

A Fashion Studies Manifesto: Toward an (Inter)disciplinary Field

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Special Issue:
State of the Field
Issue 1
Article 1

doi.org/10.38055/SOF010101

Keywords

Community
Autoethnography
Interdisciplinarity
Open-access publishing
Inclusion
Practice-based scholarship
Pedagogy

Abstract

We are two scholars who locate ourselves within Fashion Studies and outside of it. In this paper, we draw from our professional experiences and research programs to argue that *Fashion Studies* should be both a stand-alone and a cross-disciplinary field. Fashion provides a lens to understand the social, visual, and material worlds, while *Fashion Studies* fosters community among scholars who are deeply “invested” in the study of dress, adornment, and the body. First, framing our discussion through autoethnographic and embodied lenses allows us to how examine how we came into *Fashion Studies*. Our academic backgrounds are outside of *Fashion Studies*, but these routes led us to become faculty within a fashion department and inspired our work in building a diverse *Fashion Studies* community. Second, we explore our research programs as examples of how scholars in our field have to strategically position themselves. The federal grant system in Canada, where we live and work, does not recognize *Fashion Studies*. As such, we have made the case that fashion is a lens to advance new knowledge in History and Sociology, established disciplines recognized by granting agencies. We discuss how we made this case in our applications, discussing how Fashion Studies’ frameworks, methodologies, and tools of mobilization have allowed us to contribute to a range of disciplines. Finally, we discuss the need for *Fashion Studies* to welcome scholars who recognize diverse ways of knowing in order to decolonize, queer, and crip the field. The global pandemic, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the climate change crisis have alerted us to the urgency of the need for care, communication, and community. We discuss how we have supported graduate students from diverse intersections as Fashion Studies scholars and those from established fields. We ask how we can continue to create spaces for questioning and reflection to ensure that the powerful voices of the next generation of scholars and creatives in the field we love will be heard loud and clear.

INTRODUCTION

As Fashion Studies has developed, scholars have mapped out as well as celebrated the interdisciplinary nature of the field. They have asserted that Fashion Studies ruptures traditional academic silos because fashion is a social, cultural, economic, and aesthetic force (Granata 2012; Black, Hayne, and Entwistle 2018; Paulicelli, Manlow, and Wissinger 2021). In the most recent anthology of the field, co-editors Eugenia Paulicelli, Veronica Manlow, and Elizabeth Wissinger (2021) observe, “If ever a subject both called for inquiry and resisted classification in a single field or method of inquiry, fashion would be it ... The study of fashion cannot be confined or limited to the purview of a few specialists” (1-2). The inclusion of theories and methods from a variety of knowledge keepers and fields of knowledge has interrogated disciplinary boundaries and expanded possibilities of what fashion research can be. However, the everyday practice of researching against silos is often fraught because valuing epistemological possibility challenges the entrenched norms of the academy.

In this paper, we draw an autoethnographic approach by using our professional experiences to analyze the social context of being Fashion Studies scholars (Reed-Danahay 1997). Autoethnography is an approach to both doing and writing research in which scholars describe and analyze their personal experiences in order to examine and understand larger social and cultural systems. It disrupts traditional approaches to scholarship by recognizing research “as a political, socially-just and socially-conscious act” (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2010). We share our arrival into Fashion Studies, as well as our everyday challenges, dilemmas, and strategies of advancing interdisciplinarity scholarship within a context that valorizes, rewards, and maintains disciplinary boundaries. As scholars who work on the very fabric of our lives, this paper “weaves together” our stories — at times our stories are independent, and at other times our stories are shared.

Our interwoven narratives demonstrate that the interdisciplinary nature of Fashion Studies requires scholars to be concurrently “in” and “out” in everyday practice. Rather than continuing the assertion that Fashion Studies is an interdisciplinary rather than a standalone field, we confront this binary because we have experienced the harm it causes.

Instead, our paper contributes to the debate about the boundaries of Fashion Studies by asserting that the field is both bordered and borderless in practice. We also articulate strategies that Fashion Studies scholars can draw upon to navigate the field by concurrently upholding and crossing interdisciplinarity. We suggest that there are important possibilities when Fashion Studies scholars can sit with being “in” and “out” at the same time.

