



Asians Wear Clothes on the Internet

Race, Gender, and the Work
of Personal Style Blogging

Minh-Ha T. Pham

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Introduction.

Asian Personal Style Superbloggers and the Material Conditions and Contexts of Asian Fashion Work

On October 24, 2010, Susanna Lau—a London-born Hong Konger who is better known online by her childhood nickname, Susie Bubble (because she was always in her own little world)—posted a series of photographs of herself wearing lilac-and-pink-striped, 1930s-era cocktail pajamas (see figures I.1 and I.2). Shortly after the post went up, the owner of the small vintage clothing store in London where she purchased the pajamas was inundated with inquiries about the outfit. The owner recalls: “My phone was ringing off the hook. People called me from all over the country and beyond asking me for those pyjamas!”¹ As well as benefiting retailers, Lau’s taste for out-of-the-box styles of dress (such as vintage pajamas as daywear) has also launched the careers of little-known independent designers. The *New York Times* reported, “Her finds have snared the attention of chains like Topshop; last year the company snapped up Angie Johnson, the [Canadian] designer of I Heart Norwegian Wood, one of Ms. Lau’s discoveries, to create a line for its stores.”² Rumi Neely, a mixed-race Japanese American, wields the same kind of sales-boosting power. Sales surge any time fashion companies like Forever 21 and Myer (an Australian department store) feature her in their advertising campaigns. Chris Wirasinha, cofounder of pop culture web channel pedestrian.tv, rightly observes, “If Rumi likes your brand, it’s probably worth more than a *Harper’s Bazaar* or a *Vogue* mention.”³



1.1 and 1.2 Susanna Lau in vintage cocktail pajamas, Style Bubble, October 24, 2010.

Other bloggers like the Korean American Aimee Song and the Taiwanese American Tina Craig (who coauthors the blog *Bag Snob* with fellow Taiwanese American Kelly Cook) have an impact on sales simply by wearing their favorite clothes. Song has boasted that clothes she photographs herself wearing and posts to the photo-sharing site Instagram, where she has more than a million followers, usually sell out that day.⁴ Although Craig's blog focuses on handbags, a Twitter photograph of her wearing DL1961 premium denim jeans not only caused a spike in sales for the company, it also launched a capsule collection called DL1961xBagsnob (in which a pair of jeans retails for \$168–\$225).⁵ The Vietnamese American blogger Wendy Nguyen's "Promise" bracelet, designed in collaboration with Tacori (for whom she is also the brand ambassador) has become a top-selling item for the American jewelry company. The bracelet with its intertwined silver and yellow gold has also found a receptive audience among A-list celebrities like Jay Z, who purchased it as a Valentine's Day gift for his superstar wife, Beyoncé.⁶

Lau, Neely, Song, Craig, and Nguyen are part of an elite class of personal style bloggers whose tastes—represented primarily by the fashion garments and accessories they buy, wear, style, describe, admire, and broadcast on their personal blogs—carry an inordinate amount of cultural and economic influence. Like all personal style bloggers, they post photos of themselves wearing clothes, often accompanied by text describing the occasion for wearing the outfit, styling tips, or product reviews. They also share details of their personal lives that help contextualize their unique fashion perspectives. Lau has hinted on her blog that her signature eccentric style of combining “clashing” prints, colors, and categories of clothing (for example, sportswear and formal wear, or sleepwear and sportswear) “was initially an act of rebellion against my parents and the ‘popular’ people at school.”⁷ (Throughout her blog, Lau openly, if offhandedly, attributes her feelings of childhood alienation to her racial difference.) Nguyen’s adolescence—spent first in poverty as a Vietnamese immigrant, whose parents worked in the garment industry⁸ and later in the California foster care system—provides the tacit or overt backstory for all of her blog posts. Her personal history reframes how we understand her penchant for floaty, diaphanous dresses and other similarly feminine items. Her romantic and generally conservative style has a cheerful, even indomitably optimistic, spirit when viewed in light of her tumultuous past. In one post she acknowledges that her personal style blog helps her to “heal from some of the emotional scars” of her past.⁹

Broadly speaking, personal style blogs represent an individual’s taste. Unlike the clothing featured in fashion museums or in retail spaces that is displayed on mannequins or on hangers, the clothes in style blogs are personal. They are worn on a real person’s body, and they reflect a practice and convey an idea of self-composure. Clothes on personal style blogs communicate a personal style of dress as well as a style of identity and of life. They constitute what Joanne Entwistle terms “situated bodily practices.”¹⁰ Which garments bloggers wear and how they style them articulate a unique relation between the body and the individual’s experience of everyday life. This approach to the media representation of clothing distinguishes personal style blogs from other popular genres of fashion blogs.

The street style blog (for example, *The Sartorialist*, *Street Peeper*, and *Jak & Jil*) presents a more panoramic view of fashion. It is concerned with

representing the material, cultural, and aesthetic landscape of a city from a fashion perspective. It is not unusual, then, for most of the people featured in street style blogs to be unnamed and not described with any personalizing details. The primary function of street style blog images is to represent a fashion city, not a fashionable individual. The personal style blog is also distinct from the fashion news aggregate blog (such as *The Cut and Business of Fashion*), which focuses more on collecting and sharing links about fashion than on creating new content. These are filter blogs that presurf and presort the Internet for interesting, relevant, and recent news items. The personal style blog, street style blog, and fashion news aggregate blog are the three most common types of fashion blogs, but there are a number of derivative and minor genres including microblogs hosted on Tumblr, Instagram, and Twitter that are image-heavy and, more often than not, image-only presentations of personal style; blogs focused on fashion criticism like my own coauthored *Threadbared*; and blogs that combine elements of various genres of fashion, food, cooking, and lifestyle blogs. All fashion blog genres contain blogs that are independently owned, corporate owned, or some combination of the two.

The personal style blogs I'm concerned with in this book have a distinct set of common features. First, they are all privately owned and operated (though as they have become more successful, many have acquired noncontrolling corporate support). Second, they are run by Asian bloggers based mostly in the United States, although some of them are in the English-speaking Asian diaspora in England and the Philippines. And third, they constitute a highly select group of superblogs. By this, I mean that they are among the most elite blogs according to a variety of metrics, including online traffic; number of reader comments; number of subscribers or followers; the quantity and quality of fashion industry invitations, collaborations, and media attention that they attract; and their high name recognition. The blogs that are the focus of this book make up a very small and incredibly select group of personal style blogs that have the lion's share of influence and attention with respect to both the online public and the fashion industry.¹¹ How did this group of Asian superblogs rise to such prominence in the early twenty-first century? How did the fashion tastes of more or less ordinary Asian consumers come to have such significance in the new economies of mainstream Western fashion media and consumer markets? And how do Asian superbloggers' digital practices work to rearticulate race and gender

as aesthetic strategies of value rather than locations of social difference? In other words, how are their personal style blogging practices (such as self-fashioning, posing, and writing) modes of taste work that turn their styles of gendered racial embodiment into cultural, social, and economic capital? These questions frame my investigation of Asian superblogs.

To begin, it is necessary to clarify what I mean by taste. I draw on Pierre Bourdieu's famous statement that "the idea of personal taste is an illusion."¹² What he meant is that our personal tastes are shaped by and reflect our social position and social context. Bourdieu argues that the expression of taste, materialized through our manners, comportment, speech, styles of dress, and other consumer choices, is a practice of self-classification: "Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier."¹³ Our tastes locate us in a particular social context that is itself structured by a system of sensibilities, dispositions, and values (what Bourdieu terms "habitus"). Thus, an analysis of the tastes of Asian superbloggers is an analysis of the social reality that creates the conditions for their taste as well as the cultural economic context that gives value to it. It asks both what is Asian taste in the context of early twenty-first-century fashion, and why do fashion consumers and the fashion industry have such a taste for it?

Above I described personal style blogs as representations of individual taste. But with respect to superblogs, the blogger's personal style and taste are not simply represented. As I have already indicated, elite Asian bloggers' tastes do a great deal of work. Their taste practices are value-producing activities that generate a significant though highly uneven amount of cultural, social, and sometimes financial capital for the blogger and for various entities in the fashion industry. As the fashion blog phenomenon has spread to the mainstream, fashion companies have become increasingly savvy about monetizing superbloggers' free taste labors (which involve creating media publicity, building consumers' interest and trust, and fashion modeling). Sometimes their savviness verges on the ethically dubious, as was the case when the luxury handbag company Fendi borrowed the "BryanBoy pose" (the signature pose of Filipino queer superblogger Bryan Grey Yambao) in its international ad campaign without crediting or compensating him. (I discuss this event in greater detail in chapter 4.)

In addition to producing economic value, Asian superbloggers' tastes produce economic relations between bloggers and readers and between bloggers and industry insiders. Although bloggers blog for free and readers

read blogs for free, and although bloggers and readers have more or less equal social standing as ordinary fashion consumers, a superblogger is able to economicize readers' activities by turning their consumption of the blog and their admiration and emulation of the superblogger's taste into cultural, social, and financial capital—for example, when readers click on affiliate links embedded in a blog post.¹⁴

To examine Asian superbloggers' online taste activities as value-producing work is to place them in the longer historical context of Asian fashion work. In doing so, I want to extend the notion and history of Asian fashion work into the digital realm. This will serve to draw out the evolving roles that race, gender, and class play in structuring work opportunities and constraints for Asian fashion workers at a time when nonmaterial commodities (such as blogs and taste) have become so central to the fashion industry's accumulation of capital.

