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**Collective Selection, Gender and Class Differentiation. Herbert Blumer's
misconstruction of gender- and class-based social theories of fashion**

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This paper examines Herbert Blumer's theory of fashion to show how his concept of collective selection results in an impoverishment of previous theories, especially the one put forth by Thorstein Veblen, which is based on the concept of gender and class differentiation. We found that the strength of Blumer's arguments stems from a narrow understanding of the fashion process, while Veblen's retain its complexity and mansidedness. Aside from excluding middle- and lower-class actors in his depiction of the process of collective selection of seasonal dresses and adornments, Blumer also leaves out the actions performed by women, which are central to Veblen's theory of dress, adornment and fashion. Despite Blumer's purported democratic intentions, his theory results in a conception of fashion as the result of the non-democratic choices made by a narrow, upper-class, predominantly male elite that is directly though imperceptibly imposed on the rest of society. Veblen's social critical theory, on the other hand, brings to the fore the non-democratic character of that society that has fashion as one of its most important devices for gender and class differentiation.