As we write about our experiences being “in” and “out,” we recognize our position as Co-Founding Editors of this journal who are white, tenured faculty members from the Global North. We do not claim to speak about navigating boundaries within the “whole” field of Fashion Studies, either methodologically or geographically. The experiences and feelings of being “in” and “out” are different for scholars with different positionalities from ourselves. We are committed to using our privileged position to destabilize exclusive boundaries, create pathways for Fashion Studies scholars who face marginalization and, ultimately, establish a more inclusive field where others without privilege or without needing to be a “supertoken” can move into Fashion Studies faculty, research, and leadership positions.¹

This paper is a manifesto for our field — a call to challenge boundaries and radically open access. We first map out our personal journeys in Fashion Studies. We position our experiences in relation to our own embodiments in the world and the encloded histories that brought us to our work. The second part of our manifesto investigates the structural boundaries that confine the field and have shaped our experiences within it. We recognize the deep privilege we have had access to in our own journeys, and underscore that negotiating these boundaries has different implications for individuals without our positionality. We conclude by urging our fellow scholars and creatives — particularly those of us with privilege — to destabilize these boundaries in order to make the field more inclusive. Our manifesto asserts that the future of Fashion Studies requires those of us with advantage to challenge and change these boundaries altogether.

¹ Dori Tunstall (2022) defines a “supertoken” as “an individual from a marginalized group or groups whose talents are so desired by institutions that they are able to overcome their innate aversion to the individual’s identities in order to have access to those talents” (n.p.). Tunstall observes that supertokens might originally break down barriers, but that person can also be used to create new barriers that limit inclusion.



FIGURE 1 THE CO-AUTHOR AGED ALMOST THREE ON OCTOBER 31ST, 1974. TORONTO, CANADA. CLOTHING AND WIGS COURTESY OF ANONYMOUS MAKERS AND OUR MATRILINEAR ANCESTRESSES, PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF CO-AUTHOR'S FATHER, ARNOLD MATTHEWS.

OUR STORIES FEELING IN AND OUT

ALISON

Until I found fashion, I never quite knew what I wanted to be or what discipline I wanted to be in. Nothing I studied at school seemed quite capacious enough to encompass all of my interests. I loved art, languages and poetry, history, archaeology, and music, as well as looking and thinking about how people dressed. I remember making my own paper dolls and dressing them in two-dimensional drawings. When I told my parents that I wanted to go into fashion they told me, in true second wave feminist fashion, that I should not try to be a model since “they were clotheshorses”; I now understand the complex and demanding labour of self-fashioning and modeling in complex and historically informed ways (Wissinger and Entwistle 2012; Evans 2013; Pham 2015; Wissinger 2015; Matthews David 2018; Moore 2018; Brown 2019). If I were to think about a career in fashion at all, something like designing might have been acceptable, yet as a child my parents selected my largely second-hand wardrobe and I lacked agency in how I presented myself. I was a largely unwilling model, constantly objectified by my professional photographer father’s camera lens. I could not square the pain of this experience with the thrill

of experimentation and embodied delight I felt while sauntering about in my grandmothers' fabulous array of hats from the 1930s and 40s, or reveling in the sheer red nylon layers of my mom's "moonlight and roses" ball gown from the 50s, which contrasted with the soft coolness and intricate prints of her 1960s Liberty cotton lawn shirts. It is no wonder I loved the fashions of the past. A photo taken by my father in our Toronto living room in the early 70s is a case in point (Figure 1). I sit, beaming, with my younger brother. We are dressed up and ready to go trick-or-treating on our favourite holiday, Hallowe'en (October 31st). We're both wearing my stylish working-class Finnish paternal grandmothers' grey wigs, which we donned often for "dress up", and my brother wears a sunhat of my mothers' for his farmer costume. I have my own little broom, a pointed black paper witch hat, and a lovely thick wool plaid fringed cloak that belonged to my American great-grandmother Blanche-Marie Harnish wards off the chill Canadian Fall weather. She wore it on her European honeymoon seventy-six years before this photo was taken and my family kept it and brought it out for this occasion (Figure 2). I was literally swathed in a Victorian outer garment. The dress of four maternal and paternal generations appears in one photograph (Figure 3).

