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A typology of fashion violence

Keywords

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Abstract

In the study of fashion there is a temptation to privilege the experience of seduction, glamour and empowerment of individuals, or the representation of cultural values through dress. But fashion also has a propensity for narcissism (self-satisfaction) and the potential for this self-satisfaction to be achieved through the harassment and degradation of others. In this article, fashion is examined as an everyday site for establishing social distinctions, where violence in the form of microaggressions and bullying is masked by the apparent superficially and innocuousness of clothing.

The aim is to demonstrate how fashion is implicated in the three levels of everyday violence identified by Galtung (1990) in his typography of violence. The article takes examples from the cultural realm of fashion and a set of interviews with young people who experienced bullying because of their clothes. The examples are applied to Galtung's model to produce a typology of fashion violence.

Introduction

There is a general perception that fashion is superficial, shallow and does not represent our 'true being'. Yet, perhaps paradoxically, fashion is also used to sort and compartmentalize the social world, and thus it creates very real social and personal consequences. There is an ambivalence here, which is, according to Boulton and Jerrard (2000), central to the experience of fashion. An external ambivalence within contemporary society, regarding the status of fashion, is mirrored by an internal conflict within the individual, whereby consumer goods become items of status and 'symbolic self-completion' (Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1982). Everyone is subject to the gaze of others and therefore objectified. How others respond to the individual involves evaluations or judgements against a set of norms or an ideal. These judgements from the outside, as reflected back to the individual, have a considerable effect on the individual's own sense of embodiment. The use of fashion in the process of individuation is also folded or double-sided: it has an inner and experiential role of selfing, and an outer role, both productive and expressive of identity (Boulton and Jerrard 2000). Here, brands often play a considerable role in social hierarchization, particularly among young people (Elliott and Leonard 2004). Today, there are countless opportunities to compare oneself with others, not only in face-to-face interaction with other people, but also online, where the comparisons can be with a much wider set of people, including celebrities. How people present themselves, including their clothing and fashion choices, is clearly a factor in how they are seen and how they feel about themselves. Clarke and Miller (2002) show that support and reassurance from others are important in order for individuals to feel comfortable in their chosen clothes. Increased comparison, through social media and other means, has combined with the explosion in recent decades of cheap and accessible 'fast' fashion, so that fashion has become even more crucial to the processes of selfing and individuation among western adolescents (cf. Boulton and Jerrard 2000; Kaiser 2012). From a deviance-regulation perspective, individuals will seek difference when difference generates a positive identity and avoid it when it generates a negative identity. Behaviours and clothing are taken to be signals given out by the individual as to who they are, who they think they are and who they want to be, and are picked up as clues by the observer. Behaviours that stand out from social norms provoke stronger reactions than non-deviant behaviour (Blanton and Burkley 2008). Fashion is not only a matter of Simmel's classic tension between creativity and conformity (Simmel 1971); rather, it may be suffused with feelings of anxiety and social embarrassment which also affect the consumer's relationship to their clothes. Such disquiet over fashion stems from the individual's more general anxiety about relationships with people (Clarke and Miller 2002).

Fashion has been described as a phenomenon with potential to level out social conflicts and class differences. While it may be on the surface, or even on a performative level, fashion can also be manipulated, played with and transgressed. We have seen the emergence of 'total fashion', which

saturates any and every social relationship and practice, and is where the social is regulated through the 'supremacy of fashion form' (Lipovetsky 1994: 133). Cheap and accessible fast fashion consumption and high street and Internet retail chains go hand-in-hand. One such chain, H&M, labels this development as 'democratic', and fashion designer Isabel Marant describes the company's production as 'large scale for a huge audience at a democratic price' (H&M 2013). Fashion cannot credibly be said to have political intent to iron-out class divisions and conflict; instead, as Lipovetsky (1994) said, it is driven by a 'headlong quest for novelty', which he considered to be founded upon an exaltation and excitement in gratuitous aesthetic play (Lipovetsky 1994: 41). This might produce, as a by-product of its ubiquitous and accessible nature, a levelled-out and somewhat conflict-free realm of fashion, in resonance with Lipovetsky's argument. However, as this article will argue, it might well be the opposite. If fashion is a game of exaltation and excitement, it is played on a violent playground. Some studies interpret fashion as a signifier of social hierarchy and group stratification. For instance, one study advocates the use of school uniforms to mitigate gang violence (cf. Kaiser 1997). The actual mechanisms of interpersonal conflict and violence that may be at play are seldom investigated or problematized. This article does investigate those mechanisms, to contend that Galtung's three levels of everyday violence are enacted in fashion.

