

AN EXAMINATION OF INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN ITALIAN AND AMERICAN FASHION CULTURES: PAST, PRESENT, AND PROJECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

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ABSTRACT

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Title: An Examination of the Individual Differences in Italian and American Fashion Cultures: Past, Present, and Projections for the Future

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What does it mean for a nation to be a “global icon” in the fashion world and how exactly do they get there? Today, both the United States and Italy are part of the leading nations in the fashion world, yet the two countries have significantly different histories and cultures. By examining the individual histories, cultures, and global interactions of Italy and the United States, a pattern emerges for the manner in which a nation rises to power in the fashion industry. Important historical events tend to result in sociological and psychological responses and changes within society. Consequently, individual differences in fashion culture correspond to the major political and cultural events throughout the course of a nation’s history. How can the histories of Italy and the United States be used to understand the method in which they became modern-day global fashion icons, and how can this knowledge be used to make predictions for the future of fashion? These are the questions this paper seeks to answer.

Fashion design has been used by various groups of people over the course of history to outwardly express their thoughts and emotions regarding political and social climates of the time. The United States and Italy are two nations that not only influence fashion for many others, but they also have a stronghold on the direction of current social and political climates. The first task is to examine the complete history of each nations, identifying the major political and cultural events that sparked changes in society and consequently influenced fashion design. The second task is to examine the present-day fashion cultures of Italy and the United States, while considering their global interactions and influences on each other. The third and final task is to use historical evidence to develop and propose predictions for the future of the fashion industry on a global scale and within each nation.

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INTRODUCTION

“There is perhaps no closer link to an individual and to an understanding of that individual than that person’s visual self-presentation to the world.”

– Anita Stamper, *Clothing through American History*

Humans have to make a decision every morning when they wake up. Whether or not this decision is made by a conscious effort, they choose by their own free will the manner in which they want to live that day. A human’s self-presentation to society can be constructed in a variety of ways: through their thoughts, actions, words, motivations, or physical appearance. In his book *The Self*, social psychologist Dr. Jonathon Brown defines self-presentation behavior as “any behavior intended to create, modify, or maintain an impression of ourselves in the minds of others” (160). To understand the origin and function of the concept of self-presentation, scholars turn to the fields of philosophy, psychology, and sociology to develop a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon. Psychologists focus on the inner workings of human minds, while sociologists study the interactions between humans. However, these foci neglect to investigate a critical component of self-presentation: physical appearance through dress.

This project contends that the study of fashion psychology must be incorporated into this conversation in order to develop a more complete understanding of social identification through self-presentation. The field of fashion psychology has its roots in the late 19th century, when William James – often considered the “Father of American psychology” – became the first American psychologist to shed light on the psychological properties in the fashion world (CareersinPsychology.org). Nevertheless, the field of fashion psychology was largely disregarded for decades until the 21st century. Today, it is still working through its pioneer stages, and it is significantly understudied compared to other fields in psychology.

In order to contribute greater knowledge and understanding to the foundation of fashion psychology, this thesis works to identify major events in a society's history that influenced the zeitgeist of its members, in turn influencing their physical appearance through dress over time. Studying one society would neglect to analyze differences between the many societies that comprise the human race. For that reason, this paper will analyze the individual differences in the fashion cultures of two nations – Italy and the United States. However, it is important to note that this discussion will not be applicable to all other fashion cultures. It merely provides explication for differences that may arise between fashion cultures, using Italian and American culture as an example.

Both Italy and the United States are considered as leaders in the fashion industry, yet the two countries are remarkably different in their individual histories and cultures. Italian culture dates back to ancient civilizations, which allows ample time to develop a rich culture. In contrast, between the beginning of the ancient Roman Empire and the first North American colonists, the culture of the United States has only been in existence for approximately 0.07% of the lifetime of Italian culture. From this perspective, the United States was equally able to develop its own world-renowned fashion culture in a remarkably short period of time.

The individual histories of Italy and the United States will be analyzed in order to build a better understanding of the development of these nations into global fashion icons. First, this thesis will highlight major events over the course of each nation's history. Next, it will discuss these events' impact on Italian and American societies, focusing on the zeitgeist for particular periods of time. Then, it will analyze the historical events' subsequent influence on their fashion cultures from the beginning of their individual histories to the present-day.

Ultimately, the thesis will argue for a pattern that emerges overtime regarding the manner in which Italy and the United States developed their own unique, highly-respected fashion cultures and industries. Following the sentiments of George Santayana, a philosopher who coined the aphorism about history tending to repeat itself, this thesis will content that same historical pattern can be used to make reasonable projections for the future of the fashion industries in Italy and the United States. Moreover, the influence of fashion design in both Italy and the United States goes far beyond their homelands, as they are two of the top leaders in global fashion; therefore, predictions regarding the future of Italian and American fashion may also be used to foresee the future of the fashion world as a whole.

In conclusion, this thesis argues that by identifying key historical factors that influenced fashion cultures over time, we can make reasonable predictions for the future of Italian and American fashion cultures, as well as tentative predictions about the future fashion industry as a whole. Knowledge of the individual differences in Italian and American histories and fashion cultures will ultimately provide readers with a deeper understanding of the presentation of the self in Italian and American societies. By better understanding the development of self-presentation in everyday life through dress, this paper will contribute to the framework of the up-and-coming field of Fashion Psychology.

ONE FINAL NOTE:

This work is by no means a complete reflection of the fashion cultures in Italy and the United States. In reality, there are many more events not discussed in this paper that were influential to the development of the fashion cultures in Italy and the United States. For the

sake of this thesis, the ones chosen for discussion tell a compelling story and highlight the most important developments and differences between the two nations. Although men and children's apparel are discussed, the predominant focus will be on women's fashion. This focus is influenced in part by the historical prominence of females in the fashion industry and also by the wider variation in dress associated with women's apparel.

It should be noted that much of the information provided in this paper is taken from various sources of fashion history, which tend to simplify and generalize the manner of dress for specific periods of time, while frequently focusing on middle and upper classes. Readers should realize that the historical accounts, while accurate, are not necessarily representative of the whole population of interest. Furthermore, this conversation is focused on fashion culture in Italy and the United States, and it does not intend to generalize, supplement, or replace ideologies from these nations to the rest of the world. Finally, the historical examinations are divided into distinct periods of time for the sake of clarity and organization, and readers should not assume that the beginning of each new time period marks a sudden change in the current fashion unless noted otherwise.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHILE READING:

1. What kind of historical factors do Italy and America have in common?
2. Which factors/events are historically unique?
3. Which historical events influenced the fashion cultures in Italy and America to promote their individual differences in fashion?

PART 1: HISTORY OF ITALIAN FASHION

“Italians know that what matters is style, not fashion.” – Stefano Gabbana

“Don’t be into trends. Don’t make fashion own you, but you decide what you are, what you want to express by the way you dress and the way you live.” – Gianni Versace

*Italian culture dates back thousands of years to the times of ancient Rome and has since developed fame for its long history of artistic, literary, musical, and intellectual movements. For much of its history, Italy has existed as an agricultural country with a rich culture, but it did not have a significant role in the global fashion industry until 1945. Today, Italy is considered the leader of international fashion, followed by France, Spain, the United States, and the United Kingdom (USNews.com). This section divides the development of Italy as a country, fashion industry, and culture into five distinct periods of time based on major historical and cultural movements and transitions: Ancient Rome and the Holy Roman Empire, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Neoclassicism and Romanticism movements, and Fascist to Republican Italy. Modern Italian fashion in the 21st century fashion will be discussed further in **PART 3: DISCUSSION OF INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES.***

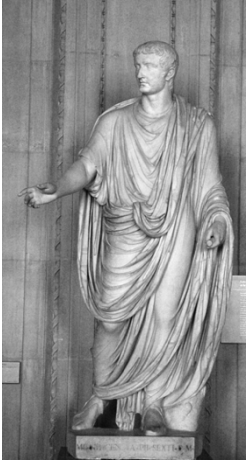
Ancient Rome and the Holy Roman Empire: 8th century BCE – 5th century CE

The origins of Italian culture date back to ancient Roman civilization, to the establishment of Rome as its capital during the 8th century BCE¹. Since its founding, Rome has undergone many changes throughout its abundant history of wars and conquests. The originally small town of Rome expanded its central location on the Tiber River, encompassed large amounts of territory throughout Europe, and eventually developed into the capital of one of the largest empires in European history. Rome was governed as a kingdom from 753-509 BCE, then developed into a republic from 509-27 BCE, and dominated as an empire from 27 BCE to its collapse in 476 CE (*History.com*). Its changes and developments were influenced by the different rulers, occupations, and invasions of Italy by other ethnic groups. Rome has not

¹ Note that BCE stands for “Before the Common Era” and CE stands for “the Common Era”

always been the political, economic, and cultural capital of Italy; however, it was highly influential on Roman culture as the founding capital of the Roman Empire in the 8th century BCE and the capital of the Catholic Church in the 1st century CE.

The long and complex history of Italian culture reflects the development of Italian fashion. Early textiles and fashion styles had Greek and Egyptian influences, but Roman styles



Marble statue (c. 1st century CE)
of Roman Emperor Tiberius
wearing a draped toga
Source: The Louvre Museum

gradually developed in its early history. In the beginning, ancient Rome exhibited the most basic form of dress – the traditional Roman toga. Before they were carefully draped around the body in a fashionable manner, togas resembled a long white sheet of fabric. The toga was originally worn by men, women, and the military, with little to no distinctions for class and rank. Differentiations between class and gender began to emerge in fashion around the 2nd century BC. The Roman Republic designated different qualities of fabric for different ranks.

The elite class in Ancient Rome was known as the patricians, and their ancestors could be traced back to the founders of Rome; however, the majority of Roman citizens comprised the class of plebeians. The upper-class patricians wore thin togas made out of white wool or naturally colored linen, while the lower-class plebeians wore coarser, darker-colored togas. Togas differentiated further for certain Romans involved in the government. For example, togas worn by the military were shorter than togas worn by regular civilians, and some togas featured colorful borders for special occasions and high-ranking officials.

Although traditional, the classic toga style fell out of fashion rather early due to its unsuitability in cold climates and restrictive movement. For casualwear, Romans switched to wearing a more comfortable tunic – a garment that was traditionally worn under the toga, but

eventually replaced the toga altogether. Tunics resembled long t-shirt dresses and were produced in a variety of fabrics, typically linen for the summer and wool for the winter. Class distinctions continued to influence an individual's dress; plebeians wore tunics constructed out of coarse dark fabric, and patricians wore tunics made out of thin white fabric. Ancient Roman footwear also distinguished an individual's gender. Generally, women wore closed-toed shoes and men wore sandals. Distinctions in social class were further apparent in some Romans' shoes: patricians wore red sandals, senators wore brown shoes with straps that wrapped up and around the leg, consuls wore white shoes, and soldiers wore heavy boots.

There are very few detailed accounts of fashion in ancient Roman civilization; nevertheless, historians are able to determine general trends and styles through depictions in Roman artwork and other records. Women appear to retire their togas after the 2nd century BC, yet those who continued to adorn togas were considered prostitutes (*Crystalinks.com*). Most women wore simple garments like tunics that were derivative of Greek fashion, as well as the occasional shawl or cloak for warmer outerwear. Ancient Roman women did not adorn wigs like some of their male counterparts or hats like their slaves, but they were expected to wear a cover over their heads whenever they left their homes. Women also wore their hair long down or up in curled extravagant styles, and they often dyed their hair in a shade of golden-red. Roman women loved to accessorize, and they developed a specific admiration for pearl jewelry.



Fresco from Pompeii (c. 55-79) depicting a typical woman's hairstyle in Ancient Rome
Source: National Archaeological Museum of Naples

For men of the ruling class, the toga remained the standard attire of dress. Men of other classes adopted more comfortable, less restrictive tunics that were more practical for work outside or leisure. Men occasionally wore wigs to hide baldness or disguise themselves. In early

Roman history, men likely wore longer hairstyles and fuller beards; however, Roman men shifted toward shorter styles and a clean-shaven look around 300 BCE with the introduction of barbers. Unlike Roman women, who loved to wear a variety of ornate accessories, Roman men usually only wore rings, and just one ring at a time, as a display of power and wealth.

Roman children dressed in a simplified version of their parents' apparel. Girls typically wore a simple belted tunic and covered themselves with a second floor-length tunic when they went outside. Boys wore white knee-length tunics with a crimson border that remained on their clothes until they came of age. Barbershops became a place of social gatherings for young men because their first shave was considered a rite of passage into manhood and a celebration in the Roman community. Men, women, and children of all classes wore loincloths as undergarments, and some women also wore a breast cloth.

Ancient Roman civilization did not have the advanced technology needed for manufacturing and maintaining large amounts of clothes, so their wardrobes were relatively simple and practical in size. To clean their clothes, historians believe they must have fashioned their own type of clothesline and somehow washed clothes by hand because the washboard was not invented until much later. Ancient wall art contains some clues regarding this process in its depictions of fullers. Fullers were Roman citizens whose job was to clean other citizens' clothes. The first Roman laundry methods are still unclear to historians because Romans lacked the amount of water and proper cleaning equipment needed to launder clothes in their own home before the development of Roman aqueducts in the 3rd century CE.



Fresco, Pompeii (c. 1st century AD), Workers putting up clothes to dry in a fuller's shop
Source: National Archaeological Museum of Naples

The start of the Common Era is famous for the emergence and growth of Christianity into a major world religion. Jesus of Nazareth, commonly referred to as Jesus Christ, was born right around the beginning of the Common Era. Jesus is famous for proclaiming to be the son of God, performing a multitude of miracles throughout his life, and gaining a large following of disciples in a short period of time. Around 30 CE, Jesus was arrested for blasphemy, tried in court, scourged at the pillar, sentenced to death by Pontius Pilate, and crucified by the Romans. Gospel accounts written down by Jesus' disciples around 75 CE describe his miraculous resurrection from the dead and ascendance into heaven. Jesus' followers became known as "Christians" and their numbers continued to grow exponentially after his death, due largely in part by his disciples that dedicated their lives to spreading Christ's life story and the word of God. The rise of Christianity did not profoundly impact Roman dress in the Middle Ages, but it is critical to understand its assimilation into Roman society and culture because it will become a foundation of Roman tradition throughout the rest of Italian history.

The rise and development of early European civilizations began around 10,000 BCE and continued through 1500 CE. The 3rd century was particularly significant in the history of the Roman Empire because it was marked by a series of crises that ultimately led to the fall of the empire and the start of the Medieval Times. This period of turmoil is referred to by historians as the "Crisis of the 3rd Century" and had several contributing factors. First, the Roman empire was too vast and diverse to be ruled successfully by one man, so its rulers struggled to maintain power and control over their subjects. Second, Roman conquests slowed to a halt, causing a

lack of money and resources. Third, without money or resources to pay their military, the Romans lacked a strong defense against Persian and barbarian² invasions.

Driven out of their homelands by drought, barbarians invaded the Roman Empire for food and money. To combat these invaders, the Romans offered the barbarians a place in their military in exchange for peace. It only took two short decades for these barbarians to learn Latin and assimilate into Roman culture, and some of them even rose in military ranks. Eventually, the most powerful barbarians in the military performed a series of coups on the empire. Provincial military leaders rose as emperors, but only ruled for a short time because they were quickly killed as they were non-Romans. Within a span of eighty years, the Roman Empire had twenty different rulers during the 3rd century. This instability in the government was the main reason for the crisis of the 3rd century.

This vicious cycle between the rise and destruction of twenty different rulers in the 3rd century led to upheaval in the provinces. Roman officials wanted a stronger military and increased taxes to control the provinces, but neither was successful in settling the turmoil. The solution to this crisis came from a Croatian man named Diocletian, who proposed that the empire should rule with a tetrarchy. According to Diocletian's solution, the empire was divided in half, establishing the Eastern and Western Roman Empires; furthermore, each half had one main ruler, named Augustus, and one junior ruler, named Caesar, who would take over after the death of his Augustus. The tetrarchy was successful only for a short time because it was dissolved in 327 CE by Constantine when he became the sole emperor of the empire through his powerful military and strong leadership. Although the Crisis of the 3rd Century itself did not

² In the time of ancient civilizations, 'barbarian' was a term used for people who did not speak Latin.

significantly impact Roman dress, it is important for understanding the atmosphere of late Middle Ages and the transition to Renaissance culture.

Around 300 CE, the production of clothing in ancient Rome was transformed by the invention of the horizontal loom. However, the transition from the vertical to horizontal loom was extremely gradual. Large-scale clothing production by horizontal looms did not reach its peak until the Middle Ages. Likewise, Roman fashion changed gradually over the next several hundred years, as the shift in production methods increased the presence of decorative elements seen on clothing worn by soldiers and other members of the Roman government. For instance, heavy military-style belts became popular during the later portion of ancient Roman history, symbolizing the militarization of government in the empire. Silk imported from China was originally a very rare luxury, but the use of silk increased steadily throughout later years of the Roman Empire. Trousers worn by Germans and Persians were also introduced in later years, but they were limited in popularity for centuries. Roman culture has always been distinct for its traditional values, and consequently, the majority of Roman citizens considered trousers as barbaric and a sign of cultural decay.

Between 100 and 300 CE, Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire, but its monotheistic ideology conflicted with traditional Roman polytheism. Christians suffered through years of religious persecution until 306 CE, when Constantine Augustus became emperor of Rome. Constantine was the first Roman emperor to convert to Christianity, and he played an influential role in its legalization. During the Edict of Milan in 313 CE, Constantine proclaimed the legalization of Christianity and tolerance for all other religions throughout the empire. Constantine also worked on building his military strength during his reign, and by doing

so, he successfully became the sole emperor of the East and the West by 324 CE. Constantine's legacy remains in his renaming of the Eastern Roman Empire's capital from Byzantium to Constantinople. One decade after Constantine's reign, Emperor Theodosius rose to power and became famous for his declaration of Christianity as the official religion of the Holy Roman Empire in the year 380 CE.

