From fashion blogger to media professional: Networked blogfriends, proximity privilege and making a media career from the North American fashion blogipelago

Rosie Findlay

Department of Media, Culture and Creative Industries, City St George's, University of London, London, United Kingdom

Email: Rosie.Findlay@city.ac.uk

Rosie Findlay is Senior Lecturer in Media in the Department of Media, Culture and Creative Industries at City St George's, University of London. A feminist media scholar, she researches contemporary fashion media and communication, and the intersection between dress, feeling and culture. Her work has been published in journals including *Feminist Theory*, *Australian Feminist Studies*, and *Communication, Culture and Critique*. Rosie is author of *Personal Style Blogs: Appearances that Fascinate* (2017), co-editor of *Insights on Fashion Journalism* (2022), and co-editor of *International Journal of Fashion Studies*.

From fashion blogger to media professional: Networked blogfriends, proximity privilege and making a media career from the North American fashion blogipelago

In the two decades since fashion blogging emerged as a distinct sub-genre, a generation of early fashion bloggers has risen to prominence as writers and editors in the media industries, despite not starting their blogs – as many later did – as a route to a fashion-related career. **This study traces the career histories of one such networked group of writers.** All participated in early fashion blogging and now work in media, mostly in New York and Toronto.

Drawing on nine interviews with individuals from the early North American fashion blogipelago, this article argues that their professional success is not simply attributable to personal skill or the visibility of digital communications. Rather, an **interplay of several factors gave rise to the opportunities leading to their established media careers**: the affordances of blogging to develop professional skills and confidence; participation in networks of 'blogfriends', and proximity to one of North America's media centres. This aspect, dubbed 'proximity privilege' by one participant (Mlotek 2019), demonstrates how enduringly geographically embedded the cultural industries are. By inhabiting one of these fashion media centres, even temporarily, the interviewees benefitted from proximity to existing networks and opportunities that consolidated the visibility and skills afforded by fashion blogging.

Keywords: fashion blogging; proximity privilege; blogfriends; networks; fashion cities

Introduction

In the two decades since fashion blogging emerged as a distinct sub-genre, a generation of early fashion bloggers has risen to prominence as writers and editors in the media industries, despite not starting their blogs – as many later did – as a route to a fashion-related career. This study takes a close look at the **conditions that one such networked group of writers and editors identify as leading to their professional success**. All participated in early fashion blogging and now work in media, mostly in New York and

Toronto. These media workers blogged between 2006-2015, a time in which fashion bloggers were, with a few notable exceptions, considered by established fashion media professionals (who worked at magazines or newspapers) as either a novelty or interlopers (see **Petrarcha 2024**; Findlay 2017; Milano 2016; Menkes 2013) offering little to the cultural consideration of fashion beyond enthusiasm and wacky outfits. Yet as autonomous media, these blogs introduced a new kind of fashion discourse, foregrounding personal perspectives and critiques on fashion and style through writing that was idiosyncratic, editorially independent and infused with irreverence and colloquial expression. Early fashion blogs were also characterised by relational networks, evident in the sustained conversations between bloggers and readers in the comments sections beneath posts and in the relationships between bloggers, who would frequently mention each other and hyperlink to each other's blogs.

The novelty of these user-generated media first attracted the attention of the press, then of the fashion industry, leading to a transformative shift in the aesthetics and logics of fashion blogging (see Findlay 2017 and **Luvaas 2016** for detailed discussion of this shift). Several bloggers, including many newcomers, adopted promotional strategies commonly employed by commercial fashion publications, such as shooting loaned or gifted items; collaborating with brands on sponsored content, emphasising visual content over written, and discursively constructing fashion as aspirational and acquisitive. This 'second wave' of fashion blogging (Findlay 2017) morphed into fashion influencing, by which point many of the fashion bloggers who had been instrumental in developing the practice had long since ceased to blog.

It is unsurprising that studies examining the influence of early fashion blogging on fashion media have tended to focus on the emergence and professionalisation of fashion influencers. **Fashion influencing has much to reveal about the pervasive**

spread of neoliberal logics of idealised selfhood. As many researchers have argued, influencers articulate aspirational selves through forms of labour valorised under neoliberalism, modelling how to be a flexible, responsibilised and responsive worker in an industry widely perceived as glamorous despite its inherent precarity (see Hund 2023; Pedroni 2023; **Rocamora 2022**; Arriagada and Bishop 2021; De Perthuis and Findlay 2019; Duffy 2017; Duffy and Wissinger 2017; Duffy and Hund 2015; see also **Mensitieri 2020 on the myth of the fashion industry as glamorous**). Yet there is another important parallel history of fashion media's disintermediation to be told: the role early fashion blogs played in inducting a generation of early bloggers into the North American media industry, despite starting their blogs before the instrumentalization of the practice. This article presents a case study of nine such writers, critics and editors (see Table 1), who participated in the 'first wave' of fashion blogging (Findlay 2017) on the North American fashion blogipelago (Dean 2010). How did this group of individuals, who started their blogs for fun and didn't see what they posted as "real writing", most of whom didn't study journalism or have pre-existing networks in media, come to have such prominent careers in fashion and lifestyle writing and editing? None sought fame through blogging and few monetised their blogs. Yet between them, my interviewees have written about fashion and culture for prestige and legacy publications including *The New York Times*, *The Globe and Mail*, *British Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *GQ*, *T Magazine*, *Rolling Stone*, *The New Yorker*, *Elle* and *Vanity Fair*, and respected websites including *Hazlitt*, *n+1*, *Refinery29* and *The Cut*.

< Insert Table 1 here>

While this case study may seem to superficially support the myth of aspirational labour (Duffy 2015) – that undertaking unpaid, creative digital labour, with enough passion and hard work, can lead to a dream job in the competitive cultural industries – close examination of the **themes that arose as interviewees discussed the emergence of their careers** demonstrates their contingency. My interviews revealed four inter-connected **themes** that were instrumental in this phenomenon, which this article will map in turn. All four **themes** were widely evident across this sample – where **one did not arise in an interviewee's lived experience**, the other three did. For most interviewees, however, all four were present in their experiences. One was *being in the 'right place at the right time'*, as the North American print media weathered the challenge of digital, and newly launched digital publications offered editorial opportunities to bloggers, who were already proficient in writing for online audiences. This was supported by the *technological affordances of blogging*, which facilitated a kind of accidental apprenticeship in professional skills valuable in contemporary media careers. The third **theme** that interviewees indicated supported the emergence of their career was the importance of *being part of a digital network of 'blogfriends'*, who offered support and shared opportunities with one another. Finally, the connections afforded by participating in the blogipelago were supported by the interpersonal connections that arose from *'proximity privilege'*. This term, coined by one of the interviewees, refers to having access to emplaced professional networks within a cultural industry, which in this study applies dually to the media and fashion industries aggregated in New York and Toronto. What became clear through this research was how vital a role proximity to these two cities played in the careers of many of the interviewees, as key hubs for media and fashion in the USA and Canada that afforded access to professional networks and their attendant tacit knowledge and opportunities.

