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Clothes Make the (Wo)Man: Gender Performed Through Fashion as an Agent of Socialization

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Submitted for the Department of Sociology

Union College
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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	3
INTRODUCTION	4
CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW	6
PART I - FASHION IN A HISTORICAL CONTEXT	6
<i>Nineteenth Century Application.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Twentieth Century Application</i>	<i>7</i>
PART II - CONTEMPORARY UNDERSTANDING OF FASHION.....	11
<i>Shifts in Gender Identity Display.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Feminist Displays in Fashion</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Underrepresentation of Minority Races in Fashion</i>	<i>17</i>
CHAPTER 2: GENDER PERFORMANCE IN THE MEDIA	20
<i>Case Study Outline and Findings.....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Hyper-Masculinity and Symbolic Interactionism.....</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Negative Portrayals of Women.....</i>	<i>33</i>
CHAPTER 3: GENDERED SOCIETAL CONSTRAINTS	37
<i>The Body Project</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Hidden Rules of Masculinity and The “Tough Guise”</i>	<i>43</i>
CHAPTER 4 : CONCLUSION	50
<i>Culture Jamming the Media.....</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>Following the Dress Code.....</i>	<i>54</i>
<i>Letter to the Editor.....</i>	<i>58</i>
REFERENCES.....	61
VOGUE ADVERTISEMENT REFERENCES:	66
ESQUIRE ADVERTISEMENT REFERENCES:.....	69

Abstract

Clothing is a social product, carries social meanings, and modifies social interaction, thus making it into the system of symbols known as fashion. This thesis focuses on fashion as a social agent, with its artistic expression and continual reorganization of styles. I question if fashion has the power to exact social change, or whether it simply reinforces and reproduces social inequality. The thesis looks at how race, class, sexual orientation, and ethnicity are both articulated and challenged through gendered fashion. We will examine the relationship between fashion, clothing, the body and body image, how fashion is a system that can discipline or exert power over others and also construct the self. The role of Fashion in the media will also be discussed in regard to self-dissatisfaction, judgment, and perpetuation of gendered stereotypes. Through content analysis examples, this thesis examines various fashion experiences, looking for the social and political forces behind the experience of clothing. We will also use fashion as a means of exploring various sociological theories, including Roland Barthes's theory of fashion as a social code, Erving Goffman and Herbert Blumer's theories of symbolic interactionism, Max Weber's theories regarding class and society, and Georg Simmel's theories on fashion as a means of conformity. I argue that through the formal and informal socialization of society, gender performance is exhibited through fashion.

Introduction

Fashion is a part of everyone's lives whether they realize it or not. Every day when we wake up and get dressed, we are making a decision for how we want to be perceived by others. That decision is affected by numerous outside factors such as fashion trends, what we are doing that day, the weather, our emotions, gender and what we saw in the media. Fashion is not only a form of identity and self-expression, but the clothes that we wear help us find a place within larger society. The same society that socially constructed the idea of gender. Gender can be defined as "the set of social arrangements that are built around normative sex categories" such as male and female that are prescribed as birth (Conley 2017, p.283). Each gender comes with a strict set of guidelines for dress enforced by both cultural and societal expectations. Clothing is a form of "nonverbal communication" that shows which gender we identify as: male or female (Lauer 1981, pg.34). As a means of fitting in, in most cases, people dress in order to fit their gender category. With a feminist focus, I will discuss how fashion is used as an agent of socialization that society pressures gender to exist within these guidelines. Feminism can be defined as "a consciousness-raising movement to get people to understand that gender is an organizing principle of life. The underlying belief is that women and men should be accorded equal opportunities and respect" (Conley 2017, p.283). From the moment a child is born they are assigned the status of boy or girl. From there, assumptions and actions towards the child differentiate and create a lasting impact. Boys wear blue and are labeled as "big" and "strong," while girls wear pink and are "pretty" and "sweet" (Conley 2017, p.134). There are different expectations of behavior that are associated with each gender. These gender limitations are dictated and policed by various social groups. If a man or woman were to dress in a way that is not conventionally associated with their gender, the social stigma from others would affect that

individual. As Simmel argues, the desire for conformity is what drives fashion. People imitate what they see in order to fit in. Lauer argues that “[fashion] marks us as conventional members of a particular group while it simultaneously differentiates us from those who are outside that group” (Lauer 1981, pg. 3). Through socialization, a person will gain an understanding of their “personality and sense of self.” Socialization is the process where individuals gather knowledge of culture to assimilate into society. Successful socialization is shown through properly assimilating within the surrounding society. (“What are...”). Fashion is a powerful tool that can be someone’s ticket to acceptance in society or their reason for deviation.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Part I - Fashion in a Historical Context

Nineteenth Century Application

Fashion has been used as a “political tool” to show “social identity” as far back as the 19th century (Strassel 2013, p.37). Clothing was largely related to political movements such as the 1850’s Women’s Suffrage movement where woman fought for the right to vote. In trying to achieve the same rights that were awarded to men, women urged one another to break free from the restricting and dangerous clothing options for females. These options include girdles and corsets that physically confined and injured them. The whalebone corsets that women wore put stress on major organs and caused respiratory problems. Women of this time period wore multi-layered dresses that made day-to-day life very difficult. The dresses could weigh upwards of fifteen pounds and went as far as creating health concerns. Within this time, Amelia Bloomer and two other women created “Bloomers” which were a comfortable alternative for women. They were essentially a dress over baggy pants, removing the need for multiple layers. This shift in dress was later known as the Victorian dress reform movement. These reformers felt that “women’s clothed bodies became emblematic of other kinds of social and cultural oppression such as domestic confinement, economic dependence, and intellectual decay” (Strassel 2013, p.38). Essentially, the clothing that women were expected to wear was a physical representation of their oppression in society. Dress reformers also brought to light the faults with the overall “fashion system,” such as “its planned obsolescence, its aristocratic origins, the cultural valuation of women’s physical capital, the economic burden required to maintain women’s beauty, and the reliance on underpaid and overworked women to manufacture fashionable goods” (Strassel 2013, p.40). The goal of this movement was to change the way women looked

at fashion and how they took part in the overall network that it promoted. They argued that fashion was being used to confine women as opposed to liberating them. Clothing during this time was being used to exemplify the societal restraints placed on women. The dress expectations for women physically hindered their ability to freely be a part of the population, while they were also politically being inhibited to be equal members of society.

Twentieth Century Application

Fast forward nearly a century later and Elizabeth Hawes, a fashion designer and feminist activist in the early-to-mid 20th century, fought for gender representation in the fashion world. In 1938, Elizabeth Hawes published a book titled *Fashion Is Spinach*. In this book she argued that it is time for women to band together and withstand the established rules of fashion. Hawes argued for a shift in American style that would stand up to the “conventional authorities in fashion” (Strassel 2013, p.43). Emerging in the midst of the Great Depression, she studied the Parisian business model surrounding fashion compared to that within America. She soon gained traction in the world of fashion and wanted to challenged women to pick clothes based on their own interest, not by what they are told to wear (Strassel 2013, p.44). Hawes was one of the first fashion designers to challenge the link between gender and fashion. On April 5, 1967, the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) held an exhibit of Hawes’ latest fashion line at the time: male skirts. Hawes advocated for gender expression through fashion for both genders. She felt that men too were constrained by the expectations of gender stereotypes through dress. Hawes aimed to “blur the lines” between gendered clothing and create a “unisex aesthetic” for everyone to enjoy and allow for “free movement, symbolizing the emancipation of both sexes from the rigidity of traditional masculinity and femininity” (Woodard 2017). Hawes’ designs sparked outrage and backlash; however, she did not mind because she felt that the way clothes are

designed to be masculine or feminine allow for men to be more powerful in society. The idea that men's clothing heavy and outweighs women's daintier garments "[signifies] strength and virility" (Woodard 2017). She felt that women were disadvantaged, and like the women in the Victorian dress reform movement, that clothing creates an unfair "power structure" within society (Woodard 2017). Hawes felt that this structure not only was harmful for women, but also for the men who are forced to fulfill this unrealistic ideology of powerful men. She argued that men dress the way they do in order to fit the mold of masculinity that society has shaped for them in order to conform to gender ideals and be accepted by their peers.

Simmel's 1957 article entitled *Fashion*, argues that fashion is merely a "form of imitation" that separates groups within society (Simmel 1957, p.541). Simmel argues that individuality is created by the duality that we all possess. He states, "a masculine and feminine principle are united in every human being...there is no institution, no law, no estate of life, which can uniformly satisfy the full demands of the two opposing principles" (Simmel 1957, p.542). He argues that femininity and masculinity cannot be simultaneously appeased. The separation of these two principles is what drives the universal want for uniformity. (Simmel 1957, p.542). In society, the masses emulate the fashion standards set forth by the elite of their designated gender category. This form of imitation is aimed at getting rid of the "external distinctions of class" present in society (Simmel 1957, p.541). However, fashion trends of the upper social classes greatly vary from that of lower spheres. Once the lower classes emulate the upper, the upper abandons the fashion trend to move on to anew (Simmel 1957, p.543). The act of imitating others "[transfers] not only the demand for creative activity, but also the responsibility for the action from ourselves to another" (Simmel 1957, p.542). By conforming to societal expectations of dress, the "worry" that comes along with decision-making for oneself is alleviated. This

person now gets to effortlessly appear as part of the group. Simmel relates this idea to children who want consistency and repetition. Children do not want to stray from what they are comfortable with and are happy to play the same games over and over. People in general strive for “similarity” and “uniformity” and are also opposed to change (Simmel 1957, p.543). By choosing to be a part of one group signified through fashion, you are automatically excluded from all other groups. Simmel states that “fashion is merely a product of social demands,” as the most obscure trends can be made possible if the person doing them is poised, distinguished, and respected (Simmel 1957, p.544). Fashion can also lead to a change in society for those who want to deviate from the masses. A need to be different is created giving “an individual stamp as opposed to that of yesterday and of tomorrow” (Simmel 1957, p.543). In summary, Simmel argues that fashion simultaneously represents “social equalization” along with the wish for “individual differentiation and change” (Simmel 1957, p.543). Simmel feels that fashion is a tool to either conform to the standards set forth by those looked favorably upon, or as a means to individualize oneself.

Hillman uses the term “gender presentation” to explain how people use clothing, physical appearance, and self-fashioning as a means of expressing gender to the world around them. She states that the feminist movement of the 1960’s was integral for shifting expectations of female dress. These women used their fashion choices to break away both physically and politically from male-dictated constraints put on their wardrobes. Feminists wanted women to further question why they were dressing the way they did. This movement gave women the ammunition to push for the right to dress how they please, which included the wearing of pants in a professional setting, as opposed to the long skirts they were accustomed to. Some were frightened of this movement and what it truly meant. Many believed that it aimed to “eradicate

gender differences between men and women” which was an alarming concept to many (Hillman 2013, p.156). In reality, they were striving to give women the freedom to dress how they please. Hillman goes on to discuss how feminists of this period disputed the predetermined standards of beauty as it was “oppressive and objectifying women” (Hillman 2013, p.155). By going against these fashion expectations, they were sending a larger message that they are in charge of their own bodies and what goes on them, as oppose to fitting an ideal that men have decided for them.

