



Manufacturing the Woman Leader

Document Version

Accepted author manuscript

[Link to publication record in Manchester Research Explorer](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Heffernan, A., & Thomson, P. (2020). Manufacturing the Woman Leader: How Can Wardrobes Help Us to Understand Leadership Identities? In R. Niesche, & A. Heffernan (Eds.), *Theorising Identity and Subjectivity in Educational Leadership Research* (pp. 82-96). (Critical Studies in Educational Leadership, Management and Administration). Routledge.

Published in:

Theorising Identity and Subjectivity in Educational Leadership Research

Citing this paper

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Manufacturing the Woman Leader: How Can Wardrobes Help Us to Understand Leadership Identities?

Amanda Heffernan, *Monash University*

Pat Thomson, *University of Nottingham*

In October 2018 over a thousand head teachers marched through the streets of London to protest and raise awareness about a school funding crisis. The protest was marked by the usual elements of a contemporary march - clever slogans on placards, chants, and a media scrum. What set the march apart, though, was the protestors' decorum and uniformity. Clad in suits, ties, heels and dresses, the heads consciously and intentionally presented an image of sartorial professionalism so as not to detract from the message they were sending: *trust us, we are leaders... and we are in crisis.*

Ironically, the media picked up on the "suited and booted" uniformity of the protest, and multiple headlines focused specifically on the heads' wardrobe choices. Protesters emphasised that they were marching for the first time, and were driven to political action for the first time due to the severity of the funding crisis. The protestors' conscious decisions about wardrobe show an understanding about the place of dress in the construction of image. Image - both self-image and the image we present to the world - form part of our identities, and help us communicate our identities to others. We think there is something worth exploring here.

In this chapter, we offer wardrobe and/or dress as a lens to help understand the process and complexities involved in women leaders' identity formation. In this chapter, we focus on dress: the assemblage of choices that a leader makes in relation to her clothing, makeup, hair, accessories, perfume, tattoos, piercings (and the list goes on). We briefly consider where and how identity has been discussed in the leadership literatures, indicate what wardrobe and dress can contribute to understandings of identity and then offer an indicative case from empirical research into women school leaders' wardrobe choices.

First of all, we must make explicit some caveats. There is a distinction to be made between the notion of *dress* and that of *appearance* (Adomatis & Saiki, 2010). There are the deep and layered complexities surrounding appearance: aspects over which we have less or no control. Skin colour, body size, height, age, visible and invisible disability. These aspects of our appearance are political and hold the weight of societal discourses, norms, and expectations. Social constructions of class, race, sexuality, able-ness and gender play out through politics which marginalise and penalise to (re)produce socio-cultural norms. We do make links to the question of appearance as we discuss dress, but cannot in this chapter do justice to the ways in which dress is tangled in wider and highly political questions of appearance. There is additionally a discourse of attractive/not attractive. Some organisational research suggests that being perceived as attractive can be detrimental to some workers (Agethe, Spörrle, & Maner, 2011) and others suggest that, overall, attractiveness correlates with more benefits in the workforce (Hooley & Yates, 2015). We understand that ‘attractive’ is a highly politically loaded notion but beyond the scope of this chapter.

Our intent in this chapter is to make a case for the utility of dress and wardrobe as a rich and generative lens for educational leadership researchers. We came to this project as a result of discussing our own shared experiences as women school leaders. We recalled our ‘school leader’ wardrobes, and discussed our understanding of the unspoken rules about how we should look as school principals. We felt at the outset of this study that we were not alone, and our research has confirmed this for us. While some might see this as trivial, it is our experience that wardrobe is a significant issue for women working in masculinist organisations, and Blackmore’s (2007) research bears this out. Before this study, there had not yet been an empirical study on school leaders and wardrobes - it is most often the autobiographical work of women school leaders that reports on wardrobe. Marie Stubbs (2003) for example reports gleefully sending her headteacher clothes to Oxfam on retirement only to have to buy a whole new set when she was called back to “save” a failing school. We see great value in the possibilities of thinking through this lens as a way of understanding leadership identities and women’s work as school leaders.