This was history in cloth form, but I grew up in a time and place where middle-class white feminists, including my mom, wanted their daughters to aspire to intellectual pursuits and prestige, like the professorship she felt she could never attain — and actual sewing was out of the question, except for my brother. In my second-wave feminist universe in the 1970s and 80s, my brother's desire to sew his own functional winter camping gear and shiny lycra bellbottom disco costumes for himself and his friends was encouraged and a sewing machine was procured for him. The pandemic led me to start my own natural dyeing and crocheting practice and explore my own creativity with textiles, but I have always retained a respect and admiration for the work and artistry that went into making clothing as well as the knitting, crocheting, and sewing skills of my grandmothers.



FIGURE 2 TINTYPE PHOTOGRAPH OF CO-AUTHOR'S AMERICAN GREAT-GRANDMOTHER, BLANCHE MARIA HARNISH (1869-1951), WITH HER HUSBAND, JAMES RAUCH STEIN. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF CO-AUTHOR.



FIGURE 3 THE CO-AUTHOR'S EXTENDED FAMILY, PHOTOGRAPH CIRCA 1932. NORTHERN ONTARIO, CANADA. PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN.

To this day I seek to remind my readers of the skill, effort, and often pain and exploitation that went into the production of both every day and glamorous special occasion dress.

I realigned my dreams with the goal of becoming something more acceptable: an archaeologist, an anthropologist, and even a field biologist, but the thing that spoke to me most in the very traditional BA degree I took was the linguistic rigour of Ancient Greek theatre and poetry and the visual richness of Art History. Because, and only because I was able to earn scholarship funding (based in part on my very “classical” and elitist education, albeit always in publicly funded schools), I was able to pursue my MA and PhD at Stanford in Art History, an elite and often feminized field. When I arrived, the number of “Americanists” working on material culture in the tradition of Jules Prown changed my trajectory forever (Prown 1982). I had always been drawn to mass culture and multiples, including prints and photography, but if my friends could work on tables and trade cards, why couldn’t I work on fashion? My supervisor was a bit perplexed and bemused, but at least he was open-minded. In the critical-theory focused ambiance of the 1990s, I also recall showing him the announcement of the launch of a brand-new journal called *Fashion Theory* in 1997, the first hopeful sign that my interests could be legitimized through a lens my professors would understand.

As Valerie Steele wrote in her first letter from the editor, “Today, it is said, Fashion is no longer the “F-Word” in intellectual circles” (1997). It may not have been “beneath contempt” by the late 1990s, as Steele wrote, but nor did more traditional scholars perceive it as a completely legitimate area of enquiry. Yet off I went to do research in Paris without knowing much of anything about the history of dress, but I was eager to learn as much as I could “in the field,” so to speak. Though I was excited by the discoveries I was making, I often questioned my choice of subject matter since I felt very alone in my pursuits. Several years later, at my PhD defense for a thesis on tailoring, technology, and social identity in nineteenth-century Paris, when I had managed to masquerade as an Art History student for many years, I was grilled and asked questions like “What is fashion?” and “What kind of job will you do?” I didn’t know how to answer the first question, even though I already had secured my first job teaching the history of textiles and dress at Winchester School of Art in the UK. I felt like I had been a disappointment to them, and I came out of the whole experience understanding that they did not recognize this exciting new field of teaching and research that I now felt I had entered, in some ways much to my own surprise.

BEN

As a child, my favourite afternoon would be putting on my grandmother's long, yellow necklaces — all of different lengths — and dancing about her kitchen. Nothing compared to the feeling of the necklaces jingling around my body as I twirled around and around to the beat of her clapping hand. Figure 4 shows me at five-years-old — my grandmother's yellow necklaces draped down my body. I had turned her favourite tea cozy into a hat and paired it with her short-sleeved shirt that, on me, becomes a floor-length coat. Peeking out of the coat is a skirt, which I made from wrapping a white towel with red trim around my waist. The bold, colourful and — some might say — clashing prints on the hat and coat exude my love of expression through dress.

As a grandchild of Holocaust survivors, my house was filled with stories of Weimar Germany's Berlin in the 1930s. My grandparents would dress up and go out to the Cabaret with their friends. I remember their stories: my grandmother in top hats and tuxedos and my grandfather in powder and red lips, as they danced until dawn.

The joy and thrill of this freedom that comes from our own self-fashioning was so palpable that I can still feel it in my body today. From them, my introduction into fashion was that of a celebration of our exquisite human embodiment.



FIGURE 4 THE CO-AUTHOR, BEN BARRY, AT AGE FIVE. HE IS WEARING HIS GRANDMOTHER'S YELLOW NECKLACES, A TEA COZY AS A HAT, AND SHORT-SLEEVED SHIRT THAT SPANS THE LENGTH OF HIS BODY.

