THE EFFECT OF CLOTHING AS A MARKER ON IDENTITY

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GİYİMİN BİR İŞARETLEYİCİ OLARAK KİMLİK ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİSİ

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ABSTRACT: One of the codes used by individuals to define their identity and convey it to others is clothing. Clothing, which is an instrument that can draw symbolic boundaries between people, must have a strong link between individuals' real social identities and externally perceived hints in order to be read in common by observers. The major problem to be investigated in this research is to analyze the relationships between identity and clothing, which have been going on since ancient times and will continue in the future. In order to understand these relationships, a theoretical framework needs to be established, and a broad, holistic perspective on the social dimensions of clothing should be developed. The main purpose of this article was to draw on the relationship between clothing and major components of identity. Based on the fact that alternative clothing codes transform those who wear certain clothes into effective symbolic subjects in terms of directing them to a certain behavior politically, culturally, and socially, it was analyzed that this subject constitutes the basis of class struggle.

Keywords: Identity, symbol, clothing, components of identity, ethnicity.

ÖZ: Bireylerin kimliklerini tanımlamak ve başkalarına aktarmak için kullandıkları kodlardan biri giyimdir. İnsanlar arasında sembolik sınırlar çizebilen bir araç olan giyimin gözlemciler tarafından ortak olarak okunabilmesi için bireylerin gerçek sosyal kimlikleri ile dışarıdan algılanan ipuçları arasında güçlü bir bağa sahip olması gerekir. Bu araştırmanın temel sorunsalı, eski çağlardan beri devam eden ve gelecekte de devam edecek olan kimlik ve giyim ilişkilerini analiz etmektir. Bu ilişkileri anlamak için kuramsal bir çerçevede ele almak ve giyimin sosyal boyutları hakkında geniş, bütünsel bir bakış açısı geliştirmek amacıyla bu makalede, giyim ile kimliğin temel bileşenleri arasındaki ilişkiye odaklanılmaktadır. Bu çalışmada, bazı grupları sembolik olarak tanımlayan ve diğerlerini dışlayan giyimin politik, sosyal ve kültürel düzeylerde belirleyici bir gösterge olarak kullanıldığı ve belirli sosyal gruplara hitap ettiği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Alternatif giyim kodlarının, belli kıyafetleri giyenleri politik, kültürel ve sosyal olarak belirli bir davranışa yönlendirmek açısından da etkili sembolik öznelere dönüştürmesinden hareketle bu öznenin, sınıf mücadelesine temel teşkil etmesi analiz edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kimlik, sembol, giyim, kimliğin ögeleri, etnisite.

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Introduction

"Identity," as a word root in Western languages like English, is based on *idem*, meaning "identical" in Latin. It extends to the thinking world of the individual and society in terms of its word meaning. On the one hand, identity is a concept that combines private and public issues (Jerkins, 2008: 16). In a sense, the individual connects with the public space by abstracting from her/his own reality. Besides, identity is the common object of inquiry of many social and human science disciplines. It is seen that different approaches are developed while making a scientific analysis on the concept of identity. These different approaches vary according to the level and form of interaction of various elements. It is possible to create a model by using these approaches to conduct comparative ethnicity studies. The point to be noted here is the importance of focusing on how a group or individual is defined through belongings, similarities, and differences or how they define themselves. Moreover, the answer to the question of "who are we? (or who am I?)" gives a dynamic relationality in terms of systematically establishing and making sense of identity, similarity, and difference relations (Özdemir, 2012: 171). While this relationality does not make it possible to define an identity monadically in and for itself, establishing an identity and connection with something else are absolute necessities, and this connection must be contingent (Laclau, 2000: 142).

Evolving from Max Weber's *Verstehen* sociology, ethnomethodology focuses on the role of everyday language, which is the expression of common sense of ordinary people, in the production and reproduction of social life (Giddens, 2000: 242–243). In terms of ethnomethodology, which deals with the impact of the sense of common sense on the structure and organization of society, social actions, identities, and other social phenomena are said to be observable, reported, and accountable if they are observed, reported, and described (Berard, 2005: 13). The critical point is that the researcher aims not to understand social life as the participants understand but to determine the methods in which this understanding occurs (Babbie, 2001: 283). Beyond its subjectivity in individual interpretation, identity, which is a social phenomenon, also has an intersubjective dimension. Addressing the subjective and intersubjective dimensions of identity as a research problem through the dialectical relationship and evaluation of the methods in the construction process of identity within the framework of the ethnomethodological paradigm would yield more inclusive results.

