

2018

Feminism and Fashion of the Twentieth Century: A Material Culture Study

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FEMINISM AND FASHION OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY:

A MATERIAL CULTURE STUDY

BY

MIRANDA DICENZO

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF SCIENCE

IN

TEXTILES, MERCHANDISING AND DESIGN

UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

2018

MASTER OF SCIENCE THESIS

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2018

ABSTRACT

While feminist literature clearly states the connection between clothing and feminism, there is a lack of material culture analysis to support the connection. This research utilizes material culture analysis—in this case, artifacts such as photographs, garments, and advertisements—to connect the ideology of feminism to its tangible and visible representation. Many fashion histories describe the period in which a garment was popular but offer little explanation about its corresponding political and social importance. This study includes histories of twentieth-century women's movements and correlating fashion culminating in an exhibition to bridge the gap between scholarly research from varying fields.

The exhibition, based on this research, presents feminist history alongside historic garments from The University of Rhode Island's Historic Textile and Costume Collection. Arranged chronologically, from the dress reform movement of the 1850s through the grunge movement of the 1990s, the exhibition recognizes the use of fashion and anti-fashion as a means of both oppression and progressive change for women in the United States.

This thesis and exhibition use material culture analysis to connect physical garments to First, Second, and Third Wave Feminism as well as the intermediate years. Garments symbolizing fashion and anti-fashion can be used to enhance our understanding of feminism, and the evolving mindsets of women in the twentieth century.

Today, women and minority groups in general, are facing uncertain futures. This thesis and exhibition invites viewers to think critically about American women's history and use of clothing to facilitate change.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people in the Textiles, Fashion Merchandising and Design department and University of Rhode Island contributed time, energy, and support to this thesis and production of the accompanying exhibition.

Thank you to my thesis advisor, Linda Welters, for her guidance throughout the thesis exhibition process. Rebecca Kelly for her assistance with installation and knowledge of textile exhibit organization. Susan Jerome, the Collection Manager, who helped in the selection of garments. My Thesis Committee—Susan Roush, Jessica Strübel, and Linda Welters—whose guidance helped select garments for exhibition and complete my written thesis. The graduate students of TMD's Special Topics course—Susan Day, Sarah Gilcrease, Erika Holshoe, and Maria Vazquez—who created mounts, chose and dressed forms, completed conservation work, and helped with installation of the exhibit.

Special thanks to Elizabeth Beasley and Jessica Perry who contributed items from their personal collections and the URI Bookstore Sign Shop who printed all of the posters, backdrops, and flyers for the exhibit.

Thank you to the URI Center for the Humanities whose Graduate Student Research Grant was used to help fund the exhibition.

Thank you to my family and friends who gave me immense support and listened to me endlessly talk about my thesis and exhibition throughout the process. Glad you stuck it out.

Lastly, thank you to Starbucks for providing me a space to work and drink caramel macchiatos.

PREFACE

This thesis has been written in the standard style.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Feminism and Fashion of the Twentieth Century: A Material Culture Study is a holistic examination of the twentieth-century women's rights movement that uses material culture analysis to connect physical garments to first, second, and third wave feminism culminating in an exhibition. Scholars from many fields have discussed the role of fashion in feminist movements each with their own emphasis, and though there has been an increase in interdisciplinary research, material culture analysis of clothing items has not been explored. Described by Lou Taylor as the Great Divide, the differences between university and museum curatorial research have created rifts between students and scholars of fashion history, design, and collections and that of cultural studies, sociology and social anthropology.¹

Early campaigns for the equality of women began in the late eighteenth century as the social and economic status of European women was changing due to industrialization. Men and women had previously shared the responsibility of income producing work, but industrial capitalism's necessity for labor drew men from the home to public workspaces. Married, bourgeois women were especially impacted in the beginning, as they found themselves without incentive to work outside of the home due to the monetary success of their husbands, and sometimes within the home, if they

¹ Lou Taylor, "Fashion and Dress History: Theoretical and Methodological Approaches," in *The Handbook of Fashion Studies*, edited by Sandy Black, et al. (London, New York, UK, USA: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 24.

had several servants.² Simultaneously in both Europe and the United States, dress reform movements with the intention of improving women's clothing occurred, drawing support from men and women with various motivations.³ Though men are a part of the fashion supply chain of manufacturing, retailing, marketing, and designing, fashion is a "feminized industry", and therefore a feminist issue.⁴ For as long as women have been subjected to restrictive social constructs, they have also suggested dress reform styles to balance the detrimental effects of fashion. The idea of functional fashion became of interest in the mid-nineteenth century and continued through the twentieth century.⁵

One of the fundamental principles of early twentieth-century feminism was the restructuring of society where women could be free to do as they pleased according to their talents and desires, and not gender.⁶ American women who have tried to remove themselves from a traditional female role through social movements have signaled their beliefs through a change in dress, and consequently have been labeled as divergent in fashion choices and opinions.⁷ Fashion has long been an indication of a woman's behavior within her social context. Throughout history, women who follow fashion show they are willing to commit time, energy, and money to a groomed and

² Rosemarie Tong, *Feminist Thought* (Colorado: Westview Press, 2009), 13.

³ Patricia A. Cunningham, *Reforming Women's Fashion, 1850-1920*, (Kent and London: The Kent State University Press, 2003), 3.

⁴ Angela McRobbie, "Bridging the Gap: Feminism, Fashion and Consumption," *Feminist Review* no. 55 (1997), 84-85.

⁵ Rachel Anne Standish, "What is Modish is Doomed: Fashion and American Feminism from the 1910s to the Early 1930s," PhD dissertation, University of Southern California, 2000, 1.

⁶ *Ibid*, 30.

⁷ *Ibid*, 43.

traditional appearance, which often implies she is willing to give up her own desires in order to participate in the “supportive female role”.⁸ Because clothing has played such an integral role in defining gender, women who chose not to act like “ladies” chose to dress in more masculine garments, and uncorseted styles. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, one of the leaders of the American women’s suffrage movement, believed that women should be able to dress in practical clothing and was a supporter of the dress reform movement.⁹ Though many suffragists participated in the dress reform movement of the mid-nineteenth century, images of women from this period primarily indicate fashionable dress, due to dress reform’s anti-fashion connection that affected the suffrage movement. Dressing fashionably became the norm for women participating in the Equal Rights movement during the “First Wave” of feminism in the early 1900s, a time primarily focused on gaining women’s suffrage.¹⁰

After the Nineteenth Amendment was passed in 1920, women’s civic standing as electors was secured, and even though the suffrage movement has been described as “the greatest independent political movement of modern times,” women’s civic standing outside the role of electors was underdeveloped and unclear.¹¹ Nonetheless, young women were introduced to the idea of the “modern woman” and a columnar silhouette, which had first been introduced by Paul Poiret in 1908, became fashionable

⁸ Ibid, 44.

⁹ Cheryl Schmidt, "Manuscript Collections: The Papers of Amelia Jenks Bloomer and Dexter Bloomer," *The Annals of Iowa* 45 (1979): 137, accessed on February 23, 2018. <http://ir.uiowa.edu/annals-of-iowa/vol45/iss2/5>.

¹⁰ Ibid, 30.

¹¹ Gretchen Ritter, "Gender and Citizenship after the Nineteenth Amendment," *Polity* 32, no. 3 (2000): 346, accessed December 5, 2017. doi:10.2307/3235356.

for many young women, but not to all. These modern, uncorseted styles gave participants of the women's rights movement hope that American women were being liberated in both society and from unnatural silhouettes, while conservative women continued to wear modest, corseted styles. Though many writers asserted that women had gained equality to men, more conservative authors warned society of the liberated woman's deteriorating morality and familial relations. Unfortunately for supporters of 1920s uncorseted fashions, the 1930s reintroduced constricting undergarments needed to shape the body under evening dresses made of bias-cut fabrics that created sensual and form fitting looks.¹² Skirts and dresses were fashionable garments for women, and up until this time "trousers" were only introduced as a style of dress reform and active wear.¹³ Though the 1930s silhouette was more restrictive in terms of dress than the previous decade, beach pajamas, palazzo pants, and loungewear-style pajama sets gained support, and pants were first generally accepted introduction of pants in women's wear.

As World War II began, women involved in the women's rights movement focused on patriotism. Women's roles changed as men were deployed to war, and laborers were needed. The tailored skirt suit was a popular wardrobe fixture for American women at this time, while cut off from Nazi-occupied France, silhouettes did not significantly change. As men returned from war in the mid-1940s, women's jobs quickly ended. In an effort to reintroduce femininity after a time of

¹² Jessica Glasscock, "Twentieth-Century Silhouette and Support", *The Costume Institute and The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, October 2004, accessed October 20, 2017. https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/20sil/hd_20sil.html.

¹³ Cunningham, *Reforming Women's Fashion*, 204.

militarization, Christian Dior introduced “The New Look” in 1947, a look defined by sloped shoulders, defined bust, constricted waist, and padded hips.¹⁴ Dior’s use of an unnatural and constricting silhouette was an attempt to define what roles women should play during a time of transitioning from the workplace back to the home. Women in support of equal rights may have worn fashionable garments featuring the “New Look” silhouette, but others wore blouses with trousers during the late 1940s and early 1950s. Postwar America was a transitional period for the women’s rights movement, and though it was not a time of widespread action, conservative ideology was being challenged and discussed during a time of masculine dominance.¹⁵

Throughout the “Second Wave” of feminism culminating in the 1960s and 70s, some feminists agreed it was necessary to reject feminine fashion and adopt a masculine style of dress, while others argued that the adoption of a natural appearance would help women regain control over their fashion choices.¹⁶ In 1968, the “No More Miss America!” protest took place in Atlantic City. Organizers of the protest asked women to bring confining garments, accessories, and other items they owned, such as bras, girdles, curlers, false eyelashes, wigs, and magazines like *Cosmopolitan* and *Ladies Home Journal* to throw into the “Freedom Trash Can”. Though this movement has been recognized as the origin of the bra-burning myth, these items were never actually set on fire. The protest is a reminder of the anger and intention of women

¹⁴ Glasscock, “Twentieth-Century Silhouette and Support,” *The Costume Institute and The Metropolitan Museum of Art*.

¹⁵ Remy G. Saisselin, “From Baudelaire to Christian Dior: The Poetics of Fashion,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 18, no. 1 (1959): 113, accessed on February 04, 2018. doi:10.2307/427727.

¹⁶ Petra Mosmann, “A Feminist Fashion Icon: Germaine Greer’s Paisley Coat,” *Australian Feminist Studies* 31, no. 87 (2016): 79.

throughout this time.¹⁷ While feminist literature points to clearly defined roles through clothing and conformity, it is necessary to include scholarly work by fashion historians to gain a greater perspective of corresponding styles to these women's movements.

“Third Wave” feminism, beginning in the 1990s, tried to repair the divide between varying feminist ideologies by creating a common enemy— a societal obsession with the perfect physical image—in a time where women had more power and professional success than ever before.¹⁸ The public's obsession with the “supermodel” created an unrealistic image of a woman's natural silhouette. Subcultures became the norm with the continuation of Punk styles, and the introduction of the Grunge look. Women used these looks along with tattooing and piercings to create their authentic style.

While feminist literature articulates the connection between clothing and feminism, there is a lack of material culture analysis to support the connection. Material culture analysis, in this case, uses artifacts including photographs, garments, accessories, and advertisements to connect the ideology of feminism to its tangible and visible representation. Many costume histories describe the period in which a garment was popular, but offer little explanation about its corresponding political and social importance.¹⁹ This study links histories of twentieth-century women's movements to correlating fashion changes resulting in an exhibition in order to bridge the gap

¹⁷ Linda Welters, “The Natural Look: American Style in the 1970s,” *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture* 12, no. 4 (2008): 499.

¹⁸ Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2009), 5.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 11.

between scholarly research from varying fields. Fleming's "Model of Material Culture Analysis" was used to draw conclusions from garments selected from the University of Rhode Island's Historic Textile and Costume Collection.²⁰ The exhibition features garments arranged in the following themes: late-nineteenth century dress reform movement, first, second, and third wave feminist movements. Though the collection provided examples of textiles relevant to twentieth-century fashion and its feminist movements, it lacks diversity. The collection from which the exhibition is drawn focuses on white women's fashion and thus is not representative of African American women and other ethnic groups. As with historical research in general, the researcher's perspective influences the interpretation. These two factors had an impact on the selections of garments for the exhibition.

²⁰ E. McClung Fleming, "Artifact Study: A Proposed Model," *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 9 (1974), 156, accessed August 11, 2017. <http://jnsilva.ludicum.org/Marta2.pdf>.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following literature review was compiled using a variety of anthologies, textbooks, exhibition label text, and peer-reviewed journal articles in relation to feminism, fashion, and their histories. The research is not exhaustive, which would be beyond the scope of the thesis. This literature review is organized into eight sections: Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Thought, Dress Reform, First Wave Feminism: 1850-1920s, Intermediate Years: 1930s-1950s, Second Wave Feminism: 1960s-1970s, The 1980s, and Third Wave Feminism: 1990s.

Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Thought

On August 26, 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment was added to the constitution, an amendment that guarantees women the right to vote. Considered the ultimate victory for the women's rights movement of the time, it was neither the beginning nor the end of a continuous fight for the equality of women. About two-hundred years earlier, sentiments towards equality began to appear in Europe as works such as *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* were published, drawing attention to inequality after industrialization and biased literary works. Published essays by John Stuart Mill such as *The Subjection of Women* in 1869, continued to question the "legal subordination of one sex to the other".²¹ Simultaneously in both Europe and the

²¹ John Stuart Mill, "The Subjection of Women", in Mary Wollstonecraft: *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, John Stuart Mill: *The Subjection of Women*, ed.

United States, dress reform movements with the intention of improving women's clothing occurred, drawing support from men and women with differing motivations. At that time, women's fashions included the use of multiple undergarments including corsets, chemises, corset covers, cage crinoline, and layers of petticoats. Women had difficulty walking, sitting, and completing daily tasks due to the number of undergarments worn. Corsets were also criticized for potential health concerns.

Mary Wollstonecraft's campaign for women's equal education began in the late eighteenth century as the social and economic status of European women was changing due to industrialization. Men and women had previously shared the responsibility of income producing work, but industrial capitalism's necessity for laborers and clerical management drew men from the home to public workspaces. Due to the financial success of their husbands, many women who had shared income responsibilities no longer needed to work.²² Wollstonecraft's best-known work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, was published in 1792. In her dedicatory letter to M. Talleyrand-Préigord, she argues for this "simple principle": "...if she be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop the progress of knowledge and virtue; for truth must be common to all, or it will be inefficacious with respect to its influence on general practice."²³

Mary Warnock (London and Vermont: J.M. Dent Ltd and Charles E. Tuttle Co., Inc., 1985), 1.

²² Tong, *Feminist Thought*, 13.

²³ Mary Wollstonecraft, "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman", in *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, John Stuart Mill: The Subjection of Women*, ed. Mary Warnock (London and Vermont: J.M. Dent Ltd and Charles E. Tuttle Co., Inc., 1985), 10.

In *Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft compares privileged women to the “feathered race”, birds that are confined to cages with nothing to do other than devoting time and effort into making themselves look attractive and admiring their own appearance.²⁴ The appearance of women, their attractiveness and fashionable dress, have long been an indication of wealth and social status. Literature of the time continued the unwavering importance of a woman’s appearance as her virtue and future success. In her opinion, the majority of writers who had written about female education and manners, “from Rousseau to Dr. Gregory”, have presented women as “more artificial, weak characters” than they would be in actuality, and thus creates an image of women as “useless members of society” perpetuated by women’s expected obsession with finery and fashionability.²⁵ In *Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft discusses *Emile*, written by Jean Jacques Rousseau, and endorses education for the male character, Emile, but believes the female character, Sophia, should be provided the same education, one that develops rational and moral capacities.²⁶ Wollstonecraft argues that if women were not confined by the duties of their home, caring for her children, and the time-consuming practice of being fashionable, then they would have more time to be educated and indulge in “personhood”— being a rational agent whose dignity consists of a capacity for self-determination.²⁷ An example of Wollstonecraft’s opinions on the skill of needle work and subject of dress is described in this excerpt from *Rights of Woman*:

²⁴ Tong, *Feminist Thought*, 13.

²⁵ Wollstonecraft, “A Vindication of the Rights of Women,” 26.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 29.

²⁷ Tong, *Feminist Thought*, 16.

From the same source flows an opinion that young girls ought to dedicate great part of their time to needle work; yet, this employment contracts their faculties more than any other that could have been chosen for them, by confining their thoughts to their persons. Men order their clothes to be made, and have done with the subject; women make their own clothes, necessary or ornamental, and are continually talking about them; and their thoughts follow their hands. It is not indeed the making of necessaries that weakens the mind; but the frippery of dress. Gardening, experimental philosophy, and literature, would afford them subjects to think of, and matter for conversation, that in some degree would exercise their understandings. The conversation of French women, who are not so rigidly nailed to their chairs, to twist lappets, and knot ribbands, is frequently superficial; but, I contend, that it is not half so insipid as that of those English women, whose time is spent in making caps, bonnets, and the whole mischief of trimmings, not to mention shopping, bargain-hunting, etc. etc.: and it is the decent, prudent women, who are most degraded by these practices; for their motive is simply vanity.²⁸

Wollstonecraft believed that too much of a woman's time was wasted on fashion for herself and her family. Essential items that a woman may need to spend time creating or repairing was an acceptable use of time, as explained by Wollstonecraft, but frivolous and conspicuous fashions prevented women from developing hobbies such as "gardening, experimental philosophy, and literature" that exercised their minds and understanding.

Though Wollstonecraft did not believe that well-educated women needed to be financially independent or politically active, she asserted that an educated woman would be a "major contributor to society's welfare".²⁹ A well-educated and self-determined woman is one who does not allow herself to be treated only as a physical representation of her husband's wealth or "a toy of man", but rather a woman who assumes responsibility for being treated as a complete human being.

²⁸ Wollstonecraft, "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman," 83.

²⁹ Ibid, 14.

Almost one hundred years later, an essay by John Stuart Mill was published in 1869, titled *The Subjection of Women*. Similar to Wollstonecraft, Mill celebrated rationality, but instead of focusing on women's education, compared to that of a man's, he used stories of exceptional women to help strengthen his claim that gender differences were not absolute. The average woman's inability to do something the average man can do does not justify barring all women from participating in that particular thing and even if all women are worse than all men at something, that does not justify forbidding them from it.³⁰ Mill argued that intellectual achievement gaps between the sexes were the result of men's more thorough education and privileged social status. Unlike Wollstonecraft, Mill focused on the qualities of women that are uniquely feminine instead of trying to make women appear more like men. Maybe most importantly, Mill believed in women's suffrage, believing that when citizens vote, they feel obligated to cast their ballots in a way that benefits all of society and not just themselves and their loved ones.³¹

Mill's opinion on women's fashionability, some of which is discussed in the following excerpt, uses language similar to Wollstonecraft's:

To look only at the outward side of the subject: the great and continual exercise of thought which all women who attach any value to dressing well (I do not mean expensively, but with taste, and perception of natural and of artificial convenance) must bestow upon their own dress, perhaps also upon that of their daughters, would alone go a great way towards achieving respectable results in art, or science, or literature, and does actually exhaust much of the time and mental power they might have to spare for either.³²

³⁰ Mill, "The Subjection of Women," 243-244.

³¹ Ibid, 266-294.

³² Mill, "The Subjection of Women," 290.

He explains that the thoughts which go along with dressing well could instead be used to gain knowledge in “art, or science, or literature”. Like Wollstonecraft, Mills believed fashionable dress and the majority of aesthetic concerns women focus on take away from the time women could use in developing their own sense of self. While Wollstonecraft blames wealthy, bourgeois women for their participation in fashion, Mills blames society’s expectations of women in general.³³

Neither author denounces dressing fashionably altogether in response to their observations, but rather, to dress less conspicuously, and therefore less cogitation on dressing and fashion. Many women and men had similar opinions on fashion that were becoming more publicized in the mid-nineteenth century as dress reform movements gained momentum.

Dress Reform

Documentation and publicity concerning the dress reform movement began to appear in the mid-nineteenth century. Women of differing political ideologies, religious beliefs, and social status were united by their discontent with fashionable gowns and preference for trousers worn beneath shortened dresses.³⁴ Participants and supporters of the movement were also connected by their rejection of fashion and its physically and mentally oppressive characteristics. Fashionable silhouettes were not derived from natural body shapes, but rather physical representations of “progressive”

³³ Ibid, 232.

³⁴ Gale V. Fischer, ““Pantalets” and “Turkish Trowsers””: Designing Freedom in the Mid-Nineteenth-Century United States,” *Feminist Studies* 23, no. 1 (1997): 111, accessed February 13, 2018. doi:10.2307/3178301.

social systems through corsetry, hoop skirts, petticoats, and other figure-shaping undergarments.³⁵ No matter their social status, women participated in wearing the latest fashions, particularly in the public realm. Involvement in the current fashions was socially important due to the merit connected to one's beauty and fashionability.³⁶

Women's dress at the beginning of the nineteenth century was characterized by an "Empire" waistline, an elevated waistline just below the breasts. This waistline was inspired by Neoclassicism, influenced by statuary of ancient Greece and Rome and the rediscovery of Pompeii and Herculaneum, whose popularity spread through Europe and America. Light-weight cotton fabrics were constructed into columnar silhouettes that drew up and supported the breasts while leaving the lower portion of the body without constricting undergarments, an example of which can be seen in figure 1. This silhouette seems to be the least confining for women of those worn in the nineteenth century. As the century moved forward, silhouettes became less natural and involved more undergarments for shaping. A decade later, "Empire" waisted gowns remained popular with the addition of heavier silk fabrics and stays—rods of baleen, wood, metal, pasteboard, or pack thread that were covered in fabric and added to the interiors of garments to help shape a women's body.³⁷ From 1810 to 1820, the waistline steadily dropped until it reached just above the natural waistline around 1830. At that time, the silhouette had become a triangular top above a bell-shaped skirt that showed a woman's ankles. Skirts were supported by corded or stiffened

³⁵ Cunningham, *Reforming Women's Fashion*, 1.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 3.

³⁷ Jessica Glasscock, "Nineteenth-Century Silhouette and Support," *The Costume Institute, The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, October 2014, accessed on October 16, 2017. https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/19sil/hd_19sil.htm.



FIGURE 1. “Empire style” unstructured muslin gown, ca. 1800. From *The Victoria and Albert Museum*. Accession Number: 444-1888.

petticoats layered with underskirts to provide fullness. Underpinnings and stays within the bodice were used to provide pressure on the waist and push the bosom upwards. Sleeve supports of down or cotton fabric, shaped with whalebone, created the leg o’ mutton sleeve popular for the time, also referred to as gigot sleeves.³⁸ An example of an 1830s silhouette can be seen in figure 2. In comparison to the empire-style dress from the early-nineteenth century, the sleeves alone made it much more difficult for movement. Large sleeves became smaller throughout the 1840s as the silhouette’s focus moved from the upper to lower body. The triangular shaped bodice

³⁸ Ibid.



FIGURE 2. *Women's dress featuring a triangular bodice, leg o'mutton (gigot) sleeves, and a bell-shaped skirt, 1831-1835. From The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Accession Number: 2017.70.*

with sloped shoulders was still present in the 1850s silhouette, but skirts became wider and reached the floor.³⁹

Mid-nineteenth-century fashionable dress was influenced heavily by Europe, and by designers such as Charles Frederick Worth. In 1852, Napoleon III helped restore Paris, France to an imperial capital by initiating changes to modernize and invigorate the French economy. Luxury goods, such as textiles and fashionable dress, reached demand levels not seen since before the French Revolution, which lasted from 1789 to 1799. After marrying Napoleon III in 1853, Empress Eugénie influenced

³⁹ Ibid.

fashion at court, throughout Europe, and America.⁴⁰ Figure 3 shows Empress Eugénie as depicted by Franz Xaver Winterhalter in 1854. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art* describes the painting as showing “the empress in a Second Empire adaptation of an eighteenth-century gown. Her interest in the previous century, especially her fascination with Marie Antoinette, queen of France from 1774 to 1793, is well documented.”⁴¹

“Trickle-down theory” of fashion was commonplace, moving from Eugénie’s fashionable dress, to the court, to wealthy women, the middle class, and downward. Wealthy women could travel directly to Paris or send a representative to a designer’s couture house, or purchase items from a department store that carried Parisian current fashions by visiting a dressmaker or purchasing fabric to construct outfits at home. Numerous magazines presented the latest fashions through illustrations and fashion plates such as *Godey’s Lady’s Book* (1830-98), *Harper’s Bazaar* (1867-present), and *Vogue* (1892-present). Empress Eugénie’s tastes and passion for Marie Antoinette influenced fashion, especially in the 1860s, as the emphasis on a narrow waist with an expanded skirt occurred simultaneously with the transition from the use of multiple petticoats to crinolines, a frame worn underneath women’s dresses to give it shape. Cage crinolines were made of whalebone, cane, or steel, and covered by cloth. The gown shown in figure 4 is an example of the silhouette and expanded skirt associated

⁴⁰ Jessica Krick, “Charles Fredrick Worth (1825-1895 and the House of Worth,” *The Costume Institute, The Metropolitan Museum of Art*. October 2004, accessed on January 4, 2018.

⁴¹ “The Empress Eugénie (Eugénie de Montijo, 1826-1920, Condesa de Teba)”, Collection Records, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, accessed on January 4, 2018. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/437942>.



FIGURE 3. *The Empress Eugénie as depicted by Franz Xaver Winterhalter, 1854. From The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Accession Number: 1978.403.*

with crinolines on the 1860s and is reminiscent of the gown Empress Eugénie is depicted wearing in figure 3, dated 1854. These expanded skirts reflect the panniers popularized by Marie Antoinette and her court. Figure 5 is an example of the type of crinoline that would accompany the gown. A shift to a bustled silhouette had occurred by 1870, which was supported by back-heavy petticoats or crinolines that had been modified for the new silhouette. Through the 1870s, the bustle moved downward and almost disappeared from gowns completely before making an extreme comeback in the early 1880s, where the bustle appeared as a ninety-degree angle on the back of women's dresses, shown in figure 6. These bustles were supported by gathered fabrics, padded inserts, and adapted crinolines. Bustled skirts were combined with completely corseted bodices and underpinnings to create an hourglass shape. The bustle completely dropped off by the 1890s, when a trumpet shaped skirt became popular. Leg o' mutton sleeves were reintroduced to the silhouette, while bodice shape moved towards the pigeon-breasted, or monobosom.

