



## Sex and Unisex: Fashion, Feminism, and the Sexual Revolution

By Jo B. Paoletti

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**Sex and Unisex: Fashion, Feminism, and the Sexual Revolution** By Jo B. Paoletti

Notorious as much for its fashion as for its music, the 1960s and 1970s produced provocative fashion trends that reflected the rising wave of gender politics and the sexual revolution. In an era when gender stereotypes were questioned and dismantled, and when the feminist and gay rights movements were gaining momentum and a voice, the fashion industry responded in kind. Designers from Paris to Hollywood imagined a future of equality and androgyny. The unisex movement affected all ages, with adult fashions trickling down to school-aged children and clothing for infants. Between 1965 and 1975, girls and women began wearing pants to school; boys enjoyed a brief "peacock revolution," sporting bold colors and patterns; and legal battles were fought over hair style and length. However, with the advent of Diane Von Furstenberg's wrap dress and the launch of Victoria's Secret, by the mid-1980s, unisex styles were nearly completely abandoned. Jo B. Paoletti traces the trajectory of unisex fashion against the backdrop of the popular issues of the day—from contraception access to girls' participation in sports. Combing mass-market catalogs, newspaper and magazine articles, cartoons, and trade publications for signs of the fashion debates, Paoletti provides a multigenerational study of the "white space" between (or beyond) masculine and feminine.

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"This book is truly refreshing: an incisive, challenging look at gender, sex, and sexuality from a feminist scholar, but without a trace of academic jargon or theoretical posturing." ?Boston Review

"There's a lot to agree with, and a lot to disagree with in Paoletti's book, but it's an ambitious, creative, and thought-provoking study that offers much to consider." ?Pop Matters

"The philosophical significance of physical appearance, as shown in this book, seems undeniable. Paoletti didn't invent the sociological study of fashion, but she has made an impressive contribution to it." ?The Gay & Lesbian Review

"Arguing through carefully selected case studies, this accessible monograph explores shifting masculinities and femininities amid a series of culture wars that emerged alongside an increasingly consumer-oriented and image-based society invested in self-examination." ?Journal of American History

"With interest, energy, and a tinge of nostalgia, Paoletti explores the unsettling of gender roles and identity in the late 1960s and '70s caused by the sexual revolution and the fight for equal rights through the popular but short-lived trend in unisex clothing for men, women, and kids." ?Publishers Weekly

"Jo Paoletti's groundbreaking work reveals not how clothing styles reflect gender norms, but how they actually come to constitute those norms themselves. Whether the history of color coded baby clothes, as in her earlier work, or the rise and fall of androgynous unisex clothing, Paoletti is one of our keenest and most perceptive cultural historians. In her skilled hands, the word "material" in "material culture" is not simply an adjective, but also an active verb." ?Michael Kimmel, author of Manhood in America

"...a very provocative and timely book!" ?Susan B. Kaiser, Author of The Social Psychology of Children

## About the Author

Jo B. Paoletti is Associate Professor of American Studies at the University of Maryland. She is author of *Pink and Blue: Telling the Boys from the Girls in America* (IUP, 2012).

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