The article has four sections: the first describes how fashion is an instrument in social competition and stratification; in the second, narcissist elements in fashion are addressed; the third presents different forms of violence in fashion such as bullying and microaggressions, and interprets these using Galtung's model of violence; finally, a typology of fashion violence is presented.

Fashion as canvas for social competition

As early as 1895, Charles Frederick Worth remarked upon the double-edged nature of dress in an interview, stating that: 'Women dress, of course, for two reasons: for the pleasure of making themselves smart, and for the still greater joy of snuffing out the others' (Worth, quoted in Polan and Tredre 2009: 9). Throughout the history of fashion studies, there has been a tendency to set clothing within a framework of communication and seduction. Clothes have been seen as tools for communicative competition, as demarcations between groups (cf. Simmel 1971) and as signifiers of class struggle or revolution (cf. Wilson 1985; Barnard 1996). Bourdieu described the struggle for meaning in taste primarily as a symbolic struggle, even if the results have economic, material or social causes and consequences (Bourdieu 1984).

Fashion could be seen as a 'body technique', a behavioural model where the most esteemed individuals within a social group are copied by the other members (Craik 1993: 9f). If such an imitation is to work it has to signal the prestige of the group: it needs to be exclusive. A prerequisite for exclusivity is exclusion, where only the ones considered as worthy can copy their way into social

advancement (cf. Entwistle 2000; Elliot and Leonard 2004). Bourdieu argues that fashion by definition is 'the latest fashion, the latest difference' (Bourdieu 1993: 135). Even if fashion is a very wide-ranging phenomenon with many popular styles existing in parallel, an essential element is the judgment and distinction between 'in' and 'out', closely related to the 'in-group' vs 'out-group'. Members of the in-group favour other in-group members, while disparaging the out-group. The processes of distinction-production and manifestation usually involve elements of inter-group comparison, which produce in-group bonding and also hostility towards the out-group, forging the in-group together through antagonism, conflict and contempt so that, in certain instances, in-group love turns into out-group hate (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Such social demarcation processes, between 'in' and 'out', draw group dynamics towards 'optimal distinctiveness', a demarcation process ultimately demonstrated by various forms of social violence (Brewer 1991; 2001). Fashion offers room for acceptable deviance: people may have the option to deviate enough to feel special or unique, but still conform sufficiently to be included and affirmed as part of the group (Harman 1985).

Within the study of dress, fashion is usually seen as a liberatory or empowering practice, highlighting its potential for social mobility and desire. But the phenomenon itself draws heavily on hierarchical mechanisms (cf. Barthes 1983; Bourdieu 1984) and fashion can be used as a tool of cruelty and power. Sometimes people take pleasure in ridiculing those who have failed to successfully assimilate the designer's dictates (Arntzen 2015). Fashion affords a symbolic union, or signifies a union between people within the same class or with similar ambitions or aspirations, and it does so by excluding other groups (Arnold 2001: 10). Fashion is 'always right', and thus the fashionable not only deserve to be admired, but also have the right to be nasty. Popular coverage of celebrities and 'in-crowds', through both fashion magazines and social media, sets the 'in-crowd' a long way above the 'out-crowd' (Arntzen 2015: 52), and at least appears to confer power to those who are 'in'. Their fame and influence may be ephemeral, but their time in the limelight still confirms the aesthetic exclusivity of those being 'chosen', that they are somehow 'worth it', while those outside are not.

Narcissism and exclusion in fashion

The concept of the fashionable necessarily rests upon its opposite: the unfashionable. Without this antithesis, fashion would fail to signify any distinction between peers and groups. These polarities together support the twin functions of narcissism and exclusion.

Narcissism is not wholly good or bad; a limited form of narcissism is essential to the formation of the self and to self-esteem (Bancroft 2012: 28ff). A narcissist's life 'consists in searching for his reflection in the gaze of others' (Hirigoyen 2004: 126). As the formation of self requires the other to act as mirror, the 'in' of fashion requires an 'out'.

