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**Declaration**

I declare that this assignment is my own work and does not involve plagiarism or collusion.

The sources of other people's work have been appropriately referenced, failing which I am willing to accept the necessary disciplinary action(s) to be taken against me.

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## **Abstract**

This paper seeks to analyse the portrayal of body positivity in three of Lizzo's works - *Scuse Me* (2017), *Juice* (2019) and *Tempo* (2019). Both visuals from the music video and the lyrics to the song will be analysed and the body positivity movement will be used as a lens for analysis, to understand the extent of the alignment of portrayal of body positivity with the movement. This paper also seeks to discern the extent of the sexual objectification of Lizzo in the same three works, with sexual objectification as the lens for analysis, and understand how it might support or undermine Lizzo's message of body positivity. Fundamentally, Lizzo's portrayal of body positivity is largely aligned with the body positivity movement's concepts but there can be a contradiction, though very rarely, between Lizzo's portrayal of body positivity and the principles of body positivity. The sexual objectification of Lizzo is moderate too, and does support her message of body positivity and the movement as a whole.

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## **Chapter 1: Introductory Chapter**

### **1.1 Background**

Growing up, Lizzo, an American singer and rapper, had been affected by seeing negative and stereotypical images of plus-size bodies (Elan, 2019). This took a toll on her mental health, and she believed that something was wrong with her, pushing her into depression. Given her experience, she thus aims to uplift others in similar situations. As an artist, Lizzo's songs often revolve around empowerment, having feminism, self-love and body positivity as underlying themes. Into the bargain, on social media platforms as well as in interviews, Lizzo often discusses self-love and being accepting of whoever one is, no matter what body type, skin colour, abilities et cetera one has. She once said her music "encourages kids to love themselves and accept their bodies". (Douglas, 2020), and at a show, she remarked, "I'm all about body positivity and self-love because I believe that we can save the world if we first save ourselves." (Schnurr, 2021). As a result of her frequent emphasis on these topics and the huge pride she has in doing so, she became recognised as an emblem of body positivity and self-love.

### **1.2 Rationale**

Lizzo has become a leading voice for the body positivity movement (Cornejo, 2020). Compared to other body positivity advocates, her incorporation of body positivity in popular culture has gifted her with a greater reach to individuals and has contributed to the masses regarding her as an icon of body positivity. Moreover, Lizzo frequently posts messages pertaining to body positivity across social media platforms, where she has millions of

followers. Almost every comment she makes in public or on public platforms will be easily seen or heard by a humongous number of people. Her loyal fans constantly promoting her works help to increase the exposure these messages get too.

The huge influence that Lizzo possesses can potentially change the outcome or future of the body positivity movement either positively or negatively, and it is crucial to understand whether we can regard her as a good representative of body positivity and learn from her in an attempt to build an increasingly inclusive society for mankind, or if learning from her would undermine the aims of and be detrimental to the movement as a result.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

1. How is body positivity portrayed in Lizzo's works?
2. To what extent might Lizzo sexually objectify herself while portraying body positivity in her works, and does this support or undermine her message of body positivity?

### **1.4 Thesis Statement**

Body positivity is portrayed in Lizzo's works in an aesthetic manner and as something people should not be afraid to embrace. There is also a contradiction in the portrayal of body positivity being for everybody. At the same time, Lizzo's sexual objectification of herself is done moderately, and this amount and utility of sexual objectification in fact supports Lizzo's message of body positivity.

## **1.5 Scope**

This research will be structured around how body positivity is portrayed and the extent of Lizzo objectifying herself in her works. Both video and lyrics of three of her works, *Scuse Me* (2017), *Juice* (2019) and *Tempo* (2019), being more closely related to body positivity, will be used for analysis.

