

**NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**

**Fit to be Tied: Masculinity versus Femininity in Women's Dress, Social  
Context and Perceptions of Power in Women**

**A Thesis Submitted to the  
University Honors Program  
In Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements of the Baccalaureate Degree  
With Upper Division Honors**

**Department of Textiles, Apparel, and Merchandising (FCNS)**

**By**

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Capstone Approval Page

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Fit to be Tied: Masculinity Versus Femininity in  
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HONORS THESIS ABSTRACT  
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AUTHOR: Melissa Talley

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**ABSTRACT:** Previous studies have examined power associations with women's business dress but little work has been directed toward the study of perceptions of power in conjunction with clothing for other social contexts. This study explores the association between masculine versus feminine styling in women's dress and perceptions of power in women for professional business, formal social, and casual social contexts. A questionnaire was administered via a PowerPoint slide presentation to 57 university students. Subjects responded to 15 color photographic images of women dressed in outfits appropriate for the three social contexts with five images representing each context. Instrument items consisted of semantic differential scales measuring perceptions of power and masculinity versus femininity for the clothed images. Pearson correlation tests indicated that one of the casual social outfits and one of the formal social outfits showed a significant negative relationship between perceived masculinity and power.

## **Introduction**

People often form initial impressions of others based on appearance cues, including dress. Various elements of dress shape the meanings it has for the perceiver: fabric color and texture, garment design and fit, silhouette, etc. These elements, in addition to the context in which the wearer is seen, shape the impressions we form of him or her, particularly when no other information is available (as when forming first impressions). These impressions in turn shape interactions between the perceiver and the perceived. Studies have shown that certain types and styles of dress can convey impressions of power.

Research findings suggest that, in a professional context, masculine styling in dress can present an image of power in women. The question remaining is whether this association holds true in other social contexts (i.e. non-professional settings). This study examined the association between perceptions of masculine versus feminine styling in women's dress and perceptions of power in women for a professional business context, a formal social context, and a casual social context.

## **Literature Review**

### *Dress as Non-Verbal Communication*

Human interaction is based upon a compilation of the judgments we make about people (Solomon, 1985). People often form first impressions of others by analyzing physical characteristics and attributes. According to Ryan (1966), we respond to clothing in order to "simplify perceptions of people or a total situation" (p. 9). Dress is especially relied upon to form impressions when there is a lack of personal information. Forsythe, Drake, and Hogan (1985) state, "Appearance becomes one of the major means of deriving cues about a person" (Solomon, 1985, p. 268). Often non-verbal cues (i.e. dress) are overlooked when considering

communication mediums. Even after additional information is acquired, people are prone to not only maintain their original impression but expand on it (Conner, Peters, & Nagasawa, 1975). Also, these impressions differ based on certain factors, and they are often formed rather quickly and solidified with a high level of confidence (Kaiser, 1985). Asch (1946) found that clothing is a common signal we base our perceptions on and that impressions vary with variations in the clothing (Ryan, 1966). Color, texture, pattern, form, and design play a significant role in how dress and the wearer are perceived (Kaiser, 1985). For example, many people feel a style with straight lines suggests a masculine appearance and curved or broken lines are associated with feminine dress. Although clothing is not the sole factor when forming impressions, it is certainly a mitigating factor. During the process of grooming, we decide the message we want to send (Solomon, 1985). It is important for people to understand the cues that can influence others in order to create the “message” they wish to send (Conner et al., 1975). Asch (1946) also stated that people perceive the image of another all at once and do not interpret the sender’s appearance in a linear progression. The Gestalt Theory says that the message as a whole is more powerful than the sum of its parts (Kaiser, 1985).

Dress is a very potent communicator in the work place (Damhorst, Miller, & Michelman, 1999). People assume a positive relationship between image and competence (ability or expertise). This association holds true regardless of whether or not the task at hand is related to appearance (Kaiser, 1985). According to Lillethun (1999), “The recent shift to a more androgynous style of dress may be a reflection of a cultural adjustment to less stereotyped conceptions of masculine and feminine gender roles” (p. 263). It can be inferred that different dress cues represent and convey different aspects of social power (Johnson & Lennon, 1999).

