



SCOTTISH DRESS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF ETHNIC IDENTITY

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Once an individual adopts Scottish-American as his or her ethnic identity, how does he or she go about taking ownership in that ethnicity? This research proposes some answers to this question. Specifically, the role of dress in the construction of ethnic feelings is discussed. The issues of salience of ethnicity to one's self-definition and the degree of connectedness to that ethnic identity are also addressed.

Symbolic self-completion theory, which posits that an individual uses symbols in an attempt to complete a desired self-definition (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982), has been the primary basis for considering the data from this research. This study also found Arthur's (1997) work to be useful in expanding the concepts outlined in symbolic self-completion theory.

In-depth interviews with six women and five men were conducted to carry out the purpose of this study. The findings from this research are consistent with Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1982) and Arthur (1997). Individuals who find their Scottish ancestry to be a salient component of their self-definition use Scottish dress as a means to construct their ethnic identity. However, ethnic dress is not important to those who do not define themselves in terms of their ethnicity: "[I wouldn't wear a kilt], I'd feel like a fake," said one respondent.

Once an individual truly feels connected to his or her ethnic self-definition, dress becomes a less important symbol of ethnicity. One woman's comment illustrates this point, "Wearing something Scottish makes me feel Scottish, but I know that I am Scottish and that's probably the most important thing."

Arthur, L. B. (1997). Role salience, role embracement, and the symbolic self-completion of sorority pledges. *Sociological Inquiry*, 67(3), 364-379.

Wicklund, R. A., & Gollwitzer