THE INTELLECT HANDBOOK OF

Men's Fashion

EDITED BY
BEN BARRY, ANDREW REILLY,
AND JOSÉ BLANCO F.

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Introduction

Expanding Men's Fashion Studies: Intersectionality, Decoloniality, and Global Masculinities

Ben Barry, José Blanco F., and Andrew Reilly

It has been over 15 years since the foundational collections on men's fashion were published. *Men's Fashion Reader* (2008), by Andrew (Andy) Reilly (co-editor of this handbook) and Sarah Cosbey, along with *The Men's Fashion Reader* (2009), by Peter McNeil and Vicki Karaminas (both of whom contributed to this volume), map out the multiple intersections between fashion studies and critical studies of men and masculinities. Prior to these anthologies, research on men's fashion appeared sporadically in collections not dedicated to the subject. Monographs and articles addressed men's fashion across disciplines such as cultural studies, media studies, history, business, and, what was at that time, the new field of fashion studies.[1] Reilly and Cosbey (2008) note a "shortage of literature … on the topic of men and dress" (xi), with existing resources dispersed across various fields. Although *Men's Fashion Reader* and *The Men's Fashion Reader* did not initiate the study of men's fashion, these anthologies played a pivotal role in organizing and coalescing the topic into a cohesive, interdisciplinary field by showcasing its diverse perspectives, theories, and methodological approaches.

Since the publication of these two volumes, there has been an increased interest in men's fashion as a topic of study. Its development is connected to the establishment of fashion studies as a discipline, yet men's fashion can be considered a field in and of itself. The first journal dedicated to the study of men's fashion, *Critical Studies in Men's Fashion*, was launched by Andy Reilly in 2014. At the time of writing, the journal has published over 150 articles. Public exhibitions on men's fashion, alongside associated publications and symposia, have also contributed to the field's visibility. These include *Man in Progress* at Madrid's Museo del Traje, and *Dandy Lion: (Re)Articulating Black Masculine Identity* at the Museum of Contemporary Photography (both 2015); *Reigning Men: Fashion in Menswear 1715–2015* at LACMA (2016); *Dandy Style* at Manchester Art Gallery, and *Fashioning Masculinities* at the V&A (both 2022). The Westminster Menswear Archive has also curated its own shows and collaborated on exhibitions about men's fashion since 2019. In

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addition, there have been an increasing number of academic conferences dedicated to men's fashion, including the *Millennial Masculinities: Queers, Pimp Daddies and Lumbersexuals* conference at Massey University in 2019—and the subsequent anthology edited by Vicki Karaminas, Adam Geczy, and Pamela Church Gibson (2022)—as well as the *Globalising Men's Style* conference at London College of Fashion in 2020, and, most recently, the Association of Dress Historians' *Beau Brummell and New Masculinities* conference at Central Saint Martins in 2024.

As the growing body of scholarship attests, men's fashion has evolved from an emerging topic to a robust field of study. Such growth prompts us to reflect more critically on its current shape, its stakes, and its direction. What is the study of men's fashion today? How is the field shifting, and what questions do we need to ask? Where do we envision its future? More broadly, what is the social and political purpose of researching men's fashion, and how might it contribute to wider movements for gender, Queer, racial, disability, and fat justice? These are the questions that have guided our thinking as we assembled *The Intellect Handbook of Men's Fashion*. As co-editors, we understand this handbook not as a definitive guide to the study of men's fashion, but as part of an ongoing dialogue that engages with fashion studies, the fashion industry, and the broader social, cultural, and political worlds in which both are embedded.

Men's fashion and dress

Before moving forward, we want to clarify how we use the terms *men*, *masculinities*, and *fashion* in this handbook. These definitions ground our approach and guide the contributions that follow. *Men* refers to a "state of being" or social category, while *masculinity* encompasses "identity, performance, power, privilege, relations, styles and structure" (Pascoe and Bridges 2016, 3). The chapters in this handbook adopt a social constructivist perspective, understanding masculinities as socially produced rather than biologically determined. Whereas masculinities are often associated with men, they can be enacted by people of all genders through individual practices as well as through cultural norms and societal structures (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Pascoe and Bridges 2016). At the same time, we recognize that in many cultural, media, and institutional discourses, masculinity remains symbolically tied to maleness. For instance, when a woman is described as "masculine" in popular media, it usually signals that she is performing gender in ways culturally associated with men. This association—where masculinity is symbolically linked to maleness in cultural discourse—reflects the persistent binary logic that underpins dominant gender norms. Yet, this logic is continually challenged and reconfigured by people of all genders, whose enactments of masculinity are neither derivative nor secondary. While acknowledging the persistence of these dominant discourses, this handbook takes a more inclusive and complex approach by focusing on how people animate the categories of men, masculine bodies, and masculinities through dress and fashion as social, cultural, political, and economic practices (Barry 2018). Contributors therefore explore how fashion and dress have been, and continue to be, used to produce, comply with, navigate, expand, reject, and transgress men, masculine bodies, and masculinities.

Several chapters in this handbook draw on the anthropological concept of dress to describe modifications and supplements to the male and masculine body that extend beyond clothing (Eicher 2000; Eicher and Evenson 2015; Luvaas and Eicher 2019). This definition of dress uses a neutral lens and objective language to describe how people dress and how those practices relate to the broader human environment and behavior. Most historical and contemporary examples and systems of dress reflect a desire for ongoing change in adornment and aesthetic expression, often sharing characteristics with the fashion system. In many cases, however, these aesthetic forms of dress have operated, and continue to operate, outside the formal fashion system. The fashion system, now central to capitalist, consumption-based societies, links identity to the possession of

goods and access to the financial capital needed to express it. Dress, therefore, allows for a more expansive analysis of how masculine identities are constructed and negotiated through various forms of bodily adornment, not just garments.

