

## SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF GENDER AND THE RELATIONSHIP WITH FASHION, CASE STUDY OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MALE, FEMALE AND ANDROGYNOUS GENDER

PEDRO GURGEL<sup>1</sup>, ANA BROEGA<sup>2</sup>, FRANCISCA MENDES<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Minho University, toussaint.pedro@gmail.com*

<sup>2</sup> *Minho University, cbroega@det.uminho.pt*

<sup>3</sup> *Federal University of Ceará, nogueiramendes@hotmail.com*

**Abstract:** *The relationship between clothing and the "androgynous gender" is structured according to sociology through social cognition and communication. Androgyny has been the subject of debate by long centuries as a form of liberation from socially pre-established patterns in Western culture. This release is often confused with other approaches than would be androgynous or hybrid. The individual characteristics of the "androgynous gender" was the starting point for the identification of existing signs on clothing and its relationship with the "androgynous gender". The aim of this work is to investigate the relationship of clothing and "androgynous gender" in the fashion system in order to check the signs on the garment through the concepts of "androgynous gender". For this was carried out a questionnaire, including the "androgynous gender", to verify the extent to which their visual and stylistic characteristics are recognized. One of the main conclusions of this study is that clothing plays a major role in the classification of "Androgynous gender".*

**Key words:** Gender, Fashion, Androgyny, Characteristics of Gender.

### 1. Introduction;

In the century XXI the fashion crashed existing and socially imposed limits. For example, Androgyny served as a link between this paradigm shift gender and proposes a new language of fashion. This concept, androgyny, is seen by Bem (1981), as the union of male and female in a single individual genres, creating the androgynous race with its own characteristics. This surge in the 1970s and want to create a new approach to the gender according to Morawski (1990). This paper discusses the study of androgyny in fashion, which was part of a master's degree in Design and Fashion Communication at University of Minho. This is structured according to the points of view of history, sociology, social psychology, social cognition and communication in its various aspects. For that was conducted a survey of the concepts of clothing and of androgynous gender.

### 2. Fashion and Androgyny;

The study of gender among individuals and their facets of sex, gender and gender role, assume the power of language expression through clothing, posture and behaviour.

The clothing takes the encoding according to the social context in which it is inserted, the meaning of dress being culturally defined. Assuming the meaning and significant according to socially prescribed standards. The codes have the importance of gender and differentiation according to social context that it is inserted, and this changeable variable. This encoding varies according to social, economic, religious perspective, policy, among other factors.

The structure of the modern system of fashion or the mass production system, mass clothing, needs the designer, creator or the stylist for the cycle to work perfectly. Because the role of the designer, creator or designer is essential for the development of collections, to guide the creative sector, and break existing patterns within other aspects in the system. The duty of the designer, creator or designer is also innovative in nature, to bring something new or at least something that never would think to use a different way, i.e., assume a new function to an existing product in the market, argues Guillermo de Osma (2008).

Dorfles, (1979) said that fashion is still intact, which varies are the new outbursts of anger or permanence of traditionalism. The influence of the designer, creator or designer is not only economic and social but the best and safest way to measure the psychological, psychoanalytic, socio-economic motivations (Dorfles 1979). This division into social classes is an important factor in the system cycle massification. Consequently this system divides the sexes and genders, man or woman, male and female. While the androgynous gender will get the opposite sex or gender of its choices to convey their values and among other aspects of human psychology in "androgynous gender". Clothing plays an important role, and will allow a new gender transgression, not allowing their social marginalization.

