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An exception to vanity sizing. Simplicity patterns tells it like it is (or was)

Wednesday, November 28, 2012

This blog began as a description of my unsuccessful search for a long holiday skirt. I decided I could make one inexpensively like I used to do long ago.

On the Simplicity website I found this post from a frustrated customer.

"I got a fantastic pattern, Simplicity/Threads 2758. I was in the middle of cutting out the pattern when I discover it's not true to size! I just found out that it's 4 sizes off, that my normal pant size of 14/16 is actually a 20/22 or more in Simplicity sizing."

For some time I've considered the effect of vanity sizing in masking the supersizing of society. Personally, sizing creep did me no favors as it allowed me to gain 30 pounds while continuing to wear the same size. This is important to the fashion industry. Making women feel good about themselves allows companies to pad their bottom line as we continue to pad our own bottoms.

Suddenly, here's a company bringing us a dose of reality. They haven't changed their sizing. The measurements/size are the same as they were in 1960.

What does this mean for me? As I shop off-the-rack I can now buy a size 6 instead of the size 10 I wore in 1968. Even after my weight loss I'm still 13 lbs more than back in 68. Checking the average measurements for a size 6, I find 36-28-38. Yep that's me all right – a size 6.

Now what if I decide to make myself a new dress or skirt. What if, like the poster on the website, I buy a size 6 pattern. The measurements there: 30 ½ -23-32 ½. Oops!
The sizes of off-the-rack clothes and pattern sizes were once exactly the same. I bought size 10 dresses and made a few of my own from size 10 patterns.

The fashion industry has research to prove that women are more likely to buy if there's a smaller size attached. Sizing creep has produced some ridiculous results. Since the old size 8 is now a size 0, the very small woman, who would have worn the old size 6, now is called size 00. If this continues, how many zeros can they fit on a size tag? What's the alternative, negative numbers?

Still, I don't understand the disconnect? Are women who make their own clothes less vain than those who don't? Are they willing to buy patterns according to their measurements because the final product won't have a size tag in it anyway?

One solution would be to forget arbitrary sizing and just sell womens' clothes based on actual measurements. Efficient yes, but how many women want to sort through a rack where their actual waist or hip size is prominently displayed?

Finally, for the record I would have to buy a pattern size 14 to match the measurements of an off-the-rack size 6. Much as I hate sizing creep and believe it fosters false self esteem and is adding to our obesity problem, there's some vanity in me too. I admit, I'd rather call myself a 6. However, I must keep

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reminding myself that it's not real. It's just a consequence of the supersizing of America.

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MOMMACASSEY

I went for a long time not knowing what my size was because I started wearing men's jeans instead of women's, and I'd always worn large and XL size t-shirts. The thing about men's sizes is that they are based on the measurements... Only recently, I started trying to get out of my frumpy look and into women's clothes again, only to find that I had gone from size 10/12 to size 18/20.

On the other hand, my toddler is wearing anything from a 2 to a 5, depending on who made it. I find it incredibly frustrating that not only are sizes creeping around, but that they seem to be perfectly arbitrary--no one designer or producer is making sizes the same as any other. It makes it so frustrating to shop, I've just about decided to stop trying to look feminine and to go back to just large t-shirts and men's jeans again.

Women need to relax. All this reminds me of the line from the movie "The Devil Wears Prada" when Emily says, a little grudgingly and a little proudly, "I'm one stomach flu away from my ideal weight." I don't think there should be a size 0 at all--to me, that means that it fits, perhaps, a hanger. Which reminds me, again, of someone saying once that clothes they make nowadays look best on a hanger, and that's why women are trying to look like clothes hangers.



3119 days ago



FANGFACEKITTY

I laugh at it now. Today I am a size 2/4...yet I am still 15 pounds heavier than when I was 20 years old and a size 6/8. Whatever. I'd much prefer to buy clothes like the men do, based on my actual measurements so I would know exactly what I was getting without having to try on every single item before purchase because of all the variations in what a size is supposed to be. Clothing sizes, like weight, are just numbers and I try to keep in mind that how I feel is more important than a number on a label.