One of These Is Much Like the Other

The Asian fashion worker—the designation likely brings to mind images of sewing machine operators; of an exploited and informal female workforce; and of a largely contingent Asian diasporic labor market concentrated in Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the United States that has been the global backbone of fashion manufacturing for the past sixty years. The work practices and conditions of this Asian fashion worker—the garment worker—are characterized by the brutal physicality of long hours, hot and poorly ventilated buildings, bent backs, tired bodies, and nimble fingers.

Since the late 2000s, the Asian fashion superblogger has emerged as a new kind of Asian fashion worker. The bloggers' online activities generate indirect and direct value for themselves and various entities connected to the fashion industry. In contrast to the earlier proletariat notion of the Asian fashion worker, the superblogger is considered to be part of a new Asian creative class. Instead of being seen as unskilled and oppressed, superbloggers are described in terms that emphasize their imagination, ingenuity, and vision. For example, when *The Business of Fashion*, a highly respected fashion news aggregate blog, kicked off its popular column "The Business of Blogging," the first three profile stories featured Asian superbloggers: first, Susanna Lau; second, Tommy Ton, a Vietnamese Canadian street style blogger and photographer; and finally, the Taiwanese American

handbag bloggers Tina Craig and Kelly Cook. The stories focused on the bloggers' artistic vision as the driving force of their productions. In Ton's profile, the writer admired the blogger's "well-trained fashion eye" and his aesthetic sense for capturing "the little details" in his "landscape-style images," "a towering Louboutin stiletto here, a pop of colour there."¹⁵ In Lau's profile, the writer quotes Lau as saying that her product is "my eye, my point of view, a certain taste, a certain way of documenting and presenting fashion."¹⁶ Ton's taste for the little aesthetic details and Lau's taste for "documenting and presenting fashion" are understood in these media profiles to be work practices, highly skilled ones that are neither widely possessed nor easily learned. The high level of Ton's and Lau's taste work is what separates the wheat from the chaff, the everyday hobbyist blogger from the superblogger.

Implicit in these descriptions is a conceptual framework that separates head labors from hand labors, creative work from physical work. Accounts of Asian superbloggers' taste work as creative work, as intellectually and artistically innovative practices, are partial and misleading. They elide the ways in which taste work is physical, instrumental, and socially and culturally conditioned. Yet as narrow and inadequate as these interpretations of Asian superbloggers' taste work are, in some ways they are also refreshing and even possibly oppositional takes on Asian labor.

The Asian creative worker is a relatively new mainstream idea. Long-held Western stereotypes of Asian workers perceived them as unimaginative; docile; and predisposed to perform rote and repetitive, if demanding, work. In recent years, a spate of media and scholarly attention has focused on the Asian creative class, particularly fashion bloggers, YouTube video makers, maverick chefs, fashion designers, and software start-up founders. The literature on the Asian creative class coalesces around several themes: the mobility of second- and third-generation Asians away from traditional Asian occupations and definitions of success; a celebration of Asians' newfound individualism and freedom from—and, in many cases, rebellions against—so-called Eastern models of collectivist subjectivity; and the end of racial stereotypes as we know them (for example, new images of cool Asians are thought to supplant stereotypes of Asians as nerds). The underlying message in all these discussions is that for these Asians, race no longer poses social, economic, cultural, or personal obstacles. In effect, creativity and entrepreneurialism are perceived as social ladders that lead

younger Asians out of blue- and pink-collar labor sectors. These sectors—which cross transnational boundaries and include domestic services, apparel manufacturing, and electronics assembly—have often been the only labor markets available to rural, immigrant, poor, and undocumented Asians.

Represented as personalities, productive Asian hipsters from the YouTube beauty guru Michelle Phan to the pot-smoking, accidental multimillionaire graffiti artist David Choe are imagined to embody a different relation to capitalism: one based not on gendered racial stereotypes but on individual talent. Asian creatives supposedly signal an entirely new vector of Asian labor history that is rooted in free expression rather than exploitation. Countless mainstream media articles and blog posts assert that the rising prominence of Asian creatives represents a definitive shift away from previous racial labor identities and markets. One such article written by Richard Florida, best known for his assertion that creativity is the new engine of capitalist production and urban renewal, begins this way: “Many in the West think of the Asian Pacific as the world’s factory.”¹⁷ The rest of the article is dedicated to smashing that perception. For Florida, the Asian factory worker is an embodiment of an earlier formation of Asian labor that has now been superseded. Florida and other writers and scholars contrast the earlier Asian factory worker with the creative entrepreneur. Whereas Asian factory labor is closely monitored and controlled, Asian creative labor is free and self-managed. Whereas Asian factory labor is exploitative and alienating, Asian creative labor is expressive and personal.

The category of the creative class embodies an implicit ideological assumption about the democratic and even liberatory properties of creative work. Framed by ideas of individualism, agency, meritocracy, postracism, and liberal multiculturalism, creative work and success in the so-called new economy is understood as fueled by individual drive and intellectual capacity rather than capital, credentials, and other institutionally conferred privileges. Following this logic, a person’s race, ethnicity, gender, and class do not hinder access to success in creative economies. They may even be assets. Re-presented through taste work practices (self-fashioning, sartorial styling, posing, and so on) race, ethnicity, and gender can be rearticulated as aesthetic positions or fashion statements that add to and enhance the value of one’s identity as a personal style blogger in the new digital fashion media economy.¹⁸

Asian web stars stand out as success stories in the digital realms of creative economies. In mainstream media outlets like the *New York Times* and the *Huffington Post* as well as popular arts and culture blogs like *Hyperallergic*, much has been written about Asian creatives' talent, charisma, capacity to build social networks, and unique but universally appealing personal brand.¹⁹ The common implication is that the new economy of informational or networked capitalism is far more egalitarian than the old economy of industrial capitalism that still persists in more formalized labor sectors like the manufacturing and film and television industries. Under informational capitalism, the increase and diffusion of productive forces, particularly as a result of new user-driven media technologies and knowledges, have purportedly democratized economic processes. Old barriers to success like race, ethnicity, class, gender, and lack of capital can be overcome with a certain measure of stick-to-itiveness and social media savvy. A *Huffington Post* story points out that "discrimination, stereotypes and exclusion are the norm for Asians, both on television and the silver screen" but "social media . . . amplifies otherwise unheard-from populations and creates an equal playing field for ethnic minorities. In this realm . . . Asian Americans (and cats) dominate."²⁰ Asian web stars—personal style superbloggers being some of the most highly visible among them—seem to be evidence of the new and more equitable race and labor relations under informational capitalism.

My book pushes against the assumptions of upward postracial mobility that structure popular understandings of the new Asian digital creative class. Rather than seeing personal style blogging as an altogether new and postracial job category, I situate it within the longer historical trajectory of gendered racial fashion work. Focusing on Asian personal style bloggers' practices and conditions of taste work, I highlight the historical continuities and discontinuities in the social and economic processes shaping new modes of Asian fashion labor. My aim is to demonstrate that the roles race, gender, and class play in structuring work opportunities and constraints under informational capitalism are evolving, not diminishing.

Throughout this book, I examine Asian personal style superbloggers as workers rather than digital artisans, high-tech bohemians, or even immaterial laborers. These latter categories of labor—occupations involved in Florida's lauded gentrification processes—do not adequately capture the structural similarities that both cut across and link the class relations

between new and earlier forms of fashion work that I am concerned with in this book.

Personal style bloggers as a group trouble distinctions between immaterial and physical labor, and between innovative and instrumental labor. Whereas digital artisans and high-tech bohemians are explicitly marked as middle-class categories, personal style bloggers are not so easily characterized. Some come from middle-class backgrounds, but others do not (as is reflected in the style-on-a-budget blogs that feature clothes purchased from fast fashion and big-box retailers). For most bloggers, blogging constitutes a second-shift job, with all the gendered implications that term entails. All bloggers blog for free, and the most successful of them blog for more than eight or ten hours each day (again, this is often in addition to the hours they work at their “day job”).

Furthermore, though they are digital or immaterial laborers, they are also embodied ones. They generate visual, textual, and aesthetic information that is located and stored in disembodied and distributed networks of algorithmic functions, personal computers, and data centers. Yet these digital, immaterial, or cognitive laborers are not laborers without bodies. Personal style bloggers’ work practices involve the physical labors of posing; self-adornment; and shuttling between their homes, photo sites, and retail sites.

Asian personal style bloggers are especially difficult to categorize in terms of conventional labor classifications. Asian superbloggers are immaterial or informational laborers, yet their gendered racial bodies are of particular importance to their work in this historical period of global fashion capitalism. Their participation in the blogosphere as well as their incorporation into the dominant Western fashion industry are conditioned to a great extent by the cultural economic value of their Asian bodies in this moment that many regard as the Asian decade, which began around 2008. (Diane von Furstenberg and others, including the *Financial Times*, are convinced that the Asian decade is really the start of the Asian century.²¹) As I will explain below, the rise of Asian fashion superbloggers has occurred at a time when the fashion industry and its various taste makers have a taste for Asian tastes.