Fashionable dress was constantly evolving, especially through silhouette changes and stylistic details. As discussed in eighteenth and nineteenth-century thought, frequent silhouette changes, time-consuming dressing practices, and the general time spent on the topic of fashionable dress throughout a woman's day, took away from a woman's time to gain valuable knowledge and hobbies. Not only did fashion influence a woman's mentality and vision of herself, but also physically. These unnatural silhouettes made movement more difficult for fashionable women as the century went on.



FIGURE 4. *Woman's dress featuring a triangular bodice, narrow waist, and full skirt, 1860-65. From The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Accession Number: C.I. 69.33.4 a-d.*



FIGURE 5. *Cage crinoline of metal and cotton, ca. 1862. From The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Accession Number: 1985.20.2.*



FIGURE 6. *Dinner dress with a profound bustle, 1884-1886. From The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Accession Number: C.I.63.23.3 a, b.*

Simultaneously from the mid-nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century, dress reformers were gaining support and attention. Some medical professionals as well as dress reformers publicized their concern for corsetry. The Healthy and Artistic Dress Union's quarterly publication, *Dress Review*, asked readers to try wearing a breast girdle instead of a corset.⁴² Given the appealing advertisements for corsetry and its profitable business, mainstream fashion did not acknowledge dress reformers' pleas. As dress reformers re-focused on finding alternatives to the long, full skirts worn daily, opposition to the movement focused on women's appropriation

⁴² Valerie Mendes and Amy de la Haye, *Fashion since 1900*, (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2010), 13.

of male dress, though many reformers searched for bifurcated clothing—a term for pants—that would be associated less with men’s clothing.⁴³ A trouser-like ensemble would provide practicality for daily activities and modesty. A shortened dress with matching trousers, either cut straight or gathered at the ankle, became popular for women associated with the dress reform movement.⁴⁴ Reformers, in general, did not believe dressing in bifurcated clothing would give them the freedom and power men had, but rather, practical clothing would allow for active participation in all areas of life and society.⁴⁵ Though not all dress reformists were involved in the feminist movement, leaders of the dress reform movement such as Amelia Bloomer and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were directly tied to both movements.

On July 19, 1848, Amelia Bloomer and her husband, Dexter Bloomer, attended the Seneca Falls convention on women’s rights where Elizabeth Cady Stanton presented the “Women’s Declaration of Independence”.⁴⁶ During this convention, Amelia was undecided about her participation in the women’s movement due to her involvement in the temperance movement, and disagreement with some of the declarations. The same year, Amelia became an officer for the newly-formed Seneca Falls Ladies’ Temperance Society, whose society newspaper, *The Lily*, was formed on January 1, 1849. Originally, the newspaper was to be written and edited by several members, but the majority of work was completed by Amelia. In the summer of the same year, Elizabeth Cady Stanton suggested the addition of a column written by her

⁴³ Fischer, ""Pantalets" and "Turkish Trowsers",” *Feminist Studies*, 112.

⁴⁴ Cunningham, *Reforming Women’s Fashion*, 3.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 31.

⁴⁶ Schmidt, "Manuscript Collections: The Papers of Amelia Jenks Bloomer and Dexter Bloomer," *The Annuals of Iowa*, 137.

under the name “Sunflower”. The column began as temperance-oriented, but gradually shifted to women’s rights topics. Frances Gage and Mary C. Vaughan, feminist thinkers, and others joined the publication and Amelia’s viewpoint merged with her contributors.⁴⁷ In 1851, Elizabeth Smith Miller, Mrs. Stanton’s cousin, appeared wearing a short skirt with Turkish trousers that she had designed and made. As Mrs. Stanton observed her cousin walk up and down the stairs with ease, with both her child and a candle at hand, she thought about reform. Amelia and Mrs. Stanton began wearing the outfit, and Amelia wrote about it in *The Lily*, as well as included photos of herself in the outfit.⁴⁸ This consequently connected Amelia and the trouser outfit, which resulted in the trousers being referred to as “Bloomers”. A photo of the bloomer ensemble can be seen in figure 7.

Trouser-like pants worn with a shortened skirt developed uniformity of dress for members of the dress reform movement. This ensemble was recognizable in public, making participants noticeable, representative of anti-fashion, and an indicator of their shared beliefs.⁴⁹ Opposition voiced many opinions including that women wearing trouser-like ensembles were unfashionable, immoral, and that somehow by wearing trousers, would become more like men.⁵⁰ Cartoons, such as the one in figure 8, exemplified society’s worst fears about dress reform. Dress reformers argued that trousers could be modified to women’s needs and were not fundamentally male

⁴⁷ Ibid, 37.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 38.

⁴⁹ Cunningham, *Reforming Women’s Fashion*, 35.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 42.



FIGURE 7. "The Bloomer Costume." N. Currier, 1851. Lithograph. From The University of Rhode Island Historic Textile and Costume Collection.



FIGURE 8. *Cartoon depicting women acting like men while wearing trouser and skirt ensembles. From Harper's New Monthly Magazine 3, August 1851.*

garments, but much of the printed material for mass circulation discussed the idea of women becoming manlier if they wore bifurcated pants.⁵¹ Images of cigar-smoking, trouser-wearing women were labeled as feminists and accused of being masculine, which in turn started the phrase “ugly feminists”. These attacks led to the decline of trouser ensembles due to their association with the feminist movement. Most dress reformers ditched the trouser ensemble by the 1860s and disassociated themselves with the feminist movement by creating smaller groups with differing agendas and

⁵¹ Fischer, ““Pantalets” and “Turkish Trowsers”,” *Feminist Studies*, 113.

costumes.⁵² Elizabeth Cady Stanton's cousin, reformer Gerrit Smith, was angered by women's movement leaders who refused to wear the trouser ensemble after its negative association to the movement, comparing American fashion to Chinese foot binding traditions. It is important to point out that leaders who dressed fashionably were more inclined to reach middle-class women. In response, Mrs. Stanton pointed out her appreciation of public opinion and ridicule. Mrs. Stanton "never wondered" why "Chinese women allow their daughters' feet to be encased in iron shoes", because she realized people who refuse "custom" received retaliation.⁵³

Though early theorists, dress reformers, and feminists agreed that American fashion was restricting women physically and mentally, the negative connotations associated with women wearing trousers was too overwhelming for nineteenth-century reformists and feminists to overcome. Regardless of intention, the connection between the wearing of trousers and a progressive future for women's fashion was too much for the general public, and men to bear. Trousers represented social change within the presence of a growing feminist movement. Though not directly related through its participants, both dress reformists and feminists confronted society's standards, giving power to a world of lessened gender distinctions.

⁵² Amy Kesselman, "The "Freedom Suit": Feminism and Dress Reform in the United States, 1848-1875," *Gender and Society* 5, no. 4 (1991): 500, accessed January 4, 2018. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/190097>.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 129.

First Wave Feminism: 1850s-1920s

Women's effort to gain the right to vote in the United States began in 1848 and ended with victory in 1920.⁵⁴ In 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton along with Lucretia Mott produced the "Woman's Declaration of Independence", also known as the Declaration of Sentiments, at the women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York.⁵⁵ From that moment on, women's rights became a topic that was often discussed with quiet support or with loud disapproval. As women gained the right to vote and more employment opportunities, they also saw society's judgement, particularly against their physical appearance, familial involvement, and morality.

As of the 1820s and 30s, all white men, regardless of their wealth or property, were allowed to vote. Reform groups concerning temperance, religion, moral-reform, and anti-slavery were concurrently forming, heavily involving women. These causes, as well as the questioning of "True Womanhood", a devout, submissive wife and mother who cared tirelessly for her family, contributed to new thoughts about what a woman's role was at home and as a citizen.⁵⁶ In 1848, a convention was held in Seneca Falls, New York to examine issues with women's rights. It was determined by the majority that American women were self-determining individuals who deserved independent political identities. The Declaration of Sentiments proclaimed, "that all men and women are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain

⁵⁴ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Matilda Joslyn Gage, *History of Woman's Suffrage, Volume 5 1900-1920*. Edited by Ida Husted Harper. AYER Company, Publishers, Inc. (Salem, New Hampshire: 1985).

⁵⁵ Tong, *Feminist Thought*, 21.

⁵⁶ Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (1966): 152, accessed on February 11, 2018. doi:10.2307/2711179.

inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”⁵⁷ The women’s rights movement gained support through the 1850s, but the Civil War drew many supporters’ attention away from women’s rights and towards the abolishment of slavery. Leaders of the movement, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, believed the abolishment of slavery was a chance to gain universal suffrage.⁵⁸ In 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment was ratified to extend the Constitution’s protection to all citizens, defining citizens as “male”. This caused Stanton and Anthony to refuse support of the projected Fifteenth Amendment and to create the National Woman Suffrage Association (later National American Woman Suffrage Association, NAWSA), which fought for a universal-suffrage amendment to the Constitution.⁵⁹ In 1870, the Fifteenth Amendment was ratified and guaranteed black men the right to vote. Some women’s rights movement members believed it was unfair to tie the less popular campaign for women’s suffrage to the Fifteenth Amendment, ultimately forming the American Woman Suffrage Association.

As the women’s rights movement gave enormous effort towards women’s suffrage, members were asked to wear their “smartest clothes”.⁶⁰ Sylvia Pankhurst, an English campaigner for the suffragist movement, once said “many suffragists spend

⁵⁷ “Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions: Woman’s Rights Convention, Held at Seneca Falls, 19-20 July 1848,” *The Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony Papers Project at Rutgers University*, accessed January 12, 2018.

<http://ecssba.rutgers.edu/docs/seneca.html>.

⁵⁸ Tong, *Feminist Thought*, 21.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 23.

⁶⁰ Cally Blackman, “How the Suffragettes Used Fashion to Further the Cause,” *The Guardian*, October 8, 2015, accessed August 20, 2017.

<https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2015/oct/08/suffragette-style-movement-embraced-fashion-branding>.

more money on clothes than they can comfortably afford, rather than run the risk of being considered *outré*, and doing harm to the cause”.⁶¹ Feminist leaders and speakers found that by wearing fashionable clothing, they were able to reach wider audiences. Dress reform was seen as anti-fashion, which in-turn isolated feminists from the general public and gave their opposition more talking points.

From 1900 to 1914 the “Edwardian Era”, also known as “The Age of Opulence”, was a time of luxurious fashion for women. Fashion plates depicted dress influenced by Queen Alexandra, after Edward VII became King. Britain and France both contributed to fashionable dress of the time. Silhouettes at the turn of the century were similar to that of the 1890s and featured an S-shaped silhouette, an example of which can be observed in figure 9. To create this shape a woman’s chest and torso were pushed forward by her corset while her backside protruded outward. Referred to as a monobosom, the bodices of this time did not distinguish each breast but rather, created a single billowing front. High collars were fashionable and influenced by military styles while sleeves became more slender. Trumpet-shaped skirts trailed behind a woman as she walked. Women wore large, wide-brimmed hats decorated with feathers or flowers. Dresses were embellished with lace, ribbons, embroidery, beads, and other decoration.⁶² As women sought the right to vote, some writers in the 1890s and early 1900s introduced the public to the “New Woman”.

⁶¹ Blackman, “How the Suffragettes Used Fashion to Further the Cause,” *The Guardian*.

⁶² Elizabeth Ewing, *History of Twentieth Century Fashion*, (Lanham, Maryland: Barnes & Noble Books, 1992): 6.



FIGURE 9. *Silk, S-shape silhouette dress with open-work and beading details, high collar, and trumpet shaped skirt, 1904. From The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Accession Number: C.1.40.106.41a, b.*

The *Library of Congress*'s exhibition titled "The Gibson Girl's America: Drawings by Charles Dana Gibson", describes America's "New Woman" as "an independent and often well-educated, young woman poised to enjoy a more visible and active role in the public arena than women of preceding generations".⁶³ Though the "Gibson Girl"

⁶³ "The Gibson Girl as the "New Woman"," *The Gibson Girl's America: Drawings by Charles Dana Gibson*, Library of Congress, accessed January 13, 2018. <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/gibson-girls-america/>.



FIGURE 10. “*Picturesque America: Anywhere in the Mountains*” drawing by Charles Gibson, 1900. From *The Library of Congress* (005.00.00) [LC-DIG-cai-2a12817] <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2010716157/>.

did not normally associate herself with politics, Charles Gibson depicted the “New Woman” in many of his drawings during the early-twentieth century, an example of which can be seen in figure 10. Fashion connected with the “New Woman” consisted of a tailor-made that rivaled fashionable Edwardian dress. Tailor-mades were influenced by bicycling outfits, both were often symbols of the women’s suffrage movement.⁶⁴

Suffragists in the early-twentieth century were often photographed wearing Edwardian fashions and tailor-made suits. Fashionable suffragists helped membership grow, and new members could identify with the cause by wearing a small piece of jewelry of stone or enamel. A color scheme was developed in 1908 by Emmeline

⁶⁴ Ewing, *History of Twentieth Century Fashion*, 19.

Pethick-Lawrence, co-editor of the British magazine *Votes for Women*. The color scheme included purple for loyalty and dignity, white for purity, and green for hope. These colors were representative of the women's suffrage movement in both the United States and Britain. Purple, white, and green ribbons were sold to decorate hats, belts, and other accessories.⁶⁵ It became common for suffragists to wear white lingerie dresses with the tri-colored sash and decorated boater, or another fashionable hat. A black and white photograph of suffragists in fashionable dress and what would be tri-colored hats and sashes can be seen in figure 11, and an example of a tri-colored ribbon in figure 12.

As highly embellished Edwardian fashions grew less popular around 1908, one fashion designer took particular interest in “liberating” women from the S-shaped silhouette. In the 1910s, Paul Poiret was known as the “King of Fashion”.⁶⁶ Poiret helped to free women from petticoats and corsets, but he was not alone in his ideas of dress reform. Designers such as Mariano Fortuny also created uncorseted designs, but Poiret was most widely credited with this fashion style. Influenced by Greek and Oriental fashions, Poiret created fashions using straight lines and rectangular lengths of fabric to create long, column-like silhouettes that were draped and gathered to create fluid lines. From 1906 to 1911, he produced two limited-edition albums, Paul

⁶⁵ Blackman, “How the Suffragettes Used Fashion to Further the Cause,” *The Guardian*.

⁶⁶ Harold Koda and Andrew Bolton, “Paul Poiret (1879-1944),” *The Costume Institute at The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, September 2008, accessed August 20, 2017. https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/poir/hd_poir.htm.



FIGURE 11. *Suffragists marching in a protest wearing fashionable dresses and tri-colored hats, ca. early-twentieth century. From The Library of Congress.*



FIGURE 12. *“VOTES FOR WOMEN” ribbon in representative colors of the women’s movement. From the Museum of London. Image number: 001247.*

Iribe's *Les robes de Paul Poiret* and George Lepape's *Les choses de Paul Poiret*.⁶⁷ A drawing from *Les robes de Paul Poiret* is shown in figure 13. Interested in connecting art and fashion in a new way, these albums used a stenciling technique known as *pochoir*, which produced areas of saturated color. Women in these albums wore Poiret's designs in eclectic environments. Between 1910 and 1913, Poiret's "hobble skirt", "lampshade" tunic, and "harem" pantaloons were introduced and publicized. Figure 14 is an example of his 1910 hobble skirt design. Though Poiret's designs required less restrictive undergarments and followed a more natural body shape, the majority of suffragists continued to wear mainstream fashion in order to draw less attention to their physical appearance.⁶⁸



FIGURE 13. *Fashion Designs by Paul Poiret, 1908. Illustrated by Paul Iribe. Les Robes de Paul Poiret, p.17. From Wikimedia Commons.*

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Mendes and de la Haye, *Fashion since 1900*, 40.



FIGURE 14. *Example of Paul Poiret's hobble skirt design inspired by ancient Greece, ca. 1910. From Wikimedia Commons.*

The tango, a dance originating in South America, became popular in America around 1911 and was a sign of changing times and fashions. Poiret-inspired “slinky” dresses were fashionable equivalents to the new dance trend. After the tango, other dances including the Turkey Trot and Bunny Hug gained popularity in America

and then Europe.⁶⁹ Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Castle, well-known dancers and pictured in figure 15, were symbolic of changing mentalities throughout the Western world. Mrs. Castle sported a bobbed haircut underneath a turban, black-penciled eyes, drawn-in brows, and lipstick contributing to the “vamp” style as early as 1913. The introduction of popular dances, night clubs, and sultry feminine style amounted to the changing mood of progressive women that lasted through WWI and the roaring twenties “manners and modes”.⁷⁰



FIGURE 15. *A hands-free Tango step that the Castles originated; photograph from Mr. and Mrs. Castle’s 1914 bestseller Modern Dancing. From The Library of Congress.*

⁶⁹ Ewing, *History of Twentieth Century Fashion*, 77.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 78.

In 1914, World War I began and for the first year, fashionable styles remained similar to those of the previous four years. A notable change in skirt designs occurred in 1914 with a move from the narrow hobble style towards flared and bell-shaped designs with decorative tiers or pleats.⁷¹ Military styles began to be added in 1915. Burberry introduced trench coats, and Norfolk jackets became popular, previously worn by men on hunting trips. Jackets were cut to hip length with large belts tied at center-front. The color khaki was introduced and along with tailored skirt suits, gained entry into women's daily wear.⁷² As the war went on, labor shortages influenced clothing that required extensive care and dressing. From 1916 onward, "easy-to-wear" clothing became the focus of designers. A "jumper-blouse" was introduced, later shortened to "jumper" by 1919, a pull-over style top for women to wear with a skirt or suit. Usually made of cotton or silk, the jumper-blouse had no fastening, and instead of being tucked in, untucked fabric rested just below the hip. Sometimes worn with a sash, sailor collar, or belt, the jumper-blouse would become a staple of 1920s fashion.⁷³ At this time, Chanel launched her first couture collection that featured two-piece jersey costumes, capes, and coats, introducing jersey fabric to mainstream fashion, shown in figure 16. The outfits and fabric became very popular and inspired commercial manufacture. The introduction of easy-to-wear clothing and jersey fabrics in women's wear revealed how dress reformist values had been absorbed by fashion. Comfortable and practical styles allowed women to dance and move more freely, but the style was also necessary as women joined the workforce during WWI.

⁷¹ Mendes and de la Haye, *Fashion since 1900*, 48.

⁷² *Ibid*, 50.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 52.



FIGURE 16. "Costumes de Jersey" from Chanel's 1916 collection. From Wikipedia Commons.

The United States entered WWI in 1917, and as men joined the services, women entered the labor force which led to developments in workplace attire. Many women, including those participating in the suffragist movement, focused on patriotism and their new role in the work force. Young women needed practical clothing and adopted bifurcated garments such as “breeches for agricultural labor and loose cotton trousers, boilersuits and dungarees for factory work and in the mines.”⁷⁴ This caused undergarments to change, and though corsets were still worn, compressed paper was used for in-boning and buttons were used instead of metal fastenings. In 1916 the brassiere was introduced and had evolved from the bust bodice.⁷⁵

Concurrently, preceding WWI through 1917, magazines, particularly *Vogue*, used their power to “maintain the standards of morality and taste” that were being tested by the nouveau rich.⁷⁶ In the 1910s, *Vogue* gained attention from advertisers due to its position as “arbiter of taste” for the social elite in New York and other wealthy town across America, including Newport, Rhode Island.⁷⁷ *Vogue*’s fashion focus also shifted from general fashionable designs to the fashionability of social elite.⁷⁸ Most women could not afford gowns from Paris, but rather dresses influenced by Parisian designers. French designers had little distribution to U.S., and only the very wealthy could afford to buy directly from designers, which had been the case since the nineteenth century. Since Paris fashion held social value, social elite who

⁷⁴ Ibid, 54.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 55.

⁷⁶ Linda M. Scott, *Fresh Lipstick: Redressing Fashion and Feminism*, (Stuttgart, Germany: Macmillan, 2006): 128.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 130.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 131.

could participate fully in mainstream fashion were inherently more influential than women who could not. Their impact was fully visible when used to promote social causes to *Vogue*, such as the suffrage movement.⁷⁹ Mrs. Oliver Hazard Perry Belmont (Mrs. O.H.P. Belmont), formerly known as Alva Vanderbilt, was the leading contributor to the feminist and suffrage movement by 1910. Belmont's divorce from William Vanderbilt for adultery—a rare case among the elite—was well known by affluent women and suffragists.

Referred to as the “Bengal Tiger”, Belmont was an intimidating woman. She held meetings in her home to recruit socialite members for the suffrage movement, who were expected to “volunteer time, money, signatures, and influence” to the cause.⁸⁰ Alice Paul, known as the “iron-jawed angel” who saved the suffrage movement and obtained women's suffrage in the U.S., worked closely with Belmont, and previously with British suffragist Christabel Pankhurst.⁸¹ *Vogue* stated in its September 1910 issue, that British suffragists “are leaders in the social world, the petted daughters and wives of the rich, who have had since babyhood hosts of servants at their beck. Yet now, for the good of the ‘Cause,’ they are spending bodily strength, sacrificing reserve, in chalking pavements!”⁸² Alice Paul's feminist group, the Congressional Union, supported by Belmont's financial and social influence, matched NAWSA, the group formed by Stanton and Anthony that merged with Lucy Stone's. The power of *Vogue* combined with the popularization of feminism through the social

⁷⁹ Ibid, 134.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid, 135.

⁸² Ibid.

elite made feminism fashionable in itself, and therefore gave the movement the opportunity to connect women of all classes. Regardless of intention, this opportunity moved suffrage to the mainstream, gaining support from a diverse community of people.

World War I slowed the suffragists' campaign but also helped solidify their desire for, and entitlement to, equality. Women's work during the war helped prove that they were equally patriotic and deserving of citizenship as men. After its end in 1918, developments in women's mindsets and fashions continued to be considerable. The number of women workers persisted and grew as the newly independent young woman used her career, paycheck, and future job prospects to further her independence. This "new" woman could come from any social class and took many forms. On August 26, 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution was finally ratified. With the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment, many people acknowledged the development of a new societal structure. As described by Frederick Lewis Allen in *Only Yesterday*, in 1919 a wife "comes to breakfast in a suit, the skirt of which—rather tight at the ankles—hangs just six inches from the ground."⁸³ This wife's "hair is long, and the idea of a woman ever frequenting a barber shop would never occur to her".⁸⁴ These references to an exemplary wife in 1919, were challenged by young women known as "flappers". The term flapper was first connected to young working-class women, but later was associated with any young

⁸³ Frederick Lewis Allen, "I. Prelude: May, 1919," in *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920s*, (University of Virginia Library: American Studies Hypertext, 2001), 1. <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/allen/ch1.html>.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 1.

woman who challenged traditional social standards. Allen illustrates the new work-lives of women after the passing of the Nineteenth amendment in the chapter titled “The Revolution in Manners and Morals”:

And what were these "own lives" of theirs to be like? Well, for one thing, they could take jobs. Up to this time girls of the middle classes who had wanted to "do something" had been largely restricted to school- teaching, social-service work, nursing, stenography, and clerical work in business houses. But now they poured out of the schools and colleges into all manner of new occupations. They besieged the offices of publishers and advertisers; they went into tea-room management until there threatened to be more purveyors than consumers of chicken patties and cinnamon toast; they sold antiques, sold real estate, opened smart little shops, and finally invaded the department stores. In 1920 the department store was in the mind of the average college girl a rather bourgeois institution which employed "poor shop girls"; by the end of the decade college girls were standing in line for openings in the misses' sports- wear department and even selling behind the counter in the hope that some day fortune might smile upon them and make them buyers or stylists. Small-town girls who once would have been contented to stay in Sauk Center all their days were now borrowing from father to go to New York or Chicago to seek their fortunes-in Best's or Macy's or Marshall Field's. Married women who were encumbered with children and could not seek jobs consoled themselves with the thought that homemaking and child-rearing were really "professions," after all. No topic was so furiously discussed at luncheon tables from one end of the country to the other as the question whether the married woman should take a job, and whether the mother had a right to. And as for the unmarried woman, she no longer had to explain why she worked in a shop or an office; it was idleness, nowadays, that had to be defended.⁸⁵

New independence gave women the confidence to move toward a more “modern” look. Fashions that were introduced during WWI, such as bobbed hair, makeup, and tubular garments like the jumper-blouse, moved full-force into the 1920s along with

⁸⁵ Frederick Lewis Allen, “Chapter V. The Revolution in Manners and Morals,” in *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920s*, (University of Virginia Library: American Studies Hypertext, 2001), 2.
<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/allen/ch5.html>.

women's "equality". Young women frequented night clubs, drank alcohol, and smoked cigarettes. Allen points out that the attitude about young girls smoking and drinking varied throughout different areas of the country, but the majority felt it was "morally wrong" for young girls to smoke and drink alcohol.⁸⁶ Nonetheless, a boyish look was caused by many factors including the continued demands for equality with men after the passing of the nineteenth amendment, and the importance of youth. Poiret had entered WWI as a military tailor and reopened his couture house once he returned, but his headstrong ideas of modernity no longer fit into the changing view of the 1920s and his career did not recover. Madeleine Vionnet reopened her house in 1919 and produced bias-cut evening gowns. For the first time, fashion designers sent an inconsistent message. Hems were longer in 1923, almost to the ground, but in 1925 they rose up to the knees. Waistlines moved up and down garments, but throughout the 1920s, the ideal silhouette was "waistless, bustless, and hipless".⁸⁷ The cloche hat was extremely popular at this time, placed atop newly bobbed hair. Finally, feminists and dress reformers saw a silhouette that did not require women to restrict themselves to an unnatural shape with corsetry.

American film's influence over fashion began in the 1920s with silent films. Women aimed to look like their favorite actresses while visiting the cinema one to two times weekly, the foremost entertainment before television. Adrian Adolph Greenberg, known as Adrian, was a Hollywood designer for film stars in the 1920s and 30s. Greta Garbo, Joan Crawford, Clara Bow and many others were dressed by

⁸⁶ Ibid, 1.

⁸⁷ Ewing, *History of Twentieth Century Fashion*, 93.



FIGURE 17. *Clara Bow in a “flapper” outfit. From the film “Red Hair”, 1928.*

Adrian, and idols to women. Fashion magazines began to picture film stars and on-screen clothing. Clara Bow is shown in figure 17 in a jumper blouse and skirt, with bobbed hair, cloche hat, and wearing makeup from the movie “Red Hair”, in 1928.

The First Wave of feminism encompasses many changes for women and society in general that would influence the remainder of the century. While many people remained positive about the changing views of women and their role in society, there was still much opposition. Articles such as “Woman’s Encroachment on Men’s

Domain,” and “Evils of Woman’s Revolt Against the Old Standards” communicated dissatisfaction with society’s direction.⁸⁸ Nonetheless, women would continue to solve issues as new challenges arose, such as educating female voters, economic independence, and job discrimination. Feminist organizations provided support and persisted quietly over the next few decades, ultimately remaining active, and planning for the future.

