THE SPIRAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUFFERING AND THE

PRODUCTION OF FASHIONABLE CLOTHES

Abstract

In this article, I explore the relationships between suffering and the production of fashionable clothes. In the commercial struggle for survival many fashionable styles are discarded while some remain durable due to their adaptability to new trends and creative ideas. The aim of this research was to investigate how suffering initiates these changes in the creative process of fashion design. This was examined through a number of methodologies, which included object-based research and ethnography. The research findings indicate that suffering within the fashion industry can be a positive attribute. It can influence the way in which clothes are produced and the skills necessary to produce them. A model depicting the connection between suffering and fashion is posited as a tentative theory suggesting that there is a spiral relationship in that changes in fashion production and consumption resulting from suffering evolve into a spiral of further suffering impacting on the future of fashion design and manufacture.

Keywords: suffering; fashion; garment; design; production; skills; spiral relationship; change

Introduction

The research aims to develop a deep understanding of the concept of suffering within a fashion context and whether levels of suffering in the fashion industry influence change in

the design and production of garments. The enquiry was initiated through object-based research in the costume archives at the Victoria and Albert Museum in the United Kingdom. I wanted to explore how fashion garments had distorted the human body and survey the manufacturing techniques that had helped to reshape the physique. My aim was to compare these methods with those developed by my fashion students when developing their degree collections in order to expand pedagogic support for their explorations into cut and construction. This led me to consider how the human body suffers, both physically and mentally when wearing fashionable clothes and how this suffering can influence changes in garment design and production. The fashion writer Katherine Wallerstein explored this in her comments on the use of emaciated, starved bodies in 1990s fashion advertisements: 'Their dark emotions, erotic undertones, and the intensities of expressions suggest romantic notions of tragic beauty and ecstatic experiences achieved through physically destructive expenditures' (1998: 135). In this description the malnourished body suggests a form of enactment linked to suffering through the wearing of fashionable garments.

In writing this article, the objectives were to analyse my own personal experience and practice as a fashion designer and, through both the literature review and methodology, identify further research and knowledge based on the disparate manifestations of suffering within fashion. The methodologies adopted allowed me to identify characteristics or contextual locations correlated to fashion industry suffering and to observe and reflect on language, signs and meanings holistically. As a result I identified the main issues related to suffering in fashion as being:

- The physical pain and discomfort of wearing fashionable clothing.

- Mental anguish leading to self-recreation through fashionable clothing.

- Suffering, loss and hardship induced by changes in society that both threaten and subsequently influence the design and production of fashionable clothing and the testing of appropriate technologies.

- The marginalization suffered by technologists in the fashion industry.

These issues are discussed in greater detail in the findings and discussion section.

Literature Review

A substantial literature review helped to establish the wider framework of human suffering in order to consider what constitutes suffering in the fashion industry. I measured past events in the context of both the present and the future as it allowed me to reflect upon and suggest possible answers to current fashion issues related to suffering. Research into the history of fashion allowed me to consider where does suffering in the industry come from, where is suffering now and what sort of suffering will there be in the future? I also considered literature related to fashion technology and the skills in making clothes such as pattern cutting, sewing, manufacture and computerized manufacture to analyze how changes in fashion linked to suffering impacted on the production of clothes.

The wider definition of suffering

Throughout the literature review, I discovered that much of the wider definition of suffering beyond the fashion industry can be identified through religion and spirituality as this has arguably given meaning to life and has formed the basis of many civilizations. I also identified it in other disciplines such as social sciences, arts and literature, psychology,

biology, philosophy and in health. As discussed, in this research, I emphasize how ideas about suffering can be transposed into a fashion context. I consequently attempt to define it in relation to the disparate experiences and levels of suffering that influence fashion design. I also emphasize that suffering is not a catchall word to describe notions of distress. In defining its meaning, I struggled between dictionary definitions and their interpretation of suffering throughout. The Oxford English Dictionary describes it as: 'The state of undergoing pain, distress or hardship' (2011). The Penguin English Dictionary describes it as: 'To experience or be forced to endure something unpleasant' (Allen 2001: 893). Both descriptions imply that suffering includes different levels of physical and mental pain.

In order to develop a broad understanding of suffering, I analyzed literature across a number of discipline areas where suffering is a key concept. These included religion and spirituality, social sciences, arts and literature, psychology, biology, philosophy and health (Amato 1990; Kleinman 1997; Mayerfield 1999; Scarry 1987; Schrade 1964). I discovered that suffering occurs in the lives of human beings in numerous ways: socially, culturally and personally. I found that many of the direct references to suffering were in religion and spirituality as this often formed a basis to the meaning of life and in the Christian example of the suffering in Hell and penance (Anon. 2004). References in the other discipline areas emphasized individual experiences of suffering through the unpleasantness of physical and mental pain. The analysis began to reveal how it could be viewed in an optimistic way, supporting growth and change both personally and professionally. This helped to substantiate ways in which suffering could be considered as motivating factors for reinvention or rebirth.

