

THE PERCEPTION OF CLOTHING AND SITUATIONAL FORMALITY AND  
THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

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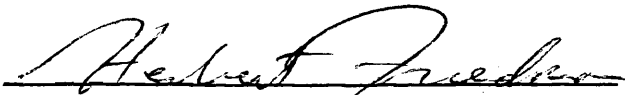
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THE PERCEPTION OF CLOTHING AND SITUATIONAL FORMALITY AND  
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## ABSTRACT

In the present study, clothing was thought to be an important component of the self. How clothing formality is perceived was also thought to be indicative of certain personality dispositions. Public self-consciousness is defined as the tendency to assume the role of the other by regarding oneself as another might. Private self-consciousness is defined as the tendency to focus on the private aspects of the self; feelings, motives and self-reflections, directly available only to the individual (Buss, 1981). One purpose of this study was to replicate Solomon and Schopler's (1981) interesting and surprising results where males high in public self-consciousness were found to have a greater interest in clothing. No such relationship was found for males' private self-consciousness or for females' public or private self-consciousness. These results were generally replicated. In addition, it was hypothesized that high public self-consciousness males would see fewer possibilities as to what could appropriately be worn in a given situation than males high in private self-consciousness. Both clothing and situations were scaled on a dimension of informality to formality in assessing this prediction. High public self-consciousness males were also hypothesized to be more discriminating in their assignment of a degree of appropriateness for clothing to situations in comparison to high private self-consciousness males. These hypothesis were not confirmed. A significant difference for the two consciousness groups was obtained when an analysis was used using the percentage of extreme ratings of appropriateness as the dependent variable, rather than the total number. The significance of the results found in the present study, as well as their implications, are discussed.

## INTRODUCTION

### Clothing and Physical Appearance

Although most people would report a certain aversion to "judging a book by its cover", there is ample research implicating physical appearance as a cue used by the observer in making assessments about the nature of others. More importantly, this information probably determines what behavior is directed toward this person. Allport has discussed the rapidity with which these first impressions are formed:

With briefest visual perception, a complex mental process is aroused, resulting within a very short time, 30 seconds, perhaps, in judgement of the sex, age, size, nationality, profession and social caste of the stranger, together with some estimate of his temperament, his ascendance, friendliness, neatness and even his trustworthiness and integrity. With no further acquaintance many impressions may be erroneous, but they show the swift totalizing nature of our judgements (Allport, 1937, p.500).

Past investigations intended to delineate the impressions aroused by physical appearance have been important, but they have given little or no attention to clothing. In studying these expressive components of behavior, psychology seems to be limited by a facial bias (Solomon and Schopler, 1981). The primary focus of attention has been directed toward the facial or naked aspects of physical appearance where it has been found that "what is beautiful is good"

(Dion, Berscheid and Walster, 1972; Murstein, 1972); that this stereotyping applies to both children and adults (Dion, 1972); that the beautiful have a tendency to possess an internal locus of control (Cash and Begley, 1976); that they are perceived as being more likely to recover from an emotional disturbance (Cash, Kehr, Polyson and Freeman, 1977); and that "because expectations of occupational status rise with a person's level of attractiveness, the strength of the attractiveness variable may increase for upper strata positions" (Cash, Gillen and Burns, 1977, p.309). As a consequence, it is reasonable to propose that people do, in fact, judge by covers.

In Horn's, The Second Skin (1975), clothing is defined as "any bodily adornment or appearance modification made of the human form" (p.121). People may interpret the significance of clothing primarily in terms of its utilitarian functions of protecting the body from harm and of covering in order to meet society's demand for modesty, but clothes may be thought of as much more, as meeting a variety of social and emotional needs. Clothing can be thought of as a kind of sign language that communicates a complex set of information indicative of a person's social status, occupation, role, self-confidence and perhaps other personality characteristics (Horn, 1975). The messages communicated with this sign language can be thought of as nonverbal symbols, or as described by Goffman (1951) as sign-vehicles or cues that select the status to be assigned to the individual and define the ways others are to treat him or her. These impressions are described by Horn (1975) as a rapid means to person perception, making it tentatively possible to categorize an individual. This visual summary provides the potential

for further interaction.

According to James (1907), the self extends beyond the boundaries of the skin. He has described the existence of the extended self, which is composed of the material me, social me and spiritual me. This extended self is defined as "all that we call our own, and all with whom and with which we share a bond of identity, such as family, possessions and country" (James, 1907, p.177). Clothing, both the kind and the manner in which it is worn, is specifically mentioned by James as an example of the extended self. An attack by others on this clothed component of the self will result in the same feelings of anger and indignation as an insult about the individual's moral character. This is simply because the body and its extensions, including the clothing with which we clad our bodies, are not simply ours, but us.

There are many who have suggested that clothing is both a strategic component of self-presentation and an indicator of personality dispositions. To begin with, there seems to be little question that what others think of the self's appearance is important, and what Bell (1980) has referred to as a common sartorial morality does operate. This sense of custom or standard for appropriate clothing seems to be generally tolerated and cooperated with by all. Although a wise person may despise custom, it is only a foolish one who will not accommodate to its dictates (Bell, 1980). Even though it might be overstated by Bell, it is the person who is aware of their offensive clothes who "suffers the most" (p.19). It is intriguing that an infringement on this sartorial morality is described with language also employed to describe deviant or immoral acts as somehow not good or

right or correct. Even more interesting is the tendency to describe deviant or immoral acts with terminology related to clothing and its construction-shabby, shoddy, threadbare, down at heel, botched, or slipshod (Bell, 1980).

In describing symbols of class status such as clothing, Goffman (1951) has described the difference between these and occupational status symbols. Although it has not always been the case, occupational status symbols, such as degrees or licenses, are protected by the law from those who might make fraudulent claims about their abilities. On the other hand, clothing as a class status symbol is not protected in this manner. An impersonator may be making a presumption, but they are not committing a crime. These status symbols are thought to carry both categorical and expressive significance, projecting the individual's point of view, style of life and cultural values. On the whole, then, class symbols are thought to serve to influence one's status in the right direction, rather than to deceive (Goffman, 1951).

In an analysis concerning the evolution of the symbols of class distinction, Veblen (1934) has presented not only a cynical attitude about the nature of human beings, but a perspective that seems to be well worth considering. Unlike his predecessors, Veblen does not view the average person as intelligent or rational in the pursuit of wealth:

People above the line of subsistence, in this age and all earlier ages do not use the surplus which society has given them primarily for useful purposes. They do not seek to expand their own lives, to live more wisely, intelligently, understandingly, but to impress other people with the fact

that they have surplus (Veblen, 1934, p.xiv).

This is also referred to as the battle of invidious comparison in a pecuniary culture where honor requires not only wealth, but its display. Clothing is only one such instrument in which one might conspicuously consume, enabling class members to distinguish between themselves and those from lower ranks.

Today this competitive display is thought to be both difficult and confusing in an age of market research, statistics and computer science where "Americans who had endured the pangs of the Depression and wartime rationing enjoy an unprecedented feast of goods and services" (Duffy, 1981, p.69). Brooks (1980) proposes that the result of these circumstances is parody display, where status competition becomes display of style rather than of wealth and that the most "effective status seeking style is mockery of status seeking" (Duffy, 1981, p.69). The best known example might be the blue jeans which began as clothing for work and have now "met Veblen's criteria for conspicuous consumption. They are expensive, unassociated with labor and their labels are insignia for old-fashioned competitive display" (Duffy, 1981, p.69).

