

Safiyah Bennington – The Body Positivity Movement

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PLAN

- X3 4 minute videos
- 1500 words

VIDEOS

- A vlog style approach for PTC's with formal shot interviews
- Each video will cover an aspect of the 'Body Positivity Movement'
- Interview based

ARTICLE

- Research based
- Tightly focusing on bringing videos together to create a Body Positivity Movement overview (parts of the interviews from the video will be transcribed and used in the article)

THE OVERVIEW

- Men, women and children have always struggled with not comparing themselves to others. Whether it was seeing a character, a classmate, a model or a friend, comparison is simply something unavoidable. Today, 1 in 5 children spend between 1 and 4 hours of their day on some form of entertainment media and teenagers are spending even more.

Bulimia, anorexia and binge eating are three of many eating disorders. Thigh gaps, bikini bridges and ab cracks are just three unattainable social media body trends that have told users that these are attributes of a 'perfect body.' While social media platforms such as Instagram have started to show more body positive trends within the last year, such as 'mermaid thighs', the number of patients admitting to hospitals have doubled within the last 6 years and there has been a dramatic increase in the number of girls in their early twenties. I want to investigate whether the new body positive movement across today's social media is having an effect on the way girls are seeing themselves or whether it's another polished, social media façade that won't be around for long. Being a person who has struggled with weight and eating disorders, I want to see how the perception of perfection has changed for women within the last few years. Ideally this would be a mini documentary series but for this submission, I will do one. I would like to take a vlog style approach to speak to women with eating disorders, dieticians and psychotherapists, not only to see the toll of social media on eating disorders but also gauge what it is that makes these girls fall into these body neglecting ways.

As this is a sensitive topic, for those who don't want to be on camera, I will do audio clips. I'd also like to include a lot of statistics and also carry out my own

survey through Survey Monkey to see if the feeling of imperfection due to body appearance is as common as we think.

Body Positivity started as a charity in the 1960's and is now a **movement**. Is it just another social media trend? A benefit?

VIDEO TOPICS – The breakdown

(Storyboard didn't have much writing space, so this goes alongside it)

The Power of a Hashtag

20s – Introduction. What is a hashtag?
+
1m40s – Powerful hashtags of the past (#blm #Alsicebucketchallenge #metoo #Bodypositivity) and whether they were beneficial to society / raising awareness
+
1m40s – Timeline of the 'perfect body' hashtags over time on social media
+
20s - Outro

=4m0s

The Psychology between body image and social media

20s – Introduction
+
2m0s – body image and the link to social media
(Body comparison, pro ana hashtags, skin conditions, the recovery community)
+
2m0s - If Body Positivity will improve the way people see themselves
+
20s - Outro

=4m0s

The Body Positivity Movement

1m30s – Introduction
(“Body positivity is...” submissions, definition and statistics)
+
1m0s - The Journey of the movement
+
1m10s - How it's being used offline
+
20s - Outro

=4m0s

Locations: Trying to shoot in a pole dancing hall for a lady who uses pole dancing to express her body positivity and shooting some footage at inspirational talks held by interviewees.

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Interviewees

- Pat Boles – Psychiatrist (On camera interview – **February 20th**)
- Hope Virgo – Anorexia survivor, Mental health campaigner and author of Stand Tall Little Girl (January 8th and January 22nd)
- Amberli Hartwell – Body diversity rep (**January 31st**)
- Sophie’s Choice – MoveGB ambassador and fitness blogger (January 9th)
- BloggerOnPole (Carolina) – Fitness blogger who uses pole dancing to express her body positivity (January 19th and **February 12th**)

- Marketing lady from Facebook (waiting for details)
- Adam Gray – Social media expert (Currently speaking)
- Social Misfits Media (**Currently in conversation for a date**)

Charities

- The London Centre (**Confirming interview**)
- BeReal @ YMCA (**confirming interview**)

- UKAT (**Contacted but no response, will call**)
- BEAT (Email sent on 23rd January, no response yet)
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RESEARCH – THE MOVEMENT

Definition of the Body Positivity movement:

- Accepting the idea that all bodies are beautiful and valuable. “The movement says you are alone, not everyone else, you should decide what feels good” (Thrivetalk)

