DENIMISM

Denim and equal rights
for women from the perspective
of the American mass media, 1915-1975

PHF Jansen / 348156 / 17 August 2015 / Dr. Ben Wubs

Content

Chapter One: Introduction

'I am writing to ask you to stand up for equality – for your mother, your daughter, your sister, your wife or yourself – by actively supporting the equal rights amendment.'

- Meryl Streep, 2015[1]

Introduction

In June 2015 movie star Meryl Streep send a letter to each member of Congress urging to revive the battle to add the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the American constitution. An essential amendment as it protects the 'equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on the account of sex.'[2] It is almost impossible to imagine that there is a majority in American society, Gilbert Y. Steiner states in 1985, that is oppressed by the democratic system.[3] Many Americans are indeed shocked about this fact. 'The time is ripe to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment,' says Congress woman Jackie Speier. 'Seventy percent of people polled think we already have an ERA in the Constitution and they're shocked to find we don't have one.'[4]

In 1920, American women were granted the federal right to vote. With this right, Suffrage leader Alice Paul thought, women could forge a place of equal responsibility and power with the men of the nation.[5] She wrote the Equal Rights Amendment in 1923, in the aftermath of World War I. American women had just experienced the first signs of equality and freedom after 1.5 million American women covered the abandoned jobs in the war production factories. This sense of economic independence expressed itself in their sense of style. In the factories many women were allowed to wear overalls, and the feeling of free movement was implemented in 1920s fashion.

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[1] Mike Ayers, 'Meryl Streep Seeks Equal Rights Amendment Revival', *The Wall Street Journal* (June 24, 2015) http://blogs.wsj.com/speakeasy/2015/06/24/meryl-streep-seeks-era-amendment-revival/ (23-07-2015).

[2] Gilbert Y. Steiner, *Constitutional Inequality: The Political Fortunes of the Equal Rights Amendment* (Washington, 1985) 1.

[3] Steiner, *Constitutional Inequality,* 1.

[4] Charles Babington, 'Capitol Hill Buzz: Meryl Streep asks Congress to revive ERA', *The Big Story AP* (Washington, 23-06-2015) http://bigstory.ap.org/article/ea9fc02e44cc46008ed406721b0578fc/capitol-hill-buzz-meryl-streep-asks-congress-revive-era (23-07-2015).

[5] 'The Nineteenth Amendment', *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 20-08-1920) 4.

By the 1920s, American women were allowed to vote, to drive, to drink and to smoke and their dress became more simple and relaxed.[6] In some areas of the United States, women started wearing pants and even jeans. However, the subordinate status of women was still firmly entrenched in the American legal system and no effort was spared to make the male and female wardrobe as different as possible.[7]

The amendment did not pass Congress, but female emancipation did not come to a stop. Circumstances like World War II, consumerism and America's newfound status as superpower helped the economic emancipation of American women.

By the 1970s, it was clear that equal rights for women highly impacted the political agenda. In the post-war America, millions of women had entered the labor market, which meant leaving the home to take jobs. This development had a positive effect on equality between man and woman and all that remained to do was to get equality fully legalized.[8] The Equal Rights Amendment passed both houses of Congress and was submitted for ratification of the state legislature when it received opposition.[9] Even though the amendment did not pass, it is unimaginable what was changed within a time period of fifty years.

By the mid-seventies a new status quo was installed in American society. A large majority of the Americans was pro-ERA, however, the opponents of the ERA were capable to block the amendment from being added to the Constitution. Furthermore, during the seventies women fashion became insufficient distinctive from male fashion to use it as a research method.

The new status quo was visible to the naked eye. Within a relatively small period of time the entire Western world had gone through a tremendous transformational change that affected the lives of people from all social layers.[10] American youngsters felt free to experiment with gender roles and this was expressed in their manner of dress, which had become more androgynous. The phenomenon had prompted the noted fashion historian James Laver to write, 'today, almost anywhere in Western Europe and North America, it is

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[6] Caryn Franklin, *Fashion: the Ultimate Book of Costume and Style* (London, 2011) 255.
[7] Julian Robinson, 'Changing Influences and Changing Attitudes', in Lawrence Langner, *The Importance of Wearing Clothes* (Los Angeles, 1991) 333.
[8] William H. Chafe, *The American Woman: her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles 1920-1970* (New York, 1972) 236-237.
[9] William H. Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century* (New York, 2012) 215.
[10] Robinson, 'Changing Influences and Changing Attitudes', 315.

possible to walk behind two young people, each of them clad in tight jeans and loose sweater, and each with long hair, and not know whether they are two girls, two boys, or one of each.'[11] Jeans were seen as informal, classless, casual and most importantly unisex. Wearing a pair of jeans was a sign of freedom from the constraints of the patriarchal society.[12]

When discussing women's emancipation, in the American media blue jeans were shown as a symbol of these rapid changes. Therefore, this thesis will look at equal rights from the developments in women's fashion, especially blue jeans, from the perspective of the American mass media. In this light, changes in styling and fashion can thus be expected to be parallel to changes in society. The aim is to establish the connection between the equal rights movement and the changes in women's fashion in the period 1915-1975. In particular, the development of jeans from the womanall in the war production factories of World War I, to the uniform of non-conformity of the 1950s, to eventually the complete acceptation of the jeans for women in 1975, as it is shown in the American media. Leading to the research question: What were the parallels between the developments in equal rights for women and women's fashion, especially denim blue jeans, and how was this perceived by the American media in the period 1915-1975?

Jeans

Jeans are immensely popular all over the world. But why? What is so special about them that almost everybody in the western world owns at least one pair? Does it have to do with the fact that jeans provide a façade of normality, as psychologist Dr. Dichter states: 'Jeans are a kind of cover-up garment, they don't give anything away, such as wealth or status.'[13] Or is it because of their status of 'freedom from convention,' what Paul Fussell expects to be the original message of the jeans.[14] James Sullivan feels that 'a pair of blue jeans embodies two centuries worth of the myths and ideals of American culture. They epitomize our present-day preoccupations – celebrity and consumer culture – and we'll likely be wearing them long

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[11] Robinson, 'Changing Influences and Changing Attitudes', 333.

[12] John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (London, 1991) 2.

[13] 'Clothes Attachments: No matter how well worn, some garments inspire a man's steadfast devotion', *New York Times* (New York, 20-03-1988) 353.

[14] Paul Fussell, *Uniforms: Why We Are What We Wear* (Boston, 2002) 48.

after the business suit.'[15] Iain Finlayson describes the role of denim as being 'a badge of social ethics, of social community and group identity, that scorned the conventional etiquette of dress.'[16]

Jeans are often perceived as a symbol of American culture and is even called 'the American uniform.'[17] Yet the denim fabric was not invented by Americans. The fabric originated in Europe. Already in the sixteenth and seventeenth century there are Dutch paintings of people wearing denim. However, only when the pants were riveted by the small-town tailor Jacob Davis the first modern pair of jeans were created.[18]

The name 'denim' is derived from a town in France *Nîmes*. However, Sullivan goes a little further and states that the name is inspired by the phrase *serge de Nîmes,* which means the trade term for the cotton-wool blend that was first introduced in the small town. To complicate the story, he tells us that the details of the origins of the fabric are vague. Other historians claim that around the same time another work-wear fabric was first produced in the sailor's port of Genoa, Italy. This fabric was named after the place of its origin, which was Anglicized as *jean*.[19] The thesis uses the terms intertwiningly, but there are marked differences between the fabrics. Denim was heavier and much more though. Unlike jean fabric, which was woven of two dyed threads. However, both fabrics were used for the creation of the same dry-goods. What, according to Sullivan, led to the interchangeability of the terms.[20] Therefore, I won't make a distinction between the terms.

Past business failures made Davis reluctant to supply for patent alone. He wrote to his fabric supplier Levi Strauss, in a thick Western dialect: "the secratt of them Pents is the Rivits that I put in those Pockets, and I found the demand so large that I cannot make them up fast enough (…) My nabors are getting yealouse of these success and unless I secure it by Patent Papers it will soon become a general thing."[21] Strauss was offered part of the profit in exchange for the $68 patent fee. After receiving two rejections from the government the two men were rewarded patent on May 20, 1873.[22]

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[15] James Sullivan, *Jeans: A Cultural History of an American Icon* (New York, 2007) 3-4.
[16] Finlayson, *Denim*, 25.
[17] Sullivan, *Jeans,* 8.
[18] Graham Marsh, *Denim: from Cowboys to catwalks. A visual history of the world's most legendary fabric* (London, 2002) 6.
[19] Sullivan, *Jeans,* 12-13.
[20] Sullivan, *Jeans,* 13.
[21] Sullivan, *Jeans*, 26-28.
[22] Marsh, *Denim*, 6.

Levi Strauss might be one of the most famous names in the jeans business, it is definitely not the only one. The new invention of the riveted jeans had not gone by unnoticed by the competing companies. Almost as soon as the first pair of jeans of the Levi Strauss & Co. brand hit the market, similarly riveted jeans were sold by rivals. During the first year of production the company already had sued two rivals for patent infringement.[23] However, the competition could not be stopped and different brands stormed the market and by the year of 1890 the Levi's patent expired and the market was free for everyone.[24]

However, after the 1930s the denim-trend 'crossed the Rockies'. Stimulated by films and books about cowboys and Indians, tourists started to holiday in the west and denim was introduced to the rest of the United States.[25] During World War II, denim bell bottoms were worn in the American navy. The supplier of the American armed forces, *The Blue Bell Overall Company*, became *Levi Strauss & Co.*'s biggest rival.[26] In letters send to home, Marsh notes, many soldiers wrote that they slept with their precious jeans under their pillow because of their fear that they might got stolen and would not be able to be replaced.[27]

In the post-World War II era, when style icons like Audrey Hepburn, Grace Kelly and Jackie Kennedy were popular, style was still linked to class. According to Keogh, in that time frame, the way you dressed reflected your whole personality, where you went to school, who your family was, what you voted and even how much money you owned.[28] People dressed with class and not under their status. During the 1950s, jeans became associated with 'an element of non-conformity', that appealed to the emerging youth culture.[29] This youth movement wanted to distant themselves from the strict culture of their parents. Denim was seen as a classless fabric. An important rupture with the past was the fact that fashion was inspired by the poorer part of society, instead of regular civilians trying to dress like the elite. Rejecting fashion was a way to make a statement against intolerances and injustices in the United States. Denim, as described by Finlayson, had the role of being

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[23] Sullivan, *Jeans*, 30.
[24] Sullivan, *Jeans*, 36.
[25] Iain Finlayson, *Denim: an American Legend* (Norwich, 1990) 12.
[26] Marsh, *Denim*, 62.
[27] Marsh, *Denim*, 62.
[28] Pamela Clarke Keogh, *Jackie Style* (London, 2001) 14.
[29] Finlayson, *Denim*, 18.

street-fashion, denim was 'real-life', classless and anonymous, it symbolized the 'revolution' that clothes did no longer represented your position in the social hierarchy.[30]

Fashion

Clothes are a language, according to Pulitzer Prize winner Alison Lurie. Long before you have actual verbal communication with another human being, you already communicated with the other by just registering the way they dress. Somebody's appearance can tell us so much about the other person like origin, personality, tastes, occupation and mood. If these prejudices about the other are correct you can find out by talking to them, but in your mind you already created a picture of the other.[31] Choosing to wear certain clothes, is a process of deciding how you want to define and present yourself. Just like language, some people have a larger vocabulary than others. 'In the language of dress, as with speech,' Lurie states, 'each individual has his own stock of "words" and employs personal variations of tone and meaning.'[32]

Lawrence Langner goes even further, by stating that clothes can influence people's behavior. 'Contrary to established beliefs,' Langner states, 'the differentiation in clothing between men and women arose from the male's desire to assert superiority over the female and to hold her to his service.' Men could accomplish this 'by means of special clothing which hampered or handicapped the women in her movement.'[33] In order to remain this status quo men subsequently prohibited one sex from wearing the clothes of the other.[34] Thus, the visual emphasis on the differences between men and women influenced the way both sexes behaved.[35] Patricia Cunningham agrees as she states that through the meaning of dress we 'substantiate our sense of self and our place in society.' The clothes we wear are an indicator of our 'personal worth, values and beliefs as well as those of the culture in which we live.'[36]

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[30] Finlayson, *Denim*, 27.
[31] Alison Lurie, *The Language of Clothes: the Definitive Guide to People Watching through the Ages* (London, 1982) 3.
[32] Lurie, *The Language of Clothes,* 4.
[33] Lawrence Langner, *The Importance of Wearing Clothes* (Los Angeles, 1991) 51.
[34] Langner, *The Importance of Wearing Clothes*, 51.
[35] Robinson, 'Changing Influences and Changing Attitudes', 333.
[36] Patricia A. Cunningham, Susan Voso Lab, *Dress and Popular Culture* (Bowling Green, 1991) 1.

Mass communication

In the 21st century, there is a vast mass media environment unprecedented in history. Through diverse systems the influence of media is everywhere and society and the media landscape are merged together.[37] The word media is derived from the Latin word *medius,* which means middle. The media are the different technological processes that stand in the middle between the sender of a message and the receiver of that message.[38]

'The medium is the message' is a statement made by Marshall McLuhan. He implies that 'the "message" of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs.'[39] When researching the perception of the media it is thus not only important about what the medium has to say, but also what the medium in itself represents.

Mass communication through media became important since the second half of the nineteenth century. The old fashioned newspaper transformed. In the modern democracy, the need of 'inventing and reinventing' personal and national identities was provided by mass communication, which led to the emergence of newspapers directed to a mass readership.[40][41] This development in mass communication was made possible by a series of technological inventions.[42] The one of the most notable inventions was photography. Photography made the world smaller by bringing pictures from all over the world to the public.[43] The mass communication of visual images was born. By World War I, photographs were published in mainstream newspapers and visualized the war.[44] Due to photography, the American media expanded their visual and written human interest stories, covering a wide range of subjects, from celebrities to lifestyle.[45] Another aspect of photography is that it operates as an universal language, which is immune to the barriers of the spoken and written language. Secondly, the human awareness of images is at the same time an

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[37] David Croteau, William Hoynes, Stefania Milan, *Media/Society: Industries, Images, and Audiences* (Los Angeles, 2012) 3-4.

[38] Jessica Evans, David Hesmondhalgh, *Understanding Media: Inside Celebrity* (Berkshire, 2005) 4.

[39] Marshall McLuhan, 'Medium is the Message', Meenakshi Gigi Durham, Douglas M. Kellner, *Media and cultural studies: KeyWorks* (Malden, 2001) 108.

[40] Miles Orvell, *American Photography* (Oxford, 2003) 13.

[41] Lyn Gorman, David McLean, *Media and Society into the 21st Century: A Historical Introduction* (Malden, 2009) 6.

[42] Orvell, *American Photography*, 13.

[43] Orvell, *American Photography,* 13.

[44] Claude Hubert Cookman, *American Photojournalism* (Chicago, 2009) 13.

[45] Evans, *Understanding Media: Inside Celebrity,* 4.

awareness of the subject.[46] Already the cave artists and the propagators of the Christian faith through the paintings in cathedrals, were aware of this human trait.

The rise of radio in the first decade of the 20th century introduced the first broadcast medium.[47] However, the outbreak of World War I brought a temporarily halt to the development of radio as a source of entertainment.[48] At the time of World War I, the national news and propaganda media were used to maintain the morale at home. At the time many politicians and journalist believed in the ability of the media to shape the public opinion.[49] A Committee of Public Information was set up to influence the public's support of the war. Thus creating tension between the media's right to provide information and the government's need to protect classified information.[50] Although film was not yet widely available, during World War I it began to be used for patriotic and propaganda purposes.[51]

In the 1920s, radio developed as a mass medium. The 1930s and 1940s were considered, by David Croteau, as radio's golden age as a 'key supplier of entertainment, and a trusted source of information.'[52] However, even right after the introduction of radio it proved to be of broader significance. Very early on radio broadcasts included political messages, reducing the distance between politicians and the people. It was also possible to reach a national rather than local audience. Making the relationship between politicians and the media of increased importance.[53] The radio as mass medium was also entwined with emerging consumerism. American radio was largely funded by commercials, creating advertisement campaigns on a national scale.[54]

However, the development of the radio as a commercial, broadcast mass medium also played a powerful social and cultural influence on a national level. Even though radio has played an important part on a local scale, it provided a national network that brought the nation together. 'Radio played a pivotal role,' Susan Douglas states, 'in helping us

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[46] Orvell, *American Photography,* 14.
[47] Croteau, *Media/Society*, 12.
[48] Gorman, *Media and Society into the 21st Century,* 50.
[49] Gorman, *Media and Society into the 21st Century,* 51.
[50] Croteau, *Media/Society,* 105.
[51] Gorman, *Media and Society into the 21st Century,* 23.
[52] Gorman, *Media and Society into the 21st Century,* 49.
[53] Gorman, *Media and Society into the 21st Century,* 66.
[54] Asa Briggs, Peter Burke, *Sociale geschiedenis van de media: van boekdrukkunst tot internet* (Cambridge, 2002) 158.

imagine ourselves and our relationships to other Americans differently.'[55] Radio intertwined the public and private, the commercial and the informal, the entertainment and the political and did this on a scale like never before.

Another medium that became popular at the beginning of the twentieth century was the motion picture. Going to the cinema became a respectable form of entertainment for the middle-class in urbanized areas. During the 1920s the production of movies moved from the east to the west coast because of its non-unionized labor, space for expansion, and its mild climate. In 1929, the Great Depression placed the movie business under serious economic pressure. To bring in revenue, producers explored animated movies, violence and sex.[56][57]

Public interest in films led to a fascination in the lives of movie stars. After World War I, stardom was built on public personalities that had lives outside of the roles they played. By 1930, Hollywood was the thirds largest news source in America. Stories about star's lives which had little to do with their professional work became frequent in the popular press.[58] After the studio's recognized their economic potential, stars were used as promotional material and were perceived as a brand to guarantee the quality of the movies.[59]

The development of television was shaped by technology, but was also influenced by existing forms of entertainment. Post World War II, the American prosperity encouraged a rapid growth in private television sets. In the 1950s and 1960s, local television stations devoted over 60 percent of their air time to national programming. Just as radio, advertisement agencies took a large interest in the medium. When programming changed from live to filmed productions, advertising developed short commercials inserted during and between programs.[60] Advertisements were full of ideological messages which reinforced dominant notions on social roles.[61] Consumers were persuaded by manipulative influences of advertisements.[62] Television commercials spread the mainstream values as well by

[55] Susan J. Douglas, *Listening in: Radio and the American Imagination, From Amos 'n' Andy and Edward R. Murrow t Wolfman Jack and Howard Stern* (New York, 1999) 9.
[56] Gorman, *Media and Society into the 21st Century,* 43.
[57] Leonard Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic: a History of American Animated Cartoons* (Columbus, 1980) 87.
[58] Evans, *Understanding Media: Inside Celebrity,* 36.
[59] Hilde van den Bulck, Sil Tambuyzer, *De celebritysupermarkt* (Berchem, 2006) 24.
[60] Gorman, *Media and Society into the 21st Century,* 138-139.
[61] Gorman, *Media and Society into the 21st Century,* 76.
[62] Gorman, *Media and Society into the 21st Century,* 78.

showing pictures as a vehicle of the commercial message. The broader significance of television was the same as for radio, yet it was on a bigger scale.

The human trait of recognizing images gained importance with the development of various mass media. First the photography brought images from all over the world to the public. Movies extended this development by projecting these images on screen in movie theaters. The television brought these images into the people's houses. The visual culture was established.

Equal Rights

In 1920 the Nineteenth Amendment passed the House by a vote of 304 to 90, and the Senate by a vote of 56 to 25, and was ratified.[63] Thus the women's right to vote and to be voted was installed. 'The services of women during the supreme crisis have been of the most signal usefulness and distinction,' an American politician stated, 'it is high time that part of our debt should be acknowledged and paid."[64]

After the suffrage movement's victory of the ratification for the Nineteenth Amendment, the movement lacked a clear sense of how to proceed. The only thing they agreed on was that they would proceed. 'With the vote as a tool,' Alice Paul, the chairman of the National Woman's Party stated, 'women can forge for themselves a place of equal responsibility and equal power with the men of the nation.'[65]

The problems of the movement where in large part due to the fact that there was no longer an ideological consent of what defined equality. This proposed the biggest problem between different ideological strands.[66] Under a new name some women emancipators found a consensus and continued their battle for their vision on women emancipation. This new name was 'feminism.'

The term feminism had been know before, but only became popular after the turn of the century. The term was applicable for the equal rights movement because of its pursuit to completely liberate women from all restrictions they experienced because of the virtue of their sex.[67] Whereas, the suffragist movement had focused on women's place within politics,

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[63] Chafe, *The Paradox of Change*, 20.
[64] Chafe, *The Paradox of Change,* 20.
[65] 'The Nineteenth Amendment', *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, August 20, 1920) II4.
[66] Chafe, *The Paradox of Change*, 45.
[67] Chafe, *The Paradox of Change*, 45-46.

the feminist movement also embraced women's place in economic and social roles and sexuality.[68] All the issues of women's rights were submitted into one proposal that was created by the National's Woman's Party for an Equal Rights Amendment. The amendment was first submitted in 1923 and its aim was: 'Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.'[69] The amendment was originally written by Alice Paul and Crystal Eastman and for the first time introduced to Congress in 1923 as the 'Lucretia Mott Amendment.'[70] However, it did not pass.

