The purpose of this study was to investigate whether clothing influenced perceptions of personality characteristics often associated with success in business environments. Specifically, the study investigated the effect of clothing on (a) perceptions of task-oriented abilities of employees in a business setting, (b) perceptions of relationship-oriented abilities of employees in a business setting, and (c) perceptions of demographic-oriented qualities (education levels and income levels) of employees in a business setting.

Seventy-six Speech Communication students were used as subjects for the study, 38 of whom were males and 38 of whom were females. Subjects included six freshmen, sixteen sophomores, seventeen juniors, 36 seniors, and one graduate
student. Ages varied from nineteen to 48, with a mean of 22.

Results indicated that formal clothing could be related to perceptions of task-oriented abilities in a business setting. However, neither formal clothing, nor casual clothing was related to perceptions of relationship-oriented abilities in a business setting. Finally, clothing could also be related to perceptions of education and income in a business setting.
Investigation of Clothing Cues Affecting Perceptions of Personality Characteristics in Business Settings

by

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of Literature</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Perception</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categorization</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributes &amp; Attribution Theory</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impression Formation</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question One</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question Two</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question Three</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Method</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulus Photographs</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipulation Check</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III. Results & Discussion 42
   Formal and Casual Clothing Comparison 42
   Results 43
   Additional Analysis 53
      Sex Differences for Task Category 53
      Sex Differences for Relationship Category 54
      Sex Differences for Demographic Category 54
   Discussion 55
      Research Question One 55
      Research Question Two 57
      Research Question Three 59

IV. Implications 61
   Applied Implications 61
   Limitations of the Study 63
   Future Research Recommendations 65

Bibliography 68

Appendix 73
    Appendix A: Research Questionnaire 73
List of Tables

Table                                                                 Page
1. Chi Square and Frequency Table                                         47
    for Formal Dress of "Mark" and "John"

2. Chi Square and Frequency Table                                         48
    Comparing Formal Clothing vs.
    Casual Clothing

3. Chi Square and Frequency Table                                         49
    Comparing Formal Clothing vs.
    Casual Clothing in Task Category

4. Chi Square and Frequency Table                                         50
    Comparing Formal Clothing vs.
    Casual Clothing in Relationship Category

5. Chi Square and Frequency Table                                         51
    Comparing Formal Clothing vs.
    Casual Clothing in Demographic Category
6. Chi Square and Frequency Table
Comparing Formal Clothing vs.
Casual Clothing by Sex

52
Chapter I

Introduction

Sitting across from Pat in an airport terminal is a man wearing a studded leather jacket, torn jeans, and combat boots. As he combs his purple Mowhawk hairdo Pat notices the man's two nose rings and ponders, "What a loser!" Little does Pat know this "loser" is a concert pianist and currently working on his PhD in Music. Pat has just formed an impression of a stranger based upon stereotypical biases from clothing cues.

Every day millions of people make such impressions. Because clothing often represents the first stimulus cue one notices about strangers, it is understandable that impressions are formed based upon the type of clothing individuals wear. Communicationists label this phenomenon object language, and argue that clothing is a set of non-verbal messages much in the same manner as facial expressions (Meyer & Meyer, 1980). Persons are able to make sense of messages by developing shared meanings of clothing cues, such as a studded leather jacket representing rebellion or toughness.
Consequently, perceptions of object language include inferences about individuals. Such inferences may include attributions of social values, social status, or intelligence.

However, are such inferences accurate perceptions and specifically, are the meanings associated with types of clothing cues always consistent with personality traits of individuals wearing the clothing?

The concept of stereotyping individuals based upon appearances is not new. Indeed, stereotyping is often necessary in organizing stimuli in one's world (Heider, 1958). Without the process of stereotyping, individuals would be overwhelmed by the vast stimuli encountered in daily existence.

Much like the average person deciding what to wear for the day, business executives must decide on clothing policies in the work place. Traditionally, businesses have been rather formal in dress codes, with men and woman wearing suits and skirts respectively. Expecting employees to be formal in garment style choices is based on the goal of establishing an image of professionalism and respectability to customers. However, does clothing make the business person in the eyes of the customer? Do clothing cues indicate personality and social traits related to capabilities in business settings?
Purpose of the Study

Can clothing act as a source of personality characteristics apart from other cues such as facial expressions, or body language? Under controlled conditions would subjects consistently prejudge one's personality characteristics associated in business as different if the only change in appearance is from clothing? These were the fundamental questions of this study.

Specifically, the purpose of this study was to investigate if clothing would influence perceptions of personality characteristics often associated with success in business environments.

Theoretical Framework

The field of social psychology, with concentration in social cognition, represented the theoretical framework for this study. Within the discipline of social cognition, four theories, often associated with research investigating social cognition and clothing cues, became the theoretical framework for this study. These theories consist of social perception, categorization, attributes and attribution theory, and impression formation (Lennon & Davis, 1989).
Social psychology is the psychological attempt to explain ways in which individuals are involved in development of intergroup relations (Doise, 1976). Within this discipline Kaiser (1984) argues there are two fundamental approaches, social cognition psychology and symbolic interactionist psychology.

Social cognition theorizes that individuals try to make sense of social situations by selecting cues to explain those situations in which they find themselves (Kaiser, 1984). The second approach is more of an interactive view, whereby attention is concentrated not only on the individual, but upon those interacting with the individual in the multi-way communication process. Thus, the point of view of the subject represents one fundamental difference in approaches. Also, social cognition emphasizes the individual's thought process, while symbolic interaction stresses the entire communication process involving the individual and those communicating with the individual.

Because this study concentrated on the individual's perception of clothing cues, the social cognitive approach appears more appropriate than the interactionist approach. Consistent with past research, Lennon and Davis (1989) documented four theoretical framework suitable for research involving perception and clothing cues. Under the heading of social cognitive psychology,
these four theories include social perception, categorization, attributes and attribution theory, and impression formation (Lennon & Davis, 1989). Discussion of these theories and past research regarding perception and clothing cues is covered in detail in the next section.
Review of Literature

This section discusses the theories and past research which form the theoretical foundation for this study. A social cognitive framework was used consisting of four theoretical perspectives including: Social Perception, Categorization, Attributes and Attribution Theory and Impression Formation.

Social Perception

Social perception research investigates cognitive perceptions encountered in social situations, with particular emphasis on variables affecting such perceptions. Although numerous variables may be influential, Lennon and Davis (1989) point to three major variables having some relationship with person perception and clothing cues research. These three include perceiver variables, object variables, and situational variables.

Perceiver variables relate to aspects affecting how one's social world is perceived (Lennon & Davis, 1989). Such traits may include physical abilities of perception such as abilities of sight and hearing, or cognitive traits affecting perception such as personality, memory,
or personal values. Important to note is that individuals are different, both in their physical abilities of perception, as well as in their personalities influencing perception. These differences not only influence perception characteristics, but the type and accuracy of social cues perceived.