Yet despite my upbringing, when I turned ten, my teachers and peers poked fun at my yellow necklaces and sartorial play; they pushed me to take up studying and sports, which I felt was necessary if I was to survive school and what seemed to be at that time the entire world. From them, I learned that my body was not to be adorned and explored, but to be used and productive in ways that conformed to a white, heteropatriarchal, and capitalist lexicon.

Fashion re-emerged in my life through a form that was more compliant with dominant white, middle-class masculinity: business and academia. When I was fourteen years old, I began a modeling agency by chance — in an effort to help my friend who was told that she was “too big” to be a fashion model. Helping this friend turned into a fifteen-year-career of representing models whose bodies were excluded from fashion’s beauty ideal and, subsequently, from representation at other modeling agencies. Figure 5 depicts me six months after launching my modeling agency. I am on the roof of the Rideau Centre in Ottawa, Canada to host a fashion show that will introduce models from the Ben Barry Agency to local retailers and designers. I launched and grew my agency in the late 1990s and early 2000s, a decade before top modeling agencies IMG, NEXT, and Elite started to be more diverse and inclusive with the models that they signed. One of my biggest challenges in securing jobs for my models was that fashion editors, designers, and photographers were worried that the models would have



FIGURE 5 THE CO-AUTHOR, BEN BARRY, ON STAGE AT THE RIDEAU CENTRE IN OTTAWA, CANADA. HE IS HOSTING A FASHION SHOW TO INTRODUCE HIS EPONYMOUS MODELING AGENCY.

a negative impact on sales. I looked for evidence to suggest otherwise — that youth, thinness, able-bodiedness, and whiteness were *not* universally aspirational in fashion advertising — but to no avail. I decided that I would undertake this research myself, and so I started a PhD in Management at Judge Business School at Cambridge University. My research explored how women responded to models of different ages, body shapes and sizes, and races in fashion advertising. I specifically examined how models made these women feel about their bodies and the advertised brand, as well as how the models influenced their intentions to purchase the advertised fashion product. My research was grounded in the Black feminist framework of intersectionality that I first learned about as an undergraduate student in women's studies. I built on this framework by bringing together scholarship on modeling and beauty ideals from Fashion Studies alongside research on consumer behaviour and advertising from marketing studies.

When I told faculty that I was studying models in fashion advertising, I was often met with puzzled glances and the following question for clarification: “You’re studying economic models of fashion advertising?” My supervisor had not studied models or fashion before, but he was always incredibly supportive and encouraging. However, many of the faculty and my PhD peers were quick to dismiss the feminized and supposedly insignificant field of fashion. I would shore up their support by shoring up masculine logics. I would first share statistics about the financial scale of the fashion industry, and then explain my “scientific methodology” that combined quantitative experiments and qualitative focus group interviews with thousands of participants (Barry 2013). My early PhD research proposal garnered funding from the Ogilvy Foundation — the not-for-profit arm of the global advertising agency Ogilvy that famously created the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty. This combination quickly set-aside any business school doubts or jests by legitimizing my work as “rigorous” and with “impact.” Thinking back, I recall being intentional about my desire to study fashion through a business school. I believed my work would be taken more seriously with this association and, subsequently, would be more likely to ignite change in the industry. I was not only dressing up my research topic in the cloak of masculinity, but that I was dressing myself up in it, too. It was about survival in academia, but inside myself I longed for the day when I could dance about in my yellow necklaces again.

NAVIGATING BOUNDARIES

ALISON

Colleagues in the UK welcomed me into a field that already had a long history of its own in that country, with pioneering foremothers including Stella Mary Newton, Aileen Ribeiro, Lou Taylor, Lesley Miller, Barbara Burman, and Caroline Evans, amongst others (Newton 1974; Ribeiro 1986, 1988; Taylor 2002, 2004; Evans 2003; Miller 2014, 2017; Burman and Fennetaux 2019). I learned a great deal from generous mentors and from working in an art school within a larger university, the Winchester School of Art at the University of Southampton. The world-renowned textile conservation centre located there at the time, and field trips to former textile-producing regions like Manchester, changed my horizons for good. It only hit me about a year after I got there, and I remember the moment clearly, that “Hey, wait, I’m a fashion historian — for real?!” In 2006, after four years, a job opened up in my hometown of Toronto at Toronto Metropolitan University — formerly Ryerson — and I was hired. It was great to be home, even with a nine-month-old baby, and yet I felt lonely to start with, since I came at a time when there was not a developed research culture in my former Polytechnical Institute. I eventually got the support I needed, but in applying for federal grant funding from the SSHRC, I came up against the reality that I would have to be strategic if I wanted legitimization as what was considered “a real scholar” in Canada. I couldn’t figure out which committee to apply to because my projects were no longer even remotely art historical, but was warned not to apply to History because of its disciplinary conservatism. I had outsider status.