School leaders and identity¹

¹The term for a school leader differs by school system, geographic location, and context. In this chapter, we use the terms school leader, principal, and head / headteacher interchangeably to mean the same thing.

We take the notion of identity to be a state of becoming, always in formation, not fixed and multiple. Hall (1996) referred to cultural identity as a strategic and positional practice which was based both in historically produced collective experiences and also in the particular trajectory of the person. Both the collective and the individual identity are socially produced, and both are in a constant state of transformation, rather than being a fixed essence.

Collective/individual become folded together although sometimes one is more dominant than another – different aspects of identity are interpellated in different space/times. While Hall was specifically referring to diasporic Caribbean identities, he offers an analytic for thinking of identity as both socially situated, collective and individual, always in movement; these are useful to bring to the question of school leadership. In the headteacher, we see individuals who belong to a collective category – Principal – as well as a constellation of patterned but individual educational biographies.

The collective nature of The Principal as identity can be seen in the ways in which, when teachers take on the role, they are seen by others as the embodiment of the school, and they see themselves in this way as well (Thomson, 2005). ‘The Principal’ as collective is brought together with and folded into the individual biography and the sense of self, the me with its associated life stories of career. Some educational leadership scholars attend to the individual through life history work for instance, but much educational leadership and management research centres on the collective, but where research on/with some leaders and their actions and experiences stand for the whole. This work is not of a piece. Some researchers attempt to find generic leadership traits, while other work addresses sociological questions of race, class and gender and location. The research we will discuss later in this chapter deals with one such sociological collective – women leaders – and we argue that wardrobe is a site where leaders’ choices can be understood as ways of managing and mediating their socially produced individual sense of self and the collective.

Much of the leadership literature addresses either collective and the person of school leader as doings, sayings and thinkings – that is on leaders’ practices and their attitudes - but there is also some focus on bodies. Bodies are most often seen as sites of struggle and illness. We learn about leaders who are stressed, not sleeping, anxious, and overworked. More attention does need to be paid to the physical toll that leadership of today’s schools takes on head teachers and principals; this bodily cost is significant, not least in terms of the capacity to stay

in post. Bodies are not neglected in the advice literatures on work-life balance – these popular texts offer strategies for self-care and recognise that, despite pressing structural demands, leaders do have some agency in relation to their bodies.

Taking a lead from the advice sector, we are interested in what new insights might be produced when we turn our attention to bodies as sites of agency through which identities are (re)constructed. We propose that leaders' identities can be explored through the myriad decisions they make about their dress– and that this active choice-making is quotidian for the collective of women leaders. Using wardrobe as a way into researching identity is not a new concept within sociology, fashion studies and gender and cultural studies, where the understanding that dress and fashion play an integral role in the formation and communication of identity is foundational.

Critical educational leadership researchers might, we suggest, embrace the notion that the fabrication of identity is not simply located in narrative and office artefacts but also extends to dress. Our field might take a lead here from critical race scholarship and LGBTIQ researchers who highlight the complexities inherent in notions of leadership and identity. Women leaders of colour have reported feeling more visible and a greater pressure to conform to leadership norms than their white women peers (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Critical race scholars have explored this sense of visibility and pressure in part through researching the politics of hair, makeup, clothing, and bodies for women leaders of colour (Armstrong & Mitchell, 2017; Mullen & Robertson, 2014). Muslim women leaders for example have reported that their clothing (particularly the wearing of a headscarf) has resulted in 'blockers' towards relationship development (Showunmi, Atewologun, & Bebbington, 2015, p, 926). Intersecting with these politics are the added complexities of age, and generational differences in expectations regarding appearance for women leaders of colour (Reed, 2012).