In general, women were dressing for themselves, not for the satisfaction of those around them, especially men. Hillman states that “self-fashioning techniques of women’s liberationists were also, in some cases, part of the feminist quest to reject gender binaries that strictly separated masculine and feminine roles” (Hillman 2013, p.155). This was the start of gender being recognized as a social construction, which was a primary argument within the second-wave feminist movement. They aimed to start asking questions no one had asked before, primarily why gender has such a power to put people in a box. These feminists were the first to make the connection between gender and fashion. They argued that the clothes they were expected to wear were being used as a means of despotism of men. A connection was made between “gender-bending dress and hairstyles to an explicit politics of gender that challenged broader conceptions of sex roles and femininity” (Hillman 2013, p.156). Some people simply saw clothes, while these women saw an opportunity to spark a political movement and bring light to the gender inequalities within society. These women were tired of the hegemony they had been restrained by their entire lives. Conley defines hegemony as “a condition by which a dominant group uses its power to elicit the voluntary ‘consent’ of the masses” (Conley 2017, p.95). The feminist movement sparked women to no longer willfully consent to the fashion they were expected to

take part in. It was time to go against the dominant members of society and not let their gender identity dictate their clothing.

Part II - Contemporary Understanding of Fashion

Shifts in Gender Identity Display

The fight for fashion equality is ongoing and still prevalent today. Levi provides a contemporary look at the differences in dress requirements in professional settings for both men and women. Levi argues that many institutions, whether that be in school or the workplace, possess “sexually exploitive dress requirements” (Levi 2006, p.90.) Many transgender individuals have begun the fight for sex discrimination through dress in the workplace and started the discussion about fluid gender identity. If an individual is transgender, this means they identify as the opposite gender than what was prescribed to them based off of their sex at birth. Levi explains that there are numerous gender stereotypes associated with each gender that have no factual evidence (Levi 2006, p.91). Levi reference’s Appiah’s definition of “normative stereotypes” which is how group members act based off the norms of a group in order to conform and maintain their membership (Levi 2006, p.93). It is often times easier to stay in one’s comfort zone where they are accepted by the group as opposed to deviating from what is the norm. Many misinterpret gender differences because they relate to what they know and experience. This means it is difficult for many to understand other points of view which becomes a main issue when creating dress-codes within professional settings (Levi 2006, p.94). In *Jespersion vs. Harrah’s Operating Co. Inc*, an early 2000’s court proceeding, Jespersen sued the company she had been working at for the previous twenty years. Jespersen was a female employee of Harrah’s who felt she could longer uphold the expectations placed on her by management. At this company, females had to have styled hair, painted nails, and attend

programs called “Personal Best” where they were taught to look the way the company wanted. The men of the company did not have the same expectations placed on their physical appearance. As previously mentioned, these dress-code rules are based upon normative stereotypes, however, not all women identify with these norms. For Jespersen, wearing makeup as her supervisor urged, goes against her gender identity and made her unable to focus on her job (Levi 2006, p.94). Jespersen was fired as a result of not complying with the grooming policies placed on her; she then sued on the basis of sex discrimination. She felt that the requirements put only on women were classified as unfair treatment based on her sex. Just because some women are comfortable with these grooming rules, does not mean all are. The case was later dismissed because “Jespersen could not demonstrate that the differential treatment amounted to an unequal burden on women” and the court stated that having different grooming requirements for men and women does not count as sex discrimination (Levi 2006, p.95). Her case would only be valid if all women were burdened as opposed to just her and her personal gender preferences (Levi 2006, p.97).

Levi argues that dress codes are not always sex discrimination, therefore, cases can have varying outcomes (Levi 2006, p.96). In the court preceding *Doe vs Yunits*, transgender student Pat Doe sued her junior high principal. Pat was born as male but identifies as a female and chooses to wear dresses, wigs, and padded undergarments to help her feel more comfortable in her gender identity. Pat was forbidden from wearing these items to school because it went against the school dress code that stated: “clothing which could be disruptive or distractive to the educational process or which could affect the safety of students” is not allowed (Levi 2006, p.99). Pat was told that her clothes were seen as distracting to other students because she was viewed as a biological male dressing in female clothes which many believe is unnatural. Sam

based her court argument around the fact that when other female students wore these items, they were not in violation of dress code or “distracting” to other students. However, when Sam, who identifies as a female, wears this type of clothing, it was a problem. This is another example which explains that not all people in one gender category express their identity in the same way. Sam eventually had to receive a note from her physicians saying it was medically necessary that she dress for her gender preference, and she eventually won her case (Levi 2006, p.99).

Levi uses these two court examples as a means of showing that gendered laws and rules are not one size fits all. People manifest their gender identity in many different ways that the people creating these rules are struggling to understand. As mentioned, clothing is often times used as a means of conforming, yet, when Jesperson and Pat are not able to conform, there is a societal uproar. Levi argues that cases pursued by transgender people have a much higher likelihood of being taken seriously than those not pursued by these individuals. She states that “cases brought by transgender litigants provide insight into what may move judges to understand both the harms of forced gender conformity for those individuals and the inelasticity of gender identity” (Levi 2006, p.113). These “normative stereotypes” that make assumptions and group an entire gender together are harmful to many members of society, not just transgender individuals (Levi 2006, p.110). Levi explains how Pat was able to win her case by filing a disability claim which allowed the plaintiff to provide more “evidence relating to the condition of being transgender” (Levi 2006, p.101). The use of these claims for transgender individuals comes with criticism as it relates being transgender to a health concern. This idea further perpetuates the stigmas surrounding gender fluidity and identifies being transgender as a hindrance or limiting factor in one’s life (Levi 2006, p.106).

Feminist Displays in Fashion

Many celebrities are using their status to change these gendered stereotypes within society. Status can be defined as “a recognizable social position that an individual occupies” (Conley 2017, p.132). Celebrities use the media as a platform that “communicates information” to the public and commonly influences or dictates our behavior (Conley 2017, p.93). Celebrities are able to deviate from the norm in order to protest or send a message to larger society. Social deviance is any sort of infraction of the “socially established norms” whether intentional or not (Conley 2017, p.191). An action that is considered to be deviant behavior can change depending someone’s definition of a social norm. Social norms can be fluid and change, which is exactly what some celebrities are attempting to do in regard to gendered fashion. Jonathan Van Ness is the grooming expert on reality show *Queer Eye*. On this show, five self-proclaimed gay men give lifestyle makeovers to people in need. Jonathan has recently expressed to the public that he identifies as "non-binary" and “genderqueer.” He explains that who he is does not fit the mold of either just male or female and aims to “break down binary stereotypes” (O’Kane 2019). He was quoted saying, "I think that a lot of times gender is used to separate and divide. It's this social construct that I don't really feel like I fit into the way I used to” (O’Kane 2019). As a child, he felt that he could not be his genuine self in public. He loved borrowing his mother’s clothes but had to do so in the confines of his house to avoid the scrutiny and gender-shaming he would receive by peers. Today, he is often seen in dresses, skirts, and heels, stereotypically female garments. Being non-binary means that someone does not identify as just either male or female within the “the two-gender system, or gender binary, of identifying as either male or female” (O’Kane 2019). Visually, Jonathan resembles a mix of male and female with his beard and mustache complementing his straight hair that goes past his shoulders. Jonathan feels that as a

genderqueer person, gender is a fluid notion that one cannot be static within. Someone who is genderqueer can find fluidity not just within their gender, but sometimes their sexuality as well. Jonathan embraces both his feminine and masculine sides and wants to show society that people express themselves in different ways and not everyone has to dress to fit gender stereotypes placed upon them (O’Kane 2019). Jonathan is using his celebrity status and platform to reach a larger audience about changing the notion of gendered dress.

Billie Eilish, a female singer, is using her way of dress as a means of breaking free from the oppression she feels as a woman. People criticize Billie for her overly baggy and androgynous clothes. Billie spoke out about how her way of dress is not just a fashion statement, but a political one. As a female, she argues that people expect you to dress with the aspects that are stereotypically feminine, however, once you dress the way society expects, you are sexualized. Billie feels that regardless of how she dresses, she will be judged and scrutinized. The way she chooses to dress does not allow people to critique her body because they cannot see it. She was quoted saying, "I never want the world to know everything about me" (Vargas 2019). Vargas states that women are constantly judged and valued for their appearance as opposed to their internal capabilities. Billie does not want discussion of her body to overshadow her music abilities, therefore, she has made it that discussion of her body is not possible (Vargas 2019).

Many high-end fashion designers are following the lead of these celebrities and trying to blur the lines between masculine and feminine. Many feel that people identify with “one fixed gender identity,” yet Chira questions who gets to decide what being male or female really means. She references prominent societal figures such as President Trump who allegedly asked his female staff members “to dress like women,” showing that he wants a clear representation of gender identity enforced in the workplace (Chira 2017). Authoritative figures have the ability to

set forth gendered dress codes, as well as perpetuate gender stereotypes. Chira goes on to argue how gendered clothing has evolved overtime. The 1960's sparked a trend for men to grow longer hair while adorning florals and bright colors, characteristics that some would argue as being feminine. In 1984, Jean Paul Gaultier dressed a man in a skirt, and later in 2016, Jaden Smith modeled clothing that was initially designed for women in an advertisement for the Brand Louis Vuitton. Designers are slowly but surely realizing that fashion is an ever-changing form of self-expression that does not have to be limited by the confines of socially constructed gender norms (Chira 2017). The institution of fashion is used as a means of socializing individuals on how to properly express their gender. If this were to change, then fashion would be less strict and confining in regard to gender and sexuality.

Hawgood discusses the displays of gender, or lack thereof, at the 2019 New York Fashion Week. Hedi Slimane, the newest creative director at Céline, premiered in his debut show unisex clothing, the first of its kind for this brand. All of the pieces in the menswear line for Spring/Summer 2019 are also offered in women's sizing. Hawgood argues that "with each passing season, designers such as Slimane push the gender binary of women's wear and menswear closer to a gender unity" (Hawgood 2019). Clare Waight Keller, Givenchy's newest creative director, also created a line of "elegant matching navy power suits for men and women alike" (Hawgood 2019). Designers are not afraid to push the status quo for what both men and women can wear, allowing them to re-write the rules for gender norms. Hawgood argues that these androgynous looks are very timely during the wake of the #MeToo Movement where women are encouraged to speak out against sexual assault or harassment. Currently, there is a "cultural dialogue taking place everywhere on the playing field between powerful women and men in power" (Hawgood 2019). Creating clothes for males, females, or anyone who wants to

sport them is showing that the power differentials in society can be broken down and underneath the clothes we are all just people.