The format of fashion offers both the mechanism of inclusion, of identification with fellows, and of exclusion, the projection and demarcation from others (Larrain 2012). An example of this can be seen in the opening of the movie *The September Issue* (Cutler 2009), a documentary on the inner workings of *Vogue* magazine which prominently features its editor Anna Wintour. Wintour states that 'On the whole, people who say demeaning things [about fashion], I think it's because they feel in some way excluded, or not part of the 'cool group'. So as a result they just mock it' (Wintour, quoted in Arntzen 2015: 53). Wintour pinpoints the explicit exclusion and the narcissistic elements of fashion; a logic which blames the ones that do not live up to fashion standards. Such a shift of blame is, according to Smith and Redington (2010), a central element of victimization, effectively hiding classist violence behind an ideology of 'free' individuation. This free individuation is a contemporary coercive force of 'aesthetic obligation to self-design' (Groys 2008).

Microaggressions, bullying and the mechanics of fashion violence

As a 'shallow' social interface, with its connotations of the masquerade (Tseëlon 2001), and by its very ambivalence, fashion offers a cover for microaggressions. Sue (2010) defines microaggressions as the everyday slights, snubs or insults that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative messages to target persons based on their marginalized group membership. Microaggressions are often intentionally malevolent. However, they can also be delivered unwittingly by a well-intended person who unconsciously affirms marginality, reflecting and reinforcing distinctions between inclusion/exclusion, superiority/inferiority, normality/abnormality and desirability/undesirability. Sue divides microaggressions into three subcategories: micro-insults, micro-invalidations and micro-assaults. The first two often are unconscious or made with good intentions; micro-assaults on the other hand, usually intend to harm and are delivered as an attack on the victim (Sue 2010: 8). Micro assaults have some things in common with bullying, which is broadly understood to be when someone attempts to inflict, or inflicts, injury or discomfort upon another person. Bullying occurs in a relationship where there is an imbalance of power or strength (Olweus 1993). However, there are two crucial differences between bullying and micro-assaults. Firstly; an individual is being bullied when he or she is *repeatedly* exposed to negative actions from at least one other person (Olweus 1993). A single negative action does not constitute bullying, which has to involve repeated actions, whereas repetition is not a precondition for micro-assaults. Secondly; all three types of microaggressions are by definition directed towards members of marginalized groups, and this need not be the case with bullying.

The concept of microaggressions puts a focus on inter-subjective power relations and hierarchies, and can be applied to fashion-related types of marginalization, victimization and bullying. In the study of fashion, one form of microaggression that has special relevance is based on classism. There is a contradiction between a currently widespread notion that western societies are 'classless'

and the experience of poor or excluded groups within these societies (Smith and Redington 2010: 269ff). Not only is the framework of fashion heavily inflected with classist language, describing attractive styles with words such as 'classy', 'high-class' and 'upmarket', but derogatory terms also have class connotations, such as 'white trash', 'hobo' or 'bag-lady' styles (cf. Arnold 1999). Clothes play a significant role in classist microaggressions. Smith and Redington describe how fashion media have a tone which emphasizes what is currently 'right'. The tone is suggestive and correctional, and by recounting 'rags-to-riches' stories, evokes the sense that anything is possible and the winner-takes-all, even though the playing field is explicitly rigged in favour of the haves over the have-nots (Smith and Redington 2010: 279). Even well-intended fashion microaggressions can have a classist component. For example, when a friend is helping someone to choose clothes and gives advice, such as 'why don't you try to dress more normal?', 'you could try to a more sophisticated style' or 'this is a brand even you can afford', a sense of superiority, if not precisely of superior class position, is involved. Such help with their dress further exposes the victim's vulnerability as it insidiously undermines their sense of self-worth while blaming them for not 'keeping up'.

The authors found similar mechanisms in interviews with young people who experienced bullying because of their clothes. When Swedish adolescents were asked why they thought some individuals were bullied, 18% answered that it was due to the victim's clothes – the clothes were ugly or wrong, or the victim had a bad haircut or wore glasses that were out of fashion (Frisén, Holmqvist and Oscarsson 2008). Thornberg (2013) identified a core process of bullying, where the victim was targeted as 'different', 'odd' or 'not like us'. The children often used dehumanizing and oddness-related labels like 'poor man's clothes'. They also used the co-constructed differentness of the victim to explain and justify bullying, seeing it as a natural consequence of the victim being fat and wearing odd, unfashionable clothes; being bullied was therefore the victim's own fault (Thornberg 2013). Cyberbullying in particular is often directed at the victim's appearance, especially when those victims are girls (Frisén, Berne and Lunde 2014). The embedded narcissism of fashion, by being considered as always 'right', offers a pretext and disguise for the social belittling of others. Fashion can be used as a screen for processes of othering, rejection, exclusion and bullying.