Visibility and invisibility are important as the headteachers in our opening example understood. Gender and sexuality scholars have researched the everyday labour of visibility undertaken by women and by LGBTIQI people. Courtney (2014) for instance discusses the ways in which leaders made their sexual identities part of their practice, challenging homophobia and heteronormativity; although sometimes motivated by an essentialised collective identity they nevertheless queered the school culture by making their bodies

symbolically visible. And researchers (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010) have suggested that leaders with intersectional identities (such as women who identify as ethnic minority lesbians) might experience invisibility in a world where the ‘standard’ person is defined as a white, heterosexual, male. Such invisibility can lead to marginalisation and reduces the chances of career progression to leadership.

Becoming visible requires careful negotiation of gendered norms, as the title of educational historian Blount’s (1996) paper ‘Manly men and womanly women’ suggests. Blount documents the ways in which some women defied the orthodoxies of dress and behaviour in post war America. Women who pursued administrative careers despite opposition ‘adjusted their wardrobes and behaviours to seem more feminine and therefore less threatening and gender role deviant’ (p 332). Sixty years later, the stereotypical leader is *still* largely a cis-gendered, white, middle-class, heterosexual male (Wilkinson, 2008) and there may still be significant implications for how a serving or aspiring leader person presents in terms of appearance and choice of dress or wardrobe.

What can wardrobe and dress tell us about identity formation?

The influence of fashion and the role it plays in identity formation has been long established (Davis, 1992). Fashion sociology, gender studies, cultural studies, and leadership studies demonstrate that women’s identities as gendered subjects are more policed than their male counterparts. For example, men do not generally have to deal with the same issues of sexual objectification as women (Kaiser, Chandler, & Hammidi, 2001). Green (2001) shows that women adopt particular wardrobes to be granted access to in-groups and that clothing can help women establish authority, and feel more in control and capable of taking on new roles. These findings have a parallel in education. We know that teachers go through a process of embodying the role, represented in part through their wardrobe choices (Rutherford, Conway, & Murphy, 2015) and that the way we are seen as educators has real effects on the way we take up these roles, particularly for women (Jones, 2017; Rutherford et al, 2015). Men also make wardrobe decisions every day and LGBTQI men in particular face complex choices and politics associated with their wardrobe, dress, and appearance. Courtney for example argues that heteronormativity is reproduced in schools through ‘gendering and (hetero)sexualising bodies and, to varying degrees, ignoring, marginalizing, or silencing non-heterosexual identities’ (2014, p. 384).

We have chosen to focus on the experiences of women, in part because of our own careers as leaders and in part because of the vast corpus of image advice available to women online, in books and in dedicated courses and workshops. A search for wardrobe advice for women school leaders brings up thousands of pages - including from universities – that suggests women leaders should dress ‘like the boys’ (Centre for Executive Leadership, n.d.). The same university page advises women to dress modestly, professionally, and not to highlight a bosom or be seen as woman – but at the same time emphasises the importance of being attractive and ‘look[ing] good’ if one wants to be successful. Literatures on careers and the sociology of fashion also emphasise the particular challenges faced by women, and layered expectations which play out in women’s appearance, dress, and wardrobe choices.

Dress/wardrobe focused literatures could fruitfully be married with those about school leadership. We have ample evidence that school leaders are expected to “look the part”, and to be symbolically and otherwise set apart from the goings on of the school workplace (Thomson, 2005). Leaders are often advised to separate themselves from staff, taking a step back from social relationships and the everyday happenings in the school staffroom. There are certainly some good reasons for this distantiating, one of which is the importance for leaders to be seen as fair and impartial when making difficult decisions. There also may be costs. Newly appointed school leaders also face a symbolic identity shift upon taking up new roles.

