

## Fat Activism and bodily meanings. An analysis of Latin American cyber-activists and their symbolic bodily construction

*Activismo Gordo y significados corporales. Un análisis de ciberactivistas latinoamericanas y su construcción simbólica corporal*

*Ativismo Gordo e significados corporais. Uma análise dos ciberativistas latino-americanos e sua construção simbólica corporal*

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This study seeks to identify the meanings given to Fat Activism by Latin American women activists and their community. A mixed methodology and content analysis were applied. The emergence of Fat Activism, based on collective experience and participation, advocates for a reflection on the moral, personal, social, and cultural aspects of the female body, questioning its immediate reality and calling on its own community to engage in areas of debate, citizen collaboration, and political vindication.

**KEYWORDS:** Fat Activism, Instagram, woman, corporeality, meanings.

*Este estudio busca identificar los significados que le otorgan activistas latinoamericanas y su comunidad al Activismo Gordo. Se aplicó una metodología mixta y análisis de contenido. La emergencia del Activismo Gordo, basado en la experiencia y participación colectiva, aboga por una reflexión sobre los aspectos morales, personales, sociales y culturales del cuerpo femenino, interpelando su realidad inmediata y convocando a su propia comunidad a participar en espacios de debate, colaboración ciudadana y reivindicación política.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Activismo Gordo, Instagram, mujer, corporalidad, significados.

*O estudo busca identificar os significados que os ativistas latino-americanos e sua comunidade atribuem ao Ativismo Gordo. Foi aplicada metodologia mista e análise de conteúdo. A emergência do Ativismo Gordo, baseado na experiência e na participação coletiva, defende uma reflexão sobre os aspectos morais, pessoais, sociais e culturais do corpo feminino, questionando a sua realidade imediata e apelando à sua própria comunidade para participar em espaços de debate, colaboração cidadania e demanda política.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Ativismo Gordo, Instagram, mulheres, corporalidade, significados.

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the most important cultural traits in the configuration of a person is the construction of corporeality. We speak of corporeality and not of the body since the body is defined as an objective, spatial reality which, like an object, has a defined shape; whereas corporeality presents history or historicity (Montenegro Medina et al., 2006). On the other hand, corporeality refers to the subjective or experienced reality related to differentiation; while each individual has their own personal history. It is not limited to the volume of the body and “is capable of extending and even taking possession of objects in space” (Zutt, 1963). Additionally, self-image is understood as a construct based on the perception of oneself, along with the explicit or tacit attributions of others (Montenegro Medina et al., 2006).

In a society of representations, personal image has gained excessive value. The female figure “would be validated only from an aesthetic, hedonistic perspective, which has resulted in a true cult of the body” (Montenegro Medina et al., 2006), therefore discrediting the historicity of the body and favoring physical beauty stereotypes that shape the sense of beauty.

In this logic, one learns to apprehend beauty in a context where “the development of Western societies promotes the slimming of the body, closer surveillance of the silhouette, and the rejection of weight in a more alarming way” (Araújo et al., 2018, p. 11). This has led to the rejection of fatness, resulting in its discredit, as privileges are insensitively granted to slenderness. Fatness is not considered beautiful, while thinness and slenderness are (Araújo et al., 2018, p. 10).

Nowadays, defining the fat body through collective imagination discourses involves mechanisms for discrimination and discipline. For example, the Body Mass Index (BMI), which is weight in kilograms divided by the square of height in meters, “is used by public health systems and weight-loss industries to label the fat body” (Castro Roldán, 2021, p. 25). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2018) uses this indicator to categorize and justify “the misnamed ‘obesity epidemic’, [and] describes what is considered healthy and normal, as a binomial categorization” (Castro Roldán, 2021, p. 25).

Since the pandemic, the obesity discourse has not only led people to a strict control of their own bodies and the bodies of others, but has also impacted their emotional and behavioral stability. This is due to the fact that the impact of the physical on personality directly affects how fat bodies interact with others, under the notion of the “unwanted body” (Bañuelos, 1994, p. 126). This is driven by the diet industry, which profits from the promise of access to thinness which is advertised through light products, weight-loss aids, gyms, cosmetic clinics, and surgical interventions.

