

# **What Would Jesus Wear?: The Fashioning of the Cross**

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**What Would Jesus Wear?: The Fashioning of the Cross**

**Undergraduate Honors Thesis**

**Presented to the Honors Committee of**

**Texas State University – San Marcos**

**In Partial Fulfillment of**

**The Requirements**

**For Graduation in the Mitte Honors Program**

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**San Marcos, Texas**

**May, 2007**

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### Acknowledgements:

For my mother, who has always supported me in all my endeavors and raised me to be independent and strong, have an open mind, and a vivid memory of my father.

My sister, who really did pave the way for me to achieve what I have; without her assistance I would have been lost in this setting.

For Dr. Alyssa Adomaitis and Dr. Gwendolyn Hustvedt, whose combined wealth of knowledge astounds me. I am grateful for their constant help, encouragement, and persistence in contributing to this work.

For Brandon, who has supported me through all the frustrations, late nights, early mornings, brain implosions, and inevitable insanity that ensued from writing this thesis.

A big 'thank you' to Professor Diann McCabe and Dr. Heather Galloway of Mitte Honors without whom this, and many other things, would not be possible.

For all my friends who inspired me in this research, and helped me out more than once.

For my fellow Mitte Honors Thesis graduates, who have all suffered the same headaches and meltdowns with me: WE DID IT.

Finally, I would like to show my gratitude for the following people who helped in my research:

Professor Laura Ellis, and her spring 2007 students of Writing II,  
Dr. Sharon Welkey, and her spring 2007 students of Introduction to Fashion  
Merchandising,

Dr. Jeffrey Gordon, and his spring 2007 students of Philosophy 1305,  
Dr. Rebecca Raphael, and her spring 2007 students of Religious Studies?,  
Dr. Dana Garcia, and her spring 2007 students of Biology.

Thank You!

## **ABSTRACT: Fashioning of the Cross**

The use of the Cross in a non-religious, dress-related context has been the norm in contemporary society for the past several decades. However, the Cross is a historically sacred symbol of Christianity. The conflict presented by these divergent uses of the Cross in dress suggests that individuals choose to redefine the nature of this symbol from sacred to secular. Public figures, such as Madonna, Britney Spears, Jennifer Aniston, Cher, Naomi Campbell, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Jennifer Lopez, Elizabeth Hurley, and Paris Hilton, have all attracted attention by their wearing of the Cross.

The transitional use and connotation of religious symbols is not novel. A review of related research details the purpose of dress and symbols in appearance management. Having an understanding of prominent researchers in this field and their respective work provides a milieu for investigating the use of the Cross by college-peers in a public, dress-related context. The data collection procedure for this study was a semi-structured interview. Information from the interviews emphasizes the perceptions these college peers have about themselves and others regarding the Cross and what role that symbolic interaction plays.

## Chapter 1

*It does not seem fair that, unbeknown to you, every single item you put on your body literally shouts out your unconscious dreams and desires to the entire world. Everyone who sees you can read you like a book, yet you yourself have no idea what you're saying.*

- Cynthia Heimel  
1947

### **INTRODUCTION**

Media-induced imagery has persuaded many people in society to be desensitized to many societal issues such as sex, violence, and especially religion. Religion often is the cause of controversy: Katie Holmes, who was once a devout Catholic, converted to Scientology and Madonna's conversion to *Kabbalah* (WWRN 2004, p. 1), are but two examples.

The recent use of religious images, such as the Cross, used in non-religious dress and practice imply that these images such as the Cross may no longer carry the significance they once have had in Western culture. Examples of the transition from sacred to profane include the following, "Karl Lagerfeld decorated a Chanel bodice with verses from the Koran, Jean Paul Gaultier designed [an apparel collection that was] ...inspired by Hasidic Jews..."(Fashion, 2003, p. 1). This thesis investigates the following questions: (1) Are religious symbols publicly used by celebrities to make a statement because they will get media attention? (2) Is it a political statement? (3) Or is it just a fashion statement?

People in the fashion industry have admitted that "...fashion has a way of neutering the symbols it co-opts, like the AIDS ribbon or the breast cancer target. They lose their original meanings and become mere cute logos" (Fashion, 2003, p. 3). Lately, there has been religious paraphernalia that is not exclusive to dress but is largely



expressed with items of dress. For example, many people have been sighted wearing the t-shirt stating the acronym of "WWJD?", which stands for *What Would Jesus Do?*, Buddhist prayer bead bracelets, Hindu deities on t-shirts and wrapping paper, and "Jesus is my homeboy" merchandise. "Just as members of the Asian Indian Hindu community became incensed after singers Madonna and Gwen Stefani wore religious *bindis* and henna designs, so too do some Chinese Americans now question the current enchantment [of integrating cultural and religious symbols in dress] as insensitive and offensive" (Hua, 2000, p. 4). One disgruntled citizen stated "some people, like the salesguy from American Eagle, argue that since the trendy beads are not actual Buddhist prayer beads, wearing them for fashion is acceptable...It's infuriating how people can reject or ridicule others' religious or cultural practices only to turn around and take what they want from them to start a fashion trend" (Nguyen, 1999, p. 6).

Even though all of these items are being paraded within certain sects of society, the one symbol that continuously fluctuates is the Cross. In recent history, examples include scantily clad designers Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana modeled for a fashion spread in *W Magazine* (2007, pp. 204-225), accompanying their sexually charged poses with rosaries, jeweled Crosses and stiletto heels against a background of other religious imagery (Appendix C-3). Such bold mingling of juxtaposing concepts illustrates the hand that designers have in perpetuating the use of the Cross in dress. Many designers such as Dolce and Gabbana and Gucci, (Appendix D.6) have recently used the Cross to express their creative identity.

However, Robert Lee Morris, nationally known jewelry designer and acclaimed creator of Madonna's Crosses which were popularized during the early 1980s,

commented "[the Cross] ...comes on strong whenever the country is in trouble. Back then, people snapped up Crosses while dealing with the country's recession and the fighting in Beirut. Around the same time, Madonna was draping herself with rosaries and crucifixes while singing songs such as "Like a Virgin" (Ortiz, 2002, p. 1).

Other experts agree with the idea of political unrest being a cause for Cross-usage increases. "For many Americans, the Cross, of course, is a symbol of spiritual devotion. And although for the devout, it's not a style choice, wearing one has never been out of fashion, indeed, the crossover prevalence today may be partly due to the national mind-set and a collective quest for reassurance." "So much has happened to our country in the last two years, says Kevin Jones, Fashion Historian at the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising in California. "I have a feeling (the Cross resurgence) began with 9/11, and then we went into the war on terror and then into Iraq" (Christian symbol, 2004, p. 1).

The purpose of this research is to understand the re-fashioning of the Cross among college-age students in Central Texas. I want to evaluate college students' responses to the wearing and the use of the Cross along with the motivational factors that lead to the use of the Cross in dress-related context. I will discuss two major celebrity influences on mainstream popular culture, Madonna and Britney Spears, along with the influence of hip-hop culture on the Cross.

### Objectives

The objectives of my research include: (1) Collect data on religious symbol use from a segment of the population; (2) Measure attitudes towards

Cross -usage in a non-religious context; and (3) Compare attitudes of Cross - usage among various segments based on key variables.

### Supplemental Background Information

#### *Ornaments and Jewelry*

Anthropologists have estimated that ornamentation has been around for at least 20,000 years, based on evidence found in wall drawings of cave dwellers around the same time frame (Untracht, 1980, p. 1). Ornaments were used as protection against evil spirits or as a trophy from successful hunts or battles. Examples of early trophy jewelry are bones, teeth, and claws that were often strung as necklaces. When worn, it was believed that the animals' traits, such the strength of a tiger or speed of a cheetah, would transfer to the wearer. Many believed that early jewelry ornamentation had a spiritual connection with life before the time of organized religion.

#### *Origins of the Cross and Christian Cross*

What most people don't realize is that the Cross is actually one of the most ancient symbols in the world, encompassing several religions, predating Christianity. Use of the Cross in a religious context in ancient Egyptian imagery is notably common. Hieroglyphics integrate at least three variations of the Cross: One combines a Cross, with a circle at its intersecting points (Appendix A.1), as a symbol of the four elements. This first four-armed Cross suggested "divine potentiality" (Laliberte, 1960, p.22), and resembles the popular Celtic Cross (Appendix A.5). The most recognizable Egyptian Cross, representing life, is T-shaped with a loop on top (Appendix A.2). The T-shaped Cross is more accurately called Tau Cross or *crux ansata* (Laliberte, 1960, p.22). Other Cross designs have also been incorporated into ceremonial foods. In contemporary times,

the exuberant use of the Tau style of Cross is used among the "Gothic" crowd, who, ironically, are reputed to glorify the morose, rather than the seemingly direct original symbolism of the Cross.