Shifting Identities and the Work of Wardrobes

Having moved into leadership positions, newly appointed leaders have to find new ways of working and relating with the people in their school communities. One element of this may be a perceptible shift in their wardrobe and clothing choices, to reflect their new status as a formally-appointed leader within a school. This aspect of forming a ‘leadership’ identity is sometimes addressed in the more functional ‘how-to’ generic leadership literature, particularly in business and management-based leadership publications. Some of this advice is arguably superficial: advice book readers are told that they can still wear high heels while climbing the corporate ladder (e.g., Archambeau, 2006), and that they can ‘fit in’ without critical consideration of their discursive positioning or the political consequences of adaptation (e.g., Sandberg, 2013). But other literatures emphasise that women leaders are

under more scrutiny than men particularly in terms of appearance and being perceived as authoritative. Women politicians, for example, need to look more tailored than men in campaigns regardless of the task at hand – the ‘rolled up sleeves’ look does not appeal to voters (Wilson, 2004). We wonder how securely embedded these ideas are in discourses of business leadership. We wonder if they subsequently permeate school leadership, which has been steadily moving towards a more corporatised form of leadership drawing heavily on discourses and norms from the business world (Thomson, 2011).

We suspect that shifts in wardrobe may well be perceptible with each new role that a school leader takes on, as she moves to different contexts or takes on different responsibilities. Our own experiences as school leaders and anecdotal evidence from our colleagues supports this view, as does higher education research. Parallels can be drawn between school teachers moving into leadership positions and academics moving into more senior professorial positions. Research undertaken on this transition may inform research into the fashioned identities of school leaders. Academic women have reported a need to replace or update their wardrobes when moving into leadership positions, to assist in creating an image and identity that reflects their authority and professionalism in new roles (Green, 2001; Kaiser, Chandler, & Hammidi, 2001).

The changing wardrobe comes at a cost. The notion of aesthetic labour (Hooley & Yates, 2015) is useful in understanding the effort, time, energy, and financial investment that goes into the assemblage of elements that constitute a leader’s ‘dress’. Collective leader identity speaks through clothing, jewellery, handbags or briefcases, shoes, cosmetics, the ‘right’ perfume or scent, and upkeep on hair and grooming. The ‘right’ hairstyle and makeup are particularly important (Hooley & Yates, 2015) and costly both in terms of finance and time spent. The construction of appearance that complies with being the ‘right’ kind of woman - not too feminine, attractive, looks good, and dresses the part - can become a battleground for women who are ‘plus size’ (though we ask, plus *what?*), women of colour, women with disabilities, and older women. (We return to this point later in the chapter.) To refuse these wardrobe expectations and costs is a choice – perhaps located the individual biography or in another collective identity - in tension with the formal leadership position.

While researchers are critical in general of narrow gendered norms in all areas of life including at work, there are debates. The use of cosmetics can be viewed as complying with

patriarchal expectations or as a feminist choice (Scott, 2005); Blackmore on the other hand noted that women leaders often feel more in control and powerful through wearing red lipstick and heels (Blackmore, 1999). This debate points to the importance of empirical work in exploring what wardrobe choices women make, when and to what ends, as well as how these choices can be explained.

The Women, Wardrobes, and Leadership Study

We saw an opportunity to undertake new critical empirical research into the relationship between school leaders' wardrobes and their identities. We did not know whether our literatures and experience based argument about the generative possibilities of wardrobe study would hold. Our study is mixed methods with an online survey and follow-up interview. In addition to demographic questions we asked about wardrobe choices, advice given to aspiring women leaders, attitudes to dress and feelings about the role and expectations. We have to date only administered the survey and report here on some initial headline results. We have also established a blog site (<https://womenwardrobesleadership.home.blog>), and post fortnightly with the resulting twitter discussion often leading to interesting comments, related blog posts and readings.