The division within the store space, man or woman, male or female is part of the division of appearances and gender division. The product is focused to a particular type of sex / gender, other partially or completely of their choices for the products opposite sex/gender. The gender division only permits one choice, i.e. their mixture is a marginalization factor, being a linear choice with their gender. This social determination of normality accepted by a patriarchal society. But there is the possibility of unisex clothing, markedly appropriation of menswear by the female gender but never the opposite. According Feijão (2011);

*"To him, (Philippe Perrot, 1981), the act of dressing is essentially an act of meaning, able to manifest an essence, a tradition, a legacy, a caste, a lineage, an ethnicity, a generation, a religion, geographical origin, matrimonial status, a social position, an economic role, an ideological affiliation."*

The Fashion divides social classes, where high, medium and low own particular style and rules to follow. This mode of communication is part of the language of social groups, where each class has its own identity and, when there is a transgression the system has a mechanism to change and keep this pyramid of classes. Luxury is not affordable to the lower classes, and, when it is copied, the system changes the codes, not allowing this merger between classes and between the sexes.

*"As a sign or a symbol, (..), clothing consecrates and makes possible divisions, hierarchies and solidarities according to a perennial and guaranteed by society and its institutions code." (Feijão, 2011)*

Fashion is nothing but sociology, says Viken (2005). The desire of one person can become a niche market for a lot of people and is through social groups that fashion can organize and guide the textile industry.

In the 1970s, the fashion "wins the streets" with the creation of ready-to-wear fashion, social events and assumes the character of gender equality and gender roles. The man and the woman or the male and female are no longer important in these communities, where the transgression of their time and space created signs that could open new horizons within social behaviours, generated, or not, by popular influences.

Viken (2005) states that fashion is not gender, but the existing sexual differentiation in all classes. This division represents sexual differentiation but also the opportunity of not using a social mask as identification before other individuals and groups. In this context, in the 1970s;

*"Young men wear long hair, perfume, make-up, colorful shirts.... If earlier the hope was to abandon the limit, and thus the difference between sexes, now the desire is to play with this limit, the most*

*forbidden of all, to displace it, to disguise it. Its not a matter of identity, but of difference.” (Viken, 2005)*

The idea of time was not to assume the pre-established standards of being a man or being a woman, male or female, but the transgression of socially imposed limits, a new social order. Abandon and recreate their own language and take on new social codes. Clearing and reinstating the old form to new signs for identification and freedom of "new genres".

Not all designers and stylists follow rules or methods of creation and development of product. The function to break parameters and seek to new symbols as a way to build new signs in the social system, like Gaultier and Margiela. These creators have replaced the old signs with new ones, creating a social critique on the conduct-staggered fashion.

In the 1920s, Coco Chanel, carries male symbols to women's clothing. In 1970, Yves Saint Laurent does the same in reverse. While Coco Chanel was aimed at the inclusion of women in the male world with more relaxed, comfortable and adaptable garments, in the most mundane situations like work, horse riding, etc., Yves Saint Laurent used this transport symbols for the inclusion of women in the male labour market. In 2000, it is the turn of Rick Owens transpose the symbols of the feminine to the masculine world and offer the man what he had left long time ago, the skirts.

It is the fashion system that helps the system in the division of social classes. Is part of a set of social rules imposed by society, that dictate what is right or wrong to use certain sex and gender, making the diversion of human conduct fainter. A man to wear a piece of women's clothing is immediately labelled as abnormal. This pre-established social conduct creates a gap between the sexes and excludes the hypothesis of generation or inclusion of new genres. Viken (2005) argues that the ideology of the eighteenth century, is a symptom for a new order:

*“In the ideological elaborations of the republican democracy in the eighteenth century, fashion becomes a point of intersection between the division of classes and the division of sexes – a point of crisis and a symptom for a new order of things. Fashion, vanity and luxury.” (Viken, 2005)*

The space for the groups until then socially marginalized groups may gain their own conduct and appearance with the change of values in the conduct of individuals. The fashion divided the social classes in hierarchies, now loses strength and gains a new order, the division of the sexes.

A thin line where the use of the product whatever it is, can be used by both sexes and accessible to all classes, when it is said “accessible”, does not assume the financial sacrifice made here between a high class and a low class to purchase a particular product, but rather the social permission to use a product without the restriction of use of the product to a particular social class or gender, says Viken (2005).

