



ANDROGYNY IN WESTERN CULTURE

WHAT IS THE CURRENT POSITION OF ANDROGYNOUS FASHION IN WESTERN CULTURE AND HOW HAS IT BEEN INFLUENCED?

 **Hogeschool van Amsterdam**
Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences

Emily Eldridge
June 2013

Journal of Anthropology - Author Guidelines

(<http://www.hindawi.com/journals/janth/guidelines/>)

Submission:

PDF, no page limit

Units of measurement:

SI (System International) units

Title and Authorship Information:

Paper title

Full author names

Full institutional mailing addresses

Email addresses

Abstract:

Self-contained and citation-free, not exceeding 200 words

Introduction:

Succinct, no subheadings

Materials and Methods:

Should contain sufficient detail so that all procedures can be repeated. Can be divided into subsections if several methods are described.

Results and Discussion:

May be divided by subheadings or may be combined.

Conclusions:

Explain the main conclusions of the work highlighting its importance and relevance.

Acknowledgments:

At end of the paper before the references and may include supporting grants, presentations and so forth.

References:

All references must be numbered consecutively and citations of references in text should be identified using numbers in square brackets; "As discussed by Smith [9]", "as discussed elsewhere" [10] etc. All references should be cited within the text, otherwise these references will be automatically removed.

Preparation of Figures:

All figures and tables in the PDF file of manuscript. Should not be submitted in separated files. IF article is accepted, authors will be asked to provide the source files of the figures – each figure should be supplied in a separate electronic file. All figures should be cited in the paper in a consecutive order.

Preparation of Tables:

Tables should be cited consecutively in the text. Every table must have a descriptive title and if numerical measurements are given, the units should be included in the column heading. Vertical rules should not be used.

What is the current position of androgyny in Western culture and how has it been influenced?

ABSTRACT

Our perception of androgyny is linked to gender and gender recognition. One of the most dominant ways that we can understand gender is through clothing, as that is one of the largest visual clues. The following research looks at how people perceive gender and androgyny today and what influences our perceptions, the history of androgynous fashion in Western culture and the current position of androgynous fashion in Western society today.

As a result of the research conducted, there were four individual conclusions given, one per theme, which suggest how the fashion industry can use the results of the paper. The themes were as follows: body ideals, otherworldly, feminism and metrosexuality. Body ideals concludes that brands introduce designs suited to larger bodies as well as bigger sizes in their clothes lines. Otherworldly results in the suggestion that the fashion industry should be collaborating more with the people who follow/belong to this theme, as there are endless innovative possibilities that may open up new doors in the fashion industry. Feminism: the research results imply that there is a missing neo-tribe for androgynous feminists. Metrosexuality results in the suggestion that it is used as a social media marketing tool.

INTRODUCTION

Androgyny is becoming an omni-present fashion trend in Western society, resulting from gender identity and societal movements. Gender identity is socially constructed in the sense that it is viewed differently depending on a culture or community, but it is subconsciously agreed upon. As a consequence, when a person goes against the grain and adapts traits from their opposite sex, they stand out. To answer the main research question "*What is the current position of androgyny in Western culture and how has it been influenced?*" three sub-questions will be approached:

1. What does the term androgyny mean?
2. What is the past relationship between androgyny and clothing in Western culture?
3. What is the relationship between androgynous fashion and Western culture today?

Fashion androgyny weaves in and out, but recently it has adopted a new role where the lines between man and woman are being blurred and it is often difficult to determine the difference between the two. Androgyny is a subtle form for an individual to communicate their gender identity, as the human mind needs visual clues to understand who/what a person is. Using clothing to shape one's image is something that everyone does, whether it is acknowledged or not. Typically speaking, in Western society we tend to place people in 'gender boxes' i.e. man or woman and therefore androgyny can be confusing. Since we are so dependent on clothing as a visual clue, androgyny (and gender identity) is a core element of the fashion industry.

The aim of this paper is to provide the reader with a structured framework of this topic, an analysis of androgynous fashion in Western culture and a forecast into the future of this trend/lifestyle in the fashion industry. The research conducted in the paper is relevant in both practice and theory; it will provide a further understanding of the socially constructed views of androgyny in Western culture, which is relevant for marketers, unisex/androgynous clothing brands, fashion-forecasting agencies, stylists and designers. Furthermore, the results of this paper will create a better understanding of the effects of pop culture on trends and consumer perception in the fashion industry.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research that has been conducted is of an unstructured/interpretive nature. For each sub-question primary research has been conducted, which includes observations of consumers and the fashion industry, the theoretical analysis of articles and specialist literature and monitoring activity on the internet such as blogs, websites, vlogs, articles and forums. After the evaluation of already existing data, secondary research such as interviews, a survey and a focus group has been analysed.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

PHILOSOPHY

The research conducted in this paper is of an unstructured/interpretive nature. Interpretivism is an approach to studying humans, which begins at the point that the subject matter is inherently different from non-human subjects. The data that is collected is qualitative and subjective to experience and there are small numbers of respondents, which allows for detailed examinations. There is a large emphasis on textual research, such as imagery (specialist), literature and videography to name a few. The ontology of interpretivism suggests that the world is dependent on the many subjective experiences of the world and do not exist independently of experience. Furthermore an interpretivist believes that there is no possibility of 'objective' knowledge as we all have different experiences.

As the subject of androgyny is based on the idea of taking the objective idea of gender and deconstructing it, an interpretivist approach is the most relevant as it runs parallel to the notion of absorbing and analysing multiple ideas and opinions [1]. Gender is a socially constructed view that is, with time, becoming deconstructed and is therefore not set in stone anymore. An interpretivist approach allows us to see a broader spectrum of androgyny and how it influences and has been influenced by fashion.

