

Effects of intermingling of cultures on the use of adornment symbols in appearance management in Mutare, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

With increased intercultural contact, people with different backgrounds and orientations come into contact with one another. In this contact meanings assigned to appearance management symbols are not necessarily correctly interpreted. This study set out to examine how the intermingling of cultures has affected the use of symbols in appearance management in Mutare, Zimbabwe. The study was guided by three research questions: 1) what meanings do the different cultures in Chisamba area assign to their adornment symbols? 2) How have the meanings been affected by the intermingling of cultures? 3) Do these meanings still portray their cultural beliefs? In-depth interviews of 40 participants and non-participant observations were used for data collection. For some participants meanings of symbols attached to dress and appearance management have changed while some have been completely lost. The erosion of cultural meanings was attributed to contact between cultures and globalisation.