

Definition and Classification of Dress

Implications for Analysis of Gender Roles

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Dress is a powerful means of communication and makes statements about the gender role of a newborn child soon after birth.¹ Although newborn children's first dress may be gender-neutral, their sex soon prompts kin or other caretakers to provide them with dress considered gender-appropriate within their particular society.² Further, specific types of dress, or assemblages of types and their properties, communicate gender differentiations that have consequences for the behavior of females and males throughout their lives.³ This essay includes a review of scholarly works related to dress and gender roles and an assessment of the problems we have encountered in dealing with terminology and classification systems used in these works.⁴ We summarize our response to the problems by presenting a sociocultural definition of dress and a classification system for types of dress that are compatible with this definition. We also discuss the relevance of the system in analyses of relationships between dress and gender roles.

Although in this paper we emphasize the use of the classification system to clarify and unify the content of anthropological and sociological study of dress and gender, the system is applicable to all work on the sociocultural aspects of dress. A major advantage of the system is that it brings together a number of related concepts, travelling under various names, within different theoretical and research contexts, under the rubrics "body modifications" and "body supplements."

Early Anthropological Perspectives on Dress and Gender Roles

Statements that anticipated a social anthropology of dress and gender⁵ date to the second half of the nineteenth century, when various new

sciences of human behavior were taking shape in both the United Kingdom and the United States. Such statements occur in Spencer's *The Principles of Sociology* (1879)⁶; Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859), *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871), and *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872)⁷; Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (1871)⁸; Morgan's *Ancient Society* (1877)⁹; and Westermarck's *History of Human Marriage* (1891).¹⁰ In these works, the authors explained variations in forms of dress according to principles embodied in theories of social evolution, and sometimes attributed differences in the dress of females and males to differences in the sexes' respective levels of social evolution, with males being at a higher level. In making such attributions, these nineteenth-century scholars were no doubt influenced by what they saw around them, that is, the relatively plain dress of men that contrasted sharply with the elaborate fashions of women. They were also influenced by the sometimes exotic (to Western eyes) material from which they were extracting data to support their theories. This material included extant accounts of experience in non-Western settings by people of diverse interests: travellers, explorers, traders, colonial officials, and missionaries; as well as historical and literary works, especially those by classical Greek and Roman writers.

By the twentieth century, social anthropologists were increasingly disenchanted with theories of social evolution. They questioned the value of the evolutionists' speculations regarding the origins of types of human behavior, as well as their attempts to determine universal, fixed stages of social development to explain variations in human behavior that differentiated groups of people. They also questioned whether sound social theory could be based on the potpourri of secondary sources used by the evolutionists to support their theoretical propositions.

Among the questioners was Crawley, the first anthropologist to give extensive and serious attention to dress and to relate it to a wide range of human behavior. In his almost book-length entry entitled "Dress" in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (1912:40-72), Crawley partially followed the pattern set by the social evolutionists. He discussed origins of dress; interspersed throughout his work references to dress at the evolutionary levels of savagery, barbarism, and civilization; and supported his generalizations about dress with numerous examples from a variety of secondary written sources. His move away from the evolutionary stance is apparent in his reluctance to claim that anything more than speculations can be made about origins of dress. It is also apparent in his refusal to apply the evolutionists' concept of survivals

in his interpretations of dress.¹¹ The most noteworthy features of Crawley's work, however, are its comprehensiveness, his many keen observations on dress that remain as applicable today as in his own time, and his stance on "sexual" dress – what we would call gendered dress. His position, pivotal to his whole work, is that of the many possible social distinctions that can be communicated by dress, the most important one is sexual, in current terms based on learned gender roles.

As the twentieth century progressed, the oncoming generation of social anthropologists stressed personal, on-site fieldwork as a means of obtaining accurate, scientific data regarding the form and meaning of material and nonmaterial inventions of cultural groups. Among these innovators were ethnographers such as Bronislaw Malinowski and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and their students (identified with the methodology of the United Kingdom), and Franz Boas and his students in the United States.¹² Lynch, in comparing the work of British and American ethnographers of this period, noted that the Americans tended to place stronger emphasis on collection and analysis of a wide array of material objects. This difference is of some importance for the study of dress because it encouraged orderly and detailed study of the socio-cultural significance of material products used as dress. She cautions, however, that one cannot take this as a hard and fast rule, since a lively exchange of ideas between ethnographers from the two countries led some individuals to choose research methods and theoretical orientations contrary to such a distinction (Lynch 1989).

