

A Comparative Cross-cultural Study of Contemporary Modesty and Immodesty in American and South Korean College Women

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Abstract

This research examines current viewpoints on modesty and immodesty in dress from a cross-cultural perspective. The purposes of this study was to explore the concept of modesty and to find out sub-variables of modesty, and the similarities and differences of modesty between two cultures. This qualitative interview study of 58 female college students in America and 36 in Korea examines attitudes about modesty. The data collection was performed in America and Korea simultaneously in Feb. 2004. According to the results of this study, the concept of modesty had 4 sub-variables such as covering up, appropriateness, drawing attention from others, and conservativeness. Both American and Korean students mentioned that time and place are closely related with modesty and that modesty was related with gender. Also cultural differences were existed.

Key words: Modesty, Immodesty; 정숙성, 비정숙성

I. Introduction

Public displays of sexually explicit dress and body exposure have been an increasing trend in the American media, particularly since the 1960s(Thompson, 2001). However, a more recent trend in contemporary American society promotes dressing in a more demure and conservative fashion(Michelman, 2003).

The most interesting aspect of the modesty/immodesty issue in American society is why the tension over this issue has surfaced at this time. Some possible reasons include a conservative political climate under the Bush administration that includes repeal of legislation and putting in place more restrictions on women and their legal rights related to their bodies. The war in Iraq and fear of terrorism have created a climate of retreat to more conservative ethics and values and have opened the door for an increased interest in the topic of modesty in America. Newspa-

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pers were recently filled with pictures of Afghani women in veiled attire. Although many of the articles about these women addressed the repression in this appearance, American readers were likewise fascinated with the meanings and complexities of their attire, which is unlike American fashion. The photographs of these veiled women stimulated an interest in the meaning of this appearance as well as the associated implications of their modesty.

In contrast to these changes in American society, young women who live in South Korean society are becoming more daring, exposed and sexually attractive than they have been acceptable in traditional culture. According to Cho(1996), there are big differences in South Korea between generations on indices of post-materialism such as personal freedom, wealth and gender roles. The younger generation in South Korea places high value on personal freedom, equality and quality of life, on the other hand the older generation is the opposite.

This research on college-aged women will demonstrate that both American and Korean cultures are exploring and possibly reevaluating the meaning of modesty in both contemporary cultural contexts. A comparison of modesty in these two cultures is compelling because 1) both countries have experienced rapid social change in recent years; 2) the impact of the media has had a profound impact on the contemporary mores of both societies, particularly among younger age groups; 3) Social orientation in Korea has traditionally been collective, however, as demonstrated in this research, is experiencing rapid social change and becoming more individualistic. 4) Social orientation in the U.S. is generally individualistic. However, America is in a politically conservative period, including an increased interest in more fundamental religious beliefs, which are linked to modesty (Michelman, 2003).

The modesty in dress is one of important factors in clothing selection. But previous studies about modesty and immodesty were very rare in both Korea and America. The studies about changes of the concept of modesty and immodesty in dress, sub-variables of the concept of modesty, similarities and differences among cultures will be useful in many

area.

The purpose of this study was 1) to explore sub-variables of the concept of modesty, 2) to investigate differences and similarities in the concept of modesty and immodesty among college-age women in South Korea and America through structured interviews with fifty-eight American and thirty-six South Korean women. Our examination of data collected from both countries, discussion and conclusions will draw on similarities and differences in ideas about modesty.

II. Literature Review

1. Historical Concepts of Modesty

The meaning of modesty varies culturally and historically. The Genesis story recounts that Adam and Eve, having eaten of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, 'knew that they were naked' and made themselves 'aprons' of fig leaves. Early theorists considered modesty to be second only to protection as the primary function of dress. Flugel(1930) suggests that clothing serves three main purposes: decoration, modesty and protection. He names five factors as modesty variables: situation, Christian values, concealment, discomfort and anatomical factors. He explains that the basic purposes of decoration are to beautify one's appearance, to look good to others and to simultaneously satisfy self-respect. Flugel regards modesty as a prohibitive gesture to control human behavior and restrain sexual display, exposure, shame and conspicuous behavior.