Although sensitivity to cues may differ from individual to individual, the general perception process remains constant in all people. Anderson (1980) points out that stimuli entering the brain are registered in sensory memories. Visual information, or ionic memory, stores tremendous amounts of information, but only for brief periods of time. Because it is impossible to process all stimuli encountered, the brain often screens particular stimuli. Stimuli consistently targeted tends to occupy the brain's attention the most. Over time certain stimuli is processed so often that less attention is required for evaluation of the stimuli. Eventually, very little cognitive processing is needed to recognize basic and repetitive forms of the stimuli, enabling an automatic response (Anderson, 1980).

For example, a person possessing an interest in different types of leathers used in apparel manufacturing would have seen enough qualities of leather to recognize a fine leather simply by looking at it. Anderson (1980) would argue this is because the individual would have
experienced the stimuli (leather) so frequently, that the brain would automatically register the quality of the leather from a quick glance. The logic is that experience of a stimuli forms an automatic response to that stimuli.

Much of this process involves the concept of schema. Schema relates to a cognitive system used for comparisons, where one need not notice all the differences in objects nor people to tell them apart (Hochberg, 1968). In essence one compares each object or face to a schema or prototype, representing a familiar cue. By noticing particular features, the brain rapidly identifies the object or individual (Hochberg, 1968).

Hochberg (1968) uses the example of an eye patch in the story Treasure Island automatically signifying Old Pew, the pirate. In this example while Old Pew may wear traditional pirate clothing, his eye patch is a distinctive characteristic, thus people associate identification of Old Pew from his eye patch.

Relating schema to person perception and clothing cues, the brain may be sensitive to visual cues from repetitive exposure to certain clothing. For example, people may recognize a logo on a shirt from viewing it so often, and infer characteristics based on the shirt. For example, the Polo brand logo could signify a variety of traits such as high quality, being expensive, and
exclusivity to name three. It is the repetitive exposure
to the logo that forms the inferences often associated
with it. The inferences may be from personal
impressions, or guided from social evaluations, such as
images desired from advertising.

Recognizing types of garment styles may also be
associated with schema, such as the repetitive exposure
to blue jeans in our society. The average person would
need little time to study a pair of jeans and form
evaluations as to where one might wear jeans, what
feeling the fabric has, or what type of color make up a
pair of jeans. This ease of evaluation is from
repetitive exposure to jeans, such that a cognitive
evaluation is automatic.

However, the same may not be said for an 18th
century military uniform, which is less commonly
encountered. Because an individual would probably have
had little or no exposure to 18th century military
uniforms, an automatic response would be less likely to
occur. Thus, the individual would need to cognitively
process the stimuli (the uniform) in some detail before
forming an impression.

As Lennon and Davis (1989) point out there has been
little research directly related to perceiver variables
and clothing cues. Rather, research has concentrated on
interpersonal relationship cues such as facial
expressions (Hochberg and Galper, 1967; Galper, 1970; Sorce and Campos, 1974; Yin, 1969) as well as perceiver variables (Warr & Knapper, 1968).

While limited research has directly related perceiver variables and clothing cues, the relationship is important to note. The foundation of person perception research involves perceiver variables affecting perception. Without understanding perceiver variables, variations of perception and clothing cues research is limited.

The second variable Lennon and Davis (1989) discuss with respect to person perception and clothing cues is the concept of object variables. Object variables involve what is actually perceived by the subjects. As Lennon and Davis (1989) point out the greatest amount of research about person perception, clothing cues and object variables has centered around judgments people based upon visual characteristics of garments they are wearing.

Research has investigated clothing cues affecting perception of credibility of message source (Gibbins & Schnider, 1980; O'Neal & Lapitsky, 1991), perception of intelligence (Behling & Williams, 1991), and perception of social class and social issues (Johnson, Nagasawa, & Peters, 1977; Lasswell & Parshall, Buckley & Roach, 1974).
Lennon and Davis (1989) argue that research in person perception and clothing cues falls into two categories: personal traits and attitudes, and evaluative and behavioral responses to target persons. Clothing cues often represent the object variables, and researchers investigate influences on perceptions of personality traits and behavioral responses.

In general, object variables are very basic. Clothing cues include clothing and accessories such as jewelry, glasses, or hats. In the present study, formal and casual clothing were the stimuli investigated.

The final variable Lennon and Davis (1989) discuss regarding person perception and clothing cues is situational variables. This theory predicts that social perception is context dependent, and thus perception and inferences made are also context dependent.

Workman and Johnson (1989) conducted a study involving appropriateness in dress as a reflection of the employee's personal characteristics and the favoritism expressed by one's employer. Similarly, Damhorst (1985) conducted a study relating interpersonal context to perception of one's relationship and formal and non-formal business clothing. Damhorst (1985) found male and female persons wearing suits were described more often as higher in rank when their adjacent companion wore casual clothing.
A simple example emphasizing the importance of context in clothing cues research would be an individual wearing a baseball uniform in a downtown business district. Taken out of context, questions would arise regarding a person wearing a baseball uniform in a downtown area. However, it would not seem peculiar if one wore a baseball uniform on a baseball field. Thus, it is not necessarily the individual's choice in clothing that raises questions, but rather the context in which the clothing is worn.

The importance of context in perception and clothing cues research is founded from the consistency that different clothing is worn for different occasions. Context largely represents the appropriateness of specific clothing for specific situations because society has developed the concept of fashion. Fashion not only dictates what type of clothing is worn for different social occasions, but it also controls the style differences within clothing categories.

Much of this context dependency relates to appropriateness and social comfort in a social situation. Because of this, the cognitive consistency theory is often associated with context, person perception and clothing cues research (Kaiser, 1984).

The consistency theory predicts perceivers will be uncomfortable in social situations if behaviors and roles
of individuals encountered are not presented as expected (Kaiser, 1984). From this dependency of appropriate behaviors and roles, negative evaluations of personality traits may exist if clothing worn by the stimulus person is not appropriate for the specific occasion.

For example, many individuals in the United States view judges as respectful and serious members of the community. Therefore it would seem out of character for a judge to wear a Hawaiian shirt in his or her courtroom. A judge's role does not fit well with the wearing of a flamboyant shirt in court, thus peoples' impressions would be that such behavior is inappropriate.

Some research involving person perception and clothing cues, with respect to roles and messages has shown that clothing cues may influence person perceptions. Kaiser (1984) points to research involving attire and verbal messages (Knox and Mancuso, 1981), or clothing and role stereotype (Kerr and Dell, 1976; Giles and Chavasse, 1975; and Rucker, Harrison, and Vanderlip, 1982). With respect to this research, Kaiser (1984) discusses that an implicit expectation exists whereby cues must be consistent with the wearer's roles and behaviors. If they are not, it is possible that perceptions of those in question may be negative.

Indeed, the three variables discussed by Lennon and Davis (1989) are very important to social cognition
research. Context is an important variable because clothing is context dependent, and perceptions of clothing cues are often affected by the context in which they are found.

Categorization

A second theory often associated with social cognition research is categorization. Categorization allows humans to group objects and events into configurations so that we may give our world some form of stability. If we did not categorize, the vast and diverse stimuli we encounter would be overwhelming. Bruner, Goodnow, and Austin (1956, p.3) point out, "To categorize is to render discriminably different things equivalent, to group the objects and events and people around us into classes, and to respond to them in terms of their class membership rather than by their uniqueness."