Even so, it must be recognized that fashion bullying is not the consequence of fashion per se, and fashion may only be an instance or a veiling of a much wider range of harassment, with varied factors or reasons for social stigmatization. But, since fashion is always 'right', it offers a *shallow* pretext for aggression, leaving the victim with little opportunity to object to or counter the violence. If challenged, the aggressor can easily hide behind the play, ambivalence and 'shallowness' of an attack on dress – as if it does not really matter, is not important, should not be taken seriously: 'I didn't mean *you*, I was only talking about your clothes!' Fashion legitimizes the bully's claiming of the higher ground in order to humiliate the weaker party: the underlying assumption is that 'I am better than you. Because I'm worth it!' There is thus a twofold use of fashion for exclusion and

violence, which may be temporally distinct: one is as an excuse and interface to bully those who are *already* marginalized; the other is as a mechanism for marginalization, to exclude and *then* offer an interface for bullying. These two modes often seem intertwined.

A typology of fashion violence

Even if several studies have exposed fashion as a site or representation of status, conflict and anxiety (cf. Barnard 1996; Arnold 1999, 2001), there is a paucity of theoretical models by which to understand the violent potential of fashion. In this article, a typology developed by the conflict researcher Johan Galtung (1990) is applied to fashion, in order to identify and demonstrate how dress is used to perpetuate, structure and legitimize violence. Along the lines indicated by Galtung, three levels of everyday violence in the realm of dress are identified here: 'cultural', 'structural' and 'direct'. These formulations are backed up by cultural and structural examples and evidence, along with examples from interviews with victims of bullying.

Defining violence

Galtung uses a wide definition of violence. Not only is it the opposite of peace, but '*violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations*' (Galtung 2009: 80, original emphasis). Violence does not necessarily need to be active, personal, physical or intended. It may also be a withdrawal or a denial of, for example, water, air, food, recognition (88) or a '*threat of violence*' (82, original emphasis). Violence is the difference between the actual and the potential, or the restraining of the actual from its potential to grow to full realization. Everything that attacks or undermines physical or psychological integrity and dignity is a form of violence. If left in peace, a being can cultivate abilities and live fully; violence is what inhibits life, expression and personal growth.

The three levels of fashion violence

Galtung proposes a stratified model of *direct*, *structural* and *cultural* forms of violence. In Figure 1, this typology is visualized as a triangle. Cultural violence is at the bottom of the model, offering a rationale and therefore an apparently rational basis for the practical implementations of violence. At the middle level, structural violence and systemic forms of exclusion and oppression are enacted. At the top is the stratum of direct violence, where actual, physical acts of interpersonal aggression take place (Galtung 1990: 294f). The distinction between the various forms of violence puts an emphasis on their type, but they can also be differentiated in time, where direct violence is an *event*; structural violence is a *process*; and cultural violence is an *invariant* (Galtung 1990: 294).

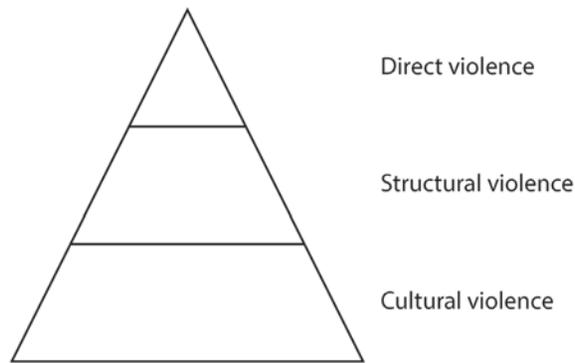


Figure 1: Galtung's typology of violence.

Cultural fashion violence

Cultural violence is described by Galtung (1990) as the very foundation of violence, hidden within our own cultural formations, embedded into the way we see the world and judge others. It is the symbolic sphere of our existence, exemplified by religion, ideology, language, art, empirical and formal science, and all such elements that can contribute to cultural violence. Cultural violence is the soft power which legitimizes an order that supports the abstract mechanisms of structural violence and the acts of direct violence. Through cultural violence, structural and direct violence are legitimized and rendered acceptable in society; that is, cultural violence makes direct and structural violence look or even feel right, or at least not wrong. Discrimination seems 'natural' and endorses individual acts of direct violence with the help of mechanisms of inclusion/exclusion, social hierarchies and norms: some people are 'worth it' while others are not.