APPROACH AND STRATEGY

This paper follows an inductive path, starting with observations (the primary data) as opposed to theory. All research has been conducted in the Netherlands, yet the use of the Internet has opened many doors and therefore it is not limited to the location inhabited by the author.

For each sub-question primary research has been conducted. This includes physical observations of consumers and the fashion industry today and narrative and performance analysis. Firstly there are two interviews with androgynes, one who lives in the United Kingdom and one who lived in the United States. Both interviewees were born as women but identify themselves as androgynous, which means they are neither female nor male. Despite this, there are unfortunately no insights from an androgyne born as a male, which must be noted as it may have provided a different perspective. Secondly there was a focus group which took place in the Netherlands, with a group of mixed international people ranging from 17 to 48 years of age. This diverse group allowed multiple views on androgyny in fashion, yet not all of the participants worked in the fashion industry themselves. Whilst this is a shame as they are not all specialists in this field, it offers alternative perspectives on the fashion industry as well. The focus groups focused on gender perceptions and androgyny as a lifestyle, fashion trend and part of pop culture. In addition a survey has been conducted amongst 80 participants, where the results of the focus group and interviews were tested on a larger group of people. The surveys were completed on the Internet and therefore responses not limited to the Netherlands, as there were many international participants. Whilst the number of participants was low, there was more room for qualitative analysis of the data.

After evaluating the primary data, certain aspects and paths are highlighted to focus on for secondary data. This includes the theoretical analysis of articles and specialist literature and monitoring activity on the

internet (netnography) such as blogs websites, vlogs, articles and forums. One must note that whilst a broad variety of texts were looked at, the fashion industry (as well as the media and pop culture) moves at an incredibly fast pace and new (relevant) data is constantly available and old (existing) data is updated: it is essentially a dynamic pool of research. Furthermore a large amount of existing data concerning androgyny in Western culture focuses on the United States and the United Kingdom, which results in limitations with regard to other European countries.

DATA COLLETION AND ANALYSIS METHODS

As the research is of interpretive nature, there is an emphasis on themes that derive which are analysed and explained in the research results and discussion. These are formed with an inductive approach, by looking at what the data is an example of. As a variety of texts were looked at, the methods of analysis are forms of discourse analysis.

Following Opler's technique that is specialised for cultural themes, I looked at how often the subject appears, how pervasive it is across different types of cultural ideas and practices, how people react when the theme is violated and the degree to which the number, force and variety of the theme's expression is controlled by specific contents [2]. The themes are solely priori themes, meaning that they are defined by characteristics of the phenomenon being studied: local and commonsense constructs and theoretical orientations [3], researcher's values [4] and personal experiences [5]. This is also known as theoretical sensitivity [6], which allows one to develop a theory that is grounded, conceptually dense and well integrated.

The themes will be defined using a multitude of techniques such as repetition, which includes but is not limited to "topics which occur and reoccur" [7] and "recurring regularities" [8]. Additionally word lists and the KWIC technique will be used, which counts the number of times a word/phrase occurs [9] and concentrates the core of a topic. The examples are then sorted into clusters of similar meaning. Furthermore phrases will be organised using collocation, which derives from linguistics and semantic network analysis and entails pairing words or phrases that are frequently strung together. All of these techniques will be used with information from the interviews, survey and focus group, in combination with analysis of the secondary data (which includes a multitude of texts, for instance videos, photos, articles and literature).

All quotes from interviews and surveys are exemplar quotes, rather than large, textual and mindless quotes. This style of quotation has been adopted as it a direct presentation of the quotes that I have discovered. Segments of text have been chosen as exemplars of the suggested concepts and theories. Exemplar quotes are an example of data being both recorded and reported.

Once the research has been completed this will lead to a conclusion, which will answer the research questions to their best extent and suggest potential future possibilities and outcomes for the fashion industry (in Western society).

SCOPES AND LIMITATIONS

ETHICS: To ensure that no one was harmed during the research process, all primary data is confidential and therefore the sources will remain anonymous. When the primary data was conducted, each participant was shown the questions in advance so that they could prepare for them and know what to expect. In addition this gave them a window of opportunity to inform me if a question was not agreeable. Moreover, no one was forced to answer a question as all of the conversations led a natural path and were not forced by myself in any shape or form. This also means that the primary data was of higher quality, as participants were not pushed in a certain direction: the discourse led its own path. Furthermore all secondary data is referenced,

therefore nothing has been stolen from another author's work.

VALIDITY: As the interviews and focus group were of spontaneous nature they are representative of a slice of the zeitgeist of Western culture today. Furthermore the study tests the current situation of androgyny in Western culture and whilst it only focuses on a few themes it still provides information on a broad spectrum of alternatives. Moreover there is a chapter on the history of androgyny in fashion (in Western society) that looks briefly at multiple touch-points and is a backdrop for the present situation and therefore shows patterns that are valid for the past.

GENERALISABILITY: Whilst the research, discussions and conclusions focus on the Western fashion industry, there are elements which are applicable to other societies, such as the globalisation of fashion. On the other hand, gender is a socially constructed view which varies a lot in different cultures and therefore the Western view of gender and androgyny may vary from other cultures. An example of this difference is India for instance, where they already have an existing third sex called "Heshra" which is worshipped and seen as holy [10].

LIMITATIONS: As previously mentioned, the primary data has been conducted in the Netherlands which means international interviews were limited to Skype and e-mail. This may be a hindrance as the facial expressions and personal interaction were not as strong as they may have been face to face. Moreover the secondary data is limited to the sources I had (the Internet, the libraries in Amsterdam and other sources in the Netherlands), meaning it does not engulf all aspects of existing data in Western society.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. What does the term androgyny mean?

Androgyny is a word that is used to describe the removal of male or female characteristics in order to create a person devoid of distinctive sexual attributes [11]. In other words it is the idea of a genderless person. To understand what a 'genderless person' means in Western society today, it is important to first understand what gender means.

