

Academic Apparel:

Examining Gender Inequality and Dress at a Large Canadian University

Clare Annett

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Abstract

Keywords: Gender Inequality, Dress, Clothing, Resistance, Academia

Women working in the current Canadian academic system face challenges which their male colleagues do not; one such challenge lies in dressing for work in the university setting. This paper examines the role dress plays in the workplace experiences of female professors at a large Canadian academic research institution. Through on-line and face-to-face focus groups as well as one-on-one interviews with 16 female professors, this study examines how these women decide what to wear to work. Using Goffman's (1959) symbolic interactionist approach to self-presentation, in combination with Simmel (1957) and Blumer's (1969) work on fashion, the various meanings attributed to women's dress are explored. Women's self-presentation in professional settings is significant, as theorized by Ridgeway's (1991; 1993; 2011) theories of gender inequality in the workplace. Finally Scott's (1990) theories of everyday resistance explore the potential for female professors to resist the dominant power structure through their choice of dress and self-presentation at work. The preliminary findings indicate that for those individuals for whom power and authority are not as accessible, dress and self-presentation can be avenues through which these individuals can access this authority and at times some may push back against the unequal power structures which exist in the current Canadian academic system.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Growing up, clothing was pretty low on my priority list. I could probably have been considered a tomboy, I wore the same grey sweatpants and blue polar fleece every Wednesday for probably my entire grade seven school year. I remember taking great comfort in my clothing during that time, it was a shield I could use to hide from strangers' questions about my athletic "masculine" figure and classmates' "manly" and "hulk" taunts, but even then I knew *clothing wasn't important*. By the time high school came around, I had my nose buried in a *Teen Vogue* magazine every chance I got—it was fun, a creative outlet, and something I enjoyed immensely. However, I avoided talking about my interest in fashion because I couldn't be both smart *and* love clothes—I knew *fashion was frivolous*.

Since those times, I have thought about clothing a lot. I have had to explain why my "large" shoulders don't "look right" in halter tops. I still struggle to decide what to wear so people will take me seriously and so people don't get "the wrong idea" from me. But I'm supposed to know *clothing is not important*. When I tell people I am studying the role of dress and fashion in women's daily lives, some are genuinely excited, some people though, have scoffed, and promptly suggested that I focus on something more relevant or *significant*. Thinking back to myself in seventh grade, struggling with my non-feminine body, my clothing was significant. The hours I spent cutting up pictures of inspiring outfits, the confidence I feel when I love what I'm wearing, are significant. The struggle to dress in a way which garners respect, not the unwanted invitation out on a date, is significant. I began asking myself why I couldn't be both smart and fashionable? Why did wearing a skirt or a tight shirt mean my abilities could be questioned, or I

could be subjected to unwanted attention and advances? If clothing is so directly linked to my daily experiences, then why is fashion not worthy of academic study? I think it is significant.

Western society and workplaces are organized through power relations among people and different characteristics such as gender, race, age, class, (dis)ability and sexuality inform these power relations (Ridgeway 1991; 1993; 2011). Through this research I explore the notion that people for whom power and authority are more easily accessible, have the privilege of worrying less about their dress and self-presentation, than people for whom power is more difficult to access. Dress is laced with power, as such people with less power may be able to use dress to access more authority. For women, people of colour, and other members of minority groups, dress is directly linked to their daily experiences. This research explores why female professors in Canada make the clothing choices they do when dressing for work. Taking a symbolic interactionist approach to clothing and personal appearance, the research question guiding this study is: how do female professors perceive their self-presentation and dress in the workplace? As well as the sub-question: What does “resistance” look like when it is not achieved through overt social movements? To answer these research questions, I carried out face-to-face and on-line focus groups, as well as one-on-one interviews with female university professors to find out what expectations female professors perceive are placed on their dress and self-presentation, how they understand they are being perceived by others and how this influences their academic careers.

Women working in academia face challenges which male professors generally do not. Research indicates that female academics remain disproportionately absent in the higher levels of the university structure, women are more likely to be on short-term or part-time contracts, and are paid less than men (Anderson and Williams 2001; Evans 1995; Geisler, Kaminski, and

Berkley 2007; Probert 2005; CAUT 2011; 2012-2013). Evidence also suggests that women experience sexism working in the university setting, and this marginalization is emphasized by other differences, including age, sexual orientation, ethnicity and disability (Anderson and Williams 2001; Evans 1995; Patton 2004; Collins 1986; de la Luz Reyes and Halcón 1988; Wall 2008). Female academics are often criticized for embodying their womanliness—their own personal understanding and expression of being a woman—and also often meet challenges most acutely when trying to balance motherhood with academia (Kaiser et al 2001; Barata et al. 2005; Coate 1999; Rothblum 1988; Allison 2007; Wall 2008; CAUT 2011; Foa 2012; Resick 2012). Because of women's embodiment, they become more visible as women in the academic setting. This can be difficult for female professors, as the ideal academic is typically male, and women must subsequently navigate academia as a physically obvious other. Despite these challenges with dress, some argue that clothing can be an act of resistance and empowerment for women, therefore opening up possibilities of interpretation for women's choices of academic attire (Green 2001:99).

Since women experience inequality in academia and because dress is a way for women to present themselves as women, fashion is a useful lens through which we can examine gender inequality in the academic workplace. As symbolic interactionism theorizes, people learn to behave and interact with one another based on culturally significant symbols (Berg 2009, 11) and clothing is a central component to these everyday social interactions. Goffman's (1959) symbolic interactionist approach to self-presentation indicates that people present themselves through the use of symbols (such as clothing) in a way which conveys information and can generate stereotyped expectations (1). Both Simmel (1957) and Blumer (1969) theorize the importance of cloth-

ing in the development of social relations and women's daily lives (1957, 551;1969, 275). Both theorists insist that the decision of dress is a calculated one, and Blumer further indicates that this decision has not been given enough sociological attention (1969, 275).

Through dress, women can present themselves in the way they feel conveys the messages they wish to project to others. According to Ridgeway's explanations of Expectation States and Status Characteristics, certain traits are of higher value in society than others (1991, 368; 1993, 176). When looking at gender as a characteristic, the state of woman is generally assigned a lower status than the state of man, and as such, there are different expectations surrounding women and men's contributions or value in the workplace (Ridgeway 1993, 177). By dressing in ways which are typically associated with femininity, through feminine symbols such as bright colours, frilly dresses, or clothing which calls attention to the female body, women can be attributed these stereotyped expectations, which can have problematic results for women in professional settings. However, when considering Scott's (1990) theory of Everyday Resistance, it becomes apparent that dress can also be used as a way to resist these dominant gendered power structures in the workplace.

As Ridgeway explains, women are often not associated with authority or power, as such they must find ways to succeed and survive in this dominant structure (Ridgeway 1993, 185). For women, dress can be a way to practice this "everyday resistance": a covert form of protest or resistance, which exists within the overarching dominant structure, but is a subtle push back to this oppression (Scott 1990, 112). For women in academia, there are challenges in presenting oneself as both feminine and authoritative—clothing is inextricably linked to the female body, and thus women's experiences of working in any professional setting. By using fashion as a lens

of analysis, this research will provide an empirical and theoretical contribution to our understanding of gender inequality in the workplace and in academia.

In Chapter 2, the literature review, I will outline the context of the current Western academic system, focusing on Canadian studies as well as drawing from some studies on universities in other Western countries. Narrowing the topic further, I focus on women's experiences working in academia. A second body of literature will be examined pertaining to women's relationships to their clothes, with a final brief section bridging these two bodies, to examine female professor's experiences of dressing for working in academia. My study will contribute to a gap in this literature, as I take a theoretical approach to exploring women's access to power and authority through clothing, and the role dress may play in women's everyday resistance. The theoretical approach is outlined in Chapter 3 and will draw from Goffman's (1959) symbolic interactionist theory of the presentation of self, Simmel (1957) and Blumer's (1969) works on fashion, Ridgeway's (1991, 1993, 2011) use of status characteristics and expectation states theories as they pertain to women's experiences in the workplace, and finally Scott's (1990) theories of everyday resistance. To gain an in-depth understanding of women's experiences working in the academic workplace, the methods of on-line and face-to-face focus groups as well as one-on-one interviews will be applied as outlined in Chapter 4. The data collected through these qualitative methods will be described and presented thematically in Chapter 5, and following their descriptions, the analysis, drawing from the theoretical framework mentioned above, will be discussed in Chapter 6. Finally, Chapter 7 will outline the study's conclusions, potential improvements and remaining research gaps.

Blumer (1969) claims that by restricting fashion to “adornment and costume purposes”, sociology fails to recognize the power and strength of fashion (275). In dismissing fashion as frivolous, unimportant and insignificant, the extra work people with less power must undergo in order to access authority, is also dismissed. If some people have to worry about their dress more than others as a result of their social characteristics and positioning, yet putting effort into dress is considered frivolous, the struggle for power becomes even more complicated. Culturally understood beliefs pertaining to women’s capabilities contribute to their lower status value (Ridgeway 1991); women presenting themselves as women then, can inhibit their success in the academic workplace. As dress is a way for women to present themselves as women, fashion is a useful lens through which we can examine gender inequality in the academic workplace.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The university system in Canada predates confederation (1867) and over time Canadian academia has expanded with the addition of faculties, diversification of professors' identities, growing student enrolment and increased government involvement (Harris 1976, 7). Originally, academia was a highly male dominated field, but the institution has progressed to a more equal gender distribution in both student and professor populations (Harris 1976). Despite the improvements towards gender equality, women professors often experience structural inequalities which men tend not to face (Geisler, Kaminski, and Berkley 2007; Probert 2005). One's biological sex is not easily hidden, and specific social norms and expectations related to both sexes inform the social constructions of gender. The expectations of women's abilities and roles can contribute to the inequality women face working in academia; women and femininity are typically attributed to hold such traits as frivolity and nurturing as opposed to men who are more readily assumed to be intelligent and powerful (Benschop and Brouns 2003; Laube, Massoni, Sprague and Ferber 2007).

When women present themselves as feminine, they may be assumed to possess traits or be associated with roles which are undesirable in academia, thus inhibiting their credibility or career advancement. Femininity can be expressed through mannerisms but also through clothing; by dressing herself as more or less feminine than is expected of a woman, a female professor may at times face negative consequences in the workplace. Women's dress carries meaning and is inextricably linked to the everyday experiences of female professors. Instances and patterns of gender inequality in the academic institution can be analyzed through women's clothing choices. By putting clothes on, women are actively making choices which will impact the way they are

perceived by others. I argue therefore, that fashion is important and warrants serious sociological attention.

Because the bodies of literature pertaining to the experiences of female professors in the current academic institution and the roles of women's dress exist independently of one another, there remains a gap in the literature which pertains to the relationship of academic women to their clothes, and the role dress plays in female professors' academic careers. While there is overlap among the existing scholarship regarding women's experiences of working in academia and women's dress, very little research has bridged these various perspectives to analyse how fashion and self-presentation relate to and highlight gender inequality in academia. Gender is a socially constructed system which can create a hierarchy among people in society, and dress is directly linked to people's self-presentation and thus expression of gender. Dress is an active choice which individuals make every day, and these decisions impact the ways in which individuals are perceived by others in society. As such, dress carries meaning in society, and this meaning directly impacts individuals' relationships, perceived capabilities and social positioning. Fashion being an often overlooked yet integral part of daily life, is an important lens through which we can understand and analyze women's diverse experiences of working in current Canadian academic institutions.

Current Canadian Academic System

In the current Canadian context, a strong post-secondary education system is linked to prosperity and economic growth in the country (Beach, Boadway and McInnis 2005, 2). As the Canadian economy shifts away from traditional manufacturing and industry jobs, the need for higher education in order to "get ahead" and secure more lucrative career opportunities in this

new economy, is resulting in a steady increase in the rates of enrolment in Canadian academic institutions (Beach, Boadway and McInnis 2005, 2). Canadian universities work to produce new theoretical and empirical knowledge through research projects, conferences and academic publications, as well as prepare students for participation in the labour market.

The history of universities in Canada pre-dates confederation in 1867, with the first bachelor's degree being awarded in 1845 (Harris 1976, 7). In 1890, Arts and Sciences was the dominant faculty among Canadian universities but by this time some schools were beginning to offer law, theology, medicine and less commonly, engineering programs (Harris 1976, 119). By 1940, the four-year Bachelor of Arts program had progressed to include a major in one or two subjects during the final two years (Harris 1976, 377).

During the 1940s, across disciplines in Canadian institutions, the students enrolled were typically men. Grace Lockhart was the first woman to receive a university degree from an academic institution in the British Empire, receiving her bachelor's from Mount Allison University in 1875 (Harris 1976, 11). Women's enrolment in academic institutions, while increasing from 1875, remained markedly lower than men's participation in the academy throughout the 20th century (Harris 1976, 456). The Second World War had a significant effect on enrolment in Canadian universities, but major decreases to institutional enrolment were avoided. The potential decrease in enrolment due to young men enlisting in the war efforts was offset by an increase in specifically female enrolment (Harris 1976, 456). This trend was especially true after 1942 when the number of women in higher education was one for every four men (Harris 1976, 456). Following the Second World War, government funding to both undergraduate as well as graduate

studies increased, and, as a result, research and scholarly work improved drastically throughout the latter half of the 20th century (Harris 1976, 575).

In contrast to the years following the Second World War, Beach et al. (2005) note that financial support to Canadian universities in the 21st century has been decreasing (4). As government funding to higher education decreases, the structure and job opportunities in the institution are disappearing as well; as opposed to filling the full-time positions of out-going professors, institutions reduce their costs by avoiding hiring new full-time professors (Beach et al. 2005, 5). The authors also highlight that the provincial and federal funding decreases have resulted in increasing tuition costs, thereby decreasing accessibility of the university system to students and increasing debt-loads. (Beach et al 2005, 3). Finally, the retention and completion of Canadian doctoral candidates is an issue, as many of these candidates choose to complete these degrees elsewhere such as the United States, where funding, job opportunities and resources are more plentiful, or candidates choose to leave academia in favour of more lucrative careers outside of the university setting (Beach et. al 2005, 6). These conditions are leading to overall shifts within Canadian academic institutions.

The Canadian university, while itself is an enduring organizational system, has recently begun to see some changes to its academic staff members as well as the kinds of positions these staff members hold in the institution. As a result of these shifts, full-time, secure and/or tenured positions are more difficult to achieve, but Canadian academic career trajectories are often considered successful once tenure status has been awarded (Ornstein, Stewart and Drakich 2007, 2). Tenure-track positions are full-time positions beginning with the entry-level assistant professor; this appointment is often a finite term leading to mandatory consideration for tenure within 5-6

years (Acker, Webber and Smyth 2012, 744). Similarly, associate professors are tenured or tenure-track (with mandatory consideration for tenure within approximately 5 years) mid-level positions. The appointment to full professor is most often a tenured position and part of the senior academic staff. The tenure-review process often stretches over a full academic year and involves the submission of a dossier, as well as an extensive peer-review process (Acker et. al 2012, 745; Ornstein, Stewart and Drakich 2007, 2). Tenured positions are full-time appointments and tenure status ensures that a professor's position will not be terminated without just cause, thus it is an important step for academic staff towards job security and permanent, full-time employment (Acker et. al 2012, 745). As previously mentioned, these full-time, tenured positions are dwindling, creating a somewhat difficult landscape for professors and graduating doctoral students.

For many Canadian professors, finding employment in full-time and permanent positions is becoming more difficult. According to the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), full-time professors in Ontario as a group are aging; in 2013 about 51 percent of Ontario's male and 36 percent of female full-time professors were over 50 years old, with approximately 33 percent of both male and female full-time professors between 40 and 49 years old (CAUT 2014-2015, 8). Also in Ontario, the proportion of professors reporting permanent full-time employment dropped from 76 percent in 2002 to 67 percent in 2013 (6). The shift away from permanent towards temporary and part-time appointments means jobs are more precarious and provide fewer benefits to professors than in previous years. The overall trend according to CAUT reports and the academic literature indicates that women are disproportionately represented in these part-time and non-tenure track positions, being predominately absent in the upper ranks of the university professor roster (Ornstein, Stewart and Drakich 2007, 2; 6; Geisler, Kaminski

and Berkley 2007, 154; 155; CAUT 2008, 1-2; CAUT 2014-2015, 14). The tenure process is an important aspect of academic career trajectories, which women tend to experience differently than their male counterparts.

Women's Experiences in Academia

Gender equality in academia has been improving throughout the 20th century, however there remain persistent gender gaps in rank, tenure and salary. In 1969-70, women were awarded only 22% of all masters and 10% of doctoral degrees granted in Canada, and only 1 in 10 university professors at that time were women (Robbins, Luxton, Eichler and Descarriers 2008, 24). While women made up 37% of full-time undergrads by 1970, they remained restricted to “female appropriate” fields, such as Arts, Humanities and the “softer” Social Sciences (Robbins et al 2008, 24). Using Statistics Canada data, Robbins et al. 2008 found that through the latter half of the 20th century, while female student enrolment was increasing, there was a severe lack of female role models in the professorial positions in Canadian institutions. Beginning in 1965, there were approximately 40 female students to 1 female professor at Canadian institutions, whereas this ratio was 11 to 1 for male students and professors (Robbins 2008, 27). By 1993, this ratio had lessened to 33 female students to one female professor, but also eight male students to one male professor (Robbins et al. 2008, 27). Women have been and continue to be underrepresented in Canadian academic institutions, and women face specific struggles in academia which their male counterparts often do not.

Women continue to encounter a glass ceiling with regards to full professor promotion and status, with men occupying the highest ranks most often (Geisler, Kaminski, and Berkley 2007,

145; Probert 2005, 52). In their analysis conducted of female professors' advancement at an American university, Geisler, Kaminski and Berkley (2007) concluded that women professors were overall less likely to be promoted to full professor than their male counterparts. Women's promotion in general tended to take longer than men's in their departments, thus leading to a lower representation of women in academia (2007, 154; 155). Another study examining promotions in academia highlights research indicating that disciplines, institutions and thus their promotion process, are not gender neutral— noting specifically that women overall tend to lag behind men in their academic careers (Ornstein, Stewart and Drakich 2007, 2; 6). The authors emphasize the lack of scholarship on Canadian institutions — however in their study, Ornstein, Stewart and Drakich found parallel trends in American, British and Australian research on gender inequality in academia (2007, 6).

In the Canadian context, specifically looking at the province of Ontario a report from the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) indicates that in 2004, female professors held 40.9 per cent and 35.2 per cent of the entry level assistant and mid-level associate professor positions respectively (2008, 3). Women professors in 2013 made up 41.5 percent of temporary and part-time positions in Ontario universities, and only 38.5 of permanent full-time positions (CAUT 2014-2015, 14). Ornstein, Stewart and Drakich (2007) found that when examining gender differences in relation to time before promotion, overall, women and men seem to achieve first promotion (to associate professor) around the same time, (men still have a slight half-year advantage in this context) — however, moving beyond the associate level, women begin to lag behind their male peers, by sometimes as many as 3 years, for promotion to the higher rank of full professor (Ornstein, Stewart and Drakich 2007, 16). According to the CAUT (2008;

2012-2013), the proportion of women occupying the highest rank of full professor was 19 per cent in 2005 and 22.8 per cent in 2011 (2008, 3; 2012-2013, 6). By 2011, female academics held 32.9 per cent of tenured positions, and 43.3 per cent of women professors were in tenure track positions (CAUT 2012-2013, 6). Because tenure allows for greater academic security and freedom in both teaching and research, as the professor may be dismissed only for “just cause,” that women in Canada are disproportionately absent in these tenured positions is quite significant (CAUT 2008).

In combination with being underrepresented in the upper levels of Canadian academic institutions, female professors continue to be paid less than their male peers. Further research by CAUT (2011) indicates that a gap in salary between male and female professors remains, especially among tenured and senior academic staff. When both age and rank were taken into consideration, the gap in pay between male and female professors was roughly five per cent, which accounts for a yearly deficit of 8,000 dollars for women (CAUT 2011, 7; CAUT 2012-2013, 6). On average, from 2002 to 2013, full-time female professors’ salaries grew from just under \$77,000 to almost \$90,000, however, these female professors’ salaries represent only a percentage of male professors’ salaries; more specifically, 86.1 percent in 2002 and 87.8 percent in 2013 (CAUT 2014-2015, 10).

Although women are becoming more present in academia and the salary gap is shrinking, female professors in many Western academic institutions remain concentrated in the social sciences and humanities, whereas men dominate the “hard” sciences and engineering (Wall 2008, 220; Geisler et. al 2007, 147; Benschop and Brouns 2003, 195;). In the CAUT Education Review (2010) it was found that in 2006 women made up 49.9% of education faculty members and

just over 40% of both humanities and fine arts. In the same year, female professors represented just 12% of engineering and applied sciences faculty members and only 15.2% of mathematics and physical sciences. As a result, women are assumed to produce certain kinds of knowledge; since the hard sciences tend to be associated with the “ideal academic” (i.e. the white, heterosexual male) and the assumption that men possess higher levels of reason than women prevails (Wall 2008, 220). As such, men implicitly come to be of higher value and warrant more respect in academia than their female colleagues.