Through the efforts of Alice Paul, the amendment was introduced in each session of Congress. In the period after World War II, the outlook for the ERA seemed promising. Congress talked about approving the amendment as a thank you for the 'magnificent wartime performance' of American women.[71] However, in 1946 it was narrowly defeated by the full Senate by a margin of 38 to 35, which denied it the two-thirds approval needed.[72] In 1972, the Equal Rights Amendment passed Congress and was brought on to the states for ratification.[73] However, opponents succeeded in setting an unseen time limit of for ratification.[74] By 1982, the Equal Rights Amendment was stopped three states short of ratification. Advocates of the ERA are still trying to get it passed again through Congress.[75] ERA-advocate Jo Freeman states: 'The power of the Equal Rights Amendment has come more from the ideal it represents than the words of which it is compassed.'[76]

This thesis focuses on societal changes in the Equal Rights issue. Therefore, the constitutional debate about the Equal Rights Amendment will not be discussed in detail. The

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[68] Chafe, *The Paradox of Change*, 46.
[69] Roberta W. Francis, 'The History Behind the Equal Rights Amendment' http://www.equalrightsamendment.org/history.htm (05-05-2015).
[70] 'The History of the Equal Rights Amendment', *Alice Paul Institute* (http://www.alicepaul.org/newsevents/era-today/) (8-8-2015)
[71] Chafe, *The Paradox of Change*, 166.
[72] 'Then And Now: The Equal Rights Amendment', *Alice at a Glance Curriculum Packet* (www.now.org/issues/economic/cea/who.html) (08-08-2015) 13.
[73] Chafe, *The Paradox of Change,* 215.
[74] 'Then And Now: The Equal Rights Amendment', *Alice at a Glance Curriculum Packet* (www.now.org/issues/economic/cea/who.html) (08-08-2015) 14.
[75] 'Then And Now: The Equal Rights Amendment', *Alice at a Glance Curriculum Packet* (www.now.org/issues/economic/cea/who.html) (08-08-2015) 17-18.
[76] Jo Freeman, 'What's in a Name? Does it matter how the Equal Rights Amendment is worded?' *Feminist* (June, 1996) http://www.jofreeman.com/lawandpolicy/eraname.htm (08-08-2015).

thesis is about bottom-up developments of Equal Rights concepts mainly through the focus on fashion especially on jeans as it was presented in mass media.

Structure

To document the equal rights movement, the changing perception of fashion and specifically jeans, this thesis moves chronologically from World War I to half-way the 1970s, because these years mark the first success of equal rights to vote and be voted to the situation were a majority of the American society is pro equal rights and partly equal rights are ruled by new legislation and Supreme Court ruling. Leading to the research question: what were the parallels between the developments in equal rights for women and women's fashion, especially denim blue jeans, and how was this perceived by the American media in the period 1915-1975?

Chapter Two, *World War I and the Interwar Period*, the drafting of the Equal Rights Amendment in America and the introduction of the lady trousers is examined. This chapter takes its starting point during World War I, when 1.5 million American women joined the war production. Either as volunteers, taking up the abandoned jobs or even in military service, women became accustomed to wearing practical uniforms. The long skirts and corsets of the 19th century were not suitable for the active roles women took in the wartime economy and where therefore replaced with more comfortable 'boyish' clothes that helped them to be more mobile.[77][78]

Chapter Two also examines the developments that stemmed from these new professional women in American society. After the war was over, some women were reluctant to give up their increased mobility, which led to the introduction of woman trousers, in some cases even jeans, as acceptable leisurewear. Moreover, this chapter will look at the American media's perception of female icons who embraced the changes in women's style. In doing so, this chapter reconstructs the consequences of World War I and its influence of the drafting of the Equal Rights Amendment. This chapter will answer the question: What were the most significant developments in the female wardrobe and Equal Rights that were covered by the American media during this period?

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[77] Annemarie Elizabeth Strassel, *Redressing Women: Feminism in Fashion and the Creation of American Style* (New Haven, 2008) 248.
[78] Franklin, *Fashion,* 255.

Chapter Three, *World War II*, argues that the social changes of World War II have had a profound influence on the long tradition of female dress and the equal rights movement that emerged after World War I. This chapter describes how the consequences of World War II on the female wardrobe manifested in the same way as in societal developments. Rosie the Riveter, with her denim overalls and protective head scarf, became a symbol of the American wartime woman. Factory work was seen as a woman's patriotic duty, the garments were perceived as part of this all-pitching-in spirit.[79] As women's fashion became more free woman's position in society transformed as well. The question of this chapter is: 'In what way did World War II affect the traditional role of American women in the family and in society and how was this reflected in media perception and fashion choices of the period?'

Chapter Four, *The Debate on a New Look*, compares the conservative and progressive strand of women in the post-war era. This chapter looks at media coverage of the reconstruction debate and the influence on the way of dressing styles. During this period jeans were associated with the war and were placed somewhere between fashion and anti-fashion.[80] Yet, this chapter also focuses on the role of the emerging youth culture, which established their own subculture that rebelled against the American patriarchal society and demanded a uniform of non-conformity. Inspired by rebellious actors like Marlon Brando and James Dean, young American teenagers wore jeans as part of their uniform of non-conformity. The main question of this chapter is: 'How did equal rights gain more momentum in the 1950s, how is this reflected in fashion and what role did the youth culture play?'

Chapter Five, *New Ideas Take Over,* looks at the sixties and first half of the seventies, which marked a very important period in the equal rights movement as well as twentieth century American women's fashion. Especially, the period between 1965 and 1975 marks a revolutionary decade as many young Americans fought to eliminate all prejudice and discrimination in society.[81] Demonstrations protested against all unequal relationships and feminism was just one segment amidst many protest movements.[82] The rebels perceived

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[79] Beverly Gordon, 'American Denim: Blue Jeans and Their Multiple Layers of Meaning,' in Patricia A. Cunningham, Susan Voso Lab, *Dress and Popular Culture* (Bowling Green, 1991) 32.
[80] Gordon, 'American Denim', 32.
[81] Chafe, *The American Woman*, 232-233.
[82] Sheila Rowbotham, *Women in Movement* (New York, 1992) 6.

fashion as a dogma installed by the ruling-classes. By rejecting fashion, they were rejecting the intolerances and injustices of the United States.[83] The strive for equality was reflected in the outfit of the protesters, as the dress code included a garment that everybody could afford: jeans. The 1960s was, according to Beverly Gordon, the era were the 'jeaning of America' really gained ground.[84] This last chapter will answer the question: What was the interaction between the various protest and social movements of the sixties and seventies, in what way did this interaction benefited the equal rights movement and how was this reflected in women's fashion?

Research methods

Denim blue jeans are one of the most worn garments in the world and are a part of the global fashion system. Jeans developed in the twentieth century from a workers garment, through a uniform non-conformity, to an item of fashion design. This development reflects underlying social changes in American society. One of these changes was the aim for equal rights. Noticeable is the fact that as women were aiming for equal rights they also started to adopt the male pants, especially blue jeans. In the thesis the connection between these developments will be researched. With this thesis I want to contribute to the knowledge of how fashion reflects social issues in American society, through the eyes of the American mass media. The aim is to establish the connection between the different developments in equal rights, fashion, especially blue jeans, and mass media.

To establish this, I will look for the connection between equal rights on the one hand and fashion and jeans on the other, in secondary literature. To confront these findings I will use visual expressions on equal rights, fashion especially jeans, as well as written expressions from the American mass media. The main consulted sources are secondary literature about the mentioned aspects and images and text on the subject as primary source. These images and texts are mainly conducted from printed media such as newspapers and magazines and visual media such as movies and television programs.

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[83] Finlayson, *Denim,* 25.
[84] Gordon, 'American Denim' 34.

Chapter Two: World War I & the Interwar Period

The conversion form aprons to overalls is slow because most women must wear both at the same time.

- Theresa Wolfson, 1943[85]

Introduction

World War I proved to be a boost for the equal rights movement as the war demanded great efforts from American women. Because of their anticipation to win the war, American women were granted the federal right to vote; a milestone in women emancipation. This chapter will focus on American women during World War I and the Interwar period. During this period women's place in American society changed significantly. The right to vote led to the formulation of the Equal Rights Amendment, which demanded 'Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.'[86] World War I also led to a change in the female wardrobe. Clothes needed to be safe, practical and provide more mobility. The war led to the social acceptance of women trousers on certain occasions. The already existing riveted jeans were modified to fit the female silhouette. This was a starting point for the premature overall acceptance of the pants as a fashion item in the upper-middle class female wardrobe during the Interwar period.

This chapter will describe how these changes took place in the period from World War I into the Interwar period. That leads to the question: What were the most significant developments in the female wardrobe and equal rights that were covered by the American media during this period?

World War I

Technological developments led to the growth of widely circulating newspapers at the beginning of the 20th century. American citizens were better informed about economic, social, political and cultural events that were happening around the world. Control and presentation of information became essential during war time because civilians were

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[85] Theresa Wolfson, 'Aprons and Overalls in War', in Ray H. Abrams, *The American Family in World War II* (Philadelphia, 1943) 47.
[86] Roberta W. Francis, 'The History Behind the Equal Rights Amendment' http://www.equalrightsamendment.org/history.htm (05-05-2015).

expected to do their part for the war effort. Censorship and propaganda were used to keep up the morale of the home-front.[87]

In 1914, World War I erupted in Europe after Archduke Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was murdered in Sarajevo by a Serbian nationalist. After the tensions increased between the outraged Vienna government and Serbs, Russia promised its alliance to its neighbors. Germany sided with the Austro-Hungarian Empire and tried to invade its archenemy France through Belgium. Britain soon entered the conflict as an ally of France and Russia, and all hell broke loose in Europe.[88]

The United States stayed neutral for the time being. But in the meantime, the war was still affecting the lives of the American people. The American fashion industry was a weak replica off the Parisian fashion scene. With France at war, in Paris, the fashion industry was impacted immediately. Many Parisian designers converted their business into war production factories and some even left their jobs to fight in the trenches themselves. As a result half of the French fashion production vanished. The designs of the remaining couturiers, often women, reflected the grim war. Simple designs with details of military embellishments in a sober color had to reflect the 'zeitgeist' of those years. Lavishness and luxuries were, both by the French and the Americans, perceived as unpatriotic.[89] According to the *Los Angeles Times*, it was most important that wartime fashion was 'sensible', yet, without the sacrifice of quality or novelty.[90]

By 1917, America was forced to enter the global conflict. After 128 Americans were killed by the sinking of the *Lusitania* by a German U-boat, America could no longer enjoy the luxury of neutrality.[91] The war provided new insights into the employment of women. During World War I, the loss of male workers to the armed forces meant that many jobs became abandoned. Major General Leonard Wood, called out to American women in an 1917 article in the *New York Times*, as there were two ways in which women could help the nation at war: '(1) By working in industry, and thereby releasing men for the front, and (2) by joining the American Red Cross.'[92]

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[87] Gorman, *Media and Society into the 21st Century,* 20.
[88] Daniel Delis Hill, *as seen in Vogue* (Lubbock, 2004) 27-28.
[89] Daniel Delis Hill, *Advertising to the American Woman 1900-1999* (Ohio, 2002) 137-138.
[90] Olive Gray, 'Wartime Simplicity of Design Ruling Note at Fashion Show', *Los Angeles Times* (28-02-1918) 1.
[91] Delis Hill, *as seen in Vogue*, 30.
[92] Leonard Wood, 'Gen. Wood Tells of Women's War Work', *New York Times* (New York, 20-05-1917) 3.

Figure 2.1

Many women followed Wood's advice as the United States entered the war. In the closing years of the war, 25 percent of the 9 million war workers was female.[93] Either as volunteers, factory work or even in military service, women became accustomed to wearing practical uniforms. During the war years of 1917 and 1918, American fashion styles continued to revolutionize. The long skirts and corsets of the 19th century were not suitable for the active roles women took in the wartime economy and where therefore replaced with more comfortable 'boyish' clothes that were more practical and increased mobility. [94] [95] This change of dress resulted in the demise of many old attitudes regarding women and women's style.[96] Additionally, trousers for women outside the factories were introduced. With limited social acceptability, women were allowed to wear trousers.[97]

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[93] 'Women are urged to take war jobs', *New York Times* (New York, 9-03-1942) 11.
[94] Franklin, *Fashion,* 255.
[95] Strassel, *Redressing Women,* 248.
[96] Franklin, *Fashion,* 238.
[97] Delis Hill, *Advertising to the American Woman 1900-1999*, 137.

On a 1918 cover of the British magazine, *The Gentlewoman*, the cover girl wore the uniform of a male US soldier; complete with a campaign hat with pinched crown, an issue shirt with large pockets, breeches and puttees. The lower leg was covered with a bandage. However, most US women who participated in the military service still wore a uniform with a skirt.

Figure 2.2

Figure 2.3

Nevertheless, some women did wear pants. Women who were working the assembly lines wore denim overalls, soon nicknamed the 'womenalls.'[98] A garment that, with the help of the suffragette movement, even extended the assembly lines and where introduced in some department stores as leisurewear.

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[98] Sullivan, *Jeans*, 69.

Summer "Womanalls"—New

Overalls Adapted for Girls, Misses and Women. For Gardening, Camping or House.
Official Farm Uniform Endorsed by the National American Woman's Suffrage Associa-
tion—First introduced on Fifth Avenue by Best & Co.—3rd Floor.

A practical Costume. Two models, one with bib front of Khaki, Blue stripe Denim and Blue Chambray, the other with complete waist of Khaki, Blue Chambray, plain Blue, Brown, Grey or Blue stripe Denim. The trousers are gathered at the bottom to give fulness, can be worn ankle or knee length.

Bib Model
2.25

Waist Model
3.25

Figure 2.4

Women's trousers had already been introduced for some elite activities, such as bicyclists and jockeys, at the beginning of the 1910s. 'Smart Women Don Trousers,' the *Los Angeles Times* already headlined in a 1914 article, but admitted that the trousers forced a concession to sex.[99] However, women rarely wore these trousers beyond the activity for which they were designed. World War I changed this as long skirts proved to be very dangerous for certain jobs. Suddenly, the social dress protocol was challenged and women were also seen wearing pants outside of the special designed areas.[100] 'Advices from the mode shows and advance fashion conventions say that even the evening gowns for next winter show a real trouser effect,' the *Los Angeles Times* reported, and the article predicted, 'the working girl and the business woman may be wearing the common, ordinary pants so popular with the male of the species.' The article closed with the expectation that, 'if they once get 'em on they'll never take them off.'[101]

The media showed a growing interest in war reporting. Even before active American involvement in World War I, there were about 500 American war correspondents in Europe and much more joined them after April 1917 when America declared the war on Germany.[102] Within a week of the declaration of war, a Committee of Public Information was set up 'to sell the war to the American people.' The committee was accompanied by censorship and measures like the Espionage Act, the Trading with the Enemy Act and the

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[99] 'Smart Women Don Trousers', *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 26-04-1914) 2.
[100] Delis Hill, *as seen in Vogue*, 30.
[101] 'Pants for Women', *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 15-08-1917) 4.
[102] Gorman, *Media and Society into the 21st Century,* 19.

Sedition act set up between 1917 and 1918. Consequently, the freedom of American media during wartime was very restricted.[103]

The American media showed a large interest in women working in the war business. 'Women will rule Europe after the war', special correspondent A.F. Lankaster wrote from Berlin in 1915 to express his expectations for European women after the war. 'The age of men has passed. A first-fruit of peace will be the establishment of women in Europe on equal terms with men and from that will start a struggle between man and woman for supremacy. In this struggle, man, if he conducts himself as he has conducted himself of late, will go

Figure 2.5

under.'[104] But the American media's also propagandized their own women in the war service. Articles like, 'Wall Street Women to Enroll to Help Win the War', the *Wall Street Journal* praised the working women, 'who were prompted by the keen desire to aid the work of the Government in every way possible.'[105] Or the *New York Times'* essay 'South's Women Eager to Help in Winning War', which specifically mentioned that the women of the North, East, and West 'are just as active. So they are.'[106] Were commonly printed to praise the American war women.

On the position of women as an economic equal little had changed; women made less money, were promoted more slowly and were not organized in labor organizations.[107] The government had intended women employment as a short term solution during the war

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[103] Gorman, *Media and Society into the 21st Century,* 23.
[104] A.F. Lankaster, 'Age of Women After the War', *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 12-09-1915) 9.
[105] 'Wall Street Women Enroll to Help Win War', *Wall Street Journal* (New York, 07-12-1918) 10.
[106] 'South's Women Eager to Help in Winning War', *New York Times* (New York, 29-07-1917) 51.
[107] Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women During World War II* (West Port, 1981) 36-37.

years. Now that the war was over, it was expected that women would return to their traditional role of wife, mother and homemaker. The government enacted laws that banned married women from working.[108] Also a public movement stimulated women to leave their posts and 'give the soldier back his job.'[109]

World War I challenged the existing social order in American society. The war created the circumstances for American women to break free from social conventions, in behavior as well as in style. American media was used to form the public opinion regarding the war as well as promoting and propagate women doing male work. An American war reporter saw the similar efforts of European women in the war industry and remarked 'Women will rule Europe after the war' and 'The age of men has passed.'[110] Women trousers became accepted if there was a good reason for wearing them and the number of reasons increased. Women that filled in the labor shortage required clothing that was practical and safe around the machinery, just as military women needed easy dress to be mobile. Thus, the circumstances of World War I, helped releasing women from confining garments, and therefore helped them to crack the state of inferiority and subjugation to men. There was still a long road ahead for the full acceptance of the women trousers, but the *Los Angeles Times* was right when they expected, 'if they once get 'em on they'll never take them off.'[111]

The Roaring Twenties

In the post-World War I period, American women continued to achieve independence. In providing their services for the homeland there was a public consent that women had earned their right to vote. 'Men are becoming convinced that women are entitled to the vote as well as men because of the impression women have made during the war.' Senator William H. Calder proclaimed in 1919. 'And as soon as women themselves exhibit their desire for the vote there will be no doubt of their getting it.'[112]

In 1920 the Nineteenth Amendment passed the House by a vote of 304 to 90, and the Senate by a vote of 56 to 25.[113] 'The services of women during the supreme crisis have been

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108 Chafe, *The American Woman,* 135.
109 Wolfson, 'Aprons and Overalls in War', 46.
110 A.F. Lankaster, 'Age of Women After the War', *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 12-09-1915) 9.
111 'Pants for Women', *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 15-08-1917) 4.
112 'Praise for Women for Work in War', *New York Times* (New York, 08-03-1919) 12.
113 Chafe, *The Paradox of Change*, 20.

of the most signal usefulness and distinction,' an American politician stated, 'it is high time that part of our debt should be acknowledged and paid."[114] With the power to vote, Alice Paul, the chairman of the National Woman's Party hoped that, women could 'forge for themselves a place of equal responsibility and equal power with the men of the nation.[115]

Nevertheless, American women were divided. Some women were eager to go back home and retain their former position after the war ended. However, there were also women who wanted to keep their job and where willing to fight for their independent and equal position. Though, the fact that women were ready to emancipate did not mean that the American society was ready for this transition. One of the biggest difficulties these women faced was that society distrusted these aspirations. It was deemed impossible to combine the homely duties with a professional life. Many
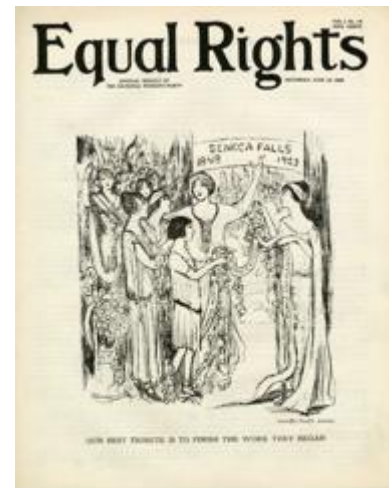
Figure 2.6
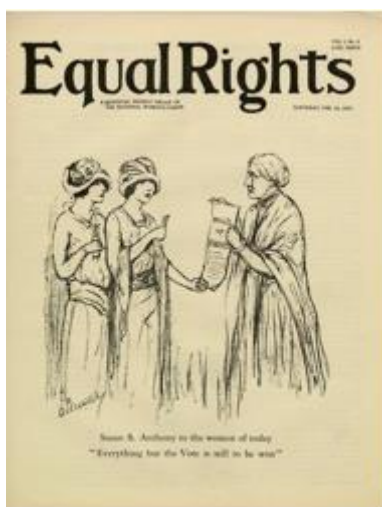
Figure 2.7

Americans feared that professional women would challenge the most important and sacred institution of the American society, the family. When a woman was away for work, there was no one around to take care of her husband and, even more important, her children. For women to be able to take a fulltime job, it was necessary to hire help who would take care of her household and her children. This idea threatened the traditional role definition of the American women as a housekeeper and child bearer too much and was most definitely not accepted.[116] Beautifully described by Theresa Wolfson: 'The conversion from aprons to overalls is slow because most women must wear both at the same time.'[117]

Even though the women's movement faced a lot of backlash from society there was a group of women who were willing to fight for women emancipation in economic and social

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[114] Chafe, *The Paradox of Change,* 20.
[115] 'The Nineteenth Amendment', *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 20-08-1920) 4.
[116] Chafe, *The Paradox of Change*, 107.
[117] Wolfson, 'Aprons and Overalls in War', 47.

roles as well as becoming the boss of their own sexuality.[118] All the issues of women's rights were submitted into one proposal that was created by the National's Woman's Party, called the Equal Rights Amendment. The amendment was first submitted in 1923 and its aim was: 'Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.'[119] The National Women's Party kept the women's rights community informed about the status of equal rights and the Equal Rights Amendment by publishing the weekly newspaper *Equal Rights.*[120]

The renewed fighting spirit was also visible in fashion. American fashion was intended for the modern woman's desire for comfort and style and the common theme of 1920s style was simplicity. The modernist approach changed all art forms during the Roaring Twenties, and in turn also influenced women's clothing.[121] Had the shapely women been the trend in the pre-World War I years, by the 1920s this was replaced by a bottomless, hipless shape. The look of the Roaring Twenties was the boyish, boxy silhouette, combined with bobbed hair and freely applied make-up. The hems moved upward which put a new emphasis on women's shoes and stockings.[122]

Figure 2.8

Decoration and ornaments now extended to the shoes, which were embroidered with beads, rhinestones, and some manufacturers even supplied separate heel ornaments.[123] Symbolizing the libertine principles that writers, like F. Scott Fitzgerald, spread

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[118] Chafe, *The Paradox of Change*, 46.
[119] Roberta W. Francis, 'The History Behind the Equal Rights Amendment' http://www.equalrightsamendment.org/history.htm (05-05-2015).
[120] 'Equal Rights Newspapers', *Sewall-Belmont House & Museum* http://www.sewallbelmont.org/collectionitems/equal-rights-newspapers/ (15-08-2015).
[121] Franklin, *Fashion,* 255.
[122] Franklin, *Fashion*, 240.
[123] Franklin, *Fashion*, 257.

