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## **Title Page**

### **An Analysis of the Shoulder Pad in Female Fashion**

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## **An Analysis of the Shoulder Pad in Female Fashion**

### **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the adoption of the shoulder pad in female, western fashion. Shoulder pads are essentially a form of wadding inserted into a garment that alters the natural shape of the shoulder line. They can give the illusion of a much broader shoulder, a square shoulder or a rounded, softer shoulder. In bespoke or made-to measure fashion such as tailoring and haute couture, the use of shoulder padding can also align the shoulders if one slopes more than the other. The fashion industry has utilized shoulder pads to enhance the silhouette of many types of clothes and this research aims to trace the history of shoulder padding in contemporary fashion, from the early 1930s. It also discusses how technology has developed the use of shoulder padding in female fashion. Their inclusion in fashionable clothing depends on the fashion taste of the day however the research also investigates how shoulder pads have sometimes been appropriated by women in order to galvanize an impression of power and emancipation.

**KEY WORDS** *Shoulder pad; female, fashion; shape; garment; silhouette*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In anatomy, the physical shoulder is one of the most mobile joints in the human body and this allows it to move through a wide range of motions. It is made from three bones; the clavicle (collarbone), the scapula (shoulder blade), and the humerus (upper arm bone), as well as ligaments, tendons and muscles. It needs to be mobile enough to support the many movements of the arms and hands, but stable enough to allow for actions such as lifting, pushing and pulling. Human shoulders extend from the neck at right angles. Like all body shapes the outline of the shoulder differs from person to person however it distinguishes the silhouette. According to the fashion writer, Colin McDowell, 'The shoulders are the armature from which the rest of the body hangs' (2013: 70). In pattern cutting the balance of a garment is often controlled from the shoulder and in drafting a garment the pattern cutter needs to ensure the shoulder line is established first (see for example: Aldrich, 2008; Bray, 1986; Bray 2003; Fischer, 2009; Joseph-Armstrong, 2013).

Shoulder pads are predominantly fabric, covered pads that come in a variety of shapes and thicknesses and are made from different fiber types. Shoulder padding is used in both male and female clothing and gives the illusion of a defined, shoulder shape that is different from the

natural body shape. This could range from a broad, square shoulder, often created for a set-in sleeve, to a rounded, curved shoulder, created by a raglan shoulder pad. Although their inclusion in garments is often dictated by the fashion taste of the day, pads can be inserted in different types of garment, including jackets, overcoats and suits. They are also used in the bespoke tailoring and couture industries to compensate for an unbalanced shoulder. For instance, extra padding can be inserted in one shoulder, or padding can enhance narrow or sloping shoulders. The pad can be made from a variety of materials but is often created from wadding and foam. In the bespoke industries the pad can be made by the tailor or seamstress to fit the size of the pattern however pads are also manufactured to standard sizes and these are mostly used in the mass market. They are generally sewn into a garment at the top of the shoulder and fastened between the lining and the outer fabric layer. Shoulder pads are also used for protective purposes such as those worn in contact sports like American football. Most modern shoulder pads, used in sportswear consist of a hard outer covering in plastic over a foam material. These pieces are often held in place by rivets or strings, which can be adjusted to fit to the size of the shoulder.



*Figure 1: A standard set in shoulder pad. Photograph courtesy of Kevin Almond.*

Manufactured shoulder pads are predominantly created for set-in sleeves and extended sleeves, which include, dolman, raglan or kimono styles. The pad used in these sleeves usually creates a square shape as in Figure 1, although a more rounded type of pad can be used to create a softer

shape as in Figure 2. Similarly a softer, round shaped pad is used in extended sleeves although a set-in pad can be used to create a square look. Shoulder pads can also be created by tailors for made to measure garments. The shape of the pad is drawn onto the pattern and the pad is built up by hand, using a variety of wadding or foam. The designer can experiment with a several pads to establish the shape of shoulder, which can be achieved by mounting different types of pad or wadding together to create a shape, as illustrated in Figure 3. It is important for the shoulder shape to be established before cutting the pattern, this dictates how the initial block shape of the pattern needs to be adapted in order to accommodate the shoulder shape. In set-in sleeves, shoulder roll is often sewn into the armhole once the shoulder pad has been secured. This creates a softer shape once the sleeve has been set into the armhole, as illustrated in Figure 4. Sleeves with a gather or pleat in the shoulder are often exaggerated with a gathered piece of net in the shoulder seam, which is concealed by the lining. The shoulder pad has been developed along with many other garment making components by the introduction of moulding technology within the fashion industry, which allows for endless creativity with the shape. This pad is constructed of layers of fibre fill, covered in an outer fabric and overlapped to finish.