We initially hoped for twenty survey responses. At the time of writing we have 408 from participants across the globe. Women leaders, former leaders, and aspiring leaders from the United Kingdom and The Republic of Northern Ireland, Australia, North America and Canada, Bangladesh, Finland, Malta, Poland, Norway, and Sweden have shared their insights and experiences about their identities and their wardrobes. Our first finding then is that some women leaders welcomed an opportunity for these reflections and insights and shared our view that wardrobe was a significant issue. Women reported the ways their wardrobes marked a shift to their new roles and told us of their everyday dress routines. Taking a lead from fashion literatures (e.g. Entwistle, 2000) which see clothing as signifiers in a semiotic construction of identity/ies, we focus here on key choices made by the women in the study.

Enter: the blazer.

Women in our study added blazers to their old 'teacher' wardrobes to set themselves apart and mark a shift to their new roles as school leaders. Women spoke about being professional,

looking smart, and looking ‘the part’ of a school leader. This rang true to our experiences too, and we wondered about what the blazer, or jacket, might mean for identities.

Entwistle (2000) tells us that clothing is akin to language and thus indicative of something deeper and worth examining. Fitzgerald (2018) discusses the wardrobes of women academics and the labour that goes into considering the ‘right’ clothing. Women in her study focused on using their wardrobes to help establish credibility, to fit in with dominant perceptions of leaders, and to mask their femininity and bodies. Fitzgerald provides some clear insights into how notions of authority, credibility, and wardrobe work together for women. She explicitly describes sombre and restrained clothing colours and styles, minimal makeup, and conservative hairstyles as being considered professional and appropriate dress style (p. 4-5). We saw similar responses in our survey with about half of the respondents explicitly mentioning black, grey and navy. We also found ourselves comparing Fitzgerald’s findings with ‘dress for success’ advice (described earlier in this chapter), noting the congruence.

But what might the blazer tell us, we wondered. And how does an analysis of wardrobe open a new line of inquiry for educational leadership research – and more specifically *school* leadership research.

What we discovered: The Blazer at Work

To show the generative possibilities of wardrobe for school leadership research, we selected the blazer as a key point from the data and analysed it through three different frames. These frames are drawn from: (1) fashion sociology (wardrobe and clothing items as group markers of identity); (2) gender and critical careers research (the notion of aesthetic labour) and (3) poststructuralist theory often used in critical educational leadership research (Foucault’s notion of the gaze). In the following sections, we provide an introduction to these concepts and then analyse selected data through the frame, theorising the importance of wardrobe in participants’ process of forming their collective identities as women leaders.

Lens 1: Group Markers (or: the uniform of leaders and leadership)

We begin the analysis of the blazer with a conceptual tool drawn from fashion sociology. To illustrate, we draw on our data as well as returning to the Head Teachers' protest described at the opening of this chapter.

Davis's (1992) work is the intersections between behaviour and fashion. Davis argues that identities are built through a series of individual decisions but that group identities evolve as a collective process over a period of time. Dress, fashion, and wardrobes communicate a collective identity, and people outside of a group generally read group identity markers correctly. Lynch and Strauss (2007) agree, saying that most people could deduce that someone wearing a tuxedo would not go to work and dig a drainage ditch.

Davis (ibid) says that changes in circumstances influence our identities and, in turn, the way we form and communicate these identities and identity shifts through fashion. All changes require constant negotiation and renegotiation. Davis suggests that some of this mediation work is done collectively by groups and that group fashion norms or markers are usually changed by external factors over time.

We wonder, then, about collective groups of school leaders and the way wardrobe markers might evolve depending on context. Group markers of suits and ties stood out at the Head Teachers' march, and through the frequent recurrence of blazers in our data. The blazer appears to be an identity construction marker for women leaders on and as a whole. There was a marked trend within the data for the jacket to form part of a work 'uniform' – the construction of the image of leadership. On the weekends, participants described much less uniformity in their preferred styles of dress. This supports an interpretation that the jacket is a mainstay for women leaders as part of a group wardrobe identity. A number of the women described their jackets as 'armour', for example: "A blazer for some reason is always helpful - it's a suit of armour". The blazers served as a power-dressing move for participants, helping instil confidence and a sense of being ready for playing the part of the leader. The crispest suture of appearance and practice was this comment: "I always say if you want to be a head act like a head, be smartly dressed, be smart."

