

# Androgyny

Business



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The topic of gender has been a sensitive issue in the society for decades. The particular reasons for this scenario is not particular hard to discern given the rising cases of gender biases in the world over. Androgyny is a term derived from Greek dictionary which refers to “ woman”. In broad explanation, the term androgyny refers to a mixture between masculine and feminine characteristics which revolves around fashion or hermaphroditism. Androgyny is thus a gender identity complex situation in which a person fails to fit completely into either masculine or feminine in the society. This social and biological aspect of human beings therefore surpasses and transcends to all areas of human life in reference to fashion, roles in society, gender identity, traits and alternatives’. The historical aspects and development of this concept has been met with varied perceptions and illustrations. This is in view of the fact that different writes have given varying opinions on the origin of this trend in human life. According to Alcey (2010), Androgyny as a trend has a few stages (like all trends): first, it pops up seemingly out of the blue and hangs around for as long as it possibly can. Next, we slowly start to tire and lastly, we move onto another trend and look back at that time in our life when androgyny was in and question why we ever left the house looking like a man from 1929 that tips his hat, vowing never to follow such a ridiculous trend ever again.

At this current point in time, we are at stage one. Androgyny is very much in, and I am very much tipping my hat. Androgyny and FashionThe aspect of androgyny has impacted greatly into both social and economic lives. The recent past decades have seen the creation of literatures, movies and music that have heavily depicted on the aspect of androgyny as their major

themes. These include the novel "The Next Level: Boys with Birkins" that will definitely leave the reader pondering on the extent the fashion industry is blurring on the line between man and woman.

The idea of the level of fashion entrenchment on sexual identity has been accepted by a number of critics and the general population alike. According to Things (2010) "Of course with the likes of Bobby Trendy, TV personality, interior decorator, and designer; and Miss J Alexander, runway coach, model, and judge on America's Next Top Model, we can see that androgyny is fairly prevalent in fashion. What I didn't expect after reading the article was my realization of another level of meaning for the term unisex." In the United States, the concept of androgyny has created a strong debate on sex.

Defined as a combination of traditional masculine and feminine elements, the concept of androgyny has been linked greatly to fashion and specifically clothing.

On the other hand, it may extend to mannerisms and behavior that defines the line between male and female. Things (2010) succinctly illustrates that "mainstream America, in general, which tends towards biological determinism, understands androgyny in terms of fashion and does not recognize it as a legitimate gender identity. Conversely many feminist and queer theorists who do not view gender as necessarily dichotomous give androgyny a place on the spectrum of gender possibilities." Alcey (2010) on the other hand points out that Far from the 80's take on androgyny (think Dynasty-style power dressing or Motley Crue-style glam rock), this time around androgyny is a little more high-end. Or west-end for that matter. It's

leaning more toward English hoodlum or dirty vintage fashion than sharply dressed male on the way to his 9am.

We have a few more options than the typical men's style of a men's designer blazer, crisp shirt, trousers, tie and hair gel. We can still dabble in suits; for example, masculine, hi-waisted pants with feminine draping detail (a little more structured than harem pants), but we can also try the latest - distressed spray-on skinny jeans, dirty oversized tshirts, lace up shoes, leather biker jacket, black opaque tights, combat boots, cropped blazers, bowler hats, unbuttoned shirts with the sleeves rolled up, smudged make-up, greasy hair and schoolboy colours like grey and plaid. The history and influence on androgyny on the fashion industry among the lives of the Americans began to record great impact in the 1950s. This fact is perhaps well illustrated by Alcey (2010), in stating that Androgyny as a contemporary fashion grew out of the 1950s bohemian and working-class youth styles to become most notably embodied in the male hippie of the 1960s, who rebelliously grew out his hair in girlish locks. In the 1970s, lesbian feminists rejected established gender categories and adopted a " unisex" uniform, which consisted of short hair, slacks and an absence of make-up.