In contrast, most chapters in this handbook engage with men's fashion by working from a definition of fashion as a cultural practice, one shaped by collective agreement around prevailing styles, aesthetics, and ways of dressing, most of which are determined by the fashion industry. The fashion industry is understood here as an industrial complex in which the pursuit of economic profit is entangled with social and political systems that remain rooted in colonialist, exploitative, and unjust practices. This capitalist orientation of fashion—as centered on consumption and market trends—shaped dominant definitions of fashion by disregarding the shifting notions of taste and aesthetic value within non-capitalist systems, which were often presumed to be static or traditional. Sandra Niessen (2020) highlights this duality between "fashion" and "dress," or what she calls "non-fashion," defining the former as a culturally specific variant rooted in capitalism and the latter as a universal human tendency to decorate the body. Although the terms dress and fashion can be used interchangeably depending on context, scholars in fashion studies should be cautious not to subsume all bodily adornments and expressions of the desire to dress under the capitalist fashion system. Building on this premise, several chapters in this handbook examine how men's dress and dress practices exist both within and beyond that system.

The changing field of men's fashion?

Scholarship on men's fashion has primarily focused on the experiences of white, cisgender men in the Global North and has drawn upon Western perspectives. When men in the Global South have been studied, often framed as the study of global men and masculinities, they are frequently positioned in contrast to "modern" and "civilized" masculinities: norms largely derived from Western-centric perspectives shaped by colonial ways of thinking. While we use the terms *Global North* and *Global South* to highlight ongoing geopolitical and economic inequities, we also acknowledge that they construct a false binary, both geographically and in relation to access to wealth and power. For example, countries such as Australia and New Zealand, though geographically located in the Southern Hemisphere, are typically classified as part of the Global North due to their economic and political dominance within global systems. This classification system also reinforces reductive global hierarchies that uphold simplified imaginaries and obscure the intersecting social inequalities present within both the Global North and South. As fashion scholars Sara Idacavage and Katalin Medvedev (2024) observe:

> The Global North and Global South are conceptual terms that serve to label groups of countries with different socio-economic and political characteristics and artificially distance the two, with Global North generally referring to countries in Europe and North America and Global South referring to countries across other continents. The binary nature of the labels is highly problematic because it masks the acute social differences that exist both in the Global North and South and puts the emphasis on geographic and economic differences at the expense of social ones. (118)

We therefore use these terms to foreground power imbalances in critical studies of men and masculinities broadly, and men's fashion specifically, while also acknowledging the inequities and complexities that such binary concepts can obscure. In men's fashion research, it is important to underscore that most scholarship has emerged from Western or Western-centric academic institutions. These scholars often began from the assumption that men and masculinity exist in opposition to the feminized sphere of fashion and, therefore, men's fashion was defined as a "set of denials" that disavowed fashion (Craik 1993, 176). As Reilly and Cosbey (2008, xi) explain in *Men's Fashion*

Reader, "the subject of dress traditionally has not been considered 'manly' in nature." Similarly, McNeil and Karaminas (2009, xv) remark in *The Men's Fashion Reader*, "Think fashion, and menswear is probably not the first thought that comes to mind."

Since the publication of these foundational collections, significant theoretical developments and sociocultural shifts have transformed the study of men and masculinities. Gender studies and critical studies of men and masculinities have increasingly drawn on Black feminism—especially the framework of intersectionality (as we explore later in this introduction)—as well as concepts from Queer and trans* studies. By engaging with these fields, scholarship on men and masculinities has deepened analyses of identity, power, and oppression, while also questioning, problematizing, and expanding narrow categories of men, masculine bodies, and masculinities. This critical rethinking of masculinity and gender binaries has been accompanied by efforts to decenter Western bias both within academia broadly and within fashion studies specifically. Alongside these academic shifts, social movements such as Black Lives Matter, Trans Liberation, Idle No More, and #MeToo have gained mainstream visibility due in part to the rise and reach of social media and digital communications. Yet these movements, and the structurally marginalized communities they represent, continue to face hate, harm, and violence, especially as the far right gains political power globally (Barry and Drak 2019).

Contemporary men's fashion scholarship has drawn on these emerging theoretical frameworks and recent waves of social activism to revisit dominant understandings of men, masculinities, and fashion. As Karaminas, Geczy, and Church Gibson (2022, 5) write in the introduction to *Fashionable Masculinities: Queers, Pimp Daddies and Lumbersexuals*, "Men's fashion at the present time must be read according to an entirely different kind of ontology with a shifting set of signifiers." Their volume, the most recent collection on men's fashion, assembles research that explores the ever-emerging multiplicities of masculinities and the proliferation of both reclaimed and newly imagined concepts of gender. It offers a critical starting point and the place from where this handbook moves.

Patriarchy and coloniality in the menswear industry

The expanded academic understanding of men's fashion parallels recent shifts within the fashion industry itself. Jay McCauley Bowstead (2018), a contributor to this volume, documents the aesthetic diversification of contemporary menswear and highlights how it now offers a variety of gendered aesthetics that men can assemble and adorn on their bodies, rather than a single narrow masculine aesthetic they are expected to adopt. From a business perspective, menswear is growing faster than womenswear and is projected to reach $547.9 billion in global sales by 2026 (Miller 2022). This growth is driven by diversification in styles, the rising popularity of jewelry and accessories, and the influence of gender-fluid fashion, which is part of a broader cultural shift that is expanding the appeal of men's clothing. Ben Barry (2018), co-editor of this handbook, reveals that men have begun to openly embrace a wider range of aesthetic options in their everyday lives. They are engaging with the once-stigmatized, feminized sphere of fashion and embracing a panorama of aesthetics that cross, mix, and scramble traditional gender signifiers.