*Figure 2: A rounded pad. Photograph courtesy of Kevin Almond.*



*Figure 3: Mounting different types of pad or wadding together to create a shape. Photograph courtesy of Kevin Almond.*



*Figure 4: Shoulder roll sewn into the armhole of a set in sleeve once the shoulder pad has been secured. Photograph courtesy of Kevin Almond.*

Padding in fashionable clothing has been used to enhance or distort various parts of the body in

order to conform to a fashionable aesthetic. Examples include; padding in bustles, which were particularly fashionable in the 1870s and 1880s. These extended the fullness at the back of a woman's dress. The padded codpiece, fashionable in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, is a covering pouch attached to the front of the crotch of men's trousers and usually accentuates the genital area. Hips have been padded in fashionable dress, to accentuate the waist and highlight a curvaceous figure and were popular in the *New Look* styles introduced by Christian Dior in 1947. Breasts have been padded to form a variety of shapes ranging from the pigeon chest of the Edwardian period, created by a wide bandeau filled with two encircles of horsehair. The high, sharply pointed breasts, fashionable in the 1950s were created by air pockets isolated in separate bust cups.

Technically the shoulder pad was invented in 1877 by a Princeton football player and was used in American football (Telfer, 2014). Throughout the history of fashion, the shoulder has been padded to form many different shapes from square and boxy to soft and rounded. The square shoulders of the 1940's, during World War II represented a hard, militarized look. Coats, jackets, and dresses were influenced by masculine styles and pads became larger, positioned at the top of the shoulder. In the 1980s, shoulder pads were a major fashion statement and defined the term, *Power Dressing* (Entwistle, 2000). This described the female drive to establish authority in a professional environment traditionally dominated by men, conferring an aura of rank and prestige onto those who wore them.

By tracing a period in fashion history from the 1930s to the present, I aim to explore how the shoulder pad has evolved in female fashion. I also consider how it has been appropriated as an armature of female authority. This is contextualised through a technical and historical analysis of fashion and through popular culture. The main objectives are to:

- Discuss how garment making technology has developed the shoulder pad and its use in fashionable garments.
- Identify ways in which the fashion industry has utilized shoulder pads to enhance the silhouette of garments.
- Explore ways in which shoulder padded garments can give the wearer a sense of empowerment and emancipation.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY**

The literature review revealed a small volume of study related to fashionable shoulder shapes and shoulder padding, from both an historical and technical standpoint. There are several works

that investigate the distortion of the body through padded clothing (see for example: Koda, 2001; Van Der Does, 1980; De la Haye, 1988; McDowell, 2013; Durland Spilker and Sadako Takeda, 2007; Vincent, 2009). Significantly McDowell's work, *The Anatomy of Fashion* (2013), breaks down different bodily parts and analyses their relationship to fashion, including; head, face, neck torso, back, arms and shoulders. McDowell says, 'It seems virtually unnecessary to remark that the human body is made up of various – and very different – parts. Yet this truism is often ignored in fashion books that tend to treat the body as a uniform whole' (2013: 47). McDowell's work includes a short, chronological account of the development of the fashionable shoulder. He also emphasizes how broad shoulders have been the idealized body shape for men since ancient times and discusses ways in which women have challenged male dominance by borrowing the line of the male shoulder.

Koda's work, *Extreme Beauty: The Body Transformed* (2001), considers how, 'The mechanisms of costume have transformed the zones of the body, dictating, shaping and proportion by artificially changing the body's silhouette and sometimes physically altering its structure' (2001: 6). The section examining neck and shoulders, discusses the structural underpinnings and techniques that evolved in order to create shape. These have ranged from down filled pillows, to the use of gathered net to create a roll at the shoulder line. Durland Spilker and Sadako Takeda's, *Breaking the Mode* (2007), examines the work of, 'Designers who revolutionized methods of garment construction or challenged the existing canons of the body's form, proportion, and fashionable silhouette' (2015: 15). Shoulder styles discussed in this book, often challenge traditional methods of garment construction and utilize the qualities of fabric in order to enhance shoulder shape. For instance, Issey Miyake's polyester, pleated and heat pressured fabric, holds a curved shape at the shoulder without padding or support. In contrast, Martin Margeila reveals tailoring secrets on the outside of garments such as exposed shoulder pads on jackets.

