

Feminism in Fashion

This research proposal is on feminism in fashion and will majorly deal with how women through history have expressed their beliefs through fashion. Fashion is a medium through which people express themselves this maybe their culture, mood, and personality among other things. Globally, women are more associated and connected with fashion although men are certainly a part of it now. Unlike men, women are judged on the length of their hemlines, choice of outfits, and even their hair as a majority of people think big curly hair is “unprofessional” in the workplace. The controversy behind fashion and feminism is that women are highly judged on what they wear and the makeup they apply. In this social media era it is very easy for people to judge women on their appearance. If a woman leaves the house without makeup on, she’s seen as a lazy but on the other hand if she does put some on, she’s seen as “trying too hard”. Not only women but even school going girls are still singled out just because of their fashion but this does not apply to their male counterparts. The paper will focus on America from the 18th century to the present time.

The research paper will be examining how women have been perceived through their fashion and why they chose to dress a certain way. It will also focus on how they changed their fashion to convey their beliefs through the years.

Main Research Question:

The main research question will be why women are in a position where they are judged so harshly on the basis of how they choose to dress themselves and how this has evolved over time.

A Tentative Hypothesis

Analyzing women's fashions through the years can help us understand how they expressed themselves through fashion in times of repression and lack of freedom. This research paper will use 'The Empire of Fashion' by Gilles Lipovetsky, Aletti Jo Barraclough's Sex and unisex: fashion, feminism, and the sexual revolution, Gibson Pamela's "To Care for Her Beauty, to Dress Up, Is a Kind of Work": Simone de Beauvoir, Scott, Linda. Fresh lipstick : redressing fashion and feminism and 'Designing Women: Feminist Methodologies in American Fashion' by Annemarie Strassel to examine feminism in fashion. In the book 'The Empire of Fashion: Dressing Modern Democracy' (Princeton, 1994), Gilles Lipovetsky talks about the historical period from the 14th through the 20th century and converses about how fashion influenced the world at the time. Lipovetsky says that before the 17th century fashion was something only the elite and aristocratic had access to. This can be connected to how women felt alienated from the male-dominated society. Traditionally, their role was to be at home as wives and mothers and not to be out on the streets. As women dared to try to leave their traditional roles behind, the clothing that wasn't practical for them anymore started going out of fashion, like tight corsets and heavy frills and other trimmings. In Designing Women: Feminist Methodologies in American Fashion, Annemarie Strassel examines how women's clothing was impacted by the social and political movements like the suffrage and health movements. Women were experimenting with clothing which was then called "dress reform" and the movement was supported by reformers and suffragists. "Dress reform" meant that women were leaving behind traditional restricting clothing

in favor of clothing that allowed freedom of physical mobility. According to Strassel, "From the vantage point of reformers, women's clothed bodies became emblematic of other kinds of social and cultural oppression such as domestic confinement, economic dependence, and intellectual decay. The suffrage movement brought about "dress reform" and restrictive clothing like corsets and petticoats were being abandoned in favor of clothing that provided more comfort and mobility- just like the suffrage movement paved the way for women to vote. As all of these sources are from historically significant periods of time when women were evolving in the society, it brings to light how they tried to take control of their lives and tried to change society's outlook of them. In a way women are still evolving and how they dress today can be analyzed to understand how they want to portray themselves. Fashion still represents a huge part in feminism and gender equality and although it is often overlooked and misjudged, we have arrived in an era of freedom to dress without having to face serious consequences like women in the olden times had to face.

Works cited

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