# The Fashioned Body, Gender and Identity

## Introduction

Fashion and gender are stated to be going hand-in-hand, how an individual lives because it is often observed to be obsessed with the gender perspective and is opined to be varied accordingly. This obsession has the potential to be translated into the dresses of women, as well as, men for daily wear and can also sometimes be marked with varied types of gender differences. With respect to fashion, the key consideration is clothes, which are interrelated not with the biological aspects but is associated with the cultural perspective. Furthermore, it can also depict the degree to which sexual differences are taken into consideration. This, there is a particular type of demand for the clothing of both the genders based on a particular situation or an occasion (Entwistle, 2015). However, fashion is also resembled in terms of photography, wherein it is opined to be freezing the moment, which is represented by the gestures eternally. Clothes have been considered as one of the burdened materialistic objects, they are often observed to be closely involved in the life cycle and human body. Furthermore, the ambiguities and multifaceted nature of clothing can also be taken into high consideration. In addition, it was further opined that the clothes usually conceals memories in relation to the day-to-day activities along with daily lives of people in historic instances (Wilson, 2013).

Thus, this essay focuses on highlighting the opinion of Joanne Entwistle as the basis for further discussions, who stated that, Clothing is one of the most immediate and effective examples of the way in which bodies are gendered, made ‘feminine’ or ‘masculine’.’ (Entwistle, p.141). Furthermore, the detailed discussions regarding genderless clothing has also been closely taken into consideration with respect to the passing trend. On the contrary, it indicates deeper shifts in both cultural, as well as, the societal contexts.

## Fashion, Human Body, Gender and Identity

According to Arvanitidou & Gasouka (2013), it was opined that gender was defined limited to the faded boundaries, which was intended to express uncertainty that remained in the culture thereby incorporating feminity and masculinity. It was further observed that there were two basic social-cultural factors, which helped in shaping the gender namely fashion and dressing. In addition, it was also observed that there were certain differences were perceived to be prominent at the time of the battle, which took place regarding women’s usage of trousers. This certainly depicted a differential treatment for both the genders. In response to these, the key role major fashion designers, who were responsible for shaping the roles of males along with the females, were represented by their dresses and clothing trends (Arvanitidou & Gasouka, 2013). Thus, with the help of detailed analysis, arguments are set considering clothing to be a passing trend or it may represent shifts in culture and society.

## Discussion

### Clothing as a Passing Fad

Arvanitidou & Gasouka (2013) stated that clothing is also regarded as a passing trend or. In addition, it was highlighted t that there were various dress movements that took place in the past such as Macaroni during 1760-1780, Dandies in the 19th century, Baeu in the 18th century and Mods in 20th century. Apart from these big movements, there were various subcultures of teens depicted their trends among various groups, which assisted in differentiating them from one another. The primary trend setter was the battle for trousers by the female gender, who wore trousers, which was originally wore by the male gender. This took place in the context of women independence in US since 1850, which was kind of a shocking thought for the moralists. After this, the role of Haute couture cannot be denied for reviving the female identity in the late 20th century, which adorned the female character with fancy dresses (Arvanitidou & Gasouka, 2013). It was evident that Bordo (2004) also had a similar opinion. It was believed that clothing was represented as a fad in context to the American society, however, this brought various disadvantages, especially for women (Bordo, 2004). The author’s another book that was published in 2000, which significantly highlighted the sexual fantasy that was being portrayed for the bodies of women. It was also opined that the clothing was taken as a trend and that at that time the fad of men clothing was simpler, unrestrictive, as well as, tailored (Bordo, 2000).

With respect to the opinions of Arvanitidou & Gasouka (2011), clothing or fashion was discussed in the context of different human concepts, which was related to the gender evolution. This came to existence with the changes in the fashion, as well as, the clothing. Therefore, it was the beginning of creating the male and feminine appearances as per the various styles that existed in the society. It was further stated that clothing/garments were considered as functional benefits, which signified the lifestyle one was living, gave identity, and provided an idea of their individual tastes and preferences. Additionally, it was further discussed that dressing represented values. This particular article further emphasized highlighting the link between clothing and values. The style/trend in clothing combines the ideas/views that an individual wants to express and the rule within which an individual must abide by in the society. Furthermore, dressing was also opined to be influenced by the dominant values, attitudes of the society, socio-economic status or life status, and individual perspective. It was observed that the people wanted to assure self-introduction with the help of their dressing style. Therefore, it was concluded that fashion or clothing combined the elements of politics, social, aesthetic, as well as, symbolises the efforts for identity building and gender creation (Arvanitidou & Gasouka, 2011). Similar was the opinion of Shilling (2005), which highlighted that the human body in the technological world today had the consideration of the society and the culture with respect to various trends.