The Internet unearthed several press reports focusing on the use of shoulder pads in fashion and expose journalist phrases such as; *Whatever Happened to Shoulder Pads?* (Telfer, 2014); *The Shoulder Pad Powers its way back into Fashion* (Mail Online, 2009); *Eighties-style shoulder pads are back... and surprise surprise, Posh is leading the way* (Daily Mail Reporter, 2009). The reports stem from 2009 onwards and discuss the intermittent appearances of shoulder padding in fashion. Haver's article describes, 'How to rock shoulder pads. What looks to be a big trend is anything to do with the shoulder. We're talking shoulder pads, shoulder embellishment, anything

to do with exaggeration of the shoulder. Its definitely a trend people are scared to embrace' (2015: 1). Telfer's article claimed, 'Sure the shoulder pad is one of those items that's *intended* to convey all the right things: Power! Capability! Confidence! Unfortunately, in real life, the shoulder pad often looks like all the wrong things: Clunky, unflattering. Totally 80's' (2014: 2). The Internet also revealed blogs and posts, which discuss shoulder padding (see for example: Ferraro, 2014, McKenzie, 2014). Sheena McKenzie's *Would you wear this to work? Power dressing beyond shoulder pads* (2014), considers some of the most popular workplace fashions of the last 100 years. Whilst acknowledging the influence of shoulder enhanced power dressing, the article also stresses how dressing for work relates to being mentally comfortable, fitting in, and being considered respectable.

There is a substantial amount of literature dedicated to pattern cutting and garment construction, which includes instruction on ways to adapt patterns in order to accommodate different shoulder shapes (see for example: Aldrich, 2008; Bray, 1986; Fischer, 2009; Joseph Armstrong, 2008; Schaeffer, 2001; Tarrant, 1994). When identifying the techniques for fitting more complex and problematic types of shoulder pad, the pattern cutter often needs to refer to pattern cutting manuals in order to revive different styles. This was highlighted in Helen Burbridge's paper, *The Problems with the Extended Sleeve Styles of Post-War Dress* (2016), which examined sleeves ranging from; kimono, set-in sleeve, raglan, drop shoulder styles, low drop shoulder, extended, batwing and dolman sleeves. Burbridge, discussed how shoulder pads need to be adapted in order to accommodate the requirements of this myriad of sleeve styles and shapes.

Widespread use of shoulder pads in female fashion began in the 1930s. They were popularized by designers such as Elsa Schiaparelli and Marcel Rochas but did not really come into their own until the large, square shouldered fashions of the early 1940s. Primary research involved object-based study of post 1930s female fashion, in significant UK fashion collections (Leeds Museums and Galleries, Imperial War Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum and Bath Museum of Fashion). I also studied many different styles of shoulder padded garments in UK retail outlets and was able to compare stores that sold designer clothing (Harvey Nichols, Selfridges, Harrods, etc), to shoulder padded garments in different high street stores, pitched at different price brackets. These included higher priced stores such as Reiss, Jigsaw, Karen Millen and fast fashion orientated stores such as Primark, H&N and Zara. I also studied shoulder padding in student garments on the BA (Hons) Fashion courses at University of Huddersfield, UK, as illustrated in figures 5 and 6. This allowed me to compare how designers make different design

decisions regarding the most appropriate use of pads in garments in order to create an effect and to consider ways in which garments are cut in order to incorporate shoulder pads. Cross-referencing this with theory related to the history of female fashion, expanded my knowledge of how shoulder padded garments had been designed, produced and worn. It allowed me to consider the social and historical significance of shoulder padded clothing and compare this to my secondary research. I also issued a semi-structured questionnaire, targeted at fashion students, academics and female managers, in order to gauge opinion about the ways in which shoulder padding has been used in fashionable garments and how they can potentially emancipate the appearance of women.



