

# Decolonizing the Mannequin

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## Body

‘What is fashion?’ is a question I often pose at the beginning of classes to undergraduate fashion students; a simple question which, surprisingly, perplexes them and often renders an uncomfortable silence in the classroom. As a prompt, I then show students two images of busy streets in London and ask them to consider which street is more fashionable: Bond Street in Central London, synonymous with many designer label shops such as Burberry and Chanel; and Ealing Road in Wembley, North-West London, a road housing many South East Asian and Indian diaspora fashion design shops, such as Variety Silk House. At this stage, a lively debate will ensue, resulting in even more confusion and uncertainty, but with the addition of understanding the aim of the task: why are some fashions included into the classroom and why are some fashions excluded?

To further examine this question, this chapter explores fashion design pedagogy using a decolonial feminist methodology. Inspired by women of colour decolonial feminists<sup>1</sup> who have critiqued how education systems reinforce inequalities (hooks 1994; Mohanty 2003), this approach to fashion design exposes how fashion design knowledges are presented as neutral in undergraduate fashion design. Therefore, drawing on women of colour feminist scholarship helps to emphasize how encouraging students to value the role of everyday life and ordinary experiences can have the potential to disrupt hegemonic thinking.

This class has been carried out as a workshop with first- and second-year undergraduate fashion design students in higher education (HE) with the aim of helping them to develop more open and reflective approaches to fashion design. The workshop asks undergraduate fashion design students to design for a person that they know, rather than an artificial standardized fashion industry sized body. This approach aims to expose and challenge how fashion tools, in this case the mannequin, might problematically reproduce heteronormative ideas that encourage racist and capitalist design practices. The final outcomes showed fashion designs presented on a range of

body types: designs for the elderly and a disabled body, for example. The fashion design students welcomed these designs; however, the workshop raised problematic questions around assessment and degree classifications (for example, were these designs menswear or womenswear?). Above all, it showed the continued need to disrupt the fashion design process and expose how mannequins, and other forms of fashion knowledge, legitimize and reproduce societal and cultural differences.

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Which 'fashion' am I teaching? Which 'fashion' am I not teaching?

*It's summer 2003 and I am being interviewed for a fashion lecturer post in London. I'm nervous at my interview and have gone out and bought a skirt that I can't afford. I don't own skirts as I have been brought up as a Muslim, and when I visit my parent's home, I still can't wear a skirt. During the interview, I am asked how I propose teaching pattern cutting in fashion. I reply with the suggestion of multicultural fashion workshops on how to make non-Western garments such as the shalwar kameez. After the interview I am taken aside by the course head and told "not to bother with that multicultural fashion". I'm left feeling that looking at garment construction from the Indian subcontinent in contemporary fashion practices in the United Kingdom. is not just unfashionable, it is also irrelevant in fashion curricula.*

This incident is significant to me because it highlights how systems of cultural hierarchies operate in fashion and the dissonance between ordinary forms of fashion and the forms of fashion that fashion design education values. Since I first began teaching fashion design, countless students, many of them people of colour, have told me that they already know how to pattern cut as their family has taught them that skill. I also understand what they mean because I identify as a British Muslim cisgender female of South Asian Indian heritage and I have been taught similar things at home too: I know how to measure with my hands, how to copy a pattern from another garment, cut straight into cloth and avoid the unnecessary waste of fabric. Many of the students want to use each other's bodies to drape fabric and make garments to wear themselves. While such an approach is encouraged in the community evening classes in dressmaking that I also teach, in undergraduate fashion design, the emphasis is to work on the mannequin. My response to students' requests to use each others' bodies is to refer them to the curricula and the fashion industry where standardized body sizing and mannequins sized UK 8 or

10 are used; although this answer leaves me uncomfortable because this approach erases different forms of fashion knowledge resulting in a false division and hierarchy of knowledge.

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### What is 'fashion' for me?