This book is inarguably indebted to the many insights that digital and immaterial labor studies provide into the new organizations and meanings of work in informational economies. However, too many critical conceptualizations of immaterial labor are limited because they ignore race as a

variable in the quality and conditions of informational or knowledge work. Terms like *electronic sweatshops* and *digital plantations* are frequently used to describe the exploitative conditions of immaterial or informational labor. But sweatshops and plantations do not simply name difficult workplaces. They designate a racially gendered system of labor organization in which owners, managers, and manufacturers dehumanize specific groups of people to extract surplus value. Race and gender shape work opportunities and constraints in physical as well as digital arenas, and scholars who ignore this risk treating Others' experiences as no more than colorful metaphors. Indeed, the historical specificity of these terms is emptied out when the sweated labor in question is that of, say, English-language Wikipedia editors (who are overwhelmingly white and male²²) or when *netslaves* refers to the volunteer AOL community leaders and chat hosts who in 1999 sued the Internet giant for back wages.

The insights that scholars like Lisa Nakamura, Minoo Moallem, Nishant Shah, and Kalindi Vora have provided into the uneven flows and inequitable distributions of technical capital (whether skills, resources, wages, knowledge, or time) represent some of the most interesting and important work on race, gender, digital labor, and economies today.²³ Collectively, their research draws critical attention to the historical links connecting material bodies and relations with digital technologies, practices, and economies. But their discussions of Chinese gold farmers in *World of Warcraft*, iPhone girls, electronic assembly plant workers, call center operators, carpet weavers, and puppeteers focus on proletarianized—or at least nonelite—classes of workers. The structural marginalization these workers experience in digital economies is reflective of and compounded by the racialized and gendered materiality of their bodies.

The Asian superbloggers I focus on here are a racially gendered labor force with an inordinate amount of status, influence, and cultural power. This class of style bloggers represents not simply the 1 percent but something closer to the 0.01 percent of bloggers who have more than the lion's share of online traffic, readers, informal and formal support from fashion industry insiders, corporate sponsorships, and personal resources. Their high visibility in an economy in which attention is currency is what has made them ready examples of the postracism of the digital era.

However, I insist in this book that Asian personal style blogger is not a postracial or postpolitical labor identity *but instead* a historically situated,

racially gendered and class-based formation. As with Asian labor in garment manufacturing industries, the labor of Asian personal style superbloggers is shaped by larger geopolitical, economic, technological, and cultural structures. Asian superbloggers' work is nonmaterial, but it is not removed from the material reality and constraints of fashion economies, social relations, and work opportunities that include the inequalities of race, class, size, and gender presentation that have always structured fashion work. The blogosphere is just as racially stratified as earlier fashion labor markets, though it exhibits a somewhat different pattern and logic of stratification.

The difference has to do with the emergence of key luxury fashion markets in Asia, the new meanings and significance of Asianness in the Asian decade, the relative privilege of Asian fashion blog workers in relation to garment workers, and the aesthetic and personal nature of bloggers' taste work compared to the impersonal work of apparel manufacturing. What's more, elite bloggers have technological, cultural, and economic resources that industrial fashion workers simply do not. Indeed, the very work and success of Asian superbloggers rests on the promoting and buying of commodities that Asian garment workers (and electronics assembly workers) produce under highly exploitative conditions. Asian superbloggers, garment workers, and electronics assembly workers are linked together in a strange circuit of production in which one group's free, highly visible, and rewarding labor (because it offers outlets for self-expression, creativity, and social connection, as well as the possibility of lucrative side work) depends on another group's free or severely underpaid, invisible, and largely alienating labor. Put differently, the emergence of this new form of Asian fashion labor (personal style superblogging) is constitutive of and constituted by the continuation of an older form of Asian fashion labor (garment work). Yet both are positioned—hierarchically—in fashion's productive system as a racially gendered supply of unwaged or underwaged labor.

While I focus on the ways in which the structural position of these two groups of Asian fashion workers overlap, I do not want to lose sight of a fundamental reality: there are vast differences between industrial and immaterial fashion work and the conditions that shape each worker group's experiences and activities. In some ways, their differences are so great that a comparison might seem implausible. Substandard work conditions, declining wages in leading apparel-exporting countries, and the physical

degradation of workers' bodies (including verbal, physical, and sexual abuse by factory managers) are structural realities for apparel manufacturing workers. Bloggers do not experience these, even in the worst circumstances.

Despite these important differences, *Asians Wear Clothes on the Internet* argues that Asian personal style superbloggers are connected to Asian garment workers—though not in the same way that other Asian fashion workers are. In *The Beautiful Generation*, Thuy Linh Tu observes that Asian American designers acknowledge and create relationships to garment workers that, for some, are based on familial histories intimately connecting the designers to the garment or apparel manufacturing industry. Whether familial or chosen, Tu explains, the kinship relations between Asian American designers and Asian suppliers and sewers who become so-called aunties and uncles challenge the fashion industry's "logic of distance" (in Tu's formulation). These relationships, for her, "acknowledge proximity, contact, and affiliation between domains imagined as distinct."²⁴ Asian superbloggers do not identify with or demonstrate any apparent sympathy for the hundreds of thousands of Asian industrial fashion workers around the globe who produce the material and technological products on which blog labor relies. Not only do superbloggers not acknowledge cultural, familial, or other intimate connections with the people who make the clothes featured on their blogs, but—as I discuss in chapter 5—they sometimes use the digital resources and digital work practices available to them to maintain a divide between head and hand, or innovative and instrumental, labors. Yet a structural examination of Asian fashion work and the productive systems and modes of fashion capital accumulation it sustains and that sustain it reveals that these two groups of Asian fashion workers have similar material and social positions in fashion's productive economy.

This book traces how the work practices and working conditions of Asian superbloggers and Asian garment workers—specifically with respect to their gendered and racialized implications—link them in spite of their differences. Thinking about these two groups together reveals fascinating insights into the fashion industry's changing and enduring divisions of labor, opportunity, recognition, and rewards as it is shifting from a manufacturing-based economy to one based on information or communication. Inarguably, the material conditions and social relations of power that defined fashion labor under late twentieth-century capitalism are

different from those defining fashion labor under early twenty-first-century informational capitalism (more on this below). This book shows, however, that there are historical continuities in the racial and gendered dimensions of patterns of employment opportunity, wage gaps, and labor systems, suggesting that conditions of fashion production in the digital age have much in common with those in earlier stages of global industrialization.

Economies of Asian Industrial and Informational Fashion Work

Asians Wear Clothes on the Internet demonstrates the complementarity of fashion's informational and industrial labor systems without conflating the two. To begin with, both systems have low start-up costs, require little to no prior training or experience, pay workers less than a living wage for physically taxing full-time jobs, prevent unionization through decentralization, discourage workers' collective identification through individualizing tasks and reward systems, and in general exploit workers. Additionally, Asian women and girls have played a significant role in both the early twenty-first-century and late twentieth-century fashion industries—suggesting a shared racial and gendered organization of fashion labor across two very different modes of work.

The entry and participation of Asian garment workers and superbloggers in both fashion production systems are results of broader shifts in global capitalism. In the 1970s, the fashion industry was transformed by the same neoliberal ideologies and policies that had begun to transform various U.S. economic and cultural sectors. Neoliberalism's inexorable march through the 1970s and 1980s cast unions as bureaucratic impediments to workplace efficiency and promoted unobstructed corporate expansion as an intrinsic right under free market capitalism. Neoliberal policies spurred the rapid growth of transnational corporations and increased global production of export goods by some of the poorest countries and people in the world. It was in this late twentieth-century period that Asians, mostly Southeast and South Asian women and girls and immigrant Asians in the United States, first entered the fashion labor force in large numbers.

The second phase of fashion's economic restructuring—which I argue is not entirely divorced from the first phase—began in the early 2000s. This twenty-first-century phase is marked by a confluence of several technologi-

cal, social, and economic changes: the mass distribution of personal digital technologies, the rise in the use of social media, and the 2008 financial crash and recession in Europe and the United States that caused the fashion industry to turn its attention to Asian consumers as a new luxury market. English-speaking Asian fashion bloggers rose to prominence in the midst of this recession, enabled by these new technological, political, and economic transformations.

In 2008, at the dawn of the Asian decade, Asian personal style bloggers embodied fashion's new ideal consumer, and they unwittingly became informational intermediaries. Their blogs provide consumers, retailers, and designers with an easily accessible storehouse of up-to-the-minute information about style trends and consumer values. A few words and photographs posted to high-ranking Asian personal style blogs like *Lau's Style Bubble* or *Neely's Fashion Toast* have enhanced the cool cred of established brands while training a high-powered social media spotlight on emerging designers and little-known fashion retailers. As representative consumers of a newly significant luxury market, these bloggers' observations are of particular interest to fashion companies that are working hard to capture Asian consumers' attention and disposable income. The growing numbers of Asian models on fashion runways and in magazines—a related phenomenon in the Asian decade—can also be attributed to the new significance of Asian markets to the Western fashion industry. As Ivan Bart, the senior vice president and managing director of IMG Models Worldwide, explains, “it comes down to getting consumers to come to your brand. You have to have faces that reflect the consumer.”²⁵ Asian superbloggers have faces that reflect the new ideal fashion consumer and do the work of promoting brands for a great deal less money than commercial fashion models or, more often than not, for free.

Asian feminized labor has been integral to the fashion industry's global expansion and development throughout the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. What is popularly described as an historical novelty—the Asian moment (beginning in the mid-2000s)—has a precedent in the early years of neoliberal globalization in the 1970s and 1980s. In both cases, the production of fashion commodities, one material (clothing) and the other nonmaterial (information, taste, and blogs), relies on racially gendered Asian bodies seen as particularly suited for fashion labor and the specific needs of global Western fashion capitalism. The industrial

manufacture of mass-produced and mass-distributed clothing requires cheap, docile, and plentiful labor that Asian and immigrant Asian women and girls are imagined to embody and to be naturally suited to provide.