#### The Meaning of Fashion

There seems to be a great interest in a strategic use of clothing in the United States today as reflected by the plethora of popular books and articles available on the subject, e.g. The Woman's Dress for Success (Molloy, 1977), "Social Roles and Uniforms: Clothes Make the Person" (Bickman, 1974), Seeing Through Clothes (Hollander, 1980), and The Executive Look (Levitt, 1981). As a result of this development, it may be useful to examine the theories which describe the origins

and maintenance of fashion.

To assume that conformity is the impetus for fashion development is to oversimplify the phenomenon. There are a variety of perspectives explaining fashion innovation and these can be divided into five main categories. The first is referred to as the boredom theory (Gibbins and Gwynn, 1975). Here it is suggested that fashion changes because consumers tire of the fashions available at that time. This does not explain why some fashions seem to be enduring or why some changes occur more quickly than others. The second viewpoint can be called the progress theory. In this case, clothing styles are said to have changed because of technological advances which provided new materials, new colors and, as a result, new fashions. This attitude concerning fashion innovation would apply only to the "1920's, when clothes were becoming more practical and less restricting" (Gibbins and Gwynn, 1975, p.1). The third explanation of fashion evolution is the conspiracy theory. This is thought to be the more popular view with the general public which assumes that fashion changes as the result of a conspiracy of fashion designers and manufacturers. Of course, this theory was obviously refuted with the rejected and subsequent flop of the re-introduction of the long skirt (Gibbins and Gwynn, 1975). The fourth category is the status conformity theory where it is believed that high status people arbitrarily dictate what is correct in clothing, lower classes, in turn, adopting these mandates in a trickle-down manner. This perspective would be closest to the viewpoint of both Veblen (1934) and Bell (1980).

The four theories mentioned, however, do not account for the

remarkable aspect associated with fashion; it is a phenomenon which provokes both change and conformity (Gibbins and Gwynn, 1975). In addition, these theories do not make it possible to predict which fashion changes will be adopted or explain why one fashion flops and another succeeds. The most important theory of fashion change has been labeled as the consequence of the Spirit of the Age (Laver, 1954) or Zeitgeist. Here it is proposed that Benjamin Franklin's culture of the Enlightenment would influence different clothing styles from that of a "Culture of Narcissism" or "New Right Society". It is suggested that each of the perspectives are worthwhile, although none can alone account for fashion change (Gibbins and Gwynn, 1975). The Zeitgeist operates on fashion changes by influencing the ideal self image of the period of time in question. The result is that stylish individuals perceive these characteristics as their own, wearing the clothes which they see reflecting them. If societal values alter and if women, for example, change from wanting to be a "sweet young thing", or "good mother" or "liberated female", clothing styles will also change and change more dramatically (Gibbins and Gwynn, 1975). The irony that results from this theoretical model of fashion innovation is that the desire to conform is thought to work against fashion:

The adoption by others of a style acts then as a legitimizer of an action that the girl wants to do anyway but is held back by conformity pressures. This does make sense as there will be at any one time more people wearing the older fashion than the newer. Pure conformity would then prevent the occurrence of fashion (Gibbins and Gwynn, 1975, p.8).

Significant Studies of Clothing in Personality and Social Psychology

Flugel (1930) has described clothing style as ideally the sublimation of libido from the naked body to articles of clothing. His perspective is important in that he attempts to outline, define and explain why there are individual differences in clothing behavior. In addition to the sublimation type, where there has been a successful transference of what is referred to as the narcissistic and auto-erotic tendencies or elements of the body to the clothes, there are also the exhibitory and inhibitory types. These are those individuals who have not resigned themselves to the necessity of clothing, the exhibitory type wearing as little clothing as conventionally acceptable and the inhibitory type who protects himself/herself from acknowledging the narcissistic and auto-erotic pressures with stiff, restrictive clothing.

The narcissistic tendency is described as the joy which all children are thought to seek and receive when they display the naked body of which they are very proud (Flugel, 1930). These characteristics are believed to be innate. The auto-erotic elements are of two kinds, skin and muscle. Skin eroticism is the pleasure a person experiences with warm sunshine or soft breezes on the naked skin. Muscle eroticism is the pleasure which results by tightening the muscles and later relaxing them. It is obvious that the wearing of clothes interferes with the feeling experienced in exhibiting the naked body and eliminates the elements that might play on the surface of the skin. Clothes can also inhibit muscular pulling or stretching as anyone knows who has had to wear a tight pair of pants or a bulky coat.

If adjustment to innate urges about the body are thought to interact with the type of clothing style adopted, as Flugel suggests, it seems reasonable to elaborate on this issue and examine the relationship between the general self-concept and the body concept. Secord and Jourard (1953) investigated just such a relationship.

The self can be thought of as consisting of those characteristics described by James (1907) which make persons the unique beings they are. These characteristics might best be summarized as personality. The body concept is the idea or belief concerning the actual physical characteristics or appearance of one's body, such as legs, arms, nose, etc. In an analysis of this relationship, Secord and Jourard (1953) found that the individual's feelings about himself/herself as a person are related to the attitudes and feelings about his/her body. In other words, "body cathexis related to self cathexis" (Secord and Jourard, 1953, p.343). Body cathexis was described as the degree of focus or concentration on any or all aspects of the body. A Body Cathexis Scale (BC) was developed, listing items such as hair, facial complexion, appetite, hands, distribution of hair over the body, digestion and age, for example. The Self Cathexis Scale (SC), on the other hand, was described as the individual's focus on the self, exemplified in such items as first name, morals, ability to express one's self, taste in clothes, sense of duty, sophistication, general knowledge, tolerance and manners. The most important result, especially if what Flugel (1930) and James (1907) believe about clothing is correct, was that BC scores and SC scores covaried. If an individual rated the body negatively, then one also rated the self to a negative degree. A perceived ugly body corresponded to a perceived ugly self

(Secord and Jourard, 1953).

Compton (1964) used the Barrier Scale, developed from the Rorschach, correlating it with clothing preferences for thirty female psychotic residents. The Barrier Scale, developed by Fisher and Cleveland (1955), was described as a measure of the degree to which an individual conceives of his/her body as an enclosed, impermeable boundary. Compton found that low Barrier scorers reported a significant preference for bright colors, bulky fabrics and patterns on clothing where there is a dramatic figure-ground contrast. It was as though clothing made from fabrics with these attributes could decrease vulnerability to potential harm from outside sources. These results suggest that subjects with a weakened conception of body boundary may employ clothing as a means to strengthen this weakened body image (Compton, 1964).

#### The Effects of Clothing on Behavior

There is evidence available to support the idea that different judgements are elicited from observers depending on manipulations of the clothed appearance. Variations in clothing produce changes in the attributes assigned to that person. In one such study, female subjects were asked to attribute a number of adjectives to a faceless, colorless, line drawing of another female who was dressed in one of five styles: business, preppie, sloppy, seductive and ultra-feminine (Harris, Note 1). Categories were created on the basis of judgements made prior to the study. The result were that subjects assigned significantly more positive adjectives to the business stimulus female and significantly more negative adjectives to the seductive stimulus female. Interpretations of this finding would require further study, but it is evident that clothing is

salient as a factor in forming interpersonal assessments.