What makes the Christian Cross more highly valued than other ancient Crosses is the symbolic story that is associated with it. The Roman Republic crucified hundreds, even thousands, of people for going against the State, such as the 6000 recaptured slaves crucified and set up along the Appian Way (Shelton, 1998, p. 179). However, it is Jesus Christ who is remembered for dying on the Cross. In the Bible, the Passion of the Cross is described in detail, making it a powerful instrument in illustrating the love God has for his children by sacrificing his only son in such a gruesome manner. The story is meant to remind believers of the suffering he faced to save them from the sins of the world. The Cross associated with the Christian faith (based on how and on what Jesus was crucified) is mostly represented as the Latin Cross, which is a vertical arm that has a shorter horizontal arm traversing it near the top (Appendix A.3), and was preferred by the Western church (Believe, 1997, p.1). Other variations adopted are the Greek, with equilateral arms (Appendix A.4), or Egyptian Tau Crosses, though a historically accurate portrayal would be a simple stake. Like many of the parables told in the Bible, details were modified to reflect more of a mythological history than an accurate one for the sake of promoting the Church's interests or maintaining a certain image.

In the Middle Ages when illiteracy abounded, believers had to rely on the spoken and pictorial word, rather than reading it directly from the Bible, and they used the Cross as a visual aid for prayer. In the earlier Christian symbols Jesus' physical image was not used, alone or on the Cross, but "rather the Church was interested in showing his

[essential] nature. The Biblical figure for Christ was the Lamb of God” (Laliberte, 1960, p. 34). A lot of thought and care went into designing Crosses, especially those bearing the image of Christ (in one form or another), or his nature, so as to accurately portray the mission of the Christian faith. The Lamb of God figure, alongside a Cross, became popular in the fourth century and was later superimposed onto the Cross itself. This newly arranged symbol is a precursor to the crucifix many are familiar with.

Despite its somewhat strong following, enough of one to have a progressive development of imagery, the early Christians were indeed the minority. It was not until the reign of Constantine in 410 A.D., and after his personal conversion, that Christianity spread and became accepted by the Byzantine Empire. Constantine’s conversion to Christianity was a monumental catalyst for the pioneers in the early Christian church.

The Cross had by that time become so widely used that, by the Ninth Century, there were already two different versions of the Cross. The versions emerged from the need for visual separation between classes or positions in society. For example, some versions were affiliated with religious procession, while others were reserved for archbishops (Laliberte, 1960, p.38). It is my hypothesis that dual representation of the Cross parallels the contemporary fashion industry's history of connecting designer brands or labels to selected imagery, this establishing it as a status symbol. The Crosses seen the most in Catholic imagery today tend to include the crucified Jesus which appeals to the human and visceral response to physical pain; Protestant imagery prefers a more philosophical and cerebral "message" version of the Cross that emphasizes the positive in the afterlife.

## Cultural Icons

To begin the analysis of the Cross in dress, I will first discuss the impact of celebrities and cultural icons that have used and incorporated the Cross in their dress. Many cultural icons are synonymous with fashion. Celebrities are considered a form of authority, as fashion trendsetters, because they usually wear original designer pieces, get publicity for wearing designer labels, and are often emulated by adults and adolescents who aspire toward the glamorous life. Several noted celebrity fashion examples of the past are Audrey Hepburn's look in the movie classic, *Breakfast at Tiffany's* where Hepburn wore a Givenchy original and Jacqueline Kennedy-Onassis' signature look of oversized sunglasses and her pillbox hat and matching gloves.

However, Madonna Louise Veronica Ciccone, otherwise known as Madonna, is a more recent celebrity yet an icon for many reasons, some of which are controversy and overt sex appeal, which is known to sell. Madonna has had influential success on the music industry with many number one hits such as "Like a Virgin", "Live to Tell", and "Holiday". Her success in music has in turn led her to other aspects of the media: movies, fashion, tours, and print (books and magazines)-all of which have also facilitated mass emulation. One clear example of Madonna's impact in society is her dress, starting with the Cross, but continually evolving along with her persona. Bloomingdale's created a special *Evita* Boutique commemorating the film's look, and though the film was based on Eva Peron, it was Madonna's portrayal that helped it sell.

Madonna has often used Crosses in her wardrobe, music videos, and even

symbols in her live performances (Appendix B-1.1 through B-1.4). Such artists, in the 1980s, who followed in her footsteps, were Gloria Estefan, Wendy James, Prince, Annie Lennox, Patsy Kensit, Bananarama, and Cher. One of her biggest critics is the Catholic Church, to which she states “My problem with the Catholic Church is that they have always separated sexuality and spirituality...it’s just a way of controlling people. That’s why they freak out when they see me dressed in corset with a crucifix hanging around my neck” (Voller, 1992, p. 73). A representative for the Church of England has also expressed its extreme disgust with Madonna’s current use of the Cross as ‘offensive’. Though she no longer wears the crucifix as much in her latest Confessions Tour, she still prompts members of the church to ask “why would someone with so much talent seem to feel the need to promote herself by offending so many people?” (BBC News, 2006, p. 1). What is being referred to is the enormous mirrored Cross on which Madonna poses, wearing crown of thorns and a deep scarlet-colored blouse, while singing what Madonna insists is a song about the African AIDS crisis. (Appendix B-1.5) As much as an artistic statement she wants to make, or the message she is trying to convey, many others still believe, like David Muir of the Evangelical Alliance, “Madonna’s use of Christian imagery is an abuse and it is dangerous” (BBC News, 2006, 1). The controversy has even gone as far as the concert being described as a “satanic orgy” by Aleksandr Shargunov, who is the chairman of the Russian public committee for moral revival of the homeland (BBC News Russia, 2006, p. 2).

Although Madonna has created an image using the Cross, another celebrity, Britney Spears has donned the crucifix on rosaries, and for that reason, has also been allegedly called out by the Vatican as someone who is blasphemously wearing the Cross while leading an un-Christian life (Appendix B-2.1). Contrary to that vocal disapproval, secretary of the Catholic Church's department for Christian life and worship, Father Allen Morris, believed that while rosary-wearing celebrities were "not doing wicked things and leading us astray, I am sorry that people are wearing them as fashion accessories and are not mindful of their religious significance...It is a very odd thing to wear as a piece of decoration - the Cross is an instrument of torture. Why not wear an electric chair?" (BBC News Church, 2004, p. 2). The emulation of a person who is admired extends to all types of celebrities.

Specific trends, like the wearing of Crosses, are often inspired directly by celebrities. Knock-off jewelry recreates the celebrity-inspired piece for mass-consumption. For example, Britney Spears and England's beloved soccer star, David Beckham, were both photographed wearing rosaries, and since, sales are booming across the U.K. (BBC News Church, 2004, p. 1). A Cross manufactured to look like one Spears was seen wearing is for sale on a website that advertises with the phrase "Look like the stars". She has recently been photographed wearing a Star of David necklace (Appendix B-2.2), demonstrating that she does not discriminate between religious imagery she chooses to wear, similar to the way Madonna has done in the past with wearing the red *Kabbalah* string. Once Madonna was seen wearing the red *Kabbalah* string, many red strings were made



for mass consumption. To further demonstrate that Spears does not discriminate between religious imagery, she also decorated her body with a tattoo of a black, white, and pink Cross while wearing the Star of David (MSNBC, 2007).

Concurrently, Hip-Hop is a phenomenally growing segment of the music industry. Hip-hop Jewelry is considered “much more than an inconsequential accessory, it signifies everything from aspirations to power to the achievement of an elite status, with numerous grey (or platinum) tones in between” (Williams 2007). Rappers like LL Cool J (Appendix B-3.2) and the group Run DMC flooded the mainstream music world with the new look of heavy gold “ropes” and “dookie chains”, along with extravagant Crosses (Appendix B-3.1). Diddy and Usher have followed suit (Appendix B-3.3, D.4). Their interpretation of symbolic interaction relies on acquired material wealth and the journeys they have encountered on their way to stardom.

### Hypotheses

After reviewing current articles and newsworthy stories on the Cross, I hypothesize that the use of the Cross as a mere fashion accessory is more frequent than for truly religious purposes, in turn causing people to feel indifferent about how the Cross is used or worn. Another speculation is that certain factors, such as church scandals and Gay Lesbian Bisexual, and Transgender (GLBT) issues reduce Cross usage in general, while socially detrimental events like 9/11 or the War on Terror increase it. Furthermore, I believe that people who wear the Cross for religious reasons are more likely to be offended by the non-religious dress-related use of the Cross by others as well as feel distrustful of those who do. If

given a choice, I assume participants will identify most with more traditional Crosses if they are Christian, and probably prefer non-traditional Crosses if Non-Christian.