Despite these varied displays of alternative knowledges and skills in the classroom, as an educator I recognize the complexities of incorporating student's fashion knowledges – along with various non-western and global south knowledges – within undergraduate fashion design curricula: we exclude that knowledge; it is not considered a source of fashion knowledge. This distinction results in non-western fashion systems used as design inspiration, a source for various forms of othering representations, such as exotic, and oriental representations (Craik 1993; Gaugele and Titton 2019); and western systems of fashion as the dominant discourse in undergraduate fashion, associated with being avant-garde and cutting edge.

This distinction has also been my experience of fashion. My relationship with fashion, dress and clothing has caused me many dilemmas due to the different and often conflicting ways in which my family has taught me how to dress in comparison to how it was taught to me in different educational contexts in the United Kingdom. In contrast to how I was taught fashion, my parents, relatives and Asian community members taught me that dress and clothing are carriers of important religious and cultural values. Therefore, my home life was always defined through adherence to rules about what can and cannot be worn. Since immigrating to the United Kingdom, my mother has continued to wear Indian forms of clothing and always worn a sari. Many first-generation female immigrants from the Indian subcontinent that came to the United Kingdom have also followed similar patterns of dress with limited assimilation of Western clothing styles, even in the workplace. This contrasts with most immigrant men who had already been assimilated into the norms of Western clothing since colonial rule in India.

Growing up in London, I developed a taste for multiple styles of fashion and clothing, influenced by varied Western street styles along with Asian styles too. Trips to heavily populated Asian areas in London, such as Southhall and Wembley, to see the Indian clothing and fashion shops were as frequent as visiting London's Camden Market and Oxford Street. Growing up in a Muslim family would also involve visits to the mosque and to extended family in the Middle East and India, both of which required wearing a hijab or shalwar khameez. So, when I first

began studying fashion as a teenager, I was aware that these formative experiences contributed to me thinking about fashion design in more pluralistic and diverse ways than my predominantly white peer group.

Now that I am teaching fashion design, those feelings have not gone away.

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## The tools of fashion design education

This lack of various fashion knowledges in undergraduate fashion is also reflected in how the fashion industry operates in an unsustainable way: short-term collections, standardized body sizes and retail stores that look the same (Fletcher 2019). While an increasing number of fashion sites are raising concerns about hegemonic heteronormative and standardized values embedded in fashion design, such as through modest fashion YouTube makers (Torkia 2020) and fashion exhibitions including Body Beautiful: Diversity on the Catwalk, The National Museum of Scotland (2019), less attention has been given to the area of fashion design education. How can such counter narratives become translated into fashion design pedagogies to nurture and respect different peoples irrespective of their body size, race, gender, class, abilities and sexualities? A design process that imagines inclusive ways of designing beyond the exclusion, appropriation and exploitation of marginalized peoples and knowledges?

To address these concerns, I have been examining the fashion design process by examining the different resources that are used to teach fashion design, such as library collections, sketchbooks and the tools used in the fashion design process, such as the mannequin and pattern cutting blocks. During the past twenty years that I have been teaching fashion design – in a variety of educational contexts, from university and colleges to community settings – I have noticed that practice-based teaching in fashion design has changed very little, except for the addition of some computer aided technologies. Most significantly, the fashion studios look the same as they did when I was a design student. Any quick internet search on fashion design colleges will throw up countless images of fashion students with measuring tapes around their necks, tentatively pinning paper or calico amid a fashion studio strewn with fashion detritus: rolls of fabric, sewing machines and large pattern cutting tables covered in dot and cross paper, shears and brown card pattern cutting blocks.