A piece of empirical research might have set out to identify different levels of suffering within the fashion industry and how these can influence change. Within this analysis I discuss indicators of levels of suffering by considering new literature that measures it. I relate this to the research in order to consider the significance of different levels of suffering on changes in fashion design, production and consumption, some of which may be said to be more severe than others. Both physical and mental suffering can manifest itself in mild to intolerable degrees. The extent of suffering and frequency of its occurrence does not necessarily determine its intensity. In those who suffer or observe suffering, attitudes towards it can vary widely. This can depend on whether it is considered beneficial or hopeless, preventable or inevitable, etc. It may be argued that its meaning and significance needs to be judged in relation to its impact on the individual, the group or the society as a whole. Literature related to the assessment of suffering (Algosphere 2012; Amato 1990; Beach et al. 2012; Dawkins 1985; Frazee 2011; Levin 1988; Mayerfield 1999; Scarry 1987) mainly considered health, religion, law, old-age and suffering in animals. However, it offers some ideas that could be usefully transposed to the area of suffering in fashion. The majority of this literature adopted a quantitative approach, focusing on developing objective measures of degrees of experienced suffering. The measures themselves are therefore not helpful in assessing the severity of different levels of suffering in the fashion industry. Nevertheless the writer and executive consultant Steve Frazee (2011) offers a model that is helpful in assessing levels of fashion related to suffering and this is discussed later.

Suffering in fashion

The analysis of literature revealed little work directly related to the concept of suffering in fashion. However, I discovered some work that linked to ways in which suffering generates change in fashion design and production and much of this is embedded within the findings section. I considered the physical discomfort involved in wearing fashionable clothing, explored through the different levels of pain that consumers are prepared to endure by wearing garments that distort the body (Glover 2008; Koda 2001; Ribeiro 2003; Steele 2001; Van Der Does 1980; Vincent 2009). Mental anguish due to marginalization and prejudice, leading to self-recreation through fashionable dress, is analysed following the sociologist Erving Goffman's (1959) theory about the presentation of self. I explored the idea that the presentation of the gendered or the glamorized self is essentially a social performance constructed to communicate a physical and sartorial message. This disguises the stigmas suffered by the marginalized persona presented in everyday life. Suffering, loss and hardship induced by changes in society that both threaten and subsequently influence the design and production of fashionable clothing and the conflicts between traditional and new technologies was examined through pattern cutting (Aldrich 2007; British Fashion Council 2000; Joseph-Armstrong 2006), garment manufacture (Fischer 2009; Schaeffer 2001; Tarrant 1994) fashion history (Breward 2003; Wilson 1985) and fashion theory (Entwistle 2000; Goffman 1959; Lurie 1981; Tseelon 1995). This literature established a framework of concerns related to suffering in fashion that began to identify the different levels of severity in suffering, which impact on change. This is discoursed in relation to the aforementioned Frazee (2011) model assessing levels of suffering in the findings and discussion section.

Gender fashion and suffering

The research focused on the womenswear market although menswear is discussed. There has been considerable research into gender and fashion over the past 30 years (Breward 1995; Brownmiller 1984; Butler 1990; Davis 1992; Kawamura 2006; Tseelon 1995, 2001; Wilson 1985, 2005). From this literature questions arise such as do women suffer more than men through their life experiences? Arguably males who cross dress in order to mask the suffering endured through their marginalized personas in everyday life also appropriate the suffering of the women. The fashion theorist Efrat Tseelon argues:

> This is why transvestites who dress genuinely to pass as women are doubly threatening. They give up a privileged position by crossing over to the devalued realm of femininity, and by so doing they challenge the system of sexual difference. (1995: 90)

I would argue that the womenswear focus within this research emphasizes gender imbalances within the fashion industry. It illustrates a growing tension between those who feel that they are discriminated against and those who feel somewhat favoured by a perception, largely unexamined, that men are better designers than women and that the history of fashion has been dominated by the male gaze (Wilson 2005: 1). I considered the different approaches of male and female designers. A male designer such as Christian Dior (Martin 1997; Wilcox 2007) transposes his ideas about the way he wants a woman to look onto the body of a woman by encasing her in uncomfortable corsetry and underpinnings. In

contrast a female designer such as Jean Muir (Fischer 2009; Muir 1993; Stemp 2007), whose navy dress is illustrated in Figure 1, designs clothes in which a woman wants to feel both stylish and comfortable. The influence of the male gaze was further emphasized by the sociologist Yuniya Kawamura, who noted that: 'Fashion emerges out of a desire to be beautiful, the norm for which is created by men in a male-dominated society' (2006: 11). The cultural studies expert Elizabeth Wilson notes that in the majority of societies the female is predominantly allotted an inferior rank: 'Fashionable dress and the beautification of the self are conventionally perceived as expressions of subordination; fashion and cosmetics fixing women visibly in their oppression' (1985: 13).

