# Living in the Shadows: Women Dressing and Conduct

 The idiomatic meaning of the phrase “living in the shadow” is the expressive identifications of an individual being a reflection image of a real object. This phrase is identified as the perfect description of the historical life of women as was defined by the society, how they were oppressively treated by men and also identified as negligible and inconsequential beings in the society (Rowbotham 42). Such a treatment succumbed them to constant misery and oppression by men that limited them from the freedom of choice and participation in the society which can be termed as,” living in the shadow of men.” Among many identified restrictions on women was the dressing code which even in the current religions and social formations teachings is restrictedly observed. Always, women are criticized, pressured and mocked on the way they dress and even their characters defined from their appearance, a case that has existed in the past and partially in the current age.

 The surprising and most often confusing aspect is the questions of why women alone? Do men also be condemned in their way of dressing? If men have got the full authority to decide on their code of dressing, on their lifestyle, why should it be women who are oppressed and succumbed to a one way of dressing that is also defined by men? These are the questions that have heated up women’s emotions in the past and even in the current times. They have identified this way of treatment as the reason for the old feminist movement implicating the weariness of women on how they were restricted to one form of conduct. It also led them to rise and fight for their freedom of choice wanting an equal recognition like men (Barrett 15).

 The books of history have recorded a long relic of women activities movement which includes women like Jane Anger during the 16th century who stood in the UK to defend women at her time. These women are a few among many feminists who are identified worldwide through literature writings and constant revolts to fight for women rights (Rowbotham 44). These fights were focused on identifying women in the society and changing the past society to identify them to have the ability and power of making a choice on their lifestyle not to be controlled by men. These choices were inclusive of how they will dress and conduct themselves, at the same time have an equal participation in the community events like rights to participate in voting and education. They were tired of the bondage that recognized their roles as being only housewives.

 The issue of decisions on dressing was also a central concern of the past movement. Women are identified to use the fashion of dressing as a feminist tool in the history (Komar 12). The design of their dressing has kept on changing in the history-defining their moment of existence and the same time giving them say and space on men’s table. It is a refute of concern that women considered to drew men and capture them into accepting their way and recognizing them as women of power and choice in the society. It was also a way of expression that they can make a choice and look better than how they were capitulated continuously by the society modesty way of thinking which was somehow slavish.

The use of their code of dressing still did not give them the power of identification that they needed, but it led to misinterpretation of their intentions, and they were now being defined according to their code of dressing (Whelan 5). The moral behavior of them was now being interpreted as regards to the way they dressed leading to the current arena of feminist trying to change the society thinking about their dressing code. This identification was defined by the teaching of the society by even religious formations which have deepened their roots in the community hence resulting to impacting an impression of women is way of dressing that shows decency and good moral standards

 In the currently observed trend, even schools have identified ladies to emulate a given form of virtue in their dressing code. Women have fought this definition of their code of dressing advancing the society to stop defining or associating women code of dressing modesty since it is identified to give a provocative thinking about the dressing code that is not the case and intentions of every woman. “The association of this clothing style that exposes cleavage, the midriff, undergarment or that is termed as immodest and provocative should be avoided” (Komar 3) and it should be looked like the way stylish that makes women look decent and attractive.

 Moreover, the past way of conduct restrictively oppressed women and gave men and impressiveness of superiority. The demands of their way of speaking, their conduct and sitting style and even the way they should cover their faces gave women a hard time since there were too many measurements that defined them and indicated them to be subordinate to men (Eagly 15). It is through such demands that women rose to defend themselves and identified different tools to make men recognize their ability perform and why they should be regarded as equal to men (Honkatukia and Keskinen 100). They struggled under the bondage for ages raising their voices which ended up to even misinterpreted in the current society.

 This way of struggle was identified in 2009 by the published nonfiction book entitled half the sky. The authors, Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, argued on the oppression of women worldwide identifying it to be a paramount moral challenge (Chermayeff, Lichtenstein and Noujaim 15). It gave an impressive title “half the sky” to determine the given portion of choice making by women in the society (Lawson 16). The less decision in the society and poverty instances more especially in the third world countries has almost led to repeat of the past way of women living. This past involved a place where other women are encrypted in the slavery of prostitution to the point of not realizing the essence of their ability to make choices and participate equally as men in the society. A representation of a community that has women whose conscience is dead.

Half the fictional sky thinking represented the changed society where women are again still living in the shadow of men (Chermayeff, Lichtenstein and Noujaim 3), where their choices are dictated by men in the society, and they are traded like commodities. These critical thinking give a representation of a saddening society where men are the drivers of women and also the users of women, which still keeps the worry of asking, why women? Has the culture not abducted the previous practices into the current forms of thinking? It is very observable that the quench of women struggles for recognition and equality in the society, the quench of them to have the power of choice is still unfruitful, and their decency is well interpreted by the traditional way of thinking.

These instances have led to definitions of what consists of human psychology. They still illustrate a center of measure that defines the morality and decency as related to dressing and conduct. Moreover, they give a corrective thinking of what it entails women respect. Should not be the issues of poverty, women have the freedom that is succumbed to the moral concern of the community. Men have now lost their control, and the community as a whole has remained to define the dressing code of women and men (Berhane 300). This society has consisted women and men who have defined the respectable standards of how women and men should look. Unlike the past society where the issue was about equality and freedom of choice for women dressing, the current society has focused in defining the moral and respectable standards of women dressing code.

 Therefore, the concern and struggle of women in the current age have made them live in the shadow of the societal interpretations of their code of dressing and conduct which they still fight to change and continue to come up with more designs and tools. It cannot be said they are oppressed by men since other women have joined to dictate the way of dressing by women. It is also very evident that women have lived in the shadow of men in the past time. The current world poverty level is also turning other societies to repeat the history of women treatment and oppression. Nonetheless, there still exists a definition that is based on morality about women dressing and conducts that is respectable and morally upright.

## Work Cited

Barrett, M. *Women's oppression today: The Marxist/feminist encounter.* . Verso Books, 2014.

Berhane, F. H. ".Women, Sexual rights and poverty: Framing the Linkage under the Africa Human Rights Syatem. ." *Charles Ngwena* (2014): 331.

Chermayeff, M.,, B., Lichtenstein and J. Noujaim. *Half the Sky. Docudrama Films*. Google Scholar, 2012.

Eagly, A. H. *Sex differences in social behavior: A social-role interpretation*. Psychology Press, 2013.

Honkatukia, P., and S. Keskinen. "The social control of young women’s clothing and bodies: A perspective of differences on racialization and sexualization." *Ethnicities* (2017): 87-103.

Komar. "How Women Have Used Fashion As A Feminist Tool Throughout History." *Bustle* 17 November 2017: 8. <https://www.bustle.com/articles/191181-how-women-have-used-fashion-as-a-feminist-tool-throughout-history>.

Lawson, S. ". Women hold up half the sky. ." Economic Research. 2008.

Rowbotham. *Hidden From History: 300 Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight Agai.* Pluto Press, 2007.

Rowbotham, S. *Women, resistance and revolution: a history of women and revolution in the modern world.* Verso Books, 2014.

Whelan, N. "12 Times Badass Women Fought Ridiculously Sexist Dress Codes In 2015." *Proving once again that females are strong as hell* (2015): 10.