At the peak of its territorial control in 395 CE, the massive Roman Empire was fully split into the Eastern and Western Empires. As a whole, the empire encompassed most of the lands in continental Europe, Britain, western Asian, northern Africa, and the Mediterranean islands, and it had authority over all the people from these areas. Through each successful conquest, the Romans imposed their Roman lifestyle on the conquered, which became characteristic of Roman traditions.

Romans' exertion of power made an impactful mark on history and contributed long-lasting affects throughout later history, including: widespread use of Romance languages, the rise of Christianity, and the westernization of the alphabet and calendar. Nonetheless, the massive Roman Empire would soon face many issues regarding the protection of their vast territory from Germanic barbarian invasions and control over their conquered people that came from an assortment of disparate backgrounds. Overall, the earliest periods in Italian culture remained rather traditional in styles of dress. Romans valued ancient traditions for centuries to come, but the development of Italian culture was hindered by barbaric invasions during the long dismal period of the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, Italian fashion designers and manufacturers would continue to emanate these traditional values in their notorious handmade products, beginning in the Middle Ages and throughout Italy's rise to fashion fame.

The Middle Ages: 5th to 15th century

The Middle Ages, also known as the Medieval Times, is a period of time characterized by divisiveness, disunity, and discord that was further aggravated by a greater number of barbarian invasions than ever before. One powerful group of barbarians, known as the Visigoths, brought devastation to the ancient Mediterranean world in 410 CE when they successfully sacked Rome – the beloved capital of the empire and the Catholic Church. Weakened by waves of invasions, the Western Roman Empire faced its downfall in 476 CE when a barbarian military leader named Odoacer deposed the last Roman emperor, Romulus Augustus, and declared himself King of Italy. The fall of the Western Roman Empire is widely considered by historians as the beginning of the Middle Ages. The period of time between 500-1000 has been coined the “Dark Ages” by historians due to the decline of culture with the collapse of ancient Roman civilizations; however, the vigilant Italian city-states worked to remain strong in the face of controversy.

Advancements in fashion and other artistic crafts that began in Ancient Rome came to a halt with the collapse of the Roman Empire. For centuries to come, Italy was left without a unified political structure. Like much of Western Europe, the Italian Peninsula experienced a multitude of invasions and divisions during the Middle Ages. Fortunately, the city of Rome withstood the turmoil of the Middle Ages, largely due to its status as the center of the Holy Roman Catholic Church. Although the Middle Ages did not bring significant developments in fashion, it is important to understand the history of this time because it laid the foundation for later revivals in art, culture, and society.

Western Europe ruralized during the 5th and 6th centuries as barbarians continued to move into the Roman Empire. At the same time, Eastern Europe faced its first pandemic of the bubonic plague. Nearly half of the population of Europe died from famine, disease, and invasions during this time, and those who survived feared for their lives. Fearful of outside dangers, towns began to move inside their walls, cities shrunk from the decline in population, and nobles fled to the countryside to hide in their castles. Until this point, society was changing very gradually because the barbarians actively assimilated into the Roman culture. What remained of the Roman Empire changed drastically once famine and disease struck the region.

With a fragmented political structure and the destruction of Roman infrastructure by invasions, those who survived the plague, famine, and invasions were left without any physical connecting network amongst the various kingdoms in Western Europe. Alone and afraid in the aftermath of Rome, the only real connection between European kingdoms was their Christian heritage. The Catholic Church was able to establish a sense of universality among the fragmented remains of the Roman Empire in an effort to help unite and protect the geographically isolated kingdoms against the dangerous climate of the Middle Ages. The unification of the members of the Catholic Church in the east and west marks the beginning of “Latin Christendom” in the Middle Ages – Latin being the primary spoken language and Christianity being the primary practiced religion during this time period.

The early Middle Ages were also marked by periods of transition. Arguably the most notable transition occurred in art, specifically in styles of imagery. Classical styles of art, characterized by dynamic movement and detailed depictions, shifted into a medieval style,

characterized by simplicity, geometry, symbolism, and transcendence³. This shift in style was influenced in part by the provinces and their Germanic influences, but the rise of Christianity played a more significant role. The Christians in the Middle Ages contributed to the shift in the philosophical focus from materialism to spiritualism. In addition, more people began to abide by scriptural prohibitions regarding idolatry that were explicitly written in the Bible⁴. These stylistic changes in imagery mirrored patterns of stylistic changes in dress from ancient Rome to modern-day. However, changes in fashion design did not come until much later. Classical styles of dress were still worn by political figures and church leaders during the Middle Ages, but they did not coincide chronologically with the shifts in style that led to modern dress.

The 6th and 7th centuries in Europe are most notable for the rise of Islam as a second major world religion. Islam was established with the life of Muhammed, another man who claimed to be God's prophet. Muhammed died in 622, but Islam continued to grow rapidly, much like Christianity but for different reasons. First, the Islamic troops were excellent fighters that had many successful raids and conquests of new land. Second, Islamic soldiers had weak opponents, as Persian and Byzantium forces were weakened through years of infighting, plague, and Western ruralization. Third, the Islamic five pillars were relatively simple and easy for converts to understand. Fourth, they did not force conquered people to convert to Islam, but rather taxed people of other religions instead. Finally, the disparate tribes in the Arabian Peninsula were successfully united under one language (Arabic) and one religion (Islam). Islam did not affect Roman clothing, but it does play an important part in the development of the

³ A shift in philosophical focus from the material to the spiritual world.

⁴ For examples, see: Exodus 20:4-5; Deuteronomy 4:16-19; and Leviticus 26:1

region and a rival of Christianity for converts. Much like the barbaric invasions in the 5th century that led to the fall of the Roman Empire, the rise of Islam invaded the religious sphere and competed with Christianity for religious converts for many centuries.

During the middle portion of the Middle Ages, Eastern and Western Europe had distinct cultures and identities. The fundamental differences between the two were exemplified by the Eastern and Western Roman Catholic Churches, as the East was Greek-speaking and ruled by a patriarch while the West was Latin-speaking and ruled by a pope. These opposing practices in the Catholic Church came to a head in the year 1054, a conflict later referred to as the “East / West Schism.” Neither the pope nor the patriarch would concede to the other’s rule, so they excommunicated each other, and the Catholic Church eventually split into independent eastern and western halves. The East and the West were inevitably separated by their religious, political, and cultural identities.

Perhaps the brightest event in the Middle Ages occurred when Frankish king Charlemagne conquered much of Western and Central Europe and was crowned Roman Emperor by Pope Leo III in 800, reviving the Holy Roman Empire to its former glory. Charlemagne wanted to rebuild the Western Roman Empire, but when he died, the empire was restored back to its fragmented state. Without a universal monarch, Europe was divided into many different kingdoms and regions, and there would be no return of the historically-renowned Roman Empire. However, Charlemagne’s attempt at reviving the empire to its former glory would become a pattern for future reforms.

At the same time, feudalism became the dominant form of socio-economic organization in Europe. The rise of feudalism is attributed to the stabilization of Latin Christendom, but also,

it was more directly influenced by Charlemagne's forces that settled in the provinces and claimed authority over various regions. In a feudal system, the majority of the population is comprised of serfs and vassals that receive land from a nobleman to harvest crops from and provide a surplus to the noble for the promise of his protection in return. The rise of feudalism sustained a primarily agricultural society, but it also allowed for towns and cities to redevelop and flourish for the first time since the wave of invasions, famine, and disease. The majority of townspeople were artisans, craftsmen, and merchants that made luxury items for the nobility. Feudal societies benefited from the newly established order, conditional allegiances between nobles and peasants, and a stronger military environment than seen in the early Middle Ages. Nevertheless, feudalism also had its weaknesses in decentralizing the vast European region and decreasing the power of monarchs. Overall, feudalism marked the beginning of a fully developed agrarian society.

During the high Middle Ages, much of Europe was united under the Catholic Church, feudalism dominated societies and economies, and most kingdoms were ruled by monarchs; however, Italy was an exception to popular monarchies because it was widely dominated by city-states. Italy's geography greatly contributed to its organization of city-states. Structured into a peninsula, Italy's expansive coastal position encouraged trade in the region, and consequently, a commercial economy proved to be more profitable for Italians than a feudal one. Moreover, Italy was divided into various regions that became famous throughout Europe for producing their own specialized goods. For example, Venice became one of the most fashionable cities in Europe by the 12th century, famous for the Venetian market and

noteworthy Venetian lace. At the same time, Sicily was one of the earliest hubs in Italy for artistic weaving and silk production.

The 11th and 12th centuries were marked by the rise of a profit economy in Europe. Improvements in agriculture resulted in a drastic increase in the European population. Moreover, populations were becoming denser when feudalism's system of primogeniture⁵ drove second and third sons off their father's land and into cities in search of work. The influx of rural townspeople into urban cities contributed to the increase in trade and commerce, and ultimately led Europe away from its history of gift-giving towards a new profit economy. To support this new economic structure, people began to mint coins more widely than before.

A more fully developed currency and new trade routes prompted the formation of communes and guilds across Europe. Communes developed out of the decline of feudalism and became autonomous cities that elected leaders to rule with sworn allegiances to its members. Communes first formed in areas without strong leadership, particularly in the strong Italian city-states, and were linked to the rise of commercial wealth during the 11th century. Guilds were a collaborative form of government within communes that worked to protect and promote the welfare of its members. Guilds encouraged trade and controlled the market through price regulation. In Italy, the guild system worked well for centuries. In Venice particularly, among the wide variety of fashion trades in the Venetian Republic, members of different crafts maintained their economic competitiveness by bannin together in guilds that protected themselves and promoted their crafts. Even though guilds eventually lost their economic advantage, the persistence of craft traditions continued to be a vital part of Italian culture.

⁵ A system of inheritance that gave the right of succession to the firstborn child

In the 13th century, the Black Death swept through Europe, wiping out large portions of the population just as the Bubonic plague did centuries beforehand. A beacon of light during this dreadful pandemic, Florence rose to power as one of the leading manufacturers of woolen cloth in the world by the 13th century. In the early 14th century, internal discord occurred in the Italian province of Lucca, driving away many silk weavers who fled to Bologna, Florence, Venice. In the 15th century, technological advancements in weaving allowed masterful Italian craftsmen to produce the first Italian-made, patterned velvet textiles. The textiles produced in Italy became famous for their craftsmanship and were extremely desirable to other Europeans.



Example of the lavish Italian velvet textiles, made out of silk and gold metal thread, produced in the late 15th century.

Source: The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

In her book *Fashion, Italian Style*, fashion historian Valerie Steele notes that the developing Italian city-states were a critical component for the emergence of modern fashion in the late Middle Ages, particularly Florence and Venice. According to Steele, “fashion requires a particular social and economic structure within which it can flourish, and a type of proto-capitalism conducive to the rise of fashion developed very early in several of the Italian city-states” (3). By the late Middle Ages, Italian merchants made significant contributions to the material foundations of Italian fashion by increasing their textile trade and production to a level that made textiles one of the leading commodities for Italians to trade with the rest of Europe.

The Middle Ages were notably the darkest time in European and Italian history. Centuries of invasions, disease, and famine wiped out nearly half of the population of Europe. Crises deepened and were eventually alleviated, creating a vicious cycle of ebb and flow that made the Middle Ages an extremely difficult time to live in. By the late Middle Ages, the Italian

Peninsula created an economic structure that thrived in trade and commerce. Italy became famous for manufacturing hand-made luxury goods, especially its highly sought-after Italian textiles. The tradition of Italian craftsmanship that developed during the late Middle Ages will only continue to flourish during the Renaissance period. The creativity and technical skill of Italian artisans is exemplified and strengthened throughout the artistic movements of the Renaissance. Eventually, Italian's creativity and traditional values will play an important part in the rise of Italian fashion culture to world fame.

The Renaissance: 14th to 17th century

The term "Renaissance" denotes a particular period of European history, but in a greater sense, it marks one of the greatest sociocultural and intellectual movements in the history of mankind. The movement encouraged the revival of ancient Greco-Roman civilizations and developed ideologies in classicism and humanism. It began in Italy during the 14th century and spread across Europe over hundreds of years until its decline in the 17th century, marking the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Modern Era. In order to rise above the hardships and crises of the late Middle Ages, the Renaissance culture renounced the dark and barbaric culture of Medieval Times. Scholars began to look to the prosperous pasts of ancient Roman and Greek civilizations to serve a model for a society on the brink of modernity.

The Renaissance movement was sparked and distinguished by the investigative work of an Italian bureaucrat, Francesco Petrarch. While browsing old books in a cathedral library, Petrarch discovered a manuscript of Cicero's letters, which at the time were unknown to exist (Cole & Symes, 366). This discovery gave Petrarch the epiphany that he was living in a time that

was far removed from ancient civilizations; consequently, he was the first scholar to redefine this period as the “dark ages” – an age of ignorance that separated contemporary society from classical culture. Afterwards, Petrarch became an advocate for the revival of the classical past, gained supporters and followers, and helped lay the basis for the Renaissance movement.

Like Petrarch, the leaders of the Renaissance movement were highly critical of their present era, and they began to promote a model for their society based upon the classical Roman culture that ended along with the fall of the Roman Empire. The Renaissance movement brought significant changes in education, fine arts, and architecture that were rooted in the Renaissance’s versions of classicism and humanism. Renaissance Classicism increased the awareness of a conceptual gap that separated contemporary from antiquity, prompting scholars to focus their studies on classical works. Renaissance Humanism diminished the importance of studying logic and theology – central topics in medieval education – and replaced them with classical studies of ancient literature, rhetoric, history, and ethics. Humanism changed the way scholars studied the human experience by using the classical past as a lens instead of trying to bring it in line with their current Christian beliefs about humanity.

There were many causes of the Renaissance that contributed to the proliferation of classical and humanist ideologies, the most important of which occurred between 1350 and 1500 when Europe faced a multitude of crises, including: invasions, disease, and divisiveness. The first cause came from barbaric invasions, particularly the invasion of Byzantium by the Ottoman Turks. The Ottoman Empire conquered Constantinople, causing Greek scholars to flee to other parts of Western Europe where they shared their books and knowledge of ancient Greece with other intellects throughout the West. These contributions gave more scholars

greater access to classical texts, and it stimulated their use of these writings in new ways that corresponded with classicism. The second cause of the Renaissance was a plague known as the “Black Death” that wiped out nearly half of Europe’s population and greatly altered the lives of those who survived it during the late 14th century.

The size and wealth of the working class increased after the plague, resulting in tensions between the Italian upper and middle classes. These tensions sparked a series of violent peasant revolts in Europe between 1350 and 1425, contributing great social and political unrest. Additionally, there was a general discontent with the Catholic Church in the wake of the Black Death. Many Christians were unhappy with the conventional practices of the Church, and their spirituality was challenged by the hardships of grave disease and frightening invasions. In the Middle Ages, the Church had maintained religious and secular powers; however, from these feelings of discontentment by a multitude Christians, the papacy was threatened by new worldly views developing outside the church during the early stages of the Renaissance.

The results of the Renaissance developed out of its classical and humanist ideology. Humanists regarded the vernacular Latin that flourished during the Middle Ages as a disgraceful departure from classical Latin. For example, during the late Middle Ages, Italian poet Dante Alighieri wrote the *Divine Comedy* in the Tuscan dialect in an attempt to increase the use of Italian vernacular⁶ in literature. Dante’s efforts were significant to the Middle Ages because most literary works were written in formal Latin during his time, and consequently, reading and studying these works was widely limited to nobles and intellectuals, who received a formal education. The *Divine Comedy* was considered a masterpiece after it was published, but it was

⁶ Vernacular refers to colloquial, conversational language used in everyday life, opposed to that of formal writing.

largely ignored by scholars until after the Enlightenment; eventually, Dante's *Divine Comedy* would come to be known as one of the greatest works in the history of literature.

Unfortunately, the *Divine Comedy* was not always held in high esteem, and Renaissance ideology negated the efforts of Dante and other writers that used Italian vernacular in the Middle Ages for many years. In turn, Latin became outdated and eventually disappeared from use in daily life.

Revival of classical studies circulated more copies of classical Greek and Latin texts throughout the West. Similarly, the Turks' invasion of Byzantium increased the access of classical texts to more scholars, who began to read written works in accordance with classical models. The demand for books increased from humanists eager for the classics, and the invention of the printing press in the 15th century helped to meet these demands. More importantly, the printing press was a powerful tool that enabled mass communication to disseminate the new worldly views of the Renaissance movement out of Italy and into the rest of Europe.

After the Black Death, European elites were losing the power they gained from the city-states that flourished during the late Middle Ages. Moreover, the peasant revolts and the rising middle class weakened the bonds of serfdom, and feudalism eventually declined by the 15th century. Without feudalism, elites were forced to find new sources of wealth, initiating Europe's "Age of Exploration" during the 15th and 16th centuries. Explorations for gold, glory, new land, and trade routes with other parts of the world eventually led to the creation of the world market, developed a global division of labor, and sparked the beginnings of capitalism in the West. Along with political and cultural changes, Christian practices began to be widely

questioned throughout much of Europe, thanks to the new methods of mass communication.

The Church's authority weakened, and divisiveness within the Catholic Church ultimately led to the Great Schism – the split of the Church into East and West.

In terms of fashion, the Middle Ages set the stage for Renaissance fashion to flourish. Italian textiles popularized in the late Middle Ages became extremely valuable and desirable across Europe. From an artistic perspective, the value placed on traditional Italian crafts was exemplified in the artwork during the Renaissance. The movement called for a revival of ancient Roman art, characterized by atmosphere, movement, realism, classicism, and humanistic values. The detailed designs of Renaissance art also mimicked the creativeness and technical skill of Italian artisans. From an economic perspective, the highly developed Italian city-states from the Middle Ages played an important part in the materialization of modern fashion during the Renaissance. The commerce and trade profit economies in Italy became the perfect environment for fashion to flourish. The popular textiles made by Italian merchants in the Middle Ages resulted in the material foundation for Italian fashion culture.