The findings also confirmed that there is a far greater female consumption of fashion resulting in more womenswear produced than menswear, resulting in more opportunities for women to suffer. For example, consumption of fashion shows that sales of new clothing are twice as high for womenswear as for menswear. The latest recorded figures for the United Kingdom are from 2010; the sales of men's clothing were £9600 million and for women it was £19041 million (Mintel 2012a, 2012b). By comparison in the UK higher education system I identified that only a small proportion choose to design menswear and a small percentage of students who apply to study fashion are male (UCAS 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, Statistics, UK). The above are the avenues I focused on within the article as much of the research analysed arose from my own experience of suffering in fashion, located as a womenswear designer.

Figure 1: Black rayon jersey cape dress, approx. 1980 by Jean Muir, who designed clothes in which a woman wanted to feel both stylish and comfortable. Photograph courtesy of Leeds Museums and Galleries.

Research Methodology

Much of the research was from a qualitative approach working with small groups of fashion designers and consumers (Corbin and Strauss 2008; Creswell 2003; Grey and Malins 2004; Kawamura 2011; Taylor 2004; Trumbull 2005; Yin 2003). These methods are generally appropriate when searching for the meaning that events/things hold for people as the sociologists Corbin and Strauss explained: 'Qualitative research allows researchers to get at the inner experience of participants, to determine how meanings are formed through and in culture, and to discover rather than test variables' (2008: 12). My approach was grounded in my

reflections and experience as a design and pattern-cutting tutor and so this focused on small groups or the individual. Consideration of the general perspective of the fashion industry was gained through primary research at relevant conferences, seminars, trade shows, retail outlets and through the literature review.

I carried out object-based research, aiming to understand the impact that degrees of suffering had on the physical nature of garments in terms of design, construction and silhouette. The objects analyzed demonstrate how differing levels of physical pain, through bodily distortion, influence cycles of change in garment design and construction. For example, I compared vintage designer and fashion student garments in order to facilitate an in-depth knowledge of clothes that have distorted the body and the physical discomfort that this creates. I also examined the work of Jean Muir, a designer held in esteem by her contemporaries for her highly skilled approach to making clothes. Through action research as a pattern-cutting tutor, I compared Jean Muir's vintage garments with those of students in fashion manufacture classes in order to embarrass students into recognizing the importance of professional standards in garment production.

Ethnographic research allowed me to gain a close familiarity with levels of physical and mental suffering and their impact on the fashion industry through direct observation, informal interviews, collective discussions and intensive involvement with fashion practitioners and consumers in their natural environments. The research settings included sub-cultural groups, occupational and cultural communities, observed through attending fashion-orientated clubs, fashion shows, conferences, retail outlets and working in the fashion studio. For example, I

observed and participated in two lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) nightclubs (Almond 2011) and was able to compare the fashioned bodies of the clubber's reconstructed selves with the conflict suffered in their everyday lives. This allowed me to establish how the clubbers' aesthetic manifestations are appropriated by the fashion industry into liberated items that alter the direction of mainstream fashion. In contrast I participated in ethnographic environments both as a tutor and as a pattern cutter within the fashion industry. I was able to examine the significance of the technical role of pattern cutting and how these highly creative skills move fashion forwards with their interpretation of new and innovative designs. Both examples helped to build up a variety of surveillance about people's reactions to levels of physical and mental suffering and how they can influence the way in which fashionable clothes are made, consumed and appropriated.

Semi-structured interviews questioned individuals' understanding of suffering. Interviewees included fashion students, academics, costume curators, designers and fashion consumers. The questions were flexible, allowing new questions and ideas to be brought up as a result of what the interviewee said. For example I interviewed eight final-year fashion students to discuss individual philosophies towards creative pattern cutting and its importance to their work. The findings revealed varied ideas and concepts, which highlighted both a creative and a technical perspective. Triangulating this with object-based research and the literature review built up a variety of evidence, which supported the creative integrity of pattern cutting and its value to fashion. This reinforced my suggestion in the findings that the marginalized role suffered by technologists within the fashion industry be considered of equitable importance to the more celebrated role of the designer.