When we examine, we can see that identity is produced, shaped, changed, and reproduced by combining many elements. It can be said that nationality, gender, class, race, nationality, language, and religion are the leading elements of identity (Konuralp, 2017). These and other elements are often intertwined when creating an identity, and some dominate more than others due to the historical formation and conditions of a particular identity. Therefore, these elements should be addressed individually in the specificity

of each identity. In addition, while identity elements such as religion, nationality, language, and class can be flexibly shaped by conditions such as race, gender, and individuals' preferences, choices, priorities, the relative stability of the innate elements makes identity ambiguous. In other words, the question of whether identity is an essential, given, and static personal feature or a fluid choice is the triangulation point of many identity discussions (Konuralp, 2018).

When we think about an identity's impression, one of the codes used by individuals to define their identity and convey it to others is clothing. Clothing, an instrument that can draw symbolic boundaries between people, must have a strong link between individuals' real social identities and externally perceived hints to be read in common by observers. In this research, we will cover the relationships between identity and clothing, which have been going on since ancient times and will continue in the future. In order to understand these relationships, a theoretical framework needs to be established, and a broad, holistic perspective on the social dimensions of clothing should be developed. The primary purpose of this article is to draw on the relationship between clothing and major components of identity mentioned above.

Relatedly, Steve Fenton (2003: 2) argues for putting interest in ethnicity back in the center of the sociological imagination, which involves the restructuring of the modern world, class formations and class cultures, and harmony in public life. Seeing ethnic groups both real and constructed, Fenton (2003: 10) refers to three other actors apart from the people involved in the group, answering the question of who made this construction: First, group thinking can be built "for us, by other," not by "us." Just like the groups created by the rulers and settlers to name the "natives" in the colonial period took on a real and distinctive character in the process. Second, the group identity construction may be the work of elites, parties, or organizational leaders in the group, not all the group members. Thirdly, groups can be formed as a result of the state's actions, power, and administrative provision.

The construction of identity involves a robust symbolic dimension. In this study, we are going to analyze the relationship between identity and clothing with reference to this symbolic dimension since the symbols of the ethnic core work in the minds of groups to mark their ethnic boundaries rather than borders of territory on a map (Armstrong, 1982: 7–8). In this respect, we are going to analyze such a relationship from an ethnosymbolic perspective.

1. Ethnosymbolic Approach

Ethnosymbolism emerged as a response to the primordialist and circumstantialist/modernist theories of ethnicity. In this sense, rather than seeing the nations existing throughout history or solely products of

modernization that came to the fore with the French and American revolutions, ethnosymbolism can be considered as a synthesis of both approaches in a way that ethnosymbolic dimension of the identity is derived from primordial sources of the culture like myth, memory, symbol, value, tradition and that is embroidered within a contingent context. In other words, be it *ethnies* or nations, the historical communities are always prone to internal and external conflicts and dynamics that bring change and reinterpretation. To use John Hutchinson's (1987, 2005) terminology, the consequences of continuous "cultural wars" between multiple national projects would determine and redetermine the ethnic or national destiny. As Anthony D. Smith (2016) maintains, enthosymbolists "analyze *ethnies* and nations over *la longue durée*, to view them as historical communities, embedded in specific contexts and in the memories and myths of their members, and to see many nations as emerging around an ethnic core and on the basis of an ethnic model."

There are two reasons for adopting the ethnosembolic perspective in this study, which aims to analyze the relationship of identity with the components that make up the identity. First, this perspective approaches the components of identity more comprehensive manner. Second, it takes into account both historical aspects and contingent features of identity.