in their works the flapper symbolized the free-spirited American woman who smoked cigarettes, drank gin, wore short skirts and danced with a revolving group of male suitors.[124] Bruce Bliven, editor of *The New Republic,* crowned the look the 'flapper uniform.'[125]

The revolutionary girls, from the cities of New York and Chicago, spread their manners and morals to the rest of the nation through magazines and the radio.[126] Radio was the invention of the 1920s. The era experiences an information revolution and the radio was the first broadcast medium.[127] The medium of the radio brought music, information and advertisement to the homes of everybody that owned a radio receiver.[128] Commercials became the main funding of radio because advertisers believed its value as a means to reach women.[129]

More women showed an interest in sports and other forms of physical activity. Urging leisure clothing to become a prominent aspect in American fashion. Going with this idea that fashion needed to be more casual and easy to wear, designers such as Coco Chanel, Claire McCardell and Jean Patou took a lead. These designers set the tone for informal womenswear that won instantaneous international success.[130]

Leisure time was celebrated by women, as featured in the *Los Angeles Times,* in silk pajamas and rompers.[131] [132] Even though this trend did not really gain ground in America it foreshadowed a later trend of women wearing pants.[133] Sports proved to push American fashion forward, the term sportswear was also commonly used for resort wear, designed for travelling and leisure time, and casual and smart clothing for spending time in the country.[134] The emergence of pants in fashion magazines

Figure 2.9

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[124] Joshua Zeitz, *Flapper: A Madcap Story of Sex, Style, Celebrity, and the Women Who Made America Modern* (New York, 2006) 5.
[125] Zeitz, *Flapper,* 156.
[126] Zeitz, *Flapper*, 81.
[127] Croteau, *Media/Society*, 12.
[128] Croteau, *Media/Society*, 13.
[129] Gorman, *Media and Society into the 21st Century,* 67.
[130] Franklin, *Fashion,* 249.
[131] 'Who Wears the Pants?' *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 04-06-1931) 4.
[132] Olive Gray, 'Of Interest to Women', *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 21-02-1929) 7.
[133] Franklin, *Fashion*, 261.
[134] Franklin, *Fashion*, 280.

was differently experienced by various social groups. For the higher classes trousers became acceptable for leisurewear. In the lower classes trousers were still associated with hard labor on land or in the factories and therefore less accepted.[135]

American manufacturers shifted their focus to ready-to-wear lines, inspired by the English mass-production of ready-to-wear clothing and the French couture design.[136] Even though, designers were still busy with designing lavishing gowns for the rich and famous, they also realized that there was a growing market for the working women who had their own fashion requirements.[137] Since the beginning of the twentieth century, agents of the American ready-to-wear manufactures, also named Modistes, went to Paris to check out the French couture houses, spot the coming trends, buy the garments and report this back to the manufacturers back home. These garments would then quickly be remade for the mass-production and distribution to the American market.[138] A trend that ultimately led to the development of the American mass-market fashion.[139] American designers rarely labelled their clothes, and the media hardly ever spoke of fashion designers by name – unless, it was a French designer. Manufacturers and department stores employed fashion designers, so any credit went to the organization rather than the individual designer.[140] All over America the fashion industry was booming. New York based ready-to-wear designers created a new style that featured easy-to-wear separates that were easy to mix and match and therefore could be adapted to any occasion.[141]

Male students from the University of Southern California, were sympathizing with the lower classes when they adopted the cheap, working wear blue cotton jeans as a symbol of democracy. Elevating the 'lowly blue jean to academic standing' was seen as quite the feat.[142] 'What the college boys wear today,' the *Los Angeles Times* expected, 'the remainder of the citizenry will put on tomorrow.'[143]

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135 Colin McDowell, *Forties Fashion and the New Look* (London, 1997) 37.
136 Daniel Delis Hill, *Advertising to the American Woman 1900-1999* (Ohio, 2002) 134.
137 Maria Constantino, *Fashions of a Decade: The 1930s* (New York, 2007) 10.
138 Delis Hill, *Advertising to the American Woman*, 134.
139 Strassel, *Redressing Women,* 11.
140 Jonathan Walford, *Forties Fashion: From Siren Suits to the New Look* (London, 2008) 59.
141 Delis Hill, *Advertising to the American Woman*, 141.
142 'Blue Jeans', *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 26-12-1927) 4.
143 'Blue Jeans', *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 26-12-1927) 4.

Figure 2.10

Some American women ventured the garment, on April 22, 1920 the *New York Times* reported: 'Young Women Secretaries of Representatives Appear in Blue Denim Trousers.'[144] Even though the women had customized the garment with multicolored silk waist and stockings and rolled up the bottoms to show their high heeled pumps.' Some bystanders perceived the choice of dress as a 'horrifying spectacle.'[145]

The American women emancipation grew steadily, and was definitely evolving. Women slowly gained more independence and this was visible in the way they dressed. The flapper dress, leisure clothing and ready-to-wear lines created the opportunity for women to move more freely and participate in activities they were not able to before. Magazines and radio's functioned as a medium to spread the modern way of life. It was not long until American women adopted the blue jeans into their wardrobe. Higher class college male

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[144] 'Latest in Overalls Startles Washington', *New York Times* (New York, 22-04-1920) 2.
[145] 'Latest in Overalls Startles Washington', *New York Times* (New York, 22-04-1920) 2.

students started to sympathize with the lower classes by adopting the 'denim uniform' as a sign of democracy. In the ever evolving society, the choice of the young would eventually be adopted by the rest.

Thirties Sobriety & Optimism

In October 1929, the U.S. stock market crashed and brought the Roaring Twenties to an abrupt end. The fashion industries of Paris and thus America were hit hard. The Depression substituted the 1920s glamour with a 1930s sobriety. The youthful flapper dress made place for a more mature ideal of feminine beauty. Legs disappeared under long skirts and the boxy silhouette was replaced by a new emphasis on curves of the hips and the bust line.[146]

By 1932, the Republican president Herbert Hoover, was replaced by Democrat Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In the first hundred days of his presidency a large number of legislation was passed to set the nation in the modes of recovery. The New Deal brought a slow, but definite recovery to the American nation. In 1933, optimism was returning in the minds of the Americans and also into fashion.[147]

During the 1930s, Paris had to make room for another fashion influence. The movie theatres were 'the' creation of the 1930s. Going to the cinema, soon became a hobby of many Americans, who were dazzled by the glamorous movie outfits, which had provided a nice escape of the Great Depression and helped to forget the lingering war threats in Europe.[148] Movies catered to the need for cheap entertainment in urbanized areas.

A true cult was created around the personas of movie stars, whose life had become an important influence for American women who wanted to look like their favorite stars. Needless to say, Hollywood had an immense influence on the way women dressed.[149] Fans enjoyed detailed information about the dress, hairstyles and diet of their favorite actresses. This created opportunities for advertisers.[150] Ironically, prior to the 1930s, Hollywood had not been a fashion trendsetter, but during the 1930s Hollywood stars started to demand certain fashion standards.[151] On the big screen Jean Harlow seduced the audience in her white evening gown, Katherine Hepburn was saluted for her casual style and Marlene

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[146] Delis Hill, *as seen in Vogue*, 49.
[147] Delis Hill, *as seen in Vogue*, 51-53.
[148] Franklin, *Fashion,* 306.
[149] Leontien van Beurden, *Mode in de twintigste eeuw* (Amsterdam, 1988) 56.
[150] Pamela Church Gibson, *Fashion and Celebrity Culture* (New York, 2012) 57.
[151] Delis Hill, *Advertising to the American Woman*, 141.

Dietrich started a trend of formal trousers for women.[152] The influence of Hollywood stars on the fashion industry was also blossoming because of the fact that designers had to create outfits that looked ahead of its time, and that would be trending by the time the movie was released.[153] As a result, the retailers and American designers' focus shifted from Paris to Hollywood. In the words of couturier Lucien Lelong: 'We, the couturiers, can no longer live without the cinema any more than the cinema can live without us. We corroborate each other's instinct.'[154]

Coco Chanel was also one of the designers who showed an interest in Hollywood. During the 1920s and 30s, Coco Chanel was a towering fashion designer who was credited for her use of jersey and tweed and most famously for the invention of the Little Black Dress. Chanel's designs were comfortable, easy to wear and anticipated the modern post-World War I spirit that was found in the New Woman. Her enduring appeal is partly due to her loose lines that suited a large variety of women and her separates that promoted the modern wardrobe's concept of mix-and-match.[155] Aspects of practicality, comfort and youthful effortlessness were the key elements to the Chanel style. A style that was personified in her own appearance of a true style icon.[156] As an experienced business women, the Paris-based Chanel was not ignorant to the influence of Hollywood on the fashion scene and in 1931 she travelled to the United States to determine whether it would be profitable to present her fashion to America through the Goldwyn films. About the visit she said: 'I will see what the pictures have to offer me and what I have to offer the pictures.'[157] After a ten-day visit the designer had agreed to do a project that would, in the words of the New York Times, 'introduce her style creations to the

Gabrielle Chanel at her house *La Pausa* in the french riviera with her dog Gigot, 1930

Figure 2.11

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[152] Franklin, *Fashion,* 275 & 288.
[153] Franklin, *Fashion,* 306.
[154] Franklin, *Fashion*, 306.
[155] Franklin, *Fashion,* 249.
[156] Franklin, *Fashion,* 249.
[157] 'Mlle. Chanel Here Hollywood-Bound', *New York Times* (New York, 05-03-1931) 26.

world' through the films of Goldwyn productions, and second, she would provide those movies 'with an authority and distinction in fashion and style that the screen has never laid claim to before.'[158]

Another west coast influence was introduced in American fashion. California designers emphasized on informal sportswear and although there were some fancy dressmakers, many designers focused on swimwear, slacks and shorts.[159] In the west pants for women had been acceptable since the beginning of the 1930s. In an article in 1930 in the *Los Angeles Times* reporter Alma Whitaker discussed how wearing pants had changed her: 'We change personalities with our clothes. Actually we are less dangerous in the pants, for then we are content to be equals, whereas directly we get into those long filmy skirts we feel infinitely superior and capable of handling all inter-sex relations, as it were.'[160] Whitaker expected that pants would soon sell like 'wild-fire.' About the male objections she was not worried, 'there will be little masculine opposition here and there in the less progressive establishments, just as there always is, but it won't last long.'[161] In New York, women were more hesitant. When trousers for women first came up for sale on February 3rd 1933, women were curious but hesitant. *New York Times* reported: 'Eastern Women Shy at Trousers: The trousers-for-women fad reached the department stores today. Much interest was reported, but few sales. Dozens of women tried on the suits, but none of the early shoppers bought any. Each suit has a skirt to match in case the possessor loses her nerve after making the purchase.'[162]

Some Hollywood actresses were revolutionary and wore items from the male wardrobe, making the garments as well as the actresses sexy and feminine. Performers such as Marlene Dietrich, Katherine Hepburn and Greta Garbo, shocked many by wearing pants and suits as a fashion statement. Inspired by the 'London Cut' suits, which were popularized in America by the Prince of Wales, Hollywood soon began to displace the British aristocracy as fashion inspiration, both male and female.[163] In a famous scene of the movie *Morocco*, Marlene Dietrich wore a suit for her role of nightclub singer. A provocative step, but Dietrich

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[158] 'Mme. Chanel: Gown on the Screen', *New York Times* (New York, 15-03-1931) 116.
[159] Delis Hill, *as seen in Vogue*, 55.
[160] Alma Whitaker, 'Trousers', *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 12-10-1930) 2.
[161] Alma Whitaker, 'Trousers', *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 12-10-1930) 2.
[162] 'Eastern Women Shy at Trousers', *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 04-02-1933) 1.
[163] Franklin, *Fashion*, 288.

Figure 2.12

gained most attention when she completely abandoned skirts and adopted trousers for all off-screen occasions.[164] Even though the trouser suit for women did not yet catch on, Dietrich had started a fad. Something Dietrich herself did not understand. In an article the *Los Angeles Times,* by Alma Whitaker, it became clear that Dietrich herself had become annoyed by the publicity surrounding her preference for masculine clothing. During the premiere of *The Sign of the Cross* she told the press: 'Why, I wore that in my first picture for Paramount, Morocco, nearly three years ago – had quite an argument with the studio to let me. I'd been wearing men's clothes in Europe for long before that. No one ever got excited about it before. Why all this fuss now? I am suddenly besieged for interviews, and with requests for manufacturers to let them promote a Marlene Dietrich suit. It is all very tiresome.'[165]

On being an inspiration for American women, Dietrich said that American women should stick to skirts because they look so good in them. 'I think it would be a pity if American women took to trousers: they look so well in dresses.' She is also confused about the sudden fuss, because American women have been wearing slacks for years. According *Los Angeles Times* correspondent Alma Whitaker, Dietrich can 'tweet all she likes' about American women needing to stick to skirts, 'but she's been gone and done it,' because all American women want to look as good as Dietrich, in 'her wee boy's outfit.[166]

Figure 2.13

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[164] Alma Whitaker, 'Why All This Fuss About Men's Pants for Women?' *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 12-02-1933) 1.
[165] Alma Whitaker, 'Why All This Fuss About Men's Pants for Women?' *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 12-02-1933) 1.
[166] Alma Whitaker, 'Why All This Fuss About Men's Pants for Women?' *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 12-02-1933) 1.

Polo coats, jeans and flat-heeled shoes (see opposite page) predominate on the Vassar "Quad." These girls are going to class in Rockefeller Hall, seen through trees.

Figure 2.14

Not just trouser suits, but also informal pants such as kaki's and blue jeans became popular. An article in *Life Magazine*, of February 1, 1937, showed Vassar college girls wearing trousers, blue jeans and flat shoes. The blue jeans were even introduced, in the article, as part of the 'classic campus dress of a Vassar girl.'[167] Clothing rules were obviously more informal on campus as there were girls wearing mini-skirts. May it be for sports or just for day-wear.

Figure 2.15

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[167] 'Vassar Clothes', *Life* (01-02-1937) 26.

Many American women had embraced the pants for comfort and increased mobility, and it was clear that pants were now part of the female wardrobe.[168] At the end of the decade *Vogue* acknowledged that pants had become 'an accepted part of nearly every wardrobe today.'[169]

The *Los Angeles Times* expectation on 'what college boys wear today, the remainder of the citizenry will wear tomorrow,' was also applicable on American women.[170] Blue jeans were slowly incorporating their place in every American's closet. The indigo dyed fabric had originally worn in America by Western mineworkers, lumberjacks and other kind of workingmen whose main concern was tough clothing and had no interest whatsoever in fashion trends.[171] These are, what John Fiske calls, the 'generic jeans.' They stand for classlessness, country, communal, unisex, work, traditional, unchanging, and in the least are a symbol of the nature of the west.[172] Up until the 1930s the 'generic jeans' was the only version of the denim garment. Yet, after this period denim was discovered by the rest of America and 'crossed the Rockies.' Stimulated by films and books about cowboys and Indians, tourists started to holiday in the west and got acquainted to the comfort and ease of denim.[173]

At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, railroad travel made it possible to vacation far away from home. Western ranches started taking in rich vacationers, some seeking an escape from the busy city life, some sought relaxation by fishing and hunting excursions.[174] Some, however, were heading to Nevada on a six-week journey searching for a new start. Hundreds of thousands of people travelled across the nation to look for 'the Reno cure.' Nevada was such a popular destination because of the state's liberal divorce laws. The practice was an economic blessing for the state. When the rest of America suffered the consequences of the Great Depression, Nevada reached the

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[168] Sullivan, *Jeans*, 68-69.
[169] Delis Hill, *as seen in Vogue*, 56.
[170] 'Blue Jeans', *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 26-12-1927) 4.
[171] Sullivan, *Jeans*, 4.
[172] Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture,* 7.
[173] Finlayson, *Denim,* 12.
[174] Sullivan, *Jeans,* 51-52.

'migratory divorce' peak, when lawmakers lowered the residency requirements from six months, to three months, and eventually to six weeks.[175]

Singer Frank Sinatra and Ava Gardner dine together at Reno's Riverside Hotel, August 19, 1951, where Sinatra is filling a singing engagement while fulfilling the six weeks residence requirement for a Nevada divorce. Asked about reports that Mrs.Sinatra would contest his action, he said "I honestly don't know what she will do." But in the next breath added, "I think you can safely say Miss Gardner and I will be married." (AP Photo)

Figure 2.16

For the six weeks, the socialite ladies had to stay in Nevada in order to get residency and a divorce, women became excited about the traditional appeal of blue jeans. Many posh ladies opened up to rough activities such as horseback riding, which were done in genuine cowboy attire. The 1939 movie classic *The Women,* portrays the dude ranch women. With an all-female casts, director George Cukor introduced the high-waist dungarees to the American public.[176] After receiving their divorce

Figure 2.17

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[175] Henry Brean, 'Divorce capital: Six-week split spurred Nevada economy', *Las Vegas Review Journal* (http://www.reviewjournal.com/nevada-150/divorce-capital-six-week-split-spurred-nevada-economy) (31-07-2015).

[176] Sullivan, *Jeans,* 52.

women took home their newfound love for cowboy style denim.[177] Denim proved to be a new way to dress casually and fashionably.[178] The 'designer jeans' was born. These jeans were not the designer jeans we know today, but the 'generic jeans' was incorporated into the urban, contemporary, commodified society of American cities. The symbol of the unchanging, classless garment was exchanged by an upscale, designed for leisure kind of garment.[179]

Inspired by the dude ranch phenomenon Levi's introduced, in 1935, the "Dude Ranch Duds" line, model Xo. 701, as a part of its Lady Levi line. This line was especially designed for the "dudines", who had never worn denim before, but who were now buying denim jeans, jackets and other kinds of denim to wear during their time on the ranches.[180] On the West Coast women wearing denim had already become quite accepted. Slowly did the trend move bicoastal, visible in media campaigns the Lady Levi's line presented pants that were "tailored to fit and look neat and trim on the feminine figure."[181]

Figure 2.18

Blue jeans conquered America during the 1930s, with the help of Hollywood and the Nevada dude ranches. Even though the garment was by far not accepted by everybody, the first signs of the growing popularity of jeans were already visible.

Conclusion

The American participation in World War I caused a break with the existing social order. As many young American men were shipped off to fight on the European battlefields American women were needed to fill the labor shortage. Because of the already existing perception of equal rights female labor participation was seen as an option. Technological innovations in manufacturing created the circumstances that women were able to do the same work as men. The construction work was divided in so many small steps that physical strength was

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[177] Marsh, *Denim,* 98.
[178] Marsh, *Denim*, 98.
[179] Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture,* 7.
[180] Lynn Downey, *Levi Strauss & Co* (San Francisco, 2007) 61.
[181] Downey, *Levi Strauss & Co*, 62.

no longer decisive. So they could replace the men. The only remaining problem was female clothing. The simple solution to this problem was changing the male working outfit into a more feminine fit. This released women from the 19th century confining complex garments and created the same safety in work conditions for women as for men.

This process was accompanied by media coverage, supported by the American federal government. Mass communication grew widely, because of radio, newspapers and motion picture. The media gave attention to the wartime denim uniform, inspiring some American women to incorporate trousers in their wardrobes.

In the post war years women emancipation triumphed when women were granted the federal right to vote. This political power made it possible to aim to fight other inequalities. This led to the formulation of full equal rights for women and men in the Equal Rights Amendment. Even though the amendment did not pass Congress, an important part of American women acted more and more independent as if the amendment existed.

In the 1920s the flapper dress symbolized this way of thinking that women deserved the right to move freely in their clothes and participate in activities they were not able to before. After the Great Depression the sense of freedom stayed but was then symbolized by the trouser suit, popularized by Hollywood actresses.

Because of mass communication blue jeans spread from the West Coast to the rest of the continent for men and women too. Even though it is generally thought that blue jeans were the fifties uniform of non-conformity, already in the late twenties West Coast college students were wearing the pants as a symbol of social levelling.

Figure 2.19

Chapter Three: World War II

These women, promoted to the head of the family, consciously obeyed a reflex of simplicity and resourcefulness, but unconsciously one of emancipation. Since circumstances imposed upon them a role of responsibility, in adopting pants, they expressed the new role of head of the family that made them equal to men.

- Bruno Du Roselle, 1940[182]

Introduction

World War II marks the biggest event in the lives of the generations involved. It was a total war which affected the lives of all civilians. Either they became soldiers or occupied the home front. In a time of war it's evident the equal rights movement could not be prominent. However, the part American women played in the war was on a larger scale than ever before.

The American fashion industry was transformed to benefit the war production. Women needed a 'minimum wardrobe with maximum versatility.'[183] Wartime fashion was a true reflection of the grim events happening in America and overseas.[184] American women filled the labor shortage in the war production factories, making the denim overall one of the most worn items. However, women took over all necessary responsibilities on the home front. This had widespread consequences on the role and expectations of women in American society. This process was widely covered by the American mass media. Movies and photographs satisfied the public's demand of visual information about the war.[185]

This chapter will look at the lifestyle changes of American women, the revolutionary changes in the female labor force as well as the changing appearance and expectations of these women. Leading to the question: In what way did World War II affect the traditional role of American women in the family and in society and how was this reflected in the fashion perception of the American media and fashion choices of the war period?

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[182] Laurence Benaim, *Pants: trousers* (New York, 2001) 94.
[183] Valerie Mendes, Amy de la Haye, *20th Century Fashion* (London, 1999) 104.
[184] Maghann Mason, *The impact of World War II on women's fashion in the United States and Britain* (Las Vegas, 2011) 6.
[185] Gorman, *Media and Society,* 104.

