A CHANGE OF FASHION: RE-THINKING AGE, EXPERIENCE, AND CREATIVE LABOR IN THE MULTIGENERATIONAL, 21ST CENTURY, NEW YORK CITY FASHION INDUSTRY WORKPLACE

by

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(Under the Direction of Katalin Medvedev)

ABSTRACT

Technological advancements, the prevalence of digital media, and shifting age demographics in the U.S. workforce dominate most of the economic, environmental, and social aspects of our work lives. This is particularly evident in Manhattan, New York City, New York (NY), the heart of the U.S. fashion, apparel, and textile industry. Up until the 21st century, the once-self-contained industry relied on foundational operational practices that had remained unchanged for over 200 years. However, since the late 1970s domestic operations such as cut-and-sew, product development, and manufacturing were gradually chipped away by the lure of lower labor and production costs in the Global South. Digital and automated technologies designed to increase productivity led to a significant contraction of the industry's often older and skilled workforce. Together with trade policies, these situational factors brought about the dismantling of U.S. factories and the gradual demise or reduction of fully staffed NY design, product development, and marketing corporate headquarters. After the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center

in 2001, the NY Garment Center suffered its greatest decrease in employment, leading to additional economic and labor losses.

The 21st-century U.S. workplace presents a unique historical situation in which as many as five generations may work side by side. Due to increasing life expectancies and people delaying retirement for social or financial reasons, a multigenerational workplace is becoming increasingly normal. As digital natives, most younger workers are equipped with the latest technology skills, but they lack soft skills and tacit knowledge that can only be acquired over time and through experience. To maintain creative practices and facilitate knowledge transfer between generational cohorts, this dissertation suggests that the fashion industry embraces the concept of an inclusive, age-diverse workforce. My work challenges the industry's problem with ageism and its extreme focus on youthfulness. In the three studies that follow I examine the potential of creative collaboration across age and experience levels between multiple generations who work in the visual- and youth-focused NY fashion and textiles industry. I argue that intergenerational teams and mentoring across all ages will ensure that foundational practices continue for the next and subsequent generations.

INDEX WORDS: Multigenerational workplace, fashion industry, creative labor, ageism, mentoring

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DEDICATION

This manuscript is dedicated to my co-muses: my darling son, Wade Oates, and my darling partner, David Winter. Wade, you are my reason for being here now and my eternal source of inspiration; David, you are my southern muse and humorist. Both of you have supported me throughout this entire process and entertained me with your humor, wisdom, and distractions. The work that took place over the last six years could not have happened without these two men in my life.

Every day we grow older; older is a state of becoming. It is also beyond our control. Those we love, admire, and aspire to drop out unexpectedly or expectedly. While I dedicate this dissertation to the living, I also wish to honor those gone long ago, Mark Oates, Mom, and Dad. Mark, I channel your wit and wisdom and wish you were here every day. Mom, the "appearance manager" who would have many a story to tell about my research and subject matter, and Dad, the entrepreneur who let me go when I moved to New York. Ultimately, I did what they did; I left home to pursue something that was not available where I was living. Mom and Dad, thank you for encouraging me to develop my artistry; I am grateful that we had the means and you had the insight.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Positionality of the First Author of the Studies

Living in Manhattan, New York City, New York (NY) for nearly four decades (1981–2017) and working as a design professional for U.S.-based companies[1] in the fashion, soft home, and textile industry, I have experienced the global shifts in creative labor and technology that have reshaped textile and clothing production and consumption. Once I reached my late 40s, in the late aughts, while most U.S. manufacturers and their NY headquarters reduced their labor pool, relocated overseas or had met their demise, I also began to experience the effects of becoming an older client-facing design professional in the perpetually youth-focused industry. My tenure as director, etc. at companies became less predictable and once secure positions became only temporary positions. Maybe I was also work-fatigued and did not want to travel as much as I had for over three decades. Several years after some precarious "Plan B, C, D, etc." reinventions (Williams, 2011), including teaching at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) without a bachelor's degree, and opening an antique shop/café in Hudson, New York, I decided to embark on a proper academic career. I wanted to investigate what happens to other older creatives who have had long productive NY fashion and textile careers and who continue to work in the industry. After I plunged into

[1] AVP Director of Textiles, Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia; Director of Operations, Ralph Lauren Home; Director of Design, Robert Allen Design Group; and VP of Marketing and Product Development and Director of Design and Product Development for multiple U.S. and international textile manufacturers.

this research I wanted to understand why and how younger colleagues mis/perceive their older colleagues and vice versa within intergenerational environments. As a graduate student at the University of Georgia, I also began to experience microaggressions because of [what I perceived was because of] my age that made me feel isolated and invisible in some, but not all academic settings. Conversely, the opportunity to experience generativity first-hand with younger colleagues has greatly informed my research with positive benefits to my well-being and social engagement. In sum, I decided to write about the topics of the articles in this dissertation because I have lived them. In my current role and identity as an academic, artist, and design professional, I sought to comprehend the dilemmas and marginalization of other older women. I wanted to understand what happens socially to women (and others), like myself, who work in client-facing creative positions in multigenerational work environments.

Age and Experience in the New York Fashion System

The fashion system embraces creative newcomers and entrepreneurs who love fashion, textiles, and culture and are fully immersed in the zeitgeist. The industry attracts a wide audience of younger fashion and textile design, merchandising, and visual arts graduates, and others, many of whom will invest in it for their entire careers. However, its efficacy depends on the collaboration of an increasing age- and culturally- diverse workforce, who often start their careers by learning the operations of the system through apprenticeships and mentorships.

Fashion's fast pace thrives and functions on curiosity, creativity, intuition, flexibility, and proper communication. Tacit knowledge and multiple levels of experience in design, materials, technology, history, culture, and manufacturing are necessary for the

successful completion of strategic steps from concept, design, and product development (PD) all the way through to the manufacturing process and retail. Hard and soft skills are learned from a long tenure on the job during which one learns to pay critical attention to aesthetics, functionality, precision, cost, and operations. Every seasonal launch and event involve complex conceptual and critical thinking, project management, problem-solving, and design skills in a collaborative environment over a period of months or years that target a specific retail market, cost structure, end-use, and, ultimately, the consumer.

Many older practitioners have been working behind the scenes in the industry for 25 years and longer; they hold the secrets, techniques, and processes that make fashion happen. Despite this, older employees may be seen as no longer essential at work. In addition, at age 50 and older the visual expectations of one's appearance may alter perceivers' expectations of what is cool, on-trend, and, thus, deemed acceptable. This may have potential results that could limit their present and future livelihood and employment which comes with the loss of financial security, career and social identities, and more. Patterns of behavior like these perpetuate generational age mis/perceptions that can hinder productivity and distort expectations in the work environment.

With a fresh look at age through the generational, social, historical, and economic aspects of the fashion industry, this dissertation challenges the industry's problem with ageism and its extreme focus in its messaging on youthfulness. The project examines the intersection of age, collaboration, creative labor, and experience across multiple generations in the workplace. It focuses on the impact of intergenerational teams. It is necessary as at present up to five generations may co-exist in the workplace. Three qualitative studies were conducted from 2018–2021 to address different aspects of age,

experience, and collaboration in the creative NY fashion industry workplace. Each study followed the previous one naturally.

Objectives

In the current age-diverse demographic, I investigate age mis/perceptions and ageism to examine its pervasiveness in the workplace. I explore and discuss the complexities of older[2] professionals working and ageing[3] in a youth-focused industry in the behind-the-scenes (BTS) creative workforce in the NY fashion and textile industry. I examine the strategies older professionals use to remain relevant in the workplace, their sartorial choices, and the significance of dress and appearance for those who hold client-facing positions in the industry. As the burgeoning population of younger and more diverse generations increases in the labor pool, examining age inclusivity and mis/perceptions across multigenerational teams in the workplace will play a crucial role in how companies evolve. Overall, the papers that make up the body of this dissertation argue that companies do well by capitalizing on generational differences and experiences. As older workers leave the workforce, companies need to maintain critical industry knowledge and facilitate skills transfer through intergenerational teams, all-age mentoring, and collaboration.

[2] I purposefully use the adjective "older" instead of "old". To me, older denotes an active identity, not a stagnating one. While "older" is also the comparative of old, I prefer to use it as a comparative to "younger."

[3] Throughout the manuscript, unless it is used in a title, etc., I use the British spelling of the word, "ageing" vs. the American spelling, "aging". As an artist and visual thinker, when I see the word without the "e", "aging" looks weak and anemic; it communicates commonly used negative age perceptions and stereotypes. To see the word *age* in the word, *ageing*, looks to me stronger, more energetic; it also has agency and autonomy. Here, the word, "age" is not hiding; it is visible and active. Ageing is unavoidable, constant, and in motion. Agency is active and engaged, it suggests action or power. We are ageing every day, we get older, not necessarily old.

Research Studies

Study One

The first study, Chapter Two, "Sartorial Appearance Management Strategies of Creative Professional Women over Age Fifty in the Fashion Industry," addresses age and appearance management strategies of 12 women, 50 years old and older who have worked in design and fashion for a minimum of 15 to over 50 years. See Appendix A for interview protocol. The study attempts to provide answers to the following questions: Does gendered ageism exist in the fashion industry? How do women over 50 manage their personal appearance and maintain their positions in the highly visual and youth-oriented culture of the contemporary fashion industry? And, lastly, do women over 50 who hold creative positions in the fashion industry have employment challenges because of their age or for other reasons?

All the participants had client-facing positions and were regarded as the authority on the product for which they are responsible. The study highlights the challenges creative women face at work as they grow older but must remain relevant in a youth- and beauty-focused industry. Their dress is often different from other professional women; it not only must display their creative capital and the brand they represent, but it must also be utilitarian and functional to "allow them to perform their job duties and engage unhampered in their creative processes, at times, in unconventional places and work environments" (McInnis & Medvedev, 2021a, p. 33). This presents a social, economic, and cultural dilemma that is further complicated by the visual expectations of these women whose work (and society at large) require them to look a certain way. The study highlights the resilience of this population and the ways in which they stay relevant to

maintain their positions in the industry. The study also addresses the growing consumption needs of older professional women, largely ignored by the industry. The study was published in 2021 in the peer-reviewed international journal, *Fashion Practice*.

Study Two

The second study, Chapter Three, is titled "Age, Experience, and Creative Labour: Narratives of Creative Professionals over Age 55 in the New York Fashion Industry." It sought to analyze the influence of exogenous and endogenous factors experienced by highly specialized older professionals over four decades to determine their effects on their careers, well-being, and work-life balance. The study explores the relationship of age and experience through the biographical narratives of six highly experienced creative professionals, who have worked in the fashion industry for multiple decades, including myself. Biographical and autobiographical narrative inquiry was used as a storytelling methodology to allow the participants to share their personal stories about their experiences, perceptions, and interactions surrounding their daily lives in the workplace (Bhattacharya, 2017; Kim, 2016). The study highlights the participants' expertise and adaptability and contains their self-reflections about historical events and the dramatic technological and labor shifts in industry operations that took place during their tenure in the industry. The study focuses on the benefits of intergenerational teams, collaboration, and knowledge transfer between generations. It describes "the strategies the participants employed to remain professionally relevant as they adapted to the shifting landscape of the global fashion industry" (McInnis & Medvedev, 2021b, p. 282). See Appendix B for interview protocol. The study was published in 2021 in the peer-reviewed international journal, *International Journal of Fashion Studies*.

Study Three

The third study, Chapter Four, is titled "Balancing Old school–New School Experience to Foster a Productive Intergenerational Workforce in the Fashion Industry."[4] The research project was triggered by the results of the second study which uncovered diverging generational mis/perceptions about collaboration within the prior study's participants' data. The study examines 14 fashion creatives who work in a multigenerational NY fashion industry workplace. As a natural progression of the dissertation research, the study's findings suggest a reframing of the generational mis/perceptions in the fashion industry workplace. It highlights the significance of collaboration, equity, and all-age mentoring in the increasingly diverse industry workplace. The study examined both younger and older populations of the age spectrum. Carl Jung's (1971) puer–senex [younger–older] archetypal dyad concept as a metaphorical framework supports the need for the intentional integration of the skills of older and younger coworkers to meet productivity and creativity goals. Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) rhizomatic thinking and the *rhizome* as a metaphor helped to understand connectivity and hierarchy in the learning processes between older and younger workers. Through the narratives of both older (over 50 years old) and millennial (under 40 years old) workers, I have proposed a "both/ and", not "either/ or", to examine a mutual desire for knowledge transfer that sometimes contradicts with age and ability mis/perceptions. The study highlights evolving ways of intergenerational collaborations

[4] The original title of study three presented at the "Can Fashion Save The World?" colloquium in Antwerp, Belgium October 2021, "Old school–New school: Balancing the Puer–Senex Archetype Fosters Productive Intergenerational Teams in the Fashion Industry," was later renamed for the book chapter to, "Balancing Old school–New School Experience to Foster a Productive Intergenerational Workforce in the Fashion Industry."

to help reframe age mis/perceptions. See Appendices C, D, and E for interview protocols and Google recruitment survey. The study will be published in 2023 as a peer-reviewed book chapter in the two-volume set, *Can Fashion Save the World?* by Routledge.

Literature Review: The Social, Cultural, Professional, and Economic Effects of Youth Culture in the Fashion Industry

Background

For most of the 20th century, the U.S. textile, fashion, and apparel industry had been a self-contained entity performing much of its design and production operations domestically. Most, if not all, textile manufacturers and apparel brands had their headquarters in the NY Garment Center which housed their executive teams of marketing, merchandising, and design and product development (PD). Every creative process from yarn development and design, development and sampling for woven, knitted, and printed textiles, garment sampling, draping and pattern making, and even textiles and apparel production runs, was performed manually or by using machinery that remained unchanged since the early 19th century. Since the late 1970s, digital technology provided a gateway for the industry to transform into a worldwide industrial complex. Because of globalization and multiple trade policies that resulted in cheaper labor costs, the dissemination of technology, and an ageing and retiring workforce, employment numbers in the U.S. fashion industry have declined (Crean et al., 2003; Minchin, 2012). As the digital world displaced older techniques and manufacturing moved offshore, the NY fashion industry has concurrently endured economic and sociocultural events that have influenced the employment of creative fashion intermediaries. During this 40+year period, NY's iconic garment industry has sustained significant upheavals, resulting in

labor losses and disruptions, such as, the introduction of digital technologies and social media, manufacturing moving offshore, industry trade policies, recessions, 9/11, and global health epidemics and pandemics like HIV/AIDS, H1N1, SARS, and COVID-19. These events have affected the supply chain as well as the industry's workforce and the economic and physical environment of the NY garment industry. In order to assess the timeline of events that informed the forty+ year time period of this dissertation research, I took a deep dive into investigating the effects of exogenous events like global shifts, recessions, technology, trade policies, and pandemics had on the industry and the study participants.

Behind the Scenes in the U.S. Fashion Industry

The creative process and PD involves a complex network of collaborating actors (Crewe, 2017). While manufacturing labor has radically contracted in the industry, employment in the creative aspects of U.S. fashion industry labor has also been affected. Regardless of where apparel and textile manufacturing happen, the high-value segment of innovation and creativity, research and PD, design, and marketing in the global supply chain is still primarily based in the United States and rooted in NY (Maloney, 2019). People who work in these types of creative professions form the foundation of the BTS processes that bring fashion to the masses. Blaszczyk (2014), describes these BTS agents that link designers, manufacturers, retailers, and consumers as fashion intermediaries. Producers of consumer goods rely on the expertise and intuition of these intermediaries to learn about popular taste. She adds,

> They are the people who work behind the scenes in design and fashion to make the material world that we live in today. They work as retail buyers, store

> designers, window dressers. They work as colorists. These are the people in design and marketing history that get overlooked. Their stories need to be told. (Munsell Color, n.d.)

In the web of the fashion and textile industries' supply chain, their responsibilities may also involve textile and apparel design and PD, merchandising, and color and trend forecasting. These occupations are highly specialized and require more education and training, which often come from a long tenure on the job (Moon, 2020).

NY culture not only generates employment and revenue, but it also attracts a diverse mix of versatile and highly skilled people drawn to it because of the energy and creative atmosphere (Currid, 2008). Describing the cultural economy of NY, Currid (2008), states that creative industries like fashion, art, and music, drive the economy as much as finance, law, and real estate. Despite the shifting global landscape, creative professionals who work in fashion capitals like NY are still key to the design, production, and promotion of fashion (Payne, 2020). In fact, the NY Garment Center still maintains a fully integrated system of design and PD operations for the higher-priced segments of fashion production (Maloney, 2019). Blaszczyk's (2014) research of production and consumption demonstrates why a deeper historical understanding of design and marketing is crucial to fashion and dress studies. Further, considering the magnetic pull that NY generates, more research is needed on labor populations in the changing NY garment industry.

Global Shifts: Recessions, Technology, and Trade Policies

The 1980s was a critical time in the fashion industry that shifted the paradigm in the U.S. and worldwide textile and apparel industries. By the 1980s and 1990s, the

majority of apparel firms that once produced in the United States moved their production offshore, citing America's need to improve productivity, quality, innovation, and the need to be more price-competitive (Minchin, 2012). Green (1997) examined a century of the history of the industry, from an immigrant labor and gendered perspective. Park & Kincade (2011) noted that 1973 was the time of peak employment in U.S. apparel manufacturing and also argued that it was the year when it began to decline. They documented the historical changes in the U.S. fibers, textile, and apparel industries from 1973 until 2005 and explored the environmental factors of globalization, technology, and consumers to determine the impact of business environments on strategies during this time. In their assessment, 2005 was the ending point for the industry, that is before the global recession of the first decade of the 21st century (2002). After the Great Recession (2007-2009) created a global bank crisis and a 10% unemployment rate, both fashion designers and retailers faced challenges with credit and order reductions (Amadeo, 2020; Wilson, 2008). While research has detailed the industrial history and deindustrialization of U.S. textile and apparel manufacturing and its effect on labor, it covers locations mostly outside of the NY Garment District and does not include details on older workers (Dicken, 2011; Vatz, 2013).

In a report about information technology for the U.S. FTA industry, Byrne outlines the advent and effects of technology and computer-aided design (CAD) and computer-aided manufacturing (CAM) in the latter part of the 20th century (1995). Introduced in the 1970s for garment grading and marking by Gerber in the United States, CAD/CAM offered significant reduction in lead times and labor costs in the cutting rooms of apparel manufactures. CAD/CAM developed rapidly; by the end of the 1980s it

was widely used as a creative design tool for both textile and apparel design, pattern making, and automation in manufacturing processes. CAD in the design studio also offered the opportunity for timely customer feedback, making the design process more efficient (Byrne, 1995; Park & Kincade, 2011). In the last quarter of the 20th century, digital technology, e-commerce, and social media had the biggest impacts in transforming the industry (Maloney, 2019; Moncarz, 1992). Moncarz (1992) notes that "design has the greatest impact on manufacturability, production cost, and product quality of any process in the apparel manufacturing life cycle" (p. 10). He emphasized that the industry must convert from labor-intensive to intelligence-intensive to meet the needs of the industry, requiring employees with superior skills and knowledge. However, industry research does not explore how technology and economic, social, and political situations affected the experiences of the older creative labor force employed during the last 40 years in the NY fashion industry.

Between 1990 and 2011 about 750,000 U.S. apparel manufacturing jobs disappeared as American retailers were turning to the Global South for their manufacturing supply chain needs (Vatz, 2013). Numerous bills and measures have been enacted to shield the industry from imports, but most meant little to no change for the U.S. fashion industry, as it competed against overseas manufacturers producing at a fraction of the cost (U.S. Congress, 1987). Trade liberalization policies, like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994 eliminated most import restrictions and duties on foreign-made clothing and dried up what was left of American textile manufacturers. Trade agreements like the Central American- Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR), signed in 2004, and later the Trans-Pacific Partnership

(TPP), signed in 2016 and withdrawn in 2017, were designed to promote free trade between other countries and the United States (Rees & Hathcote, 2004). However, none have done much to support the U.S. workforce in the industry. In fact, they have further destroyed it. The industry continues to adapt to the trade and tariff war with China, which will impact the fashion industry, its supply chain, and, ultimately, its consumers (Maloney, 2019). While research on policies and agreements document U.S. manufacturing labor in the industry, no research has been done on how trade policies have affected the NY fashion industry's creative labor (Park & Kincade, 2011).

At the beginning of the 21st century, most of the U.S. textile and apparel production had left the country for cheaper labor and production costs overseas. Consumer demand for textile and apparel products fell sharply (Minchin, 2012). Despite the drop in consumer demand for apparel, as apparel production moved overseas, American consumers' purchases of foreign-made apparel significantly increased. The economic downturn in consumer confidence caused by 9/11 further exacerbated the situation and NY apparel and textile manufacturing experienced the worst one-year decline of jobs—15.7% in 2001. This was due to the cumulative effects of heightened import pressures in the prior 20 years, September 11th, a lack of affordable space for garment workrooms, and the slowing economy (Crean et al., 2003). While these in-depth explorations, historical books, and news media described the effects of trade policies, technology, and global events on U.S. manufacturing, they do not specifically address the intergenerational creative labor market in NY.

Global Health Disruptions: Epidemics and Post-Millennial Pandemics

Perhaps the greatest loss to creative labor in the NY fashion industry was caused by the AIDS epidemic. As one of the epicenters of the crisis, NY lost an entire generation of designers, industry leaders, and BTS creative intermediaries during the 1980s and 1990s. AIDS reinforced the widespread homophobia that had already existed in the United States because of the mystery of its origins and ways of transmission to high risks groups (Ashton, 2015). From early on in the epidemic, a stigma was attached to being gay or being an intravenous drug user. Ashton reports, "AIDS became the leading cause of death in men aged 24 to 44 in 1992" (2015, p.7). Consequently, companies instilled new and discriminatory practices for male designers, such as requiring HIV testing before hiring, insuring, or financing individual employees and companies. As a result, younger male designers found it difficult to find backers (Hochswender, 1990). Conversely, and as a direct result, female designers found more opportunities for financing than ever before (Schneider et al., 1990). At the same time, the opening of once-coveted positions and opportunities left grief-stricken professionals with survivor's guilt as fashion companies and creative industries were marching on.