2. Analyzing Clothing and Components of Identity

Moving to the relationship between clothing and components of identity, we maintain that clothing has many meanings and importance, such as showing the individual's aesthetic perception, helping the formation of identity, and playing a role in communication. Clothing, which carries the elements of identity, including gender, class, and cultural orientation, is one of the most prominent social status indicators. Therefore, clothing, which effectively protects or destroys symbolic boundaries, starts from how the individual wants to reflect her/his identity, shows how positions within the social structures are perceived in different periods, and how classes are determined. Asserting that clothing is an act of differentiation and signification, as Philippe Perrot (1994: 8) notes: "Sign or symbol, clothing affirms and reveals cleavages, hierarchies, and solidarities according to a code guaranteed and perpetuated by society and its institutions."

2.1. Gender Roles and Clothing

People use their clothing choices to express who they are (Gallagher & Pecot-Hebert, 2007). However, to understand the connection between identity and clothing, it is vital first to understand how people construct and perceive their identities. Most clothing can be defined at first glance as designed for a woman or a man, but many factors such as cultural influences, sexual orientation, and men and women's social roles can be transmitted by clothing. The main question is how women and men perceive or are expected to be perceived their gender identity.

Fashion historians often argue that men stay away from fashion and prefer a calm and dignified look. Inequality between the use of men's and women's clothing has been higher at certain times and in some cultures than others. For example, fashion historians state that the gender distinction in clothing was not clearly emphasized before the nineteenth century. In the eighteenth century, in the upper echelons of the bourgeoisie and the nobility, women and men jointly exhibited lace, rich velvets, quality silks and embroidery, fancy shoes and hats, and were equally interested in making hair, wigs, and using many cosmetics (Maeder, 1983). However, towards the end of the nineteenth century, it was argued that men and women should have different social roles as they are biologically different from each other. Moreover, in the nineteenth century, the effects of class structure are more pronounced on women than men. Only a few legal and political rights have been granted to women, regardless of class. Therefore, in this period, clothing reflected a generally accepted view and restrictive attitude towards women's social roles.

The clear and established gender distinctions in men's clothing in the Victorian era gradually disappeared towards the late twentieth century. Michel Foucault's (1978) statement that gender is not always perceived in the same way but is seen fixed by the influence of clinical and psychiatric discourses represents this change. Similarly, Judith Butler (1999) argues that gender is acquired through codes such as adopting some styles of clothing, accessories, and makeup, and the self is not innate, masculine, or feminine. Although Foucault's approach expresses novelty, hegemonic ideals regarding gender-appropriate behavior and appearance are quite different for both sexes, even in the late twentieth century. In the modern era, while men's self-expression methods are largely limited, women seem to preserve a rich symbolic repertoire and even expand it further with a sense of fashion. At the center of the concept of hegemony lies the notion that reality, norms, and standards appear "naturally" and cannot be challenged. Therefore, hegemony incorporates coercion and consensus or consent (Bates, 1975: 363). According to Foucault, the continuous linear progression of history is an illusion. On the contrary, history is not continuous. Therefore, it is not possible to talk about a constant class that ensures the maintenance of hegemony. According to feminists, hegemonic femininity is a conception based on masculine standards. These standards focus on physical qualities and sexuality and encourage women to perceive themselves as men do (L. R. Davis, 1997). It is also seen that the attitude of new generation women towards media images related to hegemonic femininity has shifted to the interpretation of these images as an indicator of power relations rather than passive attitudes (Skeggs, 1993).

Nonetheless, even today, especially in traditional societies, the concept and discourse of "honor" is an indicator of symbolic violence against women (Hamzaoğlu & Konuralp, 2018, 2019a, 2019b). This discourse shows itself as "chastity" also in women's clothing.

2.2. Class and Clothing

The hegemonic nature of the gender roles leads us to elaborate on the class dimension of clothing. When we look at women in different classes, clothing gives many clues about social structure. In patriarchal societies, women's clothing is also a symbol of men's wealth since women are considered men's property. In modern societies, where the unit is a household, women's clothing reveals the household's wealth to which the woman belongs. While middle-class homemakers try to imitate the upper classes' clothes with a less financial budget, resources on the working-class homemakers' appearance are much more limited. This is also related to the fact that working-class homemakers are imprisoned and excluded from the public sphere. Because of the fact that pregnancy, raising children, and household chores are burdened by women, starting from the historical division of labor on the basis of gender, these women could not find the opportunity to take part in the public sphere. In addition, the roles played by middle-class and working-class single women conflict with the imposed gender role of the period. Because these women started to be accepted in the spheres exclusive to men as they become financially independent.