Ethnography, Dress, and Gender

Since the early years of the twentieth century, anthropologists have produced an impressive body of literature. However, none has offered as comprehensive a view of the anthropology of dress and gender as Crawley. This does not mean that British and American anthropologists have completely ignored dress and gender since that time. Especially after 1960, distinguishing characteristics of dress of females and males that intrigued Crawley also caught the attention of anthropologists intent on analyzing cultural similarities and differences between various societies. However, their analyses have tended to be treatments of limited aspects of dress published in monographs, occasional journal articles, and book excerpts, or information included incidentally in the general coverage of the material culture of a group of people.

Among relatively short works are those by Benedict (1931), Bunzel (1931), Bohannan (1956), Messing (1960), Murphy (1964), Roach and

Eicher (1965), Mead (1969), Schwarz (1979), Cordwell (1979), and Hamilton and Hamilton (1989). In entries in the *Encyclopedia of Social Science* entitled "Dress" and "Ornament," Benedict and Bunzel, respectively, followed a nineteenth-century tradition set by Westermarck and others for considering dress as clothing and ornament. As they shied away from global generalizations about clothing and ornament and warned against trying to find universal sequences in their forms, they reflected the general move away from theories of social evolution toward the more cautious approach of twentieth-century ethnographers.

Bohannan (1956) limited his observations to body modifications among the Tiv of Nigeria, emphasizing the practice of scarification. He noted that designs of scarification, a requisite for beauty among both females and males, varied by sex and in some cases had erotic meanings. Messing (1960) discussed only the Ethiopian *shamma*, a generic wrapped garment worn by both sexes, and gave examples of how differences in volume, color, texture, surface design, and manipulations of the wrapped shape communicated a variety of meanings, including the sex of the wearer. Murphy (1964) concentrated on the wrapped facial veil of adult Tuareg males. According to his interpretation, the veil announced the public roles of males, which were not available to females. He further observed that a male's manipulation of the veil facilitated his enactment of somewhat conflicting roles within a complex kinship system.

Roach and Eicher (1965) provided a broad perspective appropriate to the study of the anthropology of dress in brief essays that served as overviews to a series of readings; however, they made only brief mention of the relationship of dress to gender, or "sex roles," as they were called at that time. Mead gave some attention to details of dress of the male and female Maori of New Zealand. However, his main emphasis was on technical aspects of their traditional body coverings (enclosures). Schwarz made a plea for anthropologists to pay greater attention to dress and expanded some of his ideas by discussing the relation of the dress of females and males to the social structuring of life among the Guambianos of Colombia. Cordwell concentrated on cosmetics and other modifications of the body but did not analyze distinctions between the dress of females and males. Hamilton and Hamilton (1989) focused on the dress of adult females of the Karen hill tribe of Thailand.

Several book-length monographs have dealt with limited aspects of the dress of females and males. Strathern and Strathern, in *Self-Decoration on Mount Hagen* (1971), emphasized the body modification of males; as did Faris (1972) in his analysis of Nuba body painting,

particularly of males. Rugh (1986) focused on the folk dress of females in a number of Egyptian villages. In a study confined to one Palestinian village, Weir (1989) determined that, contrary to a popularly held view that traditional garb is highly standardized, the garments of these Palestinian women varied widely in surface design and other properties. O'Hanlon (1989) scrutinized both body modifications and body supplements, primarily of the males, in the New Guinea village of Wahgi.

As this sample of publications indicates, increasing attention is being paid to gender and dress by British and American anthropologists. What is lacking is a method for summarizing how dress is both a repository of meanings regarding gender roles and a vehicle for perpetuating or rendering changes in gender roles. Our view is that the intertwined problems of terminology and conceptualization inhibit not only the clear evaluation of the contribution of past and current research, but the formulation of sound theoretical perspectives on which to base research. In the next sections we address these problems.

Problems with Classification and Terminology

Some publications intended as guides for fieldwork offer classificatory systems and terms for describing dress. Probably the best known of these are the Royal Anthropological Institute's *Notes and Queries in Anthropology* (1951) and Murdock's *Outline of Cultural Materials* (1961). In each of these, authors subdivided dress into the familiar categories of clothing and ornament. A more recent book on methods edited by Ellen (1984), *Ethnographic Research: A Guide to General Conduct*, offers no classification system, but refers the fieldworker back to both *Notes and Queries* and Murdock's *Outline* as general starting points for generating initial checklists of terms to try out in on-site study. Thus this volume also helps perpetuate the clothing and adornment dichotomy. Other authors who have attacked the problem of classification and terminology are Doob (1961), Roach and Eicher (1973), Conn (1974), Roach and Musa (1980), and Anawalt (1981). Conn continued the clothing and adornment categories. Doob declined to use these categories and opted to use in their stead "changes in appearance," which he further subdivided into changes of the body and changes on the body. Anawalt, emphasizing only the construction of garments, divided them into five somewhat overlapping categories: draped, slip-on, open-sewn, closed-sewn, and limb-encasing.¹³ Roach and Eicher classified types of dress as reconstructing, enclosing, and attached. Roach and Musa considered body modifications, enclosures,

and attachments. Our assessment of the works surveyed leads us to the conclusion that systems for defining and classifying types of dress are frequently incomplete, and that the terminology used is ambiguous and inconsistent.