As the “ideal” academic is often assumed to be male, the specific characteristics associated with this ideal (such as logic, rigour and assertiveness) are often stereotypically male as well. A Dutch study by Benschop and Brouns (2003) points to the fact that the Dutch selection and hiring process rests heavily on gendered structures, as there is often an ideal candidate in mind, who is male, and thus every applicant is measured against this conceived ideal (201). Women academics, despite their qualifications, struggle to meet this expectation of the ideal during the hiring process and also in the classroom with their students (Benschop and Brouns 2003, 201; Laube, Massoni, Sprague and Ferber 2007, 92).

In the Western academic institution, teaching evaluations from university students are becoming increasingly important for academic careers (Laube, Massoni, Sprague and Ferber 2007, 88). In their American study, Laube et. al (2007) found that the extent to which the professor fulfills traditional gender roles associated with their sex has the greatest influence on their evaluations. Women professors tended to be less likely to fit these roles, as mentioned above, and are thus evaluated more harshly than their male peers (88). Other trends highlighted included that women tended to be perceived as harsher markers, and were often labelled instructors as

opposed to professors, as well as the notion that women were much less likely to be described as professional than their male colleagues (Laube et. al 2007, 92).

Women are often assumed to fulfill certain roles or possess specific traits, which may hinder their credibility, professionalism and respect in the workplace. Several American studies found that female academics are often sexually objectified in the institution, thus women are very conscious to avoid presenting themselves in ways which may be viewed as sexual or provocative, so as to avoid this loss of credibility and respect (Kaiser et al 2001, 117; Barata et al. 2005, 240; Coate 1999, 147). Female bodies and sexuality are both biologically and socially different from men's. Beyond being biologically different from men, women are often assumed to possess female-specific behavioural traits. Barata, Hunjan and Leggat's (2005) study carrying out focus groups of female Canadian psychology graduate students found that women believed that typically masculine traits like competitiveness and assertiveness were emphasized within the academy, while typically feminine traits such as intuitiveness and emotion were not (240).

Women are assumed to possess specific traits which may impede their ability to perform their academic role; often leading to women experiencing insecurities at work in academia.

Fear of failure and insecurities are a reality for both male and female academics, however, research indicates that women experience these feelings more than men (Rothblum 1988; Coate 1999). Rothblum (1988) introduces the term coined by Pauline Clance, the "imposter phenomenon" to describe the feelings of "intellectual faking" (16). The lack of a clear role for the "ideal academic woman" may contribute to women's insecurities and feelings of intellectual faking (Coate 1999, 147). Women often feel or perceive themselves to be less successful than men when applying for promotions, despite research in Australia highlighting that women are actually

more successful in promotion panels than men (Probert 2005, 56-7). Probert's (2005) study found that women tend to value teaching more than research in comparison to their male counterparts. Recent changes to the promotion process in Australia have eliminated much of the biases in promotions which used to favour research as opposed to teaching in justifying promotions (Probert 2005, 57). As male professors are typically concentrated in the hard sciences (often research based) and women in the soft sciences and arts, this is a significant change in the Australian promotion process for women seeking tenured positions (Probert 2005, 58).

Acker and Armenti's (2004) Canadian study pointed to evaluations and tenure as a significant source of stress for female professors. Much of the tenure promotion system involves merit reviews and performance evaluations based on the professor's fulfillment of their academic role; travelling and networking, long hours, research and publications (Acker and Armenti 2004, 12). When examining one such role — teaching hours— Kjeldal, Rinfleish and Sheridan's (2005) study recounts the stories of three junior faculty members in the business departments at their respective Australian universities. The study drew on existing literature to explain that no statistical inequality exists when examining the differences between male and female professors' workloads in the institution (Kjeldal et. al 2005, 435). While there may exist no specific quantitative difference among professors' workloads, the authors found in their qualitative analysis that there is a difference; female professors tended to be more heavily allocated in teaching positions which require much more contact with students outside of the actual classroom (Kjeldal et. al 2005, 435). This difference is not accounted for in the workload hours, thus these hours do not give a clear picture of the inequalities which may exist among male and female professors' workloads (Kjeldal 2005, 437).

This inequality can take a physical and emotional toll on female professors and as a result, could affect their careers. Acker, Webber and Smyth's (2012) article examines the tenure review process in the Canadian context, looking specifically at Ontario universities. They highlight the difference of Canadian institutions from American ones, as being more often unionized and mostly public, as well as less heterogeneous, thus tenure review data and studies from the United States do not represent an accurate picture of the Canadian context (Acker et. al 2012, 744). Drawing on Acker's past research, this study highlights the physical and emotional toll untenured academic positions take on university professors' lives; anxiety and stress, overwork and fatigue, were descriptors used by many female professors when describing their experiences of untenured work in academia (Acker et. al 2012, 745).

Health issues related to stress and burnout are prevalent among female academics and by admitting to these mental and physical health concerns, tenure appointments could be jeopardized (Acker and Armenti 2004, 14; Resick 2012, 708). In speaking about their mental and physical health, participants highlighted the stress and fatigue they felt as a result of their academic demands; not feeling good enough, or threats to self-esteem, needing to excel, and proving their worthiness of their academic positions (Acker and Armenti 2004, 16). The primary coping strategy for these insecurities was simply to "work harder" (Acker and Armenti 2004, 16). Other coping strategies included a specific self-presentation; placing emphasis on the importance of appearing relaxed and on top of the job, participants felt a certain pressure to "prove they were one of them [real academics]" (Acker and Armenti 2004, 13). The authors also describe instances of resistance against the insecurities these women felt — female academics tended to find other women in the institution to be good supports; women sharing career advice, providing

moral support, boosting each others' self-confidence, working together to build an identity of women in academia and helping one another through these evaluation processes (Acker and Armenti 2004, 18). These processes of evaluation and tenure review are highly gendered, but are not recognized as such; as women are more often responsible for domestic duties as well as academic ones mentioned above, they must spread their time over a wider range of responsibilities in both academic and non-academic spheres (Acker and Armenti 2004, 19).

The expectation that women will fulfill both the role of the ideal academic and their traditional domestic role leads to extra constraints on female academics' time. Research indicates that for women, balancing the academic and domestic roles can and act as a barrier to advancing their academic careers and at times, the sacrifice of one for the other may be required (Rothblum 1988; Coate 1999; Allison 2007; Wall 2008; CAUT 2011; Foa 2012; Resick 2012). In her essay, Allison (2007) describes the tensions and difficulties she experiences working in the American academic setting. The author refers specifically to the academic workplace as a site more suited to men (or individuals free of domestic and family obligations); one where success comes with working many overtime hours, being able to travel without much trouble, and a willingness to move from university to university for jobs (Allison 2007, 24; Acker and Armenti 2004, 12; Resick 2012, 710).

While the responsibilities of motherhood can impede female academics from fitting the aforementioned mould, the relative "flexibility" of academic careers (more flexible hours, ability to work from home, child-friendly office spaces) can often allow women to be both; mother and academic (Allison 2007, 24). At first glance this seems to be an ideal situation, however, this flexibility can actually further disadvantage female academics as they are then expected to bal-

ance the many responsibilities of both motherhood and academia— this is a situation fewer male academics find themselves faced with, based on social and cultural norms around parenting and family/career responsibilities (Allison 2007, 25). According to Coate (1999), male academics rarely hide their personal or family lives when at work (such as leaving to pick up a child after school), contrary to female academics who saw separating their domestic role from their academic one as necessary for survival in the institution (145). Since women have become implicitly associated with the domestic sphere and motherhood (Okin 1998, 118), there is an assumption that women will want to and should fulfill traditional domestic roles. Finding a balance between workplace and domestic responsibilities can lead to a double bind for female academics, as women are equally criticized for forsaking either their domestic duties or their academic careers (Foa 2012, 716; Acker and Armenia 2004, 10-11; Resick 2012, 709; Probert 2005, 67).

Many women, when considering the time and work required for advancement in their academic careers opt out of motherhood entirely for fear of being unable to simultaneously allot sufficient time to both motherhood and academia (Allison 2007, 27; Acker and Armenia 2004, 10; Crabb and Ekberg 2014, 1106; Benschop and Brouns 2003, 200). Beyond the practical time balance, academic mothers must also deal with the psychological effects of pregnancy and motherhood on their daily lives. Not only do women's bodies change during pregnancy, but women become more visible, pregnancy then draws attention to women's femininity and gender and the dual responsibilities these women face (Allison 2007, 30). Pregnancy may alter the woman's perception of herself; lowering academic expectations and not reaching the higher academic ranks (Allison 2007, 30). The added visibility of pregnancy may change others' perceptions of the woman; as pregnancy/motherhood epitomizes stereotypical femininity, colleagues may as-

sume that the woman is less professional, less likely to put the time in to produce rigorous academic research, thus if the new mother does not put in considerable effort to appear hardworking, she may be judged much more harshly than before her pregnancy (Allison 2007, 30).

While men do not face dilemmas of domestic duties and parent/motherhood in the same ways that academic women do, racial inequality in academia applies to both men and women working in the university setting. The CAUT reported in the Education Review, January 2010, that in looking at census data, professors belonging to visible minority groups earn less than their Caucasian counterparts. In 2005 the average income of university professors was \$76,996 however the average for visible minorities was \$69,390, representing an almost 10 percent gap. Further, unemployment is also more prominent in this group of university professors (CAUT January 2010, 5). In 2006 an overwhelming 83% of university teachers were (according to the census) not part of visible minority groups, leaving only 16.9% of university professors in Canada belonging to visible minority groups (CAUT January 2010, 4). Looking more specifically at these racial inequalities, Canadian Aboriginal peoples remain disproportionately absent from all the ranks of academic staff; in 2006 only 2.1% of all Canadian university teachers reported aboriginal lineage, which is less than half the 4.3% rate of the general labour force (CAUT January 2010, 4). Women professors belonging to visible minority groups were also found to experience the highest rate of unemployment in academia (CAUT 2014-2015, 5). The intersection of race and gender creates specific challenges in the current academic system, when looking specifically at gender; women working in academia tend to be overrepresented in the lower ranks of the employment spectrum, earn less than their male colleagues and are assumed to produce specific kinds of knowledge which tend to be undervalued in academia.

The unequal presence of professors belonging to racial and ethnic minority groups, however, is amplified when examining the number of female professors who belong to a racial or ethnic minority group. Issues of racism and sexism persist in the academy despite the slight increases in statistical presence of ethnic and racial minorities (Patton 2004, 190; Collins 1986, S14; de la Luz Reyes and Halcón 1988, 300; Wall 2008, 220). Du Bois (1993) argues that academia could likely be the most efficient institution to combat racism in the United States, however, academia remains in denial of the racist and exclusionary environment which manifests as a result of the conservative institutional system itself (Du Bois 1993, 90; Collins 1986, S26; de la Luz Reyes and Halcón 1988, 301). For students, universities are sites of both direct learning (in the classroom) and indirect learning (social norms and values); professors are role models and as professors belonging to visible minority groups are underrepresented in academia, students remain unexposed to non-white scholars, and potentially non-white/non-Western scholarship. In this sense students come to learn that academics are not people belonging to minority groups, thus further emphasizing the notion that people who are part of these groups are inferior, contributing to the racial stereotypes which inform much of academia's racist environments (Du Bois 1993, p. 90).

Women of colour experience discrimination based on stereotypic assumptions due to their race combined with their gender, and as a result, often do not feel respected in the academy (Wall 2008, 220; Collins 1986, S19; Messner 2004, 458). For example, sociology was a field originally dominated by white males, thus the thoughts and scholarship which emerged from the field reflected primarily the concerns of this group (Collins 1986, S26). While women have increased their representation in this field, there remains certain barriers to generating academic thought as

a woman. As Collins explains, anyone “other” to the dominant group (white males) must assimilate to participate in this scholarship, but still as an outsider-within; this being especially true of Black women (Collins 1986, S26). While this marginalization is often painful for those experiencing it, Collins notes that these women can often use this status to produce new ways of thinking about race, class and gender, which have been overlooked by more conventional academics (Collins 1986, S15). Collins asserts that Western sociology can benefit greatly from Black feminist thought (as well as other marginalized groups) as this marginality has resulted in more creative approaches to research which will undoubtedly “enrich contemporary sociological discourse” (Collins 1986, S15). Collins asserts that both white and non-white female academics are marginalized and often objectified in the academy through their treatment as “other” to the dominant academic group (i.e. white males), yet the presence of these women in the institution can challenge and threaten the dominant structure (Collins 1986 S17-8).

Within this dominant structure, female academics must find ways to resist these inequalities and cope with the consequences in their daily life. In their American study on inequality in academia, Monroe, Ozyurt, Wrigley and Alexander (2008) found that the women they interviewed were not very likely to engage in any overt forms of protest or political activism within the institution in order to bring about change to this inequality (p. 218). The participants highlighted that the discrimination they experienced in the university workplace was subtle and less visible, and the structure itself a complicated matrix of power relations (Monroe et. al 2008, 219). Some participants also felt that bringing forward cases of discrimination or harassment could jeopardize their careers, thus they refrained from doing so and opted to take a more “adaptive” as opposed to “confrontational” approach (Monroe et. al 2008, 219; 221). An example giv-

en for these covert and subtle forms of resistance was a woman to woman support and mentoring system in the institution (Monroe et. al 2008, 223). These support systems are important for women working in academia; women are not a homogenous group, experiences in the academic institution will differ among female professors, however, as research has indicated female professors tend to experience inequality in the academic institution.

In summary, women often experience obstacles when working in academic institutions; gender and race are characteristics contributing to these inequalities which women cannot easily change nor hide. Factors associated with femininity such as motherhood and domestic duties, as well as other traditional gender roles and traits can also impede women's advancement in academia. Likewise, these factors in combination with the academic environment that includes evaluations and tenure and promotion processes can generate a significant amount of stress and negative health consequences for female professors. While research suggests that these experiences of inequality exist in the institution, this inequality is difficult to resist, as female professors worry about the potential consequences for their careers if they speak out about these injustices. Finding subtle and more covert forms of resistance is an important coping strategy for female professors. Fashion and dress is a visual tool that women have at their disposal, which they can change and control in order to present themselves as they wish. Not all academic scholarship on women's dress agrees with this perspective. There is a debate regarding whether fashion is a tool for agency and resistance or is oppressive and disempowering. Fashion and dress are important factors in women's lives, and can reveal important realities and experiences of inequality in academic institutions, and patterns in the wider social structure.

Women and Their Clothes

In the Western cultural context, there are specific expectations of not only what male and female bodies are capable of, but also of how they should look (Calogero and Tylka 2010, 1; 2010, 602). Specifically, Calogero and Tylka (2010 & 2011) note that race, sexuality, body size and pregnancy were significant barriers to attaining this ideal female body. Craik (1993) argues that clothing is much more than material covering the body, claiming clothing plays a major role in dictating the body's relationship with the physical space it occupies and the body's actions (4). Clothing carries different meanings on different bodies, and fashion can take on many roles in women's lives.

Fashion is socially significant and important, and it pervades all aspects of social life (Aspers and Godart 2013, 172). Asters and Godart (2013) assert that academic research on fashion is lacking, a more clear definition of the term fashion needs to be established, and the subject requires more academic legitimacy, as opposed to being devalued (Aspers and Godart 2013, 172). The authors highlight that the body is central to fashion, and that clothes are used to classify bodies, but likewise, clothes can be used to indicate various aspects of a person's body (i.e. gender differences, etc.). Women and men can use fashion to present themselves in ways which are consistent or inconsistent with the expectations associated with their genders. Fashion is then a significant player in social norms, and through fashion and dress individuals can either adhere to or reject these gender norms (Aspers and Godart 2013, 184).

Feminist critiques of fashion and gender norms were integral components of the second wave feminist movement, and debates over fashion's role in women's (dis)empowerment persist today (Hillman 2013, 155-6; Smith 1993, 123; Guy and Banim 2000, 349; Waggoner and Hall-

stein 2001, 27; Groeneveld 2009, 180-2). Critiques of fashion emerged as a way to resist patriarchal depictions of ideal feminine beauty; by abandoning high heels and make up, women rejected patriarchal sexual oppression and were to be liberated from the male gaze (Hillman 2013, 160-1; Waggoner and Hallstein 2001, 27; Gibson 2000, 350; Mulvey 1973, 11). Third wave feminists recognized validity those second wave critiques of fashion, but also recognizes the potential positive aspects of fashion. Groeneveld's (2009) study examines the feminist magazine *BUST*'s 2006 fashion issue which presents six outfits meant to mirror the look of six "fashionable" feminists; Elizabeth Stanton, Gloria Steinem, Bella Abzug, Camille Paglia, Angela Davis and Kathleen Hanna. Groeneveld argues that the fashion issue combats the negative stereotypes around feminism (i.e. rejection of fashion, non-feminine, angry feminist etc.), and presents third wave feminist politics as "individual lifestyle choices" and a reclaiming of personal style (2009 179). The magazine itself portrays feminism as fashionable and desirable, which is contrary to the portrayal of feminists and feminism in most other media outlets (Groeneveld 2009, 179).

Many feminist scholars have not abandoned fashion, and argue that rejecting fashion will not eradicate women's sexual oppression. Gibson (2000) points out that many women dress for themselves and/or each other, and fashion is not primarily in service of the male gaze (350). By universalizing fashion as primarily sexual, this places all women as fashion victims as opposed to empowered agents (Gibson 2000, 350). Both Hillman (2013) and Guy and Banim's (2000) studies discuss women's discomfort in rejecting femininity and fashion; women speculated that making the choice to dress as they wish— as opposed to the rejection of feminine ideals and fashion— expresses their agency and liberation (Hillman 2013, 163; Guy and Banim 2000, 324).

In Hillman's (2013) study, women questioned whether they should be required to look a certain way to be truly "liberated" (163). This becomes especially important when women of colour discuss negotiating dress in predominantly white settings, where for these women, the white ideal is unattainable and undesirable (Franklin 2001, 139; Hillman 2013, 166; Owens Patton 2006, 27). Research indicates that Black women often find it difficult to dress in a way that conforms to this white ideal and thus struggle to feel beautiful and capable (Franklin 2001, 139; Owens Patton 2006, 30; Robinson 2011, 359). Adichie (2006) explains that in Western society there is a certain expectation of how to appear "authentically" African, including fabrics and clothing styles as well as hair (43). The author further explains that there are stereotypes not only around an African woman's appearance, but also her capabilities; African people in general, Adichie explains, are not assumed to possess higher education (2006, 43). In fulfilling the expectations of "authentic" African appearance, black women may be further associated with negative stereotypes about their intelligence. Similar to Adichie, Franklin (2001) notes that many Black women dress in a way which does not "draw attention" to their African heritage (140). They do this not because they are attempting to appear white, but because they do not wish to defend their choice to wear "African fabric" (Franklin 2001, 141).

Fashion is at once inclusive and exclusive (Aspers and Godart 2013, 185), this is especially true when looking at racial divides and identities in fashion. Racial divides exist historically within feminism as well; as Groeneveld argues, *BUST* attempts to reject the "traditional" feminist dress (2009, 181). In the issue, "traditional" feminist dress consists of either the Birkenstock wearing "hippie granola lesbians" or the "androgynous power-suit wearing working woman" (Groeneveld 2009, 181). These "traditional" styles of dress presented in the *BUST* article

were stereotypically worn by white second wave feminists, the article then erasing both feminist and fashion identities for non-white women (Groenveld 2009, 181). A further critique of the article's content, was that the magazine portrayed the Burka as being a fashion *and* feminist “faux-pas” (Groeneveld 2009, 181). The magazine actively erases the complexities of Muslim women's decision to wear the veil, falling into the Western discourse which situates Muslim women as victimized and oppressed, in need of liberation by Western feminists and military forces (Groeneveld 2009, 181). This portrayal is at once oppressive and constricting for Muslim women, thus fairly contradictory to the aforementioned third wave feminist “fashion and lifestyle choices”, and is a problematic theme throughout Western media and feminisms. Clothing and fashion can be used as a form of liberation and empowerment for women, however, this becomes complicated when there exist distinct discourses and expectations around what being “liberated” looks like. While there is some variation among the six looks presented in the magazine (along racial and sexual orientation lines), the spread itself presents a fairly limited image of what feminism is, resting fairly heavily on exclusively gender differences as the forefront of feminist politics (Groenveld 2009, 185).

Regardless of women's differences, fashion plays an important role in all women's lives, simply getting dressed means one is participating in fashion, whether one intends to or not (Gibson 2000, 353; Waggoner and Hallstein 2001, 40). It is however, important to recognize that there exist differences among women, thus styles, roles and meanings of fashion in each woman's life are distinct. While these differences are important to acknowledge, commonalities also exist in women's experiences of dressing for daily life. Flicker's (2013) study on women's dress in politics concluded that women in positions of professionalism/power are often judged

not solely on their accomplishments or abilities, but on their appearance, wardrobe and hairstyle (Flicker 2013, 202; 208). Women in politics and positions of power are often seen as the “other” to their male counterparts, and as a result these women must pay special attention to the way they present themselves (Flicker 2013, 211). While women in academia are different from women in the political sphere, some parallels may be drawn among their experiences.

For women, there is a fine balance between appearing too feminine/ not feminine enough, but there is also concern with “standing out” among male colleagues (i.e. wearing a pantsuit in a colour *other* than black or navy blue) (Flicker 2013, 211). Both the balance of femininity and “standing out” must be taken into account when dressing for work. The danger of dressing “too feminine” is that women in positions of power risk being belittled by comedians and media, and experience inescapable sexualization (Flicker 2013, 212). While female academics may not be visible in the same ways as female politicians, professors must present themselves to an often critical audience; their students. Women in positions of power experience a double-bind when it comes to dressing; if they dress too feminine they lose credibility, but likewise if they adopt the more masculine styles of dress they meet harsh criticisms (Flicker 2013, 214). Waggoner and Hallstein (2001) found that the many feminist academics were critical of, but embraced fashion (40). The role dress plays in women’s daily life is not as clear as is often presented in the literature. Dress is not independent of women’s race, age, body type, or sexuality, nor is it independent of the physical setting in which women find themselves. As such, female academics are not immune to fashion and must navigate unique challenges in presenting themselves through their dress choices.