Findings and Discussion

This section begins by analyzing the findings of the research, discussing the four issues related to suffering in fashion identified in the introduction. It begins to reveal how disparate experiences and levels of suffering influenced changes in the way in which fashionable clothes are produced and consumed. This forms the main body of ideas evaluated in order to assess the relationships between suffering and the production of garments. The discussion is divided into two sections that link together. The first considers the research findings established in relation to the literature and methods of analysis. It incrementally illustrates how the ideas began to manifest through the cycles of suffering analyzed. The second section identifies levels of severity in suffering within different areas of fashion, enabling me to reflect on the wider meaning of suffering beyond fashion and how it can influence change in the production and consumption of fashionable clothes.

1. Research findings

The physical pain and discomfort of wearing fashionable clothing

As discussed in the literature review I discovered a small volume of text that analyzed the pain and discomfort of body-modifying clothes. The findings revealed how fashion is never satisfied with the natural silhouette. In their search for new shape, designers constantly test customers' endurance of levels of physical pain through a cycle of continuous experimentation with traditional and evolving technology. This includes evaluation of the ways in which body-modifying clothes can be manufactured in order to be more comfortable. An example of such a garment is the Jean-Paul Gaultier jacket in Figure 2. The

jacket defines the breasts and waistline. Although the main fabric is cotton, the design incorporates wire, metal and plastic. The breast area is cut out and filled with the metal cup. Ultimately the garment is an attention-grabbing catwalk piece but is awkward to wear. Another example is designer Sarah Broadbent's copper corset (Figure 3), arguably another fashion statement piece due to its fabrication (which is copper), making it extremely cumbersome to wear. The garment feels icy and abrasive against the skin and there is also the potential for the copper to injure the body. On discussion with the designer, she confirmed that she had considered some of the physical discomfort involved in wearing the garment during the manufacture process as the inside seams were heat processed together and therefore smooth. 'A calico toile was made and fitted initially and the metal pieces were cut from the finished pattern and heat solded together' (Almond 2009: 203).

Figure 2: Attention-grabbing catwalk piece that is awkward to wear, Jean-Paul Gaultier, Cyba Punk Jacket 1994. Photograph courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum.

Figure 3: Sarah Broadbent copper corset. When worn it causes physical suffering as the copper is abrasive. Photograph courtesy of Kevin Almond.

Mental anguish leading to self-recreation through fashionable clothing

Suffering levels of physical pain made me think deeply about how mental pain can influence the design and consumption of fashionable clothes. I considered garments associated with loss and mourning, and the ways in which these clothes have been appropriated by fashion. This was particularly apparent in the exaggerated mourning attire of Victorian society (Morley 1971; Stevens 2000; Taylor 1983), demonstrated by the outfit in Figures 4–6. The extent and severity of bereavement was symbolized by a uniform, which changed during a two-year mourning period as the pain of the loss gradually diminished. This influenced clothing production as the creation of mourning

garments required careful adherence to the overstated demands in their design, and yet needed to remain fashionable in cut and silhouette.

Figure 4–6: Exaggerated nineteenth-century mourning costume. Overstated in design it retains the fashionable bustle silhouette of the 1880s. Photograph courtesy of Kerry Taylor Auctions.

Mental suffering was further explored through ethnographic involvement in two fashion-focused lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer nightclubs, Vague and Speedqueen in Leeds, a city in northern England. Following Judith Butler's (1990) theory of gender, in which the presentation of the gendered self is essentially performative, I considered how the glamorized appearance of club goers masks mental pain due to conflict with sexual and gender identities (Davies 2001; Dyhouse 2010; Goffman 1959; Gundle 2008; Jackson 2004). It emphasizes how visual culture constructs gender through the different ways in which a body is decorated with clothing, accessories and make-up. This is often appropriated by the fashion industry. Designers such as Jean-Paul Gaultier and John Galliano plunder ideas from club goers (such as the experimental looks in Figure 7) and

reinterpret them as commercial entities, which in turn influence mainstream fashion. My analysis revealed the nightclub to be a powerful social space to experiment with sartorial ideas for socially marginalized individuals, who suffer in their everyday lives. As the photograph in Figure 8 demonstrates, the club goer had the opportunity to transform himself visually into a fantasy self, reconstructing his gender identity. Figure 9 shows the clubber and his friend transformed by a combination of ethnicity in Indian female dress and western ideals of glamour. Both are ready to perform in the safety of the club in which dressing up and masquerade play such a significant role.