## **1.6 Significance of Research**

The body positivity movement has gained traction globally in recent years, with more people looking at advocates or representatives of the movement and attempting to learn from them, to better understand that their body size does not define their worth and that they are loved no matter their body type. The body positivity movement also seeks to remove the social stigma surrounding plus-sized individuals, in order to create a more accepting society and support plus-sized individuals through their struggles pertaining to their body size. However, as much as the principles and aims of the movement have always been magnanimous and public-spirited in nature, certain companies or people leverage off the movement, propagating their support for body positivity despite not taking action to actually promote an inclusive society for them, so as to benefit themselves and attract more sales with the appraisal they receive in the media which encourages others to support them for their “inclusivity”. Since Lizzo is one of the better-known icons of body positivity, she holds a wider influence on the perceptions of body positivity and how the movement could end up in the future. Through an analysis of Lizzo in relation to body positivity, greater light can be shed upon whether Lizzo could be regarded as a good leader in body positivity and whether the general public could follow her, so as to perhaps reduce the risk of a worse social

problem appearing in the midst of promoting body positivity. There are also mixed opinions or statements, some of which having a lack of concrete evidence to back them up, with regards to Lizzo and her use of body positive ideas, which this research seeks to provide further insight into and assist the discussion of different point of views.

Furthermore, with an increase in people relating the objectification or sexualisation of oneself to confidence and body positivity (Thompson & Donaghue, 2014), this research contributes to understanding that body positivity is not necessarily just about having to flaunt one's skin - rather it is about feeling secure and happy no matter one's body type.

### **1.7 Limitations**

With a wide range of body positivity advocates and supporters, their respective portrayals of body positivity across various media vary greatly. This denotes that Lizzo's portrayal of body positivity is unique to herself and she is not in any way the sole representative of the movement. Hence, findings and conclusions from this research cannot be applied to other artists, representatives or the body positivity movement as a whole.

Moreover, only three works will be focused on. Lizzo's other works, performances, interviews, social media pages and such are not taken into account, which could affect how body positivity might otherwise be presented by her. At the same time, however, greater focus is put on these three works, allowing for more in depth analyses.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Chapter 2.1: Body Positivity Movement**

#### *Chapter 2.1.1: Goals of the Movement*

The Body Positivity Movement, which first started to empower plus sized individuals, advocates the celebration of all body types, regardless of race, religion or nationality (Cherry, 2020). The overarching aim of the movement is to challenge unrealistic beauty standards, encourage self-acceptance, and increase self-esteem by enhancing one's self-image and helping people learn to love oneself to the greatest extent (Cwynar-Horta, 2016). In addition, being plus-sized or overweight has long been associated with laziness, poor hygiene, and a lack of self-care. In the corporate world, obese job candidates were perceived as less suitable as compared to normal weight candidates and candidates whose weight status were not disclosed (Flint et al., 2016). The movement attempts to eliminate this prejudice or social stigma, separating weight, fitness, and body image from self-worth (Khutoretsky, 2021), in order to create a more accepting society.

One way these are achieved is through attaining visibility, which in this case refers to obtaining exposure of plus-sized individuals in mainstream media. Visibility may be necessary in the pursuit of legitimised modes of power, be it state power, representational power or corporate power but at the same time, it remains a condition of the expressions of structure (Kim, 2018). Participants in the body positivist community reveal their bodies, perhaps across different forms of media, rather than staying invisible or attempting to conceal bodies that are described and viewed as deviant, ugly, hideous, or strange (Johansson, 2020).

By gaining more exposure in the mainstream media, being the main method for people to gain knowledge and insight on different situations and issues, essentially shaping the views consumers have of the world, plus-sized individuals have a heightened ability to be showcased and perceived as normal or common rather than outcasts of society, which contributes to breaking down the disparagement of the plus-sized community. Without visibility, people are more unlikely to recognise the diversity of body types and will continue holding on to orthodox views. An increased visibility therefore means greater power in terms of holding influence over perceptions and pushing for a change, which ultimately contributes to the body positivity movement moving forward to achieve its aims.

Another way the goals are achieved is through the concept of aestheticism (Romero, 2019). Aestheticism is an art movement that emphasises aesthetic values - the beauty of the work, the evocation of emotions and the idealistic tendencies - above all else in literature, fine art, music, and other arts. (Hasa, 2016). In mainstream media, aestheticism is used by the movement to portray the beauty of being plus-sized. In combination with cinematography techniques, there is a utilisation of cosmetic products such as lipsticks and eyeliners to enhance the beauty of the plus-sized individuals, with the intention of changing the stereotype of these individuals from being seen as unattractive to gorgeous.

### *Chapter 2.1.2: Criticisms of the Movement*

Common criticisms include the movement's promotion of unhealthy lifestyles. Based on studies done, being plus-sized, or obese, has been linked with many health issues, where it can progressively cause or exacerbate a wide spectrum of co-morbidities, including cardiovascular disease and dyslipidemia (Kyrrou, 2018). Critics argue that the body positivity

movement encourages mainly plus-sized people, but also others with unhealthy bodies such as being overly skinny, to continue risking their health with the misconception that their bodies are "perfectly fine" at any weight.