Academic Women and Their Clothes

Fashion is an integral yet often overlooked aspect of women's experiences in academia, as very few studies examine clothing's role in these experiences. Gender inequality in academia persists and is a reality female academics must navigate in their daily experience. As is true for women generally, when presenting themselves as women, female academics risk being sexually objectified or losing credibility and respect. In academic literature, fashion and dress is often positioned somewhere on a scale from oppressive and anti-feminist, to a tool for women's resistance and empowerment.

Some authors go so far as to say women working in academia must choose between thinking and appearing (Kaiser, Chandler and Hammidi 2001, 117). While female professors may not completely agree with Kaiser and colleagues, research indicates that for women working in academia navigating self-presentation and dress is a complex process. Male professors have a stereotypically accepted "look" (khakis, tweed jackets, loafers), whereas this does not exist for female academics (Kaiser et al. 2001, 17; Green 2001, 99). This lack of the "ideal" female professor erases women from the institution, as such, there is no common understanding of how to appear as an academic woman. The role of "woman" and "academic" are often in conflict with one another, as the lack of an "ideal" look for female professors forces these women to pay close attention to how they present themselves. In their Dutch study, Benschop and Brouns (2003) found that:

"There is not a single female academic in the Netherlands working in a male-dominated department who does not have stories to share of remarks on her looks, the length of her hair and her skirts, the tightness of her trousers, the subtle and not-so subtle innuendoes and how

all this attention goes hand in hand with an underestimation of her work, capacities and aspirations” (200).

As female academics present themselves as women, they must face the possibility that they will lose credibility and respect, as well as become sexualized objects in their academic institution.

Dressing for work in academia becomes difficult in multiple ways, as women may be expected to adopt a more “masculine approach” to their presentation of self (Monroe et. al 2008, 225). As men are the “successful” ones in academia, women often forego more feminine or fashionable styles of dress in exchange for these more “masculine” ones. Women do this in order to “dress for success” in the academy and appear as though they fit in with their male colleagues (Monroe et. al 2008, 225).

Women attempt to convey various messages and fulfill several roles through their clothing. Professors must appear in front of large classes of students, academic peers and are subject to course evaluations. For professional women in general, taking female academics as an example, the challenge in dressing for work lies not only in presenting themselves in a way which garners respect, evokes professionalism and signals intelligence, but also in maintaining acceptable levels of “ideal” femininity (typically thin, white and heterosexual) (Green 2001, 99; Kaiser et a. 2001, 119; Waggoner and Hallstein 2013, 31). However, as female academics are often sexualized in the institution, special attention is often given to how they dress and present themselves at work. Research has shown that women professors have concerns about being disrespected or missing out on career advancement opportunities due to their feminine or sexual appearance (Kaiser et al. 2001; Coate 1999; Waggoner and Hallstein 2013, 32). Furthermore, par-

ticipants in Green's (2001) study pointed to body shape, being perceived as womanly, or having motherly bodies, to be points of insecurity and vulnerability (112). Beyond gender, other insecurities related to personal appearance emerged, these included but were not limited to; age, race, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, class background (Kaiser et al. 2001, 134; Waggoner and Hallstein 2013, 32).

Dress is strongly rooted in the daily experience of academic women, while fashion can be constricting, a female professor may also use fashion as a tool for resistance. As there is no accepted "look" for female academics, they have more freedom to explore personal style and dress. Green (2001) argues that by women using their visibility and otherness as personal assets, rather than negative absences, clothing can be empowering, as well as a source of pleasure and gratification (99). One participant in Green's (2001) study explained that when she was awarded tenure status, she dyed her hair blonde, stating that she had to be taken seriously regardless (114). Other participants also found that career advancements warranted a new wardrobe, and that their clothes helped them fake confidence by feeling "on top of the job" (108, 101). For female academics, fashion can be both a constraint and a tool for empowerment. While fashion is an integral part of women's daily experience, clothing's role in academic women's presentation of self is sometimes overlooked.

Generally, female academics place great care and consideration in the way they present themselves for work. Miller and Arnold (2001) use Goffman's theory of self-presentation to examine female academics' online performance of the self (96). In their discussion, the authors note that female professors are concerned with how their profile photos are perceived, and if these images were overly sexual, or unprofessional (Miller and Arnold 2001, 106). The authors

conclude that presenting themselves with “authenticity, credibility and authority” were the most important concepts for female academics (Miller and Arnold 2001, 107). Self-presentation remains an important and complex process for female professors, and clothing plays an integral role in this self-presentation.

While the role of fashion in female academics’ experiences, and the struggles of being a woman in academia have been explored, these studies are missing a crucial point as they do not fully bridge the gap between these two experiences. The existing literature lacks recent contributions and relies almost exclusively on one on one interviews with female professors. To uncover important ideas, experiences and perspectives which may have been overlooked in these interviews, a conversation among many women professors is an important contribution to this scholarship. By women discussing with women, about their experiences of self-presentation through fashion, we can understand an important way in which gender inequality manifests and is perpetuated in the academic setting. This research examines why women choose to present themselves through dress the way they do when working in the current Canadian academic system. Clothing is used in women’s daily lives to present themselves the way they see fit; self-presentation and dress is an important lens through which we can analyse the current academic system and the gender inequality which exists within it. I argue, therefore, that fashion is important and warrants serious sociological attention. Because these bodies of literature pertaining to the experiences of female professors in the current academic institution and the roles of women’s dress exist independently of one another, there remains a gap in the literature which pertain to the relationship of academic women to their clothes, and the role dress plays in female professors’ academic careers. Furthermore, academics and the university classroom socializes students for partic-

ipation in the workforce; academic women then are presenting their students with an image of what it looks like to be professional.

In summary, universities, which are traditionally male dominated institutions, prepare students for work outside the industrial/manufacturing sphere. Through the 20th century universities gained more government funding, and saw an increase in female enrolment. In recent years this funding has been decreasing, causing an overall shift in the structure of academic institutions; tenured positions are becoming more difficult to achieve, which is doubly significant for female professors as women are already underrepresented in the upper ranks of the university professoriate. The shift away from tenured positions is a significant shift for female academics; although achieving tenure-track positions is becoming more difficult for all professors, women struggle in different ways than their male colleagues. As women are already less likely to hold tenured positions, and the number of tenured positions in academia is decreasing, achieving tenure status positions may be difficult for women. Furthermore, there remains a wage-gap for female professors in the upper ranks of academic positions and at times women decide to leave academia before these tenure track evaluations, or remain part-time throughout their academic careers.

Social science research exploring the relationship between women and their clothes is generally lacking, and often focuses on perspectives in feminist scholarship pertaining to women's dis/empowerment, patriarchal expectations, and fashion's role in women's oppression. While there also exists a body of feminist academic literature which explores fashion's role in empowerment and self-expression, there remain gaps to fill, pertaining to the meanings and relationships women hold to their clothes, and the messages they believe they are conveying through

these clothing choices. Women's choice of dress can reveal the way they interact and navigate the expectations and social norms associated with their gender, as well as their role in the academic workplace. When presenting themselves as women, female academics risk being sexually objectified or losing credibility and respect. Through this research I will explore the thought processes behind women's choice of dress for working in academia, and the meaning these women attribute to their clothing. I aim to answer questions such as: how do female professors decide what to wear to work; perceive their self-presentation in terms of empowerment, conformity and resistance; and handle the inequality they may face in the institution through their choice of dress? Using dress as a lens of analysis and sociological theories on self presentation, fashion, social inequality and resistance, the current academic system in Canada will be analyzed.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

As many women experience inequality working in academia, and since dress is a way for women to present themselves as women, fashion is a useful lens through which we can examine gender inequality in the academic workplace. Symbolic interactionists work to decipher the meanings we attribute to various symbols in society because behaviour and human interaction are informed by these culturally understood symbols. Goffman's (1959) symbolic interactionist theories on the presentation of self encompass various aspects of personal appearance, dress being one of them, and the meaning behind these. In discussing fashion more closely, Simmel (1957) asserts that fashion is an important aspect in understanding social interactions and organization. Building on this, Blumer (1969) claims that by restricting fashion to "adornment and costume purposes", sociology fails to recognize the power and strength of fashion (275). In combining these symbolic interactionist theories on self-presentation and fashion with Ridgeway's (1991; 1993) theories on status characteristics and expectations, gender inequality in the academic workplace can be analyzed through fashion and dress. Further, by exploring Scott's (1991) theory of everyday resistance, it becomes clear that dress and self-presentation can be a tool for empowerment and resistance for women working in the typically male dominated academic institution. Through the use of these theorists, I argue that fashion, and its symbolic meanings can highlight inequalities which female professors face in academia. For individuals who's traits can limit their access to power and authority in society, dress can be used to shed light on these inequalities and act as a way for marginalized groups to access some of this power and authority.

Human interaction and behaviour is a cornerstone of social research; in symbolic interactionism, actors interpret situations and behave accordingly based on their understanding of the

symbols present during the interaction (Berg 2009, 11). Personal experience and empathy for others' experience is also key to human interaction, as well as to symbolic interactionist theories (Berg 2009, 11). Some of the main theorists credited with informing symbolic interactionism include Mead, Blumer, and Goffman (Ritzer 2000, 340, 379; Berg 2009, 10). Based on the accepted notion that humans learn how to behave based on culturally understood symbols, symbolic interactionism as a theory aims to explain the processes of interpreting and attributing meaning to symbols (Berg 2009, 10). Specifically, symbolic interactionists examine (a) how people learn the meaning of symbols through social interactions, (b) how symbols can be used to convey information about oneself; (c) how symbols and their meaning guide human interactions and behaviour, and (d) how social systems and structures are developed through these commonly understood symbols and through symbolic interactions (Ritzer 2000; Berg 2009).

Goffman's work on the presentation of self is considered one of the first and most influential symbolic interactionist theories on the self (Ritzer 2000, 362). Goffman (1959) outlines that when defining social situations, we draw on information acquired through the observation of individuals involved in the situation. This information then allows us to know what the individual will expect of us as well as what we can expect of them (Goffman 1959, 1). "Carriers" convey this information, and these carriers allow observers to draw on knowledge from past experiences to generate stereotyped expectations (Goffman 1959, 1). Actors may recognize that there exist two parts to what it is they are witnessing through these interactions; aspects which are either in or outside of individual actors' control (Goffman 1959, 7). Those aspects which fall outside the actor's immediate control such as, but not limited to, biological sex, race or ethnicity and age can bring with them the specific stereotyped expectations mentioned above, thus informing

the way these individuals are valued in society (Goffman 1959, 13). These uncontrollable characteristics exist alongside the controllable aspects such as mannerisms, style of dress, facial expressions (Goffman 1959, 24). The two can be expressed through what Goffman describes as a “performance” (1959, 15). This social performance is defined as all activity of a given actor in a specific context, which serves to influence the perceptions, stereotyped expectations and interpretations of other participants. However, tensions can develop as a result of actors’ desire to behave in a way which is inconsistent with the way they are expected to behave (Goffman 1959, 15).

The specific contribution of clothing to these performances and stereotyped expectations can be understood through Goffman’s (1959) notion of a “personal front” which encompasses both controllable and uncontrollable characteristics. This personal front is referred to as the “expressive equipment we identify with the performer himself, this can include; clothing, sex, age, racial characteristics, size and looks, posture, speech patterns, facial expressions, bodily gestures and the like” (Goffman 1959, 24). An individual’s personal front conveys information about this actor, as well as their social role, to other actors in society.

An individual’s personal front can be divided in two sections, appearance and manner, the former refers to indicators of the individual’s social statuses or position and the latter to the behaviours which illustrate what role the individual intends to perform in the situation (Goffman 1959, 24). These should generally be consistent with one another, but when they do occur in contradictory ways, the observers of the situation may become confused by the individual’s performance (Goffman 1959, 25). Certain manners and appearances may seem to be inconsistent with one another because of stereotyped expectations. For example the “appearance” of a feminine individual with an aggressive and dominant “manner” leads to confusion as a woman is stereo-

typically expected to avoid aggression. These stereotyped expectations created through social fronts can become institutionalized in specific contexts (Goffman 1959, 27). An example of this could be the stereotyped expectation to find men in academia, and the confusion of finding a woman instead. Different social roles (such as the role of a “woman” or “academic”) tend to have existing fronts attached to them, which the individual is then required to perform as well as maintain (Goffman 1959, 27). If we understand the stereotyped expectations of various social roles, as the “ideal standards” of this role, it becomes clear that for those actors for whom the role’s ideal front is not inherent, sacrifices must be made in order to express and sustain these ideals in public (Goffman 1959, 44). For female academics, this sacrifice may involve rejecting or postponing specifically feminine roles and traits such as motherhood or emotion, in order to progress in their careers.

In this sense there can arise dilemmas when selecting and combining fronts and social roles, as certain fronts are acceptable for certain social roles and others not (Goffman 1959, 28). When actors are performing the sometimes inconsistent roles and fronts, the audience may question the actor’s authority to be performing these multiple fronts, as these actors may be considered “imposters” (Goffman 1959, 59). The possibility of an imposter performance creates tension, as the successful performance of an imposter calls into question our understanding (through stereotyped expectations and roles associated with social fronts) of an actor’s “legitimate authorization to play a part and the capacity to play it” (Goffman 1959, 59). This confusion and questioning then, disrupts the shared understanding of symbols and behaviours in society.

One particular way in which people present their social front and position is through clothing and dress and thus stereotyped expectations are perpetuated through fashion. Despite the

importance of fashion to the presentation of the self, fashion has received very little attention by Sociologists (Blumer 1969; Simmel 1957). Simmel's (1957) text *Fashion*, theorizes the social role and implications of dress in society, citing dress as one of the primary avenues used to indicate social class. Members of the same social class tend to adhere to the same fashion trends in order to differentiate themselves from other classes (Simmel 1957, 543). The upper class sets the fashion trends, so as these trends trickle down to the lower classes, new fashions have emerged for the upper class to adopt in order to maintain the class divides (Simmel 1957, 543). According to Simmel, through imitation fashion allows people to be part of a collective, while also differentiating themselves from the group if they choose (1957, 543). While fashion is not accepted by all members of society in the same way, Simmel (1957) argues that women as a group, tend to follow trends more keenly than their male counterparts (550). Due to this collective adherence to a common trend, Simmel argues that women tend to lack differentiation among themselves and this lack can be read as personal weakness, or a shortage of autonomy (Simmel 1957, 550). Interestingly Simmel does not critique men in this way, despite the homogeneity of men's dress and the specific focus on women's dress highlights the assumption that dress is important for women, and not for men. This further emphasizes the stereotyped link between women and fashion, indicating that fashion's frivolity is not something men need concern themselves with. While some women do not stray from what is expected of their dress, women who do veer from the popular fashions are the "emancipated women of the present" (Simmel 1957, 551). In this sense, Simmel is arguing that fashion is important, especially for women. Dress is important because not only does clothing carry meaning, but the choices a woman makes are also significant. When a woman chooses to conform to or reject the overall trends for women's dress, she is sending a

message that she is to be considered part of the collective, assumed to possess similar traits to the other women in her group. Contrarily when Simmel briefly refers to the “emancipated women of the present”, he acknowledges that rejecting these trends may be a way for a woman to announce her independence and individuality, separating herself from the wider collective by using an everyday process—dress—to convey different messages about herself.

While Simmel’s text positions fashion as primarily a source of class distinction and group conformity, other theorists have indicated that fashion plays a larger role than this in society. Blumer (1969) argues that the ways in which sociology has examined fashion in the past has neglected to recognize the social significance of dress and fashion, while also underestimating its reach in society (Blumer 1969, 275). By restricting fashion to “adornment and costume purposes”, sociology fails to recognize the power and strength of fashion; arguing that fashion has the ability to influence society in every facet (Blumer 1969, 275). Like Simmel, Blumer emphasizes that fashion has inclusionary and exclusionary abilities; the expectations placed on clothing and dress in society have the capacity to exclude or isolate individuals if they do not adhere to these expectations (1969, 276).

In theorizing the ways fashion is circulated and adhered to, Blumer notes that fashion is a constant process of “emulation and innovation” whereby the dominant group sets the standards and expectations of dress and these are later adopted by subordinate members of society (1969, 277). Blumer suggests that this process illustrates the efforts of subordinate members of society to liken themselves to the dominant group, however, once the subordinate groups have adopted the fashions, the dominant group will quickly change their expectations and standards to maintain the distinctions among the groups (1969, 277-8). The importance of fashion in forming so-

cial relations and the structure of society has been mistakenly overlooked by sociologists — often being dismissed as frivolous and irrelevant (Blumer 1969, 290). The role of clothing in women's everyday experiences and interactions is thus overlooked by sociologists as well. Sociological investigation into the experiences of female professors have explored workplace inequalities, examining specifically motherhood and domestic work, the wage gap, and tenure appointments. Clothing and dress then, broadens the understanding of these experiences of inequality, as women's dress is both a result of, as well as a contributing factor in women's everyday experiences. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, the clothes worn on the body must have meaning, and this meaning changes according to our interpretation of other symbols such as the gender or race of the wearer, or other social roles and fronts such as “mother” or “academic”.

Ridgeway (1991) uses status characteristics theory to explain how we interpret what Goffman refers to as “fronts.” According to Ridgeway, status characteristics are any visible trait which differentiates people from one another, such as gender or race (Ridgeway 1991, 368). Status characteristics are organized into “states”, which are the various subcategories of the trait. For example, the gender status characteristic would count male and female as two states. These states are used to structure social interactions through their “status value”, which is attributed to certain states of these characteristics. This attribution occurs when there is a common cultural belief that someone possessing one state of a characteristic is more valuable than another person with a different state of the same characteristic (Ridgeway 1991, 368; 1993, 179). Individuals possessing states of higher status value will in turn be assumed to possess greater general competence (an actor's ability to achieve a specific goal) than individuals with lower status value characteristics (Ridgeway 1991, 368-369). Ridgeway further outlines that competence is the ability to

master an event, thus competence is rooted in power (1991, 375). If certain individuals have more access to tools or resources of power, such as those with characteristics of higher status values, then these individuals will be more likely to appear competent across social situations (Ridgeway 1991, 375).

In combination with status characteristics theory, Ridgeway (1993) draws on expectation states theory to explain gender inequality in “goal-oriented” interactions (176). According to Ridgeway, an informal status hierarchy of power directs interactions among group members, and leads to inequality in individual participation and influence (1993, 176). Expectation states theory suggests that in group interactions, an informal status hierarchy of power directs interactions among the group’s members, and leads to inequality in group participation and individual members’ influence (Ridgeway 1993, 176). Ridgeway highlights research which indicates that men tend to acquire more of this status power than women, thus women are attributed less value. The reasoning behind this inequality emerges from stereotypic gender qualities, which men and women internalize and behave in accordance with, across social situations. Women and men’s behaviours vary across contexts, thus the expectation states approach must be understood as situational when examining the power dynamics and status hierarchies (Ridgeway 1993, 176-7).

Individuals in a given context or situation each develop “performance expectations”, meaning they measure their own potential contributions to accomplishing the common goal, against all other group members’ possible contributions (Ridgeway 1993, 178). These expectations emerge from implicit assumptions and status characteristics; if members have similar beliefs and information about one another, they tend to develop common performance expectations (Ridgeway 1993, 178). For example, when looking at gender in a given situation, the individuals

involved can apply general assumptions that men are more capable than women, in order to develop expectations around the value of each gender's contribution to the common goal (Ridgeway 1993, 180). As a result, both men and women assume that women's contribution will be of lesser value than men's contributions.

Under this theory, a group member with higher performance expectations will be allowed higher participation, make more suggestions, these suggestions will be more positively received, and will have greater influence over group decisions (Ridgeway 1993, 179). Women have lower status value in society than men; in order for women to be perceived as being equally competent as men, they must perform better than men (Ridgeway 1993, 185). When an individual has a high-status characteristic (as men do) they view themselves as more capable and often act as if their high influence and respect is a right (Ridgeway 1993, 186). Contrarily, individuals with low-status characteristics (such as women) tend to face feelings that they do not have the right to aim for high status (Ridgeway 1993, 186).

Looking specifically at gender status characteristics in the workplace, it becomes clear that inequalities persist between men and women. Ridgeway (2011) writes that gender is an indicator of difference, where this difference is defined through men's "status superiority" (93). In understanding work relations, actors use gender as an indicator of how to organize an individual's role in the workplace (Ridgeway 2011, 93). For example, a male nurse may be more likely than a female nurse to be mistaken for a doctor. Men and women possess assumed "sex specialized traits" and these are used to organize work related tasks and roles; interactions in the workplace rely heavily on gender (Ridgeway 2011, 94). Through these assumptions and beliefs of gender, performance expectations for both women and men dictate what roles women and men

fulfill at work. In this sense, the “taken-for-granted” cultural beliefs and expectations about gender in the workplace are perpetuated, while also reinforcing an unequal organizational structure (Ridgeway 2011, 94).