In the first few years of the 21st century more than $23 billion or 40% of all U.S. clothing imports a year shipped from Eastern Asia. However, this was the area most severely affected by the outbreak of SARS, caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (Rozhon, 2003). During this time, as well as in 2009, when the H1NI/ Swine Flu virus pandemic struck, U.S. apparel and textile companies experienced disruptions with delayed merchandise shipments. This was due to restricted travel, forced shutdowns, and imposing restrictions in overseas factories. Those whose jobs required frequent travel

to Asia were also affected by SARS and H1N1 and were advised to stay in the United States until the virus subsided (McKibbin, 2009).

It remains to be seen how the impact of COVID-19 will affect the industry and the employment of its workers. We are still experiencing the effects of a post-COVID global reset in the ways we work, live, and consume. Similar to the slow awakening to the AIDS crisis, the United States was unable to accept the threat of COVID-19 until it reached celebrity culture from both entertainment and sports (Turner, 2020). NY fashion events like the Met Gala and Council of Fashion Designers of America **(**CFDA) Awards were postponed indefinitely or canceled, as strict guidelines on large group gatherings were enacted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Ilchi, 2020).

Despite the shift in U.S. manufacturing and the dissemination of technology and globalization, NY still remains the headquarters of the U.S. fashion industry and is one of the world's four fashion capitals together with Paris, Milan, and London. It is the corporate, design and PD home of internationally recognized legacy brands, and hundreds of other style-leading brands. NYC.gov claims that "an estimated 900 fashion companies are headquartered in NY, which is also home to more than 75 major fashion trade shows and thousands of showrooms" (NYC, n.d.).

Why Age Diversity in the Industry Matters

In the 21st century, navigating and balancing a productive work environment can range from challenging to rewarding for all employees and companies. Notably, for the first time in history, the workplace may include up to five generations of employees. These generations include silent generation (SG), born 1928–1945, baby boomers (BB), born 1946–1964, Generation X (GX), born 1965–1980, millennials (ML), born 1981–

1996, and Generation Z (GZ), born 1997–2012 (Dimock, 2019). With ages ranging from late teens to 70 years old and older, a multigenerational environment is replete with different life experiences, values, and career expectations in the workplace. Table 1.1 illustrates generational differences and attributes in U.S. populations spanning five generations (Dimock 2019; Francis & Hoefel, 2018; Satterly et al., 2018).

Table 1.1

Attributes of Five Generations of U.S. Workers

	Silent Generation 1928–1945	**Baby Boomers 1946–1964**	**Generation X 1965–1980**	**Millennials 1981–1996**	**Generation Z 1997–2012**
Age, 2021 (years)	Seventy-six to ninety-three	Fifty-seven to seventy-five	Forty-one to fifty-six	Twenty-five to forty	Nine to twenty-four
2020 U.S. Pop. (millions)	21.78	70.68	64.95	72.26	67.06
Historical Context	Great Depression WW II Vaccines Analog to digital	Post-WWII Vietnam Moon landing Civil rights Personal computers Analog to digital	Fall of the Berlin Wall Gulf War Internet/ MTV/ AIDS Mobile phone Capitalism/ meritocracy Analog and digital	9/11 attacks Internet Social Media Pre/ post-digital savvy BLM/ #metoo/ Trump Globalization Economic stability COVID-19	Digital natives Social networks Mobility Multiple realities Sustainability COVID19
Work Behavior	Workplace loyalty	Live to work Idealist Revolutionary Collectivist	Free agents Competitive Individualistic	Work to live Globalist Questioning Oriented to self	Undefined ID Community-driven Dialogue-oriented Realistic
Consumption and Purchasing Behavior	Frugality	Ideology Vinyl and movies	Status Brands and cars Luxury articles Materialistic	Experience Festivals and travel Flagships	Uniqueness Unlimited Ethical

What Counts as Old? Shifting Definitions of Age Perceptions

In the 21st century, people are living longer and have healthier lives than they did half a century ago. Advanced societies are actually ageing in multiple dimensions, including health, cognitive abilities, and longevity. Today, 60- or 65-year-olds are very different from previous generations over 50 years ago and are likely to be very different from what they will be like 50 years in the future (Scherbov, 2018). Age plays a double role in our culture. On the negative side, older can be seen as declining and/or a nuisance;

on the positive, older can be seen as experienced and wise (Mackinney-Valentin, 2017). As pioneers of the youth culture, BB were brought up enjoying consumption. Now, they wish to retain their youthful status and remain a part of mainstream consumer culture, forgoing the previous generation's norm of transitioning into an "older" lifestyle. They are living longer, working longer, and many are also living better and have more disposable income (Twigg, 2007). That alone should get the attention of those that attempt to market products and commodify this demographic's spending interests.

Starting in the 1960s with the youthquake, younger generations became revered, while growing older no longer held the respect of society the way it once did. The term, youthquake, was originally coined and used by Diana Vreeland, editor at *Vogue* from 1962–1971, in the January 1965 issue. She noticed a cultural and social change when younger people, under 24, were adopting everything from Beatlemania to the miniskirt en masse (Weaver, 2017). Now these BBs have become the fastest-growing demographic, currently at 74 million in the United States, and their voices are heard across multiple platforms (Fry, 2018). As youth and popular culture pervade our work environments, ageing workers feel the pressure to look young. Because of this shift in perception of youth and beauty, I argue that ageism is prevalent in our culture, society, and work environments (Twigg, 2013).

It can be argued that age is just a number, the concept of age is changing, and one is only as old as one feels. The definition of age is changing as life spans increase and the meaning of "old" depends on who is asked. Petrow (2018) found that MLs in their 20s and 30s say that "old" starts at 59, while GXs in their 40s and early 50s say 65 is the onset of "old." BBs say 73 is the beginning of "old". He also noted other findings stating

that 60 years old is middle-aged, and, for Americans, "old" begins roughly at 70 to 71 for men and 73 to 74 for women. In contrast, the youth-centric fashion industry thinks old age sets in early, in the late 20s, as models in their 40s are already considered "old" (Twigg, 2013). It is newsworthy to highlight older models as an exception to the rule. While the inclusion of "older" models may create a positive shift in ageism awareness in our society, identifying models in their 40s as "old" perpetuates and reinforces the myths around ageing in U.S. popular culture and the fashion industry (Walsh, 2017).

Ageism: The Other Other

Ageism is a systemic social issue. Sociology and cultural studies treat age as something that is most relevant to medicine or social welfare (Twigg, 2015). Higgs and Gilleard (2019) report that "Ageism has been a key concept in articulating the mission of gerontology and was deliberately intended to act as an equivalent to the concepts of racism and sexism" (p.1). Dr. Robert Neil Butler, who founded the National Institute on Aging in 1975, coined the term, "ageism" in 1969 to describe prejudice by one age group toward other age groups. He foresaw that the increasing older population would pose future economic and social problems. From Butler (1969),

> Ageism describes the subjective experience implied in the popular notion of the generation gap. Prejudice of the middle-aged against the old in this instance, and against the young in others, is a serious national problem. Ageism reflects a deep-seated uneasiness on the part of the young and middle-aged — a personal revulsion to and distaste for growing old, disease, disability; and fear of powerlessness, uselessness and death. (p. 243)

Butler (1969) also notes that "ageism might parallel (it might be wishful thinking to say replace) racism as the great issue of the next 20 to 30 years and age bigotry is seen within minority groups themselves" (pp. 245–6).

Eventually, we all get older if we live long enough. Yet, we choose to be ageists. Like racism, discriminating thoughts, feelings, and behaviors all fuel the prejudices and myths that affect older people (Gullette, 2017; Jyrkinen, 2014). Twigg (2013) states, "You cannot choose not to be black or not to be old" (p. 47). Anyone who does not follow the defined norm is judged, evaluated as "less than", and is considered "Other" (Twigg, 2013). As older women and men cease to be included in the white, heteronormative youth culture, they are often rejected, and also become Other and marginalized in this culture. From Twigg (2013), "As Kathy Woodward (1999), comments, the older female body is both invisible—in that it is no longer seen — and hyper-visible — in that it is all that is seen" (p. 43). Race, class, gender, age, ageism, and lookism all work as systemic forms of power and inequality; they involve a negative pre-judgment, and distinctively advantage and disadvantage particular groups, depending on their social status (Andersen & Collins, 2015). Twigg (2015) further adds that "age is a master identity, governing how we are perceived, ranked, evaluated, who we socialize with, how we are judged and ordered socially, and what is deemed appropriate for us" (p. 13).

Unlike other well-researched master identities, age has not received the same amount of attention and is rarely included in the discussions of social structures. Age discrimination is also difficult to navigate in diversity, equity, and inclusion situations (Ahn & Costigan, 2019). The difference between ageism and other isms, like sexism and

racism, is that eventually the younger will also become older and those who target older people will, in time, become the victim of old age themselves. Ageism is rooted in one's fears of ageing and death. Most importantly, younger generations may cease to identify with older people as human beings and see them as different from themselves (Butler, 1975; Bytheway, 2005; Woodward, 1999). Maher (2021) tweets, "Writing someone off simply for their age is the last acceptable prejudice. The younger generations hate every ism except ageism." This behavior may have a negative impact later as studies have shown that young adults with more negative age stereotypes were twice as likely to experience age-related health complications 40 years later, compared to other young adults holding positive age stereotypes (Levy, et al., 2018). Experiencing ageism personally only late in life, may be the reason why ageism has not become the basis of identity politics in the same way as other forms of difference have (Gullette, 2017; Twigg, 2013). However, all are built into the very structure of society as intersectional systems of inequality. Andersen and Collins (2015) describe it this way,

> In thinking about diversity, people have recognized that race, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, and ethnicity matter; thus, groups who have previously been invisible, including people of color, gays, lesbians, transgender and bisexual people, older people, and immigrants, are now in some ways more visible. At the same time that diversity is more commonly recognized, however, these same groups continue to be defined as "other"; that is, they are perceived through dominant group values, treated in exclusionary ways, and subjected to social injustice and economic inequality. (p. 8)

Like all the isms, age is one of the significant markers of social difference. Twigg (2007), states that "age is replacing class as the primary engine of change" (p. 302). Bytheway (2005), sums up the issue by stating,

> Ageism is discrimination against older people on grounds of age. Just as women are disadvantaged and oppressed as a result of sexism, just as black people and other minorities are oppressed by racism, so older people suffer from discrimination as a result of ageism. (p. 361)

Age stigma can have negative consequences in the workplace. Ignoring older professionals' valuable contributions gained from years of experience can leave a gaping hole in the global fashion industry. Applewhite (2016) explains, "Challenging stigma threatens the social and political structures that maintain power relationships" (p. 124). Some employers are afraid to hire or retain an older worker assuming they are possibly a health risk. They assume older workers cannot master new skills or handle stress, they slow things down or are burned out, among others. Despite these stereotypes, research has shown that every aspect of job performance gets better with age. On a psychological level, work gives people a sense of purpose, belonging, and social connectedness. People who have something to get up for in the morning live longer and better (Butler, 1975). Unfortunately, once out of a job, older workers have a much harder time getting rehired, especially in a comparable position and with a similar salary (Applewhite, 2016). More than half of older workers are forced out of their long-held jobs, not because of their choosing, and often with the consequence of permanent financial devastation (Gosselin, 2018).

While labor research has explored inequities in race, ethnicity, class, and disability, the exploration of the intersection of age, gender, and labor in the fashion industry is lacking. Studies that have focused on race, gender, and gendered ageism in the workplace examined these issues only in conventional and corporate work environments such as public relations, finance, human resources, marketing, undisclosed senior manager positions, and for MBA students (Andersen & Collins, 2015; Daugherty, 2012; Hofmeier et al., 2017; Jyrkinen, 2014). They did not examine the intersectionality of age and gender within the work environment among older women who hold creative client-facing positions in the fashion industry. Latilla et al. (2019) examined age, creative labor, and preserving knowledge transfer in the arts and crafts industry and found that those businesses rely on artistic processes and transfer knowledge to younger colleagues to preserve their processes. Knowledge transfer and exchange between generations at work satisfy older workers' generativity, engage younger workers' commitment, and create an accepting environment, where "everyone leads, everyone learns" (Satterley et al., 2018, p. 441). An age-diverse workplace generates a more inclusive work environment and leads to better productivity and workplace retention (Dwyer & Azevedo, 2016; Latilla et al., 2019). Research on fashion that embraces an age-diverse workforce and shows the benefits of leveraging the generational strengths and attributes of their workers in the fashion system is lacking in fashion studies.

Age is a Feminist Issue

Twigg (2013), argues that little work has been done in feminist studies around ageing women; it has not received the same analytic attention as gender, class, and race. False beliefs about the social relevance of gerontology, ageing, and older people are

pervasive in Western culture. Feminist theory and research on sexism can be used to re-examine how these beliefs affect social, economic, and political life. Ageing BB and SG women's studies scholars are now paying attention to age as a feminist issue and are reframing the discourse on ageism as a master narrative (Calasanti et al., 2006; Carney & Gray, 2015). They argue that gerontology needs to be approached from the point of view of the economy (because of the consequences of retirement), politics (because of the relevance of the grey vote), and society (because of role of media in contemporary life).

Women in the Workplace

Throughout most of the 20th century, women have gradually infiltrated the workforce and continue to fill education, managerial, and executive positions once solely employed by men (Eisenberg, 2010). During the second half of the 20th century, the rapid rise of women in the labor force was a major social and economic development. In 2016, 56.8% of all women participated in the labor force. In 2018, women overall accounted for about 47% of the total labor force (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019).

Through the decades, women's roles in society have shifted; women outnumber men in professional and related occupations, including office and administrative support jobs. Labor statistics that segment women and creative labor in the workforce exist in vague categories that do not include the fashion industry. In 2015, 30% of women worked in professional and related occupations, compared with 19% of men. In 2016, 56.8% of all women participated in the labor force and they accounted for 52% of all workers employed in management, professional, and related occupations. At that time, nearly 40% of all managers were women with some occupations exceeding that (Torpey, 2017). Unlike earlier decades, women now are more likely to work full-time, year-round,

and attain higher levels of education. For example, working women ages 25–64 with college degrees increased from 11% to 42% from 1970 to 2016, exceeding that of men during the same period (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017a).

Women will continue to dominate the labor force with numbers of older women increasing at higher rates. The USBLS (2017b) reports a projected growth of 5.8% for civilian women in the labor force from 2014 to 2024. For older women ages 55–64, employment increased by 6.6%, from 51.9% in 2000 to 58.5% in 2015, and is projected to be even higher in 2024 at 62.9%. Even women 65 and older saw their participation rates in the labor force rise from 9.4% in 2000 to 15.3% in 2015 (Toossi & Morisi, 2017). The USBLS projects a 59.2% growth for women 65–74 years old while declines are projected for women ages 16–19, 20–24, and 45–54 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017b).

Women are huge revenue generators. Although not age- or industry-specific, statistics report that female entrepreneurship and female-owned businesses generate nearly a trillion dollars in revenue and employ one in seven citizens in the United States (Leebaert, 2006). Entrepreneurship offers a degree of flexibility that some other careers do not offer; almost 11% of working women are entrepreneurs compared to 18% of working men in the United States (Carnes & Radojevich-Kelley, 2011). Women make these choices because of dissatisfaction with working for someone else, or in an attempt to achieve an optimal work-life balance (DeMartino & Barbota, 2003).

Women, have a longer life expectancy than men and tend to delay retirement for economic and social reasons. In the 21st century, the Third Age (roughly between the ages of 65 and 80+) has disrupted the old narrative of age in terms of marginalization and

decline, marking a new stage in the cultural structure of age for older populations (Twigg, 2013). Barnes (2011) explains, "The Third Age is considered to be the 'golden years' of adulthood and marks the time between retirement and the beginning of age-imposed physical, emotional, and cognitive limitations." The increase of working women over 50 and the expanding life expectancies experienced in the last 50 years will continue to transform the workforce (Toossi & Morisi, 2017). With older women's influence and prevalence in the United States' economic, sociopolitical and cultural scene, all prior concepts of ageing, behavior, and appearance are changing for those in this age demographic (Kapstein, 2006).

Appearance Labor and Gendered Ageism in the Appearance- and Youth-Focused Fashion Industry

The fashion world reflects a youth-centric value system, so it is not surprising that ageism is not discussed much in the field (Bryson, 2015; Twigg, 2013). Furthermore, fashion is a feminized industry and as a large part of the creative economy, the fashion industry is also a major employer of women (McRobbie et al., 2019). Women are hit harder by gendered ageism than men, as they are often subject to unachievable appearance and beauty standards (Jyrkinen, 2014; Twigg, 2013). Gendered ageism refers to "intentional or non-intentional discriminatory actions that are based on the intersection of gender and age" (Jyrkinen, 2014, p.176). Men rarely panic about ageing as social norms suggest that ageing improves men's masculinity (Hooley & Yates, 2015; Isopahkala-Bouret, 2017; Jyrkinen, 2014; Lewis et al., 2011; Sontag, 1997). Research studies on gendered ageism in the workplace explore how age and gender intersect in the work environment and how they impact the working lives of female managers

(Daugherty, 2012; Jyrkinen & McKie, 2011; Peluchette, et al., 2006). However, they do not explore visual industries like fashion.

Clothes play a significant role in expressing our identities, emotions, and aspects of our lives. In the context of age, clothes are central to the ways older bodies are experienced, presented, and perceived within society and culture (Twigg, 2013). As Rocamora & Smelik (2016) point out, "Our identities function within a material culture, as we know all too well from our emotional relations to objects, whether it is a … particular dress that makes us feel sexy … clothes have a value" (p. 27). Many corporations have clear and conventional workplace dress codes and breaking those codes can result in drawbacks. This process is referred to as appearance labor. Peluchette et al. (2006) describe appearance labor as any "dissonance between what individuals believe that they are expected to wear and what they would prefer to wear" (p. 50). Additionally, those in the creative industries are often expected to dress differently, which could also play an important role in the hiring process and be relevant to retaining the job itself. Putting together a proper workplace wardrobe is time-consuming and often costly. Women have to be visible and work hard on their appearance at many stages of career development (McInnis & Medvedev, 2021a).

In a youth-driven culture that expects perfection, women experience workplace discrimination because of age, gender, and lookism; they are forced to balance their careers with their personal lives, which includes keeping their looks up, sexual availability, childcare, family, and menopause (Daugherty, 2012; Granleese & Sayer, 2006; Jyrkinen, 2014). Gender conflicts exist for women who occupy leadership roles historically held by men. Women are expected to demonstrate their femininity, such as

looking good and acting nice while also coming across as strong leaders, which, in contrast, is associated with masculine qualities and traits. As a result, women may end up being excluded from professional situations as they get older (Isopahkala-Bouret, 2017). Research on appearance management and gendered ageism is limited only to a few industry sectors such as education, real estate, advertising, arts and crafts, and public relations (Brodmerkel & Barker, 2019; Daugherty, 2012; Granleese & Sayer, 2006; Fitzgerald, 2018; Johnson et al., 2014; Kapstein, 2006; Latilla et al., 2019; McRobbie, 2002; Sennett, 2008). While Moon (2020) provides an overview of creative labor and material making in the fashion industry, she does not discuss the challenges ageing workers face in the industry.

Creativity, Age, and Collaboration

Gilson (2015) argues that working collaboratively is integral to the design process. Teams work better than individuals as they collectively have different perspectives and experiences, which increases their ability to create new ideas, make solid decisions, and find solutions to complex problems. Creative teams must also function both dependently and independently; they need to step back and reflect on their products and processes and spend some alone time with their own thoughts and ideas. Good design is driven by good problem-solving practices. After all, a fashion designer is designing for a specific purpose, target market and customer, an end-use or performance characteristic, cost, etc. An experienced designer's curiosity keeps one current on all fronts, including materials, technology, and social change (Diamond, 2021). Jones et al. (2015), define creativity as "a process of generating something new by combining elements that already exist" (p. 3). The creative process can be broken down into seven

steps or cycles: inspiration, identification, conceptualization, exploration/refinement, definition/modeling, communication, and production (Aspelund, 2015). The process can be nonlinear, reiterative, and, in the industry, often highly collaborative.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Working It Out in an Intergenerational Workforce

Through the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion, the workplace can be a sustainable, functional, and thriving environment that welcomes contributions and collaborations of people with multiple perspectives, identities, and generations. Jean-Baptiste (2020) sums it up with her big-picture view, emphasizing the need for design teams to bring different perspectives to the table and design for others who may not think, look, or act like themselves. While a diverse workplace provides multiple perspectives that can potentially serve a wider fashion audience, Gilson (2015) notes that it can also hinder the creative process when team members are inflexible and unwilling to hear or see issues from another's perspectives that differ from their own. The desire to maintain a homogeneous status quo has been criticized in the industry and in fashion magazines that mostly cater to a Western ideal of beauty: young, thin, and White (Lewis et al. 2011). Dwyer & Azevedo (2016) suggest business leaders need to rethink how they address diversity and generational differences. They advocate an approach that values the differences and behaviors of all cultural groups and generations and recommend an overall change in workplace policies and programs.

Grey Matter$

By 2030, one-fifth of the U.S. population will be 65 and older. Consequently, the consumption needs of the still-working-in-the-labor-force older generations warrants close examination (Bougourd, 2015). Suitable clothing for older consumers is a largely

neglected area (McCann & Bryson, 2015). This is illogical because, as Underhill (2009) states, BBs spend more money on consumer goods than GX or GY. Current trends indicate that retail clothing stores that cater to a younger market are on the decline, while the BB population will more than double by 2035 (Underhill, 2009). In the meantime, their clothing needs are not met or even considered. This means that retailers have a lot of work to do if they want to capture the grey market. While mass merchandisers have started to pay attention to the needs of older consumers with adapted appliances, hardware, automotive items, seasonal products, and beauty products, less attention is paid to them by the apparel industry. This is a huge oversight, as older people also want stylish and suitable clothing that fits and flatters (Miller-Spillman, 2019). Longer lifespans and increasing populations of this demographic will continue to challenge the industry. Because the apparel industry has been slow to respond, they are missing out on this increasing market, its spending power and love of consumer products.