Laver(1969) contends that until quite recently, it was almost universally agreed that the fundamental reason for wearing clothing was modesty. Laver expands on the work of Flugel(1930) and explores the theory of the meaning of the shifting erogenous zone, particularly as it relates to fashion change for women. He maintains that complete nudity is anti-erotic and that, by continually changing attention on the female body, dress creates interest and keeps the cycle of fashion change alive. Laver argues that fashion is essentially a game of hide and seek between seduction and 'prudery'. This tension keeps fashion alive; if one were to dominate the other, fashion

would cease to exist.

Laver(1969) defines 'modesty' as 'covering up the body so as not to attract others' attention'. Likewise, he explains 'decoration' as 'ornamenting the body to show attraction to the opposite sex'. Socially satisfying both appears logically impossible. However, dress makes these contrary motivations possible. Dress simultaneously displays our attraction and also hides our shame.

Goffman(1963) examines the situational context of body exposure. For example, the amount of undress in bathing attire at the beach may be tolerated. Undress in the confines of the home may be accepted, but the same clothing in a public setting might be considered totally inappropriate. Modesty, therefore, also has its situational relevance.

Storm(1987) mentions modesty variables with three factors: situation(both place and activity), individuals involved and era. More recently, Kang(1994) and Michelman(2003) describe the relationship between showing skin and social factors related to the media, religion, self-esteem and self-actualization. Kang(1994) suggests that physical need, self-esteem, self-actualization, safety need, frequency of contact with mass media, age, native community and income have direct effects on the modesty of clothing.

Previous explorations and research on modesty have shown that it varies from one cultural context to another. Kefgen and Specht(1981) demonstrated that clothing modesty and clothing aesthetics are important factors of clothing motivation. These two factors are opposite concepts. Aesthetics and modesty vary between cultures and changes over time. Historically and traditionally, Koreans have placed a higher value on modesty than is apparent in the predominant American culture.

Kang's(1986) study of Korean and American female college students concluded that the basis for modesty was very different in Korean and American cultures. However, for Korean female college students considered modesty a primary motivation, whereas American female students did not think it as important (Kang, 1986). In other research, modesty was not found to be an important factor but was a motivation of dress choice in American female students. How-

ever, for Korean female students, it was the most important factor in clothing selection(Barr, 1934; Jung & Lee, 1984).

2. Modesty in Contemporary American Culture

American television, movies, music videos and fashion have increasingly shown more and more skin since the 1960s(Thompson, 2001). Jennifer Lopez, a popular actor and pop music icon, bared a lot of skin in a revealing dress at the Academy Awards ceremony several years ago that challenged the boundaries of decorum. Some of the current reality television shows including 'Fear Factor' and 'Survivor', advertise excitement by using scantily clad women and men who perform acts of physical danger.

On the fashion runway, nudity is commonplace, a quick way for a designer to get a little extra attention in the press. Baring of breasts is not a new phenomenon in fashion. American consumers of pop culture view immodesty that has become more and more commonplace and seemingly accepted and assimilated into mainstream American culture. Abercrombie and Fitch has been censored for its use of nudity in its advertising campaigns and Victoria's Secret posts oversized ads of women in scanty underwear in malls and on billboards that dwarf the viewer with the women's well-endowed physical attributes (Michelman, 2003).

In the midst of all this body-baring, there is an increasing religious backlash in American society advocating a return to a more conservative appearance. Shalit(1999) examines immodesty in dress as part of a larger issue that encompasses behaviors that are associated with the way one appears. Shalit agrees that examining modesty and immodesty in dress is complex because revealing clothing does not always signify immodesty, as exemplified in the dress of other cultures. Shalit looks at the problems of appearance within the context of what she describes as the 'normalization of pornography'. The looseness of contemporary sexual mores for unmarried young adults is at the heart of Shalit's concerns, and she addresses women's immodest dress as an important of the problem.