Structurally, however, patriarchy and coloniality continue to sustain the fashion industry and uphold the power and privilege of cis white men, particularly gay white men from the Global North. According to a recent analysis by *Vogue Business*, 25 of the 35 creative director roles at the top luxury fashion brands listed in the *Vogue Business* Index are held by men. Of these, only three are men of color—Pharrell Williams at Louis Vuitton, Maximilian Davis at Ferragamo, and Haider Ackermann at Tom Ford—and just one is held by a woman of color—Sandra Choi at Jimmy Choo (Shoaib 2025). These findings demonstrate that patriarchal power in fashion industry leadership

remains unshakable, aligning with Allyson Stokes's (2015) analysis that, despite fashion design being culturally coded as feminine—and most design students identifying as women—it is predominantly gay men, particularly white gay men, who are elevated to positions of power and visibility. Moreover, the *Vogue Business* ranking of the top luxury fashion brands includes only companies based in Europe and the United States among the top 30 positions (*Vogue Business* Custom Insights Team 2024), demonstrating how wealth and prestige in the global fashion industry remain largely centralized within Euro-American fashion houses. While these rankings rely on seemingly objective metrics—such as financial performance, digital engagement, and omnichannel strategy—they are deeply shaped by longer histories of colonialism and capitalism that have concentrated capital and status in the Global North. As a result, brands from the Global South and other regions are systematically marginalized not through overt exclusion but through structural criteria that reflect and reproduce global power imbalances.

The body types modeling menswear also remain homogeneously tall, toned, and lean (McCauley Bowstead 2018), as well as cis and non-disabled (Barry 2019), despite some progress in racial and ethnic representation (McCauley Bowstead 2018). In their analysis of body inclusivity at the Spring/Summer 2024 menswear fashion weeks, *Vogue Business* finds that plus-size representation accounted for just 0.4 percent of all looks—only 12 out of 3,044—across 6 of 72 shows in London, Paris, Milan, and New York (Maguire, Shoaib, and Benissan 2023). Not only does this demonstrate the limited range of body types in menswear, but it also reveals a narrow focus on fashion weeks in these four cities, reinforcing the dominance of the Global North within the fashion industry. Moreover, Ben Barry (2018, 2019) shows that men's embrace of more diverse menswear options has not brought us closer to the more equitable and less violent forms of "inclusive masculinities" proposed by men and masculinities scholar Eric Anderson (2009). Instead, men with the most structural power use this expanded range of fashion options to gain social advantage and reinforce the gender order, while structurally marginalized men continue to face risk, threat, and violence for expressing gender through fashion outside dominant masculine ideals.

Reproducing power in the study of men's fashion

The ways in which patriarchy and coloniality continue to shape the fashion industry also need to be examined in the context of men's fashion as a field of study. Lucas Gottzén, Ulf Mellström, and Tamara Shefer (2019), co-editors of the *Routledge International Handbook of Masculinity Studies*, argue that while critical studies of men and masculinities have begun to center more diverse experiences, perspectives, and contexts, particularly beyond dominant masculinities and Global North locations, the field has also reproduced new hierarchies and binaries. They note that masculinity studies have developed a dominant ontology—what they call masculinity studies "proper"—rooted in social science theories, modernist epistemologies, and scholarship by white, cisgender male authors from the Global North. As a result, the formation of a canon within the field has led to patterns of exclusion and domination: "Recurrently quoting a few social theorists as the theory of masculinity studies obscures not only humanities traditions but also other epistemologies and ontologies – particularly knowledge from the Global South as well as racialized, Queer, and female researchers" (Gottzén, Mellström, and Shefer 2019, 5). They further observe that critical studies of men and masculinities often apply theories developed in the U.S., U.K., and Australia, most notably Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity, to other cultural and geographic contexts. According to their analysis, the dominance of Global North perspectives on men and masculinities must be understood in relation to larger geopolitical systems of power. In this way, inequities between Global North and Global South scholarship are not only structural but also embedded in broader systems of academic capitalism,

> obviously tied to the economic and power relations between global centre and periphery, where some countries have far better financial possibilities to support research than others. But it also connects directly to Anglo-globalization and a global academic capitalism resting on English as the language of power in the current global food chain of research and higher education. (Gottzén, Mellström, and Shefer 2019, 6)

When discussing decolonial practices, it is essential to remember that many parts of the world remain occupied by colonial powers or continue to face the dire consequences of settler colonialism. In this context, Indigenous decolonizing efforts are grounded in material demands. These include the return of unceded lands and stolen cultural objects, as well as acknowledgment of the structures that have extracted and exploited natural resources from Indigenous territories. These efforts also call for the recognition and integration of Indigenous knowledge systems within educational and cultural institutions. It is critical to emphasize that decolonization must be grounded in material realities, not treated as ideology or metaphor. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012) advocate for the consideration of the material priorities of decolonization and not simply the use of the term as a metaphor or an intellectual exercise. This handbook aims to contribute to ongoing conversations about decolonizing fashion and dress studies by challenging assumptions about men's fashion and some widely accepted connections between masculinity and men's bodies that are rooted in Western ways of knowing. In fashion advertising, shows, art, popular culture, and media, racialized men's bodies are not only underrepresented but also frequently appropriated and objectified as exotic, passive, and inferior. A decolonizing approach to men's fashion requires the ongoing acknowledgment of the systemic racism and inequality that plague the global fashion system.

The development of the *Routledge International Handbook of Masculinity Studies,* the most recent anthology in the field, was an intentional effort to move away from reproducing field-specific inequities. Gottzén, Mellström, and Shefer (2019) assembled chapters that decentered Global North and Western knowledge, embedded a transnational lens attentive to the relationship between local realities and global dynamics, and incorporated intersectionality to explore plural masculinities in fluid contexts. However, it is important to note that the handbook is written in English and, at the time of writing, priced at US$260 for the hardback edition: barriers of language and cost that remain prohibitive for many students and scholars. While this is not a critique of the editors, acknowledging these barriers underscores how existing power structures in academic knowledge production continue to reinforce inequities.