Optimizing a Creative and Intergenerational Workplace

In an industry that relies on experience and skills, the diminishing workforce of older creative practitioners in the U.S. fashion industry is cause for alarm. Globalization and the deindustrialization of U.S. textile and apparel manufacturing, trade policies, and changes in technology have greatly contributed to the contraction of the U.S. labor force (Dicken, 2011; Vatz, 2013). As workers have retired or were laid off due to age and higher salaries, fashion companies have been gradually handing over their creative processes to their overseas manufacturing partners. These factors have also contributed to the labor shortage of experienced creatives who have the knowledge and skills needed to carry out design and creative processes. Payne (2020) adds that the challenge is

exacerbated by the fact that design teams must communicate with their long-distance suppliers, instead of interacting with them face-to-face. She points to the growing need to acknowledge the value of technical and design expertise and encourages companies to create retrievable and tangible systems of technical knowledge that could be useful for decision-making. My research findings suggest that retaining older, experienced creative professionals and encouraging creative knowledge transfer within intergenerational organizations could alleviate and facilitate some of these pressing issues.

Theoretical Framework Guiding the Research

The studies included in this dissertation relied on several theoretical and conceptual frameworks as guides to elucidate the meanings of the participants' stories (Kim, 2016). Principles of contemporary feminist thought such as inclusivity, gender equality, and intersectionality also guided the research and analysis (Cohen & Jackson, 2016). I used generational theory as a lens to support and identify generational attributes, stereotype assumptions, workplace values and ethics, and social beliefs between generational cohorts that serve to leverage the expertise of multiple generations (Mannheim, 1952; Satterly et al., 2018; Strauss & Howe, 1997). Dewey's (1938/1997) theory of experience was used to support ideas regarding intergenerational collaboration and mentoring and social engagement of human behavior in the workplace. Dewey believed that experience is built through continuity, as each bit of experience informs the next, and so on. Atchley's (1989) continuity theory shows that older adults' evolutionary developmental process depends on their past experiences and ideological makeup (Diggs, 2008). Continuity theory also supports that identity is not confined to chronological age; older adults implement familiar knowledge, skills, and strategies as they age by linking

past experiences. This leads to higher levels of work engagement (Atchley, 1989; Cook, 2018; Kim & Kang, 2017). Social exchange theory was used in this dissertation to examine how the practice of reciprocal exchange in all-age mentoring can help increase the commitment to and engagement of a multigenerational workforce (Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2012; Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu, 2018; Cropanzano et al., 2017; Hillier & Barrow, 1999). To summarize, the combination of multiple frameworks enabled me to dissect and also challenge the social myths that frame older adults and all age perceptions and examine how creative intergenerational teams function together in the workplace.

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CHAPTER TWO

SARTORIAL APPEARANCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES OF CREATIVE PROFESSIONAL WOMEN OVER AGE FIFTY IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY[5]

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Abstract

Women in the United States are often subjected to unrealistic standards of ideal appearance. These ideals are even more extreme in the fashion industry. Because professional women who hold creative positions in the fashion industry are in the business of creating style and beauty, there is a high level of expectation towards them to maintain their dress and appearance at a not explicitly stated, but anticipated, and often unrealistic standard. In this study, creative positions refer to design, color and trend forecasting, product development and merchandising related jobs. Older women working in these areas are in a double bind because when one is responsible for creating consumer products for the fashion industry, the perceptions of one's appearance become part of one's professional expectations, reflecting one's aesthetic values and creative capital.

This qualitative study explores the complexity of age, dress, experience, and consumption needs of this professional cohort in today's visual and youth-centric culture that pervades the fashion industry. The study addresses social and cultural views on fashion as it relates to the ageing body and self-image by analyzing the relationship between women's personal style and the industry's expectations for their workplace appearance.

Keywords: baby boomer, gendered ageism, fashion industry, creative professional women, appearance management

Introduction

Women in the United States are often subjected to unattainable standards of ideal appearance (Hooley and Yates 2015; Lewis, Medvedev, and Seponski 2011). Given the unrealistic standards of the media and society, these ideals are even more extreme in the fashion industry. Consequently, creative women, who are responsible for finished

products in the fashion industry, have a requirement to present themselves in a manner that is not only appropriate and professional, but also stylish. This, however, is easier said than done for older creative professional women (CPW).

In this study, creative positions refer to design, color and trend forecasting, product development, and merchandising related jobs. CPW are the gatekeepers who work behind the scenes. They are responsible for scouting, predicting and translating trends, and bringing new fashions to the masses (Reilly 2014). Because they are in the business of creating style and beauty, there is a high level of expectation towards them to maintain their appearances at a not explicitly stated, but, anticipated, and often unrealistic standard.

CPW must consider that what they wear will be perceived as a reflection of their fashion acumen and interpreted as an expression of their creative capital. They have to present themselves in a manner that is in sync with the products they create, i.e., beautiful, youthful, and fashion-forward. Older women working in the creative aspects of the fashion industry are in a double bind because when one is responsible for creating consumer products for the industry, the perceptions of one's appearance also become part of professional expectations. While maintaining a professional appearance, CPW need to use fashion and dress as a form of personal expression that reflects their personal and business branding.

Fashion is a visual medium, which is driven by youth culture. This does not necessarily mean that one has to *be* young, rather than one must be *perceived* as young. However, a woman over fifty can no longer hide her age or maintain a youthful

appearance. Even if it *was* realistic to keep up such an appearance, it would be hugely time consuming and cost prohibitive for most.

With extreme pressures to maintain ideal youth and beauty, appearance and the subsequent perceived value of one's appearance end up being judged by the individual and others as well.

Women have longer life expectancy these days than ever before and female baby boomers (BB) and older generations tend to delay retirement. This raises the question, are women over fifty who work in the youth-centric fashion industry too old to be young or too young to be old? Either way, both denote an exclusionary ageist attitude. They may be *perceived by others* as too old (i.e., "should" be retired) and *perceived by self* as too young to be old (i.e. still able and willing to work and "should" be included).

Research Objective and Justification of the Research Problem

The goal of this study is to investigate the sartorial appearance management strategies of twelve women, from ages fifty to seventy-five, who have worked in the NYC fashion industry for fifteen years or more. We investigate whether these women have employment challenges because of their age or for other reasons.

CPW are important to study because they are the creators of the fashion industry. Their years of experience are necessary in an industry that depends on specific skills and expertise for its efficacy that can only be acquired by spending many years in the industry, learning its history and creative and business practices. Furthermore, as one fifth of the US population will be sixty-five and older by 2030, the apparel and fashion industries must address the consumption needs of this age cohort because the BB

generation is expected to make up a much larger share of both the population and the labor force than in the past (Vespa, Armstrong, and Medina 2018).

Literature Review

Most academic work on fashion has omitted age. The fashion world reflects a youth-centric value system, so it is not surprising that age(ism) is not discussed much in the field (Bryson 2015; Twigg 2013). However, dress studies are starting to include age as a significant aspect of analysis because dressing the body is a necessity and everyone, regardless of their age, must dress before going into the social world. Despite this, as Twigg (2013) argues, further work is necessary.

Although women's age and ageing process would seem to be an obvious feminist issue, it has been mostly missing from feminist literature. This is rather puzzling, considering that like race, class, and gender, age is also entangled with systemic forms of power and inequality. Age, just like class, race, and gender, often causes a negative pre-judgement and results in advantages or disadvantages for particular groups (Andersen and Collins 2015; Bytheway 2005; Gullette 2017; Jyrkinen 2014). Older women are often marginalized and become the Other in our youth-focused culture (Twigg 2013).

While feminists were slow to focus on age, recently, older feminists in their sixties, seventies, eighties, and nineties, are beginning to reframe the discourse on ageism and recognize it as one of the master narratives (Carney and Gray 2015). In fact, gerontology and ageing studies are taking a cultural turn and moving away from treating age merely as a medical issue (Applewhite 2017; Gullette 2017; Twigg 2013). While the topics of clothing and age continue to be neglected in social gerontology, they are starting to pop up in cultural gerontology. The latter has been addressing appearance and the

commodification of the ‘anti-ageing’ market and discussing cases of age resistance and age denial (Twigg 2013).

Research on ageing bodies suggests that older adults’ body image can have important implications for their well-being that includes perceived messages of capability, identity, and gender and cultural differences (Jankowski et al. 2016). Several studies have focused on race, gender, and gendered ageism in the workplace. However, they examined these issues only in conventional and corporate work environments such as public relations, finance, human resources, marketing, undisclosed senior manager positions, and MBA students. They did not examine the intersectionality of age and gender within the work environment among older women who hold creative positions in the fashion industry (Andersen and Collins 2015; Daugherty 2012; Hofmeier et al. 2017; Jyrkinen 2014). More studies that connect age, gender, and dress are needed to help society understand how dress influences others’ perceptions and one’s own behavior and explore the relationship between dress, the body, and the self (Johnson, Lennon, and Rudd 2014).

Research confirms that women are frustrated with the lack of available fashionable, well-fitting clothing as they mature (Borcherding and Bubonia 2015; Miller-Spillman 2019). McCann and Bryson’s (2015) comprehensive volume of academic articles addresses the growing number of active older people and current developments in textiles, fibers, finishes, design, and integrated technology that can be deployed to serve this group’s clothing needs. However, virtually no research exists on older CPW who work in the fashion industry. In a system that deifies beauty and youth, but stigmatizes

age, ignoring CPW's valuable contributions that stem from years of experience will leave a gaping hole in the fashion industrial complex.

Research Population and Participant Characteristics

This paper focuses on the fifty+ female population, ages fifty to seventy-five years old (in 2018), born between 1943 and 1968, that is comprised of early Gen Xers, born between 1965 and 1980 (EG), Baby Boomers (BB), born between 1946 and 1964, and the Silent Generation (SG), born in 1945 and earlier. The BB generation currently represents the fastest growing demographic in the US, leaving a significant imprint on the country's population (Fry 2018). Colby and Ortman (2014), state, born during the post-World War II baby boom in the United States, this generation has been "driving change in the age structure of the US population" (1) in cultural, economic, and political arenas, as well as consumption needs, since their birth. The BB generation is so important that it is the only generation that the US census defines (Bump 2014). Longer lifespans and increasing populations in this demographic will continue to challenge the apparel and fashion industry (Miller-Spillman 2019).

This qualitative study reconstructs the narratives of twelve CPW who were asked to describe their sartorial practices at work. To qualify for the study, only those women were selected who were fifty or older in 2018 and who identified themselves as creative professionals in the NYC fashion industry. The women had the option to use their own names or a pseudonym; those who chose to use a pseudonym are indicated with an asterisk. The authors paid special attention to the fact that the twelve women represented a diverse age and salary range. They tried to ensure that the research participants came from various racial and ethnic groups, self-identified by the participants, and were

employed in a creative field of the fashion industry for different lengths of time. The average age of the twelve participants was sixty and three-tenths years old. The average years in industry was thirty-one and nine-tenths years that spanned fifteen to fifty years for all. Half of the women (six) were BB, four were EG, and two were SG. The average income for six out of the twelve women ranged from $135,000–$175,000, with the lowest at $85,000 and the highest at $250,000+. Incomes fluctuated due to the business climate for some of the women who owned their businesses (Table 2.1).

The research subjects' professions included design in women's and men's fashion, apparel, denim, couture, jewelry and accessories, perfume, trimmings, product development, merchandising, and color and trend forecasting. In the sample, three women work for well-known corporate brands, five own their branded business with employees, and four are consultants/independent contractors. The independent women originally worked for well-known industry brands and eventually became independent out of necessity or personal choice. Some of the participants became entrepreneurs because of the flexibility that entrepreneurship offers; others, because they got dissatisfied with working for someone else, or in an attempt to create their own work-life balance. Often, older workers may be rejected for positions with reasons such as, "not a good fit", or "overqualified," both of which are codes for "too old" (Kreamer 2007). Once out of a corporate job, some of these women found it difficult to get rehired in the same capacity. Five out of the twelve women are married/partnered and sharing their earnings with their significant others. Ten out of the twelve women are the primary breadwinners in the family; that is why they want or need to keep their jobs.

Table 2.1

Overview of Participants (2018)

Participant	**Age/ generation**	**Ethnicity and race: self-identified by participants**	**Years in industry**	**Description of profession**
P1	57/ BB	White	20+ years	Senior VP Merchandising
P2	54/ EG	West African + Eastern/Western Europe	28 years	Pattern maker, dress designer
P3	63/ BB	Caucasian	41 years	Denim consultant
P4	51/ EG	Caucasian	15 years	Technical designer handbags
P5	50/ EG	Italian American	25 years	Trimmings designer, design blogger
P6	68/ BB	White	38 years	Dress and accessories designer
P7	69/ BB	White	33 years	Jewelry and accessories designer
P8	55/ BB	Italian American	35 years	Denim consultant
P9	74/ SG	Italian American	40 years	Color and trend forecasting
P10	75/ SG	Russian American Jew	50 years	Women's couture fashion designer, perfume
P11	52/ EG	African American	28 years	Fashion design consultant
P12	56/ BB	Hispanic	30+ years	Senior Director menswear
Average:	**60.3**	**NA**	**31.9 years**	**NA**
Total n	Total n = 12	Total n = 12	Total n = 12	Total n = 12

Methodology

The study was conducted by combining methods of phenomenology, narrative inquiry, and autoethnography. Phenomenology was employed to understand the lived experiences and perspectives of CPW (Denzin 2008). Narrative inquiry methods allowed the participants to share their stories. Through their stories they were also able to create meaning in their lives. In addition, using an autoethnographic approach, the first author was able to reflect on how her personal story as an experienced design professional approaching sixty is connected to this research. By fusing these methodological perspectives, the authors were able to capture the participants' thoughts, feelings, and find common themes in their experiences.

The face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were conducted between July and December 2018 with the participants in their place of work or an agreed upon location in NYC. Two interviews were conducted via video conferencing due to scheduling conflicts. The participants were asked 35 questions in total, some specific and some open-ended about a) their personal appearance management and sartorial choices in the workplace; b) being an older female creative professional in the fashion industry; c) their age and female beauty perceptions. Their answers were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for themes.

The themes discussed below uncover and interpret the participants' lived experiences (Denzin 2008). They also introduce their head to toe appearance management strategies. The authors have also documented the participants' wardrobe solutions, sartorial choices for work, and the connection of these to their employment experiences.

Positionality of the Researchers

The first author began to research this topic because she is one of the older creative women that the study examines. She had worked over thirty-five years in the fashion and textiles industry before she embarked on an academic career. In her case, everything was fine with her career and body, until it was not. Because of her personal experiences, she was keen on exploring the dilemmas and marginalization of other women, like herself.

The second author is also an older, feminist dress scholar. During her academic career, she has not only written about fashion and age (Lewis, Medvedev, and Seponski 2011), but has noticed or experienced (c)overt ageism, albeit within university settings. Because of their empirical experiences, the authors were keen on researching this topic. They meant to address not only the employment and consumption needs of women over fifty in the fashion industry, but also contribute to the literature on gendered ageism.

Discussion

I don't believe in fashion. I believe in personal style. Christine, fifty-five, a denim consultant (see Figure 2.1).

Always dress as if something fabulous is going to happen to you that day. Taylor*, seventy-four, a color and trend forecaster.

The results of this study revealed eight major themes that reflect the participants' sartorial practices. These are: reconciling one's personal sartorial branding with the perceptions of others; everyday professional basics (comfort, function, practicality, fit, and modesty); emotions dictating the sartorial choices of CPW; the importance of curating one's own style; age appropriate dress; discrimination in the workplace as a

result of ageism and lookism; addressing the consumption needs of older professional women; and lastly, resilience and self-acceptance.

Figure 2.1

Christine, Fifty-five, Denim Expert and Consultant. Courtesy of Christine

Women at Work

Dress affects how people engage at work and communicates how people perceive themselves. It also suggests how they want to be perceived by others (Peluchette and Karl 2007). Clothes not only meet our physical and physiological needs; they convey meanings in society and at work. Women's choice of clothing is influenced by a perception of their own identity and a decision regarding which aspects of this identity to show, which is also influenced by the social circumstances in which the clothes are worn (Ruggerone 2017).

CPW who work in design and fashion follow a different set of sartorial rules than women who work in traditional corporate environments like banking, accounting, teaching, and others. The dress of CPW must come across as utilitarian with effortless style. It has to display their aesthetic, creative, and cultural capital. It also has to allow them to perform their job duties and engage unhampered in their creative processes, at times, in unconventional places and work environments.

Reconciliation of Personal Sartorial Branding with the Perceptions of Others

Because the fashion industry relies on visual forms of expression, what one wears to work is important. It is a "language" that others will understand and associate with credibility and value. Like language that communicates verbally, dress communicates nonverbally (Eicher and Evenson 2014). Proper dress is necessary in order to be seen and heard in one's profession.

Those in the creative industries are often expected to dress differently from the general population. Our interviewees all brought up that they believed their sartorial appearance had a significant effect on their hiring and retaining jobs. In fact, this was the most dominant theme found in the study.

Sartorial personal branding conveys one's trade to prospective clientele. As Kelly*, sixty-nine, a jewelry and accessories designer, confirms, "They expect it." CPW's dress needs to communicate their authority, creativity and knowledge in their areas of expertise.

The women in this study recognize the importance of how they are perceived by others. They cherish good aesthetics and design in professional appearance. They dress in harmony with their own personal brand or the brand/client they work for. They select

their dress according to the tasks of their workday, the weather, who they are seeing, and what products/concepts they are presenting. Christine, fifty-five, a denim consultant, summarized this by:

> We are in a very visual society … clients are looking and judging and also comparing themselves … If I meet with a brand that's more conservative, I will dress more conservative ... [However] there's always going to be a piece of me whether it's a pin, a hat, or bangles … my own little cult of individuality, just to kind of zhoozh me up a little bit, to make it *me*.

CPW must balance their personal aesthetic and dress to "fit in" with their customers. Their clients and customers are trusting these women to make their businesses successful. Jana, fifty, a trimmings designer and design blogger (see fig. 2.2), states:

> I want to look like I'm going to work for you and you're going to invest in me and I'm going to make it happen for you. Sometimes I want to be perceived as really creative, and sometimes I want to be perceived as a successful businesswoman. Sometimes I come in between those two, depending on who the listener is. I want to stand out just a little bit with my clients and even more so when I'm being my brand.

Not only do CPW need to look the part, they also must make sure their clients are comfortable with *how* they look. Susan, sixty-three, a denim consultant, expressed this by saying:

> I just try to dress and fit in with my customers. I also make sure that I am relevant because I am selling my product and I'm trying to get their general aesthetic but also push them where they need to go.

Figure 2.2

Jana, Fifty, Trimmings Designer and Design Blogger. Courtesy of Jana.

Everyday Professional Basics: Comfort, Function, Practicality, Fit and Modesty

The dress of CPW often reflects an unconventional, yet knowledgeable, functional, and experimental style. Creative women at work seek comfort in their workplace dress out of necessity. As Joni*, fifty-two, a fashion design consultant, affirms: “Comfort is part of my style … we are on our feet all day long.”

Not only do creative women in the fashion industry need comfort, function and practicality in their everyday workplace dress, all of these must *complement* their style. CPW must be able to move freely in the studio as they work with various materials and carry out physical activities. Their jobs also involve other physical activities outside the studio that they carry out on foot or using the crowded subway.

CPWs are very practical in their choice of clothing as Andrea*, fifty-six, a senior director of menswear, noted, "I tend to choose fashion pieces that are easy to coordinate." They embrace the aesthetic and availability of streetwear in high fashion as it allows for more comfortable *and* stylish clothing, especially shoes. Comfortable shoes were brought up by all as essential go-to items for every-day workplace attire. As Gladys*, fifty-four, a pattern maker and dress designer, has pointed out: "A nice solid pair of black shoes that you can walk all over New York in is worth its weight in gold."

Eyeglasses, a good haircut and a great (hand)bag were also important. Properly fitted clothing was also brought up as essential. For example, Christine, fifty-five, a denim consultant, has stated, "If your clothes don't fit, you don't fit." Properly fitting undergarments were significant as well. When all items of clothing (seen or not), and accessories fit properly, CPW reported feeling supported and confident in their business performance.

The subject of modesty was another issue that often came up during the discussion of workplace dress selection. Because CPW are in constant motion, they wish to remain "neutral" on the job. They refrain from revealing clothing because it could be distracting, uncomfortable, and unprofessional. They do not want to appear too sexy, so they watch their skirt or dress length and pair it with lower heeled shoes.

Emotions Dictating the Sartorial Choices of CPW

The majority of women have a dynamic and meaningful relationship with their clothes. Studies show that women see an important connection between clothes and self-image (Guy and Banim 2000). They note the emotional attachment that wearing particular clothing brings. Women, including designers and creative professionals, feel better about themselves when they are emotionally attached to an item of dress (Woodward 2007). What one wears to work can have a substantial impact on how one performs at work and can help understand the link between workplace attire and employee self-perceptions (Peluchette and Karl 2007).

"Articles of clothing may also be treated as if they had *mana,* the impersonal supernatural force that tends to concentrate itself in objects" (Lurie 2000, p.30). For our interviewees, this could be a favorite article of clothing, a signature perfume, and accessories like jewelry, shoes, or a handbag. These, as they revealed, bring good *juju,* i.e., good luck, for a meeting. They also demonstrate their style, and display their authority and knowledge of their craft. Eleanor*, fifty-seven, a senior vice president of merchandising, talked about this in the following way:

> I rely on a few key accessories that dress it up for me: fun shoes, bags, scarves and eyewear. I have this Christian Lacroix silk scarf that I wear a lot. It's very bright pink and gold, and somewhat garish. I wear it so often that I sometimes refer to it as my blankie.

Importance of Curating One's Own Style

All of the women implement a high-low mix for their own style. They mix DIY, designer, vintage, and consignment as well as low price items like a t-shirt with a

designer piece. They are frequent travelers and often acquire special finds on business trips which reflect their exposure to different markets, cultures, and fashion cities. As creative women, with access to unique materials, they frequently embellish or modify their clothing and accessories, like a t-shirt, shoes or a bag. They also may use tailors for bespoke clothing or to change the silhouette of lower priced items. Jana, fifty, a trimmings designer and design blogger, for example, always has a glue gun on hand for embellishing her wardrobe pieces, especially when she travels.