Sex and Gender

When you are born, you are assigned a sex (female or male) which refers to your different biological aspects as you come out of the womb. Gender, on the other hand, refers to the way those differences are made sense of in culture. According to Claudine Griggs [12] Western culture operates with a two-sex, two-gender distinction. Sut Jhally [13] suggests that "*our ability to recognise someone as male or female is absolutely fundamental for our ability to interact with them*", implying that gender recognition is dependent on certain signals being communicated that allow us to position people in categories (male and female) which make sense to us. This distinction is a socially constructed view that is not natural, but still a norm in Western society. This differs in various cultures as there is nothing natural or biological about gender identities. Griggs [14] asked a subject why it is important for others to see gender through our bodies, to which the respondent replied "*that is the only avenue we have to display gender – it is in the mind, and only its manifestations, such as clothing are recognisable to other people*". For humans to recognise and process gender we need to have visual clues which highlight femininity or masculinity. Clothing is the most prominent marker of gender, as it is a visual clue for others which they can easily understand [15]. Additionally the human body (i.e. the way we walk or hold ourselves) is an important medium within which we communicate our gender roles.

According to the results of the focus group, masculinity can be translated as hard labour, physical strength,

strength, power, tranquility and courageous. Femininity on the other hand is seen as sensual, seductive, gentle, sweet, emotional and dainty. This is supported in theory too, as Jhally [16] suggests that in Western society the female touch is portrayed as 'superficial and weak', using the example of female hands in advertisements being shown as light, defenceless and recumbent. Furthermore women are presented in imagery as not paying attention to their surroundings and/or holding themselves in vulnerable positions such as biting their lips, leaning on men or lying down completely passive; positions that suggest fragility and dependence. On the other hand men are portrayed as active, in control and aware of the world around them. Their touch is powerful and assertive and it is rare to find them touching themselves. They stand upright and fold their arms to exert confidence, strength and independence. The roles of man and woman are parallel to how the focus group view masculinity and femininity and therefore embody cultural assumptions about what a man (masculinity) and what a female (femininity) are. Since these images are projected to us daily this influences the socially constructed norm for gender identity.

Gender in clothing

Due to our upbringing and the images projected at us in the media (and in the afore mentioned adverts and imagery), we have strong ideas about what a woman wears and what a man wears. Typically a man wears trousers and a woman wears a dress; this is instilled in us from a young age and can even be seen in public bathroom signs. We engage with this symbols on a daily basis and they are therefore engraved in our minds causing us to subconsciously recognise which is a male toilet and which is a female one. A large part of 'gender role' is dependent on clothing as others need visual clues to help the brain process who/what an individual is. The results of the survey show that these gender clothing distinctions are still dominant in men, as 96% of male respondents said they would not wear clothing meant for women as it would look "*weird*" or would not be "*culturally acceptable nor normal*". On the other hand 88% of female respondents said that they would wear clothing for men and even admitted that they often prefer the fit and/or style of menswear. The growth in women wearing menswear shows that androgyny is becoming more accepted and women are feeling more empowered and free in their clothing.

Androgyny

Having looked at what gender means in Western society, the next step is to look specifically at what androgyny is. The Oxford Dictionary[17] defines androgyny as "*partly male and partly female in appearance; of indeterminate sex*". To understand what the zeitgeist of today believe androgyny to be, the focus group participants were asked a series of questions. The group agreed that the term androgyny did not create a positive nor negative reaction, but described it is a 'grey' area and almost 'robot like'. One person went further by describing their view of an androgynous bodyshape: "*genderless and skinny, not masculine nor feminine.*" Furthermore several participants agreed that androgyny is becoming more acceptable and common and that the play between sexes is not as shocking as it was in the past: fashion has become more and more liberal in over the past few years. This suggests that it is almost normal for them and they do not find it strange. Another participant said that it is "*losing its core meaning as it has been popularised over the years – it has become a fashion trend*". From their statements we can conclude that they visualise androgyny as a slender body type, with no distinctive male or female features, rather a blend of the two. There is a red thread appearing as many people associate androgyny with clothing, specifically as a fashion trend.

Upon interviewing two individual androgynes, their responses varied slightly from the focus group: one interviewee said that it has become more commonplace and gradually become 'the norm', whereas the other person said it has become more present in peoples minds as an option, becoming a mainstream trend that remains quite superficial. Both the focus group, survey and interview results show that people associate androgyny with clothing, but there is no real understanding of why people dress androgynously: the

reasoning is still blurred.

2. WHAT IS THE PAST RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ANDROGYNY AND CLOTHING IN WESTERN CULTURE?

As a large emphasis of androgyny in Western culture focuses on clothing style, yet the motives are still not understood it is important to look at the past of androgyny in Western society to reflect on why it was relevant then and for what reason(s). As a result this may give insight into the current situation of androgyny, as our socially constructed views pivot around what we have seen and been taught in the past.

In 15th century Italy the terms “fairer sex” and “stronger sex” were coined, referring to females and males respectively [18]. The stronger sex was emphasised with the play of the calf and the thigh. the masculine, manly leg was shaped and defined with embellishments and the tight cut of fabric, which was linked to Spanish grandées and German estate-servants who were admired for their rugged strength. The leg was symbolised as powerful and strong, which could explain why trousers are seen as a masculine item of clothing – the stronger sex (i.e. the male) wore them.

A few centuries later in the 18th century fashion became a point of interchange between the division of classes and the division of sexes. Clothing was a clear marker of who you are and wear you belonged. Women adorned themselves in luxury in order to be admired by men, one which King Louis XIV adapted. His status at court was determined by appearance and thus he adorned himself in colour, with lace, ribbons, bows, precious stones, pearls, feathers and embroidered gold. He was the epitome of effeminate and showed that it was acceptable for men to decorate themselves with luxury whilst still remaining powerful – to a certain extent one could say he blurred the lines between masculinity and femininity at that time.