Neutrality

Even in the years where the United States was not an active participant in the war, American daily life was immensely influenced by the raging war in Europe. The war made the import of Parisian fashion to America impossible. In 1939, almost one third of Parisian fashion designs were sold to the American manufacturers with the purpose to be copied or function as inspiration for American designers.[186] The German occupation of France and Paris in 1940, dislocated the American designers as they lost the connection to their main inspiration. The American mass media alerted the lifestyle changes Americans were about to confront. The *New York Times* printed in April 1940 the headline: 'War Sets Theme of Sports Fashion. Paris Designer Creates Style for Women Whose Work Has Been Speeded Up: Gray Flannel Suit is Proving Popular – Turbans Taking Lead in Spring Hats.'[187] On August 19, 1940 *Time* magazine followed and reported that American designers had to deal without the Parisian fashion scene.[188]

Over time the Paris' fashion industry stopped their exports to America and without the influence of Parisian fashion imports, American designers had to fend for themselves.
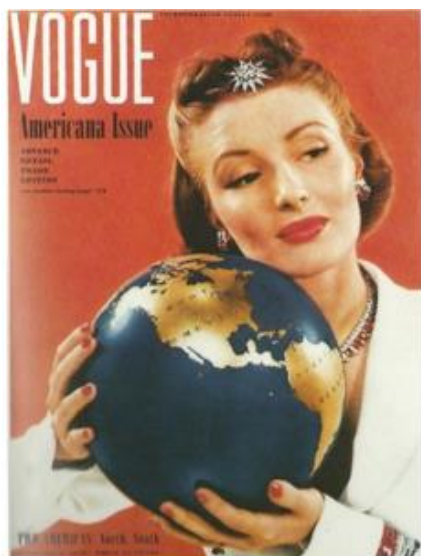
Figure 3.1

This had unleashed a crisis during World War I, but this time around, American designers had developed an American style during the Interbellum and were less distressed by the loss of the Paris designs. Within the United States, large cities and designers were battling each other to replace Paris as fashion capital. New York mayor Fiorelli LaGuardia was proclaiming Manhattan as the new fashion capital of the world. While in Chicago Colonel McCormick, had the idea to make his city the new Paris and was challenging New York's aspirations by announcing a $7,500 design price in the *Chicago Tribune.*

For others Los Angeles seemed like the most logic successor as a natural fashion leader. Hollywood had been anticipating fashion since the 1930s and was experienced with fashion

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[186] Walford, *Forties Fashion,* 61.
[187] Kathleen Cannell, 'War Sets Theme Of Sports Fashion', *New York Times* (New York, 12-04-1940) 25.
[188] Walford, *Forties Fashion*, 62.

prediction, because the clothing which was worn during production had to be in style at the time of the movie's release.[189]

Fashion coverage altered dramatically and in 1940 for the first time ever *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue* sent out their autumn issues without 'a single last-minute Paris model to rave about.'[190] American fashion shows were covered by the American press who started to name the American labels. *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* could not stay behind and feigned excitement over what the American designers had to offer. In January, 1941, the *New York Times* reported that the spring New York fashion week would be '100 per cent American not only in clothes and the talent that creates them but in the basic materials used, such as fabrics, trimmings, buttons and all accessories.' This spring fashion would be adapted to the

Figure 3.2

American women's lifestyle and these New York designs would influence 'every item of dress in the 1,366,000,000 worth of fashion merchandise' that was produced by New York's fashion industry.[191] The collections were received with mixed feelings as they differed a lot from the lavish Paris designs.[192] Functionalism and simplicity paced the style of the American designers who were celebrated, in a sense of nationalistic pride, for their sporty and casual style that perfectly embodied the American woman. Instead of looking at European designs, manufacturers now used their own designs.[193]

By wartime, women and men had opened up to wearing the denim fabric, 'which washes so beautifully, feels so crisp and cool, looks so smart,' as budget leisurewear and not just out of practicality.[194] Denim was associated with the war-time lifestyle and was positioned somewhere between fashion and anti-fashion.[195] Denim manufacturers were busy experimenting with different colors and the outbreak of the war in Europe, in 1939,

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[189] Walford, *Forties Fashion*, 62.
[190] Walford, *Forties Fashion*, 61.
[191] '20,000 Retailers to See American Style Show', *New York Times* (New York, 02-01-1941) 58.
[192] Walford, *Forties Fashion*, 63.
[193] Delis Hill, *Advertising to the American Woman 1900-1999,* 143.
[194] 'Denim Rides High in Dress Caravan: Simple Cotton Fabric Shaped Into Modish Costumes by Couturiers', *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 26-05-1941) 10.
[195] Cunningham, *Dress and Popular Culture,* 32.

inspired the American denim market for new military designs, which were added to the already existing cowgirl themed jeans.[196]

Every day the war threat got closer to America and this threat influenced the style standard. The *Los Angeles Times* reported on September 17, 1941 that in these times of uncertainty 'simplicity, good taste, functionalism' set the rules for women daytime wear, as women wanted to 'feel well-dressed yet wished to avoid being overdressed 'at a time when defense activities for both men and women are increasing with every week that passes.'[197]

Although America was successful in protecting their neutrality during the early years of war in Europe, the war was already influencing American daily life. Lifestyle changes were altering, both because Americans wanted to prepare themselves for the possible war threat and to support the Allied nations overseas. Even though America was not an active participant in the war, there was an inevitable war threat. The American lifestyle was altered to fit the coming war. The American style provided easy to wear, comfortable clothes that would benefit women in war time duties. Therefore designers looked at the denim fabric. This was possible because Paris, as fashion capital of the world, was closed down.

Rosie the Riveter's

On Sunday morning December 7, 1941, the American marine base Pearl Harbor was bombed during a surprise military strike conducted by the imperial Japanese Navy. Since 1938, the Roosevelt administration had been preparing itself for the inevitable war. And the sudden bombing had thrust America into the global conflict. World War II would affect all Americans; the American soldiers stationed on the battlefield, as well as the Americans guarding the home front. [198]

More than any war before, the conflict relied on weaponry, aircrafts and other equipment from bullets to bombs. This put American manufacturing plants into full production. The increasing demanded manpower, however, was leaving for to fight on the battlefields of Europe creating a personnel shortage in the wartime industry. The American government was forced to dig in their labor reserve: American women. World War I was still

[196] 'Denim Rides High in Dress Caravan: Simple Cotton Fabric Shaped Into Modish Costumes by Couturiers', *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 26-05-1941) 10.
[197] 'Nearing War Evolves New Style Standards', *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 17-09-1941) 14.
[198] Delis Hill, *as seen in Vogue*, 70.

a living memory for many Americans, but this time the war was on an even bigger scale and the female labor force grew to a staggering 19 million American women.[199] Others looked for other ways to help out. Around 400.000 women joined the US military.[200] Almost everybody in the nation felt obliged to do their part in the war. Only the very young, the very old and the disabled were passive participants in this war.[201]

As America entered the war the American mass media played its part by praising the female worker, while only a few years earlier, newspapers and magazines had taken the same stand as the government and discouraged women from taking up jobs outside the house. Now, war work was glamourized and women were pleaded to rush to their local registration office.[202] Employers, however, were still biased against female employees, but in this age of war everybody was expected to make adjustments. Henry Stimson, the secretary of war, issued a pamphlet that called, 'You're Going to Employ Women.'[203] The pamphlet declared: 'The War Department, must fully utilize, immediately and effectively, the largest and potentially the finest single source of labor available today – the vast reserve of women power.'
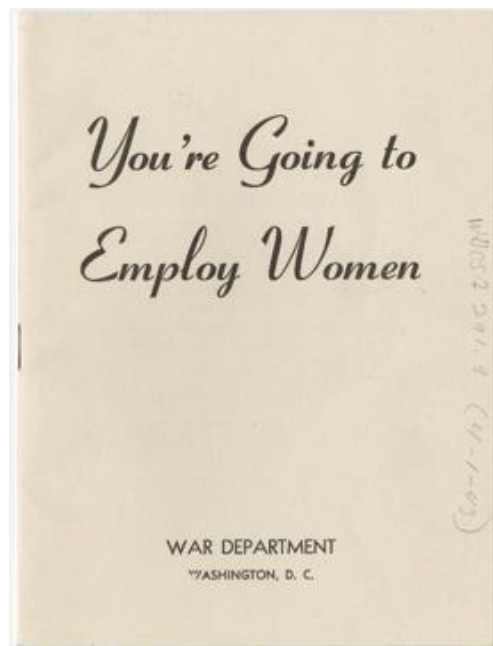
Figure 3.3

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[199] Brian Strong, Theodore Cohen, *The Marriage and Family Experience: Intimate Relationships in a Changing Society* (Wadsworth, 2011) 74.
[200] Franklin, *Fashion,* 298.
[201] Julie Summers, *Fashion in the Ration: Style in the Second World War* (London, 2015) 1-2.
[202] Chafe, *The American Woman,* 131.
[203] Chafe, *The American Woman,* 132.
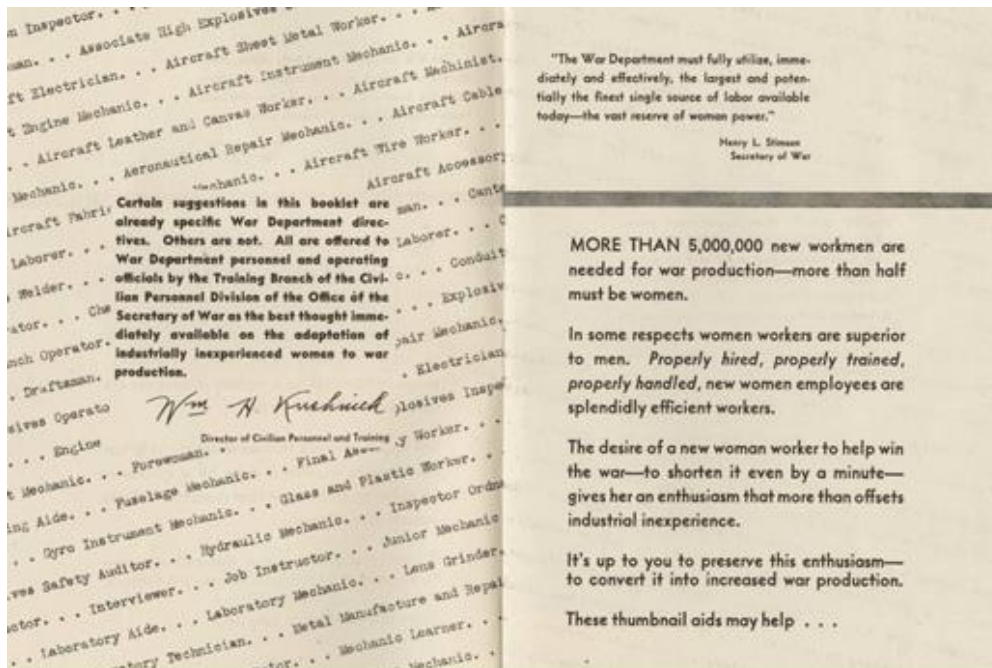
Figure 3.4

Figure 3.5

The Local United States Employment Service offices, sometimes went to such extremes to even ban the hiring of men and insist that women be employed for jobs that did not necessarily required a man.[204] The War Manpower Commission even played his part by attempting to facilitate guidelines to address and end sex discrimination. Something that still

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[204] Chafe, *The American Woman,* 132.

was the order of the day. Simply hiring women to do a men's job, however, did not guarantee economic equality as women received less pay, were promoted more slowly, and the ongoing conflict of the multiple role of woman as worker and housewife.[205]

Figure 3.6

Propaganda campaigns were not solemnly focusing on employers, but were also used to recruit women to take over the abandoned jobs.[206] Women were comforted as the campaigns emphasized that the war would not interfere with their femininity: 'Many women have thought they had to give up glamour and charm as they look to work in a factory or an office. Perish the thought!'[207] Factory overalls, jumper slack suits, and the bib-all, were presented as the latest fashion and suggestions were given how to combine their new outfits.[208]

Figure 3.7

The American propaganda effort was concentrating on the use of film.[209] The campaigns promoted patriotism, the glamorization of war work, the availability of economic opportunities, a stress on women's capacities for non-traditional work, and addressed the specific fears and reservations women had to industry work.[210] Propaganda movies, such as the 1943 film *MANPOWER*, promised women that female laborers had discovered 'that war work is often usually no more difficult than housework.' And that 'employers find that women can do many jobs as well as men, some jobs even better.'[211] To explain the

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[205] Chafe, *The American Woman,* 132.
[206] Anderson, *Wartime Women,* 27.
[207] 'Women's Activities: Working Women Given Styles With Glamour Apparel', *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 10-03-1943) 14.
[208] 'Women's Activities: Working Women Given Styles With Glamour Apparel', *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 10-03-1943) 14.
[209] Gorman, *Media and Society,* 103.
[210] Anderson, *Wartime Women,* 27.
[211]'MANPOWER', https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eKrHfTGWxQ4

female capability government officials emphasized the similarities between factory- and housework.[212]

Figure 3.8

Before the war single women had dominated the female labor force, now almost seventy-five percent of the new women workers were married.[213][214] Nonetheless, married woman with small children remained a minority, as it was expected of her to take care of her infant. Therefore, most married women workers were over thirty-five with children in their early teens. Many of these women had never before felt the reward and the independence of earning their own pay check. For the women that had worked in poorly paid areas before the war, the war meant an improvement in pay, a bigger choice of available jobs and a better status in American society.[215] In more and more families women were as responsible for the family income as her husband.[216] A fact that was celebrated with a high absence rate

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[212] Chafe, *The American Woman,* 138.
[213] Chafe, *The American Woman,* 130-131.
[214] 'Women Begin to Take Over Some of Men's Dirty Jobs', *Life* (21-12-1942) 30-31.
[215] Anderson, *Wartime Women,* 35.
[216] Chafe, *The American Woman,* 133.

under women the day after pay day.[217] Economic independence was accompanied by the freedom of dress.

© Alfred T. Palmer

Figure 3.9

In the years leading up to World War II women had already grown accustomed to a more casual and sporty attire and masculine clothing. By the 1940s, women's trousers were tailored for the feminine body and had become more flattering. The comfort and convenience of pants was increasing in popularity. However, as the war continued America was forced to prevent the waste of scarce materials and resources. Before the war women had used clothing to express themselves, but in these thrifty times most women simply did not have the money to be in style.[218] In the spring of 1942 the War Production Board passed regulations for the designers and manufacturers of the garment industry. These rules were issued in a bid to avoid the coupon rationing of clothes that had been going on in Europe and

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[217] Wolfson, 'Aprons and Overalls in War', 52.
[218] McDowell, *Forties Fashion*, 67.

Canada. It was believed that women were more productive when keeping up appearance. [219]
The set of rules was identified by the letter L, which stood for limitation order. Women's
clothing was addressed by L-85 regulations. These regulations intended to reduce the fabric
use of women's and girl's apparel. Maximum length, hip measurement and sleeve lengths
were introduced to achieve this goal.[220] Strong penalties, such as hefty fines and prison
sentences, threatened manufacturers if they failed to meet these regulations.

For experience, the American government looked at Britain and Canada, which had
already been rationing for two years. The American fashion industry was severely affected.
Common items such as nylon stockings, which had been introduced at the 1939 World Fair in
New York, were no longer in production because nylon was now used to make military
parachutes.[221] Not only nylon was confiscated, most fabrics like silk, cotton, leather and
wool were needed for soldier's uniforms or for other war related purposes. However, the
American rationing system proved successful as the
only civilian garment that became rationed in
wartime America was leather footwear, at three
pairs for every American.[222]

Rosie the Riveter was depicted by the
American media as the symbol of the working
women force who were employed as riveters and
welders on air bases. But soon she turned into a
national heroine symbolizing all 19 million American
women in the labor force.[223] The term Rosie the
Riveter, was first used in the 1942 song 'Rosie the
Riveter: 'All the day long whether rain or shine.
She's a part of the assembly line. She's making
history, working for victory: Rosie
(brrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr) the Riveter.'[224] Her image was mass distributed when Norman Rockwell's

Plus-sized? Mary Doyle Keefe, who posed for this painting, was a petite woman in
real life. Rockwell would apologize for painting her so large.
(Norman Rockwell © 1943 SEPS)

Figure 3.10

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[219] Edmund Lindop, Margaret J. Goldstein, 'American Scene: Art, Architecture, and Fashion', in *America in the 1940s* (Minneapolis, 2010) 96.
[220] Walford, *Forties Fashion*, 68.
[221] Lindop, 'American Scene: Art, Architecture, and Fashion', 96.
[222] Walford, *Forties Fashion*, 67.
[223] Chafe, *The American Woman,* 132.
[224] 'Rosie the Riveter Song With Lyrics', https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2E613J9m0I (11-06-2015).

painting of Rosie the Riveter featured on the cover of the May 29, 1943 cover of the *Saturday Evening Post*. Symbolizing American patriotism, in her denim overall and with her foot resting on Hitler's *Mein Kampf,* Rosie's image had to encourage American women to take on jobs in the war industry.[225] Mary Doyle Keefe was the model for Rockwell's painting, she was a 19-year-old phone operator in Vermont, when Rockwell approached her to ask if she 'wouldn't mind posing for a painting.' Mary had been very slender, and Rockwell later apologized for painting her as a large and muscular women. After the painting received national attention, Mary travelled the country with Rockwell to raise money for the war bond drive.[226] These Rosie the Riveter's gave glamour to the utilitarian denim overalls, factory women had grown accustomed to wear.

Some media had been praising denim, before the war, as a fabric both for 'comfort and chic.'[227] After the United States entered the war in 1942, the practicality of denim came at use in the war-production factories, as the cheap and indestructible fabric helped women to move around without restraints. The American media took a large interest in the denim attire of the factory women and they widely reported about this new social group of middle class working women. Because the factory women were seen in a positive light, the garments were seen as part of the patriotic duty and spirit and were therefore accepted.[228] However, many articles were not about the hard and profitable labor off these women, but almost all focused on the factory woman's appearance. Americans expected of these women to look lady-like and not like a bunch of slackers. There were articles that gave tips on beauty to factory women this included tip on what was the best and easiest way to apply make up for working in the factory environment and what kind of makeup was factory friendly.[229] Or how to hide the scars they had acquitted during their work. The media's emphasis lay on the fact that women still managed to look beautiful in spite of wearing denim. The overalls and slacks were primarily perceived as working clothes and they tried to give it a positive spin by trying to glamourize the fabric by outspoken designs. Others even believed that when a

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[225] Walford, *Forties Fashion*, 92.
[226] Marcy Kennedy Knight, 'Rosie the Riveter', (July/August 2013) http://www.saturdayeveningpost.com/2013/07/01/art-entertainment/norman-rockwell-art-entertainment/rosie-the-riveter.html (10-05-2015).
[227] Sylvia Weaver, 'Shirred and Elasticized Waistbands Add Allure', in *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 31-05-1940) 5.
[228] Cunningham, *Dress and Popular Culture*, 32.
[229] Martha Parker, 'The Beauty Quest', *The New York Times* (New York, 07-09-1942) 16.

woman looked good she would do a better job.[230] When fashion items were hideous, but useful, this was reported in the newspapers. For example, these new shoes for the "Rosie the Riveters":

WOMEN'S WORK SHOES DUE TO CUT ACCIDENTS

They May Not Be Beautiful, but They Will Protect the Feet

Figure 3.11

Women in the factories were granted the honor of enjoying the comfort of easy to wear and practical clothes, but for almost all other occasions the rule for women remained to dress sensibly and wear skirts and dresses. [231][232] In society the female labor force provoked opposition and praise. On the one hand there was a lot of respect that these women were supporting the war effort. However, on the other hand it was expected that women would keep the household running, supporting their husband and children. Many women took pride in their independence, but taking up an industrial job presented some adjustment problems.[233]

In the media Rosie the Riveter was used for propaganda purposes and she and her denim overall became the symbol of the women emancipation struggle. Because there was so much visual propaganda of women wearing pants, American society got used to the idea. The denim outfit played an overwhelming role in war propaganda. The fact that women were recruited on such a large scale was a major change in itself. The prominent position of the media was so dominant because the civilian support was necessary to perform the war effort in a democracy.

[230] Sally Dee, 'Overalls With Chic', *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 14-02-1943) 19.
[231] Benaim, *Pants,* 94.
[232] Mendes, *20th Century Fashion,* 120.
[233] Anderson, *Wartime Women,* 49.