Taylor*, seventy-four, a color and trend forecaster, talked about these issues saying:

> I buy fast. I buy high price. I buy low price. I mix it all up. There was a certain point where I was having clothes made for me. I wanted to choose my own fabrics…the fact that you can have five shirts made out of five fabrics that you love and feel like you've got a whole new wardrobe is fantastic. They have to be simple enough to do that. I'm always fixing. I take it to the tailor, and I'll take a long sleeve and make it a three-quarter length sleeve or take this top and then redo it into a dress, that would be like, designed for me. I put my own little spin on it.

The CPW in this study emphasized, however, that they tend to avoid prints because they can be too context specific or dated or possibly causing distraction at a meeting or interview, if someone doesn't like the pattern.

Age Appropriate Dress

Youth, beauty, and aesthetics drive the appearance-centric fashion industry. The Western ideal of beauty is seldom attainable for most women; youth and thinness are perceived as more attractive, successful, and desirable. Dress plays a significant role in the experience of old age as clothes are central to the ways older bodies are experienced,

presented and understood within society and culture (Twigg 2013). Research reports that 97% of participants' opinions of stereotypes and identities are based on others' clothes (Todorović et al. 2017).

Women are challenged with unrealistic images that promote staying young forever and getting older without obvious signs of ageing. Factors like age, can be seen as negative if one appears too young or too old (Miller-Spillman 2019). If they present themselves in a too youthful manner, it will be deemed inappropriate (Twigg 2013). However, middle age women often attempt to pass as younger to hold on to their jobs. They keep exercising vigorously, wearing trendy clothing, coloring their naturally greying hair and undergoing cosmetic surgery and Botox treatments (Trethewey 2001).

For the professional woman, grey hair can be a real liability (Kreamer 2007). It is the most obvious signifier of old age and can trigger negative stereotypes. Older women often choose to dye their grey hair as one of the ways to keep up their appearances, remain visible, and stave off ageist judgements at work. The majority of the women in the study see their colored hair as an economic necessity. They believe that if they had grey hair it would negatively affect their employment.

The CPW in this study were all very aware of age appropriate professional dress and how their post fifty-year-old bodies changed, requiring a different attention than what they had been previously accustomed to. Those of them who try to balance the conflicting norms of age-appropriate dress often fear ridicule for their dress choices and dread becoming victims of "mutton dressed as lamb." Lurie (2000) defines this term as "the sartorial equivalent of someone who lies blatantly about her age" (56). Twigg (2013) points out that often, "wearing youthful styles does not produce a youthful identity but

instead, draws attention to the ageing body that wears it" (47). The same sentiments were expressed by Christine, fifty-five, a denim consultant: "I look at how young girls dress, and emulate it, but I don't want to look too much like 'mutton dressed as lamb', because I know I will look ridiculous. Some things work and some things don't."

With the societal and workplace pressures that women face to be perfect at any age, what is an older professional woman to do who is showing signs of age in a culture that holds women to unrealistic standards of beauty and perfection? Career image is comprised of interpersonal skills, aesthetic presentation, and beauty (Hooley and Yates 2015). While an experimental and often avant-garde attire was attractive on her younger body, her older body may not wear these styles as well. Even muted colors like pale grey and beige, typically associated with female professional dress and perhaps previously worn, now suggest a withdrawn status, allowing others to perceive these women in a non-sexual and often invisible manner (Twigg 2013).

Discrimination in the Workplace as a Result of Ageism and Lookism

According to Jyrkinen (2014), "gendered ageism refers to intentional or non-intentional discriminatory actions that are based on the intersection of gender and age" (176). Ageism is directed more towards women than men. Men rarely panic about ageing. In fact, ageing is supposed to improve men's masculinity (Isopahkala-Bouret 2017; Przybyszewski 2014). Like race, class, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity, age is a master identity. It is governing how we are perceived, ranked, evaluated, and "who we socialize with, how we are judged and ordered socially" (Twigg 2013, 25).

When the issue of ageism came up, one of the interviewees, Kelly*, sixty-nine, a jewelry and accessories designer, quipped: "… they can tell [already] by your voice that

you're probably not ‘hip,’ not young.” From balancing work and family life to gender stereotyping, sexual harassment, racism, lookism, and ageism, the pressure to fulfill workplace roles can be daunting (Daugherty 2012). Because women are seen as “old” even at forty years old, professional women often feel pressured to keep up their looks in order to be successful in their careers. However, dress cannot disguise age forever and age is not reversible.

When discussing this subject, some participants mentioned that they were advised to shave “some time off of their resume.” In fact, some female recruiters have gone as far as telling them that: “there are no jobs for women over forty in New York.” On account of this, Jana, fifty, a trimmings designer and design blogger, had this to say: “It's frustrating to be discriminated against because of our age. As we age, we have a lot more knowledge but then we're not necessarily taken as seriously because we become a little less relevant.” Overall, women who work in the fashion industry experience a triple burden of discrimination because of age, gender, and the lookism of our youth driven culture that expects perfection in terms of appearance and beauty (Jyrkinen 2014).

Women reach menopause, usually around the age of fifty. At that point, most women start to show signs of ageing. They encounter the normal process of weight gain, loss of muscle tone, wrinkling of the skin and greying hair and start experiencing the effects of lookism (Jyrkinen 2014). Lookism is prejudice toward people because of their appearance; it creates obstacles to equal opportunity in the workplace. Despite inconclusive research, employers believe that beauty brings bounty and attractiveness receives a premium. At the same time, unattractiveness comes with a penalty (Tietje and Cresap 2005). Lookism is intertwined with racism. It presents older women of color with

added challenges as skin color can exclude a person from a position or make it difficult to advance in the corporate hierarchy (Miller-Spillman 2019).

Height, weight, gender, age, and skin color have no bearings on the job one is hired to do, but they often, along with dress, form the basis of hiring and employment decisions. In connection with this, Joni*, fifty-two, a fashion design consultant, recalled the following: “He brought up the fact that I was Black in the meeting, twice. He basically told me there weren’t going to be any Black people there.” Because Joni* didn’t fit the Western blonde-girl look in the ad campaigns her new boss was creating for the company, she was not surprised at all when she was laid off from a popular global brand.

Older women in the fashion industry are often forced out of their senior level positions they had held for twenty-five or more years, and are replaced with two or more lower level younger assistants under the guise of “corporate restructuring due to financial reasons.” Several interviewees indicated that despite years of expertise and excellent interpersonal skills, they had gradually become invisible at work. They sensed that they were looked over because of their age, diminishing beauty, and changes in their body shapes.

Grey Matter$: Addressing the Consumption Needs of Older Professional Women

America is greying and grey matters. Since the end of the 1990’s, the number of women ages fifty-five to sixty-four have increased significantly in the labor force and this trend is projected to continue (Toossi and Morisi 2017). BB spend more money on consumer goods than Gen X or millennials. This sentiment was confirmed by Christine, fifty-five, a denim consultant, when she said, “The real buying power is in the older

customer, forty and above. But, they're catering to the millennial customer and that's really disloyal."

Retailers have a lot of work to do if they want to capture the grey market. CPW are challenged by the dearth of appropriate clothing that becomes increasingly more evident as they get older. While they are conscious of the fact that they need age appropriate dress for the workplace, they also have high standards. They want to be stylish and dress to suit their body shape. They also refuse to adopt the limited clothing choices currently available (Applewhite 2016). Taylor*, seventy-four, a color and trend forecaster, had this to say:

> Because I'm in the business, my expectations are high. I'm looking for something for *me*. My body changed, my hair color changed, my haircut changed, my makeup changed, everything has changed, but I'm still looking for that special thing. It's got to be very Taylor. It's got to talk to *me*.

All interviewed women emphasized the socioeconomic benefits of this emerging market. Noting the importance to 'know your customer,' Gladys*, fifty-four, a pattern maker and dress designer, emphasized the lack of this insight in retail clothing choices for older CPW:

> We can't wear things that are designed by a twenty-something year old because she does not understand what our needs are. You don't like the way your body looks. Your upper arms are fat. You don't like your chin. You want to look like you have more authority. The minute you slip something on, you want to feel important, special.

Because one fifth of the US population will be sixty-five and older by 2030, apparel and fashion industries must radically change their thinking and address the needs of this growing demographic (Bougourd 2015). Conversely, the anti-ageing market, worth US $140.3 billion in 2015, understands the value of the grey market. Not surprisingly, since it is expected to reach double-digit growth by 2021 at $216.21 billion (Zion Market Research 2018). They profit by targeting women with products and services that claim to assist them passing as younger than their chronological age. Jana, fifty, a trimmings designer and design blogger, together with others, underscored how she disliked the word, anti-ageing, and that market in general.

> I hate the word anti-ageing. I think that's so ridiculous. It's not realistic. We are ageing as we speak. Who's going to be anti-ageing? I've had a lot of friends wanting me to get into some beauty products and sell beauty products. I'm not into it because I don't aspire to 'anti-age.' It's just sad to me. It's not accepting of what you are or where you're going or what's happening. I think it's a bad model for my daughter, too.

While the media is becoming more inclusive of various female body types, ethnicities, and skin colors, age remains glaringly absent in much of the fashion and beauty advertisements. Despite the lack of older women, Dove and Getty images have teamed together to feature more diversity and body positivity in their images. Their selections include a wide range of races, body types and ages (Prescott et al. 2019). While this could be seen as "greywashing," the fact that advertisers recognize the economic advantages of appealing to the grey market is, nonetheless, encouraging.

Resilience and Self-Acceptance

Our research participants knew that there was nothing they could do to make themselves younger. As Christine, fifty-five, a denim consultant, remarked, they were well aware that their appearances and bodies "have expiration dates" and that they had to be innovative and prevail, while maintaining their own individual style. Through all their years of experience, and, in spite of the discrimination and marginalization they may have encountered, these women have proven that resilience, and self-acceptance are essential to living well at any age. As Joni*, fifty-two, a fashion design consultant, emphatically stated: "In the end, people like you more when you like yourself." CPW recognize the positive aspects of ageing and are encouraged by the shifts in age acceptance and the inclusion of older women in social media. Jana, fifty, a trimmings designer and design blogger, made the following remark about this:

> Age and beauty are changing and are not controlled by the media anymore. It's controlled by this democratic groundswell of people. That's very empowering to see that we're not so unique and there's a lot of people like us that have a voice through social media. I see that as a really positive thing.

Christine, fifty-five, a denim consultant, proclaimed that her self-affirmation has allowed her to overcome the obstacles in a youth-driven culture, leading to her successful career in the fashion industry.

> You see things changing when you turn fifty. Your skin is crepey, your hair is starting to get grey, [but] I like *me* in my own skin. I like when I look in the mirror, and I say, 'wow, I look okay today.' I stopped caring about what other

> people thought about me. I feel the best I've ever felt about myself. I have less body shame.

Interviewees also stated that there are positive benefits of ageing because ageing frees women from being the object of the male gaze. As Susan, sixty-three, a denim consultant, stated:

> I hide under the 'I'm an old lady', whenever possible. It's a nice little veil to ward off the people you don't want to talk to … I don't care about being my attractive self and impressing some guy or telling him anything.

Conclusion

We're Grey, Here to Stay, So Get Used to It!

People dress for their daily duties. Therefore, it is essential that their appearance is accepted, especially in the workplace. Older CPW in the fashion industry have taken up this challenge and curate their own sartorial solutions. Their dress reflects their brand, creativity, authority, credibility, and personal style. It allows them to be seen and heard and function effectively on the job. As women are living longer and the number of women over fifty in the workforce continues to increase, the fashion industry must rethink its current employment practices and retain older CPW in their workforce. These women's expertise and experience are invaluable to maintain success, integrity, and uniqueness in the competitive environs of the industry.

According to the McKinsey Global Fashion Index, the fashion industry is worth an estimated $2.4 trillion (Amed et al. 2016). It is a feminized industry, which mostly employs women. It is one of those rare industries in which women can become successful and go far over time. However, it is driven by youthism. Discrimination

because of age makes life and work difficult for older professional women who know very well that they need to look young and maintain a fashionable appearance to be able to keep going in the industry. The industry loses if it squeezes out older practitioners. As Taylor*, seventy-four, a color and trend forecaster, has said, “People over fifty are cool, happening people.” By acknowledging and retaining the ageing population, the fashion industry will reap tremendous monetary benefit, because this growing cohort will not stop consuming and will continue to help the industry with its expertise.

The fashion industry, popular culture, and the media communicate unrealistic Western standards of ideal feminine beauty in a highly visual and youth-oriented culture. This further obfuscates the understanding of the complexity of age and workplace dress for older professional women. Luckily, current research on workplace dress for an ageing population in the 21st century is increasing (Haden 2019; Isopahkala-Bouret 2017). However, while the interest is growing, especially in popular media, academic research on gendered ageism and creative women’s sartorial self-expression in the fashion industry is still absent. As the numbers of women over fifty in the workforce continue to increase, businesses will need to rethink their approach to the changing market and retool their offerings of products and services to reach the growing market of middle-aged and older consumers (Miller-Spillman 2019). Research on these issues is imperative because this demographic demands better products and fairer workplace practices.

By 2035, the greying of America will be inevitable as the number of older adults is estimated to surpass children for the first time in US history (Vespa, Armstrong, and Medina 2018). As BB grow older and stave off retirement, managing an ageing workforce will be the biggest challenge facing organizations and their ageing employees

(Trethewey 2001). Western societies, especially, will need to reframe their perceptions of age, gender, and beauty. The popular media and the fashion industry will have to become more inclusive and accepting of the ageing population in their imagery and merchandise options. A shift in perception of age would also alter fixed notions of gender and race. In fact, it may cause a sea change socially and economically as well.

The growing number of working professional women over fifty and their expanding life expectancy will continue to transform the way women adapt to how they age and work. They will have more influence and prevalence in the economic, sociopolitical, and cultural scene of the United States. All prior concepts of ageing, behavior, work and appearance are changing for those in this age demographic. The appearance management and coping strategies of CPW, examined in this study in the context of the fashion industry, demonstrates a need for social change. Such change would not only help the economy, but would also significantly increase the psychological wellbeing of professional women affected by old age.

Limitations

While the twelve interviews provided the authors with sufficient data, it is important to note that it was difficult to find a large enough sample of women over fifty, who still work in the fashion industry. This highlights how prevalent the issues described in this paper are. Another difficulty was to have a balance of diversity among the female participants. Consequently, both these factors have bearings on the findings. In future research on this topic, the authors recommend a larger sample of CPW to fully uncover their needs and capture all aspects of their coping strategies.

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CHAPTER THREE

AGE, EXPERIENCE AND CREATIVE LABOUR: NARRATIVES OF CREATIVE PROFESSIONALS OVER AGE 55 IN THE NEW YORK FASHION INDUSTRY[6]

[6] McInnis, A., & Medvedev, K. (2021). Age, experience, and creative labour: Narratives of creative professionals over age 55 in the New York fashion industry. *International Journal of Fashion Studies, 8*(2), 281-298. Reprinted here with permission of the publisher.

Abstract

This qualitative study introduces six creative fashion professionals, aged 55–74, who started their careers in the 1980s. They have managed to overcome the complex challenges of employment and remain active in the highly competitive and youth-centric fashion industry of New York City. The participants represent key occupations that drive the behind-the-scenes creative force in the industry's supply chain. While their long careers have equipped them with expertise, multiple transferable hard and soft skills and extensive professional networks, they have become a rare age demographic in the industry. We investigate the importance of professional experience that comes with age in the current workforce by exploring the participants' self-reflections and assessments about their careers as ageing workers. We determine how exogenous factors such as globalization, trade agreements, changes in technology, the effect of politics and recessions, global health crises and endogenous factors, such as changes in positions, additional training and work–life balance, have influenced their careers. We highlight the benefits of intergenerational teams in which older workers are effectively able to transfer knowledge to and collaborate with younger co-workers and vice versa. Employing insights of the theory of experience, continuity theory, social exchange theory and generational theory, the study shows that intergenerational collaboration is critical to mastering creative processes in the fashion and textiles industry. Our research uncovers this demographic's collective experience, tacit knowledge and resilience and proclaims their passion for their professions. It also illuminates the strategies the participants employed to remain professionally relevant as they adapted to the shifting landscape of the global fashion industry.

Keywords: baby boomers, fashion industry, New York City, intergenerational teamwork, fashion design, creative labour

Introduction

The 1980s were a turning point in the global fashion industry that shifted the labour paradigm in the worldwide textile and apparel industries. During the last quarter of the twentieth century, the dissemination of digital technology gradually displaced manual techniques, and US manufacturing was outsourced to countries with lower labour costs in the Global South. Despite these developments, much of the value-generating creative processes of research, product development, design, merchandising and marketing in the global supply chain continue to be based in the United States and rooted in New York City (Maloney 2019).

This study introduces the biographical narratives of six creative fashion professionals, aged 55–74, who have worked in the New York fashion industry for over 30 years, including Anne McInnis, one of the article's authors. The number of creative professionals in this age group is dwindling. We argue that this is problematic since the fashion industry heavily relies on skills and experience (Crewe 2017).

Twigg suggests that 'fashion is strongly – perhaps inherently – youth-oriented' (2013: 11). She calls attention to the erasure of age in the fashion industry and argues that older workers, particularly females, often become the Other, get marginalized or lose their jobs when they get older. She also claims that the exploration of the linkages of age, experience and creative labour in the fashion industry is missing.

While Moon (2020) has provided an overview of creative labour and fashion industry history in New York, her work does not extend to issues related to the specific

age demographic this article focuses on. Creativity and passionate work have also been investigated in cultural labour studies. McRobbie (2002), for example, has concluded that workers find meaning and strengthen identity through their work, while Sennett (2008) made connections between craft knowledge and learning through experience and collaboration.

The study utilized the insights of John Dewey's theory of experience ([1938] 1997) and Robert Atchley's continuity theory (1989). It also found Thibault and Kelly's (1959) social exchange theory and Strauss and Howe's generational theory (1997) beneficial for the analysis. Dewey ([1938] 1997) believed that the principles of continuity and interaction are the foundations of (human) experience. Collaboration depends on human interaction. We used Dewey's principles to show how creative processes are learned experientially between workers. Continuity theory was helpful for our analysis of older workers' adaptive strategies, used to maintain skills tied to past experiences (Atchley 1989). It was also useful to illuminate how older workers connect their past and present experiences to seek continuity and generativity through collaboration and mentoring. Generativity is 'the concern in establishing and guiding the next generation' (Erikson 1963: 267). Social exchange theory pointed us to the benefits of reverse mentoring, which helps increase the engagement of a multigenerational workforce by leveraging the expertise of all generations (Chaudhuri and Ghosh 2012). Lastly, generational theory provided insights into the differences in relational values, work ethic and beliefs between generational cohorts (Satterly et al. 2018).

While plenty of literature exists on the careers of famous designers, far less is known about the careers of older, experienced industry professionals who are not in the

limelight, but without whom the magic of fashion would not happen (Jenss 2016). As the workforce becomes increasingly diverse, age diversity in industries that depend on knowledge transfer and collaboration should not be neglected (Latilla et al. 2019). In line with this, our study strove to highlight the perceptions of extremely accomplished but seemingly voiceless older fashion practitioners (Twigg 2013) about their professional experiences relating to the social, economic and political changes that have taken place in the industry over the last 40 years.

We sought answers to the following questions: In what ways have exogenous and endogenous factors from the 1980s to the present impacted the careers of ageing professionals? What motivated those who remained in the industry? What strategies have they used to remain relevant for over 30 years? We also explore why the New York fashion industry would likely benefit from the continued employment of older professionals.

Participants criteria and profiles

Our six interview participants come from various occupational backgrounds and represent several creative aspects of the textile and apparel supply chain. We investigated the career paths of professionals who have prevailed in the industry during a period when global manufacturing replaced domestic operations and organizational restructuring and generational shifts reshaped employment. It was difficult to find a larger sample and a more diverse pool of participants because few creative practitioners over age 55 are still employed in the industry.

We examined the experiences of one tailor, one patternmaker, one designer, one merchandiser/product developer, one denim design/product developer and one textile

design/product developer. Eligibility criteria included women and men 55 or older in 2020, who identified as creative professionals and had worked in the New York fashion industry for 30+ years between 1980 and 2020. Three women and two men from the first author's professional network responded to the call for participants. Participants had the option to use their names or a pseudonym, indicated with an asterisk. One participant was Black, five White. The average age of the participants was 62.7 years and their average years in the industry was 37.3 years. Education levels ranged from some college to an MFA degree. The participants' average yearly income in 2019 was $120,000.

The participants' professional profiles give context to their diverse skills and extensive industry backgrounds. Linda*, age 74, is a self-taught tailor. As an MFA, she describes herself as 'an artist who can sew'. Her career began in 1981 working for a fashion designer where every step from design to production took place under one roof. She started as a fit model, doing piece work and sample making, before being promoted to production manager. Due to the owner's excessive spending, the company went bankrupt in 1983, and Linda* was laid off. A colleague connected her to freelancing in interiors sewing, while she was also working as a technical designer in fashion accessories until the late 1980s. She spent the 1990s constructing costumes and props for Broadway, New York Fashion Week and various events of global fashion brands. She learned to make complex alterations ('surgeries') on very expensive couture gowns by Dior, Chanel, Versace, etc., for fashion editors and socialites. Since 2004, she has worked as an on-set tailor for commercial and red-carpet photoshoots and runway shows requiring on-set fittings and alterations.

The 60-year-old Niall started as an autodidact acquiring skills from books or by closely examining couture garments in museum shows. In the early 1980s, he went on to earn a degree in patternmaking at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) in New York. Currently, he is a couture patternmaker and draper at a pattern service/development factory in the New York Garment District. His first job as a production patternmaker was for a 'cheap house doing rub offs' (creating a pattern from an existing garment). Boredom drove him to contact the Public Theatre in New York in 1985, which hired him to supervise sewers for men's costumes. There, he refined his draping skills, learned on-site fitting and creating costumes for the actors. He has worked in couture, ready-to-wear, evening wear, lingerie and sleepwear. For over two decades he worked for global fashion icons and high-end labels such as Gabriela Hearst, Marc Jacobs, Proenza Schouler and many more. His work has appeared in numerous international fashion publications.