As we address the problems of classifying types of dress, we recognize that the dressed person is a *gestalt* that includes body, all direct modifications of the body itself, and all three-dimensional supplements added to it. Further, we acknowledge that only through mental manipulation can we separate body modifications and supplements from the body itself – and from each other – and extract that which we call dress. Despite these limitations, we choose to focus on the concrete reality of dress that has describable properties, such as color, shape, texture, surface design, or odor. We also take the position that the direct modifications of the body as well as the supplements added to it must be considered types of dress because they are equally effective means of human communication, and because similar meanings can be conveyed by some property, or combination of properties, of either modifications or supplements. For example, the design and color of a facial scar (a body modification) can be as accurate a means of conveying high social status as a supplemental robe of a particular shape and color. However, rarely do the stated or implied classifications of dress found in the literature take into account all possible categories of body modifications and supplements or their properties. Classification of dress as draped or tailored, for instance, presents a very limited view of dress. It concentrates attention only on variations in body enclosures that surround the body in cloth or other pliable materials, such as animal skins or plastic sheetings. Left out is a whole range of body modifications, from skin coloring to perfumes and hairdress. Likewise, those who opt for the use of the word clothing as a single category to encompass all types of dress run a similar risk, for the term clothing also restricts dress to the assemblage of items that happen to cover the body in some way.¹⁴ The omission of body modifications from the study of dress can be a serious loss, for it may lead to false conclusions regarding the social significance of dress. For example, modifications in hairdress may communicate information that has more influence on how human beings see and understand themselves and others than supplements such as robes, foot coverings, or jewelry.

The use of the term "appearance" as a category that subsumes various types of dress also has its limitations. In some ways appearance is more than dress and in other ways less. It is more than dress because it takes into account body features, movements, and positions, as well as the visible body modifications and supplements of dress. It is less

than dress because it leaves out what may be some of the most intimately apprehended properties of dress, that is, touch, odor, taste, and sound.

Accompanying the problems of classification are vexing questions about the use of terminology. In designating types of dress, writers frequently use ethnocentric, value-charged terms such as mutilation, deformation, decoration, ornament, and adornment. When they use these terms, they are usually applying their own personally and culturally derived standards to distinguish the good from the bad, the right from the wrong, and the ugly from the beautiful, and thus inevitably reveal more about themselves than about what they are describing. They are also forgetting that dress considered beautiful in one society may be ugly in another, and that dress considered right in one social situation may be wrong in another.

When classifiers label a type of dress or some aspect of it as ornament, adornment, or decoration, they are clearly making a value judgment regarding its merits as an aesthetically pleasing creation. Similarly, their calling a type of dress a mutilation or deformation indicates they have judged it to be nonacceptable. What they omit is whose standard they are applying – and this is a critical omission, for the classifiers' application of these evaluative labels is no guarantee that the wearers, or other viewers, concur with their judgments.¹⁵ Terms thus far discussed as value-laden (mutilation, deformation, ornament, and adornment) are also ambiguous terms. They are ambiguous because they reveal relatively little about type of dress, but a great deal about functions. Like the term "cosmetic surgery," they involve and emphasize the dual functions of dress: as a means of communication between human beings and as an alterant of body processes.¹⁶

Viewers who label types of dress as mutilations or deformations are registering conscious or unconscious disapproval of certain kinds of body modification, perhaps scarification, tooth filing, or head binding. Their negative reactions are based on what these types of dress communicate to them. Facial scars, for example, may communicate interference with body processes in a way that seems to threaten health and survival. They may also communicate ugliness within the value system of the viewer's own culture group, because their observable properties lie outside the cultural range of body modifications that can be accorded a degree of attractiveness. In other words, their usage is so sharply different, culturally speaking, that they simply are not eligible for consideration as marks of attractiveness or beauty by the viewer who comes from outside the culture. A displayer of scars within one culture and a person with a face lift in another may each undergo risk in order to achieve social approval. Thus scars and face lifts are more alike than

different; a search for beauty and a general disregard for risks to health or body functioning is indicated by each.

An additional term that is popular in current literature, but difficult to interpret, is "physical appearance." Some writers use the term to indicate qualities of the natural body, others to identify characteristics of the body and any direct body modifications (as in skin color or hair shape and texture). Still others use the term to summarize a totality consisting of body and garments, jewelry, and other supplements, as well as any direct body modifications. Such fluctuation in usage introduces ambiguity in concept and limits the usefulness of the term physical appearance in discussions of dress, or, for that matter, in discussions of body characteristics.