The spiraling effect of such mentality therefore impacted heavily on the social lives of the entire world population with some fashions and preferences very difficult to differentiate based on sex. The fashion codes in the latter part of the century therefore transformed while at the same time increasingly depicting the aspect of androgyny in their themes. " In the 1970s, lesbian feminists rejected established gender categories and adopted a " unisex" uniform, which consisted of short hair, slacks and an absence of

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make-up. In the 1980s, lesbian commentators, favoring a revival of gender categories, exposed the lesbian “ androgyny” of the 1970s as an imitation of working-class men’s attire”(Things, 2010). With the relaxing of the fashion codes within the society, the concept of androgyny was accepted by a large fraction of the American women.

The twentieth century has been marked by more acceptance of androgyny. Things (2010) however proceed to point out that “ while conventional symbols of masculinity, such as suits, short hair and pants, have become fair game for women, men still risk persecution for wearing conventional signs of femininity, such as skirts, high heels and barrettes” The continuous embrace and acceptance of androgyny in the recent decade has been taken to greater heights by celebrities. This demonstrates the fact androgyny will be with the human race for decades to come and may thrive on to be part and parcel of fashion. In addition to the above, androgyny may become an entrenched part and parcel of articulated fashion that it will have masses following suit without giving a second thought. According to Lesser (2010), In January’s edition of Harper’s Bazaar, Victoria Beckham erased all traces of her usually feminine style, sporting a boxy, sapphire-colored three-piece suit. Rihanna, known for her avant-garde fashion choices both on- and offstage, experimented with military jackets from Balmain – a take on the androgynous look accentuated by the pop star’s blunt, boyish haircut This demonstrates the embrace of androgyny by celebrities in the world stage.

Male celebrities on the other hand have not been left behind by the concepts of androgyny in fashion. This is demonstrated by Easterlin (2001), in stating that “ Male celebrities take the trend even further, borrowing not only

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fashion from the ladies, but makeup as well: Adam Lambert has become ubiquitously known for his black nail polish and lipgloss, while Johnny Depp keeps his black eyeliner intact even when not in character as Captain Jack". Furthermore, in the society today, men have been spotted in unisex attire. While experts in fashion design, psychologists and sociologists abide in the fact men will definitely not be wearing mini skirts and high heels soon, women on the other hand are already putting on men's attire. This is attributed to the general feelings of different sexes. Psychologists argue that aspects that are considered by the society as manly are likely to be embraced by both sexes whereas those that are perceived to be feminine are more likely to be shunned by the female sexes.

According to Lesser (2010) Gender-neutral clothing takes apparel design back to the bare essentials – well cut fabrics, in figure flattering cuts and neutral colors. It might take a while for people to get used to the idea of blurring the line between men and women's fashion, but once people realize that digging in their spouses' closet doubles the size of their wardrobe without spending a cent ... it could be a trend that's very well received indeed. These have been executed by man in the desire to achieve life satisfaction and search for elusive personal identity.

The link between Androgyny and Life Satisfaction Psychologists and the general public have always asked what the term life satisfaction refers to. A large fraction of American population as well as individuals the world over derives life satisfaction from a number of variables that always determine the quality of life. These include a measure of individual wealth, satisfaction on one's career and life, indicators in personal health and the general

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measure of the level of happiness in ones personal life. An analysis on the definition of the term life satisfaction as projected by psychologists and media portray both similarities and differences. Psychologists derive their definition of these terms from research work and available literature and lean more towards cognitive, developmental, personality and social aspects of human being.

The analysis of androgyny reveals that it forms a very fundamental tenet on which cognitive, developmental, personality and social aspects of human being are based. The media on the other hand base their definition that generally lack any form of scientific justification but are based on daily life indicators such as recent trends in fashion, increase in personal wealth and general comfort. According to Diener (1984), “ Life satisfaction is an overall assessment of feelings and attitudes about one’s life at a particular point in time ranging from negative to positive and it is one of three major indicators of well-being: life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect”. Diener (1984) proceed to state that “ Although satisfaction with current life circumstances is often assessed in research studies, emphasis is put in the research on the desire to change one’s life; satisfaction with past and satisfaction with future.” These underlines the core reasons behind the search for a new identity and happiness by human beings. The link between different sexes on aspect of fashion hinges on the desire by man to achieve a full life satisfaction.