From a social perspective, prominent Italian families also played an important role in the development of Italian fashion culture during the Renaissance. In Florence for example, the Medici family began as merely wool merchants and money lenders, but through their hard work and dedication to Italian culture, they were able to advance their social and political status. Beyond achieving success in commerce and banking, the Medici family became avid supporters of Italian arts and humanities, contributing to Florence's artistic prosperity during the Renaissance. The Medici family also



Engraving of Catherine de' Medici wearing a collar with a ruff (Emanvels van Meteren, 1614)
Source: The Peace Palace Library

made significant contributions to Renaissance fashion when Catherine de' Medici and Marie de' Medici introduced the fashion of ruffs and small collars that became popular the late 15th and early 16th century (*Renaissance-spell.com*). In later years, the Medici family developed into a powerful dynasty that ruled Florence for many years. Today, their legacy remains influential on Italian culture, and the Medici family successfully transformed their middle-class origins to become one of the most powerful families in Italian history.

Renaissance fashion originated in Italy and spread to other European kingdoms who made their own adaptations of Renaissance dress that suited their individual cultures. In general, Renaissance fashion is characterized by an atmosphere of grandeur, emphasizing the revival of classical Roman culture that was not completely lost after the Middle Ages. Women's fashion embodied fullness of dress, while men's fashion was tighter and used less fabric overall. The clothing of the elite class changed very gradually during this time, but people from other classes had significant developments in their dress that were influenced by the Renaissance movement.

Women's dresses featured a form-fitting figure from the waist up and a very full, wide-bodied skirt that opened in the front to reveal richly-trimmed petticoats that were floor-length. Sleeves on dresses were typically long and tight, but they featured puffy ornate designs. Women frequently wore their hair in curls, and accessorized their hairstyles with precious stones, gold chains, jewels, and feathers, much like women in ancient Roman civilizations.

In contrast, men's clothing closely fitted the body, except in the waist, which was more rounded and puffed out. Men also adorned ornate cloaks that typically featured a small, upright collar



Example of women's Renaissance fashion:
A Lady with a Drawing of Lucretia
By Lorenzo Lotto (c. 1530)
Source: Bridgeman Art Library

and was often paired with a cap on the side of the head. By the end of the Renaissance movement in the 17th century, styles of shoes had evolved for both men and women from a flat single-soled shoe to one with more or less heel height and thicker soles.

Renaissance fashion was a significant development in the history of Italian fashion culture because it was a recognizable distinction between the fashions of ancient Rome and modern Italy. Although inspired by ancient Roman culture, the garments of this time period were different from those of antiquity. Furthermore, the beginning of Renaissance fashion marks the origins of the variety of fashions for both men and women that have arisen from the 14th century to modern-day. Italian fashion would continue to progress forward, but often looked back to past models for inspiration.

The Renaissance movement had a long-lasting and widespread effects on society, culture, religion, and politics that originated in Italy and spread across Western Europe. In the wake of the Black Death, a multitude of social changes occurred by adopting classical and humanist ideology. Dissatisfied peasants and Christians revolted and reformed political and religious sectors of society, leading to the end of feudalism and the Great Schism of the Catholic Church, respectively. The decline of feudalism brought about the rise of communes and guilds that thrived in Italian city-states, enhancing commerce and fortifying the profit economy; furthermore, without feudal societies, nobles were forced to search for new sources of wealth, sparking the “Age of Exploration”. Invasions by the Ottoman Empire in the East drove Greek scholars to share their classical knowledge with Western Europe, increasing the circulation of classical texts and ideology that supported the Renaissance movement.

All of these contributions were rooted in and promoted the development of Renaissance classicism and humanism. In particular, the increased demand for books eventually led to the invention of the printing press and the development of mass communication, facilitating the spread of Renaissance ideology. Although there were many more contributions to and results of the Renaissance, the effects of the Black Death, Turkish invasions, and fierce tensions that began in Europe prior to the Renaissance were the greatest contributions to the movement. These events adopted classical and humanist ideas from the Renaissance and propelled the inventive, creative, and exploratory events that resulted from this sociocultural and intellectual movement. In time, the effects of Renaissance will materialize in Italian fashion culture, as people begin utilizing fashion to express their social and political ideologies throughout the Modern Era

However, not all was bright in Italy during the Renaissance, and the 15th and 16th centuries were marked by a series of conflicts and constant battles waged between various Italian city-states. This sequence of wars over two centuries became known as the Great Italian Wars. The wars emerged from dynastic disputes over the control of Milan and Naples, but as more people joined the war effort, it became a greater fight over power and territory across various regions in Italy. The Italian Wars exhausted the peninsula of resources and fortitude, further suppressing Italy from the rest of Europe's great powers. Italy was at a further disadvantage because they did not even have a true militia. Italy desperately needed a stronger defense, so underwent military reforms. One initiative was led by political theorist and Florentine politician, Niccolò Machiavelli, and largely dominated the reform movement in the late 15th and early 16th century. Reformists like Machiavelli sought to establish an Italian

military that resembled the military of Ancient Rome in size, power, and discipline.

Unfortunately, years of infighting hindered Italy in the competition between the great European powers in terms of both politics and fashion. Some European powers that surpassed Italy would soon try to conquer the Italian Peninsula for themselves.

Neoclassicism and Romanticism: 18th – 19th centuries

During the 18th and 19th centuries, Italy was occupied by a variety of forces, which in turn hindered the unification of Italy and the development of a unique Italian fashion culture. Italy's dominant commercial status began to lose some of the power it gained during the Renaissance from producing textiles and other luxury crafts. Consequently, the nation was surpassed in style and fashion culture by England and France. Internal divisiveness hindered Italy from developing its own unique style, and by the 18th century, it fell under the influence of English and French designers. More specifically, Italian women's fashion was primarily influenced by the French, and the tailoring of Italian menswear was of English influence. Depictions of clothing in 18th century Italian artwork show that Italy continued to produce its own beautiful designs in art and fashion; nevertheless, Italians were unable to produce dominant trends in global fashion.

One of the most important movements in Italian history transpired during the 19th century: a socio-political movement known as the Risorgimento, meaning "resurgence" or "revival." The movement worked to consolidate and unite different city-states across Italy in hopes of liberating themselves from foreign occupation. The movement proved its success in 1861, when the Italian Peninsula was unified into one kingdom with Rome as its capital in 1871.

The unification of Italy through the Risorgimento affected Italian fashion by reviving regional and Italian folk dress in the 18th and 19th centuries. It also sparked nationalist sentiments in the Italian nation during the mid-19th century that would soon grow and spread into fascist ideology by the early 20th century.

Haute couture rose to fame in France during the 19th century, but this rise further diminished Italy's position of power on the fashion leaderboard. Nevertheless, Italians were consistently praised for their elegant craftsmanship, and their textiles remained highly desirable. Even their greatest competitor, France, began to employ Italian artisans for their technical skills to do fine detailing in their product designs, such as embroidery. Italian accessories, especially shoes, also maintained their value and status as a luxury item of fine craftsmanship, and they were also adopted by some French couture houses. The persistence of traditional values exemplified in hand-made Italian products heavily supported the fashion culture in Italy. By the early 20th century, these same values that originated in classical antiquity evidently gave rise to the world-famous status of Italian accessories.

By the late 18th century, the Industrial Revolution was reaching its full-scale in England, but Italians were not able to keep up with these advancements, partly due to its long history of fragmentation. Nevertheless, preindustrial Italian workshops began to utilize more mechanical looms, and these workshops steadily transformed into factory systems. Eventually, production of Italian textiles and accessories began to make significant technological advancements during the late 19th century, such as the industrialization of silk production in Como, Italy. Through their traditional values, Italians maintained high-quality standards in their designs throughout these technological advancements in production. Their persistent nature for producing goods

that maintained high standards of quality, instead of resorting to methods of mass production, became a staple of Italian fashion culture for years to come

The Neoclassical movement was born in Rome during the mid-18th century, and like the Renaissance, its ideology quickly spread all over Europe. Neoclassicism, meaning “of the highest rank,” drew its ideology from classical antiquity. The movement was complementary to the Age of Enlightenment, which was occurring around the same time, but conflicted with another popular movement that began in the late 18th century – Romanticism. Whereas Neoclassicism promoted the revival of classical culture, Romanticism preferred the revival of medieval culture. The Romanticism movement combatted the modernization generated by Enlightenment ideals and also opposed the growing urbanization and industrialization from the Industrial Revolution.

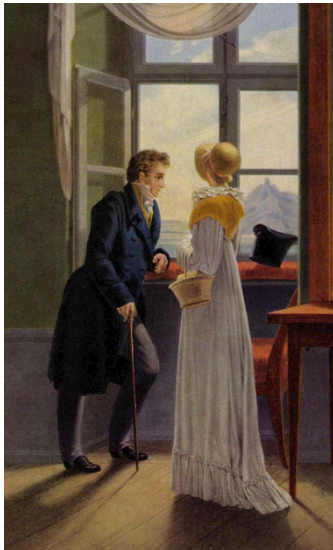
In terms of fashion, the Neoclassical movement had a more visible influence on women’s apparel than the Romanticism movement. Neoclassical designs in architecture were characterized by simplicity and symmetry, and women’s fashion followed these same principles. Dresses were simplistic in style: light, loose, typically white in color, and often tied at the waistband with a colorful ribbon. These styles appeared to be a revival of similar features seen in togas worn by women in ancient Rome and are now referred to as an Empire silhouette. Authentic classical costumes were still adorned by some women, but these outfits were usually limited to portrait sittings and masquerade balls that were made popular in Venice during the Renaissance. Women’s hairstyles featured shorter classical styles, sometimes curled or adorned with Greek-style ribbons to decorate the hair.



1808 Portrait of a French lady in an Empire silhouette: fitted bodice below the bust with long loose skirt

Artist: Merry-Joseph Blondel
Current Location: unknown, private collection

Neoclassical fashion for men was not as exemplary as their female counterparts. Neoclassicism was primarily influential only for men's hair and pants. Neoclassical men preferred shorter hairstyles over wigs or white hair powder. Most notably was the adoption of trousers in men's neoclassical apparel. For centuries past, trousers were not widely worn by men because they were considered barbaric in Greek and Roman classical culture. German-



Paar am Fenster by Georg Friedrich Kersting
Depiction of the influence of Germanic trousers on Neoclassical men's fashion
(German, c. 1815).
Source: The Yorck Project

speaking "barbarian" tribes that invaded the Roman Empire during the Middle Ages wore trousers and were the first to move pants into an intentionally "trouser-less" empire. Consequently, the trouser became stereotypical of these invaders and a symbol of the barbarian for Greeks and Romans. Nevertheless, this period saw a revival of trousers or pantaloons for men, perhaps due in part to the Romanticism movement that sought to revive medieval culture but competed with Neoclassicism. Otherwise, the introduction of trousers into popular dress marked a shift toward more practical and functional clothing in a modernizing European world.

Although the Neoclassical movement originated in Italy, most of these styles of dress were popularized across Europe by French designers, post-French Revolution. By the early 19th century, Neoclassical styles were popular all over Europe. In his book *Neo-Classicism: Style and Civilization*, historian Hugh Honour notes that neoclassical artists' approach to antiquity had "a sharp distinction... between the 'copy' and the 'imitation'." Italian fashion designers employed this same approach in their work. They looked to the leaders in fashion, France and England, for trends and inspiration, but made an effort to create their own similar designs instead of merely copying French and English designers.

After centuries of fragmentation and conquests by foreign invaders, Italy became a unified kingdom in the 19th century. Feelings of nationalism were beginning to stir in Europe, and in Italy specifically, a radical form of authoritarian nationalism known as fascism would become prominent by the early 20th centuries. The spread of nationalism in Europe led to the decline of Romanticism and Neoclassicism, but architects continued to use neoclassical styles up to the 21st century. However, political unity and growing nationalist sentiments did not automatically create cohesion in the Kingdom of Italy. Northern Italy was rapidly industrializing by the early 20th century, but these advancements did not occur at the same rate in Southern Italy due to its impoverishment and the agricultural nature of its economy. The growing disparity between Northern and Southern Italy hindered its recent unification sentiments from the Risorgimento and caused a large wave of Italian emigrants from 1861 until the rise of Italian Fascism in 1920.

In the end, the nationalism that drove the Risorgimento movement and unification of the Kingdom of Italy in the 19th century proved to have its weaknesses as well. Southern Italy had been infiltrated and conquered by more foreign invaders than the North, causing economic distress and estrangement from the rest of the nation. As a result, the northern regions of Italy, along with the Papacy, were in opposition against the South for its poverty and different culture. The growing nationalism eventually contributed to Italy entering World War I at the beginning of the 20th century. Although Italian fashion reached monumental points in the periods leading up to and following from the Renaissance movement, the development of Italian fashion culture would continue to be impaired through political and social divisiveness in Italy during the first half of the 20th century.

Fascist to Republican Italy: the 20th century

The 20th century brought more conflict and war in Italy and across Europe since the Middle Ages and ancient civilizations. From the early to mid-20th century, the Kingdom of Italy battled in War World I, saw the rise of the Fascist Regime, fought again in World War II, and became an official republic by 1946. The Italian Socialist Party dominated Italy until after WWII when the Italian Communist Party greatly grew its power. Northern Italy continued to industrialize, while Southern Italy struggled with its underdevelopment and overpopulated society. The political turmoil and social unrest that filled Italy during this time posed difficulties for the Italian fashion industry to develop its own, critically-acclaimed identity. Nevertheless, designers continued to produce their high-quality, hand-made accessories, and Italian accessories were made world famous during the 20th century.

Just as past economic and political crises did not bring the total demise of the Italian fashion industry, one production of goods continued to thrive throughout the 20th century:

Italian accessories. Several of the top Italian brands originated in the 20th century, such as Gucci and Ferragamo. Gucci was founded in 1906 by Guccio Gucci as a small saddlery shop that slowly transformed into a full line of accessories that are widely famous today. Gucci set up his headquarters in Florence when it was still a small town, but it became

world famous for Italian leather accessories in later years. Salvatore Ferragamo, another influential Italian accessory designer, learned the basics of shoe production from a young age. He brought his knowledge and skills with him to the United States in 1914 as a part of the large Italian emigration movement that began in the late 19th century. In the states, Ferragamo



An original Gucci handbag on display at the Gucci Museum in Florence, Italy.
Source: florencemuseumguide.com

continued his fashion studies and later created his own business in California that attracted many affluent Americans and celebrities. Ferragamo eventually returned to Italy, and like Gucci, he established a shop in Florence. Thanks to influential and innovative designers like Gucci and Ferragamo, Florence eventually became one of Italy's most fashionable cities, and Italian accessories reached world fame during the 20th century.

The first in a series of political upheavals began in 1914 with World War I. Italy, motivated by ideals of imperialism and nationalism, joined the war on the side of the Allied Powers in order to acquire new territories that it had been promised. Italy struggled for most of the war and suffered heavy losses until 1918, when an Italian victory ended the war on the Italian Front and became a significant component to the conclusion of the entire First World War shortly afterwards. By the end of the war, Italy suffered over 1.2 million deaths from soldiers and civilians. Moreover, even though the Kingdom of Italy was granted most of the territories it had been promised, the war drained the nation of its money and resources. Italy faced serious economic troubles and was at a high risk for total bankruptcy. The Treaty of Versailles that ended the war was largely controversial due to its clause that made Germany take responsibility for all the loss and damage the war caused upon all other nations involved. The German's discontent with the treaty paved the way for Adolph Hitler's party to rise to power in German politics – an event that some historians believe that WWI ultimately led to WWII (*History.com*). Nonetheless, the League of Nations was established in hopes of preventing another Great War from ever happening again.

Shortly after the end of WWI, amidst the political and economic devastation in Italy, the National Fascist Party came to power and ruled Italy from 1922-1943 under the authority of

Benito Mussolini. Under his rule, Mussolini robbed Italians of their personal liberties, as he banned all political parties and formed his own dictatorship. Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 led to the removal of Italy's membership in the League of Nations and its international estrangement. In search of new allies, Mussolini partnered with German and Japanese forces – a trio that comprised the Axis Powers in the Second World War.

World War II began in 1939 as a war of ideologies, such as Fascism and Communism, rather than for purely territorial gain. There were several causes for the war, including: political and economic upheaval in Germany; disputes over the Treaty of Versailles; Adolph Hitler's rise to power; and Germany, Japan, and Italy's opposition to the Soviet Union communist forces. During the war, Germans used Jewish people as a scapegoat for their misfortunes after WWI and initiated the largest genocide in human history. Italy entered WWII in 1940 and played a part in the genocides by deporting thousands of Jews to Italian concentration camps.

The Italian Front surrendered in 1943 after an Allied invasion in Southern Italy, causing the fall of the Italian Fascist Regime and the end of Mussolini's rule. However, Germany came to Italy's defense and helped establish the Italian Social Republic, an Italian Fascist puppet regime that ruled Italy from 1943-1945 under Mussolini's leadership. The Italian resistance movement, formed after the Allied invasion of Italy by Italian *partigiani* or "partisans," strongly opposed the German occupation of Italy and the Italian Fascist regime and was an essential component to the Allied victory against the Nazis and Fascists. The partisans formed into small groups of civilian army units led by former Army officers that decided to join together with the Allies to resist the German occupation of Italy. The Allies supplied the Italian partisans with weaponry to help fight off the Nazi and Fascist militaries, and by working together, they were

ultimately victorious when the entirety of the war ended in 1945. Mussolini attempted escape, but he was caught and executed by Italian partisans. Fed up with Mussolini's rule, the Resistenza movement developed in Italy as a large anti-fascist revolt. By the mid-20th century, Italian Fascism began to decline and Italian citizens would soon take an active role in choosing their own form of government.