Defining Dress

In our discussion so far we have been intentionally supporting use of the word "dress" as a comprehensive term to identify both direct body changes and items added to the body, and have presented reasons for rejecting a number of overlapping, competing terms found in the literature related to dress. We have also stressed an important sociocultural aspect of dress: that it is imbued with meaning understood by wearer and viewer. Having taken this sociocultural stance, we define dress as an assemblage of body modifications and/or supplements displayed by a person in communicating with other human beings. Defined in this general way, the word dress is gender-neutral. This general usage does not rule out that, in specific contexts or with specific inflections, the word may be used to convey socially constructed, gendered meanings. When specifically preceded by the article "a" or converted to the plural form, the word dress, according to current usage, designates feminine garments. Similarly, when used in the verb form to designate dressing the male genitals to the right or left in the custom tailoring of men's trousers, it takes on a masculine meaning. A further virtue of the term dress is that its use avoids the potential value bias introduced by words like ornament or decoration, and the lack of clarity or completeness inherent in terms like physical appearance and clothing. The classification system we present in the next section follows from the general definition of dress we have presented.

A Classification System for Types of Dress

Three previous works moved terminology and classification systems away from the built-in contradictions of the long-used clothing-versus-

ornament schema. Doob (1961) took a step toward isolating what we call dress by considering changes in the appearance of humans as changes of the body and changes on the body. What he left out were the properties of dress that evoke other than the visual sensory responses, that is, odor, taste, sound, and touch. Roach and Eicher (1973) and Roach and Musa (1980) presented systems that went beyond the visibly observable aspects of dress to include these other categories. The classification system that follows in Table 1 is based on ideas set forth in these earlier works.

The range in types of dress, as shown in the classification system, allows us to provide a method for accurately identifying and describing types of dress that relate to gender roles and other social roles.¹⁷ It also allows us to appreciate the potential variety in dress. In the classification system, we focus on the first part of our definition of dress: an assemblage of body modifications and supplements. Listed in the left-hand column are the major categories of dress – modifications and supplements – and their subcategories. As the subcategories show, parts of the body that can be modified include hair, skin, nails, muscular-skeletal system, teeth, and breath. Body parts can be described in regard to specific properties of color, volume and proportion, shape and structure, surface design, texture, odor, sound, and taste. Supplements to the body – such as body enclosures, attachments to the body, attachments to body enclosures, and hand-held accessories – can be cross-classified with the same properties used to describe body modifications.

By manipulating properties of body modifications and supplements, people communicate their personal characteristics, including the important distinctions of gender. Even when forms of dress and their properties are largely shared or similar for both sexes, gender distinctions can be clearly communicated by a minimum of manipulations of dress. For example, if the hair of males is expected to be cut short and that of females is expected to grow long in a particular society, the shape and volume of hair immediately communicate to observers the gender of the individual under scrutiny.

Relevance of the Classification System in Analysis of Dress and Gender Roles

The definition of dress and the classification system we present unites two major human acts (modifying the body and supplementing the body) that invite sensory responses to and interpretations of the result-

ing outward similarities and differences of human beings. The preponderance of visually recorded properties in our classification system indicates that we can expect the visual stimuli of dress to outweigh the impact of other sensory stimuli, such as sound, touch, odor, and taste, in establishing gender identity. An additional reason why the visually observable properties may have more impact is that they do not require close proximity to be noticed by others. On the basis of this heavy weighting of visual impact and what we know about theories of communication, we can expect dress to precede verbal communication in establishing an individual's gendered identity as well as expectations for other types of behavior (social roles) based on this identity.¹⁸ The importance of dress in the structuring of behavior, as Polhemus (1989) points out, is that some of the information that is transmitted from person to person by dress is not easily translatable into words. Moreover, to give a detailed verbal report of all the information an individual's dress communicates (including gender) would be both time-consuming and socially clumsy.

At birth, when a child lacks verbal skills as well as the physical power and motor skills required to manipulate dress, adult caretakers (kin or surrogate kin who come to the aid of the child) act as purveyors of culture by providing gender-symbolic dress that encourages others to attribute masculine or feminine gender and to act on the basis of these attributions when interacting with the child. Because establishing gendered forms of dress for males and females provides a visually economical way to reinforce the fact that wearers have the sex organs that are the primary physical distinctions between the sexes, dress serves the macrobiological as well as the macrosocial system. Distinguishing sex by dress can encourage not only sexual overtures in socially approved ways, but also mating, which, in turn, as it leads to birth of children, guarantees the continuity of both the species and society. On a more micro level, members of the kin group who are likely to establish gendered dress for the newborn are also those who are most likely to have a stake in the mating that assures the continuity of the kin group. Only the name of an individual (where distinguished by gender) can compete with dress as an effective social means for communicating the sex of an infant (or a person of any age) to others who then know what gender expectations to apply in making their responses to the dressed individual.