If we turn the mirror on men's fashion studies as a field, do we continue to witness citational practices that concentrate power among a small group of scholars, primarily cis white men from the Global North? Do we continue to prioritize theories developed in Western contexts and shaped by Western perspectives? Do we continue to obscure knowledge about men's fashion produced by racialized, trans, and non-binary people, as well as those in the Global South? We offer these questions as invitations—to ourselves as editors, to scholars, students, reviewers, and publishers—to reflect on how power circulates through the field and how we might collectively transform it.

Like many others in the field, we continue to engage with dominant theories of men and masculinities developed in the Global North. We recognize the pressure, especially for junior scholars, to demonstrate fluency in the field's established canon. Without at least partial grounding in these dominant frameworks, there is a real risk that our work will be rejected during the peer review and editorial process. Moreover, the lack of access to material written in languages other than English means that non-English scholarship often lacks global "traction" and "circulation." Similarly, research produced outside the Global North often draws on epistemologies that are more circular,

prioritize lived experience, and embrace storytelling as theory (Tuhiwai Smith [1999] 2021). This raises an urgent question: Is a field still largely led by academics based in Western and Western-centric institutions ready to accept that work as equally legible? We also recognize that the cost of existing handbooks, their exclusive use of English, and the often-inaccessible academic prose can exclude many readers, particularly undergraduate students, from engaging with the field. In addition, English-language research is rarely translated into other languages, further limiting access for students and scholars who are not fluent in English.

We do not claim to be absolved from Gottzén, Mellström, and Shefer's (2019) critiques, and we recognize the ways in which we are complicit in them. There is no simple solution to a complex, global, systemic problem, and no single handbook can fully address or redress how power manifests in the field. While we reproduce many of the power imbalances discussed above, such as the exclusive use of English and the high cost of the book, we have also made an intentional effort to challenge men's fashion studies "proper" and to provide a platform for thinking about men's fashion in ways that disrupt, rather than reproduce, dominant power structures. We encourage readers to engage with the ideas in this handbook in classroom settings, which can serve as vital spaces for introducing this work to fellow learners and expanding access to critical conversations about men's fashion and masculinities. In addition, we invite readers to continue these conversations across social media, public programming, and everyday dialogue, spaces with fewer barriers to access, where academic knowledge can be expanded, debated, and put into practice.

Towards a more equitable men's fashion

In an effort to help build a more just field—or, more modestly, to mark a point of departure—we framed *The Intellect Handbook of Men's Fashion* through three overarching theoretical perspectives. We drew on decolonizing and decentralizing efforts, global perspectives, and an intersectional approach to shape what we believe is a robust, critical, and generative collection of chapters. The chapters are not organized around these perspectives in a rigid or compartmentalized manner. Instead, intersectionality, global perspectives, and decolonial and decentralizing frameworks are explored individually in some chapters and interwoven into others.

Decolonizing the study of men's fashion

As post-colonial studies expanded in the 1980s and 1990s, fashion scholars began working to diversify the field beyond the Western-centric approaches that had long dominated fashion studies in Europe, the United States, and other parts of the Global North. This shift included a critical interrogation of global men's fashion and the links between hegemonic masculinities and heteronormative styles, both of which were upheld by the same systems that positioned men at the center of global power, including within the fashion industry. Social class also intersects with how masculinities are perceived and practiced. Although men of lower social class may experience and benefit from some symbolic prestige as men, working-class, poor, and economically marginalized men often face discrimination shaped by their class status, discrimination that is compounded by racial and ethnic perceptions and the systemic biases associated with them.

The chapters in this handbook engage with a wide range of colonial and postcolonial experiences from around the world. A shared experience across many colonized societies was the imposition, or strategic promotion, of dress codes by European and American colonizers. These codes were used to validate the colonial power's cultural systems and to propagate ideas of men's bodies as powerful, self-contained, and disciplined, with military outfits and business suits as two salient examples. The global diffusion of the men's suit and other "masculine" styles is a direct result of unequal power structures.

A decolonial lens has also, slightly and slowly, moved forward the field of fashion studies by opening space for perspectives that have historically been excluded from fashion research and discourse. Persistent colonial frameworks have long devalued fashion practices that emerge outside capitalist systems, casting them as inferior. Because these frameworks center hegemonic masculinities, the dress practices of men—and, of course, other genders—outside those norms were often dismissed as unimportant, particularly the practices of those considered "the other": poor working-class bodies, disabled bodies, Indigenous bodies, Queer bodies, and aging bodies. For working-class, poor, and economically marginalized men and masculine people, fashion has long functioned as a site of both material exclusion and symbolic contradiction. Their dress practices are often framed as lacking style and refinement within dominant fashion systems, even as those same practices are frequently co-opted and reframed as markers of rugged, "authentic" masculinity in media, military, and labor narratives. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) men and masculine people, in particular, face material barriers to accessing fashion and are disciplined through aesthetic norms shaped by classist and racialized ideals of what a "fashionable man" should be. Several chapters in this handbook take up these complexities by examining the fashion and dress practices of those whose bodies have been shaped by colonization, and, more precisely, by the economic marginalization it has produced. These chapters expose the discriminatory and violent representations of BIPOC men's bodies and reveal how class intersects with race, gender, and colonial histories in shaping what becomes legible as masculine style.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith ([1999] 2021) introduced decolonizing methodologies as a direct response to the widely held assumption that research conducted in the West is objective and scientific. Decolonizing suggests that, instead, Western research is based on colonialist notions that, as we said earlier, codified men's fashion as powerful, global, and modern, while styles associated with women were usually coded as passive, local, and stuck in time. As editors, one of our central goals is to contribute to the field's ongoing efforts to move beyond the artificial construction of gender binaries—binaries sustained by colonialist and Western-centric frameworks that continue to shape how gender and power are understood. We recognize that, in many parts of the world, men's clothing can now be worn by a wide range of bodies, regardless of gender or gender identity. While some of us are able to embrace appearances beyond binary norms, men in other contexts still face discrimination based on long-standing ideas about how men's bodies are "supposed" to look. These ideas, as we argued earlier, are the legacy of colonial powers that imposed rigid gender binaries. The fashion industry, for the most part, remains complicit in sustaining and promoting these binary constructs. Several chapters in this handbook explore efforts, both historical and contemporary, to dismantle these binaries, ranging from subtle forms of blurring to outright obliteration.

