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Dissertation

The main focus of this dissertation will be on how fan theory started a revolution amongst women and how women used fashion and art to win the rights we have now.

Fan theory would be described as a form of secret flirtation that women developed in the 18th century.

During the 16th century handheld fans became a well known fashion accessory in Japan, however it was not until the 18th century that fans were rumoured to be used as a communicative tool amongst women. The first record of women using fans however were only mentioned in the 18th century and were popular influence for satirical writers , one being Joseph Addison who wrote a satirical piece for the spectator in 1711. This advertised his school for women , teaching fan communication for purely comical reasons. However this article did start a slow revolution amongst women in the 18th century. By using fans as a secret language to communicate to the opposit sex without them having means to reply with , this gave women a way to communicate without response. One line from the article that was prominent in the article was *"may be entire mistresses of the weapon which they bear."* (Owlcation, 2019) which created a narrative in which the handheld fan was a weapon in which women could yield against men. However, due to the fact that this article was written by a man, it does raise the question whether the start of the female revolution was in fact accidentally started by a man who was just trying to be funny. This lead into researching more about how women fought back against a patriarchal society over time and how they rebelled until the present day.

Over time women have been passively controlled, for instance; during the Georgion times / early Victorian women had no control over their own wages ,they did not have the right to vote,

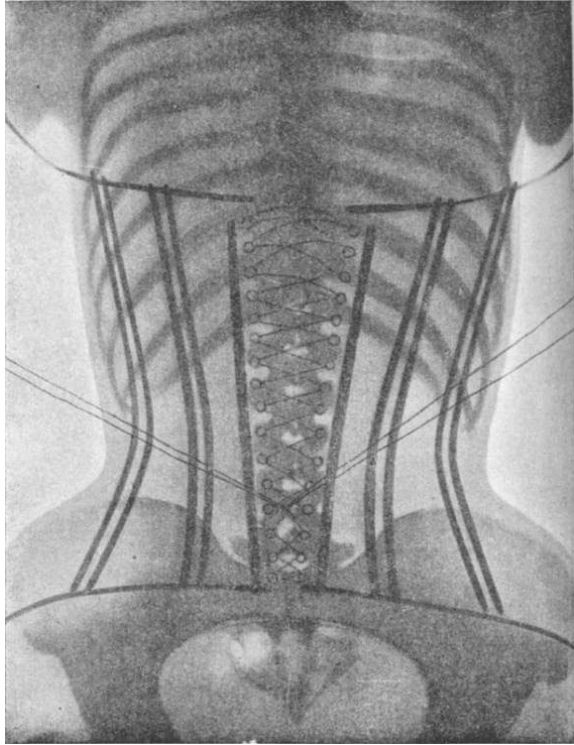
the had to cook, clean and look after the children/ household, They were also stripped of their rights to their own bodies, ect. This abominable behavior by a patriarchal society was something that carried on over time , however did become less and less acceptable over time.

For instance after the the fan theory died out queen victoria took the throne and wasn't shy to talk about her sexuality in public. This continued to slowly progress into the suffragette movement in 1903 thanks to Emmeline Pankhurst creating the 'Women's Social and Political Union'. This group were known for creating civil upsets in the name of votes for women , one key member (Emily Wilding Davidson) believed so passionately that women should have the right to vote that during her last act of throwing herself in front of the kings horse in 1913 she unfortunately died of a fractured skull. As decades went past women became more radical and created feminist groups over time. Eventually the 1960's passed and women were changing fashion so they could wear trousers and suits the most famous designer was Twiggy creating her own brand 'the Twiggy line'. Women were now changing their appearance to look more masculine. This included cutting their hair shorter and owning their appearance. This lead onto the 1970's where women held protests in the street, marching in New York as well as camping outside parliament. Many artistic groups were created for women only, these included many groups such as Guerrilla Girls who class themselves as a feminist activist artists. This movement carried on until women finally had the freedom that the modern women has today. However there are still some things that the older generation does not approve of. This is why as the younger generation has created a whole new language using emojis and shorthand.

The first example of women using fashion to conquer the seemingly unerotic image that men had given women at this point would be to look at how their dresses would have been made. To start with ladies dresses were always changing over the 1800s however the bodice would nearly always stay the same. A women's dress would nearly always include a tight, corseted bodice with a long skirt attached. This was a very modest look considering how there was barely any skin on show at all, the sleeves alone were tight and fitted until the 1890's when the leg of mutton sleeve which ballooned outwards at the top (much like a leg of mutton). Here we have a prime example of how women have no way of showing their sexuality apart from possibly the waist hugging corset that was built into the dress. This could cause many physical issues for young women the most common issue that young ladies had to deal with was the lack of oxygen getting to their brains causing them to faint.