Expectations and assumptions around women and men’s job capabilities can be built on gendered performance expectations; across all contexts, men are most often associated with authority, whereas the opposite is true for women (Ridgeway 2011, 100). Through these assumptions and biases, institutions and employers can develop a common understanding of the “preferred or ideal worker” (Ridgeway 2011, 101). Job applicants and workers are then measured against this ideal and hired or promoted based on their adherence to its standards (Ridgeway 2011, 101). This becomes especially problematic when the “ideal” for a certain position is male, and the applicant is female. For positions where the applicant is of the opposite gender than this ideal, the gender bias is a distinct obstacle (Ridgeway 2011, 101). The applicant must struggle against this inequality to prove that they possess the traits which are necessary for the position, despite the assumptions that they do not possess these traits based on the cultural gender frame.

Actors belong, in varying degrees, to dominant and/or subordinate groups making interactions among social actors structured through relations of power, which generate an unequal organizational system in society (Scott 1990; Seymour 2006; Courpasson, Dany 2009). When members of subordinate groups consciously question or intentionally act against these relations of power, they are resisting these power structures (Seymour 2006 305; Makin 2005 194; Courpasson, Dany 2009, 332). Resistance often emerges as a result of a personal humiliation which may be a result of the exploitation of a subordinate individual by the dominant group (Scott 1990, 112). Resistance is often understood as a visible protest or overt challenge to these struc-

tures; resisting in a way that can be “heard” or seen by the dominant group (Seymour 2006; Makin 2005). Everyday resistance is every bit as conscious and intentional as the more visible style of resistance mentioned above, but it is not visible, not an overt form of protest, or “heard” by the dominant groups (Seymour 2006; Makin 2005; Courpasson and Dany; 2009). This everyday resistance, while at its core is a political act, does not adhere to the traditional understanding of political resistance and protest (Makin 2005, 194). As such, this everyday resistance may not produce immediate visible structural change, though it does allow actors in similar positions within these power structures to form collectives and develop a shared consciousness (Courpasson and Dany 2009, 338). Everyday resistance then, is a way for subordinate actors to challenge dominant power structures in a way which may be unexpected or undetectable to the dominant group. Scott (1990) describes these interactions of everyday resistance through what he calls *public and hidden transcripts* (4-5).

As power relations shape both individual and group behaviour in society; members of the subordinate groups will tend to behave in a way concurrent with the expectations of the powerful members. The public interactions between subordinates with the powerful, can be understood as *public transcripts*, these transcripts are often misrepresentations of what is happening behind the scenes in these power relations (Scott 1990, 2). Through these public interactions and transcripts, individuals often deceive each other; behaving in a way which is inconsistent with their personal thoughts or wishes, in order to protect themselves from stigmatization by the dominant actors (Scott 1990, 2). This oppression and stigmatization may lead subordinate group members to experience anger and frustration towards the dominant group; but this anger can sometimes be countered by a certain level of idealization through emulation (Scott 1990, 40). Through the pub-

lic transcript, the subordinate individual may make efforts to distance him or herself from the subordinate group and liken themselves to the dominant, to reduce the negative consequences and stigmatization they experience (Scott 1990, 40). For subordinate group members then, the ability to survive and avoid negative consequences, rests heavily on managing the way they are perceived by other more powerful social actors. Scott generalizes that the greater the gap in power relations among these groups, the “thicker” the mask of the subordinates becomes (Scott 1990, 3). This mask often entails subordinate actors behaving in a way which is concurrent with the dominant groups’ expectations (Scott 1990, 17).

An actor’s public behaviour, while seemingly concurrent with the dominant group’s expectations, can have a dual meaning to the actor and the other members of the subordinate group — the underlying, often hidden meaning (undetected by the dominant, but understood by the subordinate group members) of subordinate group members’ behaviour can be understood as a form of resistance against the dominant expectations. Scott notes that power relations manifest most readily and explicitly in public, and a surface analysis of the relations in this sphere would indicate that the subordinate groups are willingly participating in their own subordination (1990, 4). The public performances of the subordinate individuals however, are often coordinated with others in similar positions, so that these subordinate performances align and contribute to the manipulation of the dominant group’s perception of these actors (Scott 1990, 34). In this sense, the stereotypes and assumptions of the dominant group about the subordinates, while oppressive, may in fact act as a useful tool for these performances and if used correctly may serve the interests of the subordinate group (Scott 1990, 34). As discussed above, Green (2001) argues that clothing and self presentation can be an act of resistance and empowerment for women; one par-

ticipant in Green's study explained that when she was awarded tenure status, she dyed her hair blonde, stating that she now had to be taken seriously regardless (Green 2001, 99; 114). The choice to participate in or conforming to a stereotypically "female" activity such as beauty or appearance, which is typically linked to frivolousness as opposed to intelligence, could be read as a challenge to the male-dominated university structure in which the female professor works. By securing a tenured position, the professor overcame some of the structural barriers many women face in the academic institution. However, by waiting to dye her hair blonde until after she had secured a tenured position, the professor is making a statement, indicating that she is deserving of her position regardless of her appearance and the assumptions that come with them. She will be taken seriously even with blonde hair, this resistance while not an overt protest, is nonetheless a form of everyday resistance which manifests in the public transcript.

In analysing these public power relations more closely, it is important to explore what is a performance and what is actual compliance in this power structure (Scott 1990, 4). Scott indicates that in order to go beyond the public performance we must look to "backstage" aspects of this performance; this offstage interaction he argues, is outside of the "power-laden context" of the public transcript, and is referred to as *hidden transcripts* (Scott 1990, 4). The term *hidden transcript* is the discourse which occurs backstage, or outside of the direct observation of these powerful/dominant members and can include any "offstage speeches, gestures, and practices that confirm, contradict, or inflect what appears in the public transcript" (Scott 1990, 5). These hidden transcripts then, can shape the everyday resistance of the collective subordinate actors.

Hidden transcripts are created in shared sites, where those participating have experienced a similar structure of domination or system of power (Scott 1990, 26). These hidden transcripts

allow for the “offstage” political discourse of subordinates to be shared among those in similar situations, without the threat of the dominant group’s presence (Scott 1990, 18). It is important to note, however, that despite this commonality of experience in the wider power structure, relations of authority and power exist among subordinate group members as well (Scott 1990, 26). In this sense, structures of power, and multiple hidden transcripts can exist within these subordinate groups and among its members— hidden transcripts then, are unique to the specific actors and contexts (Scott 1990, 14).

Beyond their context-specific nature, there are two more important aspects of hidden transcripts: 1) these hidden transcripts manifest not only in speech but in other activities in the given context and 2) the line drawn between public and hidden transcript is not clear cut, thus the zone between the two is a site of continual struggle between dominant and subordinate actors (Scott 1990, 14). In between these public and hidden transcripts, there exists another form of “subordinate group politics”; these are political acts which take place in public, so in the presence of the dominant group, but have a meaning beyond the surface and do not necessarily follow the public transcript (Scott 1990, 19). These acts are subdued versions of the hidden transcripts, and are always present in the subordinate groups’ public discourse; it is through these in-between acts that subordinate groups exercise their everyday resistance (Scott 1990, 19). For example, a female professor may choose to wear very high heels to teach a class. High heels are often associated with female sexuality and patriarchal oppression in the public transcript, however in her hidden transcript this professor may understand high heels as powerful. In wearing this type of footwear in a context where she is in a position of authority, the professor is exercising everyday resistance and using these heels to reclaim power through her female sexuality. This

everyday resistance is a way for women working in the unequal academic system to challenge these male-centred workplace assumptions and the stereotypes associated with gender in the academic institution.

Women face inequality and unique challenges when working in the academic setting, as they must fulfill both the role of the academic, as well as the woman. Bell hooks (1997) outlines that the public world of “institutional learning” is a site where the body is supposed to “go unnoticed”, but notes that this is impossible (74). Similarly, in describing the distinction between the mind and body, Ruddick (1992) goes so far as to say that “persons are reasonable, and women are persons, but ‘womanliness’ remains one of reason’s antagonists” (249). Female academics face a contradiction in appearing as women in the institution because to be reasonable, or associated with intelligence, is not associated with being a woman. The commonly held cultural beliefs about women’s capabilities and traits contribute to their lower status value; women presenting themselves as women then, can inhibit their success in the academic workplace. As dress is a way for women to present themselves as women, fashion is a useful lens through which we can examine gender inequality in the academic workplace. Fashion then, is important and warrants serious sociological attention. Through this research, with data collected through on-line and face-to-face focus group discussions, I aim to build on these theories to understand how fashion is coded into expectations for women in academia, and how clothing and dress can act as a tool for everyday resistance to these unequal power structures.

Chapter 4: Methodology

When conducting research through a specific epistemological approach, the choice of methods provides an avenue for the researcher to explore the question of what can be known (Egon and Lincoln 1994, 22). Working from feminist epistemologies of research, a qualitative approach is necessary as actors' emotions and individual everyday experiences are the basis of the data (Sprague and Zimmerman 1993, 39). Feminist epistemologies assert that research and knowledge creation are firmly rooted in women's everyday experiences and lives (Collins 2000; Harding 1987; Hesse-Biber, Leavy and Yaiser 2004; Hooks 1989; Smith 1987). Feminist approaches to research assume the existence of both domination and as a result, a dual perspective in women's lives (Sprague and Zimmerman 1993, 41). This dual perspective is created through an actor's understanding of their individual experiences as well as of the dominator's point of view (Sprague and Zimmerman 1993, 41). These points of view lead to the development of a feminist standpoint, which is a way for women to understand the relationship between their daily experiences and the overall social structure (Sprague and Zimmerman 1993, 42). Feminist standpoint epistemologies then assume that research will at once break down the patriarchal power structure which positions women as inferior to men, as well as empower women in their everyday lives (Sprague and Zimmerman 1993, 43). Feminist epistemologies of research provide an alternative way of "knowing", relying on emotion as opposed to the rational and androcentric approach characteristic of more traditional positivist research epistemologies (Sprague and Zimmerman 1993, 42).

Harding (1987) emphasizes the necessity of recognizing women's perspectives as resources for social analysis, stressing that women should be responsible for uncovering what

women's experiences actually are (7). As women are the experts on their own experiences, female professors have much to contribute to the understanding of gender inequality in academia. By sharing their experiences of dressing for work in academia, female professors will contribute to an analysis of this inequality in a way which has previously been overlooked. This project adopted a qualitative approach using one-one-one interviews and focus groups both on-line (OFG) and face-to-face (FTF) to understand why female professors dress the way they do when working in academia. As my study focuses on women's experience in the academic workplace, it is important to recognize the plural "women's" experience, as there is no universal woman (Harding 1987, 7; Smith 1987, 107; Collins 2000, 276). Thus, the women involved in this research were diverse and provided different perspectives, but they do not speak for all women.

The participants for these focus groups were professors self-identifying as female, affiliated with the same major research university. This school was chosen as it is a large bilingual Canadian research university which includes a wide range of faculties, thus recruitment of diverse professors was more likely. Characteristics such as academic discipline and rank, age, race and ethnicity, motherhood, disability and sexuality are important to encompass in this research, as clothing choice may be influenced by these factors. Quasi-random purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to recruit these diverse participants. Purposive sampling involves recruiting people based on their possession of specific characteristics, i.e. being both female and a professor. The snowball sampling technique involves recruiting participants fitting the study's sample population to the study by asking either participants or colleagues for names of those potentially interested in the research (Berg 2009, 51). Through a random number generating website, random.org, the number 8 was selected. Using the number 8 for the purposive sampling

method, every 8th female faculty member on department websites in Arts and Social Sciences was selected for recruitment. If the gender of the individual was unclear based on the name, department secretaries were contacted to inquire whether the individual was eligible for participation or not. After this initial recruitment, the researcher used snowball sampling techniques by reaching out to colleagues in various departments to help distribute the recruitment letter and generate participants. A total of 16 female professors were recruited; of the 16 participants, six participated in face-to-face focus groups, and five in an online discussion. The remaining five participants contributed individual interviews. The participants varied in academic disciplines throughout the Social Sciences and the Arts as well as academic rank, from contract or part-time to Emeritus status.

About The Participants

The participants in the study were a fairly diverse group, the majority were Caucasian, but there were four women belonging to visible minority groups: Ava, Sophia, Natalia and Rebecca. The oldest participants were Colleen and Sophia, whereas the youngest were Valentine, Samantha, Hillary and Rebecca. Several participants were mothers: Cynthia, Samantha, Lise, Camille, Valerie, Rebecca, Madelaine, and Anna. Only Anna was known to be a lesbian mother. When looking at academic rank, Samantha was a sessional lecturer and postdoctoral fellow, whereas Rebecca, and Valentine were contract and part-time professors finishing their doctoral degrees. The other participants varied in academic rank; the part-time professors having completed their doctoral degrees were Sofia and Madelaine; assistant professors were Gwen, Anna, Natalia and Hillary; at the associate level, Cynthia, Ava, Valerie and Margot; and Camille, Lise,

and Colleen were full professors. Colleen was retiring and had also previously been chair of her department.

The discussion groups were generated based on professors' availability; Cynthia, Lise and Samantha were part of the first focus group discussion, the second being Colleen, Sofia and Rebecca. The individual interviews took place with Camille, Valentine, Gwen, Ava, and Valerie, the online focus group had five participants; Madelaine, Hillary, Margot, Anna and Natalia.

Table 1- Sample and Participation

Online Focus Group	Madelaine, Part-time Instructor Hillary, Assistant Professor Margot, Associate Professor Anna, Assistant Professor Natalia, Assistant Professor
In Person Focus Group 1	Cynthia, Associate Prof Lise, Full Professor Samantha, Sessional Lecturer and Post-Doc
In Person Focus Group 2	Colleen, retiring Full Professor Sofia, Part-time Instructor Rebecca, Part-time Instructor & Doctoral Student
Individual Interviews	Camille, Full Professor Valentine, Part-time Instructor & Doctoral Student Gwen, Assistant Professor Ava, Associate Professor Valerie, Associate Professor

The face-to-face (FTF) focus groups and interviews covered broad questions (see Appendix A) pertaining to how women decided what to wear to work, departmental dress codes, inappropriate dress for the workplace, comments from colleagues and peers regarding dress, and finally dress possibly being used as a form of resistance in the current Canadian academic structure. In the online discussion group, participants were asked to submit images of their “ideal work outfits”

and a description as to why these were ideal for them (see Appendix A). The other on-line participants then commented on these images, indicating if they would wear these choices to work.

Ethics approval was received by the Office of Research Ethics and Integrity Université d'Ottawa / University of Ottawa. Informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to being added to the on-line group or participation in either a face-to-face focus group or interview. For those participating in the OFGs, a consent form was sent by email to these participants outlining confidentiality and anonymity, as well as requirements for participation in the study. The participants were added to the online forum once the consent form was signed and returned by email. For those who participated in FTF discussions or interviews, the consent form was emailed to participants in advance. Participants could either sign and send this form electronically, or sign the consent form in hard copy at the focus group or interview, whichever was most convenient for them. As female professors are busy individuals, convenience was an important and challenging factor in the organization of these focus groups and interviews.

Through new technologies, such as email exchanges or online platforms, online focus group (OFG) discussions have become more flexible as they can take place over long periods of time, they do not have to happen in “live” (Parylo 2015, 33-4). The advantages of asynchronous online focus groups include a higher level of flexibility and control for participants, the ability to revise thoughts prior to contributing, as well as the opportunity to add further reflection to initial answers (Parylo 2015 33-34; Reid and Reid 2005, 132). There are several advantages for the researcher in doing online focus groups as well such as reduced cost and time spent collecting data, circumvention of geographical barriers, and the potential for higher accuracy in data collected (Parylo 2015, 32; Reid and Reid 2005, 132).

The website Facebook was used as a platform for the on-line discussion. Participants in the OFG were given the option to use their personal Facebook account, or be assigned an account under a pseudonym by the researcher. This choice allowed the professor to participate in the way which is most convenient for them, while also providing several options of confidentiality. If the participant chose to participate with her personal Facebook account, it was clearly outlined that anonymity could not be guaranteed. It was also be clearly outlined in the consent forms that if the professor chose to use a pseudonym account, the researcher could not guarantee anonymity as the participant might have shared identifying information throughout their participation in the focus group discussion. For this discussion, the researcher created a “secret” group (where only the members of the group could see it on the social media platform) of five participants through Facebook’s group platform. The researcher had access to the online group, and was the “administrator” of the Facebook group, thus had the control to alter members, settings and add content such as photos.

A new method of using photos in research projects is emerging in the social sciences, unlike other visual methodologies which analyse existing photos and visual material, the use of photos created by the participants for the purpose of the research study is becoming more prevalent (Rose 2007: 237). Photos used in this method can uncover understanding which writing and speech cannot, as the participant may reflect on an aspect of their lives which they had previously not given much thought (Rose 2007: 238).

The Facebook group was active for three weeks, after which the researcher compiled all exchanges and responses into a single transcript in order to analyse the data, then closed and deleted the group (Berg 2009, 180). The FTF group and individual discussions touched on simi-

lar ideas as the online focus group; both the focus groups and the interviews used the same pre-determined set of broad questions to generate initial discussion.

In both the OFG and the FTF group or individual discussions, a semi-structured approach guided the discussion and the moderator's involvement. In both structured and unstructured focus groups a moderator is present to ensure that the discussion remains on topic and runs smoothly (Morgan 1996, 145). The primary distinctions between structured or unstructured focus groups, are the number of questions asked and the degree of the moderator's control over participation (Morgan 1996, 145). This research fell between structured and unstructured; in the face-to-face discussions, guiding questions and at times anecdotes were used to encourage participants to share their experiences of dressing for work in academia. Similarly the OFG was moderated through the guidelines distributed to participants regarding their ideal outfits, and their participation in the group discussion was moderated by email. When needed, the researcher sent blind copied group emails to encourage participation from those who had not yet contributed.

The researcher conducted two pilot focus groups prior to the actual study's discussions. The first pilot focus group was conducted on-line, and the second was a face-to-face discussion. These pilot discussions allowed for some changes to be made to the initial methods. Initially the on-line focus groups included "Facebook wall" questions, which were subsequently removed from the methodology. Similarly, the pilot face-to-face discussion prompted the removal of the proposed submission and discussion of the participants' ideal outfits. Finally, these pilot studies contributed to the revisions of the focus group question guide. The resulting changes made to the methods improved the study with regards to participants' experience, efficiency, as well as being more focused on the principle research question. The use of all three approaches generated in

depth and rich data, while also exploring a new methodological approach to focus groups. The on-line focus group was an efficient and convenient option for professors who were not geographically located in the city centre, or who had to split their time between academia and other responsibilities. Through the participants' ideal outfit submissions, the online focus group also allowed for a more objective discussion as the participants were all looking at the same images, and as a result, participants' differences became apparent through their various perspectives. Through the face-to-face focus groups, the researcher could direct the discussion in order to ask follow up questions on participants' statements and create a more in-depth understanding of participants' contributions. During these discussions participants could interact with one another, which may help to generate contributions which may otherwise have been missed in individual discussions. Finally, as group-think can be a concern with focus group discussions, the one on one interviews (which used the same discussion guide as the focus groups), were helpful in checking for this group think in focus group participants' responses.

Upon completion of both the online as well as face-to-face focus groups and individual discussions, the researcher generated transcripts of the raw data for analysis. Electronic copies of transcripts were available to participants via email if requested. The document was password protected and was sent to a secure email of the participant's choosing. The participants were each assigned a pseudonym, as were the locations or other people they reference in order to avoid identification of the participant themselves or those to whom they refer.

The transcripts were generated by copying of all the content and comments from the Facebook groups into a word document, and by transcribing the two FTF focus groups into word documents. Once the transcripts were created, codes addressing the initial research question were

be assigned to the raw data (Bertrand, Brown and Ward 1992, 204; Braun and Clarke 2006, 18). In coding the data, transcripts were openly coded to identify all pertinent themes (Burnard 1991, 462; Braun and Clarke 2006, 18). The codes assigned to the data were words or short phrases which summarized and captured the essence and meaning of the data, to be used later in identifying categories to aid in the analysis (Saldana 2009, 3-4). These open codes were then collapsed into one another to reduce the volume of categories (Burnard 1991, 463; Braun and Clarke 2006, 19). With these new codes, the transcript were highlighted in various colours, each colour corresponding to a specific code (Bertrand et al. 1992; Burnard 1992, 463). Responses coded in the same colour were then cut and pasted with one another to be regrouped for analysis (Bertrand et al. 1992, 204; Burnard 1992, 463). This process synthesized the answers into patterns to facilitate thematic analysis (Bertrand et al. 1992, 204; Burnard 1992, 463; Braun and Clarke 2006, 20). Once each theme had been refined and defined in a way which described the essence of that theme, a detailed description and analysis of each theme was written (Braun and Clarke 2006, 22).

Thematic analysis essentially entails identifying and analysing patterns in research data; it is a flexible method which can be compatible with a wide range of theoretical and epistemological approaches (Braun and Clarke 2006, 5-6). Themes which are key or relevant to the research are those which capture a significant aspect of the overall question or objectives, and are not necessarily the most prevalent themes appearing in the data (Braun and Clarke 2006, 11). This project applied a theoretical thematic analysis, as there are pre-existing research questions which were used for this analysis, and these contributed to the development of the themes (Braun and Clarke 2006, 12). Thematic analyses can encompass two different types of themes, either

semantic or latent. Semantic themes are surface level descriptions of the themes in the data, and latent themes go beyond what was said to examine underlying assumptions, and these latent themes are theorized to explain the semantic content (Braun and Clarke 2006, 13).

