AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Caroline M. Smith for the degree of Master of Science in Design and Human Environment presented on March 7, 2014

Title: The Projection of Self versus Perception of Self: Comparison of the Meaning of Clothing Intended by the Wearer and Perceived by Others.

Abstract approved:

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Leslie Davis Burns

Clothing is wrought with symbolism. Each day when outfits are selected and worn, messages are being sent and received, categorizing the wearer. The self and the many different roles that it plays in society are important factors in determining a personal appearance. We try to reflect our internal concept of self through outer appearance. Through impression formation and semiotics, society will then attempt to place us into appropriate

roles. This process helps to make sense of the entropy inherent in the universe. If we can correctly identify a person's role in society based on their appearance, we can quickly assess how to properly treat that person. This makes life more organized and less chaotic.

This thesis explored how we project ourselves and how others actually view us. Eleven subjects were photographed and filled out a survey on the intent of their dress. They were asked what visual messages they believed that their clothes were projecting. Eighty-three students then evaluated the photographs of these subjects. The students were asked their opinions of each subject based on style of dress. The opinions of the students were then compared to the intent and predicted response by the subjects who were photographed.

Results indicated that most of the subjects had at least a general idea of what other people thought of them. The majority of the subjects were accurate on at least one of the adjectives that they believed others used to describe them. Some of the subjects were better at predicting what others think about them than others. Some of the students surveyed were better at interpreting the intent behind the wearers outfits than other students. Impressions were primarily based on style of dress rather than other appearance characteristics (e.g., body size, hair color).

Symbolic Interaction Theory, Impression Formation Theory, Social Comparison Theory, and Social Cognitive Theory can be used to explain why we choose to dress in our individual styles. These theories will also serve as a guide for understanding how clothing is judged by society. By examining the motivations underlying clothing choice and how

these are being interpreted, there may be better understanding of the many different roles in society.

The Projection of Self versus Perception of Self: Comparison of the Meaning of Clothing

Intended by the Wearer and Perceived by Others

Caroline M. Smith

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I understand that my thesis will be become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Caroline M. Smith, Author

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The study of impression formation has a long history in the social sciences. One of the earliest studies of impression formation was published by Solomon Asch in 1946. According to Asch, impression formation is the sum of the different characteristics inherent in each person. "Each trait produces its particular impression. The total impression of the person is the sum of several independent impressions" (Asch, 1946, p. 48). Since that time, numerous articles have been published about impression formation and a wealth of information is available to scholars (e.g., Asch, 1946; Reid *et al* ,1997; Thompson & Haytko,1997). Research on person perception and social perception as part of impression formation has also occurred (Kaiser, 1985). There has also been substantial research on the construction of self. (Bandura, 1999; Festinger, 1954; Hannover & Kuhner, 2002; Lal,1995; Mead, 1913). Between the two topics (impression formation and construction of self) there has been little research on whether the self that has been constructed by an individual is accurately interpreted by others. Is the self that exists in the mind of the individual the self that others are perceiving? This thesis is designed to be a bridge between the two areas of previous research using clothing as a medium for communicating and interpreting the self.

1.1. Statement of Problem

By comparing the meanings of self as communicated by clothing with the meanings perceived by others, we might gain insight into the symbolism of clothing. By investigating if there is a disconnect between the individuals' intent and how others react to the individuals' choice of attire, useful knowledge about impression formation, construction of self, and clothing symbolism may be gleaned. One may be trying to communicate a certain message while others are interpreting this message quite differently. If the disconnect between the intent and perception can be better understood, then perhaps people might find this information useful in such areas as finding a job, advancing in a career or even finding a romantic relationship.

In this day and age, photographs of an individual are often what is making a first impression rather than a face to face meeting. "In a world that is being dominated by multimedia, the likelihood of people being judged on snapshots of their appearance is increasing" (Howlett et al, 2012, p. 38).

With the increase of social media and dating sites, people are aware more than ever of the importance of a good first impression. While some people hone and craft their online appearance to create on online persona, there is no certain way of telling that the image

they that they are trying to convey is being perceived correctly. One thing is for certain: "the fundamental role that choice of apparel plays in creating a positive first impression cannot be underestimated" (Howlett *et al,* 2012, p. 47).

1.2. Objective of the Study

The overall objective of this study was to compare the meanings of the clothing as conveyed by the wearer with the meanings of the clothing interpreted by perceivers.

1.3. Theoretical Framework

Symbolic Interaction Theory

For this thesis, Symbolic Interaction served as the dominant guiding theory. Symbolic Interaction comes from the discipline of Sociology (Blumer, 1937; Lal, 1995). According to this theory, symbols exist and interactions are viewed in the social context of the world. People construct meaning of symbols through media, observations, and social interactions. These meanings can be studied and interpreted through observing normal day to day life (Kaiser, 1990; Lal, 1995; Mead, 1934).

Each person can be thought of as an "actor" and every object and concept that we come into contact with can be interpreted sociologically (Lal, 1995). Each culture has its own set of meanings and symbols that objects and concepts in our life are imbued with based on how we treat and value each object and concept (Lal, 1995).

The way that values and objects are interpreted, change over time as our culture changes. A piece of clothing will have different meanings for different cultures and will change meaning based on the context of a situation. (Lal, 1995).

Impression Formation Theory

Impression formation is how a judgment towards a person is constructed based on his or her various attributes such as personality, physical appearance, occupation, and social status. Asch (1946) outlined two impression formation processes. The first was that the total impression of a person is formed from the sum of that person's traits. This formula is written as Impression= a + b + c + d + e. Asch also noted that one of the traits may overshadow the others which may shift the weight or importance of the other traits in forming of an impression. The second process holds that a general impression of an individual is formed from looking at all of the traits as they relate to each other. This was expressed in an elliptical diagram in which the traits all play an equal part in the impression formation (Asch, 1946, Reid *et al,* 1997).

Social Comparison Theory

Festinger (1954) articulated that all humans have a natural need to evaluate their abilities. We gauge the strength of our talents based on how others rate our performance and how we compare to others. Because of this, our opinions of ourselves do not exist in a vacuum; they are refined by comparison to others. Our behaviors will change based on the encouragement or rejection of others that we consider to be in our socio-economic

peer group. How our peers evaluate and react to a situation will color our own opinions. Humans have a natural drive to seek out approval of others. Whereas opinions about fashion or other items may be formed privately by an individual, a drive exists to have our opinions validated by a peer group who we feel we belong and whose approval is craved whether consciously or unconsciously. But we do not compare ourselves to others who are too far outside of our peer group. "A person does not tend to evaluate his opinions or abilities with others who are too divergent from oneself" (Festinger, 1954, p. 120). Festinger also stated that humans will change their opinions of themselves if they feel like their private assessment is different than the consensus of a group (Festinger, 1954). This may be an important factor in the dissemination of trends and fashion. If people see others wearing a particular style in their peer group they may decide that this style is valid. On the other hand, if someone is wearing a style that is wildly divergent from accepted modal fashions they may feel pressured to dress like the people whose opinion and approval they value.

When a person is asked to for an opinion privately and then has made available to him the consensus of the group in which he is a member, those who discover that most others in the group disagree with them become relatively less confident that their opinion is correct and a goodly proportion change their opinion (Festinger, 1954, p. 122).

In summary, all people share the need for self-evaluation, particularly from the people that they consider to be their demographic peer group. A person may belong to several different peer groups, each one with a specific "realm of relevance" that holds sway over their behavior (Festinger, 1954). The opinions of others that we respect matter to us and these have a tendency to influence our own perception of what is acceptable and correct for fashion and other areas of life.

Social Cognitive Theory

According to Social Cognitive Theory people control their lives through their brains and environments working in tandem. We use our cerebral cortex and sensory capabilities to make sense of our environments and to imbue our lives with meaning. Social Cognitive Theory asserts that a person is the "agentic" force rather than just being captive to the forces being exerted upon him or her. This theory supports the notion that humans shape and control their lives through their actions (Bandura, 1999).

Social Cognition research can be used be for research involving impressions formed by clothing. "In social cognition research where clothing is involved, the stimulus person is projected to subjects as a clothed object. Subjects then make impressions of the person based upon their views of the body, and at times also the face of the individual" (Davis, 1988, p.175).

Self-Perception Theory

Self-perception is "an individual's ability to respond differentially to his own behavior and its controlling variables is a product of social interaction" (Bem, 1967, p. 184). People have an internal view of themselves that they may or may not have trouble relaying to others (Bem, 1967). These views are usually expressed through "verbal statements that are self-descriptive" (Bem, 1967, p. 184).

While these internal views are believed by the individual to be self-produced and self-generated, it is likely that our internal point of view is unconsciously influenced by the ways that others react to us externally. "It is suggested that many subtle discriminations which individuals do make when describing their attitudes are based, rather on the kind of cues that are potentially available to an outside observer" (Bem, 1967, p. 185).

1.4. Definition of Terms

Appearance

Appearance "takes into account body features, movements, and positions, as well as the visible body modifications and supplements of dress" (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992, p. 13). We learn to hone and refine the evaluation of our appearance through social transactions. Appearance also incorporates the notion of Gestalt, which is the idea that the whole is greater is greater than the sum of its parts. To derive meaning from an outfit or ensemble one must weigh the components and evaluate the appearance overall.

Clothing and Dress

"Dress is an assemblage of body modifications and/ or supplements displayed by a person in communicating with other human beings" (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992, p.15). Clothing is a part of dress but is restricted to "the assemblage of items that happen to cover the body in some way" (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992, p.13). The term dress includes "body, all direct modifications of the body itself, and all three-dimensional supplements added to it" (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992, p.13). **"**Clothing is a form of non-verbal communication. Using dress, individuals can consciously or unconsciously encode multiple messages for for others to interpret. Viewers translate cues into meanings, whether intended, unconscious or imagined, from another's appearance as well as his/her dress" (Damhorst, 1990, p.1; Johnson *et al,* 2002, p. 125).

Code

The term code is used in this thesis and defined as "the knowledge that is shared by the addressor and addressee of a clothing message in order in order for the former to create the message and the latter to understand it" (McCracken & Roth, 1989, p. 14).

Fashion

"Fashion is defined as the prevailing custom, especially in dress...dress is visible clothing, costume, or wearing apparel that can imply a style or fashion, which reflects prevailing customs" (Cumming, 2004, p. 17).

"Consumers use fashion discourses to forge self-defining social distinctions and boundaries, to construct narratives of personal history, to interpret the interpersonal dynamics of their social spheres, to understand their relationship to consumer culture (e. g., fashion trends, popular brand names, and advertising and mass media images), and in some cases, contest conventional social categories" (Thompson & Hayko, 1997, p. 16).

