

## When Dress Code Becomes Sex Code

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### ABSTRACT

The paper introduces a new concept called 'sex-code' which is highly subjective and quite personal. Testosterone level, sexual curiosity, age, moral/cultural inhibitions etc-- all take part in determining the compendium of sex codes for a particular individual. One symbol, mannerism or image can act as a code of sex for some but need not be so for many others. In the modern world adolescent sex curiosity is capable of transcending moral, cultural inhibitions and anything in the class room can serve as a sex-code for him including the physical appearance of the teacher. The past studies substantiate that curiosity especially sexual curiosity is not different from fundamental basic drives of human beings and it is capable of disrupting intellectual, emotional, social equilibrium in the person subjected to it. Thus sex curiosity can emerge as a hindrance in effective learning.

**Keywords:** *Adolescence, Sex, Curiosity, Sex Curiosity, Learning, Internet Addiction, Dress Code, Pornography*

As definition goes by a code is “a system of signals used to represent letters or numbers in transmitting messages requiring secrecy or brevity in which arbitrarily chosen words, letters or symbols are assigned to define the meanings”. Pin code helps the post master to pinpoint the locality of the recipient easily. Google verification code gives the user a feeling of security. Bank codes are sacred and one of the many serious secrets we keep to ourselves. We do not trust many computer and internet codes. Still they give us a sense of authority as nobody-- our parent, spouse; teachers can decode it except hackers. The act of applying a code and the opening response ensuing it exudes a pleasing sense of satisfaction. Breaking a code of which we are not the custodians is accompanied by a sense of adventure.

Dress codes differ from the above mentioned technical codes in their subjectivity. Doctor's white coat prods the patients to see “healers as angels in white” (Adam H, & Galinsky, 2012). “White without spot or pride” (Edmund Spencer) and “white as utter truth” (Alfred Tennyson) frame a doctor in a god like image. His power to prolong human life by fighting diseases is divine.

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**Received: February 22, 2017; Revision Received: March 18, 2017; Accepted: March 23, 2017**

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Teacher's professional dress code, though not strictly defined in any culture, a teacher is expected to be modest in her selection of dress. Professional attire that will clad a teacher in a god-like aura as that of doctor's is yet to be articulated.

### *Are there Sex Codes?*

What is sex code? Anything capable of opening up a sexual surge can be deemed as a sex-code. Like a dress code it is highly subjective. But unlike dress codes it is quite personal/individualistic. One symbol or mannerism can act as a code of sex for me but not for a person sitting next to me. Testosterone level, sexual curiosity, age, moral/cultural inhibitions etc... all take part in determining the compendium of sex codes for a particular individual. Moreover, not all people are always aware of or mindful about their sex codes. It operates unconsciously for them. Perceptual cues having connotations of sex act as keys for decoding their codes and push the individual into a mode of craving—sexual craving.

The renowned celestial Malayalam singer, Dr. K J. Yesudas perceives 'jeans wearing ladies' as a sex code. According to him seeing a lady in jeans can cause "trouble" and "people are tempted to pay attention to what is beyond it" and this "forces them to do undesirable things" (The Hindu daily, 2014, oct.3). Just seeing a lady in jeans can work as a code for opening sexual paraphernalia in the head of some (not all) males. It may grab their attention, unleash their curiosity to think what is "beyond" it and even may drag into undesirable acts like rape. That means lady's jeans act as a code for sexuality at least in some. For some, it is a little part of stomach or curves of breasts of a lady involuntarily peeping out of her modestly clad traditional sari. For another, a coy smile of maiden lass can be a code capable of opening the reservoir of sex juices in the body and begin its onward course to genitals. Yet, for pedophiles an innocent angelic smile of a baby girl is enough. For a prostitute nothing but money paid by the customer can serve as the best code for arousal. So sex codes function from within and sensory signals (visual, auditory etc) from the environment act as cues capable of breaking codes or, simply put, as triggers.

### *Adolescent Sexual Curiosity*

Think of a modern adolescent who gathers information related to sex mostly from friends (Jones & Biddlecom 2011) and internet. What will be serving as his code? According to neuroscience, the reason for the behavioral immaturity of teenagers is their brains' onward course of development. His emotional brain ---including limbic system-- develops first and the reasoning brain---including prefrontal cortex---matures late, approximately towards mid-twenty. Sexual curiosity coupled with an emotional brain if not guided by proper, realistic sex education can play havoc on his moral, educational, social life. In a study conducted in USA (Marshall Smith, 2012) it was found that main motivating factor which prompted adolescents to view sexually explicit content in internet was curiosity about sex.