In all these images, one fashion tool remains commonplace, essential and unquestioned: the ubiquitous fashion industry UK-sized 8 or 10 mannequin that is used as part of the fashion design process. Unlike the 'judy' or 'dressmaker's dummy' which are generally adjustable figures, most fashion colleges predominantly use standardized body forms with only a few additional adjustable or plus sized mannequins. Today in most classrooms, the mannequin may have a head shape, but more often is a disembodied torso-shape, disconnected from its limbs and mounted onto a stand to which legs and arms can be attached. In this way, mannequins represent an abstracted human form, seemingly universal and neutral; a blank canvas for students to experiment onto using their paper patterns and to make up toiles, the prototypes made from cheap calico fabric. Usually made from polystyrene, mannequins are often covered in light beige stretch fabric in either a female or a male gender form.

This attempt at giving flesh tones to the lifeless mannequin by mimicking light coloured white skin characteristics reinforces racial hierarchies and white supremacist thinking to privilege white bodies. This dominance of 'white bodies' in the shape of mannequins in the fashion classroom normalizes whiteness to make non-white bodies feel 'out of place' (Puwar 2004). How different might the classroom look with mannequins covered in fabric of various hues and tones of brown through to black? Furthermore, the mannequins are always presented as male/female binary able-bodied forms preventing any exploration of gender or ableism as part of the design process.

There have, however, been attempts to change standard sized mannequins, both in the fashion industry and in fashion design education, although this has resulted in mixed responses. For example, a student-led petition in 2016 at Parsons School of Art, New York called for more than four to five plus sized mannequins in the design studios for the faculty of one thousand students. The successful petition resulted in Parsons School of Art gaining eleven plus-size mannequins up to size 26, although while students got the equipment to design for plus-size they were not provided with educational support to use the dress forms; furthermore, there is yet, to my knowledge, an entire plus-sized fashion degree course in any higher education setting. Consequently, small tokenistic gestures by the fashion industry continue to gain less favourable publicity; for example when a group of plus-size mannequins were used for displaying garments

by sports brand Nike in their London stores in 2019, the public response included countless fat-shaming and fat phobic comments in social media.

These concerns should make fashion design educators wary of how mannequins cement heteronormative values as universal in the fashion design process. How might fashion concepts constructed onto mannequins reinforce this tool's central role in reproducing classifications about the human body based on simplistic binary oppositional thinking: male/female, able-bodied/dis-abled, and plus size/standard size? These binaries underpin the fashion industry's hierarchical categorisation of bodies as white, heteronormative, able-bodied and male or female. How might fashion design education provide the space to expose the invisible norms shaping fashion design practices? It is only by deconstructing how fashion design shapes sexism, ableism, racism, xenophobia, class exploitation, homophobia and transphobia that alternative inclusive – decolonial feminist – forms of fashion design can be imagined; and, racialized and gendered hierarchies in fashion design education can be resisted.

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### The *de-humanized* fashion design process

For many years, the ways in which I have taught fashion design have stemmed from using my position – my identity, histories and memories – as a way to initiate questions to deconstruct how colonial power structures creates hierarchies in the fashion design process (menswear versus womenswear, high fashion tailoring versus low fashion street style and so on). This approach echoes that of decolonial feminist thinking which aims to address how knowledge construction is rooted in decolonial theories and women of colour feminism. Those engaged in decolonization projects aim to deconstruct and de-link from ongoing colonial thinking that continues to support hierarchical forms of knowledge which result in the domination of western forms of knowledge, while excluding and erasing knowledge from the global south and beyond (Lugones 2007; de Sousa Santos 2014; Patel 2016). Similarly, women of colour feminists have argued for the need to re-centre ontological knowledges that value emotions, positionality and the historicity of female bodies by exposing how patriarchal knowledge dominates through multiple axes of oppression, known as intersectionality (Colins and Bilge 2016).

Both decolonial and women of colour feminist theories share an understanding of how the patriarchal and colonial matrix of power (Quijano 2000) manifests itself through sexist and racist

forms of knowledge. Problematically, these knowledges – or epistemologies – contribute to how disciplinary canons are built on hierarchies of knowledge embedded with objective and Eurocentric universalist values. The project to decolonise design attempts to unpick the social relations of difference in the design process and make explicit the links between sexism, racism, heterosexism, capitalism and Eurocentrism and key concepts of patriarchy, racism, colonialism (Schultz et al. 2018).