A particular type of trend that was highlighted in this context was the centripetal trend, which was closely related to the study of human body. These trends were further depicted in the culture of manliness, especially in America and Britain even in the nineteenth, as well as, in the twentieth century. For instance in the case of sports, both men and women had their own identity but they faced the dominance of male in the treatment and restriction in fashion and trends. It has been observed that the there exist gender differentiation along with racial discrimination, which was visible at that time but women did not accept to stay within the boundaries of gendered sports. Thus, it was opined that the importance of the societal values in the fashion industry cannot be denied and is responsible for developing innovative ideas and setting standards of tastes and preferences. Hence, this will further represent trends or fads (Shilling, 2005). On a similar note, Sassatelli (2016) highlighted the context of commercialisation of fitness culture and its related values. For instance, in the Roman culture, the contemporary practice of gymnasium adapted has been linked to the improvement and progress of modernity. The human body in this context is not only related to fashion, lifestyle, and sports but also masculinity, which later became popular even in females. This depicted that gender differentiation should not be done by the society in terms of fashion nor relating to the sports (Sassatelli, 2016).

Apart from this Monden (2014) opined that clothes were in an overall basis the fundamental component for depicting the performance of gender not only in the context of men and women but also in the context of children. The same gender differences were highlighted in the context of Japanese people, which was due to the differences in the clothing and dressing style. However, it was also reported that the European’s historical evidences suggested that there were no proper distinction between the clothing as men and women’s wear was not transparently distinguished. However, sartorial distinctions of the modern era was increasingly emphasised in the Victorian era. This was observed as the men were more decorated in contrast to the fussy dressed women. It was further suggested that the gender differences in fashion has significantly created and maintained a large gap between the two genders. These differences were hence, visible by the clothing and fashion. Thus, it also encompassed various trends that evolved in the past instances of the fashion industry as per the Japanese society. It also highlighted that the trend had been common, which was a time of girlish fashion that was observed to be prominent in the society. Hence, it can be opined that clothing was more than societal/cultural shifts. In addition, it was also evident that genderless clothing has become a passing trend or ongoing phenomena of changing style and fashion. Therefore, people in the society of Japan have been considerably accepting lesser transparent or distinguished fashion rather than making it a gender differentiating issue (Monden, 2014).

### Clothing Representing Deeper Cultural/Societal Shifts

Arvanitidou & Gasouka (2013) highlighted that the importance of unisex style was highly taken into consideration, as it tried to hide gender differences thereby showing equality. On the contrary, this style was the ‘androgynous style’, which focused on combining the female and male bodies that lead to ‘primordial cosmic unity’. This will significantly appease not only gender confusion but also anxiety that persisted in the society. On the basis of societal concepts, the characteristics of feminity/masculinity have been formed for the purpose of gender differentiation. Therefore it has been opined that over the past few decades, gender definition has become vague in nature, which clearly reflects the uncertainty that persist in deciding the respective roles of both men and women. However, conclusions can be also drawn that eventually both the styles highlighted gender differences in their own way directly or indirectly. It can also be noted that fashion was closely associated with the human body formation, thereby, mediating from different identities’ negotiations at times proved to be provocative in nature. Hence, conclusions were drawn that fashion indicates not only social frivolity but also was also been regarded to be sociologically essential, as it influence the collective societal perspective and determination (Arvanitidou & Gasouka, 2013). According to Bordo (2004), the western philosophy considered that, there were shifts in culture and society due to the changes in the clothing patterns. The shifts in styles have made the interpretation more intricate, however, it was done from the perspective not only on focusing on the anxiety of male over female but also the willingness of women to embrace the respective styles (Bordo, 2004).

According to Bordo (2000), it was observed that the clothing of male and female did represent their human body and especially in the context of culture in the society. It has been observed to be shifting in such a manner that the previous trend can be considered to be obsolete as well. Thus, it was opined that cultural interpretation was a continuous process, which may or may not be completed. However, no one has been able to draw a perfect conclusion (Bordo, 2000). In accordance to the study findings of Entwistle (2015), in the initial stage, anthropology was concerned with two concepts namely, culture dichotomy and ontology. In addition, over the past years two developments that had taken place, one was the ‘queer’ style and the other was cultural pornification. Both of these developments were concerned about the social trends along with the topic of great contradictions. Contextually, leaving the contradictions aside from the male and female genders, the gay style emerged significantly and influenced culture, dress, and fashion trends in the society. However, the unclear perspective of fashion was evident, which resulted in the related concepts namely, style, and trend/fad to remain ambiguous in nature (Entwistle, 2015).