Global perspectives when studying men's fashion

The chapters in this handbook challenge the dominant narrative that fashion is a Western endeavor, and that when men around the world were forced into or chose to adopt Western dress, they did so by abandoning their own aesthetic ideas and former expressions and performances of fashioned masculine identity. As we have argued, fashion outside Europe did not begin with colonization or later, globalization. Memories of men's fashion that predated colonization remained integral to cultural expression. After independence, men, and certainly women, continued to express themselves through dress, finding ways to do so beyond the constraints imposed by colonial powers and reinforced by the globalization of dress and the fashion industry.

Men's fashion is part of a complex global system that is immensely diverse, with many aspects yet to be explored, particularly in English-language scholarship. Several chapters in this book explore that richness by contesting assumptions that position men outside the West or the dominant

fashion industry as "other," as lacking in aesthetic desire and taste, or as incapable of balancing individual expression, cultural undertones, and global trends. Men's button-front shirts, for example, are worn globally, in part due to their introduction by colonizing powers. Yet, variations of the style are abundant and deeply rooted in local cultural practices, such as the aloha shirt in Hawai'i, as discussed by Marcia A. Morgado, as well as the Cuban *guayabera* and the Philippine *barong tagalog*.

It remains essential for fashion studies to continue bringing global voices into conversations about masculinities and men's fashion. These contributions matter not only because they introduce new stories, but also because they offer ways of thinking, vantage points, and theoretical perspectives beyond the Western-centric canon. Men living outside Western-centric systems of thought and life have the right to define themselves, and to study their own fashion choices, without depending on the analysis of outsiders. The desire for innovation in how men dress has always been a global phenomenon, shaping and being shaped by the flow of ideas and goods across the world for centuries. Staples of global men's dress include not only button-front shirts but also trousers, especially denim, along with baseball caps, T-shirts, athletic shoes, and, of course, suits. The global popularity of these staple garments in the global market contributes to the overproduction of apparel and accessories, sustaining a fashion system that is exploitative to workers and harmful to the environment. Men's apparel is produced in large quantities to satisfy specific markets, including activewear, and spectator sportswear has become a large contributor to waste colonialism. These garments are frequently discarded after minimal use, especially team-related merchandise produced in advance of championship games and discarded immediately if a team loses.

Several chapters in this handbook examine the history of men's fashion. For instance, contributors revisit the eighteenth-century men's waistcoat, trace the history of tailoring for fat or stout men, and investigate the origins of the fashion mannequin by challenging the feminized assumptions often attached to it. Other chapters examine postmodern and post-postmodern practices in men's fashion, including the aesthetics of Chinese hipsters, the ideological use of accessories by Turkish men, and the jockstrap as a contradictory signifier of both potency and vulnerability. The future presents exciting new frontiers and challenges for understanding how masculinities are expressed through fashion. How will Queer fluid masculinities and Gen Z's so-called "softness" manifest in future fashion? What new landscapes await e-boys and TikTok masculinities? How might developments in AI and the metaverse reshape future masculinities and their fashion expressions? What will global diasporas bring to the world of men's fashion? Diasporas, as Arjun Appadurai (1996) describes through the concept of ethnoscapes, travel both physically and culturally between their places of origin and Western global capitals, building expansive networks through technology and financial flows. Men's global fashion identities are therefore no longer isolated, as expanding social media networks enable continuous global exchange of not only information, but also of apparel, styles, and material cultures.

An intersectional approach to the study of men's fashion

Intersectionality offers a nuanced framework for understanding how multiple forms of privilege and marginalization—shaped by gender, race, and other social identities—overlap to mutually constitute human experience. It enables scholars to examine how context-specific identities and experiences relate to broader structures of power, including white supremacy, heteropatriarchal capitalism, and settler colonialism (Collins and Bilge 2016; Crenshaw 1991). The use of intersectionality requires acknowledging the foundational contributions of Black feminist scholars who developed both the term and its theoretical framework. Black feminist thought reframed race, class, and gender as interlocking systems of privilege and marginalization that are experienced by individuals who live at their intersections (Collins and Bilge 2016). This idea can be traced back to

Sojourner Truth's 1851 speech "Ain't I a woman?" at the Women's Rights Convention in Ohio, and the concept as it was explored through the work of other activists and community leaders (Rice, Harrison, and Friedman 2019). While intersectionality has a long genealogy, the specific term was first published by Black feminist legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in her 1989 article "Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics." Crenshaw's work has since gained wide traction and been adopted across disciplines and fields.

Critical studies of men and masculinities have taken up an intersectional approach primarily through the conceptualization of masculinity in the plural, or as "masculinities." Raewyn Connell (1995) originated this approach by developing a multiple masculinities framework. She demonstrated that masculinities, long treated as fixed or dominant, are plural, fluid, and produced through hierarchical relations of power, including race, class, and sexuality. Highlighting the potential of this model, C.J. Pascoe and Tristan Bridges (2016) argue that scholars have not fully realized the possibilities of Connell's framework for analyzing how masculinities are differently practiced. Men and masculinities scholars have since built on their call and have explicitly incorporated intersectionality into their analyses. While these researchers recognize that men and masculinity continue to be privileged within the gender order, they have used intersectionality to examine how power differences between men result from the ways their masculinities are co-constituted by other social identities (Christensen and Jensen 2014). In this way, intersectionality has become an important framework for scholars in the field to analyze how masculinities are practiced across diverse configurations of power and oppression, shaped by intersecting social identities as well as by micro- and macro-level contexts.