The 56-year-old Jean has worked as an independent clothing designer and patternmaker most of her career. Early on, she assisted as a fit model and performed mundane tasks like sewing hems. After sharpening her draping skills at FIT, she embarked on a decade-long career as a patternmaker and sample maker. Frustrated with ageism in the industry because 'it doesn't matter what you know', she set up her own atelier in her apartment in 2015. Jean is a textiles 'alchemist' with a passion for material transformation; she makes bespoke garments from discarded plastic packaging. Her couture collections, called 'Auntie Plastic', have garnered attention from fashion industry insiders and influencers alike.

The 61-year-old Bjorn is the chief merchandising officer of a menswear apparel company 'worth north of $200 million'. He is responsible for the design, product

development, production and merchandising of the company's clothing line. As the first full-time employee, he feels fortunate to be part of the growth of his company, which, as he put it, 'is unusual for someone his age, especially when you talk about e-comm[erce]' because 'they tend to want to hire younger people at a lower cost'. Bjorn's role ranges from business analysis to hands-on product development. As a professor at Parsons School of Design in fashion marketing, he stays well informed about industry business practices, e-commerce and digital technology.

The 65-year-old Susan is a denim designer and product developer. After receiving a degree from the Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science, Susan started her career in New York working for US textile mills in the late 1970s. She entered the industry at a time when the design and creative processes for most US apparel and textile companies were still conducted in the city. Since then she has had several high-profile positions with global apparel brands and international textile mills. She was instrumental in pushing mills and brands towards sustainability and technical developments. As a self-described 'denim therapist', she analyses her clients' business and product needs. She is methodical and thorough and can be best described by her statement, 'I like to build a product like a guy will take apart a car'.

The 61-year-old Anne was an art school dropout. She started her career with a small domestic textile company that manufactured custom-designed woven textiles for better to bridge apparel. She answered an ad in *The Village Voice* for a handweaver and got the job because she 'was an artist, good with colour, and knew something about woven textiles'. Mentored by the company's senior staff, she got apprentice training through 'knocking off' textiles of European luxury designers. She was the design director

for multiple US textile mills until 2004 when the last US mill she worked for had shut down due to cheaper imports. After that, she served as design director for international textile mills and soft furnishings brands and taught at FIT. She is still active in the industry as a consultant. She went back to school in 2017 and is currently a Ph.D. candidate.

Methodology

We employed a combination of biographical and autobiographical narrative inquiry to examine the career histories of our research participants. Our participants illuminated their perspectives and gave meaning to their past and present experiences through biographical narratives. In Anne's case, we utilized autobiographical narrative inquiry. This methodology uses autobiography and autoethnography to 'connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural and social' (Kim 2016: 228).

To get answers to our research questions, we created a list of open-ended questions that aimed to uncover how participants constructed and interpreted their lived experiences. Our goal was to make sure the interviewees highlight what *they* perceived important to share about their professional experiences. To maintain necessary critical distance, Anne, an industry insider, consciously limited her role to a mere listener during the interview process. At the same time, her knowledge and familiarity with the context built trust and intimacy with the participants. As the primary interviewer, she relied on intersubjectivity to negotiate meaning and sustain a shared understanding (Probst 2016).

Interview data were recorded and transcribed. Using thematic narrative analysis, we searched for recurring meanings to help us identify relevant historical, social and

personal information (Kim 2016). Information from miscellaneous trade, government and marketing sources provided missing details on the subject matter.

Factors Influencing Career Paths

Up until the end of the twentieth century, the majority of US-based apparel companies relied on services and resources located in and around the New York Garment District. Garment services like patternmaking, speciality machines for picot edges and buttonholes, sample making, textile samples and apparel production runs were common during this time. Through the end of the twentieth century, the corporate headquarters of most US textile mills were also located in the Garment District and employed a full-time design team for apparel textile design and development. The area also included a bevy of work-for-hire independent design studios and an army of freelancers who executed assignments on a per-piece basis. With a quick turnaround and in-person engagement from multiple services, prototypes could be developed and adopted in a matter of days. As Susan put it: 'You could go to New York and get your entire line done in two weeks'. The industry was booming and employment numbers were high. However, since then, globalization, trade policies, recessions, various pandemics, the deindustrialization of US textile and apparel manufacturing, as well as changes in technology have significantly affected the US labour force and contributed to its contraction (Dicken 2011). As more labour moved offshore and creative practitioners retired or were forced out due to their age and higher salaries (McInnis and Medvedev 2021), the original cohort of creative industry practitioners of our interviewees diminished.

Between 1990 and 2011, about 750,000 US apparel manufacturing jobs disappeared because of trade policies (Vatz 2013). Susan recalled that the North

American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (1994) was first met with enthusiasm, but US garment factories eventually closed down after factories moved production south to Mexico. Susan had anticipated the change and therefore adapted with ease.

> All the jeans were made in Los Angeles at the time [1999]. Mexico was just starting up apparel manufacturing. [But] it was hard shipping fabric to Mexico because the fabric was often stolen. China [however] was super-efficient. Someone could go and get sampled in three weeks. Mexico would take three months; they couldn't interpret or anticipate our needs. So, I was on board to switching production to Asia.

The advent and effects of digital technology, computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing in the latter part of the twentieth century transformed the apparel and textiles industry from labour-intensive to intelligence-intensive (Moncarz 1992). Digitally produced textile and apparel design and patternmaking became essential to increase efficiency, and the new automation processes played a key role in the foray into overseas manufacturing. However, they also decimated New York's fashion workforce. Those who were used to working by hand, like sample weavers, pattern makers and studio artists, became redundant and were let go.

Niall accepted the technological turn in the industry much later because he was able to work without digital technology until 2008 when he 'made a conscious decision to learn' patternmaking software. Up until then, he had been 'protected' by working for old-school companies, which either could not afford the capital expense and maintenance of software and additional hardware, or employed patternmakers who refused to learn

digital systems. With time, however, workers that were unwilling to adjust were gradually squeezed out.

Digital technology, e-commerce and social media have the biggest impacts in transforming the industry (Maloney 2019). All our participants had both analogue and digital experiences. 'Very little has changed [in the industry] up to digital. To me, it's the biggest revolution since I started in the fashion industry', said Bjorn. He embraced the opportunities afforded by technology early on and credits his passionate interest in digital marketing as key to his lasting success. In a company of digitally savvy millennials, he assumed the admission, 'I don't understand', would have been his demise. 'I survived because I'm incredibly interested in digital marketing for tracking and predicting consumer behaviour. You have to learn it. Otherwise, you might as well retire', he said.

Linda*, whose artisanal expertise and career remains relatively unaffected by digital and social media trends, stated:

> We're watching the biggest change since I came to New York. When fashion photographers switched to digital [with instant images for editorials and the media], I had to work faster with alterations on set to keep up. Fashion Week in New York is also dying and online influence has become more important than runway influence.

Fashion not only plays a significant role in a city's cultural economy (Currid 2012); it is closely intertwined with politics (Bartlett 2019). New York Fashion Week was cut short on 9/11, following the attacks on the World Trade Center. Chinatown's garment factories, located in the 'frozen zone', below Fourteenth Street, where all vehicles were banned from 12 September to 13 October 2001, lost an estimated $490 million in the next

year because factories were forced to relocate or close (Sim 2002). Jean clarified why this mattered: ‘Those factories did small production runs. We lost all those specialists because they could never bounce back’.

All our participants said they were emotionally affected by the 9/11 attacks and had a story to tell. Most watched the towers burn and eventually collapse. Each also recalled the economic devastation it had on businesses, the industry and employment in the city. Bjorn was a consultant in 2001 and laid off after 9/11; he was unemployed for about a year before he was assigned a new job. Anne was unemployed at the time because the textile mill she had worked for shut down in July 2001. She watched the towers burn and collapse from her neighbourhood. Months later, 9/11 PTSD hit her when she realized she was often on early-morning flights to San Francisco from Newark (like UA flight 93 that crashed in Pennsylvania) for her former job. This anxiety had a long-term effect. She became reluctant to consider a job if it involved extensive air travel.

To derive a competitive advantage post-9/11, the industry was turning to fast fashion production in global locations. This meant the once six-figure jobs in the industry in New York were being replaced with jobs that required much more travelling to overseas operations, negatively impacting the work–life balance of workers. Ultimately, because of the combined effects of heightened import pressures during the previous 20 years, the downturn in consumer confidence caused by 9/11 and a lack of affordable space for garment workrooms, the fashion industry in New York experienced the worst one-year decline in jobs in 2001, 15.7 per cent (Crean et al. 2003).

Recessions and economic instability can have a major impact on employment and financial assets. During recessionary periods, consumer interest in fashion decreases or

stagnates. Bjorn brought up a key moment for his career, Black Monday, 19 October 1987, when the stock market crashed. He recalled it had a devastating effect on the industry; many companies closed down in New York, and his Swedish company transferred him to Sweden.

The Great Recession (2007–09) was the most devastating financial crisis in the United States since the 1929 Great Depression. It created a 10 per cent unemployment rate (Amadeo 2019). Regarding the financial impact of the recession, Bjorn noted that many in his cohort lost their jobs. He also pointed out that 'when the industry started to hire back again, they offered salaries that were 25 to 30 per cent lower', which extended people's employment several years. Other participants also mentioned they had to delay their retirement due to financial losses caused by recessions.

Pandemics also played an important role in decimating creative labour. During the 1980s and 1990s, New York lost an entire generation of designers and industry leaders such as Willi Smith, Perry Ellis, Halston, Tina Chow (Doonan 2013) and scores of behind-the-scenes creative intermediaries to AIDS. All participants lost co-workers, friends, partners and loved ones to AIDS. According to Linda*, '[i]t was pretty raw then; we were just waiting for a friend to die'. Survivor's guilt plagued the living as they were struggling to cope. Many sought professional help with grief and loss. AIDS, controversially, however, also led to innovation. As AIDS ravaged the talent pool of the industry and theatre arts, once coveted positions became available. Textile mill chemists, colourists and engineers crossed over into jobs previously held by designers. Susan felt the tragedy of the AIDS epidemic pushed her to be more creative and helped enlarge her

industry network. She said, '[a]s people died, we stepped it up as a mill with newly created jobs. To get by, we had to try new things [finishes], like stonewashing'.

Niall also got a professional boost because of AIDS. In 1985, he was hired at the Public Theatre. He described the urgency to fill suddenly vacant positions by saying:

> The theatre arts had been decimated by AIDS. They were desperate, so they put me in charge of menswear costuming. I was recently out of school with no experience in menswear, but was supervising menswear sewers. Their technical knowledge was way higher than mine; they studied costume design. I [only] studied patternmaking!

While Niall felt lucky getting a dream position, he recalled the cruelty of homophobia in the fashion industry: 'People in fashion, especially men, were profiled whether they were gay or not'. Anyone directly affected by and associated with perceived or actual AIDS-related lifestyles feared retaliation to their social life or career. Only after Hollywood's Rock Hudson and fashion's Perry Ellis died in 1985 was there a change in public perception (Ashton 2015) and the fashion industry as well.

Anne's personal and professional life was seriously affected by AIDS. She had to keep her husband's AIDS prognosis secret at work for eighteen months. As the primary breadwinner with their 3-year-old child, she feared being shunned by co-workers and losing her job. After her husband died in 1989, the company owner's apathy propelled her to accept another position that ended up advancing her career and salary.

Our participants recalled how highly contagious viruses like SARS, H1N1 and now COVID-19 affected their professional life. In 2003 and 2009, the SARS (Rozhon 2003) and H1NI/swine flu (McKibbin 2009) severely impacted US-based apparel

companies due to disruptions in merchandise shipments, limited air travel, forced shutdowns and restrictions imposed in Asian factories. These disruptions, however, as our participants have argued, made them learn to adapt and become more efficient. When SARS was spreading and Asian factories were shutting down, Susan's employer, a major global brand, stopped all employee travel to Asia after she refused to travel to China. In fact, Susan permanently altered their business model by going entirely online for product development and working ahead by overlapping seasons. She cut the timeline from one year to seven months, resulting in a leaner operation and significant savings for the company.

In 2020, as COVID-19 enacted strict guidelines on large group gatherings in New York, *Vogue* editor-in-chief Anna Wintour indefinitely postponed the Met Gala. The Council of Fashion Designers of America awards were also cancelled (Ilchi 2020). By 20 March 2020, New York shut down all non-essential businesses to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. While all participants voiced concerns over COVID-19, Susan thought her experience with SARS and H1N1 had prepared her for COVID-19 as she was able to work remotely.

All the above factors have contributed to the contraction of the fashion industry in New York and its labour force. In the ageist social climate of the industry, holding on to one's job has become increasingly difficult (McInnis and Medvedev 2021). Many employees that would now be over age 55 have either left or their positions were eliminated due to globalization or 'corporate restructuring', which, as they suggested, is often a euphemism for 'too old'. However, despite the decline, the fashion industry in New York maintains a fully integrated apparel design, production and wholesaling

complex for small production runs, market testing and reorders for high-price segments of the industry (Maloney 2019). Many jobs in these segments cannot be exported and require face-to-face contact (Sennett 2008), versatility, experience and the expertise of highly skilled practitioners.

Age, Experience and Labour in the Twenty-First Century

Our participants suggested that they could hold onto their jobs in the New York fashion industry through nearly four decades of turmoil because of their resilience and adaptability to fast-paced and often unpredictable circumstances. They also cited their unfailing curiosity and drive to be the best they could be at their jobs. They stated that they were 'in love' with the physical and emotional aspects of their craft and got their 'fixes' from their creativity and problem-solving. The participants' narratives revealed four major themes: years of acquired experience, soft skills, intergenerational teams and work–life balance.

Years of Acquired Experience

Creative professionals in the New York fashion industry possess a blend of unique skills and expertise that come from years of experience. Clothing has to fit, be fashionable, functional and should be manufactured at the right price, all at the same time. In this respect, Linda* said, '[a]ge is actually a benefit. Many years of experience may be seen as an asset when you're making things'. Linda's* work has always been done by hand and her skills developed over decades. Precision is a key factor and the foundation of her trade. She asserted that such old-school skills continue to be vital in the industry despite fast fashion's global success.

Our participants admitted to being perfectionists. They felt sharpened by age and maturity. As practised professionals, they suggested that they could spot flaws right away and make corrections with speed and accuracy. Niall underscored the importance of experience.

> I got really good as a production pattern maker. We had no computers and cut everything out of cardboard. If I made a mistake, a grader would come in, and say, 'See that notch [is] off by one-sixteenth inch? Fix it'. If a hem was affected, they couldn't do their job.

Our participants' narratives concurred with the literature that acquiring new skills and knowledge has contributed to their job satisfaction (Arvidsson et al. 2010). They all expressed strong pride in knowing the industry inside out. While they said they knew their worth, Linda* emphasized that she never considers any job too small or beneath her. 'I still take pride in my work. It's not just alterations. I make beautiful alterations. I am the "Good Wife of Fashion" because I make my clients look good. My ego is to do a great job'.

Our participants expressed that they thrive on their professionalism and are deeply attached to their work. They asserted that their skills and knowledge of the industry made them assets to their employers. To confirm this, Linda* mentioned that she was once introduced to a client by her employer as 'my secret weapon'. She recalled how gratifying it was to hear such praises; the appreciation of her skills by others, she argued, played a major role in her job satisfaction.

Conversely, in the new economy, rewards for accumulated service, loyalty and experience have diminished or disappeared (Sennett 2008). Such changes are noticeable

in the industry in New York as well. Bjorn recognized the value of experience but lamented,

> Many times I feel like experience is not as important as it was 25 or 30 years ago. Fast fashion does not need the precision, detail-oriented approach we learned to bring to the job. Today, what I see as important is to have the right mindset and a positive, outgoing personality.

Soft Skills

A successful career in the industry requires more than a degree. Both hard skills (quantifiable and teachable) and soft skills (subjective and interpersonal) are necessary. As Sennet (2008) suggests, good work is the result of relationships. Soft skills and experience are closely intertwined. Soft skills gained from work experience and relationships cannot be learned from a book (Gibb 2014). Soft skills include communication, interpersonal, leadership and organizational skills. Younger, less experienced co-workers and new graduates are often lacking these skills as they are not taught in fashion programmes. They also require time and work experience to develop. Our participants cited self-assurance, adaptability, creativity and intuition as their primary assets acquired on the job. They added that these skills help them make the right decision under pressure, which only a person with their maturity can do. Because of their familiarity with both the domestic and global fashion systems and their exposure to many complex situations over their extended career, they learned to stay calm when problems arise and remain focused. As Linda* put it, in the frenzied atmosphere of fashion photoshoots, '[t]hat's an asset and a vibe'. All of these skills helped them acquire

reputational capital in the profession, which is another reason why they thought their employers kept them on the job, despite their relatively high salaries.

All the participants highlighted the role of intuition in their careers. Niall said he often creates complex patterns for designers who provide him only with a simple gesture sketch or mere conversational description for a design. In such situations, he says, 'I intuit and fill in the structure'. In fact, he prefers this type of communication to the commonly used, flat, detailed line drawing.

The importance of curiosity was another theme brought up by the participants. To remain relevant in the industry, they felt one had to be not only flexible but also a life-long learner. Jean stated that fashion is 'a constant, never-ending quest for knowledge; an unflagging curiosity coupled with obsessive behaviour'. Bjorn concurred, '[i]f you are really interested in all the aspects of fashion, then you learn. I learned a lot by being inquisitive'. He added, '[a]t my tender age, I still love going to work every day. What drives my inspiration is the City, travelling, and looking at other cultures'.

Niall and Bjorn expressed what goes on in the industry is always a reflection of the zeitgeist. All emphasized that being flexible and enterprising were key to their successes. Niall said:

> You have to be adaptable, that's how I've lasted this long. I didn't grow up with video games. I always tell my younger co-workers, if you want to do something creative as a designer, design for 3D games. It's entrepreneurial. You need imagination. You can make a garment out of smoke to dress an avatar, for example.

The Generation Gap and Intergenerational Teams

For the first time in history, five distinct generations may coexist in the workplace (Figure 3.1) (Dimock 2019). In the mid-1990s, baby boomers made up 50 per cent of the US labour force. Now it is 25 per cent, but their numbers will decrease as more retire (Fry 2018). With one-fifth of the US population 65 and older by 2030, the boomer generation is still expected to make up a large share of the multigenerational workforce (Vespa et al. 2020), which warrants the examination of age-related aspects of the industry.

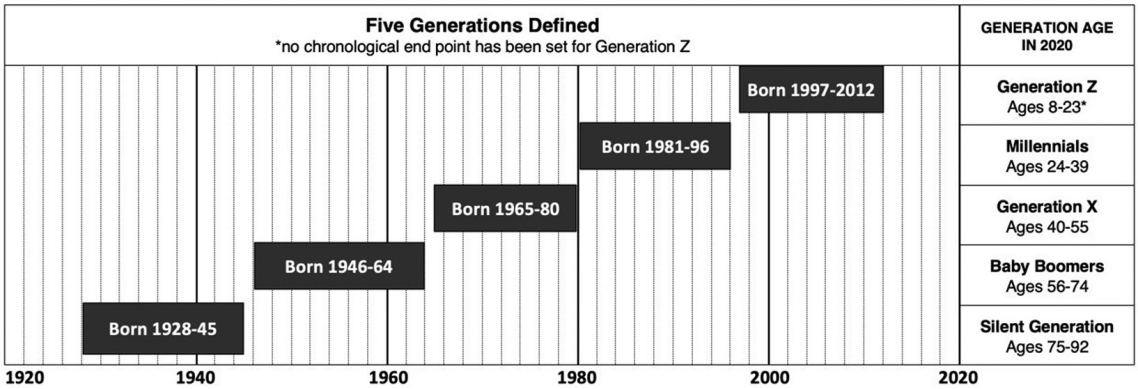

Figure 3.1

Dimock, Five Generations Defined, 2019

Each generation brings their work ethic, values, expectations, career and life experiences to the job, which creates complex work situations. Some of our participants expressed scepticism about their younger co-workers. Both Linda* and Niall remarked that their younger co-workers are primarily attracted to the glamour of fashion. They felt they want to get ahead fast but are not as eager to put in the hours as they used to. Bjorn added:

> There are not many young[er] people who want to do what we do. They are usually on their way to something else. They often want the corner office after

> three years, a big title, and a fat paycheck. They want to know when they're going to be a director. [In contrast], my generation's philosophy is, you do a good job, work hard, and you'll get somewhere. Millennials want rewards instantly; they want a very clear line to where they're going.

Regarding the expectations of younger co-workers, Linda* stated:

> I've worked with all ages. The youngsters want to be designers. They know I am capable, so they ask, 'Didn't you want to have your own line?' I explain to them, 'not everyone that makes something beautiful wants to be a designer'. They are interested in glamour. They don't want the all-nighters.

To overcome conflicts, Niall's strategy is to encourage his younger co-workers and have empathy for them. He said he understood what they were up against. He wants to lead 'by example, patience, and understanding'. He brings up his past experiences with them and suggests that a tenacious interest in learning new skills and a devotion to the job will result in personal, professional and financial satisfaction. Niall's generative behaviour reinforces the principle of continuity theory suggesting that a stronger career identity in later life leads to higher-quality work (Cooke 2018).

By participating in highly valued work, older practitioners (like Niall) maintain their work identity and social contacts (Von Bonsdorff et al. 2009). Niall also emphasized the necessity of collaboration that requires interaction to grasp complex processes. Dewey ([1938] 1997) connects interaction with cooperation. The creative process in fashion production is highly collaborative and requires workers' cooperation, various skill sets and tacit knowledge to create a collection or put on an event.