## **Chapter 2**

### Theoretical Orientation and Review of Related Research

Presented in this chapter of my thesis, are definitions of key terms, theoretical framework used to guide my research investigation and a review of literature related to the variables under investigation.

#### Definitions of Key Terms of Research:

##### *Definitions:*

Key terms that are relevant in this research are defined, in order to comprehend the difference between jewelry and religious artifact, the impact of religion's effect on fashion, and, as well as the position each in society. Definitions of particular items are also included so the distinction can be made when comparisons are illustrated.

##### *Definition of Dress:*

The definition of dress consists of all modifications and of supplements added to the human body. Dress includes visual changes as well as other modifications that involve changes in taste, smell, sound, and feel of the body. Dressing the body using body modifications and body supplements facilitates or hinders consequent verbal or non-verbal forms of communication. In this context I will refer to the Cross as “a

modification that aids in non- verbal communication within human interaction” (Eicher, 1995 p.1; Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992).

*Definition of Fashion:*

A socio-cultural phenomenon in which a certain preference in varying areas of life such as technology (i.e., iPod), a person (i.e., David Beckham) and the use of accessories in dress (i.e., the Cross) is shared by a large number of people that usually lasts for a short time period within six-months to a year. This is then eventually replaced by another new preference, which becomes “in-fashion” (Tortora & Eubank, 1998, p. 6).

*Definition of Cross:*

The Cross is essentially composed of two lines intersecting at right angles. The Cross is also a simplified version of the crucifix in which the body of Jesus is not portrayed. Throughout time, the Cross has become modified with more details such as curved extremities or ornamental points (Knight 2005), an example of which is the Maltese Cross (Appendix A.6). Although the ancient Crosses predate the Christian symbolism, the history of which is briefly discussed, this study will focus on the Christian Cross.

*Definition of Crucifix:*

A crucifix is a Cross with a representation of Jesus’ body, or corpus. It is a principal symbol of the Christian religion. The body of Jesus is sometimes depicted as a realistic dying figure, which emphasizes Christ’s sacrifice of death by crucifixion, or as resurrected and wearing a robe (The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001-05).

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

The work of authors, Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1982) on symbolic self-

completion, and the combined works of Mead (1934), Blumer (1969), and Stone (1962) on symbolic interaction provides the theoretical framework for this thesis. A review of related research details the purpose of symbols used in dress and the communication processes of the symbols during human interaction. Having an understanding of prominent researchers in this field and their respective work provides a background for investigating the use of the Cross by college-peers in a public, dress-related context.

### Theoretical Framework

#### *Symbolic Self-completion*

Wicklund and Gollwitzer's theory of symbolic self-completion (1982) is defined as when a person engages in self-symbolizing or the use of symbols to build and retain a complete self-definition, when he or she senses a lack of completion (p. 34). This theory provides an understanding of dress as non-verbal communication in a public context in which symbolism is often interpreted by the reviewer (other people's perceptions). Also, it offers the notion that the wearer cannot affirm what he or she believes has been achieved until a verification of positive feedback has come from the reviewer (p. 35).

However, previous research in the field of symbolic interaction includes the work of Mead, who pioneered the concept that a person's self is a social product. Building up Mead's work (1934), Blumer has stated that "human interaction is mediated by the use of symbols, by interpretation, or by ascertaining the meaning of one another's actions" (1969). Whether it is recognized or not by the common person, symbolic interaction is active every day, helping to shape our perceptions of other people, as well as oneself, and inevitably affects human behavior.

### *Non-verbal communication & Identity*

Stone (1962) outlined a four-part process—program, review, challenge, and validation—that can be used to assess how the Cross is used in dress by establishing a personal front which can impact the effectiveness in communicating an identity (Adomaitis, 2004).

(1) An individual's program "are responses about the wearer's appearance by the wearer" (Stone, p. 96); (2) review is an evaluation made by others in response to the presentation of the program, which is the identity communicated through the appearance and dress of an individual (Stone, 1962). According to Stone an individual may change this or her appearance in response to the review of others. (3) When the review results in a challenge, the announced identity is not attributed (e.g., you are not religious). In response to a challenge, an individual can choose to redefine the identity that their appearance and dress were attempting to communicate or give up that identity. Stone noted that a review affects subsequent behaviors of both the reviewed and the reviewer. (4) When the review results in a validation, the announced identity is attributed to the person (e.g. you are religious). A validation could subsequently facilitate ability to perform a role whereas a challenge could subsequently hinder ability to perform a role.

### Literature Review

There is a limited amount of literature that investigates the specific use of the Cross in dress-related contexts. However, there is extensive information on the use of certain symbols such as the swastika in dress, which have negative connotations and denotations which was not used as part of the literature review. Also, research involving the use of the Cross, or other religious symbols, by clergy was irrelevant to my

investigation of the Cross.

Giannone (2005) has researched the Muslim headscarf as a symbol of cultural conflict when worn as a public display of political and/or religious belief. “Classified as a religious and political sign, the headscarf is declared to be incompatible with the neutrality required of public institutions” (Giannone 2005). The use of the Cross in a public dress context has also created conflict for the same reasons. Society is attempting to maintain the sense of neutrality it values in its secular nature, understanding that the power of symbolic non-verbal communication interaction is strong and could compromise the goal of ideal political correctness when displayed publicly. For example, wearing a Cross in the workplace could be misunderstood as being part of the uniform, and therefore display the possibility of religious bias.

Kilicbay and Binark (2002) at the same time, however, designs of the *jilbab* are being modified to better fit into the realm of neutrality and therefore create a more accepting perception of the veil. The *jilbab* is an outfit consisting of a gown and headscarf worn by Muslim women; its purpose is to conceal the shape of the body (Davies 2005). Kilicbay and Binark researched the topic of veiling in contemporary Turkey to “explore how religious iconography is changing to reflect new patterns of consumption and pleasure”.

Suzuki and Best (2003) investigated and analyzed the intriguing question of who is responsible for trends in dress. They focus on the importance of trendsetters, and how their role is usually overlooked in the cycle of fashion. They argue, “trendsetting requires resources-particularly leisure time to devote to fashion, disposable income, and communication networks” (2003). While it is unclear who officially began the current

use of the Cross in a non-religious dress-related context, many celebrities and other cultural icons are involved in the practice, and thus become cultural vehicles that are witnessed and then followed by others. As trendsetters, they also alter the meaning of such symbols through their own symbolic interaction.

According to Ogle and Eckman (2002) the linking of symbols in dress and the behavior by those who wear them had serious repercussions in the case of the 1999 Columbine High School shooting. Their research interprets the deeper meanings of dress-related behavior and its effects, particularly the responses from the media. The so-called “Trench Coat Mafia”, to which the two shooters belonged, could easily be identified by the long black trench coats they wore. The media’s reaction to the revenge they sought on the athletes, who teased them because of their appearance, labeled this crime as an appearance-related social problem. A second example of symbolic interaction in this incident was that the athletes could be identified by their white baseball caps. Since that tragic event, the perceptions of anyone who wore a black trench coat could be influenced by the new connotations, and the importance of appearance management became more prominent in schools. In another analysis of the Columbine H.S. shooting, Hethorn and Kaiser (1998) used Goffman's theory of dramaturgy (1959) which defines the inconsistency between identities that are “given” and those that are “given off”. Dramaturgy is the process that compares the presentation of one's identities to onstage management such as the dramatic theatre. Performance in theatre, according to Goffman, is comparable to a performance in life. "Performance" as defined by Goffman is "all the activity of a given participant on the occasion that serves to influence in any way of the other participants" (p. 15). People manage appearances and actions to communicate a

certain identity and to influence others' perceptions. It further explains that the various identities discerned are reliant on the context of location, situation, and manner in which a symbol is worn (Damhorst 1989; Hethorn & Kaiser, 1998). Even those students who would not participate in the same behavior as the shooters, but shared the same taste in dress had to modify their behavior and dress so as to not unintentionally send the wrong message.

The message one might receive from a Cross dangling into a dancer's cleavage is probably not the same one a religious person would send by wearing the same Cross over a habit; so though the symbol itself is identical, it is the context into which it is placed that changes the meaning.