When applied thoughtfully, intersectionality allows men's fashion research to disrupt singular and essentialist notions of masculinity—particularly the framing of white, cisgender, Global North men as the default—and instead explore masculinities as plural, fluid, and hierarchically produced through fashion and dress. In doing so, it reveals how fashion and dress enable men and masculine people to both challenge and be constrained by dominant systems of power. At the same time, we are mindful that research on men's fashion must remain attentive to how intersectionality has been diluted, misapplied, or appropriated in previous scholarship, and actively work to resist such misuse. Two major review articles by feminist scholars (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall 2013; Rice, Harrison, and Friedman 2019) call attention to these misuses and emphasize the need for deeply ethical engagement, outlining four key strategies. First, researchers must critically examine their own positionalities alongside dominant masculinities, ensuring that privileged identities do not remain unnamed, unexamined, or unchallenged (Rice, Harrison, and Friedman 2019). Second, intersectional research must move beyond individual identities and subjectivities to account for the broader historical and structural conditions that shape them. As Sumi Cho, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall (2013, 795) assert, "what makes an analysis intersectional is … its adoption of an intersectional way of thinking about the problem of sameness and difference and its relation to power." Third, scholars must treat identities and structures as "working truths," while also exposing the shifting power relations that make, unmake, and remake their boundaries. In this way, intersectionality focuses on the dynamics of inequality through identities while recognizing that the boundaries of these identities and systems are always being constructed and reconstructed (Rice, Harrison, and Friedman 2019). Finally, intersectionality was originally theorized as a tool for social transformation, grounded in Black women's lived experiences of racism and sexism, yet it has often been depoliticized in research. Scholars need to honor these origins by ensuring that their work advances social justice (Rice, Harrison, and Friedman 2019).

This handbook explores men's fashion in relation to multiple, intersecting social identities and broader systems of power, with a focus on making dominant masculinities apparent and highlighting masculinities that have been underexplored. Contributors stretch the possibilities of intersectionality in men's fashion by exploring fat, older, working-class, Puerto Rican, disabled, and South African men and masculinities, among others. In doing so, we aim to consider how men's fashion scholarship can extend intersectional analysis as a framework for examining subjectivity and its entanglement with systems of power and inequality. How we design for, and dress, men and masculine bodies is shaped by lived experiences and geographic location, which intersect with gender, race, class, and other social positions—all of which are produced through structures of white supremacy, racism, heteropatriarchy, and related systems of power and inequity. Fashion and dress, then, shape how particular configurations of men and masculine bodies move through the world, and how they are seen, interpreted, and treated. We hope that by introducing more complex understandings of men's fashion, this handbook contributes to the pursuit of social justice by demonstrating how fashion scholarship can be used to deconstruct oppressive hierarchies and binaries, and to highlight and mobilize more equitable practices around gender, class, race, embodiment, and other identities.

If we are to ethically center intersectionality, it is also critical that we reflect on our own positionalities as well as those of our contributors. As co-editors, we are all cisgender gay men, though two of us (Ben and José) prefer to identify as Queer. Two of us are white (Ben and Andy), and one of us is Latinx (José). We all hold tenured faculty positions on Turtle Island, in what is currently called the United States, specifically on the unceded lands of the Lenape Peoples (Ben and José) and in the illegally occupied nation of Hawai'i (Andy). We have different experiences of power and marginalization shaped by our bodies and personal histories, yet we nevertheless occupy positions of significant privilege. In designing this handbook, we intentionally sought to create space for authors with diverse positionalities across age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and geographic location. Contributors range in age from 23 to 75, with a mean age of 49. The majority identify as women (58%), followed by men (35.5%) and non-binary individuals (3.25%).[2] Over half (55%) identify as LGBTQ+, and more than a third (35%) identify as disabled or neurodivergent. Contributors also represent a broad spectrum of racial identities, including Asian, Black, Afro-Indian mixed, and white. Ethnic identities include non-white Muslim Turk, mixed white and Native American, Latino, Guyanese, and Jewish. Nationalities represented include American, British, Canadian, Chinese, French, Greek, Latino, Polish, South African, South Korean, and Turkish. Despite this range of social locations, the fact that the handbook is written exclusively in English and was developed primarily during the COVID-19 pandemic, a time when structural inequities were sharply intensified, means that we have, in some ways, still reproduced dominant power structures. By naming our own positionalities and those of our contributors, we encourage future editors of handbooks on men's fashion to consider multi-language formats and strategies that better support contributors who may not benefit from the privileges of identity and geography.

Overview of handbook content

This handbook's scope is broader than that of previous anthologies on men's fashion due to our emphasis on decentralization and decolonization, global perspectives, and intersectionality. At the same time, we recognize that this volume is only a beginning. There remains much work to do to fully embed these approaches into the study of men's fashion. We hope this handbook and its chapters will open up new avenues for exploring men's fashion: by expanding the range of topics studied, reimagining how they are studied, and reconsidering who engages in this work. As you move through the chapters, we invite you to reflect on how you might extend the concepts and inquiries

presented here, and, importantly, how you might notice and intervene in the absences that remain. We encourage you to carry these conversations forward, especially with students.