Another criticism would be the sexual objectification of the movement. The concept of sexual objectification was proposed in the Objectification Theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). It refers to the fragmentation of people, or more specifically women, into a collection of sexual parts and/or sexual functions, effectively stripping them of their individual identity and subjectivity, and reducing them to mere bodies (Calogero, 2012). This will be gone into further detail in Chapter 2.2. With participants of the movement increasingly revealing their bodies across different forms of media (Johansson, 2020), heightened emphasis is placed on their appearance, rather than their personalities, essentially establishing a connection between their sense of self-worth and physical appearance or display (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Even though the movement might influence those who are plus-sized to feel beautiful, it can also subconsciously mould their minds to believe that they can only be worthy if they flaunt their bodies, forgoing the recognition of their internal characteristics or personality playing a part in determining their worth.

The commodification of the movement is a criticism too. With an intention to gain more exposure through mainstream media, it is argued that the increased visibility often goes hand in hand with commodification (Hennessy, 1994). Body positive advocates often take to sexualising themselves to "prove" that they are very much confident in their own skin. Yet, at the same time, they lose sight of their purpose and begin reproducing dominant capitalist ideologies when they see money-making opportunities. They often accept beauty enhancing practices (Cwynar-Horta, 2016), to possess a better presentation of themselves in the media,

which in turn helps them sell better. Other than that, brands and companies, with an intention to become more widely accepted by the general public, start to include "body positive" products, such as plus-sized clothing. Some even go to the point of featuring plus-sized models, despite not actually providing the sales of plus-sized clothing, since they do not see the worth of plus-sized people being their customers. Corporate interests have a simple opportunity to enter the fray and emerge as heroes under this system simply by recruiting an ad agency or casting director who can read the room, and without modifying their businesses' treatment of anyone (Mull, 2018).

These criticisms help set the basis of the analysis of Lizzo's works; whether the same criticisms can be said about her portrayal of body positivity, and how her portrayal thus encourages or hinders the movement's development in the right direction.

## **Chapter 2.2: Sexual Objectification**

The idea of treating a person as an, perhaps sexual, object comprises seven characteristics, according to Martha Nussbaum (Papadaki, 2019). These characteristics are the treatment of a person as "a tool for the objectifier's purposes; lacking in autonomy and self-determination; lacking in agency, and perhaps also in activity; interchangeable with other objects; lacking in boundary-integrity; something that is owned by another (can be bought or sold); or something whose experiences and feelings (if any) need not be taken into account" (Papadaki, 2019). In combination with the addition of Rae Langton's three features to the list - "the treatment of a person as identified with their body, or body parts; the treatment of a person primarily in terms of how they look, or how they appear to the senses; and the treatment of a person as if

they are silent, lacking the capacity to speak” (Papadaki, 2019) - these make up the different kinds of situations where sexual objectification can be considered to have occurred.

According to the Objectification Theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), how bodies are perceived is socially constructed, and men in Western cultures are not only allowed, but encouraged, to consider women as sexual objects. Sexual objectification is the term for this occurrence, which develops primarily and insidiously through gazing (Tuning, 2016). It is often considered ethically wrong or dehumanising due to the reduction of the worth of humans to objects, treating them as material rather than as actual humans with emotions and other qualities.

At the same time, the moral wrong of sexual objectification has also been challenged. Instead, this objectification can be considered to be positive objectification. It has been argued that it is not necessarily a terrible thing that everybody is merely an object by default, given that humans are considered to be part of nature (Papadaki, 2019). The reason why the concept of objectification exists is due to humans elevating their status or view of themselves to be better than what they really are. To treat humans as objects, therefore is to treat them as they are realistically (Papadaki, 2019). Other arguments supporting the concept of positive objectification include the idea that a healthy amount of it helps to show admiration and desire for others in a way that is unrelated to their other qualities as a person (Friedman, 2014).