During the 19th century Beau Brummell introduced the 'Dandy' to the city of London. His clothing style was both austere and elegant, but not flamboyant and extravagant. He paid impeccable detail to cleanliness, function and design in combination with expensive materials, unique craftsmanship, a majestic way of being and mastery of social etiquette and manners. According to Vinken [19] the Dandy placed the highest value on clothing, so that he often went broke for the sake of his appearance. He not only “*eroticises his body*” but also positions himself within the context of “*pure feminine*”. This suggests that Brummell's dandy attributes and lifestyle are an indication of feminine tendencies. It is typically feminine to take such care in ones appearance, making it their highest priority.

In the early 20th century, between 1900 to 1920 Paul Poiret gave a new reason to couture. He tried to demolish the corset and as a result freed women's bodies, which symbolised a much deeper freedom. His saturated colour palettes reduced elements of femininity and he deconstructed the hourglass figure of the 19th century with a lean, high-waisted silhouette. His inspiration came from a time when dress was revolutionary such as the Directoire and medieval times: with his clothing came change. He introduced European women to the kind of pants worn in the Orient by both men and women, which in turn introduced them to both total freedom of movement of legs and the most masculine article of clothing at that time. This look was known as 'la garçonne' which literally translates into 'the boy'.

After WWII in the 20's the Western woman experienced a truly liberating time. She began to experiment with her make up and even drove a car; a rebellion against the social and political turbulence she had just lived

through. She smoked long-stemmed cigarettes and over-consumed cocktails with jazz music on repeat – the flapper emerged. The flapper was brash, cold and rebelled against everything she had previously been taught, rejecting social norms placed by previous generations. She refused to remain existing in the male-dominated society of her female ancestors. Gone were the days of boned, structured and restricting corsets – flappers wore long strips of cloth to minimise the appearance of their breasts. Their hair was cropped into a bob and their hemlines were cut above their knee in order to flash a peep of their silk stockings. She embraced androgyny to prove to men that she had the ability to function as an equally valuable and important citizen; holding down her job, voting and making decisions for herself. This era was the pioneer of the escalating blurring lines between femininity and masculinity. Furthermore Coco Chanel prevailed, at the core of the Jazz Age in Paris, as the next revolutionary designer to take inspiration from menswear since Poiret. She dismissed her own corset and wore trousers in public, almost dressing like a dandy herself. She transformed womenswear by taking men's elements and making them wearable for women, such as jackets, neckties, trousers and hairstyles. Chanel confidently maintained that she clothed real women for real life [20].

Marlene Dietrich was the pioneer of androgyny in the 30's, bending gender rules when she first appeared in a top hat and tails as a stylish nightclub singer in the movie "Morocco". The follow up to her striking performance led to French women wearing tailored menswear. The Parisian Womenswear Daily [21] claimed that "*most of the smart women who are returning to Paris from the Riviera are boasting that their clothes come from men's tailors*". One can assume that women were reacting to the poor economy of the time by stepping into masculine roles and taking charge, leaving behind the glamour of the 20's and adopting a more serious role.

In the 60's the 'mod' appeared, as the epitome of youth culture at that time. Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson [22] conducted a study on youth subcultures in post-war Britain and from their findings suggested that mod style and subculture elevated visibility and freedom for young women. This status may have been a result of the young male mods, who accepted the idea that women did not have to be attached to men. Furthermore there were more jobs for women available, with a growth in boutiques and womenswear stores. This gave women expendable incomes, status and a charismatic sense of dressing up and travelling to the city for work. Women and men alike paid attention to their clothes as a reflection of their identity, with the same fussiness for detailing in clothing. The 'Teddy Boys' in particular paved the way for allowing the male interest in fashion to be socially acceptable. They adopted a suave look, with specific attention to suiting, quality, leather shoes, smooth and cared-for hairstyles as well as eye shadow, eyeliner and lipstick to enhance their features. Makeup was a female's territory but that did not mind borrowing from this look to heighten their style. Moreover female mods dressed very similar to the men, with androgynous short haircuts, men's trousers or shirts, flat shoes and very little makeup. Slender, boy-like models arose in the fashion world, such as Jean Shrimpton and Twiggy.

Our next encounter with androgyny in clothing arises in the 70's, with unclear sexual identities becoming the main form of rebellion in this era. In this era a male protest against the male collective emerged in various forms. Young men had long hair and wore perfume, make-up and colourful shirts. An established dandyism took place and one can assume that David Bowie, Kiss and The Rolling Stones had an influence of this behaviour. All three were figures who revelled against society's norms and paved a path for the rest to follow. Bowie created a new era of pop music, creating a time without blandish fashion. He celebrated outrageous sexuality and created his very own pop alter ego under the name of Ziggy Stardust in 1972. Prior to this he was playing with gender boundaries – on his album cover "The Man Who Sold The World" he is seen posing in a satin dress with flowing long hair, in a vulnerable pose that evoked a strong feminine feel. Bowie and his wife were the ultimate androgenic couple, with him dressed in pre-raphaelite, long, flowing dresses or fitted

jumpsuits with platform heels and makeup whilst she wore draped trousers with a boyish haircut and blazers. Together they shook up the conventions of what men and women should wear. In 1971 Bowie was introduced to the underground scene of New York and Andy Warhol, where the men wore blouses, women's makeup, crochet dresses with tights, large floppy hats, vests with fringe and fur. Their hair was multi-coloured and in the day they wore dresses and nail polish to downplay their masculinity. Bowie returned to England with the goal of bringing the playful American style back with him, as he believed it embodied a movement that they should have. This was the birth of Ziggy Stardust. Ziggy was android-like, genderless and pretty, and evoked the quintessential alien effect. Bowie has said that he "*wanted to escape completely from the place he was from and embrace an alternate reality*".