Although Italy surrendered their fight in 1943, the Italian Peninsula became a battle ground as Allied forces moved north, advancing on German troops. Serving as a combat zone for nearly two years contributed to great destruction of Italian lands and infrastructure. Additionally, Italians devastated their economy and their population size from nearly half a million deaths as a result of WWII. Discontent Italians called for an institutional referendum of universal suffrage in 1946. For the first time in Italian history, both men and women were able to vote on their desired form of government. On June 2ⁿ, 1946, Italy declared itself a republic. The following year, Italy signed the Treaty of Peace and relinquished its colonial possessions, bringing an end to the long-lasting Italian Empire and marking the start of the Republic of Italy. The Republican Constitution of Italy was approved on the first day of 1948, and as a result, the Italian republic joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949. Italy's allegiance with NATO ultimately proved to be beneficial when they received economic support from the United States under the Marshall Plan.

During the second half of the 20th century, in an effort to rebuild after the war, Italy underwent a series of economic highs and lows. The Italian economy experienced a revival during the 1950s and 60s, thanks to the United States' Marshall Plan. President Harry Truman developed the plan as an initiative to rebuild Western Europe after the devastations from the

war, but also to prevent the spread of Communism in the power vacuum left after American forces withdrew from Europe. The Italian economy began to flourish again, and the Marshall Plan promoted the modernization of its industries. Furthermore, the Nazi occupation of Paris halted French domination in the global fashion industry which allowed Italy the opportunity to develop its own authentic Italian fashion. The United States was also able to rise to power in the fashion world, specifically through their development of American sportswear, which proved to be highly influential on Italian fashion after WWII.

Although Italy launched its development of an authentic style and unique fashion culture during the 20th century, the modernization of the fashion industry did not take place until after World War II. Furthermore, Italian clothing and accessories had been highly desirable in Europe and the United States since the early 20th century, but accessories have always been considered secondary to the dress; therefore, Italian fashion remained largely derivative of French couture until the latter half of the century (Steel, 7). With great support from the United States, Italy was able to take their newly revived economic and cultural strength and use fashion to successfully launch a full-scale economic Reconstruction. The existence of a large Italian population in New York City from late 19th century Italian emigrations helped facilitate the relationship between Italy and the United States after WWII.

Italian fashion culture was heavily influenced by two sociopolitical groups in the 20th century: Futurists and Fascists. The Futurism movement was a social and artistic movement in the early 20th century that sought to free Italy from its long past of gradual progression by promoting modernity. Futurists used art and fashion in an effort to help build a newly modern



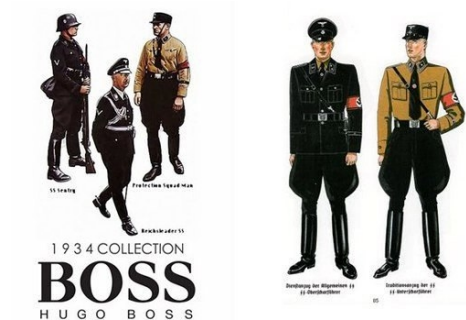
Futurist suit (Giacomo Balla, 1920)
Source: Kröller-Müller Collection

life for Italians. The movement's members were bold and wore colorful and playful clothing, in accordance with their *Anti-Neutral Clothing* manifesto of 1914 (Steele, 10). Daring to be different, Futurists popularized dynamic designs with bright colors and bold patterns for both men and women's apparel. The movement instilled more courage and creativity in Italians and their clothes, and it exemplified the cultural significance of fashion design by artists and intellectuals (Steele, 10).



The Anti-Neutral Clothing: Futurist Manifesto
Written by Giacomo Balla on September 11, 1914
Source: Flavio Beninati Archive

Fascist fashion posed a stark contrast to Futurist fashion because fascists looked back to past periods of Italian prosperity for inspiration, such as Ancient Rome and the Renaissance (Steele, 12). The Fascist regime forced their nationalist sentiments on the fashion culture, “insisting that Italian fashion should be national in character” (Steele, 12). Mussolini himself appeared to advocate the Italian fashion industry and established a National Fashion Office in Northern Italy; however, he fabricated personal interests in the fashion industry as propaganda and justification for his authoritative rule. For example, Mussolini declared a restriction on international imports and claimed that cutting off Italy from leaders in global fashion would create a greenhouse effect, in turn allowing for Italian fashion to flourish on its own.



German Nazi uniforms and nationalist symbolism were influential for the 1934 Hugo Boss Collection
Source: villingstore.net

Unfortunately, Italian fashion did not experience significant developments under Fascist rule. It continued to draw inspiration from the past, popularizing regional folk costumes once again. Evidently, the damage caused by the war combined with Fascist dictatorship impeded

the development of the Italian fashion industry in the 20th century. The declines in production and exports combined with the scarcity of natural resources in Italy decreased the demand for Italian goods in the American market, negating the effects of the Marshall Plan by fascist rule.

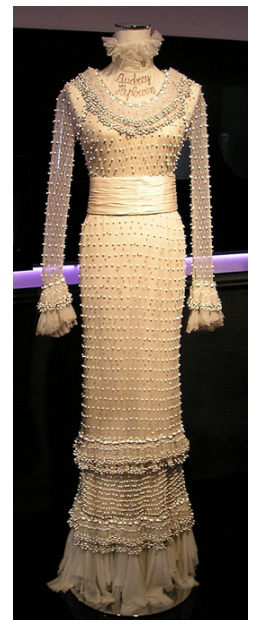
Beyond financial support from the Marshall Plan, the United States was highly influential to the expansion of the Italian fashion industry. They supplied Italians with more progressive ideals in politics, economics, and culture. They played a large role in the Italian industrialization by providing them with modern manufacturing methods. The Marshall Plan

made cultural contributions to Italy by introducing Italians to democratic and republican ideology. Most importantly, the United States served as a strong market for Italian designs. Italian manufacturers utilized Americans' interests in the luxurious Italian lifestyle portrayed in and popularized by the 1960 film *La Dolce Vita* by Federico Fellini. Translating to "the sweet life" or "the good life," "*La Dolce Vita*" became symbolic of the fabulous life of glitz and glamour that emerged from post-war reconstruction.



Original release poster by Giorgio Olivetti for Federico Fellini's 1960 film *La Dolce Vita*
Source: moviegoods.com

Rome was the center of the Italian film industry and a popular location for American movies to be filmed. As a result, Roman couture houses flourished as celebrities employed Italian designers to make film wardrobes and became patrons for their designs. Perhaps the most famous example was Valentino Garavani, whose success emerged in Rome during the 1960s. He opened his own couture house in 1960 in Rome and dressed many famous celebrities and political figures throughout his career. Valentino remains to be one of the most important and successful Italian designers in the history of fashion.



Dress made by Valentino for British actress Audrey Hepburn
Source: Museo Ara Pacis in Rome

Through all the post-war prosperity and modernization, Italian fashion preserved its traditional values. In *Fashion, Italian Style*, Valerie Steele notes several important postwar fashion shows put on by Italian designers that “strategically emphasized the connections between Italian fashion and Italy’s heritage of art and culture” (Steele, 17). Italians were noteworthy for their excellent and entertaining fashion shows, and they used these shows as a way to promote their authentic designs. They strategically presented fashion designs in these post-war shows that were inspired by the Renaissance (Steele, 17). Most notably, the commercial “invention” or “birth” of Italian fashion is attributed to two fashion shows put on by Giovanni Battista Giorgini between 1950 and 1951, where the participation of American department stores increased from 8 to 200 buyers in just one year (Steele, 19). The invitation to the event read, “The aim of the evening is to give emphasis to the value of our fashion. Ladies are keenly invited to wear clothes of purely Italian inspiration” (*Vouge.com*). Italians kept their value of tradition and ancient Italian culture alive for centuries, and now the Italian fashion industry was deliberately using their rich history and culture as a means to develop a unique identity and powerful position in the fashion world. Giorgini left an impactful legacy as the first person to fully realize the potential economic implications of Italian craftsmanship on the global market (*Vouge.com*).

An unintentional consequence of the success and popularity of Italian fashion shows resulted in conflicts between Rome and Florence. Just as Florence emerged as the center of Italian accessories, Roman couture houses stole the show with their runway designs. This internal division paved room for Milan to come to power as the fashion capital of Italy. Eventually, designers in Rome and Florence came to a compromise. Only Florence designers

would show accessories and boutique fashions, and Rome would show couture fashion.

Moreover, the division between Italian high fashion and American mass fashion found a middle ground in the boutique fashion shown in Florence. Between Florence and Rome, the audience for stylish ready-to-wear fashions was relatively limited. As a result, many Italian ready-to-wear designers moved to Milan to show their designs, which eventually transformed Milan into the headquarters of the Italian ready-to-wear industry and the fashion capital of Italy. The clothes in Milan were not couture, but they attracted the American public with their stylish and relatively affordable styles.

Italian designers had actively pursued the American market with their textiles and accessories since the 1920s, but after the war, the market extended to American consumption of Italian clothes and fashion entirely. Initially, Americans viewed Italian fashion as an inexpensive alternative to French couture, but it grew into a phenomenon where the phrase “Made in Italy” became symbolic of distinctly Italian fashion contributions (Steele, 16). Through the portrayal of Italy in Hollywood films, Americans became fascinated with Italy as an elegant and sophisticated culture, as well as a popular tourist destination for celebrities and other affluent Americans, contributing a “souvenir effect” to Italian goods.

Between influences of American sportswear, traditional values, and “La Dolce Vita,” Italian style became associated with “casual elegance,” and Americans were consuming large quantities of Italian fashion by the 1950s (Steele, 20). Italian designers appealed to post-war life by producing more casual, yet elegant sportswear that was less formal and more universal. Italian fashion liberated the female body and developed styles that were less restrictive and more comfortable for modern life. While American men were not as accustomed to body-

conscious clothing as women, the Italian fashion press often reassured the American menswear market that Italian menswear is designed to maintain masculinity in a sophisticated appearance (Steele, 41). Italy's reputation for high-quality designs and fabrics extended to men's shirts, sweaters, and tailored suits and jackets.

By the 1970s and 80s, Italian menswear was modernized and popularized through designers like Giorgio Armani, who helped launch the "Italian Look" movement of fine quality and excellent taste. A large part of the movement's success was the development of fine quality



Armani dress and suit
Spring / Summer 2005 Collection
Source: Armani Silos Museum in Milan, Italy

tailoring into luxurious ready-to-wear men's fashion that was made available off the rack of American department stores. The polished, yet relaxed style of the Italian Look bridged the gap between pre- and post-war lifestyles, between antagonism toward political institutions and dressing for success in the corporate world, respectively. Armani, as well as a multitude of other designers in the 1970s, created women's fashions that were derivative of menswear classics, such as the pantsuit, in response to the increasing

presence of females in the workplace. This unprecedented blending of scrupulous tailoring from menswear and soft feminine elements from dressmaking allowed Armani to bring life and fluidity to menswear.

Younger generations were also extremely influential to Italian fashions. The rise of a youth culture was associated with an international fashion revolution that took place in the 1960s and 70s. The Italian fashion attracted younger men and contributed towards London's development as the international capital of youth fashions for young men and women alike

during the 1960s (Steele 42). Youth fashions were futurist in character, with a playful mixture of materials and colors.

However, the post-war prosperity was short-lived due to another economic crisis that occurred in Italy known as the Years of Lead. The crisis lasted from the late 1960s to the early 1980s, and it involved social conflicts, opposing extremist groups, and terrorist massacres. By the 1980s, the economy recovered again and Italy rose back to power as the fifth largest industrial nation in the world. Overall, the 20th century was packed with trials and revivals through political conflicts and economic developments. After centuries of developing a rich culture, the Italian fashion culture developed its own unique identity and fashions that were authentically Italian in style.

For a discussion of Modern Italian Fashion in the 21st century,
please refer to **PART 3: DISCUSSION OF INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES**

PART 2: HISTORY OF AMERICAN FASHION

“The customer is the final filter. What survives the whole process is what people wear. I’m not interested in making clothes that end up in some dusty museum.” – Marc Jacobs

“Fashion is not necessarily about labels. It’s not about brands. It’s about something else that comes from within you.” – Marc Jacobs

*The history of the United States is brief in comparison to that of Italy, but it is characterized by rapid developments and revolutionary periods. The growth of the country and development of its fashion is divided into six distinct periods of time: The Colonial Period, the Industrial Period, the Civil War and Post-War Period, the Early Twentieth Century, the Mid-Twentieth Century, and the Late Twentieth Century. American fashion in the 21st century will be discussed further in **PART 3: DISCUSSION OF INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES.***

The Colonial Period: 1786 – 1820

The Colonial Period is marked by a time of independence, and American fashion soon followed the colonists’ sentiments of freedom. English colonists came to America seeking opportunity and religious freedom from Great Britain, but these early colonies struggled to hold a strong global standing. The original thirteen colonies of America declared their independence from Great Britain because even though they were granted religious freedom, they were still closely monitored, controlled, and taxed by the British government. The colonies desperately wanted full political freedom from Great Britain, so they drafted the Declaration of Independence and became the United States of America. This declaration established a set of morals that served as the basis for American politics.

The motion for equality influenced a new style of dress during this time, in which colonial fashion was no longer primarily used to distinguish social class. Moreover, the style of dress gradually moved away from fashionable European styles to incorporate more practical and comfortable styles for life on the frontier. Ideology from the independence movement

influenced colonial fashion away from European trends to begin developing a unique identity for American fashion. A leader in the independence movement and one of the “founding fathers” of the United States, George Washington promoted independence ideology not only through politics, but also in his dress. On April 30th of 1789, Washington purposefully wore a brown wool suit that was entirely American-made to symbolize the nation’s newfound independence from foreign markets — a symbol that would later become widely-considered as the first major fashion statement in American history. The independence movement had a prominent influence on American politics, yet the influence on American fashion was much subtler and grew only gradually. Both Great Britain and France influenced colonial dress from the beginning of the United States’ history, and Americans would continue to look toward and imitate European styles for many more decades.



George Washington’s inaugural suit was made entirely of domestic materials, symbolizing his faith in the American industry. Source: Mountvernon.org

Women on the frontier were still interested in and influenced by French and English styles of dress. Magazine production increased in the colonies during this time, and women relied heavily on fashion magazines to learn about the latest trends in America and from Europe. Without a large textile industry in the US capable of producing the fine quality fabrics found in Europe and Asia, many women became thrifty with their wardrobe. Garments were frequently updated by women to keep up with changing fashions; dresses could be altered using a few tricks to become more or less formal. Cotton was the most abundant fabric, and it was used in clothing for even the most formal of occasions. At the same time, the home-style production of silk, linen, and lace increased due to the heavy duties on trade with England. Thanks to the increasing circulation of magazines, women were still able to imitate European

styles in the clothing they made from home by collecting publications of embroidery patterns to recreate in their own needlework.

However, the French Revolution in 1789 made it hard for colonists to communicate with France to learn about the latest fashion. This period of war in Europe largely contributed to the development of American fashion. The style of dress began to shift away from elaborate European toward practical American. For example, big hairstyles and powdered wigs began to go out of fashion, as more women favored a simpler, more natural cut. Stays and corsets adopted from Britain gradually shortened in length, and by the 19th century, some women stopped wearing corsets entirely. Dresses also became less formal,



Colonial fashions with European influence
Source: Historyofeuropeanfashion.com



Example of decreased European influence in colonial fashion: dresses with removed trains, shorter sleeves, slimmer-bodied skirts, and more comfortable footwear for men and women.
Source: Historyofeuropeanfashions.com

shortening in length, removing trains, adapting shorter sleeves and slimmer silhouettes. These new styles of dress for women were better suited for walking and made daytime activities more manageable in the hot frontier weather. Shoes developed more practicality too, lowering heel height to resemble slippers or sandals and rounding out the fashionable pointed toe. By the early 19th century, American women were trending away from European influence and toward a more utilitarian fashion – prioritizing practicality over attractive quality.

The United States declared its independence in 1786, but tensions with Great Britain remained, eventually resulting in the War of 1812. There are two important factors of the war that affected American clothing. The first factor is the restriction to overseas markets caused by

the trade embargos that Britain placed on the United States, which cut off all trade between the two nations for several years until the war's end in 1815. The trade embargos hampered fabric production in the colonies while greatly increasing the demand for wool needed for military uniforms. Without methods for mass production, the colonists had to rely on women to hand sew clothes or tailors to create custom formal garments. The second factor is the timing; the War of 1812 occurred during a critical time for overseas innovations, as Britain was undergoing an Industrial Revolution. English inventors were creating more complex and efficient machines, such as the spinning jenny, that increased textile production. However, Great Britain was extremely hostile about sharing their inventions (Wass, 50). with the rest of the world. They refused to sell these new machines to foreign markets, and they refused to let factory workers leave the country for any reason. With trade embargos in place and technological advancements lacking for textile production, the United States could not compete with Great Britain's booming industry. American banks were forced to borrow large sums of money to finance the war, resulting in the Panic of 1819 – the first great economic crisis faced by the United States. Although industries were rapidly developing in Europe, the American colonists were still dealing with a more primitive frontier life.



Children's dress imitated their parents before the spread of Enlightenment ideas.
Portrait of Two Children by Joseph Badger
(America, mid-18th century) Source: History.org

While women were primarily influenced by French styles, men and children's fashion was influenced more heavily by English dress. Children's dress specifically was greatly affected by the ideology of an English philosopher named John Locke. Locke's philosophy was derived from the Age of Enlightenment, and it illuminated American parents on



After the 18th century enlightenment, children's clothing incorporated more comfortable designs better suited for play. *Godey's Lady's Book* (July-December, 1889)
 Source: The Morris Collection (morriscollection.org)

the importance of childhood development as a critical growth period. As a result, these new ideas also changed children's fashion. Parents began to dress their children in clothing styles that allowed more freedom of movement for active play. One major contributor to the changes in men's apparel was the idea of "Manifest Destiny," which originated from the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and grew popularity in the 19th century to promote westward expansion to the Pacific Coast. Men quickly adapted their

English styles to be more practical, functional, and better suited for riding horseback around the American countryside. The westward movement

not only influenced the development of more functional clothing, but it also gave Americans access to new bodies of water that increased trade and transportation within the country.