When applying Galtung's model to frame fashion, *cultural fashion violence* can be seen in the cultural meritocracy. The meritocracy in fashion explicitly renders people who are 'in', as attractive and/or adorable, and also as 'good' and 'right'. Arntzen's (2015) description of fashion as always being 'right' echoes symbolically the meritism of modernism, the meritocratic ideal of an achievement-oriented society, where 'to deny power and privilege to those on the top is to deny merit itself' (Galtung 1990: 298). Similarly, those who are 'in' deserve to be 'in' by definition. Meritism makes it easy to embrace luxury consumption motivated by 'because I'm worth it', but fails to recognize that acquiring a 'sense of style' is so much easier if one is young, rich, white, slim, and with what is considered a fully abled body.

In the realm of fashion, cultural violence may take many forms; for instance, the slim Caucasian model's body is taken as a standard of beauty, and other bodies are differentiated from that standard and discriminated against, both implicitly and explicitly. Cultural conceptions of fashion perpetuate unreachable ideals of beauty, age and wealth on one hand, and 'help' poor people to access these ideals through 'democratic' and accessible fashion on the other. At the same time, the 'helping hands' denigrate accessible fashion as an inferior choice, as 'cheap copies' or unsustainable 'fast fashion', and stigmatize wearers of it. Cultural violence in fashion can thus be exposed in the countless narratives of transformation, of ugly ducklings that become popular and successful. All such narratives reproduce the idea that the initial poor/ugly state is unsatisfactory and rightfully disdained. This type of cultural programming may even play with the ideal of success and beauty in an ironic way, yet still perpetuate and legitimize its power over those consumers who are sufficiently steeped in the cultural norm to enjoy the 'joke'.

Cultural violence does not only exclude, it also makes it right to 'help' those who cannot keep up, do not follow codes or cannot afford to acquire the symbols of the 'in-group'. Like the narrative of the American Dream, fashion celebrates an ideal transformation that is really and fully accessible only to the few, and disqualifies all those who have not made the journey, shifting the blame onto them for not trying hard enough. Analysis of these narratives exposes a classist bias (Smith and Redington 2010) and a culture of 'fashion supremacy' (Busch 2014). At this level of cultural legitimization, and at the next level of structural implementation, fashion also works as a form of collective correction institution, authorizing peers to regulate behaviours and forms of expression, making it acceptable to strike down or correct those who dress differently.

Structural fashion violence

Galtung described structural violence as something as natural as the air around us. Structural violence is silent and does not show; 'it is the tranquil waters' (Galtung 2009: 86, original emphasis). Structural violence is the abstract and systemic layer of exploitative social arrangements, forms of violence that suffocate rather than cause visible bruises. Such violence may consist of fragmentation, marginalization, segmentation and oppression through the structural impairment of human needs, limiting the human potential of the victim and strangling the mind and spirit. Galtung states that 'The underdogs may in fact be so disadvantaged that they die (starve, waste away from diseases) from it' (Galtung 1990: 293). In some instances, no direct perpetrator can be found, yet 'all of this happens within complex structures and at the end of long, highly ramified causal chains and cycles' (294). In a famous sentence, Galtung also distinguishes between personal (direct) violence, and structural violence: 'when one husband beats his wife there is a clear case of personal violence, but when one million husbands keep one million in ignorance there is structural violence' (Galtung 2009: 84).

An immediate interpretation of *structural fashion violence* is to trace the various mechanisms of exclusion of those who are not 'in'. Where culture legitimizes a distinction between 'us' and 'them', the structure provides the physical mechanics of implementing this exclusion. Some forms of attire are simply inaccessible to the majority of people. This does not mean that every form of economic difference is violence per se, or that all goods need to be equally distributed in order to avoid violence. But in times when visual expression and fashion have become dominant tools for the formation of social identity, systemic exclusion of what deviates too much from the ideal does not promote justice.

Physical manifestations of structural violence in fashion are found in sizes, proportions and patterns which act as mechanisms for social or racial sorting of those who do not fit the ideal of the slim, rich and young Caucasian body. Mechanisms of structural violence may also appear in the physical layout of stores, through the demarcations between genders and ages, placing larger sizes at the back, and giving stigmatizing names to sizes, like 'Plus Size' or 'For the fuller figure'. It may be seen in manuals for shop attendants describing 'ideal customers' – and how to approach them, and also framing 'unwanted customers' that might tarnish the brand image, and need to be steered away. Similarly, through 'limited editions', a brand can keep products at a reasonable price level, while still making sure only the loyal customers, the 'right' ones who fit the brand 'image', get access to the goods, using exclusive launch events not open to all, yet pretending to be. Structural violence of fashion thus enacts itself mainly on a systems level, coupled with the mechanics of consumerism, and with tangible sorting of who has access to what, and what fits onto what body. It is more physical than cultural violence, yet more abstract and systemic than direct violence.