Gender was writ large in data analysed through the lens of group identity. Tailored clothing, particularly the jacket, was *de rigeur* and we see it as indicative of the masculinist and corporate leader culture in which women leaders have to work. In respondents' talk of the various strategies that they used to undermine/speak back, we saw often more stereotypically

female wardrobe items – pink, bright, floral, floating, boho, jewellery, scarves and so on. These additions we see as resistance to bland suitedness, but also as the (re)production of heteronormativity. The assertion and insertion of individual identity into group identity may have been individually affirmative, but socially gender reproductive. Interestingly, none of our survey respondents referred to any potential for the jacket to queer the heterosexuality of school leadership. Indeed, none of them referred to sexuality at all, save through reference to the inappropriateness of plunging necklines, leggings and skirts that are too short. This is something we hope to follow up in interviews.

The group identity lens offers entrée into the ways in which women leaders negotiate, manage and mediate the folding of individual biography and the collective identity. Through examining the everyday work of wardrobe choice, we see that this is not a one-off event, but rather an ongoing process subject to change over time.

Lens 2: Aesthetic Labour (or: the cost[s] of fashioning a leadership identity)

Increasingly, researchers of work and labour pay attention to ‘aesthetic labour’; the time, financial costs, and efforts that go into people’s decisions about their appearances - and in our case, their wardrobes (Elias, Gill, & Scharff, 2017). Yates, Hooley and Bagri (2017) describe aesthetic labour as a manifestation of social, cultural, and financial capital. Following Yates et al, we understand the aesthetic labour of school leadership to mean that women leaders must know what is expected of them, and have the various forms of capital available to help meet those expectations.

Women in our survey described the financial investment required to look the part. While two of our participants spoke specifically about wearing less expensive clothing (from mass-produced clothing brands Target and Uniqlo), the vast majority of brands referred to by participants were far more expensive. A blazer from some of the brands named by participants would cost an average of £150. When participants referred to the process of buying an entirely new ‘smart’ and ‘professional’ wardrobe when taking on their new roles, we knew the cost involved would be considerable. Participants referred specifically to the expectations on women leaders to look the part and the resulting financial burden. One participant commented:

[...] two other huge influences on me have been money - how much it costs to look professional - the expense of good clothing and shoes and haircuts and accessories. I just couldn't afford to do that as a new teacher but I think the expectation when you earn a lot is that your aesthetic will reflect your salary. I'm not sure there is an equivalent for men?

It was not just financial cost that women referred to in their responses. More frequent were references to the energies and efforts that were expended in complying with expectations for their appearance and wardrobes. Participants described a sense of injustice that they felt, similar to the literatures discussed earlier in this chapter, that their wardrobes were policed in ways that their male colleagues were not:

As I get older and with a Principal for a husband who wears a uniform to work and can rotate 3 suits all year and does very little in the way of personal grooming, I'm become more and more angry at the inequity between male and female leaders. Having discussions with friends in other (creative) industries about why I have to wear makeup everyday, why I can't afford professionally to let my hair grow out because there will be a period where it will look scruffy, the expectation of a polished appearance is much stronger for women than men. I only have to look around at a deputy Principal's conference to see the difference between the scruffy men and the very polished women. And there is no room to buck the system because you will not be taken seriously.

There were also elements of physical labour evident in some responses with comments about discomfort and even pain. One participant said: "My body and psychology does not feel comfortable at all in corporate wear. I sweat and I feel hot and uncomfortable and restricted in a tucked in button down top". Another participant commented on the physical restriction and pain caused by women's clothing, noting that: "I think it's an incredibly important issue for women leaders and workers in all industries. Our clothes so often hamper us from being able to move in particular ways or cause us pain. Men do not face these issues".

