



CONFORMING AND RESISTING:
FEMININITIES, EMBODIMENT & FASHION

Dr Charlotte Dann @CharlotteJD

Prof Jane Callaghan



CONTEXT

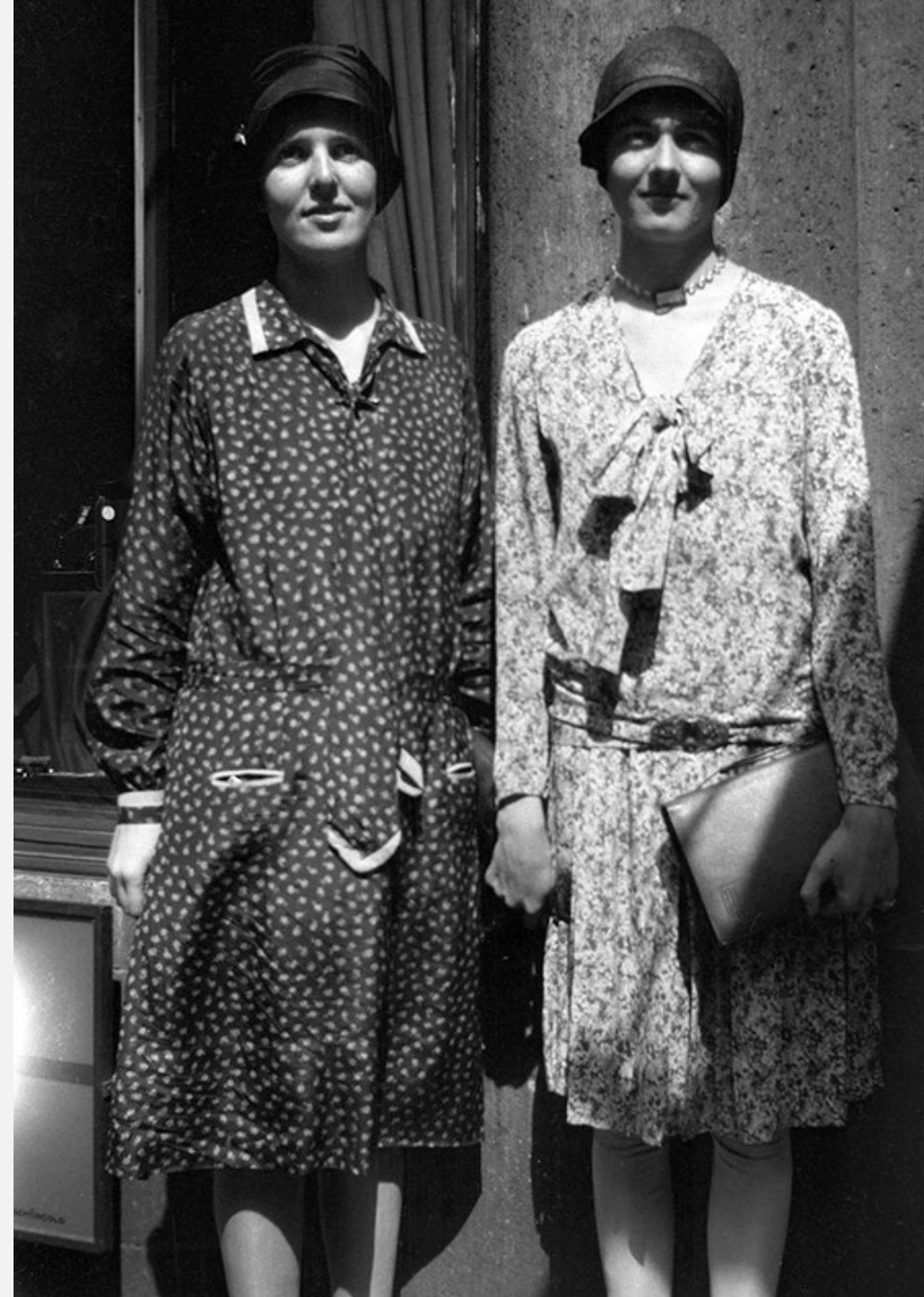
Fashion not been taken seriously

Important intersections of class and gender (Skeggs, 1997)

How women navigate conformity to / resisting against fashion, trends, and choices

FEMININITY, IDENTITY, & FASHION

- Dominant western ideals of femininity are entrenched within class based ideals linking the 'right' kind of womanliness to middle class femininity (Okolosie, 2014)
- Fashion choice as key for performance
- Consumer culture as a key site for the production and regulation of normative feminine identity (McRobbie)
- Style read as representative of identity, gender-appropriateness, and class (Harris, 2016)



METHODOLOGY

- Exploring women's accounts of their experiences of fashion and fashion 'choices'
- Online discussions as generating public opinion and collective memories (Barber & Callaghan, 2010, Tanner, 2006)
- Use of online private & bespoke Facebook group
- 28 women contributed a total of 232 posts across 11 threads – youngest woman was 16, and oldest 71
- Broad range of backgrounds and locations in the UK



EFFORTLESSLY STYLISH

‘...I do like to mentally plan my outfits for nights out etc before hand, as lame as that is!’

“I can just take forever to decide what to wear. I think that’s because I have so many different kinds of looks I go for and it has to suit my mood.

especially us girls do enjoy getting dolled up, standing out and generally showing that we have thought about what we wear & why we wear stuff. I think adverts on tv & especially magazines play a big part in this

‘I just hate the fact that the only time I generally like the way I look is when I have my make-up and hair done’.

EFFORTLESSLY STYLISH

- Embarrassment to consciously think through what they wear
- Importance of looking natural – clear tension with their sense that they need to manage their appearance
- Identity management – multiple looks
- Complex and contradictory – planning/spontaneity, conformity/choice





CHOOSING, CONFORMING, AND GETTING IT WRONG

“All women look for acceptance in some form, and fashion in the most obvious to attract attention from both sexes.”

all girls want to look good and we think we have to dress how women in magazines dress, because they are successful and we aspire to be like them. Beautiful and admired.

There are obviously some women that haven't got a clue and probably don't own a mirror! I would guess it's more important to some women to be in trend than others, and I suppose it depends how much money women have to spend of fashion.

CHOOSING, CONFORMING, AND GETTING IT WRONG

Conformity as social acceptance and social acceptability

Complex interplay of conformity and individuality – performance of Western femininity and consumer discourses

Proper performance of femininity requires ‘style’ not conformity – fashion trends positioned as wrong

Standing out whilst fitting in

You have to be fashion conscious to resist fashion



CONCLUSIONS

- Complexity of understanding conformity in the 'real' social world
- (knowingly) negotiating multiple positionings around individual identity, choice, consumerism, femininity, and appearance
- There are a multitude of ways that femininities are performed, dependent on subjective positionings



THANK YOU FOR LISTENING 😊

@CharlotteJD