OUT FROM THE WAVES AT DAYTONA BEACH COME THREE ENLISTED WAAC LIFESAVERS. MOST WAACS AT THIS CAMP SWIM EVERY DAY AND LIFEGUARDS ARE USUALLY VERY BUSY
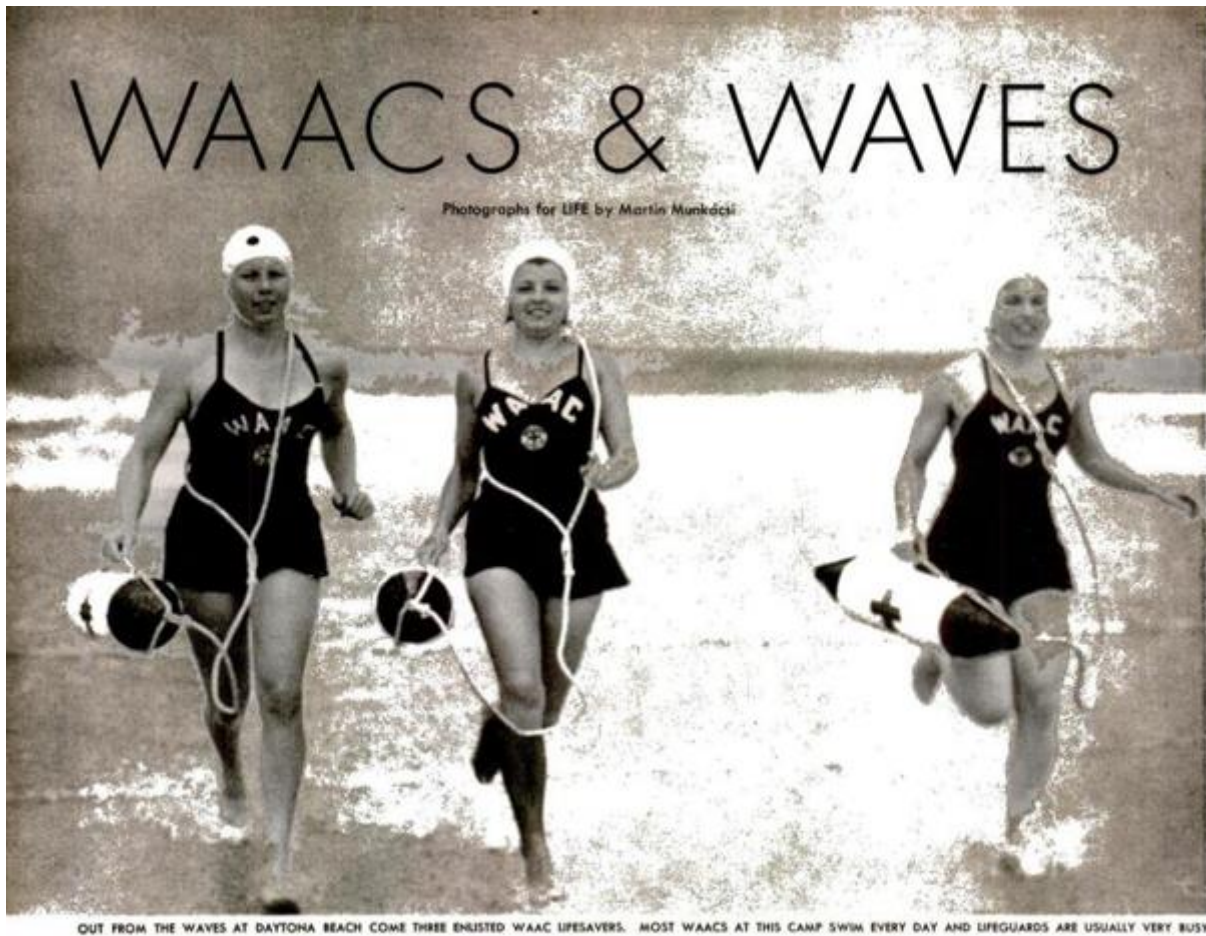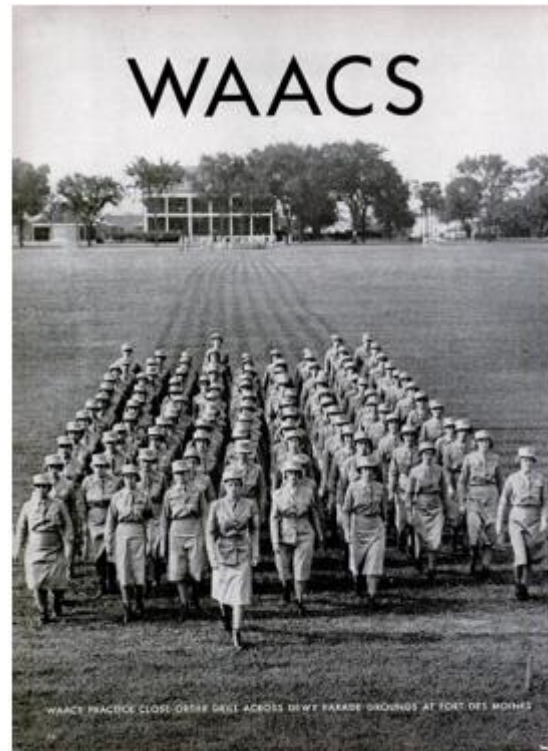
Figure 3.12

Labor shortage was not only visible in the war production factories, but also in the military there were positions that could easily be filled by women, thus providing extra men for combat duty.[234] Before the war, nobody would have ever expected that women could serve in the US Army. The only women that had been omitted to the battlefield were nurses. During World War II around 59,000 women joined the U.S. Army Nurse Corps to serve their country.[235] However, after the attack on Pearl Harbor Americans started to open up to female labor within other areas of in the U.S. army. In 1944, Representative E.E. Cox, a democrat of Georgia even offered a bill in House to plan a military academy urged for women. 'It is idle now even to speculate about whether or not women have the capacity and equipment for active participation in war. It is proven fact,' Cox states. 'Modern war is no

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[234] Bettie J. Marden, *The Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978* (Washington, 1990) 3.
[235] Bernard A. Cook, *Women and War: A Historical Encyclopedia from Antiquity to the Present* (Santa Barbara, 2006) 441.

longer military strength and naval strength alone; modern war is total strength, because modern war is total war.'[236]

First, the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (the WAAC) was established. In 1941 congresswoman Edith Nourse Rogers had introduced a bill in the House of Representatives that proposed a quasi-military organization of 25,000 women that would fill clerical jobs in the army that otherwise would be filled by men. The bill received a lot of positive reactions, unfortunately Congress was preoccupied with more pressing issues and the bill languished. By 1942, Rogers introduced another bill that proposed a WAAC of 150.000 women for noncombat duties. Revolutionarily she added an amendment that proposed to enlist and appoint women in the Army on the same basis as men.

Figure 3.13

Congress immediately objected to giving women military status, together with the benefits and rights of veterans.[237] It was feared that women in the US military would destroy the foundations of American society. It was feared that woman generals would dictate male soldiers, something that was deemed impossible in that time. On May 14, 1942, the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps was established by the American Congress and the day after President F.D. Roosevelt signed the act that authorized the Army to enroll 150.000 officers and women between twenty-one and forty-five were enlisted for noncombatant service. Organized in separate units, women were appointed auxiliary, junior leader, technical leader and so on. *Life* published a report of the WAAC's daily program. WAAC women had to wake up at 5.45 a.m., make their bed between 6.35 and 7.30 as 'no other kind will do in the Army', *Life* reported. The morning continued in a daily assembly, walking, Calisthenics, these were exercises designed to 'foster flexibility and endurance, not bulging muscles.' The afternoon

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[236] 'Military Academy Urged for Women', *New York Times* (New York, 01-10-1944) 17.
[237] Marden, *The Women's Army Corps,* 3-4.

program was determined by different specialties the woman practiced.[238] These differed from being a trumpet player in the WAAC band to a WAAC motor-transport specialist.[239]

Figure 3.14

Soon after its establishment, Americans started to ridicule and slander the WAAC women. But even in this light, the WAAC grew and by 1943 Mrs. Rogers drafted another bill to Congress to grant these women military status. After months of debate the bill was passed on July 1, 1943, as this would help with all kind of bureaucratic problems. From now on, Auxiliary was dropped from the title and the organization was called the Women's Army Corps, where the women now received the same military titles as men.[240] 'Except for the fact that they get no training in fire-arms and tactics, WAAC's are like any other soldiers.' *Life* reported, 'Once they enlist, they are in the Army for the duration.'[241]

However, the WAC was not the only women US military organization. Around the same time as the WAC, the WAVES were established. This was an acronym for Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service, the word emergency referring to the fact that women were only allowed in the Navy because of the war. Their official name was U.S. Naval Reserve, but the term WAVES had stuck. The same as the WAC, the WAVES had been admitted to the Navy to take over clerical jobs, but after the war women ended up taking over many more responsibilities. In 1944, Congress passed a public law that enabled WAVES women to volunteer in combat areas. By 1945, 2% of the Navy was constituted by women as 86,000 served as WAVES.[242]

The life of a WAVE was not like the one of a nun, *Life* magazine reported. Aside of her duties, the Navy approved of an active social existence, and, unlike the Army, WAVES were allowed to date with officers.[243]

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[238] 'WAAC's: First Women Soldiers Join Army', *Life* (07-09-1942) 78.
[239] 'WAAC's: First Women Soldiers Join Army', *Life* (07-09-1942) 78.
[240] Marden, *The Women's Army Corps,* 11-12.
[241] 'WAAC's: First Women Soldiers Join Army', *Life* (07-09-1942) 78.
[242] Cook, *Women and War,* 614.
[243] 'WAVES Are Allowed to Play as well as Work', *Life* (15-03-1943) 78.

ON THE SAND OF DAYTONA BEACH, a column of Waves, proudly carrying an American flag, parades in formation. Although Daytona is in Florida, winter wind and sun are chilly and the girls' convertible raincoats are comfortable. When this picture was taken, these Waves had been in training only one week and this was the first time they had ever passed in review.

Figure 3.15

The WAC's and WAVES were the two largest and well-known military organizations for women, but there were more establishments of women in the U.S. military. In the United States, there was a lot of attention on the uniform of these women. The attractiveness of organizations was attributed to the appeal of the organizations uniform. *Life magazine* concluded in 1941 that the British Woman's Land Army was unpopular 'because of its drab costumes of khaki breeches and green sweaters.'[244] In order to make joining these organizations appealing for American Women, the civilian uniform advisor to the Navy and former *Vogue* editor, Mrs. James Forrestal, approached fashion designer Mainborcher to design the uniforms for the WAVES.[245] In the case of the WACS, also many designers were appointed to think about a suitable uniform. Because of the physical demands on women in

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[244] Mary Welsh, 'British Women: No Time For Tears: women at war keep busy with problems of work, uniforms, make-up, dates and meals', *Life* (04-08-1941) 79.
[245] Walford, *Forties Fashion*, 92.

active duty, they introduced pants in the military uniform for women. However, they did not become a standard component as they were heavily debated by the military command.[246]

Housewives, Marriage & Fashion

The liberating potential of the wartime changes undeniably affected the traditional values and practices in America. However, despite the increasing female labor force, the claims on home and the family remained strong. Even in these emancipatory time, for many women traditional American family life remained the ultimate life goal. Therefore, in the first years of the war there was a rush to the altar. Some couples wanted to spend more time together as a married couple before the husband left. In some cases, a wedding was finally affordable with the women working. And other women set out a campaign 'to get your men while you can.' With the millions of young men being shipped out the shortage became rapidly apparent.[247]
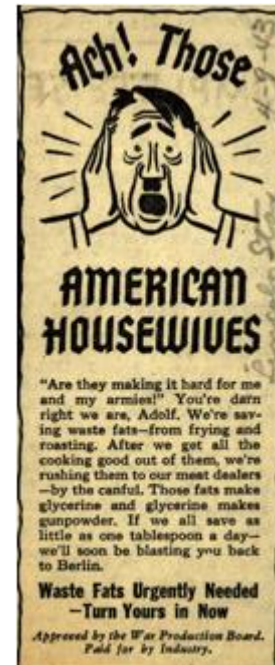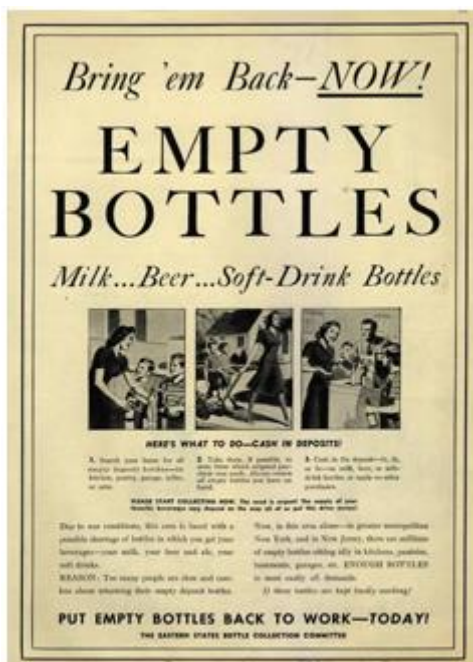

Figure 3.16

Figure 3.17

Consequently, most American women remained housewives. However, these women were still affected and were equally as important in the war effort. The women who had chosen not to take up paid work, often still contributed their share with hours of unpaid volunteer work in government agencies, day-care centers, hospitals and other services.[248] Besides this fact, many women who had previously worked in housework now had a chance to enhance their situation by looking for a job in the fast evolving war

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[246] Strassel, *Redressing Women,* 175-178.
[247] Anderson, *Wartime Women,* 76-77.
[248] Anderson, *Wartime Women,* 90.

industries.[249] This left the well-to-do homemaker for the first time in her life obliged to do her own chores.[250]

In 1943, *Harper's Bazaar* fashion editor Diana Vreeland and editor in Chief Carmel Snow challenged McCardell, to design a dress for these well-to-do homemaker. For this women, McCardell introduced the a wraparound, 'popover', denim dress with a sewn-in

Figure 3.18

potholder, an oven mitt, and a large pocket to carry around a woman's essentials.[251] Hundreds of thousands popover dresses were sold as the dress insisted that women as homemakers still deserved to look and feel attractive.[252] During a time of war designers and manufacturers needed to be creative. Because of its cheap and though nature many designers experimented with the denim fabric.[253] Famous for her American Style, McCardell became one of America's leading fashion designers. Anticipating on the mobilization of the American female population, she responded with low-cost separates and dresses that were made of heavy denim, durable cotton and wool jersey. Her designs appealed to the factory workers as well as the housewives, because they responded to the needs of active women who needed to be mobile. She used the L-85 as inspiration, but even before the war, she had focused on inexpensive alternative utilitarian fabrics that she used in her designs.[254] Next to the popover dress, she designed another garment for *Harper's Bazaar,* a denim overall for the 'clock-punching Rosies.'[255] McCardell's designs are seen as a large influence of the denim mania that emerged in the 1950s.[256]

On September 28, 1942, *Life* magazine noted that 'action has glamour, but it is not necessarily the most important contribution that women can make.' American housewives needed to think war, in order for the United States 'to look like a real war machine.'

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[249] Anderson, *Wartime Women,* 33.
[250] Anderson, *Wartime Women,* 90.
[251] Sullivan, *Jeans*, 74.
[252] Kohle Yohannan, Nancy Nolf, *Claire McCardell: Redefining Modernism* (New York, 1998) 67.
[253] 'Denim For Women Engaged in Defense Work', *New York Times* (New York, 04-11-1941) 28.
[254] Yohannan, *Claire McCardell*, 58.
[255] Sullivan, *Jeans*, 75.
[256] Sullivan, *Jeans*, 78.

Rationing and salving was not enough as they had to remember that everything they consumed regarded the war effort.[257] Manufacturers promoted their merchandise with the message that their product helped to win the war. For example a 1942 Heinz campaign presented its products as a lifesaver in the kitchen: 'In the dual role of wife and citizen, Mrs. America has a valuable ally in the House of Heinz and other makers of quality prepared foods. Since the famous 57 Varieties are ready to serve, they save time every day … lessen her work in the kitchen … provide more hours to give her country!'[258] Another advertisement, that was featured in October 1943, looked like a recruitment poster that urged women to take on war jobs, as this would release a man 'to fight this war to a finish sooner', but was actually an advertisement for *DuBarry Succes School* that had prepared a series of 'beauty shortcuts' that promised the American women she could 'work for Victory and stay as lovely as you are now.'[259]

The advertisements directed at women partly comforted them with the idea that they did not have to give up their femininity. It was also seen as the patriotic duty of women to look good for the soldiers. Therefore, *Life* magazine tried to help these women by publishing 'fashion-with-ration guides'.[260] Or featuring the 'Girl's Guides for Entertaining Soldiers.'[261] American media propaganda and advertisement conveyed beauty ideals as the solution for keeping up morale. Because of the short supply of clothing and accessories, women were required to be creative in keeping up appearance. With the short supply of fabrics a new emphasis was laid on cosmetics

YOU MUST TRAMP ALONG HOT ROADS IN OVERALLS THAT MAY NOT FLATTER YOUR FIGURE

Figure 3.19

[257] 'Life on the Newsfronts of the World: What Women Can Do: Think War, Buy Little, Maintain our ideals', *Life* (28-09-1942) 32.
[258] 'Land of the Free – to Serve!', *Life* (18-05-1942) 5.
[259] 'Speed the end of war!' *Life* (04-10-1943) 80.
[260] 'Fashion-with-Ration Guide', *Life* (20-09-1943) 94.
[261] 'Speaking of Pictures … Here is a Girl's Guide For Entertaining Soldiers', *Life* (06-07-1942) 7.

and hairstyles,[262] The War Production Board had avoided the rationing of cosmetics as they deemed makeup as essential to keep up the female morale.[263]

The L-85 restrictions had made home sewing increasingly popular in North America. The American Wartime Price Board had not included the manufacturers of patterns in the limitation orders. Yet, by February 1943, the rules were extended to include pattern designs. But this was not all, as under limitation order L-98, sewing machines were not made for civilian use until the end of the war. No new machines were made, however, manufacturers were allowed to replace parts in machines that were brought in for repair.[264] The American government asked of women's cooperation in these rationing times. By supplying 'Make Do' booklet, women were stimulated to live a frugal life: 'To help win the war and keep it from being a hollow victory afterward – you must keep prices down.' a 1943 *Life* article urged. Women were advised to only buy the necessities and to make everything they owned to last longer.' Even though sewing machines banned on the commercial market, women that did own one were advised to use it.[265] 'Use it up … Wear it out … Make it do … Or do without' was the slogan of the War Advertising Council.[266]

The outbreak of war had dislocated the nation's traditional values and provided the opportunity to challenge the American traditional practices and assumptions of the woman's place in society.[267] As the role of women changed, family life was challenged. In 1943, Ernest W. Burgess concluded that the modern family had lost its historical function of educator of its members and was now about the giving and receiving of affection. With the patriarchal family traditions challenged, there was room for 'the companionship type of family characterized by equality of the sexes.'[268] Even though most American women remained housewives during the war, it is safe to say that you can speak of a revolution as the national emergence of female labor force tripled during the war years and there was a recalculation of the prevailing notions of women capabilities as they proved to be just as capable as men.[269] Women's economic position did improve for the first time in thirty years. Rosie

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[262] Mendes, *20th Century Fashion*, 116.
[263] Walford, *Forties Fashion*, 95.
[264] Walford, *Forties Fashion*, 131.
[265] '7 things you should do to keep prices down!' *Life* (30-08-1943) 126.
[266] '7 things you should do to keep prices down!' *Life* (30-08-1943) 126.
[267] Anderson, *Wartime Women,* 3.
[268] Ernest W. Burgess, 'The Family', in William Ogburn, *American Society in Wartime* (Chicago, 1943) 32.
[269] Anderson, *Wartime Women,* 4.

Schneiderman proclaimed that instead of being treated as 'a social inferior living on the fringe of American life,' the woman worker had become a first-class citizen whose role was now acknowledged by everyone as crucial to the national survival.[270] However, women were still discriminated against in American society, but the wartime economy provided the first assault on the 'sex-segregated labor market.'[271]

World War II dramatically altered the lifestyle of Americans. As American women played a more dominant role in the war effort, they aimed for more independence and equality. All groups of women expressed themselves through their outfits. Because patriotism was so important, Americanism was manifested in fashion by a functional style and enlarged by the rationing of fabrics. Factory women in their denim overalls, housewives in their denim popover dresses and military women in their uniform.

Conclusion

Because the war participation of women during World War II was more equal to men than ever before, women gained an overall status of increased equality. In significant numbers they became the temporary head of the family as well as responsible for the family income. Because of restrictions and rationing, simplicity, good taste, and functionalism set the rules for daytime fashion.

Mass media spread and enlarged this image, by propagandizing American women working in the factories and wearing pants. These images helped to spread the perception that men and women together were sharing the war effort. This perception reinforced furthermore the equality of men and women. So the struggle for equal rights evolved.

Visual images of women wearing pants made the idea common of women adopting the same wardrobe as men. Much of the fashion industry was transformed to benefit the war effort and because of its functionality the denim fabric became dominant. The importance of patriotism caused fashion to evolve in a distinguished American style.

So this war driven limitations and functionalism in clothing widely spread in pictures, still or moving, and the new female role in family life that was also stimulated by mass media

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[270] Chafe, *The American Woman,* 133.
[271] Anderson, *Wartime Women,* 32.

created at last a new position in for women in American society. The patriarchal society, however, was not willing to give up their position, but the cracks were created.

Chapter Four: The Debate on a New Look

Happiness is the secret to all beauty. There is no beauty without happiness.

- Christian Dior[272]

Introduction

On 15 August 1945, World War II was ended by the defeat of Japan while Germany had already surrendered unconditionally on 8 May. For America and Western Europe a period of reconstruction started. America had replaced England as the new superpower. The defeat of Nazi Germany and Japan was soon followed by a new conflict between America and the Soviet Union.[273] This is seen as an ideological conflict between American capitalism and Soviet communism and is known as the Cold War.

The Allies had won the war, but at the same time it was not known how the Western Allies, outside America, would recover because all resources were drained. The American war production gradually converted to consumer use.[274] European nations slowly started to flourish again with the help of the American Marshall Plan. Large-scale economic aid to Western Europe through the Marshall Plan and the American leadership of NATO enlarged the tensions between America and the Soviet Union.[275]

In America, the war workers returned to their pre-war lives. Many women had taken up war work as a patriotic duty, however, economic equality was decades away. Many women had enjoyed working outside the house and taking up the extra money. They had increased independence that work had brought them. The hierarchy between men and women was challenged as the traditional rules and role patterns in society had been denounced. However, women again faced an exclusion from the labor force as it was one thing to employ women during wartime, it was another thing to hire women in a time of peace. With the retraction of the male heroes from the battlefields, the role women had had during wartime diminished.

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[272] Jennifer Weiner, 'Raised By Lesbians', in Ann Imig, *Listen To Your Mother: What She Said Then, What We're Saying Now* (New York, 2015).
[273] Gorman, *Media and Society,* 113.
[274] Delis Hill, *as seen in Vogue,* 74-75.
[275] Gorman, *Media and Society,* 120.

A large share of American society was of the opinion that the time had come for women to return to their homes. On February 16, 1946 the *New York Times* announced in an article 'Industries in U.S. Replacing Women: 4.000.000 Fewer Employed Now Than on V-J Day.'[276] Public opinion surveys showed that both men and women were of opinion that there should be a strict division between female and male labor. The men had to earn the money and bring home the bacon. The women had to do the housework and take care of her husband and children.[277]

However, there emerged a restoration debate, the conservative stance was challenged by progressives: women that were not eager to leave their independence behind and those who were willing to fight for the right to live their own lives and make their own decisions. This battle also marked American fashion in the 1950s, where lavish Parisian clothing and American casual style were worn next to each other.

Simultaneously, American youth developed their own culture. Coined as 'teenagers', they established a sub-culture that demanded their own uniform. This youth generation was driven by rebellion against all the American patriarchal society.