Fashion can also be considered the "modal style of a particular group at a particular time..the style which is considered appropriate or desirable" (Lauer, 1981, p. 23).

Gestalt

Gestalt is the belief that "an impression was a synthesized whole and was more than the sum of its parts" (Davis & Lennon, 1988, p. 176). By looking at the various articles of dress that contribute to a person's appearance as a coherent whole, the meaning of the clothing can be interpreted. "The perceiver organizes component parts of appearance into a global, gestalt impression, and an interdependent composite of meanings arise from the perceiver's organization of the physical cues within the surrounding context or background" (Damhorst, 1990, p. 2).

Identity

Identity is the "organized set of characteristics perceived as representing or defining the self in a social situation" (Kaiser, 1990, p.186). A person can have many different identities that he or she will present according to the social situation.

Self

George Mead defines the self as:

the running current of awareness of what we do which is distinguishable from the

consciousness of the field of stimulation, whether that field be without or within. It is

this "awareness" that has led many to assume that it is the nature of the self to be

conscious of both subject and object-to be subject of action towards an object world

and at the same time to be directly conscious of this subject as a subject (Mead,

1913, p. 179).

In other words, the self is the inner observer that realizes that the person is a

subject; "the 'me' inside the stream of consciousness" (Mead, 1913, p.179).

The self as it relates to clothing is:

thereby a process. Clothes must express one's own self: the consumer wants to feel

that 'this garment expresses my inner mood, and identity, me.' Clothes are closest to

our body and they are therefore very intimate; at the same time it seems that they

are closest to our inner self and values, which we can express or hide with clothes

(Niinimaki, 2010, p. 155).

Symbolic Interaction Theory asserts that the self "is the kind of object that a person

makes of him or herself. This based on the way that the actor has been treated by signifi-

cant others, such as parents and teachers, as well as the way in which the actor

interacts with others in a variety of situations that he or she confronts" (Lal, 1995, p. 425).

Semiotics

The word Semiotics is derived from the Greek language and means "the study of signs" (Cumming, 2004, p.139). There are three types of signs "the iconic (a sign that represents it's meaning directly), the indexical (only identifiable by association), and the symbolic (a meaning established by convention, e. g. red for danger)" (Cumming, 2004, p. 139).

Semiotics in fashion refer to the code that makes different aspects of clothing symbolic. The code changes and shift as a culture evolves. The code draws on the "conventional visual and tactile symbols of a culture" (Davis, 1985, p. 17). The codes that are expressed through clothing are "highly context dependent" (Davis, 1985, p. 17). What an outfit actually means depends upon "the identity of the wearer, the occasion, the place, the company, and even something as vague and transient as the wearer's and the viewer's moods (Davis, 1985, p.17).

Stereotype

"A stereotype is an individual's set of beliefs about the characteristics or attributes of a group. Stereotypes need not be negative; the belief that accountants are good with numbers is certainly part of a stereotype. Stereotypes need not be inaccurate. Accountants

may in fact be quite good with numbers. In general, stereotypic characteristics distinguish

a particular group from other groups" (Judd & Park, 1993, p. 111).

Summary

We unconsciously and consciously try to project the self through clothes that we choose

to wear. We attempt to make out outer self, match not only our inner self, but the social

groups with whom that we are aspiring to be identified.

Social Cognitive Theory, Self-Perception Theory, and Social Comparison Theory are all

elements of how we seek to portray our self. Impression Formation Theory explains how

others make sense of the elements that we have presented to the public.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Concept of Self

The concept of self is determined through social interactions (Kaiser, 1990). By interacting with others, we can evaluate into what categories others place us. This is an iterative, ever evolving process that continues for life.

Self-schemata are the ideas of self that are obtained from past experiences and other's reactions to the individual. As we go about our lives observing and processing our experiences, most of the information that we gather has to do with ourselves (Markus, 1977). Self-schemata help us organize and categorize this information; helping to form ideas about ourselves and predict future behaviors. (Markus, 1977). Self-schemata also help us select appropriate actions and behaviors based on previous situations. The more developed the self-schemata are the more likely that individuals will be able to process and assess information about themselves.

In addition to the idea of self being formed through social interactions, social categories such as sex, age, race, location, class, and also the time period that a person resides in will affect both their self-concept as well as how they are perceived and judged by others. (Kaiser, 1990).

The concept of self is formed and remolded throughout a life time. Self-concept changes over time as it is influenced by experiences. One of the ways that humans regulate their environment is through the use of symbols, both through perceiving symbols that have been posited by other people but also by incorporating symbols into their own self presentation. Because of the capacity to create and understand symbols, humans can communicate visually without speaking a word. These symbols are created with the anticipation of a positive or affirmative reaction from others (Kaiser, 1990; Davis, 1985, Lal, 1995). "Self-definition is also effected by the evaluations of others as well as the opportunities and constraints regarding self-definition imposed by them" (Lal, 1995, p. 425).

Social Cognitive Theory can be used to explain the reasons that people dress and act they way that they do. People are a result of their social interactions but also exert influence on their social environments (Bandura,1999). These actions are evolutionary causing people to continually change their perceptions of self. According to Bandura, the advent of the internet has quickened and expanded the process of self evolvement and perception. In the past, human environments were more reclusive. The internet has made the world into a virtual sounding board of influences, ideas, and ways to finesse the projection of self through alignment with others in cyberspace.

Bandura (1999), separates social cognitive theory into three types of environments; imposed, selected, and constructed. All three environments contribute to perception of

self. Imposed environments are the physical and social restrictions that are forced on people whether they are ideal or not. Examples of this environment are race, gender at birth, and country of birth. People do not have much of a choice in this type of circumstantial environment except in their reactions and attitudes toward it.

The selected environment is who people choose to associate with and also the activities that people engage in. This environment is more likely to be chosen and regulated by the individual. Through a reciprocal process, humans form a constructed environment through their choices. Environments are constructed through who the person is in society, how the person behaves in society, how individuals choose to utilize the environments that they were born into and also the environments that they choose to integrate as part of their internal culture. Bandura also recognized that each environment has a set of rules and actions that people will participate in to generate a desired outcome.

The way that an individual relates to their clothing and appearance is not just physical but also has psychological components. The way that clothing relates to the self is a "multi-faceted construct" (Kaiser, 1990, p. 147). These constructs involve the perception of self, "internalization of other's judgments" and if the person has a positive body image.

2.2. Identity

Identity is the "organized set of characteristics perceived as representing or defining the self in a social situation" (Kaiser, 1990, p. 186). We can have many different identities that we will present according to the social situation. While identities are plural, the self is a single entity. Often the perceived self does not match up to the ideal self. We try to match our external appearance as closely as possible to the concept of our internal self. The roles that we play in our lives are built from the self, our various identities, and the expectations that come along with identity roles. Roles can be thought of as a society providing a "script" for us to follow. Scholars of Symbolic Interaction use role theory to explain the parts that we play in society. There are often rituals or tasks associated with these roles. Clothing can often give us clues to the roles of others. Often the idea and expectations of the role have become part of the concept of self.

Identities are roles that can be ascribed and also achieved. Ascribed identities are aspects of a person such as gender, race, and socioeconomic status. The way that others views our social identity are usually influenced by these aspects. Achieved identities are often due to hobbies or accomplishments. These aspects of an identity are less static and formed through lifestyle choices (Kaiser, 1990).

"One prominent use of fashion discourse is to develop a sense of identity through a contrast between their perceived fashion orientation and that of others in their social setting. Through this logic of self-identity construction, the sense of "who I am" is

constantly defined and redefined through perceived contrast to others" (Thompson & Haykto, 1997, p. 21).

Clothing can help to achieve certain identities or to be associated with a group that the individual wants to be identified as a member of. "For as well as expressing attributes, style of dress may also play a role in creating positive attributes and many fashion theorists draw attention not to just the reception but to the production of identity" (Howlett *et al*, 2012, p. 46).

There are several different reasons why identities are formed and maintained in a society. One is the reason that by individuals having an identity it helps the society maintain a social order (Deaux & Martin, 2003). Besides the identities that have been ascribed to them by society, people often strive to self-actualize by trying to tie themselves to groups that they may not be completely associated with. People may be trying to climb the social ladder and associate themselves with groups that have a higher social identity than they possess.

 "Social ethnography and the collection of human documents require that the sociologist attend to the sources of imagery available to imagery and groups. Institutions such as school and church, the mass media, and popular culture convey visions of the world that influence the process of collective definition" (Lal, 1995, p. 425).

To truly understand the intent or the meaning behind a style, choice of wardrobe, adornment, or accessories, the interpreter must have access to the symbolic imagery of the community or society. Symbolic Interaction theory takes the subject's viewpoint into consideration as well as the environment that this viewpoint is existing in. The opinions of a subject are influenced by time and place that the subject resides in. Objects and their social constructions can only be imbued with meanings that are valid to the society of a subject. "The meanings of objects are considered through a process of interpretation during which the actor takes into account the relevant objects in the situation he or she confront " (Lal, 1995, p. 423).

The concept of the subject's self must lay in the context of the times. For example, someone who today dressed in clothes from the 17th century would be considered anachronistic. To properly perceive the intended portrayal of self, the subject's appearance must be put into the context of the current culture. Lal maintains that "the self is on loan from society" (Lal, 1995, p. 424).

The self is constructed in several ways. The first and foremost is the way that we have been treated by our community. The feedback that the we receive from parents, teachers, love interests, and peers contributes significantly to our self-perception.

We also attach meanings to ourselves through the media and popular culture. By mirroring what is shown on television, magazines, and in movies the we try to match our

inner perception of self or to influence society's perception by dressing in certain ways (Bandura, 1999).

 For us to construct the self and for others to interpret the message within the proper framework, we and the community we interact with must be privy to the same sort of imagery. To correctly interpret intent or how the community perceives a subject, we must also have access to the prevalent imagery of the society (Lal, 1995).

Humans have a natural need to evaluate their abilities (Festinger, 1954). We decide what our abilities are based on how others react to them. People evaluate their abilities based on other's opinions of their performances. People's opinions of themselves do not exist in a vacuum and are refined by comparing themselves to others. But a person will not compare himself to people who are too far outside of his or her peer group. Humans will also change their opinions of themselves if they feel like their private assessment is different than the consensus of a group. This only proves true for people who consider themselves to be part of the peer group who are assessing them. "In dealing with opinions one feels that those with whom one does not compare oneself are different kinds of people or members of different groups or people with different backgrounds" (Festinger, 1954, P. 121). Festinger also refers to this as "the realm of relevance" (Festinger, 1954, p. 132).

"When a person is asked to form an opinion privately and then has made available to him the consensus of opinion in a group in which he is a member, those who discover that most others in the group disagree with them become relatively less confident that their opinion is correct" (Festinger, 1954, p.122).