Furthermore in the 70's 'Le Smoking' truly rose to fame, despite being introduced by Yves Saint Laurent in the 60's. Iconic Bianca Jagger wore a cream YSL trouser suit at her wedding to Mick Jagger, which became her signature look and spared an array of women's powerdressing. Additionally Helmut Newton, famous photographer of fashion and the women's suffragettes, captured two iconic images of 'Le Smoking' in this decade which have inspired women further and connected 'Le Smoking' with the movement of the women's suffragettes, embodying the second-wave of feminism that arose in the 70's. The debate of sexuality, the workplace, family, reproductive rights and official legal inequalities [23] meant that women approached natural beauty and diminished typically feminine characteristics. They burned their bras in the streets, fighting for control of their own bodies, feelings and time. Men and women were reaching an equilibrium in societal hierarchy which was reflected in their clothing.

With the wave of pop culture from the 70's moving on into the 80's, androgyny in clothing was inevitable. Women felt empowered by 'Le Smoking' and both men and women alike were armed with acceptance of who they were; they embraced their inner strength thanks to the likes of pop icons such as Bowie, Boy George and Prince. Grace Jones was the ultimate power woman and an icon to both men and women, with her own androgynous look playing to both sexes. The 'Superbody' of the 80's was a silhouette of broad shoulders, a thin waist and long, svelte legs. The Superbody symbolised the new female empowerment that allowed them to be students, workers, wives and mothers simultaneously. The slender, powerful and decisive form that paraded the catwalks was the result of cultural conflict between couture's memory and an infatuation with uniforms. Shoulder pads were a clear indication of masculinity and displayed a woman who was happy to personally acquire new responsibilities. The Superbody suggested alternative approaches to feminine modes of 'masculine' dressing and other manly modes of 'feminine' dressing. A progression from the Superbody was the 'Power Suit', which was designed for women who emerged in triumph from the passionate second-wave feminist battle that reached a pinnacle in the social and political victories of the 70's. As a result of their fight, there was a new civil status of women, where equality in the workplace was embraced. Women reconciled themselves with men and achieved success in their political careers; they were seen as role models. The Power Suit was a uniform for women that allowed them to be independent and authoritative in the workplace.

Moreover in the 80's the mod subculture made a return, with young men dressing the same dandy-eque, well-put-together attire of the 60's. One interviewee admitted that the attention to detail in clothing was definitely his main priority and pride in one's appearance in combination with strict guidelines one had to adhere to meant they were a new adopting typically female traits of vanity and self-care. As a natural progression from being a mod, the interviewee became a New Romantic. New Romantics took looking after themselves to the next level and were even more flamboyant than mods. There was a group of pop icons called the 'Blitz Kids' which included Boy George, Marilyn, Bowie and Steve Strange who were attached to the New Romantic lifestyle. Their over-the-top style was a reaction to WWII and the way that society had been suppressed.

In the 90's we saw a new wave of androgynous models, known as 'waifs'. This was an ubiquitous term used

to describe the boyish figure of the time, representing 'heroin chic' fashion models such as Kate Moss and Jaime King. According to Nanda van den Berg [24] the waif was “*skin and bones, who, with her absence of feminine attributes, could have easily passed for male or female*”. This look derived from a rock'n'roll lifestyle that associated the waif with being cool and therefore created a desirous attraction. Women throughout the world wanted to imitate the genderless body and the effortlessly cool lifestyle that came attached with it.

During the 2000's another outburst of androgyny in fashion was present, with a particular thanks to Hedi Slimane's arrival at Dior in 2000. This marked a change in menswear and the label was regarded as the most influential of its generation [25]. There was an emergence of a slender silhouette, stemming from the form of androgynous teenage boys wearing structured suits and skinny jeans. Slimane promoted the skinny style stolen from pop culture, creating a revival of various English post-punk and mod styles. Slimane took the iconic YSL style of tailored androgyny and recreated it in a groundbreaking black tie collection for Autumn/Winter 2001. By referencing the fictitious gender-bending imagery of 'Le Smoking', he spurred the acceptance of elements of formal attire, for instance the structured suit jacket, in everyday menswear. Throughout the mid-noughties Slimane recreated the English mod look, reflecting back on Beau Brummell and the Teddy Boys, with a modern twist inspired by his unofficial muse Pete Doherty. Additionally Slimane also referenced Bowie in his collections, particularly embodying his 'mid-70's' look. One of his visions as a designer was to dress androgynous, asexual boys as an alternative to majestic muscular men. This decisions highlighted the rigid gender oppositions within fashion culture and expressed a desire for a more sophisticated, provocative ideal of masculinity. He did this by stripping men of any overtly sexual appeal, primarily through youthful androgyny, creating a reasonable asexual graphic model. In conclusion one could say that Slimane accentuated the 'feminisation' of men's fashion.

Contrary to Slimane, Jean Paul Gaultier adopted womenswear's formal symbols and integrated them into his menswear collections. The introduction of stereotypically feminine attributes in menswear provided men with more options in their clothing. Having more choices in their dress meant that men could be more playful and expressive, which was typically a feminine attribute. Furthermore another famous designer, Giorgio Armani, blended androgyny in his designs, with iconic unstructured suits alongside the hyper-sexualised bodies initiated by Calvin Klein.

