News Release

Happiness: it's not in the jeans

You may throw on an outfit without much thought in the morning, but your choice is strongly affected by your mood. And the item of casual wear in almost everyone's wardrobe – denim jeans – is what most people wear when depressed, new research from psychologists at the University of Hertfordshire reveals.

A study conducted by Professor Karen Pine, co-author of *Flex: Do Something Different*, found that what a woman chooses to wear is heavily dependent upon her emotional state. One hundred women were asked what they wore when feeling depressed and more than half of them said jeans. Only a third would wear jeans when feeling happy.

In a low mood a woman is also much more likely to wear a baggy top; 57% of the women said they would wear a baggy top when depressed, yet a mere 2% would wear one when feeling happy. Women also revealed they would be ten times more likely to put on a favourite dress when happy (62%) than when depressed (6%).

The psychologists conclude that the strong link between clothing and mood state suggests we should put on clothes that we associate with happiness, even when feeling low. Professor Pine said:

"This finding shows that clothing doesn't just influence others, it reflects and influences the wearer's mood too. Many of the women in this study felt they could *alter* their mood by changing what they wore. This demonstrates the psychological power of clothing and how the right choices could influence a person's happiness."

Accessories can make a difference too. The study found that:

- Twice as many women said they would wear a hat when happy than when depressed.
- Five times as many women said they would wear their favourite shoes when happy (31%) than when depressed (6%).

The study found that 'happy' clothes - ones that made women feel good - were well-cut, figure enhancing, and made from bright and beautiful fabrics. Professor Pine pointed out that these are exactly the features that jeans lack:

"Jeans don't look great on everyone. They are often poorly cut and badly fitting. Jeans can signal that the wearer hasn't bothered with their appearance. People who are depressed often lose interest in how they look and don't wish to stand out, so the correlation between depression and wearing jeans is understandable. Most importantly, this research suggests that we can dress for happiness, but that might mean ditching the jeans."

FLEX: Do Something Different. How to use the other 9/10ths of your personality, by psychologists Professor Ben (C) Fletcher and Professor Karen Pine, published January 2012 by University of Hertfordshire Press.

ENDS

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Notes to Editor

About the University of Hertfordshire

- *The University is the UK's leading business-facing university and an exemplar in the sector. It is innovative and enterprising and challenges individuals and organisations to excel.*

- *The University of Hertfordshire is one of the region's largest employers with over 2,300 staff and a turnover of almost £231 million. With a student community of over 27,700 including more than 2,900 international students from over eighty-five different countries, the University has a global network of over 170,000 alumni.*

- *The University of Hertfordshire was awarded 'Entrepreneurial University of the Year 2010' by the Times Higher Education (THE) and ranks in the top 4% of all universities in the world according to the recent THE, World University Rankings.*

- *Research is at the core of the University's strategy to facilitate far-reaching engagement with business, community and national and international partners. The University's research is world-leading and has been recognised by the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE).*

- *For more information, please visit www.herts.ac.uk*

About the Study

- *The study used a quantitative interview method, with Likert scale responses. The women in the study were aged from 21 to 64 and almost three quarters of them (73%) shopped for clothes at least every few months, mostly on the high street or on the internet (52%). Most rarely or never bought from markets (86%) or designer stores (71%).*
- *More than half the women (52%) spent no more than £50 a month on clothes, with a further third spending*

up to £150 per month. 15% of the women spent over £150 per month. 96% of the women believed that what they wear affects how confident they feel.

- *When women are sad or depressed the 3 items of clothing they are most likely to wear are: Baggy top (57%) Jeans (51%) Sweatshirt/jumper (41%)*
- *When women are feeling happy and positive the 3 items of clothing they are most likely to wear are: A favourite dress (62%) Jewellery (57%) Jeans (33%)*

- *Percentages are based on the most frequently selected categories from the list below, respondents selected their top three:*
    - *Jeans*
    - *Favourite dress*
    - *Tight top*
    - *Tight bottoms*
    - *Baggy top*
    - *Baggy bottoms*
    - *A suit*
    - *Long(ish) skirt*
    - *Short(ish) skirt*
    - *Leggings*
    - *Sweatshirt/jumper*
    - *Tunic top*
    - *Scarf*
    - *Jewellery*
    - *Hat*
    - *Favourite shoes*