Pollard(2001) evaluates the significance of the increasingly body-revealing bathing suits for women during the twentieth century and the acceptance of immodesty and, more important, a weakening of Christian morality. Pollard is particularly concerned with the proliferation of bare images in the American media and the increasing acceptance of their existence by the majority of the American public.

Michelman(2003) examines why the tension of this issue has surfaced at this time in America and why a fundamental religious viewpoint is now gaining rapid acceptability. It is difficult to be precise about numbers of people who are moving toward an interest in modesty. America is in a politically conservative period, including an increased interest in more fundamental religious beliefs, which are linked to modesty. Currently in America, being modest and being fashionable are not necessarily mutually exclusive. According to the most current conservative viewpoints, it is possible to maintain fundamental religious beliefs, display modesty in dress and still be considered quite fashionable.

In *Vogue* magazine(2004, July), fashion writers said what looked wrong this fall is the excessive fragmentary nudity(navel-baring, ultra short, super-low-rise) that seemed compulsory for a while. They suggest that readers leave these styles to the inhabitants of the tabloids' 'worst dressed' pages. *Vogue* quotes Karl Lagerfeld, head designer for Chanel, as saying, 'We've seen too much sexually aggressive fashion' 'too much is too much. And too much for a long time is worse.' Showing a lot of flesh has been so mainstream for so long that it has long since lost the power to generate any kind of erotic appeal. Yet this sober new look is not without its sexual frisson. What it offers is a powerful sensibility, based on a silhouette that echoes the curves of the body, hinting at what lies beneath. *Vogue* quotes another designer: 'Some women button up and are really seductive. Some show everything . . . and they're not.'

The changes of viewpoint on modesty have had an effect on fashion trends and on ways of expressing fashion aesthetics in America. Do trends toward religious conservatism and agendas of the political right have a more general effect on mainstream fashion,

modesty and consumer culture, or are these trends limited to a minority of religiously observant? What are the contemporary viewpoints on modesty among American college-age women? Are young women becoming more aware of modesty in a generally immodest society, or do they follow the trend of the media and show indifference to being modest?

3. Modesty in Contemporary Korean Culture

Korea has traditionally been one of the most modest countries in the world. Kang(1986) found that Korean female college students regarded modesty as the most important factor of their clothing behavior. However, there has been rapid social change in Korea since this study. These great changes in Korean society have affected multiple aspects of Korean culture, including how women dress. In addition, the meaning of dress has changed. In the late 1980s, the meaning of clothing changed from 'simply wear' to 'pursue personality' or 'self expression' (Yeom & Cho, 1992). Female college students' clothes in the 1990s deviated considerably from the modesty norm of the 1980s(Kang, 2001). See-through clothes, exposing clothes, midriff fashion and the lingerie look appeared. Women's waists and navels appeared in public. These clothes were never worn in the history of South Korea. Historically, a young woman with exposing clothing was regarded as a prostitute. But now, intelligent college women wear this type of clothing in Korea. The questions addressed in the research were, Do Koreans still regard modesty as important? What is the modesty or immodesty in dress in Korea now? If there are differences in the concept of modesty compared to previous periods, what are they? And what are the reasons for this change?

Kang(2001) examined the clothing modesty of the younger generation in the 1990s in Korea. According to Kang's research, this generation has a social context much different from the older generation's. The current generation of Koreans have grown up in a democratic and self-regulating culture. Even though their parents were exposed to changing times and modern education, members of that generation did

not change their patriarchal and conservative values. However, they allowed their children, specifically their daughters, to grow and develop within the context of rapid social change. Consequently, the current younger generation in Korea is more familiar with Western culture and a modern set of values than Confucian culture and a traditional sense of values. This has had a major impact on how young Korean women view dress and issues of modesty.