Therefore, for many decolonial feminists, the field of pedagogy and learning has become a key site of struggle where ‘rewriting and righthing’ colonial and patriarchal epistemologies is explored in the classroom (Tuhiwai-Smith 2012). Many of these attempts focus on resisting normative values embedded through top-down educational structures; and, instead recognising the values of difference as a way to build alternative knowledges that have been excluded and erased from pedagogies (Icaza and Vazquez 2018).

Many decolonial feminist writings on education argue that higher education has become a key site through which colonialism has, for hundreds of years, reinforced power structures that naturalize and reproduce capitalist and racist thinking (Mohanty 2003; Bhabra et al. 2018). This is echoed by feminist authors Sara Carpenter and Shahrzad Mojab who use a feminist Marxist analysis to show how the education process has become an abstraction: a de-politicized and commodified space, disconnected from human existence and replaced with neoliberal concepts around competition, marketization and individualism (Carpenter and Mojab 2017).

Carpenter and Mojab’s analysis has helped me to critically question how disconnected the fashion design process is from all different kinds of social realities, including humans; from the people who manufacture clothing through to the everyday people who wear the clothes. I have observed how students are designing for an imaginary universal body type when they are using a mannequin as part of the fashion design process. The mannequin therefore physically symbolizes an abstraction: a body disconnected from its head and limbs that cannot speak, express emotions or walk and has no historical or cultural context of what a body is or does. Even the standardized bodies that walk a fashion catwalk can move, yet here in the fashion classroom students are encouraged to work with a lifeless form. Therefore, fashion design students are designing on a static dehumanised form that has little to do with a living moving and breathing person, even

though it is such people who will wear the final outcomes that the fashion student designs. Could using a mannequin in the fashion design process present a clear example of abstraction in fashion design education?

Carpenter and Mojab elaborate on the abstraction process, asserting that the ‘challenge for revolutionary feminist educators is the task of contending with the complexity of abstraction in which we live’ (Carpenter and Mojab 2017). Responding to this challenge, how might fashion design educators alter their approaches and encourage new forms of fashion designing that revalue and recentre humans beings, their feelings and relationships into the design process? Carpenter and Mojab offer two key approaches for critical educators: first, the need to recognize the material conditions in which we live; and, second, to identify the forms of thought that separate us from our social realities and the natural world (Carpenter and Mojab 2017).

These two approaches therefore stress the important job to reconceptualize educational content and methods of teaching for critical educators. For fashion design pedagogies, this would mean re-thinking how the fashion design ideation process functions to elevate the status of design – and designers – and disconnects fashion from its users and wider processes of manufacturing and production. It also requires devising strategies that enable educators and students to both engage with wider political, ethical, historical and cultural knowledges and practices. This is exemplified in the work undertaken by scholar Francoise Verges who writes on processes of decolonial feminism and proposes a methodology centred on teaching issues around colonial history through a material-led approach that centres the products of slavery (Verges 2019).<sup>2</sup> Verges cites her use of a banana to open discussions on the history of slavery, cultural rituals, mythology, clothing and music, dance and so forth in relation to issues about the Global North/South division, race, gender, imperialism, geography and history (Verges 2019).

A material-led approach can, however, give rise to essentialist notions of cultural identity if it is undertaken without stressing the importance of historical and social contexts. This point is further elaborated on by academic Chandra Talpade Mohanty in the seminal book *Feminism without Borders*, who warns that the decontextualization of identity politics in education through notions of individualization de-politicizes pedagogies. This approach can then result in tokenistic pedagogies around pluralism and diversity (Mohanty 2003). This point is especially salient in



fashion design contexts where identity is often appropriated as design inspiration, rather than a source of knowledge

Therefore, for Mohanty, political identity is not simply a topic for classroom discussion or curricula content, it is, moreover, a process that gives agency to students and educators to participate in a ‘politics of engagement’ (Mohanty 2003). This important distinction has helped me to think about how students – and myself as educator – could interact with each other in the classroom to embed values around social relations and practices into fashion design practices. Addressing these concerns has helped me to develop an ongoing project that centres my personal histories with those of students’ to collectively disrupt the fashion design ideation process.