But my work for *Fashion Victims* was archival and historical, with a good dose of medical history and material culture (Matthews David 2015). I had long drawn on the valuable work of historians who had engaged with dress in my own work, even though they came to it from an extremely problematic, Eurocentric perspective (Sennett 1978; Lipovetsky 1994; Perrot 1994). I decided to apply to History anyhow, and was turned down in my first year, after which I added a curatorial project with the Bata Shoe Museum to my grant and Elizabeth Semmelhack, an award winning and ground-breaking scholarly curator, came on board as my co-investigator. Together we got a small but prestigious three-year grant that allowed us to conduct research in British and French archives and museum collections. My next and current project, entitled *The Fabric of Crime*, (www.fabricofcrime.ca) involved digging deep into crime historical and criminology literature, and I also sent my SSHRC proposal to History. As with *Fashion Victims*, it took me two years to convince the committee that I should be awarded the five-year grant, again with the collaboration of Elizabeth Semmelhack. I realized after the first round that I would have to acknowledge that fashion might be perceived as superficial, but I deliberately turned this disadvantage into a pos-

itive value. I clearly argued that fashion's artifice itself was key to understanding themes like criminal disguise and undercover policing. As frustrating as these early rejections were, having to painstakingly focus on the archival components of the project for the History committee made my project stronger. And I have indeed found amazing textiles in police archives and museums, objects that tell different stories about dress than other sources that I have used. In a full circle moment, after I was awarded that grant I was asked to serve on the History Committee for SSHRC and I saw the process as an insider rather than as an applicant. I cannot say that I did not suffer from imposter syndrome, since I was the only committee member without a doctorate in History or who did not work in a History department, but it was illuminating all the same, and now I can share my experience with more junior scholars and students.

BEN

My PhD research had taught me that the narrow beauty ideals in fashion advertising were simply a consequence of a larger, systemically exclusionary fashion system. Running a modeling agency would only change one small part of that system, whereas teaching in a fashion school had the potential to shift the worldviews and practices of the next generation, of those not only casting models but designing the clothing, advertising images, and retail spaces. At an industry event in Toronto, I met with the Chair of the School of Fashion at Toronto Metropolitan University. I followed-up with my CV and we stayed in touch. A few months later, he sent me a job position for a tenure-track fashion professorship in Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. I was successful in the position. On the surface, I had a unique combination of industry and academic experience, and my research brought these two worlds together. I could easily claim that my experience would help fulfill the university's primary mandate of "career ready" education. Below the surface, my approach to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion was very palatable — business. I was purporting to change the system from within and without overthrowing capitalism. I, too, was palatable — a white, gay, cis-gender man who graduated with a PhD in business from Cambridge. My privileged embodiment was that of the ideal, non-threatening homo-national fashion subject who autonomically was invested with authority and comfortable to many of those evaluating. As Stokes (2015) observes, my privileged gender status enabled me to be pushed down the runway in the predominantly female field of fashion.

I began my new role at Toronto Metropolitan University in 2012, just as I defended my PhD. The university was determined to quickly abandon its poly-technic roots, and there was pressure to start my research program by securing funding from Canada's granting council, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), because funding is a primary criterion for a university's national rankings. Most of my colleagues in the fashion school were creative researchers who did not apply to SSHRC, but I did have two tenured colleagues — Alison Matthews David and Kimberly Wahl — who had started six years before me and who had both received SSHRC funding. They generously shared their successful grant applications with me to use as a template as I crafted my own. I had not formally been exposed to Fashion Studies until now given my past academic training in Gender Studies and Management, and both Alison and Kim mentored me in canonical texts and core frameworks to incorporate into my grant. The SSHRC process is part puzzle, part strategy, part insider roadmap. Their guidance made it possible for me to secure SSHRC funding, especially during my first year as a faculty member.