The Industrial Period: 1821 – 1860

The American Revolution sparked the Industrial Period, which further changed traditional social dynamics. This period is marked by numerous reforms that influenced the development of American fashion, including: the industrial revolution, the urban revolution, and women's rights movements. American industries continued to develop, predominantly in the North, and brought about an urbanization movement as people began to move out of the countryside frontier life and into growing metropolitan cities with large marketplaces. In turn, the growing economy and industry established a consumer culture, and the population of the middle class began to rise. Class distinctions redeveloped in America, where they were originally relinquished in order to promote democracy, freedom, and equality. Formal social

rules were established, and Americans were expected to learn proper etiquette and maintain the appropriate style of dress for all times of day and all types of occasions. These rules reinforced old class distinctions and increased the relationship between growing consumerism and propriety.

Several factors from new social standards played a role in determining a person's dress, including: gender, age, marital status, and economic standing. These emerging social class distinctions were prominent in the industrial North but not in the South and the West. Furthermore, the North almost entirely abolished slavery by the 1840s, but it was still the leading labor for agriculture in the South; consequently, the rules of etiquette that developed in the North were not widely adopted in the South because they did not undergo much urbanization reform. The West also did not adopt the same practices in the North because many western settlers still favored an informal social structure and clothing that was less fashionable and well-suited for harsher living conditions. Therefore, the focus for this period will be identifying the changes in fashion that were influenced by the reforms in the North.

Increases in American consumer culture are associated with its industrialization and urbanization. As a result, more Northern women became interested in high fashion again. Moreover, increases in communication methods made high fashion more accessible to women outside of the elite class and contributed to the growing consumer culture. Activities like window shopping, reading fashion magazines, and discussing fashion trends with other women became daily routine for many Northern women during the Industrial Period. During this early economic and cultural progression, women grew tired of oppression from men and began to speak out and protest, specifically in the abolition of slavery and the women's rights

movements. Without the same authoritative power and basic rights as men, women started using fashion as an outlet for social commentary and a means of expressing their political preferences through dress.

The movement for women's rights was largely dominated by dress reform (Fandrich, 279). The popular high fashion styles that reemerged in the growing consumer culture quickly became unpopular again among women's rights activists. Leaders of the movement "advocated the most radical changes in women's attire – namely the abandonment of the skirt in favor of the ease and comfort of a bifurcated garment" (Helvenston, 32). Amelia Bloomer, a leader of the dress reform movement during the 1840s and 50s, designed a new women's costume famously referred to today by many grandmothers across the nation as "bloomers." The costume was designed like a traditional dress from the waist up, but the skirt was shortened to below the knee and worn with puffy, Turkish-style pants. Initially, many Americans did not approve of the design because trousers were considered acceptable for only men to wear, yet this did not stop women's rights activists from wearing them. These women were a part of the initiatives for the first major American feminist movements.



"Bloomer" dress of the 1850s
Source: Xroads.virginia.edu

Health factors also ruled the women's dress reform. High fashion dresses typically featured long trains that served no function other than beautification, and women wore tight corsets to make their waistline appear narrower. Health experts spoke out against these two elements in particular. Long trains on dresses were known to collect bacteria off the street, contributing to the spread of diseases, and were susceptible to catching fire (Helvenston, 43). In

order to appear as thin as possible, women often wore corsets so tightly that they would pass out from restricting oxygen levels and blood flow.

The combination of dress reforms and distinctive formations of social class prominently influenced this period's style of dress, which was a mixture of formal high fashion and informal practical day wear. As the trade embargos lifted, the wealthiest women wore more foreign goods. Accessories were still widely used to define an individual's social status, such as the luxurious hand fan. Social etiquette expected women to maintain the perfect housewife role, so slippers were still popular footwear. Hemlines on skirts were usually higher than floor length, and consequently, the style of slippers became more fashionable, featuring a variety of colors. Natural hairstyles popular in previous decades remained short but more formalized, either straight or curled but still presented in a tight and smooth fashion.

Men's dress followed the same influences of the increasing industrial economy, and men's clothing became the first American apparel to be successfully mass produced and sold in the national market. From efforts of mass production, "ready-to-wear" clothing evolved and became an American trademark. Men typically dressed in simple style suits, characterized by a uniform shape and dark color. Although Americans did not invent ready-to-wear clothing, ready-to-wear suits are considered an original American phenomenon (Hollander, 107). Producing men's clothing on a massive scale significantly diminished the distinctions in fabric for men of upper and lower classes, although they were still subtly present. The shift away from English influence continued onward, now evident amongst the top politicians who had little regard for their former country's fashion. During a time when women were switching back and forth between fashionable wear and practical wear, American men were not influenced for the

most part by American women, but still continued away from European styles. Overall, men's dress continued developing into a simplistic style, with little variability compared to women's fashion.

The Age of Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution brought massive, rapid developments to society, but like any great movements, they faced opposition. The Romanticism movement began in England in the late 18th century and quickly spread throughout Europe and overseas to the United States. The intellectual movement was in part a reaction to the Industrial Revolution and the Age of Enlightenment, but it was also influential for art, literature, music, and culture during the first half of the 19th century. Romanticism emphasized emotional expression and individualism, and it opposed modernity and classical styles' domination over creative work. It worked to revive medievalism, because unlike classical antiquity, the Romantic ideal believed that imagination was more valuable than reason.

In the United States, the American people found value in the Romanticism movement, and its ideology had a subsequent effect on its culture. Advancements in mass communication, such as the printing press, allowed for the rapid dissemination of Romantic ideals across the states. Romantic ideology had a profound effect on ideas of love, marriage, and a woman's purpose in society. English romantics reformed the social conventions of marriage to no longer be an arranged social contract. American romantics embraced these notions and began to treat women more like wives, who had a crucial role in the home, rather than servants or property. Women were able to participate in more leisure activities and social engagements with other women, but their most important purpose was to raise and educate their children, creating a bigger emphasis on a child-centered family.

Romanticism sparked a transition in fashion away from previous imperial styles toward a new romantic style. Dresses featured fuller skirts, shorter hemlines near the ankle, and had visible medieval influences, including: ornamentation, neck ruffs, large puffy sleeves, and an emphasized small waistline. Petticoats and stays made a revival, but stays were much lighter than before and petticoats were adorned in multiple layers to support the full skirts.

Advancements in textile coloration emerged in the United States during this time, allowing for the popular cotton fabric to be produced in a larger variety of colors. Evening gowns adjusted the romantic style day look to have lower necklines, shorter skirts and sleeves, and were typically made out of finer textiles, such as silk. Elaborate hairstyles were adorned with ornaments and Greek-style ribbons to tie or decorate the hair. Nonetheless, the mid-19th century marked the decline of the Romantic Era, and by 1837, the silhouette shifted back toward more practical colonial styles: sleeves became longer and less full, hemlines grew in length, and the waistline appeared more natural.



The stays, petticoat, and sleeves on this dress (c. 1830) characterize the influence of Romanticism on American women's apparel.
Source: The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Children's clothing was given greater consideration after the Enlightenment, emphasizing their necessity for freedom of movement, and the Romantic Era took these notions and expanded them with romantic ideals. By the middle of the movement, around 1830, girls as young as the age of six started wearing full-skirted dresses that resembled their mothers' romantic apparel. Much like American men, young American boys' apparel did not change significantly during this time. Young boys still wore clothes that allowed for comfortability and freedom of movement, typically belted tunics and trousers. For nicer occasions, boys added a collar to their shirt and a bowtie in addition to their casualwear style.

The Civil War and Post-War Period: 1861 – 1899

By the Civil War period, the United States no longer resembled thirteen colonies. Now, it was home to more than 30 million people and 34 individual states, and the population of the West and Midwest was growing rapidly. From this exponential growth in industry and population, fashion items were numerous and diverse. However, this period is marked by high tension and divisiveness before, during, and after the war. The greatest divide came between the highly populated, industrial states in the North and the agricultural states in the South. The division deepened after the war and through the Reconstruction Period, when the victorious North demanded the South to relinquish their slaves and conform to their urban etiquette. Furthermore, the South's agricultural economy was not self-sufficient like the North's industries, rendering their economy under control of the North because a majority of their economic structures were funded by the North.

Beyond the turmoil from the war, the fashion of this period is marked by major improvements in society, including: industrialization; changing roles of women in society; early technological improvements, such as the telegraph and the sewing machine; and inventions in the latter half of the period, such as the telephone and typewriter. These advancements sparked efforts to move clothing production from homes into massive factories. Advancing technology progressed methods of communication that enabled more women from far regions of the United States to keep in touch with fashion news and trends. An individual's fashion was dictated largely in part by their community and career; denser metropolitan communities had a wider variety of fine fabrics and custom-tailored garments than seen in the South, and factory or field workers did not wear elaborate styles because they were considered hazardous.

Beyond ultimate defeat, the South faced many hardships during the war because when northern troops invaded, they frequently took whatever resources they found appealing and destroyed whatever they did not want. These acts of violence did not come directly by the will of northern troops; instead, it was enacted by the “scorched earth policy” – established by Union General Ulysses S. Grant with the intention to destroy the Confederate economy. To show their support for their troops, women in the South started sewing societies that worked to help provide soldiers with suitable garments and flags using the little resources they had available.

While industry was most prominent in the North, a very small industrialization occurred in the South during the Reconstruction. In the face of extreme economic hardships, women were forced to look for additional work beyond their long history of household caretaking jobs. This led them to work in teaching, doing laundry for other families, sewing and making clothes, and in the later period, clerical work for businesses. Women’s apparel was largely influenced by advancements in communication, where many women looked to catalogs and fashion magazines to stay up-to-date on trends; however, only the most affluent were able to closely follow the styles in the magazines and dress accordingly. Middle and lower-class women followed similar styles, but they typically could not afford the elaborate garment designs prominent throughout fashion magazines. Instead, they had to innovate some of their own flair with whatever materials they had available.

Beyond access to resources, fashion news, and financial security, a woman’s ability to follow high fashion was also dictated by her employment and place of residence. Women who worked labor jobs outdoors or in factories mostly wore simple garments, tailored for

practicality and ease of movement during work. Regions of residence impacted a woman's style because the ability to dress according to high fashion magazines was largely limited to women in the industrial North, especially those in highly populated cities; however, there were Southern women who had the same advantage living in cities high in population and trade, such as New Orleans. For those women who did not live an urban lifestyle, catalogs allowed them to purchase the necessary materials for their stylistic needs, but this option was limited to those who could afford the price.

A prominent difference between the North and the South was that a large majority of southern women typically made, wore, and prided themselves on their own clothing; on the other hand, northern women, particularly those of higher socioeconomic status, were expected to dress according to their social class and age group, as the potential for judgement prevented them from doing otherwise (Stamper, 81). Aside from restricting circumstances, a general yet consistent pattern of style in women's apparel was evident across regions and social classes because the large majority of women were still interested in following styles in magazines as close as they could. Women from all backgrounds typically strived to maintain an appropriate and respectable appearance in social settings, even if they did not wear the same fashionable clothing in their daily lives. Overall, the increasing political and geographical divisiveness of this period slowed the general growth of women's apparel, and consequently influenced many populations of women to resort to more simplistic elements of style.

Men were interested in clothing, but unlike women, they were more concerned with comfort and use rather than being "fashion forward." They also did not create their own clothes, write about fashion, or judge other men based on appearance. The primary influences

on men's apparel during this period include: The Civil War, technological advancements, and westward expansion. Many northerners that were responsible for producing handmade clothing in the region left and joined the westward expansion movement, sparking the need for advancements in production. Consequently, the Union military was forced to rely more on factories to produce their uniforms (Stamper, 157). Switching from custom tailoring to mass production initiated the first attempt at standard sizing men's apparel, as manufacturers first developed men's standard sizing by taking measurements from soldiers. However, women and children's apparel did not face the same treatment and would not develop standard sizing until much later. For women and children, the only mass-produced apparel was limited to items that were already considered to be "one-size-fits-most," such as undergarments, jackets, and various other accessories.



The juxtaposition of these two plates of a French soldier (left) and American Union soldier (right) reveals the French influence on the Union's military uniforms. Source: howardlanham.tripod.com

New manufacturing efforts for ready-to-wear apparel attributed cause to the establishment of department stores. Considered as the first prototypical department store, Macy's was established in 1858 when Rowland Macy of New York expanded his local goods store to a marketplace for ready-to-wear apparel. Many more small store owners soon followed Macy's lead, supporting the mass production and ultimately inducing the creation of catalogs and catalog sales. Department stores generated significant influence on what it meant to be fashionable through their catalogue publications. The general presentation of fashion in print was important to developing American style because print media was the main source of information about fashion trends for majority of the country's history.

The development of American style during this era was also influenced by minority groups, including: immigrants, Native Americans, and African Americans. New immigrants to the United States and Native American tribes tried to retain their own sense of style, but many immigrants merged and modernized along with American dress in an effort to fully assimilate into American culture. Immigrant groups were concentrated in large eastern cities; in particular, New York City became the main entry point for immigrants, and eventually became the country's fashion capital in later years. Native Americans were noted for their diverse dress that was distinguished by the tribes and regions they associated with, and they maintained their own separate style from Americans for many decades.

As the minority group with the least amount of freedom, slaves and former slaves had little ability to express their individuality through their style. Some freed slaves were able to flee to the North or West, where they were better accepted and had more freedom for dress, but the vast majority remained in the South due to lack of means for travel or preference to stay in a familiar climate. For the most part, only freed slaves living in the North has the opportunity to dress like their American peers. However, this assimilation was not made easy without the proper finances – a luxury that many newly freed slaves did not have. Slaves' clothing was under the control of their owners, who usually made them dress in a manner that made them virtually indistinguishable from one another. The distinct homogenous dress for slaves is also attributed to the lack of resources in the South, which caused many white owners to re-fashioning old clothes in order to conserve resources during the war. Even after the war, when slavery was abolished and blacks were legally granted full human rights, southerners continued to believe and behave like blacks were of lesser value than other humans.

The Early 20th Century: 1900 – 1939

Many elements of the early 20th century influenced the style of the time, but none are more prominent than the economic change brought by the Civil War. America transitioned from a divided country, operating simultaneously on industrial and agricultural economies, to a more solidified nation, bonded together by a new economic structure dependent on consumerism. However, not all Americans supported and engaged in consumerism. Anti-consumerist groups formed subcultures and developed their own distinct style to visibly separate themselves from consumer society. However, these individualistic looks were typically comprised of various elements from mainstream fashion. The new consumerist economy pushed America to the lead producer of factory-made clothing, but production was still influenced by European trends. The mass production of apparel was an important factor behind the growing consumer culture, and the fashion industry consequently became critical to maintaining and growing America's new economy. Nevertheless, many fashion historians recognize the 20th century as the period of time in which Americans turned away from European styles and started developing their own prototypical ready-to-wear fashion styles that influenced fashion design around the world.

During the early 20th century, American fashion became remarkably simpler in cut and style. For example, more women were put to work while men fought in the war, and they began adopting more comfortable work attire. Further changes occurred from a large portion of Americans who were dissatisfied with their conventional lifestyles, specifically women in their traditional gender roles. These feelings of discontentment sparked various political movements, including radical feminism. First-wave feminism had its origins in the late 19th

century, but by the 20th century, American women were actively campaigning for equal rights to their male counterparts. The feminist movement greatly influenced women's fashion throughout the 20th century, as many women exercised their power of freewill by cutting their hair shorter, wearing shorter skirts, and adopting some traditional male styles, such as the pantsuit. Even though the majority of American women did not readily adopt these new radical styles, a general trend emerged that featured a looser-fit silhouette and shorter skirt lengths than seen in the styles of the 19th century.



As more women joined the workforce in the early 20th century, maternity-specific clothing boomed – evidence for the influence of American feminism on women's work attire. Source: The Museum of Modern Art

In an essay titled “Dress and Culture in Greenwich Village” featured in *Twentieth-Century American Fashion* by Linda Welters and Patricia Cunningham, fashion historian Deborah Saville explains that the radical change in dress style during the 1920s is greatly attributed to social and artistic movements that originated in New York City's Greenwich Village. Saville describes the inhabitants of Greenwich as a “bohemian” subculture that “experimented with dress in a highly politicized, cultural, and artistic environment permeated with feminist, socialist, and Freudian thought” (34). Subcultures are critical to examine in the development of American fashion because, according to Saville, “subcultures reveal how cultural meanings of fashion change and the process by which these changes took place” (34). The neighbors of Greenwich Village shared the common sentiments of individualism and freedom from conventional life. All over the country, Americans read about the ideology of Greenwich Village from magazines and newspapers, and many readers were captivated by their liberal ideology.

The growing popularity of Greenwich consequently led to its commercialization. Between 1910 and 1930, this political consensus spread throughout the area and into mainstream culture, revolutionizing fashion with innovative, unconventional styles. Women inspired by the liberals of Greenwich Village began exhibiting a new style of fashion that displayed the female body in light of a feminist ideology. The inhabitants of Greenwich Village made an active effort to dress differently from mainstream culture, but ultimately influenced the larger American culture, politically and stylistically.

The typical social scenes of the 20th century turned away from the decorum of previous centuries, influencing the transition away from propriety and importance of elegant appearances towards casual clothing with less restrictions. In the past, Americans would dress their best for social activities, typically church and formal dinners, but these social activities were replaced with new ones in the 20th century, including: eating, drinking, dancing, and casual dating. Despite resisting efforts from the fashion industry, the modernization of American culture, exhibited by members of Greenwich Village, eventually shortened skirt lengths to below the knee by 1920s. The modernization of the traditional silhouette progressed into the flapper look, which featured a short-skirted, straight, and slim dress. Certain fashion elements in particular that originated in Greenwich Village and made an important contribution to the popular flapper style of the roaring twenties includes: bobbed hair, short skirts, loose fitted clothing, slouchy hats, and beaded necklaces. The flapper style of dress became symbolic of modern America,



The influence of subcultures on American fashion: image of a Greenwich Village woman wearing a flapper dress and hanging a poster advertising the neighborhood's Halloween ball (c. 1913) Source: Bettmann

where women were gaining more power and influence than ever before in determining their roles and contributions to society.