Douty (1963), in a similar study, had judges rate stimulus persons on the basis of certain perceived personality traits as well as socio-economic status. Each stimulus person was presented as her own control in five different outfits, ranging from "casual through tailored to dressy", and a plain blue smock (Douty, 1963, p.198). The results were a significant difference for both a variety of personality characteristics and perception of socio-economic status according to the different changes of clothing (Douty, 1963). Unfortunately, no information was presented to suggest which clothing style induced the differences in subject judgements.

Effects of appearance on compliance have also been investigated. Neatly and sloppily dressed male and female experimenters asked subjects in an airport for money. Significantly more subjects gave money to those experimenters who were neatly, rather than sloppily dressed (Kleinke, 1977). A second study examined subject compliance of 100 housewives with an experimenter (Giles and Chavasse, 1975). They were asked by the experimenter to fill out a questionnaire, explaining that he would be returning in twenty minutes to collect it. He varied his status, presenting himself as either an undergraduate or research director in what was described as either casual or formal clothing. The results were that subjects wrote more for the experimenter in the condition where he was formally dressed, regardless of his presented status (Giles and Chavasse, 1975). It is clear that there are some circumstances where clothing influences the behavior of others in spite of the presented status. A related study found the same results, but only when the topic

of the questionnaire or petition was of a neutral or insignificant topic (Bryant, 1975).

In addition to affecting subject compliance, dress was also found to influence deferential behavior. A male and female experimental accomplice stationed themselves in the door to a library, forcing subjects to either pass between them or go around to a less convenient entrance. The accomplices were conversing with one another in the doorway. When the experimenters wore formal, rather than casual attire, subjects went to the inconvenient entrance. Conversely, when the experimenters were dressed casually, subjects more often broke through them to enter the first door (Fortenberry, MacLean, Morris and O'Connell, 1978).

Both the power and the importance of clothing can be seen in those studies where there was agreement between subjects self descriptions and ascriptions of their personality by others. For example, women were classified as deviants on the basis of a skirt length nine inches or more above the knee (White and Kernalequen, 1971). These subjects, in addition to the non-deviant group, were also administered Witkin's Rod and Frame Test, Maslow's Psychological Security-Insecurity Inventory, and the Orientation to Clothing Index (Kernalequen and Compton, 1968). The deviant group was found to be significantly different from the non-deviant group in being more field independent, more secure and more likely to dress for the pleasure of reward rather than as a means to avoid punishment or criticism (White and Kernalequen, 1971). It is evident that, at least in this case, a reliable relationship exists between clothing and a variety of variables reflected in personality indices. Further support for this idea can be seen in the study where a number of clothing items were judged to be associated with liberal sexual

attitudes (Mathes and Kempfer, 1976). More importantly, women who wore these same items described themselves as possessors of these same sexual attitudes. Correspondence was also found between those who scored high on Vernon's Church Orthodoxy Scale and modesty in clothing use (Christiansen and Kernalequen, 1971). As Goffman (1951) suggested, people do seem to dress in the direction of their own perceived attributes.

### Clothing and Consciousness

Public self-consciousness is defined as the tendency to assume the role of the other by regarding oneself as another might (Buss, 1981). The public aspects of oneself, according to Buss, include all the attributes that can be observed. The most obvious component is, of course, appearance. The other major component is style, including gestures and manners. Situations where public self-consciousness might be induced are in the presence of others, particularly in a novel situation, viewing a photograph of oneself or being a subject in front of a movie camera. All of Buss' subscales, public self-consciousness, private self-consciousness and a measure of social anxiety are conceptualized as independent, although a small relationship of .23 has been found between public and private self-consciousness (Fenigstein, Scheier and Buss, 1975).

Private self-consciousness differs from public self-consciousness in that there is a focus on the private aspects of the self, "feelings, motives and self reflections" directly available only to the individual (Buss, 1981). Components of private self-consciousness are thought to be arranged on a continuum that begins with specific body stimuli and ends with self-reflection. Although there are transient states of public and private self-consciousness, referred to by Buss as public and private

self-awareness, his scale is intended as a measure of a dispositional characteristic to be publicly or privately self-conscious.

Solomon and Schopler (1981) have found a significant relationship between public self-consciousness and interest in clothing for males. No such relationship was found for males' private self-consciousness or females' public or private self-consciousness. It was suggested that this sex difference occurred because interest in clothing may be a generalized phenomenon for females who have traditionally expressed their self-worth through the medium of physical appearance (Solomon and Schopler, 1981)

The correlation for males between public self-consciousness and scores on a measure of interest in clothing (Schrank and Gilmore, 1970) was .42 which, as Solomon and Schopler (1981) point out, "certainly surpasses the .30 plateau commonly encountered by the personality researcher" (p.7). Moreover, on closer inspection of the individual items contained in the Clothing Interest Scale (Schrank and Gilmore, 1970), 11 significant correlations were found for male subjects, while only 4 were found for females. These findings seem to support Solomon and Schopler's reasoning that the "male is freer than the female to determine his own level of clothing interest" (1981, p.9). At least in the case of this study, the results indicate that interest in clothing is indicative of a personality disposition in males, namely, the tendency to be publicly self-conscious. For females, these relationships were not obtained.

One purpose of this study was to replicate Solomon and Schopler's (1981) interesting and surprising results that males high in public self-consciousness were found to have a greater interest in clothing.

It was hypothesized that these males, high in public self-consciousness, would see fewer possibilities as to what could appropriately be worn in a given situation. This is because they are more sensitive to the social image they project and therefore stricter in their judgements about appropriate attire. Both clothing and situations were scaled on a dimension of informality to formality in assessing this prediction. In addition, it was also hypothesized that males high in public self-consciousness would be more discriminating in their assignment of a degree of appropriateness for clothing to situations as compared to males high in private self-consciousness. In other words, because males high in public self-consciousness are thought to be particularly aware of themselves as social objects, they would be more likely not only to be more involved in the task of assigning appropriate clothing to situations, but to have more definite ideas about appropriate correspondences between clothing and situations as well. For these reasons, these subjects would be expected to be more likely to use the extreme ends of an appropriateness scale in making judgements. O'Donovan (1965) has provided support for this argument with evidence indicating that subjects using the extreme ends of a rating scale are exhibiting an intense involvement with assigned tasks rather than any pathological attributes. Being less involved with the self as a social object than high public self-consciousness males, high private self-consciousness males would be expected to not only see more possibilities as to what could be appropriately worn in a given situation, but also to be more tolerant or relaxed about the degree of appropriateness in clothing and situational correspondence. This study was conducted in two stages, a preliminary scaling study and a main study.

## PROCEDURE

### Subjects

Male subjects (N=300) were recruited from the subject pool available from the Introductory Psychology classes at the College of William and Mary. 194 subjects were used to replicate Solomon and Schopler's (1981) study, 45 were used in the preliminary scaling session and the remaining 61 subjects were used in the main study. 141 subjects received one half credit hour of research participation and 159 subjects received credit for completing mass testing. Both research participation and completion of mass testing were course requirements. Consent forms were required for participation and all subjects recruited agreed to participate.