Today, English-speaking Asian superbloggers are also well positioned to provide important contributions to Western fashion's expansion into and capture of emerging and dynamic Asian markets. As I suggested above, the bloggers are racially matched with the Asian consumers whom Western fashion companies have set their sights on. At the same time, because the bloggers are English speakers, they are familiarly and knowably Western. They are just racially exotic enough to have a wide market appeal—to Asian as well as to non-Asian English-speaking consumers and retailers—yet not so foreign that their racial difference disrupts the postracial fantasy of late capitalism. Asian superbloggers' language privilege lends economic value to their racially marked bodies. Their English fluency maintains their highly marketable balance between exotic and familiar.

Finally and just as importantly, Asian superbloggers possess a sizable personal market share of the so-called attention economy as well as the capacity to accumulate more currency because they have a strong online presence, a highly engaged and loyal audience base, and a proven and significant record for promoting Western fashion brands (again, often for free). With the institutionalization of social commerce in which social media technologies and practices play key roles in shaping consumer behaviors and decisions, the Western fashion industry is increasingly (probably more than it would care to admit) relying on the unwaged labor of bloggers for its continuation and development.

It is important to underscore that personal style blog labor is always free labor—voluntarily given and unpaid. More than an economic issue, this is an issue of identity. Superbloggers' construction of their labor subjectivities as artists rests on the idea that they blog for passion, not for money. In a *New York Times* article about her, Lau describes her blogging in terms of an obsession that has “no financial motivation.”²⁶ Similarly, while blogging provides Song opportunities for additional capital streams, she frequently points out that her main source of income is her interior design job. This job serves as Song's proof that her blog is a “genuine expression of her style.”²⁷

Superbloggers—an infinitesimally tiny fraction of all bloggers—have managed to create a livelihood from side jobs such as brand collabora-

tions, affiliate links, direct ad sales, and freelancing that can be quite lucrative. Top-tier bloggers make as much as \$250,000 annually (possibly more, depending on the number and types of design collaborations, paid appearances, and advertising partnerships they amass). But these are indirect earning methods that are separate from, though related to, the actual production of blogs. The actual blogging labor of superbloggers—like all bloggers—is unwaged work. In this way, superbloggers are no different from other Internet users who provide the free labor that keeps the Internet running. Now an \$8 trillion²⁸ enterprise,²⁹ the Internet is built and sustained by a massive network of horizontal yet hierarchical users (as Tiziana Terranova points out) who voluntarily provide labor in the form of content creation, information sharing, communicating, buying, selling, and so on.³⁰

In this era of social commerce, the various and, again, voluntary online activities of fashion media and market consumers now provide much of the advertising and promotion that fashion retailers and designers depend on to sell their clothes. According to a 2013 report by the Internet search engine company Technorati, bloggers are particularly influential. Thirty-one percent of fashion consumers say blogs influence their purchases.³¹ A four-year survey conducted by the media company BlogHer (which focuses on women bloggers and blog readers, a significant number of whom participate in the fashion blogosphere) found that for the majority of female readers (53 percent), recommendations from bloggers have more weight than celebrity endorsements.³² What this influence translates to in numbers is staggering. A top-tier blog like Craig and Cook's BagSnob can drive as much as \$175 million in annual sales to retailers.³³ While retailers profit enormously, even the highest paid bloggers earn negligible fees. As with garment workers, Asian superbloggers' relationship to the broader fashion industry is characterized by sharply asymmetrical distributions of labor and earnings.

Perhaps the strongest link between Asian personal style superbloggers and Asian garment workers is the historically fraught position they share as the embodied evidence of and alibi for the racially gendered processes of transnational fashion capitalism. The two groups of Asian workers entered Western fashion's production systems in related but distinct historical moments when economic articulations of Asians represented them as Western capitalist success stories (as model minority labor) and, paradoxically, as economic competitors threatening the dominant racial order of Western capitalism (as cheap Asian labor).

Understood within a taste model of race relations, the contradictory status of Asian workers and of meanings of Asian labor in these two different fashion production systems is not surprising. Taste is flexible and fleeting—none more so than fashion taste. One person's taste is likely to be another person's distaste, but one's taste can also become one's distaste as a result of changing personal and popular tastes. One particular form of distaste is the aftertaste. These are tastes that might at first be pleasing but, after lingering too long in the mouth, throat, or public sphere (for example, through media overexposure) become unpalatable.

Historically, we have seen the increased visibility of racial Others in positions of political power, economic employment, or academic arenas turn racial admiration into racial resentment. The popular reception of model minorities provides a useful example of the slide from racial taste to racial aftertaste. In the 1960s, the U.S. paper of record, the *New York Times*, praised "Japanese American style" work ethic and academic achievements.³⁴ In 2007, an article published in the same newspaper expressed concerns that the overrepresentation of Asians at top-ranked universities like the University of California at Berkeley were turning these American institutions into "Little Asias."³⁵ More than four decades after embracing the Asian model minority and with the seeming rise in the number of model minorities at American institutions, the "Little Asias" article reflects the limits of racial tolerance when racial taste becomes racial aftertaste. The 2007 *Times* article described Asians as "the demographic of the moment," suggesting that Asians had overstayed their moment and left racial traces that were apparently neither assimilable nor repressible, and certainly not fully controllable. One such racial trace mentioned in the article is Mandarin, a language described as now "part of the soundtrack at this iconic university," heard "all the time, in plazas, cafeterias, classrooms, study halls, dorms and fast-food outlets."³⁶

Racial aftertastes describe aversions to racial alterities, the features, aspects, and bodies of racial otherness that are not easily consumable either because their racial flavor is perceived as too strong or because their racial traces linger so long that they exceed the terms and limits of racial palatability. Aftertastes mark the limits of racial tolerance; they are not manifestations of blatant racial hatred. Aftertastes are taste judgments derived from perceptions that racial boundaries of social and economic power and privilege are being threatened by a figure or feature of racial alterity seen

not just as out of place, but as not keeping its place because it is encroaching on places where it does not belong (like iconic American universities or job markets that belong to so-called real Americans). Racial aftertastes are the bringing to the surface of racial anxieties and apprehensions that exceed the limits of racial tolerance. Taste and aftertaste, like racial tolerance and intolerance, are contradictory yet complementary. Part of the same structure of racial power and domination, they are systemically cooperating and co-constituted.

Economic articulations of Asian fashion workers as both solutions for and problems of the Western fashion industry's productive needs are also contradictory and complementary. And if, as Bourdieu argues, taste is reflective not so much of personal preference but of "the logic of the space of [taste] production,"³⁷ then an examination of the taste for Asian fashion workers and its aftertaste has important implications for our understanding of the contradictory yet complementary racial logics of transnational capitalism in the late twentieth century and informational capitalism in the early twenty-first century.

While Asian personal style superbloggers are generally associated with the new Asian creative class—a labor category that supposedly distinguishes them from previous racialized categories of Asian model minority labor like the efficient and passive garment worker or electronics assembly worker—the superbloggers can be understood as a model minority labor force for the digital era. The model minority thesis emerged in the 1960s as a racial discourse that constructs an image of Asians in the United States and elsewhere as hardworking, self-driven, and self-sufficient people who maximize available opportunities for social and economic advancement (at school or in the workplace), all without fuss or friction. In the civil rights era, it functioned as a liberal alibi that countered the growing criticisms of structural racial inequalities raised most forcefully and publicly by African Americans and Latinos. Images of the Asian model minority in television news, entertainment media, and popular newspapers and magazines like the *New York Times*³⁸ and *U.S. News and World Report*³⁹ repeatedly deployed the Asian model minority stereotype as a way to obscure the racialized realities of systemically uneven distributions of political, economic, and social power, opportunities, and resources.

In the 1980s, advocates of neoliberal policies and discourses framed the transnationalization of production that shifted Western manufacturing

work offshore and underground as the triumph of free-market democracy. The largely Asian and Latina workforce in the United States and abroad that fill the jobs created by the global expansion of Western apparel manufacturing constitute a model minority labor force. The workers are perceived as ideally suited to fulfill the demands of Western fashion capital for dramatically reduced labor costs, quick turnaround of a high volume of garments, and maximized profits. Richard Pierce is the former owner of a garment factory in Saipan, a U.S. territory in the South Pacific that in the 1980s and 1990s produced clothes for U.S. brands like Gap, Nordstrom, Liz Claiborne, JC Penney, Abercrombie and Fitch, Polo, Gymboree, and Sears, to name a few. Pierce boasts of the predominantly Chinese and Filipina labor force his factory had: “I remember one of the biggest manufacturers here when he visited our company. . . . He came into the factory and the first thing he did was, he kind of just listened and you can tell by the hum of the machinery there whether it’s a productive place. He just got this smile on his face because our workers were actually, I think, better than his. It’s a busy place.”⁴⁰

While Asian and Latina garment workers have been vocal about the brutal working conditions and criminal labor practices necessary to sustain the high level of productivity that labor contractors, designers, retailers, and consumers have come to expect, they are regularly held up as living proof that the promise of free-market democracy (in which a free, competitive market will positively influence individual and national economic and social development) has been realized. Pierce maintains that the apparel manufacturing industry’s system of contract, contingent, and outsourced labor is “to the benefit of here [Saipan’s economy] and particularly, I think more than anything, to the benefit of the ladies that are here in our business that come from other places.”⁴¹ Pierce’s perspective is a common neoliberal stance that fails to acknowledge the ways neoliberal economic policies are directly responsible for widening the gap between the rich and the poor in the United States⁴² as well as deepening the international division of labor between the Global North and the Global South (and all of that division’s racialized and gendered relations of production).⁴³ A 1999 lawsuit filed by more than 30,000 garment workers in Saipan (the majority of whom were from China and the Philippines) clearly contradicts Pierce’s claim. The lawsuit cited labor and human rights violations—including emotional abuse, dangerous working conditions, nonpayment, and debt

peonage—that essentially held workers hostage in garment factories, keeping them from their children and other family members.