Behaviors in a group will change based on whether the members of the group were led to believe that the group is homogenous or heterogeneous. The members within the group are less likely to compare themselves if they believe that the other members are not simi-lar. "In other words, the perception of heterogeneity on matters related to the issue ena-bled the members of the groups to narrow their range within which they actively com-pared themselves with others" (Festinger, 1954, p. 134).

Humans tend to gather in groups is for opinion formation and self-realization. "It seems clear that the drive for self-evaluation is an important factor contributing to making the human being "gregarious" (Festinger, 1954, p. 136).

Consumers make an unconscious or conscious decision to reflect their personality through their choices of clothing consumption. Some may purchase clothing or seek out clothing that they feel is trendy or that aligns them with a certain social group or per-ceived status. Consumers feel the urge to designate that they belong to a group but also to stand out from the crowd. "The desire to belong to an elite group, and the

simultaneous desire to distinguish oneself from other lower groups is manifest in fashion"

(Karni & Schmeidler, 1990, Thompson & Haytko, 1997).

Others may reject items of clothing that reflect the norm or they may eschew fashion al-

together. Thompson & Haykto say that rejecting fashion consumption is just as much as

indicative of personal values as embracing fashion. By rejecting fashionable clothing

choices, the consumer aligns themselves with "a populist ethos emphasizing practicality,

industriousness, conservatism, and, above all else, seriousness of purpose" (Thompson &

Haykto, p.17, 1997).

Consumers that actively choose their style and seek out certain types of clothing are in

contrast to the fashion rejecters. These consumers "interpret fashion as an exciting realm

upon which to project dreams and fantasies about a life of glamour" (Thompson &

Haykto, p. 17, 1997) rather than the fashion rejecters who "choose to interpret fashion

dismissively as a superficial and frivolous enterprise lacking in practical value" (Thomp-

son & Haykto, p. 17, 1997).

2.3. Impression Formation

Humans create appearances that be can be tailored to create a certain type of impression. People communicate through their clothing, hairstyles, body art, and adornment. People select their personal adornment based on the world or culture that they hope to be a part of and what is available for consumption in their world. (Kaiser, 1990)

The meanings that come to be associated with articles of clothing or aspects of appearance are developed through social interactions. Through these interactions, people develop a lexicon of symbols that is developed and refined throughout their lives (Blumer, 1969; Davis, 1985; Kaiser, 1990).

One of the earliest researchers to use impression formation was Solomon Asch. Asch (1946) used several formulas for determining the equation of what traits lead to the forming of an impression. Asch hypothesized that the formula for impression formation is as follows: Impression = a + b + c + d + e. (Asch, 1946). These different characteristics determine how these impressions come together to form a coherent, uniform impression of an individual. One of the traits may overshadow the others which may shift the weight or importance of the other traits in forming of an impression (Asch, 1946. Stangor et al, 1992). The second formula holds that a general impression of an individual is formed from looking at all of the traits as they relate to each other. This is expressed in a more

round about elliptical diagram in which the traits all play an equal part in the impression formation. There are primary and secondary traits that color an impression formation. Asch referred to these as "central" and "peripheral" traits. Words may have various shades of meaning to different people so that exact intent of meaning may be subjective. Furthermore, a quality that is dominant in one person may be considered "subsidiary" in another person depending on the weight of the other personality traits. Impressions formed by interactions in real life may be colored by the order that traits are observed or experienced (Asch, 1946).

There are many different physical features that we use to categorize a person upon meeting them. The categories of race, sex, height, facial features and clothing style are the first visual indicators that we use to try to place someone into their role in society (Stangor et al, 1992). Race and sex seem to be the dominant categories that color our judgement. However in studies where participants were asked to look at photographs and to only use clothing style to place the subject into a category they were able to ignore categorical factors such as race and sex (Kaiser, 1990).

Finally, impressions that are formed from interacting in actual life are often prejudiced from the start because of previous interactions with people who may share similar personality traits (Asch, 1946).

2.4. Internal Self Perception versus External Self Perception

There are also internal and external reasons for clothing choices. The internal cues may not be perceptible to anyone on the outside yet will influence the idea of self. These include motives for wearing certain types of clothing. External reasons are usually obvious to the observer that the wearer is trying to convey a certain image (Scott, 2005).

> when we dress in what we believe is an appropriate manner for *any* occasion, we are invoking the expectations of others-thus we are in some sense imagining ourselves as see "from the outside". The "others" may be our bosses, our mothers, our friends or our lovers (Scott, 2005, p. 226).

Clothing in and of itself does not have symbolism until society assigns meaning to it. "We obtain our ideas about what clothes *mean* from our observations and interpretations in everyday life" (Kaiser, 1990, p. 216). There is often not just one meaning ascribed to each article of clothing. There may also be different shades, levels, or layers of meaning. But whatever our self-evaluation may be others may not interpret our outfit the same way. No matter what you wear "your choices are profoundly revealing-whether you know it or not" (Fischer-Merkin, 1995, p. 6). Whether a lot of thought is put into an outfit or we just throw something on "clothing reveals volumes on how we feel about ourselves and offers a glimpse into our desires, our fantasies, and our values" (Fischer-Merkin, 1995, p. 10).

Livesley and Bromley (1973) put forth the notion that there are four types of thought pro-
cesses that are used to evaluate the meaning behind appearance. These are "selection of
cues" in which the observer decides which specific aspects of the appearance to evaluate,
"interpretative inference" in which the observer matches "primary or central characteris-
tics meanings to the visual cues, "extended inference" in which the primary cues lead to
assumptions and conclusions about other traits, and the "anticipatory set" in which the
observer expects certain behaviors based on the meanings perceived through the visual
cues.

Bandura (1999) also noted that instead of modeling behaviors found in the direct envi-
ronment, people now copy behaviors, thoughts and modes of dress that they see in the
mass media. This process is also reciprocal. As people copy modes of behavior that they
believe reflect their personal mythology, people in their surroundings will react to these
behaviors and corresponding modes of dress that are foreign to the native modes of be-
havior and dress. By bringing in outside influence and adapting it, people become agentic
influences.

The meanings assigned to the appearance of an individual also are influenced by the per-
sonality of the observer or perceiver. The observer will notice items that reflect a similar
demographic or background. The perceiver will apply his or her own context to the situa-
tion. The confidence and self-esteem of the perceiver will also affect his or her

perception of a subject. The perceiver may assign similar levels of self-esteem or lack thereof to a subject based on his or her own levels (Bandura, 1999).

To summarize, according to symbolic interaction theory clothing and appearance can be viewed through a semiotic approach. The way that people style themselves can be studied and interpreted to assess their identities in society and their internal self-concept. Impression formation theory explains how impressions are calculated. There may be a dominant aspect of a person's appearance that colors society's impressions of that individual. But overall impressions are formed from the sum of several aspects about an individual that form a cohesive whole.

According to social comparison theory people do not assess their appearance in a vacuum. The process of choosing clothing and style is iterative. Without a society to evaluate themselves against, people would not choose clothing to have a specific message. We are "engaged in the construction and articulation of our social identities-we are not passive recipients of identities ascribed to us be some remote entity termed society-there are nevertheless strong collective currents that impinge on our sense of self" (Davis, 1985, p. 24).

According to social cognitive theory individuals control their own lives by how they choose to appear in their environment. By assessing their appearance in society through feedback such as the internet and the immediate surrounding environment, individuals

can be agents that control how others react to them by altering and honing their outside appearance.

2.5. Semiotics in Fashion

Clothing can be thought of as its own language. The visual information given by clothing speaks of how the wearer thinks of himself (Davis, 1985). Fashion can be wrought with meaning whether intentional or not. "We know through clothing people communicate the things about their persons and at the collective level this results logically in locating them symbolically in some structured universe of status claims and life-style attachments" (Davis, 1985, p. 16).

Some articles of clothing or elements of appearance can come to represent a shared meaning of the culture in which is it worn in. "Dress is a systematic means of transmission about the wearer" (Damhorst, p. 1, 1990). By these articles of clothing being associated with abstract ideas or principles, the clothing themselves become a symbol and non-verbal form of communication. The beliefs that are associated with fashion styles or articles of clothing may be perceived unconsciously. In addition to some of the messages that reference old cultural symbols, the way that clothes are styled or worn may introduce new ideologies. (Kaiser, 1990)

 Life is complicated so people develop coding systems to interpret other humans. By using a "semiotic approach" people can assess "the cultural meanings that lie beneath the

surface of messages". Kaiser, 1990, p.53) When a code is used repeatedly then a similar meaning will be deciphered. When clothing or appearance is considered as a type of code then these items can be viewed as a language where shared meanings are developed.

"Clothing can communicate an extensive and complex array of information about a person, without the observer having to meet or talk to the wearer. A person's attire has been shown to qualities such as character, sociability, competence and intelligence" (Howlett *et al,* 2012*,* Damhorst, 1990).

There is not an overarching lexicon of fashion semiotics because fashion changes so quickly and differs from culture to culture. Davis (1985) believes that those who like to think of themselves as fashion innovators will imbue even the slightest change in hem length or lapel size with meaning. Davis maintains that whether a style is widely adopted will determine whether there is an "acceptance or rejection of of code modification which will determine whether it succeeds as fashion or merely passes from the scene as a futile symbolic gesture" (Davis, 1985, p. 23).

Fashion can be thought of as another language when the notion of messages and codes come into play. Fashion innovators will be more fluent in the language of fashion. In McCracken and Roth's article on clothing codes (1989), one of their hypotheses was that "certain members of the community are the masters of parts of the code and outperform

members of the community in some but not all interpretive tasks" (McCracken & Roth, p. 15, 1989).

The notion of Gestalt must also be remembered. Each part of the outfit works together to form an overall impression. The pieces of clothing or dress themselves may be meaning-less until they are styled and worn by an individual. "Simply adding up the messages transmitted by separate components presented in a single appearance does not always yield the overall meaning. The interaction of component parts is crucial to determination of the message" (Damhorst, p. 2, 1990).

People who are part of the same culture are exposed to similar visual stimuli. Even if the language of aesthetics isn't as concrete as written words, there will be some collective understanding of visual symbols within members of a particular cultural society (Davis, 1985).

"These findings demonstrate that clothing communication is indeed informed by a code and the knowledge of this code depends upon the social location of the individual and the social characteristics of the particular clothing look" (McCracken & Roth, p. 13, 1989).