Underrepresentation of Minority Races in Fashion

It is imperative to acknowledge in most cases, political movements and fashion trends are not aimed at all races. Women of minority status have been excluded from nearly all aspects of fashion including retail shopping, trends, designing, and modeling. Sharma discusses an incident involving racism that took place in a California Versace Outlet, a high-end retail store. The training manager at the time asked employees to use the code “D410” whenever they saw a black person enter the store. The code “D410” is what is written on the tags of black clothing. This same manager also asked his employees to “hold a black shirt” when using this code “so they don’t know what you’re talking about” (Sharma 2017). Versace refused the claims; however, this incident is not the first of its kind within the high-end fashion scene. The Madison Avenue store for Alexander McQueen has been sued three times by its employees regarding the racial injustices they have face while working at the store. “Luxury department store Barneys” face accusations in 2014 when customers and employees complained the security guards were targeting minority group customers. A recent survey done by ABC News found that over 60 percent of African Americans have faced racial profiling at least once. This includes being followed or observed when in a store or being falsely accused of shoplifting. This type of racial profiling is linked to the ideology that black customers cannot afford the same luxuries as white customers, and therefore are more likely to steal. In general, minority groups are extremely underrepresented in the fashion world. In 2016, only 10 out of 110 designers surveyed at New York Fashion Week were people of color. Sharma goes on to explain that “approximately 70 percent of the models casted for the major shows were also predominantly white with some

brands...casting almost only white models” (Sharma 2017). One scholar argues that the first step to fix is the problem of racial prejudice is to recognize it and face it head on. The acts of racial discrimination need to be monitored by fellow employees to ensure that they come to an end. Most importantly, “a shift in perspectives and even simple measures such as encouraging your employees to get to know other racially diverse colleagues” can create a sense of understanding and acceptance (Sharma 2017). These racial biases are significant because they exemplify the lack of minority acceptance and underrepresentation in fashion.

Mcdermott and Pettijohn completed a study in 2011 that examined the correlation between fashion and race on college campus in particular. This study questioned 168 people undergraduates at a private Pennsylvania college, 68 men and 100 women (Mcdermott and Pettijohn 2011, p. 66). Students were shown one of six images and asked a plethora of questions. Three images consisted of a Caucasian female, and three of an African American female. Each model had a photo in three different sweatshirts: plain gray with no logo, gray with a Kmart logo, and gray with an Abercrombie & Fitch logo (Mcdermott and Pettijohn 2011, p. 66-67). Kmart is representing a lower socioeconomic brand, while Abercrombie & Fitch is a higher one. In the study, Participants of the study were asked to rate photos of the models wearing the sweatshirts in terms of socioeconomic status “and several dimensions related to status, intelligence, attractiveness, and sociability” on a scale of one to nine. Some questions asked included, “I think this person is successful in life,” and “I would be friends with this person” (Mcdermott and Pettijohn 2011, p. 67).

The researchers found that the model wearing the Abercrombie and Fitch sweatshirt was rated higher in terms of socioeconomic status than the model in the Kmart sweatshirt. The models in the Kmart status, regardless of race, were rated as the least successful and important.

These findings show that clothing and perceived social status are directly correlated. When analyzing the role of race within the findings, “the African American models was rated less favorably than the Caucasian model overall on dimensions of success, intelligence, and attractiveness” (Mcdermott and PettiJohn 2011, p. 71). Regardless of the sweatshirt the African American model had on, she was rated lower in socioeconomic standing than the white model (Mcdermott and PettiJohn 2011, p. 68). This study exemplifies how our physical appearance and clothing choices shape perceptions by others. In this case, race mixed with clothing choice effected opinions of the person that participants were merely viewing a photo of. These kinds of assumptions can, in turn, effect opportunities awarded to particular groups of people.

Chapter 2: Gender Performance in the Media

Case Study Outline and Findings

Through content-analysis, I have used magazine advertisements as a tool for delving further into the use of fashion and appearance as a socializing agent used to dictate ones' gender identity. By comparing the different portrayals of men and women in randomly selected 20th century magazines to current day 21st fashion magazines, I am able to better understand the shifts in gender fluidity throughout time. Roland Barthes explains how fashion is dictated by "an exclusive authority, ie, the *fashion-group*, or perhaps, in the case of written fashion... the editors of the magazine" (Cohen and Barthes 1985, pg 160). Essentially, fashion trends are imagined up every year by a governing body and put forth in magazines for the public to absorb and imitate. This governing body could be celebrities, fashion designers, or magazine editors. The governing group of fashion essentially decides the culture of clothing for that given season. Culture is "the sum of the social categories and concepts we embrace in addition to beliefs" (Conley 2017, p.78). Culture is perpetuated by the superior group while the inferior group accepts these ideals. Barthes argues that fashion does not evolve, it suddenly changes. People follow these trends to obtain uniformity and to fit in with the masses. These clothing trends are what socialize people to be functioning members of society and know the accepted way to fit in with those around them (Conley 2017, p.119). Barthes' theory states that "fashion is both *too* serious and *too* frivolous at the same time, and it is in this intentionally complementary interplay of excess that it finds a solution to a fundamental contradiction which constantly threatens to destroy its fragile prestige" (Cohen and Barthes 1985, pg 160). This contradiction makes it even more difficult for people to successfully play into trends. In order to obtain this idyllic balance, one must follow the guidelines of magazines and advertisements.

In order to carry out this study, I selected two magazines that are catered to a specific gender category. Participating magazines were chosen partially by accessibility, but also by popularity in terms of readership and length of existence. For the female-focused magazine, I analyzed Vogue. Vogue is the pinnacle of women's fashion magazines and had their first issue in 1892. In 1909 they were acquired by Conde Naste Publishers which influenced their focus on women. As a magazine, Vogue aims to not just reflect the current fashion trends, but shape and influence new ones. Vogue is seen as the most popular fashion magazine in the world ("Vogue – History"). To analyze male-driven advertisements, I looked at Esquire Magazine. Esquire's first issue was published in October of 1933. Currently, Esquire is owned by Hearst Magazine Media. Esquire's website proudly states, "Esquire is special because it's a magazine for men. Not a fashion magazine for men, not a health magazine for men, not a money magazine for men. It is not any of these things; it is all of them. It is, and has been for nearly seventy years, a magazine about the interests, the curiosity, the passions, of men." ("The Esquire Timeline 1932-2003"). Esquire aims to be the leading male-focused magazine that has all-encompassing content.

Advertisements from each magazine were selected using a random number generator. The generator would direct me which page number to turn to within the Esquire magazine, or which advertisement to examine on the Vogue archival database. I would continue to randomly select pages or database entries if the one selected was not of an advertisement of the gender the magazine is aimed at, or if it did not depict an image with a person. I chose two magazines from each century examined, either 20th or 21st, via a random generator. Therefore, I looked at 8 magazines in total, four from either Vogue or Esquire. I looked at five advertisements from each individual magazine. For this case study, I examined 40 advertisements in total. For 21st century

magazines, I only examined 2019-2020 advertisements, again partially because of accessibility, but also to have an accurate depiction of today's society.

When looking at individual advertisements, I looked for specific examples of a man or woman breaking away from their own gender's stereotypes and taking part in another. Essentially, in each gender category I charted clothing or appearances that went against the expected gender norms and stereotypes for either males or females. When analyzing men, I coded for five general categories. The first category was colorful or noticeable makeup. It is common for models of both genders to be wearing neutral makeup, therefore, I only coded male models that had noticeably bright makeup that was intended to stand out. The second category coded was bright colors and patterns present on clothing. This consisted of any pattern that was not neutral colors or for example, a simple stripe pattern. The next category coded for was any time a man could be seen in a skirt, dress, or high heeled shoes. I grouped these items together because they are stereotypically worn by women and are arguably the rarest to be seen worn by a heterosexual cisgender male. The next category was any large jewelry or accessory items such as a purse. The final category coded for men was having long hair that went past their chin.

Regarding women, I looked at a different set of guidelines that went against the gender norm in terms of dress and appearance for women. The first category coded for was a woman appearing to have no makeup on, essentially no clear signs or coloring of makeup. The next category coded for was women in pants, an idea that was unheard of prior to the 1960's. Next, I coded for women wearing baggy clothing that did not show any resemblance of a figure, a fashion trend that is increasingly more common in modern times. Lastly, I noted anytime a woman was depicted with short hair, typically shorter than their ears.

Table 1: Women in Vogue

	December 1956	August 1981	January 2019	October 2019
no makeup/not brightly colored	2	2	3	3
pants		1	1	2
baggy clothing				
short hair				1

Table 2: Men in Esquire

	May 1980	November 1983	Fall/Winter 2019	March 2019
colorful/noticeable makeup				
bright colors and patterns			1	1
skirts/dress/heels				
large jewelry/accessories				1
long hair (past chin)				1

“Table 1” shows an increase in female attitudes and actions that break stereotypical gender norms over time. Of the 20 female-focused advertisements in Vogue that I examined, the 2019 examples showed an increase in every category except for the wearing of baggy clothing that was not present in any advertisements. A 1981 advertisement in Vogue for Léonard, a

Parisian clothing brand, can be seen in “Image 1” showing two women depicted as friends laughing together ("Advertisement: Léard (Léonard)."1981). This is similar to the 2019 advertisement for Tampax, a feminine hygiene brand, also depicting two women in “Image 2” ("Advertisement: Tampax (Tampax Incorporated)."2019). Before analyzing the images themselves, it's important to note that tampons in the 21st century are still largely seen as taboo and not an open topic of conversation. An ad for tampons, let alone one boldly referencing a woman's menstrual cycle, would not be commonly found in the 1980's.

“Image 1” depicts two Caucasian women in formal dresses with heels, noticeable makeup, and statement jewelry. The act of leaning against an expensive car, in front of a mansion with a butler shows what kind of lifestyle and client the brand is catered to. They are sending the message that if you buy from this brand you will feel as beautiful and powerful as these wealthy women. In contrast, “Image 2” shows mixed race friends in pants and shorts, not noticeable makeup, happily smiling in front of their bikes. The culture of this image sends the message that this product is for everyone, not just the elite like the previous advertisement suggested. This advertisement celebrates the differences in women and how while each may look different, they all experience similarities. In this case: that similarity is their period. The caption reads, “You do you. Period or not.” This signifies that having to deal with one's menstrual cycle shouldn't hinder a woman from being the best version of herself and doing what she wants to do. The change in depiction of women between these two images is staggering.