The first section of the book, *Theoretical Perspectives*, explores overarching themes central to the study of men's fashion, including a discussion of the gender binary's artificial nature and practices that seek to shed this perspective from a colonial past. We begin this section with "Negotiating masculine gender with dress: Moving beyond the binary," by Andrew Reilly and Jenifer K. McGuire, which provides an overview of gender and dress. The authors examine the evolving definition of gender and the ways clothing has both supported and challenged the logic of a binary gender system. Jo Barraclough Paoletti furthers this discussion in "Little boy blue," where she traces the history of gender science prior to the mid-20th century Western separation of sex and gender. Through her study of children's dress, particularly when children of all genders were dressed similarly, she highlights how clothing participated in shaping gender ideologies. In "Globalized masculinities in Latin American national costumes," José Blanco F. and Raúl J. Vázquez-López examine men's national attire in Latin America. They consider how clothing has been used to establish national and masculine identities while also revealing enduring ties to Euro-Western colonialism. Lesiba Mabitsela and Erica de Greef continue the conversation on colonial legacies in "Redressing rituals: Writing south african men's fashion as site of decolonial praxis." Focusing on the Western suit, Xhosa trousers, and Zulu trousers, they explore the political and material intricacies of these garments and how they challenge colonial dichotomies between traditional and modern dress. Olivia Baker and Julie Hillery turn to the aesthetics of drag in "Blurring the binary: Masculinity in drag performers' costumes," showing how contemporary drag personae creatively combine masculine and feminine identifiers to disrupt binary gender norms. We conclude this section with "From Schnorrer to Parvenu: Jews, tailoring and the performance of respectability," by Jonathan C. Kaplan-Wajselbaum, who analyzes the role of clothing in the acculturation of Jewish immigrants in Europe and North America. He argues that the choice to wear a finely cut suit was not necessarily a sign of assimilation or the loss of Jewish identity, but rather a strategy for projecting respectability.

People and Bodies examines how men's bodies have been dressed through clothing sizing, tailoring, and styling. In "Genderless Sizing," Lynn Boorady traces the history of men's sizing systems in the West, including methods that focus on proportions of the body and general sizing categories, the US Military's need to clothe soldiers during times of war, and the contemporary focus on eliminating gender sizing and focusing on the body itself. Lauren Downing Peters and Chloe Chapin continue this discussion in "Circumference to size: Tailoring the fat man in America, 1820–1920" by focusing on the history of clothing for large men. Notably, their research shows that body shape and symmetry were often considered more important than size alone. Ashley Morgan's "'Dress for the body you have': Revealing the infallible realness of men's bodies through *Queer Eye*" analyzes how the popular television show emphasized real people with real bodies and how simple aesthetic techniques were used to create the participants' desired appearances. The section then turns to aging with Ania Sadkowska's "'You just go with it—you slowly move with it': Social performance of older male bodies through fashion and clothing." Her research highlights how older men present their bodies to others, navigate (un)fashioning—or the choice to follow or reject trends—and engage in re-materializing, the act of recalling memories through specific articles of dress. We conclude this section with Jason Cyrus's "The subversive style of André Leon Talley," which analyzes how the fashion icon styled his body through bold aesthetic choices that challenged dominant narratives often perpetuated in fashion magazines.

Places explores how geography and culture shape conceptualizations of masculinity and men's dress, with case studies from Brazil, Russia, China, North Borneo, and the West. This section begins with "Fashion and the devil's railroad: Masculinities, migration and modernities in the Brazilian

Amazon" by Elizabeth Kutesko. By analyzing portraits of the men who helped build the engineering marvel, Kutesko examines how their workwear prompts us to consider how style and masculinity manifest in harsh environments. Graham H. Roberts examines how masculinity and Queerness are expressed under an oppressive regime in "Border crossing: Contemporary Russian fashion photography and the Queering of men's style." Focusing on Vladimir Putin's "brand of heroic masculinity" and "extreme masculinity," Roberts analyzes how fashion creatives carve out Queer visibility in a homophobic cultural and political space. Leren Li's chapter, "A fashion investigation of the silent Chinese hipsters," illuminates the concept of *wenyi qingnian*, or "cultured youth/literary and artistic youth." Their distinctive, individualized aesthetic style is unique within a society that tends to prioritize conformity and traditional forms of masculinity. In "Haute headhunter: The development of a new traditional dress for Indigenous men in North Borneo," Daniel James Cole examines how contemporary traditional dress functions as cultural reclamation. Set against a backdrop of war, colonization, modernization, and beauty pageants, Cole explores how dress becomes a site of identity and resistance for Indigenous men. We conclude this section with "Styling gay men in the West," by Shaun Cole, who analyzes how gay men have adorned their bodies through personal aesthetics shaped by identity and situational context.

Objects and Products examines specific items of dress and their relationship to men's identity and masculine expression, including waistcoats, jockstraps, trousers, the Scottish kilt, and the Hawaiian shirt. This section begins with a look at accessories by Nazlı Alimen in "Masculinities and men's accessories in Turkey: Differentiations and intersections of religion and political ideologies." She explores how rings and earrings are seen within religious, political, and social frameworks where Islamist authoritarianism and Ottoman history shape a masculinity that both aligns with and challenges the state by deploying dominant masculine privilege and power. Elizabeth Semmelhack continues the discussion of masculine identifiers in "Fresh out the box: Sneakers and shifting masculinities." She argues that this ubiquitous wardrobe staple disrupts the stereotype that men are uninterested in fashion (because it is considered feminine), while simultaneously reinforcing elements of traditional masculinity. In "Conspicuous waist: Making and modifying the eighteenth-century men's waistcoat," Peter McNeil traces the history of the waistcoat, a garment he describes as "neither wholly an inner nor outer garment." McNeil examines its evolution, from early constructions to later modifications, as both a protective and symbolic garment. Änne Söll and Christian Wandhoff continue the exploration of eroticism in "Bottom up: The jockstrap as contradictory signifier of male potency and vulnerability." They argue that the jockstrap has shifted from a symbol of rigid hetero-masculinity to one that is increasingly Queer and fluid. In "Trousers, pants, and hose," Jay McCauley Bowstead reflects on the evolution of bifurcated garments by connecting their changes in design and form to foundational fashion theories. After the chapter on bifurcated garments, David Loranger provides an overview of the kilt as a cultural symbol and historic artifact to the kilt business in Scotland, and modern interpretations of the garment in "The Scottish kilt." We conclude this section with "The shirt that says 'aloha'," by Marcia A. Morgado. She examines the Hawaiian shirt's murky origins, its rise as a tourist commodity and collector's item, its symbolism of love and kindness, and its more recent appropriation by extremist groups.