Direct fashion violence

If the level of structural violence appears to be the tranquil waters, Galtung describes direct violence as change and dynamism, where the waves break through. Direct violence is an act, usually but not necessary between human actors. It takes the form of sanctioning, withdrawal or denial, such as starvation, or constraining of movement, but also acts of repression, detention, maiming and killing (Galtung 1990). Whereas the cultural and structural forms of violence are somewhat stable, or slow-moving, direct violence fluctuates over time, erupts in the everyday, or may explode into excess. Direct violence makes its presence felt, leaves traces, or at least comes to the consciousness of offender, victim or bystander.

Direct fashion violence could be seen as the tip of the iceberg of violence, where clothes become the target or excuse for hostile action. There is an active transgression, where the victim or witnesses can recognize, describe or point to what has taken place. However, if seen through Sue's framework of microaggressions, such direct violence may still be deceptive, ambivalent or 'ironic', thus fully revealing itself only when reflecting on it after the event (cf. Sue 2010). Yet again, the actual

aggression may be veiled by an appeal to the unimportance or triviality of clothing and fashion. It could be that cautious yet excluding comment from a shop assistant, who says, when a would-be customer browses pieces of expensive attire, 'I'm not sure that's for you. Over there we have some really nice things that might suit you better.' It might be a bouncer at a restaurant denying someone entry because of a detail of clothing, such as 'no sneakers', while simultaneously letting the 'right' people in, even if they are wearing sneakers. It might be the degrading comments and exclusion by fellow pupils at school, often in front of witnesses and bystanders. In its most excessive form, direct fashion violence is the mugging, and in some cases actual killing, of a person who is 'not entitled' to attain a popular piece of clothing or of someone who looks 'unacceptably' different (cf. Schmidt 1990; Hermann 2012).

Microaggressions are thus enacted on Galtung's stratum of direct violence, while working 'under cover', or using stealthy ways to 'get under the skin' of the victim. Furthermore, it seems that in fashion, acts of direct violence and harassment are often done in discreet ways, using the perceived shallowness of fashion as an ambiguous excuse. They could take the form of subtle comments, snubs, gossip and back talk. A snarky comment such as 'nice shoes' could mean the opposite, and if so, carries an undertone of direct rejection, such as 'don't come and sit with us!' Sometimes a timely silence is all that is needed to signal how wrong a new haircut is, leaving the victim with an uncanny feeling as a result of the microaggression as a direct form of fashion violence.

Examples of direct fashion violence

Quotes from an interview study in Sweden are in this section used to illustrate the intersection of the different levels of fashion violence. The interviews were collected in a study that aimed to explore how young people who had been bullied experienced and managed their life situation during a period of active bullying (Bjereld: in press). Ten informants aged 15–23 were recruited with a voluntary sample. The Ethical Review Board in Gothenburg approved the study, and informed consent was taken prior to the interviews.

A former victim, Jessica, 21 years old, describes how fashion was used as an excuse for the bullying she experienced over several years: 'The worst thing I did was to have mismatched clothes and an unfashionable style.'

Leo, 23 years old and from a minor city in Sweden, said he was bullied for several years at school because: 'I was a little smaller than the other guys. I have always been rather small. And I have a single mother so I have not had the coolest clothes either.'

The cultural norm or ideal for male bodies is larger. Leo was smaller than his peers and thus deviated from the ideal more than most others. In a single-parent family, his mother could not afford to buy him expensive, fashionable clothes. He was excluded by structural violence in the form

of social-economic inequalities combined with high-consumption norms. Harman (1985) proposed that fashion offers room for acceptable deviance, that is, to deviate enough to feel special, yet to conform sufficiently to be included in the group. Leo was not in a position to achieve this. Later in the interview, Leo describes a conversation with one of the bullies, Jasper, where the structural setting of his rejection (size and socio-economic background) becomes a direct form of violence:

I had an incident where I kind of talked with one of the smart guys, or the cool guys in the class. Anyway, he was smart and he was a peer supporter, but could also be a bully, such a person. We are talking and he is telling me that, 'But if you change your clothes and kind of try to be cooler. Kind of fit in. Then maybe not that many will tease you.'

