

UNIT 6

FASHION PSYCHOLOGY

Topics:

1. Role of clothing in physical, social, psychological and cultural scenario
2. Human behavior and clothing
3. Clothing and gender differentiation

1. **Role of clothing in physical, social, psychological and cultural scenario:**

Fashion is a language which tells a story about the person who wears it. Clothes create a wordless means of communication that we all understand. Your clothing can cheer you up. More often than not we dress how we would like to feel or how we would like others to think we are feeling. In other words, we put on a happy sweater along with a happy smile, even if we are feeling down. And it works, especially if we wear clothing that has gotten us compliments in the past or is something that brings back good memories.

Where in early civilizations, the key purpose of clothing was to keep us warm and relatively dry, today; central heating warms our homes, reducing our dependence on clothes alone to help us survive. Clothes have developed from practical asset to a social marker. They affect the way we see ourselves. They help us to be seen in the light we wish to be and also exude our personalities and social status.

Most sports and physical activities are practiced wearing special clothing, for practical, comfort or safety reasons. Common sportswear garments include short pants, T-shirts, tennis, shirts, track suits, and trainers. Specialized garments include wet suits for swimming, diving, or surfing; salopettes for skiing and leotards for gymnastics. Also, spandex materials are often used as base layers to soak up sweat. Spandex is also preferable for active sports that require form fitting garments, such as wrestling, track & field, dance, gymnastics and swimming.



Korean Hanboks

People may wear ethnic or national dress on special occasions or in certain roles or occupations. For example, most Korean men and women have adopted western-style dress for daily wear, but still wear traditional hanboks on special occasions, like weddings and cultural holidays. Items of western dress may also appear worn or accessorized in distinctive, non-western ways. A Tongan man may combine a used T-shirt with a Tongan wrapped skirt, or tupenu.



Garments which generate electricity

The world as clothing is always changing, as new cultural influences meet technological innovations. Researchers in scientific labs have been developing prototypes for fabrics that can serve functional purposes well beyond their traditional roles, for example, clothes that can automatically adjust their temperature, repel bullets, project images, and generate electricity. Some practical advances already available to consumers are bullet-resistant garments made with Kevlar and stain-resistant fabrics that are coated with chemical mixtures that reduce the absorption of liquids.



Self lacing foot wear

Eighty percent of communication is unconscious and it takes only 3.5 seconds to make a first impression. What you are wearing and how it makes you feel plays a pretty important part in that 3.5 seconds. We can help others to make a more accurate impression of us through what we communicate visually, linguistically and physiologically. In other words it is an unspoken form of communication.



It is exciting to meet someone who has a strong sense of personal style, because their style says so much about what they like and what matters to them. It makes it easy for others to build rapport with them, because there is less that is being guarded.

Your outfit can change your behavior. More important than others' perceptions of you, is how you feel about yourself. What we think we can wear is based on subconscious beliefs and that impacts our behavior. We see our client get the jobs they want, because they interview successfully. Who would not want to hire someone who seems confident, approachable, capable and well presented? We are definitely rethinking that un-ironed shirt from under the bed now.

The importance of color- Color is highly emotive; often the colors we do not like are linked to our experiences- for instance, of growing up. Like the color of your school uniform, or a jumper your mum forced you to wear as a child. There is also a few colors we should be adding into our wardrobes, too.

Blue is the ultimate color of communication and red is the color of power. It is no surprise that across politics, these are colors we constantly see. It now makes sense why Hillary Clinton is always, always rocking a blue power suit. The influence of body language in addition to clothing choices makes a difference. Those who make their dress a principal part of themselves will in general become of no more value than their dress.

There is a reason tailored jackets are associated with being 'dressed for success'. It seems that wearing formal office wear and structured clothes puts us in the right frame of mind to conduct business. Wearing power clothing makes us feel more confident; and even increases hormones

needed for displaying dominance. This in turn helps us become better negotiators and abstract thinkers.



Hillary Clinton in a Blue Suit

Casual Friday- While a good suit works wonders for our performance in the boardroom; wearing formal wear is not a great idea when we want to socialize. Studies have found that people tend to be less open and find it more difficult to relax when they wear formal clothes.



On the other hand, a casual and relaxed dress code at work helps us become more friendly and creative. These findings bolster the idea of wearing business casuals on a Friday; since colleagues are most likely to take out time to socialize and let their hair down on the last work day of the week.

Psychology of gym clothes- Wear some of your gym clothes or at least carry them with you. Wearing gym clothes/active wear makes it more likely that we will actually exercise. This may happen because wearing our workout gear acts as a reminder to make healthy choices. And for many, having the clothes on eliminates the step of 'dressing for exercise'; and reduces one of our excuses.