Figure 7: Sartorial ideas experimented with by club goers. Ideas such as these are often plundered as inspirational sources by fashion designers. Photograph courtesy of Suzy Mason.

Figure 8: Male clubber experimenting with gender reconstruction and dressing up for an appearance in a nightclub. Photograph courtesy of Suzy Mason.

Figure 9: Transformation in a combination of ethnicity in Indian dress and western ideals of glamour. Photograph by Suzy Mason c. 2000. Used with permission. Photograph courtesy of Suzy Mason.

The sartorial ideas experimented with in the nightclub also resulted in exaggerated modes of dress through their subversion of fashionable styles. This is illustrated in the images from the post card, advertising the aforementioned club night Vague in Figure 10. The

images blur gender boundaries as each individual was asked to customize their image in an idealized way. The larger-than-life impressions are in some way akin to the concept of the fashion victim. The 'victim' is a fashion consumer whose outward facade suffers through their stylistic blunders. Their unquestioning dedication to fashion becomes part of their life as they shape their body through: 'The social hazards of fashion dynamics as these are perceived by the great majority in contemporary western society' (Schiemer 2010: 84). The fashion victim is further discussed in the 'spiral relationship' section through a closer analysis of how 'victim' styles influence both fashion design and production.
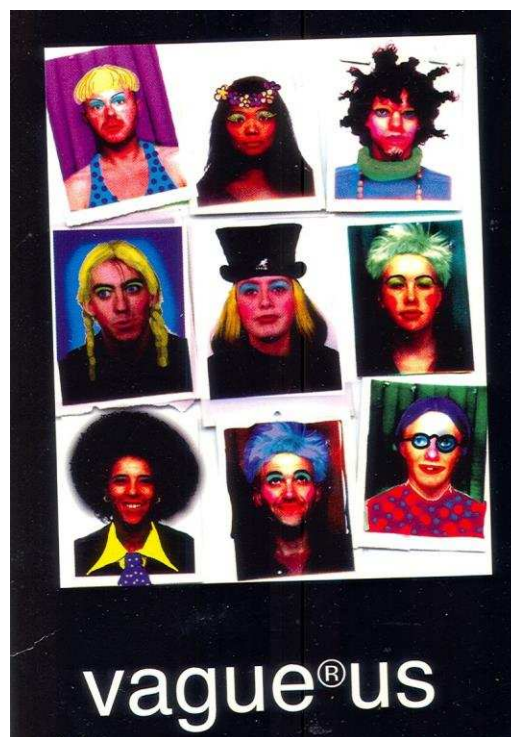

Figure 10: The Vague R Us postcard, in which each person was asked to customize their image in an idealized way. Photograph courtesy of Suzy Mason.

Suffering, loss and hardship induced by changes in society that both threaten and subsequently influence the design and production of fashionable clothing and the testing of appropriate technologies

I began to consider how suffering in fashion reflects significant changes in society. For instance in the United Kingdom, the fashion industry suffered considerable loss and deprivation due to the withdrawal of essential manufacturing resources in World War II. The British Government introduced a 'Make Do and Mend' initiative in 1943 (Figure 11) to encourage people to repair or remake clothes. The scheme was a great success and a book was published featuring a 'Mrs. Sew and Sew' character. She encouraged people to ransack their wardrobes and utilize traditional domestic sewing skills to make dresses from old sheets and curtains or coats from discarded blankets or bedspreads. Bizarre fashion statements were often made using patch-worked scraps of fabric. The government also introduced a utility scheme, essentially a series of manufacture restrictions applied to clothes. These needed to be 'Basic necessary garments not fashion fads or extreme designs' (Wilson and Taylor 1989: 118). The industry capitalized on this to initiate designs that maintained interest in fashion during the crisis. As the fashion writer Colin McDowell emphasized, 'The result was innovative and more unique clothes on the streets than had ever been seen before' (1997: 97).
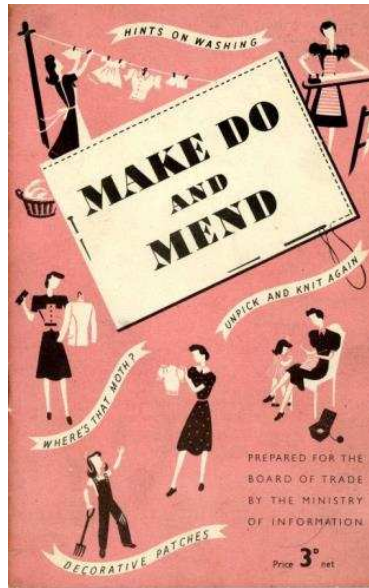
Figure 11: Make Do and Mend book cover. Photograph courtesy of Leeds Museums and Galleries.