*Figure 5: A small set-in pad inserted in leather dress by designer: Sophie Brown, University of Huddersfield. Photograph courtesy of University of Huddersfield.*



*Figure 6: A larger set-in pad that extends from the natural shoulder line in jacket by designer: Louise Annis, University of Huddersfield. Photograph courtesy of University of Huddersfield..*

## **HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

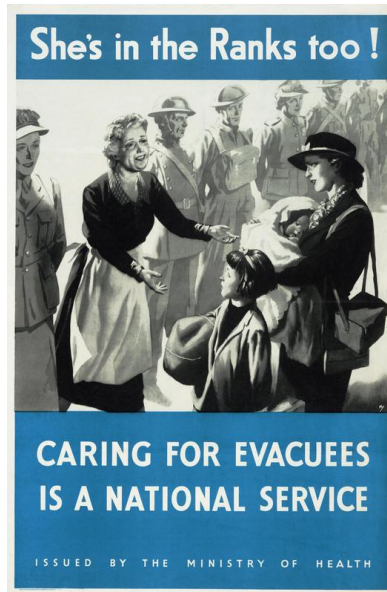
The female shoulder has mutated into various shapes throughout the history of fashionable dress. The 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century shoulder was parallel and tiny, extending into minute armholes and sleeves. From the 1820s through to the 1880s, despite many changes in dress styles, the shoulder remained rounded and dropped from the natural shoulder line. The 1830s, shoulder, whilst continuing to drop, was characterized by vastly overblown sleeves. In order to sustain them, a variety of supports were worn under the sleeves or combined with their structure. Examples of these include, ribs of wire or feather filled pillow shapes. When not sewn into dresses, sleeve supports were attached to the shoulder straps of corsets, by ties. The early and mid-1890s saw a revival of the 1830s styles with overblown leg-o-mutton sleeves however a more natural shoulder line returned in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. This research focuses in greater depth on the evolution of the fashionable, female shoulder from 1930 onwards.

Male and female shoulders have evolved differently. Throughout history the male shoulder has been exaggerated and extended in military clothing and fashionable attire. The fashion writer, Colin McDowell said, 'Men's shoulders are a cultural signifier of resilience and perseverance;

broad shoulders indicate an ability to carry emotional and psychological, as well as simply physical, burdens' (2013: 70). This suggests an exaggerated display of masculinity, the shoulder line signifying assertiveness. In female fashion, the square shoulder of the late 1930s emerged at a time of political upheaval, when women began to adopt more traditional masculine roles and this was reflected in their appropriation of the masculine shoulder line. Similar trends had occurred in the suffragette movement beginning in the 1890s, when women broadened their shoulders with epaulettes and adopted leg-o-mutton sleeves. Women had also embraced male attire during World War 1, particularly when assuming traditional male roles in the work force, due to the migration of the male population into the armed forces.

Hollywood and the styles promulgated by film stars influenced the fashionable shoulder during the 1930s. The collaboration between film star, Joan Crawford and costume designer, Adrian was a major influence on the fashionable shoulder shape (see for example: Dylas, 2013). For the film *Letty Lynton* (1932), Adrian created a feminine look that accentuated Crawford's athletic shoulders and the white organdie dress with shoulder ruffles featured in the film, was copied and sold to millions of women through retail outlets. By accentuating Crawford's Amazonian shoulders, Adrian created a rage for shoulder enhancement. This led the costume designer, Edith Head to name *Letty Lynton* the greatest influence on fashion, in film history. The collaboration between film star and costume designer continued throughout the 1930s epitomised by the broad shouldered, tailored suits he created for many of Crawford's films.

Throughout World War II (1939 – 1945), the exaggerated, military shoulder (as seen in Figure 7) appeared as a, '...display of solidarity with men in uniform, while also sharing in the power dressing of the male shoulder line' (McDowell 2013: 70). The shoulder pad created an inverted triangle look, comprised of boxy jacket and tight, knee length skirt. As discussed the masculine shoulder became a feature of early 1940s style. This look changed in 1947 with the introduction of Christian Dior's *New Look*, which presented a much softer silhouette and an overall return to femininity. The *Bar* suit from the *New Look* collection (Figure 8) comprised of a nipped-in waist, with a full skirt falling below mid-calf, emphasizing the bust and hips. The shoulder was softer and rounded with almond shaped sleeves. After a war in which women had worn austere, defeminizing uniforms, the *New Look* was welcomed as a refreshing antidote. The soft shoulder remained until the latter part of the 1950s, with the emergence of youth orientated styles associated with subcultures such as, *Beatniks* and *Moderns*.