As damaging as this was too young women, the women who were wearing the corsets themselves argued that they were beneficial to their health which they were not. According to Benjamin Orange Flowers (the author of 'Fashion's Slaves'), he believed that many vital organs were being damaged whilst women were wearing underwear was tied too tightly. "The tight lacing required by the wasp waists has produced generations of invalids and bequeathed to posterity suffering that will not vanish for many decades. By it, as has been pointed out by the authorities cited, every vital organ in the body has been seriously affected." (Books, Health and History, 2019) This shows that women were so desperate to hang onto their sexuality that they were willing to cause serious bodily harm to themselves.

It was later proved that all the things that corsets were supposedly causing (cancer, digestion problems) were all due to other infections. However corsets were proved to cause atrophy in women who constantly wore them with their ribs being crushed and not had to room to expand when they took a breath, the ribs then crashed against each other causing them to overlap.



(O'Followell, 2019)

Due to the controversy that the corseted dresses had caused in the 1800s, a woman named Amelia Bloomer thought it a good idea for women to start wearing trousers aka. Pantaloon. This made sense as it was easier for women to take part in more tasks, such as marching for the right to vote. Bloomer had started a fashion revolution accidentally and fashion moved on into the era of feminist values.

However before this, the handheld fan became popular in 1865, this is because women were supposed to be ladylike at all times, Flirting was not encouraged amongst young ladies. Especially in the middle class, these ladies had the fans.

Over time women became bored of not being able to flirt in public so they came up with a language that would indicate whether she wanted a man or whether she did not. This was a big step forward in feminism because until the late 1800s men could not respond until they decided that they should learn the language. It was a mass breakout amongst the younger generation with phrases like; 'kiss me' which would be a woman bringing the handle of the fan up to her lips, or if a woman twirled the fan in her left hand this meant 'I wish to be rid of you'. As you can

see if you did not know the code then it could be a very interesting party, however, most young people knew it as fans were incredibly popular by 1865 and were an absolute must-have.

As time went on by the 1900's corsets were falling out of fashion rapidly and by 1909 they had completely gone. As well as corsets designers had removed petticoats from dresses and opted for a more sleek skirt. This highlighted a woman's curves a bit better but because the skirt was now very tight around the ankles due to the lack of petticoats.

During the early 1900s, of course, women were fighting for the right to vote and freedom this was seen as the first wave of feminism and they decided that there were to be no distractions, so there was going to be no outlandish looks and they were to conform to society's image. However they did use colour to their advantage; they used purple for dignity and loyalty, green for hope, and white for purity. These colours were all worn with a 'votes for women' band. Hats were also a must during the early 1900s. Another thing that ought to be mentioned was that white dresses were always worn on special or important meetings.

The colours were strictly worn because suffragettes at the time were one group all fighting for the same thing. A comparison would be an army uniform. All soldiers are to wear the same uniform because they are one team.

Moving onto the 1920s and skirts are getting shorter with every year, Corsets are completely thrown out and women are now wearing a more straight-cut dress. With darker makeup, women are changing their appearance for every occasion. For instance, the dark makeup and 'flapper dresses were strictly for wild parties, the regular daywear was a simple dress that either hung off the shoulder or straps for shoulders. The '20s was the era of fun after the war so the younger generation of women who had learnt from their mothers during the war that work is the only way forward learnt to party and have fun. The 1920s was known as the age of not giving up on politics completely but for women to start learning about their individuality. Women were cutting their hair shorter to upset their mothers and reflect the boisterous times they were living in. Another reason women cut their hair shorter was to reject the exaggerated femininity that they had seen their female elders have to deal with as they were growing up.

After the Depression hit families in 1929 working-class families however did not get all the expensive designer clothes from Chanel. They had to wear factory-made clothing which became a very popular way of creating and distributing clothing due to the economic crash this was a cheaper method, rather than carry on making made to measure clothing for the rich families. Mainly because there weren't any rich families that could afford all these things. However, after 1933, women were granted the vote at an earlier age (21, the same age as men) this is when squared shoulders came into fashion. With a lot of inspiration from a lot of

European designers, women were carrying on the time-old tradition of enjoying themselves with their fashion choices.