The question to be answered in this chapter is: how did the Equal Rights movement gain more momentum in the 1950s, and how was this reflected in fashion, and what role did the youth culture play?

Anti-Feminism & the New Look

After the war the returning US veterans and their brides massively moved to the American suburbs. A generation that had gone so long without luxuries was now overwhelmed by the advertisers that reached out to them with an overflow of consumer products such as kitchen appliances, televisions, and the latest fashion styles.[278] The post-war era witnessed an increased emphasis on family life and, as families were reunited after a horrifying separation during the war years, 1946 showed the largest birth rate in American history.[279]

In the newly domesticized American society the anti-feminist movement really gained ground. Men returning from the front wanted their jobs back, even if this meant

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[276] Lucy Greenbaum, 'Industries in U.S. Replacing Women', *New York Times* (New York, 19-02-1946) 27.
[277] Chafe, *The American Woman*, 177-178.
[278] Walford, *Forties Fashion*, 184.
[279] Anderson, *Wartime Women,* 8.

taking positions from women who had earned their place. These men were also the men who moved their wives and many children to the suburbs and expected the kind of home they had dreamed of during their service years. Many employers who had been reluctant of hiring women during the war reinstated restrictions on gender and marital status. Also scientists, psychologists and journalists were very vocal about their ideas against working women and through magazines and books they spread these ideas.[280] The anti-feminist thinkers presented the woman as a motionless individual who was not affected by external events. Men and women were opposites and the two sexes needed to be separated permanently.[281]

One of the best known anti-feminist works was the 1947 publication *Modern Women: The Lost Sex* by Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia Farnham. This book claimed that feminism was the cause of the decline of the home as a social institute. Feminists were discarded as neurotics, who had suffered traumatic childhoods. The claim was that the modern American woman had been separated from her true identity; 'women had been created to be biologically and psychologically depended

Figure 4.1

on a man.'[282] Because of that separation American women, in spite of their riches in material privileges, were the most unhappy women in the world.[283] Farnham indicated women from deliberately sacrificing the home for careers and the biggest blame was put on the industrialization: 'It made women idle, useless and unimportant.' Therefore women set out to resolve this outside the home: 'at the expense of their emotional satisfaction.'[284] Women who wanted to continue their careers after marriage completely discarded her biological role. Many women had to work, but when women placed their attitudes toward work ahead

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[280] Delis Hill, *Advertising to the American Woman*, 188-189.
[281] Chafe, *The Paradox of Change,* 181.
[282] Ferdinand Lundberg, Marynia Farnham, *Modern Women: The Lost Sex* (New York, 1947) in William H. Chafe, *The American Woman: her changing social, economic, and political roles 1920-1970* (New York, 1972) 203-205.
[283] 'U.S. Women Viewed as the Unhappiest' *New York Times* (New York, 23-04-1947) 18.
[284] 'Women in Careers Subject of Debate', *New York Times* (New York, 17-07-1947) 17.

of the home and the job became a career, the woman suffered as well as the husband and child.[285] This would result in divorce and child delinquency.[286]

Margaret Culkin Banning, who claimed that women's unhappiness had a big influence on the world's nervousness and unrest because women had 'such tremendous influence on men and children.'[287] The American media showed a large interest in the antifeminist's ideas and articles that highlighted women's domesticity became more frequent. Comparing *Vogue* issues of 1940 with those of 1950, Daniel Delis Hill concluded, that there were twice as many articles on domesticity targeted the American women in the 1950s.[288]

Figure 4.2

Also in advertisements women were often portrayed in their traditional role of housewife and mother. And the new medium, television, presented American households with numbers of model housewives in fictional television shows.[289] These television shows were not realistic, but that did not matter. The American audience tuned in because television shows reflected the

Figure 4.3

ideal American family, living happy in the suburbs.[290]

The anti-feminist tendency was also embodied in the fashion trends as the casual American style of the war years had to make room for the comeback of dressier feminine clothes of the pre-war time.[291] Denim overalls stayed behind in the war

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[285] 'Women in Careers Subject of Debate', *New York Times* (New York, 17-07-1947) 17.
[286] 'Women in Careers Subject of Debate', *New York Times* (New York, 17-07-1947) 17.
[287] 'U.S. Women Viewed as the Unhappiest' *New York Times* (New York, 23-04-1947) 18.
[288] Delis Hill, *as seen in Vogue,* 77.
[289] Delis Hill, *Advertising to the American Woman*, 189.
[290] Terry H. Anderson, *The Movement and The Sixties* (New York, 1995) 23.
[291] Walford, *Forties Fashion*, 184.

production factories and women's jeans with a side zip were only accepted as leisure clothes.[292] France had been working hard on the rebuilding of luxury trade goods as the nation's economic salvation relied on these exports. Shortly after the liberation of Paris, French designers created a plan to re-establish its place as the center of the fashion world. Notable was the absence of Coco Chanel, who had closed her fashion label in 1939 and spent the war years in retreat.[293] She was accused of liaising with the Germans and when these accusations proved to be well-founded her image was damaged. Therefore, it would have been unwise to open her couture house in 1946 as nobody wanted to wear her name or No. 5 perfume. Chanel escaped to Switzerland where she lived her life in anonymity until 1953, when she felt it was safe to risk return.[294] Eight years she had been in exile. Meanwhile, another designer took the stage: Christian Dior.

Dior was born on January 21st, 1905 in Normandy and grew up in the French bourgeoisie. Before he became one of the most influential fashion designers of the 20th

Figure 4.4

century, he had been a simple art dealer that lost his business in the Great Depression of the 1930s. During the war, he had been a designer in the atelier of Lucien Lelong, where he worked closely with Pierre Balmain, who after the war opened his own successful fashion house. After the war, in 1945 Marcel Boussac, kept approaching his friend Dior several times about taking over as designer of the fashion house Gaston. For Dior, fashion had not been the most logical choice, but he decided to take a leap of faith and after the third meeting Dior agreed, however, under the terms that he would design under his own name.[295] In 1946, Boussac agreed and Dior started his fashion label. When Dior showed his new 'Corolle' collection, also known as the flower line, on February 12 1947, he was already followed closely by the media, however, nobody could predict the hype that this collection would create.[296]

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[292] Sullivan, *Jeans,* 78.
[293] McDowell, *Forties Fashion*, 156.
[294] McDowell, *Forties Fashion*, 158.
[295] Walford, *Forties Fashion*, 192.
[296] Charlotte Sinclair, *Vogue over Christian Dior* (London, 2012) 15-26.

During the German occupation Parisian street style had been inspired by uniforms; French woman wore pants because she was working at the assembly lines and riding her bicycle. Dior mocked this hideous trend that he echoed among the bombed cities and destroyed landscapes.[297] After the war, Dior longed for the return of glamour and elegance of the pre-war era. The designs were inspired by Dior's memory of corsets and deep cut out necklines from the time of the Belle Époque, and deliriously lavish and some dresses were made from forty-one meters of silk each. The designs showed a feminine silhouette that compared the female body to a flower, the 'Figure 8' and 'Inverted Flower.' His extravagant use of fabric was a grant symbolizer of the end of the war and the collection gave French fashion, as *Life* magazine called, 'a much needed shot in the arm.'[298]

Figure 4.5

Many big names in the fashion scene showed up for the show and the collection was received overwhelmingly positive. Carmel Snow, fashion editor of the American *Harper's Bazaar,* remarked that the clothes had such a 'New Look.'[299] The term was picked up by others and soon the collection was crowned as the New Look. The collection was not radically innovative as it was a continuation of the pre-war style, but the look was revolutionary in the sense that it dramatically altered the course of style.[300] Buyers from America travelled to Paris to buy mock ups of garments to reproduce the New Look for the major American department stores.

The post-war reconstruction period embodied the transformation of the war industry into a consumption driven industry. The participation of women labor declined as veterans took over their positions. Conservatives had an outspoken opinion on working women. Many young families moved to the suburbs. Economic prosperity and the new household

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[297] Sinclair, *Vogue over Christian Dior,* 13.
[298] 'The House of Dior', *Life* (March 24, 1947) 65.
[299] Walford, *Forties Fashion*, 192.
[300] Delis Hill, *as seen in Vogue,* 75.

consumer goods led to more leisure time, which led to the need of a leisure outfit. Nevertheless, even anti-feminist women wore pants on occasions.

American Style & American Woman's Dilemma

Amidst the rampant inflation caused by an economic downturn of the late 1940s the debate on the woman's place re-emerged and traditional values gained new influence and followers.[301] According to Beth Bailey, this happened because of the scarcity of men after World War II, which became 'a common place justification' for all sorts of female submissiveness.[302] In the book *The Paradox of Change*, William H. Chafe concludes that this conservative ideology emerged in the light of the post-war uncertainties: 'Perhaps out of fear that there were so few roots in modern America and things were changing so fast, people found solace in doing what they were supposed to do, whether as 'gray-flannel organization men' climbing the corporate ladder together or as 'organization women' holding down the home front and providing a bedrock of security in a world of competition and chaos.'[303] Daniel Delis Hill draws the very simple conclusion that after the war, all Americans longed for a 'return to normalcy, to perhaps rekindle the optimism they had enjoyed with the predictions and promises of the 1939 World's Fair.'[304]

The anti-feminist movement expected that women were eager to leave their jobs in the factories and go back to their traditional role of homemakers. However, an appreciable number of women obtained their position in the labor force and in doing so, they shocked the people that were under the impression that women were excited to go back home.[305] In 1946, American Congress was even discussing passing the Equal Rights Amendment as a thank you for the 'magnificent wartime performance' of American women.[306] However, it was narrowly defeated.[307]

In American society there was a growing number of females who were getting frustrated with the tension between being modern and being feminine at the same time.

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[301] Chafe, *The American Woman*, 210.

[302] Beth L. Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat: Courtship in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore, 1988) 115.

[303] Chafe, *The Paradox of Change,* 187.

[304] Delis Hill, *as seen in Vogue,* 77.

[305] Chafe, *The American Woman*, 178-180.

[306] Chafe, *The Paradox of Change,* 166.

[307] 'Then And Now: The Equal Rights Amendment', *Alice at a Glance Curriculum Packet* (www.now.org/issues/economic/cea/who.html) (08-08-2015) 13.

Dilemmas were raised, what was more important: the role of a women as a mother and a wife, or her role as contributor to society.[308] Anti-feminist groups were rejected by a growing number of social scientists, who did not believe in the 'biological determinism' argument.[309] These opposition groups strived for a new concept of the women's position. One where she would get as much recognition of her economic role as to her family role.[310]

The phenomenon of 'momism' served as a starting point for the discussion over women's suitable role. Introduced by Philip Wylie in 1942, the term described 'the fetish of mother worship in the United States.' Wylie declared that in no other country the admiration of motherhood was so extreme. [311] With nothing else to occupy mothers were obsessed about their children. Smothering them with love and affection children were refused individual growth which prevented them from developing into independent adults. During World War II army recruitment psychiatrists administered a disturbingly high rate of nervous disorders among young American men what partly founded the theory of Wylie.[312]

In the post-war era the developments in economic structure made women tasks obsolete. She had lost the creative satisfactions of home baking, home preserving and home

Figure 4.6

dressmaking as these tasks were replaced by machinery, factory-made clothes and food prepared in canneries.[313] As a 1947 article in *Life* reports: 'Millions of women find too much leisure can be heavy burden.' The Bureau of Labor Statistics listed 20 million American women as idle. These women had no children under the age of 18 and they weren't part of the labor force. Many of these women belonged to a generation that had frowned on working outside the house and their husbands had worked hard to provide an easy life. Now that she had it all, it

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[308] Chafe, *The American Woman*, 151-152.
[309] Chafe, *The American Woman*, 210.
[310] Chafe, *The American Woman*, 211.
[311] Chafe, *The Paradox of Change,* 176.
[312] Chafe, *The Paradox of Change,* 177.
[313] American Woman's Dilemma', *Life* (16-06-1947) 105.

proved to be a burden.[314] The solutions the article offered for the bored housewife or idle women, was a part-time career or the women who could afford work without pay could make useful careers out of civic and charitable work. If this was not suitable they provide a whole other list of things to do.[315] The article concludes that 'when she finds really satisfying work to do she will discover that she is more interesting to her friends, to her husband and to herself.'[316]

WORKING GIRL GWENYTH JONES IS SINGLE, PRETTY AND MUST DECIDE ON HER FUTURE

AMERICAN WOMAN'S DILEMMA

She wants a husband and she wants children. Should she go on working? Full time? Part time? Will housework bore her? What will she do when her children are grown?

Figure 4.7

The *Life* article was most applicable for married women, but they also paid attention to a younger generation of women in the childbearing age who were faced with a dilemma that *Life* deemed: the 'American Woman's Dilemma.'

They asked the questions: 'She wants a husband and she wants children. Should she go on working? Full time? Part time? Will housework bore her? What will she do when her children are grown?'[317] All problems the pre-war American women did not face. The article takes an example of Miss Gwenyth Jones, a 23 year old women, who is working as a secretary to an investment counsellor in New York City. The article states that, if Miss Jones had been born a generation ago, she probably would still be living at home with her parents and would not work fulltime. But as she is a 'typical young lady of 1947 she has a good degree and a range of interests that make her situation more complicated.'[318] She still wants to get married and have children. But housework and child care alone 'no longer seem interesting enough for a lifetime job.'[319] The article gives a few options for Miss Jones after marriage: 1) a full-time career with motherhood, and 2) full-time housework. The article acknowledges that the first option is likely to be very hard when her children are young and need *her* attention, but this option

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[314] 'Idleness: Millions of women find too much leisure can be heavy burden', *Life* (16-06-1947) 109.
[315] 'Idleness: Millions of women find too much leisure can be heavy burden', *Life* (16-06-1947) 110.
[316] 'Idleness: Millions of women find too much leisure can be heavy burden', *Life* (16-06-1947) 110.
[317] 'American Woman's Dilemma', *Life* (16-06-1947) 101.
[318] 'American Woman's Dilemma', *Life* (16-06-1947) 101.
[319] 'American Woman's Dilemma', *Life* (16-06-1947) 101.

will leave her 'well-rounded in interests and experiences when she reached the free years after 40.'[320] The second option is better for when her children are young, but her schedule is so filled with 'routine tasks' that she cannot keep up with her husband.[321] Nevertheless, an education as high as a men's education was not argued. Once grown up women had a hard time making the choice between working full-time or taking care of housework.[322]

According to Chafe, the article was about the fact that before the war a woman had only one big choice in her life and this was her choice of husband. Now females were faced with a bigger dilemma, because the 1947 woman still wanted to get married and bare children, but she also wanted to contribute to the world. The modern American woman was searching for a new identity.[323]

The American fashion industry had cut itself loose from the influence of Paris and was more independent and stronger than ever before. Despite the ongoing love affair of American women with French couture, the majority of American women opted for adaptions of the Paris styles.[324] Besides the New Look, Californian fashion attracted a lot of attention. Before the war California had been the fourth largest fashion center of America and during the war it grew even larger. The Californian climate stimulated outdoor living and Californian based designers, such as Claire McCardell and Gilbert Adrian, focused on comfortable, casual clothes for inside and outdoors. Sportswear and bathing suits were the most important items in the Californian apparel industry.[325]

The introduction of modern casual and sportswear in American society was not always without controversy. Even in post-war America women in pants were not always accepted. Timothy G. Turner expressed his frustration in the *Los Angeles Times* of August 21st, 1947: 'Now I have no objection to women drinking and smoking, for I believe in liberty, but why women should try to dress like men is beyond me. It violated the law, lay and divine.' Turner thought that this trend counteracted the feminist movement, 'it seems to me that if women wore the clothes that are feminine, on which their sisters have put so much attention down the ages they would be much more loved and respected.'[326] Designers

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[320] 'American Woman's Dilemma', *Life* (16-06-1947) 101.
[321] 'American Woman's Dilemma', *Life* (16-06-1947) 101.
[322] Chafe, *The American Woman*, 199-200.
[323] Chafe, *The American Woman*, 199.
[324] Delis Hill, *as seen in Vogue,* 86.
[325] Walford, *Forties Fashion*, 184.
[326] Timothy G. Turner, 'Women in Slacks', *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 21-08-1947) 4.

understood the trend better and incorporated pants into their 18th century inspired designs, the *Los Angeles Times* reports: Fashion designers, with an eye on the 18th century, are trying to revive the gracious styles of that era for 1947 (...) Glamorous Pajamas Hold Spotlight at Fashion Show.' The trousers of these pajamas were cut as 'full as an evening skirt.'[327] These designs embodied the balance between classical and modern fashion.

More American women earned a degree. Her role as fulltime housewife was not as fulfilling anymore. The new household consumer goods took over the household chores, which led to too much leisure time for these housewives. Conservatives against female labor were challenged by progressives. The Equal Rights Amendment even almost passed. Consumerism stimulated female labor participation to obtain these goods. Which stimulated the progressive's point that women could work and obtain a family. This created the American women dilemma.

New Optimism

When the 1950s came, the American people felt a bit of optimism as the new decade brought new chances.[328] Elegant yet comfortable and easy clothes were ideal for the active American woman who kept entering the labor force and for the first time working-class women were actively pursued as consumers.[329] The merchandise for working-class women proliferated during the 1950s and enabled them to use fashion as a way of expressing themselves.[330] In the era of conformism or as Chafe calls the 'cult of domesticity' of the 1950s, the degree of women who continued to enter the labor market was striking. In part this was due to the impact of inflation and rising expectations. The second family income provided the extra money to keep up with the consumer society like buying a more impressive house, sending the children to better colleges or to afford extra luxuries.[331] In addition, many women stated that they liked their jobs, especially the social companionship and the sense of achievement.[332]

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[327] 'Activities of Women', *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 18-07-1947) 6.
[328] Delis Hill, *as seen in Vogue,* 78.
[329] Angela Partington, 'Popular Fashion and Working-Class Affluence' in Juliet Ash, Elizabeth Wilson, *Chic Thrills: A Fashion Reader* (Los Angeles, 1992) 147.
[330] Partington, 'Popular Fashion and Working-Class Affluence', 146.
[331] Chafe, *The Paradox of Change,* 188-189.
[332] Chafe, *The Paradox of Change,* 190.

To be an American women in the 1950s meant a newfound freedom in work and education, but was also challenging because the concept of women's rights was relatively new. This provided some problems for the emancipated women. Between the conservative and the progressive stand, women were analyzed, criticized, admired and envied as never before.[333] *Life* magazine even devoted a special issue to 'the achievements and troubles of this fascinating, puzzling, eminently, noticeable figure, the American woman.' According to *Life* women had earned the right to bring home a paycheck, to enter the business industry or even politics, but even in this time of new responsibilities women still had certain urges and instinctive needs. The most satisfying moment in a women's life would never be the day she got her first job, the article stated, it would be the day she met her husband or held her baby for the first time. When women didn't give in to the satisfaction of these experiences her troubles began.[334]

But the American who was actively pursuing a career also was confronted with other problems as she was not granted the same opportunities as her male co-workers. There was no equal pay and women were denied top positions.[335] Labor equality meant much more than just hiring females, it meant a whole new societal hierarchy where women would be perceived as economic equals.[336]

"Who says we women have equal rights?"

Figure 4.8

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[333] 'An introduction by', *Life* (24-12-1956) 2.
[334] 'An introduction by', *Life* (24-12-1956) 2.
[335] Chafe, *The American Woman*, 152.
[336] Bell Hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics* (Cambridge, 2000) 38.

During the war McCardell had had a large influence on American wartime fashion and continued in the 1950 by introducing casual elegance. McCardell believed in dressing the American women in 'keeping with the way American women actually lived.' She therefore refused to bow to Parisian fashion dictates and solely focused on the relaxed and casual American lifestyle.[337] About her designs she wrote in her book, *what to wear,* 'For me it is American – what looks and feels like America. It's freedom, it's democracy, it's casualness, it's good health. Clothes can say all that.'[338] Cheap and though, denim was regarded as an American material, therefore it was natural for McCardell

Figure 4.9

to work with the fabric and use the material often in her designs.[339] The popularity and omnipresence of denim for daywear can be traced back to McCardell who used the fabric because she was worried that many American women would not manage to pay for the care and cleaning bills that were associated with designer clothes.[340] When she died in 1958, she was remembered by the *New York Times* as the 'designer of clothes to give women a look of casual comfort.'[341]

The American women had different ideals. It might have been that women were different on an individual scale, but *Vogue* suggested that 'no woman wants to be wholly

Figure 4.10

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[337] Yohannan, *Claire McCardell,* 82-83.
[338] Claire McCardell, *What Shall I Wear? The What, Where, When, and How Much of Fashion* (New York, 1956) 156.
[339] Yohannan, *Claire McCardell*, 11.
[340] Yohannan, *Claire McCardell*, 138.
[341] 'Claire McCardell, Designer, Is Dead', *New York Times* (New York, 23-03-1958) 1.

different – a certain basic loyalty to our personalities is the wonder, and delight, of psychoanalysts; but in all of us there's a constant urge towards the ideal.'[342]

Vogue proclaimed Audrey Hepburn as the embodiment of the 1950s ideal. Photographer Cecil Beaton wrote in *Vogue*: 'Nobody ever looked like her before World War II; it is doubtful that anybody ever did…. Yet we recognize the rightness of this appearance in relation to our historical needs. And the proof is that thousands of imitations have appeared. The woods are full of emancipated young ladies with rat nibbled hair and moon-pale faces.'[343] She had a rare quality as her 'allure captivated women, who were never threatened by her beauty and grace and enthralls men, who are charmed by her vulnerability and

Figure 4.11

Figure 4.12

elegance.'[344] The part of Princess in *Roman Holiday* (1953) launched her career, she was proclaimed by *Life* as 'the most gifted star hired by Hollywood in years'[345], and it also turned her into a style icon.[346] The transformation into, what Christopher Frayling calls, the iconic 'Audrey Hepburn look' – the contrast of pale and dark colors, raised dark hair, strong shapes and geometry – was attributed to Hubert de Givenchy. His task had been easy as, in his words, Audrey would have made a potato sack looked elegant. Givenchy had been renounced for his youthful, original, and colorful clothes. Features that

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[342] Delis Hill, *as seen in Vogue,* 78.
[343] Delis Hill, *as seen in Vogue,* 78.
[344] Tony Nourmand, *Audrey Hepburn: The Paramount Years* (San Francisco, 2007) 10.
[345] 'A Princess Goes on A Spree', *Life* (24-08-1953) 76.
[346] Nourmand, *Audrey Hepburn*, 6.

perfectly fitted Hepburn's personality.[347] The most recognizable image of Hepburn might be her look in the opening sequence of *Breakfast at Tiffany's* that shows Hepburn in the elegant and graceful black Givenchy dress looking into the window of *Tiffany's.*[348] Her elegant and

Figure 4.13

simple beauty graced some of the best covers of fashion magazines and Audrey Hepburn was better known for her public persona than her inner person. She was a whole lot different from the sexy bombshells who presented more obvious charm to on the movie screen.[349]

Marilyn Monroe was the counterpart of domesticity. Men of all ages fell for the voluptuous and sexy star, who wore a casual rolled up jeans and sporty shoes. This casual demeanor would be a big part of her appeal as she ignored her own beauty. Though she would

be Hollywood's most glamourous actress, she often wore jeans in her short career. According to David Little, Monroe looked like a farmer in her jeans, but a farmer with a sexual energy. She stimulated that jeans were worn lower on the hips and tighter around the feminine body, as a second skin.[350] Her look popularized the look of denim, the cowboy clothing now became sexy.[351] She showed confidence and she spoke to a new generation where girls were becoming more assertive and the rules of gender were weakened.[352]

More and more American women entered the labor force, however, they were still responsible for the

Figure 4.14

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[347] Madelief Hohé, *Fabulous Fifties Fashion* (Den Haag, 2012) 164.
[348] Nourmand, *Audrey Hepburn*, 8.
[349] Nourmand, *Audrey Hepburn*, 8.
[350] David Little, *Vintage Denim* (Salt Lake City, 1996) 60.
[351] Little, *Vintage Denim*, 60.
[352] Sullivan, *Jeans*, 94-96.

housework. This demanded easy to wear clothing, but at the same time clothes needed to be feminine and elegant. American designers responded to this need by creating casual elegance lines. Pants and blue jeans became more accepted, yet not for formal occasions.