Roots of categorization fall under the study of gestalt psychology and the gestalt principles of perceptual organization (Anderson, 1980). Gestalt principles include proximity, similarity, and differences in relation to cognitive organization. The notion of proximity implies that elements close together tend to be
organized into units (Anderson, 1980). Similarly, these principles stress that in addition to proximity, the brain organizes units into similar components of organization, whereby contrast methods are organized by unit differences (Anderson, 1980). The basic theory of gestalt principals poses that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. That is, whole units are the emergent properties of the general perception (Anderson, 1980).

Categorization with respect to person perception and clothing cues research has generally gone farther than just categorization. That is, studies have investigated how people make and form general perceptions based on categorizing. A few researchers have studied categorization with respect to clothing.

One study sought to investigate how subjects would group apparel in four categorization tasks (DeLong & Minshall, 1988). Similarly, Lennon and Davis (1988) investigated the extent to which category usage differed in first impressions in which: (a) the researcher provided the category exemplars, (b) respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they used the categories, and (c) when respondents wrote verbal descriptions so that actual category usage could be determined. Buckley (1985) also investigated categorization with respect to basic levels of dress categorization.
More common with respect to categorization of people is the concept of stereotyping. Stereotyping is grouping people into categories based upon traits expressed by those individuals. In general, visual traits are often those evaluated first, especially with respect to strangers because visual cues are often the first to be available.

In the past the study of stereotyping has emphasized possible motivational and affective determinants (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950). However, more recently stereotyping has been integrated into the discipline of social cognition, emphasizing the cognitive processes of social categorization, social inference, and social judgment (Ruble & Ruble, 1980; Taylor, Fiske, Etcoff, & Ruderman, 1978).

Borgida, Locksley, and Brekke (1981) point that two main questions regarding stereotyping research are often asked, including: (1) how are social stereotypes formed? and (2) why do social stereotypes persist even though many are erroneous? People categorize objects or events to make sense of their surroundings, so stereotyping is practiced for the sorting of people into social groups (Borgida, Locksley, & Brekke, 1981). Studies investigating stereotyping (Brewer, 1979; and Hamilton & Gifford, 1976) suggest that the effects of categorization on perceived similarity of group members may contribute
to the tendency to generalize attributes across group members often characteristic of stereotyping.

The second reason why people continuously stereotype even though most attributions are erroneous is that one's stereotypes guide one's social interaction with the individual stereotyped so as to induce that person to behave consistently with the stereotype (Snyder & Swann, 1978; Snyder, Tanke, & Berscheid, 1977; Word, Zanna, & Cooper, 1974). What this represents is a setting up of conformity to the stereotyped behavior desired by those outside the stereotyped group. This practice reduces uncertainty regarding unfamiliar people, and reinforces the stereotype.

Hepburn (1979) found that stereotypical behavior is easier to recall than neutral behavior. Thus, forming stereotypes represents social categorization for security and efficiency in social situations. Stereotyping is also practiced to make evaluations of others easier and quicker. We group individuals based upon past experiences and beliefs because it is easier than taking time to evaluate each individual we encounter.

Although some research has centered around categorization of clothing, it appears more research involving person perception and clothing cues has investigated stereotype behavior based upon clothing cues.
Examples of researchers who have investigated general personality traits with respect to clothing cues include Paek, (1986); Douty, (1963); Littrell & Berger, (1986); and Fiore & De Long, (1984). Indeed, while most of these studies have investigated general personality traits, some have centered more closely on specific characteristics.

For example, Johnson, Nagasawa, and Peters (1977) investigated perceived sociability using college students. Stereotypes of sociability were based upon photograph evaluations of models wearing in-fashion clothing versus models wearing out-of-fashion clothing. Results indicated those wearing in-fashion clothing were perceived to be more sociable.

Other research has investigated other stereotypes in social status (Lasswell & Parshall, 1961), credibility of message source (O'Neal & Lapitsky, 1991), perception of scholastic achievement (Behling & Williams, 1991), and race (Coleman & Lerch, 1987).

This research has also confirmed that stereotypes are very common. Further, traits often associated as positive, such as sociability or high credibility of message source, have shown correlation with in-fashion clothing, or clothing appropriate for particular occasions. Conversely, negative perceptions have generally existed with rebellious, out-of-fashion, or
inappropriate clothing.

Attributes and Attribution Theory

The third theory Lennon and Davis (1989) describe in the study of social cognition and clothing is attribution theory. The attributes discussed in attribution theory are slightly different from the attributes used in categorization. The first theorizes how individuals attribute stimuli, while the second represents those attributes which are categorized. Attribution theory with respect to person perception and clothing cues research is first discussed below, followed by differences between attributes and categories, and functions of attributes associated in cognition.

Attribution theory relates to the perceived causality of social behavior (Lennon and Davis, 1989). In his book, The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations, Heider (1958) points to how humans have needs for the explanation of events and drawing of conclusions. These needs are met by explaining behavior as either dispositional or situational (Heider, 1958). Dispositional attributes assume the stimulus person is responsible for outcomes in social interactions with others, while situational factors focus upon external forces apart from the stimulus person.
Kaiser (1984) relates dispositional attributes and clothing to an example of a female wearing a seductive dress to a party. She is responsible for attracting attention from the males. The key point in dispositional attributes holds that the stimulus individual has "responsibility" for his/her behavior.

Kaiser (1984) also summarizes the study of McArthur and Post (1977) investigating dispositional attributes and situational attributes with respect to clothing. In their study, McArthur and Post (1977) found an actor wearing a shirt with pretentious stripes received dispositional responses from his evaluators. However, a stimulus person whose status was derived from wearing brightly colored shirts, not common to other group members, appeared to receive attention due to situational attributes. In short, the difference was based on being an actor versus a member of the common group.

This concept involving clothing is often seen in the trickle-up theory of fashion, whereby pretentious clothing is accepted if worn first by a celebrity, but found unacceptable if first worn by a common person. What this study appears to assume is that selection of apparel cues could influence the attribution processes, depending how cues are associated with the subject.

Thus far, this paper has discussed aspects of perceiver variables, categorization, and attribution
theory, all of which have similar qualities in building knowledge about social perception. Some propose there are really no differences between categories and attributes (Wyer, 1974). However, with further scrutiny, one will find there are distinctions between categories and attributes, as well as between different types of attributes.

The distinction between categories and attributes is clearly made by Lingle, Altom, and Medin (1984). Categories are generally referred to as a grouping of entities, such as events, objects, people, or even social situations, whereby these entities are based on one or more characteristics. Lingle, Altom, and Medin (1984) further point out that attributes refer to a type of characteristic of an entity, which could also serve as a basis for a grouping. Lastly, Lingle, Altom, and Medin (1984) conclude that those properties represented solely as attributes tend to be less abundant in cognitive representation than do properties representing categories.

To illustrate, a blazer, by itself, forms a category of dress type. Characteristics such as wool, blue, or plaid represent particular attributes used in its perception. Lingle, Altom, and Medin's (1984) belief that categories make richer cognitive representations is founded because descriptions made by individuals are more
conclusive than attributes allow. For example, one may see the humor in a lime-green blazer. It is not necessarily the lime-green color (the attribute) that is amusing, but rather that it exists on a blazer (the category).