Image 1:

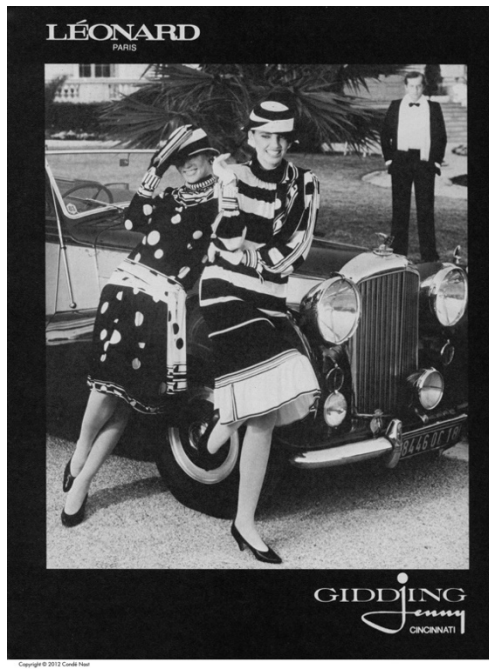


Image 2:



Image 3:

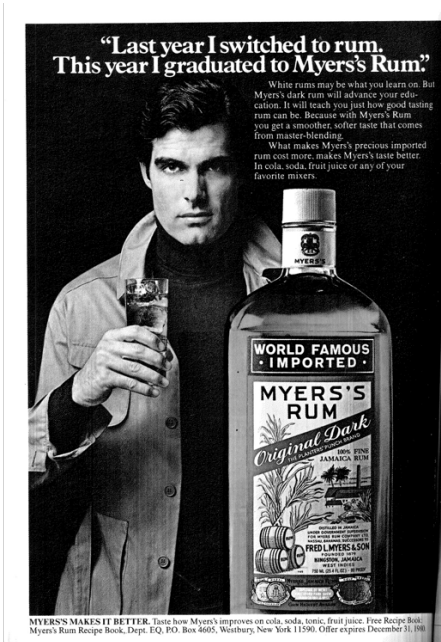
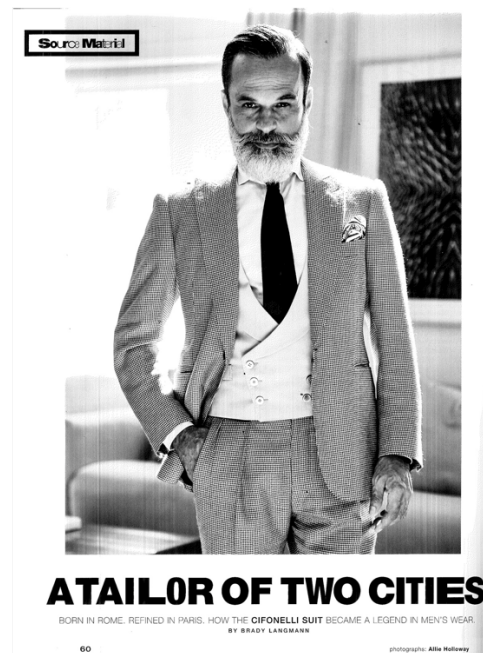


Image 4:



The findings in “Table 1” contrast with “Table 2” that showed no gender fluidity to begin with and barely increased over time. There were no examples of breaking gender norms in male 20th century advertisement examples. In the January 2019 magazine there was one example of bright colors and patterns. In the October 2019 magazine there was one example within each category for bright colors and patterns, large jewelry or accessories, and long hair below the chin. The wearing of colorful makeup or a skirt, dress, or heels was not present in any of the twenty advertisements randomly selected. It is important to note that it was much more difficult to find advertisements in men’s magazines that depicted an image of a male, especially the older publications. Most advertisements in the old magazines were for cigarettes, cars, and alcohol. These products are often times thought of as stereotypical interests of men and by advertising them incessantly the expectations of masculinity are further perpetuated.

A 1980 Esquire advertisement for Myer’s Rum can be seen in “Image 3” depicting an ominous looking man emerging from the shadows holding a Beveridge (“Advertisement.” Nov 1980, p.24). This is similar to the 2019 advertisement for Cifonelli Suits, seen in “Image 4,” that also showing a man in a strong pose looking directly into the camera (“Advertisement.” Fall/Winter 2019, p.60). Although these images are advertising different products, they use the same idea of a confident man looking directly into the camera. This shows their confidence and superior attitude. Each man is well dressed and in a non-descriptive environment because they are the sole focal point of the image. These images show that “real men” who are masculine and strong buy these products and if the consumer buys these products they will be seen in this way also. This is yet another example of how fashion is used to socialize people into certain gender roles and expectations.

Hyper-Masculinity and Symbolic Interactionism

Masculinity is a socially constructed phenomenon used to influence and dictate male behavior. Masculine ideals have escalated to a level of hyper-masculinity within society and are depicted in the media and in this instance, advertising. The media can be defined as “any formats or vehicles that carry, present, or communicate information” (Conley 2017, p.90). The media not only reflects a cultural norm, but produces culture by what it shows. The media is produced by a governing body who decides what images are shown (Conley 2017, p.94). In this case, the media is showing overtly masculine ideals. Hyper-masculinity, or HM, can be defined as “a gender-based ideology of exaggerated beliefs about what it is to be a man” (Vokey et al. 2013, p.563). Basically, HM is the heightened behavior one takes part in an attempt to be perceived as manly. The beliefs associated with HM involve “toughness as emotional self-control, violence as manly, danger as exciting, and calloused attitudes toward women and sex” (Vokey et al. 2013, p.563). Men are being taught to behave in this manner in order to be accepted as male members of society. Advertising is one of the many outlets being used to project HM ideals on impressionable boys and men. In a recent study of a variety eight different U.S. magazines, 56 % of the 527 advertisements analyzed depicted one or more hypermasculine beliefs from a curated checklist. In some of the magazines examined, 90% or more of advertisements showed at least one of the hyper-masculine behaviors. Examples of HM behaviors found in these advertisements is an image of a man choking a woman or a group of men surrounding a woman in an alley (Vokey et al. 2013, p.563).

This data shows that HM is extremely prevalent and has the ability to negatively influence the male population. An advertisements’ primary goal is to sell a product or service to

the consumer. Fashion advertisements aim to not just sell the clothing in the image, but also to set forth the current fashion trends. However, in attempting to do so they often “perpetuate stereotypes and present behavioural norms for men and women” (Vokey et al. 2013, p.565). A stereotype is a learned assumption that marginalizes a group of people and makes claim that all members of this group have certain similarities. Showing stereotypes in advertising can further sustain their grasp over a certain group. By depicting socially accepted and sought-after versions of masculinity, men are buying into not just the product, but also the lifestyle that comes along with it. If they too purchase this product, they will be seen as the strong and masculine man depicted in the advertisement. Advertisers will do what is needed to make their product seem more appealing so that they can make the maximum profit. Depicting HM appeals to the majority who are purchasing their product because many of them are attempting to reach the ideals shown in the image. Men are not as often depicted in a dress, for example, because due to gender constraints, there is a much smaller population of men who choose to wear dresses. There is a “societal pressure” that tells men they must give in to the “proscribed standard of masculinity” in order to be accepted within society (Vokey et al. 2013, p.565). Men feel stress from society to conform to masculinity ideals or else they won’t be seen as manly. This standard of masculinity tells men that they cannot wear items associated with femininity or they will not be seen as masculine as their male counterparts who are wearing what is assumed of them. Advertisements can be seen as “a major socializing agent within our culture that influences the development of masculine ideals and norms” (Vokey et al. 2013, p.573). This further creates a sense of toxic masculinity that does not give men the freedom to dress and act how they please. The stigma to fit the mold of what it means to be masculine by societal standards is what constrains men from being their authentic selves.

Erving Goffman's Dramaturgical Theory explains why men feel a need to prescribe to society's masculine ideals. In Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, he compares everyday life to a performance where people play a particular role that is depicted to those around them (Goffman 1959, p.17). This theory is called "Dramaturgical theory" which can be defined as "the view of social life as essentially a theatrical performance, in which we are all actors on metaphorical stages, with roles, scripts, costumes, and sets" (Conley 2017, p.139). This idea of a performance alludes to any activity that an individual takes part in "during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers." (Goffman 1959, p.22). Observers, in this case, refer to the peers of the individual, as well as overall societal judgement. Goffman argues that the clothing we wear "demonstrates awareness" of the role and status that we hold as individuals in society (Rubinstein 1995, p.43). As people, we dress the part in order to be positively perceived by others. The way we dress is a nonverbal way of communicating to those around us. We start as individuals, but over time develop a mask that is the role we are trying to obtain and maintain. People learn how to wear this mask by observing and socializing with those around them through development. This mask is essentially the version of ourselves that we strive to be and preserve (Goffman 1959, p.19). In regard to masculinity, men wear this mask in order to be seen as manly by their peers. Those in the "front stage" observe our performance and use the clothes we wear as a means of identifying our role. For example, females wear dresses and men wear suits. A man in a dress or bright makeup might cause others to question their role. The front is defined as "that part of the individual's performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to fine the situation for those who observe the performance" (Goffman 1959, p.22). Those in the front use our appearance, dress, and actions to identify our social status in society

(Goffman 1959, p.24). All of this information about an individual is what tells the audience what to expect of that person and how to interact with them (Goffman 1959, p.1). Dressing within the stereotypes assumed for one's gender is a way of creating a sense of understanding for those around them. A woman in a dress is accepted and understood, whereas someone's role as a man might be in a state of confusion if they are in a dress. The audience might not know how to perceive this individual and how to properly interact with them. The backstage is where people prepare their mask for the role they are going to play. There are no audience members present at this part, so the individual can dress informally and act in ways that might not go with their role (Rubinstein 1995, p.44). Rubinstein states that "nursery school teachers, judges, ushers, health care personnel, ward attendants, supervisors, and maître d's, among others, act as gatekeepers" that create the boundaries for appropriate dress in a given role. If you do not follow the guidelines set forth by the gatekeepers or wear the necessary mask, then you will be banished (Rubinstein 1995, p.46). In advertising and the media, this mask is accentuated in order to get a positive reaction from the audience or consumer to sell product.

Blumer's theory of Symbolic Interactionism explains the meaning behind "human conduct," and in this case, how magazines influence their readers (Blumer 1969, p.1). There are three main principles behind his theory. The first is that the way someone acts towards "things" is based off a preconceived notion (Blumer 1969, p.2). These "things" can be objects, people, or intuitions. For example, the way someone acts towards a man or woman is based off of their previous assumption about how men or women are expected to act based off of societally enforced stereotypes. When readers are looking at magazines, they look at "things" for guidance on the ideals of beauty and society's latest trends. The second principle states that "the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's

fellows” (Blumer 1969, p.2). Essentially, the altercations with peers is where the meanings for things is taught. Through socialization, people learn the ways in which men and women are “supposed to” dress and act. If a man or woman is dressed in a way that does not follow the guidelines for how they been socialized to dress, they will be chastised. The third and final principle explains that these meanings are “modified” and “interpreted” through encounters. This last principle is especially significant in today’s society as there is a push for gender fluidity. If meanings can be “modified” then that means there is room for these gender stereotypes to be changed.

Blumer feels that as people, we take meaning for what we have been taught, as opposed to forming our own opinions. People see a fashion trend within a magazine and take the messages as final. He says we have a “tendency to treat human behavior as the product of various factors that play upon human beings” (Blumer 1969, p.2-3). Furthermore, people are granted social permission to have different behaviors depending on status and role in society. The meaning behind an action can be entirely different for two individuals, contingent on the preconceived societal position of that person. Meaning is derived in two ways: the first is “intrinsic” and naturally a part of that object (Blumer 1969, p.3). In this case, celebrities not only have the means to dress the way top fashion magazines depict models, but they are also given social permission to dress in a more avant-garde manner. The second way of deriving meaning is by comparing elements associated with that thing. An example of this would be seen through someone carrying a designer handbag. That handbag has an expensive price tag and therefore signifies wealth and prestige for that individual. This might give someone else an urge to buy that handbag to receive the same status that it brings. Symbolic interactionism states that “meaning [arises] in the process of interaction between people” (Blumer 1969, p.4). Meaning is a

“social product” that is based off of interactions, people, relationships, and so on and so forth. Blumer argues that humans need to look past the meanings that they are accustomed to and disengage so that they can make their own observations and interpretations (Blumer 1969, p.4). Instead of taking guidance from magazines, advertisements, and celebrities, Blumer argues that people need to question why we take their message as law.