A key dynamic invigorating this research is the asymmetries that structure access to opportunities within the cultural industries, despite the de-centring possibilities of digital connectivity. It is important to note that, as several scholars of digital media and geography have convincingly argued, as in spatial relational networks, online environments are also structured by asymmetries in flows of information, connectivity, and opportunities (see Crewe 2017; Baym 2015; Neff 2005; Sassen 1991). For this reason, American political theorist Jodi Dean (2010) argues in her work on early blogging, that "blogipelago" is a more suitable collective noun for networks of blogs than "blogosphere". In distinction to "blogosphere's" connotations of evenly distributed accessibility and unified conversation, "blogipelago" indicates towards the "kinds of links, networks, flows, and solidarities that blogs hinder and encourage" and "like 'archipelago', reminds us of separateness, disconnection, and the immense effort it can take to move from one island or network to another" (Dean 2010, 38). I adopt Dean's term to draw attention to the dual clustered relationality and geographic specificity of the blogs surveyed in this study.

The media history told here tells addresses several vital debates within cultural geography and cultural studies. While recuperating an overlooked dimension of fashion blogging's influence on contemporary fashion and lifestyle media, it contributes to literature examining how social ties form within the cultural industries (see Neff 2005) by modelling how a leisure pursuit formed by shared mutual interests in niche aspects of fashion gradually became "constitutive of productive milieus" (Neff 2005, 136) within North American fashion and lifestyle media. The milieus these early bloggers participated in and co-created reveal the interanimation of digital and emplaced networks in fostering professional opportunities within media, demonstrating the

porosity of boundaries and incidental way in which opportunities tend to arise within relational networks.

Methodological Approach

I employed a qualitative methodology in this study, in which I conducted semi-structured interviews. Ethics approval was granted for this research by two separate ethics committees at the two institutions at which I worked during the data collection: the College Research Committee, London College of Fashion UAL in February 2019; and the Central Research Ethics Advisory Group, University of Kent (Research ethics application: CREAG098-07-22) in August 2022.

Interviews focused on each individual's experience of blogging and their transition to paid writing: when they started their blog and why, what their blogging practice involved, how professional opportunities arose, and the role blogging played, if any, in the development of skills they draw on in their current work as a writer and/or editor. I employed a snowball sampling approach after initially approaching interviewees already known to me, either directly or indirectly, from my earlier research into fashion blogging. I recorded audio of the interviews and manually transcribed and coded them according to theme and keyword.

Some interviewees and I had similar memories of early fashion blogging due to our mutual participation in it, **despite having blogged within different blogipelagos. I kept a personal style blog, *Fashademic*, in Sydney, Australia, from 2010-2014 while conducting my doctoral research into this sub-genre of fashion blogging; I read fashion blogs for eight years, having followed several streetstyle blogs before discovering style blogs in 2008, while living in Toronto (see Findlay 2017). During that time, I followed the blogs of several of this study's interviewees and after the**

fashion blogging waned in favour of Instagram, I kept following them on Twitter and Instagram. I have interviewed two of the interviewees before for other studies: Isabel, for my doctoral work; and Haley, for my research into creative non-fiction fashion writing.

There are many more early bloggers who developed media careers in North America **(and other contexts, such as Australia and the UK)** during the same period as my interviewees. Some, such as Tavi Gevinson and Leandra Medine, launched online publications that elaborated the content and perspective initially developed on their personal fashion blogs; whereas other early fashion bloggers developed writing and editing careers that resemble those recounted in this study, such as freelance writing careers, or writing freelance before attaining a paid role at a prestige or legacy fashion or lifestyle publication or digital publisher (see, for example, **Petrarcha 2024**, Strugatz 2019). As such, while this study presents a small sample, the kinds of experiences interviewees detailed – many of which were resonant across the interviews – represent the key **themes** that seemed to support the transition of several early fashion bloggers from the margins to being professionally networked within North American fashion and lifestyle publishing.

I chose interviews, despite the partiality of memory and potential bias, because of the privileged insight this method offers into lived experience, and because many early fashion blogs are no longer available for analysis, having been deleted, archived, or simply deteriorated due to the instability of older digital media artefacts.[1] I sought to

[1] Many early fashion blogs have been deleted or archived by their bloggers. Those that remain often are not complete, as they feature inaccessible media from sites that have since been deleted or in file formats no longer supported by the host blogging platform. Certain blogs can be viewed through Wayback Machine, which archives content posted by the original blogger but does not archive most of a blog's original design or graphics, and often cannot play embedded audio-visual media.

facilitate a "truly collaborative encounter" (Devault and Gross 2012, n.p.), aligned with the principles of feminist interviewing. To this end, I employed active listening and shared the original interview transcript with each interviewee, inviting them to make amendments and clarifications, working only with the approved transcript they returned for this research.

A Media Industry in Flux

I think I just wanted a place 'cause I always liked to write and I always wanted to be a writer but I remember at that time it was like all the magazines were shutting down first, it was like the first wave of it, and they were like, 'publishing is dead!' and I was like, 'well… I guess I'm never going to be a magazine writer! – Marie

Many of the former fashion bloggers I interviewed started their blogs during a period in which North American print media was widely reported as being in crisis (Gross 2009; Robinson 2009; Coates et. al. 2010; Weir 2010). Several described a sentiment like Marie, above: that their initial dreams of one day working in fashion publishing felt increasingly impossible due to widespread magazine closures. These closures took place throughout the first decade of the 2000s, as fashion titles such as *Mirabella* (2000), *Elle Girl* (2006), *Teen People* (2006) and *Cargo* (2006), among other lifestyle and entertainment titles, were shuttered by parent companies Hachette Filipacci, Time Inc. and Condé Nast. The economic instability of print was exacerbated by the 2008 global financial crisis, which led to "the worst advertising recession in a generation" (Robinson 2009). The impact of this recession on fashion publishing mirrored wider trends in advertising revenue loss in North American print at the time: in 2009, 1,126 magazines closed, of which 53% were consumer titles, and 293 newspapers closed (Weir 2010). Between 2009-2013, newspaper advertising revenues dropped by 50% (Chandra and

Kaiser 2014). In this context, lifestyle journalism came to seem like an increasingly precarious career choice: the authors of the State of the Media 2010 report described the wider North American media landscape as "an unstable environment where more than 600 reporters from the magazine industry along can find themselves jobless in a matter of a year" (Coates et al. 2010).

Print's loss of advertising revenue was exacerbated by advertisers diverting their ad spend to digital publications, taking advantage of their possibilities for more targeted advertising and the migration of consumers to online content (Chandra and Kaiser 2014). Accordingly, employment opportunities in digital publishing and information surged during this period: between January 2007-September 2016, jobs in these areas increased by 207% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2017).