The marginalization suffered by technologists in the fashion industry

The role of technology in the fashion industry constantly evolves and skilled professionals arguably suffer conflict when they need to adapt to or learn about new skills necessary to manufacture garments. Fashion students often struggle to acquire professional expertise in garment production. A much-used derogatory phrase 'It looks very home dress-makey' (Burman 1999) is frequently levelled at them when they present finished garments at a critique. This is designed to induce embarrassment, an arguably mild form of suffering that shames them into recognizing the importance of acquiring the production skills necessary to create professional garments. Similarly, there is significant conflict among fashion professionals. I analyzed the results of the literature review (Aldrich 2007; Fischer 2009; Hollingworth 1996; Karimzadeh 1999) and the ethnographic research, both as a pattern cutting tutor and practitioner in the fashion industry. The findings identified how

the technical role of the pattern cutter (as illustrated in Figure 12) frequently suffers marginalization in respect of the more glamorous and creative role of the designer. This balance could be redressed by emphasizing the significance of pattern cutting within fashion and how creative technical skills are integral to cycles of garment production and consumption through their three- dimensional interpretation of new and innovative designs. The example of the calico toile in Figure 13 arguably demonstrates this significance as the pattern cutter Hannah Custance has adopted an experimental and creative approach to the three-dimensional interpretation of the jacket and skirt.

Figure 12: The technical role of the pattern cutter frequently suffers marginalization in respect of the more glamorous and creative role of the designer. Photograph courtesy of Kevin Almond.

Figure 13: Creative pattern cutting – Hannah Custance, collection toile. Photograph courtesy of Kevin Almond.

2. Levels of severity in suffering

The research findings have considered the four main issues related to suffering in fashion identified in the introduction. From this analysis a framework of six key concerns emerge, these being physical pain, deprivation, bereavement, marginalization, undervaluation and embarrassment. In this section, I analyze levels of severity in both physical and mental suffering in order to relate them to the cycles of suffering identified in fashion. In his article 'Suffering and human needs', Steve Frazee (2011) considered basic human needs and provides a hierarchical model of core and basic requirements, the

absence of which result in suffering of various forms and degrees. The scale below lists both essential and more basic human needs in an order of necessity.

Core human needs

Healthy food

Clean water

Use of language

Protective shelter

Restorative sleep

Proper sanitation

Bodily movement

Pleasant companionship

Hope for basic need fulfillment

Basic human needs

Personal autonomy

Physical and mental health

Productive work

Trusted community

Adequate health care

Nurturing childhood

Significant relationships

Physical security

Economic security

Safe birth control and child-bearing

Social and technical knowledge

Spiritual/Philosophical context

(Frazee 2011: 2)

I applied this guide to the fashion framework of six key concerns (physical pain,
deprivation, bereavement, marginalization, undervaluation and embarrassment) in order
to assess how different levels of suffering can influence change in garment production
and consumption.

Consideration of Frazee's hierarchy assists in placing the six key concerns in a suggested
order of severity, 1 being more severe and 6 being less. Through careful consideration I
recognized that some of the core and basic human needs could be mapped onto the levels
of suffering in fashion. In placing the six concerns in a suggested order of severity I
attempted to consider both their relationship with the literature and the overall physical
and mental impact on the level of suffering endured by individuals or fashion
organizations, discussed in the research findings. I assessed the relative severity of the
suffering described in each of the six concerns by considering them in relation to the
number and importance of the core and basic human needs described by Frazee.

1. Physical pain (body modifying clothes) – this could be considered in relation to
   both 'bodily movement' and 'physical and mental health', which contribute

towards the levels of physical pain suffered by individuals when wearing fashionable clothes.

2. Deprivation (loss of material resources, fashion industry suffers loss such as in World War 11, etc.) – this could be considered in relation to a lack of 'productive work' and 'economic security'.

3. Bereavement (grief and exaggerated mourning dress) – this could be considered in relation to a 'spiritual and philosophical context' and 'significant relationships' or due to a lack of 'adequate healthcare'.

4. Marginalization (glamorized appearance of club goers masks mental pain due to conflict with marginalized sexual and gender identities) – this could be considered in relation to the absence of a 'trusted community' and 'significant relationships' and in relation to 'basic need fulfilment'.

5. Undervaluation (undervaluing pattern cutters) – this could be considered in relation to an undervaluing of 'technical knowledge' and 'productive work' and in relation to a 'trusted community'.