### **Chapter 2.3: Current Discussions on Body Positivity and Sexual Objectification in Lizzo**

Contrasting statements have been made regarding body positivity and sexual objectification in Lizzo. There is an accolade of Lizzo empowering plus-sized individuals to regain the strength they possibly have lost to society, by showing that it is normal (Elan, 2019) for having a bigger body and being confident or proud about it. Users on numerous social networking sites have made praises of her confidence being inspiring (Rosa, 2019) to plus-sized individuals who are conceivably dealing with self-hatred due to their appearance.

On the contrary, others have also remarked that Lizzo could actually be insecure, rather than confident, although there is a lack of concrete evidence to substantiate this claim. It was noted that Lizzo had constantly been talking about body positivity and showing off her plus-sized body, despite her claiming that she desires for more of the attention on the music she releases (Ahlgrim, 2020). This repetitive nature of her advocacy suggests her insecurity since she comes across as too desperate to prove that she was positive and confident, which was not how she felt in reality (Jordan & Logan, 2019).

In addition, Lizzo has been criticised for being overly sexual. It has been emphasised that she should not be dressing up in thongs and constantly twerking (Cee, 2019) in music videos and performances. It would perhaps convey a message to younger plus-sized individuals that they would need to sexualise themselves, showing greater cleavage and more skin, in order to be considered "confident" or "body positive" by society (Cee, 2019).

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

The goals of the body positivity movement will be used as bases of analysing the portrayal of body positivity in Lizzo's works. These goals include attaining visibility of plus-sized individuals, promoting societal acceptance and removing social stigma of all body types, and turning self-hatred into self-love and self-acceptance. The concept of sexual objectification will also be used as a basis of analysing the extent of Lizzo's self-objectification. At the same time, analysis will be made to recognise the purpose of the objectification - whether it was used in alignment with and in efforts to promote the body positivity movement or was simply unnecessary. These analyses of Lizzo's works will be carried out through multiple ways. This includes but is not limited to the analysis of the lyrics, colours, camera angle, objects and lighting. Material sourced from the body positivity movement and advocates and other research will be used as references for the analyses too.

## Chapter 4: Discussion and Analysis

### Chapter 4.1: The Portrayal of Body Positivity in Lizzo's Works

#### *Chapter 4.1.1: Criticising Status Quo and History*

Lizzo mainly criticises two things that occur in the status quo, and perhaps occurred in the past, in her works - the first being the lack of proper credit given to plus-sized individuals for their internal qualities and the second being the way the plus-sized community is represented in the media.

She first criticises the lack of proper credit given to plus-sized individuals for their internal qualities contributing to their success - rather than their hard work and abilities, superficial factors are credited.

*It ain't my fault that I'm out here gettin' loose*

*Gotta blame it on the Goose*

*Gotta blame it on my juice, baby*

*It ain't my fault that I'm out here makin' news*

E1. Lizzo, *Juice* (2019)

In *Juice* (2019), Lizzo sings about the lack of credit she has gotten for "gettin' loose" and "makin' news". In slang terms, "gettin' loose" means to be relaxed or carefree. Lizzo uses this term to refer to her not being as obsessed with or stressed about her bigger body, as she had in the past which had affected her mentally. By "makin' news", she refers to the

recognition or attention people are giving her, which she has been working hard for. For both of these circumstances, it "ain't" or had not been her "fault", hard work or effort for attaining them. Instead, it was "blame[d]" or credited to "the Goose" and on her "juice". "Goose", in slang terms, refers to silly people or things. In this case, it alludes to Lizzo being affected by supposed silly ideas or concepts such as plus-sized people being perfectly fine, thus her ability to be carefree, or negatively put, not know better. As for "juice" in slang terms, it can refer to numerous things. In this case, it refers to Lizzo's use of sexual ideas to garner views and increase the amount of attention on her, disregarding her efforts in other areas, such as marketing or writing catchy melodies. She essentially sings about how people credit her success or happiness to shallow reasonings rather than her profound ability and efforts.



Fig 1. Lizzo, *Juice* (2019)

In her music video for *Juice* (2019), the word "juice!" can be seen on different body care or beauty products, seemingly representing a brand, with hefty prices of "\$499.00". With the

repeated phrase “blame it on my juice”, not only in the lyrics, but visually as well, this denotes that her confidence or success was credited to the expensive products or external resources she uses, rather than her internal abilities such as learning to accept herself and working hard.