Outside of the fashion industry, pop culture icons were shaping the way for the new metrosexual man. A metrosexual is a man who is “*especially meticulous about his grooming and appearance*” [26] and was given to David Beckham by Mark Simpson in 2002. Simpson wrote an article about Beckham that announced him “*almost famous for wearing sarongs and pink nail polish and panties belonging to his wife, having a different, tricky haircut every week and posing naked and oiled up on the cover of Esquire*”. He suggested that Beckham's open-mindedness had undoubtedly helped change some 'unsophisticated attitudes' in the very male-orientated sport of football. In turn, the metrosexual was a modern-day dandy and Beckham paved the way for many more metrosexuals to appear. Jean-Marc Carriol, representative of Clarins said “*The feminist movement has been the biggest contributor to the men's market since it has developed. The success of the push for women's rights has fundamentally altered the way men and women interact within the workplace. Appearance and grooming are really important*” [27]. This suggests that when men and women became more equal in the workplace, their interactions with one another became more balanced and receptive and this opened new doors and thought processes for both men and women alike. Men became more acquainted with female attributes and took interest in them, resulting in the metrosexual.

3. WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POP CULTURE AND ANDROGYNOUS FASHION IN WESTERN CULTURE TODAY?

Having looked at the past of androgynous fashion in Western culture, the next step is to look at the current

situation and what it has been influenced/affected by. When the general public were asked how they thought the media handles androgyny, 20% said it was biased to females, 28% said it was viewed as a trend, 12% said it was seen as a positive thing, 20% said it was confusing, 12% said it was viewed negatively and 8% said it was viewed stereotypically. Focus group participants said they felt like the media tries to push a feminine image on women and a masculine image on men, and also agreed that it is seen as an object of interest and progressiveness and not yet fully understood. These results suggest that people think androgyny is biased towards women, where it is accepted in a more positive manner than to men. Furthermore it is seen to many as a trend, and many believe the media do not know how to handle the subject of androgyny and still see it as an alien subject.

Additionally the survey highlighted how the respondents view the relationship between pop culture and androgyny. 28% see the relationship as an expressive of identity, 4% think it relates to gender equality, 4% do not see a relation, 8% deem it to be desirable, 28% see it as a statement, 12% view it as a hype/trend, 8% believe it to be a stereotypical relationship and 8% believe there to be a negative relationship. The focus group results are similar, suggesting that the media are very stereotypical and tend to hone in on trends, which is what is currently happening due to the blurring of gender lines in movies and music, plus pop culture icons being tomboyish men or effeminate women. When the respondents were asked what they think of androgyny as a fashion trend, 30% said it was a short-term trend, 25% said it was a lifestyle rather than a fashion trend, 25% said it represents gender equality (political statement), 5% said it was respectful to androgynes and 20% said it was liberating for gender socially constructed rules (political statement). The focus group results were varied, highlighting that it allows gender differences to fade but agreeing that it is still more accepted for women than for men to dress androgynously or borrow from the opposite gender. These responses suggest that people believe androgyny has become more accepted as a fashion trend, but also believe that it has helped gender equality and empowered women plus allowed men to look after themselves and care for their appearance more, therefore borrowing from their opposite genders stereotypical traits.

On the other hand the interviews with the androgynes provoked slightly varied answers, with both interviewees agreeing that the media struggles with handling androgyny and that there is definitely a need to educate and inform, as it has not been approached appropriately to provide the masses with enough information. When asked if they thought pop culture has had an influence on the understanding of androgyny, one interviewee said they believed it had as it provides strong role models for people, which are particularly relevant for youth culture where a lot of change starts. In contrast, the other interviewee said that the fact that people always mention Bowie highlights that the public embracement of androgyny died out in the 80's and that no one truly understands what androgyny really means. Despite their clashing responses there is a red thread: androgyny is generally accepted but the psychological reasons behind it are not always understood. When asked what they thought of androgyny as a fashion trend, one interviewee said they thought it was fine as it meant it made life more easier for people right along the gender spectrum, whereas the other said they used to find it beautiful until they discovered more about androgyny and now they find it frustrating as individuals who identify as androgynous feel like they have to look a certain way to be taken seriously, when gender identity is much more than the cut of clothes. Additionally the androgynous trend focuses on the slender body type, making it difficult for larger androgynes. Whilst one believes it has made life easier for true androgynes as it is more accepted in the fashion industry, the other thinks it makes things a little harder as we have now come to accept androgyny as a skinny, boyish, genderless figure. Lastly they were asked if they believed it was easy for an androgyne to buy clothing, to which both interviewees agreed that it is much easier and more open in Western society now, but still limited for larger androgynes. On the other hand, there are more unisex changing rooms and stores, which means there is less judgement and confusion upon regarding androgyny.

Androgynous models and pop icons

Various androgynous models and pop icons were mentioned throughout the survey and focus group, in both the fashion industry and the music industry who helped make androgyny more acceptable and understood. These 'role model's include Agyness Deyn, Alexa Chung and Stella Tennant, who have been on the circuit for the past few years, yet recently there has been a new wave and the androgynous aesthetic is being taken a step further.

Andrej Pejic is a male model from Australia who models both menswear and womenswear. Discovered by Jean Paul Gaultier and placed on the catwalk for womenswear in 2011, he has also been placed in bridalwear catwalk shows, a women's underwear campaign for Dutch brand HEMA, modelling both male and female clothes on the catwalk for Michalsky and various magazine shoots. Whilst the fashion industry openly embrace him, the use of social media has helped others to as well. Andrej has thousands of 'likes' on his Facebook page, thousands of 'followers' on Twitter and multiple blogs dedicated to his style. This demonstrates the power of social media as a platform for expressing yourself and connecting with people worldwide, which in turn opens peoples eyes to new ideas – something that was not as prevalent before, when the Internet was not as accessible and expansive.