It was in this context that Fat Activism emerged. It began to cement its goals of struggle in 1970 with a group of feminist obese women in Los Angeles, who found “ways to make themselves visible in a context and society that pursues ideals entirely opposed to certain body types and sizes” (Hernández Cvetic, 2020, p. 5). While fat people in society are condemned to exile, Fat Activism seeks to break through that “invisible hypervisibility” (Piñeyro, 2016, p. 43) which arises from the scarcity of positive cultural referents (Navajas-Pertegás, 2017).

The English-speaking world has had approximately four decades of Fat Activism and two decades of Fat Studies as an entry within academic research. This field not only addresses broad social issues such as stigma, discrimination, and weight bias but also focuses on aspects of people’s health, such as “iatrogenic diseases caused by programs aimed at ‘preventing’ and ‘treating’ fatness” (Rothblum, 2012, p. 4).

Meanwhile, in recent years, the Spanish-speaking context has found strategies for interaction and unique ways of representing itself in a digital culture characterized by digital technologies. Thus, body activists have emerged, recognized for advocating content related to body diversity, using Instagram as a platform to generate communicational practices shaped by a collective imaginary which recognizes certain practices and discourses around issues of discrimination (Castro Roldán, 2021).

Based on this, the research focuses on identifying the meanings given by the activists @lafatshionista, @fatpandora, @brenda.mato, and their community to digital Fat Activism through their Instagram posts during the month of March 2018 to 2022. These months were chosen because they include dates that have historically marked significant moments in the lives of women: March 8 (8M), International Women’s

Day, and March 4 (4M), International Day Against Obesity, which, within the community, has been redefined and recognized as World Day Against Fatphobia by over 181 Spanish-speaking activists.

In addition, the lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which began in Latin America in March 2020, was also taken into account, giving rise to a respective pre-pandemic (2018-2019), pandemic (2020-2021), and post-pandemic (2022) analyses.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This analysis is of an explanatory type. As part of its design, it is a retrospective and longitudinal study, examining the phenomenon from 2018 to 2022 during the months of March. A mixed methodology was applied, using content analysis techniques with both quantitative and qualitative aspects.

With a purposive probabilistic sampling method, considering the mentioned and outlined characteristics, @lafatshionista, @fatpandora, and @brendamato were chosen as the three body activists whose accounts were the focus of the study.

@lafatshionista: Priscila Arias. Mexican, digital content creator, podcaster, and body activist. She primarily dedicates her account to beauty and fashion, but also addresses issues like fatphobic discrimination through satire and comedy. She is the creator of the podcast *¡Guácala qué rico!*, which explores stigmas around sexuality in fat bodies. Since 2012, she has also managed the Instagram account @micuerporesistente, which focuses on health in dissident bodies from her experience, including insulin resistance.

@fatpandora: Adriana Convers. Colombian, publicist, digital content creator, and activist for body diversity. She is the author of *A todas nos pasa* (2019), a book that aims to debunk myths about female bodies through personal and close experiences, and encourages building self-esteem collectively. She is also the creator of the podcast *Talla Única*, which addresses topics such as fatphobia, hormonal disorders, and digital-age bullying, among others, from a gender perspective.

@brenda.mato: Brenda Mato. Argentinian and body diversity activist. She is a driving force behind the #LeyDeTalles, a law that

allows for the standardization of clothing sizes in Argentina. Within her fashion content, she organizes initiatives such as @diversaferia, an exhibition featuring entrepreneurs with a range of body sizes. She is also a member of the Colectivo de Gordes Activistas de Argentina, which “speaks out against stigma, violence, pathologization, and constant discrimination towards fat bodies in this society” (Gordesactivando, 2021).

TABLE 1  
GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE ACTIVISTS

Activist	Verification	Posts*	Followers*	Followed*
@lafatshionista	Verified profile	992	804 000	1 310
@fatpandora	Verified profile	2 326	188 000	993
@brenda.mato	Verified profile	1 197	146 000	3 542

\* On May 3, 2023.