However this time instead of hiding their bodies under baggy dresses a waistline was brought back into fashion, this timeless dangerously though. This time a higher waistline was introduced to dresses, this gave a more natural look into what women looked like. With 'The perfect woman' looking tall, slim and with slim hips many mature women couldn't compete with that so high-waisted skirts were a big hit. The thirties also brought sports trousers into fashion with women taking inspiration from Chanel once again when she paved the way for women to wear trousers when a photo of her emerged from the Deauville society wearing long cotton trousers. Women were then seen taking part in many sporting events wearing trousers mainly taken inspiration from sailors and military styles. These were also high-waisted with a wide leg for movement. This was seen as a big step forward in feminism and fashion. The squared-off shoulders on the dresses and coats were added to make females seem more professional and trustworthy as women were now entering the workforce after the great depression hit the world.

Another thing that we can take from the 1930s was the modernist impact that art had on fashion, for instance, the infamous lobster dress by Salvador Dali and Elsa Schiaparelli. This caused such a big uproar in the fashion industry because of the sharp, harsh colours and edges of the lobster drawn onto white, pristine silk. The 1930s was an innovative time for fashion and women.



(Dali and Schiaparelli, 2019)

Then the 1940's hit. This brought the second world war with it, this along with clothing rations due to lack of fabrics being imported. Colourful clothing was also a rarity during the war so that every chemical could be used for the war effort. So people made do by cutting up old clothes that did not fit them to create new ones. Passing old clothes down to younger siblings or maybe even just carry on wearing them. Clothes were a scarcity during the '40s and the clothing tokens people had were not going far either. On the 1st June in 1941 the government implemented ration books to everyone, the clothing rations were supposed to get each person one new outfit per year. This completely went out the window eventually when the tokens kept getting reduced to the point where buying one coat would cost a person a whole year's worth of rations.

However like I said people made do, women went back to working in the munitions factories and other jobs similar. This created the turban. To keep women's long hair out of their faces whilst working with dangerous machinery it was common practice to tie it all back in a 'Turban' this would make sure that it was all out of the way and the workers could see and were safe. Another iconic look to come out of the war effort was the 'Siren suit'. The 'Siren suit' was essentially the very first jumpsuit. To make things easier for people who stayed at home the Siren suit was boiler suit that somebody could put over their sleep-ware if the sirens were going off and they had to evacuate their houses.



(Morrellos clothing, 2019)

The '40s did make way for Denim Jeans. Due to the lack of pencil skirts that were being worn by working women, designers needed a cheap and durable fabric that they could produce for the huge amounts of women works, therefore denim jeans were created. Along with Jeans sturdy work boots were a necessity to factory floors, with quick work going on people would drop potentially dangerous things so thick boots were important.

However, when women were not working they would be wearing more American designs, due to the war most European designers had dropped to focus on the effort, therefore with most European designers busy American women started to take over the fashion world, with names like Claire McCardell inventing American sportswear and Bonnie Cashin's boots which was not yet a feminine style.

After the Second World War finished feminism took several steps back, as men came home injured from war women needed to get back to the house and look after the family. Many women preferred to do this so they could dress in fashionable clothing again. Christian Dior set the fashion scene for the 1950s with his 'New Look' collection. This created a silhouette of a woman with a tight waist, pointy chest and a tight-fitting pencil skirt that was much longer than previous stylings. He felt he was comparing women to a delicate flower. However, the younger generation was not as ok with this styling as the older generation was.

The fad started in American then made its way around the world. This fad was known as the rockabilly era.

The Rockabilly style was developed in the south of America and was inspired by the music surrounding that era. With a mix of rock and hillbilly, it gave an edge to the younger generations wardrobe as well as completely going against the pin-up girl which the older generation was supporting. With a tight waist and frilly skirt and short hair young women were taking a note from the 1920s and learning to have fun with the body they had. Yes, it was covering the legs a bit more than usual however it was not their parent's clothing and it had a certain sass to it.

Moving onto the 1960s when fashion took hold of the world. Mainly in London.

The '60s were defined by one style. This was called Mod Fashion.

Mods were called Mods because of the modern take on fashion. In the mindset of anything goes Mary Quant created the mini skirt which was a short pencil skirt that came up a lot higher than the knee. This revolutionised feminism in fashion, women could walk around showing off their body without feeling like they had broken a sacred rule. Mini skirts were a starting point for all fashion brands, and most were lead by young designers. Mod fashion was targeted at young people who wanted something other than long skirts that covered up their body. Women were once again taking their bodies back.