Like Blumer, the current Editor in Chief of GQ magazine, Will Welch, aims to have people disengage from their preconceived notions regarding what it means to be a man. He wants to take away this mask and allow for men of all types to be emulated within his magazine. GQ, a men’s fashion and lifestyle magazine, plans to shift in this direction in order to be “a magazine that isn’t really trying to be exclusively for or about men at all” (Welch 2019). Welch says that his aim is to assist in creating a magazine that has a “diverse and gender-nonspecific audience” (Welch 2019). In regard to fashion, Welch aims to create an exciting experience for anyone of any gender or sexuality with an interest in “menswear culture” (Welch 2019). At the time of publication, the upcoming New Masculinity Issue was well underway. Welch aims to highlight people who are “actively engaging with the complex and shape-shifting inquiry around what masculinity means today” (Welch 2019). He intends to do this by spotlighting activists, celebrities, athletes, scientists, and others who are putting in time and energy into changing the societal view of what it means to be masculine. GQ asked 1,005 Americans on the current “state of masculinity” and their feedback shows a “seismic change is indeed under way” and work needs to be done so that the magazine does not fall behind (Welch 2019). Many argue that in modern-day society, there is a shift in acceptance for those who choose to break free from the stereotypes assigned to their gender. Now more than ever, the idea of the “nuclear family” in which a man who is the strong provider is married to a woman the beautiful wife and mother.

Talcott Parson's Sex role theory explains this idea as the optimal arrangement in society where people are best fulfilling their function and role in society (Conley 2017, p.293). Welch aims to break this image of men and going forward GQ wants to stop advising readers on how to be manly or masculine, but to encourage an "exploration into how stereotypical definitions of masculinity are being questioned and changed. Welch states that GQ aims to be an "exploration of how we can all become more generous, honest, open, and loving humans-especially if we rebuild masculinity on a foundation of traits and values like generosity, honesty, openness, and love" (Welch 2019).

Negative Portrayals of Women

While the media depicts an exaggerated image of masculinity, it also depicts women in a way where they are objectified and seen as inferior to men. Jean Kilbourne has made a 40-year long career discussing the role of women within advertising. Many ask if in all this time she has found that the depiction of women has gotten better, however, she argues that it have gotten worse. The advertising industry in just the United States is an over 250 billion dollar a year business. Kilbourne states that the average American is exposed to over 3,000 ads every day (Kilbourne 2010). I feel that this number has risen in the past 10 years since this documentary was produced as there has been a significant rise in social media and influencer marketing. Today, social media personalities are constantly promoting brands and products through their content. Therefore, between social media, billboards, television, sides of busses, and so much more, we are constantly surrounded by advertising.

As people, we internalize what we see and process advertisements subconsciously. This creates a situation where it is hard to break free from this "toxic cultural environment" that

bombards us with unhealthy images and messages that diminishes our well-being for the sake of profit (Kilbourne 2010). These advertisements tell women that the most important thing about them is their appearance that requires a lot of time and money to achieve an idealist look. This ideal is flawless and therefore unattainable. The models portrayed in magazines are digitally retouched and altered to a point where they do not even resemble the woman on the page. This perpetuates a toxic environment where consumers want to emulate the models on the pages and compare themselves to these unattainable images. These unrealistic beauty standards are taken one step further for women of color who often times are only seen as beautiful when depicted with white characteristics such as lightened skin, straight hair, and overall Caucasian features. These beauty restraints not only effect women's self-esteem, but also shift male perspectives on the women they are with (Kilbourne 2010). Both men and women compare real-life women to the digitally altered women in advertisements who have been changed to the point of no longer truthfully showing what that model looks like.

It has long been a theme in advertising for women's bodies to be objectified which "creates a climate where there is widespread violence against women" (Kilbourne 2010). By turning a human into a "thing," it becomes easier to justify violence towards that person or group. This directly relates to a history of racism in the United States where minority groups are dehumanized and therefore taken advantage of. In advertising, it has been seen that women are being turned into objects catered to male audiences, such as beer or cars, which signifies that female are objects for male use. Kilbourne argues that in recent years, she has seen an increase in the objectification of men in media, however, when they are objectified they are made to look big and strong while women are depicted as weak. She argues that men do not face the same repercussions of objectification because they "don't live in a world where they're likely to be

raped, harassed, or beaten, or at least straight white men don't live in such a world, whereas women and girls do" (Kilbourne 2010). She goes on to explain that boys grow up in a world where men are shown as perpetrators of violence and advertisements are eroticizing violence. This was exemplified by Vokey in the previously discussed study where hyper-masculinity was heavily prevalent across advertisements. When discussing this point, Kilbourne showed numerous ads that depict images where men are holding a woman down or choking her. A 2010 statistic showed that one-third of women murdered in this country are done so by their male partners or husbands. This idea relates to the toxic masculinity mentioned prior that tells men that in order to be respected they must be strong, in control, and feared.

With the objectification of women comes the growing desire for women to fit the idealized appearance that men have constructed. In 2010, 91% of cosmetic procedures are performed on women. From 1997-2007 the use of surgical cosmetic procedures rose by 457% and the use of nonsurgical ones such as Botox or lasers grew by 754% (Kilbourne 2010). Women feel a need to physically alter their appearance in order look a way that society approves of. This teaches young girls that they will be judged by how they look and that they must change themselves in order to be accepted. Young girls are also taught that eternal youth is the goal and to fear showing signs of age. Women have been programmed to think that beauty and youth and synonymous, which means that a woman must fear aging.

With being youthful comes being small, where women in advertising show an unrealistic standard of beauty where adult women have the frame and build of teenage girls. A size zero is what women are taught to aspire for, which has an eerie correlation with aspiring to be nothing in society (Kilbourne 2010). Women are often shown as vulnerable with passive body language,

whereas men are in strong and dignified poses taking up more space on the page. This idea can be seen in “Image 2” and “Image 3.” Wanting to be smaller leads to the eating disorder epidemic in the United States. Models are getting smaller and smaller, and when they cannot get any smaller digital retouching is used. Editor of British Vogue stated that sometimes they must retouch images to make women look less emaciated when, for example, their ribs are protruding from their chests. The tall and thin frame of models is part of one’s genetic makeup that cannot be achieved by just anyone. Fewer than 5% of the population truly look like the models in magazines (Kilbourne 2010). The desire for thinness is what has caused ads for food to be eroticized. Women are meant to feel ashamed for eating, therefore, food is depicted as a sexual desire or promiscuous act. Eating a burger is seen as something not womanly to do, so a model makes it a forbidden and sexual act to indulge in her craving. The idea that “sex sells” is put into every product to the point that it has become pornographic. Men and women look to advertising as a form of socialization for what is acceptable within society. Whether this be to dress, or how to physically look, gender is portrayed in the media in the form of the ideal for the masses to replicate. It is clear that women men and women have an unhealthy relationship with advertising and their mental and physical states.

Chapter 3: Gendered Societal Constraints

The Body Project

I sat down with the Assistant Director for Health Promotion and Student Wellness at a small liberal arts college in Upstate New York. The median family income of a student at this school is \$152,600. This is rather high compared to the median household income of the United States that is \$61,937 according to the 2018 census (Guzman 2019). Of the 173 colleges in New York, this “highly selective private” college is ranked 7th in terms of highest median parent income. At this four-year college with roughly 3,200 undergraduate students, 66% come from the top 20 percent. 3.5% of students come from bottom 20%. This information is based of anonymous tax records and does not include international students or students who students who could not be linked to their parents' tax returns. This information was gathered in 2013 and therefore might have shifted in the past 6 years as an entire grouping of students have cycled through (“Economic Diversity and Student Outcomes”). Lastly, at this institution, only 22% of the students are domestic identify as people of color, while 10% of student body are international and identify as such (“U---- at a glance”).

Weber discusses the correlation between one’s class standing and society. One’s social class is explained as those within the same grouping in terms of ability to purchase goods, “outer social standing,” and “inner personal fate” (Weber 2019, p. 450). Weber defines sociology as “a science that in construing and understanding social action seeks causal explanation of the course and effects of such action. By “action” is meant human behaviour linked to a subjective meaning on the part of the actor” (Weber 2019, p. 78). Essentially, he feels that sociology is all about understanding interactions amongst individuals and the environment around them. He explains

that everything has a particular meaning that is interpreted and effects one's behavior. In this case, the idea of social class effects one's behaviors and interpretation of the world around them. He states that those in higher social classes are seen as privileged and granted with more freedoms. These people can afford higher cost goods and have more accessible opportunities to accumulate wealth and capital. This results in an education privilege within higher class groups (Weber 2019, p. 450). In regard to fashion, celebrities are given more freedom in terms of what society deems acceptable for them to wear as opposed to the average person. In chapter one, I discussed Jonathan Van Ness, a genderqueer television personality. He has hair past his shoulders and frequently wears dresses, high heels, and makeup to public events. Because of his celebrity status, his outfit choices are more accepted within society. In contrast, a genderqueer person of lower class might not be able to wear the same clothes as Jonathan to their work functions. Jonathan uses his elevated status to help spread awareness and acceptance for the LGBTQA+ community and break down the stigma surrounding gendered clothing. Higher class individuals such as celebrities are often are living off of the hard work of others. A historic example of this would be slave owners, however, today these people could be a company owner, CEO, or celebrity (Weber 2019, p. 451). Being in a position of wealth creates the ability to conduct life differently than someone of lower class (Weber 2019, p. 455).

When discussing this particular "highly selective private" college, it is important to take note of the socioeconomic class of the student body ("Economic Diversity and Student Outcomes"). Recognizing the societal class of these students shows that the resources and problems these students are faced with is not the same for all college-aged groups. A 2010 study looked at the body image ideals and eating disorder symptoms among different cultural groups. This study looked at White, Latina, and Black college women. Almost every hypothesis in this

study was found to be false as disordered eating and body image problems vary across cultures. These false hypotheses shows that assumptions about these groups cannot be made and treatment cannot be streamlined across them all. The author states that their findings “underscore the importance of considering cultural variables in the assessment and diagnosis of eating disorders. First, it is clear that women from all ethnic groups are vulnerable to the development of eating pathology. Second, clinicians should be sensitive to, and assess for, cultural variables that may put ethnic and racial minority women at particular risk for eating disorders” (Gordon 2010, p. 142). This study further proves why it is significant to take note of the intricacies of a given group being examined and to not make assumptions. For this reason, the climate of the Upstate New York liberal arts school calls for a program such as They Body Project.