Breaching out of the fashion industry is Casey Legler, a female menswear model who was originally an Olympic swimmer. She was signed for Ford Models as the first female in the male model department and was therefore the obvious choice for brand AllSaints to use in their Spring 2013 portrait series. The reactions to her online are positive too, with one commenter saying *"I love the way that things are being mixed up – a woman modelling menswear, a man modelling womenswear. Hurray! We're all just people and part of the human race."* [28]

Furthermore transgender model Lea T. who became the face of Givenchy and was pictured kissing Kate Moss on the cover of LOVE magazine is a widely accepted androgynous model, as well as Tilda Swinton who has been modelling both menswear and womenswear for Pringle since 2010 and Cara Delevigne who is the 'model of the moment' with her big bushy eyebrows and urban, basketball-boy styled garments. Additionally in the music industry Kiyomi McCloskey is a huge androgynous icon, known for her masculine look that she combines with her feminine attributes. McCloskey has even created her own clothing line for androgynes, opening the doors for everyone to see and understand an area of androgyny that has not been touched upon enough. According to Robert van Krieken [29], the reason why we idolise these people is because they are displayed as celebrities. They occupy positions of prestige because they are celebrated. Furthermore, social position is now more a matter of press than prestige. The fact that people have instant access to view this press makes it easier for a person to become a celebrity and to be idolised. In combination with the unusual identity or style of the afore mentioned icons, this makes them stand out amongst hundreds of other celebrities today – we are finally celebrating being unique.

David Bowie

One of pop cultures biggest androgynous icons has recently returned to the limelight, releasing a new album in March 2013 called "The Next Day". Bowie's newest video "The Stars Are Out Tonight" features a celebrity couple who moved next door to him and his wife and features Tilda Swinton as his wife, female model Saskia de Brauw as the male celebrity and male model Andrej Pejic as the female celebrity. The message of the video is a statement against the press, suggesting that they fabricate stories and become too involved in people's lives, not allowing them to express themselves freely: opening the door for androgyny amongst other unique elements and attributes of human nature. [30] The return of Bowie may re-inspire people to break socially constructed boundaries of gender and play with makeup and new styles – a movement that is already visible in the online community.

Modern-age metrosexual

Inspired by Bowie, Beckham and modern androgynous icons, as well as androgynous icons from that past that have shaped clothing styles today, we are experiencing a new-age metrosexual men. In 2008 when the recession hit Western society, the fashion industry caved in but there was a surge in turnover and profit in the menswear sector. [31] Since then there have been increasingly more men's accessories (e.g. bags and purses) designs and an advance in men's cosmetics and creams. British celebrity Ollie Locke was mentioned in the focus group as an androgynous icon, and has recently opened up to his extensive makeup routine via a viral YouTube video. He also suggests that the more open men are about their grooming routine, the more acceptable it becomes and he does not believe it to be frowned upon at all. Opening up on such a huge social media platform demonstrates that the more forthcoming people are with their grooming routines, the more acceptable it becomes. In addition, male style icon Jeff Brazier has also created his own YouTube channel where he admits to tweeting some 'oufits of the day's' to inspire other people. This openness about dress and personal style that is seen in both men is something that used to be viewed as quite a feminine thing to do, but with the doors opened via social media it has become more widely accepted. There are many more men on YouTube with grooming or personal care channels, as well as using platforms such as Facebook or Twitter to have conversations with other men about their metrosexual tendencies. This suggests a change in the mentality of men, who are more open to their 'feminine' traits and are openly metrosexual, with the help of social media platforms which create more open-mindedness.

New-day femininity

In the past few years there has been a new wave of feminism, with more females graduating from university than men, showing a determination to succeed. In the workplace women are now more respected as 'androgynous' than they are as 'blonde bimbos', in contrast to the past where women were seen and not heard in the workplace. [32] Kark suggests that both women and men who are interested in being perceived as effective leaders should be advised to blend feminine and masculine behaviours. Due to an increase of women in the workplace there is more emotional and open communication, which means that influential and effective leaders are not just characterised by the masculine characteristics of the past, but call for androgyny behaviours instead. This has influenced fashion as well, as the androgynous role model in the office does not just stop at behaviour; it extends into clothing. Women are wearing more masculine garments in order to show that they are strong and powerful, and men are dressing a little softer to show that they are emotional and approachable.

Moving beyond the fashion-industry, Susie Wolff is 2013's most admirable female icon. She is currently the world's only female Formula One Driver – a sport that is seen as one of the most 'manly' ones on Earth. Charlotte Sinclair suggests that Formula One is “*the very apex of masculinity, a male dominion almost entirely impenetrable to women, equivalent to the pit-mining in its gendered monotone.*” [33] Wolff is determined and driven and not afraid to let the world know of her typically 'masculine' talent and ambition. Yet, despite falling into a cliché of how people 'suppose' she should look and act being a female Formula One driver, Wolff is not a butch woman. She has been quoted saying “*I like being feminine, it is my way of not conforming to the stereotype that if you are a racing driver you do not care how you look*”, hence she is the perfect balance of masculine and feminine traits. As Wolff has stepped forward and followed her (masculine) dreams, we can predict that she will empower many women to do the same thing – something that will happen faster thanks to the fast movement of global information on social media. The increase of social media is allowing more women to voice themselves; there are now more female celebrities that are taken seriously and are role models to men and women alike as they have more platforms to express themselves on. Women are no longer confined at home and they are far from delicate; their opinions can be

voiced much easier than in the past.

Androgynous trends and designers

The core source of androgyny in clothing in Western society is the fashion industry. In line with the new-day feminism, trouser suits are popping up everywhere on the catwalks and in the streets (where fashion currently takes its biggest inspiration from). Moreover Hedi Slimane showed his debut collection for YSL menswear in October 2012, a union of the two most iconic androgynous designers in the fashion industry. Despite the collection being designed for men, Slimane used female models on the catwalk, insinuating that both sexes can wear the collection; uniting genders together once more. One could say that thanks to Slimane, elements of formal attire such as the structured suit jacket have been accepted in everyday menswear, as well as the accentuated feminisation of men's fashion.