Until 1983, middle school and high school students in South Korea were required to wear school uniforms and to have the same hair style (short or bobbed). Self-regulation of school uniforms and hair was instituted in 1983, though most schools still require uniforms. Also in the 1980s began international satellite broadcasting, movies, TV programs and publications, and international information interchange through telephone, e-mail and the internet. In 1989, restrictions on travel and imports to foreign countries were lifted. All of these changes allowed younger Koreans to have more open minds about Western culture (Park, 1995).

The most important distinguishing feature of the new generation of Koreans is that they are not restricted by the established values of traditional Korean society. An anti-authority orientation is one of the representative characteristics of the new generation. It is contrasted with the production, collection and authority-oriented older generation (Park, 1995). This new, consumer-oriented younger generation uses dress as a visual way of conveying their rejection of traditional Korean society. This is especially dramatic in the context of the highly modest values of classic Korean culture.

According to Kang's two studies (1986, 2001), Korean female college students thought modesty was more important than aesthetics of clothes in the 1980s. By the mid-1990s, the students emphasized modesty of dress less so than in the 1980s, and their concept of modesty was much changed. College students show their waists, navels, breasts, legs, shoulders and upper arms in public. Even though they draw much attention from others by their exposing clothes, they no longer think it is immodest. They think it is fashionable. Erotic, see-through clothing has appeared in

some current Korean fashion trends. Young women expose their bodies in public in fashions that bare their waists and belly buttons. Clothes cling to the body, showing body curves. The fashion even features wearing underwear on the outside, destroying the dichotomy of under and outerwear. Magazine, newspaper and other mass media have dealt with this exposed appearance with article titles such as 'Lingerie Style Fashion Trends', 'Outer Wear Looks like Under Wear', 'Exposure Emphasis', 'Belly Button T-shirts/Hot Pants', and 'Dress Looks like Slip'.

Kang (2001) explains that the main cause of differing generational values in the 1980s and 1990s was rapid social change in Korean society during this period. The specific areas of change were the transition from authoritarian and patriarchal aesthetic values to a positive orientation to diversity, individuality, sensibility and sexuality.

4. Collectivism and Individualism

Collectivism is defined pattern consisting of closely linked individuals who see themselves as parts of one or more collectives and are primarily willing to give priority to the goals of these collectives over their own personal goals (Triandis, 1995). *Individualism* is a social pattern that consists of loosely linked individuals who view themselves as independent of collectives and are primarily motivated by their own preferences, needs, and rights (Triandis, 1995).

Triandis (1995) discusses four universal dimensions of the constructs of individualism and collectivism. They are as follows: 1) The definition of the self is interdependent with collectivism and independent in individualism. 2) Personal and communal goals are closely aligned in collectivism and not at all aligned in individualism. 3) Cognitions that focus on norms, obligations, and duties guide much of social behavior in collectivist cultures. 4) An emphasis on relationships, even when they are disadvantageous, is common in collectivist cultures. In individualist cultures, the emphasis is on rational analyses of the advantages and disadvantages of maintaining a relationship.

Our research will be discussed in relation to both

traditional definitions of collectivism and individualism as they impact modesty as well as the impact of social change on this behavior.

III. Research Methods

This research was performed simultaneously in an American university located in the southeastern United States and a university located in Seoul in South Korea. In order to develop research questions, a pilot study was performed in both America and Korea in February 2004. Five faculty members and two graduate students attended in America, and seven graduate students attended in Korea. The pilot study included open-ended interviews of all participants and took about 1½ hours. The interviews were tape recorded and then transcribed for analysis.

