

January 2023

Fashion, Body & Gender

MARK-E0058 Sociology of Consumption and Fashion

Petra Paasonen, Doctoral researcher
Department of Marketing
Aalto School of Business

Readings

Entwistle, J. (2000). Fashion and the fleshy body: Dress as embodied practice. *Fashion Theory*, 4(3), 323-347.

Zanette, M. C., & Scaraboto, D. (2019). From the corset to Spanx: shapewear as a marketplace icon. *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 22(2), 183-199.

Brice, J., Thorpe, H., Wheaton, B. & Longhurst, R., (2022). Postfeminism, consumption and activewear: Examining women consumers' relationship with the postfeminine ideal. *Journal of Consumer Culture*

Farinosi, M., (2022). Deconstructing the stigma of ageing: The rise of the mature female influencers. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*

Gurrieri, L. (2021). Patriarchal marketing and the symbolic annihilation of women. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 37(3-4), 364-370.

Gurrieri, L. & Drenten, J. (2019). The feminist politics of choice: lipstick as a marketplace icon. *Consumption, Markets & Culture*, 24(3), 225-240.

Twigg, J. (2007). Clothing, age and the body: A critical review. *Ageing and Society*, 27(2), 285-305.

Volonté, P. (2019). The thin ideal and the practice of fashion. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 19(2), 252-270.

Agenda

I. Fashion and the body

II. Fashion as expression of identity, exercise of agency AND/OR tool of oppression

III. How do these ^^ become articulated in the marketplace and through consumption

**LET'S MAKE THIS A
DISCUSSION**

**At any point, feel free to debate
and contest, raise points for
discussion, ask questions etc.**

Take-aways from Perusall

Fashion and the Fleshy Body: Dress as Embodied Practice

Joanne Entwistle

Joanne Entwistle is Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Essex. She is author of *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory* (Polity) and is currently researching workers in the fashion industry.

Introduction

“There is an obvious and prominent fact about human beings,” notes Turner (1985: 1) at the start of *The Body and Society*, “they have bodies and they are bodies.” However, what Turner omits in his analysis is another obvious and prominent fact: that human bodies are *dressed* bodies. Dress is a basic fact of social life and this, according to anthropologists, is true of all human cultures that we know about: all cultures “dress” the body in some way, be it through clothing, tattooing, cosmetics or other forms of body painting (Polhemus 1988; Polhemus and Proctor 1978). Conventions of dress transform flesh into something recognizable

CONSUMPTION MARKETS & CULTURE
2019, VOL. 22, NO. 2, 183–199
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10253866.2018.1497988>

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group

 Check for updates

From the corset to Spanx: shapewear as a marketplace icon

Maria Carolina Zanette^a and Daiane Scaraboto^b

^aESLSCA - Ecole Supérieure Libre Des Sciences Commerciales Appliquées, Paris France; ^bEscuela de Administracion, Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Chile, Santiago, Chile

ABSTRACT

This article presents the marketplace icon of shapewear—clothing that changes the shape of the human body by compressing or enhancing it. The trajectory of shapewear from the highly structured corset of the sixteenth century to the elastic Spanx of the 2000s evidences how this marketplace icon has come into being. Shapewear has materialized many evolving forms of beauty standards and gender roles as it participates in body-centered market assemblages. Market actors, such as manufacturers, designers, media, celebrities, activists, physicians, and consumers, translate shapewear to materialize intentions in the female body, shaping it accordingly. Whether promoting female autonomy or oppression, shapewear stands as a marketplace icon because it has maintained stable market appeal across time and body-centered market assemblages: it shapes the female body while symbolically articulating women’s roles.

KEYWORDS

Shapewear; corset; Spanx; feminism; market assemblage; body

What does fashion have to do with the body?

Discussion in small groups

"Dress is an embodied practice, a situated bodily practice that is embedded within the social world and fundamental to microsocial order"

Body and dress operate dialectically

- Dress adds meaning to the body and provides means by which bodies are made appropriate and acceptable to social situations
- Body gives life and fullness to dress (experience of dress as alive and "fleshy")

Dress is both social and personal experience

- Dressed body is always situated within a particular social context
- Dress is actively produced through routine practices directed towards the body, which results in **ways of being** and **ways of dressing**

Dress and Habitus (Bourdieu)

The habitus = set of dispositions and naturalized skills that one has developed through their upbringing in a certain cultural milieu

Fashion system together with social conditions and social norms affect the dress in everyday life

