

Talking About Fashion: My Clothes, My Identity

I don't think I'm a very fashionable person. In fact, I know I'm not a very fashionable person. Both my students and my colleagues tell me that I'm pretty old-fashioned. I wear some of the same clothes now that I wore in high school, at least the ones that haven't broken or torn since I went to high school. And I like to wear clothes that express who I am.

For example, I went to college. And I like to wear clothes that look like I went to college. I like to wear a collar, sometimes even a tie. I think it makes me look educated and I'm proud of the education I have. But at the same time, for example, I spent a long time working physically, in a factory and in the Army. And one of the things you do when you do physical work, is you roll the sleeves of your shirt up. And now, when I'm working, without even thinking I roll the arms—the *sleeves*—of my shirt up. It's just a working reflex and I like it, it's part of who I am: I work.

Another good example is that I, like many Americans, was in the Army. And many former soldiers in the U.S. still have different parts of their old uniforms. I would never wear these clothes to work, but, if you come to Dresden in the summer, there's a good chance you can see me wearing a camouflage baseball cap I got from the Army. Why? Not because I liked the Army—I hated the Army—but, because it's part of who I am. And, I also think that, if my wife talks very long about me and describes me to someone else, it's one of the things she will say.

My history is a part of my personality, and I like clothes that express that.

I said a moment ago that I have old-fashioned tastes. What does that mean? To be honest, I don't know. I like the clothes that I like. But, I know, for example I like a lot of 'earth tones' we say in English. Earth tones are the colors you can find in nature: browns and greens, and blacks, and grays. A dark orange. And these colors are considered 'subdued' and also a little bit old-fashioned.

Brown, in particular, I like. But I'm told it's a grandpa color. Maybe that's a German thing, I don't know. But, I think I look good in it. I like the way it looks in general. And I don't like clothing that draws attention to me. When I get dressed. . .

Stop. Back up. Something you should know about me is that I'm very tall. Six feet, six inches. Or, if you think in metric, I'm one meter, ninety-five tall. I . . . am pretty easy to find in a crowd. And, for that reason, I don't need to wear clothes that make me *easier* to find in a crowd: I already am. I like clothes that blend in. Sort of an 'urban camouflage' and those clothes tend to be conservative and, I guess, old-fashioned.

So, here's my question to you: What kind of clothes do you wear? How would you describe your style? Do your clothes say anything about you? Do they describe who you are? I'm interested to hear it.