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### *Re-embodiment* the fashion design process

To address these concerns in the context of fashion design education, I have been inspired by the list of ten items in the ‘Killjoy Survival Kit’ assembled by feminist author Sara Ahmed in the important and inspiring book, *Living a Feminist Life* (Ahmed 2017). Ahmed describes this kit as a strategy and item 10 in this kit describes the importance of bodies, ‘Bodies speak to us. Your body might tell you it is not coping with what you are asking; and you need to listen. You need to listen to your body. If it screams, stop. If it moans, slow down. Listen’ (Ahmed 2017, p.247).

Have you ever produced fashion designs for people that you know; why are you mostly designing for an imaginary sized 8 or 10 sized female? Inspired by Sara Ahmed’s ideas around what bodies do, I have used these two questions as a starting point for a number of fashion design classes that I have tested as part of my PhD research with fashion design students in HE in London. This research aims to re-centre and reconnect fashion design students with the social reality of human bodies, experiences and values; and, expose the artificial hierarchical categories at play when mannequins are used as part of the fashion design process.

Echoing the material-led approach of Francois Verges outlined earlier, one class has specifically focused on the role that mannequins play in the fashion design process. This class has been carried out as a workshop with first- and second-year undergraduate fashion design students in HE with the aim of helping them to develop more open and reflective approaches to fashion design. The workshop was proposed by the institution as a stand-alone class outside of any

formal assessment to offer students a space for testing alternative fashion ideas in contrast to technique-led and formally assessed classes.

The workshop class begins with the sharing of personal photographs of my family and friends dressed in various forms of fashion, some for different types of occasions, paying close attention to their social and historical contexts. These examples are of living and breathing ordinary people that I have a relationship with and I include photographs of myself too. As my family originates from the global south and its diasporas, the photographs include examples of non-European dress forms: myself wearing my full black hijab on a religious occasion (see Figure 9.1); my plus size mother wearing her work wear, a patterned polyester sari, my elderly grandfather at home in a lungi and my brother on a religious pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia wearing two pieces of white towelling cloth, the ihram.

Figure 9.1: My mother and I wearing the hijab, 1990s.

I also include photographs of friends, including a pregnant friend in maternity wear, my friend's baby in a grow suit and my children in dungarees. I point out details on the garments to give the specific historical contexts and stress how such styles are in constant flux. Therefore, I am showing a selection of photographs that capture living and breathing diverse bodies: the elderly, children, infants, Muslim women, plus sized women and non-western men which capture a variety of examples fashion, such as genderless fashions and religious fashions, and, furthermore, do not subscribe to western heteronormative ideas of fashion culture. This display of cultural difference therefore helps to raise wider pedagogical questions around what is and is not a fashionable body.

The second part of the workshop then connects to students own socio-cultural contexts by asking them two questions: first, to think about five people who they know and have a relationship with; sometimes, I ask them about five people that they love to help them focus on people with whom they have an especially strong bond (Ahmed 2018); and, second, if they have ever designed clothes for these people who they have listed as part of their undergraduate fashion education. Some students reply that while they have designed garments for friends and family, this has never been a part of their undergraduate fashion design education. This pedagogical approach is an attempt to encourage students to think critically about what types of bodies they design for as

part of their undergraduate fashion education and what type of bodies they do not design for; and, what is the distinction between fashion designing at university and fashion designing outside university. Each time I have run this class all students have replied that, so far, their fashion classes have only focused on designing and illustrating for standard sized female or male bodies, perhaps with an occasional one-off project that looks at another type of body, such as a disabled body. If I ask final year fashion students who are designing their final collections what body they are designing for, the majority will state that they are designing for a male or a female standard sized body and a minority might be designing a genderless collection or a plus size collection. However, very few, if any, will be designing for children or babies, the elderly, pregnant bodies or clothing associated with religious beliefs.