The 1920s was marked by other forms of modernization and innovation that influenced American style, such as: greater numbers of young people attending college, better communication methods, the invention of airplanes, and better affordability of automobiles. America no longer resembled a newly developed colonial country, but was instead an innovative, industrial, and consumeristic country whose lifestyle was developing at a fast pace. As another major influence on fashion, jazz music originated in New Orleans and its popularity grew and spread rapidly throughout the United States. The influence of jazz on fashion was evident in women's skirts that were shorter than ever before, made with the intention of allowing freedom of movement for dancing and swinging. Jazz musicians had their own unique style of dress, distinguished by musical elements like improvisation, that eventually influenced mainstream fashion.

The high-spirits of the roaring twenties ended abruptly when the stock market crashed in 1929. However, these economic hardships allowed American fashion to become more autonomous than ever before. The creation of a distinct American style is attributed to the government's restrictions placed on imported goods during the Great Depression. Americans started to genuinely favor American apparel over Parisian fashion because of its prominence in Hollywood movies and heavy promotion by designers in New York and California. Moreover, the United States was considered the leader of sports by the 1930s, which set the basis for American sportswear's popularity. In her essay titled "The Americanization of Fashion: Sportswear, the Movies and the 1930s" from *Twentieth-Century American Fashion*, Patricia

Warner noted that the clothing designed for popular sports and portrayed in Hollywood films eventually became “the American penchant for playing and winning” (Welters and Cunningham, 80).

Hollywood celebrities adopted these styles, and their fame and influence on mainstream fashion ultimately popularized traditional sportswear and launched it into mass

production. Sportswear was made appropriate for almost all occasions except the most formal, and it eventually became a staple of modern American style. Hollywood’s popularity continued to rise for many years after the 1930s, and it is arguably the most influential force in American culture.

Hollywood glorified sports’ ideals, made sportswear famous, and eventually influenced the fashion industry on a global scale. By the mid 20th century, clothing featured throughout American

stores, film, and print media was evidently American in style.



The May 1955 cover of *TIME* shows some of the earliest female models of American sportswear around their creator – one of the first American sportswear designers – Claire McCardell.

Source: *TIME* Magazine (Vol. LXV, No. 18)

The Mid-20th Century: 1940 – 1969

Beyond developing their own quintessential fashion, American life did not see much improvement after the Great Depression because the United States became a main actor in World War II from 1939 to 1945. The war not only created tensions with overseas governments, but it also broke America’s ties with European fashion industries. Paris had been a prominent influence on American fashion since colonial times, but its occupation by German troops left Americans disconnected to their long-established fashion inspiration. American designers

frequently relied upon Parisian fashion trends and interpreted them in a manner designed for manufacturers of mass production. For these American designers, creativity was not valued as highly as profitability – an ideology that became characteristic of American consumer culture. Moreover, Paris was a major contributor of revenue for couture clothing in America, but it lost its influence during Nazi occupation.

Americans had already established greater independence from Parisian fashion during the early twentieth century, but now they were forced to focus and rely on their own American designers and fashion icons. The mayor of New York City, Fiorello LaGuardia, understood the economic value of fashion design for his city's financial income. LaGuardia took the initiative to grow the domestic fashion industry and promote local designers by capitalizing on the lack of international communication during WWII. New York City launched a risky yet rewarding campaign for creativity and design leadership in America that resulted in its present-day status as the fashion capital of the United States and a leader in the international fashion industry. LaGuardia revolutionized New York's fashion industry and set a standard that leaders of other industrial cities soon followed. Their efforts were evidently successful by the end of WWII, when Paris was liberated and French designers returned as leaders in the fashion world, but American designers prided themselves on and continued to make truly all-American collections, officially establishing their fashion independence from Europe.

During the post-war period, American artists used fashion as a medium to publicly promote their own work while simultaneously advancing American textile designs. Analogous to the artists of Greenwich Village expressing their ideology through fashion, this period was unique for American artists turning their art into fashion through textile designs. A noteworthy

example of this new phenomenon is the 'American Artist Print Series,' which collaborated efforts between the Midtown Galleries of New York City and the Onondaga Silk Company. Presented to the public in 1947, this collaboration produced a collection of textile designs inspired by average American artists that were created into fashionable, read-to-wear garments. Much of the success of these printed garments is attributed to their listing prices, which were higher than mass produced clothing but lower than couture fashion, targeting upper- and upper-middle-class women. The 'American Artist Print Series' was one of the first large-scale, financially successful attempts at promoting creativity and domestic artwork through fashion design in American history.

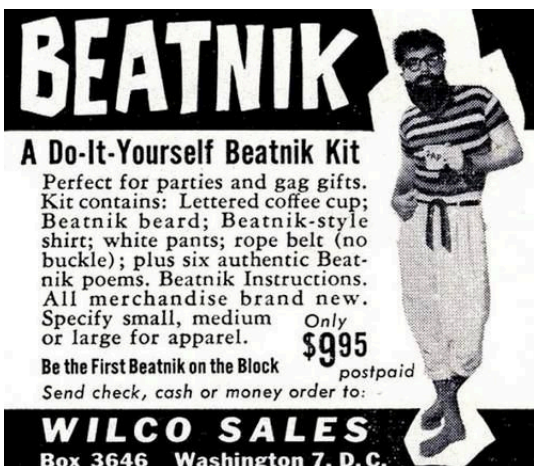
World War II was over by the late 1940s, but high political tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, known as the Cold War, continued well into the 1950s. During this time, the average American family led a conservative lifestyle in new suburban areas with conventional gender roles. The conservative attitudes of the time were evident in fashion for men and women, who regarded neat and presentable appearances to be of utmost importance. Most men kept a well-groomed appearance with a short haircut and clean-shaven face. Likewise, women's hairstyles were generally short, and they commonly wore suits, dresses, or skirts with stockings and heels. Men's casualwear was typically reserved for weekend activities or blue-collar workers; otherwise, most men wore suits. Gray flannel suits became conventional, and Hollywood proliferated the production of this style with the 1956 film *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*.



1956 movie poster of *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* depicting the popular suit style during the mid-20th century.
Source: 20th Century Fox

While these styles were widely accepted, there was still a significant number of Americans who did not wish to conform to this stiff, conservative lifestyle. These people formed a resistant group that was mainly comprised of intellectuals, writers, and artists, all of whom used their work to express their discontent with American life to the public. The group quickly gained more supporters as their message was received with approval from many other discontent Americans across the nation and became known as the 'Beat Generation.' The Beat subculture created a movement that practiced and promoted bebop jazz, abstract art, and philosophical thinking.

The original Beats did not have their own characteristic style, but they did show a preference for casual clothes throughout social settings that was unlike most other conservative Americans of the time. The Beats' style was initially derivative from the 'hipster' look that originated in the late 1930s, but eventually, they developed their own unique style to signify group membership by the mid-1950s. A typical Beat male adorned a beard and long hair, accessorized with dark glasses, sandals, and a beret. A typical Beat female is distinguished by her long straight hair, and baggy male clothing. Beats were known for wearing black, second-



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hand clothing, and keeping an unkempt appearance in defiance of the characteristic tidy styles of the 1950s. The preference for casualwear by the Beat subculture foreshadowed the mainstream fashion in subsequent decades, paved the way for the establishment of the hippie subculture in the 1960s, and eventually influenced the fashion of all but the most conservative Americans.

The influence of the Beat culture on American fashion is clearly depicted in this comical promotion for a "Beatnik DIY Kit"
Source: Pinterest.com

The “American Dream” was popularized in the mid-20th century by writer James Truslow Adams in his book *Epic of America*. Adams writes that the American Dream is “that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for every man, with opportunity for each according to his ability or achievement” (214). A popular ideology, and yet, many immigrants and racial minorities still struggled to attain the American Dream. As a result, the 1960s included explosive political and social protests in America. Many people began to reject the status quo, fueled by discontent with the United States’ involvement in the Vietnam War, disputes over women’s rights, and fervor of the civil rights movement.

People began to view the world in new ways and breakaway from traditional rules, including fashion norms. For example, women wore pantsuits for formal occasions, while men ditched gray flannel suits for those across the color spectrum. Above all, the greatest contribution to popular yet unconventional fashion designs came from the United States’ competition with the Soviet Union to be the leader in space navigation. This “space race” introduced modern fashion styles that incorporated geometric, silver metallic, and straight-edged designs. Space style is also famous for introducing the white jumpsuit into fashion. All of these design elements that were distinctly characteristic of space travel became fashionably famous for their symbolic meaning. In her essay “Space Age Fashion” from *Twentieth-Century American Fashion*, Suzanne Baldaia explains that “fashion magazines provide signs and symbols to comprehend the modern world” (171).



Jane Fonda’s Space Age style costume in the 1968 film *Barbarella*, designed by Paco Rabanne – demonstrating Hollywood’s tendency to proliferate the style of the times in movies
Source: Wmagazine.com

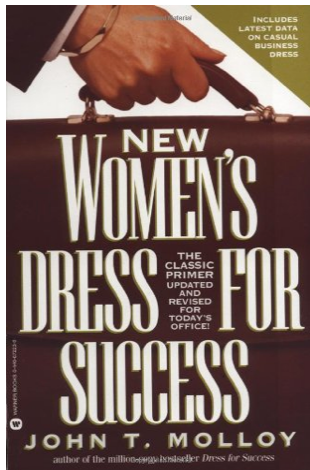
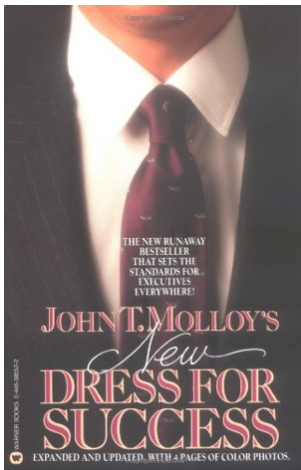
Baldaia continues on to explain that in this way, consumers are initially attracted to clothing that they find aesthetically pleasing, but the reason that they choose to dress in a particular fashion is because it symbolizes a certain personal aspect of their contemporary culture.

The space race was in part a larger battle between the United States and the Soviet Union for global domination. Although the Soviet Union was the first to navigate space and to send a man into outer space, the United States proved its capabilities and asserted its dominance when it successfully placed the first man on the moon in 1969. The race was a driving force for camaraderie in America that brought people together after decades of war and other hardships. The fashion industry capitalized upon this wave of American pride and spirit, and their modernization of fashion design with space elements earned public approval and financial success because it signified the power of the United States as a major world leader.

The Late 20th Century: 1970 – 1999

America had made great strides by putting the first man on the moon, but they were still tangled in a military mess in the Vietnam War until 1973; therefore, fashion continued to focus on stylistic elements of the hippie subculture until the mid-1970s. By the middle of the decade, the general trend for fashion turned away from the sluggishness of hippie style and returned to valuing presentable appearances. Employment became an increasingly important issue when Vietnam veterans returned from war and competed with other young Americans for work. Good looks were considered critical for success in a competitive job market, thus the notion of “dress for success” was popularized during the ‘70s and ‘80s. The “dress for success” movement influenced the publication of a large number of books on proper dress in the

workplace that served as a guide for regular men and women, as well as manufacturers and retailers in the career clothing market. It also contributed to the increased consumption of



luxury goods by Americans in the 1980s. An individual's clothing was a marker of their status and achievements, and fashion styles consequently became showier than in previous decades. Women added more flair to their authoritative looks, including: padded shoulders, broad lapels, coats, expensive jewelry, and silk blouses.

Author John T. Molloy's *Dress for Success* book in 1975 and its 1977 sequel *The Woman's Dress for Success* were best sellers that popularized the Dress for Success movement and the concept of "power dressing."

Source: Amazon Books

The women's rights movement and progressive ideology regarding a woman's place in society contributed greatly to the number of women in the workplace. Women's new role in corporate America affected many designers, retailers, and manufacturers in the career clothing industry. Changes in women's fashion were derived from American women's motivations to gain equal respect and be taken seriously in the male-dominated world of business. Women began to break norms in the workforce. They retired the pantsuit and adopted the skirt-suit because it was the perfect balance between appearing too masculine in a pantsuit and too feminine in a skirt and blouse.

Although men had been the leader in the business world for the history of America, men's apparel also underwent changes during this time. The colorful suits that men favored in the '60s were mass produced using polyester, making them so bright and showy that some argued for a return to classic, neutral-colored suits. A new style of suit was designed for men,

known as a “leisure suit,” which was a new and popular option for casual attire and leisure activities because it featured more comfortability and freedom for movement than regular suits. Even former hippies adopted new dress codes as they entered the workforce because they viewed it as an alternative attempt to change the world.

Americans applied attitudes about dressing for success to casualwear as well. An article titled ‘Dressing Down for Success’ was published in one 1996 issue of the *New York Times*. The author emphasized that choosing the right clothing for casualwear was just as important as choosing the right clothing for formalwear. The importance placed on appearances by Americans during the 70’s and 80’s caused stress and insecurities for many regarding how to choose the most appropriate clothing for any and every occasion. The significance of this article exhibits American’s continual appreciation of casual attire during a time when American fashion industries were dominated by career clothing. The concept of “casual Fridays” originated in Hawaii, quick spread overseas to California, and eventually became a staple of American culture. However, “casual Friday” did not take away from the importance of dress to display power, authority, and status in American society.

Another influential factor on American style in the 1980s was television (TV). TV was widespread in homes since the 1950s, but TV actors’ clothing did not influence mainstream fashion until the 1980s. The fashion industry recognized the influence of TV shows on particular audiences and its connection to fashion. The industry began targeting those same audiences by manufacturing clothing that appealed to viewers, based on clothing featured in popular TV



1970s Simplicity 5161 Men's Leisure Suit
Source: Artfire.com

shows. A vast majority of TV viewership came from a rising younger generations, known as the “baby boomers” that are associated with the increases in birthrates after WWII.

The younger generations were influential actors in developing fashion trends by the 1990s. These young Americans formed their own distinctive style by rejecting past trends, such as the authoritative style from the ‘80s and their parents’ hippie look from the ‘70s and ‘60s. The 1990s were noted for a style of fashion that featured a multitude of influences, including: casual dress, mixing of styles, labels, retro styles, minimalism. The most significant influence on ‘90s fashion was the youth and the music industry, particularly rap and hip-hop artists. Hip-hop culture emerged from rap, which originated in the Bronx in New York during the 1950s and 1960s. Hip-hop culture originated from gangs on city streets, and the artists who achieve fame are noted for rapping about their new luxurious lifestyle.

This transition to luxury from poverty is displayed in the fashion of hip-hop culture; it is a combination of styles influenced by streetwear and high fashion labels. Hip-hop fashion for men mainly consisted of baggy clothes, sports jerseys, baseball caps, sneakers, hoodies, while hip-hop fashion for women was much of the opposite. Female hip-hop artists influenced the subculture’s fashion with their sexy, provocative, tight-fitting, and revealing clothing. Hip-hop artists valued brand-named clothing and frequently flaunted designer goods in their lyrics and music videos. The importance of brands for these artists



An image released by CNN Films of a scene from the 2015 documentary *Fresh Dressed*, which investigates the roots of hip-hop fashion culture from Southern plantation culture.
Source: CNN Films via LATimes.com

prompted some stars to create their own clothing labels, which were made successful by contributions from their loyal fans. The fashion industry was turned upside-down because, for the first time ever, celebrity musicians with their own fashion senses were able to match the success of long-established, well-renowned American fashion designers.

For a discussion of Modern American Fashion in the 21st century,
please refer to **PART 3: DISCUSSION OF INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES**

PART 3: DISCUSSION OF INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN ITALIAN AND AMERICAN FASHION CULTURES

“Fashion is always of the time in which you live.” – Coco Chanel

Up to the 21st century, the history of dress has been as well documented for both the United States and Italy, as well as the countries that were influential to them and influenced by them – indicating the increasing importance of fashion industries and cultures overtime and throughout the world. It is more simplistic to think of fashion in its most concrete form: the industry, its designers and models, and the consumers of fashion design. Yet these are merely components of the world of fashion because in reality, fashion is a way of life for humans. Coco Chanel famously noted that “fashion is always of the time in which you live,” and throughout history, men and women have used clothing to define who they are or where they come from.

In this section, the most significant influences on the fashion cultures in both the United States and Italy will be discussed in order to construct a clear understanding for how they developed their own world-renowned fashion cultures and how these cultures exist today. However, the historical accounts for present-day fashion are not as comprehensive as those for past fashions since, according to Coco, fashion is the present – the time in which we live – and therefore, is always evolving. With this in mind, the discussion will focus on the major historical influences that had the most significant impact on the present-day fashion cultures and climates in Italy and the United States – both historical commonalities and individual differences. Then, the modern 21st century Italian and American fashions will be discussed in light of these major influences and interactions with each other. Through analyzing the top influential events in fashion history of both the United States and Italy, patterns will emerge

regarding the manner in which these two nations came to be leaders in the fashion world. In the next section, the important influences and patterns discussed here will be used to make projections for the future of these fashion industries.

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN ITALIAN FASHION

From ancient civilization to the 21st century, there are three primary influences on the evolution of an authentic Italian style: Ancient Rome, traditional values, and Renaissance renewals. These influences are significant in their unique contributions to the development of Italy's fashion culture.