Uniform thinking- Any kind of clothing that is associated with a specific role activates all our knowledge and expectations about how people from that profession should behave. For example, wearing uniforms and coats can make people more conscious of their duties and encourage them to pay more attention to their jobs. Just wearing a lab-coat during an experiment encourages people to pay more attention (since lab-coats represent serious, attentive professions like scientists and doctors) and make fewer mistakes.

School children attend school more and perform better when they are given uniforms to wear- perhaps because uniforms makes school work that much more real and valuable to the children and their parents.



Children in School Uniform

Luxury good and politics- Most of us think our political affiliations as rock solid. But not only can clothes affect our perceived social status, they can even change our political views and attitudes. In one study women who are asked to carry a Prada handbag identified more with conservative, capitalist values than a control group who were given a non-luxury handbag. These ladies were also less likely to help others in general; but were more likely to help if it improved their status. The researchers believe that this could be because people unconsciously attempt to behave in ways that are congruent their look. So essentially, if we dress for the role, we will start to live it.



The clothes we wear send powerful signals to our peers and strangers, projecting the self image of us that we want to display. In fact subtle varieties in dress sense can affect our ability to attract a partner whilst we are dating. Against the gender stereotypes of females being more fashion-aware and conscious of others' clothes and makeup efforts than males, studies have also lifted the lid on men's insecurities with regards to clothes.

Contrary to commonly held beliefs, men have been shown to be more often self-conscious than females with regards to their personal dress sense and the way in which they are viewed in public.

Uppers and downers- Feeling low/cranky/upset/sad? While our mental state most definitely affects the way we dress; the reverse may also hold true. What we wear could affect how we cope when we're depressed, anxious and stressed. Research says the quickest little fix for a bad day is to wear brightly colored clothes. Cheerful colors work as mini pick-me-up; and thus boosting our mood and energy. Also, we associate bright colors with happiness, sunny days, and carefree times- like the summer vacations when we were kids.

On the other hand, we associate deep and dull colors with low energy, being tired and a more somber mood. So the next time you feel like donning a dark hoodie to hide a bad day; reach out for the bright pullover instead! It may just make you feel little happier.

Amazingly even our underwear affects the way we feel about ourselves. Hidden clothes like our socks and underwear can exert a powerful influence on our self perception and confidence levels. Wearing something we perceive as sexy can make us feel more self assured, more powerful and more confident.

To improve self image, even copying someone's style may be a good idea. Research shows that when we emulate the dress code of people we consider smart and powerful, we feel infused with these qualities as well. This certainly is an argument for owning clothes that bring out the best in us.

2. Human behavior in clothing:

Your clothing can make you feel powerful. The 'power tie' is a real thing, according to a study published in social psychological and personality science. Researchers had certain people wear formal business attire and complete a series of five experiments that challenged their cognitive processing abilities. Those who dressed up felt significantly more powerful and in control of the situation than their under-dressed peer.

Your clothing can make you a better thinker. The study also found that the subjects who dressed in business formal clothing could think faster on their feet and had more creative ideas. The scientists speculated that how you dress can change your perception of the objects, people, and events around you- sparking fresh ideas and a new point of view.

Your clothing can make you exercise harder but make it feel easier. Athletes in red-clothing won more events in the 2004 Olympic Games than their competitors in blue, which inspired researchers to see if that was just a coincidence or if there is something special about the color red.



Pilot & Flight Crew Uniforms



Your clothing can make you smarter. Dressing in clothing that is associated with intelligence, like doctor's coats or pilot's uniforms, may not only make you look smarter but actually make you act smarter too, according to a study published in the Journal of Experimental Social Psychology. Researchers gave doctor's lab coats to subjects (none of whom were doctors) and then asked them to perform a series of complex tasks. Those in white coats made a significantly fewer mistakes than the people in street clothes. The scientists then repeated the experiment but this time gave lab coats to all the participants. However, they told half the people they were doctor's coats while the other half were told they were paint smocks. Again the people in

'doctor's coats' performed better on the tests, which shows that it is not just what you wear but also what you think of what you wear that matters.

Your clothing can make you focus better. Being able to focus on a task, particularly when it is boring, is half the battle when it comes to many jobs. The same lab coat study found that people wearing the 'smarter' doctor's lab coats were able to focus harder and longer than those who thought they were wearing just a painter's smock. We know that physicians 'tend to be careful, rigorous, and good at paying attention' and so when we act like a physician we embody some those qualities- almost as if we are trying to live up to the expectations of the outfit.