Each society, or subgroup of a society, has its own rules regarding which body modifications or supplements should declare gender roles; to our knowledge, all make their declarations. A ribbon, but a

Table 1.1 Classification System for Types of Dress and Their Properties*

Types of Dress**	Properties							
	Color	Volume & Proportion	Shape & Structure	Surface Design	Texture	Odor	Taste	Sound
Body Modifications								
Transformations of								
a. Hair								
b. Skin								
c. Nails								
d. Muscular/skeletal system								
e. Teeth								
f. Breath								
Body Supplements								
Enclosures								
a. Wrapped								
b. Suspended								
c. Pre-shaped								
d. Combinations of ab,ac,bc,abc								
Attachments to Body								
a. Inserted								
b. Clipped								
c. Adhered								
Attachments to Body Enclosures								
a. Inserted								
b. Clipped								
c. Adhered								
Hand-Held Objects								
a. By self								
b. By other								

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tiny attachment tied to a wisp of a baby's hair, can announce a gendered identity as feminine. Similarly, within a specific cultural group a short haircut can be a body modification that invests a baby with a masculine identity. The examples given indicate that either a specific supplement or a specific body modification may be a significant symbol that elicits gender expectations and an anticipation that through time children will learn to direct their own acts of dress according to gender expectations. Age, therefore, is closely allied to gender in social expectations for type of dress. Furthermore, language is a strong ally in reinforcing social rules for dress of "a boy," "a girl," "a man," "a woman." As they grow older and develop increasing physical and social independence, children learn by trial and error to manipulate their own dress according to rules for age and gender. They usually acquire these rules via direct advice from adults or older siblings, or by following role models of the same sex, such as admired friends or publicly acclaimed individuals. For the most part, societies are lenient with young learners. Even when rules for gender-distinct dress are strict, children are likely to have more leeway in dress than adults. Thus a young boy may wear only a shirt when both shirt and preshaped trousers are *de rigueur* for a man, or a young girl may wear trousers when a skirt is proper for a woman.

Acquiring knowledge about gender-appropriate dress for various social situations extends to learning rights and responsibilities to act "as one looks." Accordingly, gendered dress encourages each individual to internalize as gendered roles a complex set of social expectations for behavior. These roles, when linked with roles of others, represent part of social structure. Since each person's rendering of any

* This system also appears in Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins and Joanne B. Eicher, "Dress and Identity," *Clothing and Textile Research Journal*, Vol. II, 1992. This system is based on previous work as follows: Mary Ellen Roach and Joanne B. Eicher, *The Visible Self: Perspectives on Dress*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1973; Mary Ellen Roach and Kathleen Ehle Musa (now Campbell), *New Perspectives on the History of Western Dress*, New York, Nutriguides, Inc., 1980. We wish to acknowledge suggestions from various students and colleagues. Bruce Olds, University of Wisconsin-Madison journalism student, suggested the hand-held category. Gigi Bechir, University of Minnesota sociology student, suggested that breath can be modified. A discussion with colleagues at a Design, Housing, and Apparel seminar at the University of Minnesota convinced us to use "types" rather than "forms of dress."

** Both body modifications and body supplements can be further classified according to (a) general body locus, e.g., head, neck, trunk, arms, and legs, or (b) more specific locus, e.g., lips, nose, eye-lids or lashes, ears, hands, ankles, feet, breasts, genitals.

social role is unique, this social structuring is constantly recreated (in its details) at the same time that its general configuration may appear to remain constant.

Prescriptions for dress according to gender and age may become increasingly complex as individuals progress through various life stages and participate in multiple societal systems, such as the religious, economic, and political. In each of these systems, differences in forms of dress for females and males can define, support, and reinforce the relative power and influence of the sexes. When specific differences in color, structure, surface design, volume, or texture distinguish dress of males and females, differences in social rank and power can be made obvious. Thus the differential in power and rank of males and females that determines who shall sit on the left and who shall sit on the right of the aisle in church can be made palpably visible by even slight differences in dress.

In the late twentieth century, in areas where technology is highly developed and the economic system is supported by a largely white-collar society, the male white-collar worker's biological presence has been diminished by the shape and volume of his business suit that masks his body contours. By comparison, shape and volume (in proportion to body size) of females' business dress reveals body contours more than the dress of males. This example of females' dress contrasts with dress in some less technologically advanced areas of the world where adult females, often to comply with religious codes, shroud their bodies in veils. It also raises questions regarding the relation of dress and the integration of females into positions of power equal to those of males within the respective economic systems. In some societies an interesting similarity exists between the body veil as a concealing gender-specific wrap for a female, and the Western business suit of a male as a somewhat rigid, preshaped body veil. However, the former is sanctioned by the religious system; the latter by the economic system.