However, unlike my colleagues, I was not a not a historian. I had to figure out how to identify myself within an established discipline that SSHRC recognized. I picked Sociology because my research was primarily qualitative and focused on masculinity, the body, and fashion in everyday contemporary life. To recognize Fashion Studies within this discipline, I worked to establish the long history of sociologists studying fashion as a social practice that establishes identity. Citations to Simmel and Goffman would serve to convince the most discipline-protecting sociologists that their canon included fashion. I also strategically published in journals focused on the sociology of gender in order to convince the SSHRC review committees that I was a true sociologist, despite my location in a fashion department and PhD in Management. Fashion Studies also helped me open up new possibilities in my research. My grant applications proposed innovative methodologies, at least in the context of sociology, including wardrobe interviews, clothing co-design workshops, and the co-production of fashion shows and exhibitions. I made the case that these methods would help reveal how gender and the body was produced, embodied, and navigated in everyday life, and the review committees were enthusiastic about these sensory and affective approaches. Positioning Fashion Studies through sociology made me feel as though I was hiding our field, yet it also helped me see how theories from sociology generated new understandings when expanded upon through Fashion Studies. In my successful grant applications, the review committee saw fashion as making an important contribution to sociology. They noted that the practice-based creative activities were methodological innovations that would produce new understandings. Because I was located at a fashion school, the execution of my grant, especially the creative components and students required to facilitate it, was seen as feasible.

My first SSHRC grant application for Refashioning Masculinity: The Use of Fashion to Deconstruct and Reimagine Men's Gendered Identities was successful. It dug deeply into sociology of men and masculinities, and it was only for a modest sum of funding for sociologists: \$70,000. My second and current SSHRC grant, Crippling Masculinities: Disabled Men's Intersectional Narratives through Fashion, was for \$250,000. It was not awarded in the first round. The review committee was cautious that I was too junior a scholar to lead the project, without sufficient research project management and sociological experience. I added two established scholars with full professor status to my project, one who was trained as a sociologist and the other in disability studies. With this addition, the grant was awarded in the second year and I learned that winning larger grants that focus on fashion require established scholars in their discipline in which the grant is categorized. I have since been part of a SSHRC Partnership Grant with teams of leading sociologists and gender scholars in which I have specifically been invited to contribute my expertise in Fashion Studies and fashion creative practice as research methodology. I have also been able to join SSHRC grants led by emerging fashion scholars in order to bolster their applications. I now feel more confident with my SSHRC applications because I have developed a balance between being "in" and "out" — I have led successful projects in Fashion Studies to be seen as fundable by SSHRC and, at the same time, my Fashion Studies perspective allows my work to offer a unique sociological perspective according to the grant committees.

BOUNDARIES AS CHALLENGES

ALISON

One of the consequences of falling outside of disciplinary boundaries was that I started my career by giving conference papers in a motley assortment of venues, including literature and history conferences. At first, I found these extra layers of exclusion a challenge and sometimes a burden as I tried, chameleon-like, to adapt my work to each discipline's discourse, and attempted to be an expert in multiple fields.

In some ways, I was already equipped to do this by my very subject of study: what could have taught me more about the shape-shifting and fluid nature of boundaries than fashion itself?

Yet I am also aware of how even in a colonial, masculine, and neoliberal structure, my positionality as a privileged, white, able-bodied cisgender woman has legitimized my work and help me to secure grants and permanent jobs in academe. Like Ben, I was able to attend one of the top-ranked Universities in the world, so that even if my field was not perceived as high status, my degree was. Because of my habitus, and the body I occupy, I realize now that I took it for granted that I could go to an elite academic institution. I could not have attended Stanford without full funding, but I came to Fashion Studies with the family support, institutional knowledge, and the cultural capital to succeed. These barriers to entering Fashion Studies and the additional hurdles to securing academic legitimacy in University structures account in part for the whiteness of our field.