Source: The author.

In addition to considering activists who are constantly updating their content, it was important to note the activation date of their Instagram accounts before 2018. For the selection of posts, only photographic posts from the months of March were considered.

TABLE 2  
SAMPLING OF POSTS

Activist	March 2018			March 2019			March 2020			March 2021			March 2022			Total				
	P	V	R	P	V	R	P	V	R	P	V	R	P	V	R	P	V	R		
@lafatshionista	12	1	0	12	3	0	7	2	0	8	4	8	6	2	14	45	12	22		
@fatpandora	31	0	0	35	3	0	12	2	0	18	1	3	14	0	7	110	6	10		
@brenda.mato	22	0	0	21	1	0	18	2	0	10	2	6	8	0	2	79	5	8		
P = Photographs / V = Videos / R = Reels															Total			234	23	40

Source: The author.

Based on this sampling, 234 visual posts from the three profiles were reviewed for the month of March from 2018 to 2022. For the



As shown in the chart, the most frequently identified word is *belly*, repeated eight times, and it often accompanies the word *body*. The word *women* is also identified with seven occurrences, and, in fifth place, the word *life* appears six times. Although these are the terms that stand out the most in the graph, there are others that are also part of the meanings of body, such as *feminism*, *photos*, *all*, *people*, *models*, *health*, *years*, *many*, among others.

In a post from @lafatshionista (2022) she acknowledges that her *belly*, a colloquial term she uses to refer to the protruding part of her abdomen, is a part of her body that she has hated the most for years. She points out that, although she has been overcoming her insecurities, she hides it and dresses in such a way that she manages to conceal it.

Although her followers tell her that she has an hourglass figure, she sarcastically and humorously states that her silhouette is the opposite of an hourglass: “fat hotties don’t have bellies; they have prominent hips, legs, and boobs” (Arias, 2022). She adds that the fashion industry recognizes this body type as worthy of being models. Consequently, she faces issues in finding clothing, especially swimwear and underwear, that fits her body because “the mold for making them was designed for someone youthful with different genetics and a more ‘aesthetic’ and ‘balanced’ body” (Arias, 2022). She continues the description by adding personal details to the story: the day she took the published photograph, she was doing a photo shoot for a clothing company with content creators who are known for fitting into hegemonic stereotypes. She emphasizes that she likes being big, standing out, and looking different. Her purpose is to be a role model for women who have a belly like hers and “don’t feel traumatized like I did years ago because there was no one with a belly represented anywhere” (Arias, 2022).

FIGURE 2  
POST BY @LAFATSHIONISTA



Post of appreciation to my belly.

My belly, along with my feet and my nose, are the parts of my body that I hated the most in life.

I think it's now very common to hear or read things like that on many content creators' profiles.

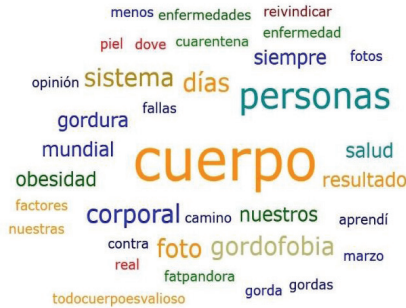
But in particular I emphasize this because even though I have overcome many insecurities, I always hide my belly and dress in such a way that it is disguised. (Some of you tell me that I am hourglass, no friends, I have a belly, my silhouette is the opposite of hourglass).

Source: Arias (2022b).



For her part, @fatpandora's profile features the following words:

FIGURE 3  
WRITTEN CONTENT IN @FATPANDORA CONTAINING THE WORD *BODY*



Source: The author.

In addition to highlighting the word *body* with 13 frequencies of use, the word *people* appears a total of eight times, and *photo* and *fatphobia* both appear six times. Although these are the most prominent words in the chart, others are also noted, such as *fat*, *skin*, *learned*, *quarantine*, *Dove*, and *real*. These terms accompany the main word across different themes and attitudes.