Jasper tries in this situation to advise Leo how to change his appearance to be accepted. The conversation implies that through cultural violence the bullying of Leo is not completely wrong since he deviates from the ideal, both in his small body and with his clothes. In that way bullying could be justified. Especially the clothes, which are something that Jasper suggests Leo could change, meaning that if he just adjusted to the norm, he might not get bullied anymore. The comment might be given as a well-intended remark, but turns into a microaggression since it blames the victim for his own ostracism. Leo however refuses to change his appearance, both because his mother cannot afford it and also because he felt it was wrong to be forced to look like everyone else in order to be accepted. The consequence of this choice was that he stayed bullied for several years, feeling accepted for who he was only later as a young adult.

Another former victim, Linda, says that she was criticized and later bullied, not because of her own appearance but because she had friends that deviated from the norm. 'I got a lot of criticism because I spent time with those who were not of the cool kind [...] It was much like this: "But hello? How can you spend time with her?"'

Linda stood up for her friends and stayed with them, although they had different clothes and were seen as uncool, with the result that she was excluded from the popular in-group because of her socialization with the out-group. She was ostracized and later severely bullied because of her actions. Anna (19) said that when she was around 15 she had been like her friends. But she fell out with one girl at school and was bullied by that girl and her friends. More and more others joined, and Anna ended up being bullied in many different ways, one of them about her clothes.

Like all the others, I had on my denim shorts and a crop top, which one of the girls in the gang had worn three days before. But when I wore it I was a whore. I was dressed like a whore and it was like, 'You have to understand that people see you as a whore when you

dress like that.' 'But the rest of you do that!' So they went to my parents and kind of said 'how can you let her dress like that?'

Unlike Leo, Anna dressed in a similar way to her peers. Even so, she was bullied because of what she wore. In such a situation, anything she wore would be seen as an excuse to justify the bullying. The very act of trying to imitate the popular style, exposing her aspiration to fit in, was seen as an affront and provocation by her former friends, because she had proved herself unworthy by aligning herself with the out-group. And even when victims defend themselves, as in her example, clothes offer a cultured excuse to the bullies, thus effectively veiling their violent behaviour, even when the bullies talk to Anna's parents.

An iceberg of fashion violence

Direct violence, as described by Galtung as at the tip of the triangular model of violence, breaks through the tranquil waters of structural violence. The little peak of the iceberg is visible. Forming the boundary between direct and structural violence is *a surface of experience*, where what appears above can be recognized. What is under the surface is obscured under dark waters (Galtung 2009). The metaphor of the iceberg points to how little of the real violence is actually seen or experienced directly. It illuminates how steeped the phenomenon of fashion is in structural and cultural violence. Aesthetic elitism seeps into social life, culturally legitimizing the judgment and exclusion of others based on their appearance. In Figure 2, the metaphor of fashion violence is illustrated as an iceberg. At the left side of the iceberg, the forms that violence in fashion takes are positioned. At the right side, examples of how the violence is expressed are illustrated. The larger part, and the bottom of the iceberg, consists of cultural violence. It is not visible, but is always submerged in everyday cultural behaviours. It contains the norms and ideals of fashion, deciding what is fashionable or not, and as a consequence, who is in and who is out. The forms of cultural violence are expressed in different 'remake me' narratives, in ugly-duckling stories and fashion-police TV shows. In the layer above, structural violence takes the form identified in the physical layout of stores, in sizing and gender exclusion. Structural violence is manifested materially in that larger sizes are positioned in the back of the stores, and certain garments are only available in small sizes.

At the tip of the iceberg, above the surface of experience, direct violence is positioned. This is visible fashion violence, based on foundations established in cultural and structural violence. Direct fashion violence can take the form of microaggression and bullying, expressed in well-intended comments, resulting in assaults; intentional ridicule of individuals for their appearance and clothes; or the exclusion of individuals that deviate too much from the norm.