BOUNDARIES AS BENEFICIAL

BEN

For us, being simultaneously “in” and “out” of Fashion Studies has opened up our pedagogy and research. Being “in” has provided us access to theories, scholars, and networks that have prepared us with the knowledge to deeply consider the influence of fashion and dress on diverse world-shaping contexts and legitimize this inquiry as academic. Fashion theory has provided the framework for Alison to study how criminal and criminalized use of clothing illuminates larger gendered, racialized, and classed inequities in the ways that crime is policed. It has provided the framework for me to explore how disabled men and masculine people’s engagement with clothes generates new understandings of disability, gender, and fashion outside of compulsory able-bodiedness and dominant gendered logics. Being “in” Fashion Studies has connected us to practice-based fashion makers with whom we have collaborated to expand our work. As previously described, Alison collaborates with the curator at the Bata Show Museum to develop exhibitions that showcase her research about how fashion has harmed the health of its makers and wearers for broader audiences. I have collaborated with fashion design students to create and facilitate fashion hacking workshops where we remake clothing with queer, trans, fat, D/deaf, disabled, and/or Mad-identified participants to support their body-minds and express their identities. During these fashion hacking workshops, we not only collaboratively dream participants’ ideas about gender and body into material form, but we also share fashion design skills so that they participants foster relationships and knowledge to hack more of their clothing in the future. Our scholarship provides new perspectives to scholars in history, sociology, gender studies, disability studies, and criminology who, because of fashion theory, view fashion as a new optic to address previously unasked questions.

We have used being “in” yet also “out” of Fashion Studies to provide new understandings to Fashion Studies as well as to other disciplines. Being both “in” and “out” is an intervention into the tightly controlled boundaries of academia.

GRAPPLING WITH BOUNDARIES AND INCLUSION

We have navigated boundaries in Fashion Studies with both challenges and success but, underlying both, with deep privilege. If we have experienced confusion and alienation as white scholars from elite graduate schools in the Global North, what are the possibilities for Fashion Studies scholars from positions of marginality, refusal to assimilate and from the Global South? As we have become more senior in our department, we have taken on leadership roles and have had more power to challenge the limitations that the boundaries of Fashion Studies have created, and instead work towards a field where more scholars can benefit from being “in” and “out.” The whiteness of Fashion Studies is reflected in the lack of racial diversity of scholars in our fields, our approaches to studying fashion and dress, and an almost glorification of the PhD as a criterion for entry into the field for a tenure-track professorship, especially in the areas of history and theory. We have worked to intentionally recognize and disrupt some of these systemic barriers by creating tenure-track job postings in Fashion Studies that call out our value towards diverse ways of knowing and understanding fashion and diverse lived experiences that have been systemically marginalized and unrecognized by the fashion system and academic institutions. Under qualifications, our posting recognized lived experience and community engagement as equivalent to a PhD and only required candidates to have a MA in Fashion Studies, Fashion Cultures, Fashion Histories, and/or Fashion Theory. While we recognize attending graduate school — and university at all — is a privileged experience, we hoped that expanding and redefining traditional academic qualifications would expand standards of success for being a permanent Fashion Studies faculty member not only for this search but for future searches (Tunstall 2022). Ben took up the role of Dean of Fashion at Parsons School of Design in 2021. One of the first initiatives was to launch a tenure-track cluster hire in Fashion Design and Social Justice and Fashion Management and Social Justice that would continue to create secure faculty jobs that recognized systemic barriers to these positions. For example,

the fashion management posting explicitly noted that “experiences in the fashion industry, fashion entrepreneurship and/or community work” was equivalent to “a graduate degree in fashion management, fashion communications, fashion studies or a relevant fashion or business discipline.”

Similarly, we have intentionally developed courses in both our undergraduate and graduate programs that centre decolonized and inclusive approaches to fashion history, theory, and practice. While we have taught some of these courses, we have also supported these courses to provide opportunities for emerging scholars whose positionalities and research interests align with the subjects. Additionally, we draw on these courses to intentionally recruit graduate students by showing them that their lived experiences are valued and supported in our field. The result is that the next generation of our field looks very different from the panels of most Fashion Studies conferences. Take the two students whose Major Research Projects that Ben supervised in 2019 in the Toronto Metropolitan University’s MA Fashion program: one Indigenous student used the fashion hacking method to explore how fashion can foster healing and build community among young Indigenous women, and one Muslim student used wardrobe interviews and digital storytelling to explore the intersectional fashion experiences of Muslim women who dress modestly. Alison applied for and was promoted to Full Professor status during the pandemic, in part so that she could lend clout to the dozens of recommendations and reference letters that she writes for the talented students applying for funding, jobs, further study, and doctoral work. Interestingly, the external referees that I suggested for my promotion dossier who all had to be Full Professors were not all white, but all were based in the UK. While we work to support the next generation of fashion scholars who have been marginalized from our field and encourage them to move our field, we work to remember our limits as white people.