Regarding the meanings assigned by @fatpandora, the analysis focused on the post made on March 31, 2020, which addresses several themes related to her corporeality. First, she acknowledges that her body is one that everyone talks about, explaining its popularity by describing it as a “robust and large body, full of rolls and mountains” (Convers, 2020a). She also mentions that her body takes up a lot of physical space in everyday life, but it also occupies a significant amount of mental space for others, referring to the constant formation of opinions about other people’s fat bodies.

FIGURE 4  
POST BY @FATPANDORA



The body everyone talks about: Yes, that big, robust body, full of rolls and mountains. That body that takes up a lot of physical space but also in everyone's head. That body that many boast of accepting and never discriminate against, but from on the inside is the body they fear and feel uncomfortable with. Everywhere they shout "love yourself as you are" but when that "tolerance" becomes an apparent personal reality, everything changes. If your opinion and consideration are altered when your skin is stretched, it is not your opinion, it is discrimination disguised as fear of being singled out. Fatphobia exists and is coming to the surface in this quarantine.

Source: Convers (2020a).

It is noteworthy that her body is one that many boast about accepting and never discriminating against, but "in reality, it is the body they fear and feel uncomfortable with" (Convers, 2020a). This statement questions social movements like Body Positivity, criticizing their limited impact on changing the structural oppression faced by fat

people and their failure to address fatphobia (Soto Villarruel, 2021, p. 70).

In this aspect, in addition to mentioning the main premise of Fat Activism, she situates the location and context in which the description of this post was written, referring to the Covid-19 pandemic: “Fatphobia exists and is surfacing during this quarantine. Neither being isolated nor not having to go out every day in our overflowing bodies to face the streets frees us from prejudice” (Convers, 2020a). As a result of this last paragraph, the importance of understanding the context in which her discourse develops can be retaken, especially when it represents a narrative shift in the socio-cultural experiences of individuals.

In the profile by [@brenda.mato](#), unlike the other Figures, there is a greater number of words related to various themes of her activism.

FIGURE 5  
WRITTEN CONTENT BY [@BRENDA.MATO](#) CONTAINING  
THE WORD *BODY*



Source: The author.

As the central focus of the study, the most frequently identified word is *body*, appearing a total of 18 times. Following in order of frequency are the words *free* and *nothing*, each with eight occurrences, and in fifth place, with six repetitions, are the words *constant* and *shit* (which, being generally offensive, conveys a sense of frustration).

In the post by [@brenda.mato](#) from March 2, 2018, she engages in activism through the self-recognition of her body as a form of representation of herself and her daily life.

FIGURE 6  
POST BY @BRENDA.MATO



I am short, like my mom. I have stretch marks that remind me of all the changes my body went through.

I have huge thighs full of cellulite, where the person I love enjoys resting their hands.

I have green eyes like my dad.

I have a belly.

My breasts are so big that they've already sagged.

I have a split palette for having taken a risk and wanting to be as cool as my brother (NOTE: DO NOT jump off a ramp with your bike if the sidewalk is broken).

Source: Mato (2018).

She lists all the physical characteristics of her body, such as her height, which is similar to her mother's; the stretch marks that remind her of all the changes her body has gone through; her thighs, which are filled with cellulite; her green eyes, like her father's; her belly, which she recognizes as something neutral without positive or negative comparisons or references; her breasts, which, being so large

and prominent, have sagged, illustrating the effect of gravity on all bodies; and finally, she mentions her full lips and a double chin that becomes more pronounced when she laughs heartily. This reflection ends with the question: “Do people really still see this as something bad?” (Mato, 2018). Which leaves an open question for the recipients of the message.

### *Meanings of Activism*

Next, the meanings assigned by the three activists to their digital Fat Activism will be explored, segmented into three categories of analysis: symbolic, sociopolitical, and occupational.

For @lafatshionista, her activism from a symbolic perspective is related to “self-esteem or self-love”, with a more individualistic view rather than a collective one, where one’s own role is a trigger for self-conception of the body.

She mentions that activism is driven by bravery and that this struggle involves facing situations accompanied by people who generate lessons in one’s personal life, disguised as “betrayals, insults, destructive relationships, and humiliations” (Arias, 2019a). She concludes with the statement: “Woman, sister, friend... Wake up! You’ve got your own back! Or who else were you expecting?” (Arias, 2019a), aiming to prompt the reader into action by reinforcing that the experience of fatphobia is largely a personal overcoming.