Attributes help explain events and give reasonable explanations for questions. In the same manner a scientist wonders about a condition or event, Heider (1958) argues that perceivers ask the same questions of themselves with the hope of answering questions about their social world.

As Forsyth (1980) discusses, events occurring in our social world appear to be non-random, due to systematic regularities which people hope to understand and explain. Forsyth (1980) agrees that attributional explanations enable people to make sense of their social world. If it were not for explanatory uses of attributes, people would be in a state of constant confusion because nothing would make sense, and every new stimulus experienced would represent a complete transformation of thought.

Forsyth (1980) also discusses predictive attributes and points out that predictive attributes not only allow individuals to anticipate occurrences, but help gain self control when such occurrences present themselves. This predictive technique allows individuals to gain self confidence in social situations because they can
anticipate what events they might experience, and hence, will be ready to deal with them when they occur.

As Kelley (1971,22) notes,

"The attributor is not simply an attributor, a seeker after knowledge; his latent goal in gaining knowledge is that of effective management of himself and his environment."

In essence, predictive and explanatory attributes overlap to some degree because as social events present themselves individuals hope to provide explanations. However, individuals create explanations because they can predict from past experiences what is likely to occur in their social world.

For example, imagine a woman wearing an evening gown in the middle of a desert. One would predict an individual in the desert would probably wear light clothing or even robes of some sort. One would predict this from past experiences such as viewing desert dwellers in the news, movies, or history books. The perception of a woman wearing an evening gown would not make sense, given past experiences, because one would assume the dress would be damaged from the harsh environment, that it would not provide ample protection from the sun, and finally that its creation was intended for formal evening occasions and not the desert.
However, human nature would dictate that we give some type of explanation for wearing such apparel, no matter how odd it may be. It may be a wild explanation such as the woman was kidnapped, or she's testing the durability of the dress for the manufacturer. The reason given is not as important as the need for explanation.

A third attribute function discussed by Forsyth (1980) is the egocentric function. Similar to the explanatory function, humans have the need to access information, and to constantly learn. Often times new information is contradictory to past learning, and individuals may use biased processing to maintain self control. Forsyth (1980) points out that when attributes are formed to protect or maintain beliefs about oneself or one's environment, they are done so to fulfill an egocentric function.

For example, if an individual has been taught to believe a particular reasoning for an event he or she would have a difficult time if new research contradicts his or her initial teaching. Rather that accept this new paradigm, the individual may elect to use biases of reasoning to protect his or her ego.

An example could be an individual who judges a woman wearing a seductive dress to be immoral. The individual may choose, through an egocentric attribution process, to omit an explanation such as seductive dresses may be in
style, or that the woman simply wishes to express herself. Attributes may also be biased so as to maintain self control and self confidence in social situations.

Forsyth (1980) has demonstrated the important functions attributes provide with respect to social perception. As Forsyth notes (1980, p. 186):

"This functional approach of using attributes seems to connect the link between attributions—a typically psychological social psychology topic, and social identity—a typically sociological social psychology topic."

Indeed attributes, and attribution theory play significant roles in social perception research because they represent final cognitive functioning before an impression is made. Attributes are the building blocks for categories because they form the basis for humans dividing objects into groups and assigning instances to particular categories (Lingle, Altom, and Medin, 1984). Consequently, attributes and relationships among them underline the structure of categories, and form how categories can be organized and implemented (Lingle, Altom, and Medin, 1984). Various functions are served by attribution processes.
Impression Formation

Thus far this chapter has discussed three theoretical perspectives related to person perception and clothing cues research, including social perception, categorization, and attributes and attribution theory. The fourth discussed by Lennon and Davis (1989) is impression formation.

Lennon and Davis (1989) describe impression formation as a process whereby diverse bits of information regarding individuals are integrated into a general impression. Lennon and Davis (1989) trace this area of study to the work of Asch (1946).

Asch (1946) discusses the phenomenon of how one is able to form a general impression of another individual from a simple glance. In what manner are these impressions established? Are there lawful principles regulating their formation? These were the fundamental questions that led Asch (1946) to research general impression formation techniques. However, these questions were not easily explained by the general format that Asch (1946) described, whereby simple bits of information regarding individuals were simply integrated. General impressions may have been developed if those evaluated were to have simple and unique qualities. However, Asch (1946) believed such impressions would be
more difficult to explain if the subjects had diverse personalities.

For example, an individual may have rather common qualities, such as a good sense of humor, a friendly disposition, and intelligence capabilities. However Asch (1946) noted that an individual could also exhibit qualities such as selfishness, mood swings, or intense tempers. In such cases problems would exist in forming impressions from such diverse and complicated individuals. Further, it would be nearly impossible to predict correct evaluations in all categories because of the subjects' diverse personality characteristics.

Asch (1946) discussed different theories to explain impression formation. One of these theories is the notion that the total impression of an individual is the sum of several independent impressions (Asch, 1946).

Such a theory is expressed as follows:

Impression = a + b + c + d (Asch, 1946).

While this theory has merit, some researchers argued in addition to such factors there is a "general impression" by which a plus or minus direction shifts evaluation of several traits. The format is the same as the first except added to the traits is a general impression affecting each trait (Asch, 1946).

Asch (1946) also discusses a second theory whereby an impression of the entire person is formed. In this
capacity, an individual does not see another person by this trait or that trait, but rather by the sum of perceived traits. The impression is the integration of the parts, implying these qualities form a general impression of the subject. Common to this theory is the belief that quick glances of individuals do not give accurate impressions.

Much of this first impression formation literature uses the adjective checklist used by Asch (1946). The method involved was reading to individuals, a list of adjectives such as cold, assured, persuasive, etc. Subjects then tried to form impressions of individuals based upon the adjectives given to them (Asch, 1946).

Several preliminary points made by Asch (1946) were that normal adults were capable of forming unified impressions, as well as that individuals make references to characters and situations not directly mentioned in the given lists (Asch, 1946). Possibly, people form descriptions, not only from their actual meanings, but also by placing the individuals in fictitious situations and forming characters found in daily social life to help form general impressions. Finally, just as the subjects differ in personality, definitions of the adjectives given also tended to differ (Asch, 1946). The notion is that each individual has a slightly different connotation and conception of the meaning of adjectives.
The use of basic impression formation with respect to clothing and behavior has been well founded. Lennon and Davis (1989) point to research demonstrating the influence of a single appearance cue on impression formation (Baron, 1981; Hamid, 1972; Lennon & Miller, 1984, 85; Thornton, 1944).

A detailed example of this is the work of Lennon and Miller (1984, 1985). They investigated combined effects of specific appearance cues such as hairstyle, skirt length, and shoe style on impression formation. The results indicated that impact of a physical appearance cue seems to decrease in the presence of similar cues, but increases in importance in the presence of dissimilar cues (Lennon & Miller, 1984, 1985).

Past research involving social perception and clothing has concentrated on two major categories including personality traits, and references to social situations. Much research has investigated behavior with respect to clothing, but the terms perception and impression represent differences in definition. The researchers imply that they are interested in perception or impression formation, however the techniques used are not consisted with the adjective descriptions commonly found with Asch's (1946) work. For example, Asch (1946) provided subjects a list of adjectives and asked the subjects to choose an adjective that best represented an
individual in front of the subjects. Many researchers recently have used techniques of providing photographs and drawings, and asking the subjects to rank or describe individuals based upon impressions in particular contexts (Littrell & Berger, 1985, 86; Buckley & Roach, 1974; Nagasawa & Peters, 1977).