Generational theory also supports generational collaborations because age-diverse workers inject more creative ideas and problem-solving into the workplace (Satterly et al. 2018). Teamwork depends on cooperation to complete a project because different members of the team work on different aspects of the same product and each is dependent on another (Stone 2012). Fashion is an industry where apprentice schemes and job training are key to helping new entrants learn skills (Crewe 2017). 'If you work with people who are inclined to teach you and pass on their knowledge, then you gain experience and learn what it takes to be relevant', said Bjorn. Our participants stated that most of their skills were learned through real-world experience, gained from years on the job and constructive feedback from other people, which is what mentoring provides (Gibb 2014). Bjorn argued that 'it's impossible as a young[er] person to be successful in the fashion industry without a good mentor'.

Mentoring between co-workers is desirable for fostering human capital. However, mentoring tends to be hierarchal and one-directional. In contrast, intergenerational teams promote the concept of reverse mentoring, which supports two-way learning and exchange between all employees. Social exchange theory posits that all behaviour is a series of exchanges. It highlights collaboration and teamwork, information sharing, decision-making and a flatter hierarchy (Chernyak-Hai and Rabenu 2018). In a collaborative workplace (such as the fashion industry), all parties are expected to give and take in equal proportions (Thibault and Kelly 1959). When reverse mentoring is used as a social exchange tool, employees are more open to intergenerational learning. They benefit from the 'everyone leads, and everyone learns' model (Satterly et al. 2018: 446) because it inspires all generations to overcome inclinations of associating a certain 'age'

with any mentoring role. Reverse mentoring could solve the intergenerational conflict at the workplace as it helps eliminate age bias and leverages the expertise of all generations (Chaudhuri and Ghosh 2012). Additionally, knowledge transfer between generations satisfies older employees' desire to impart their hard-earned practical knowledge and experiences to junior employees (Latilla et al. 2019).

All our participants agreed that their younger cohorts bring familiarity with new trends, a keen sensitivity to the latest socio-economic changes, visceral involvement in the zeitgeist and often a generational desire to build a more sustainable, less wasteful and responsible fashion industry. While Bjorn stated he brings his experience, problem-solving skills and his professional network to the table, he emphasized that reciprocity, openness to new ideas and reverse mentoring are necessary for seamless collaboration between generations.

Susan's mentoring style with younger designers often becomes a training session because of their lack of textile and industry knowledge. 'People don't have the textile knowledge or the history; they can't put [a collection] together and come in at the right price'. Still, Susan also recognizes the positives of learning from her younger co-workers. She thought because she did not have a top-to-bottom leadership style but a collaborative one, today, some of her former younger co-workers are her best clients. 'We're like family. Now I ask *them* [for advice]; they've become me'.

Work–Life Balance

While our participants emphasized their love of their jobs, they also stressed the need for work–life balance and self-care. They thought being a certain age has afforded them a measure of freedom, which they consciously used to balance their professional

and personal life. Their age and financial security allowed them to be selective about when, where and who they work for. Linda*, for example, sets her own schedule and works only eight months a year. She said she no longer participates in any physically strenuous or stressful fashion events.

> I don't do Fashion Week anymore. I prefer to be on a photoshoot. When you work in a fashion show, you don't know when you're going to see daylight again. I've had [enough of] all the drama, the socialites. With e-commerce, I go in at eight and leave at five.

Although Niall was nostalgic about the high energy of Fashion Week, he concurred: 'I was working seven days a week, 9 a.m. to 2 a.m. The skin on my feet started to peel. There was no time for self-care or to do what you want'. He felt that this late in his career he no longer needed to make such sacrifices. His self-assurance, confidence in his skills and financial security, coupled with his need for self-love and self-care, allowed him to do so.

Discussion

Participants felt that their value for the industry comes from their tacit knowledge, specialized skills and extensive professional networks. They thought that their resilience has been key to their longevity in the youth-centric fashion industry (Twigg 2013). They emphasized that soft skills such as flexibility, openness to new ideas and adaptability to new trends in global manufacturing and technology were a must. Participants also noted their deep and lasting involvement in their professional life and high level of job satisfaction, which correlates with the literature on passionate labour (Arvidsson et al. 2010).

Strauss and Howe's (1997) generational theory helped provide insights into relational values, work ethic and beliefs between generational cohorts. The participants reflected on the changing workforce in the industry. While they mentioned issues with their younger co-workers, ultimately, they welcomed collaboration with them. They suggested that one of the primary roles of older workers was mentoring younger co-workers to ensure skills transference. They felt their role as mentors was not only personally fulfilling but also essential considering that much of the profession is learned on the job in the fashion industry. They emphasized that it is not only younger co-workers that benefit from generative behaviours like mentoring and knowledge transfer (Doerwald et al. 2020), but they do too.

Because fashion production has so many moving parts, close collaboration between members of the labour force is essential. Our participants welcomed reverse mentoring because they felt younger workers bring new awareness, alternative perspectives and sharper technological skills to the job. Their perspective concurs with the literature which suggests that multigenerational teams in the workplace are a positive driving force because different generations complement each other and provide a significant opportunity from which the entire age spectrum can learn (Ronnie 2017). They also felt that reciprocal professional exchanges between younger and older cohorts created a more inclusive environment, increased their engagement and younger workers' commitment to their job and, thus, had a positive effect on the creative process. These sentiments support McRobbie's (2002) assessment that creative workers find meaning, emotional satisfaction and purpose through their work. This finding also reinforces the principles of social exchange theory (Chernyak-Hai and Rabenu 2018), which implies

that reciprocal social exchanges, like mentoring between different age groups, will increase collaboration and, therefore, will likely result in higher productivity.

Our participants were also in favour of a multigenerational workforce because they felt that intergenerational learning in the workplace eliminates age bias with any mentoring role (Chaudhuri and Ghosh 2012). They viewed the practice of reverse mentoring and an inclusive, age-diverse workforce as beneficial for all ages. They also argued that by extending their professional career older workers are able to maintain social contacts and continue to have meaningful work experiences, while younger co-workers can acquire crucial knowledge and skills from them.

Participants expressed a desire to seek continuity through participation with their younger colleagues. This finding supports Atchley's (1989) continuity theory since participants kept utilizing adaptive strategies that were tied to their past experiences. Their narratives also corroborated Dewey's theory of experience, which highlights the personal and social aspects of interactions and experiences at work (Kim 2016). Our participants thought that older practitioners' continued existence in the industry is desirable because they have a strong work ethic, efficient organizational methods and knowledge that combines history, culture and synthesizes a collective experience of the industry. At the same time, their maturity and life experiences compelled them to seek a better work–life balance in their late careers.

Conclusion

Despite the decline in US manufacturing, the fashion industry continues to thrive in New York. Today it focuses on high-value jobs like marketing, research, design and product development (Maloney 2019). This study examined the perspectives of six highly

skilled ageing fashion practitioners who have worked in these areas in New York during the past four decades. While various pandemics and 9/11 deeply affected our participants emotionally, the economic, political and technological changes of the past four decades impacted some of them financially. Despite this, they were not as affected by these developments as we had anticipated. However, they emphasized that all these factors contributed to the declining number of fashion practitioners in their age cohort.

The participants considered it problematic that the numbers of practitioners over 55 are very low in the industry. They argued that their knowledge and skills acquired over decades were still relevant since the fundamental creative processes in the industry have remained relatively unchanged, especially in high-value creation. Their assessment also concurs with earlier findings in the literature (Sennet 2008) that their jobs are not exportable because much of their expertise requires face-to-face contact.

If US fashion companies do not encourage intergenerational knowledge exchange when older workers leave the workforce, knowledge will be lost and creative processes and skills will continue to be outsourced to overseas manufacturers due to cheaper labour costs. This creates a volatile situation and may have long-term consequences. Participants asserted that fashion companies benefit by retaining older, experienced practitioners because they can efficiently navigate the complex global supply chain and effectively problem-solve in crisis situations.

Overall, our participants emphasized that professional experience, which comes with age, matters, especially in the fashion industry, which heavily relies on the praxis of apprenticeships, experience and collaboration (Crewe 2017). They confirmed the advantages of a more inclusive and more age-diverse workforce in which everybody's

voice and input mattered. They sensed that amidst intense global competition, intergenerational knowledge transfer and collaboration are necessary to remain profitable and competitive in the fashion industry. Participants argued that although work was a major part of their identity and repeatedly proclaimed their pride in their skills, in the last phase of their professional career, they were keen on having a better work–life balance.

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CHAPTER FOUR

BALANCING OLD SCHOOL–NEW SCHOOL EXPERIENCE TO FOSTER A PRODUCTIVE INTERGENERATIONAL WORKFORCE IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY[7]

[7] McInnis, A., Medvedev, K., & Miles, T.P. (2023). Balancing old school–new school experience to foster a productive intergenerational workforce in the fashion industry. In I. King (Ed.), *Can fashion save the world?* Routledge. Accepted book chapter will appear in the forthcoming book; reprinted here with permission of the publisher.

Abstract

This study challenges the (mis)perceptions of age to analyze the potential of more purposeful collaboration across multiple generations in the contemporary New York fashion industry (NYFI). It explores the social and economic benefits of creative multigenerational teams where as many as five generations may co-exist in the workplace. The study highlights the advantages and challenges of sponsorship, mentoring, and reverse mentoring in the fashion industry. The results of interviews with both older and younger generational cohorts suggest that an intentional integration of the skills of older and younger coworkers is needed to meet productivity and creativity goals. Such a work environment enhances collaboration and well-being, offers a solution to the challenges of preserving and fostering productivity, and facilitates the effective exchange and transfer of creative thought processes and practical skills.

Introduction

Many older creative NYFI workers have reinvented themselves to stay relevant while they watched their jobs getting outsourced, have been forced to retire, or have voluntarily left the workforce. These changes have resulted in a talent and skills deficit, particularly in the high-value areas of the NYFI creative workforce (McInnis & Medvedev, 2021a). In the industry's highly collaborative environment, younger, less experienced workers require training that comes from face-to-face interactions and mentoring by more experienced and (often) older colleagues.

While the challenges are widely acknowledged, it is less clear how the industry will build a future that fosters creativity and diversity. In this qualitative study, we challenge generational (mis)perceptions to identify strategies promoting collaboration

across generations. What are the factors that facilitate or hinder successful integration of an age-diverse creative workforce? This chapter ends with a proposal for reframing the needed changes to benefit all members of the creative workforce.

Background

"In fashion you have to be ready for change. It's about change." Linda*, age 75

The end of the 20th century brought about a significant labor shift in the fashion industrial complex accompanied by a decline of the U.S. textile and apparel industry. For the NYFI, the economic downturn caused by the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center not only marked a new era in U.S. history but also an end to the way textiles and clothing had been produced in the United States for over 200 years. Many fashion companies were forced to obtain services outside of NYFI or overseas, resulting in job losses (Economic Impact, 2001). With the manufacturing segment of the industry already in decline due to cheaper labor overseas the NYFI suffered a 15.7% decline in jobs. Other factors contributing to the NYFI decline included low consumer confidence, increased imports, and unaffordable commercial real estate in the Garment District (Crean, 2003). Societal trends such as new materialism, fast-fashion consumerism, the dominance of internet technology, and a global digital reality also accelerated the shrinking of the industry. Despite these shifts, Maloney (2019) reports that New York City remains a global fashion center and employs 4.6% of the city's private sector workforce which supports competitive garment production. Crean (2003) highlights the advantages of domestic sourcing compared to off-shore production. For example, in the NYFI, higher-priced and medium-to-small manufacturers benefit from the flexibility of utilizing local operations for their collections. Advantages include shorter lead times, smaller minimums, better

quality control, market testing, sampling, and re-orders. Because of these factors, the NYFI relies on in-person, high-value creative labor.

Respect, Reframe, and the Renaissance of Old-school Skills

With the exception of a few high-profile female fashion designers like Vivienne Westwood, b.1941, Betsy Johnson, b.1942, Norma Kamali, b.1945, and Diane von Furstenberg, b.1946, older people are generally not associated with fashion. The fashion industry is not particularly interested in satisfying the needs of older customers. As a result, for example, older women consumers feel they are not represented in fashion advertising, and do not benefit from inclusive sizing and apparel selections (Twigg, 2013). However, in the context of the intersection of creative labor and age, age is relevant because many older creative fashion professionals still actively work in the industry.

Lured by higher profits and lower labor costs, U.S. fashion and textile companies have systematically eliminated specialized positions that were most often filled by older creative professionals. As industrialization continues in developing regions in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa (Kruse et al., 2021), it is unlikely there will be a complete reshoring of the U.S. textiles and fashion industry to its pre-21st-century level. However, consumers are increasingly interested in authenticity and responsible fashion practices. These interests have led to a return to old-school skills in a contemporary, new-school 21st-century environment. This is shown by the re-birth of U.S.-made denim, for example, as long-shut-down, domestic manufacturing facilities and distribution centers are repurposed for production in the 21st century (Twardzik, 2020). Running these domestic operations requires the talent of older creatives who know the necessary processes and

have the skills to complete the task at hand. This embraces the "re" in renaissance, the renewal and respect for still relevant techniques and processes that have been sold off, dismantled, outsourced, and forgotten. Hillman and Pozzo (1983, p. 119) explain:

> Respect means to look again, to re-gard what happened yesterday and re-spect it. Respect culture and experience. We look again at what was forgotten or repressed, and whatever we look at again we gain a new respect for—whether in ourselves or culture. Just the looking again, the respect, renews it. The up-dating process is constantly wiping out history; nothing in our culture is more hated, more repressed than the old. There is a desperate fear of the senex [old (wo)man]. But the senex is also the wise (wo)man. We still are all positivists; we believe you move forward by turning against the past, whereas in the Renaissance we move forward by looking backward.

Many cultures respect their elders' wisdom and experience to guide younger people (Stoller, 2021). By contrast, in contemporary Western cultures, older professionals rarely continue to receive the same respect and regard for their work-related talents and creativity as they had at a younger age (Brodmerkel & Barker, 2019). This is despite findings that there is a great potential for creativity in later life (Hubback, 1996).

By the year 2030, workers will need social, emotional, adaptability, and resilience skills besides cognitive, digital, and technical skills (McKinsey & Company, n.d.). Non-hierarchal mentoring, close and respectful interaction among coworkers, quality feedback, and real-world experience assist in the development of many of these skills. With the increasingly diverse younger workforce, we argue that to be successful, businesses and managers will benefit by building a more inclusive workplace that

emphasizes various types and forms of mentoring and supports the diverse needs of their employees. It has been proven that companies and workers who embrace diversity in the workplace and skillset are bound to succeed (McKinsey & Company, 2021). Therefore, we ask, if specialized industry talent and skills continue to disappear in the United States, who will replace older creative practitioners, and who will train younger ones?

Optimizing an Intergenerational Workforce in the 21st-century Workplace

In the 21st-century workplace multigenerational teams working side-by-side are common because workers are delaying retirement. Reasons for the delay are broadly articulated and include financial needs or passion for their work. Women especially are delaying retirement (Toossi & Morisi, 2017). Invisible to the public and the average consumer, many behind-the-scenes older practitioners, 50 to 75 years old and older, who have worked numerous industry-related jobs for 25 years and more, are now working together with younger cohorts. Managing an age-diverse work environment may be challenging due to the broad age range of workers. The age disparity is particularly challenging for older workers in the inherently youth-focused fashion industry (Twigg, 2013).

Currently, millennials are the largest percentage of adults in the U.S. workforce (35%). Other generations represented in the workforce are Generation X (33%), baby boomers (25%), and the silent generation (2%). Generation Z is a future source of U.S. workers whose impact is not yet known. For perspective, in the 1990s, baby boomers made up 50% of the workforce with Generation X at 29%, and silent generation at 21% (Fry, 2020). The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that from 2019 to 2029 millennials ages 35 to 44 years old will increase by up to 4.5 million, the largest gain in

the U.S workforce for a single age group. The first wave of millennials in that decade, ages 45 to 54, are also projected to increase. By 2029, working baby boomers ages 65 and older will increase up to 4.5 million and shift to the oldest group in the workforce, at about 16.5 million. By contrast, age groups 16 to 24, 25 to 34, and 55 to 64 are projected to decrease in in the labor force (Torpey, 2020).

Each generation brings different career and life experiences, work ethics, and cultural and value differences to the workplace. Factors such as age, historical context, work, consumption, and purchasing behavior are associated with numerous differences in workplace values. Perhaps the biggest change in workplace skills came with the advent of electronics - home computers, cellphones, and social media (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). The latest technology is most familiar to successively younger cohorts. Additionally, millennials and Generation Z are not only digital natives with little or no memory of a pre-smartphone world, but they are also more educated and ethnically- and racially diverse (38% and 48%) than their older colleagues (Parker & Igielnik, 2020).

Age and Diversity. With older workers increasing in the workplace, age is a growing diversity concern, especially for women. Older workers are dismissed based on misperceptions about age and ability (Lipnic, 2019). Despite the prevalence of ageist attitudes, age-related concerns are mostly left out of the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) initiatives (Ahn & Costigan, 2019). All ages, races, abilities, and cultures bring specialized skills to the workplace. Our research revealed that managers, in general, will need to be more attuned to their employees' needs. Employee training and mentoring programs can help businesses understand the diverse abilities, values, and work ethics of their coworkers. Personalized options involving all employees in decision-making can

decrease tension between different age cohorts and result in higher job satisfaction, more promotions, and less absenteeism and turnover at work (Dwyer & Azevedo, 2016). Intergenerational mentoring programs encourage knowledge exchange between age groups; they solidify older workers' loyalty to their jobs and engage younger workers' commitment (Satterly et al., 2018). This requires collaboration and ongoing interaction, best learned through real-world experience and constructive feedback from others. To ensure a more inclusive work environment, a diverse team can create opportunities to support all employees' development and companies will need to consider how DE&I values are implemented (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016). Companies that employ a purposeful alignment of core values and embrace skills differences are expected to fare better in the future (McKinsey & Company, n.d.).

Collaboration, Experience and Age. Fashion operates in a highly collaborative environment. The essence of collaboration and knowledge is layered and complex. Creating a line or collection requires a talented and flexible team. This requires a synthesis of information that is built on layers of collective experience, a culmination of ideas and insights that might have a starting point with a single person but become shared with the entire group and vice versa. The process continues until it is materialized into a finished product. A successful collaborative industry workplace depends on a balance of and cooperation between all ages, experiences, and cultures to promote productive work habits.

What experienced creative fashion practitioners singularly or collaboratively do best is formulate multiple ideas, concepts, events, etc., with the goal to bring finished products to market. They are also highly competent in finding the means, materials,

facilities, and human capital to source and materialize a product within a specific timeframe and for a targeted consumer audience. Experienced workers rely on decades of hard and soft skills acquired to complete the task at hand. Crawford (2009) adds, "The things we know best are the ones we contend with in some realm of regular practice" (p. 163), and that “practical know-how is always tied to the experience of a particular person. It can't be downloaded; it can only be lived” (p. 162). In the case of the fashion industry, knowledge gained over time is impossible to convey to a less-experienced worker who has never been responsible for an entire launch; they can only learn it from others. Highly specialized older creative professionals have mastered all the traditional industry processes and techniques (McInnis & Medvedev, 2021a). The application of these skills and practical know-how to workplace problem-solving challenges the cohesiveness of a multigenerational team because younger workers are unfamiliar with these strategies. While younger workers depend on knowledge transfer (often from older colleagues) for their future success, their lack of familiarity with professional practices can sometimes make the skills of older workers appear irrelevant. There is also a sense that the product created by these strategies is less attuned to the zeitgeist of younger coworkers. Older workers bring their own set of preconceived notions that influence team cohesion. For example, younger colleagues are viewed as lacking communication and soft skills valued by older coworkers (McInnis & Medvedev, 2021a). The differential in perspectives creates a work environment fraught with complexities, compounded with repercussions of questionable age (mis)perceptions.

Age and Ability. Creative industry professionals must maintain high levels of cognition and physical ability, which may be affected by age. People who work behind

the scenes in the fast-paced, high-energy fashion industry endure long hours, constant traveling, and movement in the studio. They juggle multiple tight deadlines, physically research the market and are expected to make quick decisions (McInnis & Medvedev, 2021b). Older workers rely on their extensive work and life experience which provides them with the skills and knowledge to be productive and stay safe in complex work environments. Haight & Miles (2005) report that higher injury rates and lower productivity tend to fall to the 25 to 54 age group. While their research found that older employees may have difficulty performing and prioritizing multiple tasks, their findings also suggest that companies and their managers would benefit from (re)hiring and maintaining older experienced workers.

Today's fast fashion no longer demands the level of detail once required. Additionally, fashion is a visual medium driven by youth culture. Now companies seek younger employees with lower salaries and hiring prioritizes employee attitude at the expense of experience (Sennett, 2008). Because of this situation that is compounded with the effects of globalization and cheaper overseas labor, specialized workers in the industry are in danger of disappearing. Jobs that require in-person collaboration, explicit communication, and hands-on precision processes, like product development, design, sample garment fittings, alterations, etc. cannot efficiently be done overseas. These practices tap into tacit knowledge specific to the assignment (Sennett, 2008). U.S.-based companies cannot solely rely on time-and-travel-intensive overseas sampling and production for their needs; they have to balance their lead times with the availability of experienced domestic workers to facilitate critical steps in the design process. This necessitates the need to maintain age diversity and keep old skills alive.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The title of this study uses the term(s), "old school–new school", to denote a symbiotic relationship. It is meant to suggest high regard for and acknowledgment of the value of age, experience, and merit and does not have the connotation of "old fashioned" or, "out of date". Our goal was to highlight the value of reliable past (old-school) practices for the survival of the industry to complement contemporary (new-school) methods, practices, and attitudes. Our conceptual framework was informed by Carl Jung's (1971) puer-senex archetypal dyad, Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) rhizomatic thinking, and some 21st-century core feminist principles (Cohen & Jackson, 2016). We also utilized the theoretical frameworks of generational theory to make sense of differing generational attributes. Mannheim's (1952) generational theory was useful to identify and define generational values, ethics, and beliefs in the workplace. Generational theory also provided insights on human behaviors and patterns over time, supporting the need to retain older professionals, facilitate the shift of leadership roles, and attract younger workers to the profession (Pendergast, 2009). Contemporary 21st-century feminist principles such as inclusivity and intersectionality (Cohen & Jackson, 2016) also informed our study and helped bring our conceptual framework into the present. Additional principles of third-wave feminism, such as pluralistic and nonjudgmental attitudes regarding social differences were also useful for our analysis (Snyder-Hall, 2010).