With the help of model and later on designer Twiggy, Mary Quant started a fashion revolution, this went hand in hand with the ongoing working-class revolution. The working class were finally getting recognised in the media, in fashion and music. This type of fashion was started in small boutiques on the infamous Carnaby Street in London, this, of course, is completely opposed to the baby boomer generation who started all their lines in couture houses.

Moving on to the 1970s not much changed fashion-wise. I remember when I was younger I became obsessed with 70's fashion and I told my friends mother about it and she responded with "We used to call the 70's the decade that fashion forgot" and many years later, I can understand why. During the '70s there never any specific style women could wear long skirts, with short jackets and platform boots. For women, fashion took a step back and they were focussed more on making political statements.

After the '70s, the '80s took over with their massive shoulder pads. The eighties was known for its blur of neon colours and power suits. The '80s for women was a time when they were finally being taken somewhat seriously in the business world so power suits and blazers with sometimes built-in shoulder pads were a massive hit. Cotton and tweed made crossovers along with huge overly styled hair. The miniskirt came back with a vengeance and even featured in the workplace. Women were learning not to care about what men deemed as appropriate anymore. They were becoming their gender all over again. It had taken just about 80 years but women were finally being taken seriously in every day and were learning to fight back for themselves. Even if they weren't at work women were wearing crop tops and bright neon leggings and not caring.

Finally, women were now dressing for themselves and not for their male counterparts, unfortunately, there was still some sexism in the workplace and women were still fighting to becoming recognised for their talents however progress has been made from women wearing bright white dresses with sashes to women in blazers and miniskirts working in office buildings.

Following on from this, the aim is to now explore how women fought for not just their bodies back but for their rights and safety over time.

During the Victorian era it was seen as unseemly for a woman to show any body parts in public other than her face/ hands they were made to feel as though they were only ever to enjoy their bodies when a man was present;

‘the enjoyment of sex was an exclusively male prerogative’ (Furieux, 2019)

Therefore they came up with their filter system, this was created using hand-held fans. The idea was to hold the fan in a certain way to try and attract men with codes that only they would understand.

This was women fighting against a certain idealistic woman who would never initiate sex first or flirt with a man. They were just expected to conform to what the men wanted. This leads us to mention rape and victimisation of women in Victorian times. However, this will come later.

For now, I will focus on other cultural issues that were prominent in the Victorian era surrounding women.

Women in the Victorian era were seen as the weaker sex due to their reproductive organs. To validate this claim men claimed that women were emotionally unstable and were unable to make important decisions so were to care for the family and the household. After a woman married she essentially didn't exist. Her rights were stripped of her and she was her husband's property. Not only that but all of her possessions were now his as well as her body.

The refusal of sex in the Victorian era was grounds for an annulment however this did not stop many men as rape was completely legal in a marriage in Victorian times as well as domestic violence.

When speaking of legality it was not until male employers were imprisoning their female staff so that they could have ‘conjugal visits’ with them. Working life was not as good as today, especially for working-class women, often being shipped off to rich houses with a box of garments, maybe a bible and possibly some mementos from home. This box could often be taken away from them however in the event of thievery (made up or real). If this ever did occur most women would be pushed onto the streets with no income and no ‘character’ (aka. A reference) they would most likely end up on the streets where they would probably become prostitutes which was not safe for a woman. Due to the random men that would grab them and rape them without payment either that or they would be brutally murdered or stabbed. As it states in ‘The murders of the black museum 1870-1970’ (Honeycombe, 1992) ‘Women were assaulted and injured every night. Some were killed’. This quote was taken from a chapter talking about the infamous killer Jack the Ripper. Who actively roamed the streets of

Whitechapel stabbing defenceless working women and mercilessly cutting them open whilst ripping their organs out.

So as you can see, women were not treated nicely during the Victorian times, even with a queen leading the country women had to be careful about how they were seen. However, over time fans became more and more popular and were becoming more and more accessible for lower classes in England. This meant that by the 19th-century handheld fans were so popular that any person would be able to own one. This included the working class which also included working women. This made it much more common for working girls to be able to hide their profession more easily.

However, this profession was soon cut short as the war-hit England in 1914. As most men at the time were either shipped off to fight or were guarding the homelands women had no choice but to abandon the family home or boarding and move to the factories to help their country. By 1918 women were working on farms, trains, as police officers, firefighters, postal workers, etc.

The biggest employer of women during the war was munition factories.

As the demand for ammunition grew and grew so did the demand of workers making them.

