CLOTHING CLUES

Ask for some volunteers to come to the front of the class (or use yourself if you feel comfortable in doing so). Challenge the volunteers and the class members to identify as many clothing clues as possible being sent by those students (or yourself).

Some examples might be:
- a sweatshirt or T-shirt with a logo of any kind tells where the person has traveled, what group he/she belongs to, or what interests he/she may have.
- jewelry a person is wearing.
- sports or athletic attire shows an interest in particular events.
- hairstyle would depict a person's nature (i.e., conservative vs. outgoing)
- uniforms or colors that depict membership in a club, organization, or school
- etc.

Continue the activity by explaining that colors and types of fabrics worn also give additional clues about the wearer. Use fabric swatches to depict each clue as it is covered and/or gather pictures of people that would appropriately depict each clue.

For example:
- WHITE is symbolic of purity and light; peace.
- PASTEL COLORS are soft and innocent, non-threatening, romantic, and delicate.
- BRIGHT COLORS say "look at me," are warm, and indicate cheerful, happy personalities.
- QUIET COLORS, such as tan, brown, and gray, are neutral, not forceful, subtle, dull if used alone. They say "I blend in with the crowd" and do not call attention to the wearer.
- BLACK is a forceful, dramatic color that shows power and sophistication. In some uses it is considered to be sexy. Negative images associated with black are drug users and Satan worshippers.
- MEDIUM TO HEAVY WEIGHT FABRICS, such as denim, corduroy, flannel, canvas, and leathers, are casual, outdoorsy, sporty.
- SOFT LIGHT WEIGHT FABRICS, such as silk, rayon, chiffon, lace, or soft velour, are more feminine and less powerful.
- THICK FABRICS, such as velour, fleece, cashmere, angora, chenille, etc., give a soft "cuddly" appearance.
- FIRM WEAVES, such as wool or wool blends, linen, rayon, or silk, give a business look and command more power.
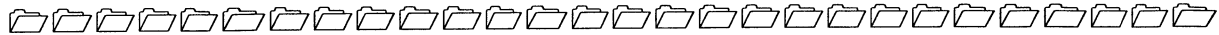
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Concepts for presentation/discussion:
- The clothing messages we send should be like we are and not just a reflection of others around us. Our dress should be individual and reflect our own personality.
- The clothing messages we send might be inaccurate or we may be sending a mistaken message about the type of person we really are.
- Changes in our clothing messages occur for many reasons. They may change several times in one day, according to the activities and people with whom we are associating.
- What are the pros and cons of dressing to please yourself, to please other people, or just to fit in?
- Why are groups of people, as well as individuals, stereotyped by dress?
- Everyone in a group is an individual, but the way they dress ties them to the group—for better or worse. (Examples: employees at a fast food restaurant, military personnel, police officers, cheerleaders, sports teams, music groups, school clubs, etc.)
- Is the image that ties us to a group fair, false, or a fact of life?
- What could be the results of mistaken images?

Break the students into small groups and give each group a large piece of paper with one of the following categories written on it:

1. Businessman or woman (business suit or attire)
2. Athletic type (jogger, football player, climber, skier, etc.)
3. Individualist (non-conformist, unique dresser)
4. Name brand watcher (trendy)
5. Fadster (outlandish, current extremes such as grungy or whatever is in for that year)
6. Preppie students (conservative, classic styles, limited adornment)
7. Western/country (jeans, boots, wide belts, western shirts, etc.)
8. Mainstream America (blue collar, middle class, traditional)

Have each student record the types of clothing, fabric choices, accessories, etc., that he/she would probably wear using the student activity guide on the following page. Let the students share some of their roles, activities, and dress with the class.