Fig 2. Lizzo, *Juice* (2019)



Fig 3. Lizzo, *Juice* (2019)

As Lizzo cheers in a victory pose in a later scene portraying a talk show, the host gives a judgemental, or perhaps contempt, facial expression. This further displays the lack of happiness others feel for her and the lack of proper celebration for her successes as a plus-sized individual.

The second thing occurring in the status quo, which also occurred in the past, that Lizzo criticises about is the way the plus-sized community is represented in the media.



Fig 4. Lizzo, *Juice* (2019)



Fig 5. Lizzo, *Juice* (2019)



Fig 6. Lizzo, *Juice* (2019)

Early on in the music video of *Juice* (2019), Lizzo can be seen exercising with dumbbells in her hands. The same settings can later be seen as part of a scene in a small television. This implies that the earlier scene of her exercising had most likely been portrayed on the same

television, which references popular exercise videos in the 1980s, as can be inferred from the deliberate foggy video quality and the leotards Lizzo and other plus-sized individuals behind wear. These exercise videos had only featured conventionally fit people. By referencing these videos, she thus satirises the lack of visibility in the media then, which perhaps caused plus-sized individuals to seem less capable and unable to do the same fitness or aerobic moves as others.

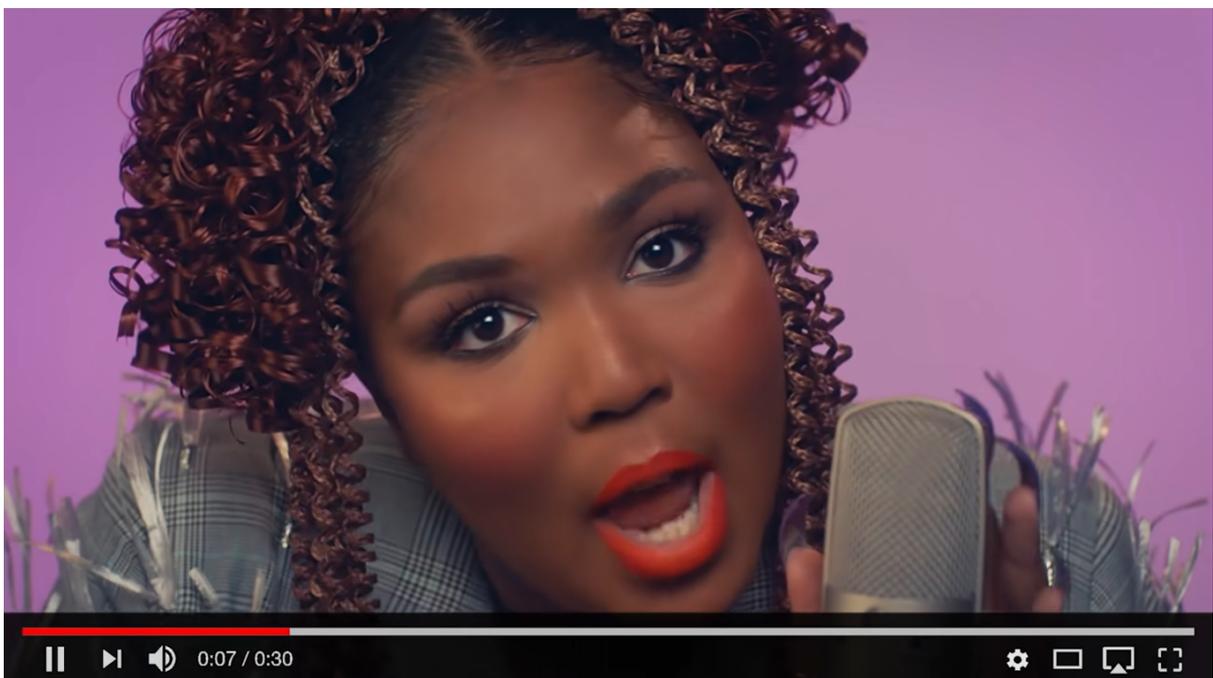


Fig 7. Lizzo, *Juice* (2019)

In another scene portraying a video, similar to those on Youtube, being played, Lizzo can be seen to have a close-up shot of her face and not once her body throughout the entire video. This is an allusion to the lack of visibility of plus-sized bodies in the current media, which causes them to be portrayed as hideous and not be normalised in society.