Unfortunately, this meant that 80% of women were working in these factories, which also meant that 80% of women were being exposed to harmful chemicals like TNT which would dye their hair yellow and possibly kill them. An estimated 400 women were killed in the factories.

Yet they were being paid less than a man would.

This started the first argument about the gender wage gap and initiated the first strike in 1918 this was led by the tram and bus workers at the time, which spread throughout London to the train runners etc.

This was all led by women and ultimately won by women. However, parliament only supported this law only until the war ended.

As time went by women rallied to become accepted as equals by men. However, this had been going on for a long time, since 1848 women had been holding meetings for more than 50 years since the first-ever Women's Rights Convention. Their main focus was to achieve more rights for women, they circled petitions, as well as lobbying Congress to pass a constitutional amendment to enfranchise women. Overtime after many attempts at franchising the Women's Rights Convention they felt they were not being listened too. The last straw was when the women reformers in the club wanted to pass reform legislation, however, this was not heard at parliament due to the politicians refused to listen to a disenfranchised group.

This is when women realised that they needed the vote.

When looking into the other side of the gender wage gap it can make sense, this is because if we look into the number of time men spent in the war, risking their lives, losing limbs or their sanity out on the battlefield. It can make sense about the larger wage that they came back too. Also coming from not working for four years, it is understandable that they hadn't made a lot of money. Most of the men as well were coming back to families that needed support, some even with young children.

Another argument was the fact that as the government did abolish the gender-free wage after the war was over they did grant the 'Representation of the people act' in 1928 which was widely seen as a reward for all the women working during the war.

This act was made so that men over the age of twenty-one and women over the age of thirty were able to vote (due to certain residential aspects).

As well as women being granted the vote they were also seen as being freed from their low paying jobs in domestic services and many women agreed with this premise. As women weren't allowed to work in the higher-paying jobs like dentists or doctors etc, the pay that they got for munition factories etc, were seen as good enough and more than they deserved at that time according to the British media of the time.

In 1928 Stanley Baldwin gave women the right to vote once they had reached the age of 21. He stated 'It will never again be possible to blame the sovereign state for any position of inequality. Women will have with us the fullest rights. The ground and justification for the old agitation are gone.' (Souhami, 2019) However, his words fell on deaf ears as overtime women were back to being treated as slaves to men in their upper-class jobs that paid huge amounts more than women would earn. Also working under a marriage bar which meant once a woman married they would no longer be able to work as nurses or teachers.

Even considering these arguments time went on even after women got the vote they were still seen as inferior to men. They were still working in low paying jobs like caring and cooking in the middle class and higher class houses. Due to the great depression hitting the 1930's women were being looked at as inferior workers compared to men and were back working 'women's work' and being paid considerably less than their male counterparts. This caused many arguments as the men of the household felt emasculated as women became the main breadwinner. The argument was that a woman's place was in the home caring for the family and the household.

This same behaviour was seen back in the 1910s when women were under the thumb of a man, the only change, however, is that women had the vote this time. It is understandable in some sense as the economy crashed people went back to what they had learnt as a child, which was that women were the 'Angel of the household'. As there was a crisis that had hit the country the men in parliament had to figure out. To do that the gender wage gap was bought back.

However, this did not stop women from enjoying little things. Women were now smoking cigarettes, wearing shorter skirts and shorter hair. They were now driving cars and dancing at parties. During the 30's they became able to call for divorces and they were moving on and fighting for their rights still. However domestic life was not getting any easier for the homemakers due to cases of domestic violence becoming more and more common. Men were being fired or retired from their jobs, money was low. and they would have to stay at home most days. This with the financial burden on the household, as well as the shortage of food led to many partners having arguments which could lead to men becoming more violent towards their wives. Historian Harvey Green hypothesises in his book 'The Uncertainty of Everyday Life 1915-1945' that 'Domestic violence and child abuse increased as men found it difficult to cope

with worklessness' (Green, 2000) This could of lead to rape, internal injuries or even in some cases death. This was yet another thing that women had to fight against. During the 1930s some families were even fatherless, which resulted in many women supporting children alone, whilst working full-time jobs and keeping the house in order. Some women, however (most were lesbians) moved onto Paris. These women created a community out of reach of the patriarchy. They lived and worked as they pleased, without them the modernist movement of the '30s would not have happened.