- Habitus enables improvisation and adaptation to these conditions: allows for agentic perspective while recognizing the influence of the social world
- Changes in society are (slowly) reflected in the habitus; habitus is a relatively open structure and constantly modified

Useful for understanding how dress styles are gendered and how gender is actively reproduced through dress

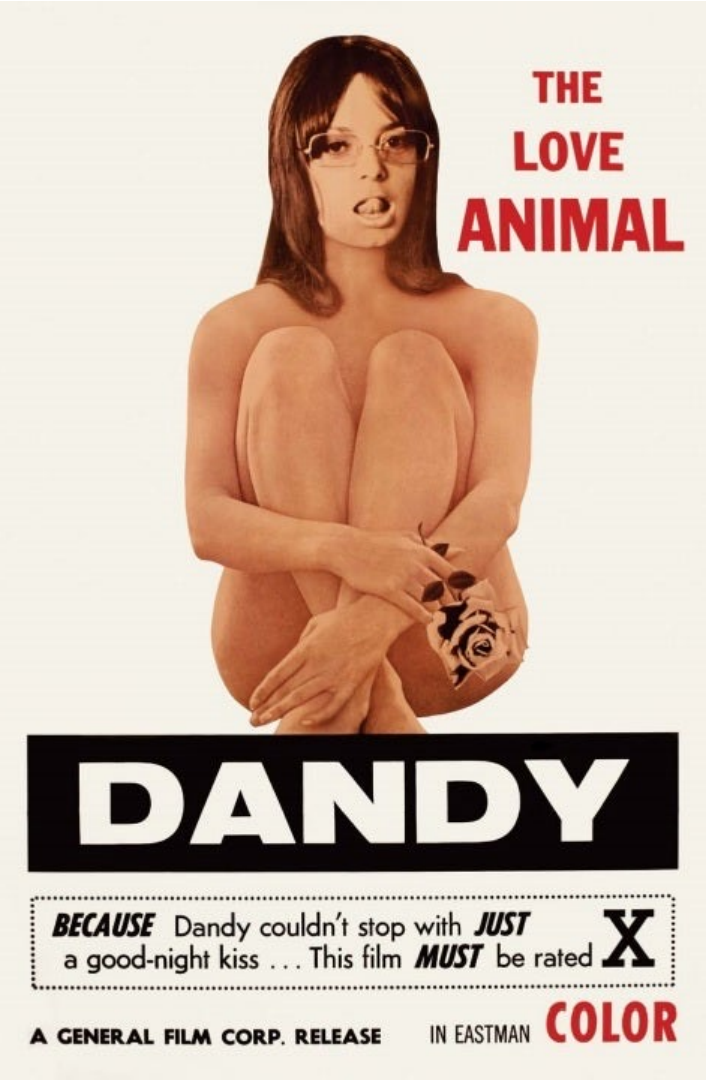
- Suit as an example of the standard “masculine” dress
- Women are seen as located in the body, whereas men are seen as transcending it



Man, Icon, Artist... of the Year



... Woman of the Year





“A man’s clothes, like his body, should indicate his transcendence and not attract attention; for him neither elegance nor good looks call for his setting himself up as an object; moreover, he does not normally consider his appearance as a reflection of his ego.

...woman, on the contrary, is even required by society to make herself an erotic object.

The purpose of the fashions to which she is enslaved is *not to reveal her as an independent individual*, but rather to cut her off from her transcendence in order to offer her as *prey to male desires*; thus society is not seeking to further her projects but to *thwart them.*”



See the full editorial [here](#).

Women as erotic objects

Female body as feminine and by association sexual
(Entwistle 2000)

Consumer culture provides women with a lexicon of clothes, styles, and accessories coded as sexy

- Such resources do not exist for men (to the same extent)

Women's worth in society is connected to whether they are seen as sexy or not

- Trivialisation of women; submissive femininity as the stereotype to adhere to

Different sexualization of bodies can be seen as a way to uphold the patriarchy



**Expression of Identity /
Exercise of Agency**

Tool of Oppression



Some of the fashions subjected to women throughout the history have been uncomfortable, restrictive, and even life-threatening.