Intermediate Years: 1930s-1950s

After the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment through the 1950s, the feminist movement was not largely discussed or written about in historical accounts. In the 1930s, as the Great Depression took hold of the United States, the fashionable silhouettes shifted, and body-shaping undergarments were reintroduced. World War II brought more women to the workforce and therefore the need for practical garments brought about change in women’s fashion. Returning soldiers from WWII displaced female workers who had taken their jobs while men were deployed overseas, resulting in women’s return to previous employment, home-making, or becoming jobless. The introduction of Christian Dior’s New Look in 1947 seemed to influence women’s fashionable dress and role in society as girdled silhouettes came back into fashion. Simultaneously, counter-cultures were developed and highly influenced by music genres, war, and general dissatisfaction with traditional norms.

⁸⁸ Estelle Freedman, "The New Woman: Changing Views of Women in the 1920s," *The Journal of American History* 61, no. 2 (1974): 376. Accessed October 16, 2017. www.jstor.org/stable/1903954.

As the United States suffered through a decade of financial crisis, the employment and freedom women had achieved after the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment was viewed less favorably than it once was. Many working women were asked, or forced, to leave their jobs to allow for more men to enter the workforce and/or help give emotional support to their families during a critical time.⁸⁹ The Depression spread worldwide and caused mass unemployment. French couturiers, dependent on exports to the United States, slashed prices and stopped producing labor-intensive textiles and garments that featured extensive embroidery, beadwork, and the like. There was growing competition from London and New York as ready-to-wear and mass-produced fashions gained momentum. Though French designers were still the most influential of the time, New York designers such as Valentina, Hattie Carnegie, Elizabeth Hawes, and milliner Lilly Daché were considered high-end American designers and created robust fashion businesses.⁹⁰

The tubular and figureless silhouette of the 1920s was replaced with a form-fitting shape that accentuated the feminine body. Belts were used to emphasize the natural waistline, while skirts gently flared, and hemlines dropped to their lowest point in a decade for evening wear. Bias-cut gowns, introduced by French designer Vionnet, were replaced by her expertly draped gowns influenced by classicism, an example is shown in figure 18. Brassieres, lightly boned corsets, and stretch undergarments were used to shape women's bodies. Elasticized rubber yarn, Lastex,

⁸⁹ Ibid, 380.

⁹⁰ Mendes and de la Haye, *Fashion since 1900*, 76-78.



FIGURE 18. *An example of French designer Madeleine Vionnet's bias-cut gown design, 1938. From The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Accession Number: 41.108.1.*

was introduced in 1930 and used to produce stretch undergarments and swimwear. Technical advancements such as the construction of sky scrapers influenced the long and thin silhouette of 1930s fashion. Lastex was developed and used in stretch undergarments. By connecting new technologies to fashion, it encouraged women to participate in new, modern looks. Many French designs of the 1930s seemed to require shaping undergarments while many American designers refused their use. American designers were also trying to break down the traditional fashion model by refusing French influence. Annemarie Strassel describes the changing mindset of American style:

Elizabeth Hawes published her best-selling first book, *Fashion Is Spinach* (1938), which played a crucial role in defining American style for a broader audience. More than just a "look," American style for Hawes was characterized by a resistance to conventional authorities in fashion. Steeped in the exigencies of the Great Depression, Hawes challenged the fundamental business model of custom couture and the mystique of Parisian fashions, or what she referred to as the "French legend." Random House sponsored an essay contest as a publicity stunt for the book, and the winning contestant wrote a response that suggested the radical scope of her premise: "Women of America unite ! You have nothing to lose but your clothes !... Let Elizabeth Hawes be our Marx".⁹¹

The Great Depression's unemployment and financial effect caused American designers and consumers to reevaluate the overall fashion business model.

At the same time, film stars were becoming more popular than ever and their fashion sense was extremely influential. Costume designers were promoted by their studios and included Adrian at MGM, Orry-Kelly at Warner Brothers, and Travis

⁹¹ Annemarie Strassel, "Designing Women: Feminist Methodologies in American Fashion," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 1/2 (2012): 35-59, accessed January 10, 2018. <http://www.jstor.org.uri.idm.oclc.org/stable/23611770>.

Banton, Walter Plunkett, and Edith Head at Paramount. These designers were creating costumes for individual characters and storylines but also began to generate new trends and endorse fashions.⁹² The white evening gown with ruffled sleeves produced by Adrian, shown in figure 19, for Joan Crawford's character in *Letty Lynton* (1932) was copied by department stores—Macy's alone sold 50,000 copies.⁹³ The design has been credited for influencing the fashionable shoulder pad of the 1930s. Many details and accessories from films were mass produced during this period.



FIGURE 19. *Joan Crawford's gown designed by Adrian for the 1932 film "Letty Lynton". From the film Letty Lynton, 1932.*

⁹² Mendes and de la Haye, *Fashion since 1900*, 88.

⁹³ Amy M. Spindler, "Bringing Hollywood Home," *The New York Times Magazine*, 1999, accessed March 10, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/10/24/magazine/bringing-hollywood-home.html>.

During the 1930s, women continued to try and develop their sense of self after gaining the right to vote and more independence as citizens. There were women who chose to follow mainstream fashion and others who chose not to follow fashionable dress, either of which could believe in feminist notions. During a time where women's place in society was not necessarily certain, many turned to small signifiers that left them feeling more confident and in control of their livelihood.

Bifurcated styles were introduced but not readily accepted in mainstream fashion. Beach pajamas, bifurcated pajama pants, and Hollywood fashions all indicated a shift towards bifurcated clothing, but they were limited to certain environments such as the seaside and in the home. Beach pajamas can be seen in figure 20. Actresses were able to dress in a more progressive manner than average women, because actresses were not associated with the stigma behind bifurcated garments and their dress reform roots. Perhaps the most notable actress associated with pants was Katherine Hepburn, who was hailed as being the "patron saint of the independent American female" in her 2003 *Los Angeles Times* eulogy written by Mary McNamara.⁹⁴ At a time when Sigmund Freud's theories of femininity, female masculinity, and female perversion alluded to women's desire to wear pants as "penis envy", Hepburn represented women's evolving mindset.⁹⁵ Similar to opposition of earlier dress reform movements, opposition to bifurcated garments in the 1930s

⁹⁴ Mary McNamara, "It Was Her Defining Role: Life," *The Los Angeles Times*, July 01, 2003.

⁹⁵ "Psychoanalytic Feminism," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, May 16, 2011. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-psychoanalysis/>.



FIGURE 20. *Women wearing beach pajamas while lawn bowling, ca. 1935. From Wikimedia Commons.*

continued to relate women's acceptance of bifurcated garments as being unreasonable and a physical representation of women's desire to take over men's power in society. Katherine Hepburn inspired women to dress in a more practical way, when women could be arrested if they wore pants in public for "masquerading as men." In a 1981 interview with Barbara Walters, Hepburn said, "I have not lived as a woman. I have lived as a man. I've just done what I damn well wanted to and I made enough money to support myself, and I ain't afraid of being alone."⁹⁶ An image from *Life Magazine* shows Hepburn in her favorite off-stage outfit, a man's suit, in figure 21.

⁹⁶ Marcie Bianco and Merryn Johns, "The Most Daring Thing About Katherine Hepburn? Her Pants," *Vanity Fair*, May 12, 2016. <https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2016/05/katharine-hepburn-style-pants>.



FIGURE 21. *Katherine Hepburn photographed for Life Magazine in 1938 by Alfred Eisenstaedt. From The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty Images.*

Art and fashion were connected through designers like Elsa Schiaparelli, who has been credited with being the first designer to introduce “themed” collections. She produced collections with themes including the circus, harlequins, astrology, and musical iconography which began in 1937. She also used zippers in her designs which



FIGURE 22. *A woman photographed wearing Elsa Schiaparelli's Shoe Hat. From Wikimedia Commons.*

previously had only been used for underwear, utilitarian dress, and luggage.⁹⁷

Schiaparelli produced garments and hats in conjunction with Salvador Dali's surrealist style with designs such as the Shoe Hat, Desk Suit, and Lamb Chop Hat. Figure 22 shows a woman wearing Schiaparelli's Shoe Hat.

In 1930, a short story titled "The Lipstick Mood" was published in *Ladies' Home Journal*.⁹⁸ This story describes a married woman named Christel Duncan who decides to try on some lipstick after receiving it from a friend. Her husband demands

⁹⁷ Mendes and de la Haye, *Fashion since 1900*, 100.

⁹⁸ Scott, *Fresh Lipstick: Redressing Fashion and Feminism*, 213.

she take off the lipstick and so she does, but she thinks how “small and obedient” she feels after removing it. She packs the lipstick in her purse, where it remains until she attends a party with her husband and overhears two women discussing lipstick in the bathroom. One woman applying lipstick says, “it’s kind of a signal to the world that you aren’t dead yet. Or a signal to yourself. I tell you. I get a lipstick mood. It gives me a kind of nerve.”⁹⁹ Christel decides to apply her lipstick after the women leave the bathroom and she re-enters the party with a new attitude, where she receives an attention she is not used to. Ultimately, her husband asks her with a different tone to remove the lipstick while on the way home from the party and the reader is left feeling like their relationship has changed. Linda Scott describes Christel’s experience as inferring “a vague dissatisfaction with herself, a growing awareness of her husband’s dominance, a sudden feeling of rebelliousness, a detached observation of others’ responses to her, and, finally, a new resolve.”¹⁰⁰ In this case, lipstick by itself was used as an expression of women’s changing mindsets within a patriarchal society. Though the suffrage movement ended with success, women continued to struggle with what their role within society would be.

When World War II began in 1939, it provided new jobs for women, and while society easily readjusted, a general agreement had not been reached on the proper place of women in American society. The wearing of lipstick was connected to a woman’s “strong, autonomous, industrious, even courageous” spirit and was declared a wartime necessity.¹⁰¹ Imagery of a woman wearing a red lip and laborious work

⁹⁹ Ibid, 214.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 222.

attire such as the “We Can Do It” poster, was used to encourage women, shown in figure 23. Designers introduced practical designs as soon as WWII began. Once again, as in WWI, bifurcated garments were being worn by women who were employed as laborers. Tailor-mades continued to be popular for women who were working in office-type settings. Occupied by Nazi Germany, Paris lost its status as the western world’s fashion center and New York tried to define itself as the fashion capital of the United States.

American women were allotted coupons for textile and garment purchases when the Consumer Rationing Order was introduced on June 1, 1941. Women’s hats were not rationed to allow women a “fashion statement”.¹⁰² Writer Margaret H. Gammon’s view on women’s wartime clothing was given in 1944 when she asked, “Isn’t it time to stop treating women like nincompoops? Isn’t it time to consult them about their tastes in fabrics, color, becomingness...? They are the buyers and users and they might have some useful words to say, even in the fashion field where they are supposed to leave matters in the competent hands of masculine esthetes.”¹⁰³

Constance Bowman, a high school teacher who worked in a bomb factory during the summer of 1943, wrote down her experiences there which spoke to the reaction of women in trousers. She documented the “catcalls, whistles, pawing, and suggestive comments from strangers” that she endured daily, and that many women had endured for decades.¹⁰⁴ The wearing of trousers by women in WWII allowed for

¹⁰² Mendes and de la Haye, *Fashion Since 1900*, 110.

¹⁰³ Melissa A. McEuen, *Making War Making Women: Femininity and Duty on the American Home Front, 1941-1945*,” (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 133.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 153.



FIGURE 23. *Poster created by J. Howard Miller to encourage women to participate in wartime jobs. From The National Museum of American History. Accession Number: 1985.0851.05.*

the “anger and resentment” of those who “could not abide gender role redefinition in such a public setting.”¹⁰⁵ A photograph of female workers from WWII can be observed in figure 24. Surprised by the differences between how women workers who were allowed to wear tailored skirt suits to work and women who had to wear trousers were treated, Bowman said it was a “great shock” to learn that “being a lady depended more upon our clothes than upon ourselves.”¹⁰⁶ Bowman deduced, “We found out that it was not our innate dignity that protected us from unwelcome attentions, but our trim suits, big hats, white gloves, and spectator pumps. Clothes, we reflect sadly, make the woman – and some clothes make the man think that he can make the woman.”¹⁰⁷

Post World War II, American society was left deciding what women’s roles would become as soldiers returned home from war. In perfect synchrony with the end of World War II, Christian Dior presented a new silhouette and garment style, what American fashion editor Carmel Snow called the “New Look.” The “New Look” consisted of “sloped shoulders, an articulated bust, a constricted waist, and padded hips”.¹⁰⁸ This silhouette lasted through much of the 1950s and was created by the use of undergarments like girdles and waist cinchers. Brassieres were given increased interior structure to define and point breasts to the desired effect. It doesn’t seem like a coincidence that a constricting silhouette which resembled nineteenth-century dress more than the twentieth would come about at a time where women were being displaced from jobs where they had been wearing practical clothing. As women tried

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 154.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Glasscock, “Twentieth-Century Silhouette and Support.” *The Costume Institute and The Metropolitan Museum of Art*.



FIGURE 24. *Women war workers wearing bifurcated pants while working for Marinship Corp, 1942. From U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.*

to figure out their next move, advertisements, magazines and movies were pushing imagery filled with marriage and family. Society seemed keen on shifting back to traditional social and gender roles. Clothing, like Dior's "New Look", was an "exaggerated statement" of gender, which tried to solidify the effort being made for women to conform to traditional roles. Dior's "New Look" can be viewed in figure 25.

Postwar Paris once again became a fashion epicenter with many established designers as well as newcomers. Schiaparelli remained popular, Chanel reopened her house, and Balenciaga gained new notoriety, while Balmain, and Dior were newly established. Balenciaga chose to use models who were of more average looks and his designs were created for women of differing shapes, sizes, and ages.

At the same time, the reemergence of intellectual curiosity about women could be found in publications and reviews of the early 1950s.¹⁰⁹ Interest in feminism was indicative of American women's anticipation for a revival of feminism. Women had participated obediently during the Depression and WWII without questioning equality or making new demands. As racial equality became a serious topic, women began to make the connection between racial and gender differences as had been done in the First Wave of feminism. It also can be said that many young women had not experienced the trials and tribulations of the suffrage movement.

In the late 1950s, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* was being written—it would be published in 1963. Friedan's introduction includes a critique of Freudian

¹⁰⁹ Freedman, "The New Woman: Changing Views of Women in the 1920s," 383.



FIGURE 25. *Christian Dior's "New Look", 1947. From La Maison Dior.*

psychoanalysis, which she believed was not applicable to postwar Western culture. Friedan, a trained psychologist, wrote *The Feminine Mystique* from her home while she fulfilled her daily activities as a house wife. Her thoughts are representative of middle-class American women of the 1950s. Friedan argued that what she calls “the feminine mystique” came into existence during postwar years to claim that the only appropriate roles for women were the ones that pertained to their reproductive systems—her “sexual and maternal performance.”¹¹⁰ Friedan points out, the main

¹¹⁰ Scott, *Fresh Lipstick: Redressing Fashion and Feminism*, 227.

inaccuracy in “the feminine mystique” was not its fondness of marriage and motherhood, but that it “overvalued” those things.¹¹¹

While many adolescents wore the distinct style of Dior’s “New Look”, groups of young people connected through common ideologies and interests developed unconventional styles of dress, known as subcultures. Inspired by Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road*, young men and women interested in existentialism dressed in black. Women wore oversized sweaters with skirts or tight trousers. Beatnik styles, a mix of American Beat and the existentialism look, included “sloppy joe” sweaters, cropped very tight jeans, and either ballet pumps, sandals, or bare feet for women. A photograph of women wearing beatnik style can be seen in figure 26. Greaser styles were developed among motorcycle gangs and popularized by Marlon Brando in *The Wild One*. Men wore leather jackets and white t-shirts with jeans cuffed at the ankle with leather boots. Female greasers wore leather jackets, and cropped pants.¹¹² A photo of a group of greasers can be seen in figure 27. The development of various subcultures was a response to dissatisfaction with Western mainstream fashion, its lifestyle, and also the Vietnam War which began in 1955. It was a clear indication that many young people were willing to participate in anti-fashion to physically represent their mindset. Though these subcultures remained independent from mainstream fashion, many movies were inspired by them.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Tong, *Feminist Thought*, 28.

¹¹² Mendes and de la Haye, *Fashion since 1900*, 153.

¹¹³ Ewing, *History of Twentieth Century Fashion*, 155.



FIGURE 26. *Young women in beatnik style, 1950s. From Wikimedia Commons.*



FIGURE 27. *A female with a group of men dressed in greaser styles, 1950s. From Wikimedia Commons.*

Subcultures were the beginning of a complete youth revolt against the conforming mindset of the 1950s. In *Fresh Lipstick*, Linda Scott explains, “in two hundred years, the American Girl has *never* been someone who ‘regards the existing state of affairs as something fixed.’ The girls of the baby boom proved to be no exception to that tradition.”¹¹⁴

Second Wave Feminism: 1960s-1970s

Around 1960, rebellious young feminists vehemently declared what leaders of the suffrage movement had often induced: to be fully emancipated, women required “economic opportunity, sexual freedoms, and civil liberties.”¹¹⁵ It was in the Second Wave of feminism in the United States that feminists were often referred to as liberal or radical. Liberal feminists tried to improve women’s status through legal and social influence of political parties, large corporations, and media networks. Radical feminists aimed to increase women’s consciousness about their oppression and to become liberated from a patriarchal system. Many feminists, whether liberal or radical, participated in the “shocking” new fashion developments of the 1960s. Much of the protesting and rallying of the Second Wave can be attributed to radical feminists. Though distinct groups, women came together to push for equality.

As women shared their personal experiences with each other, they realized that their individual experiences were shared by many women. By the mid-1960s, many feminists had joined one of the emerging women’s rights groups, such as National

¹¹⁴ Scott, *Fresh Lipstick: Redressing Fashion and Feminism*, 249.

¹¹⁵ Tong, *Feminist Thought*, 23.

Organization for Women (NOW), the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC), or women's liberation groups like the Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell (WITCH), and the Redstockings.¹¹⁶ As NOW and other women's rights organizations— often comprised of older feminists— focused on legislative change, a group of emerging young feminists began challenging the politics and priorities of these established feminists. Many young feminists, who wore newly adopted fashions, joined liberation groups who were involved in protests such as the Miss America Pageant protest of 1968. There were also feminists who participated in anti-fashion such as cutting their hair, having unshaven legs and underarms, and refraining from makeup and bras. Opposition referred to these feminists as “hairy women” and “hippies”.¹¹⁷ Not all feminists cut their hair or dismissed mainstream fashion or beauty culture, but the “politicization of hairstyles, dress, and self-presentation” was a core piece of second-wave feminism.¹¹⁸ The way in which feminists and women physically represent themselves remains a topic of debate due to the consequences of fashion and beauty culture for women.¹¹⁹

President John F. Kennedy introduced the Commission on the Status of Women in 1961, which resulted in the Citizens' Advisory Council, individual state commissions, and the passage of the Equal Pay Act. The 1964 Civil Rights Act was passed and amended to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, along with race,

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 24.

¹¹⁷ Betty Luther Hillman, ““The Clothes I Wear Help Me to Know My Own Power””: The Politics of Gender Presentation in the Era of Women's Liberation,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 34, no. 2 (2013): 158, accessed February 13, 2018. doi:10.5250/fronjwomestud.34.2.0155.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 155-156.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 156.

color, religion, or national origin by employers, employment agencies, and unions. Though the Act had been amended, courts did not always enforce Title VII's amendment. The anger and betrayal women felt encouraged them to fight for their civil rights.¹²⁰

At the same time, Jacqueline Kennedy became the First Lady of the United States. Jackie Kennedy was photogenic, stylish, attractive, and quickly became an international style icon. She was consistently on America's "best-dressed list" having promoted a "trend for clothes with clean, uncluttered lines in plain, pure colors."¹²¹ Many wealthy women were particularly influenced by Kennedy's fashion taste. After receiving backlash for her fondness of Paris fashions, Kennedy began to support American designers. Oleg Cassini became her personal designer, creating American-made garments with Parisian flare. Kennedy had a keen fashion sense and was aware of what fashions would suit her for official business, leisure activities, and formal occasions. The obsession with Jackie Kennedy promoted many fashion trends including pillbox hats, "chunky" sunglasses, and A-line dresses, and was dubbed the "Jackie Look".¹²² Though she wasn't in the public eye again until she married Aristotle Onassis, Jackie Kennedy's influence remained intact through the 1960s for affluent women.

A growing teenage consumer market was established by the end of the 1950s and would have lasting effects on fashion manufacturing and marketing. Transatlantic non-stop flights were introduced, rapidly dispersing fashion trends from Europe to the

¹²⁰ Ibid, 48.

¹²¹ Ibid, 184.

¹²² Ibid.

United States. London supplemented Paris as a fashion center due to its revolutionary designs whose focus was on young women, rather than the wealthy.¹²³ By the mid-1960s, elegant and traditional styles for mature women contrasted with innovative styles by emerging designers.

Christian Dior, who introduced the “New Look” about ten years prior and had been credited with securing the future of Paris couture, died suddenly leaving “a legacy of the world’s most prestigious fashion house.”¹²⁴ Dior’s twenty-one-year-old assistant, Yves Saint Laurent, was appointed artistic director and began creating more youthful designs. Laurent’s first collection for the House of Dior was the “Trapeze” which featured an exaggerated A-shape silhouette. In 1960, his collection was influenced by greaser and beatnik subcultures and included leather details. Though Saint Laurent was drafted into the army shortly after and was replaced by Marc Bohan, he opened his own house in 1961 and revitalized the pea coat, trenchcoat, and safari suit. In 1965, Saint Laurent designed heavy silk dresses inspired by Mondrian paintings often associated with the 1960s, shown in figure 28. Mondrian dresses and Saint Laurent’s later designs were converted into cheaper versions and recognized that making less expensive versions of couture designs would attract a wider consumer base.

Emerging designer Pierre Cardin experimented with “ultramodern” designs which connected him with a futuristic movement within fashion.¹²⁵ Cardin’s designs featured asymmetrical rolled edges, scalloped necklines, and face-framing collars. He

¹²³ Mendes and de la Haye, *Fashion since 1900*, 158.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, 160.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, 168.



FIGURE 28. *Yves Saint Laurent's Mondrian dress, fall/winter 1965-66. From the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Accession Number: C.I.69.23.*



FIGURE 29. *1960s designs by Cardin who was influential in space-age style, ca. 1965. From Pierre Cardin Archives.*

was one of the first designers to create heavy-weighted colored tights to be worn with short skirts in cold months, and white or patterned tights for summer.¹²⁶ A photograph of some of Cardin's futuristic 1960s designs can be viewed in figure 29. In a 2010 interview with *The New York Times*, Cardin explained his designing mindset as a way to “draw something of the future — to be young, to see that a woman could be free. I wanted to give women in the 1960s a chance to work, to sit, to take the car and drive in my dresses.”¹²⁷

Perhaps the garment most associated with the 1960s is the miniskirt. In the late 1950s, Mary Quant had been selling stocked items from her London shop, Bazaar. Invested in selling clothes for young women, Quant began creating her own designs



FIGURE 30. *Mary with models at Heathrow Airport before leaving for a continental fashion tour, ca.1965. From Getty Images.*

¹²⁶ Ibid, 170.

¹²⁷ Suzy Menkes, “Pierre Cardin: One Step Ahead of Tomorrow,” *The New York Times*, March 22, 2010. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/23/fashion/23iht-fcardin.html>.

after becoming frustrated with the “matronliness” of available items.¹²⁸ Quant’s designs included simple shifts with triangular inserts to allow movement and most importantly, shortened skirts. A photo of Mary Quant with models wearing minidress styles is shown in figure 30. Soon Quant was designing tights, accessories, and underwear to create a complete look. In 1962, Quant secured a contract with J.C. Penney, and in 1963 began mass producing with the Ginger Group. Quant’s goals were strikingly similar to Cardin’s, as she explained, “it was the girls on the King’s Road —during the ‘Swinging London’ scene—who invented the mini. I was making easy, youthful, simple clothes, in which you could move, in which you could run and jump and we would make them the length the customer wanted. I wore them very short and the customers would say, ‘Shorter, shorter.’”¹²⁹ It seemed that designers who emerged in the 1960s had a similar focus for women’s fashion: simple garments that were fun, easy-to-wear, and easy to move around in.

Mass production and disposability reached new heights when paper garments were introduced in the 1960s. Between 1966 and 1968 paper fashion became extremely popular. First used as an advertising scheme, paper designs were appropriated by fashion designers and artists. Cheaply produced nonwoven fabric was printed with eye-catching designs, heavily influenced by the Pop Art movement, an example of which can be seen in figure 31. Paper fashions could be purchased in

¹²⁸ Mendes and de la Haye, *Fashion Since 1900*, 177.

¹²⁹ “The Glory Days of King’s Road,” *The Telegraph*, accessed November 18, 2017. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/expat/expatpicturegalleries/8426600/The-glory-days-of-Kings-Road.html?image=4>

supermarkets, drug store, department stores, and by mail in exchange for box tops or clipped coupons. Paper fashions diminished after 1968, but the use of nonwoven fabric and visual art represents a fascinating moment in 1960s fashion.¹³⁰

Music had a huge cultural impact as musicians like the Beatles were idolized by men and women alike. A range of clothing was produced featuring images of the band members. Sports personalities, disc jockeys, fashion photographers, and models all became inspiration for teenagers and young women as the influence of Hollywood



FIGURE 31. “The Souper Dress” was an example of paper fashion of the 1960s, 1966-67. From The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Accession Number: 1995.178.3.

¹³⁰ Stamos Fafalios and Vassilis Zidianakis, "'Fragile,' 'Souper' and POP! The Atopos Paper Fashion Collection," *Art in Print* 4, no. 3 (2014), 1. Accessed October 16, 2017. <http://www.jstor.org.uri.idm.oclc.org/stable/43045685>.

film stars diminished. American cultural beauty standards were set by young models, photographed by talented and revolutionary fashion photographers. Lesley Hornby, also known as Twiggy, became the “Face of the Year” in 1966 and sported an adolescent body type with a short pixie haircut and wore thick, black mascara and eye makeup styles that accentuated her large eyes.¹³¹ Twiggy is pictured in figure 32. Heavy black eye makeup with pale lips and skin became a staple of the 1960s.