The colleague of this small liberal arts school is extremely involved with the Body Project on campus. She has been at this college for thirteen years, and the Body Project has been on present on the campus for four. The Body Project is a nationally run initiative started by NEDA, The National Eating Disorders Association. NEDA defines The Body Project as “a group-based intervention that provides a forum for women and girls to confront unrealistic beauty ideals and engages them in the development of healthy body image through verbal, written, and behavioral exercises” (Body Project). The role of The Body Project is to educate students on how to become body image activists. These students can be a presence on campus to their peers and portray positive body image ideals, combat the pressure that people feel to fit a particular image ideal, or to combat body shaming, negative body talk, and concerns with eating disorders (*Body Project Interview*, 2020).

At this college, students in The Body Project are engaged in projects, workshops and marketing strategies to spread their positive message. Students can choose to take part of two 2-hour workshops that are facilitated by trained Body Project leaders that are students who have been through the program. Students are leading students on how to have these tough conversations and challenge cognitive distortions that we have on the ideal way of looking. The Body Project is not appropriate for a student with an active eating disorder or if they are under two years into recovery. The conversations that are had can be triggering to someone in those positions and not in a stable relationship with their bodies. Students fill out a pre and post form to provide information on the impact of the program. Out of every hundred students who take part in The Body Project, seven won't develop an eating disorder that they might have without taking part in this workshop. This faculty member does a lot of health promotion work through the counseling center. At the start of every year, a menu of programs is offered to all Greek life and athletics groups on campus. These groups can choose which programs and workshops, if any, they want to take part in. Interestingly, she has never been invited by a fraternity or male athletic team to administer a body image workshop. When asked why she thinks that is the case she explains that, in general, men are not taught to focus on their body image. If it is not a concept that is coming across their mind everyday they might not think of it as a worthy topic to bring to the forefront. She feels this situation is a result of the stigmas rooted in gender norms and gender expectations within society. In general, society finds it acceptable for a woman to be in touch with emotions and speak openly about mental health whereas men are socialized in a way to be tough and strong (*Body Project Interview*, 2020). As stated by Vokey, Men feel a need to conform to masculinity ideals or else they won't be seen as manly (Vokey et al. 2013, p.565).

In this instance, voicing concern over one's body image would not be seen as the masculine thing to do.

Furthermore, when discussing the layout of The Body Project, it was explained how the vast majority of peer leaders have been women. In the first training there was one male present, who has now graduated, and there are currently two men involved with the organization on campus. The two men part of the Body Project are with approximately 30 women. However, it is important to note that the version of The Body Project is aimed towards women and geared towards traditional female body concerns. When asked why she thinks not many men have taken part in the Body Project, she attributed it to the stigma around speaking out around body image concerns that is heavily pervasive in men rather than women was again discussed. In her role as a counselor, she has seen that it is primarily women that are coming forward for services and treatment. An eating disorder is a diagnosable condition that more women are impacted by than men. One can argue that many men who are being impacted by an ED are not seeking services, not disclosing that they are struggling, are going undiagnosed, untreated, or not voicing their struggles to anyone. Again, this relates to the fear of not being perceived as manly by their peers. Often times, talking about one's feelings is seen as feminine (*Body Project Interview*, 2020).

In regard to the media and advertisements, it was stated that young men and women are surrounded by media, television, commercials, magazines and direct advertising for products that are all trying to send them a message at once. Consumers are being marketed to in a way that intimates if they use that product, join that service, dress that way, then they too can be happy and look like that. Marketing for brands has gone beyond just selling a product or an image, but are now selling a lifestyle that comes with that look. Media and advertisements push an image

ideal that is different for men and women. From the coaching and counseling education and research that this college counselor has seen, she explains that men are struggling more with body image concerns that involve being “traditionally masculine” in terms of muscles, toning, and having a “cut” appearance. In contrast, women tend to look for more of a slender appearance, although in the past few years there has been a surge in athletics and being fit and strong. However, for both genders there is always a limitation. Men do not want to get too built and be seen as unattractive, and women do not want to gain too many muscles and be seen as manly. This contradiction makes it difficult to obtain society’s body image ideals which in turn can lead to eating disorders or other unhealthy behaviors(*Body Project Interview*, 2020).

In our discussion, recent all-inclusive media campaigns came up such as Dove and Aerie. These two companies in particular are taking part in marketing campaigns that promote body confidence for women of all shapes and colors, as well as do not digitally enhance their images. A few other brands are beginning to show more inclusive body types, ethnicities, and disabilities that allow the consumer to see themselves in the person advertised. However, when asked if both men and women are getting the same body positive message, this counselor stated, “it’s funny, because now all of the campaigns.. that come to my mind right now are targeted for women or children. [I’m] not aware of any for men” (*Body Project Interview*, 2020). It is important to ask why men are not being given this same positive message. Fashion trends and the models chosen to portray them can also have a harmful effect on body image struggles. Most models chosen are tall and thin, meant to exemplify the ideal way the clothes are meant to look and fit. Yet, clothes will fit differently depending the body type of the consumer. This can have a trickle-down effect to create negative body issues for individuals. In her professional experience, people will begin to think they cannot wear certain items because it does not look the same way on them as it does

on the model or because they do not look like that model (*Body Project Interview*, 2020). For a long time, higher fashion wasn't available in plus sizes which created a part of the population without access to fashionable clothing. The average American woman wears a size 16 (Christel 2017). All of these American women are being bombarded with the same messages regarding being thin and fitting into a certain body ideal. Models are glorifying a body size that is physically not attainable by the vast majority. The 2018 statistics provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention state that the average American woman who is of 20 years of age or older is roughly 170lbs and 5 feet 3.7 inches. This would cause the average woman's BMI to be 29.6 which would put them in the "overweight" category (Fryar 2018). The Body Project is providing women with the mental tools to disregard the harmful messages they are constantly bombarded with in the media and accept their body the way it is.

Hidden Rules of Masculinity and The "Tough Guise"

As previously mentioned, the media often depicts men as being violent and in control. Kaufman states that there is no proof that men are genetically predisposed to violence. He argues that this kind of behavior is a learned trait that connects to the role of gender in society. Violence relates to a context and "social experience" that men are surrounded by as they grow and develop. Kaufman argues that "the racism, sexism, and heterosexism that have been institutionalized in our societies are socially regulated violence" (Kaufman 1987, p. 5). Violence is a learned phenomenon through interaction and witnessing. One's upbringing has a large impact on the kind of person they grow up to be. If someone is battered, they are more likely to batter someone else. Being a male in a male dominated society comes with certain privileges. Some examples are the ability to walk the streets at night without fear, an average of higher wages, and overall societal power. This male domination is passed down with each generation

and is what causes men to embrace the ideals of masculinity at such a young age. It is what socializes men into their gender role and causes them to take part in this for the rest of their lives (Kaufman 1987, p. 6). Kaufman goes on to say that “through psychological development” a man will embody and take “into himself a set of gender-based social relations: the person that is created through the process of maturation becomes the personal embodiment of those relations” (Kaufman 1987, p. 7). He argues that by the ages of five to six years old this lifelong understanding of masculinity is already instilled. In adolescence, boys develop a fear of femininity and learn to repress that aspect of human behavior. Because masculinity is an “ideology,” not a biological certainty, it is “fragile” (Kaufman 1987, p. 7). The rules of masculinity are not definite, therefore, some men are constantly trying to prove their masculinity out of fear of being undermined. He goes on to explain masculinity as a “scripted behavior” one must follow in order to be accepted as a male. There is tension between “maleness and masculinity... because masculinity requires a suppression of a whole range of human needs, aims, feelings, and forms of expression” (Kaufman 1987, p. 7). As a human it is impossible to not feel emotion, but as a masculine man, one is expected to suppress these feelings. In terms of fashion and body acceptance, one must follow the assumed behaviors of a male in order to be accepted and physically seen and interpreted as a man. Fashion is just one “form of expression” that masculinity aims to dictate and suppress. As Goffman stated, our costumes are what help others to identify our role and place us in a certain situation (Goffman 1959). Therefore, men are assumed to dress a certain way or else they will not be adequately fitting into their masculine role.

Following similar themes as Kaufman, Lyman agrees that masculinity is used to group men together in order cultivate a male dominated society. Those who do not conform to the

standard masculinity guidelines are chastised. Lyman describes “male groups” as “shame cultures” that use the “male bond [as] a group identity that subordinates the individual to the rules, and because social control is imposed through collective judgements about self-control, such as ‘strength’ and ‘cool’” (Lyman 1987, p.165). The male identity is one that diminishes individuality in order to promote a group identity. In order to be accepted and perceived favorably, one must follow the societal rules of masculinity. This type of ideation assumes that all members are “equally dependent on the rules” and want to be seen as “cool” and accepted” (Lyman 1987, p.165). Because being a man is seen as superior, men do not want to become an pariah once they have gained a coveted spot in the group. Therefore, they may not want to dress in a way that could diminish their ability to be seen as manly. Furthermore, they may not want to express a concern in their body image because that is something not typically discussed in male peer groups. An example of a male group identity is commonly found in sports ideology. Sports are an example of an arena that perpetuates the male bond and creates a sense of “fraternal bonding” amongst athletes (Curry 1991, p.188). This type of bond is what differentiates men from their female peers. Sports and athletics allow for boys and men to “do gender” in a manner that publicly displays their masculinity in a way that is socially acceptable. This male alliance is “strengthened by an effective display of traditional masculinity and threatened by what is not considered part of standard hegemonic masculinity” (Curry 1991, p.189). As previously mentioned, masculinity is fragile because it is based on a sense of insecurity of not being a part of the group. Curry uses the term “profeminism” to explain the way in which feminist perspective can be applied to the male experience in sports. This term gives significance to “sexist and homophobic remarks that reveal important” (Curry 1991, p.188). He essentially looks at the idea of male bonding in regard to sports, which are commonly equated with being

masculine. Curry gives the example of a gay football player who shows aggression on the field and takes part in the same “locker room garbage” in an attempt to gain his peers trust and acceptance and deter their attention from his sexuality. In general, the male fraternal bonding is based on shared activity and attitudes as opposed to “self-disclosures” (Curry 1991, p.188). Essentially, men do not bond by sharing more about themselves, but by already having present commonalities.

Jackson Katz’ theory regarding toxic masculinity directly correlates to Goffman’s theory of masking ones’ true self. Katz is an anti-violence educator who has developed a theory called the “Tough Guise,” a front that men put on to show masculinity in regard to strength, toughness, and gaining respect through violence and threat (Katz 1999). He consistently uses the metaphor of the Wizard of Oz to depict his theory. At the end of the Wizard of Oz, the curtain is pulled aside, exposing the wizard as an insecure man hiding behind a projection or guise to act as a mask to shield his vulnerability and humanity. In order to be seen as masculine, he must hide behind this curtain and conceal his true self. This idea tells men that they can only show certain parts of themselves to the world because the other parts are not deemed manly. Men are encouraged to hide behind this guise in order to be socially accepted, if they deviate they are chastised and made to feel inferior than those who are able to reach society’s standards of masculinity. For all races, ethnicities, and socioeconomic groups, men are taught that in order to be a “real man” they must fit in to a “narrow box that defines manhood.” To keep people “boxed in,” insults and judgement is used to put on pressure for men to conform and continue with the Guise they are taught (Katz 1999).