Historically, women's role in society has resulted in fewer legal rights, but also fewer fashion options

Patriarchal expectations and norms of shape and constrain individual choices

- “If she is **submissive** to the established order, she will assume a discreet and stylish personality” (De Beauvoir 1949, 560)





@drjasondiamond

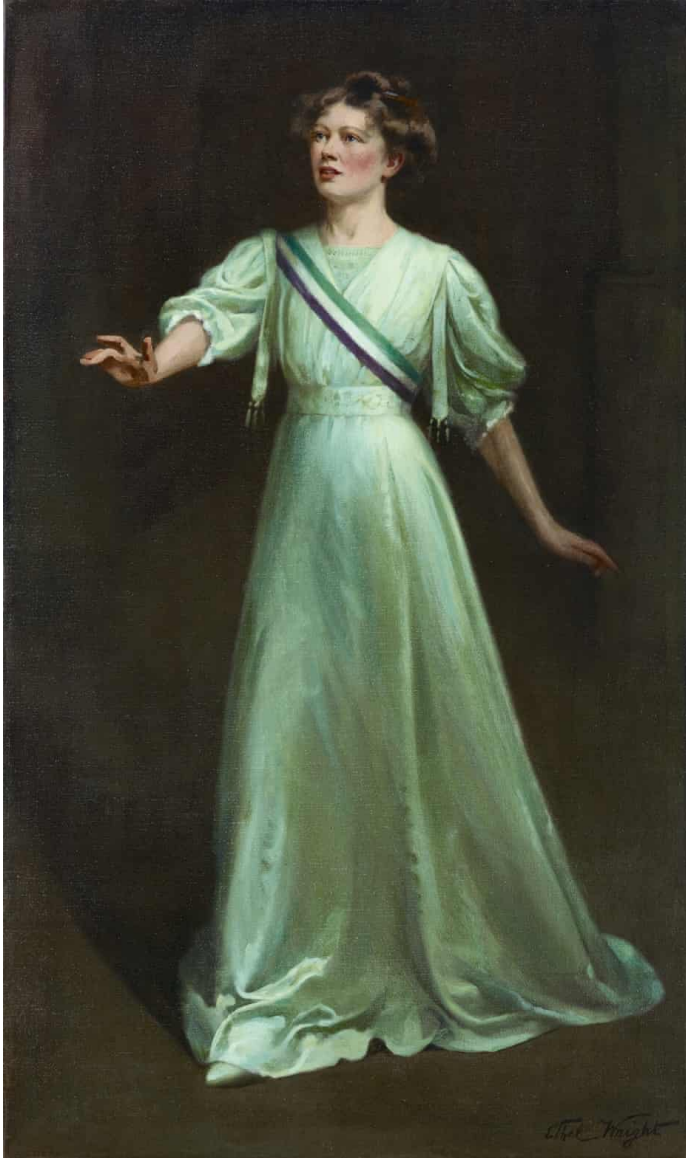
no shame in my dr diamond game



“They really hit just the right note of softness and support.”

—lululemon guest





Claiming agency through fashion

“Resistance emerges when the consumer is conscious of the process of subjectification and tries to defy the limits imposed by it” (Zanette & Brito 2019, 367)

Different forms of resistance

- Direct resistance; problematizing and contesting oppressive discourses
- Resistance through reversal; e.g., instead of challenging the contemporary fashion and ideals of femininity, suffragettes chose to conform
- Complicit resistance; recognizing oppression, but partially succumbing to it (Zanette & Brito 2019)

Individual choice and paradox of conformity



Oppressive or empowering?





The feminist politics of choice: lipstick as a marketplace icon

Lauren Gurrieri^a and Jenna Drenten^b

^aSchool of Economics, Finance and Marketing, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia; ^bQuinlan School of Business, Loyola University Chicago, Chicago, IL, USA

ABSTRACT

Lipstick has been a dominant beauty practice across cultures and throughout history. Once deemed a sign of Satan, a potential health risk, and even an illegal product, lipstick has experienced centuries of controversy to secure its status as a marketplace icon – albeit a polarising one. Liberating to some; limiting to others. How have such tensions shaped lipstick’s cultural meanings? By examining lipstick’s gendered history, we highlight how lipstick reflects contested feminist politics of choice – regarded as playful and deliberately chosen as well as fostering appearance-based expectations based on idealised feminine beauty. We highlight how lipstick gives rise to tensions between empowerment and oppression across three main themes: self-expression and choice, privilege and choice, and morality and choice. We conclude that for lipstick to be pleasurable and freely chosen, it must first be decoupled from patriarchal standards of ideal feminine beauty for women.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 30 December 2018
Accepted 13 September 2019

KEYWORDS

Choice feminism; feminine beauty; lipstick; cosmetics; makeup

10 Hacks to Achieving the 'No Makeup' Makeup Look

written by [BETH GILLETTE](#) / OCTOBER 10, 2021

The Everygirl's product selections are curated by the editorial team. If you buy something through our links, we may earn an affiliate commission, at no cost to you. We only recommend products we genuinely love.