Fig 8. Lizzo, *Juice* (2019)



Fig 9. Lizzo, *Juice* (2019)

In the “talk show” scene, Lizzo can be seen flailing her arms and pointing her finger at the host, who is outside of the camera frame. The host and talk show can be seen as a representation of the media, and for Lizzo to make those actions suggests her accusations

against or frustrations with the media for their portrayal of plus-sized individuals. Yet, the camera only focuses on Lizzo, cutting out the host from the frame, essentially removing the context in which Lizzo vents her frustration. This insinuates the media having portray plus-sized individuals in a negative light - that of unreasonable and hot-tempered people.

These two criticisms Lizzo makes of what occurs in the status quo, and sometimes also what occurred in the past, portray the importance of the body positivity movement and the increased visibility it needs, to combat the social stigma against plus-sized individuals.

#### *Chapter 4.1.2: Conveying Body Positive Messages*

Firstly, Lizzo portrays body positivity in an aesthetic manner.



Fig 10. Lizzo, *Scuse Me* (2017)



Fig 11. Lizzo, *Scuse Me* (2017)

Lizzo and other plus-sized individuals are shot in a nature-themed scene in *Scuse Me* (2017). Lizzo seems to be wearing a jade green silk garment with a crown on her head, while the others wear pastel-coloured organza garments. There are flowers, a waterfall and much greenery around them, and the use of other accessories such as chokers, done-up hair and make-up applied. Furthermore, mist is utilised in the scene, which creates a somewhat blurry or dreamy look, adding on to the beauty of the scene. With post-production such as colour correction, the scene thus looks aesthetically pleasing. This helps to portray the beauty of plus-sized individuals, deviating from society's view of them being unattractive.

Secondly, body positivity is portrayed as something that people, or plus-sized individuals, should embrace as it is empowering. It is shown to give them confidence and enlighten them that they are still worthy of many things and should not feel pressured to change themselves.

Feelin' like a stripper when I'm lookin' in the mirror

E2. Lizzo, *Scuse Me* (2017)



Fig 12. Lizzo, *Tempo* (2019)



Fig 13. Lizzo, *Tempo* (2019)

By embracing body positivity, Lizzo shows that she is able to feel confident in her own body. Despite society's judgements on and prejudices against the plus-sized community, she is not concerned about them and continues to strip down, don skimpy outfits, flaunt her body and twerk, which therefore portrays her confidence in her own body without her requiring validation from others.



Fig 14. Lizzo, *Juice* (2019)

As seen in *Juice* (2019), she is able to confidently perform and stand in the spotlight.

I'm the pudding in the proof (pudding in the proof)

E3. Lizzo, *Juice* (2019)

Lizzo plays on an old saying, "the proof is in the pudding", which means that the worth of something can only be determined by testing it, rather than judging it by appearances.

However, in this case, she flips it around and uses the word "pudding" as a slang, which refers to a fat person like herself, and "proof" as a metaphor for success. In other words, she is a plus-sized individual who is achieving success, essentially saying that plus-sized individuals are very much capable of making accomplishments.



Fig 15. Lizzo, *Juice* (2019)

In the "talk show" scene in *Juice* (2019), the bottom left corner writes "JUICE SHOW with Lizzo", presumably the title and logo of the scene. Yet, the host, as can be seen sitting behind the table, resembling other shows such as "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon", is not Lizzo. This denotes that although she might only be a guest on the show, she is the one that is recognised, not the host, for being part of the show, which in turn suggests that her performance is outstanding and overshadows others' performances, presence, or even titles. This portrays plus-sized individuals as people who are very much able to stand out from the crowd and flourish with much recognition.

Somebody come get this man

I think he got lost in my DMs, what? My DMs, what?

E4. Lizzo, *Juice* (2019)



Fig 16. Lizzo, *Tempo* (2019)

Lizzo alludes to many people paying her attention with the huge number of texts she gets, by singing about how a man “got lost in [her] DMs”, referring to his message being drowned out by all the other messages she receives. She also shows a man kissing her through a selfie camera on a phone, which suggests his desire for intimacy with her. With the addition of hearts on her eyes, love is therefore symbolised here, and all these show that even if people are plus-sized, they still are showered with and deserve love.



