A GLIMPSE OF STOCKING
Pantyhose as an Indicator of the Changes in American Dress
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Abstract

This presentation examines the wearing of pantyhose in the American workplace as a representation of the evolution of the formality of American business dress. This study investigated the introduction of pantyhose in 1959, how popular periodicals like the Los Angeles Times and the Wall Street Journal have discussed and portrayed them, and the experiences American women have had with them. Approximately 200 magazine and newspaper articles from a 40-year period were analyzed and a total of 46 women between the ages of 20 and 70 in diverse professions from various locations in the country were interviewed. A phenomenological evaluation of the data showed that pantyhose, like stockings before them, were once considered indispensible undergarments but are now generally viewed as optional accessories. This is most apparent when one considers the revision in attitudes held about pantyhose in conservative fields, such as banking, law, and hospitality. Firms who had required pantyhose were contacted to see if that requirement was still in effect, and the answer was overwhelmingly no. Even traditionally conservative organizations such as the Walt Disney Company have joined the majority of American businesses in accepting that bare legs are no longer improper in the public forum. Though pantyhose were once essential to every woman’s wardrobe, this concept has changed since the 1990s, as has the very idea of what constitutes professional attire. The disappearance of pantyhose in the office is indicative of the relaxing formality of American business as a whole.
Bio

Sara Jablon is a freelance costume designer and a Ph.D. student in Apparel, Merchandising & Design at Iowa State University. She has an MFA in Costume Design from New York University and worked on Broadway for more than ten years. Sara has taught at Hunter College and Berkeley College, both in New York.