Puer-Senex Archetype

We argue that sponsorship is one of the preconditions of meaningful and committed collaborations. This involves ongoing advocacy for younger coworkers and

championing their professional advancement. Applying the generational characteristics of fashion practitioners through the lens of Carl Jung's (1971) puer–senex [younger–older] archetypal dyad, we highlight the advantages of sponsorship in the fashion industry. Senex means experienced. It is the Latin word for an old person, with English derivatives such as senate, senile, and senility, but with the caveat that it is not viewed in the negative light we tend to view old age in the United States. Puer, the Latin word for child, with English words such as puerile, is also defined as foolish or silly. As explained by Jungian consultant, W. Falcon (personal communication, February 4, 2021), puer refers to the younger, driven, experimental type, while senex refers to the older, measured, skilled type. Falcon suggested this regarding their relationship to the fashion industry,

> Puer is the identity of fashion. Puer is full of great ideas; fashion is driven by the archetype of the puer. They are successful in the industry because of their youth and beauty and are focused on the zeitgeist. They may sometimes be out of touch with reality and in the clouds. So, they need to know the senex, the business, the foundation and manual operations, existing networks, and communication skills, which is where the senex's expertise lies. Senex brings it all to reality, brings it all back to Earth.

All archetypes are bipolar and have both positive and negative traits. The puer–senex dyad appears to be a social construct of unchanging opposites, but according to Merhtens (n.d.) and Jung, both must be active in our lives. The negative senex may be rigid and resistant to change; the positive puer can be optimistic, curious, with a fresh take on the world. Current age demographics in creative labor in the youth-focused fashion industry prioritize the youthful puer and marginalize the experienced senex. We need access to our

inner puer as much as our inner senex and by balancing the skills of both, the industry can foster well-being and growth.

The Rhizome

Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome metaphor and rhizomatic thinking help us move a step forward as it reflects the non-linear, non-hierarchal, and variational environment. Fundamentally, the rhizome concept is about connections that are not top-down. Such a non-hierarchal way of connecting represents the messy, sprawling web of language and activities that make up the creative process. The rhizome can be used as a conceptual model to demonstrate how information exchange, organization, and the creative process takes shape between intergenerational teams. Rhizomatic thinking highlights the principles of connectivity, heterogeneity, and multiplicity in the collaborative fashion scape.

The rhizome's nature is to form a network of underground (behind-the-scenes) roots and tubers to facilitate a needed irregular and unpredictable movement (Robinson & Maguire, 2010). Deleuze and Guattari describe the rhizome as "the antithesis of a root-tree structure…the structural model which has dominated western thought, the rhizome removes any idea of a natural hierarchy" (1987, p. 7). We argue that when puer and senex work together in a rhizomatic fashion, linearity and hierarchy disappear in creative work as both are allowed to bring ideas to the table. Additionally, rhizomatic thinking can be applied to mentoring and the creative process because it involves an entangled, non-linear, back-and-forth interaction that is essential for learning skills and knowledge transfer. This process benefits older workers whose inner need and socio-cultural expectation to mentor their younger cohort demonstrates their generativity—the desire to

guide the next generation (Erikson, 1963). Further, Donnison explains that the impact of 21st-century technology on millennials suggests that they "do not think in a linear fashion but rather think non-linear, loopy, in hyperlink hopscotch fashion" (2004, p. 23). Kim adds, rhizomatic thinking "shifts the traditional binary logic of dualism to multiplicity that is circular, multiple, and lateral" (2016, p.114). The rhizome metaphor can be applied to the fashion cycle as W. Falcon (personal communication, February 4, 2021) explains,

> Fashion is often re-fashion: it really shouldn't be old versus new as the new grows out of and is derived from the old. Same with civilizations and religions, each new one is built upon the rhizome and deeper layers of previous ones. So, in the end, there's no escaping the old since the present and what is new is derived from it one way or another.

Bringing It Together with Feminist Principles

Incorporating contemporary feminist principles like inclusivity and pluralism matter in the workplace. Acceptance of thoughts, styles, skills and multidirectional ideas encourages flexibility and freedom to work with a mutual respect for diversity in one's line of sight and creative execution. Companies benefit in an inclusive environment that shows concern for their employees' well-being, and respects each other's differences (De Smet, et al., 2021).

Our framework combines the old-school-new-school-puer-senex-dyad with rhizomatic thinking and feminist principles to demonstrate how learning and connections are entwined and interrelated in a non-linear fashion. The combination of these theories was utilized to point out the benefits and challenges of an intergenerational workplace and to help us home in on how (mis)perceptions can frame one's thinking across

chronological and biological ages in the workplace. Recognizing the need for a balance of the puer-senex and an age-inclusive environment, we investigate ways to re-view the fashion industry workplace.

Research Design and Methodology

As three collaborating researchers, we combined our decades of skills and experiences in the fashion industry, academia, and gerontology. The research grew out of the first author's personal experience as a creative professional for nearly four decades in the NYFI job market and all authors' experiences with ageism in their respective fields. The study is based on primary data collected from semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. One-on-one interviews with eight older creative fashion professionals, 57 to 77 years old, and six younger colleagues, 24 to 36 years old, were conducted to assess how each generation's contribution to the fashion industry can be optimized. Over 17 hours of interview data were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for themes. Our thematic narrative analysis searched for recurring meanings to help identify relevant historical, social, and personal information (Kim, 2016). We also conducted a content analysis of various trade, academic, and popular media sources to help build the study and interview protocol.

Recruitment Process and Participants

The research was inspired by a previous study that two of the authors conducted with older creative fashion professionals. In that study, several themes of age and generational (mis)perceptions in the workplace emerged in the data (McInnis & Medvedev, 2021a). We thought it would be insightful to conduct a follow-up study that explored the differences between older and younger creative professionals working

together in the NYFI. We focused on two diverse age cohorts, millennials, under 40 years old, and baby boomers together with members of the silent generation, over 56 years old. Participants were recruited from the first author's professional and personal industry networks – LinkedIn, social media, and through an eligibility-determined Google survey. All participants had key responsibilities in the behind-the-scenes high-value creative processes that included design, product development, merchandising, marketing, and color and trend forecasting. The millennial group had direct interaction with at least one creative professional over 56 years old, perceived or actual, and worked in the industry for at least two years. The older cohort had a minimum of 25 years of industry experience, worked in a multigenerational workplace, and had direct interaction with at least one creative professional under 40 years old, perceived or actual.

A total of 14 participants, 24 to 77 years old, agreed to participate in the study. We chose millennials for the younger cohort as they currently represent the largest percentage of all generations in the U.S. workforce (Fry, 2020). After participants were contacted and agreed to participate, interviews were scheduled and conducted in 2020-2021 in person in New York City; three interviews took place online via Zoom due to scheduling conflicts. Our participants were asked to provide narratives of their experiences, perceptions, and interactions with their colleagues in multigenerational workplaces. We probed them to define the benefits, challenges, and (possible) solutions they experienced. To keep the study focused on the puer-senex archetypal dyad and to maintain our participants' anonymity, we define the participants of each group without any gender or other identifiers. We refer to the younger, under-40 cohort as puer, younger, or millennial, and the older, over-56 cohort as senex, older, or by generation.

Foundation, Change, and a Re-evaluation of the Generation Gap

Our results suggest that to meet its productivity and creativity goals, the fashion industry would benefit from the purposeful integration of the skills of older and younger coworkers. The realignment of how we value each generation's contribution to the creative process will be a positive change for all. As one senex put it, "Younger people are trying to do something good, not just for them, but for the whole world." Ultimately, a diverse workplace that transcends age and rank, and encourages the democratic interplay of both puer (younger, driven, experimental) and senex (older, measured, skilled) characteristics would be ideal to improve the creative fashion industry workplace. Such dynamic disrupts the static nature of traditional organizational structures and leads to more effective collaborations and creative problem-solving. A senex participant highlighted the need to think differently by stating that "The world has shifted, and it needs different skills and different types of people. You're learning from them [young people] and they're learning from you."

In our narrative analysis, we looked for recurring themes that point to ways in which individuals can benefit from a multigenerational creative workplace. Our data brought to light four main themes that focused on age-and-work-related issues: generational workplace attitudes and expectations; re-thinking management practices, mentoring, collaboration, and recognition; re-thinking values, and DE&I; and the renaissance of experience.

Generational Workplace Attitudes and Expectations

Our findings revealed that while all ages have similar incentives to succeed, they have different attitudes and expectations regarding how to achieve success. A senex

participant stated, “The same thing that motivates me motivates a younger generation. The difference is on what they perceive as the reward for investments.” The biggest differences were identified in work ethic and sense of responsibility. Older participants often perceived their younger coworkers as less focused on the quality of work. They also felt that younger workers demonstrated limited accountability, citing a problem with understanding the implications, the cause-and-effect of things, or the why did this happen? Older participants added that younger workers also lacked the ability to discern how to prevent the reoccurrence of errors from happening again. We found that millennials perceive themselves as getting the job done with fewer complications and a lesser sense of urgency. They stated that “older workers tend to overcomplicate things, should be more direct, and less passive-aggressive in their communications.” They feel frustrated when their senex boss lectures them or sends them long text messages, often outside of work hours, directing them to a task that would be better communicated and more easily trackable in a step-by-step, organized email.

Both age groups agreed that clear communication was crucial. A senex participant argued that millennials think they know more than they do and say, “Okay, I think that’s good enough” when in fact, according to the senex participant, it is not. Another senex added,

> What’s absent in all younger people is a lack of adult, critical analysis. They absorb information in a rapid matter, but often do not question sources or the validity of statements and take things at face value without spending any time evaluating it.

Our senex participants emphasized that older workers are also more fiscally conservative and competitive, while younger workers tend to be more entrepreneurial and creative. One senex added that they see their younger cohort as very innovative and having “an internal compass that kind of moves them. They'll try things, they’ll fail, they’ll start over.” Additionally, older workers thought that their younger cohort seeks instant gratification. They argued that younger coworkers are more anxious than they were at their age and come across as very financial- and title-incentivized. While older generations are very focused on “pay your dues, prove to everybody that I’m worth all this money you can pay me”, the younger generation looks to their older bosses to “map out [their] next five years”, and asks, “When is my next promotion?” even when just starting with the company. At the same time, older workers are conscious of their technological shortcomings, especially since most younger workers have little or no memory of a pre-digital world. As one senex put it, “We're in their [puer-digital] world [now]. They're not in our [senex-analog] world.” In turn, a puer described how this affects their modus operandi:

> People in my generation are going to be a lot more open to making risky decisions and changes because of growing up with digital. A lot of different technologies, the internet, cell phones, all these things; we grew up with that becoming “a thing”.

Re-thinking Management Practices, Mentoring, Collaboration, and Recognition

Our participants at both ends of the age spectrum realized that they lacked certain skills and welcomed skills training from the other. Established practices in the industry such as mentoring and apprenticeships are often one-directional and hierarchical. Most of

the participants were not familiar with the term, reverse mentoring, but understood its significance in a collaborative environment that relies on knowledge transfer, able use of new technologies, and established practices. The younger participants were not aware that they often assumed reverse mentoring roles but agreed that the practice was a positive experience and increased their commitment.

Teamwork depends on cooperation and collaboration to get the job done. The senex may be seen as resistant to change, while the puer values and embraces change, bringing a fresh point of view to the workplace. Experienced workers provide industry knowledge, but we also found that that they should be more amenable to recognizing the value of what their younger coworkers contribute. While younger workers expressed a desire to be granted more opportunities to flex their creativity and ideas, older workers would like to see more respect for past practices that are still effective and vital to operations. One senex participant had this to say on this account:

> Those in their fifties to sixties have nothing to lose to mentor and train; they have already ridden themselves of ego; they don't see someone who is 30 years old as a threat to them.

In a reverse mentoring role, a puer may offer valuable insights as one senex noted, “I rely on the younger generations to supply the information [input or reaction to something] that might just go right over my head.” Acknowledging their younger cohort’s value, another senex stated:

> They definitely bring in energy and a desire to learn. They really respect what I have to offer in the experience perspective, and it's why they try to adopt it. They understand after a while that this industry requires a very particular and

> specific knowledge, which they know they don't have, and they know they need that.

All participants concurred that individual skills appear to be more relevant than team skills. One senex noted that employers need to properly assess employee strengths and talents, and, if necessary, move individuals to another more suitable department in the company. While older workers recall that they were more independent and responsible for themselves in the past, as a senex observed, "now every person has their own agency and autonomy," which must be valued. Empathy and emotional IQ have become crucial as a senex confirmed,

> You're not really managing your team anymore you're managing individuals. They expect you to be a little bit of a therapist too and take care of them. They have this demand on you; "you're my boss and you are responsible for me". By managing individuals, you manage the synergy of the people and their work; thereby you're managing your team.

Re-thinking Values and DE&I

Feeling invisible as an older designer in the youth-oriented fashion industry, a senex lamented, "Age is a good model to show how social inequities exist." Ironically, even though younger generations are known to be less judgmental and are more sensitive to words and actions that could marginalize others, ageism still appears to be an acceptable prejudice. Negative connotations with age in the fashion industry are prevalent. Most senex participants recalled the feeling they got from younger colleagues who think, "How can they possibly understand what's going on with a younger consumer today?" Words and actions matter; what was once funny or even acceptable, is no longer

so. Today, in a more empathic work environment, our senex participants found that the old ways of being tough with employees do not work anymore. One of them noted, “I find myself a little bit more sensitive to what I say. We are in a very litigious society; everything is about HR.” Based on interviews of our participants, the current trends in DE&I and sustainability can create an inclusive space for puer-senex collaborations. However, integrity and merit also count; as one puer stated about DE&I at the workplace, “Don’t be performative; don’t just check the box, especially when it comes to diversity, equity, and sustainability”.

The Renaissance of Experience

Both senex and puer participants concurred that senior professionals possess the necessary knowledge and experience to navigate operations and manage staff. One senex explained,

> A VP or director of design and product development has to have exceptional creative qualities and a vision of a product for the future. Experienced production professionals have a broad understanding of their market segment and are able to build on their existing relationships; they understand how the production process works and are aware of quality requirements of the products they are producing.

The desire for old-school processes in a new-school world is increasing as companies and brands strive to portray authenticity and transparency to set themselves apart from others. Senex participants brought up the renaissance they see happening, citing newfound respect by younger workers for their industry experience and knowledge. This requires knowledge, experience, face-to-face interaction, good communication, and the smooth

collaboration of the puer and senex. As a result of the "renaissance of experience", as one senex has called it, the puer is more receptive to learning from the senex, and vice versa, culminating in a more balanced and productive environment.

Conclusion

This study has challenged some of the social myths that frame workplace age perceptions. We have posited that multigenerational teams can play a crucial role in how companies evolve. We have argued that such multigenerational teams will increase employee satisfaction and loyalty, thereby impacting employees' (mis)perceptions of efficiency and work dynamics. Using the puer-senex dyad as an archetypal construct, the rhizome as metaphor for mentoring and the creative process, and feminist principles to highlight social differences, we examined strategies to foster a multigenerational workforce. Our participants' testimonies revealed both cohorts' support for each other. They agreed that creativity would suffer from the predominance of either generation. The research has concluded that individuals and businesses must embrace their inner puer-senex because a balance of both provides the best result.

Creating a collaborating workforce is the precondition for a responsible fashion future. An intergenerational work environment fosters deeper collaboration, offers a solution to the challenges of productivity, and facilitates the effective exchange and transfer of creative thought processes and practical skills. Our study shows that encouraging mutually respective collaborations between puer and senex, embracing rhizomatic thinking, and sincerely implementing DE&I initiatives and feminist principles could create a new model for the industry. A re-take to re-frame all age perceptions and a re-evaluation of past industry practices can serve as a motivation for social change where

all experiences and types of knowledge matter. Responsible fashion starts with the human element. To re-form the fashion industrial complex, we need an egalitarian, inclusive, and collaborative intergenerational workforce that is respectful of all differences and in which all skills are mobilized for the common good.

Limitations and Future Research

The study was based on a smaller sample of interviews with younger industry practitioners than older ones because of COVID restrictions and because the authors had easier access to older workers through their personal connections under these circumstances. We chose millennials as the younger cohort because they represent the largest percentage of workers. Further research is needed to gather more information about the perceptions of older workers by younger worker cohorts, including Generation X and Z, for a more balanced data set. Additionally, ageism is prevalent especially for working women. We believe that research that interrogates why age discrimination appears to be often overlooked in DE&I initiatives in the fashion industry and elsewhere has major potential as well.

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CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

This qualitative dissertation has explored the context of age across generations in the creative labor pool of fashion intermediaries who work in the Manhattan, New York City, New York (NY) textile and fashion industry. Conducting this research, I relied on my past work experiences as a creative fashion intermediary for nearly four decades while I lived and worked in NY. The idea to problematize age in the youth- and beauty-focused fashion industry stems from my experiences of becoming an older client-facing industry creative in my late 40s. As a White woman working in the feminized fashion and textile industry since my early 20s, I did not initially comprehend why I was "Othered" and made redundant. However, returning to school at age 58, I often felt the same negative energy towards me from some students and even some instructors/professors in the classroom where I was always the oldest. I felt both invisible and hyper-visible. I perceived that all people saw of me was my age. The situation became so uncomfortable that I almost gave up my academic career and seriously considered leaving the graduate program. But then, to fight back, I decided to channel my emotions into research and investigate if my feelings and experiences are common, particularly among older creative practitioners in the fashion industry. As the research progressed, I also studied younger workers' age mis/perceptions and conducted a close examination of the potential of generational collaboration in a multigenerational workplace.

This dissertation has focused on the sociocultural and socioeconomic aspects of the NY fashion and textiles industry. It examined the complexities of working and ageing in its youth-centric and visual culture. It also highlighted the merits of intergenerational collaboration in the workplace. Appendix F shows data from three qualitative research studies conducted from 2018- 2021, in which I interviewed 24 participants, ages 24 to 77. In the process, I recorded and transcribed over 40 hours of interview data. The studies explored appearance management strategies, consumption needs, and workplace practices of professional women and men over age 50 who hold client-facing creative positions in the industry. The research stream also extended to the examination of age, experience, exogenous (external/global events) and endogenous (internal/personal events) factors, and their effects on highly skilled long-term practitioners. I also engaged with narratives of both older (55–77) and younger (24–36) workers to explore various aspects of the multigenerational workplace to uncover social myths that can frame workplace age perceptions.

Study one examined dress, appearance, and sartorial choices of twelve creative professional women ages 50–75 who hold client-facing positions in the fashion industry. My adviser and I studied how age mis/perceptions affect creative women over 50 in the NY fashion industry and uncovered their strategies to remain relevant. We concluded that the dress of client-facing and visibly older women must be fashionable and functional and reflect the wearer's brand, creativity, and credibility. Although women over 50 cannot hide their age, our participants created sartorial solutions and career management strategies to remain relevant in the youth-focused industry. Regardless, all study participants had experienced varying levels of ageism and lookism. They reported being

overlooked and ignored and even told to shave off some years on their resumes. Some were “let go” for being too old or having a “too high” salary. While they were aware of their social and work-imposed “expiration dates,” their resilience, need and love for work, and confidence in their expertise kept them engaged and helped them pull through. It also became evident that their impact on the industry is lasting. In fact, their examples demonstrate that the financial benefits of retaining and hiring older experienced women should not be overlooked. All our participants emphasized that the industry needs to be more age-inclusive, move away from impossible Western beauty standards, and also pay more attention to the growing older consumer market’s clothing needs.

Study two explored age, experience, and creative labor through the narratives of a shrinking pool of six highly specialized creative professionals over age 55 who had worked in the industry for three+ decades. Participants introduced their craft, told stories of their expertise, and recounted their career histories. The main goal of this study was to determine if and how their careers were affected by exogenous and endogenous factors. Their accounts made it clear that historical shifts in the global supply chain and technological developments in pre- and post-digital product development, design, and manufacturing both adversely and favorably affected their livelihood. Events like 9/11 and pandemics mostly affected the careers of those whose work required extensive travel. While all participants experienced the emotional effect of 9/11 and various pandemics, we anticipated that these exogenous factors would have a more severe and lasting impact on their careers. But, no, they persevered. At the same time, they all agreed that these factors beyond their control have significantly contributed to the shrinking numbers of experienced practitioners in their age cohort. They emphasized the dire need for

companies to retain older experienced employees. As gatekeepers of industry-specific tacit knowledge, they know how to navigate the supply chain processes. Therefore, their valuable expertise must be passed down to the industry's present and future intermediaries.

The participants' desire to learn and exchange knowledge through mentoring uncovered the generative practices of these highly experienced workers. They convincingly argued that experience, which comes with age, matters, especially in the highly collaborative fashion industry. As dedicated workers paving the way for the next generations, they recognized the importance of a better work-life balance and the imperative to be a good fit for the company culture. They suggested that the ideal fashion industry employee should possess hard and soft skills alike, be increasingly attuned to diversity, and ready to overcome generational differences in the workplace.

Study three explored narratives of eight older creative fashion and textile professionals, ages 55–77, and six younger millennial workers, ages 24–36. It examined the dynamics of our participants' multigenerational workplace environments to uncover the social myths that frame workplace age perceptions. While varying generational expectations and mis/perceptions were reported from both sides, the participants' narratives confirmed that balancing all ages and experiences would sustain a healthy fashion industry workplace. Our participants were open to all-age mentoring and realized that an inclusive workplace is the precondition of a productive and collaborative environment. They emphasized that the process of collaboration and creativity is multilayered and complex. Overall, the results of the study suggested that the fashion

industry benefits when inclusivity, multiple voices, and diverse socioeconomic classes, races, ages, and gender equality work in tandem.

Despite global competition and events that have changed the world and the industry forever, the NY fashion and textile industry continues to thrive and still offers many high-value jobs. However, it also faces serious challenges because specialized skills continue to be lost due to the contraction of the labor force. Knowledge, age, and experience matter. We need the skills of a diverse group of experts, innovators, idea generators, and problem solvers which means we need *both* older *and* younger practitioners in the workplace.