Commercial fashion magazines were initially slow to develop a competitive and original digital offering: the websites of most prominent titles tended to replicate a selection of their print content and were usually edited by one or two members of staff, even when the site traffic outstripped the magazine's circulation. As interviewee Haley observed, North American fashion publishing at the time was "an industry that was terrified of change to the point that it really limited itself at a moment where it could have had so many new voices and new ways of being." Rather, it was digital-first publications (and fashion blogs) that innovated fashion media online. One such publication was Condé Nast's *Style.com*, which digitised *Vogue*'s archive of runway images and published up-to-date runway coverage and original content by a team of established fashion writers and critics such as Nicole Phelps and Tim Blanks. Another key early fashion website was *ShowStudio*, a platform launched by Nick Knight and Peter Saville to explore the formal possibilities and creative processes underpinning digital fashion moving image. Both sites launched in 2000. Other notable blogs and

websites devoted to covering fashion and style that launched during this period included *Refinery29* (2005), *The Cut* (2008), *The Hairpin* (2010), *Toronto Standard* (2010), *Man Repeller* (which started as a personal blog in 2010 and transitioned to a multi-authored website in 2012/2013), *Rookie* (2011), *xoJane* (2011), *HelloGiggles* (2011) and *Four Pins* (2012).

This media context is important for several reasons. Many of the publications listed, especially *Style.com*, as well as user-generated fora like *The Fashion Spot*, were sources of the research early fashion bloggers undertook to develop their fashion expertise; and many of the interviewees wrote for these titles as they were initially transitioning from maintaining their blogs to writing professionally. Part of what made their skills compelling for these site's editors was early fashion bloggers' proficiency in publishing about fashion in an online environment: some interviewees mentioned being approached by editors to blog for companies such as Urban Outfitters and *The Fashion Spot*, even as teenagers with no previous paid writing experience. They recounted editors saying, "I'm looking for bloggers" or "she found my blog and she was like, 'you should do this for us.'" As interviewee Sean said, his blog *The Khaki Crusader* "got me so much… it got me doing some paid content stuff, lots of opportunities came through that… it was really an interesting time because… people were looking to [personal blogs] more, for sure." Indeed, even as the dream of a 'traditional' job in fashion and lifestyle media seemed increasingly unlikely, the skills and resources early fashion bloggers developed on the blogipelago was one of the **key factors that seemed to lead** to initial professional writing opportunities.

Learning on the Blog

"Basically, I am a writer because of the blog" – Laia

Laia started her fashion blog *Geometric Sleep* in 2006 while in the final year of her graphic design degree at college in Philadelphia. A friend had a music blog – "she was writing little music reviews of all the new records that she was into and [my friends and I] were just like passing it around… I thought that was cool and I wanted to […] do the same but with fashion" – so she created her own. After graduation, Laia moved to New York with hopes of becoming an art director at a fashion magazine: "but then, that was the year that all the magazines closed down… the economy went to the tank." She discovered other fashion blogs and decided to take her own more "seriously": "this was in 2006, so it wasn't like 'oh my God, these people are famous' – it was like, 'oh cool. I could put a bit more effort into this and be part of the conversation." For Laia, blogging seriously meant developing more purposeful content: moving from blogposts that were "very much like, 'look at this, I like this shoe'" to "actively researching and actively looking for things to write about". A crucial dimension of this shift was discovering that other people were interested in fashion the way she was – a sentiment that frequently arose in interviews and to which I will return – and the license she felt to write for these bloggers: "when you see that there is a similar community to something that you've been experimenting with, it gives you a little bit more freedom to go deeper."

Laia's experience reveals several aspects of fashion blogging that recurred throughout this research: how digital connectivity made it possible to connect with other people who shared a niche interest in fashion, undertake research and self-publish; that anticipation of being read shaped and encouraged blogging practice; and the vastly different horizon of possibilities fashion blogging then afforded: connection and pleasure, rather than regimes of instrumentalised visibility. Fashion blogging was initially a hobby, with no previously chartered pathway to working in fashion media or

the fashion industry. As Laia said, “no-one was trying to get famous in 2006 from blogs.”

Even though most of the former bloggers I spoke to had dreams of one day becoming a writer, most didn’t start their blogs with any intimation that it could lead to a media career. The professional skills and resources they developed through blogging are therefore akin to the “accidental entrepreneurship” (2012, 57) sociologist Gina Neff observed in early Silicon Alley developers. As she writes, “while few of the pioneers of Silicon Alley set out to become media entrepreneurs, their sites functioned both creatively and instrumentally for building career portfolios, leading to new jobs, [and] creating visibility within the industry” (Neff 2012, 58). Brooke Erin Duffy (2017) identifies a similar trajectory for some of the participants in her research on fashion bloggers, for whom the creative passion work of blogging incidentally led to influencing careers. As in these studies, my interviewees often described their blogs as something for themselves: to find other people who shared their specific interests in fashion; to “figure out what writing [was] outside of school”; as a space to experiment with writing and have fun. These dimensions are evident in Isabel’s experience of blogging on *Hipster Musings*, which she started in 2006 as a 16-year-old in Ontario:

> I loved putting together outfits and liked finding clothes […] cherishing them and being playful with them. So, being able to put together an outfit, which I would do by writing in a notebook days in advance, like, *I want to wear this with this, and maybe with these shoes, but maybe with* these *shoes*, and I’d test it out… Once I figured out a really great outfit and was able to document it in a way I was satisfied with, and then share the story of the outfit… *that* I would say was the most exciting to me. And then, you know, getting the feedback from that, and having people think it was cool… was very exciting for me.

The key professional skills interviewees identified that they developed through blogging and currently employ in their careers were: *developing subject expertise through independent research*; *teaching themselves to write*; *developing a distinctive "voice"*; and *gaining confidence by writing for a dedicated audience*. These skills were supported by the habitual nature of blogging, which involved regularly reading other blogs, researching, writing, editing, and interacting with commenters. Even though it was undertaken for fun, fashion blogging required a significant investment of time and labour. For example, Jacob, who blogged about "brand backstories and backstories of a particular [menswear] item or particular trend" on *Wax Wane*, adhered to a strict, self-imposed publishing schedule of posting three times a week, and Laia described blogging as "like a second job in a way", spending up to two hours every day working on posts, "and then you have to look at all the other blogs." This is how she described how she created content for *Geometric Sleep*:

> The busiest times were when the collections were on. I would [look] at every show every day as soon as it went out, and I would save on my desktop all of the looks that I liked. If I liked a show – if I saved more than three or four images from a show and, when I was editing, I decided all four needed to be there, then that designer got their own dedicated post about the show. If it was one-to-four, or maybe two of them were… similar or just different colours, I could put them side-by-side and they would go in a round up… Generally, I wrote 250 words per designer, and if it was a long post, probably… 800 [words].

This extensive process was common among the interviewees, who blogged in a time when fashion blogs were more discursive, featuring longer written posts alongside visual content (see Findlay 2017 for more discussion of this era of blogging). The kind of work Laia describes undertaking was similar among the interviewees, who spoke of the independent research they conducted into the films, fashion history, designers and

collections they would blog about. Hazel, who wrote about fashion and culture on *Bonjour Girl*, described spending "hours and hours" blogging after school as a teenager. She made collages in Photoshop of runway looks she liked, and wrote reviews of fashion shows:

> it would take a while because… I would have my New York Fashion Week schedule and I would highlight the shows I wanted to look at, and I would go home and I would go to Style.com… and I would pick out all the things I liked and I would throw them in Photoshop and I would make this collage and then I would write a little review or something, or what I liked about it.