Indeed, although men's clothing has rejected aristocratic values of the *ancien régime* and has become more straightforward, unchanging, and dignified, it has changed regularly, many types of products have emerged to show symbolic commitment to the values of the period and provide material for the expression of social class. Associating masculine identity with business, middle-class men's clothing is strictly limited to values focused on work and career and reflects the privilege of achieving prestige with professional success (Crane, 2000: 197).

With the spread of ready-to-wear after the Industrial Revolution, clothes gradually lost their economic value. Previously, clothes were considered one of the most valuable goods of the person, and those in the lower classes could never reach new clothes. The ability to easily access cheap clothes, regardless of their place in the social structure, allowed everyone to create their style rather than imitating the upper classes. Tocqueville's (2016) assessment of the United States of America (USA) that "the servant may at any time become the master" clearly reflects the widespread attitude of the time. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the USA witnessed many people acquiring new identities in new places due to immigration. The fact that many immigrants who have left their traditional clothes as soon as they arrive have used clothes to get rid of their old identities and establish new ones is an indication of the effect of clothing on identity.

In class societies, each class has a unique culture that distinguishes itself from others and shares specific values, goals, and gender ideals with other classes. Clothing styles, a mixture of materials from different sources, have different meanings for different social groups. Like some popular music

and popular genres, clothing styles are meaningful for the social groups they target, but they are mostly incomprehensible for individuals outside of these social contexts. Transferring these ideals through clothing has created the so-called fashion cycle. Various theories have been introduced to explain these cycles. The best-known theory of fashion and clothing behavior was introduced by Veblen (1894) and developed by Simmel (1957). According to this theory, fashion is seen as starting from the elite at the top of the social structure and moving towards the lower classes with the process of being imitated by their inferiors. As fashion loses its appeal in the popularization process when it comes to the lower middle class and the upper layers of the working class, upper classes are interested in another new fashion to separate themselves from the lower layers as a reflection of the symbolic dimension of clothing.

Simmel's trickle-down theory explained the dominant way of fashion spread in Western societies until the 1960s when demographic and economic factors increased the influence of young people in all layers of society. Later, the baby boom generation, which was crowded and more affluent than the previous generations, led to the inversion of trickle-down. Thus, new styles emerge by adolescents or young adults in sub-status groups and then imitated by other age groups and upper strata (Field, 1970; Polhemus, 1994). However, more complex than these two models, new styles also occur in subcultures such as artists in middle-class groups. These emerging styles spread rapidly to all social system layers, either up or down through media and technology.

Simmel's theory supposes that new styles are adopted prevalently. However, the most obvious shortcoming of the theory is the reductionist assumption that fashion only covers the symbolization of the social class, irrespective of the purpose of the fashion designers or wearers (F. Davis, 1992: 112). It should be questioned who does or does not adopt these styles, except for their social status or the status they aim for. Many characteristics of the person such as profession, gender, sexuality, age, leisure activities, ethnic, national, and religious affiliations can play a role in clothing preferences.

Considering Simmel's theory's shortcomings, the alternative approach is Blumer's (1969) collective selection theory. This theory, which is based on cultural mass appreciation, suggests that the spread of fashion is more complicated than the process described by Simmel, and it contains many elements of the "collective behavior" study with a sociological background. Instead of seeing clothing as an auxiliary to social class separation, Blumer brought a more detailed account of the collective mood, tastes, and preferences. According to Blumer, fashion is related to a general cultural trend towards time and modern mood. Therefore, regardless of class relations, whether it is more egalitarian or rigid, fashion is an ever-expanding area.

2.3. Race and Clothing

Race as an identity element in which identity is made visible via biological features becomes more emphasized because various racial groups have different dressing practices and traditions. In addition to the effects of genetic structure-based attributes such as skin color and physical sizes on clothing, the reflection of racial differentiation on clothing is more related to class differentiation.

For example, during the Ottoman Empire, a black slave who wandered the streets of Istanbul next to his master would wear clothes that corresponded to class and racial differences. It was impossible to see a black Muslim dressed as a Muslim Circassian an Orthodox Greek. Therefore, although there was no classification based on race in the Ottoman system, which envisaged a classification according to religious communities, the reason why dressing reflects the differentiation on racial grounds is class.