In this day and age more than ever there is more collective exposure of media images that are aimed at specific demographics. Even ten years ago, there would not have been such a concentration of similar media imagery so widely disseminated across digital media. Young adults are one of the main demographics marketed to. With virtually everyone in

this age group having access to the internet, this demographic is bombarded with images every day of what celebrities and bastions of pop culture are wearing and buying. Even if absorbing this imagery is unconscious by the viewer it seems like it would shape their interpretation of language coding. Through the media and internet, even students living in a town as small as Corvallis have been exposed to a many different style tribes and sub-cultures via magazines, websites, catalogs, music videos, television shows, and movies. Celebrities take pictures of themselves constantly and post these photos on social media sites. In the past, young adults were exposed to less fashion styles less rapidly. In 2013, fashion is changing on a daily basis through social media updates.

The self is determined by our interaction with others. The notion of self evolves through-out our lifetime. Our identities and self-assessment come from the roles that we play in society and also the roles that we were born into. The way that we dress often reflects the way we see ourselves. By looking at the way we dress others can determine what roles we play in society and what our identity is.

Our articles of clothing that we put on each morning can all be thought of as symbols in a language known as semiotics. Clothing is a visual language that can be read to determine what roles a person plays in society, their interests and personal attributes. The entire out-fit should be looked at to determine meaning rather than the individual pieces of clothing. This notion that the sum of the outfit rather than it's individual parts is known as Gestalt.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

The purpose of the present study is to compare what people intend for others to think about them based on the clothes they are wearing and what strangers who are assessing their outfits actually think of them.

3.1. Stimulus Subjects

Portrait photographs were taken of eleven individuals (referred to as stimulus subjects) who all resided in Portland, OR. The stimulus subjects were recruited through an online recruitment advertisement. The stimulus subjects in the portraits were asked to wear their favorite clothing to the photographic session. They completed a survey and were interviewed about their personal styles. Stimulus subjects were also asked to write what sort of impressions they believe their style or clothing may give to strangers. The portrait sessions took place at a professional photography studio in a commercial space.

3.1.2 Recruitment of Ad for Stimulus Subjects

To create the stimulus materials for the study, 11 individuals who were willing to have their portrait taken wearing their favorite clothing and to complete a survey about their personal characteristics and lifestyle were recruited through an online advertisement.

These individuals were male, female and transgendered, with ages ranging from 18 to 35 years. To recruit these individuals I placed an ad in the "creative gigs" section of craigslist for the duration of one month. The ad stated that volunteers were needed for a research study on fashion and style. The ad stated also stated that they would have their photograph taken at a professional studio. After the individuals were contacted and confirmed, two different days were chosen in which the subjects were photographed. The ad read as follows:

Looking for people who love fashion to be photographed (SE Hawthorne)

Hi there,

 I am looking for a few more people for my thesis project. My thesis is called "The projection of self versus the perception of self: Comparison of the meaning of clothing intended by the viewer and perceived by others". The thesis is for my MA in Merchandising Management at Oregon State University.

I am taking portraits of individuals who are between the ages of 18-35 at a professional photography studio this Saturday, Nov 2nd between 11am and 5pm. The photography studio has generously donated the time to me and this is the only day that I can use the studio. Students at Oregon State University will see the photographs at a later date.

If you are interested, please contact me for more information. After I take your photograph, I will email you a copy of your portrait and give you $5 cash. The whole

thing will take less than 30 minutes to take your photo and interview. During the inter-

view I will ask you some questions about your fashion style.

If you are interested or know anyone else who might be, please pass the information

along. Thanks!

3.1.3. Photographic Documentation of Stimulus Subjects

The individuals who were recruited received a free, high resolution, digital copy of their

portrait emailed to them and $5. Each appointment took around thirty minutes. Each sub-

ject was instructed to wear their favorite clothing in which to be photographed. Upon ar-

rival each subject was given a verbal consent form addressing the risks of participating in

the study. After consenting, each subject was then instructed to fill out the stimulus sur-

vey addressing their clothing style and the outfit in which they were being photographed.

The subjects all struggled for a moment to put their style into words. They wrote down

their answers to all of the survey questions and then the researcher and each subject went

through each answer to make sure that the handwriting could be clearly read. While most

of the stimulus subjects had never given serious thought on how to describe their own

style of dress, all of them came up with suitable answers that could be coded.

In the photo studio a white background and identical lighting was used for each subject.

While being photographed, each subject was asked to stand in a position that they would

naturally adopt in their normal environment. No poses or facial expressions were suggested. Each subject posed and relayed the facial expression that they felt the most comfortable portraying. After the portrait session, the photographs were loaded up on a computer so that each participant could choose the photograph used for the study and also to be emailed to them. .

3.2. Participants and Procedure

Students from Oregon State University who were enrolled in a course titled "Appearance, Power, and Society" were asked to observe three of the portraits (randomly selected and in random order) and assess the personal styles of these stimulus subjects. This course meets the requirements of the "Difference, Power, and Discrimination" category of Oregon State University's Baccalaureate Core (general education) and is therefore taken by students from across campus. The student participants were asked not to evaluate a stimulus subject if he/she was someone they knew.

Packets were put together that included three randomly chosen photographs, three surveys (one for each photograph), a consent form, a demographic survey. These packets were distributed in person in the classroom to 83 students and then collected.

Thirty seven male and 36 female students served as the participant sample for the study. Each participant was shown photographs of three stimulus subjects. These photographs were part of a packet that were handed out in random order to the students during the last

15 minutes of their class time. Photographs were randomly assigned to participants and in random order. Accompanying each photograph was a survey that used open ended questions. By using fill in the blank questions for the first part of the survey, the participants had the opportunity to write down whatever words came to mind about the stimulus subjects' attire.

At the end of class the packets were collected from the students. The photographs, surveys, and demographic information sheets were separated into their respective groups so that the information could be examined.

The students were told that their answers would be anonymous. Their name was written on the consent form which was the first sheet in the packet. This sheet was then removed so that the students could receive extra credit but not have their answers tracked.

3.3. Survey for Participant Sample

The questions on the survey were as follows:

1. What are the first five words that come to your mind to describe this person?

2. Describe what the individual is wearing.

3. What do you think this individual's clothing "says" about the individual's personal and lifestyle characteristics?

4. How would you describe this individual's fashion style?

5. In your opinion, is there an identifiable fashion group to which you think this individual belongs? If so, what is that group?

The questions in the survey mirrored the questions that were administered to the stimulus subjects when their photographs were taken. This was to help in the process of comparing the answers and to help with the coding process.

The answers from the surveys of the stimulus individuals and the sample students were evaluated and coded. The answers between the stimulant surveys and the samples were checked for similarity. An analysis was performed to calculate the discrepancy between the stimuli's descriptions and how the sample perceives the photographs of the stimuli.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1. Demographics

The students who participated in the survey at Oregon State University were part of a large lecture class of 120 students. Of these 120 students, 83 participated in the survey for extra credit. Forty-three percent of the participants were female whereas 57% were male. Forty-eight percent of the participants were from a small town, 31% were from Portland, and 20% were from another city. Thirty-three percent of the participants were fashion majors studying either Merchandising Management or Apparel Design, whereas the remaining 67% were studying other subjects such as Business or Engineering. The median age for the students was 19.5 years with 58% of the participants being either 19 or 20. Eleven percent were 18, 10% were 21 and 8% were 23. The youngest students were 18 and the oldest student was 35.

Most of these participants were sophomores and juniors in college.

The participants were asked to rate their personal interest in fashion on a Likert Scale. The 5 point scale ranged from 1 which was "low fashion interest" to 5, which was "high interest in fashion". Thirty-six percent of the participants selected a 3 as their level of fashion interest which indicates a "moderate interest in fashion". Thirty-three percent of the participants selected 4 as their level which indicated "very interested in fashion". Eighteen percent of the participants reported 5 as their level of fashion interest. The 1's

and 2's, the participants least interested in fashion, were in the minority at 7 % and 6% respectively. This means that 87% of the participants had a moderate to high level of interest in fashion.

Participants were asked on the demographic sheet to reveal their hometowns. This information was collected to see if there was a difference in perception accuracy or fashion interest between rural participants and city adjacent participants. No significant difference was found, likely due to the internet that would have exposed participants equally to fashion trends.

**Survey Students
by Gender**

Figure 4. 1. 2. Pie Chart of Sample Demographics by Gender

Survey Students by Major

33%

67%

■ Fashion Major ■ Other Major

Figure 4. 1. 3. Pie Chart of Sample Demographics by College Major

**Students by Level of
Fashion Interest**

■ 1   ■ 2   ■ 3   ■ 4   ■ 5

Figure 4. 1. 4. Pie Chart of Sample Demographics by Level of Fashion Interest

**Survey Students by Level of
Fashion Interest**

■ Fashion Interest

Figure 4. 1. 4. 2. Bar Graph of Sample Demographics by Level of Fashion Interest

Survey Students by Age

18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 30 35

Figure 4. 1. 5. Pie chart of Student Demographics by Age

Survey Students by Age

Number of students per age

Figure 4. 1. 6. Bar Graph of Student Demographics by Age

**Survey Students by Proximity
to a City**

Figure 4. 1. 7. Pie Chart of Survey Students by Proximity to a City

4.2. Perception Accuracy

There were eleven stimulus subjects. Three photographs out of the eleven were chosen randomly for each packet. The eleven stimulus subjects who were photographed each filled out a questionnaire about the characteristics that they assume others perceive about their appearance. Five dominant characteristics were selected for each subject.

A total of 83 participants filled out the packets. Each photograph had a survey accompanying it. The participants were asked if they recognized the subject in the photograph. If the answer was yes, they were instructed to skip the survey pertaining to that photograph.

The questions on the survey were as follows:

1. What are the first five words that come to your mind to describe this person?

2. Describe what the individual is wearing.

3. What do you think this individual's clothing "says" about the individual's personal and lifestyle characteristics?

4. How would you describe this individual's fashion style?

5. In your opinion, is there an identifiable fashion group to which you think this individual belongs? If so, what is that group?

Since the photographs for each packet were selected randomly there were an uneven number of participant evaluations for each subject. The median number of evaluations

per subject was 22. The stimulus subject with the least amount of evaluations had 17. The largest number of evaluations for a stimulus subject was 28 people. Some of the evaluations were omitted because the participant filling out the survey recognized the stimulus subject in the photograph.

Six of the stimulus subjects were recognized by evaluating students who were randomly given their photograph in the packet. Three of these students were recognized by one person, while the remaining stimulus subjects were recognized twice. This is due to the fact that Oregon State University is 80 miles away from Portland, 31% of the class was from Portland, and the stimulus subjects and survey students are members of the same age bracket of 18-35 years.

The surveys that were filled out by the students were evaluated for each stimulus subject. Words written about the stimulus subject by the students that were the same, very close, or a synonymous with the characteristic named by the stimulus subject were considered to be in agreement with the stimulus subject's self-evaluation.