Research involving personality traits has covered a variety of characteristics, most of which has centered on stereotype characteristics based upon impressions of clothing cues. For example, research has investigated perceptions of intelligence (Behling & Williams, 1991), general personality (Fiore & DeLong, 1984), credibility of message source (O'Neal & Lapitsky, 1991) and general perception of individuals (Douty, 1963). While the methods of obtaining data for this type of research may have differed over the years, there seems to have been a consistent pattern of interest in impression formation of personality traits based upon clothing cues.

Very similar to investigating perceptions of individuals and clothing worn is the research on perceptions of individuals in social situations. This category of research has investigated the perceptions of individuals in a variety of social situations including meanings of clothing cues in social context (Damhorst, 1984, 85), impressions of different clothing and their effect of sociability of individuals (Johnson, Nagasawa,
& Peters, 1977), perception of social class (Lasswell & Parshall, 1961), clothing as a communicator of social and political attitudes (Buckley & Roach, 1974), and the importance of clothing on self-esteem among adolescents (Daters, 1990). Most impression formation research has involved clothing cues and context.

While research documented in this paper has primarily concentrated on perceptions of personality traits based upon clothing cues in social and interpersonal settings, similar personality traits and characteristics can be studied as qualities needed in business environments.

Examples of research investigating perceptions of clothing in business environments often stresses women in the work place, such as investigating business dress for women corporate professionals (Dillon, 1980). Forsythe, Drake, and Cox (1984) investigated dress as an influence on the perceptions of management characteristics in women. Their results appeared to indicate clothing had both a positive and a significant effect on the perception of selected personal characteristics (Forsythe, Drake, and Cox, 1984).

Some of the research involving dress in business environments has done so with respect to management abilities and perceived capabilities in interview situations. For example, Cash (1987) investigated the
impact of grooming style on the evaluation of women in management. Results provided some evidence that aspiring female managers tend to dress more professionally than do women who aspire to occupy traditional women working roles, such as secretaries.

Forsythe (1988) found that masculinity of clothing had a positive effect on the perception of management characteristics, as well as favoring of hiring decisions.

Research investigating interviewing environments seems to indicate similar results to managerial research. Kerr and Dell (1976) investigated perceived interviewer expertness and attractiveness with respect to effects of interviewer behavior and attire, in an interview setting. Results indicated that only counselor role behavior significantly affected students' perception of interviewer attractiveness, while perception of expertness seemed to have been affected jointly by role and attire (Kerr and Dell, 1976).

It would seem reasonable that if clothing has an effect on impression formation of personality traits and characteristics in social contexts, research with respect to business contexts is also warranted. In both instances it appears social situation and organizational setting play an important role in such research because much of the investigations appear to be context dependency of clothing cues.
Research Questions

This chapter has discussed the theoretical frameworks and past research justifying investigations pertinent to this paper. This chapter has reviewed literature to support the relationship of clothing cues to person perception.

There is little doubt of the importance of social cognition in person perception and clothing cues. The four theoretical frameworks overviewed for this paper have legitimate support due to past research, and consistent findings (Lennon & Davis, 1989). Continued research involving social cognitive theories and clothing cues in a variety of contexts is justified.

The research questions for this study were grouped into three categories of perceived characteristics: Task, Relationship, and Demographic. Within the three categories adjectives were selected that represented qualities of each of the three categories. Judgments of productivity and compatibility are based upon perceptions of how employees would perform the tasks required in business settings, how the employees would perform interpersonally with customers in business settings, and employees' social statuses.

Research Question One:

Will customers perceive an employee to possess more task-oriented abilities in a business setting when the employee wears formal clothing rather than when the employee wears casual clothing?

The Relationship Category includes adjectives associated with abilities in interpersonal communication in business settings. Several studies have investigated the influence of clothing on communicative processes. Relationship ability studies have been conducted by Buckley & Roach, (1974), and Damhorst, (1985). The adjectives used for this category include: 1. "Charismatic", 2. "Understanding", 3. "Good Listener", 4. "Respectable", and 5. "Sociable".
Research Question Two:

Will customers perceive an employee to possess more relationship-oriented abilities in a business setting when the employee wears formal clothing rather than when the employee wears casual clothing?

The Demographic Category investigated qualities associated with perceptions of social status of an employee. This area has been investigated by Behling & Williams, (1991), and Lasswell & Parshall, (1961). The adjectives used for this category include: 1. "Education", and 2. "Money".

Research Question Three:

Will customers perceive an employee will make a higher income and have earned higher education levels when the employee wears formal clothing rather than when the employee wears casual clothing?
Chapter II

Method

This study was undertaken to investigate the possible influence of clothing cues on personality characteristics often associated with success in business environments. The method will be explained in five sections which follow. They include: design, sample, stimulus photographs, procedure, manipulation check, and analysis.

Design

To investigate the possible influence clothing has on the perceptions of personality characteristics often associated with success in business, this study used a test group. The experimental manipulations were two photographs shown to the group. The two photographs were identical except for the clothing worn by the models.

The dependent variables were the subjects' impressions of the two photographs with respect to personality characteristics often associated with success in business. See Appendix A, page 73.
Sample

Subjects from four Speech Communication classes comprised the sample. Because they evaluated the photographs they were termed customers. Students in two classes viewed photograph A, and the other two classes viewed photograph B.

A pre-test evaluation was conducted in an undergraduate Speech Communication class to determine what would be considered men's casual clothing and men's formal clothing. An in-class discussion concluded that men's casual clothing is clothing such as jeans, t-shirts, and sweats. Men's formal clothing is a man's suit, or slacks, blazer, and tie.

The sample group used for this study consisted of students enrolled in four Speech Communication classes at Oregon State University, Spring term, 1993. Eighty-four subjects participated in the study, of which eight were omitted. Three were omitted because they personally knew the models used in the photographs, and an additional five were omitted due to not answering all the questions.

Of the 76 subjects used, 38 were males and 38 were females. Subjects consisted of 6 Freshmen, 16 Sophomores, 17 Juniors, 36 Seniors, and 1 Graduate Student. Ages varied from 19 to 48 years with a mean of 22 years.
**Stimulus Photographs**

Two photographs were used in this study for the stimulus photographs. The two photographs were taken of the same models from the hip up, wearing two different garment styles. The photographs represented two garment styles worn in places of business; one representing a more casual look, and the second representing a more formal look.

The garment styles used in the photographs consisted of one photograph (a) where one model wore a casual shirt and jeans, and the other model wore a suit. The other photograph (b) used the same models, but the models switched clothing worn in the previous photograph. Both models stood next to one another, in identical poses, for both photographs.

**Procedure**

Collection of the data occurred over three days, during Spring term at Oregon State University, 1993. All participation was voluntary, anonymous, and confidential.

Access to the classes was authorized in advance by the respective professors. The classes were chosen randomly, and none of the classes were told other classes were participating in the study. The study was
administered at the beginning of a class period. Subjects were given the questionnaire and instructed to respond to the photograph (a or b) projected at the front of the classroom.