Nevertheless, even today, as maintained by recent research, "how clothing style and race are used in forming impressions and making attributions about the social class has great implications for understanding and challenging prejudice and discrimination" (Kahn & Davies, 2017; Mcdermott & Pettijohn II, 2011: 64). However, we should also note that the primary use of differences from nature to explain social reality will create the problem of over-determinism and lead to the concealment of social effects.

2.4. Nationality and Clothing

As with other components of identity, one of the essential tools that make nationality visible is clothing. Banal nationalism is reproduced by adapting national symbols, colors, folkloric elements to everyday clothes and uniforms as an expression of nationality (Billig, 1997). Thus, the daily loyalty of people to the "nation" is secured. In this respect, the attempt to integrate people living within certain boundaries by creating a common national culture requires membership to a nation as an "imagined" political community. More precisely, a common national identity that reinforces national unity has been created, and people have been included in a common market (Anderson, 1994; Kymlicka, 2016: 456; Marshall, 1965: 101–102). Thus, creating a common national identity serves an "equalizing" function by eliminating or ignoring differences. However, at the same time, a class project based on harmonizing the interests of the bourgeoisie "protected" within national boundaries, with the interests of the working classes that have nothing to sell but their labor, is implemented.

At this point, the policy of nationalism not to grant the "other" the right to live by marginalizing the "otherness" ensures national integration by expanding the scope and visibility of the "normal." The collective identity struggles of citizens who feel marginalized around the "other" characteristics different from the state's nationality may create rival

nationalisms that develop in reaction to the nation-state's nationalism and take the form of either the politics of recognition or the separation from the national unit. The first aims to liberate blacks, women, indigenous peoples, ethnic-religious minorities, homosexuals from marginality by bringing with an understanding of "differentiated citizenship" (Young, 1989) based on multiculturalism. The second aims to establish new nation-states through separatist violence.

In this context, the class and identity tones of the political struggle in Western liberal democracies are determined, to put it in Nancy Fraser's (1998, 2000) terminology, along with "politics of redistribution" or "politics of recognition." The former is a traditional mobilization, including the struggle of the working classes at the lower levels of the economic hierarchy against inequalities. The latter is the identity struggles of the groups against status hierarchies. Also, the dynamic composition between redistribution politics and recognition politics varies from context to context. For example, WASP (White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant) identity in the USA represents the upper rank of the hierarchy in terms of both status and economy, while Catalans in Spain are above the country average in economic terms and below the Spanish culture in terms of cultural status (Konuralp, 2019). In particular, in the politics of recognition, where the ethnosymbolic dimension appears to be more striking, dressing provides a strong manifestation.

2.5. Language and Clothing

Language, which constitutes the ethnosymbolic building blocks of the world of meaning, mediates the emergence of the self's cognitive capacity. Not only has a significant role in forming self-identity, but language equated with nationalism has the most compelling effect of uniting historically divided communities around a political unit (Isaacs, 1989: 94). An example is the unification of Germans divided into different states by rediscovering their essence through their vernacular (Smith, 2007: 328).

Also, in the Ottoman order, where many nations survived for centuries via their cultural autonomy under the roof of an empire, communities could preserve their vernacular languages. In this order, making differences visible by dress codes was essential. By enacting and enforcing dress codes, the sultans presented themselves as practitioners of morality, order, justice, and guardians of borderlines that differentiate their subjects (Quataert, 2005: 44). In due course, Greek, Serbian, Bulgarian, Armenian nationalists shaped around vernaculars sought their independence.

Today, language continues to constitute the most important source of inspiration in self-differentiation for both separatist nationalist movements and groups struggling for politics of recognition (Adaş & Konuralp, 2020b, 2020a; Konuralp & Adaş, 2020). Thus, in these movements and struggles, clothing functions as a means of communication alongside language.