The Body Positivity movement was formed in the 1960’s and has had a recent resurgence. It celebrates all body types and sizes – it’s inclusive of all genders, ages, races, people with disabilities and those of diverse sexual orientation

- *Watched Grace F Victory’s ‘clean eating’ documentary
- The movement has evolved in its attempt to be more inclusive. But a majority of the community is still plus size.
- The National Organization for Women has officially designated October 14th as “Love Your Body Day.”
- **The 1940’s and 50’s was when acceptance of and desire for curvy women came around.** “Advertisements for gaining weight and taking supplements to add ‘glamorous curves’ to one’s figure were everywhere.” Marilyn Monroe was a big inspiration
- **Curves started to go out of trend again in the 60’s**
- Sadly but unsurprisingly, most of the women who participated in the study experience anxiety about their bodies. Thirty-eight percent of respondents noted having a negative relationship with their bodies, 33 percent described their relationship with their bodies as “neutral,” and 29 percent said theirs was positive. But the percentage of women who want to change their bodies is a lot higher than 38 percent. Fifty-five percent of women currently want to lose weight, and 54 percent admitted that they probably care about their physical appearance more than they should (Brit.Co study)
- According to Pelletier, this is a “healthier outlook that women’s bodies aren’t meant to be made smaller or lighter — if not already — but tangible, strong, and full.
- While studies show a strong correlation between the use of social media as being a trigger for people with ED, people that engage in body checking, and people with body dysmorphia, no one is appointing social media as the ‘bad guy;’ the issue arises in the way it is used (Bullimia.com). Active since 1996, body positivity movements ‘became mainstream’ rather recently. (Hsmmag)
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Companies embracing body positivity:

- Missguided



- Asos



- River Island



- Dove



STATISTICS

- Over 70 million people suffer worldwide from an eating disorder. bulimia nervosa or anorexia nervosa
- According to a study (Fairburn & Harrison 2003), 80-85% of people with eating disorders are not underweight.
- The number of admissions to hospital of patients with potentially life-threatening eating disorders has almost doubled over the past six years, amid warnings from experts that [NHS](#) services to tackle anorexia and bulimia are failing to help those in need.
- A surge in the number of teenage girls and women in their early 20s lies behind this dramatic rise. The admissions for those aged under 19 for anorexia went from 1,050 to 2,025 over the period examined.
- 22% of girls surveyed have told us they're tempted by plastic surgery (like implants) while another 21% of girls surveyed, along with 10% of boys surveyed, are tempted by cosmetic treatments like lip fillers and Botox. We also uncovered that out of all the girls we asked, a whopping 47% of them revealed they've gone on a diet and tried to lose weight by the age of 17.
- To achieve this so called "beach body" people often try to achieve this unattainable physical appearance which can lead to eating disorders. Since 2000 eating disorders have risen by 15% and it is estimated that more than 725,000 people in the UK are affected by an eating disorder (10% anorexia, 60% bulimia and 40% were classified as EDNOS; Eating disorder not otherwise specified)(Beat, 2015). 11% of those affected are male (Micali, Hagberg, Petersen & Treasure, 2013).
- The media plays a large role within influencing body image. The media constantly reinforces certain key messages which people often think will lead to a healthy, successful and better lifestyle. For males it is increased muscle growth and for females it is trying to maintain a thin ideal body. The social comparison theory is closely linked to this process. When people see healthy, strong, thin, toned fitness models in magazines they will compare themselves with these people which can result in body dissatisfaction and decreased self-esteem (Tiggemann, Polivy & Hargreaves, 2009).
- The Be Real Campaign encourages organisations to sign up to their "Body Image Pledge". This involves using adverts which reflect the diversity of the UK; show people as they are in real life (with alterations limited to technical corrections); promote a healthy appearance; and promote the pledge.⁷⁴ As Liam Preston, Senior Parliamentary and Policy Officer at the YMCA, and coordinator of the campaign said: When you start to see people who look like you, who sound like you and who reflect your choices in life, that is when you start to feel more confident in yourself. So that for us was what we put front and center of our body image pledge
- Ten million new photographs are uploaded to Facebook alone every hour

- However, social media also provides a place for people to create content which challenges dominant norms around body image
- Claire Mysko, an award-winning author and expert on body image, leadership and media literacy, explains: “While social media is not the cause of low self-esteem, it has all the right elements to contribute to it. Social media creates an environment where disordered thoughts and behaviours really thrive.”
- In addition to being one of the strongest predictors of eating disorder development, body dissatisfaction leads us to spend enormous amounts of our personal resources—including money, time, and energy—trying to fix our flaws.
- We need to become more critical consumers of the mass media. We need to think about the messages that we learn from a very early age about what makes us valuable or not valuable. As we become more aware of our surroundings and the cultural messages we learned, we must determine *whether we aspire to be a certain way because we believe it is right or because we were culturally conditioned to believe it is right*
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THE INSTAGRAM DIET

- Many wellness bloggers and influencers sell blanket workout and diet plans that aren't suited to everyone.