Subjects were told this was a thesis study for a graduate student in the Speech Communication department, and the study investigated perception. The subjects were also told that the context of the study was such that they represented business owners who had authorized architectural work for a new conference room. The photograph represented two architects who would be bidding on the project. The subjects were also told that the two architects were from different architecture firms.

As decision makers, the subjects were instructed to answer the questionnaire based upon their perceptions of the two architects. The subjects were instructed they could take as much time as needed, and could view the photograph for the entire duration of their evaluation.

Administering the study took about 15 minutes per class, and all questionnaires were administered by the investigator. Questionnaires were gathered when all subjects had finished. The questionnaires were placed in envelopes distinguishing the classes used until the data was analyzed.
Manipulation Check

Because this study investigated perceptions of different garment styles, a manipulation check was administered using the last question in the questionnaire. The manipulation check consisted of a question inquiring as to which model shown in each photograph was wearing the more casual garment style of the two.

Results indicated that all 76 of the subjects answered this question correctly, thus none were omitted for failing to identify differences between casual clothing and formal clothing.

Analysis

Because this study investigated person perceptions, two models were used rather than one so that a more accurate assessment could be made regarding the influence clothing may have. Two photographs were used, and the subjects consisted of four small groups, later combined into two large groups. Identification of these two groups was based upon which model was dressed formally. The two models were given the names "Mark" and "John", thus the two groups were categorized as "Mark's Group" and "John's Group".
Analysis for the research questions was conducted by grouping questions from the questionnaire into one of the three categories, either Task, Relationship, or Demographics. The statistical analysis for each research question was done item by item by (a) comparing formal dress for "Mark" and "John", using Chi Square and a Frequency Table to establish consistency, and, (b) by comparing formal clothing versus casual clothing using Chi Square and a Frequency Table. Additional analyses investigated sex differences for the three categories, also using Chi Square and a Frequency Table.
Chapter III

Results & Discussion

**Formal and Casual Clothing Comparison**

This chapter presents the results and discussion of the study. Coverage includes: results, additional analysis, and discussion.

The first analysis involved comparing perceptions of characteristics when "Mark" and "John" were both dressed formally. It was anticipated that there would be little difference between the models, in that clothing would have greater influence on perceptions than the models' facial characteristics. Table 1, page 47 shows that there were few differences between the model perceptions of the characteristics with the exception of the adjectives "Charisma" and "Sociability". These had Chi Square values of 9.14 and 10.29 respectively (p<.05). Each adjective used in the study was analyzed to investigate whether the models' characteristics influenced perceptions. Perceptions pertaining to all other adjectives appeared not to be influenced by the models, so data was then pooled for "Mark" and "John" when in formal clothing and "Mark" and "John" were
dressed in casual clothing

Results

Research Question One asked, "Will customers perceive an employee to possess more task-oriented abilities in a business setting when the employee wears formal clothing rather than when the employee wears casual clothing?"


The data on Table 3, page 49 appears to indicate that more people perceived the models to poses task-oriented abilities when wearing formal clothing than when wearing casual clothing.

As Table 3, page 49 indicates perceptions of eight of the nine adjectives investigated supported the claim that formal clothing may have been associated frequently with the adjectives "Disciplined", "Serious", and "Punctual". (Please see Chi Square values and Frequency Table, page 47.) The remaining five adjectives also were associated with formal dress. (See Table 3, page 49.)
The only adjective which did not appear to be linked with formal was "Innovative". With a Chi Square value of 2.33, it would appear that perceptions of "Innovativeness" in a business setting were not associated with formal clothing, but possibly with casual clothing.

Based upon the results presented however, "Respondents in the role of customers perceived an employee to possess more task-oriented abilities when the employee was wearing formal clothing rather than when the employee was wearing casual clothing."

Research Question Two asked, "Will customers perceive an employee to possess more relationship-oriented abilities in a business setting when the employee wears formal clothing rather than when employee wears casual clothing?"


As pointed in Table 1, page 47, the adjectives "Charismatic" and "Sociable" appeared to be influenced by factors other than clothing. Because of the influence the two models appeared to have on perceptions for these particular adjectives, it must be noted that analysis of clothing's association with them will be limited in
validity.

Table 4, page 50 appears to show some inconsistency with Chi Square values and results shown in the Frequency Table for relationship adjectives. For example, the Chi Square value for "Charismatic" was .44, while the value for "Respectable" was 549.14. As the means demonstrate, both of these adjectives were associated with formal clothing rather than casual clothing. (See Table 4, page 50) However, "Understanding", "Good Listener", and "Sociable" adjectives showed Chi Square values of 27.50, 15.08, and 32.27 with positive association with casual clothing (See Frequency Table 4, page 50). Based upon the results presented it would appear that both formal clothing, and casual clothing are related to perceptions of particular relationship-oriented abilities.

Research Question Three asked, "Will customers perceive an employee to make a higher income and have earned higher education levels when the employee wears formal clothing rather than when the employee wears casual clothing?"

The adjectives labeled under the Demographic Category included: 1. "Educated", and 2. "Money".

Table 5, page 51 indicates customers' perceptions higher status qualities in a business setting were linked
more often with formal clothing than casual clothing. For example, the adjective investigating "Income" showed a Chi Square value of 1156, and the "Education" adjective showed a Chi Square value of 682.67 (See also Frequency Table 5, page 51). According to the means, both were perceived as more often linked with formal clothing. Based upon the data presented, it would appear that Research Question Three could be answered that, "Respondents in the role of customers perceived an employee to make more income and have higher education levels when the employee was wearing formal clothing rather than when the employee was wearing casual clothing."
### Table 1

**Chi Square and Frequency Table for Formal Dress of "Mark" and "John"**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Chi Square</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Mark&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertive</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charismatic</td>
<td>9.14 *</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplined</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Listener</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composed</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctual</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respectable</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educated</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociable</td>
<td>10.29 *</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.01*
Table 2

Chi Square and Frequency Table
Comparing Formal Clothing vs. Casual Clothing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Chi Square</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertive</td>
<td>164.57**</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>64.80**</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charismatic</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>27.50**</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent</td>
<td>225.33**</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplined</td>
<td>5476.00**</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Listener</td>
<td>15.08**</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composed</td>
<td>103.76**</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious</td>
<td>1156.00**</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctual</td>
<td>1156.00**</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respectable</td>
<td>549.14**</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educated</td>
<td>682.67**</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>1156.00**</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociable</td>
<td>32.27**</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>450.00**</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.01, **p<.001 df=1
Table 3

**Chi Square and Frequency**

**Table Comparing Formal vs. Casual Clothing in Task Category**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Chi Square</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertive</td>
<td>164.57**</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>64.80**</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent</td>
<td>225.33**</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplined</td>
<td>5476.00**</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composed</td>
<td>103.76**</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious</td>
<td>1156.00**</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctual</td>
<td>1156.00**</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>450.00**</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.01, **p<.001 df=1
Table 4