1912

Elizabeth Arden marches down Fifth Avenue with suffragettes and **red lipstick for equality**. The bold lip shade later goes on to symbolize female empowerment.

Self-expression

Lipstick as a key signifier of femininity

- I. A pleasurable, self-chosen and skilled feminine pursuit

- II. A normative, oppressive beauty practice that maintains the narrow feminine ideals



Priviledge

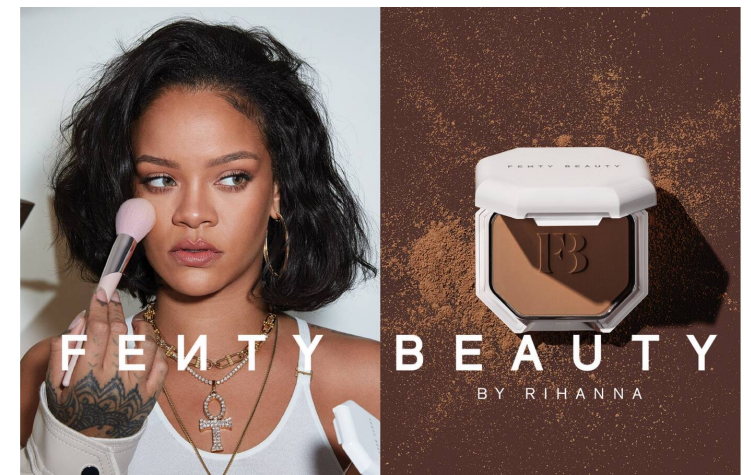
Lipstick has been historically associated with ideal female beauty

(embraces youth and privileges whiteness)

I. Imposes constraints on those who do not fit the dominant ideal

II. Opens up opportunities for both economic and political resistance

Brief history of beauty as protest and power



Morality

Lipstick as a marker of
morality

(rules governing access and
application of lipstick)

I. Oppress by moralizing and
controlling bodies; what is
acceptable and appropriate

II. Resist and challenge
gendered norms; use of
lipstick as a tool of
political engagement and
activism



Read my lips.

Because all people should be seen and heard.
It's your mood, your personality, and your point
of view—make it known.

SHOP NOW



“the empowering characteristics of beautification, however, are difficult and perhaps impossible to represent in a sexist context; therefore, while beautifying may be a positive experience for women, ***being viewed as a beautified object in current western society is almost always opposed to women’s equality and autonomy***”

(Cahill 2003, 42)

Commodification of empowerment

Freedom, choice and opportunity can be achieved through consumption

>>>> Postfeminism / neoliberal feminism

A shift from objectification to subjectification

- Visible in consumer culture and media
- Creates new forms of self-policing and commodification as women come to embody the ideal neoliberal subject
- 'Female gaze'

Patriarchal marketing and absence of representation (Gurrieri 2021)



How does age relate to fashion?

Age and fashion

Fashion and age sit uncomfortably together. Fashion inhabits a world of youthful beauty, of fantasy, imagination, allure. Its discourses are frenetic and frothy; its images glamorous and – above all – youthful. Age by contrast is perceived as a time of greyness, marked by retirement from display or engagement with the erotic and style conscious. (p. 1)

Ageless style

- *“The new cultural ideal of successful aging is indeed to age without showing the visual signs of doing so”* (Twigg 2010, 486)

Aging successfully is a marketplace intervention with neoliberal solutions

- (Rules of patriarchal marketing apply here as well)

Role of age-ordering in determining dress choices of older people

- No fashion for older people as such?
- Considerations of color, cut, and return to childishness