On the other hand, @fatpandora acknowledges that her activism is enabled by the collective. In a photo showing her half-naked torso, she describes how she always wanted an image of her body in underwear but only dared to make it with a trusted photographer. An important point she adds is that she never intended to publish it; it was meant for herself. “I never published it; it was a photo for me, to capture a moment in my life where I did something difficult, and I thought it would stay that way forever” (Convers, 2020b). This implies that her symbolic feelings, expressed through subjective meanings in her activism, are still in the process of self-reconciliation with her body. For this reason, she did not publish the image until she was contacted to participate in

the initiative #TodoCuerpoEsValioso, created by activists @leocorro<sup>3</sup> and @burn\_thisway<sup>4</sup> from Mexico, who have generated a total of 887<sup>5</sup> posts on Instagram.

The photographs shared through this initiative reflect the theory of social representations, which explains “how images understood as representations of reality (sign) act within social groups by transmitting values” (García & Torres, 2014, p. 56). They thus integrate aspects from the individual to the collective, from the symbolic to the social, and from thought to action.

For @brenda.mato, her activism is symbolically linked to the word *Free*, concerning the feeling of freedom expressed throughout the descriptions of the selected post. She continues the description with the phrase: “Free from hating my body” (Mato, 2018). This action of freeing her body from hatred and negative emotions symbolically impacts the values she shares through her activism.

Additionally, she mentions key themes for understanding the existing fatphobia in society, stating that she frees herself from diets and magic recipes which promise a non-existent happiness. From this perspective, fatphobia is closely related to capitalism, as “the diet industry profits from the promise of access to the (advertised) dreamed thinness” (Bastos, 2019, p. 2). Thus, @brenda.mato releases and reinforces all actions of self-growth recognized in her written content.

The content, shared by the three profiles, features contextual characteristics, establishing a dialectical relationship with social reality. In this context, Covid-19 emerged, which was declared a pandemic on March 11, 2020 (WHO, 2020). From that moment, the number of infected people in various countries began to rise despite the adopted measures. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommended limiting travel

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<sup>3</sup> Public figure on Instagram with 38 100 followers (reviewed on October 25, 2022), who calls herself a Guru of the Body Positive movement and a Body Diversity activist. At <https://www.instagram.com/leocorro/>

<sup>4</sup> Public figure on Instagram with 5 500 followers (reviewed on October 25, 2022), who calls herself an activist of the Body Positive movement. At [https://www.instagram.com/burn\\_thisway/](https://www.instagram.com/burn_thisway/)

<sup>5</sup> Reviewed on October 25, 2022.

outside one's place of residence to prevent possible spread, a situation that lasted from 2020 into part of 2021 (Ayala et al., 2018).

In this context, the three activists adopted different senses and meanings concerning their activism. While @lafatshionista and @fatpandora maintained a discourse in March 2020 focused on protecting oneself from Covid-19: "Fresh out of the oven with a message for you: STAY SAFE! Stay home" (Arias, 2020a), and "especially during these times of confinement where living 24/7 with family, constant comparisons can affect us" (Convers, 2020c), and @brenda.mato addresses two relevant issues about the Covid-19 pandemic and fatphobia. First, a post was identified featuring two exactly identical photographs, one captioned "Before quarantine" and the other labeled "After quarantine".

This visual discourse is accompanied by written content that begins with the statement: "Your little jokes about quarantine are fatphobic" (Mato, 2020). She continues by asking: "What if instead of worrying about 'all the pounds you're going to gain' during this time, you focused on stepping out of your bubble and stopped making negative comments about fat bodies?" (Mato, 2020), refuting concerns about weight gain during the pandemic. The description continues with the statement: "Fat people are fed up with being your bullshit joke" (Mato, 2020). She concludes by stating that a pandemic does not give anyone the right to mistreat another person.