This project's thematic analysis along with the theoretical framework explored gender inequality in academia, using dress as a lens of analysis. This analysis included both a description as well as an analysis of each theme, as they relate to why women dress the way they do when working in academia.

Methodological and Ethical Concerns

As this is a master's thesis project, there are certain factors contributing to limitations on the scope of the research. The scope of my study encompasses women working specifically in a Canadian academic institution, however I acknowledge the existence and importance of educational institutions outside of Canada. Similarly, it is important to recognize that self-presentation and definitions of masculinity are also issues for men working in this system. Further research in this area would contribute to the literature, however, the scope of this study does not allow for an adequate understanding of this issue.

The professors participating in this study were all affiliated with the same Ontario university, and they may have discussed experiences of inequality at this university specifically. This may be problematic as participants may be uncomfortable with disclosing experiences which may reflect poorly on a colleague, or if other participants disagree with statements made about mutual colleagues. As such, participants were encouraged to alter names and locations in their experiences if they wished to avoid identifying colleagues and themselves. Furthermore, the on-

line Focus group responses were made electronically in writing, and thus could be copy, pasted and shared more easily by any member of the group. The participants signed a confidentiality agreement outlining that they will refrain from sharing information from the focus group with individuals not participating in the study.

Finally, psychological or emotional discomfort may have been a risk, as these women may have disclosed information on experiences where they were sexually harassed at work or discriminated against. The researcher provided examples of resources which are available to professors for help in dealing with workplace harassment and discrimination. These were listed on the consent form, and included; Shepell-fgi (1-800-387-4765), and the University of Ottawa Human Rights Office (613-562-5222, respect@uOttawa.ca).

Women's experiences are important and can contribute to existing bodies of literature in both sociology as well as feminist and gender scholarship. Through a thematic analysis of the on-line and face-to-face focus groups, I explore how female professors experience and think about dressing for work in academia. Through these experiences and perspectives, gender inequality in academia can be understood and analysed in a way which has previously been dismissed.

Chapter 5: Results

For this study the role dress plays in the lives of women academics was explored through interviews and focus groups with 16 female professors. When working in the university setting, women can at times, face challenges in presenting themselves as women. As intelligence and power in the workplace are not generally traits associated with women, female professors may experience inequalities in the academic institution. Clothing and dress are symbols worn on the body, which carry meaning and convey messages in a given situation, as such the choices made by female professors in dressing for work in the university setting can be significant. Through examining women's self-presentation and dress, the gender inequality which exists in academia can be understood in a way which may have previously been overlooked. The women in this study discussed how being female, along with other characteristics such as race, sexuality and class, influence the way they dress and present themselves in their daily lives. For these female academics, decisions pertaining to dress and self-presentation in the workplace were complex; with answers and discussions prompting self-reflection into aspects of themselves which some women had previously given very little thought. The women's diversity in academic department, rank, race, sexuality, and age generated interesting and insightful conversations pertaining to their clothing and self-presentation. For some participants, considerable thought went into dressing for work in academia, wardrobes held sentimental value and were closely linked to the women's personalities, culture and lifestyle. In some cases, clothing and womanliness was an unwelcome burden or distraction in the classroom. In these cases participants attempted to counteract their womanliness with their dress, in order to maintain credibility and in extreme cases avoid sexual harassment. Other participants claimed to put little to no thought into their appear-

ance, emphasizing that dress had very little effect on their experiences at work, believing that colleagues noticed very little in terms of workplace dress.

Factors such as race and ethnicity, culture, age, class, and sexuality came together to influence each participants' approach to dress. While recruiting participants was challenging, as female professors have many commitments and responsibilities, women of colour were especially difficult to recruit. In general, the proportion of women on department websites whose faculty picture or name were obviously non-white was very low, as is consistent with the research and statistics on university professor demographics discussed above. As such the use of the random number 8 to select female professors from these disproportionate lists, was less likely to yield participant of colour. Of the 16 participants, only four women belonged to visible minority groups.

Each participants' experiences were unique, the women had very different relationships to their clothing and approached dress in different ways. One commonality which emerged throughout the data collection and analysis was that clothing and dress carry meanings. Some participants readily accepted the importance of dress in their daily lives, others resisted the role of dress in their experiences working in academia, however, even those who rejected the importance of dress were participating in the process of conveying messages through clothing. In discussing how they decide what to wear to work, workplace appropriateness and dress codes, personal style, comments from colleagues or students, and the role clothing may play in women resisting the current Canadian academic structure, these women revealed subtle instances of gender inequality in academia. The participants found commonalities in their overall understanding of appropriate and inappropriate dress for the workplace, however differences emerged when pro-

fessors spoke to their specific experiences, as the combination of factors such as race, age, academic rank, sexuality and motherhood influenced each participants' approach to their academic apparel. Throughout the discussions, women's experiences of dressing for work in academia reveal that there exist inequalities in the academic institution. These inequalities and unequal access to power are highlighted by women's choice of dress; clothing can be a means to acquire some of the power and authority which is often inaccessible due to women's social positioning in the academic workplace.

Ideal Outfit Images - On-line Focus Group Discussion

The images submitted by each participant for the online focus group were fairly different from one another, with some participants preferring dresses exclusively over pants, whereas others avoided feminine dresses in the workplace altogether. The comments left on each image revealed the different factors which affect each participants' dress and self-presentation. The participants in the online focus groups were all affiliated with the same university, but as the method allows for participation from anywhere with internet access, several of these women were not currently located in the city centre. Margot was situated in Europe, Hillary was working at a smaller, rural university East of Ontario, and Anna was travelling between Canada and the Middle East for her research. Beyond geographical location, individual characteristics came up through the participants' outfits and descriptions as well as the comments left on these images. Natalia spoke of the influence being a young woman belonging to a racialized group had on her dress choices, whereas Hillary highlighted the importance of avoiding femininity and appearing on the same level as her students. Anna's more masculine approach to dressing made her feel powerful, but her looks received fewer comments from peers than other participants' choices.

Contrary to Anna and Hillary, Madelaine's choices were exclusively dresses which she described as feminine and modest. Finally, Margot discussed the importance of dressing in a way which was feminine yet professional, and avoided dressing to fit a predetermined mould. Women's experiences are unique and diverse, however, through these five participants' ideal outfit choices, recurring themes emerge in female professors' approaches to dressing for work in academia.

Natalia, Assistant Professor, Ideal Outfits

Natalia's choices were overall fairly neutral in colour, and professional but feminine. The first, a loose fitting, short sleeved dress made of thick navy blue fabric. The neckline ends above the collar bones and the hem falls above the knee, but Natalia rejected heels. The second dress she chose was in a pattern of neutral grey and cream, with a 1/2 sleeve and a hemline which hits above knee, again with a high neckline. Natalia suggested she would wear a blazer to add professionalism. The third item Natalia chose because it was "professional and warm in winter"; a form fitting skirt falling mid-shin, in a navy blue colour, thick fabric, with a geometric linear pattern. Natalia also included cropped jeans with a button detail at the ankles paired with colourful sandals, a white blouse with long sleeves, and an opaque fabric. The last two pants chosen for her ideal outfits were ankle length navy khaki pants, and a pair of classic wide legged dress trousers. Natalia explained that these outfits were a good balance between professional yet feminine, and helped to age her as she is a short woman and part of a visible minority group, so is often mistaken for someone other than the professor. Natalia's most formal outfit, the dress pants, was reserved for the "first lecture of the year" where she wanted to appear authoritative. With the exception of Madelaine (also a shorter woman) the dresses Natalia chose were seen as too short for

several participants. Anna explained that as she moves a lot and is a larger woman, she would feel too exposed; “that’s a lot of thigh”. Margot believed that the length made these outfits appear “definitely girly, and I would judge a fellow woman academic accordingly”, as such she would not wear these choices to work. Whereas for Hillary, she may wear those choices outside of work, but her movement and body placement in class would be changed if she were to wear these outfits.

Hillary also indicated that the slacks were almost too formal for teaching a class and her choices tended to be slightly more casual than others.

Hillary, Assistant Professor, Ideal Outfits

Hillary’s choices overall took a more “androgynous” and casual approach; dark skinny blue jeans, paired with a plain white t-shirt and a simple neutral slightly oversized blazer, with white sneakers. The second choice was a pair of slouchy tapered trousers, with a loose white button up collared shirt tucked in. The final outfit was a half-tucked button up collared shirt with light skinny jeans and suede loafers. Hillary described her clothing as both a “shield from students’ eyes”, while she also used clothing to narrow the divide between her students and herself. Overall, Hillary avoided femininity and showing skin or curves in the classroom, due to “internalized femme-phobia and misogynist attitudes about female academics”. Natalia commented that while she would not wear sneakers to class, the rest of the outfits were good, especially for days not spent teaching. Madelaine, a contract professor, approved of Hillary’s choices and emphasized that she “want[s] jeans to be a thing... in the end, it’s what I’m teaching them that matters. And I WANT to do it in jeans”. Madeleine’s ideal outfits however, did not include jeans and

she indicated that she would rarely wear them to work. For Associate professor, Margot however, adding a well-cut blazer would benefit Hillary's outfits and the shoes were an issue; "badly made shoes look too quickly cheap" and "heels must be well made and not in colours that make them look tarty". While Hillary's choices were described as androgynous, Anna's choices were the least feminine of the group erring on the masculine side, and she rejected heels altogether.

Anna, Assistant Professor, Ideal Outfits

For Anna, the first choice was a grey wool suit comprised of tailored flared leg trousers and a black blouse tucked in with a neck bow and the matching grey blazer. The second outfit option was a three piece suit; navy blue trousers, vest and blazer worn with a white collared shirt. The tie was royal and electric blue stripes, with the hairstyle being a short spiked cut. Practicality and comfort were important to Anna, but so was wearing clothing which fit her larger size, and made her feel powerful and elegant. Only Hillary commented on Anna's outfit, agreeing that the outfits looked "sharp" but that she would feel too formal wearing this to class, and would prefer to project a "collective vibe" to her students. Unlike Anna, Madelaine chose exclusively dresses.

Madelaine, Contract Professor, Ideal Outfits

Madelaine described her choices as modest, most of the dresses she chose, she said she would pair with a cardigan to add some cover. The first dress was a black and white striped patterned dress with a draped skirt and asymmetrical hemline landing at the knee, the sleeves were small caps and the dress had a high neckline. The second dress was straight cut, but form fitting, in a black and white linear pattern, a black belt emphasizing the waist. The dress fell to the knee,

with a high neckline and long sleeves. The third dress was black, knee length, with an A-line shape, was short sleeved, and buttoned up with a collar at the neck, and pockets in the sides. Following that Madelaine chose a light orange, black and white abstract patterned dress with long sleeves. The fit was loose and featured a high neckline. A similarly shaped simple black dress with pockets was the next choice. Both the final dresses were black and white patterns, with short sleeves, a bell shaped skirt, emphasis on the waists and feminine bow details and belts. Madelaine's choices were practical, modest and versatile, but she emphasized that it was important to be able to wear various accessories to add a unique aspect to the outfit. Her Orthodox Jewish upbringing was pointed to as the source of her modest dress, but as she explained, her style was classic with personality. Participants agreed that the classic versatile dresses were a good mix of personality and practicality, Hillary would prefer to add a blazer to detract from the form fitting aspect of some of the dresses, and would also not wear the two white and black dresses, as they were too feminine, and she felt she would not be taken seriously due to her "internalized femme-phobia".

Finally, Margot submitted a selection of outfits which were versatile and easily mixed and matched; these pieces included a black blazer, black trousers, a black pencil skirt, and grey trousers with simple white shirts and black leather heels or flats to create the various looks.

Margot, Associate Professor, Ideal Outfits

There was a feminine neck scarf on several of Margot's submitted outfits . The most formal look featured a pair of grey trousers, button up white shirt and square shouldered blazer, whereas the most casual was black skinny trousers with the blazer and a t-shirt with a pattern,

and white sneakers. The final look which Margot contributed was a loose fitting salmon pink knee length dress, paired with feminine heeled sandals and a loose fitting trench coat. Margot suggested that female academics rely too heavily on black suits and should incorporate more colour into their wardrobes. She emphasized that women should not try to emulate men, and should recognize dress is about them and their personality, and should not be about fitting into a “pre-conceived” mould. Hillary appreciated the balance of professionalism and feminine, and the mix of formal and casual options. Madelaine also found the ease of the pink dress to be appealing. The ideal outfits submitted by participants were of diverse styles and revealed aspects of each participants which informed their choices of dress. Overall the participants all indicated that when teaching, they hoped to dress professionally but still with some kind of personal flair or uniqueness.

Practical Professionalism

Most participants believed that there was no written dress code in their respective departments. Participants often clarified that it was always clear however, which professors worked in the business school as they were always dressed very formally in suits. While suits were rejected by nearly every participant, they agreed that certain contexts such as a thesis defence or an interview would benefit from the formality of a suit.

Participants noted that academia was thought to be a profession where mixing and matching clothing styles, and a more casual approach to professional dress were acceptable, for example: a blazer with jeans. Camille, a full professor and Samantha, a sessional lecturer, both asserted that if departments were to instate dress codes, there would be “trouble” and “a revolution or

mutiny”. Most other participants echoed this stance, noting that departmental dress codes would not be well-received by professors. Overall, the participants agreed on the need to strike a balance between professional and comfortable clothing choices. When describing their dress and the images they wished to present through their dress, professors used the words “professional”, “appropriate” and “comfortable” most often. When asked to describe what “professional dress” resembled, the majority of professors said a nice pair of pants, either black or dark jeans, and a nice top. Most often they would indicate that they would add a blazer to add an extra level of professionalism, and putting effort into their professional dress included the addition of wearing make-up. Neutral and darker colours were chosen most often, with the exception of Camille and Valentine who indicated that they often wore brightly coloured shirts or blouses and still felt professional. Through several interviews, participants made it clear that dressing in ways which they felt were professional enough was difficult in the Canadian context, as the climate required certain practical clothing items.

A reoccurring theme pertaining to the climate emerged primarily in the face-to-face discussions, but also in the on-line focus group. Professors explained that there was a challenge in finding a balance between clothing choices which would be practical for the climate and environment, while also being sufficiently professional and comfortable for the workplace. Professors cited commuting to work by bus, car, bicycle or on foot in various weather conditions (extremely cold, ice and slush, to very hot and humid) to be an influential factor in their dress choices. The necessity of migrating from building to building on campus meant that some professors brought extra shoes in the winter to avoid looking “frumpy” or becoming uncomfortably hot while teaching in winter boots. During the summer months, several participants noted that they

rode their bicycle or walked to work, in which case they brought an extra set of clothing to work in order to ensure they dressed appropriately and not in sports' clothes, as these would be inappropriate. Questions of dressing appropriately and comfortably in the summer heat became difficult as bare shoulders, shorts and sun dresses were thought to be inappropriate by some participants.

The winter weather also limited professors in the dress choices they made, but Samantha, Cynthia and Lise agreed that no one in their departments would disapprove of dressing in a way which was practical for the weather in the winter (parkas and practical boots). Lise also indicated that as she is from France, there is a distinct learning curve for non-Canadian professors upon arrival to Canada, and also a marked difference between French and Canadian dress standards at work. These cultural differences will be discussed in more detail below, but were further outlined in Valerie, Valentine and Camille's interviews. Hillary also made the distinction between rural and urban Canadian contexts, noting that the rural environment was much more casual than her experiences teaching in a larger city centre. Her dress in the urban centre was "flashier" than the neutral and casual approach for the rural environment. Other than Hillary and Margot (located in Europe at the time of the focus group), the participants were all located in the same large urban centre, at the same major research institution. The weather in this urban centre created a challenge for these female professors to dress in a way that was both workplace and weather appropriate.

The need to be professional in the academic workplace, while complicated by the weather in Canada, is further influenced by the diverse responsibilities associated with academic careers. Responsibilities which came up in discussions include; teaching lectures and seminars, holding

office hours, attending department meetings, going on job talks, presenting and networking at conferences, directing a thesis defence, and official administrative roles. With these diverse roles came the need to adapt clothing choices to daily activities and interactions. Nearly every participant noted that the activity of the day was a primary influencing factor in their dress choices; thus, they dressed different depending on whether the day included teaching or office hours, a department meeting or a thesis defence, researching alone in one's office, or travel to a conference. Outside of teaching and office hours, the participants noted that conferences and other public events required a higher level of attention and effort put towards their appearance. Samantha further noted that conferences highlight the disciplinary divides of dress, referring to a conference in a department within Social Sciences as “eccentric”, “look at me” and a “fashion show”, whereas a conference in Science/Health in the same week was much more formal and uniform.

Most participants indicated that if the day entailed teaching, they would “make more of an effort” than if they were only in office hours. Rebecca stated that while she dressed nicely for teaching, she would not “dress down” for office hours, as she was more likely to run into other professors in the department on those days. The only two professors who stated that there was no difference between their dress on a teaching day and any other day were two professors, who both expressed “what you see is what you get”. Meaning they wore comfortable clothing, regardless of the day's activities, and not much thought went into their appearance. While they both indicated that they recognized when colleagues were “well dressed”, only Lise, a full professor, emphasized that she frequently felt she “should make an effort” on teaching days. Her lack of effort was attributed to clothing and shopping being low on her priority list as a result of the

combination of motherhood and academic responsibilities. Gwen an assistant professor, however, repeated throughout the interview that “[dress] is not something I think about”.

In contrast to professors who put little thought and effort into their dress, Valerie revealed that much thought went into her dress; she had two separate wardrobes—one for work and one for her private life. Regardless of the day’s activities and interactions, her work wardrobe was described as highly professional and generally avoided femininity; she wore turtlenecks and skirts which did not highlight her feminine figure very much. Valerie explained that she wished to avoid any kind of attention being drawn to her femininity in the academic workplace. For female professors to present themselves as feminine in the academic workplace at times came with some difficulties, so the participants approached this dress style with caution.

Distracting Femininity

Beyond the day’s activity, a majority of professors indicated that the class’ size, and year of study, as well as to which point the semester had progressed, would change the way they approached their dress. Preparing for large classes in big lecture halls was compared to a performance, with many eyes on the professor. This kind of teaching required the highest level of effort in clothing choice, Ava said that in these big classes “I don’t want to appear that I am anything other than professional”. In these large classes, several professors noted that they felt “looked at” and so they took more care to dress in a way that would convey “authority”, professionalism, and credibility, especially at the beginning of the semester. Ava continued to explain that the gender of her students in these large groups also tended to have an impact on how she presented herself through her clothing:

“I also think that I would dress, even more conservatively, if there were young men in the class. Not because I necessarily think that they would harass me or anything like that, it’s just that I want to appear even more confident in my clothing, and we all know that when we don’t feel confident in what we’re wearing, we don’t appear confident.”

- Ava, Associate Professor

For Ava, Lise, Valentine, Sofia and Cynthia, clothing was linked to confidence. For these participants, being uncomfortable or self-conscious in their clothing had a negative effect on their teaching and confidence. Lise also noted that if other professors wore clothing which could be perceived as inappropriate, but the individual appeared confident in these clothes, then the inappropriateness was not an issue. Samantha further confirmed that in her department some women dressed very casually, while others were more professional, but things like cleavage, short hemlines and tight clothing were not an issue in the sense that no one would have a problem with these styles being worn in the department; “it’s like, meh, whatever”- Samantha.

When asked to describe what clothing might be inappropriate in the academic workplace, the most common words used were revealing and low cut or cleavage. Other commonly used descriptors were short or very tight clothing, as well as bright colours and very “frilly”, feminine choices. In the online discussion, Margot commented on Natalia’s dresses, stating that they were too short and girly, and that she did not approve of these styles for the workplace. Very high heels were also thought to be inappropriate by Sofia, Rebecca and Colleen. On the other hand, Hillary indicated she would sometimes wear sneakers to class in the rural context where she now works, to which Natalia and Margot replied, that in the urban context, they would not wear

sneakers to work. In the face to face discussions, sneakers were also rejected by Samantha, Cynthia and Lise.

All participants agreed that they would not wear shorts to work, despite seeing male academics doing so in the warmer months. Similarly, bare shoulders emerged as something to avoid in the workplace, with the exception of Camille, a full professor, who saw no issue with bare shoulders. Samantha would not have worn shirts baring her shoulders when she taught in Population Health, however she saw no problem with doing so in her current department. Disciplinary divides were perceived to exist mostly between professional schools such as business and law, or the natural sciences—where dress was more formal and professional—compared to the Social Sciences or Arts and Humanities—where participants believed a more casual approach was acceptable.

The professors from Social Sciences and Humanities who participated in this study, agreed that there was no real dress code in academia (at least in their departments), and that different people dressed in ways which worked for them. Some professors pointed to colleagues, whereas others explained that their students were their primary influence when getting dressed. For Rebecca, a contract professor, her clothing choices were influenced by her assumptions based on others' perceptions; "I think for me, it's how I think I would like to perceive somebody in my position". Not all participants referred to others' perceptions as influencing factors in their dress choices. Camille indicated that in making her dress choices, she thought less about how others were going to perceive her, and more about how she felt in the clothing.