Fig 17. Lizzo, *Juice* (2019)



Fig 18. Lizzo, *Juice* (2019)

Lizzo at first shows herself exercising at the start of the music video too. In the end, however, she ceases and instead dances to the music, which in combination with her joyous facial expression, puts forward a celebratory or carefree mood. The fact that she changes

between the start of the end of the music video, which could be in and itself an allegory to her development as a plus-sized individual over time, portrays the embracement of body positivity contributing to her self-sufficiency and removing the pressure to change herself to fit society's standard of beauty, therefore also allowing her to feel happy.

Last but not least, on the contrary, body positivity is sometimes portrayed in a contradictory manner in Lizzo's works.

If I'm shining, everybody gonna shine (Yeah, I'm goals)

E5. Lizzo, *Juice* (2019)

“Shine” means to be considered glamorous, outstanding and treated with high regard. Lizzo asserts that if she were to empower plus-sized individuals, she would fight against the discrimination other people face as well to achieve equality and happiness for all, rather than empowering only plus-sized individuals at the expense of putting others, perhaps thinner women, down.

Slow songs, they for skinny h\*es

Can't move all of this here to one of those

E6. Lizzo, *Tempo* (2019)

At the same time, however, Lizzo refers to skinnier women as “h\*es”, which is a derogatory term. This literally shows her insulting them, encouraging a stereotype of them having many sexual partners instead of empowering them.



Fig 19. Lizzo, *Tempo* (2019)

Lizzo, in a scene in *Tempo* (2019), also portrays herself and other plus-sized women twerking and dancing in real time, while thinner women bounce on cars in the background in slow motion. Efficiency is something that today's competitive society prizes. By portraying plus-sized women dancing at full speed, it alludes to their effectiveness in accomplishing things and how they still are able to live up to society's standards. However, thinner women being put in slow motion hints at their inefficiency, and the bouncing on cars alludes to their paucity in providing value. Lizzo, while empowering plus-sized women, essentially puts thinner women down and invalidates their worth.



Fig 20. Lizzo, *Juice* (2019)

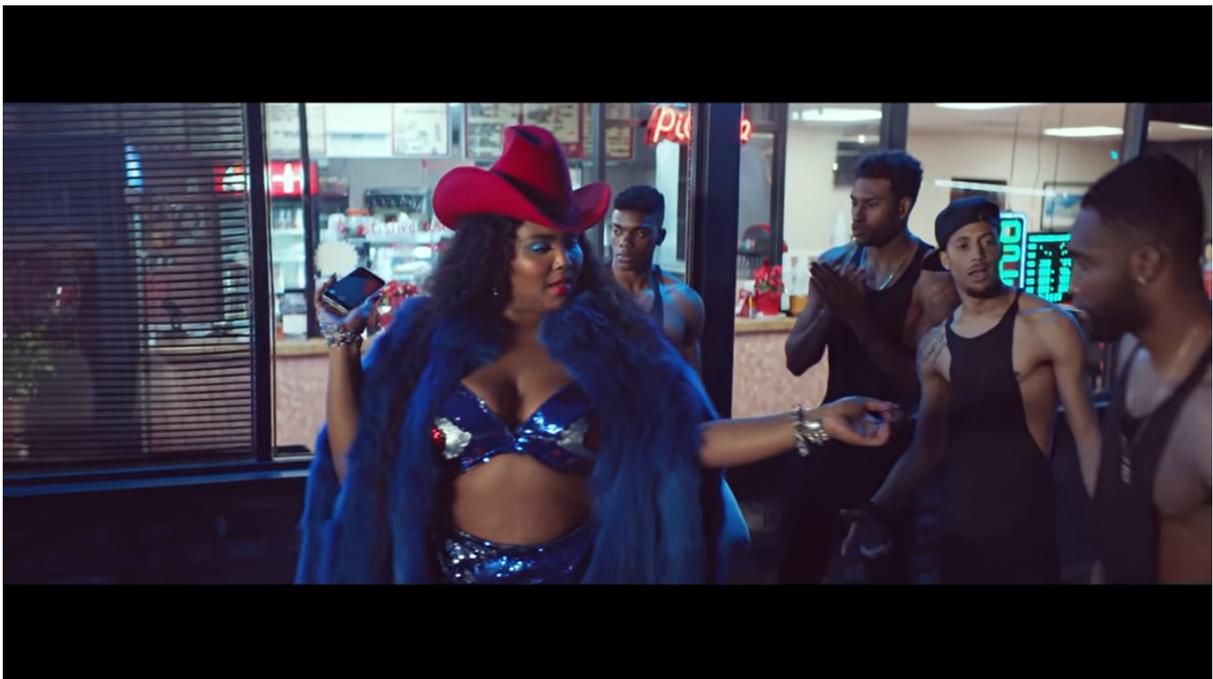


Fig 21. Lizzo, *Tempo* (2019)