Italian fashion originated during the ancient Roman and Greek civilizations that were famous for their political power and cultural prosperity. Later revivals looked back to the success of ancient cultures to serve as a model for their current reforms and movements. For instance, the Empire silhouette was popularized in the 18th century with the Neoclassicism movement, but its original style was derived from the Roman togas worn in Ancient Rome. Arguably the most significant and widespread movement in Italian culture was the Italian Renaissance. The “revivalist” methodology of looking back to the past to serve as a model for the present would inspire many more social, cultural, political, and intellectual movements in following years, both in Italy and across the world. However, a rather negative consequence occurred from Italy's past glory when the Roman Empire's prosperity in size and wealth made them a target for outside invasions. These barbaric invasions ultimately brought the downfall of one of the largest empires in history and marked the decline of ancient culture with the start of the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, the long-lived prosperity of ancient Roman civilizations served as the basis of Italian tradition, and these traditional values supported Roman citizens through a series of crises brought on by the dark Middle Ages.

Italy's history of sociopolitical developments is firmly rooted in their traditional values. However, the maintenance of Italian traditions did sometimes result in political disputes, such as debates revolving modernization, that severely hindered advancements in Italian society, politics, and technology. Yet beyond contributing to a slower progression than their European peers, Italy's identity was formed out of its heritage of art, culture, familial values, and traditional crafts. The preservation of traditional values was one of the most significant factors in promoting the value of Italian goods within a competitive global market and later in establishing an entirely distinct Italian style. Religious traditions made Christianity extremely valuable during the Middle Ages because the Catholic Church was the only unifying network to support and connect disparate regions following the fall of the Western Roman Empire. Furthermore, the East/West Schism of the Catholic Church in 1054 resulted in the formation of different cultures in Eastern and Western Europe. Italian culture progressed on the western half, along with England and France who were largely influential in Italian fashion. The value of tradition formed a large portion of Italy's identity within the world of fashion, particularly in the familial values and traditional craftsmanship that sustained years of advancements in production methods. For instance, Versace began as a family fashion design business in 1978 and has since been instrumental in leading Italian fashion toward innovation, such as in their recent "Manifesto for 2018: Unity, Sustainability, Resistance!" (*Vouge.com*).

The geography of Italy was largely beneficial for the development of their fashion culture, but it was negatively consequential because the coastal peninsula structure made them an easy target for invasions by land or by sea. A series of foreign invasions and occupations in Italy largely hindered any efforts for advancement in Italian life and slowed the development of

a unique Italian fashion culture. Consequently, Italian fashion remained under French and English influence for many years. However, these occupations were more beneficial in the long term because they introduced other cultures and influences while creating Italian camaraderie and nationalist sentiments during the Risorgimento and Resistenza movements for unification and equal rights against oppressive forces. Furthermore, just as in the United States, more Italian women joined the workforce while men went to war, increasing their role in society and contributing efforts to modern Italian feminism.

The final primary contribution to the evolution of Italian style was the Italian Renaissance, the first revival of classical Roman culture, and its subsequent influence on other major movements. The Renaissance began in Italy, but its ideology quickly spread across Europe as it helped lift European minds out of the dark Middle Ages. The European world of thought was dominated by the Enlightenment in the 18th century, as it was influenced by the Renaissance in the 17th century. The movement applied principles of reasoning to sociopolitical problems because enlightenment thinkers believed “enlightened” reason would be more advantageous to solve these problems over traditional customs (Cole & Symes, 550). Scholars used enlightenment ideas to engage in deep thought and discussion, where they largely scrutinized the value of traditional institutions and questioned the origins and nature of government, morality, and social order. Most significantly, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and the succeeding multitude of important movements form a *pattern* in Italian history – a cyclical pattern from focusing on classical antiquity to advancing and focusing on modernity, where resistance eventually hits – sparking cultural and intellectual movements that look back to antiquity and influence change throughout various sectors of society from resurgences of

traditional values and cultures. The cycle has returned to its start, and the pattern continues on as a general trend throughout Italian history, as seen in **PART 1: HISTORY OF ITALIAN FASHION**.

The fashion trends over time followed a very same pattern as they were in the direct sphere of influence from the changes in zeitgeist, the social climate of a particular time. The Medieval Era was a period of slow growth for Italian fashion, whereas the following centuries' fashion designs were greatly influence by Renaissance fashion that revived elements of dress in Ancient Rome. Italian designers used elements of clothing in ancient Roman civilization as inspiration for new designs that were manifestly symbolic of Roman heritage and exhibited their value of tradition. More recent centuries have seen the modernist influence on fashion design through the Futurist's use of unconventional styles and colors. The legacy of the Renaissance movement would continue on to be influential for a multitude of movements in Italian society and throughout the world. Yet its most striking feature is not its long-lasting legacy, but rather the very foundation for the argument of this thesis: Over the course of its history, Italy has experienced a pattern of ebb and flow between pre- and post-modernity, and this pattern is rooted in the merits of traditional craftsmanship in Italian fashion, and more broadly in the esteem of traditional values in Italian society.

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN AMERICAN FASHION

From the original thirteen colonies to one of the most powerful countries in the 21st century world, the top five most significant influences on the evolution of American fashion were: the American Independence movement, advancement in technology, and consumer culture. These influences are significant in their unique contributions to the development of Italy's fashion culture.

Revolutionaries brought about the independence of the United States politically, and their revolutionist ideology influenced the zeitgeist from the earliest portion of the United

States' history. Throughout time, politicians such as George Washington and Fiorello LaGuardia have campaigned for initiatives to develop and rely more on domestic industries. Yet American fashion continued to be derivative of English and French fashions for many years and would not fully gain its independence until the Nazi occupation of Paris during World War II. In its broadest significance, the American independence movement influenced two wars that had three key influences on the development of US fashion industries. First, American Revolution of 1776 was further inspiration and supports for revolts stirring in France which culminated into the French Revolution of 1789. While the French were preoccupied at war, the American people focused their fashion toward styles that were more suitable for their own time and place. Furthermore, by declaring their independence from Britain, the United States created great tensions with their previous paternal state that resulted in the War of 1812. Britain's trade embargos on the United States furthered their focus on domestic industries. Initially, the war constrained the progression of American fashion industries because they were largely unable to access the new inventive technologies developing in Britain at the time. Once the war ended, the Americans saw a considerable need for methods of mass production and initiated their own industrialization in the mid-19th century.

From trying to reform the English government to entirely breaking away from English rule, the United States' history is rooted in reform, equality, and improvement of society. This progressivist ideology led to rapid advancements in both technology and society in America. The first substantial need for advancements in production methods came about from the need for uniforms during the Civil War. Thanks to the first attempt at standard sizing by the Union military, small shops grew into large department stores and gradually produced more standard

sizing for women and children's apparel. Advancements in communication also equipped them with the necessary technology to produce and distribute fashion catalogues to Americans across the nation. As a result, department stores generated significant influence on what was considered "fashionable" during the time. At the same time, anyone interested in fashion could read catalogues and magazines to try and follow high fashion as well as they possibly could.

Technology advanced more rapidly during the post-Civil War industrial period, and along with urbanization, fostered a new consumer culture from the rising middle class. Consequently, this new culture in American society redefined class distinctions, primarily in the industrial North, which further separated it from the still-agrarian South. Nevertheless, fashion culture advanced along with the American Industrial Revolution, and "ready-to-wear" clothing quickly became an American trademark. By orienting their focus on developing domestic industries, the United States greatly improved their economy from increasing desire for American clothing, which was seen as a more affordable alternative to high fashion European clothes.

A final but crucial component of the United States' history of rapid advancements is the amount of sociopolitical movements that emerged from progressive consumerism. The American Revolution supplied the United States with political power, but the Industrial Revolution equipped American industries with the social and technological power to spread their ideas and foster a growing consumer culture. However, not all Americans were advocates for the expansion of consumerism, and resistance groups inevitably rose up in opposition. These anti-consumerist groups formed into subcultures and adopted their own styles of dress to appear markedly different from mainstream fashion culture. Their non-conventional

ideologies were made known to a greater number of American citizens than ever before by advanced methods of communication from the industrial period.

Throughout the rest of American history, there is a great number of movements that were started by Americans who were dissatisfied with conventional norms, and in turn, they used fashion as a means to express their opinions and ideologies. The first significant instance of this occurred with women's dress reform during the women's rights movement. Then the Age of Enlightenment and Manifest Destiny movement brought about more functional clothing for children to play and men to ride horseback, respectively. The last significant instance of this took place with the Dress for Success movement after veterans returning home from the Vietnam War created a surge in job competition. Overall, the United States' history of rapid advancements and sociopolitical movements contributed to a pattern of change in Americans' zeitgeist overtime, which in turn influenced the formation of American fashion culture based on consumerism. Furthermore, the combination of social and technological advancements allowed news about politics and fashion to become more accessible to Americans from a wider range of socioeconomic classes than ever before.

Consumer culture is one of the most defining features of the United States' fashion industry. It revived the American economy after the civil war, and its growth led to the rise of subcultures. Originally, these subcultures emerged in resistance to consumer culture, but eventually led to the emergence of a variety of subcultures that were dissatisfied with sociopolitical norms. Despite opposition, American industries continued to rely on consumerism for its economic benefits, but more groups began to renounce conventions and promote modernization in politics, society, and fashion culture. Greenwich Village, the Beat generation,

and music culture are a few examples of subcultures that had a major influence on the zeitgeist and resulting fashion of their times.

COMMONALITIES BETWEEN ITALIAN AND AMERICAN FASHION CULTURES

Italian culture has existed for many more centuries than American culture; nevertheless, Italian and American fashion cultures were both influenced by similar historical factors and were also influential for each other. The United States and Italy share three key influences that contributed to their unique fashion cultures: their geographies, the impact of the Great World Wars, and the effects of the film industry. It is important to note that although these are shared factors, they manifest their influence differently between the two nations. In turn, these shared factors further contribute to the individual differences between Italian and American fashion cultures, which ultimately led to the formation of their unique identities in fashion.

Italy's geography is primarily important for its peninsula shape and location in the Mediterranean Sea. Its coastal position encouraged trade, and trade favored a profit economy in Italy during the 11th and 12th centuries – a period of European history that was widely dominated by feudalism. Evidently, their geography supported the expansion and development of strong city-states that were primarily ruled autonomously by communes and guilds. The dominant city-states of Rome, Florence, Venice, and Milan would later form some of the most fashionable cities in Italian history. The Italian Peninsula was divided into regions that each developed special regional crafts, typically produced by family-run businesses. Communalism within strong Italian city-states and individualism between them ultimately fostered the importance and popularity of traditionally hand-made Italian regional crafts. The rise of city-states is also closely aligned with the fall of feudalism that initiated an active world market, which further supported the Italian economy and increased their regional exports.

The United States' geography is similarly significant for its location and regional divisions, but in a different manner from the Italian Peninsula. The New World was an optimal

location for the original colonists to declare their independence from Britain and begin a new nation. The political separation from Britain and massive physical separation from the rest of Europe enabled the United States to develop their independence from influences by European fashion designers in greater extents overtime. The rise of an authentic American fashion culture was also impacted by the division of the United States into regions with different cultures. The Northern, Southern, and Western regions of the United States each contributed their own influences on fashion. The North primarily looked to European fashions for many more years than in the West or the South because they had a larger elite population wealthy enough to purchase luxurious European goods. Furthermore, the large-scale industrialization and urbanization in the North fostered a consumer culture that appealed to a growing middle class. In contrast, the South maintained an agricultural economy for much longer, and most women constructed their own clothes while looking to northerners for fashion inspiration and the latest trends. The West itself was an entirely different culture that adopted more practical clothing that was better suited for travel. The West was not nearly as interested in European fashions as the North or South because their focus was on new opportunities from westward expansion.

The most similar geographical characteristic that Italy and the United States shared was the severe division between their North and South regions; however, the North/South division in Italy generated different consequences than in the United States. In both Italy and the United States, the North experienced greater industrialization at quicker rates than in the South which led to internal divisiveness within each nation. The North/South division in Italy prevented Italian fashion culture from separating itself from French and English influence. Unification gave Italians political power, but they were not fully rid of influence from Parisian fashion until World

War II. Furthermore, Italy's political liberation did not alleviate tensions between the North and South, as the Risorgimento had hoped to achieve. The government was preoccupied with economic profitability from industries in the North, while southerners were still perceived as less civilized and lazy.

In the United States, the North/South disparity led to the American Civil War, which evidently contributed differently to American fashion. The Civil War saw a shift from custom tailoring to mass production methods after the Union created the first standard sizing for menswear. Furthermore, the North and South were reunited after the Civil War under a highly profitable consumer culture. Overall, the geographic location and structure of both Italy and the United States significantly contributed to the development of their fashion cultures. The regional differences in Italy and the United States affected a variety of factors that are determinant of an individual's ability to follow high fashion, such as available resources and socioeconomic class.

The Italian and American fashion industries have been increasingly intertwined in recent years, a growing relationship that has its roots in the Great World Wars. Both Italy and the United States were on the side of the Allied Powers during World War I, but Italy experienced greater political and economic devastation after the war. This turmoil paved the way for the rise of Italian Fascism and continued to suppress the emancipation of Italian women in society and of Italian fashion culture from foreign influence. The United States, in contrast, experienced more growth and variety in their fashion culture during and after the First World War. More women were joining the American workforce while men fought in the war, which supported and strengthened feminist sentiments that originated in the late 19th century. The same

phenomenon occurred in Italy, and Italian women were even fighting alongside men during the Resistenza movement, but they were still considered inferior. It was not until the early 1970's with the Manifesto of Italian Feminism, that the modern form of Italian feminism was born. Overall, the increased involvement of women in the workforce in both Italy and the United States during the Great World Wars influenced women's apparel to be simpler and more suitable for industrial jobs. Furthermore, leaders in these feminist movements redefined the standards for women's clothing by including more traditional male styles, such as the pantsuit.

Overall, the First World War suppressed the growth of Italian fashion, but it gradually altered the American zeitgeist to incorporate more progressive ideology, such as redefining conventional gender roles for women in society. Future progressive groups and movements would continue to directly influence Americans' zeitgeist and indirectly influence American fashion culture throughout the course of its history. The historical pattern of American opposition groups in favor of progression and modernization over traditional social and political norms is a defining feature of American culture. Most importantly, progressivism differentiates the fashion in American from Italian, as Italy's ancient heritage of art and culture maintains a higher value on tradition that is manifested in Italian fashion and innovations throughout time.

The Second World War was chiefly important for both American and Italian fashion cultures to establish unique identities. The Nazi occupation of Paris during the war halted the French fashion industry, forcing Italy and the United States to focus on developing their own authentic styles and fashion cultures. However, the manner in which these two nations finally achieved independence in the fashion world differed slightly. The United States joined World War II following a decade of economic depression, which consequently suppressed Americans'

efforts to improve their economy and society after the Great Depression. The war also broke American ties with European affairs in politics, commerce, and fashion. Nonetheless, the United States took advantage of the lack of communication with Europe to grow the domestic fashion industry by campaigning for creativity and design leadership in America.

The United States successfully defeated the Axis Powers by the end of World War II, and afterwards, they enacted the Marshall Plan to financially support the economic recovery of European nations, regardless of the extent of their involvement in the war. Under the plan's conditions, the United States heavily influenced the economic and political structure of Italy. In return for their financial support, the United States forbade the Italian government from any involvement with communism in an effort to stop the spread of the Soviet Union's influence in Europe. The plan helped revive the Italian economy and fostered relations between the United States and Italy, particularly through the support of an Italian-American population in New York City. All in all, the Nazi occupation of Paris and their inevitable defeat during World War II intensified Americans and Italians' attention on cultivating their domestic fashion industries. The post-war economic revivals brought the establishment of authentic Italian and American fashion cultures whose innovative styles were finally independent from Parisian influence.

The film industry is the last major influence that made simultaneous advancements in both American and Italian fashion. Along with political efforts to grow domestic industries during the early 20th century, many celebrities from Hollywood movies prominently displayed American fashion on and off camera. The most prominent of Hollywood's fashion contributions occurred when they capitalized on Americans' love for sports by incorporating sports apparel in movie wardrobes, ultimately popularizing sportswear as an American fashion staple. In turn,

Americans began to genuinely favor American apparel over European fashions due to its repeated appearance in film and the patronage of American designers by Hollywood celebrities. Hollywood's influence on American fashion began in the early 20th century, but its effects were long-lasting throughout history to present day.

The Italian film industry was not extremely significant for Italian fashion culture until after World War II, with the release of Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*. Fellini's movie made "La Dolce Vita" (i.e. "The Sweet Life") a staple of Italian society and culture – one that portrayed a fabulous and luxurious lifestyle that Italians wanted to gain from the post-war reconstruction period, which in reality, was quite the opposite of lifestyle in the movie. Just as Hollywood proliferated American sportswear as a style of the times, it grew Americans' interests in Italian goods and in Italy itself as popular tourist destination. Moreover, Rome was an extremely popular location for Hollywood to film its movies, as it became the center of the Italian film industry under Fascist rule. Mussolini ordered the construction of a large film studio called Cinecittà as a scheme to revive the Italian film industry, but also to make propagandist films. Around the same time, Mussolini had forced all the lower-class working citizens to move outside the city walls of Rome, many of whom found employment at Cinecittà, which ultimately helped support their artistic craft through film production and design. Throughout the 50s, 60s, and 70s, Hollywood heavily employed these same Italians to do everything for their movies, including: costume design, setting construction, dubbing, voiceover, and the whole production.

The relationship between Hollywood and Italy has maintained significant influence on Italian and American culture through the present day. In the early 2000s for example, Mel Gibson filmed *The Passion of Christ* at Cinecittà and throughout other locations in Italy.

American celebrities working on films in Italy naturally showed further patronage for Roman couture houses. Hollywood films and celebrities integrated their influence in Italy while making films in a manner that helped successfully popularize sportswear in the United States and market American sportswear overseas to Italy and other European nations. At the same time, the Italian film industry promoted an idealized perception of Italians' lifestyle that drew in a large market of American consumers.

DISCUSSION OF MODERN-DAY FASHION IN ITALY AND THE UNITED STATES

There is a considerable record of events and developments in the history of the United States and Italy that constituted the argument of this thesis up to this point. The same cannot be said for historical documentation of 21st century fashion due to its recency; however, this section will focus on the general climate of modern-day Italian and American fashion cultures. Any claims or generalizations regarding 21st century fashion will be supported with historical accounts or first-hand observations.