Youth Culture

The American youth developed its own culture. Because of increasing prosperity teenagers were allowed to keep their own money, instead of helping out their parents.[353] The baby boom after the war, made teenagers a large segment of American society.[354] American children had worn blue jeans as playing clothes. This youth generation was driven by rebellion against all the American patriarchal society. One way of showing their aversion to adulthood was to keep the uniform of childhood.[355]

Figure 4.15

They established a sub-culture that demanded their own uniform. The iconic movie *The Wild One*, 1953, soon turned Marlon Brando, with his blue jeans and black leather jacket, into the poster boy for the youth revolution. Two years later James Dean followed with a similar look

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[353] Sullivan, *Jeans*, 84.
[354] Delis Hill, *as seen in vogue*, 91.
[355] Sullivan, *Jeans,* 82.

of blue jeans, white t-shirt, boots and a leather jacket. These jeans, worn by film stars, were social levelers as this style was affordable for most people.[356]

Figure 4.16

Against the backdrop of the uncertain 1940s and in the light of the increased prosperity, the rise of mass consumerism and advertisement, teenagers and rebels wore denim as a token of their individuality and uniqueness. They almost dressed identically and the uniform of non-conformity was established.[357]

The denim manufacturers struggled against that image and their advertisement campaigns were targeting mothers 'buried knee-deep in laundry.' Levi Strauss tried to overcome the negative image with its campaign: 'Denim: Right for School.' Levi Strauss & Co chairman Bob Haas tells: 'We were working against the stereotype in the newspaper business at that time against jeans, and specifically the Levi's brand, as shorthand for an outlier, a rogue, a criminal.[358] As many parents saw jeans as the dress of rebellious teens. The American Institute of Men's and Boy's Wear and the manufacturers of chinos and other competing garments, promoted the movement against jeans in schools.[359] But, the jeans manufacturers could not deny that their bad boy appeal was attracting business and their advertising shifted to the suburban youth market, which had gained enormous economic might because of the post-war baby boom.[360]

Figure 4.17

By 1959, *Life* magazine recognized the youth as a '$10 Billion Power.' The American teenagers emerged as a big consumer as they spent more money and had more money to spent.[361] The blue jeans industry needed to recognize that it was selling an idea and an image as much as it was

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[356] Franklin, *Fashion*, 343.

[357] Little, *Vintage Denim*, 58.

[358] Sullivan, *Jeans,* 85.

[359] Sullivan, *Jeans,* 86.

[360] Sullivan, *Jeans,* 85.

[361] 'A New, $10-Billion Power: The U.S. Teen-age Consumer', *Life* (31-08-1959) 78.

selling the product.[362] The American Jeans manufacturers were thus experiencing a strange paradox. They had an image problem, yet it was precisely that image that made them appealing to the target audience.[363] With this in mind American designers did their 1959 junior lines on the theme 'if you can't beat them join them.'[364]

During the 1950s, American teenagers took a prominent role in the American economy. The youth had more money to spend and were willing to spend this on clothes that distinguished them from their parents. By applying their uniform of childhood teenagers showed their aversion, the uniform of non-conformity had arrived.

Conclusion

A reconstruction period appeared in American post-war society. Veterans that had returned from the front took over the positions previously filled by women. A restoration debate emerged between conservatives and progressives on the matter of female labor. The war production factories were transformed to benefit the consumer society. Consumer goods took over the American economy. The newfound economic prosperity created the circumstances that young American moved to the suburbs and were overwhelmed by all these new household consumer goods.

Fulltime housewives felt obsolete as their tasks were taken over by technology. Too much leisure time proved to be a burden. American women were educated and felt bored. Working, professional or voluntarily, proved to be the solution. The extra money helped to pay for even more luxury. But working also proved to be welcome because women became a more interesting spouse to their husbands.

The working women created the America women dilemma. What was more important, being a good mother or being an interesting individual? The restoration debate between conservative and progressive Americans led to a new status quo. Women were allowed to work to obtain more luxury, but it remained their task to take care of the family.

The dual role of housewife and working women created the market for casual elegant clothes. Women needed to look feminine and elegant, while at the same time they needed to be mobile.

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[362] Sullivan, *Jeans,* 118.
[363] Sullivan, *Jeans,* 108.
[364] 'Designers Turning to Blue Jeans', *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 15-03-1959) 26.

An unprecedented phenomenon appeared in American post-war society. Youth became a group in itself. The post-war baby boom created a growing number of youngsters, who wanted to distinguish themselves from their parents. Mass media reached out to this group, through advertisements and movies as well. These youngsters challenged the existing order, by questioning society values. As a group they adopted the denim blue jeans as a symbol of non-conformity. The youth culture was created.

Chapter Five: New Ideas Take Over

Could you write the history of the modern world on a fabric? The answer would be yes if you planned to use white ink and selected blue denim as the fabric.

- Herbert Koshetz, 1971[365]

Introduction

The 1950s teenage rebelliousness transformed into social protest movements of the 1960s. The revolutionary period created room for new ideas. In the second half of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, many young Americans fought to eliminate all prejudice and discrimination in society.[366] In the protest movement decade, no movement functioned in a vacuum and the equal rights movement competed and at the same time was stimulated by the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War protests, and the Sexual Revolution.[367]

The new counter-culture promoted peace, social equality and civil rights. The youth perceived fashion as a dogma installed by the ruling-classes. By rejecting fashion, they were rejecting the intolerances and injustices of the US government.[368] Paris lost its position as fashion capital of the world once again and was replaced by edgy London, with Mary Quant as its leader.[369]

In the last years of the sixties and the early seventies, the protest movements peaked. Feminism was organized in different strands with different ideologies and was able to force the installment of some legislations on equal rights. In 1972, there was another attempt to add the Equal Rights Amendment to the American Constitution. This chapter will answer the question: What was the interaction between the various protest and social movements of the sixties and seventies, in what way did this interaction benefited the equal rights movement and how was this reflected in women's fashion?

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[365] Herbert Koshetz, 'Dungarees Of Denim: Worn-Out Look Has 'In' Appeal', *New York Times* (New York, 07-02-1971) 7.
[366] Chafe, *The American Woman*, 232-233.
[367] Sullivan, *Jeans,* 111.
[368] Finlayson, *Denim,* 25.
[369] Delis Hill, *as seen in vogue,* 95.

Conservatism & the American Teenager

During the early sixties, cultural changes began to strengthen the growing predominance of a youth-oriented society. The decade began with an event that marked one of the earliest signs of the youth wave that was spreading America. During the presidential election of 1960, the eldest man ever elected, Dwight D. Eisenhower, was replaced by the youngest man ever elected: John F. Kennedy. Together with his wife Jacqueline, Kennedy brought optimism and a promise of renewal to the nation. In his acceptance speech for the Democratic Party nomination for the Presidency, Kennedy directly addressed the young Americans: 'It is a time, in short, for a new generation of leadership – new men to cope with new problems and new opportunities.'[370] Jackie Kennedy, at thirty-one, was the youngest first lady in the nation's history. Decades younger as her predecessors, she was received as a breath of fresh air.[371]

Figure 5.1

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[370] John F. Kennedy, 'Address of Senator John F. Kennedy Accepting the Democratic Party Nomination for the Presidency of the United States – Memorial Coliseum' (Los Angeles, 15-07-1960) http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25966 (17-07-2015).

[371] Keogh, *Jackie Style,* 14.

Overnight Jackie became a style icon and as first lady she topped many best dressed lists.[372] Her choice of clothing, loosened social distinctions as her style was elegant, simple and at the same time accessible.[373] Together with her official designer Oleg Cassini, Jackie strove to create an American style that was not beholden to Europe.[374] Jackie lifted the curtain of live in the White House and she invited the American people into the rituals of upper-class America. American society had an almost obsessive interest in the Kennedy family. American women from all social layers and race connected with the first lady and her style.[375] Her elegant and accessible style made her a role model of her time.[376]

Simultaneously, the conservative trend reigned further in the early 1960s. Even though the first lady was celebrated for her style, the rest of American fashions lacked innovative creations in the first years of the decade. Fashion designers, who had been innovative twenty years earlier, focused on the traditional silhouettes with simple lines and details. Hollywood was not as influential as it had been during the 1930s and even big fashion-plate movies like *Breakfast at Tiffany's, Funny Face* and *Gigi* failed to innovate American fashion.[377]

Although the conservative trend reigned further in the first three years of the decade, the 1950s rebellion against the patriarchal society continued and cultural changes of the early sixties reinforced the predominance of the youth-oriented society. And these youngsters had new ideas for their generation.

Throughout the 1950s, the civil rights movement had grown expansively. As their

Figure 5.2

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[372] 'Best Dressed For 1963', *Life* (11-01-1963) 36.
[373] Keogh, *Jackie Style*, 14.
[374] Keogh, *Jackie Style*, 10-13.
[375] Keogh, *Jackie Style*, 38.
[376] Franklin, *Fashion*, 333.
[377] Delis Hill, *as seen in Vogue*, 93.

struggles became daily front-page news, the American people became aware of the existence of large economic and social inequalities in America. The movement emphasized the immorality of discriminating against any group on the basis of physical characteristics may it be race or sex.[378] Young black women activists abandoned their respectable clothing and hairstyles and adopted blue jeans, denim-skirts, overalls and showed off their natural hair. This uniform was consciously chosen to influence the way American society viewed African-American women, by dressing alike they hoped to erase the boundaries between the opposing groups.[379]

The birth control pill was introduced in 1960, yet it took a few years before it gained popularity.[380] The birth control pill was introduced as a means to limit population growth.[381] The pill separated birth control to the act of intercourse, which meant a breakthrough in

Figure 5.3

women's emancipation. The impact of the new birth control pill on the behavior of middle-class, white, female college students was dubbed the Sexual Revolution.[382] Many Americans remained concerned about the consequences of the birth control pill. 'Birth Control Devices and Debates Engross the U.S.', *Life* reports in 1963.[383] Still, the birth control pill became popular and by 1962 more than 1 million American women were using it.[384]

Another aspect of the Sexual Revolution was the fact that an increasing number of young people starting living together without being married first.[385] The 1962 book *Sex and the Single Girl* dealt with this phenomenon and was revolutionary because the author, future *Cosmopolitan* editor-in-chief, Helen Gurley Brown proudly admitted that she had lost her virginity before marriage. She even encouraged other women to follow her example. Brown was an advocate of sexual freedom for women.[386] Even though, Brown encouraged pre-marital sex, many men did not

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[378] Chafe, *The Paradox of Change,* 197-198.

[379] Tanisha C. Ford, 'SNCC Women, Denim, and the Politics of Dress', *Journal of Southern History* 79 (2003) 626.

[380] Delis Hill, *as seen in vogue,* 93.

[381] Religious News Service, 'Nixon Would Aid Nations Asking Birth-Control Data', *New York Times* (New York, 09-04-1960) 1.

[382] David Allyn, *Make Love Not War: The Sexual Revolution: An Unfettered History* (New York, 2000) 4.

[383] 'Birth Control Devices and Debates Engross the U.S.', *Life* (10-05-1963).

[384] Allyn, *Make Love Not War,* 34.

[385] Beth Bailey, 'Sexual Revolution(s)' in David Farber, *The Sixties: From Memory to History* (North Carolina, 1994) 238.

[386] Allyn, *Make Love Not War*, 10-12.

agree with her message. In 1962, Alexander King, editor at *Life* magazine expressed his fear of Brown's type of feminism: 'the assumption that a women is supposed to get something out of her sexual contact, something joyful and satisfactory, is a very recent idea. But this idea has been carried too far, too. It's become so that women are sitting like district attorneys, to see what the man can or cannot perform and this has put men tremendously on the defensive.'[387] Others were immensely positive: 'Power. Money. And Sex. All three as crucial to America today as they were to ancient Rome. Mrs. Brown not only has all three, she personifies them.'[388] John Hallowell writes in the *Los Angeles Times.* Brown was eventually hired as editor in chief to revitalize *Cosmopolitan* magazine and *Sex and the Single Girl* was the inspiration for the new formula.[389] Under her rule, the magazine transformed from a woman's magazine written by men into a magazine that acknowledged and encouraged female sexuality.[390]

Youngsters wanted to act and dress differently from their parents and rejected the reigning ideologies and public roles.[391] As the 1960s began to unfold, students reclaimed blue jeans. Denim was seen as a symbol of 'integrity, empathy for the less privileged, and a commitment to one's own true self.'[392] The blue jeans companies realized they were not just selling a product as well as selling an idea.[393] Up until the 1960s the garment was often known as dungarees or overall pants, now it was universally known as 'blue jeans.' Folk singer Bob Dylan, even addressed the garment in his 1962 cover song *House Of The Risin' Sun*: 'my mother was a tailor / She sewed these new blue jeans.'[394] Even Levi Strauss & Co. gave in and finally called them

Figure 5.4

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[387] Allyn, *Make Love Not War*, 21.

[388] John Hallowell, 'The Soul of Helen Gurley Brown', *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 15-06-1969) M25.

[389] 'Helen Gurley Brown Named Editor of Cosmopolitan', *Wall Street Journal* (17-03-1965) 18.

[390] Jennifer Scanlon, *Bad Girls Go Everywhere: The Life of Helen Gurley Brown, the Woman Behind Cosmopolitan* (New York, 2009) 9.

[391] Delis Hill, *as seen in Vogue*, 96.

[392] Sullivan, *Jeans,* 112.

[393] Sullivan, *Jeans,* 118-119.

[394] Bob Dylan, 'House Of The Risin' Sun', *Bob Dylan* (1962).

Figure 5.5

'jeans.' With the growing youth movement the annual sales of jeans increased by nearly 50 percent in 1961, while the sales of dress shoes dropped to a historic low.[395]

Birth control and jeans were a powerful combination, Paul Fussell stated. The two inventions 'ushered in an entirely new world of pleasure for the young.'[396] The tight-fitting crotch and rear made jeans an indispensable mean in a young man's dating game. When worn right, jeans could possess the same sexual allure for women.[397] Young women were distancing themselves from traditional ideas of modesty and celebrated their body forms in tight jeans. The sex appeal of women in jeans, inspired even tighter fits.[398]

At the same time, denim was still widely worn as leisure clothing. 'The Whole Family Goes Down to the Sea in Denim and Terry Cloth,' *New York Times* advertised.[399] However, policies against women wearing pants or blue jeans in most offices and on special occasions remained in place until about 1970.[400] At the beginning of the 1960s these policies began to waver, fashion adopted denim and began to use it in their designs to make the fabric more socially acceptable.[401] 'New Roles for Denim', *New York Times* concluded. 'Denim is no longer a country-cousin fabric. It had moved from the farm to casual wear, and now is being used for town costumes, coats and dresses.'[402]

Figure 5.6

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[395] Sullivan, *Jeans,* 111.
[396] Fussell, *Uniforms,* 50.
[397] Fussell, *Uniforms,* 50.
[398] Sullivan, *Jeans,* 122.
[399] 'The Whole Family Goes Down to the Sea in Denim and Terry Cloth', *New York Times* (New York, 02-05-1961) 41.
[400] Delis Hill, *as seen in vogue,* 108.
[401] Little, *Vintage Denim,* 67.
[402] 'New Roles for Denim', *New York Times* (New York, 20-02-1962) 53.

At the beginning of the decade the conservatism of the 1950s ruled on. However, changes emerged that would be of greater significance in the coming years. The introduction of the birth control pill and the election of John F. Kennedy as president catalyzed these developments to the surface. The birth control pill provided women with the same sexual freedom as men. This new freedom was translated to other segments of society. This was visible in mass media and from now on there was no female wardrobe that didn't hold pants.

Youthquake & Optimism

The year 1963, marked a changing year, according to Daniel Delis Hill. The violent turmoil, jolted America out of its 'fifties conformity and complacency.'[403] John F. Kennedy was assassinated and the nation collectively grieved. Young people began to challenge the government and social order that had led to the disarray and disruption of the national landscape.

Youngsters wanted to act and dress differently than their parents and rejected the much loved sixties versions of the fifteen year old, outdated New Look.[404] Jeans had come

Figure 5.7

socially tolerable and had lost their edge.[405] The Sexual Revolution that took off at the beginning of the decade influenced American fashion.[406] Because of the traditional fashion dictates in American couture, young Americans diverted to British fashion influences. The mini-skirt was born in 1964 in London and was loved among many young American women. Mary Quant

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[403] Delis Hill, *as seen in vogue,* 96.
[404] Delis Hill, *as seen in Vogue*, 96.
[405] Beurden, *Mode in de twintigste eeuw,* 102.
[406] Allyn, *Make Love Not War,* 4.

became a leader of the fashion world. She was credited with inventing the mini-skirt even though she denied the association, she remarked that she only popularized the style that was already visible on the streets. In her words: 'We were at the beginning of a tremendous revolution in fashion. It was not happening because of us. It was simply that, as things turned out, we were part of it … All a designer can do is to anticipate a need before people realize that they are bored with what they have already got.'

The mini-skirt trend was received with raised eyebrows. Some schools in the Los Angeles area, had already let go of their former dress codes and had changed it to 'bring skirts from the bottom of the knee to the top of the knee in keeping "with the times."' However, they were not willing to accept mini-skirts.[407] *New York Times* columnist Isadore Barmash, spoke out her concern of the skirt that 'alarmingly' stops at 4 inches above the knee, some even 5 inches. The shortness of the skirt 'causes men to stop and stare on crowded streets or creates disconcerting situations in the subways or draws curious groups when miniskirted women board taxis.'[408]

The poster girl for the 1960s mini-trend was Twiggy. Her girlish, teenager figure responded to the youth movement that was taking over the nation.[409] As fashion trends revealed more flesh and hemlines moved up, a health and fitness craze spread across the nation for women who wanted to dress younger. The ideal was narrow, boyish hips rather than the feminine silhouette of the New Look.[410] Jeans were worn skin tight and functioned as a second skin.[411] Narrow until the ankle or wide like the bell-bottoms, hip huggers paired with knit tops became the casual youth look.[412]

Figure 5.8

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[407] Vi Ethinger, 'Knee-High School Skirt In – Mini Out – to Put It Briefly', *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 11-09-1966) 1.

[408] Isadore Barmash, 'Miniskirts Are Raising Some Retailing Eyebrows', *New York Times* (New York, 04-12-1966) 9.

[409] Franklin, *Fashion,* 354.

[410] Delis Hill, *as seen in Vogue*, 103.

[411] Franklin, *Fashion,* 373.

[412] Delis Hill, *as seen in Vogue*, 103.

The international fashion scene continued to surprise with glamourous and exciting collections, sometimes going a little overboard. An Austrian-born American fashion designer Rudi Gernreich introduced the monokini, a regular bathing suit on the bottom, only to be held up with two small straps rising between the arch of the wearer's breasts.[413] *Life* magazine branded the suit 'Fashion's Best Joke on Itself in Years' and the 'most absurd garment,' 'The suit is no good for swimming, because it falls off, and it is no good for sunning because it leaves disastrous strap marks.'[414] *New York Times* reported that stores would not display or promote the garment, but 'If they want it, we will have it for them.'[415] The *Los Angeles Times* was worried 'If There's No Swim Suit Top Where Will it Stop?'[416] The creation caused international attention. Soon English designers copied the idea and created fancy topless dresses.[417] Window shoppers from all over the world reacted with the same modest shock to the dress. Only a few women had the guts to buy the garment, only to be told off when they wore it in public.[418]

Sexual freedom that had been installed by the birth control pill was also visible in fashion. The mini-skirt symbolized the diminishing promiscuity. Noticeable, however, is the fact that the ideal female silhouette was rectangular and boyish, with Twiggy as the poster girl. The youthful body ideal had gone overboard by creating a childish body shape unobtainable for the grown up women.

The Revolutionary Sixties

The revolutionary sixties reached its climax in the final two years of the decade. Peace demonstrations against the Vietnam War were in progress, feminists held demonstrations at the Miss America pageant and the slogan 'Black is beautiful' first appeared in the mass media. In 1968, the assassinations of young and idealistic presidency candidate Bobby Kennedy and Nobel-Peace Prize winner Martin Luther King shocked the nation.[419] Urging the pacifist youth to act up.