The participants who completed the surveys accompanying the randomly selected photographs were honest in their assessment. In my assessment, some of the comments

were insensitive and cruel; however this may be what would be going through the partic-

ipants' mind if these evaluations were first impressions that were generated such as see-

ing someone on the street.

4.2.2. Inferences

The majority of the evaluations about the stimulus subjects' styles were about inferred

personality traits, careers, political leanings, drug use, extracurricular activities, and bev-

erage choices. "This person hangs out in coffee shops", this person "drinks coffee", this

person "drinks craft beer" were phrases were written several times by the student partici-

pants. It should be noted that in Oregon, for many people, coffee and craft beer are a

large part of the culture for many people. The consumption of either of these beverages is

thought of as an upper middle class activity. The fact that the participants were inferring

these traits about several stimulus subjects was likely way of saying that the stimulus sub-

ject looked middle class.

The stimulus subjects who were in bright or colorful clothing were either described by

participants as "attention seeking or "needs attention" or as "confident" and "not afraid to

stand out." Thus, bright and colorful clothing elicits differing inferences. Further research

would be needed to fully understand these varying inferences.

Any of the stimulus subjects wearing black or leather were referred to as "Goth", "dark"

and "edgy." The stimulus subjects usually referred to themselves in these terms as well.

One participant referred to one of these stimulus subjects as "loves taking long walks on the beach…..at night…." a possible inference to the dark colors being worn. Dark and black clothing appears to have sinister connotations for both the projector and the perceiver.

One of the stimulus subjects who self-identified as "Goth" (with the majority of the participants in agreement), also referred to himself as "Victorian.". Several of the participants called his style "medieval." This usage was not counted as the perceiver agreeing with the stimulus subject. However, both the projector and the perceiver are saying that the style is anachronistic.

Goth dress is a style of dress associated with a music style derived from punk. It began in the 1970's and 1980's and is still adopted as a style, mainly by teens. People who dress "Goth", dress all in black, stay out of the sun, and sometimes accessorize with safety pins and leather.

All of the stimulus subjects who had or appeared to have red hair were referred to by the participants as "ginger" which is derogatory slang for "red hair". It is still considered somewhat socially acceptable to say this but it is a slur that most people with red hair find offensive.

All of the stimulus subjects who were overweight, sometimes even just slightly, were referred to as "fat" and/or a "slob". Several of the guys were referred to as "gamers", looks

like he plays video games" and "probably role plays". The stimulus subjects that were assumed to be gamers were wearing baggy clothes and t-shirts. These were the most casually dressed of the stimulus subjects. These are also supposed to derogatory towards the stimulus subject. These comments were always coupled with comments such as "unemployed", "doesn't leave the house" and "computer geek".

One of the stimulus subjects was referred several times as "being smart" and "good with computers." This was the only stimulus subject that revealed that he is learning computer programming for fun. It's not what he does professionally, though. He was wearing very casual clothing but had a shirt with a science theme on it, so this may be where the inference is coming from.

Two of the male participants self-identified as gay or homosexual, while one male subject identified himself as androgynous and one male subject referred to himself as transgendered. This information was volunteered by all four subjects; the researcher did not ask. The survey participants seemed to infer who identified themselves as gay. It should be noted that only the male stimulus subjects' sexual orientation was inferred by the students who participated. The sexual orientation of the female stimulus subjects was not inferred by the student participants. There were no slurs or negative connotations about these males, though. The students stated very plainly which of the stimulus subjects they believed to be gay. One student wrote about one of the other males who did not reveal his orientation, "this guy is probably straight". One of the female stimulus subjects

was referred to as "strong"and "masculine" by several of the participants but they did not assume that she was gay or speculate about her orientation. The words "effeminate", "gay", "metrosexual", and "European" seemed to be used interchangeably by the participants and by the stimulus subjects themselves to refer to any man who was extremely fashionable and also identified as gay.

The participants could easily identify all of the artists and musicians in the group of stimulus subjects. They did not say why they believed this, but they were right the majority of the time. The artists and musicians tended to wear more scarfs, jewelry, and brighter clothes.

The participants also identified the only mother in the group. They did not say why exactly they thought she was a mother but they also described her as "smart", "put-together", "looks respectable", "grown-up", and "responsible" which are traits that they may associate with motherhood.

One of the stimulus subjects was dressed very casually but the students accurately inferred that he had a good career. The subject is in fact an accountant. One of the students did not agree with this assessment and said that this subject "did not have a professional job and "did not work in an office." It should be noted that all of the

stimulus subjects were photographed on Saturdays and usually did not wear their work clothes (one stimulus subject was heading to work after that photo shoot and noted this in his evaluation of his outfit).

The participants also labeled many of the stimulus subjects as either conservative or liberal. Most of the stimulus subjects were labeled as liberal were also labeled as "green", "an environmentalist", and/or "a bicyclist" or "bicycle rider". Again, the students did not say why they thought this and politics and environmental beliefs were not measured in the stimulus survey. The stimulus subjects who were placed into this category usually has beards and/or were wearing plaid or flannel shirts.

Some of the style genres that were repeatedly mentioned, whether they were entirely accurate or not, were punk, hippie, preppy, goth, raver, and hipster. "Hipster" was also used as a catch all genre for any sort of non-conservative or trendy dress style. It should also be noted that the participants referred to the stimulus subjects that they found stylish as having "swag" or "swagg" and in one case of someone they found frumpy as having "no swag." They also referred to outfits as "being on point" or "not on point" to indicate if they found the outfit stylish.

Only a third of the class that participated in the survey had a background in apparel fashion. Sometimes the remaining two-thirds of the class struggled to find the proper words to describe the stimulus subjects style or fashion. When asked if there was a

particular category that they would place the stimulus subject in the participant without a fashion background would often answer "I don't know," "don't care," or "not sure."

In summary, it appears that the stimulus subjects had a strong idea about how strangers would assess their appearance. The majority of the inferences related to personality and careers rather than the stimulus subjects being associated with specific style groups or subcultures that have specific styles of dress they are associated with.

In the following tables, the terms were chosen by the stimulus subjects to describe their own personal style. The agree or not agree is whether the survey participants used one of these terms to describe the subject. The terms that are grouped together in the boxes are terms that have similar shades of meaning.

Survey	Japanese, Lolita, Harajuku	Gender queer, androgynous	crazy, colorful	fairy, unicorn	punk
Survey	**Agree 1**	**Agree 2**	**Agree 3**	**Agree 4**	**Agree 5**
1	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
2	no	yes	yes	no	no
3	no	yes	no	no	no
4	no	no	yes	no	no
5	no	no	yes	no	no
6	no	yes	yes	no	no
7	no	yes	yes	no	no
8	yes	no	yes	no	no
9	no	yes	yes	no	no
10	no	yes	yes	no	no
11	no	yes	yes	no	no
12	yes	yes	yes	no	no
13	no	yes	yes	yes	no
14	no	yes	yes	no	no
15	no	yes	yes	no	no
16	no	yes	yes	no	no
17	no	no	yes	no	no
18	no	no	yes	no	no
19	yes	no	yes	no	no
20	no	no	yes	yes	yes
21	no	no	no	no	no
22	yes	yes	no	no	no
23	no	yes	yes	no	no
24	no	yes	yes	no	no

Table 4. 2. 3. Charts of Perception Accuracy Stimulus- Subject 1

Trait 1. Japanese, Harajuku, Lolita: Agree-5, Disagree-19

Trait 2. Gender queer, androgynous: Agree-16, Disagree-8

Trait 3. Crazy, colorful: Agree-21, Disagree-3

Trait 4. Fairy, unicorn: Agree-3, Disagree-21

Trait 5. Punk: Agree-1, Disagree-23

Survey	Comfy	warm	stylish	responsible	conservative
Survey	**Agree 1**	**Agree 2**	**Agree 3**	**Agree 4**	**Agree 5**
1	no	yes	no	no	no
2	no	no	yes	no	yes
3	yes	no	no	no	no
4	yes	yes	no	no	no
5	yes	yes	yes	no	no
6	yes	yes	no	no	no
7	yes	no	no	no	no
8	yes	no	no	no	no
9	no	yes	no	yes	no
10	no	no	no	no	no
11	no	no	yes	no	no
12	no	yes	yes	no	no
13	no	no	no	no	no
14	no	yes	yes	no	no
15	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
16	yes	yes	no	no	no
17	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
18	yes	yes	no	no	no
19	no	no	no	no	no
20	no	no	no	yes	no
21	no	no	no	no	no
22	yes	yes	no	no	no
23	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
24	no	no	no	no	no
25	yes	yes	no	no	yes

26	no	no	no	no	no

Figure 4. 2. 4. Charts of Perception Accuracy Stimulus- Subject 2

N/A indicates that the survey was not filled out because the survey participant recognized the stimulus subject.

Trait 1. Comfy; Agree-11, Disagree-13

Trait 2. Warm: Agree-12, Disagree-12

Trait 3. Stylish: Agree-6, Disagree-18

Trait 4. Responsible: Agree-3, Disagree-21

Trait 5. Conservative: Agree-2, Disagree-22

Survey	modern	creative, artist, musician	hipster	old-fashioned	motivated, energetic
Survey	**Agree 1**	**Agree 2**	**Agree 3**	**Agree 4**	**Agree 5**
1	yes	no	no	yes	yes
2	no	yes	no	no	yes
3	no	no	no	no	yes
4	no	no	no	no	no
5	yes	no	yes	no	yes
6	no	no	yes	no	no
7	no	no	no	yes	yes
8	no	no	no	no	yes
9	no	no	no	no	yes
10	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
11	yes	no	no	yes	no
12	no	yes	yes	no	yes
13	no	no	no	yes	yes
14	no	no	no	no	no
15	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
16	no	no	no	no	no
17	no	no	no	no	no
18	no	no	no	yes	no
19	no	no	no	no	no
20	yes	no	yes	no	yes
21	no	no	no	no	no
22	no	no	no	no	no
23	no	no	yes	no	no
24	no	yes	yes	no	no
25	no	no	yes	no	no
26	no	no	no	no	yes
27	no	no	no	no	no
28	yes	no	no	no	no

