

Clothing: sign language of our lifestyles

Clothing speaks. It communicates nonverbally something about ourselves — our way of life. A famous French philosopher, noting

in diverse ways by different individuals goes back to our own personalities. First impressions cannot be divorced from our frame of refer-

ence — our personal experiences, likes and dislikes, environmental and cultural influences.

Every viewer has a particular set of standards and a particular pattern of past experiences. These standards and experiences condition his impression of other people. One person may stress cleanliness, neatness, simplicity, and constraint in dress. Another individual may scrutinize a person against such categories as smartness, sophistication, becomingness, and suitability.

A person who is first perceived to be slovenly and poorly dressed is often thought to have little concern for his own appearance and little regard for the opinion of others. Sometimes this appraisal is extended to associations of unfriendliness and rudeness.

Studies in perception have shown that we tend to see things in the way we want or need to see them. For example, a person who wears glasses probably suffers from eye strain, often caused by too much reading. A person who reads a lot is apt to be very intelligent. Consequently, it is logical to assume that people who wear glasses are intelligent.

The average person is well

award that he is likely to be judged on the basis of his appearance, especially by people who do not know him intimately. There is usually less compulsion, however, to be on "best dress behavior" with friends. There is one exception — the value we place on our friends' or acquaintances' opinion affects our mode of dress.

Let's develop this hypothesis one step further. When do you care the most about your appearance?

- when you are with friends?
- when you are with strangers or acquaintances?
- when you are with your own family?
- when you are alone?

According to one study that used these same questions, 56% indicated concern for their appearance greatest when among friends, 43% said it mattered most with strangers and acquaintances, only 1% thought it important with one's own family, and none thought clothing to be important when alone.

Our families and most of our intimate friends know us too well to judge us solely on our clothes. Friends and acquaintances who know us less well are still forming opinions about us. The opinion of strangers, on the other hand, may or may not be valued.

Let's do a little soul searching. In what instances do you care most about your personal appearance?

- grocery shopping at a local supermarket?
- grocery shopping at a 24-hour convenience store?
- shopping in a local department store downtown?
- shopping in a shopping center
- shopping in a distant city?

Is there any difference in the way you dress? Why?

Many of us pay greater attention to our personal appearance when we go to a different city than if we were in our hometown. Cases have supported the theory that our personal appearance does affect the service we obtain from sales clerks. On the other hand, sometimes people experience a sense of anonymity in being far away from home. Sometimes, we relax our standards of dress when we know that no one will recognize us.

This extremely casual dress, worn by many Americans away from home has resulted in a rather unflattering stereotype of the typical American tourist.

The consequences of first impression judgments correlate to our liking or disliking other people. It is noted that an individual is inclined to like persons whom then judge to be similar to themselves and dislike persons whom they see a very different.

HOME ECONOMICS

By JOANNE J. FALLS
Home Economic Extension Agent



The close relationship between clothing and lifestyles stated, "If I were allowed to choose one book from the pile which will be published 100 years after my death, do you know which one I would take? I would simply take a fashion magazine... and its rags would tell me more about humanity of the future than could all the philosophers, novelists, prophets, and scholars of the time."

The dress of an individual is a kind of "sign language" that relates a complex set of information. For example, how many of us indulge in people watching when we are waiting for someone. It's a great pastime.

In people watching, don't we observe how people walk and their mannerisms in addition to how they dress? From this brief visual contact, we tend to size up the person. In less than 30 seconds, we judge the sex, nationality, ethnic group, profession, and social status of the stranger. In addition, this glimpse may give us an estimate of his temperament, friendliness, neatness, and even his integrity. In essence, we form our first impression of the person.

The fact that a person is viewed

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March of Dimes grants total \$99,360

The Greater Triad Chapter of the March of Dimes Defects Foundation has awarded thirteen grants, totaling \$99,360, for the program year.

Projects approved for local March of Dimes grants must meet one of the three criteria adopted by the eleven-county Chapter: Projects must be aimed at 1) preventing premature births, 2) improving prenatal care access, or 3) reducing unwanted pregnancies in adolescents.

Funds for National March of Dimes research grants, as well as local grants, advocacy, and health education, are raised by volunteers through such year-round

events as TeamWalk Piedmont, the North Carolina Chili Championship, Mission Possible, and Chefs Auction.