Second, @brenda.mato highlights three interesting themes: exercising as a fat person, the pandemic, and fatphobia. The post begins: "The other day I took this photo of myself after working out at home" (Mato, 2020), and mentions that she had never posted photos or videos of herself exercising or doing sports because she felt uncomfortable doing so and did not want to show it on her Instagram profile. She continues by expressing: "With all this quarantine crap and fatphobia, I realized that I never considered staying home and being sedentary as a problem" (Mato, 2020), and adds that she does not feel the forced need to stay active during the pandemic because she exercises for herself and to benefit her body, not to lose weight.

However, her reasons for feeling uncomfortable with sharing content related to exercise are expressed as follows: "It's really difficult to

FIGURE 7  
BEFORE AND AFTER QUARANTINE BY @BRENDA.MATO



Your little jokes about quarantine are fatphobic.

How about instead of worrying about “all the pounds you're going to put on” during this time you get out of your bubble and stop making negative comments about fat bodies?

Eating caloric food is not being fat. It's being a gourmand or a glutton.

Don't justify your stupidity with our bodies.

We fat people are sick and tired of being your bullshit joke.

A pandemic doesn't give you the right to be an evil person. You're not funny. You're a moron.

Source: Mato (2020).

talk about exercise when you have a fat body because people arbitrarily assume that you do nothing. Or also because it feels like crap to have to constantly justify that I'm fat even while exercising” (Mato, 2020). The stigma of exercise for fat people is a topic evidenced in “a society that exercises solely for the benefit of losing weight, thus normalizing



an idealized body philosophy” (Contrera & Cuello, 2018). She ends with: “The size of your body doesn’t determine your worth. If you gain or lose weight during quarantine, believe me, it doesn’t matter” (Mato, 2020). Through this final paragraph, she refutes that exercise and fatphobia are linked to each other. Politically, the meanings not only have contextual characteristics, establishing a dialectical relationship with social reality, but also conceptualize the body as a site of power from a critical perspective.

In the analyzed posts from March 8, International Women’s Day, a comparative analysis was conducted with posts from two years apart for each profile. It was observed that both @lafatshionista and @fatpandora showed a clear evolution in their discourse. Initially, both influencers celebrated women’s ability to create with phrases like “Woman = creator” (Arias, 2019b), and expressed gratitude for women being brave: “Today I celebrate being a woman, I celebrate the woman I have become over the years, and also the one I had to leave behind to be who I am now” (Convers, 2018). Two years later, the shift in discourse with feminist premises is evident: “It’s not going to fall, we’re going to knock it down” (Arias, 2020b), and the use of hashtags representing the fight against gender violence #NiUnaMenos #8M, accompanied by initiatives: “The best way to commemorate this day is by informing and protecting ourselves” (Convers, 2020d).

Regarding @brenda.mato’s profile, a similar and constant premise was identified over the five years of study, resulting in the denunciation of beauty stereotypes as macho violence in both analyzed cases: “As long as bullshit beauty standards keep ruling and screwing our lives, there won’t be any fewer victims of macho violence” (Mato, 2020), accompanied by hashtags: #8m #NiUnaMenos. From various identified feelings and an attitude of denouncing the discrimination she faced, she informs recipients that in this new commemoration of International Women’s Day, it is necessary to talk about these issues, but with truth and commitment: “And not just talk about it, but do something urgent to solve it. Because no body, no matter how fat, can put up with so much shit” (Brenda Mato, 2022); thus concluding her discourse and highlighting the urgency of addressing fatphobia through both personal and collective action.

FIGURE 8  
POST BY @LAFATSHIONISTA



“Fat” for as long as I can remember was the word that described me above all others.

It was what defined me, but also what at all costs I had to eradicate because it was undesirable, unhealthy and uncomfortable for my surroundings.

The world made me believe that everything that has happened to me is my fault. That if I really wanted it, all suffering would disappear.

From the time I was 9 years old when I went on my first diet and up until 20 years later, I had never wanted something more strongly. I was willing to give up everything, pleasure, food and life, in order to achieve the idealized thinness. I still didn't succeed.

Source: Arias (2022a).