It was also mentioned that in some of the societies, there was a particular form of dress that were used as a control mechanism in the society. For instance, women’s clothing was made as a weapon for political purposes and the key change that took place was that clothing and the related movements made changes in the social norms. Furthermore, the movement of feminism was discussed, which emerged as a result of the construction of the society itself that justified the interests of the male dominated societies (Arvanitidou & Gasouka, 2013). On the study findings presented by Edwards (2006), the culture of masculinity was observed in details in the society with special reference to the crisis of masculinity. The author highlighted the vague nature of this crisis and further stated that economic trends in the geographical, as well as, demographical perspective. This created great concern for some of the groups of men, as they faced the problem of manufacturing decline and various other issues. This further led to the increasing degree of economic inequality along with other related problems, especially concerning the culture and the society. Furthermore, the prevailing philosophies were also changing in the societal and gender considerations, which re-evaluated the approach of Marxist regarding masculinity (Edwards, 2006). With respect to the cultural perspective, fashion reflects the societal and prediction concerns, thereby, allows fluidity of the concepts of sexuality and gender identity. The reason behind this particular aspect is that fashion liquidity symbolises cultural transitivity. This is mostly due to rapid changes that were observed in cultural values. As a result of which, it has become prominent that culture illustrated not only morality but also fashion designer’s ideology, wearer’s ideas, and the culture as a whole (Arvanitidou & Gasouka, 2011).

According to Shilling (2005), society was undertaken in collaboration to culture and theory so that it could be related to the social sciences, as well as, humanities in the contemporary world. Moreover, the interaction between the existing societal structure and the generative capacity of the human body was also examined. It was found that due to these interactions, the development of social environment along with the potential of humans can also be determined to be important (Shilling, 2005). Thus, with the passage of time, gender clothing or unity clothing submerged the differences between the genders such as wearing jeans by both the gender, however, it has become the part of the western culture. According to Monden (2014), the fashion statements that were depicted by the males showed the trends and social changes that took place in the recent scenario in contrast to the historical evidences. Thus, the fashion culture of Japan was observed to be shifting its culture and the role of women from being mere mothers and housewives to consumers of luxury and fashionable items. Subsequently, these changes were significantly taken into consideration. Therefore, it can be stated that clothing has been undergoing various type of changes, especially in the perception and the role of both male and the female gender. Hence, it depicts deeper shifts/changes in the society, as well as, their respective cultures similar to that of Japan (Monden, 2014).

Thus, considering the key aspects and clothing in relation to all the concepts such as fashion, lifestyle, culture, society, and trends, it can be stated that these concepts have been directly or indirectly contributing towards the contradictions and debates that have been prominently visible. Especially, referring to the society, clothing, as well as, fashion can be integrative in nature to form the essential elements of the society. In addition, clothing has been directly or indirectly depicting gender differences. However, efforts of unisex style cannot be neglected because even though gender differences were hidden, it helped the society to have a certain changes in a positive way. Furthermore, the evolution that took place with the dress movements was also a change factor or shift that helped the perception of society towards masculinity and feminity (Arvanitidou & Gasouka, 2013).

In a similar context, Twigg (2009) also had similar opinion but significantly focused on considering the age factor to be taken into greater emphasis. However, clothing was related to the human body, which was stated to be depicting the social world for which dress or clothing is a part along with a parcel of the culture and society, as well as, the age in which the particular person belongs. Furthermore, the consumer’s culture should be highly taken into consideration, in addition to the changing preferences and beliefs of the society. Clothing, however, in this article was not entirely concerned about the fashion and in the greater extent, emphasises the individual identity rather than gender differences particularly considering the social class (Twigg, 2009).

## Conclusion

Clothing is regarded as one of the ways through which human bodies are gendered because of having a specific approach to designs. It is observed that there are numerous women and men, who possess a masculine along with a feminine approach to a design respectively, creating a blend of meticulous design and contractual management in the world of fashion. Arguments have been raised for determining whether genderless clothing is a passing fad or it is indicative of deeper shifts in society and culture. It is expected that proper determination of this argument would lead towards identifying whether clothing can be considered as one of the ways through which bodies are gendered, developing masculine and feminine approaches to a specific design. Evidences suggested that genderless clothing is not a passing fad, rather it is considered to be an ongoing revolution, making deeper shifts in society, as well as, the culture. The community of the modern day context thinks about this ongoing revolution to be a kind of association persisting amid clothing and identity, which has an influence on masculine and feminine approaches to a particular design.

Genderless clothing is argued to be indicative of deeper shifts both in society and culture by accepting the ‘androgynous style’, which emphasised combing the bodies of both males and females. This particular style intended to develop ‘primordial cosmic unity’ by highlighting gender differences in one way or the other. Since fashion and genderless clothing have a close relation with the formation of human body, these not only represent social frivolity but also impose significant impact on the collective social perspectives and determination. Clothing is viewed as a functional benefit for the human beings, as it provides identity to them, determine individual tastes, and establish a linkage between choices and values. Thus, it can be considered as one of the successful instances based on which human bodies are gendered in terms of masculinity and femininity.

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