6. Embarrassment (due to unprofessional garment construction skills) – this could be considered in relation to a lack of 'technical knowledge' that leads to 'productive work'.

Levels of suffering do not necessarily have a linear relationship with the degree of impact on the production and consumption of fashionable clothes and a minor level of suffering could influence major change and vice versa. For instance, I suggest that the most minor form of suffering is embarrassment; however, in assessing this, it is evident that it has a

major impact on the fashion industry. It is crucial for the industry to have designers and technicians who fully understand and appreciate the need for professional garment manufacture skills in order to manage the needs of production. Without this the industry could not really operate. Alternatively, marginalization, which is placed in the middle of the severity scale, has an arguably lesser impact on the fashion industry as it can result in the self re-creation gained by appropriating a new look or style. These selves can also establish new trends in fashion, which inspire new ways in which to manufacture clothes. It is of lesser impact than embarrassment as there are arguably many other things that influence garment design; however, in order to produce fashionable clothes professional manufacture skills are essential.

The Spiral Relationship

In this section I reflect on the research findings and discussion. Both assess direct connections between suffering, its effect on the fashion industry and how it impacts on design and production. I wanted to consider ways in which the findings relate to existing concerns within fashion and initiate a new analytical insight into these debates. This is established through the concept of the fashion victim. The overdressing of the fashion victim influences fashion design, which affects fashion production. I set my undergraduate fashion students an assignment in which they were asked to design and make outfits that celebrated the 'victim's' overworked approach to dress (illustrated in Figure 14). This influenced garment-making as students had to incorporate a profusion of techniques in their manufacture; these included corsetry, boning, embroidery, ruching, sheering, crinoline construction, tassels, bra making, canvassing, draping, tailoring, studs,

etc. These many techniques also contributed towards the garments being extremely complicated and costly to make and difficult to wear.

Figure 14: 'Fashion Victim' group collection by undergraduate fashion students at University of Huddersfield, UK, celebrating the 'victim's' overworked approach to dress. Photograph courtesy of Kevin Almond.

Through the example of the fashion victim collection, a cycle begins to emerge emphasizing five concepts that interlink: suffering, change, design, skills and production, fashionable clothing and the consumer. The stylistic blunders suffered by the fashion victim initiated changes in design so that the skills in making clothes needed to be reviewed in order to produce fashionable clothing for the consumer. This initiated further suffering in the use and testing of new and traditional technologies with which to make clothes so that the cycle begins again. The five concepts are arranged in Figure 15. This

suggests how issues related to suffering in the fashion industry could influence changes

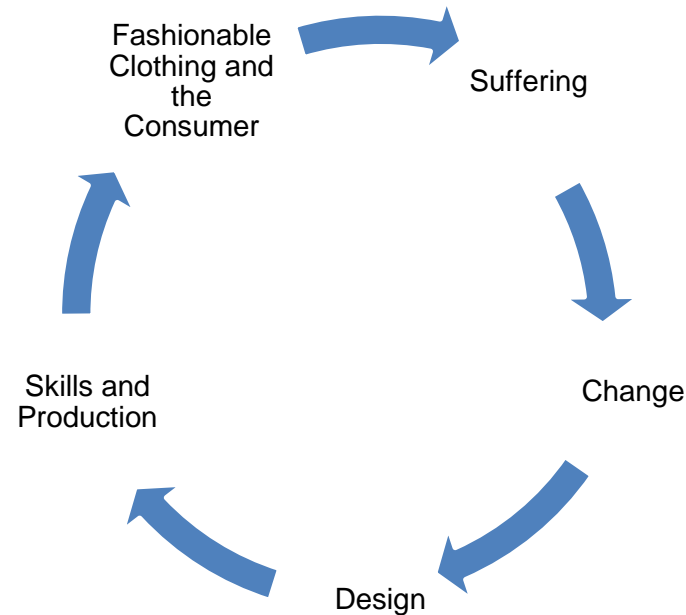in the design, skills and production of fashionable clothing for the consumer.