For many participants, clothing was a personal choice and a way of expressing themselves. Ava and Valerie both expressed a love of clothing and fashion. Ava revealed that her "cre-

ative fix” came from purchasing and wearing clothes and her dress code was “her own”. Valerie explained that her wardrobe outside of academia reflected her personality and she had fun dressing in retro styles and unique pieces, but in the workplace, she tended to dress more formally than her colleagues. Camille, Madelaine and Sofia also emphasized the importance of originality and uniqueness in their dress, as well as their love of colour; for both Camille and Madelaine, the uniqueness was achieved through interesting and colourful accessories transposed on otherwise neutral, often black outfits. Sofia preferred to wear clothing in colourful layers which could be removed for teaching, in order to maintain a professional appearance, while including touches of her culture. Several other professors attributed sentimental meaning to their clothing and accessories, the emotional attachment to clothing was also apparent when Valerie, Ava and Hillary positioned their clothing as protection. Valerie referred to her dress as “armour”, Ava a “bubble of protection” and Hillary as a “shield” from students’ eyes in these classrooms; these women explained that their clothing choices tended to avoid overly feminine looks, or showing skin and curves.

Many women explained that they make conscious efforts to conceal their undergarments; visible panty lines, bra straps and sheer tops were generally avoided. The main reason for this being that the women did not want to call attention to their bodies or femininity. Ava emphasized that when teaching she wanted “as few feminine distractions as possible”, she avoids dressing in bright colours, tight clothing which shows her feminine figure, and wearing jewellery which may “clack” against the board or desks. Colleen and Sofia also mentioned that they did not want to dress in a way which may distract students—whether it was through too much colour or vibrant patterns, or high heeled shoes which made noise when they walked. In a similar sense, Rebecca

and Valerie both described their clothing choices as “neutral”. For them, this neutrality in dress ensured that their intellect was the focus, not their appearance. Rebecca explained that when she received a comment regarding her “hotness level” on a website where students can rank professors, she felt she had failed her students. Both Rebecca and Gwen made the point that it should be the “intellect, the contribution” not the appearance that matters and that should hold a person’s attention.

Receiving comments which made her appearance instead of her contributions the focus, upset Rebecca and caused her to question if she had dressed appropriately. As a result of these comments, Rebecca analyzed what she could have done differently in order to maintain the students’ attention. Likewise, Valerie, an Associate professor, explained that she wanted to convey “intellectual rigour” through her clothing, and for her body to be invisible in the classroom. Valerie explained that, especially at the beginning of the semester, male students tend to challenge her, and try to catch her off-guard in class, to which she responds like an “intellectual tigress”, providing coherent arguments, facts and academic research to prove herself and her credibility to her students. Valerie speculated that this experience, which she knows to be shared among her female colleagues, may not be something men are subject to, and felt that dressing in a way which minimized her femininity, conveyed professionalism and authority helped her to retain students’ respect. Ava too emphasized the importance of appearing “asexual” in the classroom, she asserted that there exists a certain attraction and sexuality to certain professors, and through her clothing she wants to avoid this feminine image as much as possible.

The university structure is predominantly male dominated and as a result it becomes difficult for female professors to navigate dressing in a way which is appropriate, comfortable and

also reflects their personal preferences. Camille noted that she took cues from male colleagues' style of dress, mixing a blazer with jeans to achieve a balance of professional and casual. Camille further pointed to her tall stature as being helpful in giving her a more serious air, so she did not feel she needed to dress specifically chic to project this seriousness. Similarly, Gwen recognized that her experiences in the academic workplace have been primarily male dominated, but she asserted that it made no difference what she wore in these contexts. She explained that she was comfortable fighting for her stance and her intellectual respect among these male colleagues because that had been her personality since she was young and she grew up with brothers. In contrast, the need to minimize femininity and sexuality when teaching in the university context was addressed directly by Ava, Valerie and Hillary. Ava explained that her decision to appear asexual stems from trying to combat "2000 years of patriarchy and the sense of entitlement, that [a woman] can be sort of flirted with or harassed [by men]". Relations between female professors and their male students, or male colleagues also came up in several other interviews.

Valerie highlighted two experiences which have had a lasting effect on her attitude towards dressing for work in academia; the first, a male colleague sexually harassed her regardless of what she wore, and the second, during her doctoral degree rumours began circulating that she had slept with her thesis supervisor, despite her being married with two children. Valerie explained that she felt her openness, smiling disposition and exuberant mannerisms were problematic for her in these instances, as they were misconceived as invitation. As a result, Valerie felt that she must counterbalance her personality and openness by dressing more conservatively.

Hillary also highlighted that she prefers a more androgynous simple style of dress as opposed to the hyper-feminine looks such as dresses which emphasize the waist and evoke a "classic femi-

ninity”. For Hillary these styles of dress made her feel less professional and as a result she felt she would not take herself seriously when wearing them.

Within the male dominated academic institution women’s bodies are visible, and this visibility can be heightened by biological processes such as pregnancy, menopause and menstruation. Ava discussed the challenge of women managing their bodies in the university context and emphasized that these are challenges male professors do not face. Specific examples given include a woman in front of a class worrying about a stain due to menstruation, needing to use a breast pump but not having time between classes, or experiencing a menopausal hot flash in front of the class. Ava explained that women must try to plan accordingly for these experiences, which may mean altering their dress in order to stay comfortable and confident in the workplace. For women, biological processes related to reproduction and ageing can affect the way they dress as well as their approach to buying clothing.

Cultural and ethnic backgrounds also played a role in women’s dress choices. For example, crediting her Orthodox Jewish upbringing for her choices, Madeleine described her style as “modest” with higher neckline, and dresses which stop at the knee, often paired with a sweater, and generally avoiding pants altogether. In her individual interview Valentine (a francophone Canadian) explained that in her department, many of her male colleagues are from Latin America, and as such have a different understanding of male/female relations. They will oftentimes comment on female professors’ appearance, referring specifically to body parts such as thighs or behinds. She indicated that reactions from female professors differed, as most Canadian women found this to be inappropriate and have made complaints, whereas many female professors from Latin America will dismiss this as “boys being boys” and took no offence to it. In a separate fo-

cus group, Sofia, Rebecca and Colleen discussed comments about their femininity and appearance from students and colleagues. In this conversation, Sofia, a professor of Latin American descent, dismissed comments on her physical appearance from students as “just joking” and “not serious”, whereas Rebecca took significant offence to these comments. Another instance where cultural differences were problematic, came up in Camille’s individual interview, she stated that it can be very difficult to manage international students, especially if they are male. Camille briefly explained that relationships of gender, authority and respect were different in some of these other cultural contexts, so it can be difficult to gain the respect and credibility from these male international students.

Job Security, Rank and Dress

Gaining credibility and academic respect were also difficult to navigate for some young professors; Samantha, Valentine, Rebecca, Natalia and Hillary all referred to their current age and young appearance, while Camille and Valerie spoke of the past when they were younger. These women all expressed the need to counterbalance their age with their professional appearance in order to maintain credibility, or ensure they were not mistaken for someone other than the professor. Natalia noted that being female, a visible minority and a shorter person meant she had to pay very close attention to avoid being mistaken for a student. Hillary also stated that this mistake happens to her often, she however, does not mind the mistake. Hillary’s approach to teaching, somewhat similarly to Rebecca’s, attempts to build a relationship with her students through more collective solidarity, narrowing the divide between professor and student. Contrarily, other professors including Valentine, Valerie, and Natalia in the study noted that they felt they

needed to create a slight divide through their dress in order to claim the authority and credibility in the classroom.

For younger professors, the age gap between their students and themselves narrows in upper years and graduate programs. Samantha explained that teaching graduate classes allowed for a more casual approach to dressing, as she perceived these students as peers. Cynthia, an Associate professor agreed with this comment, adding that “I had a PhD group today, that’s the shorter boot”, as opposed to a higher heeled shoe. While the majority of professors indicated they would not wear heels to teach, as they were not comfortable or practical, Cynthia emphasized that as she is short, she benefits from the added height, and feels strong when she wears heels. As students get older and classes get smaller, professors allowed themselves to “dress down” and narrow the divide between themselves and their students. Another slight change in professors’ dress also came as a result of the semester’s progress; the majority of professors agreed that they became more relaxed in the formality of their dress the further the semester proceeded. The primary reason behind this slow shift for the participants was the perception of a developed relationship with the students after the first impression. After the early stages of the semester, the professors’ credibility and respect came from the rapport with their students, no longer their appearance. Lise added that at conferences, there is an added pressure to make good impressions through one’s appearance, as these were not people “we see every day”.

For professors who have been in their departments and positions for longer, it can be easier to understand the expectations of dressing for work; as Camille, Lise and Valerie mention, their dress became more relaxed over time, with the beginning of their careers being associated with a more formal style of dress. Feeling more secure in their position and a sense of belonging

in the department were big factors contributing to this relaxation. Gwen on the other hand, affirms that her dress has not changed since she began her career. Colleen, a full professor who first taught in 1969, explained that when she began teaching both the professors and students were required to wear academic gowns to class. She said that this made it easier, as there was no difference among professors' dress. According to Colleen, since 1969 the overall attitude in society regarding professional and appropriate dress has shifted towards a more casual approach, and her own professional style remains "tailored but practical". On the opposite end of the spectrum from Colleen, Rebecca adds that as she is only part-time, and has only taught for four years. As a result, she does not know the norms in the department and does not have much of a rapport with her colleagues, so tends to dress more formally. Similar to Rebecca, Samantha speculated that job security or precariousness may play a big part in a female professor's approach to dressing for work; being a postdoctoral fellow, she felt that her job's precariousness made her dress more professionally, and believed that once she began her slightly more permanent job she might take a more casual approach. Lise, a tenured professor agreed that in the first years of her post-doctoral fellowship, she enjoyed dressing up and shopping, but as she got busier and the pressure was reduced, she no longer prioritized dress in her work life. Cynthia, who says she has very little personal style and takes a more practical approach to dressing, explained that she was hired directly out of her PhD, so never felt that insecurity, nor that pressure to "dress the part".

With regards to this insecurity, Valentine asserts that until you receive tenure status, your evaluations are everything. In her department, Valentine and the other part-time professors and teaching assistants are given a "speech" at the beginning of the year, where the senior (male) professors tell them to "dress the part". More specifically they outlined that women should wear

suits, heels and make up, whereas this is not extended to the men in the department. When discussing dress and evaluations, Valentine, a part-time professor, indicated that she has always received very strong evaluations, which is why she believes her supervisors “cut her some slack” in the dress department, as she has a fairly casual approach to dressing. If an evaluation were to come back negative, Valentine believed that the department may look into the professor’s dress.

Colleagues’ Comments

The participants in this study had diverse experiences of receiving comments from their departmental colleagues and students. Compliments on a unique scarf, interesting jewellery, a haircut, or a particular article of clothing became a kind of bond for female professors. Most of the women agreed that they often received positive comments from their fellow female colleagues, and that this type of rapport fit into the category of friendship rather than a work colleague. Samantha, Lise, Ava and Cynthia agreed that no one in their department would ever say anything negative regarding a colleague’s dress. Gwen felt that colleagues did not pay very much attention to dress, beyond the passing friendly compliment, unless there was something “wrong” or if the dress was specifically “bad”, but she “did not think about it a lot”. These friendships and bonds are important for female academics, Camille explained that she is part of a woman professor support group on campus, and this network has helped her throughout her career in academia. The group gives her a feeling of support, solidarity and reassurance with respects to her experiences working in the institution.

Several other participants, however, spoke of uncomfortable, unequal or difficult experiences working in academia related to their appearance. Many of these anecdotes pertained to

comments they had received from male colleagues regarding their dress and self-presentation. Valentine explained that a male colleague once told her she “looked like crap”, and that colleagues would not hesitate to express their opinion on a peer’s appearance if they thought it was not up to department standards. She also noted that whenever the summer months arrived “the second you showed some skin, leg, shoulder, they [male colleagues] looked at you like, ‘are you serious?’ Or they wink at you, make a comment about your butt”. Valerie also explained one situation where she wore a lower cut shirt to a department meeting, and as she does not wear these types of shirts often, a male colleague made a comment questioning if Valerie would be cold. Camille also spoke of two situations where a male colleague made “misplaced” comments. The first occurred when she wore a pair of unique, wide legged artisanal designer pants and a male colleague expressed that he assumed she would not wear those to a department meeting. The second occurred when she was dressed in a suit for a thesis defence, and a male colleague made a joke, saying “you never dress up like that for us”. Camille felt these comments were inappropriate, despite the second comment being a “joke”. Unlike these male colleagues, Samantha stated that the male director of her department never commented on women’s dress because he “is really aware of how that could come across the wrong way”. For Valerie, her experiences of sexual harassment included the male colleague commenting on her dress, but she also noted that oftentimes female students will compliment her on her hair or something she is wearing, as she feels there is often an affection or maternal relationship between female students and professors. For Ava, this kind of role model/ mentor relationship exists between female professors and female students, and is an important way for female students to see other women in positions of power in academia.

Several participants explained that they felt there were inequalities between men and women within the academic institution, these gender inequalities were also compounded by other characteristics such as race, class, and sexuality. For female professors, the various characteristics which inform their daily lives are inextricably linked to their experiences working in academia.

Both Camille and Valentine, being francophones, explained that they had a French accent when speaking in other languages. Camille indicated that speaking with a francophone accent made it difficult, as students assumed that she was less intelligent than she was, and questioned her authority as a result. For Valentine being a francophone also posed challenges for her when teaching. Valentine taught a language other than French/English, however, she has a French name and does not “look like she speaks that language”. As a result she felt her students did not take her as seriously as her Native-speaking colleagues. She indicated that she used to try to wear clothes more like her colleagues to appear more similar to them; bright colours and patterns, dresses and make up, but this was “just not me” and she felt uncomfortable teaching a class this way. Some participants mirrored these feelings, as Ava explained;

“I think women have it tougher than men do, especially if they're white men, and they're tall, and they speak with sort of a mainstream accent, I think they are automatically accepted as authorities”- Ava, Associate Professor.

Being a woman and having an accent was an experience shared by Camille and Valentine, however, for Ava, Natalia and Rebecca, their authority was called into question because of their appearance. The fact that all three women were members of a visual minority group was tied to

their choice of dress and experience in academia. For Natalia this occurred when she is mistaken for someone other than the professor, so she tends to dress more professionally in order to convey this authority and professionalism. For Ava, minority groups struggled in academia as they are typically “not assumed to be authority figures” so her presence in the academic institution was important because she is both a woman, and a member of a racial minority group. For her, the important part of her appearance was providing a different image for students, of who constituted an authority figure:

“The students notice what you wear, so I dress to suit myself, but I also dress because I know who’s looking at me, and I want the young women to know that this is what a professional looks like, and it could be conforming but I don’t really care [laugh]... I don’t have a need to be seen as cool, I have a need to be seen as a professional, who belongs, who’s doing as good a job as she can”- Ava, Associate Professor.

Presenting and dressing herself in a way which was professional for Ava, was a way to show other young women that there was room for them in academia, and that being professional does not have one definition. Like Ava, Rebecca a self-described “non-anglosaxon immigrant Canadian” also felt that her conforming dress helped her to fit into the academic institution, but that there was a combination of confirming and resisting in her presence.

“For me it’s both confirming in a sense that I don’t want to stand out, but resisting in a sense by saying to people this is my capacity, this is me taking me seriously... so I’ve found ways to conform but also get whatever I want out of it”

- Rebecca, Contract Professor.

When dressing for work in both academia and her previous workplace in the government, Rebecca indicated that she is very careful in how she dresses. Rebecca explained that she tries to dress in a way which is professional but does not take the attention away from what she is teaching. She felt she had to present a very professional appearance in order to be seen as credible and knowledgeable. Rebecca explained; “I am very careful of how I dress, so that people will, you know, see me as somebody who has value to offer”. Rebecca speculated that perhaps her attention to dress in relation to her race was a pre-emptive move on her part, a result of past experiences and more specifically because she claimed the content she teaches could be considered “controversial”. As her class content was “controversial” and “questioned norms and values”, she felt that also being a member of a visible minority group worked against her in the classroom in terms of her credibility and academic respect.

Contrary to Rebecca’s experience, Gwen (a middle aged, Caucasian professor) claimed that her “generic-ness”, the fact that “I’m just so ordinary”, meant that she had the privilege of not needing to think about her self-presentation or dress. She explained that she is “neither so beautiful nor so ugly, I’ve never gained weight, those things have just never come up for me” so clothing was not a great concern for her. Gwen reflected that clothing becomes tied to body image, and as she has never felt self-conscious in her body, she has not seen the need to put much thought into her dress. Gwen indicated that she has very few items in her wardrobe and has very little to no attachment to them. Looking back to her childhood, Gwen highlighted the fact that she did not grow up with money, and as a result she was not in the “habit” of buying clothing or thinking about her choice of dress. As she stated:

“I think when people grow up with more money, they do buy things, but if you spend a really, really long part of your life not being able to or not buying things...we’re like oh no we don’t spend money, we don’t really know how to do that, therefore we just don’t really do it”- Gwen, Assistant Professor.

Despite having the money to purchase clothing now, Gwen asserted that she does not spend money on clothing, as she is “not in the habit of buying clothes”. Without the “habit” of buying clothes, Gwen insisted that while some people have fun shopping, she does not. The people who do, have often grown up with enough money to see shopping and buying clothing as an entertainment or leisure activity.

Spending money on clothing is not a priority for Gwen, contrarily Margot left a comment on Hillary’s outfits regarding the choice of footwear, and emphasizing that cheap shoes were unacceptable. Evidently for Margot, it is important to spend money on quality clothing and footwear items, as a woman being seen as “cheap” or “tarty” is undesirable. While spending money on clothing was more important for some participants than others, Samantha, Cynthia and Lise agreed that with motherhood, their income and time spent shopping is primarily for their children as opposed to themselves.

Motherhood shifts the priorities, division of labour and daily experiences of female professors. Many participants, Samantha, Cynthia, Lise, Madelaine, and Rebecca concluded that motherhood and academia were at times difficult to balance. These participants all mentioned that having children rearranged one’s priorities and clothing dropped lower on that list. The mothers explained that they were often exhausted due to the juggling of roles and did not have time to spend on shopping or picking out nice clothing. The clothing they did purchase was prac-

tical, machine washable and in comfortable fabrics which they could wear all day, at work as well as at home with their families. Furthermore, the biological changes associated with pregnancy and motherhood meant that often clothing no longer fit properly, but shopping was no longer fun as it was rushed and harder to find clothing that suited their needs. Several professors opted for online shopping as it took less time and was more convenient for their lifestyle. For the online discussion group, Madelaine submitted an image of a dress which she had just purchased online. Madelaine tended to purchase dresses which were “classic and timeless” but with “personality” or could be paired with various accessories to create different looks. The versatility and timelessness of her clothing was important in order to reduce the frequency as she indicated that her time was split between academia and her toddler. Camille explained that she felt it was imperative for her academic career to maintain a divide between her professional and domestic life. As such, she did not share any personal details regarding her “very traditional lifestyle, heterosexual, children, all that”, as she felt that women academics were often judged harshly for bringing their domestic lives into the professional sphere. Camille explained that she believed it would be difficult for a female professor to leave a department meeting early in order to pick up children, whereas if a male professor were to do this, they would be praised for being a helpful and thoughtful father. Camille also explained that for women academics, she felt it was important to maintain a certain level of privacy regarding domestic aspects such as partnerships and romantic relationships.

The academic institution according to Camille, is a very “traditional milieu”, and as a result she advises her graduate students to avoid highlighting any relationships or political statements which may fall outside of this traditional expectation. For Camille, an academic should not

advertise their sexuality openly if it falls outside of the traditional expectation of heterosexual monogamy, until they have secured a stable job at an academic institution. Interestingly, in the online discussion, one lesbian professor, Anna, who is married with children, provided two ideal work outfits which were slightly more masculine than the other participants' choices. The first was a grey wool suit with tailored flared leg trousers, paired with a black blouse. The second outfit was a three piece suit in navy blue, paired with a white collared shirt, a blue striped tie, and a short spiked hairstyle. While Anna described her outfits as elegant, beautiful and stated she would feel powerful and professional in the classroom when wearing them, only one participant made a comment on these outfits. Hillary commented that while the looks were "sharp" they were too formal and would create too much distance between students and herself.

For Anna these images made her feel comfortable and powerful, without being feminine. Valerie too spoke of one woman in her department who tended to dress in a more masculine style. This woman dressed in a way which was more masculine than more of Valerie's colleagues, and her mannerisms were much more aggressive than the more feminine professors. Valerie indicated that this professor would come into department meetings, sit with her legs spread wide and her arms either folded over her chest or planted firmly on the table, leaning forward. Valerie then explained that a male colleague in the department claimed that if Valerie were to position herself in this way, she would be judged for being too sexual and seductive. Valerie indicated that the notion that female professors are seductresses, is unfair to male colleagues as it positions them as "animals" and also discounts the fact that women could be seducing other women. Valerie shared one other anecdote regarding the professor/seductress dilemma; a well-respected, successful male professor once taught a class while sucking on a lollipop. Valerie was

shocked, as a woman professor could never do this due to the assumptions of female sexuality and seduction. Men and women working in academia have different barriers and various aspects of each individual informs the experiences professors have when working in the academic institution.

Resisting Inequalities in Academia

The understanding that women and men professors experience academia differently became apparent throughout the interviews and focus group discussions. When discussing the notion that clothing could be used as a form of resistance within the academic institution, Samantha, Cynthia and Lise all agreed they did not personally engage in political statements with their dress choices. Cynthia went so far as to say “I wouldn’t even have the clothes in my wardrobe to [make statements] be political. I don’t even know what I would want to say”.