This labour developed their fashion knowledge while also giving bloggers opportunity to teach themselves skills relevant to a career in writing and editing, including researching, drafting and editing prose; doing visual research; editing visuals, and planning layouts. Yet at the same time, Hazel described that, in hindsight, her blog felt "very unedited and raw", which was also resonant amongst interviewees: that while they were proud of their blogs, which had been formative and consistent with their career specialism, what they blogged was indicative of their learning and not representative of their current skills and work. This contrasts to the virtual portfolios of the participants in Neff and Duffy's respective studies: for the former bloggers represented here, the blog functioned as a space to *figure out* rather than *mobilise into a product or portfolio*. This is typified by a comment by Sean, whose blog *The Khaki Crusader* featured stylish golfers and golfing clothes. He said: "I was just having fun! I mean, I was just doing whatever the hell I wanted, there wasn't a lot of thought behind it. It was good practice for what I do now, which is a lot of autobiographical writing."

By extension, even though their blogging practice involved many skills writers and editors employ in their professional lives, many of the interviewees did not see

themselves as writers when they blogged, even when they started to receive commissions from editors. Part of this seems attributable to the widespread cultural perception of fashion blogging at the time, that it was amateur and therefore wasn't 'real writing', a point made by a number of fashion critics and editors who published disparaging comments about bloggers as a means of differentiation (see Milano 2016; Menkes 2013). This impression was reinforced by the differences between fashion blogging and fashion journalism in form, style and tone.

It also seems attributable to the fact that the expertise of many of interviewees was cultivated through blogging rather than traditional pathways such as studying journalism at university – of all the former bloggers I spoke to, only two studied degrees related to media – or initially entering the industry through an internship or entry-level position. Here, as with the gossip bloggers of Erin A. Meyers' study (2012), these fashion bloggers engaged in a "distinct professional media production that retain[ed] ties to audience practices" (1027) of media consumption for pleasure, a mode of cultural production they did "not see… as connected to any sort of traditional journalistic practice" (1031).

At the same time, they were writing on a threshold: in a media environment in flux, they were developing skills desirable not only within the field of print media – publishing on a schedule, writing for a specific audience, developing subject expertise in a portfolio of writing, and so on – but those advantageous to the burgeoning digital environment of fashion publications that published writing akin to independent blogs: immediate and 'voicey'; shaped by the writer's perspective; engaged and informal, and contiguous with the topics and themes fashion bloggers explored. I examine this porosity in the next section, where I consider how digital and emplaced networks coincided in this case study.

Networked Blogfriends

We all started as a ragtag group of people online and as we've grown older […] we all just happen to be still involved in media, so we're like following each other, recommending each other, and it's just like the natural circle of friends slash your co-workers. It's just a different way of being co-workers – Laia

A defining characteristic of the early fashion blogipelago was the sense of community fostered between bloggers and readers: interviewees often referred to finding 'my people' through blogging. The relationality this implies was reflected in the texts of blogs themselves, as bloggers tended to mention one another in their posts, link to each other's blogs and have conversations in each other's comments sections. There was also permeability between bloggers and readers in these spaces, as Haley observed: "there really wasn't a very clear distinction between the writers and the readers. The writers were making what they wanted to read, and the readers were thinking about how *they* would write about their lives." She described this as a "sense of shared responsibility or collective ownership [… that] creates a really, really strong community." Haley's sentiment echoes Nancy Baym's observation that many online groups foster a "strong sense of group membership", whether gathering synchronously or asynchronously, due to the development of invested relationships around a mutual interest between people from several locations (2015, 81). These close bonds tended to cluster into loose friendship groups, cohering according to a blogger's interest in fashion, persona, and where they were based: for instance, when active on the blogipelago during the time period of this study, I observed clusters of friendships between Australian fashion bloggers, and fashion and streetstyle bloggers of Asian descent based in the UK and US, who attended fashion weeks together, as well as US bloggers who posted about

menswear, including Jacob, Sean and Rachel.

A number of the interviewees initially connected with one another on the blogipelago and remain networked, with many still being close friends at the time of our interview: they often mentioned one another, and on more than one occasion, an interviewee was about to see, or had just seen, another former blogger I was interviewing. Interviewees described crashing on each other's couches when they were visiting each other's cities, and of their admiration for each other's writing. These anecdotes demonstrate the strong social bonds that formed through early fashion blogging, which could be conceived of as a relational "community of practice" that supported "the production, identification, appropriation and flow of tacit knowledge" (Asheim and Gertler 2004, 309).

Besides shared interest and information exchange about fashion, the close-knit relationships that formed through blogging supported the sharing of professional opportunities, as some bloggers started to undertake paid writing and editing jobs, and commissioned writing from other bloggers or passed along writing jobs. For example, as a teenager, Anna emailed the editor of Toronto-based independent fashion magazine *Worn Fashion Journal* to ask if she could start freelancing for them. At 19, she became *Worn*'s blog editor and would try to find "people I knew who didn't consider themselves writers" to write for them because she too didn't feel like a writer. She edited a series called '*Worn* Crush', which featured interviews with bloggers (including Laia and Marie), and helped create a "fashion scavenger hunt" feature for the print magazine featuring "seven or eight bloggers, [giving] them a list of like, 'find something yellow, the shoes you wore last Saturday night' and then had them put together an outfit" (Isabel was one of the featured bloggers in this piece). Likewise, when Haley became editor of *The Hairpin* (after being publisher of *Worn*, working

there at the same time as Anna), she said she "reached out to everybody from *Worn*, from *Rookie*, from the style blogs, everybody whose writing I liked" to write posts for the site.

While this could be read as an example of the affective relationality inherent to aspirational labour, in which relationships with others in a community can be strategically deployed (Duffy 2016), none of the interviewees described their experiences in terms even remotely approaching the language of professional networking. Rather, their accounts of the opportunities afforded to and from their 'blogfriends' were parsed in the language of genuine friendship, with gratitude for the opportunities that were shared and surprise at where they have ended up. For example, Jacob, who acknowledged the fundamental role other bloggers like Sean played in supporting his writing career by commissioning him to write shortly after graduation, said of the menswear blogipelago he was part of: "we all were not super close but we all kind of cared about each other in this loose manner… we all had faith in each other in a weird way and knew that we would figure it out, that we could all help each other somehow, and we wanted the best for each other."

One of the most famous examples of a fashion blogger working at an independent publication was when then-style blogger Tavi Gevinson (*Style Rookie*) launched *Rookie*, a digital magazine that published smart writing, advice and imagery for teenage girls. Tavi first became famous when her blogfriend Elizabeth Spiridakis Olson wrote about *Style Rookie* in *The New York Times's T Magazine* (where Elizabeth worked as an art director alongside blogging at *White Lightning*). Tavi started her blog aged 11, and the intelligence, distinctive voice, and humour of her blogging persona, as well as the novelty of her youth, sustained public interest in her perspective on fashion

culture. Tavi announced her then-untitled digital magazine on *Style Rookie* in November 2010 by posting a call for expressions of interest from potential contributors:

> it looks like we're going to start a magazine for an audience of teenage girls […] On the note of that whole Internet thing, a great advantage of creating a magazine today is the access to talent and voice. This is supposed to have a 'for the people, by the people' kinda vibe. We want to find the best possible group of people for this project, and a wide range of ages, styles, etc. (Gevinson 2010)

She invited readers to email a sample of work for consideration, and several people who responded to the call and subsequently wrote for *Rookie* also had fashion blogs, including Marie, Hazel, Anna and Laia. Some of these writers were already friends with Tavi through blogging – for instance, Laia and Tavi often referenced their friendship on their respective blogs, and they travelled to London together to appear in feature on fashion blogs published in *POP* Magazine's Autumn/Winter 2009 issue. Others didn't know Tavi personally before emailing about the magazine, like Marie, who said "I just read her, I didn't know her personally […] but we had mutual friends […] so I submitted […] then I got a response and she was like, 'I really want you to do it, I read your blog', so that was really exciting."