3119 days ago



MJZHERE

Forget the second hand stores and sizes - I am completely lost trying to find what fits there (I can't judge at all by looking). Then the sizes differ from store to store, and among the brands. I am so fortunate I was given a pile of clothes - most fit- because I am not having fun shopping. Glad to see that I haven't lost my mind - even when I was younger, in the 120's, I wore size 12 and 14's - I think skin and bones my hips won't be smaller than 35 (and then my waist was 24). In fact, I started to get really worried about my DD as an adult as she kept telling me smaller sizes when I would pick her up clothes.

3120 days ago



CD8467616

I didn't know Simplicity was still in business. I didn't know people still use patterns to make their own clothes... My mom made all my clothes when I was a child (in the 50s!) and I learned to sew too, but stopped when fashions changed and store-bought clothes became so much less expensive. I used to love looking through the thick pattern books at the store (Simplicity, McCalls, Butterick). As a young woman I was a size 8-10 and I was pretty tiny!

My solution to the size problem now is to buy everything from the same company: J Jill. I wear their size XLP (extra-large petite) and I know anything in that size is going to fit me --- til I get smaller, that is!



3120 days ago



LOLATURTLE

Definitely interesting. I think there are limits to what people will accept, though. It has to be gradual size creep or it doesn't work.

I discovered the last time I lost weight that Lane Bryant vanity sizes above and beyond the "normal" vanity sizing going on! When I got into an LB size 18 I was excited to shop at other stores only to discover that fitting into LB 18 means not yet fitting into Old Navy 18 or department store 18.

I just noticed HFAYE81 also mentioned this! When LB resized all their pants 2-10. I was irritated because I had to figure out what "size" I was all over again. I asked the salesgirl what was up with that and she got all gushy about it "Isn't it GREAT?? I've never been a size 6 before!" I just looked

at her. Because, what??? Just because the tag said "4" didn't make me any smaller.

It was even more confusing because they have three "shapes" of pants, but that part I wish ALL stores did! I am "blue" which is the biggest difference between your waist and hips (small waist big hips). "yellow" is slightly bigger hips than waist and "red" is same size hips/waist.

They don't have the 2-4-6 pants anymore, so I'm guessing the quick jump in vanity sizing didn't please too many customers.

3120 days ago

Comment edited on: 11/28/2012 12:42:22 PM



HAYBURNER1969

Yes, since I still wear a size 2-4 (like I did in high school 30 years ago), I wondered where would I shop now for clothing in the size I needed then? The children's department, I guess. I noticed at Wal-Mart the other day when buying underwear for my daughter that they have bras there up to 36". Maybe that's where I need to start buying my bras now, since finding a 32B is not easy. Although I guess I must be a little vain too, because I really don't want to buy a bra named "Growing Up with Bali."

3120 days ago

Comment edited on: 11/28/2012 9:28:55 AM



SUZYMOBILE

Thanks again for a terrifically well informed blog! You know, of course, that because I shop at Goodwill, where the clothing can be any age, I'm assaulted with a wide range of sizes, all of which fit me--from 1.5 to 11!

The really sobering part of your blog is the question: What next? How many zeroes will they have to add on to make women feel good about themselves? How about the 450-lb woman who died in Hungary because they couldn't find an aircraft big enough to return her home to her usual medical care? In the future would she be a size 14?

3120 days ago



CD12557708

How interesting! I noticed this when buying patterns for Renaissance dresses earlier this year. I for one would rather have universal sizing, my vanity can get over it (I'm a "20"). Its a pain to order clothes when you don't know how the sizes fit you. A few years ago the plus store Lane Bryant resized everything, a 14 was a 2, a 16 a 4, an 18 a 6, you get the idea. Luckily they dropped that confusing b.s. pretty quickly.