Barnard (2001) attempts to determine where meaning of dress comes from, and investigates several theories. He relates the combination of assembling clothing to *syntagm*, which is a sequence of words in a particular syntactic relationship to one another; a construction (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/syntagm> Retrieved on 27 April 2007). He clarifies the two major kinds of potential explanations as being either external, where the meaning is assigned by someone, either the designer or wearer, or internal when the object itself generates meaning based on its qualities. The external authorities of image follow the hierarchy of 1) designer 2) wearer 3) spectator (fashion critic, journalist, parent etc.) and 4) religious/political institutions. All of these theories regarding how meaning is assigned to a symbol were essentially disproved because it was determined that the meaning changed from place to place, situation to situation, and any assigned meaning from any of the external authorities could be disregarded. In order for there to be only one meaning, none of those variables could change in any way. Taking



an object out of its intended context alters the meaning. It was also disproved that the object itself generates the entire, and only, meaning. "It is as if the qualities are inherent in the garment or the textile; one just has to look at the garment to apprehend its meaning" (2001). The meaning of the symbol is related to its context, because "an external authority has decided what a certain set of colours, patterns and cuts will mean." (2001). For example, if a man wears a jogging suit at a gym, he is considered athletic; however the same jogging suit worn at a wedding would be out of place. This ties back in to the idea of a meaning needing acknowledgement to achieve completion. In conclusion, Barnard stated that "new items of fashion and clothing change their context, the *syntagm*, in which they appear and thus alter the meanings of all other items in the *syntagm*, in the same way as the addition of a word to a sentence, for example, alters the meaning of that sentence."

Evans (2000) investigated research, based on work by Walter Benjamin's transitions of symbols in culture. The idea that a symbol must be used continuously, regardless of the context, in order to stay recognizable is supported by Benjamin's statement that "every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably." Evans makes a valid point that fashion itself is a collection of "dislocated images" that inherently contain innumerable meanings that can be both complex and contradictory. Evans also noted, on the other hand, that critics of postmodernism, such as Frederic Jameson, believed that the recurrent use of symbols was a "deathly recycling of history which emptied out meaning, rendering it bankrupt, good only for costume drama and fantasy." Seen in this light, the recent prevalence of the Cross in fashion supports Jameson's theory, since its meaning has been

altered and diluted by symbolic interaction.

Beaudoin (1998) suggests that because the crucifix is a “religious symbol dear to an earlier generation of Catholics, its fashionability and appropriation as an accessory function as a subtle mockery of the institution”. He also argues that Generation X’ers have consequently turned the crucifix into a “free-floating religious talisman in our ready-made ‘religiosity’”. Beaudoin poses the theory that crucifix has been targeted as an easily commodifiable item, (a fashion statement), because it symbolizes “something with which some X’ers identify, no matter whether they come from various religious traditions or none at all”. Many Xers currently wear the crucifix and Cross as a form of communication to rebel against older generations.

Pardun and Mckee (1995) studied how frequently rock musicians use religious and sexual imagery in music videos, as well as how frequently the two were combined within the same music video. They document that the use of religious symbols, especially the Cross, is becoming more and more prominent in popular culture and that religious imagery was very often deliberately depicted in the music videos. The most interesting result of their study was that the religious imagery was more likely to be paired with sexual imagery than without it. The rock videos’ portrayal of religious imagery seems to be used as an agent of rebellion, rather than Christian faith.

Edmonds and Cahoon's (1993) research investigates how the use of symbols directly affects the perceptions people have about the person using them. They further state that a person's perceptions are often related to their religious beliefs. Religiously-influenced behavior modifications in dress were analyzed by using responses to Allport’s Religious Orientation Scale, which categorized a group of college women into “intrinsic,

extrinsic, and indiscriminate proreligious.” The intrinsic students inherently relate to a group based on how many items from the intrinsic scale they agreed with; the extrinsic students had the opposite pattern of the intrinsic; and the indiscriminate proreligious were students who agreed with items on both scales, and responded favorably to religion in all senses. The results indicated that a “significant interaction between clothing style and religious sentiment occurred”. Religiosity directly affected the dress-related behavior of “intrinsic” women in choosing to wear non-revealing clothing, while those categorized as “extrinsic” and “indiscriminate” women opted revealing clothing. In their study, they also found a high level of consistency between what the women actually chose to wear and their attitudes about the clothing. The results imply that “intrinsic” women follow their internalized beliefs that disagree with dressing revealingly; in contrast, the “extrinsic” women are more likely to wear revealing clothing due to the influence of the media, and its perceptions of what are considered socially acceptable justifications for wearing sexually provocative clothing.

Schlenker (1980) has researched the importance of a person's role, self-concept and social identity in impression management. His findings include the impact of symbol use through dramaturgy, which is a metaphorical term used to describe how an individual “performs” a chosen “role” in life, which confirms with Goffman's (1959) theoretical framework on dramaturgy.

## Chapter 3

### Methods

Since this study intends to comprehend the motives behind the deliberate or unintentional use of religious symbols, specifically the Cross, the grounded theory approach seemed to be the most appropriate evaluation tool. According to Glaser, a grounded theory approach includes: (1) the need to get out in the field, if one wants to understand what is going on; (2) an emphasis on change and processes and the variability of and complexity of life; and (3) the interrelationship between meaning in the perception of the subjects and their action. It is a qualitative method that allows for the discovery of “the social psychological processes in an experience” (Morse, 1994). Grounded theory “can be used to uncover the nature of people’s actions and experiences and perspective which are as yet little known in the world of research” The description is “generated by systematic collection and data analysis” (Glaser, 1992, p.12). A qualitative approach was used to investigate the use of the Cross in a public, dress-related context. Because qualitative methods have been proven to be successful to capture the essence of “an experience” (van Manen, 1990).

Each part of the grounded theory approach was important to the research. Getting out into the field in this case included observing the use of the Cross in a fashion context (i.e., shopping mall and media). Surveying college students with semi-structured interviews, made it easier to understand the perspective regarding the use of the Cross in a non-religious, dress-related context. The observations were also implemented in the formulation of the instrument. The theoretical framework used in this research is a combination of the symbolic self-completion and symbolic interaction theories. Field

research results for this study were obtained by conducting a semi-structured interview with college freshmen and college seniors in central Texas, which allowed each participant's views to be expressed, as opposed to limiting the research to quantitative results that do not answer the question of why a person does something.

### Observations

#### *Media Research*

Fashion magazines such as *Vogue*, *Elle*, and *W* often show famous people adorned with Crosses in their photo spreads or advertisements, and luxurious Haute Couture houses have featured the Cross on their runway models. Gucci's fall 2006 show featured models parading in eighteenth century-inspired gowns, paired with enormous black Crosses (Appendix C-1.1-1.3). Another example of the Cross making an appearance in high-fashion magazines is in a Dolce & Gabbana ad, where the Crosses were small and subtle (Appendix C-2.2); or, contrary to that, the large embellished gold Cross held by the model in the Lady Hawke fashion spread in *West East* magazine (Appendix C-2.1). In some images, celebrities rather than supermodels, are featured, further perpetuating the cycle of emulation. Some celebrities, such as actress Portia de Rossi (D-3) and singer Missy Elliot, are widely seen wearing the Cross while in public, or photographed in magazines and the Internet. Missy Elliot, seen with singer Madonna, in an ad for Gap clothing store, wore a Cross reminiscent of her hip-hop background (Appendix D-1). Actress Penelope Cruz, who's last name coincidentally translates into 'Cross' in Spanish, appeared wearing multiple Cross necklaces on the cover of *Elle* magazine, as well as throughout the photo spread (Appendix D-2). Model Naomi Campbell, who is infamous for her temper, has worn the Cross at various fashion functions (D-7).

While the intention or the motive for wearing the Cross is usually unexplained, there are instances where a celebrity's faith is explained. The caption of a picture of Rod Stewart in the October 2005 issue of *Fashion Rocks*, states that the Cross worn by Stewart is his own (Appendix D-5), implying his religious affiliation. Steven Baldwin has made it a new life goal to spread the word of God by starting his own Christian youth ministry. He has also, since, publicly worn Crosses and religious apparel that promote his faith through his ministry (Appendix E-1.1, 1.2).

### *Field Research*

Crosses are one of the most prominent symbols in contemporary American society. West Oaks Mall in southwest Houston, Texas was chosen for random site observation because it is in a rather accessible area of the city within a very diverse community. It was an ideal site in which to witness the Cross in a commercial venue, as several stores and kiosks, catering to a variety of markets had at least one in stock. Four national retail stores were observed: Forever 21, Claire's Accessories, Gordon's Jewelers, and Hot Topic. In addition to those, two locally owned businesses-a jewelry kiosk and a Christian merchandise store were also included in this study.