*Figure 7: The exaggerated military shoulder from, She's in the Ranks too! Poster made by: Ministry of Health (publisher/sponsor) 1939, Art.IWM PST 8561. Photograph courtesy of the Imperial War Museum, UK.*



*Figure 8: Christian Dior, 'Bar' suit, T.376&A-1960. Photo graph courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, UK.*

The early 1960s shoulder became more pronounced and slightly boxy. Small shoulder pads were used in women's jackets and coats, such as the boxy two-piece suits designed by Chanel. Padded shoulders were rarely used in blouses, knitwear or dresses. Arguably the overriding shoulder silhouette in the 1960s was the A line mini-dress. This was often a sleeveless shift with shrunken or bare shoulders. By the late 1960s, fashion adopted the styles of the *Hippie* movement and floaty, romantic clothes became popular, which de-emphasized the shoulder. In the early 1970s there was a revival of styles influenced by the 1930s and 1940s in the work of Barbra Hulanicki, Bill Gibb and Ossie Clarke. They added definition to their chiffon and fake fur creations with the addition of small shoulder pads. The shoulder shape was also significant in Yves Saint Laurent's forties inspired collection from 1971 and in his tuxedo style *Le Smoking* looks, which he originated in 1966.

Broad, square shoulders returned to prominence at the end of the 1970s. Arguably inspired by the UK Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, who used large shoulders as a means of communicating power and to be taken seriously in a traditionally masculine environment. 'She opted for tailored suits so that she could stand quite literally 'shoulder to shoulder' with men' (Crawhirst 2012: 1). Thatcher's clothing was distinctive, 'Her signature pearls, shoulder pads, handbags and lurid blue suits stand out as a medium of control' (Crawhirst 2012: 1). The look became known as *Thatcher Style* and her regal, highly groomed appearance symbolized a political technique. The 1980s businesswomen quickly adopted shoulder pads to give them a squared off silhouette and this became the defining look of the decade. The costumes from the 1980s television programmes, *Dallas* and *Dynasty*, worn by the actresses, Linda Gray, Joan Collins and Linda Evans, epitomized the apex of the shoulder pad, suggesting they were women strong enough to survive in a male dominated world. Dormant shoulder pad factories reopened their assembly lines, but the craze was short lived. In their pursuit of new silhouettes, it was not long before designers, returned women to softer shoulders.

The two fashion sketches by designer Sylvia Ayton, for the UK retailer, Wallis (figures 9 and 10), illustrate the changing shoulder shape between 1987 and 1997. Ayton said, 'The 1980s moved us into a decade of differences, although it was a glamorous mix of all things bright and beautiful I will always remember it as a big shouldered, power-dressing era' (Ayton 2006: 1). She continued, 'In 1988 the film *Working Girl* with actress, Melanie Griffith said it all, the power coat 52 inches long, and the power suit and of course the big, big raincoat, worn on top, produced two sets of shoulder pads' (Ayton 2006: 1). The 1987 sketch in Figure 9, demonstrates the apex of the square

shouldered, padded jacket for the Wallis customer. By 1997 this had relaxed into the much softer shoulder of the sketch in Figure 10.

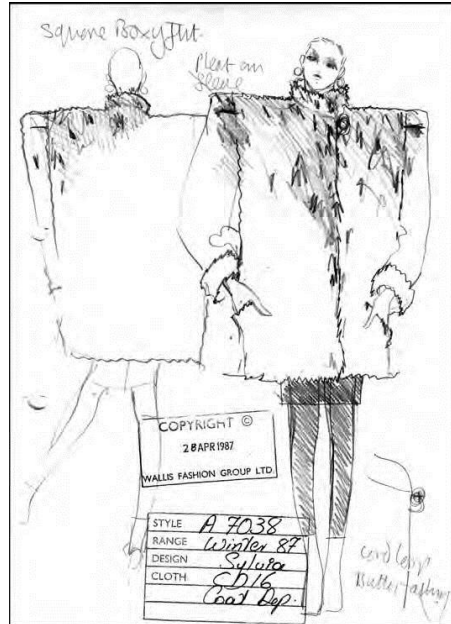


Figure 9: Wide shoulder coat design by Sylvia Ayton for Wallis, 1987. Photograph courtesy of Sylvia Ayton and Wallis.