Today the androgynous seeks to achieve this same similarity in distinguishing and have an emphasis on the body, where the mystery of sex is intrinsic to their character; i.e., the act of covering the body or discover it, in the most appropriate manner, can lead to believe that the androgynous beings possess a trace of femininity or masculinity as the use of clothing.

Thus, how the fashion communication is made through advertising and marketing strategies will generate guidelines postures and attitudes of gender, through third information generated on a large scale, as a form of behaviour accepted. It can be seen in many advertisements in the fashion business, woman being represented as the weak bond and man as the strong bond of power. While the androgynous being assumes the gradient between black and white, grey (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Dolce-Gabbana-Fall-Winter-2011-2012-Ad-Campaign-02. Available at: <http://oari.freshnet.se/files/2011/07/Dolce-Gabbana-Fall-Winter-2011-2012-Ad-Campaign-02.jpg>

### 3. Androgynous gender;

Bem (1974) explained the term "androgynous" (being ANDRO for male and for female, GYN), as individuals who embrace both genders; i.e., the relationship between physical and psychological androgyny, if there are those who are born with physical traits of both sexes, there are also those who seek androgyny at their opposite sex or gender. This liberalization on the Androgyny of (Bem, 1974, p.362), is "(...) a concept of what its time has come, a concept that appears to provide liberalization and humane alternative to the traditional, "sex-biased" patterns of mental health."

These hybrids beings, according to Woodhill & Samuels (2003), possess by nature an artistic predisposition and high creativity, their Intelligence Quotient (IQ) and Emotional Quotient (EQ) value are usually superior to others because they have in a single being the two values of genders. In the Bem model, androgynous individuals have a higher self-esteem, as well superior welfare to other genders, and this may be one of the characteristics of androgynous individuals.

Carl Gustav Jung (1916), argued that the androgynous first was the integration of pairs affixed "*anima und animus*", which is linked to intrapsychic functioning of each individual, both male in the and female and in vice and versa.

With the arrival of more conservative societies or civilizations came the "*Scientia Sexualis*", according to Foucault (1995) to prohibit the desires of the body through knowledge of sexuality. European civilizations like the Greeks and Romans in its beginning had no body modesty, however with the union of the State to the Catholic Religion, modesty and the division of the sexes started (Ribeiro, 2006, p.288).

Plato (1991) in his book "The Banquet," cites examples of the existence of these hybrid beings even then. Example is the Greek god Dionysus, God of Wine, who was a God portrayed with ambiguity gender, a figure seen as feminine and masculine together through extreme characteristics. Eliade (1984) cited by (Bem 1974, p.44) states that "The Androgynous is considered superior to both sexes precisely because it embodies the whole, and therefore perfection."

Plato (1991), described how the sexes emerged saying there were three beings Andros, Gynos and Androgynous. Andros being the male body, Gynos the female body and androgynous entity composed of two halves, one female and one male. Andros gave birth to gay men, Gynos to lesbians and Androgynous by having both heterosexuals.

Secor (1974), believed that androgyny was the ability of one person to possess all human characteristics, considering them complete human beings.

*“androgyny is the capacity of a single person of either sex to embody the full range of human character traits, despite cultural attempts to render some exclusively feminine and some exclusively masculine. The ability to access this “full range of character traits” and subject positions so that we read and write as “fully human men and women” is the ideal that Woolf is chasing.” (Secor, 1974, p.16)*

Jung (1916) argued that the androgynous was the integration of opposing pairs "anima und animus", i.e., a union of the two sexes in one being. However, this hybrid does not have to be inherent characteristics of male and female? Kristeva (1987) assumes a position of narcissistic centralism to androgynous.