The “Hippie Movement”, well-known by the mid-1960s, offered young Americans an alternative lifestyle to the traditional, materialistic social system they were used to. Hippie culture was anti-war, anti-wealth, and known for its “back-to-the-earth” spirit. Many young women developed a hippie mindset and anti-authoritarian dress. Women grew their hair long, wore hip hugger jeans, cropped shirts, and loose peasant-style dresses. Music, sex, and mind-altering drugs were the trifecta of communal experiences. The *Woodstock Music & Art Fair* of 1969 attracted over 400,000 hippies to a dairy farm in southern New York State. Woodstock was an event in sync with hippie ideals that has represented social harmony, “peace and love”. Mainstream fashion adopted hippie-style garments by introducing appliqued, crocheted, and knitted garments. Natural beauty products along with health foods became fashionable as well.¹³²

Many new fashions focused on young women, which helped to perpetuate the liberal mentality of young feminists actively promoting the idea of freedom of dress to American society. The push for more freedom within women’s fashions was due to

¹³¹ Mendes and de la Haye, *Fashion since 1900*, 188.

¹³² *Ibid*, 194.



FIGURE 32. *Twiggy photographed by Bert Stern for Vogue Italia, April 1967. From Vogue Archives.*

the activism being put forth by the women's movement which included the interest and attention drawn to Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963, as well as the Miss America Pageant of 1968. Though the protest caused feminists to be labeled as "bra-burners" due to misrepresentative media coverage, women who participated chose to throw bras, cosmetics, girdles, high-heeled shoes, and issues of

men's magazines like *Playboy* into a "Freedom Trash Can".¹³³ No items were actually burned during the protest, but it did send a message of rejection directed towards a culture that defined women by how they looked, an issue American women continue to bring attention to. Figure 33 shows two women throwing items into a "Freedom Trash Can."

While many young feminists embraced contemporary fashions, a number of feminists used dress and hairstyles to refute gender differences and oppressive or objectifying ideas about womanhood. Women began to cut their hair as a symbol of emancipation from societal expectations. During the 1960s, lesbians were actively and openly participating in the feminist movement, whereas prior to this time lesbians were excluded. One New York City lesbian feminist was quoted as proclaiming, "hair is political!" Many feminist women adopted an "androgynous uniform" (known as a "dyke uniform" for lesbians) in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which consisted of jeans, button-down shirts, and work boots, often worn without makeup or a bra. At a feminist rally in 1970 in San Francisco, some women wore fashionable clothing, some wore makeup, others wore both, and some women were in anti-fashion. One woman told a reporter she wore "heavy sandals, denim pants and olive drab sweatshirt" due to her fear of men's sexual objectification. Another said she "discovered the comfort and practicality of boots—men's boots with thicker soles and longer wear than women's." Another woman explained, "I like to wear makeup once in a while", which she argued

¹³³ Hillman, "The Clothes I Wear Help Me to Know My Own Power," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 161.



FIGURE 33. *Two women throwing items into a “Freedom Trash Can” during the 1968 Miss America Protest. From Duke University Digital Collection.*

was fine as long as she was dressing to make herself happy instead of men. She continued to explain, “It’s fun as long as it’s not controlling you...clothes should be an extension of yourself.”¹³⁴ These discussions on dress and makeup emphasize many of the conflicts that arose among feminists in the 1970s over the “politics of self-presentation.”¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Hillman, ““The Clothes I Wear Help Me to Know My Own Power”,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 162-163.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 156.



FIGURE 34. *From left, Betty Freidan, Congresswoman Bella Abzug, and Gloria Steinem at the 1972 Democratic Convention. From Fred W. Macdarrah/Getty Images.*

In 1970, feminist organization NOW, led by Betty Freidan and Gloria Steinem, pictured in figure 34, picketed the United State Senate demanding a hearing for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). That same year, over twenty-thousand American women held a nationwide “Women’s Strike for Equality” protest requesting full social, political, and economic equality. Gloria Steinem gained national notoriety as a feminist leader after her 1969 article “After Black Power, Women’s Liberation”, though she had previously written an in-depth look at the reality of working as a “Playboy Bunny” in 1962.¹³⁶ In 1971, Steinem and Betty Freidan along with other feminist leaders, founded the National Women’s Political Caucus. Steinem delivered

¹³⁶ Gloria Steinem, “A Bunny’s Tale,” *Show Magazine*, May 1, 1963, 90-94.

a speech titled “Address to the Women of America,” after the Caucus’ founding, where she stated:

This is no simple reform. It really is a revolution. Sex and race because they are easy and visible differences have been the primary ways of organizing human beings into superior and inferior groups and into the cheap labor on which this system still depends. We are talking about a society in which there will be no roles other than those chosen or those earned. We are really talking about humanism.¹³⁷

The ERA was passed by both houses of Congress in 1972 and submitted to the state legislature for ratification. It was at this time, when it appeared the ratification seemed likely, that the ERA met significant opposition. Phyllis Schlafly, pictured in figure 35, deployed conservative women in opposition, arguing that the ERA would “promote a ‘gender-free’, unisex society” including the elimination of sex-segregated bathrooms, legalization of same-sex marriage, and drafting women into the military.¹³⁸ Schlafly and her supporters capitalized on the “unfeminine” appearance of some feminists and initiated fear in many conservative and anti-feminist Americans. The ERA was eventually ratified by thirty-five states before the congressional deadline of March 22, 1979. The remaining states, with the exception of Nevada, have yet to ratify the ERA.

Regardless of Schlafly and her supporters’ fears of a “gender-free society”, feminists continued to dress both fashionably and in anti-fashion depending on their beliefs. In “*The Clothes I Wear Help Me to Know My Own Power*”: *The Politics of Gender Presentation in the Era of Women’s Liberation*, Betty Hillman points out:

Debates on feminist gender presentation also revealed deeper conflicts among feminists and nonfeminists alike over the meaning of female

¹³⁷ Gloria Steinem, “Address to the Women of America,” National Women’s Political Caucus Opening Conference, Washington, D.C., July 10, 1971.

¹³⁸ Hillman, ““The Clothes I Wear Help Me to Know My Own Power”,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 174.

identity and womanhood. Did nontraditional, androgynous, or “masculine” self-presentations help to create a new feminist version of womanhood, free from socially constructed gender roles? Or did rejecting traditional feminine gender presentation signal that feminists sought to abandon their heterosexual female identities? Those who believed the former often embraced new forms of self-styling; those who believed the latter often rejected politicized self-presentation as further proof of the radical nature of feminist activism. Self-presentation, of course, is also a deeply personal decision, and individual feminists wore a myriad of styles and expressed a multitude of opinions on these styles. But more often than not, debates on gender presentation among feminists and their observers returned to a common theme: what it meant to be a woman in an era of women’s liberation.¹³⁹



FIGURE 35. *Phyllis Schlafly with protestors after the ERA was submitted for ratification, early 1970s. From Underwood Archives/Getty Images.*

¹³⁹ Hillman, ““The Clothes I Wear Help Me to Know My Own Power,”” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 157.

The mid-1970s saw economic decline, a continued path of political unrest, and a diversifying social structure. Dissatisfaction with mainstream fashion and society in general, led to the development of the “Punk” scene beginning in 1976 in London. Punk was initiated by unemployed young people and students from neighboring art schools who flocked to Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren’s boutique called Seditionaries. Punk made its way to the United States as singers such as Iggy Pop and Lou Reed gained notoriety. Punk “was an anarchic, nihilistic style which deliberately set out to shock”; an example of punk style can be seen in figure 36.¹⁴⁰ Miniskirts, black fishnet tights, leather jackets along with spiked Mohawk hair, blackened eye makeup, lipstick, and facial piercings. Punk was a new way for young feminists to express themselves. The hypersexualized styles of punk brought attention to the female body and coincided with themes being discussed by the ongoing feminist movement. In *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism*, Elizabeth Grosz explains, “in the West, on our time, the female body has been constructed not only as lack or absence but with more complexity, as a leaking, uncontrollable, seeping liquid; as formless flow; a disorder that threatens all order.”¹⁴¹ The introduction of Punk began a new rebellious use for women’s bodies— as protest. Before this time, anti-fashion had been used as a form of protest, but generally not in a sexualized manner. Historically, women fought for practical clothing and more androgynous dress more so to blend in. Punk styles were the beginning of a new type of revolt, where women

¹⁴⁰ Mendes and de la Haye, *Fashion since 1900*, 221.

¹⁴¹ Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 194.



FIGURE 36. *Women dressed in Punk styles, 1980. From Getty Images.*

sexualized themselves to protest against the “double standards of sexuality” and “to show as much of the offending, ‘uncontrollable’ female as possible.”¹⁴²

While anti-fashion was more popular with young, progressive women, mainstream fashion of the late 1970s continued to be important to older generations and affluent young women. Though mainstream fashion was followed by a specific demographic, it did not mean designers were ignoring the changing times and changing mindsets of many women. Designers continued to create complete ensembles, but the diversity in society inspired diversity in dress. This led to the development of a more “individualistic appearance” by mixing high end designer

¹⁴² Shehnaz Suterwalla, "Cut, Layer, Break, Fold: Fashioning Gendered Difference, 1970s to the Present," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 1/2 (2012): 271, accessed January 4, 2018. <http://www.jstor.org.uri.idm.oclc.org/stable/23611790>.

clothing with ethnic or period clothing bought at boutiques or specialty stores.¹⁴³ Low-income consumers could purchase clothing from various stores to make their own unique look. From the 1960s onward silhouette changes became irrelevant in comparison to the first half of the twentieth century. Fashion choices, for most women, were less about societal and class values and more about personal expression. Examples of mainstream fashion can be viewed in figure 37, which shows a 1970s *Vogue Basic Design* pattern.

Legislation passed in the 1960s and 1970s empowered more women to enter the workforce after they gained more legal support for workplace issues. In addition to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Rights Amendment of 1972 (though it is still not completely ratified), the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 (an amendment to the Civil Rights Act) offered women legal protection in the workplace



FIGURE 37. *Vogue Basic Design* pattern showing 1970s women's fashions. From: *Wikimedia Commons*.

¹⁴³ Mendes and de la Haye, *Fashion since 1900*, 222.

if they were to become pregnant. Prior to the 1960s, women would often not return to work after childbirth in order to become home-makers. The establishment of public policies that protected pregnant working women necessitated new designs for maternity wear. Though maternity wear had been available since the establishment of Lane Bryant in 1904, maternity wear became more well known in the 1950s when pregnancy was featured in entertainment outlets, such as Lucille Ball's real-life pregnancy being incorporated into her television series *I Love Lucy*.¹⁴⁴ An example of maternity wear from that period can be seen in figure 38.

With a growing number of women entering and remaining in the workforce, it was necessary for employers to reevaluate their company policies to include female employees. Clothing for career women became of interest, which continued through the 1980s. An image depicting women's 1970s tailored pantsuit styles can be seen in figure 39. Though pantsuits were available, women struggled with the negative connotations associated with career women wearing pants. In 1977, John T. Molloy published *The Woman's Dress for Success Book*, modeled after his successful book, *Dress for Success* for men. *The Woman's Dress for Success Book* "describes common fashion errors committed by business women and offers guidance in selecting clothes and accessories that promote success, express authority, and attract men."¹⁴⁵ While dressing well may be important to business women, Molloy's book is understandably centered around sexist ideologies. Though Second Wave feminists were able to

¹⁴⁴ "Items: Is Fashion Modern?", exhibition text, *Museum of Modern Art*, New York City. October 1, 2017 through January 28, 2018.

¹⁴⁵ John T. Molloy, *The Woman's Dress for Success Book* (Illinois: Follet Publishing Company, 1977), 2.

achieve many legislation victories through protest and consistency, the materialistic attitude of the 1980s caused issues for feminist objectives.



FIGURE 38. *Maternity outfit on display in the “Items: Is Fashion Modern?” exhibition at the New York City, Museum of Modern Art, October 1, 2017 through January 28, 2018. Photograph by Linda Welters. From: Museum of Modern Art.*



FIGURE 39. *Example of 1970s women’s tailored pantsuits. From: Wikimedia Commons.*

The 1980s

In 1979, Margaret Thatcher became the first female Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. A shifting economy under Thatcher when many well-dressed “Young Urban Professionals”, or “yuppies” gained financial success through executive positions. In 1980, Ronald Reagan became the President of the United States, emphasizing the connection between “smart, sophisticated” garments and being financially successful.¹⁴⁶ The transformative role of the “female executive” during this time led to a new way of dressing. Thatcher, shown in figure 37, became a role model for professional women in both the U.K. and U.S. She attended London

¹⁴⁶ Ewing, *History of Twentieth Century Fashion*, 278.



FIGURE 40. *Margaret Thatcher wearing a “power suit” in June 1989. From Time Magazine.*

fashion shows, was an avid reader of *Vogue*, and was politically successful. The idea of “power dressing” became increasingly popular as the symbol for successful business men and women was the power suit—shoulder pads created large, wide shoulders and tailored skirt-suits included double-breasted jackets.¹⁴⁷ For many people, the existence of female executives and business women was a new concept in the 1980s, and therefore not entirely understood. Molloy’s book was followed by many business women. Molloy conducted years of research to determine the most appealing color, pattern, and fabric combinations for women’s tailored skirt suits, which he recommended for being taken seriously in the workplace. Margaret

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 279.

Thatcher once told a young female press secretary, “Never trousers, my dear. They rob a woman of her authority.”¹⁴⁸ Thatcher knew her fashion choices were what the public would notice first, and just as the suffragists came to the conclusion that fashionable dress was a safer choice, she realized that dressing in skirt suits would not be as risky as wearing a pant suit. Power dressing of the 1980s was not without criticism. Women in power suits were associated with a “constricting stereotype”, where the female body was adapted to a masculine shape. Women’s suits of the 1990s offered softer fabrics and less constricting shapes, following the natural lines of a woman’s body.

Jackie Brookner points out that in the 1980s, American society saw Ronald Reagan deny “problems of racism, sexism, dealings with drug dealers, and even the red and the black of the federal budget, while his media experts were busy encouraging the public consciousness to embrace simplistic conventions and nostalgic attitudes toward women and men, family and flag.”¹⁴⁹ Reagan was in opposition of abortion and reproduction rights, affirmative action, and many liberal social service programs. For women to maintain the advancements of Second Wave feminism, they would need to continue fighting as they had for the previous two decades. A new generation of women of color joined the women’s movement, a movement that had

¹⁴⁸ Amanda Platell, “A Navy Single-Breasted Suit, String of Pearls, Black Court Shoes and Magnificent Hair: How Margaret Thatcher Taught Me Powerful Women Never Wear Trousers,” *Daily Mail UK*, November 4, 2015, accessed February 20, 2018. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-3304242/A-navy-single-breasted-suit-string-pearls-black-court-shoes-magnificent-hair-Margaret-Thatcher-taught-powerful-women-never-wear-trousers.html>.

¹⁴⁹ Jackie Brookner, "Feminism and Students of the '80s and '90s: The Lady and the Raging Bitch; Or, How Feminism Got a Bad Name," *Art Journal* 50, no. 2 (1991): 11, accessed February 13, 2018. doi:10.2307/777155.

been predominantly white. The pushback towards feminism and other social movements in the 1980s empowered women to take action in the 1990s.

Third Wave Feminism: 1990s

In the early 1990s, a generation of young women began to create their own opinions of feminist ideologies. By this point, feminism had gone through its first phase— the nineteenth-century women’s suffrage movement and second wave— beginning in the 1960s and associated with the Civil Rights movement. Feminists of the ‘90s accommodated more diversity by examining the connections between “gender oppression” and other types of “human oppression” as well as welcoming “conflict and contradiction.”¹⁵⁰ Recession and anti-materialistic mentalities caused designers to rethink their inspirations and look to the past. Hippie and punk influences were combined to create “Grunge”. Designer fashions were marketed at fashion shows and worn by the decade’s “supermodels”, a new phenomenon of the time. Though supermodels brought interest back to the fashion industry, the beauty standards radiating from these models caused women to feel dissatisfied with themselves generating a rise in eating disorders and cosmetic surgery. Unrealistic beauty standards became a topic of interest as authors such as Naomi Wolf who wrote about “the beauty myth.” Dissatisfied with America’s beauty standards, issues with femininity, and patriarchal mentality, female musicians used the development of music videos and creation of the Riot Grrrl movement to help further the cause and

¹⁵⁰ Tong, *Feminist Thought*, 271.

bring attention to women's dissatisfaction with the way they've been treated by men and society in general, engaging in war with the media.

In *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism*, Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake explain:

Even as different strains of feminism and activism sometimes directly contradict each other, they are all part of our third-wave lives, our thinking, and our praxes: we are products of all the contradictory definitions of and differences within feminism...¹⁵¹

As third-wave feminists developed new research and literature, issues pertaining to certain groups of women such as “multicultural, postcolonial, and global feminists” began to be addressed.¹⁵² In fear of misrepresenting cultural identities, third-wave feminists have dedicated much time to listening to the problems of differing groups of women. Third-wave feminism was committed to overcoming its “whiteness” by supporting women of color and other cultures to building their own form of feminism— something that was already occurring, but not generally encouraged. Additionally, third-wave feminists were more accepting of women's differing sexual orientations. For these reasons, and the generally less judgmental, less rigid mentality of third-wave feminists, a new feminism was being molded in the 1990s. Instead of encouraging women to fight for what they “*should want*”, women could say what they wanted from society and for themselves without their authenticity being questioned.¹⁵³

The early 1990s fashions were dictated by recession and backlash towards the 1980s materialistic mentality. Fashion houses struggled to make sales as consumers

¹⁵¹ Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake, *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 3.

¹⁵² Tong, *Feminist Thought*, 285.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, 288.

dealt with constricted incomes. The Gulf War furthered their anguish as trade with the United Arab Emirate countries was halted. These factors caused designers to seek inspiration from international fashion trends. “Authenticity” became the buzzword of the decade as subculture and ethnic styles gained popularity.¹⁵⁴ Styles historically trickled down from royalty and wealthy citizens, but “street style” had become more well-known as subcultures gained momentum in the U.S. beginning in the 1950s with groups such as the beatniks and greasers. The mid-1990s saw many subculture styles incorporated into designer fashions as collections of Hippie styles came out by Dolce & Gabbana, and a mixture of ethnic and subculture styles from Jean-Paul Gaultier. An ad from Dolce & Gabbana’s spring 1993 Hippie collection is shown in figure 41. Tattoos and piercings, a style associated with Punk individuals, became mainstream fashion. Punk and hippie fashions were combined to create the “Grunge” look. Grunge was “a colorful, disheveled style in which clothes that were homemade, customized or second-hand were worn in layers and accessorized with heavy ex-army boots.”¹⁵⁵ An image of young women wearing grunge fashions can be seen in figure 42. Seattle rock groups like Nirvana and Pearl Jam were linked to the grunge movement.

At the same time, designer fashions were walked down the catwalk on “supermodels”, a phenomenon of the 1990s. Models such as Cindy Crawford, Linda Evangelista, Naomi Campbell, and Kate Moss rivaled the film stars and musicians of the day and created new interest in designer fashions. An image of *Vogue UK*’s

¹⁵⁴ Mendes and de la Haye, *Fashion since 1900*, 252.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 252.



FIGURE 41. *Dolce & Gabbana advertisement for spring 1993 Hippy collection. From Dolce & Gabbana.*



FIGURE 42. *Young women dressed in grunge styles, 1990s. From Wikimedia Commons.*

January 1990 cover shows some of the decade's supermodels in figure 43. These models were seen as the beauty ideal of the decade, but enthusiasm for very thin models was criticized by many as it had been linked to the rise of eating disorders. It was this emphasis on unrealistic beauty standards that pushed women towards revolt. In the first and second waves of feminism, revolt meant protesting in the streets and rallying.

Though protesting still occurred, technological advancements and a more open-minded society had given third-wave feminists new platforms to demonstrate their dissatisfaction. Companies used public advertisements to voice their opposition to the decade's beauty standards. Figure 44 shows an advertisement from The Body

Shop that states, “There are 3 billion women who don’t look like supermodels and only 8 who do.” These advertisements were empowering during a time of growing cosmetic surgery, use of Botox, and weight-loss surgery.



FIGURE 43. *Vogue UK January 1990 Cover with Naomi Campbell, Linda Evangelista, Tatjana Patitz, Christy Turlington and Cindy Crawford. From Vogue Archives.*

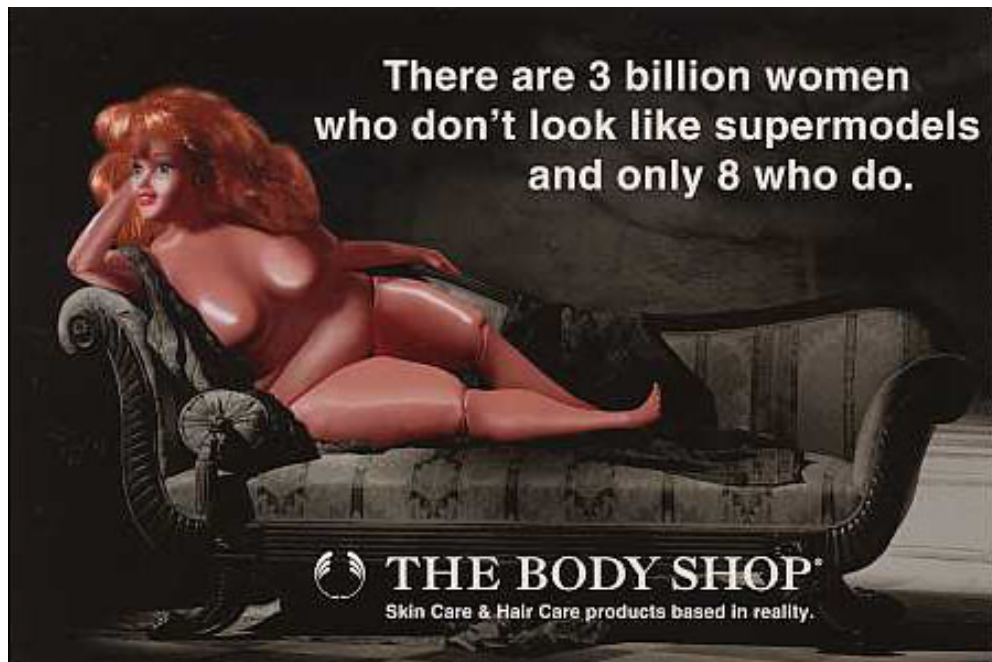


FIGURE 44. *Advertisement by The Body Shop, 1998. From The Body Shop.*

Femininity and beauty have long been hot topics for feminists, but third-wave feminists were more supportive of women embracing their own interpretations of these concepts. In her book *The Beauty Myth*, Naomi Wolf describes that:

many [women] are ashamed to admit that such trivial concerns—to do with physical appearance, bodies, faces, hair, clothes—matter so much. But in spite of shame, guilt, and denial, more and more women are wondering if it isn't that they are entirely neurotic and alone but rather that something important is indeed at stake that has to do with the relationship between female liberation and female beauty.¹⁵⁶

Wolf continues on to discuss the correlation between legislative and career-oriented victories and the weight of beauty:

¹⁵⁶ Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, 9.

During the past decade, women breached the power structure; meanwhile, eating disorders rose exponentially and cosmetic surgery became the fastest-growing medical specialty. During the past five years, consumer spending doubled, pornography became the main media category, ahead of legitimate films and records combined, and thirty-three thousand American women told researchers that they would rather lose ten to fifteen pounds than achieve any other goal. More women have more money and power and scope and legal recognition than we have ever had before; but in terms of how we feel about ourselves *physically*, we may actually be worse off than our unliberated grandmothers. Recent research consistently shows that inside the majority of the West's controlled, attractive, successful working women, there is a secret "underlife" poisoning our freedom; infused with notions of beauty, it is a dark vein of self-hatred, physical obsessions, terror of aging, and dread of lost control.¹⁵⁷

Before women began working outside of the home, a woman's beauty was representative of her virtue or of her husband's status. A woman's humanity was connected to her physicality and ability to find a husband. As women began to enter the workforce in the early-twentieth century, focus of beauty ideals shifted to women who were paid as "display professions— fashion mannequins, actresses, dancers, and higher-paid sex workers such as escorts", professions that were seen as low in status at the time.¹⁵⁸ Since the women's suffrage movement, it appeared that the more powerful women became, "the more prestige, fame, and money is accorded to the display professions: They are held higher and higher above the heads of rising women, for them to emulate."¹⁵⁹ Wolf explains:

...all the professions into which women are making strides are being rapidly reclassified—*so far as the women in them are concerned*—as display professions. "Beauty" is being characterized, in professions and trades further and further afield from the original display professions, as a version of what United States sex discrimination law calls a BFOQ (a bona fide occupational qualification) and Britain calls

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 10.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 27.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

a GOQ (a genuine occupational qualification), such as femaleness for a wet nurse or maleness for a sperm donor.¹⁶⁰

Essentially, a women's beauty was considered a qualification for hiring and promotion. The emphasis on beauty within the workplace could be attributed to general societal fears of "what might happen if free women made free progress in free bodies through a system that calls itself a meritocracy."¹⁶¹ Often, women would not fight this unsaid qualification due to guilt from gaining more power, fear of not being able to provide for their families, or being accustomed to connecting beauty to wealth.¹⁶² Not only were women silently told that their beauty was a strong indicator of their career-related success, but use of extremely thin, beautiful fashion models in advertising furthered women's fixation on being beautiful—in terms of America's beauty standards.

The use of supermodels in fashion advertisements, such as Kate Moss in Calvin Klein's 1992 campaign in figure 45, took its toll on American women. The "beauty myth" was deeply rooted in women's magazines and the advertisements, polls, and advice filling their pages. Magazines offered modern women a role model with time-proven advice and "tone of allegiance to the viewer."¹⁶³ Because viewers trust what they are reading, it is easy to misread a magazine's content—"advertisements, beauty copy, images of models—as if it were a coherent message from the editors telling women, 'You should be like this'." Though the "beauty myth" encouraged women to judge one another on their appearance, it could also connect

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 29.

¹⁶² Ibid, 30.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 74.

women who oppose it. Introduction of the internet, popularity of music videos, television shows, low-cost documentaries, and other media outlets perpetuated women's obsession with beauty and social standards but also gave feminists new opportunities to reach a broader range of women. Music and its accompanying videos became an outlet for women with feminist vision.

Music videos often depict female characteristics and sexuality with a sexist approach, but videos can also be created to include feminist concerns. Robin Roberts explains, "the depiction of female sexuality by some female performers illustrates the way in which the music video can be appropriated for explicitly feminist concerns, such as the right of women to determine their own sexuality and their right to express pleasure."¹⁶⁴ One video that resonated with many women and feminists, was Madonna's "Express Yourself." Though the song was released on the *Like a Prayer* album in 1989, it was rereleased on *The Immaculate Collection* in 1990. The video depicts a cityscape with Madonna at the center, first wearing a bias-cut Vionnet style gown, followed by a black lingerie set, and later, a man's suit with only a bra underneath, shown in figure 46. Shirtless men work throughout the video, while the men's supervisor is shown viewing Madonna through a screen where she is chained at the neck. The video infers that Madonna begins as a discouraged wife to the men's supervisor, wearing a 1930s style gown and moving through life unhappily. As the video progresses and Madonna's outfits move towards the man's suit she becomes freer and ultimately chooses a new man for herself. The video was considered risqué,

¹⁶⁴ Robin Roberts, "'Sex as a Weapon': Feminist Rock Music Videos," *NWSA Journal* 2, no. 1 (1990): 1, accessed January 10, 2018. <http://www.jstor.org.uri.idm.oclc.org/stable/4315990>.