### Methods

Replication of Solomon and Schopler (1981). Subjects were asked to complete the Self-Consciousness Subscales (Fenigstein, Scheier and Buss, 1975) and the Clothing Interest Scale (Schrank and Gilmore, 1970). The Self-Consciousness Subscales consist of 23 items and the Clothing Interest Scale consists of 20 items. The Self-Consciousness Subscales are presented in Appendix A and the Clothing Interest Scale is presented in Appendix B.

Preliminary Scaling Study. 45 subjects were presented with 81 slides of clothed male stimuli which varied on a continuum from informal clothing to formal clothing. In addition, 57 brief situational descriptions which varied on a continuum from informal situations to formal situations were presented. Examples of these brief situational descriptions are "Going to the airport to pick up a friend (a love interest)" and "Keeping an appointment with a professor close to your age". The

complete list of situations is presented in Appendix C. Half of the subjects were first presented with the clothing stimuli and half were first presented with the situational descriptions. For both the clothing stimuli and the situations, subjects were asked to rate each on a scale from 1 to 9, with 1 being described as very informal and 9 being described as very formal. Subjects were told to express their own opinions and not what they perceived to be societal demands.

In one session in which 20 subjects participated, the scale was presented to the subjects with 1 denoted as very informal, 5 denoted as semi-formal and 9 denoted as very formal. Even though a 5 was assigned to the point of semi-formal (halfway between very informal and very formal), the term has connotations in language that are associated with a higher degree of formality than the intended meaning of moderately formal. As a result, the scale was adjusted with 1 denoted as very informal, 5 denoted as moderately formal and 9 denoted as very formal for the remaining 25 subjects.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
very				moderately			very	
informal				formal			formal	

Correlations were computed across the formality ratings for the two groups. The correlation coefficient for the 81 slides for the two groups was .98 ( $p < .01$ ). The standard deviations for the two groups was also correlated and found to be .48 ( $p < .01$ ).

This result indicated that the first group perceived semi-formal as half way between very informal and formal as instructed, in spite of its somewhat contrary semantic connotations.

When formality ratings were completed for both the clothing slides and the situational descriptions, means and standard deviations were computed for each slide and each situation. For the clothing slides, 3 were chosen to represent the informal end of the formality continuum 6 were chosen to represent the moderately formal point of the continuum and 3 were chosen to represent the formal end of the continuum. The 12 slides selected are presented in Appendix D. For the situational descriptions, 10 were chosen to represent the points on the continuum from informal to formal and are presented in Appendix E. For both the clothing slides and the situational descriptions, very high and very low formality ratings were eliminated to avoid extreme stimulus demand. Subjects were also asked to indicate their interest in the prescribed task using a scale from 1 to 9. 1 was described as being "very interesting, could easily pay attention", 5 was described as "neutral, no feelings about the task one way or the other" and 9 was described as "painfully boring, the worst task I ever had to do". Subjects mean interest rating was 3.87 (SD= 1.56), an indication that they took the task seriously and were attentive to the assignment.

#### Main Study

Classification of Subjects. Subjects were eligible for participation in the main study if they scored in the upper third of the public self-consciousness subscale and the lower third of the private self-consciousness subscale (high public self-consciousness), or in the upper third of the private self-consciousness subscale and the lower third of the public self-consciousness subscale (high private self-consciousness)

These are two scales contained the the Self-Consciousness Subscales (Feingstein, Scheier and Buss, 1975). Those eligible were selected from the list of 194 subjects used in replicating Solomon and Schopler's (1981) study. Although Buss has suggested that high public and private self-consciousness subjects can be assigned on the basis of using the median as a criteria, he prefers to use the upper and lower thirds in order to be more discriminating and to avoid those who "can't make up their minds in answering the questions" (Note 2).

A list of the 10 situational descriptions in varying order for each of the 12 clothing slides was given to 34 subjects high in private self-consciousness and 27 subjects high in public self-consciousness. The instructions were:

You will be shown 12 slides depicting different types of clothing. For each slide, there is a sheet listing 10 situations in which the clothing might be worn. For some situations, the clothing may be appropriate; for other situations, it may not be. The same situations are listed for each slide. When the slide is projected on the screen, read down the list of 10 situations and check each situation for which the clothing seems to be at least slightly appropriate to you. After you have checked the situations, please rate the degree of appropriateness of the clothing for each situation checked using the presented scale. 1 can be thought of as 'barely appropriate', 4 can be thought of as 'moderately appropriate' and 7 can be thought of as 'very appropriate'. There are no right or wrong answers, you

can check none or all of the situations and anything in between. I am interested only in your judgements.

An example of the stimulus material is presented in Appendix F. Subjects were debriefed at the completion of the task and given an opportunity to ask questions. Those interested in ultimate results included their mailing address with their stimulus materials.

## RESULTS

Replication of Solomon and Schopler (1981)

The results of Solomon and Schopler were partially replicated in the present study. They reported a correlation of .42 ( $p < .01$ ) between public self-consciousness and clothing interest scores for males. In the present study, a correlation of .42 ( $p < .01$ ) was also found.

While the correlation between private self-consciousness and clothing interest scores was not reported separately for males in the Solomon and Schopler study, an overall correlation for subjects of .11 was, a nonsignificant result. In the present study, a correlation for males of .15 was found ( $p < .02$ ). In addition, Buss' finding of a nonsignificant correlation of .23 between public and private self-consciousness was not supported. In the present study, a correlation of .44 ( $p < .01$ ) was obtained. Comparisons between the present results and Solomon and Schopler's are presented in Table 1.

Comparisons were also made between male self-consciousness scores at the College of William and Mary and male self-consciousness scores at the University of Texas (Fenigstein, Scheier and Buss, 1975). At the College of William and Mary, the mean for public self-consciousness scores was 19.86 (SD= 5.36). At the University of Texas, the mean for public self-consciousness scores was 18.9 (SD= 4.0). The mean for private self-consciousness scores for males at the College of William and Mary was 24.32 (SD= 5.91). At the University of Texas, the mean for private self-consciousness was 25.9 (SD= 5.0).

TABLE 1

Comparison of Correlations for Male Subjects in  
Solomon and Schopler (1981) and the Present Study

	<u>Solomon &amp; Schopler</u>	<u>Present Study</u>
	r	r
Clothing Interest/Public Self-Consciousness	.42**	.42**
Clothing Interest/Private Self-Consciousness	.11(n.s.)	.15*
Public/Private Self-Consciousness	.23(n.s.)	.44**

\* $p < .05$ .

\*\*  
 $p < .01$ .

### Main Study

In order to determine whether or not subjects perceived a correspondence between formality of clothing and formality of situations, their degree of appropriateness rating for each clothing formality level is presented in Table 2. It is evident here that clothing stimuli at the more formal end of the continuum, for example, were rated more appropriate by the subjects in the more formal situations. It is evident that there is subject perception of correspondence between clothing and situational formality.

A second analysis on this correspondence also supported the conclusion that there were perceived differences of formality for both the clothing stimuli and the situations. The mean formality of those situations checked by subjects for informal clothes (slides 1,2,3) was 3.42 (SD= .548) and the mean formality of those situations checked by subjects for formal clothes (slides 10,11,12) was 5.93 (SD= .546). This was a significant difference ( $p < .05$ ).