The second part of the class then requires students to design a garment or fashion concept for one of their friends or family members they had listed by adapting a mannequin – by changing its physique such as by adding wadding to make the figure fuller, for example – or working on each other's bodies. Returning to Mohanty's call for an engaged pedagogical process, this part of the project is deliberately collaborative to encourage students to discuss the various types of bodies they might be working on. The focus for this fashion design ideation process is on living, breathing bodies connected to contexts and this forces students to discuss criteria such as comfort, durability and respect.

During these workshops, I have heard groups of students discuss: the multiple ways that bodies change throughout life, from a crawling baby to a walking toddler, from a teenager to a fully grown adult and during childbirth; how elderly bodies' skin will begin to sag and develop bumps and lumps; and, why disabled bodies remain absent from fashion curricula. In this way, working on each other's bodies remains a powerful approach to fashion design, especially given how those students who only undertook adaptations on the mannequin, remained confined to the hierarchies of gender and body ableism (Figure 9.2).

Figure 9.2: Student experimentation with 'ageing' the mannequin.

Overall, this approach to using bodies or adapting the mannequin as the first part of the design ideation process can also create unexpected outcomes as students can make connections between bodies and cloth, without the need to test out ideas through 2D illustration or 2D paper patterns.

Furthermore, using cardboard pattern cutting block becomes a redundant element of the fashion ideation process and instead it is refreshing to see students move around the classroom in fabric. Textiles become a more central part of the design process and experimental draping and pleating methods can provide an alternative to tightly structured and sewn garments which dominate many forms of western garment construction.

By working collectively and sharing ideas about different types of bodies, the students are disrupting the conventional linear fashion design process that usually begins with first taking sources of inspiration and then building a fashion design concept around a standardized body. Instead, here the fashion design process takes a different starting point – the body – and, in this way, centres the user. This design approach is more commonly used in other design disciplines such as product design or furniture design. However, this new and alternative fashion ideation process goes further because it situates the user in a set of social relations so that they draw on and connect to a wider set of design criteria, such as the user's age and religious beliefs.

This alternative set of design criteria contrasts sharply with the usual in fashion design which prioritizes aesthetics, presentation and technical skills; instead, these become replaced with criteria that value socio-cultural and ontological factors and relations. During experimentation, the workshop will be full of enthusiasm and energy; however, towards the end of the class as we begin to think about packing up, some students will question how they can record the final outcome technically without the use of a pattern to enable them to duplicate the fashion design; other students will also question authorship and how they can receive an assessment mark from collaborative work. These questions prompt more questions around capitalist practices and the relationship between standardized bodies and capitalist modes of production that requires the manufacture of multiples garments in standard sizing. Indeed, the institution where this project was piloted chose to discontinue this project due to the problems group work raised for assessment and around issues of implementation – or lack of – of technical skills. Further questions were raised about the aesthetics of the final outcomes and how some designs 'looked' shabby.

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## Reflections and conclusion

My intent in this chapter was not to suggest that fashion educators should abolish the mannequin in fashion design classes or even that mannequins should be adapted or changed; neither was the intent to encourage fashion students to access more plus size or adjustable mannequins. Instead, these fashion classes have been an attempt to give students collective agency to engage – with their tutor – in exposing the neutrality of the fashion design process. Helping students to think critically about their position in relation to what they are taught can help them to disrupt and transform the fashion design process by situating people and socio-cultural factors more centrally in fashion design.