*“The androgyne does not love, he admires himself in another androgyne and sees only himself, rounded, faultless, otherless. Coalescing in himself, he cannot even coalesce: he is fascinated with his own image.” (Kristeva, 1987, p.08)*

This statement by Kristeva (1987), puts androgyny focused on the aesthetic image of the individual, transforming it as an isolated being. It is connected to intrapsychic operation of each individual (Jung 1916, it is noteworthy that Carl Gustav Jung, psychiatrist, lived in a patriarchal era and monotheism nineteenth century). Being them part of a system that preserved man as a dominant being and women as dominated. The third kind, for not fitting into the social system, viewed as a deviation from the standard of a regulation stipulated by other social factors that governed and governing societies today would not be considered, socially generates social marginalization of this gender.

In PAQ<sup>1</sup> scheme constructed by Spence & Helmreich (1979), the term androgyny was applied to individuals who were assessed as "high male" and "female high", but not as a social group. In the BSRI<sup>2</sup> model believes that the individuals evaluated in "high female" and "high male", contrasting their gender, are considered the social group Androgyny at Bem (1974). The term androgynous is then introduced:

*“We introduced the term androgyny simply as a convenient label to identify individuals who score relatively high on both the M and the F scales of our particular instrument... Androgyny, as we have used the term, has no particular theoretical import, being intended to indicate nothing more than a relatively high degree of both instrumental and expressive personality traits, as defined by the PAQ” (Spence & Helmreich, 1979)*

#### **4. Practical development work;**

To validate what has been researched and confront with the authors that have addressed these issues and its variants in their work was necessary to conduct a questionnaire survey.

In the survey were asked to choose through a series of features as gender, namely sensitivity, hubris, weakness, homosexuality, strength, sentimentality, manly, bisexuality, courage, domination, compassion, heterosexuality, duality, emotionality, Male, strength, pride, submission and others. The characteristics associated with Gender Male, Female and Androgynous with a number of selected through the work of Bem (1974) as characteristic: the addition of sexual identity; the questions are multiple choice and closed, as shown in Figure 2.

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<sup>1</sup> Personal Attributes Questionnaire

<sup>2</sup> Bem Sex-Role Inventory

09- Assinale o que considera características "masculinas":( Escolha (3) três opções)

Sensibilidade		Força		Coragem		Dualidade		Vigor	
Arrogância		Sentimentalidade		Dominação		Emotividade		Orgulho	
Fraqueza		Másculo		Compaixão		Feminino		Submissão	
Homossexualidade		Bissexualidade		Heterossexualidade					

10- Assinale o que considera características "femininas":( Escolha (3) três opções)

Sensibilidade		Força		Coragem		Dualidade		Vigor	
Arrogância		Sentimentalidade		Dominação		Emotividade		Orgulho	
Fraqueza		Másculo		Compaixão		Feminino		Submissão	
Homossexualidade		Bissexualidade		Heterossexualidade					

11- Assinale o que considera características "andróginas":( Escolha (3) três opções)

Sensibilidade		Força		Coragem		Dualidade		Vigor	
Arrogância		Sentimentalidade		Dominação		Emotividade		Orgulho	
Fraqueza		Másculo		Compaixão		Feminino		Submissão	
Homossexualidade		Bissexualidade		Heterossexualidade					

Figure 02: Questions 09, 10, and 11. Characteristics of male, female and androgynous gender.

Later we asked the surveyed to assess ten (10) images and asking them to first answer among the three (3) gender option, "male", "female" and "androgynous". Then based on the analysis of the respondent on the image relating to a particular gender, asking about why the person choose that option, asking them through same options: Physiognomy Model, Clothing, Patterns, Attitude/Attitude and Other, this justification may be multiple answers. (See figure 03).