On the other hand, on March 4, World Day Against Fatphobia, @lafatshionista was identified with a different discourse on social media, recounting her experience with fatphobia: “If we really seek health, what we need to combat is fatphobia” (Arias, 2022a). She shared a sequence of images that visually reflected her discourse.

The post shows @lafatshionista standing facing the camera, completely naked, with the word *disgust* painted in blue on her chest and *fat* on her stomach, and also the text “March 4 World Day Against Fatphobia” with a font covering her chest and part of her hip. On the other hand, @brenda.mato and @fatpandora, as active participants in the Collective Manifesto, signed by 181 activists in 2022, not only share the visual aspect in their posts but also similar descriptions that quote verbatim the main guidelines<sup>6</sup> of the Collective Manifesto.

Finally, throughout the data processing, it was evident that each activist has been part of a brand or company with which they have collaborated hand in hand. However, a common brand was identified that has actively participated with all three profiles. This brand is Dove, a Unilever company. In 2007, the Dove Real Beauty campaign marked a before and after in advertising and the fashion industry.

Thus, three different campaigns which each profile carried out with Dove were identified, but arriving at the same conclusion. All three profiles introduced a new advertising discourse recognized as *femvertising* or pro-woman advertising based on a feminist line that uses women’s images through stories created by women themselves and images and slogans in favor of women. Through their campaigns such as #SinDistorciónDigital (NoDigitalDistortion): “Many of us come across these types of photos everywhere, which ultimately only create pressure on us to meet that beauty standard and make us think our bodies aren’t enough” (Arias, 2022c), Belleza Real: “This journey of learning to reconcile with my body as a fat woman has been a long one, especially because while you walk it, you constantly receive the instruction to ‘love yourself as you are, but not if you’re fat’” (Convers, 2022), or #Mostremos: “Because I want to see more bellies like mine, which also deserve to be shown” (Mato, 2022), they left the old advertising stereotypes behind.

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<sup>6</sup> Among the most relevant points of the manifesto, the objective of seeking “bodily autonomy, individual and collective bodily liberation” is stated. Also, fatphobia is understood as a system of oppression, which puts fat people in a situation of disadvantage, injustice, and exclusion, and which is reproduced in a systematic and structural way” (Manifesto, 2022).

### *Community meanings*

The meanings attributed by the community to the discourse of the three Instagram profiles can be understood as “the participants share among themselves meanings or contents or informational sets through a certain system of signs via a certain physical system of transmission/perception of these signs” (Zaldua Garoz, 2006, p. 43). Thus, it was possible to identify how the meanings given by the activists were re-signified by the users in the comments, generating a process of transmission/perception of certain signs.

Regarding @lafatshionista’s comments, there is one that contradicts itself by refuting that it is not okay to be fat and proud of it, but mentions that all body types should be loved with pride:

It’s precisely not about being thin; that’s not okay either, and it’s not about being fat and feeling proud of it, . . . , but yes, always happy and proud of the body we have, regardless of the life stage we are in . . . (Form, 2023).

This emphasizes that the discourse regarding fatphobia is not fully understood. The other two comments support @lafatshionista’s discourse through personal stories about fatphobia they have experienced.

Regarding @fatpandora’s comments, all three comments share positive and affectionate attitudes supporting the #TodoCuerpoEsValioso campaign post. Thus, comments reflect feelings of gratitude, celebration, and inspiration for sharing personal issues about the difficult path of self-reconciliation. They acknowledge that, although @fatpandora’s strong theme is fashion, her followers appreciate access to content related to self-love, self-esteem, and fatphobia.

As of @brenda.mato’s post comments, three themes are identified in each comment from her community. On the one hand, there is an emphatic support for @brenda.mato’s activism accompanied by reflections on the importance of eradicating beauty stereotypes. On the other hand, a theme emerges about health, where there is a critical and propositional attitude denouncing late diagnoses by doctors when a fat person seeks medical advice. Notably, this comment received 69 “likes”, indicating support for the denunciation and recognition of it as

a situation experienced by many. Finally, the third comment critiques the use of machismo, noting that beauty standards are also set by many women, to which Brenda responds that machismo is a structural and historical issue of gender domination imposed on roles, making the gender that perpetuates it irrelevant.