3120 days ago

Comment edited on: 11/28/2012 9:11:41 AM



COACHMOMMY

Funny, I just experienced that this morning. My sister's friend has clothes of all different sizes from all different eras (they're both in their early 60's, but don't tell anyone!). She has very expensive taste and very nice clothes. My sister gave me a bunch last year that were too small for her friend. Not sure how old they are (they look brand new), but I put on a suede skirt this morning and noticed it's a size 14. I buy size 8 & 10's off the rack now. I'm about the same weight I was 20 years ago (but before kids!) and back then I was a 12/14.

I must admit too, it was nice after I lost my weight buying size 8 & 10's, but sizes don't matter as much, especially since you can be a different size at different stores. It's very frustrating buying clothes for 3 teenage daughters!

3120 days ago



PMRUNNER

Maybe they can convert to actual measurements, but use the metric system instead of inches! No one really knows the metric system anyway, so folks could get the right size and still be blissfully ignorant of the actual measurements!

3120 days ago



OPTIMIST1948

This -- THIS is an interesting blog. I have "known' about sizing creep, but this is the first time I've heard an intelligent discussion on the topic that isnt whiny or pompous.

The sad part is that I'm also finding the same thing as many of your commentators. Sizing isnt accurate in the stores. I have to spend more time shopping because I dont know what size I fit into in *this store* as opposed to *that brand*. And for someone like me that hates shopping, its a real BORE!

3120 days ago



CD12758218

It is interesting, for sure. I am now getting into size 4, plus I need short length for my pants and it is becoming a challenge at times to find something that fits. 6 is often the smallest size on the racks, which makes no sense. I thought finding 3X's could be hard, but now I'm wondering what the women who are smaller than me do. I guess shop in the juniors section, which I haven't done since college and so the sizes there are a true mystery to me.

3120 days ago



LEB0401

YES! We should go the Euro way and have sizes based on measurements, not relativity. It's so much easier to buy jeans based on your waist measurements, tops based on your bust. It seems to me that only the expensive retail stores (like Guess) are doing this.



Even in 5 short years the sizes have inflated. I'm now the same weight I was freshman year, but as I shop in the same stores as I did before, I find I have to size down. I got burned pretty badly when I bought some trousers without trying them on.
3120 days ago



CELIAMINER

Thank you for putting sizing creep into numbers. Since my closet contains clothing that fits ranging from a size XS sweater from Ann Taylor to a size 14 pair of jeans from Macy's, I get very frustrated trying to shop. I miss being able to order cute clothes from catalogs, especially when they are on sale, but I don't want to take the expensive (postage/shipping) chance I will have to return/exchange them or the even more expensive chance that they can't be returned. I have to try *everything* on now. While it's gratifying to be able to try on clothes without tears and gloom descending on me, I'd like to be able to head to the dressing room without three sizes of everything to cover my bases.



3120 days ago



MISSUSRIVERRAT

I was sewing a cobbler apron from a pattern that I used to use about 50 years ago. It is a family tradition to make these cobbler aprons (more fitted than regular aprons). The size is "medium" , for sizes 12-14. Converting that size to today's sizes it would be about an 8-10 or maybe even smaller. I have to bear this in mind when I sew for some of the average sized adults who would saythat they think that a medium would be the right size for them.



3120 days ago



MISCHAKEO

The fashion industry is definitely catering to vanity. Great blog.



3120 days ago



AZMOMXTWO

Why do we need to lie to ourselves
I am fat that is the end of it I just need to get my weight under control and go from there
I do not need to be told that I am smaller than I am to feel better



3120 days ago



ONEKIDSMOM

Yep! I have seen this phenomenon. One of my favorite examples is my mother's wedding dress. She was wed in 1949. She wore a calf-length (midi) satin gown that was fashionable at the time. In a size 16.



My kid sister wore it at her wedding in 1989. It did not need to be altered. At the time, she was a size 10, I think, on the rack.

I tried it on when I was at a point where off the rack I was wearing an 8 tight, and it fit me tight.

It is what it is. Bottom line, every time I look to purchase, I have to check the sizing charts, and base it on my measurements!

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