Uncritical celebrations about the benefits of neoliberal restructuring for (Asian) workers in other countries occurred at the same time that (white) workers in the United States in the 1980s were experiencing severe economic decline as a consequence of “the combined effects of deindustrialization, economic restructuring, and the oppressive materialism of a market society where things have more value than people.”⁴⁴ The model minority worker discourse added more fuel to the flames of anti-Asian sentiment, which has a long history in the United States. In the 1980s and 1990s, a pervasive belief that Asians represented a foreign economic enemy to white American workers led to heightened anti-Asian violence, including the murder of Vincent Chin in Detroit, Michigan. (One of his attackers was heard saying, “It’s because of you little motherfuckers that we’re out of work!”⁴⁵) Asian garment workers in the 1980s and 1990s were put in the contradictory position of embodying both a gendered model minority labor force and a racialized and foreign economic enemy.

The fraught position of Asian garment workers—as the racially gendered embodiment of the problem of and the solution for transnational fashion capitalism, as the alibi confirming and the evidence undermining the promise of free-market democracy, and as the model minority labor force and foreign economic competition—mirrors that of the new Asian fashion worker. Asian superbloggers such as Yambao, Lau, Song, and Neely are regularly held up as proof that the digital democratization of fashion production systems is real. The indirect earnings of Yambao, Song, and Lau are routinely the focus of news stories about fashion’s digital democratization. To be sure, they provide compelling evidence for claims that social media are lowering participation barriers and allowing more people to enter the previously insular fashion industry. The fact that ordinary Asian Internet users have become superbloggers (earning six figures annually) in a historically white cultural economic field—seemingly through their own hard work and determination—is the kind of rags-to-riches trajectory that is essential to the model minority discourse. Asian superbloggers are not simply among the top earning personal style bloggers; in 2013, Yambao and Song were the two highest grossing superbloggers in the world.⁴⁶ Yambao made headlines when he admitted in the early days of personal style blogging that “he makes more than \$100,000 per

year,"⁴⁷ mostly from advertising and guest appearances.⁴⁸ Aimee Song, the highest-paid blogger in the world, commanded fees as high as \$50,000 for a single brand collaboration a couple of years ago.⁴⁹ While there are no published data, her current fees are likely higher now since her popularity has increased in recent years.

But as with the earlier formation of the model minority fashion worker, the Asian superblogger is largely a discursive construction that conceals deep-seated asymmetries of race, color, class, and body size in the blogosphere and in the global fashion industry more broadly. Asian superbloggers are a highly visible and high-achieving group, but they are also only a tiny minority of superbloggers—which is why the same few Asian superbloggers are named over and over in the fashion media. The personal style superblogosphere, as a whole, is overwhelmingly white. At the same time, Asian superbloggers' body sizes and skin tones complement rather than challenge dominant standards of beauty. In fact, personal style blogs and other related social media platforms and practices have not so much democratized the fashion industry as they have enabled limited forms of diversification that do not upset the racialized hierarchies of fashion bodies, tastes, and economies that have historically structured the Western fashion industry.

Discursive constructions of Asian superbloggers as the embodied evidence of digital democratization also ignore the uneven social relations built into the commercial Internet, where a handful of corporations control the technical means of communication, creative expression, and sociability that millions use but will never own. While new user-driven technologies of communication and information have certainly lowered participation barriers in fashion's productive and consumer economies, they have not eliminated disparities in the quality of participation in and through the blogosphere. Henry Jenkins, Craig Watkins, and others have argued that the corporatization and mass distribution of cheaper Internet technologies and telecommunications infrastructure have narrowed the digital divide between the technological haves and have-nots.⁵⁰ These authors caution, however, that there is a growing participation gap in which certain online users and activities that serve and sustain corporate interests are privileged over others. The participation gap is unmistakable in the personal style blogosphere.

Creating a fashion blog is free and relatively easy, thanks to new on-line publishing services. Yet the corporate-run search engines' operating logic means that only the most popular sites are likely to show up in web searches. The advent of expensive search engine optimization services means that the top search result positions are for sale to sites with large bankrolls. The same websites and blogs routinely appear in the top three to five results of web searches; all other sites, as Jodi Dean puts it, are "drowned in the massive flow [of commercialized data]." ⁵¹ When I ran a search using the term *fashion blog*, the first page of Google results included only corporate and monetized blogs maintained by Elle magazine, *New York* magazine, the *Sartorialist*, and Fashion Toast (Neely's blog, which is now hosted, but not owned, by the media giant Fairchild Fashion Media). I received nearly identical results using the Bing and Yahoo search engines. Blogs owned and run by individual personal style bloggers were nowhere near the top of the search rankings. This confirms Dean's observations that digital democracy is little more than a "neoliberal fantasy": "Rather than a rhizomatic structure where any one point is as likely to be reached as any other, what we have on the web are situations of massive inequality, massive differentials of scales where some nodes get tons of hits and the vast majority get almost none."⁵²

In the personal style blogosphere, fashion's traditional social hierarchies are not leveling out, nor are they becoming more democratic. Instead, these hierarchies have evolved in ways that allow them to expand into this popular digital arena. Far from being a postracial meritocracy, the personal style blogosphere is organized by highly uneven distributions of power and privilege that are not determined by blog quality. The on-line traffic of some African American fashion blogs (both personal style blogs and street style blogs) outrank or are comparable to white and Asian English-language U.S. fashion blogs, yet many of the African American blogs with the most traffic, like *The Fashion Bomb*, do not show up in top search results and do not receive nearly the same levels of national and global attention as do white and English-language Asian superblogs. With the notable exceptions of *Street Etiquette*, a style blog coproduced by Joshua Kissi and Travis Gumbs; Tamu McPherson's street style blog *All the Pretty Birds*; ⁵³ and Kathryn Finney's cheap chic blog, *The Budget Fashionista*, African American-run blogs occupy the same marginal status in

the blogosphere as African American fashion models (and Black fashion models more broadly) do on the runway.⁵⁴

Bloggers that are not located in global media empires also have an extremely difficult time gaining the attention of the hegemonic Western fashion industry. Han Huohuo, for example, is a blogging sensation in China. His account on the strictly policed Chinese microblogging platform Weibo draws more than a million followers, yet he hardly registers in the mainstream consciousness of the Western fashion public. Because he lives in China and is subject to its state-run and heavily censored media system, Han lacks access to popular blog host sites like Blogger and WordPress; blog-measuring sites like Technorati; and social media platforms like YouTube, Vimeo, and Twitter. Further, Weibo is not readily accessible to audiences outside of mainland China, although modified versions of it exist in Taiwan and Hong Kong.

Han and other Chinese bloggers are further disadvantaged by China's relatively low ranking on the Global Creativity Index that measures national levels of financial investment and research, among other technological infrastructural commitments. In 2011, China ranked thirty-seventh, about on a par with Latvia and Bulgaria.⁵⁵ In effect, these technological conditions structure the flows of information and communication that shape bloggers' work experiences, opportunities, and earning potential (in terms of social, cultural, informational, and financial capital). As a result, the social divisions of labor and the social stratifications that exist outside of the Internet are embedded in and supported by the operating logic of search engines and the development logic of telecommunications networks and services.

Even superbloggers who have the advantages of public, industry, and technological attention (such as a top rank in search engine results) participate in the blogosphere under highly asymmetrical and exploitative conditions. Superbloggers who generate hundreds of thousands of clicks on and in their blogs and microblogs (Twitter, Instagram, and so on) may or may not monetize their popularity, but they do create an extraordinary amount of capital for social media sites that these companies depend on for revenue. Popular platforms draw interest and funding from venture capital firms as well as major advertisers—both of which are willing to pay top-ranked Internet companies a lot of money for access to their users' information and attention. The importance of Asian superbloggers to Google

has not escaped the company's notice. When the Web behemoth wanted to understand how new media are consumed and used, it turned to a small handful of experts, among them Lau, Yambao, Ton, and Ethan Nguyen.⁵⁶

For every superblogger who can command public and corporate attention, there are thousands more (across all racial groups) who will never find a general audience, much less a livelihood. Asian superbloggers have won the “glittering prizes” in what Andrew Ross calls the “jackpot economy,” but as with all jackpots, there are many more players than there are winners.⁵⁷ As I demonstrate throughout this book, the glittering prizes of substantial online traffic, corporate collaborations, sponsorships, affiliations, and paid freelance writing and speaking opportunities can distract us from noticing that the game is rigged against bloggers, even those who have achieved considerable success. The dominant fashion industry rigs the game in a way that recalls Marx's notion of worker alienation: as Mark Andrejevic puts it, workers' labors are turned back on them.⁵⁸ Ironically, the more successful bloggers are, the better positioned they are for increased self- and corporate exploitation.