Promotions and Business incorporates marketing and management perspectives on men's fashion, including the consumption practices of men and masculine people, the design and branding of menswear, fragrance marketing, and the significance of mannequins in visual display. In "Queer crip masculinities: Embodied dressing/making and reimagining of disabled masculinities," Ben Barry and Philippa Nesbitt examine how disabled, Queer, and trans men and masculine individuals challenge dominant fashion consumption norms. Drawing on everyday dressing practices, the authors show how participants remake garments in ways that resist ableist and patriarchal

expectations while reconfiguring dominant narratives of disabled masculinity. Victoria L. Rovine's chapter, "African menswear design: Fashion-scapes and dress innovations," brings attention to African menswear by exploring case studies of designers whose innovations reflect dynamic cultural flows and global influences. Her analysis draws on the concept of "fashion-scapes" to describe "overlapping, cross-fertilizing dress worlds in which garments, styles, and images traverse cultures, markets, and categories." Shifting to the realm of scent and sensory branding, Miranda Gordon, in "Encoding cultural meaning: Gendered performativity in fragrance space," addresses the role of fragrance as gendered storytelling, highlighting how packaging, marketing, and application practices construct masculine identities. Myles Ethan Lascity's chapter, "Suit up: Branding white-collar masculinity," examines how the brands Suitsupply, Indochino, and Bonobos mobilize hegemonic masculinity through the marketing of men's suits. Finally, in "Body doubles: Men's tailoring and the origins of the fashion mannequin," Alison Matthews David argues that the male mannequin predates the female mannequin and served to "reif[y] normative white male bodies," and was a critical tool for the creation and promotion of menswear.

Art, Media, & Popular Culture investigates how men's fashion and bodies are represented across cinema, television, painting, photography, online communities, and romance novels. In "Dress, style, and masculinities in American cinema," Adam Geczy and Vicki Karaminas examine how Hollywood constructed predominantly heteronormative archetypes through dress, ranging from the lover and the jock to the bachelor playboy, rebel, and outlaw. Shifting from the silver screen to the small screen, Hannah Liebreich and Sadie Lynch explore female masculinity and *The L Word* in "Emerging binaries and Queering bodies." They argue that a new binary is emerging in representations of Queer women: the good lesbian and the bad lesbian. Rebecca Halliday builds on the theme of visual representation in "Men's street style at fashion week as photographic and representational practice." Focusing on the men whose style is photographed outside of fashion shows, Halliday explores how the consecration of individual aesthetics both reflects and shapes cultural shifts in men's fashion, disrupting and reifying dominant masculinities. The styling of bodies continues in Kyunghee Pyun's chapter, "Hybrid dandyism and the construction of masculinity in modern Korea: Ko Hui-dong (1885–1965) and Lee Quede (1913–1965)." Pyun analyzes how these two painters represented themselves through attire that blended traditional Korean intellectual and Western modern masculine aesthetics. Nathaniel Weiner examines gendered online communities in "Online menswear communities." He analyzes how menswear is discussed in online forums, especially around style niche categories, and notes how these spaces create community and produce "collective intelligence" around menswear. Concluding this section, Jonathan Allan's "Men's dress in popular romance novels" analyzes the figure of the (un)dressed hero with particular attention to the symbolic power of the suit.

The future of men's fashion scholarship

We firmly believe that the continued development of men's fashion studies must be guided by intersectionality, decolonizing and decentering approaches, and global perspectives in order to confront the critical, worldwide crises that lie ahead for social justice. These include the ongoing threats to trans* individuals, the persistent discrimination and oppression of BIPOC masculinities, and the fashion industry's pervasive prejudice toward those who do not conform to dominant standards of beauty and gender. In addition, men and masculine people will increasingly face life-sustaining challenges related to fashion consumption and design, particularly those tied to the escalating dangers of climate change and other environmental crises.

While hegemonic masculinities remain central to the fashion industry, fashion studies must continue to challenge the constructs of masculinity and men's fashion that the industry imposes and

perpetuates. Some progress has been made, but setbacks remain frequent. The fashion industry continues to center dominant masculinities because they are marketable and circulate globally through advertising, fashion shows, pop culture, and entertainment. Yet, even as these hegemonic masculinities continue to dominate, the margins keep pushing for space. As the future feels "wide open," research in men's fashion must keep asking, and answering, critical questions about how masculinities relate to clothing design and how men and masculine individuals dress. What will a man be? What will men's fashion be? What will men's beauty be? What will men's bodies be? The future of men's fashion—and of masculinity itself—depends on how we choose to engage with these questions.

Notes

1 Some of the foundational texts on men's fashion include Tim Edwards's (1997) *Men in the Mirror: Men's Fashion, Masculinity and Consumer Culture*, Christopher Breward's (1999) *The Hidden Consumer: Masculinities, Fashion and City Life 1860–1915*, Shaun Cole's (2000) *Don We Now Our Gay Apparel*, and a special issue of *Fashion Theory*, edited by Christopher Breward (2000), on masculinities, to name only a few.

2 3.25% of contributors did not respond to the question regarding their gender identity.

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