Figure 4. 2. 5. Charts of Perception Accuracy Stimulus- Subject 3

Trait 1. Modern, timeless: Agree-5, Disagree-21

Trait 2. Creative, artist, musician: Agree-3, Disagree-23

Trait 3. Hipster: Agree-7, Disagree-19

Trait 4. Old-Fashioned: Agree-5, Disagree-21

Trait 5. Motivated, energetic: Agree-11, Disagree-15

Survey	comfort	preppy	punk	weather appropriate	No trait
Survey	**Agree 1**	**Agree 2**	**Agree 3**	**Agree 4**	**Agree 5**
1	yes	no	no	no	n/a
2	yes	no	no	yes	n/a
3	no	no	no	no	n/a
4	yes	no	no	no	n/a
5	no	no	no	no	n/a
6	no	no	no	no	n/a
7	yes	no	no	no	n/a
8	yes	no	no	no	n/a
9	yes	no	no	no	n/a
10	no	no	no	no	n/a
11	yes	no	no	no	n/a
12	yes	no	no	no	n/a
13	yes	no	no	no	n/a
14	no	no	no	no	n/a
15	yes	no	no	no	n/a
16	no	no	no	no	n/a
17	yes	no	no	no	n/a

Figure 4. 2. 6. Charts of Perception Accuracy Stimulus- Subject 4

Trait 1. Comfort: Agree-11, Disagree-6

Trait 2. Preppy: Agree-0, Disagree-17

Trait 3. Punk: Agree-0, Disagree-17

Trait 4. Weather Appropriate: Agree-1, Disagree-16

	clean-cute, put together, looks nice	Portland style	classic	relaxed, comfortable	preppy
Survey					
Survey	**Agree 1**	**Agree 2**	**Agree 3**	**Agree 4**	**Agree 5**
1	no	no	no	yes	no
2	yes	no	no	yes	no
3	no	no	no	yes	no
4	no	no	no	yes	no
5	yes	no	no	no	no
6	no	no	no	no	no
7	no	no	no	yes	no
8	no	no	no	yes	no
9	yes	no	yes	yes	no
10	no	no	no	no	no
11	no	yes	no	no	no
12	no	no	no	yes	no
13	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
14	no	no	no	yes	no
15	no	yes	no	no	no
16	yes	no	no	yes	no
17	no	yes	no	no	no
18	yes	no	no	yes	no
19	no	no	no	no	no
20	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
21	no	no	no	yes	no
22	yes	no	no	yes	no
23	yes	no	no	yes	no
24	no	no	no	yes	no

Figure 4. 2. 7. Charts of Perception Accuracy Stimulus- Subject 5

Trait 1. Clean cut, put together, looks nice: Agree-7, Disagree-15

Trait 2. Portland style: Agree-3, Disagree-19

Trait 3. Classic: Agree-1, Disagree-21

Trait 4. Relaxed, comfortable: Agree-14, Disagree-7

Trait 5. Preppy: Agree:0, Disagree-21

Survey	artsy, musical, bohemian	gay	Portland	fashionable	confident
Survey	**Agree 1**	**Agree 2**	**Agree 3**	**Agree 4**	**Agree 5**
1	yes	no	no	yes	no
2	no	no	no	yes	yes
3	yes	no	no	yes	yes
4	yes	no	yes	yes	yes
5	yes	no	no	yes	no
6	yes	no	yes	yes	no
7	yes	yes	no	yes	yes
8	no	no	no	yes	no
9	yes	no	no	yes	yes
10	no	no	no	yes	no
11	yes	no	no	yes	yes
12	yes	no	yes	yes	no
13	no	no	no	yes	no
14	yes	no	no	no	no
15	no	no	yes	yes	yes
16	yes	no	yes	yes	no
17	no	no	no	yes	no
18	yes	no	no	yes	no
19	yes	yes	no	yes	no
20	yes	no	no	yes	no
21	no	no	no	no	no
22	no	yes	no	yes	yes
23	yes	no	no	no	no

24	yes	no	no	yes	yes
25	no	no	no	yes	no
26	no	no	no	yes	no
27	yes	no	no	yes	no
28	no	no	no	yes	no

Figure 4. 2. 8. Charts of Perception Accuracy Stimulus- Subject 6

Trait 1. Artsy, musical, bohemian: Agree- 17, Disagree- 11

Trait 2. Gay: Agree- 3, Disagree- 25

Trait 3. Portland: Agree- 5, Disagree- 23

Trait 4. Fashionable: Agree- 25, Disagree- 3

Trait 5. Confident: Agree- 9, Disagree- 19

survey	retro, vintage	glamorous, feminine	smart, professional	creative	nice
Survey	**Agree 1**	**Agree 2**	**Agree 3**	**Agree 4**	**Agree 5**
1	no	no	no	no	yes
2	yes	no	no	no	no
3	no	no	yes	no	no
4	no	yes	no	no	no
5	no	no	yes	no	no
6	no	no	yes	yes	no
7	yes	no	yes	yes	no
8	yes	no	no	no	no
9	no	yes	no	no	no
10	no	no	no	no	no
11	no	no	yes	no	yes
12	no	yes	no	no	no
13	yes	no	no	no	no
14	no	no	yes	no	no
15	yes	no	no	no	no
16	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
17	yes	no	yes	yes	no
18	yes	no	no	no	no
19	yes	no	no	no	no
20	no	no	yes	no	no
21	no	no	no	no	yes
22	yes	yes	no	no	no
23	no	no	yes	no	no
24	yes	no	no	no	no
25	yes	yes	yes	no	no

Figure 4. 2. 9. Charts of Perception Accuracy Stimulus- Subject 7

Trait 1. Retro, vintage: Agree- 11, Disagree- 13

Trait 2. Glamorous, feminine: Agree- 5, Disagree- 19

Trait 3. Smart, professional: Agree- 10, Disagree- 14

Trait 4. Creative: Agree- 3, Disagree- 21

Trait 5. Nice: Agree- 3, Disagree- 21

Survey	minimalist, sleek	punk	creative	quiet	intelligent
Survey	**Agree 1**	**Agree 2**	**Agree 3**	**Agree 4**	**Agree 5**
1	no	no	no	no	yes
2	no	no	no	no	no
3	yes	no	no	no	yes
4	no	no	no	no	no
5	yes	no	no	no	yes
6	no	no	no	no	no
7	no	no	no	no	yes
8	yes	no	no	no	no
9	yes	no	no	no	yes
10	no	no	no	no	no
11	no	no	no	no	no
12	yes	yes	no	no	no
13	yes	no	no	no	no
14	yes	no	no	no	no
15	no	no	no	no	no
16	yes	no	no	no	no
17	yes	no	no	no	yes
18	no	no	yes	no	no
19	yes	no	no	no	no
20	no	no	no	no	yes
21	no	no	no	no	no
22	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
23	no	no	no	no	no

Figure 4. 2. 10. Charts of Perception Accuracy Stimulus- Subject 8

Trait 1. Minimalist, Sleek: Agree- 10, Disagree- 12

Trait 2. Punk: Agree- 1, Disagree- 21

Trait 3. Creative: Agree- 1, Disagree- 21

Trait 4. Quiet: Agree- 0, Disagree- 22

Trait 5. Intelligent: Agree- 7, Disagree- 15

survey	stands out	utilitarian	Portland	average	carefree
Survey	**Agree 1**	**Agree 2**	**Agree 3**	**Agree 4**	**Agree 5**
1	no	no	no	no	yes
2	no	yes	no	no	yes
3	no	no	no	yes	no
4	no	yes	no	no	no
5	no	yes	no	yes	yes
6	no	no	no	no	yes
7	no	no	no	yes	yes
8	no	no	no	yes	no
9	no	no	no	no	yes
10	no	yes	no	yes	yes
11	no	no	no	no	no
12	no	no	no	no	yes
13	no	no	no	no	no
14	no	yes	no	yes	no
15	no	yes	no	yes	yes
16	yes	no	no	no	yes
17	no	no	no	yes	no
18	no	no	no	no	yes
19	no	no	yes	no	no
20	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
21	no	yes	no	no	no
22	no	no	no	no	no
23	no	no	no	yes	no
24	no	no	yes	no	yes
25	no	no	no	no	no

Figure 4. 2. 11. Charts of Perception Accuracy Stimulus- Subject 9

Trait 1. Stands out: Agree- 1, Disagree- 23

Trait 2. Utilitarian: Agree- 7, Disagree- 17

Trait 3. Portland: Agree- 2, Disagree- 22

Trait 4. Average: Agree- 9, Disagree- 15

Trait 5. Carefree: Agree- 12, Disagree- 12

survey	victorian	gothic	original	androgynous	dark
Survey	**Agree 1**	**Agree 2**	**Agree 3**	**Agree 4**	**Agree 5**
1	no	yes	no	no	no
2	no	no	yes	no	no
3	no	yes	no	no	no
4	no	yes	yes	no	no
5	no	no	no	no	no
6	no	no	no	no	no
7	no	no	no	no	yes
8	no	yes	no	no	yes
9	no	yes	yes	no	yes
10	no	no	no	no	no
11	no	no	yes	no	yes
12	no	yes	no	no	yes
13	no	no	no	no	no
14	no	yes	no	no	no
15	no	no	no	no	no
16	no	yes	no	no	no
17	no	no	no	no	yes
18	no	yes	no	no	no
19	no	yes	no	no	no
20	no	no	no	no	yes
21	no	yes	no	no	yes
22	no	no	no	no	no

Figure 4. 2. 12. Charts of Perception Accuracy Stimulus- Subject 10

Trait 1. Victorian: Agree- 0, Disagree- 22

Trait 2. Gothic: Agree- 11, Disagree- 11

Trait 3. Original: Agree- 4, Disagree- 18

Trait 4. Androgynous: Agree- 0, Disagree- 22

Trait 5. Dark: Agree- 8, Disagree- 14

survey	unique, different	colorful, rainbow	stands out	creative	tank girl
Survey	**Agree 1**	**Agree 2**	**Agree 3**	**Agree 4**	**Agree 5**
1	yes	yes	no	no	no
2	yes	no	yes	no	no
3	yes	yes	yes	no	no
4	yes	no	yes	no	no
5	yes	no	yes	no	no
6	yes	yes	yes	no	no
7	yes	yes	yes	no	no
8	no	yes	yes	no	no
9	no	no	yes	no	no
10	yes	yes	yes	no	no
11	yes	no	yes	no	no
12	yes	yes	yes	no	no
13	yes	no	yes	no	no
14	yes	no	yes	no	no
15	yes	yes	no	no	no
16	yes	yes	yes	no	no
17	yes	no	yes	no	no
18	no	yes	yes	no	no
19	yes	yes	yes	no	no
20	yes	yes	yes	no	no
21	no	no	no	no	no
22	yes	yes	yes	no	no
23	no	no	yes	no	no
24	yes	yes	yes	no	no
25	yes	yes	yes	no	no
26	yes	no	no	no	no
27	yes	no	no	no	no
28	no	no	yes	no	no

Figure 4. 2. 13. Charts of Perception Accuracy Stimulus- Subject 11

Trait 1. Unique, different: Agree- 22, Disagree- 6

Trait 2. Colorful, rainbow: Agree- 11, Disagree- 11

Trait 3. Stands out: Agree- 23, Disagree- 5

Trait 4. Creative: Agree- 0, Disagree- 28

Trait 5. Tank girl: Agree- 0, Disagree- 28

4.3. Projection versus Perception

The results were as follows:

For Stimulus Subject 1, 21% of the students surveyed agreed with the stimulus subject that they seemed to project trait 1, 66 % agreed with trait 2, 87.5 % agreed with trait 3, 37.5 % agreed with trait 4, and 1.5 % agreed with trait 5.