Asian superbloggers have acquired a substantial number of privileges within the fashion industry. Yet these privileges come at a cost. The corporate Internet, as Andrejevic has argued, is structured to accelerate and channel users' behaviors for commercial profit. Online publishing services encourage bloggers to make their sites visible to search engines; use tags and categories (a classification system that groups similar blog posts together and makes them searchable); post often; respond to readers' comments; link to other blogs; and even pay for web traffic using services like StumbleUpon, which forwards web content to users. These activities can help increase and sustain high levels of blog traffic—a key goal for superbloggers—but they also demand more and more free labor from the bloggers in the form of more blog posts as well as more Tweets, Instagram photographs, and other social media content. These diverse but converging social media platforms provide additional channels for online traffic to the blog and different possibilities for brand collaborations. In February 2014, for example, Song—whose Instagram account attracts more than four million weekly hits and has more than a million followers—took over the Instagram account for the online fashion retailer Revolve Clothing. These are temporary guest worker arrangements that are in addition

to the personal style blogging that bloggers do for their own social media channels.

Rather than hiring a full-time, permanent employee (who earns a regular salary and benefits), retailers, brands, and designers turn to high-profile superbloggers as short-term contract workers to fill a variety of jobs including social media managers, models, and spokespeople. Asian superbloggers, as I suggested above, have a structural advantage in fashion's casual labor markets. Not only does their strong online presence provide the all-important personal customer touch points that familiarize consumers with fashion brands, but their racially marked bodies also link them to the kinds of consumers that brands are particularly targeting. In other words, their racial advantage makes them more vulnerable to the exploitative features of casual labor.

In the section that follows, I briefly revisit the history of Asian garment workers. While *Asians Wear Clothes on the Internet* focuses on the contemporary forms and practices of Asian fashion work seen in personal style blogging, the history of an earlier mode of Asian fashion work is crucial. Presenting this history even briefly provides an important contextual backdrop for examining the historical continuities, global forces, and racially gendered frameworks that structure the taste work of Asian superbloggers today.

To be sure, Asian garment workers' fashion tastes play no role in their production of fashion products. Asian garment workers' bodies—the sites at which taste is perceived, performed, and socially constructed—are fragmented and ultimately alienated from the productive processes of apparel manufacturing. Apparel manufacturing industries exert enormous amounts of control over and abuse of garment workers' bodies (even their bodily functions are controlled by routine denials of bathroom breaks). The near total devaluation of their bodies reduces hundreds of thousands of Asian women and child workers to little more than their labor power. Yet the history of Asian fashion work in apparel manufacturing sectors is worth reviewing in an investigation of Asian personal style superblogging for what it can reveal about changing and enduring racialized hierarchies that structure the political economic and social terrain on which even some of the most elite levels of Asian fashion work take place.

A Critical Review of Asian Fashion Labor

Since the 1970s, Asian women and girls have made major contributions to the global expansion and development of the U.S. fashion industry—now a dominant cultural, economic, and aesthetic power in global fashion. The Asian and Asian American history of the U.S. garment industry is a long and complex story that has been the subject of numerous academic and popular texts. The Asian fashion worker and the garment industry are critical topics in and across development studies; globalization studies; urban studies; feminist labor studies; immigration studies; sociological, political economic, and cultural studies of fashion; and comparative ethnic studies. The Asian garment worker holds a central position in the critical imaginary of Asian American studies and disciplines that intersect and overlap with the field. When *Amerasia* conducted an inventory of Asian American and Asian diaspora studies publications, the journal's editors found that research "related to the labor issues [surrounding] contemporary garment workers [got] the most attention."⁵⁹ The Asian garment worker also appears in Asian American studies scholarship that is not specifically about labor and economy. For example, literary, media, and cultural studies texts like Darrell Hamamoto's *Monitored Peril: Asian Americans and the Politics of TV Representation* and Laura Hyun Yi Kang's *Compositional Subjects: Enfiguring Asian/American Women* invoke the Asian garment worker as a figure representing global capitalism's transformations. Throughout Asian American and Asian diaspora studies, the Asian garment worker embodies globalization's cultural, social, and economic effects.

Western academic literature, films, news reports, and documentaries about garment workers in general regularly focus on the Asian female fashion worker. In a scholarly essay on digital labor's political significance, David Hesmondhalgh pits the feminized Asian factory worker against (positive) free digital creative labor: "Are we really meant to see people who sit at their computers modifying code or typing out responses to TV shows as 'exploited' in the same way as those who endure appalling conditions and pay in Indonesian sweatshops?"⁶⁰ The gendered racialization of garment workers in these sites accurately reflects contemporary workforce demographics in which Asian women are now a majority (though they have not always been). Such gendered racialization is also present in assumptions about Asian women's natural facility for gendered manual labor—for

example, stereotypes about their nimble fingers. In reducing Asian women to their racial and gendered bodies, the fashion industry has made them both vital and vulnerable to fashion's material conditions and productive economy.

Despite their now ubiquitous presence, Asians have not always participated in the U.S. garment industry. From 1870 to 1965, Asian workers made up a very small minority of the multiracial and multiethnic apparel manufacturing workforce. Beginning in 1882, Asian exclusion laws—which included special bars against Asian women and Asian workers—kept Asians from establishing a foothold in this growing industry. Before the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act reversed these anti-Asian immigration policies, the U.S. garment industry was powered first by Italian and Eastern European Jewish immigrant labor and, following World War I, by African American and Puerto Rican labor.⁶¹

During World War II, Italian and Jewish workers and members of other white ethnic groups left the industry for better-paying jobs related to the war effort, and African Americans who had left the South as part of the Second Great Migration and Puerto Ricans who were emigrating in increasingly large numbers to New York City filled most of the garment industry jobs.⁶² Though African American and Puerto Rican workers formed the majority of the workforce, they rarely occupied management positions, which members of white ethnic groups held until the 1970s. And though the fashion industry turned to Southeast Asia for cheap labor as early as the 1950s (when postwar prosperity increased the demand for clothing and other personal goods), it was not until the late 1960s and early 1970s that Asian women became a visible presence in the garment industry.

In the mid-1960s, several key events facilitated Asian women's entry into the garment industry: the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, affirmative action policies, and the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act. Encouraged by recent civil rights victories, African Americans left the garment industry for better employment opportunities, creating a labor shortage that Asians soon alleviated. Chinese, Korean, and Southeast Asian immigrants who were just arriving in the United States after the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act took jobs in the garment industry, primarily in Los Angeles and New York City. According to a 1969 Columbia University survey, 23 percent of New York's Chinatown residents were working in the apparel industry at that time.⁶³ Chinese factory owners in New

York's Lower East Side and Chinatown tended to hire Chinese American workers. Korean factory owners who opened shops in midtown Manhattan hired mostly Mexican and Ecuadoran workers.⁶⁴ The ethnic hiring networks and work environments of Chinese-owned garment factories provided Chinese workers with some flexibility in their work time. Margaret M. Chin notes that Chinese factory owners offered courtesies to members of their ethnic group, such as permitting workers to run errands in the middle of the workday or bring their children to work on school holidays. Chinese workers, however, complained that Chinese factory owners often took advantage of them. They worked more hours at piecework rates, earning less money than Latino workers at Korean garment factories who received hourly salaries.

Trade and capital liberalization throughout the 1980s and 1990s shrunk an already faltering U.S. garment industry. When the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) took effect in 1994, its impact on the weak U.S. garment industry was almost immediate. In the first year after the U.S. Congress ratified NAFTA (alongside the Canadian Parliament and the Mexican Senate), Los Angeles lost tens of thousands of jobs, while wages plummeted in the jobs that remained.⁶⁵ The 1995 creation of the World Trade Organization, which was designed to expand labor and consumer markets, was another blow to the U.S. garment industry. Between 1997 and 2007, the New York City garment industry lost 650,000 apparel jobs⁶⁶—and it had already lost an average of 2.8 percent of its jobs every year between 1970 and 1987.⁶⁷ Most of these jobs moved to Southeast Asia, South Asia, Mexico, or Central America, where fashion companies found the lower wage, work, and environmental standards easier on their bottom lines. In the 1990s and early 2000s, workers in Asia and Latin America were paid an average of about \$7,200 per year.⁶⁸ In 2005, when the Multi-Fibre Arrangement that had been governing world trade in textiles and garments since 1974 ended, U.S. imports from China of cotton trousers increased by 1,500 percent and imports of cotton shirts increased by 1,350 percent.⁶⁹ As Asia became a world supplier of apparel (with the United States its biggest consumer), the United States lost more textile jobs as well as jobs in ancillary services such as cutting, laundering, and finishing operations.⁷⁰

The apparel manufacturing jobs that remained in the United States after trade liberalization relied, by and large, on the sweated labor of women of color and nonwhite immigrants. A 1998 U.S. Department of Labor study

of seventy Southern California garment factories found that 61 percent violated provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act: owners violated the minimum wage law; failed to pay overtime; did not pay some workers for work; and denied workers standard benefits like sick pay, health insurance, disability protection, and worker grievance systems. Social Security and vacation pay were nonexistent in these factories. Based on this report, Edna Bonacich and Richard Appelbaum estimate that the Los Angeles garment industry was accruing about \$72.6 million in unpaid wages per year.⁷¹ In addition to wage violations, the investigators found that hazardous work conditions were prevalent in most of the factories: blocked and locked exits, nonfunctioning doors and windows, dangerous electrical wiring, and uncapped gas lines. They also found malfunctioning toilets, some of them in the same room where workers worked, ate, and slept.