The first, Forever 21, is a store filled to the brim with the trendiest styles aimed at women and junior girls. There are 390 mainly mall-based stores in the United States and in Canada. Forever 21, Inc. owns Forever 21 classic, which targets women and junior girls, and Forever XXI, which includes men's, women's, lingerie, footwear, cosmetics, and accessories (Hoover's.) The store studied was Forever 21 classic since it seems to be the most commonly found store of the two. Its accessory racks featured a variety of costume jewelry, the majority of which were necklaces. Mixed in with fang/claw

pendants and giant plastic baubles were about three to four variations of Cross necklaces (Appendix F-1.1). Two were delicate and feminine, closely resembling Catholic rosary beads (Appendix F-1.3). The others bore larger Crosses with chunky stones and beads on the chains (Appendix F-1.2). The prices made these Cross necklaces affordable to mass consumption.

Claire's Stores, Inc. includes Claire's, Claire's Boutiques, and the Icing, all of which are meant for "frugal, fashion conscious teen and pre-teen girls" (Hoover's.) They operate 3, 000 plus boutiques located primarily in malls in all fifty states, Canada, Europe, Japan, Puerto Rico, the UK, and the Virgin Islands. The items in the West Oaks Mall store, were abundant, and represented a very wide range of tastes from "Gothic" to "Princess". The Cross observed in this context was reduced to nothing more than a charm, as was clearly printed on the box in which it came (Appendix F-2.1). There seemed to be no religious significance to it at all as it was in a package that also contained hearts and other 'trivial' objects such as fairies and princess crowns.

Gordon's Jewelers was also visited and seemed to be the most 'sophisticated' retailer to carry the Cross. Gordon's is a subsidiary of the Zale Corporation with 2400 locations, 300 of which are Gordon's Jewelers in 35 states and Puerto Rico. The stores are mostly in malls and cater to the "upper moderate customer" with "compelling regionalized assortments that are tailored to the specific market" (Zalecorp.) The designs offered are considered to range from "classic to contemporary" (Zalecorp), which is accurately reflected in their selection of Crosses. The Crosses are also labeled under a few categories that pertain to religious celebratory events, keeping the intentionality of the Cross as close to the religious motivations as possible, compared to the other retailers.

Such celebrations include baptisms and first communions. Most designs were slender and simple Crosses made of gold or silver. Plain Crosses were also more common here than crucifixes. In this researcher's opinion, these Crosses were definitely the most modest Crosses encountered (Appendix F-3.1), and even if the Cross was abstracted, it maintained a classy aesthetic (Appendix F-3.2).

The fourth venue, Hot Topic was the most interestingly varied in its selection of Crosses. Hot Topic claims to be and have “everything about the music” (Hottopic.com.) There are 660 plus of this “punkish, teen-oriented retail chain” (Hoover’s) stores in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. It carries rock music-inspired clothing and accessories in what resembles a popular industrial club. The founders of Hot Topic keep the MTV generation in mind, specifically those between the ages of twelve and twenty-two. Of the Crosses observed many referenced death, and seemed to reflect the realm of the macabre, rather than the ‘light’ and ‘hope’ of Christian faith. Most of the Crosses did not have a high polish like the ones at Gordon’s Jewelers, but instead had oxidized details, making them seem aged. The Crosses appeared in various formats throughout the store. Many of them were heavy and were in necklace form (Appendix F-4.1). One particularly noteworthy Cross had a combination of skulls at the tip of each arm, and a rose at the axis connected to a rosary bead-chain hybrid (Appendix F-4.2). Some Crosses were featured on tiny coffin pendants that had skeletons in the interior or on graphic print handbags (Appendix F-4.3, F-4.4). The common thread was that they all had a defiant connotation. The stores are stocked with items they believe to be the most popular with that twelve to twenty-two aged target market, based on trends set by celebrities. The intention is therefore, to fulfill the need of the consumer to fit into a group, to relate to the music scene or to a celebrity.



The store's marketing strategy is based on the theory of symbolic self-completion, as the consumer hopes to attain a desired status through association with the material objects found in the store. In short, the next best thing to being a celebrity or rock star is to at least look like one, and Hot Topic merchandise makes that possible. In addition to the personal aspect of self-completion, accomplished by wearing clothing or accessories from Hot Topic, everyone who is familiar with the store's philosophy and image associated with it, can therefore assume the wearer belongs to a particular group of people. Examples are as obvious as the name of a band spelled out on a t-shirt, or as subtle as the style in which cosmetics are worn; more specific to this study are the details of the Hot Topic style Cross itself and/or how it is worn by the person.

A kiosk had a lot of flashy accessories, both secular and religious. The Crosses, however, were either outrageously gaudy or lumped in with various other generic shapes in a display case labeled 'dog tags' (Appendix F-5.1). The Crosses were rather large and shiny, one with what can only be assumed to be diamonds or cubic zirconias (Appendix F-5.2), but lacked the modesty so revered and promoted in the Protestant faith.

Finally, the retailer whose wares are intended to contain a personal or public religious message had a surprising variety of Crosses offered. It was here that the transition into what is perceived as 'cool' or "uncool" by the masses is most visible. The market of religious goods has had to adapt in order to stay afloat against a world full of reality television and mindless consumerism. There were several Crosses that remained unembellished in their appearance, but somehow were still categorized as "quality costume pendants" (Appendix F-6.1). Many more had modified styles to conform to popular imagery, and, as such, camouflaged the Cross. Two prominent examples of

disguise were: 1) t-shirts with a Cross resembling a motorcycle jacket emblem, and 2) a Starbucks logo. Alison Jameson, an Edinburgh-based fashion PR consultant, stated in an article for the Scotsman that "some people associate Christianity with fashion faux pas such as "Jesus sandals" worn with socks, so Christian clothing was due an image revamp" (MacGregor, 2002, p.2). "Revamping" can also be seen in religious items other than apparel, such as a teen-oriented Bible aimed at young girls. The Bible is formatted to resemble a fashion magazine, since the publishers' studies revealed that teen girls respond more positively to magazine formats than the dense formats of the traditional Bible (Solomon, 2003, p. 17). It is understandable when a manufacturer concedes and starts using a more relatable image in order to stay in business, but one sometimes ponders if it is not just as border-line sacrilegious as any of the other Crosses decked out in diamonds or skulls. The Cross resembling a motorcycle jacket emblem was very subtle in the way it conveyed its message, as one must look closely to observe the scripture "encoded" within the design (Appendix F-6.2). The design based on the Starbucks logo was more obvious, featuring two Crosses behind an image of Jesus (Jesus' image replacing that of the mermaid in the Starbucks design) placed within the logo, circled by a Bible verse circling the image (Appendix F-6.3). This example effectively connected a popular culture image to a religious message, but in turn sacrificed the true meaning of the Scripture through its association with such a recognizable icon of mass consumption. Several more blatant images on t-shirts included a Cross made of two Band-aids with the phrase "Jesus Heals" written in red to signify blood, along with a drop of blood hanging from the last letter of the phrase to further stress the meaning (Appendix F-6.4). Another religious t-shirt shows a plain white Cross on a blue background, with the word 'believe'

in huge letters written on the horizontal arms of the Cross (Appendix F-6.5). The extremes of representing the Cross in both a religious and a secular context were evident, but there were also some intermediary expressions of the symbol, such as metal-studded ones on leather cuffs that might appeal to a "hard rocker" personality (Appendix F-6.6). In most examples these representations rely on the symbol of the Cross itself to allow the viewer to deduce his or her own message.

Forever 21, the kiosk, and the religious retailer also cater to the theory of symbolic self-completion by providing the connection to an image the consumer wishes to realize. Forever 21 carries what teenagers can wear to look more like their favorite celebrities; the kiosk has a selection of merchandise relatable to that of famous rappers; the religious retailer offers redemption as well as vehicles for evangelization, which fulfill the ideals of Christian doctrine.

#### Data Collection:

A pilot study was conducted prior to distributing the final research instrument. The pilot study was used to generate questions for the instrument, based on general reactions and responses to the subject matter, format, wording, clarity of questions etc. The questions were formulated in such a way as to encourage the participant's sharing opinions about the general subject of symbols in dress, as well as both personal and collective dress-related behaviors. Though the pilot study was useful in writing the instrument, the responses were not used in the final research.

Once the final instrument was generated, it was distributed to mix of college students. A group of various ethnic, religious, cultural and educational backgrounds was essential in attaining a sample of responses that were relatable to the general population

of Texas State. This was ensured by selecting core curriculum classes to survey, such as a basic Philosophy class, since it is required that every student take it. The instrument was sent via email as well as distributed in person.

In reference to one of the hypotheses proposed, that life and educational experiences impact perceptions of dress, as one person's perspective of life and immediate surroundings is very different from another person's. The study was narrowed down to two specific groups. The purpose of focusing on college students was to compare the mentality of each group based on their experiences, and how those experiences, along with their personal backgrounds and current events, have influenced their perceptions of the Cross in a non-religious dress-related context, if at all. Age was not necessarily a major factor, but college experience was. Presumably, one enters college with either an open mind or in hopes of expanding one's mindset and experiences, so there were expected differences.