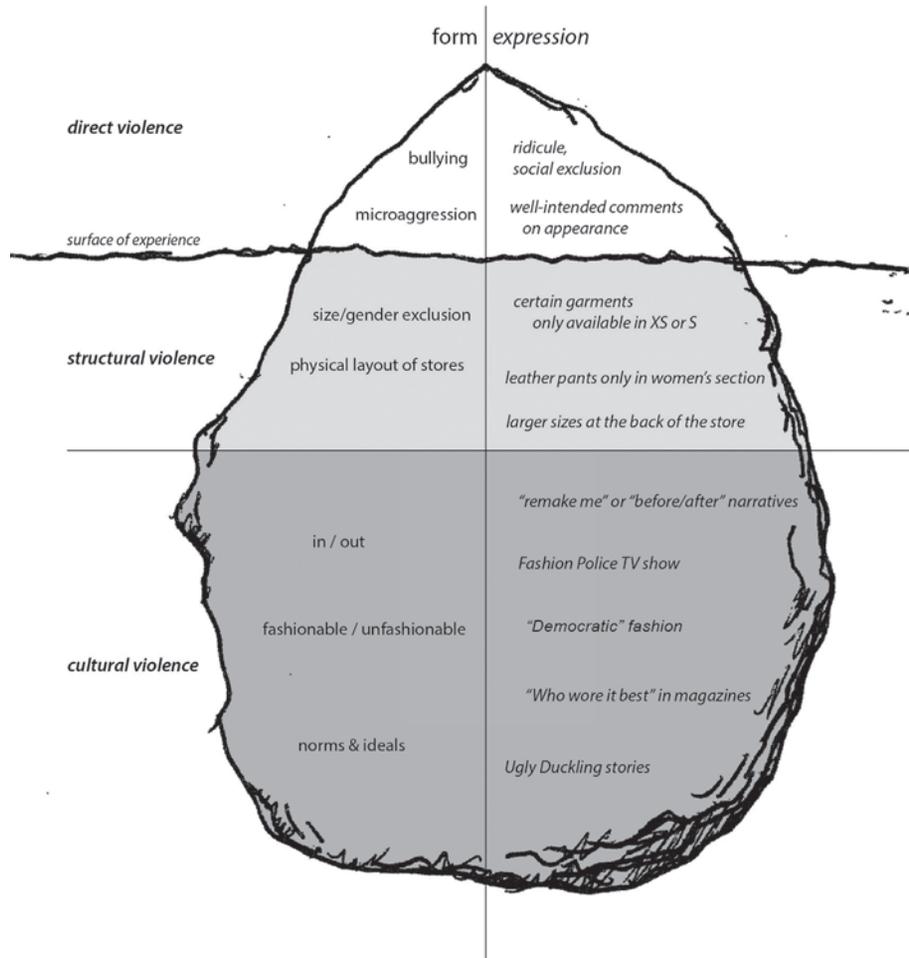


Figure 2: Iceberg of fashion violence.

Conclusions

The tip of the iceberg of fashion violence is direct violence, which may be easy to condemn. But the prerequisites for direct fashion violence are hidden beneath, in cultural and structural violence. Without the norms and ideals established in cultural values, and without the structural mechanism of exclusion of those deviating from these cultural norms and ideals, direct violence would not be possible. By creating the fashionable ideals of beauty the fashion industry is establishing an in-group and an out-group. The norms of what and who is good enough are the foundations for the typology of fashion violence. Individuals not close enough to the ideal are excluded from wearing specific brands because they do not fit. To be fashionable is always right, and for those who are not, a piece of clothing can be used as a reason for exclusion, microaggressions and bullying.

Various forms of violence are inherent in social processes of individuation where clothing is involved, and fashion often acts as the interface for such processes of rejection. The aesthetic play of fashion is not only a matter of pure amusement or endless excitement. Instead, due to its ambivalent connotations, and culturally perceived shallowness, fashion offers the means whereby moments of aesthetic play turn violent and fashion is instrumentalized to become an interface and excuse for bullying. Fashion is a practice and a social instrument, used in power games; it signals allure and attraction but also exclusion and bullying. By its very definition of exclusivity, fashion both invites consumers to participate, to strive to be 'in', but also offers a tempting target for those who want to preserve social demarcations and force others out.

This study recognizes the downsides of fashion that are seldom investigated or problematized. The intention behind framing the mechanisms of violence in fashion is not to paint fashion jet-black. By drawing attention to the problem it is also possible to offer a framework for future reconciliation. The typology of fashion violence illuminates cultural, structural and direct fashion violence in a way that may help form possible strategies for non-violence in fashion. When framing the topic of sustainability, fashion is not only a phenomenon which affects the natural environment, but it also pollutes the social environment with its competitive, judgmental and excluding mechanisms. Thus, to address social sustainability, fashion designers need to consider how the current paradigm of 'democratic' fashion, in resonance with the ubiquitous use of social media, contributes to a fashion arms race, a culture of aesthetic anxiety and fear. Sustainability in fashion is not only a matter of mitigating pollution and raising salaries. It is ultimately a question of peace.

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