Your clothing can help you get your way. This one is for those who are haggling over a car price or negotiating a house contract. Your clothing can give you an edge in argument. Subjects were divided into three groups- they dressed either a suit, a pair of sweats, or were allowed to wear their own clothing; they were then put in a scenario where they had to negotiate. The people who were dressed well routinely trumped those who were dressed down. Even more interestingly, the men in sweats actually showed lower testosterone levels, which further reduced their aggression.

Your clothing can make you more honest. There may be sneaky side effect of wearing knock-offs, accordingly to a Harvard study published in psychological science. Researchers gave people fancy new sun glasses, telling half of a group they were designer while the other half was told they were counterfeit. Those wearing the knock-offs were more likely to cheat during subsequent game and expressed more suspicion of other players. Wearing fake clothing, it turns out, may make you feel fake- and may make you assume others are also being fake.



Good clothes can positively influence the way the wearer thinks and behaves. The major benefit of wearing suitable clothes is an increase in confidence. Sometimes people wear hi-end brands such as Louis Vuitton, Chanel, or Christian Dior, just to show-off their wealth.

On the contrary, some people do not believe that clothes can change the way you behave because they consider clothes as superficial external factor. Although clothes can change behavior, the most important thing is the moral goodness inside of people. Without a doubt, clothes can change the appearance of a person who wears them, but not their fundamental

traits. Clothes not only partly adjust human behavior, but also influenced by wearing good clothes, righteousness inside our minds is more valuable, but not easy to change.

3. Clothing and gender differentiation:

Gender is social, psychological, and cultural construct, our reason to polarize gender is influenced by sex, that is, the biological dichotomy of male and female. The biological continuum of genes, chromosomes, hormones, and reproductive physiology helps produce a script for appearing and behaving male and female. Viewing gender as a fluid concept allows scholars studying clothing and appearance to understand gender relations as more than men and women 'dressing their parts'.

Gendered dressing is more than complementary role-playing; power relations are inextricably involved. Otherwise, women's adoption of trousers represents an important readjustment of the definition of femininity, but not necessarily a change in the existing balance of power.

Through an examination of historical changes in Western men's and women's dress during the 20th century, it is possible to gain a greater understanding of the changes in the social meanings of clothing and its relationship to gender. Through the 1950s, men followed a restricted code for appearance, limited to angular design lines, neutral and subdued color palettes, bifurcated garments, for example- pants, for the lower body, natural but not tight silhouettes, sturdy fabrics and shoes, and simple hair and face grooming. This simple and restricted dress code related well to a focus on work and on social, economic, and political accomplishments rather than attention to changes in fashion.



Dress except for the neck tie, did not impede physical activity. The negative impact of this uniformity and conformity is that men may dress to conceal aspects of their identity, which is not always true for women. Men's business attire has been linked to a display of power facilitated by the uniform nature of dress. The opportunity for men to relax at work on 'casual Fridays' has not released them from burdens of conformity, as they frequently adopt a Gap or Levis uniform of

polo shirt and khaki pants. This symbolic allegiance to work and career also signals a privileged access to economic and political power in post industrial society, namely, occupational success.



Women's Formal Dress Code

Women's conservative dress-for-success appearance of the 1980s can be analyzed as an appearance cue that announced women's intention to ascend the corporate ladder. Women have had more elaborated fashion code, which meant that they could wear some of what men wore, and a lot more. For example, although men always wear pants, women wear both pants and skirts. They have an unlimited choice of fabrics, colors, design lines, and silhouettes.

In some cultures, layering of body supplements frequently can indicate an elaborated code related to gender, but it can also serve to demonstrate social rank. For example, in India, most married women wear bangle bracelets on each wrist.



Pink Head bands for girl babies



Bangles & Sindoor for married women in Hindu Tradition

After World War 2, the color preferences for boys and girls reversed. Parents often put elastic pink satin head bands on their hairless girl babies, so that no one is confused about their gender.

Rules about fashion and gender are still almost every walk of life, both formally, and, more often, informally. We have all been trained from an early age to regard some clothes as strictly for women. Men make seemingly mundane yet crucial decision: what to wear to work. Most pull out some variation of the charcoal, navy, or black suit from their closet. Some might add their own twist: polka-dot pocket square or colorful socks. As work was separated from the domestic sphere, home became feminized and work became masculinized. In this way, the business suit was seen to embody masculine traits, and became synonymous with corporate success. In contrast, people who enjoy wearing fabulous clothing (like other activities considered feminine and associated with women and marginalized men) are often denied opportunities and become seen as 'problems' in organizations.

SOLVE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. Explain role of clothing in cultural scenario.
2. Explain psychological effects of clothing.
3. Explain how clothing can influence gender differentiation.
4. Explain the relation between human behavior and clothing.
5. Describe the functional roles of clothing.