**Chi Square and Frequency Table**

Comparing Formal vs. Casual Clothing in Relationship Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Chi Square</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charismatic</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>27.50**</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Listener</td>
<td>15.08**</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respectable</td>
<td>549.14**</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociable</td>
<td>32.27**</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.01, **p<.001 df=1
Table 5

Chi Square and Frequency Table
Comparing Formal Clothing vs. Casual Clothing in Demographic Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Chi Square</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educated</td>
<td>682.67**</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>1156.00**</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.01, **p<.001 df=1
### Table 6

**Chi Square and Frequency Table**

**Comparing Formal Clothing vs. Casual Clothing by Sex**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adjective</th>
<th>Chi Square</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(formal)</td>
<td>(casual)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>male  female</td>
<td>male  female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertive</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>33  29</td>
<td>5   9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>25  31</td>
<td>13  7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>22  17</td>
<td>16  21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplined</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>11  7</td>
<td>27  31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composed</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>31  31</td>
<td>7   7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>38  37</td>
<td>0   1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctual</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>10  13</td>
<td>28  38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>30  30</td>
<td>8   8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>34  37</td>
<td>4   1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charismatic</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>35  37</td>
<td>3   1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>33  36</td>
<td>3   2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Listener</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>36  35</td>
<td>2   3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respectable</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>38  36</td>
<td>0   2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociable</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>7   9</td>
<td>31  29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educated</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>8   9</td>
<td>30  32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>34  34</td>
<td>4   4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**df=1**
Additional Analysis

Additional analysis was conducted to investigate sex differences with respect to perceptions of the research question categories. Since both the models were male, the effect of respondent sex on perceptions of the adjectives was analyzed. The following was investigated using Chi Square Analysis.

Sex Differences for Task Category


Table 6, page 52 indicates that apparently there was no significant difference between males and females with respect to perceptions of formal and casual dress indicating task characteristics. The Frequency Table, Table 6, page 52 shows there was no significant difference between males and females.
Sex Differences for Relationship Category


Results from Table 6, page 52 show that, as with the Task Category, there were no significant Chi Square values, nor Frequency values when comparing males and females perceptions of the Relationship Category adjectives.

Sex Differences for Demographic Category

The adjectives representing the Demographic Category included: 1. "Education"; and 2. "Money" (Table 6, page 52). As Table 6, page 52 shows, males and females did not differ in their perceptions of these adjectives.
Discussion

This section poses possible reasons why subjects responded to the research questions the ways in which they did. It also discusses, compares, and contrasts the three research questions, and their results.

Research Question One

The first research question investigated perceptions of task-oriented abilities in a business setting. Results appeared to indicate that more people perceived the model to pose more task-oriented abilities more often when wearing formal clothing than when wearing casual clothing in a business setting. One possible reason for this phenomenon could be that businesses have traditionally been institutions requiring more formal clothing, such as business suits. This stereotype could have possibly affected subjects' perceptions because they recognized suits to be associated with businesses. In addition to this association is also the stereotype that "clean cut" individuals are more productive and more work conscious than those who are more casual in appearance.

The means on the Table demonstrate two of the adjectives, "Reliable" and "Punctual" are task abilities which relate to a time frame. It would seem likely that
the Chi Square values would be very similar, but this was not the case. "Reliable" had a Chi Square value of only 64.80, whereas "Punctual" had a Chi Square value of 1156 (See also Frequency Table, Table 3, page 49. Discipline may relate to management of time. "Disciplined" showed the highest difference between means and had the highest Chi Square value of 5476. Perhaps the perception of the subjects was that the suit portrayed an image of successful time organization. Although some adjectives had higher means values than others, it must be stressed that all, with the exception of "Innovativeness" were related more often with formal clothing. Perhaps the reason "Innovativeness" was not significantly related to formal dress was that it represents a creative ability more than other pure task abilities.

It did appear females perceived task-oriented abilities to be more apparent when the models were dressed formally than the males did. However, three of the adjectives: "Competent", "Composed", and "Successful" were selected equally often by males and females.
Research Question Two

The results indicated that neither formal, nor casual clothing worn by an employee in a business setting appeared to influence people's perceptions of relationship-oriented abilities. Again, it must be pointed out that the models did appear to have some influence on perceptions of "Charisma" and "Sociability" in addition to their formal and casual clothing (Table 1, page 47). However, what seems interesting is although the models may have had influence, males and females had very similar perceptions of the two adjectives. What this appears to represent is that while the models may have had some influence on perceptions of these two adjectives, the influence had the same effect on both sexes. Even more interesting is that more individuals of both sexes perceived "Sociable" to be associated with casual clothing. This is consistent with research by Johnson Nagasawa and Peters (1977) who found in fashion clothing was judged to be linked with sociability by college students. Thus, not only did more males and females perceive the same model influences, but more both perceived "Sociability" to be associated with casual clothing. Perhaps this was because being sociable, friendly, and approachable may be more consistent with a casual style and casual dress.
"Understanding" and "Good Listening" abilities were also significantly associated with casual clothing by more individuals than with formal clothing, and were perceived very similarly by both sexes. The exception to most adjectives was "Respectable" which had a Chi Square value of 549.14 for formal clothing. Both males and females had similar perceptions of "Respectability". It may be that respectability correlates with a more formal, business kind of relationship and appearance.

The Relationship Category was the one of the three in which no trends for clothing and attribution of characteristics emerged. Perhaps the models were a factor? Perhaps some perceived a formally dressed, sophisticated person to be charismatic (as a politician is charismatic, for example), while others felt a casually dressed person had more of a wider appeal with the average person. Perceptions of "Understanding" and "Good Listener" qualities were more often perceived with casual clothing, while "Respectable" was more often perceived with formal clothing. It could be that "Respectable" could be more of an impression characteristic, where an individual gains respect from accomplishment rather than from how he or she interacts with other individuals.

It would appear that some Relationship characteristics may be tied to formal dress and others to
casual clothing cues. It also may be that the
categorization of the task and relationship adjectives
may not be appropriate. This will be discussed later.

Research Question Three

More subject group members overwhelmingly perceived
higher education and higher income levels when the
employee wore formal clothing than when he wore casual
clothing. There was also very little difference between
males and females in their perceptions. "Education"
differences were only separated by a Chi Square value of
.22, while "Income" was only separated by .04. Clearly,
not only more males and females perceive "Education" and
"Income" to be greatly influenced when wearing formal
clothing than when wearing casual clothing, but they did
so to nearly the same degree. This is expected given the
research showing a positive association between
professional clothing and social status Lasswell &
Parshall, 1961).

Understanding clothing's influence on income could
be rationalized from the standpoint that formal clothing
is often perceived as more expensive than casual
clothing. Thus, the individual wearing nicer, and more
expensive, clothing would appear to make more money than
a more casually dressed individual.
The notion could be the same with respect to education levels because of the stereotype of the "white collar" worker and the "blue collar" worker. In this study's case, the more formally dressed model wore a white-collared shirt, and the casually dressed model wore a blue-collared shirt. It could be hypothesized that this stereotype could influence perceptions of education levels too because an individual wearing a more expensive garment would have a higher paying job, associated with higher education levels.