Analysis of the data in the research instrument was comprised of narrowing down the most significant questions that related to the motivations participants had for wearing the Cross, and the nonverbal communication that occurs between people through their use of symbols. Results of the study were recorded and categorized based on what basic motivational sector the participants fell under: devotion, assimilation, or rebellion, each of which can have multiple influences.

The communication sector then branches out into the feelings the participants had when they observed others wearing the Cross. For example: (1) what one person communicates intentionally, (2) what is unintentionally communicated by that person, (assumptions about the person made by others), and (3) what others communicate

intentionally, or unintentionally, (assumptions about others made by that person). Then an analysis of how the communicated message affected the participants' views was logged to determine what motivational and communicative use, if any, was deemed acceptable or offensive, and in which situations.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

### Data Analysis:

The survey results were composed of 316 respondents from Texas State University students from various ages, educational classifications, and religious backgrounds.

Students in the 18-20 year age range comprised 63.5% of the total, while 21-22 years was 22%, 23-25 years was 10.2, 26-30 years was 2.6%, and ages 30 plus was only 1.6%.

Sophomores made up the majority of respondents with 33.6%, and Freshmen followed with 31.3%. The third largest group was Juniors (19.4%), and the Seniors (12.8%) and Senior plus students (3%) were the minority.

When asked if the respondents wore any religious symbols and/ or identifying religious jewelry 61.3% said yes and 38.7% said no. From the selection of choices of religious symbols 64.9% of the participants that answered the question chose only the Cross. From that same number of people 1% chose the crucifix, 16.6% chose "other", 7.8% chose both the Cross and another symbol. Only 2% of those who responded wear the Cross and *Ichty*s symbols, while 4.4% wear a Cross and a crucifix

Of the 194 responses to the question of why the Cross was worn 61.3% stated religious reasons. An additional 4.6% responded that fashion was the main reason for wearing the Cross. Only 1% attributed rebellion as the reason for wearing the Cross, and 4.6% of the students who responded claim to wear the Cross for other reasons not listed in the choices. The number of respondents who do not wear the Cross is 12.4%, while 14.9% of respondents wear the Cross for more than one reason.

Of the 96.2% of students who responded 61.8% assume that people wearing the Cross are Christian, while 38.2% do not assume people who wear the Cross are Christian.

The respondents' religious affiliations were primarily composed of 25.8% Roman Catholic, 17.8% Christian, and 14.1% Non-Denominational Christian. The other religions that were also common were Methodist (8.4%), Agnostic (8.1%), Baptist (6.7%), and "Christian other" (6.4%). "Other" religious affiliations that were not listed were 5.7%, while Lutheran affiliation made up 4% of the total. The fewest numbers were for the Atheist (2.3 %), and Jewish and Buddhist (both only .3%) affiliations. Absolutely no Muslim or Hindu affiliations were reported. To further break down the numbers, when the total group was divided into Christian and Non-Christian participants, 83.2% were Christian, and 16.8% were considered Non-Christian (Appendix H-2.1).

The influence socio-cultural events and the media had on wearing the Cross was measured. Overall, the majority stated that "other" reasons (18%), which were not elaborated on, have influenced them in some way. More participants claimed that the events of 9/11 (6.5%), war in Iraq (4.8%), religious scandals (3.4%) affected their views on the wearing the Cross than other reasons such as Hurricanes Katrina/Rita (3.1%), legislation regarding GLBT issues (1.4%), and tsunamis (1%).

Celebrities, such as Diddy (22.4%), Madonna (22%), and Usher (19.2%), ranked the highest in being noticed wearing the Cross. Others, who were noticed wearing the Cross but either not as often or by not as many people included Jennifer Lopez (10.2%), Britney Spears (9.3%), Beyoncé (9%), David Beckham (7.8%), Kirk Cameron (6.5%), Paris Hilton (4.5%), and Naomi Campbell (2.9%). Celebrities that were noticed by respondents but were not listed in the choices given, and were generically labeled as “other” made up the remaining 18.9%.

Furthermore, participants were asked to select a Cross they were most inclined to wear from an array of Crosses of several styles. The selection included a diamond-encrusted Cross, which 8.9% of participants chose; 7.6% of those wear the Cross for religious reasons, 14.3% wear it for a combination of reasons, and 12.5% wear it for “other” reasons. Even though they do not currently wear a Cross, 22.2% of the students still selected the diamond Cross.

A t-shirt with a white Cross and the word “Believe” on it was chosen by 7%; of those, 11% wear the Cross for religious reasons and 5.6% of people who do not wear Crosses at all would probably wear this particular one.

The third Cross, decorated with skulls and roses, was chosen by 5.4%, overall, but 6% currently wear the Cross for religious reasons, 14.3% for fashion, and 7.1% have a combination of reasons. This Cross was chosen by 5.6% of people who did not wear already a Cross.

The most popular Cross among participants, at an overall 66.5%, was a plain silver Cross. Religious motivations for wearing the Cross accounted for 63% of people who chose this Cross, with fashion motivations following at 57.1%, rebellious

motivations at 50%, “other” motivations at 62.5%, and the highest, 75%, for those with a combination of motivations. The plain Cross was also very popular with respondents who did not already wear Crosses at 61.1%.

A rather unconventional version of the Cross, featured on a tote bag alongside an illustration of Jesus, was chosen by 1.9% overall. Only 1% of participants with religious reasons for wearing the Cross chose this version, while 12.5% of those with “other” reasons found it more appealing.

The final option, a crucifix, was selected by 10.1% of respondents, of which 12% wear the Cross for religious reasons, 28.6% wear it for fashion, and 50% whose motivation is rebellious in nature. The survey also showed that 12.5% of students that chose the crucifix normally wear Crosses for “other” reasons, and 3.6% have a combination of motivations. Of those who do not wear a Cross 5.6% selected the crucifix as a religious symbol they would wear.

Overall, when asked if the respondents would be offended when they observed the Cross being worn in a non-religious, dress-related context 17.5% said they would be offended. On the other hand, an overwhelming 82.5% stated they would not be offended.

The level of offense varied slightly based on the different motivations participants had for wearing the Cross. Only 24.6% of the participants who wore the Cross for religious reasons stated they would be offended, while 75.4% would not be offended when seeing the Cross used in a non-religious, dress-related context. Of participants who wore the Cross for fashion reasons, similar to those with religious motivations, 22.2% would be offended and 77.8% would not be offended. In addition, 14.3% would be



offended, while 85.7% of respondents would not be offended when observing the Cross in a non-religious, dress-related context.

If someone the respondents knew was not religious or did not share the same faith wore the Cross in a non-religious, dress-related context, 80.1% claimed to feel indifferent about that person. Only 2.7%, however, said they would still trust that person, while 17.2% said they would distrust that person.

The numbers for respondents' level of trust versus distrust and indifference based on religious motivation resulted in 3.6% who would continue to trust, 20.7% who would distrust, and 75.7% who would feel indifferent. Of participants who wear the Cross with fashion motivations 11.1% would trust, 11.1% would distrust, and 77.8% felt indifferent about the usage of the Cross. Additionally, 11.1% of students with "other" undisclosed reasons for wearing the Cross responded that they would trust another person who wore the Cross in a non-religious, dress-related context. Indifference was high at 88.9%, while there was a 0% level of distrust. Finally, 0% of people with a combination of motivations for wearing the Cross believe they would trust those who wear the cross in non-religious, dress-related contexts. The level of distrust, a little higher than other motivations, was at 28.6% and 71.4% felt indifferent (Appendix H-2.2).

## Chapter 5: Implications of the Study

### Discussion

#### *General overview*

The survey results have disproved my hypothesis that the use of the Cross as a mere fashion accessory is more frequent than for truly religious purposes, in turn causing people to feel indifferent about how the Cross is used or worn. Additionally, many participants wore the Cross for fashion purposes sometimes even combined with religious purposes. These combinations lead to a high level of indifference and low level of offense due to the participants' attitudes toward their own motivations. It would be unlikely for a person to disapprove of a behavior, or distrust someone based on that behavior in which he or she also partakes. The results would probably be completely different if the survey had taken place in another city or country, and would need further research. For example, in a country like Japan, where Christianity is in the minority, there would probably not be the same kind emotional and religious connotations of the Cross with the Buddhist citizens. However at Texas State University at San Marcos, the results indicate that most people wear the Cross for religious reasons.