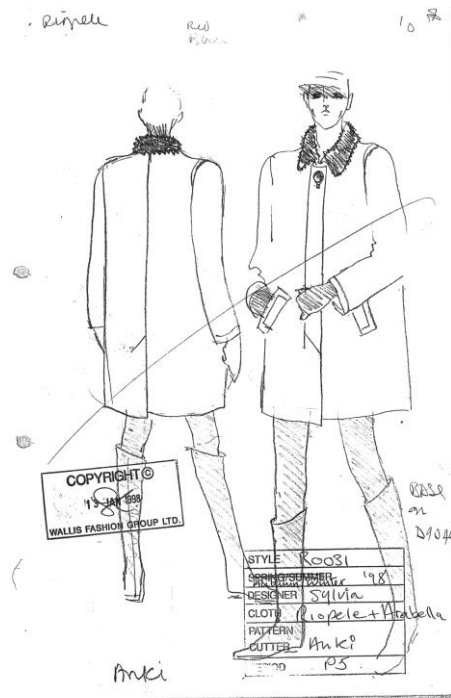


Figure 10: Softer shouldered coat design by Sylvia Ayton for Wallis, 1997. Photograph courtesy of Sylvia Ayton and Wallis.

There was a backlash against 1980s styles in the 1990s. Although some manufacturers continued to produce ranges of clothes with large padding until the mid, 1990s, the shoulder line eventually returned to a more understated shape. Strong shoulders returned in 2001, influenced by the designer, Tom Ford, formerly head of design at Gucci and Yves Saint Laurent. Ford was known for making women look and feel powerful and sexy. By the 2009-2010 season, shoulder pads had returned to the mainstream market and featured in the collections of designers such as, Roland Mouret and Victoria Beckham. The styles of the 1980s had a resurgence in the 2010s, as many young women began to imitate the styles of singers such as Lady Gaga and Rihanna, who are known for their 1980s style jackets with large shoulder pads.

### DISCUSSION OF SHOULDER PAD QUESTIONNAIRE

In 2016 I issued an anonymous questionnaire to over 300 undergraduate students and academics in a large university fashion and textile department. Fifty four replies were received. Questions were framed around the research aims of this paper and quizzed respondents about ways in which, shoulder padding alters the human silhouette, their manufacture, their impact on fashion

and the sense of empowerment they can give to the wearer. The questionnaire was issued in 2016, when shoulder pads were not a predominant trend in fashion, therefore the responses from the students tended to be more influenced by their understanding of fashion history. The academics were older and several had first-hand experience, of the impact shoulder pads had on 1980s fashion and were able to reflect on this. As one of the questions considered how shoulder pads gave a sense of empowerment to women, particularly in business, the questionnaire was also issued to a university senior management team, the majority of whom were female. The responses to the four questions are discussed below.

*Can you describe any ways in which the shoulder pad distinguishes the silhouette of the human body?*

This question asked respondents to consider how shoulder pads can distinguish the silhouette by framing a garment, giving it shape or altering the natural shoulder line, thereby changing body shape. Some respondents considered ways in which, shoulder padding creates structure and form generating an illusion by making other parts of the body, such as the waist, appear smaller. They can be used to show strength or masculinity, for instance in military uniforms. Some discussed how the addition of a shoulder pad completely changes the silhouette of a garment, either squaring the shape or making it more rounded. One respondent said, ‘The shoulder pad is a tool with which to frame a part of the body, much like a collar. It changes the silhouette to look smarter and more formal and to stand proud. To be able to alter the lines of one’s body in a semi-permanent way is powerful and yet more subtle than a push up bra’ (anonymous).