The modernist movement was supposedly started by Ezra Pound's quote ' Make It New!' which gave modernist art the inspiration it needed to start. Modernist art was based around a utopian society and a progressive workforce after world war one. It was supposed to be a view into a new world, a new positive world which would use colour and abstract shapes to convey the new freedom that artists/musicians/photographers found. Fashion also took inspiration in the new modernist movement. For instance Salvador Dali's 'Shoe Hat'. This was modelled after a woman's high heel shoe from 1937, or another instance would be his lobster dress that was created in collaboration with Elsa Schiaparelli. Both artists based this dress on 'New York Dream-Man Finds Lobster in Place of Phone' which the title alone shows how avant-garde the modernist era was. Another designer that should be worth noting was Lola Prusac who worked for Hermès in Paris. Prusac was the first designer in Hermès to use geometric shapes in her clothing, these included silk coloured squares on a black mini dress. This was a huge inspiration in 60's clothing as mini dresses had just become popular.

The modernist era was a very popular inspiration for fashion in the 1960s. With London fashion becoming known as Mod fashion, it was affordable and cheap for the working class because it was made for the working class. This was a time when the younger generation was taking back their identities with their clothing choices, haircuts and music choices.

The 1960s had a huge impact on modern culture today, it wasn't just an era where the youth took back their identity, it was also a time when women took back their sexuality. After what is known as 'The Second Wave Of Feminism' which was a homage to the first wave except for this time rather than just looking at the legal side of feminism this time women looked at every aspect of life. This included; women's politics, women's sexuality, work and family life.

At the height of the '60s, trousers and the mini skirt were a way that women could take control over their sexuality by either 'daring to bare' or wearing trousers for a more formal look. The average income had risen to the highest level it had been since World War Two and designers took advantage of this. Women were earning a good wage and reaping the rewards of it through fashion. Bright colours and short skirts were their way of breaking through the depression that had come with the war.

One very prominent designer was Mary Quant, who used modernism to her advantage with her quirky, oddly shaped dresses with bold bright colours. This was a whole other world compared to the previous fashion of the '50s, where women wore gloves and hats with long skirts and a nice proper heel. However, during the '50s female designers were taking back their sexuality

with dresses that were made to contour the body such as the pencil or 'wiggle dress' which had a high neckline and a very thin waistline that was snug to the body.

As you can see the power of fashion to take back a woman's identity was very prominent throughout history. However it wasn't just sexuality they were taking back, the '70s were on their way and the art world was not ready.

Moving onto possibly the biggest era for feminism, the '70s inspired women to take back everything. Art, music and most importantly freedom to be a free-thinking, self-supporting person. During the 70s there were countless famous women in art, such as Yoko Ono and Cindy Sherman. This was the era that women shattered negative views on female artists. Before the 70's women were not seen in art, many were refused exhibition space or funding just based on their gender. Art was seen as a boys club before radical feminist Judy Chicago created Womanhouse in 1971, with Miriam Schapiro. Womanhouse was a huge achievement for women and a safe space where women could work and express themselves without being treated like an object and without being criticised for having an opinion. One very prominent artist during the '70s was Cindy Sherman who was quoted by the Guardian saying "If you don't like me this way, how about you like me this way?". This was Sherman's take on her personality not being good enough for the public so she dressed up in her photoshoots. Once again this is an instance of women using clothing and accessories to own themselves.

Women have always had to fight to be recognised as actual people when it comes to everyday. Unfortunately the gender wage gap is still a very real thing at 17.3% difference in 2019 the world still needs some work at accepting women in the workplace. The world has become more accepting yes but the fact of the matter is women are still reporting sexual harassment in the work place. The Everyday Sexism project has reported alongside with TUC that 52% of women have not and will not report assault in the workplace for fear of losing their jobs or being looked at differently by co-workers. However over the last century women have experienced setbacks but they have always clawed their way back to loving their bodies and owning themselves. Most recently with the body positivity movement in 2018 where any body shape became acceptable.

Fashion has kept up with the times as well whilst back in the 50's a woman was supposed to have a small waist now we have women trying their best to look healthy and happy. We have taken many strides in confidence when it comes to waist size, from a time when it was common to wear a waist clenching corset we have come to a place now where women felt confident in looking how they look.

In conclusion the fights for women's rights are still very much going on however the female gender has accomplished so much over the past one hundred years. I do think that fashion had a big impact on this movement as well as art and photography. If there was a defining decade for feminism and fashion I would say that the 1960's was a huge time for them both. The mini skirt was an invention that let women embrace what they had. So to answer my proposal at the

start of this dissertation , I don't necessarily believe that the hand held fan started a revolution with fashion and feminism , I do however believe that over time as fashion changed , the patriarchy changed with it because women gave them no choice.

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