



Fashion, Culture, and Identity

By Fred Davis

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What do our clothes say about who we are or who we think we are? How does the way we dress communicate messages about our identity? Is the desire to be "in fashion" universal, or is it unique to Western culture? How do fashions change? These are just a few of the intriguing questions Fred Davis sets out to answer in this provocative look at what we do with our clothes—and what they can do to us.

Much of what we assume to be individual preference, Davis shows, really reflects deeper social and cultural forces. Ours is an ambivalent social world, characterized by tensions over gender roles, social status, and the expression of sexuality. Predicting what people will wear becomes a risky gamble when the link between private self and public persona can be so unstable.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Davis (emeritus professor of sociology, Univ. of California-San Diego) discusses several intriguing theories about fashion's social and psychological significance in modern culture. What makes clothes fashion; how fashions evolve; how fashion choices express social status, gender identity, sexuality, and conformity; and how fashion is (or is not) accepted are all discussed, Davis having reviewed over 200 sources of writings by social scientists and fashion students. Especially good is the chapter on the dynamics of certain groups' intentional resistance to fashion. Davis does propose a few of his own ideas, always backed up by the literature. The work would have been enlivened by increased emphasis on Davis's actual interviews with designers, editors, and manufacturers, whose opinions are only briefly summarized. This book is a good basis for further reading, but lay readers will need handy access to an unabridged dictionary to cope with the scholarly language. For academic and specialized collections.

- *Therese D. Baker, Western Kentucky Univ. Libs., Bowling Green*

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Users Review

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