Many participants also believed that their reasons for wearing the Cross were more internal, rather than for public display of their faith, and did not care about others' perceptions of them when they wore the Cross. In turn, a good number of respondents who wore the Cross, most of those strictly for religious purposes, tried not to make assumptions about others, despite hoping that others would automatically assume they were Christians because they publicly wore the Cross.

### *Choice of symbols*

An interesting note regarding use of the *ichtys* is that although it was listed as a choice of symbol in the survey, several students wrote in “Jesus fish” under “other”. This illustrated that people are not always aware of the meaning, or even names, of specific symbols they choose to wear. This behavior is a result of assimilation as well as habitual dressing, and therefore has the tendency to devalue the meaning of the symbol.

The most popular Cross among the survey respondents was the plain silver Cross. A comment made very frequently about what that particular Cross communicates, as well as why they chose it, was that it was simple. It also served as a demure reminder of what their respective faiths associate with the Cross, leaving the other Crosses to communicate a more specific or blatant message. Examples of such are the “believe” t-shirt as being “preachy”, the diamond-encrusted Cross as “flashy” or “gaudy”, or the crucifix as being inherently Catholic and representing “suffering” or “sacrifice”.

Another somewhat common symbol was a prayer box necklace. The prayer box is actually used more than one religion like Buddhism, Judaism, and Christianity. The box itself holds a prayer or wish written on a tiny piece of paper. The designs on the exterior of the box can range in any of the symbols used for any of the faiths it is associated with such as the *Om*, *Ichtyis*, Cross, or Star of David.

The more stylized versions of the Cross were favored by participants who thought they “looked cool” or communicated “modern Jesus lover”.

### *Influences from the media*

Although 9/11 was more likely to affect the usage of the Cross than GBLT issues, the study showed no significant increase or decrease directly attributed to those factors.

Some participants did state that these issues, along with the war in Iraq and hurricanes Katrina and Rita did affect their Cross-usage, but did not explain further. Pearson's chi-square test affirms that there were enough significant numbers showing a relationship between certain variables for those relationships to not be random.

This study illustrated the variety of reasons why people choose to wear the Cross, and how they felt about its usage in general. By asking participants to reflect on their own values and compare them to other people's values, this study adds a valuable perspective into our behavior and symbolic interaction. This perspective can aid in further understanding the way we interact, and the importance of how it is communicated.

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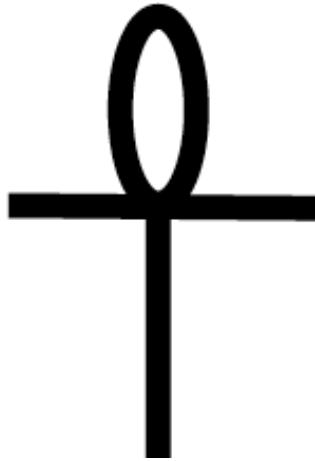
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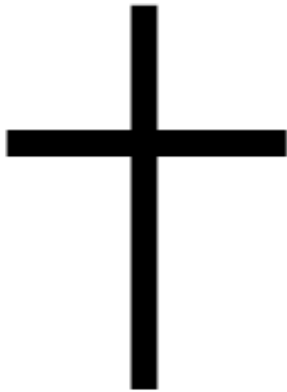
## Appendix A: The Cross