Moreover, when Lizzo depicts herself perhaps flirting with men, she mainly uses muscular men to do so. This illustrates the strong attraction people have for muscular men, which feeds into toxic masculinity. Instead of being confident with their own bodies, which is

something Lizzo has claimed to promote, men would feel compelled to have a muscular body.

Despite claiming to be empowering all to feel confident about their own bodies and fighting against social stigma affecting them, which is also something that the body positivity movement aims to achieve, certain groups of people had been put down in Lizzo's works, thus body positivity being for everybody is portrayed in a contradictory manner.

#### **Chapter 4.2: The Objectification of Lizzo**

Lizzo sometimes sexually objectifies herself but it is not necessarily excessive.



Fig 22. Lizzo, *Tempo* (2019)



Fig 23. Lizzo, *Tempo* (2019)

On some occasions, Lizzo can be seen flaunting much of her body, namely her thighs, stomach, cleavage and her shoulders. She treats herself as being identified with her body and how they look, where she twerks and dances sexily, touches her body and gives seductive facial expressions. All these emphasise her beauty and confidence, and contribute to increasing the visibility of plus-sized bodies, in an attempt to normalise and reduce the stigma of them. Yet, rather paradoxically, these forms of objectification can also push forward the belief that one can only be body positive when flaunting a lot of skin and might encourage others to treat plus-sized individuals as sexual beings.



Fig 24. Lizzo, *Scuse Me* (2017)



Fig 25. Lizzo, *Juice* (2019)



Fig 26. Lizzo, *Juice* (2019)

Lizzo, on the contrary, can sometimes also be seen to have almost fully covered up her body and showing minimal skin.



Fig 27. Lizzo, *Juice* (2019)



Fig 28. Lizzo, *Juice* (2019)



Fig 29. Lizzo, *Juice* (2019)

Other times, while still fully clothed, there is arguably a lot of sexual objectification, where she shows her cleavage or a small portion of her chest.

While there might be several instances where she placed much focus on her body, there are numerous other instances where she is still very much covered up. The sexual objectification of herself does not seem to occur repeatedly but more moderately and when it deems appropriate to do so, depending on the setting of the scene and the meaning of the song.

Even then, the sexual objectification of Lizzo does not undermine but support her message of body positivity. There is a good balance between body positive messages regarding superficial and internal qualities - the focus on the sexual objectification of herself does not overwhelm consumers to the point where other messages are drowned out. This balance contributes to the understanding that being body positive does not mean to have to constantly flaunt one's skin. Additionally, the objectification, in combination with the use of aesthetics, is able to show that plus-sized individuals are still beautiful in their bare skin. Given that bodies are ultimately a representation of and a part of people, and that society will inevitably place focus on and look at them, no matter the size, from time to time, this amount of objectification serves to remind people that plus-sized individuals can be confident with their appearance, while simultaneously showing that they do not have to actively conceal their bodies and can flaunt them when it deems appropriate, just like any other person would.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

In Lizzo's portrayal of body positivity, she is mostly aligned with the body positivity movement as a whole. Similar to the movement, she utilises aesthetics, encourages plus-sized individuals to embrace body positivity due to the confidence and sense of worth they attain and includes a healthy, moderate amount of the sexual objectification of herself. This points towards her in-depth understanding of the movement and her tactful or careful infusion of its concepts into her works, which in turn indicates her effort and seriousness in promoting the movement well. She does not appear to include messages or ideas with regard to the movement for shallow purposes such as obtaining appraisal from the public and earning more money. As such, Lizzo can be considered reliable when looking to her as a role model of body positivity. This still holds true despite the contradictory manner of certain portrayals of body positivity. It is important to recognise that humans are never perfect and are always learning throughout time - Lizzo's mistake can be attributed to her past lack of knowledge or a simple oversight on her part. All in all, she can be regarded as a good representative and role model of body positivity, although a critical perspective must still be taken in order to be sensitised to the messages which might undermine the body positivity movement from attaining its aims.

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