We are also working to challenge boundaries through the open access journal that we founded two years ago, *Fashion Studies*.

Fashion Studies aims to destabilize the research and creative divide in our field by providing a platform for all of this work to be published together in one journal.

Our journal aims to provide practice-based scholars and those who have a creative and non-traditional approach to research with the same peer-review mechanism that will allow them to have their work count in the traditional academic system through the anonymous peer-review process. Most importantly, we seek to stop the exploitation of scholars in our field who offer journals their research and perform expert peer-review of others' research without compensation, while these same corporate-owned journals charge university libraries millions of dollars for subscriptions and charge those without university affiliations fees. This is our effort to share *Fashion Studies* and our research with a larger audience, and to help others both inside and outside of academia learn about the field. Through our work at the university and *Fashion Studies*, we strive to build community in a more global context, ignite scholarly dialogue, and foster new voices who feel both in and out of Fashion Studies.

CONCLUSION

What we concluded from working on this paper was that we as scholars and practitioners need to make it possible for the “out” to be “in.” It is imperative that we encourage and promote the out perspective by working to reduce the barriers rather than erecting them anew. For us, Fashion Studies is about fostering community, collaboration, and inclusion, not about disciplinary boundaries. If Fashion Studies is to thrive in the future, we must welcome change, embrace difference, and include new voices. In this spirit of collegiality, we are honoured to host this Special Issue lovingly and expertly co-edited by Sarah Scaturro and Ann Tartsinis, who come from backgrounds in Textile Conservation and Curation/Art History. We presented this paper in a pre-pandemic world that looked very different, but we write now with even more of an awareness of the importance of the systemic inequalities that the virus has exacerbated —political, social, racial, and environmental — in the three years since we flew to Chicago together. It is even clearer that we should not be policing who is in and who is out, as the fashion industry and traditional academic structures have taught us to do. Yet there is still a great deal of work to be done to on the institutional structures

we have discussed: education, funding bodies, the opportunities to disseminate and share creative, autoethnographic, historical, and global experiences of dress and adornment that challenge whiteness and privilege from a range of positionalities. We realize that these struggles can be shared across many fields that are by nature interdisciplinary, including in programs and research in areas like Gender Studies, Media Studies, Public Health, and Disability Studies, among others.

It is not an accident that we study clothing, multilayered structures that mediate between inside and outside, between our bodies and the world. Clothing is a boundary, but it is one that is constantly shifting and permeable.

Let us heed the materiality of what we study, in our ethics, our practice, and our vision of Fashion Studies: let us welcome those who are seemingly “out” into this field that we love. When deployed conscientiously and with intention, Fashion Studies offers the potential to challenge systemic barriers and to create change in the world. As scholars once again embodied and adorned in the true splendour we remember from our childhoods, from Ben’s flowing dress, yellow necklace, and glittery blue eyeshadow to Alison’s top hat and iridescent “rainbow warrior” cape and skirt by designer Lesley Hampton, we wear our hearts and our scholarship on our sleeves and bow out with grace to leave the floor to all those who wish to add their strand to the variegated tapestry that we dream of for Fashion Studies.²

² Tapestry weaving itself is a textile practice belonging to multiple cultures spanning millennia, including the ancient Egyptians, Inca cultures in what is now known as Peru, kesi weavings in China, medieval and later Flemish tapestries, and Salish weaving from Turtle Island.

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ARTICLE CITATION

Barry, Ben, and Alison Matthews David. “A Fashion Studies Manifesto: Toward an (Inter)disciplinary Field.” *State of the Field*, special issue of *Fashion Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2023, pp. 1-23, <https://www.fashionstudies.ca/a-fashion-studies-manifesto>, [https:// doi.org/10.38055/SOF010101](https://doi.org/10.38055/SOF010101).

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ARTICLE CITATION

Barry, Ben, and Alison Matthews David. "A Fashion Studies Manifesto: Toward an (Inter)disciplinary Field." *State of the Field*, special issue of *Fashion Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2023, pp. 1-23, <https://www.fashionstudies.ca/a-fashion-studies-manifesto>, <https://doi.org/10.38055/SOF010101>.

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sciences humaines du Canada

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ISSN 2371-3453

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