To assess differences between the two consciousness groups, there were four 2 (Public vs. Private Self-Consciousness) X 4 (Level of Formality) analyses of variance performed. The four dependent variables were the number of situations checked as appropriate, the number of ratings at the extreme end of the appropriateness rating scale (1,2,6,7), the number of ratings where the situations were rejected altogether or embraced as totally appropriate (0,6,7), referred to as the end rating, and the variance of appropriateness ratings for the two consciousness groups. These dependent variables were used to assess the degree to which the two groups differed in the definiteness of their ideas about

TABLE 2

Mean Appropriateness Rating for each Situation at Four Clothing Formality Levels

<u>Situations (abbreviated)</u>	<u>Clothing Formality Levels</u>			
	1	2	3	4
1. Checking mail.	3.92 <sup>a</sup>	3.31	.642	.553
2. Popular group concert.	1.61	2.72	.688	.400
3. Going to a friend's room to eat.	2.90	4.66	1.61	.849
4. Meeting at the library.	2.43	4.52	.973	.486
5. Keeping an appointment.	1.24	4.96	1.92	.875
6. Going to the airport.	1.64	4.79	3.88	3.51
7. Going to a bar with a date.	1.09	4.40	4.17	3.03
8. Going to a restaurant.	.398	2.69	4.60	5.34
9. Norfolk Symphony concert.	.993	.988	3.53	4.95
10. Sorority initiation dance.	.102	.731	3.79	5.27

<sup>a</sup>Greater numbers are indicative of greater appropriateness.

appropriate clothing and situational correspondence. The only consistent main effect found was for that of formality of clothing levels ( $p < .01$ ). The means for the two consciousness groups in these analyses are presented in Table 3.

A significant difference for the two consciousness groups resulted when an analysis of variance was performed using the percent of extreme ratings of appropriateness as the dependent variable rather than the total number. These results are presented in Table 4. It is evident from these findings that males high in public self-consciousness make a greater percentage of their total appropriate responses at the extreme ends (1,2,6,7) of the rating scale than do the high private self-consciousness males. In other words, males high in public self-consciousness were more likely to judge a certain clothing slide as either "barely appropriate" or "very appropriate". This characteristic is further illustrated in Figure 1. Additional analyses indicated that the significant tendency to make extreme judgements of appropriateness occurred exclusively at the second level of clothing formality  $F(1,59) = 6.28, (p < .01)$ . At the remaining three levels of clothing formality (first, third and fourth), high public self-consciousness males were no more likely than high private self-consciousness males to make a greater percentage of their total appropriate responses at the extreme ends (1,2,6,7) of the rating scale.

TABLE 3

Means for Public and Private Self-Consciousness  
At Four Levels of Clothing Formality

Dependent <u>Variables</u>	Clothing Formality Levels							
	1		2		3		4	
	P <sup>a</sup>	R	P	R	P	R	P	R
Number Checked	3.73	3.46	6.64	7.09	5.40	5.79	4.57	4.96
Extremes Checked	1.91	1.73	3.26	3.93	2.77	2.60	3.10	3.16
Ends Checked	7.11	7.21	6.09	5.32	6.59	6.89	7.73	7.65
Variance	4.63	3.91	6.81	5.76	6.60	6.26	8.27	7.43

<sup>a</sup>P= Public, R= Private Self-Consciousness.

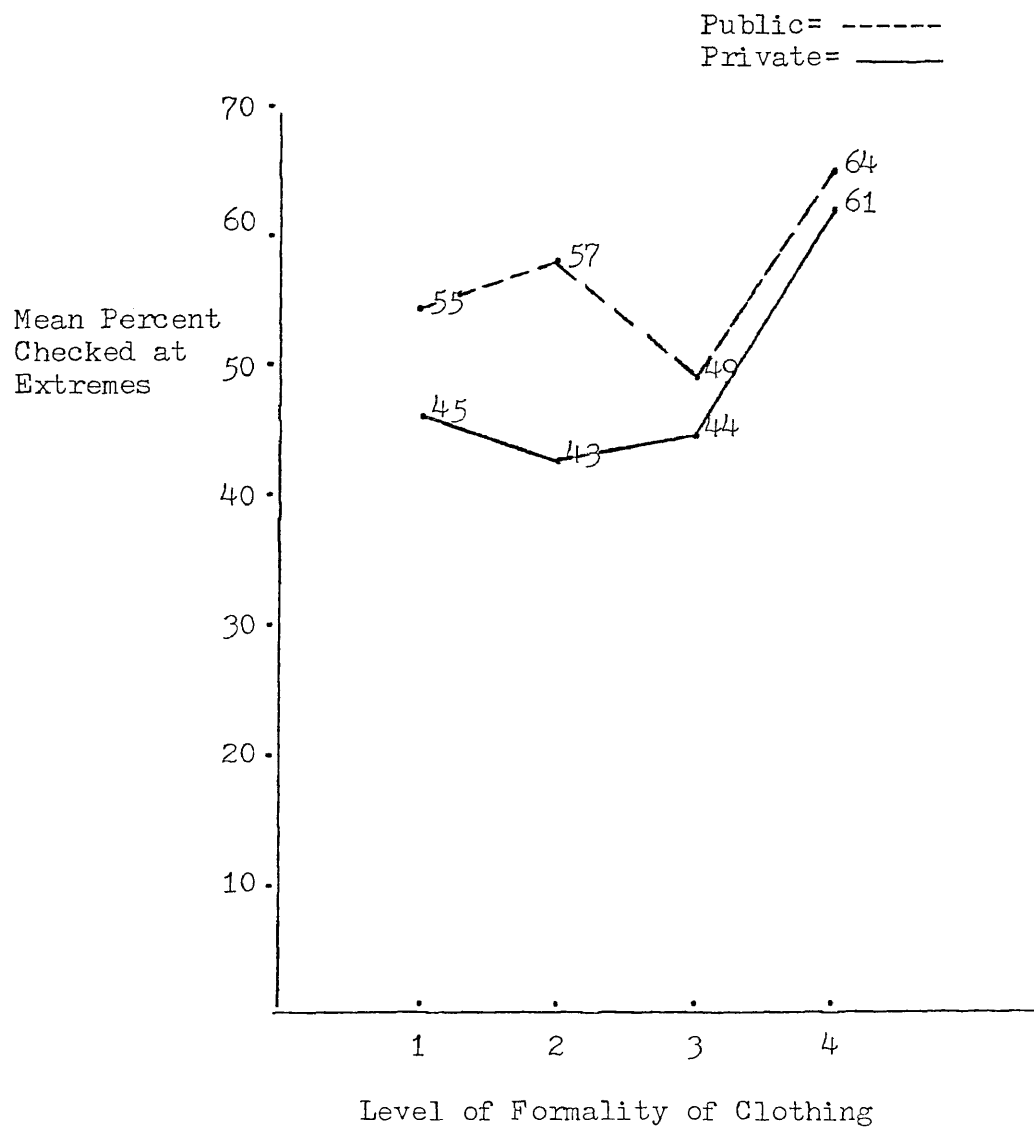
TABLE 4  
 Analysis of Variance:  
 Percent of Extreme Ratings

Source	Sum of squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F Ratio
Consciousness	.899	1	.899	4.09*
Error	8.79	40	.219	-
Level of Formality	1.79	3	.599	5.35**
Level of Formality X Consciousness	0.25	3	.084	0.75
Error	13.43	120	.111	-

\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

Figure 1  
Mean Percentages of Extreme Ratings for  
Public and Private Self-Consciousness Groups



## DISCUSSION

In the present study, it was hypothesized that high public self-consciousness males would list fewer total situations as appropriate and/or be more likely to see a given situation as extremely appropriate or not very appropriate across all levels of clothing formality. Results of the present study did not support the hypothesis that males high in public self-consciousness would check fewer situations as appropriate for the four clothing formality levels than males high in private self-consciousness. There was no significant difference in the number of appropriate situations checked for the two self-consciousness groups. The hypothesis that there would be less variance among the group of males high in public self-consciousness was also not supported. In addition, there was no significant difference found between males high in public self-consciousness and males high in private self-consciousness in the tendency to use the extreme ends of the appropriateness rating scale. In other words, using the total number of responses, high public self-consciousness males were no more likely than high private self-consciousness males to describe a situation as "inappropriate", "barely appropriate" or "very appropriate" for a given clothing slide.