### *Power, Gender, and Dress*

Kaiser (1985) states, “assessments of a sender’s power pertain to perceptions of physical strength, interpersonal power, and perceived control over others and the environment” (p. 266). According to O’Neal (1999), power is usually seen as “the ability to control others or that of having authority or influence” (Johnson & Lennon, 1999, p. 128). Power is assigned to different people for a variety of reasons (e.g. profession, relationship, position, age, sex).

Silverman (1994) conveys the message that it is sexual difference that is the principal determinant of power, privilege, and authority. Sex has long since been that which closes the “specular gap between men of different classes and placing men and women on opposite sides of the great visual divide” (Benstock & Ferriss, 1994, p. 191). Power may be divided into two types: agonic power (having influence over others that may involve elements of aggression, also known as direct power) and hedonic power (indirect influence derived from charm, appearance, etc., also believed to be manipulative persuasion). With regard to these categorizations of power, hedonic is most commonly associated with women and agonic with men. Rudd and Lennon (1999, p. 156) observed that even if women do have agonic power, they often rely on elements of hedonic power because agonic power is perceived as unfeminine. With this in mind, women often use elements of dress and fashion to establish a sense of credibility, control and persuasiveness. Some power is better than none at all, and while, “behaviors rewarded for men are not rewarded for women, women may pursue the main avenue open to them for achieving power or influence over others, attraction through beauty and charm” (p. 157).

### *Dress, Gender and Social Contexts*

Certain occasions and environments call for specific types of dress. Ensembles chosen may strongly influence how people will respond and perceive the wearer. Out of the 97 studies

about dress perception analyzed by Damhorst (1990), “potency [power] information was conveyed through dress in 81% of the studies” (p. 5).

Olge and Damhorst (1999, p. 90) found that the “rules” for appropriate men’s business dress are often much more apparent than those for women’s dress. Their findings indicated that suggestions for women’s proper attire were skewed and inconsistent. When it comes to business settings, both women and men associate business suits with power. However, men judged the women’s business outfits with the least amount of color and style as more suitable. Women judging the same sets of outfits allowed for more “aesthetic variety” (p. 94-95). Also, in a study by Rucker, Anderson, and Kangas (1999, p. 70) some women said they preferred and relied on vibrant colors to ensure they did not look like “male clones.” Men, on the other hand, unanimously cited somber colors as more potent. Tuner (1991) says that since the rules for women’s business dress are far less predictable than that of men’s, it is sending a message that has the potential to challenge and question the legitimacy of men’s power and dominance. In other words, women’s business attire should adhere to restrictive norms like men’s dress in an effort to establish a sense of equality and responsibility.

In Damhorst and Ogle’s study, the social contexts that brought issues of uncertainty, in women and men, were formal and casual occasions. There was much disagreement and difference of opinion when trying to pinpoint one specific outfit or style that conveyed an image of power. Almost 20% of the participants had a hard time connecting power with casual dress. In order to create an appearance of power in a casual setting, the subjects envisioned an ensemble that took formal power cues and then reinterpreted them for an appropriate situation, such as the use of dark colors for the outfit or adding a belt) (Johnson & Lennon, 1999, p. 71 & 73).

## Data Collection

For the present study, data were collected by using a questionnaire presented to 57 Northern Illinois University students in two separate Family, Consumer, and Nutrition Sciences classes. Prior to data collection survey approval was granted by the Institutional Review Board (Appendix 1). The questionnaire was administered to the subjects via a PowerPoint presentation. The subjects responded using Scantron answer forms. Prior to the data collection, the participants were told the general purpose of the study and were given directions for completing the survey (Appendix 2). The subjects were informed that their participation was voluntary and anonymous and were asked to complete a consent form (Appendix 3). As incentive for completing the survey, their instructor/professor agreed to give each participant five extra credit points. An alternate assignment for the same amount of points was available upon request of the student (Appendix 4).

The subjects were also asked a series of demographic questions regarding their age, sex, college in which their major course of study (or courses) of study reside, and major program of study in FCNS (if applicable). The majority of the sample fell into the age group of 18-22 years (66.7%). The sample was mainly comprised of women (91.2%) and only 5.3% were male. Most of the participants had majors in the College of Health and Human Sciences. Within that college, the most common major was Textiles, Apparel, and Merchandising (64.9%) and Family and Child studies accounted for approximately 30%. Of those that had a second major, the College of Business was the highest response (10.5%). A more thorough presentation of the demographic frequencies can be found in Table 1.