The shoulder pad can create a silhouette that is masculine or feminine. Compared to the male physique, females invariably have narrower shoulders. Shoulder pads broaden the shoulder silhouette giving a more masculine line whilst making both the waist and hips look smaller and the body look slimmer. Several respondents commented that using shoulder pads in garments is a 1980s influence and ‘Most contemporary clothes do not have shoulder pads (except suits which may have them built in), or we have endeavoured to chop them out - very unsightly things! I think older women find shoulder pads acceptable still’ (anonymous). Another respondent commented, ‘All I can say about shoulder pads is, as a mature student, I remember the 1980s power dressing with fear and loathing. The shoulder pads were uncomfortable and laughable, like the corsets of the Victorian era they will remain a hideous reminder of how fashion has tried to shape women's bodies for the benefit of man’ (anonymous). Both comments are detrimental about padding and refer to a period in fashion when padding in the shoulder was extreme.

*Can you briefly describe any ways the fashion industry has utilized shoulder pads to enhance the silhouette of garments?*

Respondents to this question cited the 1940s and 1980s as decades when the use of shoulder padding exaggerated the shoulder line. With government clothing restrictions throughout Europe and the USA in the 1940s, it was a dramatic way of changing the shape of a garment. One respondent observed how shoulder pads made the wearer, 'Look smarter and more formal and stand proud and upright, broadening the shoulders to mimic the male form to gain a presence that a powerful male figure had, when women did not' (anonymous). Others recalled the sharp shoulder pads used in Yves St Laurent's *Le Smoking* suits of the 1970s and the rounded shoulder pads of designer, Giorgio Armani's relaxed tailoring in the early 1980s. It was also noted that shoulder pads are essential in tailoring, particularly hand tailoring where they can be shaped and moulded through stitching or steaming. Custom shaped pads also complemented garments, enabling the maker and wearer to create an individual structure.

Respondents observed how shoulder pads both shape and support the sleeve crown in outerwear jackets, coats and suits. Pads have also been used to emphasize gathers at the sleeve crown. One respondent said, 'They don't seem to have mastered the subtle use of shoulder pads in lighter garments such as blouses or dresses' (anonymous). Another noted how, 'The fashion industry has used embellishment to enhance the fashionable silhouette, such as epaulettes and beading on the shoulder, as well as folding, gathering and pleating on the sleeve head' (anonymous). One respondent mentioned that many super hero outfits, such as those worn by fictional characters like, *Superman* or *Wonder Woman*, are enhanced by shoulder padding making the character appear larger than life. This is predominantly padding for costume, therefore not fashion orientated.

*Can you describe any ways garment making technology has developed the shoulder pad and its use in fashionable garments?*

This question allowed respondents to reflect on the ways shoulder pads have been used in fashion and how technology has advanced their production. Some recalled how shoulders were enhanced by doubling-up pads to give a sharp look or rolls of wadding were added to give a rounded look. Detachable shoulder pads using velcro or poppers became common in knitwear and unstructured tailoring during the 1970-80s. One respondent who had worked as a designer for the retailer, *Wallis* commented, 'At Wallis when shoulders were in fashion we designed new

pads especially for different styles of garments and sleeves. Extra-large for coats, raglan for raglan-sleeved raincoats, smaller for blouses. Press photos had models wearing a blouson jacket and coat, all with shoulder pads. Truly enormous, truly uncomfortable, but truly fashionable’ (anonymous). Many reflected on the exaggerated shoulders of the 1980s when it was noted that, ‘It got ridiculous, shoulder pads in your t-shirt, then another set in your jumper, and then in your coat. It was crazy’ (anonymous).

In today’s fashion, shoulder pads are less harsh in shape and appearance. One respondent commented, ‘Although I have not seen much use of the shoulder pad in garments other than coats, jackets etc, there appears to be more of an awareness of ways in which to create a subtle fitting to the garment’ (anonymous). In tailoring and couture dressmaking, constructing individual shoulder pads for customers can level uneven shoulders. A small insertion in one side can allow the garment to remain symmetrical. It was noted that contemporary use of pads is more discreet and the creation of a silhouette more to do with the structure of the garment through interfacing or bonding of fabric, to achieve shape. The shoulder pad has also been developed by the introduction of moulding technology, as one respondent said, ‘I believe in true tailoring, the shoulder pad continues to be constructed of numerous layers in many fabrications but in main stream and couture fashion, the shoulder pad is now a moulded product’ (anonymous). Moulded pads are predominantly constructed in fibre fill and covered in an outer fabric layer, then treated with a heat process and shaped by electro heated machines. This is usually heat-sealed at the edges.