Public self-consciousness males were thought to be more likely than private self-consciousness males to check fewer situations as appropriate across the four formality levels of clothing stimuli because they are described by Buss (1980) as being particularly aware of themselves as social objects. As a result, it was thought reasonable to theorize that this sensitivity to self-presentation would be reflected in more definite ideas about what kind of clothing is appropriate in a given situation.

This, in turn, would result in fewer situations being rated as appropriate. Again, this hypothesis was not supported in the present study.

Because males high in public self-consciousness were thought to be more discriminating in assigning clothing to situations than the males high in private self-consciousness, it was expected that this tendency would be reflected in the percent of the extreme ratings of the appropriateness rating scale rather than only in the total number. As indicated in Table 4, a significant main effect for the two consciousness groups resulted. As hypothesized, males high in public self-consciousness made a greater percentage of their total appropriate responses at the extreme ends (1,2,6,7) of the appropriateness rating scale ( $p < .05$ ). Additional analyses indicated that the tendency for males high in public self-consciousness to use the extreme ends of the appropriateness rating scale was significantly evident only at the second level of clothing formality (slides 4,5,6) ( $p < .01$ ).

It is reasonable to find that males high in public self-consciousness are discriminated from males high in private self-consciousness in the appropriateness ratings at the second level of clothing formality. Although a male high in private self-consciousness is thought to be more intune with his own feelings and motivations and less concerned with himself as a social object, he may be aware of what is obviously informal or formal clothing and where it is generally appropriate if he is an average person with average social skills. In the second or middle range of formality, there should be more ambiguity and a better opportunity to discriminate between those who have more definite ideas

about appropriate clothing and those who do not. It is somewhat surprising that this discrimination between the two consciousness groups did not take place at the second half of the moderately formal clothing level (slides 7,8,9). On closer examination of these slides, however, it is evident that although they may be less formal than the most formal slides, 10, 11, and 12, they contain certain cues (ties, buttoned-up shirts, jackets) which could have resulted in subjects easily placing them in a formal clothing category. Labeled as formal clothing, the task for deciding what was an appropriate situation was made simpler. This may have been more difficult to do with the slides where no such cues were apparent, such as slides 4,5, and 6. In addition, there were no informal cues evident in slides 4,5, and 6 that could have resulted in subjects easily placing them in an informal clothing category. In slide 6, there is a sweater worn over a shirt as a jacket, preventing the attire from appearing informal. In slides 4 and 5, shirts are worn outside the trousers, but they are prevented from appearing basically informal by the neat, even hemlines.

That males high in public self-consciousness did not check fewer situations as appropriate as anticipated may have occurred because the problem of assigning the clothes to the situations listed was easy. For these college males, it may have been generally not difficult to assess which clothes were informal or formal and appropriate in the 10 possible situations. This could have occurred in spite of the precaution taken in eliminating very informal and very formal slides of the preliminary scaling study in the selection of the 12 slides for the purposes of the main study. Perhaps more measures should have

been taken to ensure that the assigned task would be more ambiguous than it apparently was. It is important to point out that ambiguous clothing is not synonymous with deviant or bizarre clothing such as that found in slide 1. Both consciousness groups were equally likely to reject this slide as inappropriate in all 10 situations. Slide 3 was also rejected equally often by the two groups as inappropriate in all 10 situations. The other slides were endorsed as appropriate in at least one of the situations. An operational definition of ambiguous clothing which will discriminate between the two consciousness groups requires further study.

Another consideration in explaining why males high in public self-consciousness did not check fewer situations as appropriate across the clothing formality levels could be the criteria for assignment into the two consciousness groups. Here, the upper and lower thirds of the two consciousness scores were used for assignment. Perhaps finer discriminations might have occurred between the two consciousness groups if the upper and lower quartiles had been used as the criteria for assignment into groups. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the criteria were those suggested by Buss (Note 2).

That high interest in clothing is indicative of a personality disposition in males, namely, the tendency to be high in public self-consciousness was an important finding made by Solomon and Schopler (1981) and generally replicated in the present study. No such relationship was found for females in the Solomon and Schopler study. The replication of a relatively high correlation

( $r = .42$ ,  $p .01$ ) between public self-consciousness and clothing interest scores for males in the present study adds support to Solomon and Schopler's reasoning that the "male may be freer than the female to determine his own level of clothing interest" (1981, p.9). It might be illuminating to repeat the present study with women business executives who would presumably be more sensitive about appropriate clothing/situation correspondence than the college female subject used in Solomon and Schopler's research.

In the results of the present study, high public self-consciousness males were no more likely than high private self-consciousness males to check more total situations as appropriate across all clothing formality levels. It is also evident, however, that at a given level of clothing formality, namely a somewhat ambiguous level, it is possible to differentiate between those individuals who have a relatively definite idea or feeling about what kind of clothing can be appropriately worn and those who are more relaxed in their assessments. It seems reasonable to assume that those who possess this concern about clothing/situational correspondence may be more likely to realize the possible strategic utility of clothing and may be at an advantage in employing it as an instrument in self-presentation. Although clothing has been overlooked as a subject for study, there is very little to argue with Stone who professes that: "As the self is dressed, it is simultaneously addressed, for, whenever we clothe ourselves, we dress 'toward' or address some audience whose validating responses are essential to the establishment of ourself" (1962, p.101). If clothing is salient to the degree that Stone proposes in the establishment of the self, the ability to

discriminate the appropriateness of certain clothing in various situations may not only be indicative of a certain kind of consciousness, but other personality dispositions as well.

## APPENDIX A

## THE SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS SUBSCALES

(Fenigstein, A., Scheier, M.F. and Buss, A.H., 1975)

## THE SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS SUBSCALES

Please read the following statements which may or may not be characteristic of the way you see yourself as a person. Read each sentence carefully and decide how characteristic or uncharacteristic of you each statement is. Use the following rating scale and place the number of your answer in the appropriate box.

Extremely uncharacteristic = 0

Generally uncharacteristic = 1

Equally characteristic and  
uncharacteristic = 2

Generally characteristic = 3

Extremely characteristic = 4

1. \_\_\_ I'm always trying to figure myself out.
2. \_\_\_ I'm concerned about my style of doing things.
3. \_\_\_ Generally, I'm very aware of myself.
4. \_\_\_ It takes me time to overcome my shyness in new situations.
5. \_\_\_ I reflect about myself alot.
6. \_\_\_ I'm concerned about the way I present myself.
7. \_\_\_ I'm often the subject of my own fantasies.
8. \_\_\_ I have trouble working when someone is watching me.
9. \_\_\_ I constantly scrutinize myself.
10. \_\_\_ I get embarrassed very easily.
11. \_\_\_ I'm self-conscious about the way I look.
12. \_\_\_ I find it hard to talk to strangers.
13. \_\_\_ I'm generally attentive to my inner feelings.
14. \_\_\_ I usually worry about making a good impresssion.
15. \_\_\_ I'm constantly examining my motives.
16. \_\_\_ I feel anxious when I speak in front of a large group.
17. \_\_\_ One of the last things I do before I leave the house is look in  
the mirror.
18. \_\_\_ I sometimes have the feeling that I'm off somewhere watching myself.