As we have discussed ways in which gendered dress may be incorporated into religious and economic systems, we have touched on the relationship of dress to gender and power. We now turn specifically to this relationship within institutionalized political systems. The most important political information that the dress of people within a political system can convey is the right of the wearer to make decisions on behalf of people within a particular governmental unit. And the most important aspect of this dress, particularly for police and military personnel, is that it commands instant recognition of the right of

the wearer not only to make decisions but to use force to maintain social order or wage war. A uniform based on a gendered-enclosing, preshaped, trousered outfit for males is at present a global standard for police and military dress. When females have entered this traditional realm of males, they have generally accommodated to wearing a preshaped uniform while maintaining feminine distinctions in modifications of hair or facial skin color. The uniforms, because they cover bodies, downplay the sexual characteristics of the wearer, as do requirements for identical color, texture, and general shape and structure. Another example of political dress is the voluminous enclosing robe of a judge. Although the robe can be unisex, shoes, modifications of hair, and any cosmetics that complete the judge's dress are usually not.

Some types of political dress are neither body-hiding enclosures nor uniforms. Instead, they are small attached, inserted, hand-held, suspended, or rigid preshaped objects. They include badges, buttons, ribbons, rings, medallions, crowns, and staffs. Often these smaller objects take on rich political meanings because of their "rarity." Four stars on a general's epaulets, an array of ribbons on a veteran's military uniform, a mayor's ribbon-suspended medallion, a pope's tiara, and an emperor's jewelled crown all communicate meanings relative to specific rank and temporal power of the wearer. They are available to women only if a society allows women to take the political positions these objects announce. In some cases, a queen's crown may only proclaim her husband's power, not her own.

Conclusions

In this paper we have developed a perspective for use in analysis of dress and gender roles. This perspective includes a definition of dress and a classification system for types of dress. We have also explored how the definition and system can free our discussions of dress and gender from some of the old assumptions, such as the necessity to classify all dress as either clothing or ornament. A few scholars have utilized perspectives closely allied to ours in analyzing the cultural significance of dress. As example, we refer to studies by Kroeber (1919), Kroeber and Richardson (1940), and Robinson (1976). Their work involved developing methods for measuring properties of dress and searching for ways to link historical fluctuations in properties of dress to fluctuations in other cultural phenomena. Kroeber and Richardson measured aspects of dress that can be readily interpreted as volume

and proportion, and also as shape and structure, as these properties were exhibited in a historical sequence of women's fashionable and largely preshaped garments. Several decades later Robinson showed that measurement techniques similar to those used by Kroeber and Richardson could also be applied in studying a type of body modification, that is, trimmed beards. These studies suggest that scholars can classify and make judgments about a variety of types of dress and their properties without resorting to biased, ambiguous terms or getting bogged down with the vast global accumulation of nomenclature for specific units of dress.

With our topic, dress, accurately identified, we can proceed to formulations of questions concerning what choices from a seemingly open-ended universe of body modifications and supplements – and their properties – individuals and social groups make. Within a given cultural group, we can explore whether dress tends to have a narrow range of types to identify gender roles and direct behavior of males and females in gender-specific ways versus an elaborately detailed system of distinctions with alternate choices. We can consider whether body supplements, versus body modifications, prevail in establishing gender distinctions or whether some balance is maintained. We can also compare the influence of variables such as age, sex, and technology, and types of kinship, religious, economic, and political systems on gender distinctions, as well as the points of variability in dress that support these distinctions.

Another topic relevant to the United States since the late 1960s is the types of dress that can support equality in economic roles of men and women. In a kind of natural experiment, women working in white-collar jobs began to choose tailored business suits with a jacket similar to a man's suit jacket, worn with either trousers or skirt. Such dress was adopted by women maintaining ideologies from relatively conservative feminist to radical feminist. Somehow this ensemble stood, in the ideology of the time, as a claim for equal opportunity for women and men, particularly in the economic arena. As time went by, masculine properties in colors, texture, garment shape, and even the suit itself, gave way to more feminine-distinct features in dress, such as bright colors and surface designs in fabric. As a result, radical feminists felt betrayed (Lind and Roach-Higgins 1985; Strega 1985). However, what had occurred was easily predicted by anyone who gave serious thought to Bohannon's study of the Tiv reported in 1956. The suit as a political statement had yielded to fashion, just as among the Tiv men and women the old fashion in design and texture of scarification gave way to the

new. Those who felt betrayed failed to accept or recognize that fashion (often mistakenly considered characteristic only of societies with complex technology) is a pervasive social phenomenon that may prevail over ideology, taking over a once politically potent symbol and drawing it into the fold of fashion. This takeover in no way rules out that dress functions as a powerful though often underestimated system of visual communication that expresses gender role, which is usually intertwined with age, kinship, occupational, and other social roles throughout a person's life. From womb to tomb, the body is a dressed body, and caretakers typically introduce the young to gender-differentiated dress and often dress the dead in gendered garb. Thus each human being enters and exits life in dress appropriate for the sociocultural system into which he or she is born and from which he or she departs.