## CONCLUSIONS

The discourses of the activists narrate their individual stories, marked by differentiation, and express various characteristics in their digital activism. Generally, the meanings obtained proved useful for understanding the descriptive, symbolic, and interpretative aspects that the three activists use to create discourses that address their immediate reality.

On the one hand, the body is recognized as the result of a constant process of reconciliation while body parts that have received years of hatred and rejection are identified. It is emphasized that fat bodies deserve recognition and visibility to foster representation in digital media for future generations. On the other hand, the existing fatphobia is reflected and made visible, not only in the activists' corporeal reality but also in all fat bodies perpetuated by prejudice and discrimination.

Symbolically, activism is seen through three assigned values: courage from an individualistic perspective, where achieving self-love depends solely on oneself; the importance of the collective, as a catalyst for generating initiatives from diverse viewpoints, and freedom, as through nudity –conceived not just as the naked body but also as uncovered emotions– emotions are shared free from shame, hatred, restrictions, and rules imposed by others on fat bodies.

Socially, and in the context of Covid-19, fatphobic actions were identified and denounced in the form of satirical memes about weight gain and the constant criticism of exercising as a fat person during social confinement. Politically, the identified discourses directly relate to the feminist slogan “the personal is political” (Hanisch, 1969), since political issues are placed within a framework by expressing their right to exist from diversity, without being victims of oppression and discrimination. March 8 showed the evolution

of discourse on the profiles @fatpandora and @lafatshionista, which shifted from celebrating women to a discourse with feminist premises. Meanwhile, @brenda.mato expressed a strong discourse around beauty stereotypes as macho violence through social pressure to meet a particular beauty ideal, even when it poses a risk to the person's mental and physical health (Montagud, 2022). Whereas on March 4, World Day Against Fatphobia, which resignified the Day Against Obesity, a similar discourse was seen in two profiles, @brenda.mato and @fatpandora, where the premises of the Collective Manifesto that established March 4 on the world calendar were shared, and a discourse with strong digital presence was identified, revealing their personal experiences with fatphobia, resulting in both visual and written activism to sensitize the recipients of the publication.

In the labor context, it is noteworthy that, in several posts, the same activists have denounced that even though some companies claim to be inclusive, they lack size variety and real changes. Thus, there are campaigns that have seen corporate diversity as an opportunity for economic and social profitability. Since the introduction of social movements like *Body Positivity*, the fight for body diversity has caused the generation and reproduction of body stereotypes, beliefs, and norms that respond to and govern the existence of a new mold to fit into in order to be recognized as valid bodies in the advertising industry. Thus, aesthetic mandates continue to be perpetuated and profited from as forms of patriarchal domination that Fat Activism itself claims to eradicate.

Regarding community-provided meanings, while there are feelings of gratitude, celebration, and inspiration for sharing personal issues about the tough path to self-reconciliation, while reflecting on sociocultural issues such as machismo and its relationship with beauty standards, with respect to the area of health, the existence of late diagnoses by doctors when a fat person seeks medical advice is denounced through the comments. This prevents people from getting comprehensive care, while their rights are violated in the name of medical concern, which prioritizes weight loss over other medical issues, thus reinforcing and reproducing discriminatory, violent, and fatphobic practices and discourses.

The cyber-activists included in this study play an active role in the social, political, and economic scenario, as they invite and encourage their own community to engage in debates, citizen collaboration, and political advocacy. Through autobiographical perspectives, they use tools like personal narratives and experiences portrayed in the first person, framing experiences from the singular to the plural. From intimacy, they create activation resources to achieve awareness and visibility of fatphobic issues, considering and shaping narratives that permeate contemporary reality. This allows for rethinking the construction and dimension of cyberactivism, which, as seen with the three profiles, is generated through political denunciation narratives that reconfigure habits, customs, feelings, and practices, reshaping everyday visualizations of the social order while acting as sounding boards that expand their demands, claims, and discursive frameworks in both digital and conventional areas.

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