19. \_\_ I'm concerned about what other people think of me.
20. \_\_ I'm alert to changes in my mood.
21. \_\_ I'm usually aware of my appearance.
22. \_\_ I'm aware of the way my mind works when I work through a problem.
23. \_\_ Large groups make me nervous.

From: Fenigstein, A., Scheier, M.F. and Buss, A.H. Public and private self-consciousness: Assessment and theory. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 1975, 43, 522-527.

## APPENDIX B

CLOTHING INTEREST SCALE (Schrank and Gilmore, 1973)

## THE CLOTHING INTEREST SCALE

Please read the following statements about clothing. Rate each according to the extent to which you believe the statement to be true or not true. Using the following guide, select the appropriate number and place it in the box.

Definitely false = 0

Definitely false, more false than true = 1

Undecided, equally true and untrue = 2

Partially true, more true than false = 3

Definitely true = 4

1. \_\_\_ I enjoy clothes like some people do such things as books, records and movies.
2. \_\_\_ Clothing is so attractive to me that I am tempted to spend more money on it than I should.
3. \_\_\_ I skip the clothing ads in newspapers and magazines.
4. \_\_\_ I have no interest in keeping up with the latest fashion trends.
5. \_\_\_ I would rather spend my money on clothes than on anything else.
6. \_\_\_ Mass media accounts of what women in the public eye are wearing are boring.
7. \_\_\_ I enjoy reading about current fashion trends.
8. \_\_\_ I don't attend fashion shows even when I have the opportunity.
9. \_\_\_ Planning and selecting my wardrobe can be included among my favorite activities.
10. \_\_\_ I like to read and study fashion magazines.
11. \_\_\_ I enjoy window-shopping to see the clothes.
12. \_\_\_ I am not clothes-conscious.
13. \_\_\_ I would like to be considered one of the best-dressed men/women on campus.
14. \_\_\_ The subject of clothing is uninteresting to me.
15. \_\_\_ It is tiresome keeping up with fashion.
16. \_\_\_ I do not enjoy shopping for clothes.
17. \_\_\_ I think that clothes are important in expressing one's creativity.

18. \_\_ I am not too concerned with clothes.
19. \_\_ I keep my wardrobe in top condition at all times.
20. \_\_ I don't stop to look at clothes when I don't plan to buy.

From: Schrank, H.L. and Gilmore, D.L. Correlates of fashion leadership:  
Implications for fashion process theory. The Sociological  
Quarterly, 1973, 14, 534-543.

APPENDIX C

57 SITUATIONAL DESCRIPTIONS

<u>SITUATIONS</u>	<u>FORMALITY RATING</u>	<u>SD</u>
1. Working in the yard.	1.54	.602
2. Going jogging around campus.	1.68	.784
3. Going to the gym.	1.71	.777
4. Going to check on mail.	2.6	.931
5. Going for a walk around campus.	2.77	1.01
6. Picking up clothes at the dry cleaner.	2.82	.940
7. Going to the cafeteria on campus.	2.82	.941
8. Going to the grocery store.	2.85	1.17
9. Going to a football game.	2.88	1.23
10. Taking a pet to the vet.	2.97	.999
11. Going to the library alone to read.	2.97	1.02
12. Going to a concert featuring a popular group.	3.14	1.07
13. Going to pick up a pay check.	3.25	1.22
14. Going to the library.	3.25	1.22
15. Going to a friend's room or apartment to visit (not a love interest).	3.31	1.15
16. Going to a fraternity meeting.	3.3	1.52
17. Going to a study group meeting after dinner.	3.37	1.24
18. Going to class after lunch.	3.4	1.17
19. Going to the shopping mall.	3.4	1.22
20. Getting a ride home over Christmas break with other people.	3.4	1.26
21. Going to class before lunch.	3.45	1.22
22. Meeting a class group at the library in the afternoon.	3.57	1.02
23. Going home for the weekend.	3.57	1.22

<u>SITUATIONS</u>	<u>FORMALITY RATING</u>	<u>SD</u>
24. Going to a Homecoming game.	3.57	1.49
25. Going to tour Colonial Williamsburg.	3.62	1.19
26. At home expecting a visitor although not definite.	3.88	1.21
27. Going to a friend's room or apartment to eat (not a love interest).	4.11	1.32
28. At home expecting a guest for meat loaf.	4.14	1.31
29. Going to the airport to pick up a friend (not a love interest).	4.28	1.32
30. Going to a fraternity rush party.	4.31	1.95
31. Going to a movie off campus.	4.34	1.32
32. Keeping an appointment with a professor of the same sex.	4.48	1.38
33. Keeping an appointment with a physician for the first time.	4.51	1.22
34. Keeping an appointment with a professor close to your age.	4.51	1.33
35. Going to the airport to pick up your parents.	4.62	1.45
36. Going to the airport to go on vacation.	4.65	1.39
37. Going home in a plane.	4.7	1.55
38. Going to a restaurant with some friends.	4.71	1.34
39. Going to hear a public figure at William and Mary where there is an admission fee.	4.74	1.33
40. Keeping an appointment with a professor of the opposite sex.	4.77	1.53
41. Going to a movie with a second date.	4.91	1.27
42. Opening a checking account at the local bank.	4.91	1.61
43. Keeping an appointment with a professor considerably older.	4.97	1.57

<u>SITUATIONS</u>	<u>FORMALITY RATING</u>	<u>SD</u>
44. Going to the airport to pick up a friend (a love interest).	5.02	1.59
45. Going to a bar without a date.	5.02	1.61
46. Going to a movie with a first date.	5.34	1.37
47. Going to a Homecoming party.	5.34	1.73
48. Going to a sorority party.	5.37	1.67
49. Going to a bar with a date.	5.57	1.27
50. Going to a restaurant with a date.	6.2	1.14
51. Going to Thanksgiving dinner.	6.05	1.35
52. Going to meet with someone of your sex about possible employment.	6.08	1.36
53. Going to meet with someone of the opposite sex about possible employment.	6.11	1.38
54. Going to church or worship services.	6.74	1.72
55. Going to a concert featuring the Norfolk symphony.	6.85	1.14
56. Going to a sorority initiation dance.	7.16	1.68
57. Going to a wedding at Bruton Parish.	8.00	.938

## APPENDIX D

12 SLIDES SCALED ON A DIMENSION OF INFORMALITY TO FORMALITY



SLIDE 1

Formality Rating= 2.51 (SD= 1.10)



SLIDE 2

Formality Rating= 2.71 (SD= 1.13)



SLIDE 3

Formality Rating= 2.91 (SD= 1.13)



SLIDE 4

Formality Rating= 4.28 (SD- 1.03)



SLIDE 5

Formality Rating= 4.31 (SD= 1.14)