**TABLE 1. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SAMPLE**

	Frequency	(%)
<b>Age</b>		
18-22	38	66.7%
23-27	13	22.8%
28 and over	6	10.5%
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	3	5.3%
Female	52	91.2%
Invalid Responses	2	3.5%
<b>First Major Course of Study</b>		
College of Business	1	1.8%
College of Education	1	1.8%
College of Engineering and Engineering Technology	1	1.8%
College of Health and Human Sciences	50	87.7%
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences	3	5.3%
College of Visual and Performing Arts	1	1.8%
<b>Second Major Course of Study</b>		
Not Applicable	47	82.5%
College of Business	6	10.5%
College of Education	2	3.5%
College of Health and Human Sciences	1	1.8%
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences	1	1.8%
<b>Major Program of Study in FCNS</b>		
Textiles, Apparel, and Merchandising	37	64.9%
Nutrition, Dietetics, and Hospitality Administration	1	1.8%
Family and Child Studies or Early Childhood Studies	17	29.8%
Other	1	1.8%
Missing Response	1	1.8%

**Research Instrument**

The PowerPoint presentation included 15 color, photographic images of women clothed in outfits suitable for three different social contexts: business professional occasion, a casual social occasion, and a formal social occasion. Five outfits represented each context. The subjects then responded to the images using 6 descriptive antonym pairs that anchored 7-point semantic differential scales. The antonym pair masculine-feminine was placed on a 7-point semantic differential scale to measure subjects' perceptions of masculine versus feminine styling in dress.

The following five antonym pairs measured dimensions of power: strong-weak, assertive-passive, confident-uncertain, self-sufficient-dependent, and dominant-submissive.

The outfits were chosen from current women's clothing catalogs and websites based upon their styling and appropriateness to context. To ensure the participants were not biased by any confounding factors, the head and feet were removed from the image. An effort was made to select models in "neutral" poses, or poses that suggested neither masculine or feminine characteristics.

The outfits had varying degrees of masculine and feminine characteristics. Color, fit, adornment, and style were taken into consideration. Feminine clothing is often characterized by broken lines, soft, delicate fabric and hand, and light to medium coloring. Masculine styling dress is usually described as having long, straight lines, heavy fabrics, and somber/dark colors (Solomon, 1985). For each context, the five images were chosen to represent different amounts of masculine and feminine style elements.

The questionnaire was pre-tested prior to data collection with a small group of students to identify any potentially confusing or problematic issues contained within the instrument. The original questionnaire had 140 questions with a total of nine antonym scales for each image. Due to feedback from the pre-test participants and the desire to shorten the instrument to reduce the likelihood of subject fatigue, three semantic differential items were removed from the original instrument. These included effective-ineffective, practical-impractical, and knowledgeable-uninformed. Elimination of these specific items was based on either a participant indicating that the item was difficult to respond to or the investigator's decision that the item was not one of the stronger measures of power. The six antonyms appeared next to each of the 15 outfit images and

five demographic questions were included at the end. The final instrument consisted of 95 items total (Appendix 5).

### **Results**

To examine the relationship between perceptions of power and masculinity versus femininity in women's clothing styling, 2-tailed Pearson Correlations were calculated to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between power and masculinity/femininity for each of the 15 outfits. According to Gravetter and Wallnau (1988), the Pearson Correlation is "a statistical technique that is used to measure and describe a relationship between two variables" (p. 383). A p-value of .05 or less was selected as the significance level in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program.

Mean scores were used to determine the rankings the respondents as a group gave the outfits in terms of masculinity versus femininity of styling and power within each social context. The lower the mean score, the more masculine in style and "powerful" the subjects rated the outfit. The higher the mean score, the more feminine in style and less "powerful" the subjects rated the outfit. Mean scores for each outfit for the masculine versus feminine variable and the power variable are presented in Tables 2 and 3, respectively.