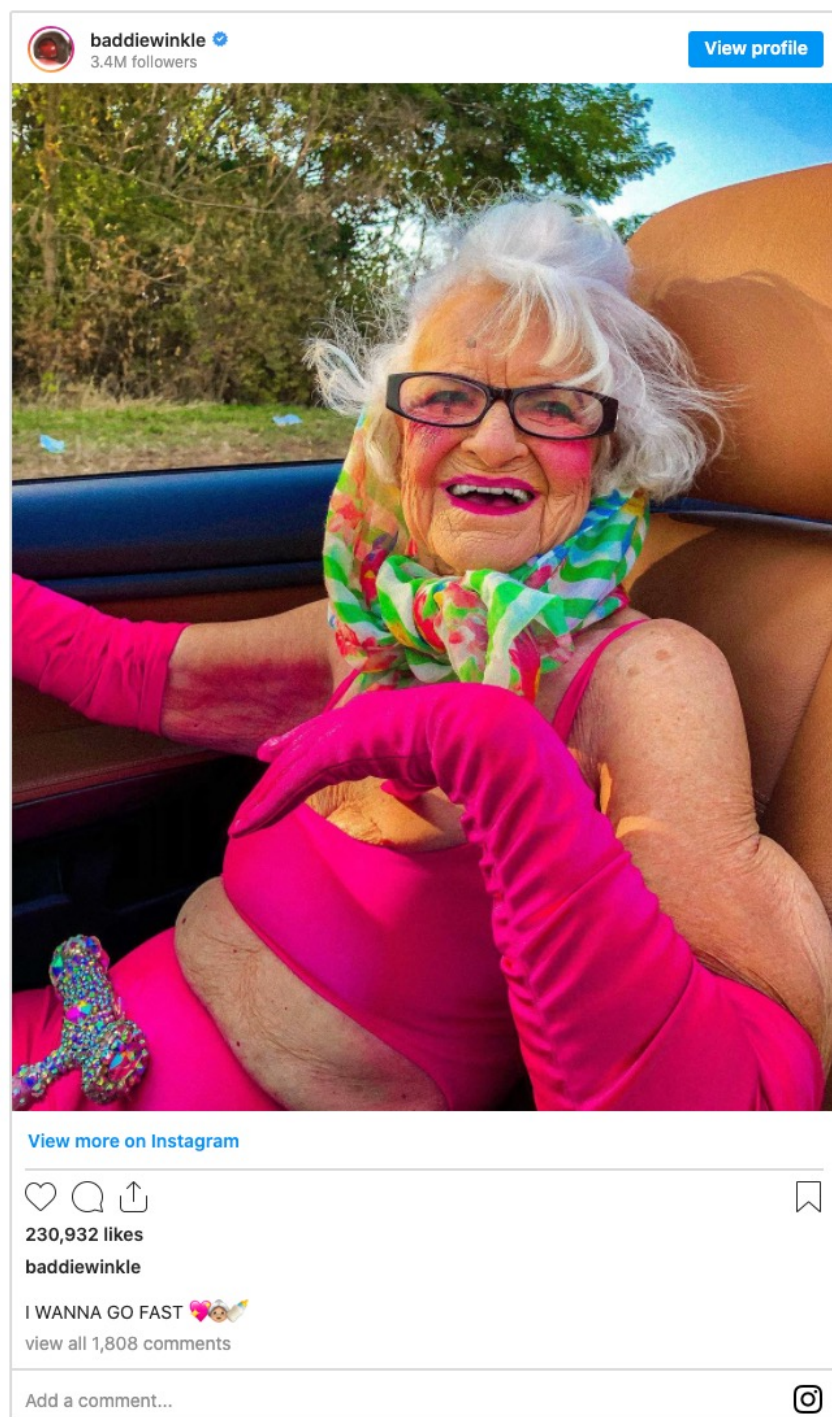
...maintained through **moral ordering** of dress that discipline the body

- Lapses of dress
- Sexuality

Intersection of gender and age

- The “rules” tend to be harsher especially on older women





Farinosi 2022: Deconstructing the stigma of ageing: The rise of the mature female influencers

Dress to resist and redefine the dominant meanings of age

Tensions between age resistance vs. age denial

- Internalization of society's devaluation of older people
- 'Growing old gracefully'

Role of consumer culture

- Increased representation and visibility, destigmatising ageing
- ...or new, more subtle forms of age-ordering?

Can empowerment be marketised?

Summary

1

Body and dress operate dialogically

Fashion system together with social conditions and social norms affect the dress in everyday life

- Concept of habitus; gender as reproduced through dress
- Habitus is a somewhat open structure and constantly modified

2

Fashion can be used to express identity and take control

- Opportunities for resistance

But it also creates tensions between oppression and empowerment

- Considerations of self-expression, privilege and morality

3

Freedom through consumption / market place ???

- Choices are made within the fashion system; **are we free to choose?**

Individual empowerment \neq equality

- Systemic inequalities in the society