Finally, there was an element of emotional labour involved in making the wrong choices. A number of participants described negative comments, or teasing (or 'friendly banter', as one participant described it) regarding their wardrobe choices. One participant commented that "I find clothing a challenging issue. I have little dress sense and sometimes get friendly teasing from equal colleagues when I don't understand what's wrong with what I am wearing."

Naomi Wolf (1991) famously argued in her book *Beauty Myth* that while women are disciplined to focus on their appearances, their energies and efforts are being funnelled into directions that distract and deplete them, rather than helping them to advance in their work and careers. We can see this reflected in our survey results, in the time that it takes to find the right items of clothing; the significant financial investment into ‘smart’ and ‘professional’ jackets; the time that it takes to achieve and maintain the ‘right’ hairstyle; and the choice one participant made in the mornings between a long relaxing breakfast *or* wearing the makeup that so many participants felt was an expected element of their dress. We see it also in the pain, discomfort, and restriction of movement described by participants when referring to their wardrobes. There is of course no easy solution to the labour required to look the leader. As one of our participants commented, “I am torn between wanting to look good, be respected, but also angry that I have to do this a certain way”.

The lens of aesthetic labour amplifies and particularises the associated notion of emotional labour (Hochschild, 2003), illustrating in particular the reflexive everyday effort (see Giddens 1981) that many women school leaders experience. It connects with broader notions of performativity (Lyotard, 1984; Mills & Niesche, 2014), showing how embodied identity work is integral to the ways in which women must be seen to be doing the job and must visibly enact their management through expending time, money and attention. Perhaps most importantly the concept of aesthetic labour moves us away from thinking of identity as a ‘thing’ and points instead to identity as work: and for women leaders, identity work is consuming and unavoidable.

Lens 3: Power, Subjectivity, and Identity: The Foucauldian Gaze and Surveillance (or: who are we dressing for?)

Foucault (1977) offers the panopticon, the gaze, and surveillance as mechanisms of power. The disciplining powers of these mechanisms make us behave in certain ways; here we focus on the gaze as productive of how participants dress, construct, and present themselves as women leaders. If the panopticon is about creating a sense of permanent visibility (Foucault, 1977), we wondered whom it was that women leaders felt the most visible to. We asked women in the study who they were dressing for, or who they considered when they made their wardrobe choices. They said parents, staff, and students (in that order). This manifested

in a number of different ways. Participants described having entirely separate wardrobes for work and leisure. They described meeting expectations, as they understood them, of the staff, parents, and students in their school. We were initially somewhat surprised that students were last on the list of considerations, though parents are a key audience for whom the school must be embodied.

Overwhelmingly, the jacket stood out as the point of significance in outfits worn for specific audiences. Some participants donned the blazer for meetings, when moving about in public, and when working or meeting with parents. For others, the blazer was a constant part of their wardrobes. This suggests to us that for some participants, the blazer was for the gaze of others, but discarded when the gaze was absent. For them, the jacket spent as much time as possible on hooks on the backs of doors, or draped over chairs until the moment it was needed.

We saw a difference between the observing gaze (which manifested in wearing the blazer to meet external expectations and convey a sense of authority and professionalism) and the internalisation of the mechanisms of the gaze from some participants. There was also a sense of resistance to the jacket in some responses. For some participants, particularly younger women leaders, the jacket was described as a device of sorts that helped them to be taken seriously. Participants described the jacket as body armour (see above). Some described efforts at mimicking male leaders' wardrobes, elaborating that, "[I wear a] suit with jacket [...] so I am smarter and more formal than [in previous roles]".