There is need to understand the meaning of life satisfaction because it is a measure of the is level of population’s optimism and happiness . According to Easterlin (2001), In economics, we rely on the somewhat vague (perhaps <https://assignbuster.com/androgyny/>

usefully vague!) concept of utility to explain individuals' choices and behavior. Within a given budget constraint, the consumer is both rational and welfare maximizing. From the micro foundations of economics we can show that relaxing the budget constraint expands the individual's choice set between goods, services and leisure and, assuming freedom of choice and rational behavior, this must also lead to increased wellbeing or happiness. This indicates that life satisfaction is not only a product of social well being and political stability but also a product of economic strength. The fashion industry has thus thrived on economic strength to drive the concept of androgyny based on the desire to achieve life satisfaction. In this regard, an understanding of three aspects of life satisfaction (social, economical and political) is important and cannot be undermined.

Variables that contribute to Androgyny There exists a heated argument that Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory that is based on motivation theory lays a stable foundation for the understanding of the life satisfaction theory and the search for true identity. In an attempt to explain the variables of life satisfaction, five basic needs have been highlighted. These include physiological needs, safety needs, self esteem needs, and self actualization. Psychologists have used these five basic indicators and variables to explain the rise of androgyny. Research articles and literatures abide in the fact that individuals who have managed to achieve higher degrees on the five basic indicators have expressed fairly higher levels of embrace of the concept of androgyny.

In respect to psychological needs, human beings' behavior, attitude and mind should be positive. This involves an exploration of the things that human

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beings desire to not only do in life but also acquire. If this is achieved, one of the basic variables in life satisfaction has been satisfied and the related others are close at hand. This is due to the fact the understanding of human wants are intertwined. Safety needs in an individual is product of health, security and peace of mind while leisure needs hinges on the ability to try new identity. An analysis of self esteem and self actualization both revolve around realization of one's self worth.

According to social scientists, life satisfaction is determined by several variables among which are personality, career satisfaction and personal attitude. Personal positive in androgyny refers to the ability to feel good. Both men and women have exhibited their peak positive personal attitudes at their happiest moments in life. According to Iverson and Maguire (2000), “an investigation found significant correlation between personality traits and androgyny.” Androgyny is a product of personality, life satisfaction and personal genes.

In addition to the above, Iverson and Maguire (2000), expounds the correlation between androgyny and life satisfaction in stating that “One important discovery is that androgyny is correlated with life satisfaction and this correlation is reciprocal, meaning people who are satisfied with life tend to embrace the concept of androgyny than those who are not satisfied with their lives. The concept of androgyny therefore hinges on the desire by man to explore more opportunities and experiment things in their life time. There exists a positive relationship between androgyny and life satisfaction.” An important finding, however, is that being in fully satisfied with life does not necessarily translate to the embrace of concepts of androgyny in that the <https://assignbuster.com/androgyny/>

desire to explore more in only rampant in dynamic and competitive industries such as fashion and make up.” (Iverson and Maguire, 2000).

Popular magazines, newspapers and self help books document a number of variables that significantly impact on an individual’s levels and ability to become androgynous and all these are closely related to self satisfaction. Workerbee (2010) document in New York Times that, Autonomy, or self-direction, is one of the most important determinants self satisfaction, as well as overall life satisfaction. Professionals, such as doctors, lawyers and judges, and owners of businesses are much more likely to enjoy job autonomy than people who work under supervision or surveillance, such as most workers in the services and manufacturing sectors. This group of people are more likely to try new things in life than those who are self motivated. Most of these non-academic sources concentrate around the role of self satisfaction as the major variable androgyny. Towards this end, National Career Development Association (2007), buttresses this point further in stating that, There are a variety of factors that can influence a person’s level of job satisfaction; some of these factors include the level of pay and benefits, the perceived fairness of the promotion system within a company, the quality of the working conditions, leadership and social relationships, and the job itself (the variety of tasks involved, the interest and challenge the job generates, and the clarity of the job description/requirements).