Modern-Day Italy: the 21st century

Instead of following the path of advancing technology into developing their own consumer culture, Italian designers maintained their traditional Italian heritage throughout the Industrial Revolution and spread of mass production methods. In general, Italian designers did not allow mass production of clothing to diminish the quality of their products. Italian manufacturers will often mass-produce fashion basics, such as textiles, in preparation for Italian designers to apply their own unique designs on, such as hand-made embroidery patterns. Italians also made modifications to American sportswear to create their own Italianized version. Italian sportswear incorporated the same American designs of comfort and simplicity, but it bore more cultural significance and evidently exhibited greater sophistication. Italians were

able to successfully market their Hollywood-style designs to the United States due to the prestige of their European label.

In the 21st century, Italian society and fashion culture is dominated by *la bella figura* – a cultural phenomenon that is the most defining feature of the evolution of Italian fashion culture from its ancient heritage and traditional values to modern-day. Translating to “the beautiful figure,” *la bella figura* is a philosophy rooted in Italian society and encompasses the importance of presentation to Italians. *La bella figura* largely affects the way Italians dress and behave across social settings. As seen in *La Dolce Vita*, Italians tend to put on a seductive and elegant appearance for visitors. In *Fashion, Italian Style*, historian Valerie Steele notes an observation made by Italian writer Giannino Malossi:

The very idea of belonging to an elegant and seductive nation... whose success is based on elegance, arouses a feeling of satisfaction and confidence in the average Italian. This positive attitude toward the question of elegance has made a far from insignificant contribution to the development of the commercial myth of Italian fashion. And the success of this myth, in turn, has strengthened its grip on the public. (Steel, vii)

Malossi’s keen observation of Italian life ruled by *la bella figura* captures the success of Italian fashion from their individual differences in culture. Italians devised their own model of a fashion industry revolving around high-standards of quality in products and relationships. For instance, the persistence of craft traditions and the importance of family are strong influences on modern-day Italian fashion. Whereas Americans are focused on steps needed to produce a desired outcome for a given assignment, Italians tend to be more immediately concerned with

forming excellent relationships between group members in order to achieve the desired result.

In short, Italian history began with ancient Roman culture, and as a result of ancient prosperity, Italians' value for tradition maintained their rich heritage through revivalist movements like the Renaissance; in time, Italy rose to power in the global fashion industry by developing an independent fashion culture famous for its exceptional craftsmanship.



The embroidery of Renaissance art, modeled after Lucas Cranach's painting of *Adam and Eve*, depicted on a 2014 Valentino dress exemplifies the influence of Italian craft and cultural traditions on modern fashion designs. Source: Met Costume Institute's Instagram (@metcostumeinstitute). April 6, 2018.

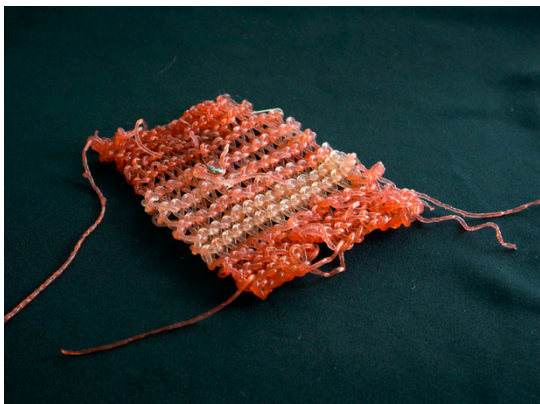
Modern-Day America: the 21st century

Unlike Italy, the United States' heritage originated within revolutionist ideology from the American Independence movement. In general, the evolution of American fashion culture modeled after the same sentiments that founded and progressed the American nation. From their earliest efforts to gain independence from Britain, Americans were able to direct these independence efforts into growing their domestic fashion and eventually establishing an authentic American style. The United States' fashion culture diverges from that of Italy in its history of rapid modernization. From its earliest history, the United States needed to gain political and economic power in order to support the fledgling nation against attacks from the British. In turn, American fashion gained its independence from European influence through its history of rapid advancements in technology and society. Together, modernization movements and the ever-growing consumer culture made significant contributions to society and allowed

Americans to create a world-renowned fashion culture based on the mass production of ready-to-wear clothing.

From the late 19th to the early 21st century, the rise of the internet and social media greatly altered many aspects of American life, including its fashion culture. Today, American fashion is influenced less by trends than by movements, as trends tend to only arise out of these major sociopolitical movements. The rise of the internet and social media contributed greatly to the decline of trends because more people can utilize media to explore the variety of fashions options across the globe to find styles that best suit their individual preferences; therefore, the emphasis shifted away from following trends towards generating personal style. Furthermore, fast fashion movements in the early 2000s exasperated trends by making them readily and widely available in a short period, close to two weeks' time. Resistance groups emerged soon afterward to spread awareness of the negative effects that result from fast fashion, such as slave labor and the toxic patterns of rapidly buying and selling clothes that result in large amounts of waste.

Today, fast fashion bears greater negative connotations that it did during the earliest portion of the 21st century. In an effort to reduce the negative effects of fast fashion, the American fashion industry developed initiatives for ecological sustainability and conservation in



AlgiKnit prototype of a sustainable textile, made using a unique technique that knits algae-sourced materials together, producing product with little to no waste.

Source: AlgiKnit (via Algiknit.com)

fashion design and production. The New York-based company AlgiKnit, for instance, was able to combine the skills of American engineers and fashion designers to create more eco-friendly textiles by using readily available biopolymers to create entirely compostable

materials (*AlgiKnit.com*). This initiative is extremely important because, by using algae products in their designs, AlgiKnit is not only creating compostable textiles, but they are also helping reduce the negative environmental effects of algae bloom. Bodies of water contain a natural balance of algae, but the algae can often become highly concentrated due to an excess of nutrients, like phosphates, that are found in many fertilizers. Rain causes a runoff of these chemicals from crops into nearby waters, contributing to an algae overgrowth that is fatal for marine populations in the area.

It is important to note that there are already many existing initiatives by designers for sustainable fashion using recycled products, such as Nike's use of recycled plastic in their shoes; however, AlgiKnit's methods show greater potential success for American fashion that would result in negative waste – the reduction of waste or hazardous material, over merely recycling it – by fixing a problem that is already naturally in existence, algae bloom. As more American designers account for their ecological role in fashion, the United States would benefit from utilizing their technological skill to continue designing state-of-the-art production methods that align with or support the ecosystem. The use of technology to optimize ecological services would provide substantial hope for a new future in American fashion that produces little to no waste. However, these fashion designs still largely lack the penchant of American fashion culture – they have not achieved the level of mass production that would make these sustainable and compostable clothes widely available at affordable prices. Nevertheless, they are becoming increasingly more available to wider audiences depending on the product, materials used, and method of production.

PART 4: FUTURE PROJECTIONS

FOR ITALIAN AND AMERICAN FASHION INDUSTRIES AND CULTURES

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” – **George Santayana**,
“History doesn’t repeat itself, but it often rhymes.” – **Mark Twain** (*allegedly*)

Scholars have recorded and studied history for centuries before the Common Era, and history has evolved into a study that has many purposes and benefits. A common conviction about history, due in part to George Santayana, is that history should be studied in order to avoid past mistakes and take better action in the future. For the purpose of this paper, the historical accounts of the fashion cultures in Italy and the United States hold a three-fold purpose: first, it documents the origins of the first institutions and universities that shaped different societies’ culture and thought processes; second, it is a key source on the identity of particular groups of people; and third, because it provides a suitable amount of historical support needed to make logical predictions for the future, specifically the future of Italian and American fashion, as well the global fashion industry to which both nations are intertwined. In sum, this thesis will construct credible projections for the future of Italian and American fashion using the support of historical trends presented.

Throughout history, Italian fashion designers strove to maintain high-quality products throughout advancements in technology and production methods, while the American fashion industry capitalized on consumer culture to build their economic structure. The underlying central reasoning behind these individual differences in fashion culture rests in the fact that the two nations began in fundamentally different ways. Foundational differences evidently allowed for the propagation of their core value systems and zeitgeists to impact evolution of their

fashion culture. Italian culture was built upon values of heritage, tradition, and artistic craft. While Italian art and design has undergone significant developments, it maintains these core values because Italians historically tend to revert to the past prosperity of their ancient Roman heritage for inspiration.

The significance of the long history of revival movements for ancient culture in Italy is key to understanding why the Italian population widely considers fashion as an art form, first and foremost, while Americans tend to become engulfed in fashion through consumeristic principles. The source of American consumerism is also found in the foundation of the United States of America: a nation established upon values of liberty, equality, and the pursuit of happiness. Today, the United States of America is the greatest world power, but for a long time, they dealt with a fledgling culture compared to the rich history of Italian culture and that of other older European societies. In turn, the United States' history is marked by rapid progression and advancements made to society in order to become the major player in the global sphere that there are today.

While there are Americans that primarily understand fashion for its artisanal and sentimental values, the majority of American society is still under large influence of consumer culture. The prevalence of consumerism throughout American history and culture provides important insight to the inner workings of the fashion industry in the United States. In particular, the movement from standard sizing to mass production to fast fashion and then transitioning toward sustainability is a critical pattern to understand when making predictions for the future of American fashion. Likewise, the historical pattern of Italian revival movements can be used to make reasonable projections for the future of the Italian fashion industry.

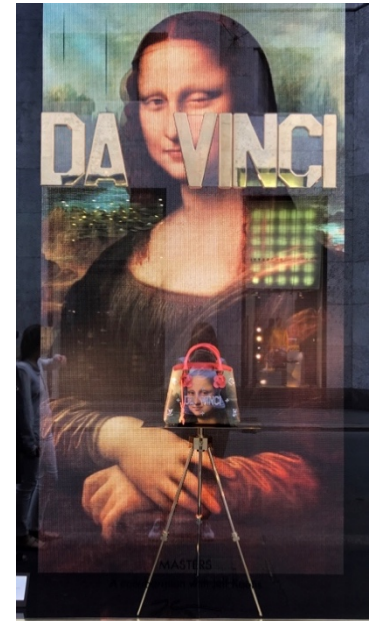
Italian heritage is so deeply rooted in ancient culture that Italy is predicted to retain and express their traditional values throughout future period of time. If and when Italians stray too far from their tradition, to the point in which they feel that their ancient Roman heritage widely neglected in its use as a model for society and source of inspiration for culture, then revivals will inevitably occur in due time. Presentation is of principle importance in Italian life, even throughout the most ordinary components of daily life, and Italians will continue to promote the notions of *la bella figura* in the future of their society and fashion culture. Through the power of *la bella figura* and Italian cultural heritage, Italians will be able to return back to ideals of classical art and culture in fashion design, should it ever reach high levels of modernization that effectively curtail cultural traditions. Yet the greater issue for Italian designers will be creating new ways to implement ancient values into their fashion while in a world that is only going to continue to progress forward. When struggling to do so, they should call upon the words of their fellow Italian designer Gianni Versace who famously said, "I am not interested in the past, except as a road to the future." Following Versace's lead, Italian designers will be able to maintain their traditional heritage in an increasingly complex industry and advancing society by using their prosperous past as a lens for the future.

In an ever-increasing technological world, Italian designers will have to continue to actively construct new ways to incorporate traditional craft values into their products. They will likely continue to construct designs and models for fashion culture and society in general that maintain and promote artistic expression. An example of this can be found in recent collections of handbags by Louis Vuitton. Louis Vuitton's 2018 collections have revolved around the theme

of “The Spirit of Travel” – highlighting the use of consumer culture to Europeans’ advantage by marketing goods with an enticing souvenir effect. The year before, Vuitton also had a summer collection of handbags inspired by some of the most famous Italian artists, such as Leonardo Da Vinci and Vincent van Gogh. The fact that Vuitton is a French label makes this example even more significant because it illustrates the modern-day influence of Italian Renaissance art on high-fashion, including on French designers that have historically held Italy under its influence for centuries.

Innovations in Italian society were widely unappreciated for much of its history and were typically considered a “barbaric” movement away from the traditions established in the time of Ancient Rome. However, it is crucial for members of the Italian fashion industry and culture – as well as Italian citizens in general – to realize that our world will only continue to advance and increase its use of technology. Since the core values of Italian culture are widely opposed to rapid innovations, leaders in Italian fashion must take the initiative to develop campaigns and designs that use technology for its optimal advantages, such as mass producing basic textiles at a low cost, while also making sure to include an authentic Italian flair, like hand-made embroidery or high-quality accessories.

Projections for the future of the United States’ fashion industry are derived from the history of technological advancements within consumer climate and the recent movement toward sustainability in America. America is projected to continue into its consumerist culture, as it has done for many years. However, it will be a different, milder form of consumer culture –



Store display and handbag modeled after the Mona Lisa by Italian Renaissance artist Leonardo da Vinci: evidence of one initiative taken to implement famous Italian history on current fashion designs, even by French designers.
Photo from Louis Vuitton in Milan, Italy (2017 Summer

one that moves away from fast-fashion and instead focuses largely on sustainability as the United States further exercises its political, industrial, and intellectual powers. As a major world leader, the United States places a great deal of importance on advancing and improving society. These innovative sentiments will spread across all aspects of life, including the fashion industry. In time, Americans can anticipate more and more innovations for sustainable textiles and apparel, which will come at increasingly lower prices through the use of technology.

PART 5: CONCLUSION

“Fashion is the most powerful art there is. It’s movement, design, and architecture all in one. It shows the world who we are and who we’d like to be.” – **Blair Waldorf**, *Gossip Girl*

Together, Italy and America will continue to learn from and be inspired by each other for many more years. The two countries have a close symbiotic relationship, and this will continue to translate across their individual fashion industries and the global industry. Through studying the development of Italian and American fashion and the interactions between these two nations, this research provides insight into how the United States and Italy can work together to improve their societies and industries. Both cultures are unique, but it may be opportune for their industries to understand each other’s origins and customs if they wish to maximize their success working together in the future. For instance, the admiration of Italian culture in the United States is predicted to help more Americans develop their own unique fashion sense and understanding of self-presentation and do so at substantially higher rates with the propagation of *la bella figura* sentiments overseas.

Italy is not as widely advanced technologically as America, so Italians can use their relationship with the United States to learn about new innovations, especially for sustainability. Italians would highly benefit from using technology to implement sustainable methods throughout their society and industries as they have historically been at a disadvantage for resources. Furthermore, Italians would likely adopt these movements because their values largely oppose the principles of fast fashion. If Italian fashion designers are able to generate new products with old values in an increasingly modern world, it would be advantageous to discover how innovative technology can help them retain their traditions.

This paper has taken apart the past, brought it back together in the present, and reasoned about predictions for the future. However, the magnitude of this paper stretches beyond industrial projections. It provides greater awareness for how the individual differences in Italian and American fashion cultures gave rise to their global leadership positions in the fashion world, and more generally how these differences transpire across other sectors of their societies. Additionally, the focus has primarily been on history, but it has also taken psychological and sociological perspectives to analyze the evolution of cultures.

Psychology in the context of fashion has received significant attention since the early 21st century, so these discussions are important foundational contributions to the budding field of fashion psychology. For instance, the breadth of consumerism across the American nation allows sociologists and fashion psychologists alike to understand how Americans behave in the fashion world and society in general, such as spending habits, importance of appearances, and aesthetic appeals and expression. A comprehensive understanding of fashion culture will allow for leaders in Italian and American fashion to work with their consumers, and even non-consumers, to try and operate together in a mutually beneficial manner. When different sectors of the fashion world become aware of how each other operates and why they behave a certain way, then they can identify ways to work together in the most mutually beneficial fashion for consumers, designers, manufacturers, producers, and the entire ecosystem alike.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Mary Louise Hotze was born on December 31st, 1995 in Houston, Texas. From a young age, she dreamed of following in her parents' footsteps to attend the University of Texas at Austin (UT). During her senior year of high school, she was accepted into the Plan II Honors program, and began her studies at UT pursuing a second major in Psychology. During her sophomore year, Ms. Hotze undertook courses on Italian language and quickly fell in love with the Italian culture. During the summer of 2016, Ms. Hotze was granted a Rome Study Program Scholarship to support her dreams of studying abroad. She traveled to Italy with the Rome Study Program and immersed herself in the Italian language and culture. Ms. Hotze's time spent abroad contributed to her pursuit and obtainment of a minor in Italian. Moreover, she returned home from Italy with a new conception for individual differences in fashion and appearances between cultures – prompting her proposal to research the individual differences in Italian and American fashion cultures. Ms. Hotze was received a Plan II Thesis Grant Award in support of her self-guided research travels to Italy for her thesis during the Summer of 2017.

Growing up with a special needs brother, Ms. Hotze developed a passion for human behavioral studies and individual differences from a young age. Going beyond these academic interests, Ms. Hotze enjoys volunteering her time to helping her local community and promoting the success of others. In 2014, she was awarded the President's Volunteer Service Award by the office of President Barack Obama. During her sophomore year of college, Ms. Hotze became a member of both the Pi Beta Phi Fraternity and the Plan II/KIPP Partnership program. As a member of Pi Beta Phi, she volunteered at and contributed books to underprivileged schools in Austin in an effort to promote the fraternity's initiative to improve children's love for reading in order to achieve a more literate society. After serving as mentor in the Plan II/KIPP Partnership program for one year, Ms. Hotze was elected to the position of Program Coordinator, where she continued to promote the mission of KIPP Academy by instilling in middle school students from underserved communities that college is an attainable and valuable goal for each and every one of them.

Ms. Hotze's interests in human behavioral studies and passion for helping others drove her to work as an Undergraduate Research Assistant in UT's Developmental Research Group during her senior year. The knowledge and experiences Ms. Hotze gained from her research group strengthened her interests in continuing her education in psychology after college. After graduating from UT in May of 2018, Ms. Hotze plans to attend the University of Houston's graduate school in the fall, pursuing a doctoral degree in Industrial/Organizational Psychology.