On Sept. 14, Executive Committee Chairman Ward Miller, along with Maida Dundon, Chairperson of Health Professionals Advisory Committee, announced these chapter grants to Forsyth County agencies:

The Young Women's Christian Association of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County has been awarded \$2,500 for "Straight from the Parent."

Project director Courtney Saunders, director of the YWCA's new Empowerment Center, will

lead ongoing group sessions in which parents and children addresses issues of sexuality and decision-making.

Independence High School has been awarded \$860. School Nurse Carolyn Jones, who teaches classes for pregnant teens, will secure specialized teaching aids and equipment needed for practical learning.

Other community services offered by the Greater Triad Chapter include worksite prenatal health education classes, a video lending library for schools, and collaborative efforts involving the religious community in issues of maternal and infant health.

More women taking construction jobs

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Twenty-one-year-old Rhonda Galliher used to be a cocktail waitress. But she says being a carpenter's apprentice pays better and gets her closer to her ultimate goal of being an architect.

And Galliher says her boyfriend, a college student majoring in physical education, enjoys telling friends he is engaged to a construction worker.

There are more women in construction work than there used to be, but figures from the past few years indicate that their numbers, after rising for a decade, have started falling again nationwide.

Galliher, employed by Newburg Construction Co., has been working on the Watterson Expressway reconstruction project in Louisville. She's not the only woman on the project.

Debbie Eurton, a 5-foot-2, 105-pound mother of four, has about a year to go in her four-year Carpenters union apprenticeship.

She said her mother and friends often tell her to "get a real job." Her three daughters are supportive, but her 12-year-old son tells her "no woman can do what a man can."

Sara McCracken, a carpenter who is foreman of a crew doing work at the E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Co. plant, said her father, a carpenter himself, tried to block her application for a carpenter's apprenticeship in 1980. Now he's proud.

"He had four boys and two girls," she said. "I'm the only one who followed in his footsteps."

The federal Bureau of Labor Statistics counted about 602,000 women working in construction last year, 8.5 percent of total employment in the industry. That was up from 290,000 — 5.5 percent in 1972, but down from 614,000, or 8.8 percent, at the peak in 1985.

Those figures include women in traditional jobs such as secretaries and bookkeepers, but the bureau can't break out those who actually drive the nails and the bulldozers.

Figures show, though, that there were about 1 million carpenters in the country in 1972; about 5,200 of them — 0.5 percent — were female. The number peaked at about 18,000 in 1980 and was about 16,601 in 1991.

The University of Louisville's Kentucky State Data Center has no state figures for women in construction as a whole. But its records say there were 210 female carpenters in the state in 1980 and 319 in 1990.

The memory of a day when there were no women working in construction outside the office is still so fresh to Jerry Hammond executive secretary-treasurer of the Kentucky State Building and Construction Trades Council — that he continues to marvel at least a little that women operate cranes, weld, do plumbing and pipefitting and even have invaded his own trade, ironworking.

"I still think it's brutal work for a man," he said.

His impression may be borne out in national numbers, which

say that there are fewer women in the locals now than four or five years ago. He said that that's despite an improvement in the way women are treated, and despite efforts to make women union officers.

"I would have to declare that access to the trades is no longer a problem for women," he said. He guessed that a bit of success has caused organizations that pressed for admission of women in the 1970s and '80s to back off.

Betsy Jacobus, who, as director of the Louisville YWCA's Creative Employment Project, fought to put women in non-traditional jobs, disagrees in part. She contends that Republican presidents have failed to enforce equal-opportunity laws for 12 years, resulting in fewer women working in construction.

But, she said, "It probably is true about attitudes in the trades having changed a little for the better." She believes some women are still harassed, though.

A female Louisville carpenter interviewed 15 years ago reported sexual remarks, grabbing and other mistreatment from men, including bosses.

But Tamera Kirby says she has experienced no sexual harassment or other abuse from co-workers. Kirby has been working inside the Commonwealth Life Insurance Co. building in downtown Louisville, hauling conduit, wire and tools to fellow employees of Arrow Electric Co. Inc.

"I know how to talk to men," Kirby said. "I have three brothers."



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