There is a mixture in the data, then, of women leaders dressing for the observational gaze of others (parents, staff, and students), and participants who had internalised the mechanisms of the gaze and saw the jacket as a device that enabled them to embody a vision of how a leader should look and dress. The jacket was the symbol of collective professionalism, credibility, and authority. However, there were also a lot of responses which indicated how an individual biographic identity was married to the collective, in ways that did not detract from the blazer. One respondent told us they were

Professional but quirky. I have tended to dress older than I am throughout my career as I was a young head teacher and young deputy and I felt that I needed the protection of a corporate wardrobe to be taken seriously. Now that I'm middle aged I feel more

confident to allow small touches of myself to become a bit more professionally public.

Here we imagine the ways in which choosing “small touches of myself” become part of a daily routine of grooming a leader self, of ensuring that the identity presented meets expectations but also indicates something of the particular person.

Using Foucault in conjunction with the blazer allows us to focus on the discursive positioning of leaders and the ways in which they are disciplined and discipline themselves, but also resist. In particular the theoretical lens foregrounds parents, whose choices are vital for enrolments, money, school satisfaction surveys and so on, are a key part of leadership optics, as are official meetings integrated into audit and public relations practices. The presence of the ever-ready jacket indicates the ways in which these forms of surveillance are always possible, so women leaders must be ever ready to respond – fabricating a heteronormative, corporate and acceptable self at a moment’s notice and deflecting the gaze away from potential ab-normal signifiers.

What are the implications of the women and wardrobe study?

Common to all three lenses on our wardrobe data was a strong sense of the imposts and expectations of women school leaders as well as their commitment to the work and the everydayness of their practice. There was also a sense of resentment evident about the impact of these choices on comfort, ability to move freely, and the costs both in finances as well as time and energy spent on decisions. Some of the women in this study expressed their concerns about the disconnect between their feminist ideals and the sense of requirement that they had to consider their wardrobe and their outward-facing identities. However, in all cases, the leader identities expressed were both collective and individual but patterned, and mediated on a daily basis.

We make three claims arising from our emergent wardrobe research.

Firstly, we see that there are some new possibilities in wardrobe research for critical educational leadership scholars, particularly in relation to how we conceptualise and seek to understand leaders’ identity work. We see a range of possibilities for exploring how women

leaders' identities are shaped, channelled and changed through a more in-depth investigation. We hope to undertake some of this work ourselves through interview in the near future. We see possibilities for methodological innovation, building upon calls for more creative methods in educational leadership research (Thomson, 2017). We plan to work with women's stories of their clothing, and with images of wardrobe items. We hope to sit with women as they show us the items of clothing that have meaning for them. We see the value in continuing the same types of conversations that first brought us together to begin this research project, and in bringing women together to share their stories.

Secondly, we can also see generative possibilities in bringing in new theoretical approaches and ways of thinking from other fields. We have drawn upon the fields of fashion sociology, careers, and gender studies. Theorising the data through these three lenses showed some of the possibilities for thinking about wardrobe and identity. Across the three frames, wardrobe and fashion are a synecdoche for the active process undertaken by women in constructing their identities as leaders. The three lenses open up new avenues for exploring these quotidian practices further, providing different ways of understanding the processes of developing identities, of communicating identities, and of understanding the labour and processes that are involved for women leaders. As critical educational leadership researchers we were able to make use of these lens to extend our thinking, while contextualising these approaches within the specific worlds in which school leaders practice. These are not the only lens possible and we see further generative possibilities in engaging more with investigations of material cultures and visual cultures.

Thirdly, we see wardrobe research as having purchase on some highly normative gendered discourses of school leadership. It is important we suggest to disrupt the public and visible construction of leadership via the more superficial 'you, corporate woman, are what you wear' and to produce more nuanced accounts through empirical research on lived experiences.

We hope to have demonstrated in this chapter that wardrobe is not a trivial matter. There is some truth we suggest in the highly gendered aphorism that "clothes maketh the man". While wardrobe is not all that there is to school leadership, it offers a new avenue for pursuing questions about the experiences of leading, the social context, identities, life trajectories and

expectations and norms. As such, wardrobe studies may make, we propose, a very helpful addition to the field.

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