Based on the results of the pilot study, thirteen questions were chosen for inclusion in the study of college-age women. Questions could be divided into several categories according to research purposes. The questions are as follows: **The concept of Modesty and Immodesty**-① What is modest dress? ② What is immodest dress? ③ What is the difference between immodesty, sexuality, disrespectfulness and being fashionable? **Modesty and Situations**-④ Have you ever had an experience where you were embarrassed for wearing immodest clothes? ⑤ Do you think there is a special occasion where everyone should dress modestly? **Modesty and Gender**-⑥ Do you think that modesty in dress is different according to one's gender? ⑦ Have you ever had experiences where someone (like your father, husband, boyfriend, brother, son, and male colleague) criticized your clothes for immodesty? **Modesty and Generation**-⑧ Have you ever been criticized about your clothes for immodesty from your parents or an elder person? ⑨ Have you ever criticized your children's or youngster's choice of clothing for immodesty? **Modesty and Clothing Selection**-⑩ What is your favorite style of dress? ⑪ What is your favorite fashion brand? ⑫ Do you wear your favorite style every day? If you don't, why not? ⑬ When you buy your clothes, do you think about modesty? Questions about age, gender, religion, education status, and ori-

gin country were also included.

The qualitative study of 58 female college students of the department of Merchandising, Apparel and Textiles in Southeastern part of America and 36 female college students of the department of Clothing and Textiles in Seoul in Korea examined attitudes about modesty and immodesty in dress.

The data was collected in America and Korea simultaneously. During the class, the faculty explained the methods of answering, and gave the questionnaire to students. Students wrote the answers during class to the thirteen questions about modesty and immodesty. After students finished answering, the faculty collected all the answering sheets. Continuously students were participated on the discussion about modesty and immodesty in dress. The faculty summarized the discussion. Students' data and the summaries of the faculty were used for contents analysis.

IV. Results and Discussion

Results were examined, sorted and coded for common themes in response to questions. Findings indicated differences and similarities in both the perception and definition of modesty and immodesty.

1. The Concepts of Modesty

According to the results of this study, the concept of modesty had 4 sub-variables such as covering up, appropriateness, drawing attention from others, and conservativeness.

1) *Covering up*

Students in both countries described modesty in dress as covering up one's body. They answered that clothes must be neither too short nor too revealing. Even if clothes cover up all of one's body, if an outfit is too tight and reveals body curves, they thought it was immodest. Some immodest clothes that they mentioned were too-short skirts, low-cut tops, outfits that display the midriff and other skimpy outfits.

2) *Appropriateness for the particular situations*

Both American and Korean students mentioned

that time and place are closely related to modest and immodest dress. They answered that modest dress is what is appropriate for the particular situation. For example, wearing a revealing bathing suit at the beach or pool is not immodest due to its appropriateness to time and place. In contrast, wearing a T-shirt and blue jeans to a formal ceremony, like a wedding or funeral, is immodest even though the wearer is well covered.

Modest dress should be acceptable to the general public and be proper. Some Korean students answered that modest dress should never fall out of righteousness. It seemed that Korean students have social norms of dress and they are conscious of them.

Most American students answered that dress depends on what, how and where. They said there are certain people, times and places that will accept immodest clothes, so if the time and place are appropriate, it is OK. American students thought that there was a boundary of respectability. Even if it is immodest dress, it does not have to be disrespectful of social norms and if it is beyond the boundaries of respectability, its wearer may be looked down upon by others. In contrast, Korean students never mentioned this.

Both American and Korean students thought that immodesty, sexuality, disrespectfulness and being fashionable are different. They thought that immodesty constitutes revealing and provocative dress. Disrespectfulness is defined as inappropriate attire for a situation and causes others to feel uncomfortable. Sexual attractiveness expresses femininity. Dressing fashionably displays their sense of style as well as individuality, good taste and knowledge of the latest trends.