Bonacich and Appelbaum estimate that the actual percentage of garment factories operating under sweatshop conditions was likely much greater than 61 percent. For example, the Department of Labor survey did not include unregistered and underground firms that accounted for 25–33 percent of the Los Angeles garment industry.⁷² Also uncounted were the makeshift garment factory outposts hidden in the homes of workers. While industrial home work was outlawed in the 1940s because officials found it too hard to monitor wage and work violations (especially involving child labor), home work not only persists today, it is a standard practice in the garment industry.

Ironically, personal style blogging has revived home fashion work not only as an acceptable but also as a lauded mode of fashion labor. The story of Yambao's beginning his blog in 2004 from his parents' home in Manila (at the age of seventeen or twenty-four⁷³) has become more than a personal blog origin story. Frequently invoked in the "how to make it as a fashion blogger" media stories that have become their own genre, the image and idea of this Asian superblogger working from home (voluntarily) underscore Yambao's initiative and passion and the extraordinariness of his rise to superblogger status, as well as functioning as a racially loaded moral tale about the value and practice of the Third World Asian work ethic. As a popular racial mythology, Yambao's story plays an important role in the construction of Asian superbloggers as the new model minority of the digital economy.

The myth of the Asian work ethic (to which Yambao contributes to some extent in the construction of his identity as a fame-taxed fashion celebrity) places extra burdens on superbloggers whose high level of productivity, in turn, creates greater demands for more and faster production. This is something that both Yambao and Lau have directly addressed on their blogs. In one blog post, Yambao admits that he “sometimes feel[s] like packing up and calling it a day because of the horrible, unreasonable demands by [blog] audiences.”⁷⁴ In another entry, he posts screenshots of his various e-mail and Facebook in-boxes, some showing more than 600 new messages.⁷⁵ By his own account, the “horrible, unreasonable demands” of his readers include: “Why are you so slow updating? How dare you not update in days? Why have you changed the way you blog? Why haven’t you replied to my emails? Why don’t you want to follow me on twitter? Why aren’t you replying to my tweets? Why won’t you accept my facebook request? Why is your content so different now than what it was three years ago? Why do you have ads? Why do you have lots of ads? Why can’t you post more pictures? Why can’t you post better pictures?”⁷⁶

Yambao’s description of the ever increasing and seemingly relentless expectation for productivity reminds me of the experiences of garment workers interviewed in Tia Lessin’s documentary *Behind the Labels*: “Today he [the factory manager] would say that the quota was sixty pieces. Tomorrow he would increase the quota to sixty-five pieces. You reach sixty-five and the next day, he would say seventy. . . . They always yelled at us: ‘Why can’t you reach 2,000?’ The supervisor punched our table and shout[ed] at us . . . ‘You work so slow!’ His insults were more than you can bear.”⁷⁷ Meeting their quotas, the women explain, often require working inhumane hours: “We worked forty hours straight. Two days without eating, sleeping, without changing anything, without toothbrushing. But most of the time, I work like twenty hours, twenty-two hours, twenty-six hours.” Long work hours exacerbated the likelihood of accidents such as workplace fires and industrial needles puncturing fingers. Most days, first aid supplies and medicine were padlocked in a cabinet. Locks were removed and air conditioners turned on only in preparation for scheduled investigations by employees of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Asian fashion workers in the information economy do not have to contend with domineering bosses and a hostile work environment. For

superbloggers, the pressure for productivity is both internalized as well as distributed across blog readers. Yet in the examples above we see that Asian superbloggers who do different kinds of fashion work under different operating conditions share with garment workers racialized demands for productivity.

To clarify, I am not arguing that the expectation for constant and high productivity is unique to Asian superbloggers or garment workers. As Jonathan Crary argues, this expectation is a condition of our times, made more widespread by the advent and use of digital communications and the idea that “productive operations . . . do not stop” in our 24/7 world.⁷⁸ Crary means both technological and human productivity. What I am pointing to in the shared experiences of these two distinct groups of Asian fashion workers is that the racialization of their labor power—the idea that Asian fashion workers have a predisposition to hard work and high levels of work demand—is both a source of advantage and of mistreatment in their respective fashion labor markets. They occupy a common fraught position as a model minority labor supply believed to be oriented to hard work, yet racial assumptions about their natural facility for hard and difficult work put them in a position where they must bear the burden of demands (often discourteously made) for unreasonable amounts of work.

Racial and gendered stereotypes about Asian model minority workers have structurally advantaged them in hiring decisions while historically disadvantaging African Americans, Puerto Ricans, and (to a lesser extent) Dominicans seeking jobs in the garment industry, who suffer from corresponding stereotypes about laziness and a quickness to complain. Typically, Asian garment workers are darker skinned due to their working-class, rural background, and/or Indigenous ancestry, and they have little education. Stereotypes about this socially disenfranchised group of workers’ racially gendered docility and willingness to accept substandard work conditions have resulted in a new international division of labor in which the largest portion of the world’s apparel manufacturing is done in Asia. Currently, the four largest exporters of clothing to the United States—which provide a whopping 97.7 percent of the clothing Americans purchase⁷⁹—are all countries in Asia: China, Viet Nam, Indonesia, and Bangladesh (in that order).⁸⁰

The advantage that Asians have in the garment industry is a cruel irony in light of the oppressive work conditions and workplace arrangements that they endure on a daily basis. In 1995, seventy Thai immigrants were held

in a Southern California apartment complex in El Monte that served as a covert garment factory. They were forced to work seventeen-hour days for \$1.60 per hour (the 1995 California minimum wage was \$4.25 per hour). The Thai-Chinese owners of the makeshift factory also charged workers a hundred dollars per month for food and housed sixteen workers in one room. By one account, the apartment complex was “ringed with razor wire and fences with spiked bars turned inward as if to prevent escape. The building’s windows had been covered with cardboard, and the interior had been converted into a fiberboard-and-plywood rabbit warren of crowded living areas and sewing work spaces.”⁸¹ While the owners promised workers they would be freed after paying off their transportation debts, Bonacich and Appelbaum point out that their rock-bottom wages and the vastly inflated costs of food and other supplies “virtually assured that they would never get out of debt peonage.”⁸² Garments manufactured in the El Monte factory were sold at Nordstrom, Sears, Target, and Mervyn’s. They also bore the coveted “Made in the USA” label, which was meant to assure consumers that garments were manufactured in compliance with strict employment, wage, and environmental standards.

What the El Monte factory and other sweatshop factories continue to do illegally in the United States, trade liberalization policies allow U.S. companies to accomplish legally overseas. The garment factories in Saipan are a representative example. In the 1990s, Saipan’s \$1 billion per year garment industry was the island’s economic backbone. Most garment workers were women from China and the Philippines. They paid as much as \$3,600 in recruitment fees (borrowed from friends and family) to travel to Saipan. Their base salary at that time was \$6,350 per year. After paying for room and board (approximately \$2,400 per year) and paying off their recruitment fee debts, workers might earn a net salary of \$350 in their first year.⁸³

Saipan garment workers believed that U.S. employment and wage laws protected them, since Saipan is a U.S. territory and they were making clothes for U.S. companies such as Gap, J. Crew, and Walmart. When workers arrived, however, they discovered that U.S. territories were exempt from U.S. immigration laws, import duties, and federal minimum wage laws. In fact, Congress passed the minimum wage exemption in the early days of 1970s neoliberalism to attract businesses to Saipan and similar locales.

Saipan is an exemplary sign of neoliberalism in Aihwa Ong’s sense of the term. Ong understands neoliberalism as a global system of exception

in which political and economic liminality is a standard feature of life.⁸⁴ Saipan's guest worker economic structure and legislative shell game produce a neoliberal exception by deterritorializing labor and thereby stripping migrant workers of rights they might have under U.S. law or the laws of their origin countries. In so doing, the Saipan garment industry and the U.S. fashion industry operate within a context of exception with respect to wage and employment laws. This state of exception allowed them to disregard U.S. manufacturing standards while still assuring consumers that their clothes were "made in the USA."

In fact, the "Made in the USA" label has long been a cover for severe corporate abuses. Throughout the 1990s, Saipan garment workers' essentially free and round-the-clock labor enabled the all-American fashion company J. Crew to expand into international markets and the Gap Corporation to become the second-largest-selling apparel brand in the world.⁸⁵ While these brands bear the "Made in the USA" label because they were made in a U.S. territory, the label conceals workplace abuses and hazardous workplace environments that are the reality of Asian garment workers' lives. In Lessin's film, a Filipina woman describes her first impressions of a Saipan factory and living barracks: "As we were driving towards the barracks, I was really surprised. I'm asking, 'Is this United States territory?' It's like a rural area in the Philippines. . . . The barracks is [sic] squalid, unsanitary, rat-infested and cockroach-infested. We have ten bunk beds, so twenty people stayed in that place." Another woman notes the unsafe noise levels that workers were subjected to in their rooms: "Next door to my barracks is a sewing workshop. It sounds like a machine gun firing away. Next to my bed is a window with an exhaust fan that sounds like an airplane. I couldn't sleep well for three months. . . . It's not a place suitable for living."⁸⁶

The "Made in the USA" label functions as the kind of spectacle that George Lipsitz identifies as a key feature in "the new patriotism" of the 1980s and 1990s in the United States. He points out that the "nationalistic rhetoric and patriotic display" is odd in an "era of economic and political internationalization."⁸⁷ Yet the new patriotism emerged when it did because it served to provide a feeling and discourse that deflected "attention and anger away from capital" and the racial and gendered configurations and consequences of massive unemployment, wage stagnation, and homelessness that so many Americans experienced at this time, as a result of deindustrialization and deregulation policies. "Made in the USA"

labels obscure the economic realities wrought by neoliberal policies and the racially gendered labor that constitutes the production of fashion commodities bearing the labels. The very policies that move garment work offshore to exceptional sites like Saipan, where Asian female workers are specifically recruited through contractors who promise attractive salaries and work environments, are also the policies that make it possible to devalue this labor force and make it invisible.

