<http://www.ladyflashback.com/>
<http://www.mystylepill.com/>
<http://www.thebudgetbabe.com/>
<http://www.themishdish.com/>
<http://www.theuniformproject.com/>
<http://www.wardobereview.com/>
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<http://www.wornthrough.com/>
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