Rookie was a very visible publication: its launch, book and podcast releases, and eventual closure were widely reported by legacy and popular media such as *The Telegraph*, *CBC*, *Dazed*, *Slate*, *The Cut*, and *The Globe and Mail*. The interviewees who wrote for *Rookie* spoke about how important the publication was for their careers: Laia described learning to pitch and being edited on *Rookie* as a "training ground […] for so many of us." The visibility of writing for the site led to other writing opportunities: Anna said that writing for *Rookie* "helped me so much in getting other jobs and branching out", and for Marie it was "a major, major thing for my career." For many

interviewees, *Rookie* was one of the first paid freelance writing gigs they had. It was operational in the early digital fashion and lifestyle media ecosystem that offered many fashion bloggers their first by-lines and gradually, the opportunity to start writing full-time. This was true for Marie, who commented that "when websites like *The Hairpin*, *Refinery29* and *Jezebel* became more mainstream, it did start to feel like there was more of a possibility to actually 'be a writer' than before."

Such examples illustrate the disintermediation facilitated by digital networks, as the affordances of blogs supported, to some extent, "the devolution of fashion authority from traditional power brokers such as magazine editors […] toward a more diversified assemblage of participants" (Crewe 2017, 129). **As Louise Crewe argues, the internet has reconfigured relationships between "'trusted' fashion intermediaries and knowledge providers" (2017, 143) and their audiences, as technologies such as search engines, digital archives and databases have allowed regular users to undertake research in a comparatively more even distribution of fashion knowledge and, by extension, knowledge production.** As established editors and bloggers commissioned pieces from the blogipelago, some early fashion bloggers were able to gain experience of being edited and writing for different publications and audiences, and getting paid for their work, thereby building an initial portfolio. This process was not a disruption to or dismantling of existing media hierarchies so much as an expansion of the media field and its pool of potential workers. Bloggers working in voluntary or paid positions at publications like *The Hairpin*, *Four Pins*, *A Continuous Lean* and *Worn,* and those writing freelance for these and other outlets, model the porosity of borders between the fields of print and new media, where relations of centre, periphery and margins in media work were traversed, as bloggers moved from being "precarious, amateur, unfunded" writers on the margins of North American media to

moving between being "flexible, semi-professional, underfunded" and "institutionalised, professional and well-funded" media workers (Sender 2012, 209). Some, like Haley and Jacob, moved into full-time employment as an editor and fashion writer, respectively, while others undertook part-time paid employment (in fashion boutiques, in administrative roles in the financial, real estate and legal sectors) alongside freelance writing jobs.

The role digital networks of blogfriends played, then, illustrates "both continuities and ruptures in the spatial organization and reproduction of fashion" (Crewe 2017, 136): this case study echoes the findings of many other studies on new media work and the duality of its façade of glamour and flexibility and its inherent precarity (see **Hund 2023;** Duffy 2017; Gill 2010; Neff, Wissinger and Zukin 2005). Yet at the same time, it resists neoliberal logics of autonomous individualism (see Gill 2010) by foregrounding the strong interpersonal bonds shaping much of these early opportunities and interactions. The view that the blogipelago was a community that offered recognition and support (both initially and even now, in their professional careers) permeated these interviews. As Marie said of her friends from her blogging days, "all the people that I'm still connected with… from our blogs then to *Rookie*, ultimately, it's like a small community where we will pitch to each other and recommend each other for jobs. It all started with *Agent Lover*."

Proximity Privilege

"We had this office space at this heritage building in Toronto… just this community space you could go with cool people who were talking about the things they were interested in, who had expertise in different areas, who really encouraged the shit out of each other and who were tied to the community. We would throw parties; we would go to zine fairs… I still see people I know from that era" – Anna, on working at *Worn*

A theme that I did not anticipate arising when I started this research was the continued importance of cities to the formation of networked opportunities for the interviewees. Early techno-optimist discourses of the capacity of online connectivity to "liberate people of geographic constraints and forge connections" (Baym 2015, 44) have long been critiqued in literature evaluating the intersection of global cities, cultural labour and networks in an era of digital connectivity (see for example Gu 2023; Baym 2015; Clare 2012; Neff 2005; Sassen 1991). Yet the visibility of blogger-to-blogger connections, and the sheer volume of digital publications that many early fashion bloggers wrote for had suggested that these professional opportunities had largely arisen by the dual processes already mapped in this work: the skills developed through habitual blogging for an audience; and the opportunities arising from being networked with other blogfriends, who shared opportunities with each another as they undertook paid positions within media publications.

However, these interviews revealed the enduring importance of being able to access emplaced networks of media and fashion professionals. All interviewees save one were based in New York or Toronto (or both) to gain proximity to the media and fashion industries based in those cities. Some relocated to undertake undergraduate or postgraduate degrees in either city, some moved after graduation, and others already lived there and stayed to try to move into roles in media. Interviewees spoke of their awareness that "that's where the industry is, that's where I need to live", their hope that being in New York or Toronto might help them access media work, and that being in the same location as existing professional networks might lead to connections. Sentiments such as these emphasise the enduring way in which certain cities exist in the

popular imagination as nerve centres of certain industries, doubly powerful in this case study due to the associations of New York and Toronto with both media and fashion.

New York and Toronto have both been described as "fashion cities" due to their aggregation of industries that sustain the symbolic and material production of fashion (see Gilbert and Casadei 2020; Crewe 2017; Leslie and Brail 2011). They both house universities with well-established fashion education programmes (Fashion Institute of Technology New York; Parsons School of Design; Toronto Metropolitan University) and museums that specialise in fashion archivism and/or stage large-scale fashion exhibitions (Museum at FIT; Metropolitan Museum of Art; Bata Shoe Museum; Royal Ontario Museum). They respectively host North America's two largest fashion weeks as well as vibrant fashion retail precincts and brand flagship boutiques. In addition to the colocation of established fashion and lifestyle media companies, several of the digital publications mentioned in this study were or are also headquartered in either city: *Worn* and *Toronto Standard* were based in Toronto; *Style.com*, *The Hairpin*, *Four Pins*, *xoJane*, *The Cut*, *Refinery29*, and *Man Repeller* in New York. **Both cities thus exemplify Oakley, Laurison and Friedman's observation that the cultural and creative industries' "urban networks of cultural production have an interdependence with cultural consumption" (2017, 1512), both of which attract aspiring workers to the cities where these industries are based.** The collective belief of aspiring fashion media workers is that cities like New York and Toronto function as "important nodes of information, knowledge and culture" (Leslie 1997, 570) that support informal entry-points into creative work through the forms of face-to-face collaboration and specialised cultural consumption they make available (see Oakley et al. 2017; Currid 2007; Lloyd 2006; Storper and Venables 2004). The ways interviewees spoke about what they sought to do in these locations – network, apply for and

undertake internships at media companies and apply for paid positions within media – more closely resembled the strategic forms of sociality often mapped in literature on new media work, and was distinct from the ways they spoke of interactions in the digital networks they participated in, as previously discussed, that eventually fulfilled a similar function.