Globalization has been disastrous for garment workers in the Global South as well as in the Global North. By all accounts, the number of sweatshops in the United States has increased in the years since the birth of NAFTA and the World Trade Organization. In garment industries abroad, there has been a steady decline in wages, while corporate greed climbs unchecked. A 2013 study prepared by the Worker Rights Consortium found that “garment workers still typically earn only a fraction of what constitutes a living wage—just as they did more than 10 years ago.”⁸⁸ Living wages are salaries that afford workers minimum necessities such as adequate nutrition and decent housing. Most garment workers earn about one-third of a living wage. In places like Bangladesh and Cambodia, where wages are lowest, workers make only about one-sixth of a living wage. In nine of the fifteen countries that the 2013 study investigated, real wages had decreased: Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, the Philippines, and Thailand. In the countries where wages increased—China, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Peru, and Viet Nam—the gains were less than 2 percent when adjusted for inflation. As a consequence, the report concludes, “while wage gains for workers in Indonesia, Vietnam, and Haiti were more substantial [than those in other countries], it would take more than 40 years for the prevailing wage rate to equal a living wage even if their recent rates of real wage growth were sustained.”⁸⁹ Together, trade liberalization and the interlocking hierarchies of race, color, gender, and class have shaped both the work opportunities and work constraints that characterize Asian fashion work in the apparel manufacturing industry.

Today, it is not trade and labor liberalization but a confluence of several shifts in popular and consumer culture that is shaping the work opportunities and constraints of Asian personal style superbloggers. As I discuss in chapter 1, the global spread of Asian cute culture, the emergence of new fashion markets in Asia as a result of the rapid rise of some

Asian economies, and social media–connected consumers’ growing influence on fashion companies’ behaviors and strategies have culturally and economically restructured the Western fashion industry around the tastes and Internet activities of Asian fashion consumers. The Asian superbloggers who are the focus of this book are structurally advantaged with respect to the broader context in which the business and culture of fashion now operates. They are prime beneficiaries of these shifts and the changing dynamics of race, gender, and labor that are the shifts’ effects.

The influence of basically ordinary Asian consumers on fashion advertising, retail, and consumer behavior is both historically unprecedented and historically conditioned. These consumers are the flavor of the Asian decade or Asian century, depending on one’s view of global economic forces. Yet their heightened visibility and success have also left a racial aftertaste for fashion industry insiders and media pundits who have tacitly and overtly suggested that they are racial threats to fashion journalism and the standards of taste, decorum, and work ethic that the industry purports to uphold. The fraught positions that Asian superbloggers occupy as beneficiaries of racialized preference and targets of racial discrimination, as a racialized labor force in a postracial digital media economy and as signs of the progressive democratizing development of fashion media and markets, as well as symptoms of their decline (for example, lowered barriers to participation mean lowered standards of knowledge and practice), are the focus of chapter 1. First, I argue that their fraught positions signal a continuation of the historically contradictory relation of Asian fashion workers to the fashion industry. Second, I argue that Asian superbloggers’ fraught positions illustrate the contradictory reality of liberal multicultural and postracial celebrations of diversity and difference (such as the digital democratization of fashion). The paradox that underlies these fraught positions as the subject of popular tastes for racial difference and the object of racial aftertaste demonstrates the implicit conditionality and limits of celebrations of multiculturalism, diversity, and racial tolerance.

After chapter 1 historicizes these blogs and shows their context of global Asian labor and the changing social dynamics of global consumer capitalism, chapters 2 through 5 unpack different elements of the personal style blog and Asian superbloggers’ negotiations of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Asian superbloggers are not passive bystanders of the structural forces that condition their participation in contemporary fashion media.

Their blogs are tools for shaping, negotiating, and managing stereotypes of Asian cheapness in the linked terms of taste, work ethic, and morals. How specific blogging practices work to produce and perform Asian superbloggers' taste and their fashionable embodiment as a distinct but not radically different racialized tastemaker is the subject of chapters 2 through 5.

Each of these chapters documents, reveals, and carefully analyzes major features of the personal style blog and the specific taste work practices associated with them: the style story, the outfit photo, the blogger pose, and the outfit post, respectively. These are not frivolous formalities of the style blog but rather a complex set of aesthetic, representational, and commercial strategies that reveal the particular ways in which the work of Asian superbloggers is raced, gendered, and class-based as well as how the style blog genre, more generally, is at once a cultural form and a commercial product. My critical attention to Asian superbloggers' taste work is intended to uncover the shifting and enduring relations of race, gender, class, and labor in one of the most popular spheres of the Internet.

Chapter 2 begins the discussion of Asian superbloggers' taste work. I analyze bloggers' style stories—the text that accompanies their outfit photographs—as a complex mode of taste work that involves textual, computational, and identity work in the form of code switching. Drawing on Roland Barthes's theory of “written fashion”⁹⁰ and Bourdieu's formulation of fashion language as a site where the struggle for fashion meanings takes place, I argue that Asian superbloggers' style stories are the means by which they articulate themselves as racialized fashionable bodies, as embodiments of legitimate difference.

The code switching in Asian superbloggers' style stories is not necessarily about shifting between languages; instead, the shift is in how the bloggers express their Asianness, from a racial difference to a style of racial embodiment. In close analyses of Song's and Yambao's style stories, I argue that the stories function to aestheticize Asianness by recasting racial difference as a style of Asianness that is distinct in terms of taste and, tacitly, class. The bloggers' style stories indicate an important shift in the signification of race in the personal style blogosphere, from the physical and social body to the practices of aesthetic sartorial choice.

Style stories suggest that Asian superbloggers wear their race on their sleeves, but as with all things in fashion, how race is worn matters. Chapter 3

focuses on the class-based dimensions of superbloggers' taste work practices. Analyzing the aesthetic forms and technocultural structures of outfit photos—the essential feature of personal style blogs—I consider what these photos might tell us about how racialized eliteness is constructed in the personal style blogosphere and what kinds of Asianness are valued when they are attached to eliteness.

Stylistically and formally, all outfit photos look pretty much the same. Some of their most characteristic aesthetic and formal conventions have been credited to Asian superbloggers and reproduced ad infinitum throughout the blogosphere. Yet hierarchies in the personal style blogosphere—between hobbyist bloggers and superbloggers, for example—suggest that outfit photos are almost the same but not quite. Analyzing the formal features of outfit photos produced by the memetic repetition of photographic practices like Lau's mirror shot technique, I argue that there is a difference in the repetition of camera angles and distances. This difference is understated because it is located not on the surface of outfit photos' formal qualities but in the distinction of informational mobilities—of the frequency and extent of the photos' circulation. Outfit photos demonstrate that Asian eliteness in the blogosphere balances distinction with relatability; it is the embodiment of a difference that looks familiar. As with their style stories, Asian superbloggers' outfit photos and other taste work practices are ways to construct the bloggers' legitimate difference as racialized taste makers and style leaders.

Chapter 4 focuses on fashion blogger poses, particularly the brand-name poses Lau and Yambao invented—the Susie Bubble pose and the BryanBoy pose. The significant amount of cultural, social, and financial capital these bloggers have accrued through the poses and their memetic repetition suggest that the poses function as job performances that have the power to heighten bloggers' status and role in the blogosphere. I argue that fashion blogger poses in general reflect the changing values and gendered attitudes related to knowledge, expertise, and authority in informational capitalism. However, the brand-name poses bear the marks of the ongoing racial disparities in the blogosphere, even for elite bloggers. As I explain, they were created in response to and are performances of racial ambivalence. As job performances, then, they represent the added racial and gender dimensions of impression management against stereotypes

that workers belonging to minority groups are often pressed to perform in traditional workplaces.

Chapter 5 returns to an early and central premise of this book: that while there are structural similarities that link new and earlier forms of fashion work, Asian superbloggers do not necessarily acknowledge these links. In fact, bloggers actively maintain the divide between digital and physical labors. An investigation of the technological and aesthetic conventions of the primary mode of personal style blogging called outfit posting demonstrates that bloggers use the digital technologies and practices available to them to render invisible the spaces and times they move through in doing the work of blogging and self-fashioning (for example, driving to retail sites and trying on clothes). Outfit posts represent personal style blogging as an effortless activity. Their spatial and temporal conventions suggest that bloggers come by their stylishness easily and effortlessly, confirming the idea of the personal style blogosphere as a site of real and natural style.

The construction of blogging as effortless has two contradictory implications that I examine in chapter 5. It has the positive effect of disassociating the concept of Asian fashion work from sweated labor, but it also has the negative effect of deskilling personal style blogging in ways that have historically defined and justified the devaluation of women's work. This produces a doubly negative effect for Asian superbloggers. First, it deskills the very significant knowledge and expertise they have with respect to media work, bodily work, and taste work. And second, the racial hierarchies that have historically organized women's work (often performed not just by women but also by Asian men, for example, as laundry workers and domestic workers) especially devalues Asians in ways that raise the racialized specter of cheap Asian workers. In outfit posting, the primary mode of media production for personal style bloggers, the structural intersections of race, gender, and class that shape Asian fashion labor in manufacturing sectors are both disrupted and reinforced by Asian fashion labors in the blogosphere.