For Stimulus Subject 2, two of the students surveyed recognized the subject and did not fill out the survey per request. 46 % of the students surveyed agreed with trait 1, 50 % agreed with trait 2, 25 % agreed with trait 3, 12.5 % agreed with trait 4, and 8.3 % agreed with trait 5.

For Stimulus Subject 3, two of the students surveyed also knew this subject and did not fill out the survey per request. 19 % of the students surveyed agreed with trait 1, 11.5 % with trait 2, 30 % agreed with trait 3, 19% with trait 4, and 42% with trait 5.

For Stimulus Subject 4, 65% agreed with trait 1, 0% agreed with trait 2, 0% agreed with trait 3, 6.3 % agreed with trait 4, and there was not a 5th trait listed.

For Subject 5, two of the students surveyed knew the subject and did not fill out the survey per request. 32 % agreed with trait 1, 14 % agreed with trait 2, 4.5 % agreed with trait 3, 64 % agreed with trait 4, and 0 % agreed with trait 5.

For Subject 6, 61 % agreed with trait 1, 11 % with trait 2, 18 % with trait 3, 89 % with trait 4, and 32 % with trait 5.

For Subject 7, one of the students surveyed recognized the person and did not fill out the survey per request. 46 % agreed with trait 1, 21 % with trait 2, 42 % with trait 3, 12.5 % with trait 4, and also 12.5 % with trait 5.

For Subject 8, one of the students surveyed recognized the person and did not fill out the survey per request. 45 % agreed with trait 1, 4.5 % with trait 2, also 4.5 % for trait 3, 0 % for trait 4, and 32% for trait 5.

For Subject 9, one of the students surveyed recognized the person and did not fill out the survey per request. 4.6 % agreed with trait 1, 29 % agreed with trait 2, 8.3 % agreed with trait 3, 37.5 % agreed with trait 4, and 50 % agreed with trait 5.

For Subject 10, 0 % agreed with trait 1, 50 % agreed with trait 2, 18 % agreed with trait 3, 0 % agreed with trait 4, and 33 % agreed with trait 5.

For Subject 11, 79 % agreed with trait 1, 54 % agreed with trait 2, 82 % agreed with trait 3, 0 % agreed with trait 4, and 0 % agreed with trait 5.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to compare what people assume others think about them based on the clothes they are wearing and what strangers who are assessing their outfits actually think of them. Eleven stimulus subjects were photographed at a photography studio and filled out a questionnaire about their personal style. Five dominant words were chosen for each stimulus subject based on their self-evaluation. These were the most specifically descriptive adjectives that each subject used. These were the words that evoked a physical description. Photographs of the stimulus subjects were then shown to a group of college students who wrote what they thought about the stimulus' subjects clothing style and appearance.

5.1. Procedure and Results

Eighty-three male and female students who were enrolled at Oregon State University in Corvallis, OR served as the participant sample for the study. Each participant was shown photographs of three stimulus subjects. Photographs were randomly assigned to participants and were in random order. Accompanying each photograph was a survey that used open ended questions. By using fill in the blank questions for the first part of the survey, the participants had the opportunity to write down whatever words came to their mind about the stimulus subjects.

In previous studies, a semantic scale and forced word choice format were used. By using the open format, it may be possible to explore different facets of impression formation based on assessment of clothing style.

The students who were given the survey were told that the study was about clothing style and first impressions. However, their answers were free form so other things about the subjects in the photographs were found to be part of the first impression formation. This was useful to in seeing what sort of thoughts people actually have when assessing a stranger. Although clothing may give the students many clues about the person, the students also looked to clues such as age, race, and gender to evaluate each photographed subject.

Because an open ended survey was employed the results were harder to categorize and code then a forced answer format. But the information gleaned from the sample of students evaluating the clothes of the stimulus subjects was more natural since they were asked to write their reactions in their own words. Since judgments and responses of the sample subjects were in their own words rather than suggested through word pairs, the study was a more accurate assessment of first impressions of the stimulus subjects.

- All of the eleven stimulus subjects were able to accurately predict at least two traits that strangers would use to describe their appearance.

- Out of the eleven subjects, five predicted at least one trait that was not chosen by any of the eighty three survey students.

- One of the eleven stimulus subjects listed two traits that none of the survey students used to describe that subject's appearance.

- That means that out of the eleven stimulant subjects, ten of the subjects were able to accurately predict four out of the five traits listed that a stranger would use to describe their appearance.

These findings suggest that people may have a solid understanding of how their outer self is perceived by others who are observing their appearance.

A second coder looked over the data and achieved the same results. The second coder agreed that 87% of the descriptions used by the stimulus subjects were echoed by the survey participants. This confirms the presence of inter coder reliability.

5.2. Discussion

Portland has a much larger and more diverse population than Corvallis, OR where Oregon State University is located. In addition to having a more diverse population, there was less of a risk of subjects recognizing each other when they evaluated the photographs.

Festinger's (1954) article backs up this assumption by stating "It may very well be that the segmentation into groups is what allows a society to maintain a variety of opinions within it...A society or town which was not large enough or flexible enough to permit such segmentation might not be able to accommodate the same variety" (p. 136).

The stimulus individuals and the student sample have similar cultural style references from popular culture the media, and their society. This decision is due to Festinger's theory of Social Comparison Processes. Festinger (1954) maintains that people will "cease comparison with those who are too different from oneself" (p. 131). If the stimulus and sample groups are kept to a similar demographic then the students who are evaluating the photographs are more likely to care about giving their opinion on the clothing styles of the stimulus subjects. Howlett *et al* (2012) also maintains that "clothing communication relies on a code. This code represents knowledge about social or cultural norms...The more people that understand the code the more potent the clothing will be at communicating information" (Howlett, p. 39, 2012). This is why it is relevant to use fashion students for the survey sample. The stimulus individuals and sample individuals will also be more likely to have collective definitions if they are from a similar demographic. McCracken and Roth (1989) concur "uses of the clothing code, on the other hand, encode only the messages called on for their own age gender, status, and lifestyle" (p. 28).

Several different categories of descriptions were collapsed into narrower categories because of similarities in the words (Damhorst, 1990). Some answers did not make any sense or were illegible. Other answers spanned several dimensions of categories. "Semantic boundaries for word concepts are hazy at best, due to the multilingual nature of word meanings. With some and stimuli and some types of subjects, intercorrelation of of category concepts may occur" (p. 3).

Clothing does affect the impressions that are made from the subject to the perceiver (Davis & Lennon, 1988). But clothing may not be the primary visual cue that the perceivers look to for placing a subject into a category. Race and gender are the first visual cues used to prompt categorization of an individual (Stangor, *et al, 1992).* If the perceivers are told that the purpose of their subject assessment is to discern social categorization based on dress style then the perceivers will pay less attention to race and gender as the primary categorization factors (Stangor, *et al).*

There is the possibility that the sample subjects used stereotypes to try to evaluate the stimulus subjects in the photographs. Even if the students had been told to ignore race and gender as qualifying factors in their assessment of the stimulus subjects' clothing, there is always the possibility that the sample subjects tried to decipher the age and

socioeconomic status of the stimulus subjects and used these as part of their assessment (Davis & Lennon, 1988).

Because impression formation in real life is comprehensive, it involves whatever stereotypes and assumptions that we have based on our feelings about race, gender, hair color, perceived wealth, etc. The survey students could have been asked to try to focus primarily on the clothing of each stimulus subject but since the face of each stimulus subject will be visible in the photographs it is likely that some stereotypes associated with the these categories such as race, gender, hair color, body type, and so forth did consciously or unconsciously creep into the answers of the sample subjects. The students were not told to discount any visual indicators.

A study by Hamid (1968) found that even when the models were similar in physical appearance and facial expression, their clothing did affect the perception of the receiver. Hamid found that that the impression forms could be manipulated by changing clothing components on the models such as glasses and hemline length. Hamid's results suggest that most impressions and assumed stereotypes of others are formed based on style of dress rather than facial expressions (Hamid,
1968).

Perhaps students who study fashion primarily are able to focus mainly on clothing for their impressions of the stimulus subjects rather than attractiveness, race, or gender. However, as noted previously, it is unlikely that this information about each stimulus

subject was ignored. Hamid did find that "when ranking faces alone, no consistent stereotypes emerged" (Hamid, 1968, p. 194). But Hamid's study had very similar looking models who were all blonde. It's difficult to say whether that result would be applicable to this study. it may be best for the stimulus subjects to maintain a neutral expression due to the fact that their faces will be shown and "facial information is known to heavily influence judgements" (Howlett *et al,* 2012, p. 40).

The questions on the student surveys section mirrored the questions that were administered to the stimulus subjects when their photographs were taken. This was to help in the process of comparing the answers and help with the coding process.

 The logic behind using a less leading survey style comes from the survey techniques used in S.E. Asch's article *Forming Impressions of Personality* (1946). Asch describes using several different scales that were used to facilitate a description of each subject. Asch found that whatever word was used first as a suggestion had a tendency to color the rest of the description. There were also words that would produce what he referred to as a "halo effect" that had a dominant bearing on the following words chosen to describe the subject. Due to these findings, it seems logical to have a section in which the subject can describe themselves freely using a fill in the blank method. This technique may be even more useful for the second part of the experiment in which the participants were asked to describe photographs of the other participants. By using a free form method of

description, the words the subjects choose for the description will not be influenced by a predetermined set of words.

Also, the majority of studies involving clothing and impression formation have used a "forced choice format" (Davis, 1984: Davis & Lennon, 1988, p. 179). By using an open ended survey the categories and impressions may be more truthful and accurate than past studies in which the sample subjects were forced between word pairs. It is possible that some of the words might not have been in the subjects' vocabulary and that neither of the words actually described the impression that was trying to be relayed (Davis & Lennon, 1988).

McCracken and Roth (1989) mention that "clothing-wearers on the other hand, can experience real difficulty in giving an account of the meaning of their own clothing" (p. 28).

All of the subjects self-selected and were looking at ads in the "creative gigs" section of craigslist. This likely lead to subjects who were more versed in the language of fashion and who dressed a bit more creatively than the average person one might find on the street.