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[413] Allyn, *Make Love Not War*, 23.
[414] Shana Alexander, 'Fashion's Best Joke on Itself in Years', *Life* (10-06-1964) 56.
[415] Bernadine Morris, 'Topless Suits Go on Sale This Week', *New York Times* (New York, 16-06-1964) 43.
[416] Gay Pauley, 'If There's No Swim Suit Top Where Will It Stop?', *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 29-06-1964) 16.
[417] Allyn, *Make Love Not War*, 23.
[418] 'East and West – the Same Reaction', *Life* (10-07-1964) 58.
[419] Delis Hill, *as seen in Vogue*, 104.

Jeans remained important in the youth movements. Youngsters wanted their own style with authentic, natural and functional clothes. Blue jeans and a shirt was the ideal uniform to go back to America's roots.[420] But the urge for individualism was threatened after jeans became popularized 'What Should a Lady Wear to a Nice Party? *Wall Street Journal* asks its readers, 'Consider Blue Jeans.'[421] To differentiate themselves many youngsters sought to escape this uniformity, by painting, embellishing, plastering or embroidering jeans, to give them a unique and distinguished look.[422] 'Once, bluejeans were sturdy, reliable, and unglamorous.' *New York Times* reports. 'This season, jeans are sprouting geometric, floral, Paisley and abstract patterns. Where it will all stop, no one knows.'[423]

Figure 5.9

At the same time there was a unisex trend setting in.[424] For the biggest part, unisex meant more masculine clothes for girls and women. The attempts to introduce female clothes to the male wardrobe did not really catch on.[425]

Figure 5.10

However, some young men were moving towards a more feminine fashion sense.[426] Fashion moved into a unisex style the so-called 'Peacock Revolution,' with its floral prints, decorative patterns, and vivid colors. When men started to grow their hair and wear heals, many complained that guys couldn't be told apart from the girls.[427] According to Alison Lurie in *The Language of Clothes*, 'to the careful observer, all these students are only identical below the waist; above it they may wear anything from a lumberjack shirt to a lace blouse. Grammatically, this costume seems to be a sign that in their lower or physical

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[420] Little, *Vintage Denim,* 69-70.
[421] Everett Groseclose, 'What Should a Nice Lady Wear to a Nice Party? Consider Blue Jeans', *Wall Street Journal* (New York, 27-12-1968) 1.
[422] Beurden, *Mode in de twintigste eeuw,* 102.
[423] Enid Nemy, 'Patterned Jeans Chase the Blues', *New York Times* (New York, 11-02-1969) 34.
[424] Franklin, *Fashion,* 359.
[425] Jo B. Paoletti, *Sex and Unisex: Fashion, Feminism, and the Sexual Revolution* (Bloomington, 2015) 6.
[426] Franklin, *Fashion,* 372.
[427] Sullivan, *Jeans,* 122.

natures these persons are alike, however, dissimilar they may be socially, intellectually, or aesthetically.'[428]

In the hippie movement gender neutral fashion blossomed with couples often wearing the same outfits. Preaching peace, love, and freedom, protest was at the heart of the hippie movement and in particular against the American involvement in the Vietnam War.[429] They took issue with patriarchal and capitalist society, sexual discrimination and civil rights. Their way of dress conveyed these beliefs. Individuality and anti-fashion was the key. Clothing conveyed peace, interest in other cultures and experimentation with drugs. 'Today, nothing is out, because everything is in. Every costume from every era is now available to everyone.' Marshall McLuhan wrote about the hippie fashion.[430]

Figure 5.11

Gender expression in unisex clothing coincided with the women's liberation movement that was growing in America. Young women had the example of a working mother, but also witnessed the isolated position of their mothers. They realized they wanted to change their own future. Jo Freeman reminds that these young women did not comprehend that it might require more than an individual decision to conquer their own course. In her words, we grew up 'believing there were three sexes: men, women, and me.'[431] The movement was long overdue. American women were expected to fulfill as an economic, social and political participants on the one hand, but on the other were denied equal rights and opportunities.[432]

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[428] Lurie, the language of clothes, 16.
[429] Franklin, *Fashion,* 374.
[430] Franklin, *Fashion,* 374.
[431] Stephanie Coontz, *A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique and American Women at the Dawn of the 1960s* (New York, 2011) xviii.
[432] Rosalyn Baxandall, Linda Gordon, *Dear Sisters: Dispatches from the Women's Liberation Movement* (New York, 2000) 3.

Women's discontent of their place within American society in the sixties was produced by the unprecedented, growing number of women entering the labor force.[433] By the mid-1960s, the contradiction between paid work and higher education on the one hand and the submissive domestic position of women on the other, became irreconcilable for some women.[434] The most widely discussed condemnation of America's sex inequality system came from Betty Friedan, a housewife and former labor union journalist.[435] Friedan addressed this problem and stated that American society held women captive by promoting the idea that women could only be happy in their role as mother and wife. She argued that an independent existence outside the home would give women the space to become a full and equal individuals.[436]

The women's liberation movement developed in the shadow of other protest movements. These protest movements were an eye opener to the submissiveness of women in general. These protest women, however, were not well organized, nor was there a form of formal structure within the basis of the different strands. Consequentially, not one organization would take the lead and the women's liberation movement was polarized.[437]

Some feminists questioned whether the feminine ideal of sexual freedom was genuinely liberating for women. Or did the excess skin and tighter fit, help turn women into

Figure 5.12

sex objects?[438] A group of radical feminists prioritized the sexual oppression of women. One of the first demonstrations of the group was picketing the Miss America Pageant of 1968. Even though, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that the winner of the 1968 Miss America pageant, preferred jeans over formal wear.[439] As a form of

[433] Alice Nichols, 'Nothing Distant About It: Women's Liberation and Sixties Radicalism' in David Farber, *The Sixties: From Memory to History* (North Carolina, 1994) 152.
[434] Nichols, 'Nothing Distant About It, 153.
[435] Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (New York, 2012) 1930.
[436] Rosen, *The World Split Open,* 1930.
[437] Jo Freeman, *Social Movements of the Sixties and Seventies* (New York, 1983) 17-18.
[438] Valerie Steele, *Women of Fashion: Twentieth-Century Designers* (New York, 1991) 134.
[439] 'Miss America Prefers Jeans over Formality', *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, 09-09-1968) 9.

protest, tossing their bras in trash cans to burn them, this move symbolized the attempt to change the existing fashion and beauty standards. To this day there is no clarity if the women really did burn the bra's, but the term 'bra-burners' entered the media vocabulary.[440] Men were seen as the enemy and patriarchy was the system that was holding women down. Radical feminists saw separatism as an important strategy.[441] Instead of integrating women into the prevailing hierarchy, they wanted to create their own institutions and reformulate politics and power. The counter institutions would help to create the utopian society of the future.[442]

American fashion was not in the least accused of being a part of the sexual slavery of women. Harsh words were directed at the American media by an anonymous member of the radical feminist group The Redstockings: 'the real evil of the media image of women is that it supports the sexist status quo. In a sense, fashion, cosmetics, and "feminine hygiene" ads are aimed more at men than at women. They encourage men to expect women to sport all the latest trappings of sexual slavery – expectations women must fulfill if they are to survive … For women buying and wearing clothes and beauty aids is not so much consumption as work. One of a woman's jobs in society is to be an attractive sexual object, and clothes and make-up are tools of the trade.'[443]

Another group of feminists was less radical, but on a certain level agreed with the statement that 1960s fashion sexualized the American woman. They sought to work politically in order to secure changes in the economic and political position of women. Their ultimate goal was to assimilate women into the American society, totally accepted and as complete equals to men. Liberal feminists focused on equal-opportunity legislation, lobbying the Equal Rights Amendment to assure that women would be treated exactly the same as men.[444] Even though their plans were perceived as extreme, within feminism, liberal feminists were seen as pragmatic and conservative. By introducing the term 'sex-object' in

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[440] Steve Craig, 'Feminism, Femininity, and the 'Beauty' Dilemma: How Advertising Co-opted the Women's Movement', Paper presented at the South-west/Texas Popular Culture/American Culture Association Conference (Lubbock, 1998).
[441] Chafe, *The Paradox of Change,* 203.
[442] Nichols, 'Nothing Distant about It, 159-160.
[443] Ellen Willis, 'Women's Liberation Criticism of Consumer Theory,' *The Stanford Daily* 156 (19-11-1969) 3.
[444] Chafe, *The Paradox of Change,* 203.

the daily vocabulary liberal feminists made American society aware of the sexualization of American women.[445]

The more the struggle for equal rights continued, older and professional women borrowed more items from men's fashion and wore pants, loose jackets, walking shoes, and no makeup.[446] The look slowly became accepted and even perceived as attractive.[447]

In the last years of the sixties, protest movements peaked. The hippie movement is one of the examples of this revolutionary time. Feminism got more followers that were organized in different clusters with different ideologies. Especially the young generation rejected the differences in male and female clothing and the unisex trend perseveres. Although this is mainly applicable for women adopting the male wardrobe. This equality in clothing spread slowly to the older generations.

Equal Rights

Much of the discontent of the sixties continued into the early seventies. Feminism was revitalized. The efforts of the feminist organizations in the preceding decade raised the nation's consciousness on women's issues. Nearly every major news outlet ran stories on women's social struggles.[448]

The feminist movement had some success stories. As the presidential election was forthcoming, politicians had more attention for women's rights issues and congress enacted Title IX of the Education Amendment Act, which banned sex discrimination of any kind by colleges and universities that received federal aid.[449] The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission began to pay attention to discriminatory employers and federal contracts were instated that mandated the employment of a certain quota of women.[450]

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[445] Steve Craig, 'Feminism, Femininity, and the 'Beauty' Dilemma.'

[446] Baxandall, *Dear Sisters,* 16-17.

[447] Franklin, *Fashion,* 372.

[448] Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society and Politics* (New York, 2001) 164.

[449] Chafe, *The Paradox of Change,* 215.

[450] Chafe, *The Paradox of Change,* 215.

Also, activist women won to reform the law of rape. New laws barred the cross-examination of rape victims about their previous sexual history. Also the statutes that required a third-party witness testimony reformed.[451] Feminists, also fought for abortion. They argued that women should have complete control over their bodies and should have the final say in the decision whether or not they wanted to carry life.[452] On January 22, 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Constitution protected a woman's right to decide
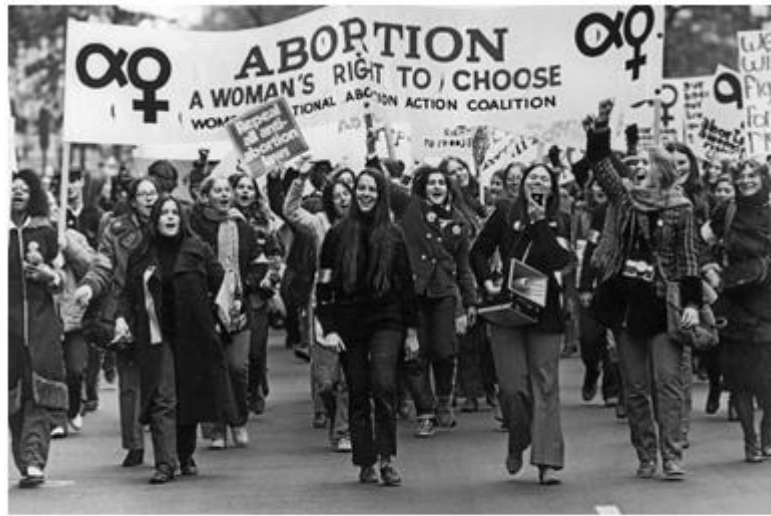
Figure 5.13

whether to bring a pregnancy to term and legalized abortion across the nation in the case *Roe v. Wade*.[453]

As the renewed voice of feminism began to be heard, policies against women in pants in most offices and social occasions were viewed as sexist and inappropriate. As the barriers came down, pantsuits for women were introduced to be worn at work, the theater, or even prom and were sold by the millions.[454] At first the pant suits were softly constructed with a feminine silhouette, but by the mid-decade women's pant suits began to resemble the business suits of their male counterparts. The blazer became one of the most popular garments for women's business attire.[455] It was not long until designer jeans were introduced by Calvin Klein and Gloria Vanderbilt, which were widely worn by fashion icons such as Bianca Jagger and Jackie Kennedy.[456] In the words of president and CEO of Levi Strauss & Co, Walter Haas Jr.: 'look, jeans are worn by young and old, radical and conservative. The real point is their classlessness.'[457]

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[451] Schulman, *The Seventies*, 167.
[452] Linda Greenhouse, Reva B. Siegel, *Before Roe v. Wade: Voices that shaped the abortion debate before the Supreme Court's Ruling* (Yale, 2012) 188.
[453] Greenhouse, *Before Roe v. Wade,* viii.
[454] Delis Hill, *as seen in Vogue*, 108.
[455] Delis Hill, *as seen in Vogue*, 108.
[456] Franklin, *Fashion,* 373.
[457] Sullivan, *Jeans,* 124.

American television started to embrace the American working women. The first popular and long-running television series clearly to feature the influence of feminism was

Figure 5.14

the *Mary Tyler Moore* show. The sitcom focused on the life of thirty-something, unmarried, working woman Mary Richards and her network of friends and colleagues. Its originality was based on the fact that the comedy format moved from domestic and home-based situations to the workplace. Although the show was not specifically aiming to incorporate feminism, the shows writer James Brooks observed that 'we sought to show someone from Mary Richards' background being in a world where women's rights were being talked about and it was having an impact.' The *Mary Tyler Moore* show was not the first working woman sitcom. Yet it is acknowledged as the first show which showed that work was not just a prelude or substitute to marriage, but could satisfy life for women in the same way it presumably did for men.[458]

Lastly, diversification occurred by the 1970s, when the movement broadened its attention to the struggles of American women living in poverty. While the group of elite white women were complaining about the burden of too much leisure time, Bell Hooks argues, there was a huge majority of women in America who were out of necessity part of the workforce.[459] Seventies feminism campaigned for subsidized child care for these working mothers and sanctions against fathers who abandoned their families.[460]

However, one of feminists most important struggles did not go as planned. In 1972, the Equal Rights Amendment passed Congress and was brought on to the states for ratification.[461] However, Senator Sam Ervin and Representative Emanuel Celler succeeded in setting a time limit of seven years for ratification.[462] The public support for women's rights was obscured by the opposition in American society. Anti-feminist protest was centered

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[458] Bonnie J. Dow, *Prime-Time Feminism: Television, Media Culture and the Women's Movement since 1970* (Philadelphia, 1996) 24.
[459] Hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody*, 38.
[460] Greenhouse, *Before Roe v. Wade,* 168.
[461] Chafe, *The Paradox of Change,* 215.
[462] 'Then And Now: The Equal Rights Amendment', *Alice at a Glance Curriculum Packet* (www.now.org/issues/economic/cea/who.html) (08-08-2015) 14.

around the argument that the Equal Rights Amendment wanted to make women identical to men and thus fought to abolish all institutions that were based on the differences between

Figure 5.15

the sexes, which would challenge the traditional values that had made America a great nation. For anti-feminists the ERA symbolized the enemy.[463] The year 1977 marked a turning point for the ERA, the

rise of the New Right with the argument that the ERA would open a Pandora's Box with undesirable changes, like criminal defendant's right and abortion. Attitudes towards the ERA became increasingly polarized along partisan lines.[464]

The support of the ERA was not strong enough to add it to the Constitution. On June 30, 1982 the Equal Rights Amendment was stopped three states short of ratification. The public support could count on two-third of the women, most of the African Americans, but less than fifty percent of the white men.[465] Most of the Americans were pro-ERA. In the words of Jo Freeman 'The power of the Equal Rights Amendment has come more from the ideal it represents than the words of which it is compassed.'[466]

Figure 5.16

Even though the Equal Rights Amendment was not added to the American Constitution, American feminism had succeeded on many fronts. Most of the Americans were pro-ERA. In separate legislations and Supreme Court rulings women's rights were enlarged. A new status quo was installed that perceived women as equals to men and this was visible in the way women dressed, from the business suit to the blue jeans. Fashion was no longer oppressing women. The denim blue jeans had become common and could be found in every wardrobe. Even in high fashion.

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[463] Chafe, *The Paradox of Change,* 217.
[464] Serena Mayeri, Ryan Brown, Nathaniel Persily, Son Ho Kim, 'Gender Equality', in *Public Opinion and Constitutional Controversy* (Oxford, 2008) 153.
[465] 'Then And Now: The Equal Rights Amendment', *Alice at a Glance Curriculum Packet* (www.now.org/issues/economic/cea/who.html) (08-08-2015) 17.
[466] Jo Freeman, 'What's in a Name? Does it matter how the Equal Rights Amendment is worded?' *Feminist* (June, 1996) http://www.jofreeman.com/lawandpolicy/eraname.htm (08-08-2015).

Conclusion

In the sixties and first half of the seventies, developments in American society emerged that changed the American status quo. The introduction of the birth control pill and the election of John F. Kennedy as president catalyzed these developments to the surface. The birth control pill provided women with the same sexual freedom as men. The mini-skirt garment functioned as a symbol of the diminishing promiscuity of American society.

In the last years of the sixties, protest movements peaked. The hippie movement was one of the examples of this revolutionary time. Feminism gained more followers and were organized in different clusters with different ideologies. Especially youngsters rejected the differences in male and female clothing and the unisex trend persevered. Although this was mainly applicable for women adopting the male wardrobe. This equality in clothing spread slowly to the older generations.

Even though the Equal Rights Amendment was not added to the American Constitution, in 1972, American feminism had succeeded on many fronts. Most of the Americans were pro-ERA. In separate legislations and Supreme Court rulings women's rights were enlarged. A new status quo was installed that perceived women as equals to men and this was visible in the way women dressed, from the business suit to the blue jeans. Fashion was no longer oppressing women. Blue jeans had become socially accepted and even part of high designer fashion.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

The most significant developments in the female wardrobe and equal rights for women that were covered by the American media during World War I and the interwar period were the fact that American women entered the labor force during the war and some women even continued to be part of it even after the war was over. Concerning equal rights, women earned the right to vote and be voted and an Equal Rights Amendment was formulated. The war had introduced American women to the luxury of wearing pants. In the interwar period the American media got more adjusted to the image of women wearing pants, as Hollywood actresses spread the look.

The outbreak of World War II affected the traditional role of American women in the family and society because women entered the labor force on an unprecedented scale. War propaganda tried to stimulate women to enlist, in doing so they spread the image of women wearing denim overalls, which stimulated the perception that women and men were sharing the war effort. These images contributed to a more commonness of women wearing pants overall.

After World War II, women were praised by American society because of their magnificent wartime performance. However, the conservative strand in American society believed it was now the time to return home for them. The growth of the consumer society, however, led to machinery that took over the household duties. To pay for these consumer goods an increasing number of American women joined labor force. Also more women earned degrees and wanted to work to be more interesting for her husband. The more women obtained positions outside of the home, the more they were confronted by their unequal status in society. The dual role of housewife and labor participant demanded elegant yet easy to wear clothes. This led to the introduction of the casual elegance American style. The growing youth culture enlarged the demand.

The youth movement of the fifties obtained a more dominant position in the sixties. The youngest president ever was elected and brought a new optimism to the nation. Protest movements wanted to challenge all inequalities in American society and inspired each other with their struggles. One of the most prominent protest movements were the feminists. They were able to change the position of women on some points. However, when they tried to add the Equal Rights Amendment to the American Constitution, they failed. Even though

the attempt was unsuccessful, the biggest part of American society was in favor of the amendment and thus accepted the equality of men and women. Women's fashion reflected the changed status quo. American women were no longer restricted in their choice of dress. Jeans suited all groups; embellished and pattered for youngsters who wanted to distinguish themselves, skin tight for sexual women, unisex for the hippies, and designer jeans for high fashion women. When the way of clothing is considered a language, the denim blue jeans became the expression of equality.

In conclusion, the American media have positively discussed women in pants or jeans, ever since World War I. Optimism about these women in pants was mainly because they wanted to stimulate women to enter the war production labor force. During the interwar period fashion designers were playing with women trousers, but the trend did not really catch on. As working trousers in America were similar to denim trousers, the rise of the blue jeans started. World War II, meant a breakthrough for women trousers. On an unprecedented scale American women joined the war production. The use of a female labor force had an accelerating effect on the demand for equal rights. First, because women entered new situations where inequality became more noticeable for them. Secondly, because by adopting the male trousers, social conventions against women wearing male pants, were broken out of necessity as wartime women demanded safe and effective clothes during labor time. Thirdly, this phenomenon was strengthened by wide media attention. In both wars the media played an important role as a provider of information and opinions as well as an advertising display. Because of the necessity of trousers in the female labor force and the adaption of women trousers on more occasions as a consequence, women in trousers were widely debated by the American mass media both in image and text. After World War II, there was a restorative resistance against female labor. The post-war economic prosperity was caused by consumer capitalism, which was advertised by the mass media. The new broadcast medium television played a growing role in American consumerism and was a consumer product in itself. The increased prosperity drove American women to jobs, to pay for all the luxuries and probably to cure boredom. This brought American designers to experiment with fabrics like denim and to develop casual elegance clothes. Consumerism and economic prosperity also triggered the emerging youth culture. The youth culture used denim as a social leveler, but at the same time it proved to be a gender leveler. The newly

obtained equality after the war years was picked up by the next generation. This was visible in the way they dressed. In the sixties and the first half of the seventies these youngsters became adults who challenged the social order. As they had used jeans in the 1950s as a symbol of non-conformity, jeans were now applied as an icon of equality. The media showed a large interest in the social and protest movements of the time. Consequently, these movements were aware of the possibilities mass media offered to spread their ideas. Simultaneously, the American mass media adapted to the new social order. To defend the newly obtained equality it became obvious that the equality needed to be transformed to equal rights and even was to be captured in the already formulated Equal Rights Amendment.

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Feminism isn't about making women stronger. Women are already strong. It's about changing the way the world perceives that strength.

- G.D. Anderson