Perhaps a point of note is the fact that perceptions of education levels and income levels is very context dependent. The example of athletes who may have not gone to college, yet earn millions of dollars per year supports this. Similarly, few rock stars wear suits, yet many are quite wealthy. It would seem that the context visioned in the minds of the subjects is important to investigate because education nor income are always associated with more formal clothing. However, in this study's context of a business atmosphere, it would appear clothing is very much influenced by the context.
Chapter IV

Implications

This section discusses the implications of this study, including: applied implications, limitations of the study, and future research recommendations.

Applied Implications

This study was conducted to investigate possible influences of clothing on perceptions, and also to apply the findings to practical uses in business settings. The three research questions dealt with facets of communication in businesses that exist every day. Tasks must be completed in business, and customers must form impressions regarding the abilities of employees to perform the tasks. Customers must also deal with employees of businesses on interpersonal levels; thus it is important to know how customers feel towards employees' styles of interpersonal communication. Finally, businesses are often concerned with their image in the customers' "eyes", and two positive images sought are profitability and employees who are knowledgeable.

This study appears to support the notion that customers associated many favorable perceptions of
employees when the employees are dressed formally. This would especially appear to be true for more conservative institutions, such as banks. Corporate tasks often represent the more serious or formal nature of business, thus it would seem logical that customers would prefer employees to look and act seriously in the tasks they seek to complete.

The other side of business tends to be one where employees must communicate with customers. This study investigated whether formal clothing or casual clothing would be preferred by customers, but this study found no clear correlation between clothing and perceptions of good interpersonal skills. However, individuals perceived good listening skills when employees dressed casually. The fact that the subjects used for this study were college students, and dressed casually, may point out that individuals who must deal interpersonally with others may feel more comfortable if the others look similar to themselves. From a practical perspective, perhaps dressing similarly to one's customers is a good policy for building rapport, and making the customer feel more comfortable.

Results showed that more people associated formal clothing with perceptions of positive demographic facets, such as education and income. This could be useful information for business owners because every business
seeks to have a positive image, and these results would seem to indicate that formal clothing could portray an image of higher education levels and higher income levels.

The results of this study are consistent with other past research. Research investigating professionalism and abilities in the workplace has traditionally shown that perceptions of formal clothing have a positive correlation with such values as intelligence, disposition, and upstanding community values to name three (Cash, 1985; Dillon, 1980; Forsythe, 1988; and Kerr & Dell, 1976).

Other research has investigated how clothing cues affect perceptions of the individuals (Douty, 1963; Fiore & DeLong, 1984; and Johnson, Nagasawa, & Peters, 1977). It is the particular categories of characteristics and their correlation with formal and casual dress that this study sought to investigate, not the entire quality of the person.

Limitations of the Study

Any study has some limitations, and this study is certainly no exception. One limitation of this study was the wording of the questions in the questionnaire. The
instructions asked the subjects to choose one model of the two, thus subjects were forced to choose only one model per question. A Likert-type scale would have allowed subjects to express degree of differences in opinion, and an open-ended questionnaire would have allowed subjects to express their verbal perceptions of the models. This change in questionnaire could have influenced the results because the varying of degree between models would be more revealing statistically. Additionally, giving subjects the opportunity to add additional adjectives they felt would belong in the categories, and delete ones that they thought should be omitted would have increased validity.

Another limitation was having only two models. Perhaps an ideal study would be to have as many models as possible. This would have decreased the problem of having to choose "this" model or "that" model. In this scenario the subject could choose from several models to better represent his or her opinion.

The results of the adjectives for the relationship category were mixed. It may be that one limitation in this section was due to the particular choice of adjectives listed. Those included were: 1. "Charismatic", 2. "Understanding", 3. "Good Listener", 4. "Respectable", and 5. "Sociable". Charismatic people may not be judged so from appearance, but rather how they are
assumed to come across with their peers. That is, if one's peers are dressed a particular way, perhaps the individual appeals to them more in a leadership role. For example, eccentric individuals do not always dress formally, such as Charles Manson or Bob Dylon. Yet, these individuals were charismatic in their own way. Much like "charismatic" could have different meaning for individuals. "Respectable" may also have different meanings. Respect was defined as a quality of the relationship; a perception of a partner's credibility and trust. It could also be expected that respectable people would seem very dapper and well groomed. It could be possible that "Respectable" is more of a task-oriented adjective rather than a relationship-oriented one in that people may respect someone for their achievements rather than how they relate to others.

It may be that the definition of the adjectives is equally as important as deciding what type of clothing is considered formal and what is considered casual. This is something that may need to be determined before such a similar study is undertaken in the future.

Future Research Recommendations

Perhaps the most interesting facet of this study was the inconsistency of type of clothing and perceptions of
relationship-oriented abilities. Investigation of clothing's influence in interpersonal communication, in a variety of contexts, would be a good starting point for future research.

Since this study used male models for the photographs, it would also be interesting to study perceptions in businesses settings using females, or even males and females in the same business setting. This would be practical because women are entering the workforce in large numbers.

It would also be interesting to see how varying types of formal and casual clothing would be viewed. This study looked at two styles of clothing. It may be that different types of formal and casual clothing would show different results. It would also be interesting to poll the same subject group ten years later to see if they still perceived the employee the same way they did earlier.

Indeed, more research must be made to further investigate how clothing may have influence in perceptions of individuals. It would seem that now more diverse styles of clothing are worn in the United States, due to different cultural influences, researchers will need to investigate how clothing affects society and what
role clothing may have for future generations in this country.
Bibliography


Appendix A: Research Questionnaire

This study is part of thesis research for a Masters Program. Your response will be anonymous and confidential. Your participation is voluntary. Thank you for your cooperation in making this study possible. If you have any questions about the study, contact David Mills, graduate student, in the department of Speech Communication.

Thank you for participating in this study. Please read the instructions and answer the questions on the next two pages.
Imagine you are an owner of a small business. You have placed an employee in charge of converting an old employee lounge into an impressive conference room. The project will require extensive architecture work. Your employee has narrowed the selection of architecture firms to two. Today you are meeting with the architects from the two firms for the first time. This meeting will help you decide between John's firm or Mark's firm.

Please check ONE name per question, based upon your first impressions of John and Mark.

1. Who appears more assertive? John__ or Mark__
2. Who appears more reliable? John__ or Mark__
3. Who appears more charismatic? John__ or Mark__
4. Who appears more understanding? John__ or Mark__
5. Who appears more competent? John__ or Mark__
6. Who appears more disciplined? John__ or Mark__
7. Who appears the better listener? John__ or Mark__
8. Who appears more composed? John__ or Mark__
9. Who takes work more seriously? John__ or Mark__
10. Who appears more punctual? John__ or Mark__
11. Who appears more respectable? John__ or Mark__
12. Who appears to be more educated? John__ or Mark__
13. Who make more money? John__ or Mark__
14. Who appears more sociable? John__ or Mark__
15. Who appears more innovative? John__ or Mark__
16. Who appears more successful? John__ or Mark__
17. Who is dressed more casual? John__ or Mark__
Please respond to the following items.

Male___ Female___
Age___
Major_____________________

Circle one:
Freshman  Sophomore  Junior  Senior  Graduate  Other
If "Other" please specify_____________________

Do you know either of the models shown in the photograph? yes___ no___
If "yes" please explain_____________________

Thank you, please turn your packet over on your desk.