Notes

1. We distinguish between the terms "sex" and "gender," but early writers whose work we discuss did not use the term "gender." Only since the 1960s have social scientists made a concerted effort to assign the term "sex" to biological distinctions between females and males and the term "gender" to variations in social roles learned by females and males. We also point out that, as adjectives, female and male emphasize biological differences between the sexes, while feminine and masculine indicate differences in social roles, hence gender.
2. We can expect dress of the newborn to vary from one social group to another, and to change through time in each group. Examples of gender-neutral dress supplied at birth include hospital-provided diaper, long-sleeved undershirt, and knitted cap in the United States in the 1990s; a coating of oil and a touch of ochre around the fontanelle among the Nuba in the late 1960s (Faris 1972); a paste of ground camwood applied to the head among the Tiv of the 1950s (Bohannon 1956).
3. Of the two general functions of dress, communication is of primary concern for social anthropologists. The other general function, altering body processes, is, for the most part, a matter of concern for biophysicists, members of the health professions, or moralists.
4. We limit our examples to works published in the United Kingdom and North America.
5. The dates given are the earliest we determined for publication of material in book form. Some of Spencer's chapters appeared earlier as articles published simultaneously in journals in the United States, United Kingdom, and additional European countries.

6. From among the early writers, Spencer, in *The Principles of Sociology*, presented one of the more extensive treatments of dress, devoting three chapters to the topic. Since Spencer's point of view was determinedly evolutionist, he searched for types of dress that distinguished primitive people from nineteenth-century western Europeans, whom he considered to be representatives of higher levels of social evolution. Further, his observations on dress foreshadowed those of later social scientists, particularly Goffman, as he emphasized that various types of dress serve as guides to interpersonal conduct within the daily and special "ceremonies" of life. Goffman acknowledged this debt in an article "Symbols of Class Status" (1951) and in his book *Relations in Public* (1971). Spencer also emphasized the effects of dress on social patterns of authority and deference in humorous encounters, giving numerous examples of how different types of men's dress make clear, or reinforce, these patterns. At first, his failure to pay much attention to women's dress seems ironic; however, this omission may carry a message. Perhaps he simply did not perceive women as exerting much control in encounters among those people he regarded as primitive – or, for that matter, among people who had developed what the nineteenth-century evolutionists considered the civilized state epitomized by western European nations, with elaborate political organizations designed for exercising social control.
7. In *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, Darwin attributed developments in dress by both sexes to a general inborn similarity in the mind of "man." At the same time, he perceived innate differences in attention paid to dress by men and women, attributing to females a "greater delight" in activities of dress than men (Darwin, C. n.d.: 884, 901). In *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals* he carried his ideas further, proposing that females have greater sensitivity to others' views of dress than do men. This explanation, although based on a belief in innate differences, led him a step away from a strictly evolutionary stance regarding sex differences in dress. (Darwin, C. 1955: 325–46). In fact, this concept expressed a rudimentary social-psychological viewpoint, greatly resembling that of contemporary symbolic interactionists, who posit that people's self-evaluations of their presentations of the outwardly observable self are learned through their social interactions with other people.
8. Tylor was perfunctory in his treatment of dress of both males and females in *Primitive Culture*. He did mention dress as he set forth his doctrine of survivals, but mainly cited a few historical changes in form that, by analogy, exemplified how cultural survivals from earlier stages of social evolution may persist in the "more important matters of life." Despite his downplaying of the social significance of dress, and observable survivals in it, subsequent generations of writers on dress – from various disciplines – apparently thought otherwise and regularly included virtually obligatory sections on such survivals in their work. These writers include: G. Darwin (1872), Veblen (1899), Webb (1907), Hurlock (1929), and Flugel (1930).