When the other professors were asked if they felt that their dress was an act of conformity or resistance, the women all initially stated that protesting in general was “not their style” and they did not see their clothing as resistance. For Gwen, resistance came not through her clothing but through her intellect and presence. She explained that she is comfortable fighting for her stance in the “intellectually aggressive” male dominated academic setting, and oftentimes has found herself to be the only woman in a given context. In these instances Gwen did not believe dress had any effect; “just by being a woman I was rebelling, my presence, it didn’t matter what I wore, there were so many hormones around anyway”. Colleen, while not making political statements of her own, did recognize that clothing could be used as resistance or have a political message.

Both Ava and Valerie recognized the importance of making a statement with clothing and appearance, but both women did not engage in such overt behaviours themselves. Valerie claimed she did not “have the guts” to engage in this kind of resistance. However, Valerie also explained that she “refuses” to cut or tie up her long blonde hair. She speculated that her blonde hair, in combination with her exuberant and open personality was maybe “too much” so her clothing was her way of “compensating” and maintaining a “low profile”. While it was not Camille’s style to take a stance, she recognized that being a blonde woman, with a francophone accent and relatively young in academia is often judged negatively. She explained though, as she became more confident in who she was, she found she cared less about what people thought of her. Camille’s confidence counteracts the pressure to conform to people’s expectations; “I don’t care, the more I’m me, the more I know myself and I will not change my appearance, it helps that I am in a position of power”. For Camille, with time and security in her position in the university workplace, she became more confident in her choices and self-presentation.

Unlike Camille, Valentine is only a part-time professor and thus has less job security in the university, so she explained that she generally conforms to the expectations of her dress. For Valentine, there were certain “things [wearing heels and make up] that they will never make me do”. Valentine also felt she had to cover her tattoos, which are near her ears so she made a conscious decision to always wear her hair down in order to cover these tattoos and hide them from her students.

During the discussion of resistance and conformity, Samantha reflected on the earlier conversation of women dressing in ways which were considered “revealing” and thus inappropriate. She speculated that, if there is no written dress code, as they had all agreed at the outset,

then why was it that she did not feel comfortable baring her arms, and why was a low cut shirt considered inappropriate. Samantha then explained that maybe for women, dressing in ways which were revealing was “pushing the boundaries” of what is appropriate in the academic context, and wondered if these women worried about not being taken seriously due to their revealing dress. Lise too, agreed that there was something unfair in the way women’s dress is judged; she believed that it was an unfortunate reality for women. Lise believed that if a woman wore something revealing and then a negative situation occurred, people would point to their dress and say “oh, yes, well, she was looking for trouble”. Samantha agreed that she did not enjoy the feeling of being “looked at like you’re looking for a boyfriend when you’re not”, so personally wearing revealing clothes made her uncomfortable for this reason. Lise came to the conclusion that when she sees colleagues wearing tight or revealing clothing, yet they appear comfortable and confident, there is no problem. For these women who are confident in their appearance, Lise believed they could dress however they wished and “no one would question their authority”. For the women in this study, while they believed they did not use dress to make political statements, it became apparent through the discussions that there was a combination of conformity and resistance in their approaches to dress and self-presentation.

For the 16 women who participated in this study, the time and effort they put into their choice of dress varied. Participants took into consideration not only the weather outside, but also the activity and responsibilities of the day, and the people they would be interacting with. For many female professors, balancing academia with their domestic lives or familial responsibilities was difficult and required clothing which was versatile, low maintenance, yet professional. Femininity and the female body further complicated the notion of “professional dress” for these

women, as feminine curves, biological processes, motherhood and female sexuality are inextricably linked to dress. Even professors of higher rank and age found that they had male colleagues providing them with misplaced comments regarding their appearance in the workplace. The social barriers affecting female professors were not limited to gender, further complications associated with visible minority group belonging, culture and class all intersected to generate very different realities for the participants. While the male dominated university structure may not have been experienced the same way by all female participants, the idea that clothing and dress could be used as a form of resistance to this unequal structure generated interesting reflection and discussion from female professors; some professors expressed surprise during the interviews, as they had not previously given much thought to the reasons they dressed the way they did, but through the interviews they realized that their dress was more complex than they initially believed. Many of the participants initially expressed that they did not engage in overt political statements or resistance through their clothing. However, when examined more closely, their choices and self-presentation have important meanings for the professors themselves as well as the people around them. The relationship between professors and their clothing varied among participants, however, each discussion and anecdote revealed another aspect of the current academic structure in Canada. The Canadian academic context can be further understood by analyzing these experiences of dressing for work in academia through a symbolic interactionist perspective, drawing from theories of status characteristics and expectation states, as well as notions of everyday resistance.

Chapter 6: Discussion

For female professors, dressing for work in academia can be a complex task. Factors influencing each participants' choice of dress were diverse, as there is no universal women's experience. While each woman's experience is distinctly her own, there were several overlapping themes among the approaches to academic dress; daily responsibilities, age, rank, discipline, domestic expectations, relationship to students and colleagues, and the weather were common across the discussions. While similar themes emerged throughout the interviews and focus groups, factors such as race, sexuality, motherhood, class, and age interacted with gender in order to produce the diverse experiences of each participant.

These women shared their experiences of navigating dress and self-presentation in a Canadian academic context, at a large university located in a major city centre. Throughout this study's interviews it became apparent that many women felt that they experience academia differently than their male colleagues. Several participants indicated that they had experienced inequality in academia in some form; not being taken seriously by students, receiving unwelcome comments from male colleagues, feeling the need to conceal their domestic roles and private lives and trying to find belonging in a male dominated academic system. These experiences of inequality can be further understood through the discussions of dressing for work in this academic context.

For some participants, clothing and dress was not something they "needed to think about", whereas others felt it was incredibly important to present themselves very carefully through dress. People for whom power and authority is not a stereotyped trait (women, people of colour, members of other minority groups), can access power through clothing and self-presenta-

tion. However, for people who must work to acquire power as opposed to those who are assumed to possess authority, self-presentation and dress is an added layer of time and effort they must undergo. Dress is significant in daily life—especially for women academics—as it can highlight different experiences of inequality and bring to light the structural barriers which exist for certain people and also provide a potential avenue for a new understanding of resistance to these inequalities and dominant structures. In examining the lived experiences of female academics, dress becomes a useful lens through which to better understand these institutional inequalities. In combining self-presentation with gender, academic responsibilities, relationships to colleagues or students, race, femininity and sexuality, and resistance to this male dominated environment, dress is significant to female professors' daily experiences. Different kinds of clothing— for example, blazers or high heels— convey different meanings and thus different expected characteristics of the wearer. Similarly, the articles of clothing worn on women's bodies may take on different meanings depending on the woman wearing them. Women's bodies though, can be difficult to navigate while teaching in academia, so clothing choice is an important aspect of professors' daily experiences, especially when examining age, rank, race and class dynamics. Clothing can be an important tool for female professors to access power, and subtly resist the stereotyped expectations of women in academia.

Clothing and the Female Body as Carriers

The majority of participants took the most time and care in dressing for days they were going to be teaching. More specifically, the class size was a significant factor in the decision making process. Large classes were compared to performances, with many eyes on the professor,

as such, a specific attention was paid to the way they presented themselves in these settings. In positioning the professors as performers and the students as the audience, dress and self-presentation are important to the interactions and power dynamics within the classroom itself. In their individual interviews, both Valerie and Ava explained that at the beginning of the semester, male students consistently challenged and questioned them. As Ridgeway (1991) explains, women are attributed less value in the workplace than men, and as a result, men are more likely to express their opinions and perceive themselves as more knowledgeable than women. For female professors, this is problematic as their authority and credibility is questioned by all students but also specifically male students. Valerie explained that due to this challenge, she has to prove her credibility and academic rigour by “breaking” these students’ assumptions with a fierce, well-structured academic argument. In combination with Valerie’s academic argument, she indicated that it is imperative to present herself in a way which conveys authority, professionalism and “intellectual rigour”. For Valerie, this meant that her clothing was conservative, and she avoided showing skin, feminine curves or drawing attention to her body at all. In Goffman’s (1959) terms, femininity and female bodies are not a personal front which is expected in combination with the academic’s social role. This contradiction results in a less than believable performance, which may allow students to question the professor’s performance and authority.

As Ridgeway (1993) explains, women are often assumed to be weak or less capable than men so dress becomes an important way for women to present themselves as authority figures. The confidence these women take from their clothing helps them to make a good impression on students and prove their value. This first impression was important to most participants, as they explained that the beginning of the semester requires more attention to dress and a more formal

approach. Lise further explained that at conferences you need to make more of an effort because these were not people you saw every day. As Goffman (1959) theorizes, repeated, consistent performances to the same audience builds the actor's credibility. Female professors have to work hard to prove to the audience that they have the authority to be performing the role of the academic. Once the audience has accepted the front, the women can relax in their role.

In a similar vein, Lise, Cynthia, Camille, Gwen and Colleen explained that their dress became less of a concern the older they got, the longer they were in their positions or the more secure their jobs became, as they have established rapport with colleagues and they feel a greater sense of belonging. Some of the younger professors, Natalia, Hillary, and Samantha or those who worked part-time and interacted with their colleagues less frequently, such as Rebecca or Madelaine, felt they had to pay very close attention to how they were presenting themselves in the eyes of their colleagues. Samantha believed that she might feel less pressure regarding her dress if she were in a more secure job situation, Valentine also emphasized that until you were tenured, the "evaluations were everything"— explaining that she receives very strong evaluations and thinks this is why her more casual approach to dress is accepted in her department. In looking more closely at these responses, we can see that the older participants felt that they could relax in their role as they aged and found themselves in a more secure job position, whereas the younger professors, for whom job security was not guaranteed, felt they had to pay close attention to their dress. As such, clothing helped the older professors to access power and authority when they were in less secure job situations, but once they achieved a certain level of security and respect in their departments, they felt dress was less of a concern. Likewise, the younger par-

ticipants with less security felt they had to pay close attention to their dress, and used clothing as a means to access some of this power and authority.

The majority of participants described their dress as primarily professional, which was described as adding a blazer or suit jacket to workplace outfits. The blazer serves as what Goffman (1957) referred to as a carrier, which conveys professionalism and authority for the participants. Presenting themselves in a way which was perceived as professional was an important aspect of female professors' dress and self-presentation when teaching. The ideal professor is assumed to be male, and as such there exists an "ideal look" for professors; khakis, tweed jacket or blazer (Kaiser et. al 2001; Green 2001). The equivalent "ideal look" for female professors does not exist, indicating that women are assumed to something other than the ideal professor (Kaiser et. al 2001). For female professors, looking like a professor can often involve adopting certain aspects of masculine dress in order to convey this authority. This becomes problematic as authority and power come to be linked to masculinity, and thus masculine styles of dress such as the blazer become symbols of this power. Women must dress in ways which indicate an acceptable level of femininity and professionalism, without losing credibility due to this femininity (Benschop and Brouns 2003). The majority of participants in this study chose to strike this balance by adding a blazer to their otherwise feminine or simple outfits.

For Camille, the notion to wear a blazer came from observing her male colleagues' choices to mix their blazers with jeans. Blazers are clothing items which are typically associated with the male personal front and appearance, and Ridgeway (1991) explains that men are attributed a high status value (thus more power) in society and the workplace. A blazer then is a piece of menswear clothing which can become associated with men's power and authority, and as a result

men's dress itself can become the norm for professional dress. Women then may adopt more masculine styles of dress in professional settings in order to access some of this authority (Monroe et. al 2008). While Camille felt professionalism was achieved through adopting a style of dress similar to her male colleagues, Margot rejected the notion that women academics should be expected to fit a specific mould regarding their professional dress. Margot emphasized that women should dress for themselves, wear more colour, and avoid dressing in black suits. However, Margot contradicted herself by commenting on several other participants' "ideal outfits" indicating that the outfit would benefit from the added professionalism of a blazer. As previously discussed, women are often something "other" than their male colleagues and thus women's self-presentation in the workplace is further complicated (Flicker 2013). As Simmel (1957) theorized, if women choose to adopt clothing styles which are outside of the expected trends for women—such as a blazer— they are sending messages through their personal fronts and exhibiting independence and strength. The choice to wear a blazer allows women professors to incorporate symbols of authority into their personal fronts and appearances, which can increase women's access to power in the workplace typically associated with men. While the use of a blazer as a symbol of power may benefit female professors in the workplace, this symbol remains associated with male authority.

As the symbol of authority (the blazer) is also a symbol of masculinity, the assumption that power and authority itself is associated primarily with men is perpetuated in the academic workplace. Women then, must work within the existing symbolic understanding of authority in order to access this power. Wearing a blazer often helps to conceal certain physical characteristics unique to women such as breasts or a narrow torso. While many participants explained they

consciously covered their feminine bodies in the workplace, they also attempted to balance the authoritative blazer with feminine touches. This balance is important as it became clear through the discussions that the most of the women tried not to present themselves as “too” masculine. As discussed in the literature, women felt they needed to do this in order to appear approachable and avoid criticism (Flicker 2013; Monroe et. al 2008; Green 2001).

Like the blazer, a suit and tie are clothing items directly associated with men and masculinity. One participant, Anna submitted her ideal outfits and these were comprised solely of suits, one of them being a three-piece suit with a tie. As Goffman (1957) indicates however, when an individual is performing a social role, a contradiction can occur between the role and the meanings of their personal front. If a woman’s appearance or manner is too far from the expectations of the ideal woman’s personal front, or a social role is being performed by someone with a personal front which is not assumed to be ideal for this role, tension can result as other social actors have trouble understanding the contradicting symbols. When Anna chooses to wear a suit to work, she is presenting a contradictory personal front through her clothing, as her female body conveys meaning and expectations of how someone of this gender should appear, however her clothing conveys messages of masculinity as opposed to femininity. While the majority of participants indicated that they felt a blazer was an important aspect of their workplace dress, they also rejected wearing a full suit. Three out of four participants in the online focus group did not comment on Anna’s outfit choices, despite having commented on all of the other submitted outfits, indicating potentially some confusion on their part, as to how they should behave or respond. Hillary was the only participant to leave a comment on Anna’s images, and while Hillary

noted that the suit looked “sharp”, she also explained that she would not wear it to work as she felt it would create a barrier between the students and herself.

While women can draw from menswear in order to access authority, they are required to maintain a certain level of the expected femininity associated with their gender in order to avoid the contradictions which Goffman (1959) outlines. As explained by participants, without this “balance” of professionalism and femininity, the women could be criticized more harshly by students and peers. To complicate matters for female professors, the majority of participants expressed an aversion to dressing in ways which were considered too feminine, “frilly” or girly. Several professors indicated that they felt heels would be inappropriate for female professors — the sound, as well as the look would be distracting to students. In the same way suits are associated with men, high heels are generally exclusively worn by women, and act as carriers for messages of femininity and female sexuality. As such the rejection of high heels in academia further solidifies the notion that femininity and female sexuality are not desirable traits in academics. One participant explicitly stated that she avoids feminine dress due to the “misogynistic and femme-phobic” attitudes in academia. In revisiting the notion that the blazer is the expected symbol of authority, and is also associated with masculinity, this attitude becomes more apparent, as there exists no specific symbol for *female* authority in academia. Women professors then must work to present themselves in ways which are understood as professional and authoritative by their students and peers, while also not overstepping the boundaries of what is considered “too masculine” and contradictory to their female personal fronts. The femme-phobia which Hillary mentioned in the on-line discussion is further evident when examining the styles of dress which most participants labelled as “inappropriate” for work in academia.

Most participants indicated that anything “too revealing” would be a poor choice for the academic workplace. More particularly this meant cleavage or a visible bra, which were both brought up most often as aspects of dress which should remain concealed in the workplace. Low-cut clothing and feminine undergarments then, can be understood as carriers of femininity, which then contribute to an individual’s female personal front. As Ridgeway (1991; 1993; 2011) affirms, women are assumed to be less valuable than men in the workplace, thus the expectations of their contributions and credibility is less than that of men as well. Cleavage, and specifically bras are physical/dress characteristics which act as carriers for femininity and womanhood. By positioning cleavage as inappropriate, femininity and the female body become undesirable characteristics in academia—reaffirming Hillary’s claim that there exists a femme-phobic attitude in academia. Most participants also agreed that they would avoid wearing anything short or tight to work.

Clothing which highlights the female body is positioned as undesirable which can be understood through Ridgeway’s (1991; 2011) theories indicating that femininity and the stereotyped traits associated with women are not desirable in the workplace or more specifically academia. In her role as an academic, Rebecca perceived comments, positive or negative, regarding her appearance as a marker of failure. This failure she attributed specifically to appearing too feminine or calling too much attention to her female body. Rebecca believed that her purpose was to help students learn and if her body or appearance held their attention more than her intellect, then she had not succeeded in performing the role of the professor. In Goffman’s (1959) theory, a performer’s credibility can be called into question if they are not creating a believable performance in their social role. Furthermore, as Ridgeway (1991;1993) theorizes, women are

attributed less value in the workplace and are expected to provide fewer valuable contributions in professional settings. In examining Rebecca's statement, we can see that she actively attempts to minimize her female personal front, in order to more successfully perform the academic's social role and maintain credibility among her students. For Rebecca, the clothing she chooses to wear must remain professional but also "neutral", in the sense that her female body goes unnoticed in the classroom.

Valerie explained that she is very aware of how her feminine body is perceived in academia. She shared her experience of sexual harassment in the academic workplace, and indicated that this greatly impacts her daily approach to dress; she actively tries to downplay her femininity and its associated sexuality. Sharing a story of once seeing a male colleague teaching a course while sucking on a lollipop, Valerie was shocked as she could not imagine a female professor ever doing this. In Valerie's mind, the lollipop acts as a carrier of sexuality, but since sexuality is often assumed to be linked to women and is not associated with intellect and power. As women are attributed a certain value based on their physical characteristics according to Ridgeway (1991; 1993) the value and expectations of a woman presenting herself in a sexual way in the workplace would be detrimental to her expected contribution. For men though, masculine sexuality carries different meaning and the lollipop would not be a symbol of sexuality for heterosexual male professors, thus sucking on a lollipop in class would have less negative effects for male professors' academic respect and assumed contributions.

Valerie emphasized that women are assumed to be constantly attempting to seduce men, a fact she indicated was unfair to women, but also to men as this positions them as animals who cannot control themselves. However, it is specifically difficult for women in several ways; the

first being the assumption that women's sexuality hinges on men, furthermore, the assumption that seducing men is women's primary focus generates the assumption that their contributions are primarily sexual as opposed to intellectual, and finally, this assumption eliminates the experiences of lesbian women, as they are unlikely to be trying to seduce men. Valerie further explained that in her department, there is one female professor who is known to be lesbian, and her body language and dress is much more masculine than other women in the department: wearing suits and positioning herself in ways which take up a lot of space, and are "strong" stances, bracing her hands and her feet firmly apart or across her chest in department meetings. This woman's personal front then, is comprised of both a more masculine appearance and manner—this front then being inconsistent with the expectations of self-presentation based on the professor's female gender. Valerie further explained that a male colleague in this department made a joke that Valerie, would never be able to carry herself this way (legs spread when sitting on a bench) because it would be perceived as too sexual. He explained that this position would imply that Valerie was trying to seduce the men in the room. This assumption indicates that women and femininity are inextricably linked to sexuality and seduction, which as previously discussed, are not traits which garner academic credibility and respect. The assumption that this lesbian professor's manner and appearance voids her of her female sexuality, erases the experiences and existence of sexuality outside of the heterosexual sphere.

Camille explains that she will often tell her students to avoid making any clear statements through their dress, especially pertaining to their sexuality, until they have secured a position in academia. She does this because she believes that academia is a very traditional milieu, and as such it can be difficult to be accepted by peers if you do not fit the conventional expectations of

men and women. For women, it is difficult to navigate dressing both in ways which are too feminine, but also in ways which stray too much from the expectations of women's self-presentation and dress. While there seems to be a line which could be detrimental to cross when dressing for work in academia, dress can be at times a tool female professors have at their disposal to push back against these expectations around femininity, sexuality, capabilities and academia's male dominated structure.

As several participants noted, academia remains a male dominated institution, and as such the female body is highly visible as being something other than this male ideal. Ava explained that academia is not a setting which is conducive to women's bodies and that this adds a certain level of complexity to dressing for work. For women, they must dress according to not only their body's shape or size, but also to their female body's biological processes. Menstruation, lactation, menopause (appearing uncomfortable due to a hot flash, or a perceived "emotional mood swing") are all processes which can be understood as symbols or carriers of the female front. As previously discussed, Ridgeway (1991) women are attributed a lower status value in the workplace, and exhibiting these female-specific processes may call more attention to the female state than the professor's performance of the academic social role. Under Goffman's (1959) theory, if the performance of the academic role is called into question due to women's biology or bodies, the woman may lose credibility with the audience and lack authority in performing this role.

Women must dress in ways which may preemptively minimize the possibility of these biological processes interrupting her academic performance. For women, these biological processes are carriers for women's personal fronts, and contribute to women's assumed social role in

the domestic, as opposed to professional sphere. A woman's personal front comprises both the uncontrollable female body/ biological processes, as well as the controllable aspects of her appearance, such as her dress. For women attempting to successfully perform two social roles—mother and academic— dress becomes an important site of compromise and balance. Women must dress in ways which allow them to manage the biological female carriers, while also appearing professional and authoritative for the workplace. Samantha, Cynthia and Madelaine all agreed that there was a challenge in dressing professionally for work, while also practically for their motherhood roles, as they preferred to have clothing which could satisfy both their domestic and professional needs.