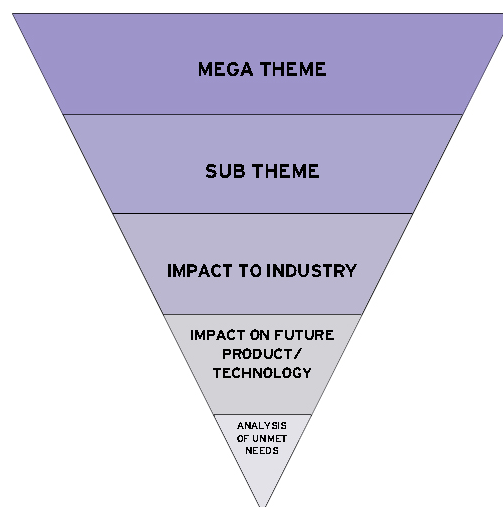
Currently the monochrome look is a staple trend, which embodies androgyny in another form. It unites contrasting ends of the colour spectrum, which symbolises the union of contrasts in itself. Furthermore it is a trend that both sexes can wear and often blurs aesthetic gender lines.

Celine, Ann Demeulemeester and Maison Martin Margiela to name a few, are designers that have recently featured many suits and trousers in their collections; indicating the return of the Powerwoman. Moreover there has been a surge of gender-bending in cosmetics recently. In Thom Browne's Spring/Summer 2011 menswear collection the male models were seen wearing gold lipstick on the runway. Furthermore Haider Ackermann's Spring/Summer 2013 womenswear collection featured sumo-wrestler hairstyles on the models which represented feminine elegance with the strength of masculinity. This relates back to the notion of the modern-day metrosexual/dandy who prioritises his visual appearance and places around with his look.

CONCLUSION

The objective of the paper was to answer the question “What is the current position of androgynous fashion in Western culture and how has it been influenced?”. Throughout the article we have looked at what the term androgyny means, what the past relationship is between androgyny and clothing in Western culture and what the current relationship between pop culture and androgynous fashion in Western culture is. As a result of the research, it can be suggested that androgynous fashion today is a consequence of four different themes: body ideals, otherworldly, feminism and metrosexuality.

The results of the discussed and analysed research will be highlighted and the relevance of the the outcome for the fashion industry will be presented. To present the results in the clearest manner, the “Macro to Micro” approach by Frost & Sullivan will be adapted and used (*Frost & Sullivan, 2013*).



Above is a model representing a triangle, which acts as a 'filter' for all the information that has been presented in the paper. Firstly the “Mega Theme” in this circumstance is androgynous fashion in Western culture, which needs no further explanation. The “Sub Themes” are “body ideals”, “otherworldly”, “feminism” and “metrosexuality”, as previously discussed in chapter six. These all sustain the androgynous fashion trend and drive changes to the society, as discussed and reflected upon previously.

Based on the research analyses and discussion, the following conclusions have been drawn for each theme and how they can be integrated in the fashion industry.

OTHERWORLDLY

As for the otherworldly theme, I believe that there should be more fashion collaborations with this creative individuals, as they can bring new, innovative ideas to the table and therefore open up the fashion industry to a world of new, exciting products or concepts. In their minds there are no strict boundaries of male or female therefore the possibilities are endless.

FEMINISM

I believe feminism as a theme in androgyny would make a strong neo-tribe. All of the supporters of/contributors to this theme have similar interests, and most likely of a similar age range and their glue power is their devotion to feminism. With a new neo-tribe will come more tolerance and acceptance of androgyny as a fashion trend plus woman will be able to express themselves in a way that is deemed weird or unwomanly.

METROSEXUALITY

I suggest that metrosexuality is used as a marketing tool for brands, particularly in use with social media. So far we have seen the growth and popularity of YouTube combining metrosexuality, but I think platforms could be created where the communication is two-way, rather than focusing on a one-way message. If this were to happen, perhaps metrosexuals would grow more confident and the fashion industry would see a change in menswear: something that is typically seen as quite boring due to very few new innovation or inspirational products that not seen in a negative way.

In conclusion, androgyny is a fundamental aspect of Western culture. As we have discovered, it is not a new fashion trend – one could even argue that it is not a trend at all as the majority of humans (minus the otherworldly group) identify with gender. Currently androgyny is influenced by several themes: feminism, metrosexuality, otherworldly and body ideals, yet the fast-paced, continuous world could cause these to vary as androgyny in fashion is a progressive, dynamic trend that tends to be an after-effect of a change in society or societal matters. I believe that if the fashion industry followed my suggestions, androgyny would become more embraced and could progress forward, paving the way for innovative designs such as Lucy McRae's body architecture or Lady Gaga's creative yet disturbing dress sense.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [1] Molls, 2013
- [2] Opler, 1945
- [3] Bulmer, 1979
- [4] Strauss, 1987
- [5] Maxwell, 1996
- [6] Strauss & Corbin, 1990
- [7] Bogdan & Taylor, 1975
- [8] Guba, 1978
- [9] Tesch, 1990
- [10] Jhally, 2009
- [11] Morely, 2012
- [12] Griggs, 1998
- [13] Jhally, 2009
- [14] Griggs, 1998
- [15] Griggs, 1998
- [16] Jhally, 2009
- [17] Oxford Dictionary, 2013
- [18] Vinken, 2005
- [19] Vinken, 2005
- [20] Vinken, 2005
- [21] Vogue, 2013
- [22] Hall & Jefferson, 1993
- [23] Burkett, 2007
- [24] Van den Berg, 2010
- [25] Rees-Roberts, 2013
- [26] Dacosta, 2013
- [27] Gotting, 2013
- [28] Styles, 2013
- [29] Krieken, 2012
- [30] BBC, 2013
- [31] Teunissen, 2010
- [32] Kark, 2012
- [33] Sinclair, 2013