Katz explains the way in which the media shows a “steady stream” of images that show what it is to be manly and in control which in most cases perpetuates “violent masculinity as a

cultural norm.” Violence for men is not necessarily a deviation, as it is an accepted aspect of masculinity. Katz uses staggering statistics to further prove this theory. He states that over 85% of the people that commit murder are men, 90% of people who commit violent physical assault are men, 95% of serious domestic violence is perpetrated by men, 85-95% of child sexual abuse is done by a male, and 99.8% of people in prison convicted of rape are men. It is estimated that one in four men will use violence against a partner in their lifetime (Katz 1999). Although this film was made in 1999 and these statistics may have varied, it is safe to say that there is a clear connection between toxic masculinity and the infliction of pain and suffering on society. Those who experienced pain and abuse as a child often grow up to do the same to others, further perpetuating the cycle of violent masculinity. This guise is often times used as a survival method to get through the cultural adversity someone is facing (Katz 1999). It is pertinent to note that the vast majority of victims of male violence are other males. Shifting the narrative of masculinity is an important battle for not just women, but men too.

Katz argues that the way we talk about the problem obscures and hides the root causes. Violence is not talked about as a gender issue and men, who are the dominant group, are going under discussed as being assailants. The dominant group goes unmentioned and unquestioned while the focus is put on the subordinated group (Katz 1999). An example of this is explained by linguist Julia Penelope who discusses the use of the passive voice when the media is reporting the crimes against women. This type of language ends up shifting the focus off of the male perpetrator and onto the female victims and survivors. A headline will read that girls were raped and killed, as opposed to how many men raped and killed women. By reporting in this way, the language that discusses violence as a gendered issue is not present. The concept of road rage is another example of a phenomenon that people do not associate that with gender, yet a 1999 study

showed that over 95% of violent driving incidents were caused by men. Katz argues that if it were the other way around and women were being this violent, it would definitely be looked at as a gender issue. He states that “violence has been gendered masculine; we find it unusual when women do it” (Katz 1999). Furthermore, because men are the dominant group, their actions are less focused upon. Conley defines this system as “hegemonic masculinity,” the institution where men are both dominant and privileged and it is invisible and undiscussed (Conley 2017, p.291). Because of this privilege and dominance, men are less likely to speak out on more “feminine” issues such as body dissatisfaction.

Katz discusses the mid-20th century depiction of superheroes, wrestlers, and toys when explaining unrealistic body expectations. These examples of media show a more normal and attainable physique. He compared these images to late 20th century examples where these depictions of men are shown with rippling muscles and larger statures. Action figure biceps have almost doubled in size since the 1970’s to the late 1990’s. This information is even more shocking when compared to female counterparts where women are becoming “wafer thin”. In the 1970’s, Marilyn Monroe’s curvy exterior was the standard of beauty, whereas in the 1990’s women like Kate Moss who have nonexistent body fat are being idealized (Katz 1999). His points relate to Kilbourne’s discussion of women being encouraged to take up less space in society and equate to nothing when reaching the ultimate goal of being a double zero (Kilbourne 2010).

The shift in perceptions of masculinity are a result of a perceived threat to masculinity ideals. The increase in anti-gay crime can be attributed to the insecurity and anxiety that young men feel about their sexual and gender identity as culture continues to open up. These men feel a need to prove that they are “real men” and are using violent as a means of doing so. This can also

be done by bullying someone dressing outside of their gender category to signify who “real men” truly are. Katz states that “masculinity is a performance” where men are all trying to fit in to the prescribed definitions of gender. School shootings can be used as an example of violent masculinity. Guns are used as an “equalizer” for the insecurities a man might feel to fit the physique that is forced upon men in society. A man may not be the largest or have the most muscles, but having a gun to assert one’s manhood will get the point across. If they want respect, and their definition of respect is physical and involves control, then a gun or violence is often used. Many people attribute the rise in male-perpetuated violence to video games, movies, and celebrity influence. Katz argues that this problem goes beyond these institutions and is a part of a “larger cultural and social context” as it is a part of the normal socializing of men (Katz 1999). Katz believes in reflection theory which argues that culture is a projection of “social structure and relationships into the public sphere” that is used as the mirroring of the reality and social structures of society (Conley 2017, p.88). Basically, this theory and Katz argue that the media it not to blame for creating these stereotypes, but for further perpetuating them. Katz is pushing for a shift in the culture of masculinity as a whole in order to change the viscous cycle it extends. Men are not given the same freedom to talk about psychological problems that women are. Men are taught to be tough and ignore their emotions. Katz is calling for a change in the narrative of masculinity to say that compassion, caring, and vulnerability are what it means to be a “real man” (Katz 1999).

Chapter 4 : Conclusion

Culture Jamming the Media

In modern society, the culture surrounding gender and sexuality is heavily policed by fashion, clothing, and the media. Culture is essentially the common beliefs of a certain group of people (Conley 2017, p.78). Some groups and organizations seek to shift the narrative around what society deems as acceptable and what the media portrays. As both Katz and Conley stated, the media cannot be blamed to creating inequalities, but merely reflecting and exaggerating the stereotypes already present within society. Conley uses the term “reflection theory” to describe the media being used as a screen in which the film is projecting the “underlying reality or social structures of our society” (Conley 2017, p.88). This reality can also be explained as the culture of a given society which is the shared beliefs that the majority possess. Culture Jamming can be used as a means of shifting the narrative and rewriting the societal stereotypes that are used to limit people’s self-expression.

Culture jamming is defined as the act of turning media against itself. This type of behavior goes against consumerism that promotes the accumulation of “material possessions” in order to achieve happiness and fulfillment (Conley 2017, p.105-106). The United States is a country that enforces shopping as a sort of patriotic duty. For example, Black Friday is a day full of sales and discounts where massive crowds of people line up in order to get first pick of the products. However, it is interesting that this day takes place the day after Thanksgiving, a day of rest and family time, where most stores are not open. This teaches Americans the way to show thanks is to shop and that they must make up for taking a day off. The act of Culture jamming questions the messages that the media enforces and asks society to question their own actions. These actions include why we buy into certain advertisements as consumers. This methodology

finds advertisements to be a sort of propaganda that uses bias information to influence a specific cause or point of view. Rihanna is just one example of a celebrity who is using her platform to culture jam and allow specifically women to find confidence in how they look as opposed to trying to reach an unattainable standard of beauty set forth by the media.

Rihanna is a pop culture icon in the United States who rose to stardom as a singer. Recently, she has put singing in the backseat while delving into other business ventures. In September of 2017 she launched Fenty Beauty, an inclusive luxury makeup line. Being a woman with black skin from Barbados, Rihanna knew that there was a need for diversity in the beauty market. Before Fenty Beauty, many makeup lines did not carry a variety of foundations for all skin tones and did not recognize that makeup looks very different when there is a white base underneath it, versus a darker complexion. Rihanna helped create the first makeup line with “40 shades of foundation that spanned evenly across the spectrum—from the fairest to the deepest” (Schallon 2018). From women with albinism, to women of dark pigmentation; all took to social media to express their gratitude to Fenty Beauty for including them. Rihanna made it clear to her fans that she did not simply put her name on this project, but instead was heavily involved and passionate about her creation. In the year following Fenty Beauty’s launch, the “Fenty Effect” took place. This is where numerous brands have too widened their shade range in an attempt to compete with Fenty in the market. Women of all colors identify with Rihanna’s product and have an emotional response to being able to finally identify with a makeup brand (Schallon 2018).

After the success of Fenty Beauty, Rihanna launched her next business venture in May of 2018: Savage X Fenty. This is a line of lingerie where “bras are available from a 32A to 44DD, with lingerie, underwear and loungewear coming in sizes from XS to 3XL” (Newbold 2018). Not only are the products themselves inclusive, the models used were of all shapes, sizes, ethnicities,

and abilities. Rihanna's goal was "to celebrate fearless individuality and broaden the definition of what is beautiful" (Newbold 2018). Rihanna wanted to create another product that all women could see themselves in and feel empowered in. The price point of these items aims to be accessible so that all women can find the "savage" in themselves. Rihanna does not want to just create a product to the elite, but to everyone (Newbold 2018).

A year after the launch of Savage X Fenty, in September of 2019, Rihanna created a "fully immersive [experience that has] stolen the thunder of traditional catwalk presentations" (Nnadi 2019). Using the Amazon Prime streaming platform, Rihanna reworked her Savage X Fenty Fashion Week runway show into an online spectacle filled with singing, dancing, and inclusivity. This show had transgender women, disabled women, a wide variety of ethnicities depicted, and plus sized women all embodying their beauty. This show had an "empowering body-positive, sex-positive mission" (Nnadi 2019). Rihanna's spectacle created an emotional response from critics who were pleased to be able to relate to the models on the screen. The show was described as a "celebration of women's bodies and sexuality in an inclusive and diverse environment" (Fisher 2019). Rihanna wants people to know that they too can feel empowered and sexy without looking like the conventional stereotype of beauty. The show was intended to be shown through the "female lens" as opposed to a show catering to what men want. Women were encouraged to look and feel how they want, not to fit a man's ideal of beauty. Rihanna aimed to hire models that had "unique characteristics" that are not generally "highlighted in the world of fashion as it pertains to lingerie and sexy, or what society sees as sexy" (Fisher 2019). This fashion show brought to light how narrow the blonde bombshell definition of beauty was that was created by stores like Victoria's Secret.

Victoria's Secret is the #1 retailer for women's intimate apparel. So, it is no surprise that people were quick to compare Rihanna's show with the yearly Victoria's Secret fashion show that airs on national television. Victoria's Secret is known for their "angels" that strut down the catwalk with massive wings. Although in 2011 the televised fashion show brought in 10.3 million viewers, the ratings have continually dropped each year. In 2018 they had only 3.3 million viewers. In comparison, Rihanna's lingerie show was available to 100 million Amazon Prime subscribers in more than 200 countries (Hale 2019). Many argue that Victoria's Secret has struggled to stay culturally relevant. Their depiction of women aligns with the mainstream ideals for what men find attractive. They aim to create a spectacle of fantasy, something their customers can aspire to be. Whereas Rihanna wanted to create a show that her customers can directly identify with. The former CMO of Victoria's Secret, Ed Razek, was quoted explaining how the show is meant to depict "fantasy" and essentially has no room for plus sized, disabled, or transgender models on a TV special. This "corporate thinking" has negatively affected Victoria's Secret sales and has caused them to take a large financial hit (Hale 2019).

In November of 2019, about two months after Savage X Fenty's runway spectacular, Victoria's Secret announced that they will be cancelling their televised runway show for that year. There had been speculation for a few months that the show would be cancelled. Prior to this announcement, Victoria's Secret was attempting to combat dropping sales by featuring a plus-sized model in a campaign, as well as hiring their first openly transgender model (Mackelden 2019). Many feel that Rihanna has "put a nail in Victoria's Secrets' fashion show coffin" (Hale 2019). Due to Rihanna's status within society, she has the power to influence the population. Her actions and marketing strategies apply to the vast majority of women and as a result has caused other companies to try and match her, or crumble if they do not.