For female professors, the balance of their multiple roles means that they must manage their time in order to satisfy their social roles. As Ridgeway (1993) confirms, the female state comes with specific stereotyped expectations (and roles), so women in academia may have to adapt their behaviour in order to fit the social role of the academic, as opposed to being assumed to solely fulfill domestic roles. The social role of mother remains inextricably tied to women (Okin 1998, 118), as such, women are assumed to fulfill this role, despite having other social roles (such as that of the academic) to perform as well. Camille explains that she avoids bringing her personal/domestic life into her academic life. Camille emphasized that if she were to leave a department meeting early to pick up her kids at school, this would be perceived negatively, whereas she had seen male colleagues receive praise for this. Men are assumed to possess a higher value than women in the workplace (Ridgeway 1991), and men's social role as fathers is not their assumed priority, but an extra role in combination with their workplace role. Instances where men break the performance of the academic in order to fulfill their fatherhood roles are

received positively, as they are not expected to do this regularly, so it is perceived that they are voluntarily taking on *extra* work. In contrast the social roles of motherhood and of academic may both require full time dedication, and as such women face a very heavy combined workload, which is often taken for granted by other social actors.

The separation of domestic and professional spheres can be important for academic women. Ava emphasized that she did not want to be perceived as anything but professional by her students, specifically stating that she did not need to be their mother. However, Ava continued to explain that she felt that it was important for her as an academic to show the women in her classes what a professional looked like, as people belonging to minority groups are often not assumed to be authority figures. As indicated in the literature review, academia is a place where both women and visible minorities are proportionally less present than their male and non-white counterparts (Patton 2004, 190; Collins 1986, S14; de la Luz Reyes and Halcón 1988, 300; Wall 2008, 220). This female and racial underrepresentation becomes significant as students learn to understand the social role of professor/academic as primarily white and male. For Ava, a woman belonging to a visible minority group, being a role model and an example for her female students was important. Ava explained that she is very conscious of how she is presenting herself, as she wants women in her classes to see that women belonging to visible minority groups can be in positions of power.

As Ridgeway (1991;1993) explains, individual characteristics have different states and these states are assigned value and expectations regarding the individual's contribution to the workplace. Beyond the female state, racial states contribute to an individual's assumed professional contribution. Ridgeway (1991; 1993) indicates that the highest value is assigned to Cau-

casian people, and racialized group members are automatically assumed to contribute less in the workplace. In combining the female and racialized states, academic women belonging to visible minority groups have inherently less access to power and authority than men and Caucasian individuals. Natalia mirrored Ava's comments, for both women dress was an important carrier for power and authority; as they do not fit the physical characteristics of authority figures, they had to convey the message of professionalism and authority through other means. Rebecca also explained that as she is not caucasian Canadian, she felt that she had to present herself in a way that conveyed authority and professionalism, as her course content was often controversial. Rebecca emphasized that she wanted her clothing to show that she was professional and "had value to offer", despite being a visible minority, thus not assumed to be an authority in the workplace. As these women's personal fronts possess uncontrollable physical characteristics which position them as something other than the ideal academic, they use clothing as controllable aspects of their appearance and personal front in order to access power and authority in the workplace.

Unlike Ava, Rebecca and Natalia, Gwen (a Caucasian assistant professor) emphasized that her priority in the classroom was her intellect not her appearance, and as such, she repeatedly stated that she paid little to no attention to how she presented herself at work and thought very little about clothing. This is interesting as Gwen was wearing unique earrings, a colourful scarf, and tall leather winter boots which were "the only boots I can wear on the ice", indicating at least some attention paid to personal style and self-presentation, despite denying this. Gwen further explained that "I'm just so ordinary...my generic-ness means I don't really need to think about it [dress]". By ordinary, Gwen meant that she generally fits the dominant expectations, she is Caucasian, able bodied, adhered to a neutral feminine appearance (was not specifically feminine, nor

masculine in her self-presentation) and was not overweight. By positioning herself as ordinary, Gwen's statement is a clear indication of who is not considered ordinary in academia; racialized women, women who are either so feminine or so masculine that it becomes noticeable, and women with disabilities. This further highlights the importance placed on women's dress and appearance in general for those who do not fit this dominant description. Since they are already less likely to be accepted as authority figures based on characteristic states which they cannot easily change, these women must present themselves in a way which conveys professionalism and authority through carriers such as clothing. The use of culturally understood symbols can help to guide human interaction as long as all the actors involved have a similar understanding of the cultural meaning attributed to these symbols.

In the workplace, the culturally understood symbols which contribute to behaviours and interaction among colleagues can become confusing if there are individuals coming from various cultural backgrounds. These symbols may carry different meanings and evoke different behaviours across other cultures. As symbolic interactionism indicates, there are culturally understood symbols which help to guide human interaction (Berg 2009). However, as these symbols are culturally distinct, there might be confusion when individuals of different cultural backgrounds are interacting with one another. Camille explained that at times she felt that the international students in her classes were more difficult to convince of her intellect and authority. Camille explained that some men in her classes from other cultures seemed to respect her less than other students who had been raised in the Canadian context. In these situations Camille's personal front and the carriers she presents through her appearance and manner are not producing the appropriate behaviours in these students. This confusion may be the result of misunderstood mean-

ings as these students have come to understand the symbols and norms differently. As such, it can become hard for female professors to navigate a multicultural classroom. Similarly, as Valentine explained, when she wore anything in the summer revealing any skin, the men in her department who were not raised in the Canadian context reacted more overtly than some of her Canadian colleagues. As Goffman (1959) emphasizes, symbols are culturally understood and the meanings and expected behaviour attributed to these symbols are specific to that culture as well. As Valentine experienced, the men raised in non-Canadian cultural contexts behaved in ways which Valentine felt were inappropriate; there is an inconsistency between the cultural understandings Valentine attributes to her clothing's symbols and the behaviours of the non-Canadian colleagues. Furthermore, Valentine indicated that within her department the Canadian women reacted very differently to these comments than the women raised in non-Canadian contexts. Valentine and other Canadian colleagues felt these comments were inappropriate, whereas women from different cultural contexts dismissed the comments as being insignificant and "boys being boys". This difference in women's reactions further highlights the cultural aspects behind the meaning attributed to symbols. In a separate interview, Sofia, who was raised in the same context as many of Valentine's male and female colleagues, explained that she was unaffected by students commenting on her attractiveness, perceiving these comments as "not serious". Interestingly, these two perspectives seem to support one another and highlight the cultural aspects of femininity and self presentation for women in the Canadian academic context.

When participants were asked if they felt their clothing was an act of conformity or resistance, the near immediate answer from most participants was that they did not participate in any types of resistance or political statements. Gwen rejected the notion that clothing could be seen as resistance, she explained that while she was used to being the only woman in male dominated academic settings, she felt comfortable in these contexts and did not believe how she dressed would have any effect on these interactions. She further explained that these male dominated contexts required her to fight for her stance, and be “intellectually aggressive” to be respected. However she said this was part of her personality and saw no need to dress a certain way, as being a woman in this setting was a kind of rebellion. Gwen’s interview repeatedly rejected the notion that dress could be important, she emphasized that clothing was not something she thought about and did not believe other people thought very much about either. For Gwen, the focus should be on her ideas and academic contributions, as such, she rejected the expectation for women to spend time, thought and energy on self-presentation and clothing. Many participants felt that like Gwen, they did not use their clothing as a way to engage in some form of resistance. However, throughout some participants’ responses, some came to see their dress as a balance between resisting and conforming.

The first participant to speculate around this resistance was Samantha, she began by explaining that she did not wear revealing clothing, but also recognized that the group had just discussed the fact that there was no dress code in academia, so there was no rule against wearing revealing outfits. As there was no rule against dressing in a way which was revealing, Samantha wondered why she then felt uncomfortable doing so. Samantha further speculated that perhaps dressing in such a way might be an avenue to push back against the male dominated academic

structure, and push the boundaries of the expectations on female academics (while emphasizing that this was not something she would do). As previously discussed, femininity and the female body were inconsistent with the front of female academic, and symbols of femininity such as high heels, bras and low cut clothing were undesirable in academia. According to Scott's (1990) theory of everyday resistance, for female professors, dressing in a way which called specific attention to femininity and sexuality may be a hidden transcript used to resist these assumptions around the incompatibility between women's appearance and intelligence. This kind of subtle resistance could be used to illustrate that while these women were appearing in ways not typically expected of the ideal academic, they were still contributing valuable and important knowledge to academia.

Cynthia explained that she did not own clothing which could make a statement, and she "wouldn't even know what I would want to say". During discussions Cynthia explained that she had never felt insecurity in her position in academia as she was hired directly out of her PhD, and also emphasized that for her it did not matter what her students thought of her, because she was going to teach them regardless if they listened or not. Interestingly, Cynthia differed from most participants on her stance in relation to high heels. As was previously discussed, high heels are a carrier for a feminine personal front and convey meanings linked to female sexuality, and as such, were considered by most participants as inappropriate in academia. For Cynthia, high heels, while clear symbols of femininity, brought her confidence and made her feel powerful. By using one of the most exclusively feminine pieces of women's dress to access power in the classroom, she is working within the dominant expectations of women's dress, but the meaning Cynthia attributes to the high heels are different from the meaning of high heels in the public tran-

script, allowing Cynthia to access a feeling of power and authority, but she did not perceive this as an act of resistance.

Similar to Samantha and Cynthia, both Valerie and Camille initially claimed they did not participate in resistance of any kind. However, throughout our discussions on resistance, each of the two participants mentioned that they felt they belonged in their positions, *despite* having blonde hair. Both women acknowledged that there exists assumptions around blonde women, specifically that they are not serious or intelligent. Blondness was a symbol conveying meaning which Valerie and Camille recognized could be problematic in the academic workplace. Neither of the two women however were willing to change their hair colour or style, a decision which neither participant perceived as resistance prior to their respective interviews. Camille explained that as she was a relatively tall woman, she felt she gave off a serious air despite her blondness. Valerie explained that she tends to fall into the category of conforming, however, she refuses to ever cut her long blonde hair. Valerie further explained that as she dressed fairly conservatively, she felt it allowed her the flexibility to keep her blonde hair. Her conservative dress which she referred to as “low profile” and minimized her femininity helped to counterbalance her blonde hair. Both women recognized that blonde hair is not something that is associated with intelligence and by refusing to change their hair colour, they acknowledged that they were consciously choosing to present themselves as something other than "intelligent" thus other than the ideal professor. Blonde hair then, could be part of their hidden transcripts, which resisted the assumptions around both women and academics, to illustrate that blonde women should be taken seriously in academia.

Several other participants recognized that they felt their dress was a mix of conforming and resisting. These women happened to be members of visible minority groups as well. Rebecca, Sofia and Ava all explained that they felt that there were multiple aspects to their dress, some of which were conforming, but through this conforming, they were resisting certain assumptions as well. For Ava, conforming was her primary approach to dressing, but she said it did not bother her that she conformed to these expectations of dress and self-presentation as she wanted to show young female students that “this is what an intelligent, authority figure looks like”. As previously discussed, Ava explained it was hard for minority groups of any kind to gain respect in academia, as members of these groups are often not assumed to be authority figures. For Ava, being present in academia and doing a good job while also being a woman and a minority, was an important way to resist the overall academic structure which tends to be both white, and male-dominated. Conforming in her dress then becomes a way for Ava to be taken seriously in academia, and show that there are different ways to look like an authority figure.

For both Rebecca and Sofia, they felt that their daily approach to dressing was a mix of conforming and resisting. Rebecca explained that in her work with the government as well as in academia there were times where she felt the fact that she was not Anglo-Saxon Canadian had a negative effect on how people perceived her contributions and value in the workplace. She speculated that her dress choice, while being very conscious and careful to present herself in ways that were professional, may be a pre-emptive way of avoiding people questioning her authority. For Rebecca, dressing in a way which conformed to the expectations of dress for academics, and avoiding presenting herself in ways which were specifically feminine, was a way to show people that “I’m here, take me seriously” and that she had “value to offer”. By using her dress as a way

to present herself as professional, Rebecca, and Sofia agreed, they were resisting the assumptions around what was considered a professor, or who could be an academic.

Conforming dress then becomes a hidden transcript for these women who belong to racialized groups, by conforming to the dominant expectations of academics or authority figures, these women were resisting the assumption that women belonging to visible minority groups could not be these authority figures.

Through their clothing, women professors may have the opportunity to resist the academic structure which can create barriers for their careers; clothing and dress can be an important tool which female academics have at their disposal to access power and authority which may be inaccessible to them through other means. Female professors experience academia differently than their male counterparts; women at times must navigate unequal power, questioned authority and a lack of academic respect from both students and colleagues in the institution. Some female professors dress for themselves, however, they are also dressing for those who are looking at them. Both students and colleagues can impact the way a female professor presents herself at work. Avoiding femininity, using dress as protection and an avenue to professionalism, or resisting the male dominated university structure, clothing is an important aspect in self presentation in the workplace. Dress and clothing can be used by women in different ways, but female academics' experiences of dressing for work in academia can provide insight into women academics' experiences of inequality as well as empowerment when working in academia.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This research examined the role dress plays in women's daily lives, looking specifically at academic women's dress in the Canadian university setting. Dress is inextricably linked to power, as such, less powerful people may be able to use dress to access more authority in certain contexts. For women, people of colour, and other members of minority groups, dress is directly implicated in their daily experiences of navigating power and authority in the workplace.

Through this research I explored the notion that people for whom power and authority are more accessible, have the privilege of worrying less about their dress and self-presentation, than people for whom power is more difficult to access. Taking a symbolic interactionist approach to clothing and personal appearance, the research question guiding this study was: how do female professors perceive their self-presentation and dress in the workplace? As well as the sub-question: What does "resistance" look like when it is not achieved through overt social movements? Through the on-line and face-to-face focus groups as well as one-on-one interviews with female professors, I explored what expectations female professors perceive are placed on their dress and self-presentation, how they understand they are being perceived by others and how this influences their academic careers.

A total of 16 female professors were recruited, of the 16 participants, six participated in face-to-face focus groups, and five in an online discussion. The remaining five participants contributed individual interviews. The participants varied in academic disciplines throughout the Social Sciences and the Arts as well as academic rank, from contract or part-time to Emeritus status. The participants in the study were majority Caucasian, but there were four women belonging to visible minority groups. The participants varied in age, and half the participants were mothers,

but only Anna was known to be a married, lesbian mother. When looking at academic rank, the participants ranged from part-time and contract professors, to various tenured positions and emeritus status.

The discussion groups were generated at random, based on professor's availability; Cynthia, Lise and Samantha were part of the first focus group discussion, the second being Colleen, Sofia and Rebecca. The individual interviews took place with Camille, Valentine, Gwen, Ava, and Valerie, the online focus group had five participants; Madelaine, Hillary, Margot, Anna and Natalia. The face to face focus groups and interviews covered broad questions pertaining to how women decided what to wear to work, departmental dress codes, inappropriate dress for the workplace, comments from colleagues and peers regarding dress, and finally dress possibly being used as a form of resistance in the current Canadian academic structure. In the online discussion group, participants were asked to submit images of their "ideal work outfits" and a description as to why these were ideal for them. The other participants then commented and these images, indicating if they would wear these choices to work. Informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to being added to the on-line group or participation in either a face-to-face focus group or interview.

This project applied a theoretical thematic analysis to the transcripts, as there are pre-existing research questions which were used for this analysis, and these contributed to the development of the themes (Braun and Clarke 2006, 12). This project's thematic analysis along with the theoretical framework explored gender inequality in academia, using dress as a lens of analysis. This analysis included both a description as well as an analysis of each theme, as they relate to why women dress the way they do when working in academia.

This project generated an important contribution to the existing literature pertaining to women's dress and self-presentation in the workplace. The results and analysis show that women, and other people belonging to minority groups, have less inherent access to power and authority in the workplace. As such, dress becomes a tool which these less powerful people can use to access this power and authority. However, this creates a double bind as they must put in extra work and effort in order to present themselves in a way which provides them access to the power which is often easily accessible by members of the dominant group. If some people have to worry about their dress more than others as a result of their social characteristics and positioning, yet putting effort into dress is considered frivolous, the struggle for power becomes very complicated in these settings. As fashion and dress is often dismissed as frivolous and unimportant (Simmel 1957; Blumer 1969), people in positions of lesser power can equally be criticized for undertaking extra effort in their appearance. Through the group discussions and interviews, participants explained that they wished to present themselves as professional, and there are certain articles of clothing which can be used to convey specific messages in the workplace (Goffman 1959). Beyond certain pieces of clothing being considered appropriate or not for the workplace, the participants also collectively rejected presenting an overly feminine appearance. As was explored in the theoretical framework, symbols of femininity convey messages and indicate traits which are often undesirable for and inconsistent with the expectations of the ideal academic (Ridgeway 1991; 1993; 2011).

In rejecting overly feminine dress, the participants highlighted the existing social structure which prioritizes masculine traits and bodies in the workplace and more specifically in academia (Ridgeway 2011). The ideal academic being predominantly understood as male, positions

women as something other than this ideal, thus potentially creating subtle systemic barriers to women's advancement in academia. To be reasonable, or associated with intelligence, is not associated with being a woman. The commonly held cultural beliefs about women's capabilities and traits contribute to their lower status value (Ridgeway 1991); women presenting themselves as women then, can inhibit their success in the academic workplace. As dress is a way for women to present themselves as women, fashion is a useful lens through which we can examine gender inequality in the academic workplace. The unequal access to power in professional settings, such as academia, becomes evident when analysing the choices women make in presenting themselves through their clothing. The unequal access to authority and power in these settings may at times require people of lesser power to engage in resistance or struggle in order to access this authority. While many participants did not believe they were engaging in any kind of resistance with their choice of dress, several participants did claim to engage in what Scott (1990) calls everyday resistance through their dress. Female professors' choice of dress could at times allow them to create space for themselves in academia, despite possessing characteristics not typically associated with power and authority.

This project would have benefitted from the addition of more racially diverse voices, however as was discussed in the methodology, the difficulty in recruiting participants with these characteristics was difficult as the overall demographic in academia is disproportionately Caucasian. Recruitment in general was difficult and time constraints limited the recruitment process, however, future research may benefit from seeking exclusively racialized participants in order to more successfully concentrate the recruitment documents and process on members of these groups and thus collect data more reflective of this section of the population. Furthermore, a

study examining men's dress, particularly men in positions other than the heteronormative preference of white, able bodied, masculine and heterosexual men, could bring further complexities of the role dress plays in men's lives and the struggle for power in various contexts

The method of using on-line focus groups to generate discussion is relatively new, as such, convincing professors to participate through this platform was difficult. To avoid this in future, recruitment for face-to-face and on-line discussions could be conducted separately, in order to limit the participants' choices to simply participating or not, as opposed to participating in on-line or face-to-face focus groups or not participating at all. Finally, while the face-to-face discussions were able to clarify and uncover some more detailed responses than the on-line focus group, these face-to-face encounters may have benefitted from the use of the "ideal outfits", to add a visual element to the discussions.

This study has revealed the importance and potential of women's clothing and dress in uncovering existing structural inequalities, as well as the potential to approach resistance in a different way. However future research may benefit from focussing on groups of women with specific characteristics such as; women of colour, transgendered women, women of non-heteronormative sexualities or gender expressions, women in other workplace contexts and women with disabilities. In focusing specifically on these groups of women's experiences, the multiple intersections of gender with other social positions could provide important insight into women's experiences of dressing for their everyday lives as well as the struggles they regularly face.

Academics are often assumed to be intelligent individuals and academia itself is often thought to be progressive as a result. Through examining women's dress, this study has revealed that in the university workplace, the inequalities and social assumptions pertaining to gender,

race, class, ability, and sexuality continue to inform power dynamics. As such, certain professors have greater access to power than others based on their social positioning as opposed to their actual capabilities and job performance. The access to power informs women's choice of dress; those with less power in the workplace may be able to use dress to acquire some of this authority. While not generating widespread change, women's use of dress can subtly resist the dominant power structure. If these inequalities and assumptions are allowed to permeate a "progressive" institution like academia, they are likely to remain engrained in society at large as well.

Appendix A

Focus Groups/Interview Guides

Online Focus Group Directions

- 1) Search online to find images of your “ideal work outfit” and submit these to the researcher via email. Include a description of why this outfit is ideal for you. Describe why you chose these pieces of clothing for your ideal work outfit. How would you feel when wearing this outfit? How do you want to be perceived when wearing this outfit? What roles do your gender, class, race/ethnicity, dis/ability, sexuality or other aspects of yourself play in these choices?
- 2) Participate in the on-line discussion by commenting on other participants' outfits. Try to answer the following questions on each participants' submission: Would you wear this ideal outfit to work? Why or why not?

In Person Questions (Face-to-Face Focus Groups and One-on-One Interviews)

- 1) How do you decide what to wear to work?
- 2) What kind of image are you trying to present through your clothing?
- 3) How do you know what you are “supposed” to wear to work?
- 4) What comments have you received about your professional appearance?
- 5) How do you see your clothing choices as an act of conformity? An act of resistance?
- 6) What roles do your gender, class, race, dis/ability, sexuality or other aspects of yourself play in your clothing choices at work?
- 7) Any other insights?

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