9. Morgan, in his work *Ancient Society*, devoted a chapter to the "organization of society on [the] basis of sex," but offered no comment on how dress may be related to such social organization, or the interpersonal conduct it implies. Instead, he followed his special interest in kinship designations almost exclusively in the discussion of this topic. We take note of him, however, because of the meticulous detail with which he delineated what he perceived as material and non-material progress made in each of the six stages of social evolution that culminated in the attainment of the seventh stage: civilization. These six preliminary stages included three levels of savagery and three levels of barbarism. From his mental mapping, we can extract how he saw the dress of human beings fitting into a great evolutionary scheme. Briefly, he saw humans entering the first social level of savagery naked, the first level of barbarism in skin garments, and arriving at civilization in woven garments.
10. In his *History of Human Marriage*, Westermarck, like Spencer, gave considerable attention to what we are calling dress. Unlike Spencer, however, he restricted his discussion to primarily one topic: "primitive" people's use of self-decoration as a way of enhancing "sexual attractiveness." In his discussion, he used, and perhaps helped set, a pattern that anthropologists generally still follow: the practice of separating dress into the two overlapping categories of ornament and clothing.
11. Hodgen pointed out that Crawley was one of several anthropologists who spoke out in opposition to the use of the doctrine of survivals, questioning the assumption that savagery survived among contemporary people, especially peasants, as bits of "fossilized thinking" (Hodgen 1977: 146, 164).
12. We recognize the negative connotations frequently implied in the use of the term "social evolutionist." In 1952 Radcliffe-Brown noted a tendency for the term "evolutionary anthropologist" to be used as a kind of abuse. When Morgan was so disparaged, Radcliffe-Brown defended Morgan's view as one of progress and not as evolutionist, commenting that such anti-evolutionists as Franz Boas believed, like Morgan, in progress (Radcliffe-Brown 1963: 203).
13. Anawalt (1981) credits Barnett (1942) and Boucher (1966) as sources for her categories. Barnett proposed that all material objects have three properties: principle, form, and function (a garment wrapped around the body exemplifies the principle of being draped, the garment's shape is its form, and its function is covering the torso). Boucher provided the names of the five categories that Anawalt modified.
14. Other terms that leave out many or all body modifications are apparel, garb, attire, and costume. We are especially aware that non-Westerners are sensitive to having their dress called costume by Westerners, for they feel the term sets them apart as quaint, freakish, immoral, or deprived, when they are simply following their own customs in dress.
15. We do not rule out that careful describers of dress can avoid their own

bias when recording other people's evaluations of types of dress. However, the literature does not indicate this is universally done. Moreover, as the next section explains, whence the knowledge or whence the valuing is of little consequence, since these terms are only remotely related to the task of describing type of dress.

16. Dress may be a direct alterant of body processes in the case of some body modifications, such as tooth filing or cutting body tissues to introduce lip plugs. It can also be an alterant as it serves (as a cloak may) as a micro-environment and an interface between body and the macroenvironment.
17. The classification system itself is applicable in any study of dress, not just to the study of dress and gender.
18. Gregory P. Stone, in an article titled "Appearance and the Self" (1962), points out that appearance in face-to-face interaction precedes discourse, and he uses the word "program" to categorize the dress that an individual wearer presents to another for "review," stating that when program and review coincide, the self of the wearer is validated. His ideas are of relevance here, as he would point out that one's gender, as presented by one's program of dress, establishes a basis for consequent verbal interaction with others who review the wearer's dress.

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2

Women as Headhunters

The Making and Meaning of Textiles in a Southeast Asian Context

Ruth Barnes

The Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford holds what is certainly the greatest and best-documented collection of artifacts from the villages of the Naga Hills, a mountainous region of northeast India, bordering on Burma.¹ Two collectors, in particular, provided the bulk of the material: J. H. Hutton and J. P. Mills, both at one time British colonial officers in the Naga Hills. Their presence in the area corresponds roughly to the years between the two world wars. Although stationed in the Naga Hills primarily to fulfill their duties to the colonial service, both men took great interest in the habits and customs of the people they were to administer. They considered it part of their professional duty to learn as much as possible about local habits, social institutions, and languages, and to publish what they learned in scholarly publications. To Hutton and Mills the service to the colony and the pursuit of anthropological investigations were mutually complementary and, in general, not in conflict. An emotional attachment and respect for the people of the Naga Hills added to their commitment. Between them they published five monographs on different Naga groups that are still the primary sources for the area, as well as numerous articles (Hutton 1921a, 1921b; Mills, 1922, 1926, 1937).² Their books are detailed and densely packed with information, yet all follow a peculiar pattern.

For their monographs, both were influenced and guided by the methods of investigation proposed in *Notes and Queries*, the Royal Anthropological Institute's handbook and guide to ethnographic fieldwork questions, which led to a standardized structure of their books. Whichever volume one opens, the chapter sequence is identical: (1) General (or Introductory), (2) Domestic Life, (3) Laws and Customs, (4) Religion, (5) Folklore (or Folktales), (6) Language. Incidentally, the ethnographic