Students of both countries had negative feelings about immodesty and disrespectfulness and positive feelings about sexuality and being fashionable. They thought that an outfit can be fashionable and sexual without being disrespectful. Dress that expresses sexuality and style, which in some circumstances could be immodest, could be appropriate depending on the situation. The students of both countries thought that immodest dress can be sexual and fashionable in an appropriate situation, but disrespectful in an inappro-

priate situation.

3) *Not draw too much attention*

Both American and Korean students answered that modest dress should not draw too much attention from others, while for immodest dress the reverse is true.

Asked about immodest situations, both American and Korean students answered going out to bars, dancing at clubs, attending parties and going out with boyfriends or friends. All of these activities are related to attracting men.

American students described immodest dress as dressing provocatively, while Korean students correlated it with loud colors and designs, too much jewelry or exaggerated dress.

4) *Conservativeness*

Both students in Korea and America thought that modesty required conservative and formal dress. American students used the terms 'conservative' and 'modest' interchangeably. In contrast, Korean students described modesty more frequently as 'decent'. Korean college students had a negative orientation to authoritarian aesthetic values (such as 'conservative') and a positive orientation to diversity, individuality and sexuality.

2. Differences between Two Cultures

There were clear differences between Korean and American students in situations requiring modesty. American students mentioned individual situations more, while Korean students discussed collective issues. Modest situations were prioritized by American students as (1) attending job interviews and work situations; (2) church; (3) school and class, family reunions; and (4) family gatherings with elders. The other occasions requiring modest dress were weddings, funerals, special dinners and special occasions that need formal wear.

Korean students prioritized modest situations as follows: (1) formal ceremonies like funerals and weddings and (2) formal events and meetings that require politeness and formality. The other events

requiring modesty were sacrificial rites (ceremonies for ancestors), religious services, gatherings with elders, and making a first impression.

Only Korean students related cleanliness and wrinkle-free dress with modesty. American students never related clean apparel with modesty; they described cleanliness of clothes and modesty as different aspects of dress.

3. Modesty and Gender

Modesty and Gender were correlated. Most American students answered that modesty in dress was different between genders. American students explained that there is more pressure on girls to dress modestly because of the religious pressure put on females. They mentioned that females are portrayed as 'tempting' men based on the way they are dressed. They thought women tend to be judged more than men when it comes to modesty and that women have certain social values they are expected to maintain. These students verified that men and women have different social norms related to modesty. They thought that men do not have to worry about being modest or immodest because less attention is focused on how they dress.

Korean students' answers focused more on social and collective aspects of modesty. 58% of Korean students answered that there are no differences in modest dress between genders; the definition or standard of modesty is not different for men and women. Therefore, both men and women should wear decent and appropriate clothes for the time and place. No one should make others socially uncomfortable by their choice of dress. Korean students thought modesty in dress changes not by gender but by situation. If the clothes are not proper for a certain occasion, they are immodest whether the wearer is a man or a woman. 42% of Korean students answered that modesty in dress is different between genders. The reasons were similar to those given by American students.

In conclusion, more American female students thought that modesty in dress is different between genders, while more Korean students thought modesty is similar for men and women. American stu-

dents mentioned more reasons based on personal behavior, while Korean students discussed traditional social norms and collective aspects. Findings also indicated that Korean students were criticized more strictly by the older generation for their immodest clothing than were American students. This may be due to a difference in beliefs about modesty between generations in Korea that may not be as strong in America.

V. Conclusions

This study addresses the central issue of modesty and immodesty in cultures that have differing histories of social response to its meaning. This study was performed to explore the concept of modesty and sub-variables of modesty, and to investigate the similarities and differences of modesty between Korea and America.

Results of this study indicate similarities between American and Korean students in their concept of modesty such as covering up, appropriateness, not drawing other's attention and conservativeness. Students from both countries thought that time and place are closely related to modesty and immodesty in dress. Whether certain clothes are modest or not is defined by situation. Even very revealing clothes are acceptable if they are appropriate for the situation. At other times, covering all the body, if the clothes are not appropriate for the situation, can be regarded as disrespectful. Therefore, there are common ways to evaluate modesty, but the meaning cannot be identified unless it is examined within the situational context.