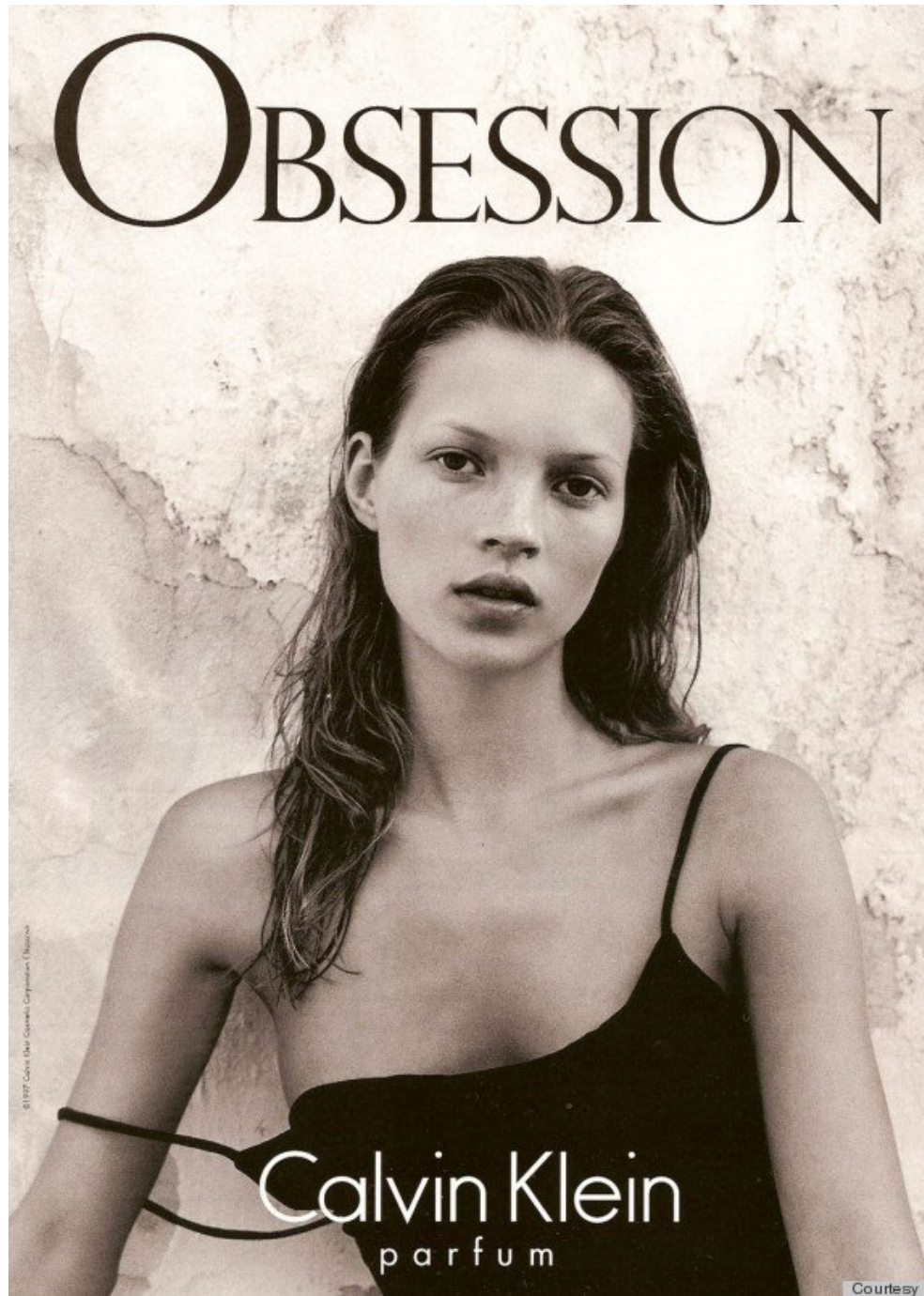


FIGURE 45. *Kate Moss in Calvin Klein's 1992 campaign was labeled as being "too thin. From Calvin Klein Archive.*

which Madonna had always been known for, and many criticized Madonna for what they described as over-sexualized imagery but the 1990s was an evolving time for feminism which more widely broadcast their ideas about women's sexuality and personal choice. Overall, "Express Yourself" is a song meant to empower women.

Madonna explained her interpretation of the song to Becky Johnston in the May 1989 issue of *Interview*:

The ultimate thing behind the song is that if you don't express yourself, don't say what you want, then you're not going to get it. And in effect you are chained down by your inability to say what you feel or go after what you want. No matter how in control you think you are about sexuality in a relationship there is always the power struggle... always a certain amount of compromise. Of being beholden, if you love them. You do it because you choose to. No one put the chain around this neck but me. I wrote 'Express Yourself' to tell women around the world that pick and choose the best for yourself, before that chain around your neck, kills you instead. It's my take on how man can express what they want, the same prerogative should be there for a woman too.¹⁶⁵

Lucy O'Brien declared in *Madonna: Like an Icon*, "'Express Yourself' is a feminist call-to-arms, complete with muscular brass playing and soulful voice. Here Madonna is the anti-materialism girl, exhorting her female audiences to respect themselves. That means having a man who loves your head and your heart. If he doesn't treat you right (and here's the revolutionary rhetoric) you're better off on your own."¹⁶⁶ While Madonna was not the only pop star to bridge feminist ideologies and music video representation, this was an important example for the decade. At the same time, Janet Jackson's album *Control* was extremely popular and included empowering sentiments

¹⁶⁵ Becky Johnston, "Confession of a Catholic Girl," *Interview*, May 1989, 59.

¹⁶⁶ Lucy O'Brien, *Madonna: Like an Icon*, (New York, New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2009), 206.



FIGURE 46. *Still image of Madonna wearing a man's pant suit in her video for "Express Yourself". From Madonna's Express Yourself Video.*

for women. Pat Benatar and Annie Lennox are other examples of female musicians who used music videos to express feminist ideologies in the 1990s. While many well-known pop stars could express themselves through mainstream media sources, another group of female musicians were establishing the Riot Grrrl movement.

The Riot Grrrl movement incorporated women into the punk rock scene beginning in the early 1990s Washington, D.C. area, progressing throughout the U.S. and into the mainstream. Laurel Gilbert and Crystal Kile describe the Riot Grrrl movement in *Surfergrrrls: Look Ethel! An Internet Guide for Us*:

"Grrrl," a word coined by Bikini Kill singer and activist Katheen Hanna, is a spontaneous young-feminist reclamation of the word "girl." It has proud analogies among many groups of women; in fact, "grrrl" was at least partially derived from a phrase of encouragement popularized by young American black women in the late 1980s: "You go, guuurlll!" As we all know, when it is not being used to describe a woman under sixteen, the word "girl" often takes on pejorative, infantilizing overtones, suggesting silliness weakness or insubstantiality. "Grrrl" puts the growl back in our pussycat throats. "Grrrl" intended to recall the naughty, confident and curious ten-year-olds we were before society made it clear it was time to stop being and playing with boys and concentrate on learning "to girl"... Riot Grrrl is a loosely affiliated group of young, generally punkish, take-no-prisoners feminists who publish zines, play in bands, make art, produce radio shows, maintain mailing lists, create websites and sometimes just get together and talk about our lives and being women in contemporary society...¹⁶⁷

Conventions were held where Riot Grrrls could meet and exchange zines, watch bands perform, and attend workshops on topics such as rape, eating disorders, abuse, self-

¹⁶⁷ Laurel Gilbert and Crystal Kile, *Surfergrrrls: Look Ethel! An Internet Guide Us!* (Seattle: Seal Press, 1996), 6.

defense, racism, and zine production.¹⁶⁸ An example of a “Riot Grrrl” zine material can be viewed in figure 47. Female bands such as Bikini Kill and Heavens to Betsy were involved and representative of the movement. “Riot Grrrls” did not stick to one fashion or makeup style and wore whatever they chose, but generally, punk fashions



FIGURE 47. Cover of BIKINI KILL zine, no. 2. From *The Kathleen Hanna Papers*

¹⁶⁸ Jessica Rosenberg and Gitana Garofalo, "Riot Grrrl: Revolutions from Within," *Signs* 23, no. 3 (1998): 810, accessed January 4, 2018. <http://www.jstor.org.uri.idm.oclc.org/stable/3175311>

similar to that of the 1970s in combination with the 1990s Grunge styles seem to be common styles. An image can be seen in figure 48. Bikini Kill published a “Riot Grrrl” manifesto in their 1991 *BIKINI KILL ZINE 2* that included some of reasons for the movement’s existence, an excerpt reads:

...BECAUSE doing/reading/seeing/hearing cool things that validate and challenge us can help us gain the strength and sense of community that we need in order to figure out how bullshit like racism, able-bodieism, ageism, speciesism, classism, thinism, sexism, anti-semitism and heterosexism figures in our own lives...

...BECAUSE we are angry at a society that tells us Girl = Dumb, Girl = Bad, Girl = Weak...

...BECAUSE we are unwilling to let our real and valid anger be diffused and/or turned against us via the internalization of sexism as witnessed in girl/girl jealousy and self defeating girlytype behaviors.

BECAUSE I believe with my wholeheartmindbody that girls constitute a revolutionary soul force that can, and will change the world for real.¹⁶⁹

Though opposition may describe “Riot Grrrls” as a young feminist’s movement, it was a legitimate and significant presence within the Third Wave. Female punk-rockers and feminist zine creators reached many young women throughout the United States. The goals described in the “Riot Grrrl Manifesto” were parallel to many Third-Wave ideologies. Democratized technologies and subculture movements are both part of Third-Wave feminism. As discussed earlier, the Third Wave is not necessarily a singular ideology or movement and is a combination of many efforts that form a collective feminist consciousness. Moving forward, this piece of Third Wave, young-feminist involvement would disperse knowledge and

¹⁶⁹ Kathleen Hanna, “Riot Grrrl Manifesto,” *BIKINI KILL zine no. 2*, 1991, accessed February 26, 2018. http://onewarart.org/riot_grrrl_manifesto.htm.



FIGURE 48. Photo of BIKINI KILL performing in the 1990s. From MAKERS feminist media brand.

empowerment through technological integration and feminist networks—helping feminists across the United States and globe connect.¹⁷⁰

Documenting a century of feminist movement and fashion changes does not allow for both to be discussed in their entirety, but rather to discuss well-known and expressive moments within each. Feminism has evolved tremendously over the course of one hundred years, but its correlation to fashion and anti-fashion has been consistent as documented by this review of literature. Anti-fashion through subculture and individual choice has been used to refute traditional fashion systems. Though

¹⁷⁰ Ednie Kaeh Garrison, "U.S. Feminism-Grrrl Style! Youth (Sub)Cultures and the Technologies of the Third Wave," *Feminist Studies* 26, no. 1 (2000): 164, accessed February 13, 2018. doi:10.2307/3178596.

anti-fashion is the most obvious way that dress is used to communicate, mainstream fashion has been used to help women's causes reach greater audiences. While fashion and anti-fashion have been used to move women's causes forward, it has been shown how fashionable dress has been used to promote traditional gender roles.

Women's struggles with beauty and societal standards were present through the twentieth century, shifting with each decade's views and expectations. Personal fashion choices and beauty standards are topics that remain a focus from twenty-first-century feminists. Many media sources continue the cycle of sexism while discussing female politicians such as Sarah Palin and Hillary Clinton, whose fashion choices were either too feminine or too feminist. Femininity in politics and the workplace is still cause for debate and dress, along with many other daily tribulations, remains a symbol of feminism's continued purpose.

Second-Wave feminism opened the door for more choice in women's clothing, while the Third Wave solidified women's choice in fashion, at least in the personal realm. Today, many women dress in an individualistic style without receiving criticism on a daily basis, but the overall mindset about women's fashion choices and beauty may not have progressed as much as feminists would have liked. Social media outlets such as Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, and Twitter have expanded communication on a global front, but it also provides a channel for sexism, bigotry, racism, and overall rudeness. Body-positive fashion models such as Tess Holliday, receive an immense amount of support on social media, but also receive offensive comments with the purpose of diminishing Holliday's self-esteem and body-positive attitude. Looking towards the future, where do we go from here?

The purpose of this research is not necessarily to provide an answer, but to look at the correlation between feminism, fashion, and decade's worth of the American woman's fight for equality and physical freedom within society in order to ignite discussion. Research on feminism, fashion, and overall beauty standards can be used to open a dialogue between its scholars and audience that facilitates understanding, involvement, and general knowledge.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The extensive review of literature in Chapter 2 on women's feminist movements, fashion, and anti-fashion of the twentieth-century was combined with material culture study in order to select artifacts for curation of an exhibition in the University of Rhode Island's (URI) Textile Gallery. Garments from The University of Rhode Island's Historic Textile and Costume Collection (HTCC), within the Textiles, Merchandising and Design Department (TMD), were chosen with the following criteria in mind: Fits within the twentieth-century time frame; Represents selected fashions of First, Second, Third Wave feminist movements, as well as intermediate years, ranging from the year 1850 through 1999.

The HTCC's mission is to "support teaching in the Department of Textiles, Fashion Merchandising and Design as well as other departments at the University of Rhode Island; promote research by students, faculty, and visiting scholars; and provide artifacts for use in class and exhibition in the Textile Gallery and other museums".¹⁷¹ URI graduate students in the TMD Department have the unique opportunity to work with historic textiles on a daily basis through in-class projects, contract work, and thesis research. This research incorporates the collection and its documentation for specific garments relevant to twentieth-century feminism. The first step to choosing

¹⁷¹ "Historic Textile and Costume Collection Mission and Management Policies," *University of Rhode Island's Historic Textile and Costume Collection*.

garments for analysis was setting parameters for the First, Second, and Third Waves of feminism as well as its intermediate years.

First Wave fashions include garments that would have been worn to protests and marches by suffragists as documented through photography and texts such as women's tailored skirt suits or white lingerie dresses. Intermediate fashions include the more constricting 1930s bias-cut or slender, elongated gowns, tailored skirt suits for WWII female workers, garments in line with Dior's "New Look", and garments portraying 1950s housewife looks. Second Wave fashions include mini-skirts, jeans, maternity wear, hippie garments, pantsuits, and professional attire. Third Wave fashions include styles influenced by the 1970s Punk movement and 1990s Grunge movement. Since Third Wave is not defined by fashion itself, photographs, and advertisements provided visuals that accompany clothing from the time period. Late-nineteenth-century undergarments such as corsets and hoop skirts were included to represent the dress reform movement. Garments were also chosen based on gallery case and end case measurements. The garments selected are recognizable and offer historical information on both their feminist and fashion history which ensured interesting and adequate label text. All garments chosen were in good condition, did not need extensive conservation work, and were stable enough to be displayed for six months to a year.

The curator chose garments with the assistance of the Collection Manager, Susan Jerome. Garments were chosen before the Spring 2018 semester began because students participating in the graduate course, TMD 568: Special Problems in Textile

Conservation, taught by Rebecca Kelly, acted as curatorial assistants for the exhibition preparation.

Eleven outfits were chosen with consideration of the above parameters. The material culture analysis of each piece followed Fleming's Model of Material Culture Analysis. Five fundamental principles were used within Fleming's model: history, material, construction, design, and function. In this research, material, construction, and design details were not discussed in detail unless it was essential to the feminist history of the piece. The garment's history and function, and therefore its cultural relevance within twentieth-century feminism, were critical to this research and accompanying exhibition. History is described by Fleming as including, "where and when it was made, by whom and for whom and why and successive changes in ownership, condition, and function."¹⁷² Function, "embraces both the uses (intended functions) and the roles (unintended functions) of the object in its culture, including utility, delight, and communication. Next, identification of the object is produced on the basis of classification, authentication, and description. Essentially, the identification process verifies that the object is authentic in regard to its date and materials. Interpretation is that last step of Fleming's model, resulting in a cultural analysis "concerned with the relations of the artifact to its culture."¹⁷³ These steps towards material culture analysis resulted in definitive information used to describe and relate each outfit to twentieth-century feminism.

¹⁷² E. McClung Fleming, "Artifact Study: A Proposed Model," *Winterthur Portfolio*, 156.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, 161.

After selection, the garments were photographed. Photographs were uploaded into a spreadsheet, created by the researcher on Microsoft Excel, and organized in chronological order to identify any weaknesses in the timeline. Garments were categorized into exhibitable “outfits” added or removed depending on analysis. Once the complete and consistent timeline was created, chosen items were thoroughly described and evaluated to determine condition. Documentation from this process was added to the database.¹⁷⁴

Outfit choices and an overview of the exhibit’s purpose was presented to the Special Problems course on the first day of class. In the following weeks of class, students were given the curator’s garment database and completed conservation work as necessary. Curatorial assistants chose dress forms and created mounts for all outfits. They also vacuumed and steamed outfits before installation. The curator created a document that mapped out the gallery space to ensure each dress form and mount’s placement. The gallery space document also describes end case themes.

Placement within gallery cases and end cases followed chronological order, and a visible timeline was created to be used in the exhibition. Text labeling and accompanying imagery was completed, printed, and fitted into the exhibition space after dress form and mount placement. Advertising of the exhibition took place online and on campus in the weeks before the exhibition was installed to ensure attendance at the opening reception.

¹⁷⁴ Nathan Campbell, “Introduction to Material Culture Studies: A Crash Course”, accessed December 2, 2016, <http://chnm.gmu.edu/wwh/modules/lesson4/images/sources/materialculturehandout.pdf>.

Limitations of this research include the use of the HTCC alone in choosing garments for analysis and exhibition. The confined geographical context and demographics limited the range of artifacts from which exhibitable items could be selected.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Fleming's Model of Material Culture Analysis was used to produce the results discussed in this chapter. The researcher's observations and research pertaining to each outfit was combined with information from Chapter 2: Review of Literature. The chosen garments and historical information gathered during research were combined to create a historic textile exhibition, explored in the final section of this chapter. The results are organized into thirteen sections: Outfit 1: 1870s Bustle Hoop and 1890s Corset, Outfit 2: 1910 Woman's Tailor-Made and Blouse, Outfit 3: 1920s Gold Metallic Evening Dress , Outfit 4: 1930s Floral Printed Crepe Evening Gown, Outfit 5: 1930s Bifurcated Pajama Set, Outfit 6: Late 1940s Balenciaga Skirt Suit, Outfit 7: 1950s Homemaker's Look, Outfit 8: Early 1960s Maternity Top and Skirt, Outfit 9: 1960s Paper Dress, Outfit 10: 1970s Embroidered Jean Jacket, Outfit 11: 1980 Woman's Tailored Pantsuit, Outfit 12 and 13: 1980s Punk and 1990s Grunge, and Exhibition.

MATERIAL CULTURE STUDY AND EXHIBITION

The Textiles, Fashion Merchandising and Design Department at the University of Rhode Island began as the School of Home Economics. Early on, many of the professors had interest in historic textiles, but it wasn't until the early 1950s when Mary Whitlock became the Chair of the newly named Textiles, Clothing and Related Arts program, that the collection gained notoriety within the University of Rhode Island and surrounding community. Whitlock personally collected historic textiles as

well as purchased and collected items for the growing Historic Textile and Costume Collection. She advertised the collection to colleagues, the university, and “South County”, an area with much historical interest and long-standing family homes and collections. This led to donations from the general public, both physical and financial. Now, the HTCC consists of about thirty-thousand garments and textile-related objects, filling three classroom spaces, and functions as a teaching collection. The HTCC is an extremely valuable asset to the TMD department, and more specifically to the Historic Textile specialization within the TMD Graduate Program.

Garments from the HTCC were chosen for this research by their representation of fashion and anti-fashion associated with the three waves of twentieth-century feminism through silhouette and physical style, and the criteria discussed within Chapter 3. Fleming’s model, commonly referred to as material culture study, was used to produce historical and cultural information for each outfit chosen for exhibition. Outfits chosen for exhibition from the HTCC include: Dress reform fashions including a ca. 1870 bustled hoop skirt and ca. 1895 Royal Worcester corset; First Wave suffragist and feminist fashions including a ca. 1910 white blouse and tailored skirt suit and ca. 1925 gold metallic evening dress; Intermediate period fashions including a ca. 1935 printed crepe evening gown, ca. 1930s pajama set with oriental design, ca. 1947 Balenciaga tailored skirt suit, ca. 1955 white blouse with black skirt and apron, and ca. 1960 maternity blouse and skirt; Second Wave feminist fashions including a ca. 1968 paper dress, ca. 1975 hand-embroidered jean jacket, and ca. 1980 pantsuit with a pink blouse. Late 1970s and 80s punk fashions (Second

Wave) and 1990s (Third Wave) Grunge fashions will be represented by garments on loan from private collections, though they will be briefly discussed in this chapter.

The Textiles, Merchandising and Design Department's Textile Gallery, located on the first floor of Quinn Hall at the University of Rhode Island, was opened in 1999 after years of fundraising efforts.¹⁷⁵ The gallery space was constructed using museum quality materials and considerations. Historic textiles and dress from the HTCC are used to produce yearly exhibitions within the Textile Gallery. Previous exhibitions include: *Celebrating 125 Years at the University of Rhode Island*, *The Rise of the Readymade Apparel Industry*, *The Other White Dress*, *From Kitchen to Kitsch: Aprons from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*, along with many others. The exhibition process is a valuable experience for graduate students specializing in Historic Textiles who intend to work for museums, historical and preservation societies, and in private conservation. Graduate students are required to enroll in TMD 548: Exhibition and Storage of Historic Textiles, which provides students with necessary skills in the development of a historic textile exhibition, specifically, creating custom mounts for textiles, choosing and preparing dress forms, as well as installation of all items. This research was conducted in consideration of an exhibition. Curatorial skills are not necessarily included with the Exhibition and Storage course. The goals of this research combine material culture study with curatorial and installation skillsets.

¹⁷⁵ "Collections and Gallery," *Department of Textiles, Fashion Merchandising and Design*, accessed February 28, 2018. <https://web.uri.edu/tmd/collections-gallery/>.

Exhibitions in any institution allow for the sharing of knowledge between visitors, scholars, and the institutions employees. Exhibitions are used in many fields to start a dialogue between viewers, institutions, and society. Often, the items within an institution's collection connect to current research being conducted within the field, current events, social issues, and other factors. Historic textiles offer viewers a way to connect to the past through their histories, communicatory properties, and visual appeal. In *Fashion and Museums: Theory and Practice*, Marie Riegels Melchior explains,

Another capacity of fashion in museums (of which curators are very conscious) is its unique potential to produce presence within the context of interpreted meaning, while also appealing to people who consciously stage their personal appearance. The advantage of dress, whether fashionable or not, is that it is easy to understand without extensive knowledge of art history, literature, sociology, or other intellectual disciplines, and can instead be read through its bodily syntax—how the body is concealed, revealed, or imaged. For example, the casual viewer is often amazed by the narrow waistline of nineteenth-century corsets and can almost feel the pressure of the tight lacing on the body, relating to the feelings of women from that era.¹⁷⁶

This capacity can be maximized by collections such as the HTCC who collect items worn by individuals from the surrounding areas. Though families primarily keep important, occasion-based clothing, New England is rich in historical textiles worn by average citizens on a daily basis compared to other regions. One of the strengths of the HTCC, is its family collections which include everyday textile items that show wear and tear. Often, collections focus on couture and designer items that most

¹⁷⁶ Marie Riegals Melchior, "Introduction: Understanding Fashion and Dress Museology," in *Fashion and Museums: Theory and Practice*, edited by Marie Riegels Melchior and Birgitta Svensson, (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 5.

Americans could not afford. “Collecting clothing actually worn is an important part of the acquisition strategy of most fashion collections. The documentation around each dress (oral history about why the item was purchased, how and when it was worn, as well as photographs of it being worn) is vital for creating social history narratives around fashion consumption,” explains Julia Petrov.¹⁷⁷ The purpose of this exhibit is to show examples of how fashion and anti-fashion were used to participate in mainstream expectations or to communicate feminist issues. Petrov goes on to say, “As feminist museologist Baby Porter noted in 1988, women and femininity are all too often encoded in museum displays with the material culture of domestic toil and the textile arts.”¹⁷⁸ Gender considerations are extremely important in exhibitions because the way a subject is portrayed may have a lasting impression on its viewers. *Feminism and Fashion of the Twentieth Century* aims to discuss many types of women and feminists from the twentieth century in order to provide an unbiased view. Textiles, when they are “authentically and sensitively” displayed to depict women, have “the ability to summon up in our imagination an embodiment, rather than an ethereal caricature, of our foremothers.”¹⁷⁹ It is the goal of this exhibition to create a professional, thoughtful exhibition concerning women, feminism, and communicatory power of fashion and anti-fashion.

Selection of Garments

With the help of the Collection Manager, Susan Jerome, and Thesis Advisor, Dr. Linda Welters, the researcher chose garments representative of fashion and anti-

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 82.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 87.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 88

fashion from First, Second, and Third Wave feminism, as well as the intermediate period, of the twentieth century. Garment selection occurred over the Fall 2017 semester to ensure enough time for material culture study, exhibition planning, and preparation to occur. Garments were assembled into complete outfits that would be shown on a singular dress form or corresponding mounts. The outfits were presented to the thesis committee for review and recommendations. After recommendations were considered and changes were made, material culture study could begin on the chosen outfits.

Outfit 1: 1870s Bustle Hoop and 1890s Corset

A bustle hoop and “Royal Worcester” corset were chosen from the HTCC to represent the constricting and impractical undergarments of the late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century. They illustrate dress reformists’ concerns with women’s undergarments and fashionable dress.

In 1956, Mrs. John Gardner from Exeter, Rhode Island donated a set of cage crinolines, also known as hoops.¹⁸⁰ The hoop chosen for this research, is a ca. 1870 bustle hoop constructed of cotton and steel rings, pictured in figure 49. It is discolored and some of the steel is exposed where the cotton is damaged. Its accession number is 1955.36.06. Hoop skirts are generally of simple construction due to not being visible to anyone other than the wearer and women who may have helped her get dressed.

