

Applying the four theoretical perspective the problem of fashion case study examp...

[Art & Culture](#), [Symbolism](#)



The reading discusses the world of fashion from four different sociological perspectives. These sociological perspectives are structural functionalism, conflict theory, symbolic interactions and feminism.

According to functionalism, fashion serves as a purpose to differentiate between the wealthy and not-so-wealthy. So, the rich would wear expensive clothing because he/she can afford them, while the poor will wear cheap clothes because he/she cannot afford to wear ' high' fashion clothing.

The conflict theory suggested that the companies engaged in fashion are the ones who benefit from fashion, not the buyers. The theory says that the fashion industry is constantly introducing new styles, so that they can earn remarkable profits by selling them. Therefore, the owners of the companies, engaged in the business of fashion, are the ones who benefit from fashion. Also, according to the conflict theory, mass media is used as a tool to influence the taste of potential consumers. Fashion also acts as a distraction from socio-political issues around us.

The symbolic interaction says that clothes are used as a symbol to send messages to others. The type of clothing that you wear can convey a lot of messages, ranging from sexual orientation, relationship status, religious and racial affiliation, etc.

Feminism tells us how fashion is a tool used to insert male dominance over the women. The fashion world says lots of things, like only the thin is pretty. It also stresses upon women body, hence portraying women as sex objects.

Fashionable clothing is also highly uncomfortable and unhealthy. So, in short, feminists think of fashion as a form of patriarchy.

All of these four sociological perspectives give a deep interpretation of the fashion world. While one paradigm explains certain aspects, the other paradigm defines the unexplained and unanswered questions by the first one. So, if you think about it, all four sociological perspectives gives a unique critique about the fashion world that happens to be true and accurate. For me, functionalism was the least appealing of all.

Today, mass production has allowed people to wear all sorts of clothing. It's only the high fashion that the poor can't afford but speculation by mass media has made a lot of people fashion enthusiasts. Such people strive to wear collectable and products of high fashion. Moreover, the rich has adopted clothing and fashion of the lower-class, like the hip hop clothing. Such type of clothing can be seen as worn by celebrities and stars, like Justin Timberlake.

The other three theories proved to be very attractive to me. Being a Marxist myself, conflict theory provides a brilliant critique on fashion and how it's used as a tool to further create division in the classes. Profit is used as a motive to constantly evolve fashion and trends, and change consumer taste. Symbolic interaction also proved to emanate what we experience every day. Our clothing reflects our ideas, mood, religion, culture, job, etc.

But the most attractive of all was feminism. Fashion is used as a tool to further the patriarchal society we're living in. Fashion magazines,

advertisements and ramp walks, all show that to be beautiful you need to be thin. They also show that the more erotic the clothing is, the more fashionable the woman looks. This portrays women as sex objects. Therefore, the identity of women is defined by this patriarchal institution, known as fashion. Why can't a plus-size woman be beautiful? Or why is showing skin (eroticism) more fashionable than not showing too much skin? As a result of the prevalent beliefs, women are not as liberated as the fashion world would want us to believe.