This trend of basing oneself in New York and/or Toronto exemplifies the enduring importance of cities as centres of innovation in certain cultural industries, including fashion and media, despite the affordances of digital connectivity to de-centralise work and networking. Bjorn T. Asheim and Meric S. Gertler note that one of the paradoxes of the "contemporary global economy" is that "innovative activity is not uniformly or randomly distributed across the geographic landscape. Indeed, the more knowledge-intensive the economic activity, the more geographically clustered it tends to be" (2004, 291). One of the elements that reinforce the concentrated spatialisation of innovative activity is how tacit knowledge is communicated. It is "difficult to exchange over long distances. It is heavily imbued with meaning arising from the social and institutional context in which it is produced, and this context-specific nature makes it spatially sticky" (Asheim and Gertler 2004, 293). This leads to "density of cultural actors", as individuals seeking to work in these industries "embed themselves within a socio-spatial context that can give rise to the symbolic and material resources needed to balance commercial with aesthetic objectives" (Rantisi and Leslie 2010, 35).

Such cities have a "centripetal pull" (Asheim and Gertler 2004, 294) due to the assets and associations located there, which was reflected in the word choice of interviewees describing their decision to relocate. For example, Anna described relocating to Toronto for university as a "need" – "school was basically like, 'I need to get to a bigger city because I need to meet people.' And looking back, I did. I

networked a lot". This reveals the kind of relational proximity individuals identify as connected to particular spaces, in turn giving rise to "occupational similarity", which generates communities of practice which support and enable flows of tacit knowledge (Asheim and Gertler 2004, 298).

Being able to engage in the events and networks embedded in New York and Toronto was advantageous for several interviewees. Some of these opportunities arose from networking in formal contexts: for example, while studying her master's in journalism at Columbia University, Isabel was commissioned by a classmate to write for a Parisian fashion magazine that he worked for, and her thesis advisor connected her with a *New York Times* editor, a publication for which she later wrote. Other opportunities arose incidentally, a consequence of being co-located in environments where fashion and media workers circulated. For instance, Jacob met Sean, who edited the blog at GQ.com, through working in a store in New York: "if I hadn't been in New York and working in that store, and if there hadn't been weird store events and kind of just meeting people… it was kind of like a music scene in a way, like we all knew each other." Laia's "first proper job writing full-time" also arose through incidental networking: "my ex-boyfriend's brother's girlfriend worked in fashion, she worked at *W* magazine. And her friend was working at *Yahoo!* and they were looking to hire a writer." These experiences illustrate both "the specific advantages of unplanned and haphazard, inter-network contact" (Jacobs in Storper and Venables 2004, 365) made possible by being in proximity to the industry networks of creative cities as well as the close imbrication of fashion's material and symbolic industries in these contexts.

That being able to participate in these industries by virtue of being co-located was itself a form of privilege as Haley noted when she reflected on her process of commissioning writers for *The Hairpin*, the website she edited (a job she moved from

Toronto to New York for). As well as keeping the slush pile open, Haley would commission writers, and when she did:

> it was always because they had published something already… If I was reaching out to somebody [and] I hadn't read their writing it was likely that I had met them in person, or somebody had recommended them to me… Which is a form of gatekeeping because if you've already been published chances are you are in a position where you have access to editors, you probably do have some level of education that has allowed you to get these types of jobs and… if I've been introduced to you, that's a proximity privilege, where it's like, we just happen to be in the two media centres of North America… Toronto and New York.

Proximity privilege is the ability to connect into existing creative networks by virtue of being able to move to a city where there is an aggregation of institutions and professionals working within a cultural industry and benefit from the interpersonal relational sociality this proximity facilitates. The inherent 'privilege' of this proximity encompasses both formal and informal opportunities: serendipitous and haphazard offers of work, or one paid opportunity leading to another because your work is 'known' and vouched for by more established players in the industry.

At the same time, proximity privilege does not insure against the precarities and risks inherent to engaging in freelance creative work. The interviewees who relocated were in their late teens or early twenties when they did so, and none mentioned having to factor dependents or the needs of a partner into their decision to move. Several undertook their freelance writing alongside other full-time or part-time paid work that supported their livings costs in both related and unrelated fields of work: fashion retail assistant, office manager and buyer for a fashion boutique, PR specialist at a financial consulting firm. Some undertook internships in fashion and media companies to gain more experience, of which some were unpaid: Isabel lived off the money she'd saved by

working through university while doing a six-month unpaid internship at a Canadian literary magazine in Toronto and was debt-free because her parents paid off her student loans. Anna, too, was able to take on unpaid work and internships because her parents paid her university tuition. She said: "it is a huge reason why media is not more diverse and very unequal. I think I took it for granted at the time, and as you get older you realise how fucked up it all is." These examples illustrate "the inequalities [that] complicate the narrative of the creative city" (Oakley et al 2017, 1514) and nuance the form of privilege proximity affords. It is a privilege to be able to relocate to try to connect into existing professional networks, and benefit from word-of-mouth recommendations and incidental opportunities; but to do so requires either a secure base of economic capital or the ability to maintain a freelance work alongside other forms of labour, whether casual employment, paid internships or a full- or part-time role in a different industry. **The concept of 'proximity privilege' dovetails with other studies into the structural factors that delimit (or support) the professional opportunities available to individuals. As with Sam Friedman and Daniel Laurison's work on the 'class ceiling' preventing equal access to elite occupations in the UK (2019) and Jo Littler's dismantling of the myth of 'meritocracy' (2017), this study demonstrates the coincidence of other factors beyond early participation in the blogipelago and being skilled in communication that facilitated and sustained many of these interviewees' progression into stable, paid media work.**

Having the proximity privilege to access these emplaced networks and their attendant opportunities is perhaps what differentiates these interviewees from countless other bloggers who may well also have harboured dreams of working as a paid fashion writer but drifted off the blogipelago into unrelated careers: as Brooke Erin Duffy argues, the ability to participate in "productive socialization […] – necessary

networking where work and non-work time bleed into one another – is not available to everyone" (2016, 449). Jacob reflected on this as he acknowledged how significant the early opportunities Sean (GQ.com) and Michael Williams, editor of *A Continuous Lean* menswear blog, offered him were: "there are so many people I know that wrote and wrote and wrote for years and didn't get anywhere, and I really cannot … express more fervently, that if it wasn't for [Michael and Sean] I would not have been able to have had the life that I've had. I was just lucky enough that those people took care and saw something in me, and that has been true for my entire career."