This dissertation has also concluded that ageism is the last acceptable social prejudice. It is possibly due to the fact that most people will not directly experience the effects of ageism until later in life. Consequently, they may be insensitive to older people's needs, which differ from their own. Ageism is still prevalent in the youth and beauty-focused fashion industry and primarily affects working older women. Despite this, age discrimination continues to be overlooked in diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives and remains challenging to prove and fight effectively. Patterns of ageist behavior affect older workers both economically and socially. In an industry (and society) that considers those in their 40s as “too old,” more research is necessary to investigate why diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives pay less attention to ageism than other master identities and marginalized groups in creative industries like fashion and textiles.

Ageist practices in the fashion industry create a unique situation. The industry needs the skills and expertise of older creative practitioners but still often treats them

shabbily. Why are their needs ignored even though they have so much to offer? While the industry is experiencing a renaissance of experience, they keep throwing the baby out with the bathwater. The inherent nature of fashion, the forever-young puer, connotes a youth-centric focus. However, most processes and skills are best learned from collaboration with the older and skilled senex.

Fashion is about change. As new people come and go, ideas flow, and fashion changes. Adapting to new technologies and keeping up with the industry's fast pace depends on the resilience and expertise of its skilled workers. However, the industry often wastes its creative talent by opting for beauty and youth over age and experience. As a result, specialized skills are disappearing. The need to reframe the industry's age mis/perceptions of older workers who hold specific expertise and assuring to retain their creative practices through knowledge transfer undoubtedly will become a pressing issue for the fashion industry. The future of a thriving fashion industry relies on the expertise of the older, skilled [senex] creative workers and the younger [puer] generation's technology savviness, awareness of the zeitgeist, and cultural knowledge, combined.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview protocol for Chapter Two, Study One: "Sartorial Appearance Management Strategies of Creative Professional Women over Age 50 in the Fashion Industry"

I. Demographic information

1. What is your age?
2. How would you identify your ethnicity and/ or race?
3. What is your profession?
    a. Tell me about your profession.
    b. How long have you been in your profession?
    c. Where is your job based primarily?
4. What is your yearly income from your profession?

II. Workplace sartorial choices (capsule wardrobe: a few essential mix/ match pcs?)

1. What does professional dress mean to you?
    a. Describe in detail your workplace style of dress. (Tailored, casual, etc.)
    b. What makes this appropriate for work?
    c. What exactly differentiates professional/ workplace dress from other types of dress?
    d. Give examples.
2. How do you prepare for work?
    a. What do you consider when you make your sartorial choices for the workplace?

3. What do you consider basics for work dress? Explain in detail.
    a. Do you subscribe to a capsule wardrobe with a few essential mix and match pieces?
    b. For travel/ office what do you keep on hand?
    c. How has this changed for you since turning 50?
4. What brands/ styles do you like for workplace dress?
    a. Why?
    b. Why do you think people prefer particular brands for the workplace?
5. Do you try to blend in, stand out or look different in the workplace?
    a. Explain.
6. What makes an outfit you put together for work memorable or effective for you?
    a. Why do you wear certain items?
7. Say you get a call from a potential client/ account you have been trying to get. They call you, say, we are on board, but we have to meet today, in 20 minutes. They are 15 minutes away, and you're not dressed for work. What would you grab to put yourself together?

III. Age and personal appearance management in the workplace

1. What is most important for you about your appearance?
    a. Do you think people judge you by your appearance in the workplace?
2. Was there ever a time you felt uncomfortable or out of place in your profession/ in the workplace?
    a. If yes, how did that make you feel?

b. If yes, do you feel this is an issue or not?

c. Explain.

3. What is more important for you: comfort or style?

a. Explain.

4. What choices do you make for your hair, jewelry, make-up/fragrance, clothing, and shoes and how has this changed with body changes and turning 50?

a. Do accessories/ makeup provide focus away from the body for you?

b. Are these necessary for you to look more "presentable" in your perception?

c. Why? What are the reasons for these changes? Give examples.

5. What type of garments (cut, color, fit, pattern, etc.) best suit the professional look in your opinion for your age group and industry?

6. Do you want to come across as ageless, sexy, hip, etc.?

7. Do you see commonalities in dress styles, appearances, etc. amongst your peers?

a. Do you see uniformity, commonality in cut, color, style, and patterns?

b. Describe.

8. Where do you shop?

a. What brands fit into your style of dress?

9. Do you exercise?

a. What are your dietary habits?

b. Do you want to come across as somebody in shape?

c. Have you had plastic surgery/ Botox?

IV. Being a creative professional woman in the fashion and interior design industries

1. Does being a creative person in your industry make a difference in the way you dress?

    a. Is it expected to show creativity in your way of dress to your peers in the profession?

    b. Explain.

    c. Has this changed since becoming a consultant?

    d. Is that different from day-to-day corporate dress?

    e. Explain.

2. Why does youthfulness matter in the fashion/ interiors industry or does it?

    a. Do you want to look younger than your age amongst your professional peers?

    b. Can older women be fashion influencers in the industry?

    c. Explain.

4. Do you think younger creative associates in the industry get ahead because of their dress and/ or age?

    a. What role does the youth-centric/ visual culture of the industry play?

5. Are style/ dress/ expectations different in other industries and corporations?

    a. For creative professionals in fashion and interior design?

    b. Are women/ men treated the same?

    c. Are POC treated the same?

    d. Does salary matter?

V. Female Beauty

1. What does beauty mean to you?
    a. What is your definition of beauty?
    b. Is it external or internal or both?
    c. Has your definition changed for you in the last 5-10 years?
    d. Explain.
2. Are beauty and age concepts that go together?
3. Can you name some people who you think are beautiful?
    a. Why?
    b. Explain in detail: age, profession, appearance, etc.
    c. If they do not bring up older people, just ask why not?
4. Which social media style leaders, popular culture media, events, magazines, etc. do you follow or pay attention to?
    a. What do you get from these sources?
    b. Why do you follow them?

VI. Closing thoughts:

1. Would you say that dress for you is more of a harmonious background to your work rather than the focus of your appearance? (If applicable)
2. What should younger colleagues appreciate most about you?
3. What would be your sartorial advice for your younger colleagues?
4. Is there anything more you would like to add about this topic/study?

Appendix B

Interview protocol for Chapter Three, Study Two: "Age, Experience and Creative Labour: Narratives of Creative Professionals over age 55 in the New York Fashion Industry"

I. Demographic information

1. What is your profession? How long have you been in your profession? In NYC? How and where did you learn your trade/ expertise/ skillset?

2. What is your yearly income (range) from your profession?

3. What is your age (range)?

4. How would you identify your ethnicity and/ or race?

II. Workplace experiences

1. Tell me how and if any of these events/situations affected your work and employment in the industry during the 1980-2020 time period. Go into as much detail as possible:

a. Economic recessions and recoveries between 1980 and 2008.

b. pre- and post-digital/ social media, between 1980 and 2020.

c. Political elections: National, State, and Local.

d. AIDS crisis and epidemic

e. 9/11

f. Global changes in the industry: offshoring/ reshoring, tariffs

g. Gentrification and environmental changes in the NYC garment center

h. Cultural experiences and events

i. Social experiences

j. SARS/ Swine Flu/ Coronavirus

2. How did any/ all of these events affect your employment?

3. How did any/ all of these events affect you emotionally, socially, financially?

4. Are there specific memories you would like to share from this time period?

5. What is unique about your area(s) of expertise? Explain.

6. Who will replace you when you stop working?

7. What will be your replacement's skill set and previous background, education, and training?

8. Is it important in your area of expertise to have older experienced workers? Why or why not?

9. How would you say the fashion industry in NYC has evolved/ changed over the past 40, 30, 20 years? Explain.

10. What have you enjoyed most about your career? What have you enjoyed the least?

III. Being an older creative professional in the textile, apparel, and fashion industry.

1. Does being a creative person make a difference in the way you dress and perform at work? Is it expected to show creativity in your way of dress to your peers in the profession? Explain.

2. Why does youthfulness matter in the fashion industry? Do you want to look younger than your age? Can older professionals be fashion influencers in the industry? Explain.

3. Do you think younger creative associates in the industry get ahead because of their dress and/ or age? What role does the youth-centric/ visual culture of the industry play?

4. How do the rules change for men/ women? Are women/ men treated the same? Are POC treated the same? Does salary matter?

5. Was there ever a time you felt uncomfortable or out of place in your profession? Tell me about it.

6. In the last 10-25 or more years, what have you done differently in terms of staying relevant, seen, and heard in your profession?

IV. Closing thoughts

1. What should younger colleagues appreciate most about you?

2. What would be your advice for your younger colleagues?

3. Is there anything you would like to add about this topic/ study? Tell me what you would like to say about this study.

Appendix C

Interview protocol (over 50 years old) for Chapter Four, Study Three: "Balancing Old school–New School Experience to Foster a Productive Intergenerational Workforce in the Fashion Industry."

I. Demographic information: update with participant's current information

1. What is your profession? How long have you been in your profession? In NYC?

2. What is your yearly income (range) from your profession? Ex. $100,000 to $120,000, etc.

3. What is your age (range)? What year were you born?

4. How would you identify your ethnicity and/ or race?

II. Being an older creative professional in the textile, apparel, and fashion industry.

1. It is possible now that you could be working with multiple generations of people in their early 20's to over 70 and more. When you hear the word *generation*, what do you think of? What does "old/ older" or "young/younger" mean to you when you think of your colleagues at work?

2. What are your workplace perceptions of and experiences with professionalism, creativity and talent, contributions, capabilities, and physical appearances (weight, skin color, age, dress, gender), of younger (millennial) professional women and men who work in creative positions in the fashion industry? In what ways do you measure or judge these qualities of your younger colleagues? Is it different with your colleagues who are older or in your age cohort? Explain.

3. In the last 10-25 or more years, what have you done in terms of staying relevant, seen, and heard in your profession?

4. How would you describe the way(s) you feel you are perceived by your younger colleagues at work? Explain any positive, negative, and neutral observations and situations you have experienced; ex. mentor/mentee, competition, collaborator, etc.

III. Multigenerational, collaborative, and inclusive workplace

1. Is it important in your area of expertise to have older experienced workers? Why or why not?

2. What are your biggest concerns about the fashion industry workplace regarding knowledge transfer and career growth?

3. What are your thoughts on mentoring and reverse mentoring and the exchange of creative ideas, knowledge, and skills across all ages in the workplace? In what ways have your experiences reframed your views on working with younger creative women and men in the fashion industry workplace?

4. What would an ideal young colleague bring to the table? What would the ideal work environment and creative process look like? For example, how would you share responsibilities, what would the decision-making process look like, etc.?

Can you provide examples of when something was successful?

Can you provide examples of when there was a problem?

How do you feel in terms of equity and recognition? Competition?

Do you experience jealousy/ competition between older/younger?

How could it work better in terms of competition, etc.?

5. How does a collaborative, multigenerational team in the workplace impact your work environment in the fashion industry? In what ways do mixed ages promote a productive and positive work environment? What are the challenges?

6. What are your thoughts on workplace hierarchy, diversity, and inclusion? How can the industry build a future that is better for the environment and business, increase creativity and productivity, and generate a more diverse and inclusive workforce?

IV. Closing thoughts

1. What have you enjoyed most about your career? What have you enjoyed the least?

2. Who will replace you when you stop working? What will be your replacement's skill set and previous background, education, and training?

3. What should your younger colleagues appreciate most about you? How would they describe their workplace experiences with you?

4. What would be your advice for your younger colleagues regarding workplace practices and the industry?

5. Is there anything you would like to add?

Appendix D

Interview protocol (ML under 40 years old) for Chapter Four, Study Three: "Balancing Old school–New School Experience to Foster a Productive Intergenerational Workforce in the Fashion Industry."

1. It is possible now that you could be working with multiple generations and with people over 50-60-70-75 and more. When you hear the word *generation*, what do you think of? What does this word mean to you? What does "old" or "older" mean to you when you think of your colleagues at work?

2. How does a collaborative, multigenerational team in the workplace impact your work environment in the fashion industry? In what ways do mixed ages promote a productive and positive work environment? What are the challenges? What are examples of when they hinder productivity?

3. What are your workplace perceptions of and experiences with professionalism, creativity and talent, contributions, capabilities, and physical appearances (weight, skin color, age, dress), of older professional women and men over age 50 who work in creative positions in the fashion industry? In what ways do you measure or judge these qualities of your older colleagues?

Is it different with your colleagues who are in your age cohort?

a. Professionalism
b. Creativity and talent
c. Contributions and capabilities

d. Physical appearance: body, including weight, skin color, scent or smell; age; clothing and accessories; body modifications and adornment, including hair and skin.

4. How does your perception differ for women and women, people of color, ethnically, and culturally, within different age groups of older creative professionals over age 50? Explain.

5. What are your thoughts on mentoring and reverse mentoring and the exchange of creative ideas, knowledge, and skills across all ages in the workplace? In what ways have your experiences reframed your views on working with creative women and men over age 50 in the fashion industry workplace?

a. What is an ideal mentorship?

b. What works, what doesn't? Give examples.

c. What can be improved by relying on the relationship with older people?

6. How would you define the way(s) you feel you are perceived by your older colleagues at work?

a. Explain any positive, negative, and neutral observations and situations you have experienced. For example, protégé, mentor/mentee, competition/jealousy, collaborator, etc.

b. Can you provide examples of when something was successful?

c. Can you provide examples of when there was a problem?

d. What prevents older people from performing- be truthful- give me an example of when it worked, when it didn't.

7. What are your thoughts on workplace hierarchy, diversity, inclusion, and recognition? How can the industry build a future that is better for the environment and business, increase creativity and productivity, and generate a more diverse and inclusive workforce?

8. What are your biggest concerns about the fashion industry workplace regarding knowledge transfer and career growth?

9. What advice would you give to your older creative colleagues regarding workplace practices and the industry?

10. Is there anything you would like to add about this topic/ study?

Appendix E

Google recruitment survey[8] used for Study Three: "Balancing Old school–New School Experience to Foster a Productive Intergenerational Workforce in the Fashion Industry."

"Millennials Working in the Fashion Industry"

Please read this description and eligibility criteria. If you qualify and are interested in participating, complete the form below.

I am recruiting millennial participants for a focus group research study called, "Examining Millennial Perceptions in a Multigenerational Fashion Industry Creative Workplace."

I am looking for eight millennial participants for two one-hour focus group studies. I will be conducting two one-hour focus group sessions, with four participants in each one-hour group.

The purpose of the study is to examine ways in which millennial employees perceive and value older creative professional female employees, over age 50 (perceived or actual), as co-workers in the creative processes of the fashion industry supply chain.

The focus group session will last one hour and take place online via Zoom between November 5th- November 14th, date and time will be determined with the best efforts to accommodate all schedules.

The Zoom session will be video and audio recorded. You have the option to block your camera on the Zoom session. You may also choose to use a pseudonym and change your identity for the Zoom session (instructions to follow).

[8] Posted on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn with a graphic and link to a Google survey form.

The eligibility criteria are:

• You must be born between 1981-1996

• You must be employed in the fashion industry for a minimum of two years, and currently in a position associated with the fashion, textile, and apparel supply chain.

• Your employment responsibilities include, but are not limited to, design, product development, marketing and sales, public relations, media, trend and color forecasting, and administrative and operational functions.

• You must have direct interaction and responsibilities with at least one creative professional woman who is perceived to be or is actually over age 50 (born 1970 and earlier), and who is either employed (part-time or full time) with the company, or who consults with the company, and whose responsibilities are crucial to the product development and design process of the employer/ product/ brand, in areas such as, design, product development, merchandising, and trend and color forecasting.

If you meet the criteria and are interested in participating in a one-hour focus group, please complete this online form (takes less than 2 minutes).

If selected, you will be emailed a consent form, confirmation of time and date, and a Zoom link with a password. The email will come from anne.mcinnis25@uga.edu.

Your responses may help us understand the impact of multigenerational teams in the workplace and the significance of mentoring, reciprocity, reverse mentoring, and knowledge and skills transfer to preserve and maintain creative processes and productivity in the fashion industry.

There is a $5 Amazon gift card incentive for those selected who complete the focus group study at the assigned time and date.

Note: this study has been approved by the University of Georgia IRB (Institutional Review Board).

Feel free to share this link. Thank you!

Survey Questions:

Q1. First Name, last name optional. If you wish to use a pseudonym, please indicate and list the name you want to use below.

Q2. Best email and contact info: indicate your preferred method of contact:

- Phone/ Text/ Email

Q3. How old are you?

Q4. What year were you born?

Q5. How would you identify your gender?

Q6. How would you identify your race and ethnicity?

Q7. What is your job title?

Q8. What year did you start working in the fashion/ apparel/ textile industry?

Q9. How long have you been in your present job/ position?

Q10. What is the location of your place of employment and company? City, state, country

Q11. Which area(s) best represent(s) your job responsibilities? Check all that apply.

- Design and product development, Technical design, Merchandising
- Marketing, public relations, sales, social media
- Administrative, organizational, operational
- (Other): Recruiting, Buyer

Q12. Which sector of the fashion industry represents the company where you work? Check all that apply.

- Designs, licenses, and/or manufactures textiles/ fibers/ yarns/ materials for apparel and accessories
- Designs, licenses, and/or manufactures apparel and accessories: men's, women's, children's
- Color and trend forecasting
- Public relations/ social media/ popular media for fashion industry
- Other: Recruiting firm for fashion clients; manufacturer/ buyer

Q13. Do you have direct interaction and responsibilities with at least one creative professional woman who is perceived to be or is actually over age 50 (born 1970 and earlier), and who is either employed (part-time or full time) with the company or who consults with the company, and whose responsibilities are crucial to the product development and design process of your employer/ product/ brand?

- Yes or no?

Q14. Highest education achieved?

Q15. What is your yearly salary range?

- $0- $49,999 a year
- $50,000- $99,999 a year
- $100,000- $149,999 a year
- $150,000- $199,999 a year
- $200,000 a year or more
- Prefer not to answer

Q16. Check all days/ times you are available. You will only attend one group and the focus group session will last one hour. All times are Eastern Standard Time.

- Dates from 11/5/20- 11/14/ 20 with times between 3 PM- 6PM and 6PM-9 PM, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays plus an option to state none of these days works and other, day/time to fill in if needed.

Appendix F

Participant data from three studies 2018-2021

Participants w-woman m-man	Age in *2018 / **2020/ ***2021 Generation/ Birthyear	Ethnicity/ race: Self-identified	Years: started in industry *2018/ **2020/ ***2021	Profession/ expertise	Study 1: 2018 Study 2: 2020 Study 3: 2021
P1-w	57*/ BB/ b. 1961	White	25+: @1998*	Senior VP Merchandising	Study 1
P2-w	56*/ GX/ b. 1963	West African + Eastern/Western Europe	28: 1990*	Pattern maker, dress designer	Study 1, 3**
P3-w	65**/ BB/ b. 1955	Caucasian	41: 1977*	Denim consultant/ denim therapist	Study 1, 2, 3**
P4-w	51*/ GX/ b. 1967	Caucasian	15: 2003*	Technical designer handbags	Study 1
P5-w	50*/ GX/ b. 1968	Italian American	25: 1993*	Trimmings designer, design blogger	Study 1
P6-w	68*/ BB/ b. 1950	White	38: 1980*	Dress and accessories designer	Study 1
P7-w	69*/ BB/ b. 1949	White	33: 1985*	Jewelry and accessories designer	Study 1
P8-w	58***/ BB/ b. 1963	Italian American	35: 1983*	Denim consultant	Study 1, 3
P9-w	77***/ SG/ b. 1944	Italian American	40: 1978*	Color and trend forecasting	Study 1, 3
P10-w	75*/ SG/ b. 1943	Russian American Jew	50: 1968*	Women's couture fashion designer, perfume	Study 1
P11-w	52*/ GX/ b. 1966	African American	28: 1990*	Fashion design consultant	Study 1
P12-w	56*/ BB/ b.1962	Hispanic	30+: @1988*	Senior director menswear	Study 1
P13-m	60**/ BB/ b. 1959	Irish	35: 1985**	Couture (creative) pattern maker	Study 2, 3**
P14-m	62***/ BB/ b. 1958	European/ Caucasian	36: 1984**	CMO- menswear/ womenswear	Study 2, 3
P15-w	74**/ SG/ b. 1945	Boring 100% English. Quaker heritage landed in PA in 1600's	39: 1981**	On set tailor, an artist who can sew	Study 2, 3**
P16-w	60**/ BB/ b. 1959	White	39: 1981**	PD and design	Study 2, 3**
P17-w	59***/ BB/ b. 1962	White	32: 1989***	Design & CAD studio manager	Study 3
P18-m	57***/ BB/ b. 1964	White	25: 1996***	Design development	Study 3
P19-w	24***/ ML/ b. 1996	White	2: 2019***	PD assistant	Study 3
P20-w	31***/ ML/ b. 1990	Black	9: 2012***	Sr. technical designer	Study 3
P21-w	36***/ ML/ b. 1985	European/Egyptian Jew descent	14: 2014***	Owner/designer of Arielle de Pinto Jewelry	Study 3
P22-w	33**/ ML/ b. 1987	Hispanic and White	11: 2009**	Strategic account executive	Study 3***
P23-w	26**/ ML/ b. 1994	White	3: 2017**	Talent acquisition executive	Study 3***
P24-w	29**/ ML/ b. 1991	Mixed	6: 2014**	Market editor publishing	Study 3***
Total: 24	**Average age: 53.5 Average 50+: 61.4 Average -40: 29.3**	**NA**	**Average years: 25 Average 50+: 30.8 Average -40: 7.5**	**NA**	**NA**

Some interviewees participated in more than one study.

3** Interview data collected from study two was also used for study three

3*** Interview data collected in 2020

Salary ranges from under $50k to up to $250k a year

Birth years span 53 years: 1943–1996

Silent generation (SG): b. 1928–1945

Baby boomer (BB): b. 1946–1964

Generation X (GX): b. 1965–1980

Millennial (ML): b. 1981-1996