Expansive hoop skirts, beginning around 1855, supported voluminous dresses, but as silhouette styles shifted to bustled fashions in the 1870s, many women did not

¹⁸⁰ University of Rhode Island Historic Textile and Costume Collection. Gardner file, Accession Records. Accession number: 1955.36.06.

need to wear a full hoop anymore. Instead, women gathered the extra fabric to the back of their gowns to further enhance the bustled appearance, supported by padded bustles and layers of petticoats. The HTCC's bustle hoop is an example of one of the final pushes from steel and hoop manufacturers who would soon stop producing hoops—an outdated fashion by the 1870s—altogether. From the front, a women's silhouette consisted of an hourglass shape with a smooth, flat surface, but from the back, a woman's backside was heavily shaped. An example of a dress that would have been worn with this style of hoop can be viewed in figure 50. Hoops and constricting undergarments, such as the Royal Worcester Corset being exhibited with this bustle hoop, were at the center of discussion as dress reformists gained notoriety from 1850 through the early-twentieth century.

Hoops skirts were not necessarily causing internal health concerns for women, but rather inconveniencing their daily activities. Sitting, walking, ascending and descending the stairs were all extremely difficult tasks due to hoop skirts and petticoats. This hoop is representative of the last remaining styles of the 1870s, when bustles could be achieved without the use of a hoop. An example of a similar bustle hoop, from the same time period, can be viewed on a dress form in figure 51. Bustled silhouettes of the 1870s were referred to as the “waterfall” style, because the appearance of layered fabric looked as though it was cascading down the backside of a woman. The “waterfall” style was popular in the first decade of the bustle fad which became extreme in the 1880s, as discussed in Chapter 2. After the extreme, ninety-degree- angle of bustle styles in the late 1880s, silhouettes evolved into a flowing, trumpet shaped skirt. As skirts “became narrower and flatter in front more emphasis

was placed on the waist and hips. A corset was therefore needed which would help mold the body to the desired shape.”¹⁸¹ Skirts of the 1870s through the turn-of-the-century were flat in the front and required similarly shaped corsets.



FIGURE 49. *Bustle hoop, ca. 1870. Accession Number: 1955.36.06. Author's photograph. From The University of Rhode Island's Historic Textile and Costume Collection.*

¹⁸¹ Lucy Johnston, “Crinoline, Crinolettes, Bustles and Corsets from 1860-80,” *Victoria and Albert Museum*, accessed February 20, 2018. <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/c/crinolines-crinolettes-bustles-corsets-1860-1880/>.



FIGURE 50. Evening gown with “waterfall” bustle from the House of Worth, ca. 1872. From The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Accession Number: 46.25.1a-d.



FIGURE 51. *A similar bustle hoop from the 1870s displayed on a dress form. From The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Accession Number: C.I.45.79.2.*

Miss Louise White donated a “beautifully made white cotton brocade corset,” ca. 1895 in 1954, shown in figure 52.¹⁸² The corset is made of cotton, silk, lace, and steel. Its accession number is 1954.14.01. White was the Director of Nursing at URI at the time of the donation. She had acquired the corset through her sister, whose roommate’s father was in the corset business. The donor records indicate the roommate’s father, “migrated to the United States,” where, “he had only a few

¹⁸² University of Rhode Island Historic Textile and Costume Collection. White file, Accession Records. Accession number: 1954.14.01.

dollars” and, “built a very wealthy business.”¹⁸³ It is unclear whether or not the roommate’s father was David Hale Fanning, the original owner and president of the Royal Worcester Corset or a later president of the company. Regardless, this corset exemplifies the style of the late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century.

The Royal Worcester Corset Company began, in 1861, as the Worcester Skirt Company, a manufacturer of hoop skirts for women’s wear. When the use of hoops was no longer popular, Fanning perfected several models of corsets and with them was able to retain the hold he already had upon those dealers selling woman’s wear.”¹⁸⁴ In 1901, as the business flourished, the name was changed to the Royal Worcester Corset Company. Three types of corsets were produced at the company: “Bon Ton”, “Royal Worcester”, and “Adjusto” corsets. The HTCC’s corset is of the “Royal Worcester” variety. The manufacturing plant, in Worcester, Massachusetts, was the largest plant solely dedicated to the production of corsets, which were distributed throughout the United States as well as globally. Fanning was known for his attention to employee’s “health, comfort, and welfare.”¹⁸⁵ With over two-thousand employees, many of which were women, the environment at Fanning’s plant was described as sanitary and comfortable with its own water supply and hospital ward. A photograph of the plant’s interior can be viewed in figure 53. The photograph shows about seven-hundred women at work at the nearly five-hundred electrically-powered sewing

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Charles Nutt, *History of Worcester and Its People, Volume 3*, (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1919), 212.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 212.



FIGURE 52. *Woman's "Royal Worcester" corset manufactured by the Royal Worcester Corset Company, ca. 1895. Author's photograph. From the University of Rhode Island's Historic Textile and Costume Collection. Accession number: 1954.14.01.*



FIGURE 53. *Photograph of one of the main stitching rooms at the Royal Worcester Corset Company in 1902. From The Worcester Public Library's "Worcester Collection".*

machines according to the Worcester Public Library's "Worcester Collection". This photograph is evidence of female employment within New England's manufacturing industry at the turn-of-the-century. Not only were women purchasing and wearing corsets, but they were also involved in their manufacture in the New England area.

The "Royal Worcester" corset from the Royal Worcester Corset Company, effectively transformed a woman's body into the desired silhouette of the early-twentieth century, the hourglass shape. This particular example from the HTCC is a non-custom corset for evening wear produced through mass-manufacturing featuring a delicate flower print fabric, with ribbon and lace edging on both the top and bottom.

The ideal silhouette of early-twentieth-century women was focused on smooth

hips and a “swelling chest”, that was often “shaped very low around the bust line so women would need more support on top—if at least to preserve decency with the low-cut evening dresses of the time.”¹⁸⁶ The corset from the HTCC sits low on a women’s chest and upon the hips.

The bustle hoop and corset were chosen due to their appropriate appearance according to date, condition and stability acceptable for exhibition, and their representation of constricting and impractical undergarments being protested by dress reformists. Fashionable women were indebted to a rigid dressing routine that was time consuming, but also corsetry was at the center of health-related debate and dress reformist’s concerns. *Reforming Fashion, 1850-1914: Politics, Health, and Art*, an exhibition concerning the women’s dress reform movement, describes a women’s morning routine:

When getting dressed, the fashionable woman first put on her stockings, which were gartered above the knee with elastic bands that could reduce circulation of the legs. She might then put on her high cut button shoes because, once the corset was on, it then became difficult to bend down to button the shoes. The next two pieces were drawers and chemise. Drawers were knee-length or longer cotton trousers that buttoned at the waist, often left open for ease in elimination. Over the drawers she put on either a hip-length knitted vest and a short petticoat or a chemise. The next essential garment was the corset stiffened with thin strips of whale bone. If a woman tight laced she risked squeezing her intestines and internal organs. Her breathing would be restricted as well. Over this, a woman put on a corset cover and then a bustle, a contraption made of coils that was tied around the waist and hung in back. Another petticoat would be worn over this.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ Lucy Johnston, “Corsets in the Early Twentieth Century,” <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/c/corsets-early-20th-century/>.

¹⁸⁷ “Reforming Fashion, 1850-1914: Politics, Health, and Art,” *Ohio State University’s Historic Costume and Textiles Collection*, accessed February 20, 2018. <http://costume.osu.edu/2000/04/14/reforming-fashion-1850-1914-politics-health-and-art/>.

This daily routine and health issues related to shaping undergarments, propelled many different groups of people, including physicians, feminists, artists, and health advocates, to vocalize their concerns about the connection between fashionable dress and women's health. The dress reform movement was well-known at the beginning of the twentieth century, and though success may not have been immediate, the lasting impression of dress reform and its alternative fashions such as trousers would be a reminder throughout the century of many women's desires for practical clothing.

Outfit 2: Ca. 1910 Woman's Tailor-Made and Blouse

Connie Jones donated a woman's wool tailored jacket and skirt, ca. 1910, in 2005.¹⁸⁸ Its accession number is 2005.05.01 a, b. The wool fabric is a navy-blue color with subtle black and gray stripes. The jacket features a double-breasted front closure with a black velvet collar. The skirt is decorated with pairs of buttons and buttonholes down the center-front. Below the buttons, the front edges remain open to the side, imitating a man's cutaway coat. Pleating provides fullness and the bottom of the skirt is decorated with a bias strip of fabric. An image of the outfit can be seen in figure 54. A blouse was chosen from the collection to accompany the suit for exhibition. The blouse's accession number is 58.38.21. The skirt suit and blouse are presented as one cohesive outfit to represent women's fashions around 1910. Tailored skirt suits and lingerie dresses are the two most notable outfits observed in suffrage movement photography.

¹⁸⁸ University of Rhode Island Historic Textile and Costume Collection. Jones file, Accession Records. Accession number: 2005.05.01 a, b.



FIGURE 54. *Navy-blue tailored skirt suit with white silk blouse, ca. 1910. Author's photograph. From the University of Rhode Island's Historic Textile and Costume Collection. Accession number: 2005.05.01a, b.*

Tailored skirt suits, also referred to as tailor-mades, with blouses were extremely popular at the beginning of the twentieth century. Tailor-mades were previously worn for walking, riding habits, bicycling, and other athletic activities. By 1905, many fashionable women wore tailor-mades on a daily basis due to their practicality. Though women still wore shaping undergarments with skirt suits, they were seemingly more comfortable for women's daily activities. The S-shaped silhouette was the peak of corsetry when silhouette styles emulated the hourglass figure with a monobosom chest. Though necklines began to lower, blouses with high necklines were popular in conjunction with tailor-mades through WWI. As the empire waist became popular, there was less emphasis on corsetry with particular styles, such as Paul Poiret inspired designs, shown in Chapter 2. Due to WWI, militaristic styles and decoration were incorporated into women's fashions.

The HTCC's tailor-made features a jacket in a man's cutaway style with military-influenced details such as a double-breasted front opening and double buttons down the center-front of the skirt. This skirt suit is a good example of daily wear for a woman around 1910. A fashion plate depicting a woman in a tailor-made from *Les Modes* magazine can be viewed in figure 55. As discussed in Chapter 2, many suffragists wore dress reform fashions, such as bloomers, on a daily basis in the early years of the suffrage movement. As negative stereotypes were being affiliated with suffragists who wore dress reform fashions, women involved were asked to wear fashionable dress in public. Leaders of the suffrage movement knew that drawing attention to the movement through reformist fashions—thought of as anti-fashion—

would lead to more opposition and slow progress. Reflecting on this issue years later, Susan B. Anthony explained,

I learned the lesson then that to be successful, a person must attempt but one reform. By urging two, both are injured, as the average mind can grasp and assimilate but one idea at a time. I have felt ever since that experience that if I wished my hearers to consider the suffrage question, I must not present the temperance, the religious, the dress, or any other besides, but must confine myself to suffrage.¹⁸⁹

As suffragists stopped wearing dress reform fashions and participated in fashionable dress, more women became involved in the suffrage movement. Wearing fashionable dress encouraged more women to participate in the movement because there was less fear of being ridiculed and standing out. Suffragists could wear a pin or sash over their fashionable outfits. Tailor-mades, lingerie dresses, and the Gibson Girl look, consisting of a blouse and skirt, were the fashions most frequently observed through photography during this research. This example, from the HTCC, is representative of the daily fashions worn by suffragists participating in public protests and marches. Figure 56 is a photograph of suffragists marching in 1913. Both tailor-mades and lingerie dresses are being worn. For exhibition, a “Votes for Women” sash was created and displayed with the outfit.

¹⁸⁹ Ida Husted Harper, *The Life and Work of Susan B. Anthony Volume 1*, (Kansas City: Bowen-Merill, 1899), 117.



FIGURE 55. *Tailor-made by designer Bernard featured in Les Modes, February 1910. From Les Modes.*



FIGURE 56. *Suffragists marching in 1913, who wear tailored skirt suits and lingerie dresses. From Getty Images.*

Outfit 3: 1920s Gold Metallic Evening Dress

A gold metallic evening dress, consisting of an overdress, slip, and long collar, ca. 1920, shown in figure 57, was chosen to represent the 1920s fashions post-suffrage that were viewed by many young women as fashionable, yet considered anti-fashion by a conservative society. This dress is a donation from the “Tirocchi Collection” which does not consist of traditional donor records due to its unusual circumstance. Its accession number is 1990.09.478a-c. The gold fabric used to construct the dress was most likely imported from Europe, and its purpose was to draw attention to the wearer. The garment consists of a dropped waist, and shapeless, androgynous silhouette attributed to the *garçonne* look. A ruffled and flared shape can be seen at

the bottom of the overdress, which would help to create movement as the wearer walked or danced. The slip is constructed of black silk at the top and the same metallic as the overdress and collar at the skirt. Hemlines of the time reached a



FIGURE 57. *Gold metallic evening dress, ca. 1920. Author's photograph. From The University of Rhode Island's Historic Textile and Costume Collection. Accession Number: 1990.09.478 a-c.*

woman's calf. This outfit would be worn in the evening, and its purpose is to create a sensory experience and attract the eye of others as the wearer was out in public.

This gold dress, from the HTCC, was donated as part of the "Tirocchi Collection". Anna and Laura Tirocchi were immigrant sisters from Italy who operated and owned the A. & L. Tirocchi dressmaker's shop in Providence, Rhode Island from 1915 to 1947. Their first shop was located in the Butler Exchange building on Westminster Street, and later in a historic Victorian mansion on Providence's Broadway. A photograph of Anna Tirocchi and her employees in the Butler Exchange workroom is shown in figure 58. The sisters custom-made the latest Paris fashions for prominent women with imported luxury textiles until about 1924, when the shop



FIGURE 58. *Anna Tirocchi in the Butler Exchange workroom making the final adjustments to a dress, ca. 1914. From Tirocchi Archive.*

focused on ready-to wear items. Young, skilled women from neighboring Italian-American communities, like Federal Hill and Silver Lake, worked in the shop stitching clothing. In 1947, when Anna Tirocchi died, Laura closed the shop's doors permanently with all of the contents remaining. It was not until 1989 that the shop's contents were examined, when Laura's son, Louis—inheritor of the house—invited curators from the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) Museum to choose objects for their collection. The HTCC at URI received 2,000 items during this process as well. The Tirocchi dressmakers' shop is a valuable resource for a wide-range of historical issues such as Italian immigration, custom-made and ready-to-wear production in Rhode Island, women as workers and consumers, and the importation of luxury goods to this area from 1915 through 1947. The RISD Museum's 2001 exhibition, *From Paris to Providence: Fashion, Art, and the Tirocchi Dressmakers' Shop,* described the shop as a "time capsule" that:

flourished in Providence from 1915 to 1947, when fortunes were being made in the textile, jewelry, machine parts, rubber, and oil industries; when increasing freedom and the right to vote were won by American women and were reflected in new clothing styles; and when two aspiring dressmakers and their young Italian-American employees found fulfillment in bringing high fashion from Paris to Providence.¹⁹⁰

The gold metallic dress is an example of *garçonne* styles that dominated post-war fashions, as young women celebrated the new freedoms of suffrage and citizenship. The name *garçonne* may have originated from Victor Margueritte's novel,

¹⁹⁰ "From Paris to Providence: Fashion, Art, and the Tirocchi Dressmakers' Shop," *Costume and Textiles Exhibition at the RISD Museum*. January 12-April 8, 2001. Accessed February 20, 2018. https://risdmuseum.org/art_design/exhibitions/149_from_paris_to_providence_fashion_art_and_the_tirocchi_dressmakers_shop.

La Garçonne, published in 1922. His novel tells the story of a young, progressive woman who leaves home in search of an independent life away from her family.¹⁹¹ Though the reality of women's lives post suffrage was more complicated, the garçonne look became aspirational for young women. Youthful and more androgynous, the style showcased a flattened bosom. The term "flapper", associated with the garçonne look, described progressive, young women post suffrage who donned short hair, makeup, and dropped-waist fashions. Though corsets were not abandoned altogether, some young women refused to wear them, while others adopted elastic corsets that provided support and were more comfortable.¹⁹² These women participated in new dance culture, smoked cigarettes, and drank alcohol at speakeasies and night clubs. Many individuals in line with the conservative opinions within mainstream society believed that this style was too bold and gender bending. As shown in Chapter 2, many cartoons were introduced depicting "flappers" as masculine and unladylike. Figure 59 shows a gold dress with similar silhouette and embellished with rhinestones ca. 1925, designed by Edward Molyneux. Though these young women did not necessarily participate in the suffrage movement, the "flapper" and garçonne appearance was representative of the shifting mindset of women in the 1920s. Regardless of women's continued political struggles post suffrage, these women were willing to break traditional societal roles because of the freedoms gained through the suffrage movement. Many women participating in the suffrage movement continued to work for legislative changes to support women's changing role in society

¹⁹¹ Mendes and de la Haye, *Fashion since 1900*, 58.

¹⁹² *Ibid*, 65.

post suffrage. Though they were not necessarily part of the “flapper” crowd, suffragists recognized these young women for being bold and willing to challenge traditional gender and societal roles.



FIGURE 59. *Gold evening dress embellished with rhinestones ca. 1925 by Edward Molyneux. From The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Accession Number: 2009.300.1276.*

Outfit 4: 1930s Floral Printed Evening Gown

To represent the fashionable styles of the 1930s, a floral printed crepe evening gown was chosen from the collection, shown in figure 60. Its accession number is 1990.09.16, and it also belongs to the “Tirocchi Collection”. The gown features a colorful flower design with black ground printed on a crepe fabric. Short, puffed sleeves, an opening at the center-top of its back, frilled insert at the hem, and self-fabric belt are all indicators of 1930s fashion.



FIGURE 60. *Evening gown with printed floral design, ca. 1935. Author's photograph. From The University of Rhode Island's Historic Textile and Costume Collection. Accession Number: 1990.09.16.*

The 1930s began with the New York stock market crash in October 1929 that led to the Great Depression. Women who had started working post suffrage may have lost their jobs as employers cut costs to make it through the depression. Men were offered women's jobs in an effort to keep them working through the financial crisis. Women were often expected to manage the home during this time.

The Tirocchi dressmakers, who constructed this gown, are described in the previous section. By the 1930s, they had switched from custom-made to ready-to-wear garments. According to the book, *From Paris to Providence: Fashion, Art, and the Tirocchi Dressmakers' Shop, 1915-1947*, records at the shop had become less informative about style in the mid-1930s and only listed importers names. Effects of the Depression were seen as clients postponed payments and abandoned orders. By 1941, only a few devoted clients remained.¹⁹³

After the loose-fitting, dropped-waist styles of the 1920s, women's fashions became form-fitting, long, and slender. Though many fashion houses down-sized to make it through the Depression, new styles were still introduced such as the backless, bias-cut evening gown. Sculpted fashions with feminine curves were often belted to emphasize the natural waist. Hemline lengths varied by the time of day: about 14 inches from the ground during the day, two inches shorter in the afternoon, and floor-length for evening. While the 1920s androgynous silhouette focused on a flattened chest, the '30s enhanced the bust using shaped brassieres.¹⁹⁴ Light, boned and laced

¹⁹³ Susan Hay, "Paris to Providence: French Couture and the Tirocchi Shop," in *From Paris to Providence: Fashion, Art, and the Tirocchi Dressmakers' Shop, 1915-1947*, ed. Susan Hay, (Providence: Rhode Island School of Design, 1999), 169.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 79.

corsets as well as stretch undergarments were used to shape a woman's body. Belts became an important fashion accessory as emphasis was drawn to the waist. They were often constructed of matching fabric and decorated with a clasp or buckle of "jeweled metal or sleek plastic".¹⁹⁵ Floral prints were extremely popular at this time. An example of a very similar evening gown consisting of a floral printed pattern on black ground can be viewed in figure 61.

Fashionable dress was often dictated by Hollywood in the 1930s. Before this time, fashions trickled down from wealthy individuals who could afford expensive Paris fashions. The costumes within a film were essential to its success and large amounts of money were spent on the costumes of female actors. Men often paid for and provided their own clothing. Due to the popularity of Hollywood fashions, "manufacturers and designers seized the opportunity to produce wearable, and profit-making, fashions inspired by the screen."¹⁹⁶ Figure 62 shows actress Marsha Hunt wearing a dress similar to the HTCC's gown and the example from the MFA. This influx in female movie icons and focus on Hollywood fashions influenced the mentality of American women. Women began to compare themselves to the beautiful women on screen more than ever before, propelling America's obsession with unrealistic beauty standards. At the same time, there were female stars in Hollywood who participated in what was considered anti-fashion, like Katherine Hepburn, who wore pants on a daily basis. Bifurcated pants were introduced as a fashionable

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 86.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 87.

garment for lounge, beach, and sportswear in the 1930s, though they were not worn in other social situations.



FIGURE 61. *Printed evening gown with floral design, ca. 1930. From The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Accession Number: 1006.1989.*



FIGURE 62. *Actress Marsha Hunt wearing a gown of similar design, ca. 1935. From Wikimedia Commons.*

Outfit 5: 1930s Bifurcated Pajama Set

As mentioned in the last section, bifurcated fashions were acceptable as beach wear and at-home loungewear. Though actresses like Hepburn, pictured on page 52, wore bifurcated pants on a daily basis, it was not acceptable for the average woman. Hepburn was often criticized for wearing pants, but due to her Hollywood status, she had a bit more power over her choices than the average woman.

Many examples of 1930s loungewear can be found within the HTCC, but this particular example was chosen because it consists of a complete set including a robe, top, bifurcated bottoms, a set of slippers and the matching, fabric-covered case it was contained in. Its accession number is 2004.04.01a, b, c, d, e, and can be viewed in figure 63. Donated by Joyce Hackett Schnappauf of West Kingston, Rhode Island, the



FIGURE 63. *Complete silk pajama set with oriental design, ca. 1930. Author's photograph. From the University of Rhode Island's Historic Textile and Costume Collection. Accession number: 2004.04.01a, b, c, d, e.*

pajama set belonged to her relative Marian Hackett Nesbitt, the secretary to Floyd Gibbons. Floyd Gibbons was a WWI correspondent for the Chicago Tribune and NBC, pictured in figure 64. Unfortunately, it appears that Gibbons had multiple secretaries and no information could be found in reference to Nesbitt. The donor records indicate that Nesbitt traveled the world with Gibbons during his time as a WWI correspondent.¹⁹⁷ The pajama set features an oriental-influenced resist design which could have been purchased while traveling or in the United States. Each item is constructed from silk fabric with a unified oriental design of flowers and greenery either applied as a wax resist or printed to look like a wax resist. The pant legs are extremely wide which was popular for both pajama sets and beach pajamas of the time. Figure 65 shows a pajama set consisting of a robe, top, and wide-legged bifurcated pants with an oriental design.



FIGURE 64. *Photograph of Floyd Gibbons from 1921. Photographed by Harris & Ewing. From Chicago Tribune.*

¹⁹⁷ University of Rhode Island Historic Textile and Costume Collection. Schnappauf file, Accession Records. Accession number: 2004.04.01 a, b, c, d, e.



FIGURE 65. *Black silk pajama set with oriental design and bifurcated pants. From La Belle Vintage.*

Loungewear, worn strictly at home, was a safe space for women to wear bifurcated pants. Many men and women believed that bifurcated pants in any setting were a gender-bending practice. To some, women belonged in skirts and dresses solely because of their gender. It would be about twenty to thirty years before pants became an acceptable garment for women to wear in all public spaces.

Outfit 6: Late 1940s Balenciaga Skirt Suit

A tailored skirt suit by the designer, Balenciaga, was donated to the HTCC in 2001 by Michael McKenna, which can be seen in figure 66.¹⁹⁸ Michael McKenna and Carlos Benevides owned Artifice, a small resale shop in Providence, Rhode Island.



FIGURE 66. *Balenciaga skirt suit from the HTCC, ca. 1947. Author's photograph. From the University of Rhode Island's Historic Costume and Textile Collection. Accession number: 2001.02.02 a, b.*

¹⁹⁸ University of Rhode Island Historic Textile and Costume Collection. McKenna file, Accession Records. Accession number: 2001.02.02 a, b.

The shop specialized in quality vintage clothing—specifically twentieth-century fashions. Objects from the shop have been utilized in previous exhibitions, though the particular objects were not identified. Its accession number is 2001.02.02 a, b. The suit is constructed of blue wool twill fabric. A double-breasted jacket with navy buttons flares at the hip like a peplum, a short section of fabric attached to the waistline of a blouse, jacket, or dress. This design was influenced by Dior’s 1947 “New Look”. The skirt is of the straight, “pencil” style, which has been altered from the original skirt shape. Originally, the skirt would have been more voluminous. An image of Dior’s “New Look”, which this skirt suit would have emulated, is shown in figure 25—in Chapter 2, and below, in figure 67. Both examples feature jacketed styles with peplums. The skirt was most likely altered to the straight style, so the owner could continue wearing this designer suit through the 1950s, when a straighter skirt shape became popular.

Women’s lives in the beginning of the 1940s were drastically different than what their lives would become in the later part of the decade. WWII gave many women the opportunity to work outside of the home due to the majority of male workers participating in the military. To coincide with the type of manual labor jobs many women had, bifurcated pants, overalls, and jumpsuits were worn by women. Designers produced practical designs during this period to provide women with appropriate fashions for the times. Tailor-mades remained popular for women who were not working manual labor jobs. Chapter 2 discussed the differences in which women were treated depending on their appearance. Women who wore tailor-mades were treated much better than women wearing bifurcated garments due to the negative

connotation associated with females wearing pants. After the war ended and many men returned to civilian life, women were forced out of their occupations and generally expected to become homemakers. Though many women were married and had families to manage, some women were discouraged by how they were treated and replaced once men returned from the war. These women became involved in women's groups with feminist goals. Post suffrage, many women's groups worked in the shadows to pass legislation that would improve the quality of women's lives.



FIGURE 67. *An example of Dior's "New Look" of 1947. From Dior Archives.*

At the same time, advertisements and the media were focusing on traditional gender roles and designer fashions followed suit. Dior's "New Look" was introduced in 1947, shortly after the war ended, while women were essentially being told by media and society that their place was in the home. Balenciaga, and other designers like Charles James, created their own versions of the "New Look". This Balenciaga skirt suit is representative of the "New Look" and its possible intention to "curtail women's freedom".¹⁹⁹ An example of a "New Look" inspired skirt suit, by Charles James, can be seen in figure 68. Numerous examples of skirt suits by differing designers were found clearly influenced by Dior's design, which is an indication of its popularity. "New Look" fashions were very feminine, requiring girdles and shaped undergarments to produce the desired silhouette. "Accentuated and clearly defined breasts, a natural shoulderline... and an immensely full mid-calf to ankle-length skirt (sustained by multilayered petticoats)" made up the "New Look". Though shaping undergarments have been used consistently up until this point—with the exception of some early-twentieth-century styles—women were dressing in practical clothing for the half of the 1940s as they worked in many different occupations. Many women hoped to incorporate bifurcated fashion into their everyday dress, but due to society's backlash, they were expected to dress in ultra-feminine styles—if they followed contemporary fashion. As the 1950s began, subcultures came into play. Women who did not want to participate in fashionable dress incorporated subculture attitudes and fashions into their daily lives.