Conclusion

We have this shared intellectual obsession, the same style of curiosity and enthusiasm for a lot of the same topics, and we found a way to be close either through the internet or in where we live and I just, I feel very lucky and grateful for all their [fashion bloggers'] work – Haley

In charting the four themes that arose in conversation with a generation of early fashion bloggers about their media careers, this research has engaged with several tensions that animate studies of flexible creative labour in the cultural industries. The experiences of the interviewees reveal the complexity of being a cultural worker: that friendships created and maintained through shared interest and enjoyment rather than calculation can also become a form of social privilege that is professionally advantageous; and that proximity to cities with a dense concentration of creative industries is a form of privilege, when being able to take advantage of the opportunities afforded also requires forms of economic privilege or prolonged insecure work. The social networks these interviewees cultivated through their fashion blogs came to "serve as a new form of labour market mediation" (Neff 2005, 138): as Laia commented, "it's just like the natural circle of friends slash coworkers". Yet these relational networks provided

bloggers with "sociability, support, information, a sense of belonging and social identity" (Wellman in Edensor et al 2010, 15) and were an impetus for their fashion blogging practice: writing for each other and their wider readership led to a labour market mediation of a different kind, as bloggers incidentally developed their writerly 'voice' and developed skills and expertise that would position them advantageously in an uncertain media environment where independent digital publications were on the rise.

This study also demonstrates the close interanimation between digital and emplaced networks of cultural actors, and the porosity of media work and opportunities across digital and print environments. The North American fashion blogipelago operated in parallel to the established networks of fashion and media professionals in New York and Toronto, reflecting Louise Crewe's argument that "when physical, material and virtual spaces coexist, coalesce and collide, old and new fashion practices merge, are twisted together, hybrid and relational" (2017, 131). Indeed, as this study has shown, these independent fashion bloggers and their practice coalesced with independent and established fashion and lifestyle media. The coincidence of having sufficient capital to sustain working within a precarious labour environment, the opportunities that arose from blogging during a significant shift from print to digital within North American media, and the genuine, invested relationships that developed through bloggers' community of practice all **seemed to support** the conditions for these career trajectories.

In addition to recuperating an important and heretofore untold narrative of fashion-related media work arising from the fashion blogosphere, this study adds to our understanding of how important relational networks are in the creative industries and adds to the literature correcting myths about digital's decentring of

cultural work and allegedly meritocratic 'opening up' of opportunities. This study demonstrates that timing, technological affordances, genuine friendships, strategic networking and the ability to participate in existing geographical milieux as well as individual skills and interests, collectively contributed to the emergence of my interviewees' careers in media.

Table 1. Table of the nine participants, outlining the duration in which their fashion blog was active, their current role and selected previous publications they have written and/or edited for.

Interviewee	**Blog/ Dates Active**	**City**	**Job Title (a/o Dec 2023)**	**Selected Publications Written/Edited For**
Anna Fitzpatrick	*If the Sok Fitz*/ 2007-2013	TO	Novelist and freelance writer	*Worn Fashion Journal; Rookie; Toronto Standard; Rolling Stone; The Hairpin; Harpers Bazaar; Elle; The Globe & Mail; The New York Times Magazine*
Haley Mlotek	n/a	TO; NYC	Managing editor, *Feeld*	*Worn Fashion Journal; SSENSE; The Toronto Standard*; *The Hairpin*; *MTV News*; *The New Yorker*; *Garage*; *Hazlitt; n+1*
Hazel Cills	*Bonjour Girl*/ 2009-2012	NYC	Editor at NPR Music	*Rookie; The New York Times; Los Angeles Times; Pitchfork; MTV News; Rolling Stone; Jezebel*
Isabel Slone	*Hipster Musings*/ 2006-2012	TO; NYC	Freelance journalist and cultural critic	*Worn Fashion Journal*; *Hazlitt*; *The Toronto Standard*; *xoJane; The New York Times*
Jacob Gallagher	*Wax Wane*/ 2009/10-2014	NYC	Fashion columnist, *The Wall Street Journal*	*GQ.com; Esquire*; *A Continuous Lean*
Laia Garcia-Furtado	*Geometric Sleep*/ 2006-2015 (largely inactive after 2011)	NYC	Senior Fashion News Editor, *Vogue Runway*	*Rookie; Lenny Letter; British Vogue; Harper's Bazaar; Elle; Red Magazine*

Marie Lodi	*Agent Lover*/ 2008-2015	n/a	Writer, editor and podcast host	*Rookie; Hello Giggles; Refinery29; Racked; PAPER; The Cut; Allure; i-D; Bustle; Fashionista*
Rachel Tashjian Wise	*Pizza Rulez*/ 2011-2014/15	NYC	Fashion writer, *The Washington Post*	*Four Pins*; *Vanity Fair*; *GQ*; *Harper's Bazaar US*
Sean Hotchkiss	*The Khaki Crusader*/ 2007-2011	NYC	Freelance writer and coach	*GQ.com; Men's Health; GQ; Esquire*

Reference List

Arriagada, Arturo and Bishop, Sophie. 2021. “Between Commerciality and Authenticity: The Imaginary of Social Media Influencers in the Platform Economy.” *Communication, Culture & Critique* 14 (4): 568-586. https://doi.org/10.1093/ccc/tcab050

Asheim, Bjorn T. and Gertler, Meric S. (2004) “The Geography of Innovation: Regional Innovation Systems.” In: *The Oxford Handbook of Innovation*, edited by Jan Fagerberg, David C. Mowery and Richard R. Nelson. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Baym, Nancy K. 2015. *Personal Communications in the Digital Age*. Cambridge: Polity.

Chandra, Ambarish and Kaiser, Ulrich. 2014. “Targeted Advertising in Magazine Markets and the Advent of the Internet.” *Management Science* 60 (7): 1829-1843. http://dx.doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.2013.1830

Clare, Karenjit. 2013. “The essential role of place within the creative industries: Boundaries, networks and play.” *Cities* 34: 52-57. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2012.05.009

Coates, David, Bredholt, Rebecca, Holley, Julie, Johnson, Kyle and Mendolera, Katrina. 2010. “State of the Media: An Analysis of the Changing Media Landscape by the Vocus Media Research Team.” White paper, *Vocus*. https://www.slideshare.net/Cision/vocus-2010-stateofthemedia.

Crewe, Louise. 2017. *The Geographies of Fashion: Consumption, Space, and Value*. London and New York: Bloomsbury.

Currid, Elizabeth. 2007. *The Warhol Economy: How fashion, art and music drive New York City*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Currid-Halkett, Elizabeth and Ravid, Gilad. 2012. "'Stars' and the Connectivity of Cultural Industry World Cities: An Empirical Social Network Analysis of Human Capital Mobility and its Implications for Economic Development." *Environment and Planning A* 44 (11): 2646-2663. https://doi.org/10.1068/a4555

Dean, Jodi. 2010. *Blog Theory: Feedback and Capture in the Circuits of Drive*. Cambridge and Malden: Polity.

De Perthuis, Karen and Findlay, Rosie. 2019. "How Fashion Travels: The Fashionable Ideal in the Age of Instagram." *Fashion Theory* 23 (2): 219-242. https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2019.1567062

DeVault, Marjorie L. and Gross, Glenda. 2012. "Feminist Qualitative Interviewing: Experience, Talk, and Knowledge." In: *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis,* edited by Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber. Los Angeles: Sage.