001- female



002- female



003- female



004- male



005- male



**Figure 03:** Edited images form de questioner 001 to 010.

When questioned about the images (see above image 03), (question 12 of the questionnaire, 001 to 010 pictures), by choosing a gender associating one or several characteristics, the overall sample responded that “clothing” is most important factor in that decision. The image 001 is a female, but is associated with the Androgynous by the clothing. In image 002, feminine image, associated with the original female gender, also by clothing. In image 003, feminine gender, associated to Androgynous by clothing. In image 004, masculine gender, associated with the Androgynous, also by clothing. In image 005, masculine gender, associated with the male gender by clothing. In image 006, masculine gender, associated with the Androgynous by clothing. In image 007, masculine gender, most associated to their original gender, also by his clothing. In image 008, masculine gender, most Androgynous responded, also by clothing. In image 009, masculine gender, associated to the original, male gender, through the clothing. In image 010, masculine gender, the overall sample responded to Androgynous gender, through the clothing. That is, the questions on the evaluation of the images, initially divided into male and female images, offering the third gender of the androgynous, respondents assume the androgyny as gender, and associate them across the garment. As Tajfel (1981) said, a group split in their way of dressing.

## 5. Presentation and discussion of results;

The sample was non-probabilistic accidental because it was collected freely and randomly, through the use of social networks for the dissemination of the survey. The questionnaire survey received 187 responses, of which only 166 were considered valid responses. The withdrawal response to the survey is 11.2% of the sample.

According to the construction of the survey, the first part characterizes the sample; it refers to the socio-demographic profile of respondents. Thus the sample is mainly composed of the Female (63%), with only 37% of Male respondents. As age sample characterization, a division was made by age groups: Youth (under 25 years), Young Adult (between 26-35 years), adults (aged 36 to 45 years) and finally the age of Mature (older than 45 years of age). The sample characterized by different age groups, the majority being young adults (53%), followed by Young (31%), Adults (12%) and Mature (4%). Regarding to the education, 46% of respondents are post-graduated, followed by 45% of degree holders of Higher Education, 8% have the level of secondary education (12th year) and only 1% with basic education (9th grade).

Come within the answers to the theme itself, and for the Sensitivity, Arrogance, Weakness, Homosexuality, Strength, Sentimentality, manly, Bisexuality, Courage, Domination, Compassion, Heterosexuality, Duality, Emotionality, Male, Strength, Pride, Submission in male characteristics, three options were chosen: Strength (26.5%) Masculine (17.4%), and force (14.6%). Also with some prominence are considered Courage (10.5%) and Domination (11.3%) characteristics. In female characteristics, three more were chosen sensitivity (24.5%), Emotionality (22.9%) and Sentimentality (16%). Outside features still considered as Female (9.6%) and Courage (6.3%) as being relevant in females gender. When asked about the

characteristics associated with gender Androgynous, three more were chosen Duality (20.1%), sensitivity (14%) and Bisexuality (11.3%). Another highlight is the Courage (11%) and Sentimentality (6.3%) characteristics.

## **6. Final Thoughts;**

According to research by Bem (1974), since then the male would be allied to a position of dominance while the female dominated, and everything that does not fit these pre-established standards would be considered as deviations from pre-established pattern according to Moscovici, (1976).

This study and according to question 09 of the survey related to the "masculine" characteristics, respondents associated, as in the study of Bem (1974), with the characteristics related to strength, vigour and manly. The same happened in Question 10, female characteristics, thus associating, as Bem (1974), the emotion, femininity and sentimentality. In question 11, on the androgynous characteristics, respondents associated the features of duality as in the study of Bem (1974) and then the sensitivity and bisexuality, adding the individual characteristics of androgynous on the sexual identity.

Here there is a problematic relating with the third most marked characteristic, bisexuality, sexual identity or sexual orientation, respondents believe that androgyny is as characteristic of this social group.

## **7. Future Prospective;**

In the future prospective, become relevant to this research to propose a wider and more detailed study, not only increasing the sample (mainly other professional areas), but mostly with another questionnaire targeted consumers themselves Androgynous. What are the characteristics of the Androgynous gender? What is the social role of Androgyny? How that information collected can be reversed in the creation of Androgynous gender? What are the signs or symbols with which these individuals identify themselves and perceive themselves as an image? These and other relevant issues raised here will lead to a deepening of the study and its improvement in future studies. This study is saved the relationship with the sexual identity of the individual. This relationship between gender and sexuality must be addressed in future studies.

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