*Can you briefly describe any instances, where shoulder pads in fashion have been exploited in order to establish female authority?*

The literature review refers to the ways shoulder pads have been used to highlight authority and power and how this emancipated style has been adopted by women. Predictably many questionnaire respondents cited the 1940s and 1980s as decades when exaggerated shoulders reflected women’s liberated role. It was also observed that shoulder pads were heavily utilized when androgynous dressing became popular in the late 1970s. This was popularized by female singers such as Annie Lennox and Grace Jones, whose wardrobes included the padded masculine suit. Similar to the adoption of male attire in the 1930s by movie stars such as Marlene Dietrich, this structured look blurred gender identities.

Unlike the corset, which restricts women's movement, the shoulder pad has induced women to dress like men with wide, exaggerated shoulders. For business wear it was noted, 'The shoulder pad is a must have component of any suit in order to portray authority in the workplace' (anonymous) and 'For businesswomen, power dressing gives them scary power if they have big shoulder pads' (anonymous). In the film *Working Girl* (1988), the female boss feels more confident in a tailored jacket than a cardigan, especially working with men. The film critic, Christopher Lavery described the visual impact of the female boss, 'Her strength comes more via form, i.e. the size of her shoulder pads. The eighties was a battleground for those who possessed the widest shoulder pads, for they would own the room' (2013: 1). Beyond descriptions of 1940s and 1980s fashion, respondents noted how military uniforms empowered women. The use of shoulder pads and shoulder decoration such as epaulettes contributed to this emancipated look and also influenced fashion.

Although the questionnaire was limited to the views of students, academics and managers from the university, fashion and textile department, it aimed to gather different perceptions about shoulder padded garments from fashion specialists. Future research could focus upon a wider distribution of the questionnaire within other universities and within the fashion industry in order to gauge a broader opinion. Within the constraints of this research however the views of the sampled university department are considered in relation to the social and cultural influences that can change fashion and their subsequent impact on the appropriation of shoulder padding in female fashion.

## **CONCLUSION**

Although padded shoulders were invented as a sportswear application in 1877, this research investigates how they have been incorporated into female fashion from 1930 onwards. The study identifies how the shoulder has been enhanced through padding, transforming the human silhouette and physically altering its structure in order to conform to a fashionable aesthetic. It also reveals how garment making technology has developed the manufacture of the shoulder pad, ranging from manual production, to the use of moulding technology. Shoulder padded garments are described as giving the wearer a sense of empowerment. By focusing on female fashion from 1930, the research emphasizes how the social and political climate, particularly in the 1940s and 1980s, encouraged women to emancipate themselves within the workforce. Fashionable clothing reflected this through their exaggerated use of shoulder padding.

The literature review identified how the historical and technical development of shoulder pads has been documented in works which discuss the fashionable anatomy and how the human body has been transformed through padding. There has been no sole work related to shoulder padding in fashion, which this research aims to bridge therefore what ultimately is the benefit of such an analysis? Firstly I would suggest that by identifying a gap in literature, the study adds to the rich historical documentation of fashionable garment construction and future researchers can learn much from closer scrutiny of the different components of fashionable dress. This is something advocated through object based research (Mida and Kim, 2015), which allows the researcher to explore and articulate garment design and construction through observation and handling, before measuring their findings through theoretical consideration. The anonymous questionnaire issued to the university fashion and textile department revealed the ways in which respondents understood how garment making technology has developed the use of shoulder padding in fashionable garments. It also allowed respondents to consider how the enhancement of parts of the anatomy in dress, can reflect social and cultural change. The shoulder pad (as well as padding in other areas of garments) is applied in order to enhance different, fashionable silhouettes and the economic value of this lies in the development of new clothing for the consumer. Future research could investigate ways in which shoulder shapes can be created through the use of new technologies, such as 3D printing, smart technology and the development of moulding technology. It would also be interesting to consider if the use of new technologies in shoulder padded garments continues to reflect changes in fashion. In so doing this would continue to evolve the ways we produce fashionable clothes and the structural applications we utilize in order to enhance fashionable shape.

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