Figure 15: Cyclical relationship of suffering, change, design, skills and production,

fashionable clothing and the consumer

The fashion product changes seasonally, however, and does not return to the same form;

therefore, the relationship could be described as spiral rather than cyclical. The

sociologist John Zeisel proposed a design process model depicting a 'Domain of

acceptable responses' (1984: .6). This was a spiraling process that depicted the journey

from research to design and it is used to inspire the model proposed in Figure 16. Here

the conceptual shifts are changes that take place in the production and consumption of

clothing. It is rooted in fashion and the consecutive image-present test cycles represent

the spiral of reactions to forms of suffering. As Zeisel described: 'Designers aim to reach

one acceptable level of response within a range of acceptable solutions. This domain of acceptance is measured largely by how well a product adapts to its environment' (1984: 6).
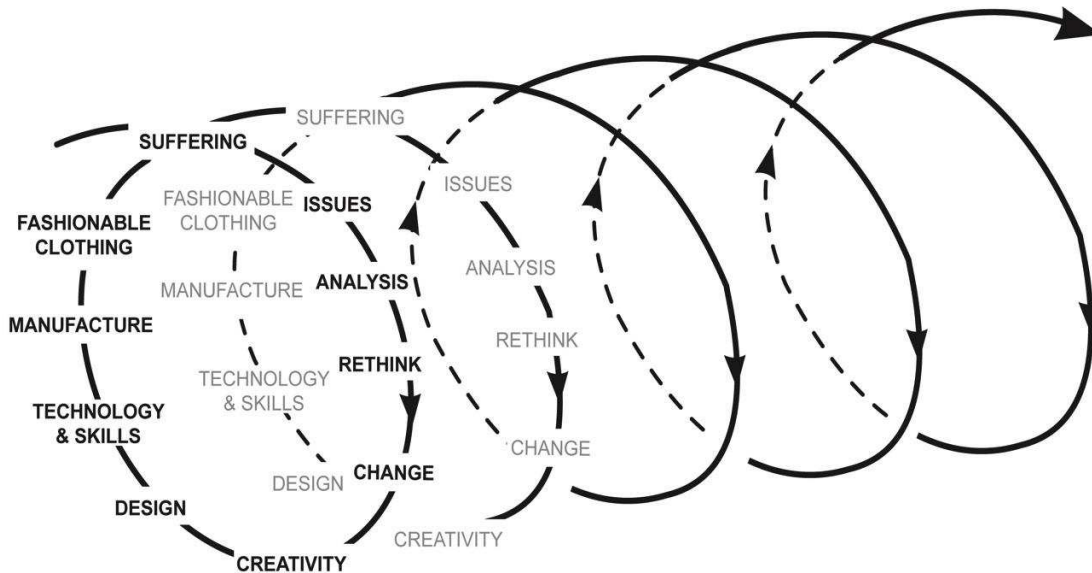

Figure 16: Spiral relationship of suffering and fashion.

In Figure 16, I draw on the key features of the Zeisel spiral to illustrate how changes in fashion design and production are a spiraling process in which solutions are sequentially arrived at through a series of responses to suffering. This forms my own analysis demonstrating how the fashion product adapts to change. The fashion product does not return to the same form and can initiate further suffering through the testing of new technologies and through its appropriation as a fashionable item. The concepts of suffering, change, design, skills and production, fashionable clothing and the consumer, in the cyclical diagram, are expanded in the spiral to further detail the sequences that initiate change in the manufacture of fashionable clothing for the consumer (suffering,

issues identified, analysis of issues, rethink, change, creativity through use of design, technology and skills). Once a solution is identified, it is tested against the original problem or set of objectives before being rejected or re-imaged to further refine the solution. This spiraling process of imaging, testing and re-imaging relies on the adequate flow of information from each design process as a means to inspire the creativity and to test ideas.

Conclusion

Suffering is identified as an amalgamation of levels of distressing experiences that cause physical or mental pain. I suggest that this influences major and minor change within the fashion industry as suffering can be a causal factor for change in design, skills and production. The research poses two further questions. For instance, (1) without suffering how would fashion change and what would cause this change and (2) could the changes in fashion design and production that evolve in the spiral relationship become so refined that it becomes impossible to initiate further change from suffering? For inspiration, fashion designers have frequently plundered design themes related to suffering: witchcraft, rape, fear, death, gothic, war, etc. (Arnold 1999; Koda 2001; Ribeiro 2003; Steele 2001). Throughout the literature review, however, I identified little research that considered how the different levels of suffering identified in this research directly relate to changes in fashion design and production.

The spiral relationship suggests that changes in fashion resulting from suffering evolve into further suffering, which initiates further change. This is described as a continuous, evolving

cycle and has an affinity with the naturalist and geologist Charles Darwin's ideas about evolution (1859), in that a species gradually evolves, and yet never into its original form. In the future new forms and levels of suffering will manifest themselves and the present research could be used as a benchmark for considering change in the creation of fashionable clothes and generate further ideas for research. The spiral relationship inspired by the Zeisel (1984) model depicting suffering in fashion could potentially determine a future focus for levels of suffering to manifest themselves, impacting on the way in which fashionable clothing is produced and the testing of evolving technologies in their production.

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