 McCracken and Roth (1989) also address the fact that people are trained in the semiotics of linguistics while fashion semiotics have various degrees of language mastery. People who spend a lot of time perusing fashion magazines or reading fashion blogs on the internet would have more access to the codes that are inherent in clothing. Someone who

never looks at fashion magazines may just buy the clothing that is available in their community. It is also likely that their style of dress would just mirror that of their peers in order to fit in as a member of their community.

5.3. Limitations

There are several limitations to the present study. The people who respond to an ad about fashion and having their clothes interpreted might be more likely to be fashionable. They are also more likely to put thought into their clothes than the general public. Also, the subjects knew that they were being photographed that day and probably chose their outfits careful thought and intent. This is different than someone spotted on the street who may be wearing work clothes, going to the gym, or wearing something they just threw on to run to the grocery store.

The students who evaluated the photographs of the subjects were mostly fashion students. While they may have a broader understanding of the semiotics of clothing they may also present a more judgmental tone in their assessments. People who love fashion and follow the latest trends may look down on others who have a more casual relationship with their wardrobes.

These are photographs of people who show some interest in fashion and they were judged by people who are studying fashion. While this scenario may naturally occur, it is much more likely that an average person's outfit is being judged by others without a background in fashion. In this sense, this experiment exhibits subjects who may wear purpose-

fully semiotic clothing and they are being examined by students who are more likely to be concerned with fashion. This amplifies the messages being sent by the clothing of the subjects and also the messages being received by the fashion students. "Perhaps almost any characteristic of a person can be communicated through dress. However, the potential for message transmission seems to be dependent on the context of perception, the stimulus person, and the receiver" (Damhorst, 1990, p. 7). It is possible that some exciting information may be generated in this study from fashion students looking at photographs of subjects who are likely to have an interest in fashion. These results may not be transferrable to impression formation in the general public.

Even though there was some overlap in the general fashion vocabulary between the stimulus and sample surveys, some of the answers were quite ambiguous. According to Davis it is "hard to get people in general to interpret the same clothing symbols in the same way; in semiotic terminology, the signifier-signified relationship is quite unstable" (Davis, 1985, p.18).

5.4. Recommendations for Future Research

I am offering the following recommendations for future research. The reasons that the majority of the stimulus subjects were able to predict what the eighty three survey participants would say about their appearance should be explored further. A study that measures how accurate projection and perception of traits are in the general population rather than with stimulus subjects and participants who are more likely to be interested in fashion than the average person may provide different results.

It is possible that people with a stronger sense of their inner self may be more aware of how others perceive them. A study that measures strength of inner self versus accuracy in predicting the perception of self by strangers would enhance the information uncovered by this study.

The stimulus subjects who were recruited for the study answered an ad in the "creative gigs" section of craigslist.org. These subjects were likely creative individuals who think about their clothing and outfits more than the average person. They may be more in tune with the semiotics of clothing. A study where people were randomly selected to have their outfits evaluated may give different results than those achieved here.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. IRB Approval

Institutional Review Board
Office of Research Integrity | Oregon State University
B308 Kerr Administration Building, Corvallis, OR 97331-2140
Telephone (541) 737-8008
irb@oregonstate.edu | http://oregonstate.edu/irb/

**STUDY ID
5744**

Notification Type	**APPROVED**		
Date of Notification	8/27/2013		
Study Title	The Projection of Self Versus Perception of Self: Comparison of the Meaning of Clothing		
Principal Investigator	Leslie Burns, PhD		
Study Team Members	Caroline Smith		
Submission Type	Initial Application		
Level	Expedited	Category(ies)	6, 7
Number of Participants	165 *Do not exceed this number without prior IRB approval*		
Waiver(s)	Documentation of Informed Consent		
Risk Level for Children	N/A		
Funding Source	None	Proposal #	N/A
PI on Grant or Contract	N/A		

The above referenced study was reviewed and approved by the OSU Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Approval Date: 8/27/2013
Expiration Date: 8/26/2014

Annual continuing review applications are due at least 30 days prior to expiration date

Documents included in this review:

☒ Protocol
☐ Consent forms
☐ Assent forms
☒ Alternative consent
☐ Letters of support

☒ Recruiting tools
☒ Test instruments
☐ Attachment A: Radiation
☐ Alternative assent
☐ Project revision(s)

☐ External IRB approvals
☐ Translated documents
☐ Attachment B: Human materials
☐ Grant/contract
☐ Other:

Comments:

Principal Investigator responsibilities for fulfilling the requirements of approval:

➢ All study team members should be kept informed of the status of the research.
➢ Any changes to the research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to the activation of the changes. **This includes, but is not limited to, increasing the number of subjects to be enrolled.**
➢ Reports of unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others must be submitted to the IRB within three calendar days.
➢ Only consent forms with a valid approval stamp may be presented to participants.
➢ Submit a continuing review application or final report to the IRB for review at least four weeks prior to the expiration date. Failure to submit a continuing review application prior to the expiration date will result in termination of the research, discontinuation of enrolled participants, and the submission of a new application to the IRB.

Appendix 2. Recruitment Ad Placed on Craigslist.org

Interested in a **Free** Portrait?

I am conducting a research study through Oregon State University. I am seeking 15 individuals, ages 18-35, who are willing to pose for a photographic portrait at a professional studio. You must also be willing to talk about your style of dress and what motivates your clothing choices. For your participation you will receive a high resolution digital copy of your picture and $5 cash.

**Call or send a text to:

(503) 957-8003

or email me at <u>smithca3@onid.orst.edu</u>

Dr. Leslie Burns is the Principal Inverstigator for this study. These photographs are for a study called "The Projection of Self versus Perception of Self: Comparison for the meaning of clothing intended by the wearer and perceived by others".

* If you have questions about your rights or welfare as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office, at (541) 737-8008 or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu

Appendix 3. Survey for Stimulus Subjects

1. If you had to guess, what words would you say that others (people who see you on the street

but don't know you) would use to describe your style?

2. How would your peers describe you?

3. Does anything influence your style?

4. Describe the outfit that you are wearing. What do think that this outfit says about you?

5. Do you feel like you belong to part of a style group or identifiable group that has certain

styles of dress?

Appendix 4. Verbal Consent Form

Verbal Consent for Stimulus Subjects

Title of Study: The Projection of Self versus the Projection of Self: Comparison of the Meaning of Clothing

PI: Leslie Davis Burns
Student Researcher: Caroline Smith

The following will be read to each Stimulus Subject

{Purpose}
I am conducting the study to see if there is a difference in what you believe your clothing style says about you and what other people think it says about you.

{Activities}
I will take a photographic portrait of you in a professional studio. I will also ask you questions about your personal clothing choices including what you are wearing today. When we are finished I will have a photographic image of you. I will also have written down your answers to the questions that I will ask you about clothing, style, and fashion. This will take about an hour for each participant. Therefore, the duration of you participation will be approximately one hour.

{Risks}
*There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation. Although the main focus will be on your clothing style, your face will be clearly shown in the photograph. The photographs will be shown to college students in Corvallis, OR and they will be asked to discern what your clothing style says about you. If anyone recognizes you, they will be asked to not provide comments and any comments they make will not be included in the study. You will **not** be shown the results of what these strangers say about you.*

{Benefits}
The benefits of participating in this study are a free digital professional portrait and $5 for your time. The portrait will be emailed to you at the end of this portrait session.

{Voluntary Participation}
Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to leave at any time. Your name and email address will be known to only the researchers. This information will be destroyed after three years. I need your permission to use your image. You are free to remain silent on any topic that comes up in our interview.

{Sponsor and Contact information}
I am funding my own research for this project. However, the research is performed under the supervision of Oregon State University.

| Oregon State University | IRB Study # 5744 | Expiration Date 08/26/2014 |

Appendix 5. Photographs of Stimulus Subjects

Appendix 6. Written Consent

Written Consent Form for Research Participants

Purpose.
I am conducting the study to see if there is a difference in what people believe their clothing style say and what other people actually think it says.

Activities
You be shown a series of photographic portraits that were taken in a professional studio. You be asked to look at each photograph and answer a series of questions about personal characteristics and the clothing style of each person.

Risks
There is no risk to you in answering questions about the subjects. These subjects all reside in Portland, OR. However, if you recognize the individuals in any of the photographs, please do not complete the survey for that individual. Please do not write any identifying information on the survey. I appreciate your answering the survey questions honestly and completely.

Benefits.
The benefits of participating in this study are that you are contributing to research on impression formation and first impressions of strangers.

Voluntary Participation
Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to leave at any time. You are free to remain silent on any topic.

Contact information
Please feel free to contact me at (503) 957-8003 or at smithca3@onid.orst.edu should any questions or concerns arise.

Sponsor
I am funding my own research for this project. However, the research is performed under the supervision of Oregon State University.

Principal Investigator is Dr. Leslie Burns
The name of the study is "The Projection of Self versus the Projection of Self:
Comparison of the Meaning of Clothing"

If you have questions about your rights or welfare as a participant, please contact:
Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB)
ph. (541) 737-8008 or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu

| Oregon State University | IRB Study # 5744 | Expiration Date 08/26/2014 |

Appendix 7. Demographic Sheet for Sample

Demographic information

What is your gender? _____

What is your current age? _____

What is your current major at OSU? _____

What is your home town? _____

On a scale of 1 − 5 with 1 being Low and 5 being High, what is your level of fashion interest?

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5

Low   High

Fashion Interest   Fashion Interest

Appendix 8. Sample Survey

Research Survey: Each research participant will receive 3 photographs and three copies of this survey.

Please look at the individual in the photograph.

Do you recognize this individual?

_____ Yes. If yes, thank you. Please do not answer questions for this individual.

_____ No. If no, then please continue with the questions below.

1. What are the first five words that come to your mind to describe this person?

2. Describe what the individual is wearing.

3. What do you think this individual's clothing "says" about the individual's personal and lifestyle characteristics?

4. How would you describe this individual's fashion style?

5. In your opinion, is there an identifiable fashion group to which you think this individual belongs? If so, what is that group?

Appendix 9. Participant Announcement

Participant Recruitment: announcement to OSU students

To be announced in selected DHE classes by the Student Researcher

Dr. Leslie Burns, as Principal Investigator and I are conducting a research study through Oregon State University. The study is titled "The Projection of Self versus Perception of Self: Comparison of the Meaning of Clothing". If you are an OSU student and 18 years or older, please consider participating. Participation will involve looking at three photographs of strangers and being asked a series of questions about your first impressions of their style and characteristics. Results of the study will contribute to our understanding of first impressions. Participation is voluntary and will take about 15 minutes. If you are interested, please stay after class to complete the informed consent and survey.

If extra credit is being given for your participation, your name on the informed consent will serve as record of your participation. These names will be shared with the instructor.