There are cultural differences between America and South Korea in the concept of modesty. Modesty is based on prevailing cultural norms and habits, which help determine what is or is not modest. The media, which have increasingly shown more and more skin in both American and Korean cultures, have been blamed for increased immodesty. However, there appears to be a trend in America to be increasingly more modest, while in South Korea the opposite is true, due to rapid social change and acceptance of a broader range of socially acceptable dress, particularly among the younger generation.

This, however, has created both ambivalence among Korean young people and tension with the parental generation.

In America, in contrast, conservative political, social and ideological forces have created more tension around issues of immodesty. Conservative religious groups in American society have actively and effectively advocated for 'a return to modesty'.

Dress has been shown to be a tangible reflection of social change. This study examines beliefs about modesty among women in the 20s in both South Korea and the United States indicates that the previously held conception about South Korean society as being generally collective and American as individualistic is experiencing change. What has been reported in this paper is that dress in Korea is becoming less modest for these young women, while in contrast, American society is demonstrating an increased interest in modest dress, particularly among those with a stronger religious orientation. The proliferation of internet sites on modest dress indicates that this "trend" may be fairly large and is in part, supported by conservative political and religious climate in America. What seemed to separate the Korean and American students was that Korean students focused their answers on the social and collective issues of modesty while the American students expressed more individual concerns that did not necessarily reflect on their family or social group. Korean students were more inclined to feel that modesty in dress was not different between genders while American students felt that different social norms applied to men and women.

This study was performed in southeastern part of America. It is regarded very conservative area in America. If this study will be done in other area in America, the results might be different. It is the limitation of this study. For the next step, the developing the questionnaire for examine the modesty in dress from various areas and ages is needed.

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요 약

본 연구는 한국과 미국 여대생의 정숙성·비정숙성 개념에 대한 문화적 차이와 유사점을 질적연구를 통해 알아보기 위한 것이다. 본 연구를 위한 자료수집은 2004년 2월 한국과 미국의 대학에서 동시에 이루어졌다. 전문가 집단에 의해 진행된 사전조사에서 정숙성·비정숙성에 관한 심층 인터뷰와 토론내용을 녹음하여 내용분석한 후, 본 조사를 위한 13개의 질문을 구성하였다. 본 조사에서는 58명의 미국 여대생과 36명의 한국 여대생이 수업시간 중에 질문지에 자유기술식으로 응답한 후 토론하였으며, 응답의 내용을 내용분석하였다. 그 결과, 응답자들은 정숙한 옷이란 신체가 드러나지 않도록 덮는 것, 시간과 장소에 적합한 옷, 주변의 지나친 시선을 끌지 않는 옷, 보수적이고 격식을 갖춘 옷이라고 응답하였다. 또한 정숙성과 비정숙성을 판단하는 데는 시간과 장소의 적절성이 밀접하게 연관되어 있으며, 두 나라의 여대생들은 정숙하지 못한 옷, 최신유행의 옷, 부적절한 옷, 섹시한 옷을 구분하여 인식하고 있었다. 한편 미국 여대생들은 정숙성에는 성별에 따른 차이가 있다고 응답한 학생들이 더 많았던 반면, 한국 학생들은 그 반대였으며, 한국 학생들만이 의복의 청결과 관리상태 및 디자인을 정숙성과 연관시켜 생각하였다. 또한 미국 학생들은 개인적인 관점에서 정숙성을 인식하는 반면, 한국 학생들은 집단적인 관점에서 인식하고 있어 문화적 차이를 보였다. 본 연구의 결과, 미국 학생들은 정숙한 의복을, 한국 학생들은 비정숙한 의복을 받아들이는 경향이 과거보다 증가하고 있음을 확인할 수 있었다.