SLIDE 6

Formality Rating= 4.31 (SD= 1.18)



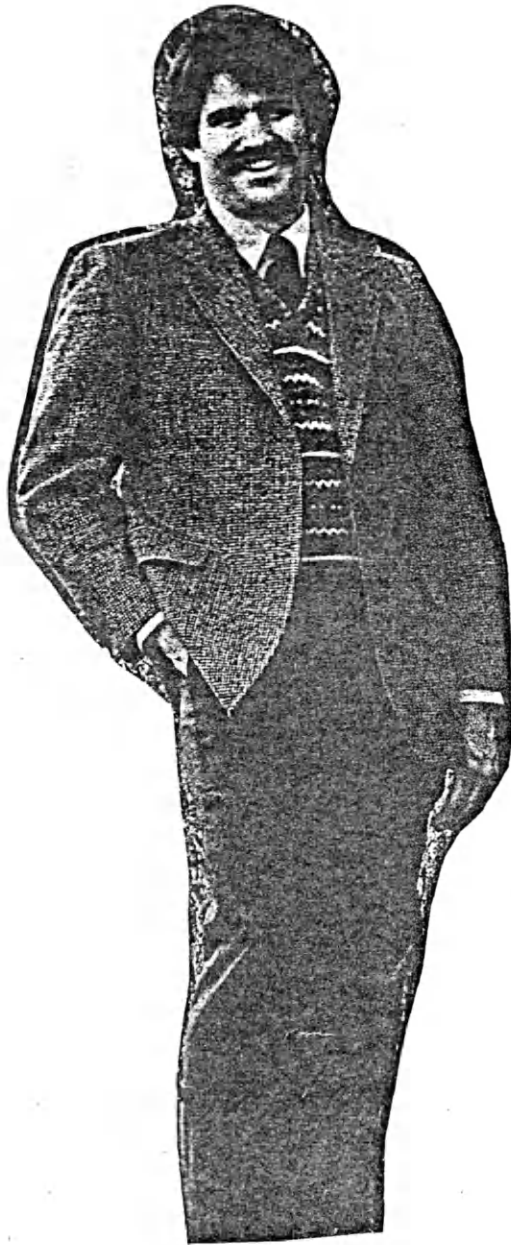
SLIDE 7

Formality Rating= 6.08 (SD= 1.10)



SLIDE 8

Formality Rating= 6.22 (SD= 1.09)



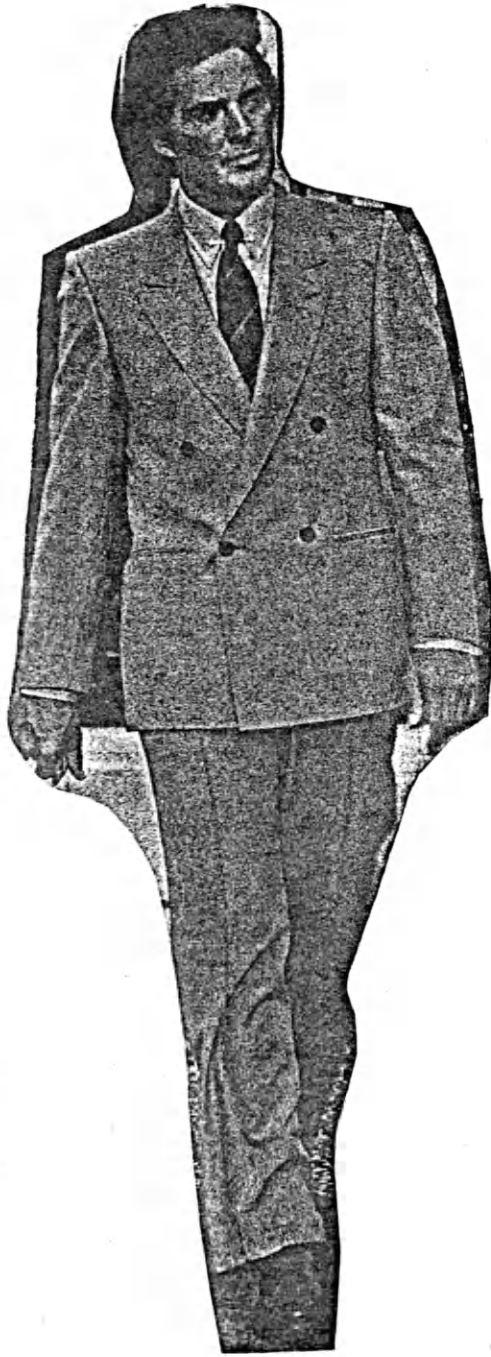
SLIDE 9

Formality Rating= 6.51 (SD= 1.02)



SLIDE 10

Formality Rating= 7.48 (SD= .874)



SLIDE 11

Formality Rating= 7.51 (SD= .840)



SLIDE 12

Formality Rating= 8.17 (SD= .736)

## APPENDIX E

10 SITUATIONAL DESCRIPTIONS SCALED ON A  
DIMENSION OF INFORMALITY TO FORMALITY

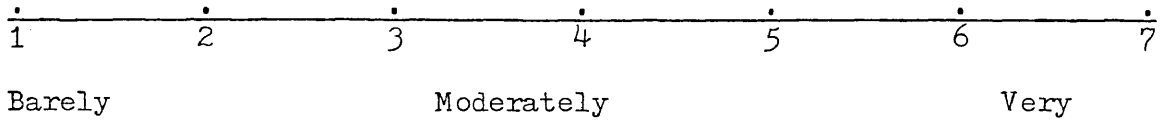
<u>SITUATIONS</u>	<u>FORMALITY RATING</u>	<u>SD</u>
1. Going to check on mail.	2.6	.931
2. Going to a concert featuring a popular group.	3.14	1.07
3. Going to a friend's room or apartment to eat (not a love interest).	3.31	1.15
4. Meeting a class group at the library in the afternoon.	3.57	1.02
5. Keeping an appointment with a professor close to your age.	4.51	1.33
6. Going to the airport to pick up a friend (a love interest).	5.02	1.59
7. Going to a bar with a a date.	5.57	1.27
8. Going to a restaurant with a date.	6.2	1.14
9. Going to a concert featuring the Norfolk Symphony.	6.85	1.14
10. Going to a sorority initiation dance.	7.16	1.68

APPENDIX F

SUBJECT STIMULUS MATERIAL

SLIDE: 1

APPROPRIATENESS



Check if  
clothing  
appropriate

Degree  
Rating

- |     |       |       |   |
|-----|-------|-------|---|
| 1.  | _____ | _____ | Going to check on mail.   |
| 2.  | _____ | _____ | Going to a concert featuring a popular group.                       |
| 3.  | _____ | _____ | Going to a friend's room or apartment to eat (not a love interest). |
| 4.  | _____ | _____ | Meeting a class group at the library in the afternoon.              |
| 5.  | _____ | _____ | Keeping an appointment with a professor close to your age.          |
| 6.  | _____ | _____ | Going to the airport to pick up a friend ( a love interest).        |
| 7.  | _____ | _____ | Going to a bar with a date.   |
| 8.  | _____ | _____ | Going to a restaurant with a date.                                  |
| 9.  | _____ | _____ | Going to a concert featuring the Norfolk Symphony.                  |
| 10. | _____ | _____ | Going to a sorority initiation dance.                               |

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