This approach therefore points to the need for fashion design educators to engage with their students as a collective to co-create spaces where cultural differences can be valued. A workshop class format was used here; however, without formal assessment or inclusion in the full curricula, there is no clear understanding whether students did or did not build on their learning in subsequent classes. For this reason, more creative ideas around participatory forms of fashion design pedagogy will be needed to encourage shared learning. The hope is that dominant fashion knowledges can be challenged for the universal assumptions they continue to present and that reproduce capitalist and racist fashion design practices. While this chapter argues how the mannequin represents a forms of abstraction, it also points to how there are many other sites and tools in fashion design education that also, arguably, present forms of abstraction and therefore require further challenging, from pattern cutting blocks to the library collections that differentiate and categorize between non-western forms of clothing and European fashions.

Re-connecting fashion design pedagogies with historical and socio-cultural contexts, and between educators-and-students and students-and-students offers possibilities for collective struggle and resistance against ongoing colonial thinking in fashion design. However, it is important to stress how such a process must be carefully planned and worked through; simple duplication or a one size fits all approach would not work. My personal background enabled this specific decolonial feminist approach to raise certain questions; however, another fashion design educator may not be in the same position to raise similar issues.

While decolonization is an ongoing project, in the context of this research, it might enable fashion educators and students to see that how we design in undergraduate fashion is never politically neutral, and worse, can cause harm by contributing to racist, patriarchal and capitalist fashion design systems. While this is not an easy path for both educators and students, and presents what could be described as, ‘a pedagogy of discomfort’ (Boler and Zembylas 2003), as a fashion design community, we all need to recognize and centre our discomfort with current fashion design pedagogies and acknowledge how cultural and racial bias is constructed in the fashion design process. If we can do this, fashion design education could be transformed to offer a radical space to reconceive fashion for future inclusive and sustainable forms of fashion design.

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## Call to action

### Rewriting and righing mannequin resources

This call to action asks fashion design educators and students to undertake an audit of mannequins in their fashion design department. The aim of this activity is to expose how classification systems are categorized hierarchically in fashion design and therefore presents a key approach for any fashion educator aiming to decolonize fashion design education. To expose how colonial thinking is maintained through heteronormative body classification, this pedagogical approach asks students to undertake the following:

*Step one:* Undertake an audit of mannequins in your school’s fashion department: count how many mannequins there are in the department. Next, classify them according to the following body types: child, baby, man, woman, transgender, plus size, petite, colour, ability and so forth. Which categories dominate? Which categories are absent?

*Step two:* What were the findings? How will you address the imbalance? Will students take the findings to their equality and diversity committee at their institution and demand an investigation? Or could students start a political campaign, such as a petition for a wider variety of mannequins or the need to abolish them altogether? Could students adapt mannequins for developing toiles or are there other creative methods that could be developed?

## Anti-racist mannequins


To address the use of light coloured flesh tone fabrics that cover mannequins and normalize white supremacy in fashion design, this project centres an anti-racist approach to design.


Together educators and students could research or make their own mannequin covers in a variety of hues and tones that represent a diversity of skins.


## Fashioning dis-comfort

To further explore and expose colonial thinking in the fashion classroom, these are a set of guiding principles to help centre cultural difference in the fashion design process and encourage discussion that are purposefully both *uncomfortable* and produce *discomfort*. Fashion educators and students are asked to share their lived experience of fashion – both successes and failures – to support a richer conversation and dialogue around what bodies are included and excluded in fashion; and why this may be the case. In this way, fashion is not about simply getting students to make clothes for each other – instead the aim is to find ways to incorporate different bodies into the fashion design process.

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<sup>1</sup>I have avoided using the problematic term Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) which is typically used in the UK or the acronym BIPOC commonly used in the US which has limited usage in the UK context. Therefore, I have used the term women of colour or people of colour throughout to include Black, First Nations, Indigenous and people of colour even though I am aware that these are contested terms.

<sup>2</sup>Verges Françoise (2019), ‘Decolonial feminist teaching and learning: What is the space of decolonial feminist teaching?’, in J. de Sara, I. Rosalba and R.U. Olivia, *Decolonization and Feminisms in Global Teaching and Learning*, UK: Routledge, pp. 91–102.