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Analyzing Gender Non-Conforming Terminology in the Context of *Vogue* From 2000-2020

Background

Vogue has been a highly respected source for the latest fashion installations and profiles since the first publication in 1892. As such, it can be used as a tool to assess how historical changes in our society impact how we interact with high fashion. As a society, over the last twenty years we have seen a shift in how gender is defined and how our fashion choices are influenced by our identities.

Methods

The Iowa State University Library database was searched for all Vouge articles using the parameters shown below. Articles printed after December 1999 were searched for key words including various spellings of androgynous, genderqueer, non-binary, and gender fluid. The search produced 167 results which were then organized by date. Each result was compiled into an excel sheet where the key word, or words, and context were recorded.

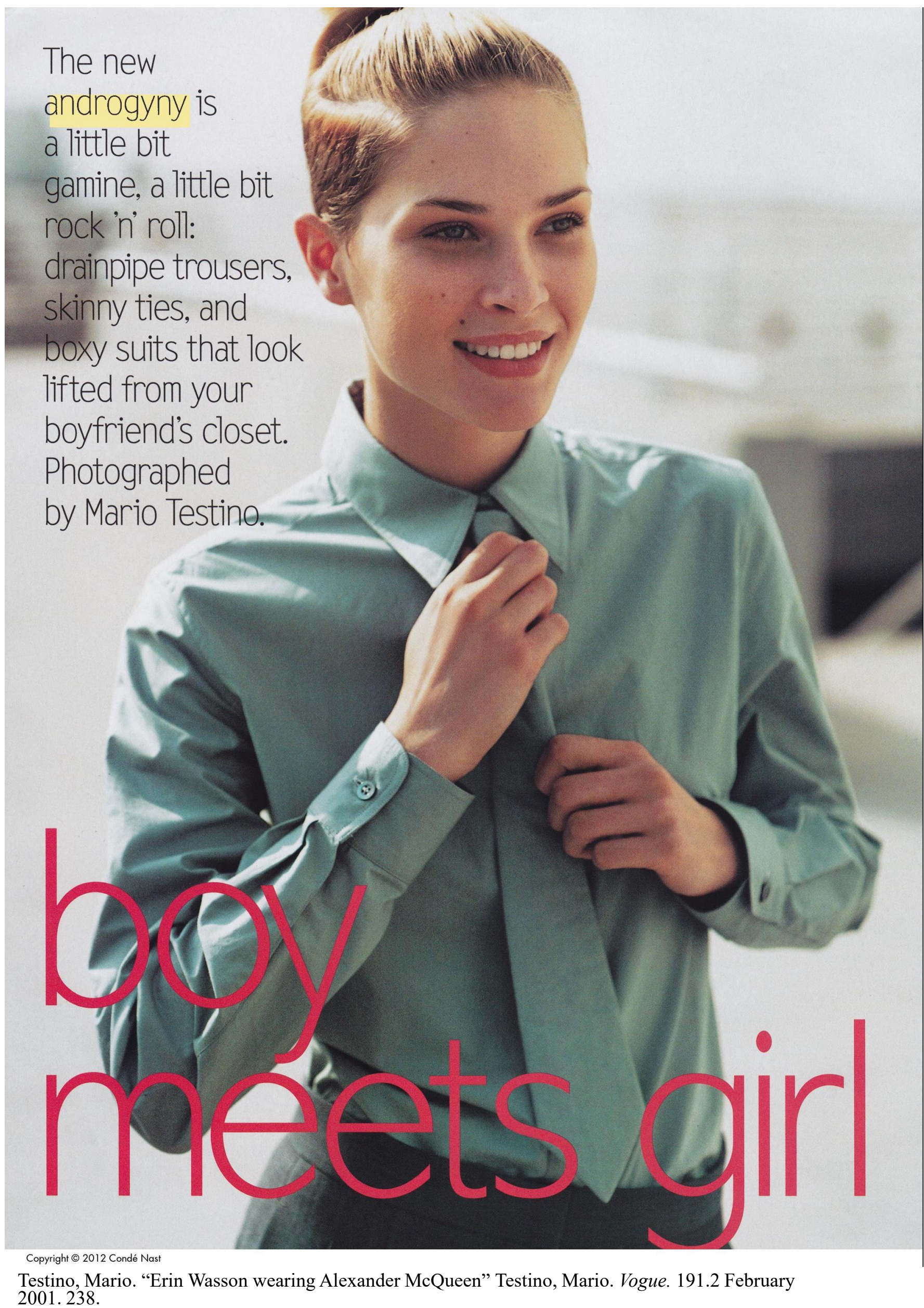
Objectives

The goal of this study was to review how the fashion media outlet Vogue addresses these changes and in what context. The Iowa State University Vogue database was searched using a variety of key words pertaining to gender non-conforming terminology such as “androgynous”, “gender fluid”, and “non-binary.” Each mention of these words was recorded, along with its context, to categorize the ways in which they are used by Vogue to describe fashion and the greater fashion world. From this data, trends were uncovered showing how the use and context of each of the selected words has shifted over the last twenty years in the context of Vogue.

Conclusions

The two primary areas of focus for analysis were the frequency at which each search term appeared over the selected 20 year period and the context in which they appeared. The initial results showed that variations of the term “androgynous” appeared with significantly more frequency than any other search terms. Search terms relating to “gender queer,” “gender fluid” and “non-binary” only appeared thirteen times total out of the 167 articles analyzed. 85% of these appearances occurred in articles printed in 2015 or later.

Further analysis of the term “androgynous” and its variations uncovered trends in context and usage. Early mentions of the term are generally restricted to describing the fashion of music and rock icons, relating androgyny to an edgy and rebellious personality. Later, as fashion evolved, the term emerged as a popular way to describe the aesthetics of designers such as Hedi Slimane and Yves Saint Laurent. Finally, “androgyny” became a stand-in term for “genderless” and appears more frequently as a compliment to evolving gender identities.



Future Work

Future work should include developing a comprehensive code-book to categorize the context of each word to create a consistent method for organizing data. This will allow for further comparison between word contexts in future Vogue articles or articles from other fashion magazines. Possible research expansions could include an analysis of Vogue articles prior to 2000 as well as an analysis of other fashion outlets such as Elle and Harper’s Bazaar.