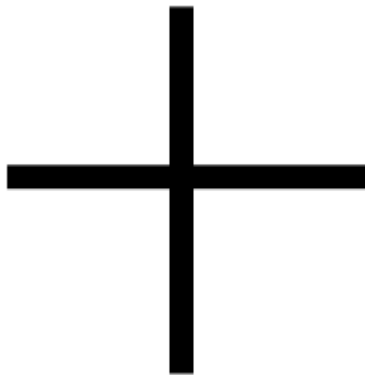
A.1



A.2



A.3



A.4



A.5

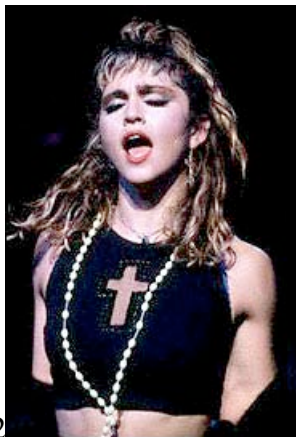


A.6

## Appendix B-1: Cultural Icons-Madonna



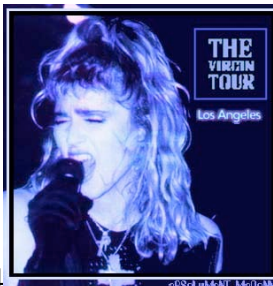
B-1.1



B-1.2



B-1.3



B-1.4



B-1.5

Appendix B-2: Cultural Icons-Britney Spears



B-2.1



B-2.2



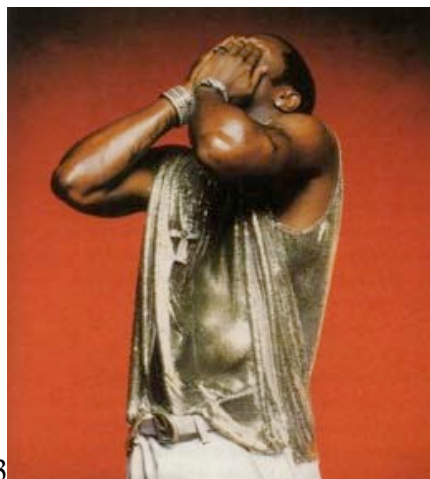
Appendix B-3: Cultural Icons-Hip Hop



B-3.1



B-3.2



B-3.3

Appendix C-1: High Fashion-Gucci on the Runway



C-1.1



C-1.2



C-1.3



Appendix C-2: High Fashion-Lady Hawke Photo Layout



C-2.1



Appendix C-2: High Fashion-Advertisement for Dolce & Gabbana



C-2.2



Appendix C-3: High Fashion-Dolce & Gabbana Photo Layout





Appendix C-3: High Fashion-Dolce & Gabbana Photo Layout



Appendix C-3: High Fashion-Dolce & Gabbana Photo Layout



Appendix C-3: High Fashion-Dolce & Gabbana Photo Layout





## Appendix D: Trendsetting Celebrities



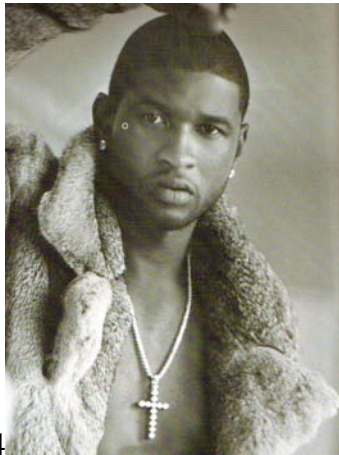
D.1



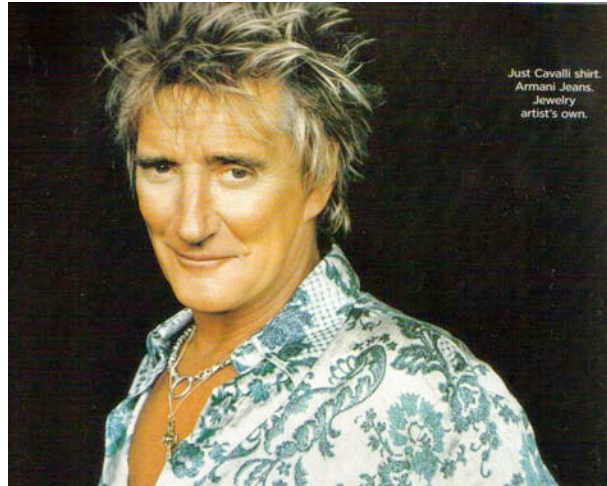
D.2



D.3

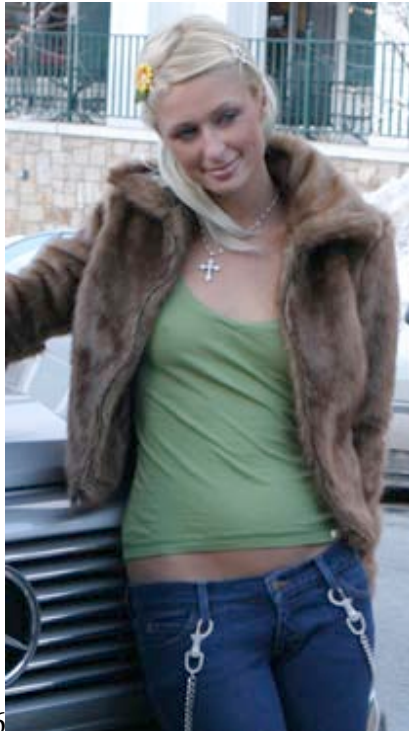


D.4



D.5

## Appendix D: Trendsetting Celebrities



D.6



D.7

Appendix E: Celebrities Displaying Intentionally Public Religious Intent



E.1



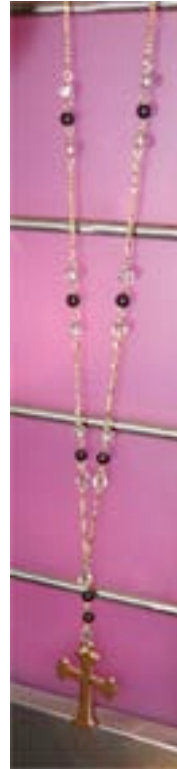
E.2



Appendix F-1: Field Observations-Forever 21



F-1.1



F-1.2



F-1.3

## Appendix F-2: Field Observations-Claire's Accessories



F-2.1

### Appendix F-3: Field Observations-Gordon's Jewelers



F-3.1



F-3.2

Appendix F-4 : Field Observations-Hot Topic



F-4.1



F-4.2



F-4.3



F-4.4

Appendix F-5: Field Observations-Kiosk Vendors



F-5.1



F-5.2



Appendix F-6:Field Observations-Christian Merchandise store



F-6.1



F-6.2



F-6.3



F-6.4



F-6.5



F-6.6

Appendix G-1: Data Collection-IRB Approval

Thursday February 22, 2007

Exemption Request

Based on the information in the exemption request you sent February 13, your project has been found exempt.

Your project is exempt from full or expedited review by the Texas State Institutional Review Board.

Becky Northcut, CIP  
Compliance Specialist  
Office of Sponsored Programs  
Texas State University-San Marcos  
sn10@txstate.edu  
(ph) 512/245-2102 / (fax) 512/245-3847 or 1822  
JCK 489 & 440 - 601 University Drive  
San Marcos, TX 78666  
Texas State University-San Marcos is a member of the Texas State University System

## Appendix G-2: Data Collection-Instrument Disclaimer

*The transitional use and connotation of religious symbols is not novel. The purpose of my study is to investigate the perceptions of religious symbols in art and fashion.*

*This study is being primarily conducted by Michelle Sotolongo, under the advisement of Dr. Alyssa Adomaitis and Dr. Gwendolyn Hustvedt of the Department of Fashion Merchandising at Texas State University. This study will contribute to the completion of an Honors thesis regarding perceptions of religious symbols in art and fashion.*

***There are no physical, psychological, social, or economic risks involved with participating in this study.*** Although there are no risks in participating, the knowledge gained may be considered a benefit to the participant. The completion of the instrument is ***entirely voluntary*** and voluntary withdrawal at any time will not incur any repercussions. It is not required to answer every question and will result in no consequences. ***All identifying information will be kept confidential at all times and destroyed once the study is complete.***

*The research has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of Texas State University-San Marcos. If there are any questions or concerns about the procedures of this research study, please contact the Institutional Review Board at (512) 245-2102.*



Appendix G-3: Data Collection-Instrument

*Participation is totally voluntary and you may stop at any time. Please answer as thoroughly as you like, and feel free to add any comments.*

**1. Do you wear any religious symbols or/and identifying religious jewelry?**

☐yes ☐no

**2. If yes, How often?** ☐Daily ☐Weekly ☐Occasionally ☐Rarely ☐Never

**3. Is this** ☐Habit ☐Intentional

**4. Which one(s) do you wear? Please check all that apply.**

☐Cross ☐Crucifix ☐Star of David ☐Star and Crescent

☐Om ☐Buddhist symbols ☐Ichtyis

☐Other:\_\_\_\_\_

**If you do not, or have never worn a cross, you may SKIP #5, #8 and #12**

**5. Why do you wear a cross? Please check all that apply *and feel free to add any comments.***

☐Religious reasons (faith)

☐Fashion (assimilation or conformity)

☐Rebellion

☐Other:\_\_\_\_\_

☐I do not wear a cross

**6. Which of the following celebrities have you noticed wearing a cross?**

☐Britney Spears ☐Madonna ☐Usher ☐Paris Hilton ☐Naomi Campell

☐David Beckham ☐Diddy ☐Beyonce ☐Kirk Cameron ☐Jennifer Lopez

☐Other:\_\_\_\_\_

Appendix G-3: Data Collection-Instrument

**7. Have you heard anyone close to you make comments about wearing the cross?**

☐Parent ☐Grandparent ☐Sibling ☐Friend ☐Teacher

☐Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Did their comments change your opinion about the cross in any way?**

**8. Have any of these recent socio-political events affected your views on wearing the cross? Please check all that apply *and feel free to add any comments.***

☐Religious/Church scandal ☐9/11 ☐War in Iraq ☐Tsunamis

☐Hurricanes Katrina/Rita ☐Legislation affecting the GLBT community

☐Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**9. Does it offend you when you see the cross being worn in a non-religious dress-related context? ☐yes☐no**

**If yes, Which settings might offend you? *Feel free to add any comments.***

☐Work ☐School ☐“Hanging Out” ☐Parties ☐Bars ☐None

☐Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Do you assume that people wearing a cross are Christian? ☐yes ☐no**

**11. If you knew that a person was not religious, or is of non-Christian faith, but wore a cross how would that make you feel about the person?**

☐Trust ☐Distrust ☐Indifferent

**12. What do you think people assume about you when you wear the cross?**

**12b. Are your reasons different from their assumptions?**

Appendix G-3: Data Collection-Instrument

**13. Of the crosses shown below, which, if any, are you *most* inclined to wear?**



A

B

C

D

E

F

**13b. What does the cross you selected say to you?**

**13c. If you did not choose one of these, please describe the cross you would purchase to wear.**

**Name:**

**Age:** ☐18-20 ☐21-22 ☐23-25 ☐26-30 ☐30+

**Classification:** ☐Freshman ☐Sophomore ☐Junior ☐Senior ☐Senior+

**Religious Affiliation:**

☐Christian ☐Jewish ☐Muslim ☐Hindu ☐Buddhist ☐Agnostic

☐Atheist

☐Roman Catholic ☐Other: \_\_\_\_\_

☐Lutheran

☐Methodist

☐Baptist

☐Non-Denominational

☐Christian Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix H-1: Data Analysis-Coding Key

### Instrument Coding Key

1. ☐1 ☐2

2. ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

3. ☐1 ☐2

4. ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7 ☐8 ☐9 (1 & 8) ☐10 (1 & 7) ☐11 (1 & 2) ☐12 (3 & 8)  
☐13 (1 & 6) ☐14 (2 & 8)

4a. comments

5. ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 (any combination)

5a. comments

6. ☐6.1 ☐6.2 ☐6.3 ☐6.4 ☐6.5 ☐6.6 ☐6.7 ☐6.8 ☐6.9 ☐6.10 ☐6.11

7. ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6

7a. comments

7b. comments

8. ☐8.1 ☐8.2 ☐8.3 ☐8.4 ☐8.5 ☐8.6 ☐8.7

8a. comments

9. ☐1 ☐2

9a. ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7

9b. comments

10. ☐1 ☐2

10a. comments

11. ☐1 ☐2 ☐3

## Appendix H-1: Data Analysis-Coding Key

**11a.** comments

**12.** What do you think people assume about you when you wear the cross?

**12b.** Are your reasons different from their assumptions?

**13.** ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6

**13b.** What does the cross you selected say to you?

**13c.** If you did not choose one of these, please describe the cross you would purchase to wear.

**14.** ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

**15.** ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5

**16. Affiliation:**

☐1 ☐2 ☐3 ☐4 ☐5 ☐6 ☐7

☐8 ☐14

☐9

☐10

☐11

☐12

☐13

**16a.** Affiliation comments

**16b.** comments

## Appendix H-2: Data Analysis Results-Tables

**Table H-2.1**  
**Choice of Cross Based on Religious Affiliation**

Religious Affiliation	Overall	Diamond Cross	Choice of Cross		Skull Cross	Plain Cross	Cross Bag	Crucifix
			Believe	T-Shirt				
Christian	83.20%	8.80%		7.90%	4.60%	67.60%	0.90%	10.20%
Non-Christian	17%	11.80%			8.80%	61.80%	8.80%	8.80%

**Table H-2.2**  
**Level of Offense, Trust, Distrust, and Indifference Based on Reasons**

Reasons for Wearing the Cross	Offended	Not Offended	Trust	Distrust	Indifferent
Religion	24.60%	75.40%	3.60%	20.70%	75.70%
Fashion	22.20%	77.80%	11.10%	11.10%	77.80%
No Cross	19%	81%		13.60%	86.40%
Combination	14.30%	85.70%		28.60%	71.40%