Other magazines such as family magazines argue that most individuals draw the embrace of androgyny from the family they are part of. The existence of a single parenthood in some families may influence the offspring to lean

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more towards one side of sex. This is more so when the parent and the child are of different sexes. A young boy who has grown exclusively under the care of a single mother is likely to adopt the androgynous life style because of the influence of the life's background on him. National Career Development Association (2007), states that " results from a multiple regression analysis indicated that parenting formed a fundamental aspect of the way young people handle their lives in future and is related to satisfaction or parental attachment".

In addition to the above, social magazines have linked androgyny and positive parenting to conform major determinants of life satisfaction (Haigler, Day & Marshall, 1995). Workerbee (2010) in their free library periodicals state that " Good parenting was found to be positively related to life satisfaction in the present sample and this finding is consistent with research that has demonstrated a relationship between satisfaction with life and the desire to explore more in life." In addition to that above, the authors continue to succinctly state that there exist very strong correlations between family and life satisfaction. These magazines, newspapers and self help books also make attempt to link self esteem as factor that contributes to life satisfaction. Sports individuals and students who have demonstrated higher self esteem levels have been observed to report satisfaction in their lives. In understanding that self esteem is manifested in triumph, despair, pride and shame which are revealed in individual emotions.

These emotions determine the quality of life and individual' self worth. It is a general knowledge that individual who despair in life do not appreciate that value of life and such fail to achieve higher levels of life satisfaction. In <https://assignbuster.com/androgyny/>

addition to the above, periodicals and books state that self esteem encompasses self worth, self regard and self respect. This remains the major reason as to why social magazines have described self worth as a determining factor in life satisfaction. Most academic literatures and research findings seem to have similar results in the analysis of variables in life satisfaction as those retrieved from non academic materials. Both materials lay a lot of emphasis on self satisfaction as determinant in individual androgyny.

This is because today's economic settings are dominated by economic and social demands that must be met by the availability of purchasing power. In ensuring that an individual achieve this purchasing power, life satisfaction plays a greater role in an individual life. In addition to the above, both materials document personality, career satisfaction and personal attitude as major contributing factors to life satisfaction. Furthermore, self esteem and autonomy in handling and making major decisions that revolve around the life of an individual is also shared by the two sources. The only difference observed in the two sources in their attempts to analyze factors that impact life satisfaction is on the role of the family.

Most academic materials emphasize on the quality of relationships while retrieved materials from magazines, newspapers and self help books take the wider role of family (Argyle & Martin, 1991). This reflects that these two articles abide in a number of factors that contribute to androgyny and life satisfaction. The overall assessment and feelings of an individual is determined by a number of factors as portrayed in the literature. The analysis of materials retrieved from these tow sources reveal major

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similarities and very few differences. This is based on the fact that academic materials entrench their arguments and findings on actual scientific research works while non academic sources make use of unconfirmed reports and personal opinions.

The topic of androgyny remains a relevant topic that fills needs more research so that the gaps between the past and current literature in understanding this position in regard to human social aspects and life satisfaction are explored to greater details. Such important findings and implications are the basis of policy formulation and provide the insight towards into the experience of psychologists, sociologists and to the benefit of the fashion industry. The recommendations of this research study will be relevant to the future endeavors in the attempts to dig deeper into the topic of androgyny. It is worth appreciating that just as androgyny has been with us for decades, it is likely to be modeled and shape the future of the fashion industry in the decades to come. This view is supported by a number of articles and books and points towards a more vibrant and dominant culture of androgyny.