INTERVIEW 1 – HOPE VIRGO

- Author of Stand Tall Little Girl – A book about her experience of Anorexia
- Helps employees and schools deal with the rise of mental health issues

Tell me about #dumpthescales

- “Launched in July 2018”
- “I wanted to raise awareness so people change their understanding. I’m working with the government and department of health. Anorexia’s not just a physical illness

What made you write your book, ‘Stand Tall Little Girl’?

- I wanted to share my story. I want friends and family to be able to see what I went through

Tell me a bit about yourself

- Started mental health campaigning after recovering anorexia for a year.
- “Eating disorders aren’t just about weight”

What made you want to go out and help others?

- Relapsed 2 years ago and couldn’t get help because she wasn’t underweight enough.

What do you think of the Body Positivity Movement?

- “It moves away from focusing on weight. It shows you can be happy at any weight, and there is more focus on curvy sizes”

How do you use your platforms to promote body positivity?

- Mainly to get the message across that you don’t have to be super skinny to be happy

How do you think social media affects how we see ourselves?

- “It puts added pressure on people. We all filter (our pictures) and I think that adds to the pressure. That pressure means we waste time”

Has social media helped or had an effect on your recovery?

- “At first it was hard to use. Now I use it in a positive way.”

INTERVIEW 2 – SOPHIE’S CHOICE

- Was in an abusive relationship at the age of 17 and formed body dysmorphia
- Advocate for health and fitness
- MoveGB Ambassador

Tell me about yourself!

- “When I was 17, I’d never been overweight, I was a dancer”
- Was with her boyfriend and he was abusive
- “I would just eat for comfort”
- After 4 years, she decided to leave. “I decided I was going to get healthy again. The thigh gap movement was a real trigger for me but now I know, my body is not made for a thigh gap”
- Got into fitness in April 2018, then Instagram came along
- “Having a big bum and strong legs is no longer a problem”
- “I came to a realisation that being skinny and having a six pack isn’t the be all and end all, you need to feel good mentally”
- ‘As long as your mind, body and soul is healthy, that is ‘fit’ to me’

How did you become a MoveGB Ambassador?

- “They approached me at Christmas, I was shocked as I don’t see myself as an influencer”
- “They’re trying to make us move more as a nation. You can sign up for a pound!”

What is ‘body positivity’ to you?

- “It’s about being in a good placed in your mind and body to change the way that you look at yourself. Practicing self-love”

Do you think it is more than a hashtag/trend?

- “I’d like to think so. People shouldn’t be getting into it because it’s a thing to do. It should be to help themselves”

How do you use your platforms to promote body positivity?

- “By being real with people”
- “Everybody has down days, we’re human. Authenticity is the way forward.”

Do you think social media has a positive/negative effect on body image?

- “It depends on how it’s used, I’ve used it in both ways. I’ve seen the Skinny Teas and Lollipops. Sometimes it can be used in a negative way, we can’t control what we see”

Do you think the idea of a perfect body has changed online?

- 100%. One second our legs shouldn’t be touching and then our bums and legs are amazing, but we just don’t know how long they’ll be in for. That’s why we should accept our bodies and not follow the trend.”

Has this had an effect offline?

- I'd like to think so, it encourages you to work harder. For me it has."

How do you think a non-blogger / ordinary person can contribute to body positivity?

- "Sharing their story"
- "You get internet trolls but there are people out there struggling, who are positively receptive."

Has social media helped your overcome your body dysmorphia?

- I think it has, it definitely could've had a detrimental effect but it's what you make of it."

INTERVIEW 3 – BLOGGERONPOLE (CAROLINA)

Do you feel as though even though you aren't plus sized or underweight, that you still have a place in the body positivity movement online?