Duffy, Brooke E. 2017. *(Not) Getting Paid to Do What You Love: Gender, Social Media, and Aspirational Work*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Duffy, Brooke Erin. 2015. “The Romance of Work: Gender and aspirational labour in the digital culture industries”. *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 19 (4): 441-457. https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877915572186

Duffy, Brooke E. and Hund, Emily. 2015. “‘Having it All’ on Social Media: Entrepreneurial Femininity and Self-Branding Among Fashion Bloggers.” *Social Media + Society* 1 (2): 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305115604337

Duffy, Brooke E. and Wissinger, Elizabeth. 2017. “Mythologies of Creative Work in the Social Media Age: Fun, Free, and ‘Just Being Me.’” *International Journal of Communication* 11: 4652-4671.

Edensor, Tim, Leslie, Deborah, Millington, Steve and Rantisi, Norma M. 2009. “Introduction: Rethinking Creativity: Critiquing the creative class thesis.” In: *Spaces of Vernacular Creativity,* edited by Tim Edensor, Deborah Leslie, Steve Millington, and Norma M. Rantisi. London: Routledge.

Findlay, Rosie. 2017. *Personal Style Blogs: Appearances that Fascinate*. Bristol: Intellect.

Friedman, Sam and Laurison, Daniel. 2019. *The Class Ceiling: Why it pays to be privileged*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.

Gevinson, Tavi. 2010. “it’s happening.” *Style Rookie*, November 14, 2010. http://www.thestylerookie.com/search?updated-max=2010-11-14T16:45:00-06:00&max-results=1&reverse-paginate=true&start=112&by-date=false.

Gilbert, David and Casadei, Patrizia. 2020. “The Hunting of the Fashion City: Rethinking the Relationship Between Fashion and the Urban in the Twenty-First Century.” *Fashion Theory* 24 (3): 393-408. https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2020.1732023

Gill, Rosalind. 2010. “‘Life is a Pitch’: Managing the Self in New Media Work.” In: *Managing Media Work*, edited by Mark Deuze. London and New York: Sage.

Gross, Daniel. 2009. “Do Condé Nast’s Closures Mark a Bottom for Media?” *Newsweek*, October 6, 2009. https://www.newsweek.com/do-conde-nasts-closures-mark-bottom-media-81227.

Gu, Xin. 2023. *Cultural Work and Creative Subjectivity: Recentralising the Artist Critique and Social Networks in the Cultural Industries*. London: Routledge.

Hund, Emily. 2023. *The Influencer Industry: The Quest for Authenticity on Social Media*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Leslie, Deborah. 1997. “Abandoning Madison Avenue: The Relocation of Advertising Services in New York City.” *Urban Geography* 18 (7): 568-590. https://doi.org/10.2747/0272-3638.18.7.568

Leslie, Deborah and Brail, Shauna. 2011. “The productive role of ‘quality of place’: A case study of fashion designers in Toronto.” *Environment and Planning A* 43 (12): 2900-2917. https://doi.org/10.1068/a43473

Littler, Jo. 2017. *Against Meritocracy: Culture, Power and Myths of Mobility*. Taylor & Francis Group.

Lloyd, Richard. 2006. *Neo-Bohemia: Arts and commerce in the post-industrial city*. New York: Routledge.

Luvaas, Brent. 2016. *Street Style: An Ethnography of Fashion Blogging*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Menkes, Suzy. 2013. “The circus of fashion.” *T: The New York Times Style Magazine*, February 10, 2013. https://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/10/t-magazine/the-circus-of-fashion.html#:~:text=Or%2C%20more%20accurately%20in%20the,on%20his%20Sartorialist%20Web%20site.

Mensitieri, Giulia. 2020. *The Most Beautiful Job in the World*. Translated by Natasha Lehrer. London: Bloomsbury.

Meyers, Erin A. 2012. ‘“Blogs give regular people the chance to talk back’: Rethinking ‘professional’ media hierarchies in new media.” *New Media and Society* 14 (6): 1022-1038. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444812439052

Milano, Francesco. 2016. “Is Vogue.com in the position to attack influencers?” *NSS Magazine*. September 28, 2016. https://www.nssmag.com/en/fashion/9107/is-vogue-com-in-the-position-to-attack-influencers.

Mlotek, Haley. Interviewed by Rosie Findlay. 2019.

Neff, Gina. 2012. *Venture Labor: Work and the Burden of Risk in Innovative Industries*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Neff, Gina. 2005. “The Changing Place of Cultural Production: The Location of Social Networks in a Digital Media Industry.” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 597 (1). https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716204270505

Neff, Gina, Wissinger, Elizabeth and Zukin, Sharon. 2005. “Entrepreneurial Labor among Cultural Producers: ‘Cool’ Jobs in ‘Hot’ Industries.” *SOCIAL SEMIOTICS* 15 (3): 307-334. https://doi.org/10.1080/10350330500310111

Oakley, Kate, Laurison, Daniel, O’Brien, Dave, and Friedman, Sam. 2017. “Cultural Capital: Arts Graduates, Spatial Inequality, and London’s Impact of Cultural Labor Markets.” *American Behavioral Scientist* 61 (12): 1510-1531. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764217734274

Pedroni, Marco. 2023. “Two Decades of Fashion Blogging and Influencing: A Critical Overview.” *Fashion Theory* 27 (2): 237-268. https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2021.2017213.

Petrarcha, Emilia. 2024. “The Users Who Overtook The Machine”. *Ssense*. September 25, 2024. https://www.ssense.com/en-gb/editorial/culture/fashion-internet-history.

Robinson, James. 2009. “Presses to grind to a halt as print passes its sell-by date”. *The Observer*. March 22, 2009. https://www.theguardian.com/media/2009/mar/22/newspapers-layoffs-online-advertising.

Rocamora, Agnés. 2022. “The Datafication and Quantification of Fashion: The Case of Fashion Influencers.” *Fashion Theory* 26 (7): 1109-1133. https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2022.2048527

Sassen, Saskia. 1991. *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Sender, Katherine. 2012. “No Hard Feelings: Reflexivity and Queer Affect in the New Media Landscape.” In: *The Handbook of Gender, Sex and Media*, edited by Karen Ross. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.

Storper, Michael and Venables, Anthony J. (2004) “Buzz: face-to-face contact and the urban economy.” *Journal of Economic Geography* 4 (4): 351-370. https://doi.org/10.1093/jnlecg/lbh027

Strugatz, Rachel. 2019. “Op-Ed: Why I Chose Journalism Over Influencing.” *Business of Fashion*, December 13, 2019. https://www.businessoffashion.com/opinions/media/op-ed-why-i-chose-journalism-over-influencing/.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2017. "Newspaper publishers lose over half their employment from January 2001 to September 2016". Report, *TED: The Economics Daily*. https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2017/newspaper-publishers-lose-over-half-their-employment-from-january-2001-to-september-2016.htm.

Weir, David. 2010. “Vocus Report on the State of the Media: It’s Really, Really Bad.” *CBS News Money Watch*, January 13, 2010. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/vocus-report-on-the-state-of-the-media-its-really-really-bad/.