Although not everyone has the prestige and power that Rihanna has, many are trying to culture Jam the media and fashion world in regard to gender and sexuality on a smaller scale. The Body Project is an example of an activism effort to change culture around negative body perceptions. This program is teaching women to question why they think they have to look a certain way and how to be comfortable in the skin they're in. Will Welch at Esquire is another example of someone who is doing what he can to question the stereotypes surrounding masculinity. Welch aims to use his platform to shift GQ Magazine in a direction that is more inclusive in their depiction of men and overall manliness.

These examples of culture jamming show that our current culture is not finite and can be shifted. Blumer argues that we derive meaning from what we see (Blumer 1969). Weber explains how the elite, like Rihanna, has the ability to initiate this shift in mindset (Weber 2019). If we change the messages being set forth into society then we can shape new mindsets and forms of understanding.

Following the Dress Code

Jo Paoletti's book, *Sex and Unisex: Fashion, Feminism, and the Sexual Revolution*, discusses the cross-section between gender and clothing and why things are constructed the way they are today. Paoletti discusses the role of unisex or androgynous clothing and defines this form of fashion as essentially making women's clothes more masculine. She argues that it is more difficult to feminize men's clothes and have that be socially accepted (Paoletti 2015, p.6) This can largely be attributed to the stigma surrounding men exhibiting feminine qualities that has been present in society for decades. Paoletti explains how as a society we were on the path to de-gendering clothing, but then ultimately reverted back to our original ways.

The 1960's were a turning point in which society was on the path to unisex fashion being acceptable for both sexes. This era brought clothing inspired by the Civil Rights Movement and Sexual Revolution. These movements inspired a sense of freedom and acceptance. The Civil Rights Movements had a focus of providing African Americans with equal rights to their white counterparts. The Sexual Revolution encouraged men and women to go against the traditional sexual behaviors of their gender. The clothing that resulted from these two movements exhibited hope for a "future of equality and androgyny" (Paoletti 2015, p.6) The 1960's were also an integral part of second-wave feminism in which women began to free themselves from fashion constraints and, as a result, hemlines grew shorter causing women to be more aware of their bodies. This awareness brought on an increase of body dissatisfaction and pressures for women to be "young, slender, and sexy" (Paoletti 2015, p.10) With women becoming sexually liberated due to public access to birth control, they quickly became sex objects. Paoletti states that "women's styles had to balance being sexy and liberated, men's styles tended to navigate the territory between expressiveness and effeminacy" (Paoletti 2015, p.10) Men and women were faced with contradicting guidelines for dress expectations.

In the late 1960's, the Equal Rights Amendments was discussed in political spheres and aimed to provide equal rights for all people regardless of sex. With this hope for equal rights also came a rise in unisex clothing that did not segregate people based off of appearance. In 1965 to 1975, girls began wearing pants to school while mothers began wearing pants for work. Women fighting for their equal rights included how they were accepted to dress and appear. Later in the 1970's, the "peacock revolution" took place where men were granted the permission to wear bright and flamboyant clothing. This style of dress was taken from London's Carnaby Street and became streamlined into the fashion trends of the decade. This took place in the era of Disco

music and dancing that created a subculture where men were granted with access to “expanded color palettes, softer fabrics, and a profusion of decorative details” (Paoletti 2015, p.10) This way of dress was a large shift from the “drabness” that men were accustomed to and expected to wear prior.

Interestingly, in the mid-to-late 1970’s “the pendulum started to swim back toward more traditionally feminine clothing” for women as Victoria’s Secret was launched and Diane Von Furstenberg emerged on the scene (Paoletti 2015, p.6) As previously mentioned, Victoria’s Secret is a hyper-sexualized women’s intimate wear brand, and DVF is a clothing line involving primarily florals and their famous wrap dress. Paoletti states that “by the mid-1980s unisex fashions had largely faded into the haze of nostalgia” (Paoletti 2015, p.6) The author brings up the debate if gender identity is a result of nature versus nurture. This concept asks if a person’s behavior is a result of the environment they are a part of, or genetically predetermined. For example, the author questions if girls innately choose to dress in pink and dresses, or if it is a result of the culture the child was raised in (Paoletti 2015, p.7) Paoletti states that science has proved that gender roles are learned and malleable, meaning they are able to be changed. Pants are an example of a result of the unisex era that has become a permanent change in culture, but not a “revolution in gender roles” (Paoletti 2015, p.11) The way boys and girls, and men and women dress is a result of their upbringing and socialization within society. It is possible to change these assumptions and allow people to make their own fashion decisions.

This form of gendered dressing relates to the gender stereotypes that are present and confine society. Paoletti brings up the idea that “if men are expected to be sexually aggressive while women are passive, the results are a double standard for sexually active men and women, overemphasis on women’s appearance, homophobia, and a rape culture” (Paoletti 2015, p.168)

The way that men and women are limited results in a culture shift and a series of perpetuated stereotypes as people attempt to carry out the actions associated with their gender roles. Our “basic assumptions” regarding gender need to be revisited. If a man exhibits stereotypically feminine attributes, his peers applaud them for being their authentic selves. Yet, if a female exhibits “girly-girl” behavior, she is shunned for giving into the “artificial construction imposed by consumer culture” (Paoletti 2015, p.168) The binary model that suggests men and women are opposites is outdated and inaccurate. People have been trying to successfully fit into one of these two boxes, however it is not that simple. It is difficult for people to be their authentic selves when their judgement is clouded by years of forced gender roles and assumptions. We can learn from third-wave feminism that instead of focusing on gender, focusing on “intersections of numerous identities, including sexuality, race, class, and ability” allows for a deeper understanding of individuals and what makes them unique. Although biology is important, it should not be a “destiny” to how one must act or dress (Paoletti 2015, p.169)

The way that someone dresses indicates a choice to either conform or resist socially defined expectations for behavior” (Rubinstein 1995, p.3). Rubinstein defines fashion as "a period's desired appearance," whereas clothing is an “established [pattern] of dress.” Basically, fashion is defined by the trends of a time period, and clothing is the idea of wearing a dress because you are a female (Rubinstein 1995, p.3). One's personal style is used to convey their role. They can only do so when an outfit is unified and can be used to identify their sex (Rubinstein 1995, p.7). Rubinstein states that “sex differences... are forcefully regulated by the personal evaluation, social judgements, and expectations governing ‘appropriate’ dress” (Rubinstein 1995, p.10). If someone's clothing choice goes against their gender category they will be judged and deemed to be dressed inappropriately. The act of simply wearing “women's clothes” puts those individuals

at a disadvantaged and subordinate role to men. The term “clothing speech” is used to define an individual’s way of manipulating the language of their clothing in a way to “produce specific utterances characterized by personal intonation and style” (Rubinstein 1995, p.11). The clothing that we choose to wear “demonstrates awareness” of the role and status that we hold as individuals. The way we dress is a nonverbal way of communicating to those around us if we identify as male or female by society standards of dress (Rubinstein 1995, p.43). Research shows that children are introduced to sex differences through dress as early as two years old. At this age they are too young to understand differences in sex and gender, yet this introduction comes from those around the child. Simply dressing your baby in blue versus pink acts as a catalyst for dress expectations as they grow and develop. This color choice is a stimulus that effects how others perceive and act towards the baby. Some go on to argue that we dress in a gendered way to alert the opposite sex and create desire (Rubinstein 1995, p.83). For example, the wearing of high heels, girdles, and garters are all associated with the idea of eliciting a sexual response from males. The author argues that all of these items are worn to seem attractive in the male’s vision and expectations of beauty. Beyond beauty, clothing is used to show status and invoke a response from others. Wearing the newest or most expensive sneakers signifies your wealth to others and effects their opinion of you (Rubinstein 1995, p.125). The clothing that we wear each day goes beyond a simple t-shirt as they are signifiers for larger themes in society, some we are not necessarily aware of.

Letter to the Editor

Through completing my thesis, I want to urge others to question the culture we choose to be a part of and decisions we make regarding how we dress and make assumptions about others. The clothing that we wear is part of a much larger system that is dictating our gender roles in

society. Throughout history, clothing has been used as a socializing agent to dictate and structure how gender is represented in society. Fashion designers, Magazine editors, models, and consumers can all take actions to rewrite the script of the performance that Goffman argues we take part in. Many men and women dress the way society has urged them to as a result of them being born male or female. I will address prominent players in the fashion world and express how they can break free from further perpetuating gender stereotypes and using fashion as confinement.

It was not until recently that fashion designers began to expand their clothing lines to include plus sizes, regardless of the fact that the average woman wears a size 16 and models are often donning a size zero or even double zero (Christel 2017). Some designers do not want their clothing on larger models because it goes against the overall look of the brand. However, if designers make their clothing more accessible to a range of body types they will be sending a positive message to consumers and young boys and girls who are growing up with body image issues. For these designer's runway shows and advertising, they should take a lesson from Rihanna and use more inclusive models that depict various genders, ethnicities, abilities, and sexualities. Rihanna's businesses are doing extremely well and knocking her competitors out of the water. Financially, other companies would be able to bring in more business if they had a more inclusive business model. More options for androgynous and unisex clothing allow for fashion that can be interchanged between people regardless of gender preference. Lastly, fashion designers should break free from the gender stereotypes that women wear pink and floral dresses, while men wear blue suits. Now is the time for creativity and breaking free from the clothing rules that society is so accustomed to. With this change in clothing production, the stigma and judgment surrounding deviant dress will decrease.

Magazine editors need to understand the impact the images that are being put on their pages have on their readers. Will Welch at GQ is a prime example of someone who is using their power and authority to make a positive societal change and re-write the definition of manliness. Advertisements being put in magazines should be more accurate as to how they depict society. Such a small population of people truly resemble the models on the pages or live the lavish lifestyles that are portrayed. Showing women as inferior in advertising creates an imbalance within society where women are looked down upon and treated as such. Depicting hypermasculinity in advertising gives men a violent and dominating ideal to replicate. Showing gender roles in advertising gives people the idea that this is the type of look and behavior they are meant to emulate.

The overall institution of fashion needs to shift away from confining gender to a box. Gendered clothing should be a thing of the past as key players in the fashion world continue to push for fluidity as opposed to rigidity. As a society, we need to break free from what we think we understand about gender and sexuality and allow the rules to be re-written. As people, we dress as a result of how we have been taught in order to fit our marker as male or female. This way of dressing is used to limit and oppress individuals who seek to break outside of the norm and deviate from what is taught and enforced. Starting at a young age, we should allow children to dress how they please and not judge the fashion choices they make. The same goes for adults who may have differing ideals for fashion. Fashion should be used as a tool to further self-expression as opposed to dictating how someone can dress because of their gender. Fashion as an institution should no longer be used as a means of socializing society into a strict set of gender roles in order to allow for a decrease in stereotypes, assumptions, and stigma.

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