I think I do for two reasons. I've never been massively over or underweight, but my weight has fluctuated and changed of about 12 kilos in the past 10 years. It kind of goes to show that even if you're not massively over or underweight, the way women's bodies are discussed and expected to be still has a lot of influence on women's perception of themselves and their confidence. Also, I kind of internalized my abusive relationship as a consequence of my body's effect on men and started hating it and punishing it, first by under and then over-eating, and being more body-positive has definitely helped my confidence.

How has pole dancing helped you embrace your body?

By always having to be in front of my own body in a bikini in a group of women and men of different shapes and sizes helped me understand that everyone is beautiful and strong in their own way. It has helped me focus on my strength and flow rather than my weight - I haven't weighed myself in a year!

My body isn't model pretty. It isn't what some people would define as perfect. My arms are very muscly and my thighs are thick. But I love it: it's strong, it helps me do what I want and it makes me feel sexy, even with my cellulite.

As a blogger, how do you help others to love their bodies?

I promote diversity and positivity by interviewing different people and discussing my own experience to show that you don't need to be skinny to feel beautiful.

HOPE VIRGO – DOCUMENTARY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

FOR ‘THE MOVEMENT’ MINI DOC

- What is the Body Positivity movement to you/ Your definition?
- How do you contribute to the movement?
- Do you think the movement is being used offline, how?
- How has it made you change the way that you view your body?
- Are there any other influential hashtags or influencers that you like/follow?
- What do you think the future holds for the movement?

FOR THE ‘PSYCHOLOGICAL’ MINI DOC

- Do you think social media has personally helped or hindered your eating disorder and recovery?

FOR THE ‘POWER OF A HASHTAG’ MINI DOC

- What power do you think hashtags have today?
- Which hashtags have you acknowledged/noticed in the past?
- How do you think the idea of a ‘perfect body’ has changed on social media platforms?
- Is the movement more than a hashtag?

VOICE OVER SCRIPT SO FAR

(*Context can overlap as documentaries will be posted separate and therefor need all important information included.*)

INTRO – THE BODY POSITIVITY MOVEMENT

Clear skin, body hair free and a slim figure has been the vision of ‘the perfect body’ for centuries. A wave of acceptance, known as the Body Positivity movement has come to social media within the last few years, such as ‘mermaid thighs’ and ‘eff your beauty standards’ hashtags, allowing men and women to embrace their sexuality, skin conditions, size, disabilities and races. I want to investigate whether the new body positive movement across today's social media is having an effect on the way girls are seeing themselves or whether it's another polished, social media façade that won't be around for long. “

INTRO – THE PSYCHOLOGY BEHIND SOCIAL MEDIA

(PTC)

For many of us, comparison is something that we subconsciously do when looking at other people and the same applies online. A ‘perfect life’ is quite often seen as we scroll through our Instagram feeds, quite often deflecting us from the whole picture that may not be as polished as what is shown. Social media is such a big part of our lives that our addiction now has a psychological name called FOMO, known as fear of missing out. (Psychologists at Nottingham Trent University)

INTRO – THE POWER OF A HASHTAG

On Instagram, hashtags are gems of exposure, with a user increasing post exposure by 12.6% by just using one single hashtag. In terms of the Body Positivity Movement, the power of hashtags can be used in good and bad ways, either promoting the embrace of all bodies and creating communities, or separating one ideal from all of the others.

CHANGE OF PLAN (REFLECTION)

Instead of questioning if the movement is inclusive, I'm going to investigate if it's more than a hashtag and how it's used offline. After interviewing many people, I realised that the movement is actually very inclusive of all body types and that I would be able to get more content on how the things that aren't seen under the Body Positivity hashtag are having an effect offline.

Thankfully, a lot of the interviews spoke very openly, allowing me to have some great quotes that have been written in this document, that I can use in my article. As many of the interviewees don't live in London, I had to do Skype calls, record the interviews and transcribe them. A downside, at this point, is that I don't have many on camera interviews as many of them are confirmed for after the draft submission date or are waiting to be confirmed.

****Audio problem: For Hope Virgo interview, Michael said sound of room monitor would not pick up on mic but it did, so sound correction will need to be edited ****

CONTACTS

Interviewees

Psychiatrist

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Bloggers

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