¹⁹⁹ Mendes and de la Haye, *Fashion since 1900*, 130.



FIGURE 68. A “New Look” inspired skirt suit by Charles James, ca. 1948. Accession number: 2009. 300.199a-d. From The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Outfit 7: 1950s Homemaker’s Look

Though subcultures were developing in the 1950s, women who believed in mainstream expectations and fashions continued to wear “New Look” styles. A straight-style skirt was introduced at the end of the 1940s which was worn through the 1950s. At the same time, American designer Claire McCardell created “strong, timeless designs with practical shapes”.²⁰⁰ In the 1950s she introduced unwaisted dresses, cropped halter tops worn with Bermuda shorts, and strongly colored shirtwaisters with circular skirts, which provided American women with functional, but elegant day wear. This outfit from the HTCC was chosen to represent the at-home fashions a homemaker would wear, inspired by the more functional designs.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 148.

A black wool gabardine skirt, ca. 1955, was donated by Dr. Olga P. Bruchner in 1962. Its accession number is 1962.04.03b. Bruchner was the Dean Emerita of the College of Home Economics.²⁰¹ The skirt is of a circular shape, but its fullness is somewhere between the “New Look” and a straight style. The skirt was dressed with a blouse and apron, both items found within the collection with unknown donor information. The white blouse consists of vertical tucks down the front with lace details. The apron is decorated with embroidered flowers, lace edging, and an embroidered teapot on the proper right pocket. Figure 69 shows the blouse, skirt, and apron on a dress form. This outfit is representative of what a homemaker would have worn while participating in at-home chores. The HTCC did not have a good example of a shirtwaist dress, which would have been chosen to depict 1950s homemakers’ fashions if available. By combing garments from the collection, a “look” popular among homemakers was achieved. Many advertisements depict housewives in similar outfits. Figure 70 is an example of an advertisement for gas cookers that portrays a woman in a shirtwaist dress and apron while in her kitchen.

Not all who women who wore contemporary fashions believed in American society’s expectations, but generally, those who followed mainstream fashion also cared about the way society viewed them. Often women, whose goals were marriage, family, and overseeing the home, felt it was necessary to uphold these standards to reach those goals. The 1950s was a time in which traditional gender roles were a topic of conversation. The development of subcultures caused conservative-minded

²⁰¹ University of Rhode Island Historic Textile and Costume Collection. Bruchner file, Accession Records. Accession number: 1962.04.03 b.

reformers and groups to evaluate the systems women were participating in, such as the workforce and university education.



FIGURE 69. *Black wool gabardine skirt, blouse, and apron. Author's photograph. From The University of Rhode Island's Historic Textile and Costume Collection. Accession numbers: 2005.10.66, 2005.10.37, and 1962.04.03 b.*



FIGURE 70. *An advertisement depicting a homemaker in a red shirtwaist dress with apron, ca. 1955. From British Gas Council.*

In *When Sex Became Gender: Mirra Komarovsky's Feminism of the 1950s*, Shira

Tarrant explains:

Conservative educational reformers in the 1950s demanded a specifically “womanly” curriculum—one that encouraged the pursuit of family values, human relations, creative arts, and aesthetic appreciation. The argument put forth was that women educated in these “naturally feminine” areas could best heal the nation and bring out its most civilized qualities. Komarovsky agreed that the basic concepts of these courses were, in general, sound. The ability to choose sensibly between the purchase of two toasters, to prepare a well-marinated shish kabob, or to parent children is, of course, important, she wrote. “But life presents choices on a different plane, too, such as choices between political allegiances, economic and non-economic values, [and] competing cultural interests”. Critical insights gleaned from the social sciences and the liberal arts encourage a change in the student toward a more complex mode of thinking. The ability to

discern and decide things for oneself is necessary for good citizenship and is a skill that, therefore, ought to be properly taught to *all* people, she stated.²⁰²

Ultimately, this outfit represents the lifestyle in which mainstream society pressured women to participate during the 1950s. Not only does Tarrant demonstrate the skill-sets conservative educational reformers believed women should be taught, but this quote also represents the presumptions about women's future occupations. These pressures and expectations caused conversations about the necessity for pro-women legislation moving forward and a generation of youth revolt beginning in the 1960s.

Outfit 8: Early 1960s Maternity Outfit

Though many married women with families were homemakers, some women participated in the workforce. In the 1960s, many women were employed as secretaries, educators, and similar occupations. Not all women remained at work if they became pregnant, but the growing number of women in the workplace caused employers to evaluate dress codes and workplace policies. The interest in career women's clothing continued through the 1980s.

A maternity outfit, ca. 1960, was chosen from the HTCC to represent the changing roles of pregnant women beginning in the 1950s, likely due to the baby boom happening at the time. In 1952, Lucille Ball became the first woman to show off her pregnancy onscreen in the hit show *I Love Lucy*. This was the beginning of a

²⁰² Shira Tarrant, "When Sex Became Gender: Mirra Komarovsky's Feminism of the 1950s," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 33, no. 3/4 (2005): 341, accessed January 4, 2018. <http://www.jstor.org.uri.idm.oclc.org/stable/40004432>.

decade where pregnancy was displayed and celebrated. Prior to the 1950s, women's pregnancies were often concealed. Until this point, maternity wear was not marketed due to designers and stores believing women would not buy clothing that would be worn for less than a year. Lane Bryant was the only major retailer selling maternity wear since 1904. Primarily, women used fashion patterns to construct maternity outfits at home.

The maternity outfit from the HTCC, accession number 2000.12.01 a, b, was donated by Jeffrey Butterworth of Pawtucket, Rhode Island.²⁰³ It is a two-piece blue maternity outfit with silver metallic threads. A circular rhinestone decoration holds the fabric detail in place at the center front of the shirt. The shirt features a collared neckline and self-fabric ties at center-back. The skirt has adjustable ties at the cut-out center-front waist which would allow for a woman's growing stomach during pregnancy. Donation information does not indicate who wore the outfit. Figure 71 depicts the outfit as displayed for exhibition. An example of a McCall pattern that features two similar-looking maternity outfits can be seen in figure 72.

Early in the twentieth century, while European countries formed social insurance programs and labor legislation, the United States did not participate in program or legislative development. The only maternity supports were through state legislation regarding the employment of women and children. Laws, meant to protect,

²⁰³ University of Rhode Island Historic Textile and Costume Collection. Butterworth file, Accession Records. Accession number: 2000.12.01 a, b.



FIGURE 71. *Blue maternity outfit with silver threads, ca. 1960. Author's photograph. From The University of Rhode Island's Historic Textile and Costume Collection. Accession number: 2000.12.0 b.*



FIGURE 72. *Printed pattern for a maternity dress and tops with skirt, ca. 1960s. From McCall Printed Patterns.*

limited women's hours of work, regulated work environments, and banned the employment of women in "dangerous" occupations.²⁰⁴ Special treatment for women through these laws reinforced sex segregation in the workforce and created a platform for policies and practices that were biased and harmful for women workers. As Lise Vogel describes in *Debating Difference: Feminism, Pregnancy, and the Workplace*, "in the name of protection, special—but often unfavorable—treatment of pregnant workers thus became a norm that was still in place in the early 1970s". She goes on to explain:

²⁰⁴ Lise Vogel, "Debating Difference: Feminism, Pregnancy, and the Workplace," *Feminist Studies* 16, no. 1 (1990): 12, accessed on February 04, 2018. doi:10.2307/3177954.

Employers could and did fire workers because of pregnancy; they could also refuse to hire a female applicant on the basis of her pregnancy. Maternity leave could be required regardless of the employee's desire to work; many employers forced pregnant workers to stop working three to six months after conception. Health insurance policies often excluded from coverage normal and cesarean deliveries, or even childbirth altogether. When covered, pregnancy-related expenses were usually reimbursed at a much lower rate than other medical costs. Employers (or states) could not only force a woman onto maternity leave, they could also determine the point at which she was permitted to return; a new mother ready to go back to work might have to wait. While waiting, she had little change for any income replacement because most states explicitly excluded pregnant women and those recovering from childbirth from eligibility for disability or unemployment benefits. Maternity leaves generally had to be taken without income replacement, extension of benefits, retention of seniority, or rights to reinstatement. Where employees enjoyed relatively good maternity benefits—the minority of cases—these were usually the product of either collective bargaining or employer goodwill, the latter not necessarily extended to all female employees. For example, some employers provided benefits only if the employee was married.²⁰⁵

Though society was accepting and celebratory of pregnancy, women were subjected to discrimination in the workplace. Until the 1970s, when Congress enacted the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978, pregnant women were dealing with these issues.

Outfit 9: 1960s Paper Dress

1960s culture was very diverse in terms of social movements. As mentioned in the last section, women in the workplace were facing discrimination due to pregnancy and gender-related issues which became the focus of liberal feminist groups. At the

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 12.

same time, more radical feminist organizations were emerging after years focused on traditional sex-roles.

Radical feminist groups began public protests and revolted against American society. The 1968 Miss America protest prompted young women to throw their constricting undergarments and fashionable items into a “Freedom Trash Can”. Designer fashions focused on youthful women, marketing miniskirts, futuristic fashions, and knee-high boots. At this time, mainstream fashions began to split into a variety of segments. Boutiques opened which focused on specialty items. Affluent young women followed the fashionable dress of prominent women like Jacqueline Kennedy. Art movements, such as Pop Art, influenced music and fashion. Technological advances and research within the textile industry produced nonwoven materials like bonded paper, useful within the medical field, but also incorporated into fashionable dress. Subcultures, like the Hippies, were also being developed at this time. Young women wanting to satisfy “exhibitionist yearnings” participated in many new styles at this time.²⁰⁶

In 1966, the U.S.’s Scott Paper Company marketed an advertising scheme to promote their new line of table napkins which offered readers a paper dress. The company was overwhelmed with orders as paper dresses and undergarments became popular. From 1966 to 1968 paper dresses were available at drugstores, supermarkets, department stores and by mail order in exchange for box tops. Pop artists like Andy Warhol were hired to create designs featured on the dresses’ surfaces.²⁰⁷ Made to be

²⁰⁶ Mendes and de la Haye, *Fashion since 1900*, 183.

²⁰⁷ Fafalios and Zidianakis, "'Fragile,' 'Souper' and POP! The Atopos Paper Fashion Collection," 14-15.

worn once and thrown away, these dresses were the first disposable garments in western fashion. Paper dresses merged technological developments, visual art, fashion, and consumerism in an interesting industry moment.

The HTCC has a variety of paper dresses, but one stood out in regard to the Pop Art movement and changing mindsets of young women of the 1960s. This paper dress, accession number 1994.04.01, was donated by Diane Montenegro in 1994, and was purchased at an antique store for one dollar.²⁰⁸ The sleeveless paper dress features a large eye printed in black and white, shown in figure 73.

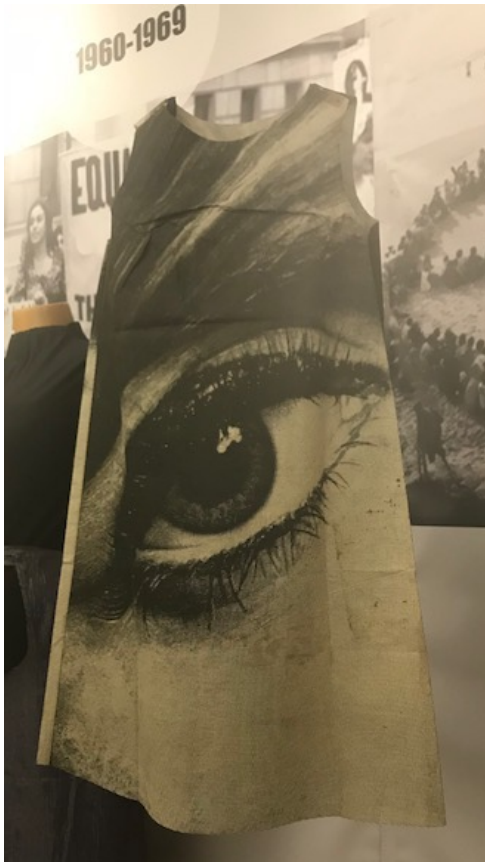


FIGURE 73. *Paper dress with large eye design, ca. 1960. Author's photograph. From The University of Rhode Island's Historic Textile and Costume Collection. Accession number: 1994.04.01.*

²⁰⁸ University of Rhode Island Historic Textile and Costume Collection. Montenegro file, Accession Records. Accession number: 1994.04.01.

Upon researching this design, it was discovered that American graphic designer Harry Gordon printed a large black-and-white photograph of Bob Dylan on a paper dress. The design was used to send a message and celebrate an allegiance, like that of a dorm room poster. Gordon created five more *Poster Dresses* in 1968, each with a different black-and-white photographic image: “a rocket, a cat, an eye, a rose, and a hand held in the gesture of a Buddhist peace symbol overprinted with Allen Ginsberg’s poem *Uptown N.Y.*”.²⁰⁹ Packaging for the *Poster Dresses* can be viewed in figure 74. The “eye” dress is identical to the dress in the HTCC, though no label in reference to Gordon or the *Poster Dresses* was found. It could be that this is a design copied from Gordon.

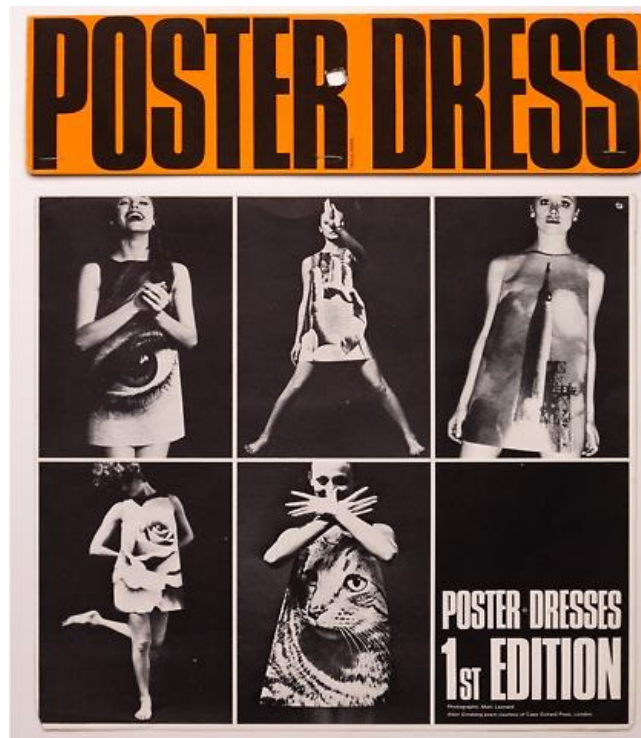


FIGURE 74. Packaging for Harry Gordon’s *Poster Dresses*, 1968. The top-left image depicts the same paper dress found within the HTCC. Photograph by Panos Davios. From *Atopos Contemporary Visual Center Collection*.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, 16.

Paper dresses were reflective of the 1960s liberating and modern mindset of Second Wave feminist culture which often blended visual art, industrial materials, commerce, and wearable fashions. The HTCC's paper dress is an example of the youthful fashions of the 1960s.

Outfit 10: 1970s Hand-Embroidered Jean Jacket

Fabric resembling denim was used for waistcoats and other garments for both sexes prior to the twentieth century, but the sturdy, twill fabric known as denim today carries a different connotation. In the late nineteenth century, denim pants had been used as workwear for many years. In search of a more durable denim pant, Levi Strauss worked with Jacob Davis to patent denim pants that had rivets placed at stress areas on May 20, 1873.²¹⁰ The pants were called “waist overalls” or “overalls” until 1960, when baby boomers began referring to them as “jeans”. Overalls were a masculine garment that was associated with the working man. During WWII, women adopted these fashions as they worked in manual labor jobs. Once the war was over, and men returned to work, women ditched their wartime garments. In the 1950s, biker subculture and film influenced America's view of denim when Levi Strauss & Co.'s “507” denim jacket and “501” denim jeans were incorporated into “rebellious” individuals appearance. Due to society's fear of juvenile delinquents associated with the biker subculture, and films like “Rebel Without a Cause” and “The Wild One”, the Denim Council was founded in 1955. Subsequently, denim pants were banned from

²¹⁰ “The Invention of the Blue Jean,” *Levi Strauss & Co.*, accessed February 26, 2018. <http://www.levistrauss.com/our-story/>.

many school districts.²¹¹ 1960s baby boomers discarded the fear of denim and heavily incorporated “jeans” into the Hippie movement. Use of denim in the Hippie movement illustrated its “working class connotations and was a comment on the growing materialism of postwar America”.²¹² Bellbottom jeans and embroidered and patched denim are trends that began in the 1960s. Because of denim’s masculine history, feminists integrated jeans and denim fashions into their daily dress to challenge what it meant to look like a woman.

An embroidered and patched Carter’s Watch the Wear jean jacket was added to the collection in 2005, accession number 2005.10.77. This was a found item without any donor information. The jacket features two printed floral fabric patches below proper-right and left shoulders and two embroidered pyramid designs with clouds and stars on satin fabric at the bottom center left and right edges of the jacket’s front, shown in figure 75. A small airplane pin is attached to the proper-right front collar point and rectangular pieces of red fabric are attached to the cuff of each sleeve with blue embroidery thread, all of which are also viewable in figure 75. A detail of the pyramid patches can be seen in figure 76. Circular patches are found on the upper arms of each the proper-right and left sleeves—one that depicts clouds with a rainbow, and the other with a yellow embroidered circle within a larger pink circle encompassed by an embroidered saying that reads, “the eternal self centered by the light within”, viewable in figures 77 and 78. The back of the jacket is decorated with

²¹¹ “Denim: Fashion’s Frontier,” Google Arts & Culture Online Exhibition from *The Museum at The Fashion Institute of Technology*. Accessed on February 26, 2018. <http://www.fitnyc.edu/museum/exhibitions/denim.php>.

²¹² Ibid.

three patches: A red patch on the proper left that says, “The simple joy of sharing/The simple sharing of joy”, a red patch on the proper right that says, “In spirit we can always be together”, and a central patch featuring rainbow, cloud, and sun motifs. An embroidered saying, “Love and Rainbows—Lady Rainbow” is found at the center back bottom edge. The back patches and embroidered saying can be seen in figure 79.



FIGURE 75. *Front view of the HTCC’s embroidered Carter’s Watch the Wear jean jacket. Author’s photograph. From The University of Rhode Island’s Historic Textile and Costume Collection. Accession number: 2005.10.77.*



FIGURE 76. *Detail image of pyramid motif patches on the proper-bottom-front of the HTCC's 1970s jean jacket. Author's photograph. From The University of Rhode Island's Historic Textile and Costume Collection. Accession number: 2005.10.77.*



FIGURE 77. *Detail image of rainbow and cloud motif embroidered patch on the jacket's upper-proper-right sleeve. Author's photograph. From The University of Rhode Island's Historic Textile and Costume Collection. Accession number: 2005.10.77.*



FIGURE 78. Detail image of the “eternal self lightened by the path within” patch on the upper-proper-right sleeve of the jacket. Author’s photograph. From The University of Rhode Island’s Historic Textile and Costume Collection. Accession number: 2005.10.77.



FIGURE 79. Detail image of the jacket’s three embroidered patches found on its back. Author’s photograph. From The University of Rhode Island’s Historic Textile and Costume Collection. Accession number: 2005.10.77.

H.W. Carter & Sons, Incorporated has been in business since 1859 and should not be confused with The William Carter Company (owner of Carter's, OshKosh B'gosh, and Skip*Hop), who opened business six years later in 1865. H.W. Carter began manufacturing overalls in 1870 in Lebanon, New Hampshire. Initially selling them in the New England area with the trademark "Carter's Railroad Overalls", H.W. Carter acquired The Watch the Wear Overall Company of Keene, New Hampshire in 1929 and began labeling his products with the trademark, "Carter's Watch the Wear".²¹³

The HTCC's Carter's Watch the Wear jean jacket, decorated by its owner in the 1970s, is representative of the use of clothing as personal expression in the late 1960s and through the '70s. An example of jean pants altered into a long jean skirt with an embroidered patch insert, also featuring sun and rainbow motifs, from the exhibition titled *Counter Culture*, can be seen in figure 80.²¹⁴ Dress and gender presentation were a means of challenging traditional sex and gender roles. Second Wave feminists used alternative styles of self-presentation to free themselves from the "submissive femininity" associated with traditional dress.²¹⁵ In this case, women

²¹³ "H.W. Carter & Sons, Inc., and American Marketing Enterprises, Inc., Plaintiffs, v. The William Carter Co., Defendant," No. 95 Civ. 1274 (DC). *U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York - 913 F. Supp. 796 (S.D.N.Y. 1996)*, accessed February 26, 2018. <https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp/913/796/1426376/>.

²¹⁴ Marcie Sillman, "Feathers, Fringe and Bright Shiny Beads: Hippie Fashion Is Art," *KUOW*, September 17, 2015, accessed February 26, 2018. <http://kuow.org/post/feathers-fringe-and-bright-shiny-beads-hippie-fashion-art>.

²¹⁵ Hillman, "'The Clothes I Wear Help Me to Know My Own Power,'" *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 162.

broke down the masculine relationship with denim garments from the first-half of the twentieth century by incorporating it into their daily dress.



FIGURE 80. *Pair of jean pants altered into a skirt with embroidered patch from the “Counter Culture” exhibition at Bellevue Arts Museum. Photographer: Gil Aegeter. From KUOW.*

Outfit 11: 1980s Woman’s Tailored Pantsuit

New styles of dress, like pantsuits, were gaining acceptance even though there was still much opposition to such a gender-bending fashion. As seen with the past two outfits discussed in this chapter, the greatest take-away from late 1960s and early 70s fashion is that women had options in what they chose to wear. Second Wave

feminists had the choice to wear mainstream fashion such as miniskirts and dresses, jean garments, subculture styles, and androgynous looks.

Working women would often wear either a tailored skirt suit or pantsuit each day. A suit, donated with both a matching skirt and pair of trousers, from the HTCC was chosen to represent working women's fashions of the early 1980s. Skirt suits were generally more accepted by employers and American society due to the continuation of pants as a gender-bending styles. Though businesswomen wore "power suits" with large shoulder pads and masculine features in the 1980s, trousers remained controversial. As discussed in Chapter 2, Margaret Thatcher, the most powerful woman in politics at the end of the '70s and through the '80s, warned young women not to wear trousers to work because it took away their "power".²¹⁶

Dr. Linda Welters donated a three-piece ensemble in 1999 that consists of gray and white, wool plaid suit that includes a single-breasted, two-button blazer with a below the knee skirt and trousers, accessions number 1999.09.01 a, b, c. The trousers were chosen to be worn with the jacket due to their controversial past throughout feminist and women's history. A photograph of the suit is shown in figure 81. The suit pieces were constructed by Dr. Welters from Butterick pattern 3325, dated 1980, which can be seen in figure 82.²¹⁷ Butterick pattern 3325 was included in the donation

²¹⁶ Amanda Platell, "A Navy Single-Breasted Suit, String of Pearls, Black Court Shoes and Magnificent Hair: How Margaret Thatcher Taught Me Powerful Women Never Wear Trousers," <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-3304242/A-navy-single-breasted-suit-string-pearls-black-court-shoes-magnificent-hair-Margaret-Thatcher-taught-powerful-women-never-wear-trousers.html>.

²¹⁷ University of Rhode Island Historic Textile and Costume Collection. Welters file, Accession Records. Accession number: 1999.09.01 a, b, c.

and is a three-dollar pattern with Evan Picone design. Butterick patterns began manufacturing sized patterns for women's wear in 1866 and collaborated with



FIGURE 81. *Pantsuit worn in early the 1980s. Author's photograph. From The University of Rhode Island's Historic Textile and Costume Collection. Accession number: 1999.09.01 a, b, c.*

different designers, *Vogue* magazine, and even published their own magazines throughout the twentieth century.²¹⁸

Dr. Welters constructed both the skirt and trousers to have the option of either style. She had just started working at URI in the TMD Department at the time this suit would have been worn. Dr. Welters was in the process of finishing her dissertation, which was completed in 1981. During this time, she made most of her working wardrobe. The fabric was not purchased from a fabric store, but instead was purchased as a mill end from a North Kingstown retailer.²¹⁹



FIGURE 82. *Butterick Pattern 3325 used to create the pantsuit in figure 82. Author's photograph. From The University of Rhode Island's Historic Textile and Costume Collection. Accession number: 1990.09.02*

²¹⁸ "Butterick History," *The McCall Pattern Company Inc.*, accessed on February 26, 2018. <https://butterick.mccall.com/our-company/butterick-history>.

²¹⁹ University of Rhode Island Historic Textile and Costume Collection. Welters file, Accession Records. Accession number: 1999.09.01 a, b, c.

John T. Molloy's book *The Woman's Dress for Success Book*, was a well-known and frequently used guide for women in the workforce from its release in 1977 through the 1980s. The book offers women an explanation of common fashion errors and suggestions of clothing and accessories that "promote success, express authority, and attract men."²²⁰ Molloy promotes the wearing of skirts in the workplace as opposed to trousers. In business and political positions, women were often told not to wear trousers. Women in most other professions were able to comfortably wear trousers to work beginning in the 1970s.

Outfits 12 and 13: 1980s Punk and 1990s Grunge

Both the Punk movement of the mid-1970s and '80s and the Grunge and Riot Grrrl movements of the 1990s were influenced by economic decline, music culture, and social unrest. Subculture groups since the 1950s have resisted mainstream standards of femininity through subjective anti-fashion styles.

Dissatisfaction with mainstream fashion and society in general, lead to the development of the "Punk" scene beginning in 1976, London. Punk was initiated by unemployed young people and students from neighboring art schools who flocked to Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren's boutique called Seditonaries. Punk was a trial of androgyny for both men and women. Men often wore makeup and "feminine" shirts, decorated with lace or frills, with leather biker jackets while women adopted masculine trousers and similar leather jackets. Women mixed androgynous

²²⁰ John T. Molloy, *The Woman's Dress for Success Book* (Illinois: Follet Publishing Company, 1977), 2.

items with hypersexualized details such as t-shirts with open holes, fishnet and laddering style tights, and confidently showing off uncovered areas of the body.