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Philosopher Thomas Hobbes called curiosity as “the lust of mind” though lady Roosevelt addressed it as “the most useful gift”. Researchers in human sciences describe curiosity as an inexorable drive like hunger or thirst. It is triggered by incongruence between something and individual’s existing world view. In this sense, sexual curiosity in adolescence at first emerges as a desire to close an “information gap”. Afterwards its unfolding gathers momentum and onward course resembles that of a typical biological drive in intensity. In its active mode sexual curiosity can assume one or more of the following patterns. 1) Epistemic curiosity--- desire for information and knowledge 2) Perceptual curiosity---one’s basic tendency to draw attention to novel objects in immediate environment 3) Specific curiosity---desire for particular piece of knowledge such as final piece of content (Jonathan, 2012). One cannot categorize the nature of curiosity fueling the sexual hormones of a typical adolescent who habitually involves in watching porn. Nobody can deny the fact that class rooms of 20<sup>th</sup> century will have many adolescents watching porn on a daily basis--- irrespective of social, religious or economic background they are coming from. And studies have shown that internet sex renders curiosity into compulsion (Kathleen Kelleher, 2002). If left unsatisfied, curiosity intensifies itself overtime. (Lee and Qiu 2009). Then who knows what all things can function as sexual codes for an adolescent?

### **SEXUAL CURIOSITY AS A SNAG IN LEARNING PROCESS**

Curious mindset is characterized by heightened arousal of emotion in response to stimuli (Berlyne 1954; Jepma et al. 2012; Loewenstein 1994). This explains elevated levels of general sensitivity in adolescence. When curiosity, coupled with a fundamental human drive (here sex) reaches at its peak, no amount of motivation injected into learning process can call back adolescent’s attention and anchor it on the material to study. The reason for this is, curious minds indulge in ruminative thinking over the missing information (Shani, Igou, and Zeelenberg 2009; Shani et al. 2012). Charged with emotions curiosity depletes the cognitive resources of individuals as they spend time and energy on cognitive elaboration and ruminative thinking to obtain answers to more provoking questions (Min Jeong et al. 2009, as cited in Kyra, 2015). The underlying mechanism by which sexual curiosity disrupts learning is that sexual curiosity does not allow to allocate an iota of attention to the learning content (Jepma et al. 2012; Menon and Soman 2002; Wilson et al. 2005) but it drags student’s attention towards the stimuli imbued with sex content or its connotations.

Inside the class room it may be teacher’s bare hands, or a little part of her stomach exposed while writing the equation  $E=mc^2$  on the black board. Or it might be the projection of her breasts or her beautiful charming smile she exuded in affection. Anything like this can act as a sex code capable of opening up the flow of hormones into the genitals for an adolescent mind charged with sex curiosity. Only his mind knows what they are. Effective sex education is an apt answer for the dilemma. But actualization of it is a distant dream in India or Kerala and the reasons for this are many---cultural, religious, economic etc. --- and they remain unresolved till today

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What we teachers can do? We can reduce the possibility of adolescent's sex codes being activated by us. In his mind our body should not degrade to the level of sexy lady he watched in the internet last night and we must feel the need for defending our professional dignity. We can mind our dress code and save our body appearance becoming triggers for temptations and we must.

### CONCLUSION

In the globalized world the repercussions of cultural intermixing are so poignant that we can never dream of new generation digesting the lofty ideal ---“Matha-Pitha-Guru- daivam” (treat your mother, father and teacher as gods) which the old Indian culture cherished as its invaluable and irreplaceable legacy. Newer solutions to newer problems inside the classroom should be our motto. Let teachers wear coats like doctors. Any color will do. According to Wicklund's self completion theory, clothes fulfill a need in the wearer (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 2013). This is the answer to why we wear what we wear. By wearing coats we will be fulfilling our need for maintaining professional dignity, of course, by not triggering untoward needs in curious minds sitting in front of us.

### *Acknowledgments*

The author appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

*Conflict of Interests:* The author declared no conflict of interests.

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**How to cite this article:** Rapheal J (2017), When Dress Code Becomes Sex Code, *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, Volume 4, Issue 2, No. 94, ISSN:2348-5396 (e), ISSN:2349-3429 (p), DIP:18.01.151/20170402, ISBN:978-1-365-84229-0