2.6. Religion and Clothing

Finally, clothing might make religious and regional origins more visible. When looking at the shape and material of clothes, it turns out that man is not only defined by nature but also combines it with other peculiar characteristics. Let us take the Jewish dress, *kuttonet*, a long tunic surrounding the body (Hirsch & Levi, 2011). While its vertical and flexible structure symbolizes personality and uniqueness, it also separates the body from nature with the help of the colors and general shape embroidered on the edges (Haulotte, 1966).

Wearing religious clothing and symbols is an important manifestation of religious affiliations in any society or community and various public or private settings. The fact that individuals wear traditional symbols as a sign of their religious affiliation may reflect their belief that it helps improve their spiritual life. It may also be explained by the struggle to impose identity with which they are linked. Sometimes it may only be due to the desire to gain a certain religious attitude or use a particular dress religiously to gain visibility or recognition in the public sphere. In doing so, clothing expresses its social and religious functions. For example, as Tvedtnes (1994: 649) puts it, "The Bible and other early religious literature are replete with references to priestly clothing and its symbolism." Also, in the Biblical accounts, the king, priest, and prophet can be recognized in this way because what they need to wear is certain.

In the context of Islamic veiling, as Alev Çınar (2012: 37) argues, with the headscarf ban, the secular norms of the public sphere made the headscarf a "marked" identity while unveiled women were unmarked, meaning invisible in the West. Whereas in France, wearing the headscarf was considered an ostentatious religious sign and banned, in Germany, it was only banned for the teachers. "In the UK and other countries, there is no general interdict" (Taylor, 2011: 41). It is argued that in the French case, the symbolism of the headscarf implies the challenge of a differentiated cultural entity to the unified republican/secular French nation (Asad, 2006: 506–509; Scott, 2007: 15–17). In this respect, Islamic headscarves or traditional veiling in Islamic communities may connote a political dimension. For example, in Turkey that has a predominantly Muslim society and a secular state, and that removed the ban on headscarf in 2013, the headscarf turns to be a symbol of women's finding place in the public sphere, rather than their exclusion (Konuralp, 2020).

As another example, the clothes' colors reflect a religious symbolism in the context of the caste system seen in Hinduism. While white is reserved for the highest castes is indicating purity, red symbolizes some warrior castes, and saffron yellow or orange is associated with Hindu monks. Also, the outcastes and impurity are symbolized with blue (HandEye, 2010).

Conclusion

To conclude, clothing is used as an identifying indicator at political, social, and cultural levels and addresses certain social groups. It defines some groups symbolically and excludes others. Alternative clothing codes also turn the wearers into effective symbolic subjects in terms of directing the wearers to a specific behavior politically, culturally, and socially. This subject is essential in the class struggle because it has a critical function in constructing society in terms of semantics or symbols. Therefore, clothes give many clues about the formation and development processes of societies. In class societies, many clothing codes clearly assert the class to which they belong.

The analysis of the relationship between clothing and identity shows us how the symbolic dimension of the identity is marked by visually expressed dresses. The ethnosymbolic approach helped discern the symbolic assertion of the ethnic core of identity. In this respect, we elaborated on the components of identity like gender, class, race, nationality, language, and religion.

In terms of gender, we argued that subjects make use of dress in the formation and destruction of the symbolic boundaries of gender roles. In other words, gender roles are put into symbolic molds via clothing. Therefore, gender inequalities were transposed to clothing and fashion preferences.

Similarly, social classes based on the economic differences of groups of people reflected inequalities that were made visible through clothing. Therefore, it was thought that the lower classes had used the outfit as a means of climbing the social ladder by imitating the upper classes, and the fashion trends had been determined from top to bottom. However, it was interesting to note that the spread of fashion had changed its direction from sub-status groups to the upper strata in the post-war era.

In today's world, where racial discrimination is challenged and denounced, we cannot read the relationship of the race used to refer to biological characteristics, with clothing independent of class content.

Along with language, nationality continues to be crucial for the daily reproduction of nationalisms. Therefore, the relationship of clothing with national and linguistic identity cannot be denied in terms of providing visual content to banal nationalism.

Finally, clothing makes the manifestation of religious affiliations more visible. Thus, the use of religious symbols and dress in clothing makes the belief system that the individual belongs to a marked identity. This also turns the religious symbols into tools for struggle in opening the secular boundaries of the public sphere in some Western contexts where religious identities are contested for formal recognition.

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