Shehnaz Suterwalla points out:

The act of cutting through clothes as a technique to exaggerate the female form matched the ways in which punk used the idea of rupture as the central tenet of its musical sounds. The screaming, howling, and shouting in punk signaled an aggressive, antidecorous presence. For men, this was the sound of their frustration, particularly for those who were working class. For punk women, I argue, it was the sound of the female subject coming into view, cleaning her voice, expression agency and desire.²²¹

An image of women wearing punk movement fashions can be seen in figure 86. A mixture of androgynous and hypersexualized garments were combined to create a single punk-inspired outfit similar to the styles shown in figure 83.

1990s Grunge was a movement rooted in Seattle's musical grunge scene, which quickly spread throughout the United States. Grunge fashions included androgynous, baggy, layered styles that again help women reconstruct what it meant to be feminine. Primarily a youth movement, like punk and many subcultures before, young women with feminist views participated.

At the same time, the Riot Grrrl movement gained momentum in the U.S. Their antics included dressing up in baby doll dress with combat boots, torn stockings, and generally a look that combined punk and grunge styles with hypersexualized feminine garments. Societal ideals of femininity were challenged and re-written through play on the virginal/promiscuous dichotomy.

²²¹ Suterwalla, "Cut, Layer, Break, Fold: Fashioning Gendered Difference, 1970s to the Present," 272.



FIGURE 83. *Women wearing punk fashions in the 1970s. From “Punk, Politics and Youth Culture” on Reading History, the University of Reading’s Department of History blog. <https://unireadinghistory.com/punk-politics-and-youth-culture/>*

An androgynous grunge-style outfit was used to demonstrate the opposition to ideal beauty standards within the 1990s Third Wave feminist movement, inspired by looks such as the one in figure 84. As discussed in Chapter 2, the popularization of supermodels, discrimination in the work place due to appearance, and overall expectations of women in regard to femininity and beauty caused women to push back at American culture.

The HTCC does not have any examples of punk or grunge styles from the 1970s through 1990s, therefore garments were used from private collections to ensure authenticity. Figures 85 and 86 show the punk and grunge outfits displayed on dress forms before installation.



FIGURE 84. *Young woman dressed in grunge-style fashions in the 1990s. From Wikimedia Commons.*



FIGURE 85. *Punk outfit ready for installation. Author's photograph. From Private Collection.*



FIGURE 86. *Grunge outfit ready for installation. Author's photograph. From Private Collection.*

Development

Rebecca Kelly assisted the researcher in creating a timeline for exhibition planning, preparation and installation. A schedule is essential to the successful development, marketing, and installation of an exhibit. The timeline can be viewed in Table 1. The timeline includes all of the major tasks that had to be completed before the exhibition's opening night. Once established, the researcher and curatorial

Task	Date
Present exhibition statement, purpose, and plan to curatorial assistants	January 26, 2018
Deinstallation of current exhibit	February 2, 2018
Painting of gallery space	Week of February 5
Installation of printed backdrops	March 3, 2018
Conservation work, creation of mounts, and preparing dress forms	February 3- March 9, 2018
Installation of completed dress forms and mounts	March 9, 2018
Installation of label text and photography	March 20, 2018
Exhibition opening night	Friday, March 30, 2018

Table 1. Exhibition timeline and schedule.

assistants could move forward in completing each task. Curatorial assistants for this exhibition were graduate students enrolled in the TMD 568: Special Problems in Textile Conservation course. The exhibition will be on display for one year.

Beverly Serrell's book, *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*, was used as a guide to develop the exhibition's "big idea".²²² Serrel advises curators to create an

²²² Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*, (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 1996), 1.

exhibition with a single focus, “that unifies all parts”.²²³ The big idea consists of a statement that describes what the exhibit is about. It “guides the development of exhibit elements and their labels that support, exemplify, and illustrate aspects of the big idea”.²²⁴ Essentially, every component of the exhibit must relate back to the central idea. This helps the curator to omit any distracting or irrelevant aspects of the exhibit. With this in mind, an exhibition statement was created: *Feminism and Fashion of the Twentieth Century* is an exhibition and master’s thesis that explores the First, Second, and Third Waves of American feminism through the medium of textiles. The purpose of the exhibit was to present feminist history alongside historic garments from The University of Rhode Island’s Historic Textile and Costume Collection. Arranged in chronological order, from the dress reform movement of the 1850s through the grunge movement of the 1990s, the exhibition recognizes the use of fashion and anti-fashion as a means of both oppression and progressive change for women in the United States. The goal of the exhibition was to invite viewers to think critically about American women’s history and their use of clothing to facilitate change as well as inspire viewers to participate in the sartorial and cultural dialogue transpiring today.

On January 26, 2018, the researcher presented a Powerpoint slideshow to the Special Problems course, Dr. Linda Welters, and Rebecca Kelly that described the statement, purpose, cultural relevance, and garment selection for exhibition with the same title as this thesis, *Feminism and Fashion of the Twentieth Century: A Material*

²²³ Ibid, 1.

²²⁴ Ibid, 2.

Culture Study (Short title *Feminism and Fashion of the Twentieth Century*). The curator answered questions and concerns regarding the plan. The same day, a list of the chosen outfits was given to each student that included measurements, donor information, and accession number.

The exhibition *Celebrating 125 Years at the University of Rhode Island*, was deinstalled on February 2, which required the removal, disassembling, vacuuming, and storage of all historic textiles, dress forms, and mounts exhibited as well as the removal of all label text and photography. Once the gallery space was emptied of its contents, it was painted by URI maintenance the following week. Cracks and holes were filled before the space was painted a white shade with an eggshell finish. Gloss finishes should not be used in gallery spaces due to their reflective quality.

Promotion

While working on the exhibition process, the curator was made aware of a grant available from the URI Center for the Humanities. A grant proposal was submitted for review, which included a budget for exhibition expenses. The curator was awarded five-hundred dollars with a Graduate Student Research Grant from the Center for the Humanities. The grant was used to print flyers publicizing the exhibition's opening night and to print a timeline backdrop and end case panels for gallery cases.

The opening night flyer was designed on Microsoft PowerPoint and printed at the URI Print Shop, to be distributed throughout campus a few weeks prior to the opening night. Figure 87 shows the event flyer. A Facebook event was created, and invitations were sent out through the site. An event page was created on the URI

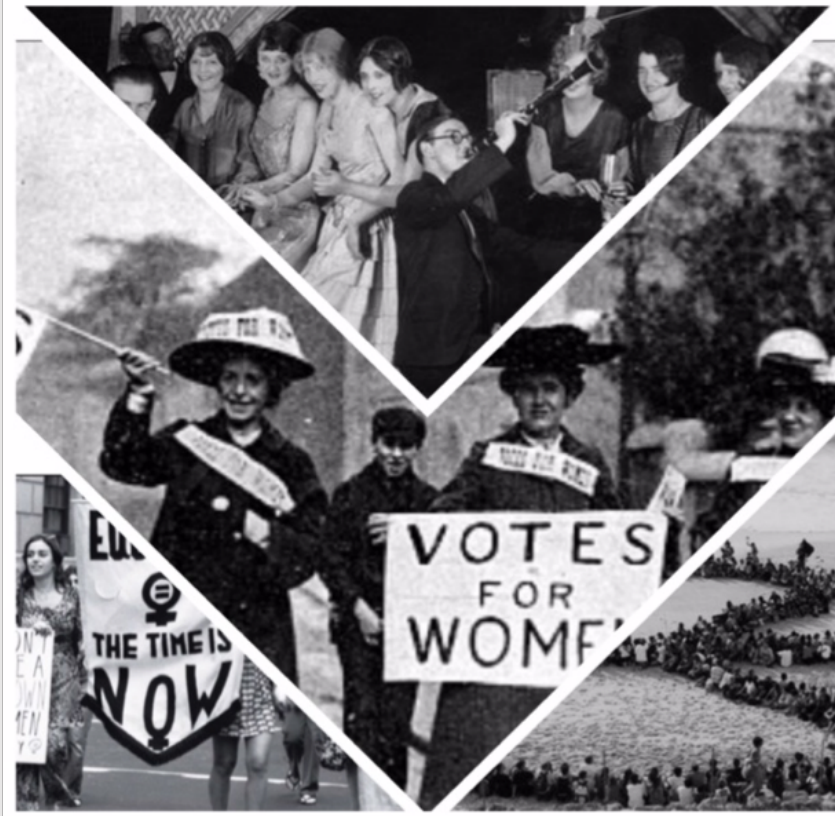
event website. An Instagram account was created to document the exhibition process and publicize the opening night and exhibition. TMD Department faculty were notified of the event via email with attachments of the flyer to encourage students to attend or offer extra credit opportunities.

Preparation and Installation

Backdrop panels served as a timeline for the two large gallery cases at the center of the gallery space. Each backdrop, six total, offers viewers a timeframe and an image which represent the outfits placed in front of them. The panels were created using PowerPoint and can be viewed in Appendix A.

Curatorial assistants completed minor conservation treatments where necessary. The bustle hoop had exposed steel in a few areas. Fabric was dyed, color matched using a spectrophotometer, and applied as an overlay to those areas. A patch on the jean jacket had loose embroidery stitches that allowed an edge of the patch to fold over. The stitches were secured along with the patches edge. The gold metallic dress's shoulder straps were not fully attached to the dress. Stabilizing stitches were applied to ensure the straps were secure for exhibition. No other conservation treatments needed to be completed on chosen textiles.

Curatorial assistants worked on creating mounts and preparing dress forms from February 3 until March 9, 2018. This process included molding Fosshape mounts, choosing dress forms that textiles would fit appropriately, padding out dress forms to reach the desired silhouette, dressing dress forms, shaping garment sleeves and other features. The last step was to place completed outfits within the Textile Gallery's cases and add finishing touches such as positioning arms and deciding on



FEMINISM AND FASHION
OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

A MATERIAL CULTURE STUDY

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21, 2018

6PM – 8PM

QUINN HALL AUDITORIUM AND TEXTILE GALLERY
55 Lower College Rhode, Kingston, RI 02881
THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND

FIGURE 87. *Flyer created to advertise the exhibition's opening night. Created by author on Microsoft PowerPoint.*

final placement within the cases. A blueprint of the Textile Gallery's cases was created that depicts the placement of each outfit and describes end case themes, shown in Appendix B. End cases themes were developed from recurring topics within the Review of Literature. The first end case consists of introductory text that describes the exhibition statement, purpose, and brief historical summary. The second case contains the 1930s pajama set because the uniqueness of the full set is important to display all together. The third end case incorporates images of First and Second Wave protests with images of Third Wave advertising campaigns, music videos, and zine covers. The fourth case's theme is current activists concerned with gender, femininity, and beauty issues. It also depicts some ways social issues have been incorporated into art and fashion in recent years. End case designs can be seen in Appendix C. At the same time, the curator conducted material culture analysis on each outfit using primary sources from Chapter 2: Review of Literature. The material culture analysis is included in the previous sections of this chapter. The results were summarized and integrated into label text for exhibition. After placement of dress forms and mounts, label text was applied to the cases.

The exhibition opening was on Friday, March 30, 2018 from 6 to 8pm in the Quinn Hall Auditorium and Textile Gallery. Tables were brought into the main floor hallway to be used for refreshments and decoration. Many students, faculty, and members of the public attended the opening night. At 6:30pm, the curator spoke about the exhibition's development and purpose, followed by Dr. Linda Welter's who discussed John T. Molloy's *Dress for Success* and its impact on women's career fashions. After the speakers, visitors toured the gallery space.

The development and installation of the exhibition took many months of preparation, marketing, and planning. Members of the TMD Department worked together to produce a professional and successful exhibit that was well-received by visitors and the university.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated the ways in which fashion and anti-fashion can be used as both a means of oppression and progressive change for women in the United States. The following is a brief summary of fashion and feminist movements of the twentieth century. In the First Wave of feminism, fashionable dress was worn by suffragists to gain support from a broader range of individuals. When many suffragists incorporated dress reform fashions, such as bloomers, into their daily dress, they were labeled as “ugly”. This negative connotation caused some women to keep a distance from the suffrage movement. It was not until suffrage became fashionable itself, when elites like Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont (formerly Alva Vanderbilt) encouraged women to join the suffrage movement, that suffrage was accepted by the masses. Women could wear fashionable garments and simply apply a “votes for women” sash, pin, or ribbon to the front of their outfit. In this case, fashion was used to promote the suffrage movement, but it also hindered suffragist’s ability to freely wear dress reform styles. A tailor made was chosen from the HTCC to represent fashionable dress of First Wave feminists and a “votes for women” sash was constructed and worn for exhibition.

After suffrage was gained, many young women participated in garçonne styles which dominated post-war fashions, as new freedoms of suffrage and citizenship were incorporated into dress. They became known as “flappers”, a term used to describe progressive young women who donned short hair, makeup, and drop-waist fashions and went out dancing, smoked cigarettes, and drank alcohol at speakeasies and night clubs. Though this style was considered fashionable by many young women, it was

determined to be anti-fashion by conservative, mainstream society. Cartoons depicted “flappers” as young women who participated in “unladylike” behaviors because they wanted to be men. A gold metallic dress from the HTCC represents the “flapper” look.

Until 1960, the feminist movement was working behind closed doors to establish pro-women policies and legislation that would supplement the Nineteenth Amendment. 1930s fashions were extremely long, slender, and feminine which needed the support of girdles and stretch undergarments to ensure the correct silhouette. It could be that these fashions were introduced to counteract the freedom many women felt post-suffrage. A floral printed evening gown was chosen from the HTCC to represent the feminine fashions of the 1930s. At the same time, women began to wear pants in some environments, such as for beach, lounge, and sportswear. This was the first time that pants were incorporated into mainstream fashion. A bifurcated pajama set with oriental decoration was exhibited to represent changing loungewear styles of the 1930s. In the 1940s, America’s involvement in WWII called for women to fill men’s jobs as they were deployed in the military. Women adopted overalls, bifurcated pants, and jumpsuits while working laborious jobs during WWII. Tailor-mades also remained popular for office positions. During WWII, women were treated differently depending on what they wore. Historical accounts report that women who wore bifurcated garments were harassed on the streets while women who wore tailor-made suits walked freely and without harassment. It was clear that these bifurcated styles challenged traditional gender roles and would not be easily accepted by the masses. In 1947, Dior’s “New Look” was introduced to mainstream fashion as

WWII ended and women's roles in the workforce also concluded as men returned home from the military. Advertising, media, and fashion all promoted traditional gender roles at this time—almost as a way of reminding women of what role they belong in after years of work and independence during the war. A tailor-made suit was chosen from the HTCC to represent the “New Look” and fashionable dress of the time, as well as a blouse, skirt, and apron outfit to illustrate housewife fashions of the 1950s. The HTCC did not have any examples of garments worn by women working laborious jobs during WWII. Subcultures began to be discussed in historical accounts in the 1950s. Overall dissatisfaction with mainstream society, and political and social issues caused individuals with like-minded ideologies to form groups such as the beatniks and greasers. These groups created their own fashion styles that were worn like a uniform by participants. An example of 1950s subculture fashions was not available from the HTCC. The 1950s was also a time of discrimination towards women in the workplace, especially those who were pregnant. Women did not receive maternity leave benefits and often were fired or asked to leave their positions if they became pregnant. Until the 1970s, when Congress enacted the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978, pregnant women were dealing with these issues. A maternity outfit from the late 1950s/early 1960s was exhibited to demonstrate these challenges.

During the Second Wave of feminism, beginning in the 1960s, a shift in fashion seemed to take place which allowed for varying styles to occur simultaneously. Affluent women followed the mainstream fashions of Jacqueline Kennedy. Radical feminist groups urged young women to participate in protests,

abandon their constricting undergarments and fashionable items. The hippie subculture movement was gaining momentum and developed its own “bohemian” style as well as popularized the wearing of “jeans” by men and women. Jean items were often embroidered, patched, and personalized by the wearer. Designers such as Mary Quant and Pierre Cardin created youth styles like the mini skirt and futuristic looks. Art movements, music, and new technologies were incorporated into fashion for young women. At the same time, young working women needed garments appropriate for the workplace. John T. Molloy’s *The Woman’s Dress for Success Book*, was used as a guide for many business and working women in the late 1970s and throughout the ‘80s. Many women wore trousers in the workplace beginning in the 1970s, but Molloy only promotes the wearing of skirts. Women in politics or business wore skirt suits through the 1980s as pantsuits were viewed negatively in many circumstances. The HTCC had many examples of fashion connected to Second Wave feminism. A paper dress that is printed with a Pop Art, black and white image is representative of youthful mini fashions of the 1960s. Photographs of 1960s protests often show young women in miniskirts and dresses. To represent hippie movement styles, an embroidered jean jacket was selected. The final outfit chosen from the HTCC was a woman’s pantsuit which illustrates working women’s fashions of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Both 1980s punk movement fashion and 1990s grunge fashions were depicted through private collections. Punk, grunge, and Riot Grrrl movements are all subcultures associated with Third Wave feminism. These movements incorporate music with anti-establishment themes that include active female participation instead

of women being connected to bands as girlfriends or groupies. Many female-led bands were developed at this time. Anti-fashion was used to redefine femininity within these subcultures and to challenge traditional gender roles.

Garments were selected based on their association with differing aspects of twentieth-century feminism. This research has indicated that the HTCC contains some examples of hippie fashions, but lacks garments connected to other twentieth-century subculture movements. In the future, the HTCC should incorporate more examples of subculture fashions into the collection.

In conclusion, this research reflected that minorities such as women of color were not included in the feminist movement until the Civil Rights movement. Historical accounts do not include information about African American women until later in the twentieth century. The Third Wave seems to be the most diversified population of feminists, though many would argue that subcultures within the feminist movement, such as the Riot Grrrl movement, were primarily comprised of young white women. This lack of information combined with the demographics of individuals who have donated historic garments to the HTCC, resulted in an exhibition that represents primarily white women.

Material culture analysis of each outfit uncovered information pertaining to early-twentieth-century manufacturing in the New England area. Analysis can connect the production of many of HTCC's garments to the local manufacturing culture as seen through examples such as the Royal Worcester Company corset and Carter's Watch the Wear jean jacket. These connections can develop into further research and form ties to current research being conducted by local historic and

preservation societies. For example, Historic New England's current project, "Connect the Threads", includes H.W. Carter & Sons manufacturing plant that produced many Carter's Watch the Wear garments.

Through this research, an exhibition was created which combined physical garments with descriptions of their social history. It gave me the opportunity to write and submit a grant proposal to the URI Center for the Humanities which I was awarded. Grant funds went towards printed materials for marketing and installation. Developing an exhibition was a difficult and creative process that has provided me with useful curatorial skills for the future. After producing the exhibit's central idea, I reinforced it through photographs, advertising, exhibition text, and imagery. This experience allowed me to work with a curatorial team to produce a successful and inviting exhibition.

Recommendations for future research are first to conduct interviews with second and third wave feminists before too much time elapses, secondly a larger institution could expand on the concepts in this exhibition to reach a larger audience, and lastly conduct a survey of collections throughout the United States to see if feminism and fashion varied regionally.

APPENDIX A.
TIMELINE PANELS

1850-1919



1920-1939



1940-1959



1960-1969



1970-1989

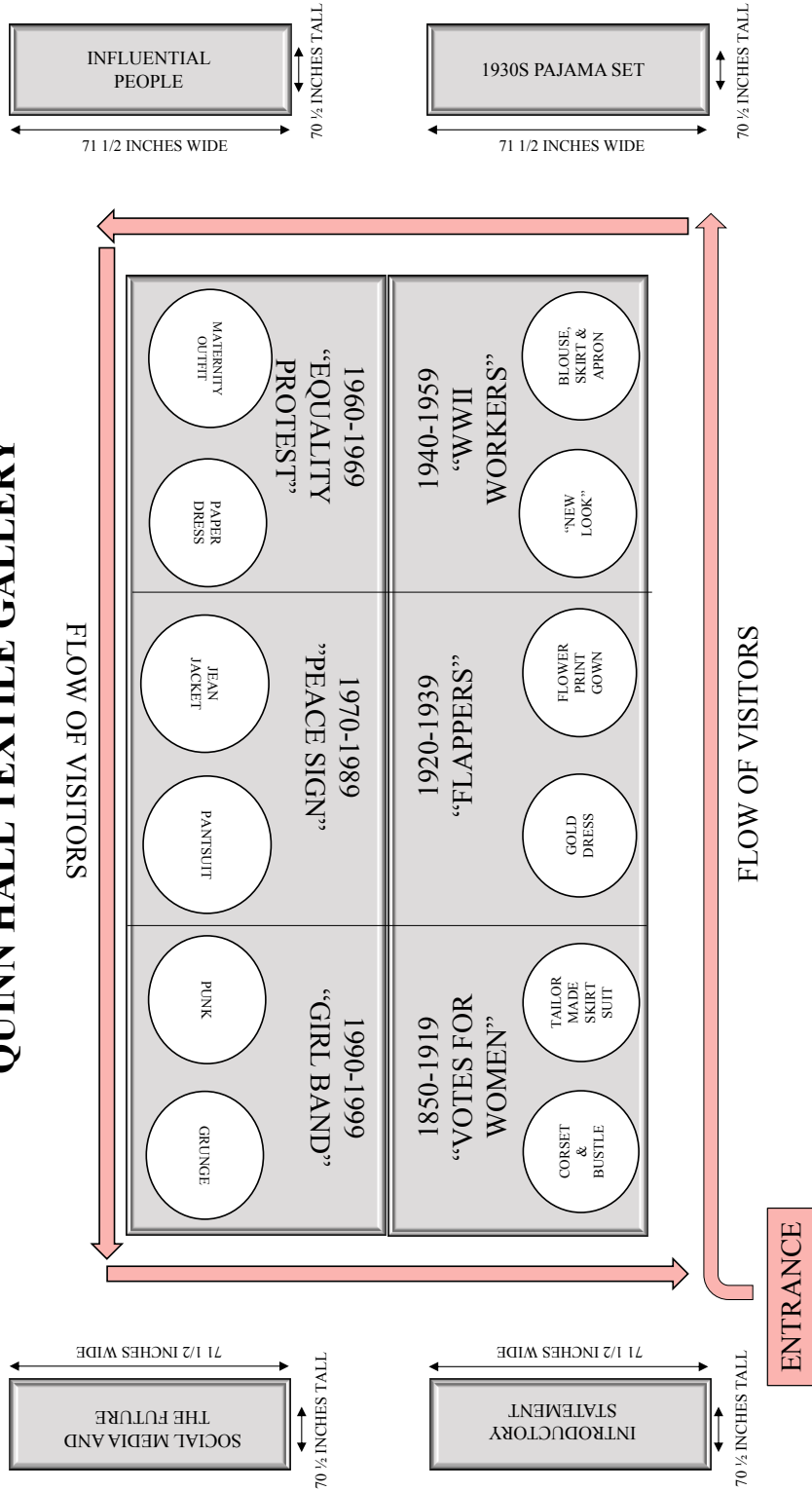


1990-1999



APPENDIX B.
GALLERY SPACE DESIGN

QUINN HALL TEXTILE GALLERY



APPENDIX C.
END CASE DESIGNS

FEMINISM AND FASHION OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

March 21- December 15, 2018
Curated by Miranda DiCenzo

Feminism and Fashion of the Twentieth Century explores the First, Second, and Third Waves of American feminism through the medium of fashion.

The first half of the twentieth century was dedicated to dress reform, First Wave Feminism, World War I, and life after the ratification of the 19th Amendment. As women gained "equal rights" to men, their new role in society was uncertain. Many young women participated in the "flapper" movement—bobbing their hair, smoking, drinking, using makeup, and wearing what was considered risqué fashions. After securing new independence, many women became caught in the grips of the Great Depression and World War II. Fashionable dress continued to go through silhouette and stylistic changes even through times of crisis while practical clothing, especially that worn by female workers during WWII, was judged harshly by critics. After soldiers returned from WWII, many women were displaced from their jobs and again their societal role was questioned. When Christian Dior introduced the "New Look" in 1947, and advertising pushed traditional female roles, it seemed that conformity, marriage, and family were a woman's future. Dissatisfied with mainstream fashion and society in general, many subcultures began to develop in the 1950s such as the beatniks, greasers, hippies, and punks. These unique fashions represented changing mindsets of many American women during the Second and Third Waves of feminism.

Feminism and Fashion presents feminist history alongside historic garments from The University of Rhode Island's Historic Textile and Costume Collection. Arranged in chronological order, from the dress reform movement of the 1850s through the grunge movement of the 1990s, the exhibition recognizes the use of fashion and anti-fashion as a means of both oppression and progressive change for women in the United States.

EARLY PROTESTS

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Fashionable suffragists gathering at Marble House, Newport home of Mrs. Alva Belmont, 1909.

Source: Originally published in the New York Times. From The Library of Congress.



Suffragists picketing the White House wearing tailor-mades and "Votes for Women" sashes, 1917.

Source: The Library of Congress

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Two women wear minis, introduced as a youthful style in the 1960s, while protesting at the Miss America Protest, 1968.

Source: Duke University Libraries



Women participating in the Women's Strike for Peace and Equality, 1970. Women's fashions had evolved to include a variety of styles at this time such as jeans, trousers, miniskirts and dresses.

Source: Time Magazine

A DIFFERENT WAY

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Music videos were introduced in the 1980s and by the 1990s many female artists used their videos to communicate messages representing feminist values.

Source: VEVO



Printed and digital zines spread the Riot Grrrl movement's message through mixed media. Riot Grrrls addressed issues of sexism, body image, and identity through music, meet-ups, and print.

Source: The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Library and Archives



Postcards from The Body Shop's "Barbie" campaign, 1998. In response to the 1990s interest in supermodels, some companies created self-esteem campaigns.

Source: The Body Shop print advertisement



HILARY CLINTON
Politician and Activist

Image Source: Instagram

TESS HOLIDAY
Model and Body
Positive Activist

Image Source: Instagram



MICHELLE OBAMA
Lawyer and Activist

Image Source: Instagram

HARNAAM KAUR
Model and Body
Positive Activist

Image Source: Instagram



MALALA YOUSAFZAI
Activist and Nobel Prize
Winner

Image Source: Instagram

GLORIA STEINEM
Activist and
Journalist

Image Source: Instagram



“For I conclude that the enemy is not lipstick, but guilt itself; that we deserve lipstick, if we want it, AND free speech; we deserve to be sexual AND serious—or whatever we please; we are entitled to wear cowboy boots to our own revolution.”
— Naomi Wolf



For All Womankind is a design initiative for Fempowerment founded by New York based designer Deva Pardue.

Source: Deva Pardue



Prabal Gurung used his fall 2017 show at New York Fashion Week as a way to take a stand for women's rights.

Source: Neilson Barnard/Getty

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