TABLE 2. MASCULINE-FEMININE RANKING WITHIN CONTEXTS

<u>Outfit</u>	<u>Mean Score</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>	<b>Masculine-Feminine Ranking Within Contexts (1=Most Masculine)</b>
<b>Formal Social Occasion</b>			
Outfit 1	6.77	.535	5
Outfit 2	6.26	1.027	4
Outfit 3	5.04	1.535	1
Outfit 4	5.34	1.576	2
Outfit 5	5.60	1.425	3
<b>Casual Social Occasion</b>			
Outfit 1	4.58	1.782	3
Outfit 2	4.89	1.484	4
Outfit 3	3.96	1.822	2
Outfit 4	3.35	1.747	1
Outfit 5	5.49	1.241	5
<b>Business Occasion</b>			
Outfit 1	4.04	1.625	1
Outfit 2	5.58	1.322	3
Outfit 3	5.95	1.274	5
Outfit 4	4.72	1.849	2
Outfit 5	5.79	1.532	4

The many different elements of dress that people take into account when forming impressions of a clothed appearance are evident in examining the rankings. Within this study, color seemed to be a very prominent cue. Black was almost always seen as more masculine, and pink gave the impression of femininity. Also, regardless of cut or color, outfits with pants were seen as more powerful. This pattern demonstrates the importance of perceiver characteristics in forming impressions of others.

TABLE 3. POWER RANKING WITHIN CONTEXTS

<u>Outfit</u>	<u>Mean Score</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>	<u>"Power" Ranking Within Contexts (1=Most Powerful)</u>
<b>Formal Social Occasion</b>			
Outfit 1	2.32	.610	4
Outfit 2	3.05	.834	5
Outfit 3	2.07	.826	3
Outfit 4	1.71	.791	2
Outfit 5	1.60	.648	1
<b>Casual Social Occasion</b>			
Outfit 1	2.85	.785	4.5
Outfit 2	2.77	.834	3
Outfit 3	1.50	.608	1
Outfit 4	2.85	.908	4.5
Outfit 5	2.34	.716	2
<b>Business Occasion</b>			
Outfit 1	1.79	.817	2
Outfit 2	2.49	1.017	4
Outfit 3	2.72	1.011	5
Outfit 4	1.64	.889	1
Outfit 5	2.27	.924	3

Significant negative relationships between subjects' perceptions of power and masculinity versus femininity in the outfit images were found for one of the formal social occasion outfits and one of the casual social occasion outfits. No significant relationships between the two variables were found for any of the business professional occasion outfits (See Table 4).

TABLE 4. PEARSON CORRELATION MEASURING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MASCULINITY VERSUS FEMININITY OF STYLING AND POWER FOR THE 15 OUTFITS

Context and Outfit	r	p-value
<b>Formal Social Occasion</b>		
Outfit 1	-.039	.771
Outfit 2	-.107	.430
Outfit 3	-.125	.356
Outfit 4	-.183	.177
Outfit 5	-.503***	.000
<b>Casual Social Occasion</b>		
Outfit 1	-.225	.093
Outfit 2	-.321*	.015
Outfit 3	-.113	.404
Outfit 4	-.032	.816
Outfit 5	-.041	.762
<b>Business Occasion</b>		
Outfit 1	-.200	.136
Outfit 2	.096	.478
Outfit 3	-.184	.170
Outfit 4	.109	.420
Outfit 5	-.033	.808

\*\*\*p<.001

\*p<.05

The formal social occasion outfit demonstrating a significant negative relationship between the two variables was rated third in terms of masculinity versus femininity of styling (1 = most masculine, 5 = most feminine) and first or “highest” in terms of power (1 = most powerful, 5 = least powerful) among the five outfits for the formal social occasion context. The causal social occasion outfit demonstrating a significant negative relationship between the two variables was rated fourth in terms of masculinity versus femininity of styling and third in terms of power among the five outfits for causal social occasion context.

## **Conclusions and Implications**

Some evidence was found to suggest a negative relationship between perceptions of power and masculine styling in women's dress for the contexts of formal and causal social occasions. For certain styles of dress for these two contexts, the more feminine the subjects rated the clothed images, the more power they associated with these images. The lack of a consistent relationship between perceptions of power and masculinity versus femininity of styling in women's dress may be indicative of the lack of clarity in current societal views on what appearance cues convey these traits identified by Lillethun (1985). Postmodern fashion has been characterized as being ambiguous in meaning through the combination of appearance cues traditionally associated with distinctly different appearance "categories" (Kaiser, 1985, p. 264), as in the case of androgynous looks that combine elements of both masculine and feminine style. As women have achieved a more equal footing in society with men, it may be that the association of masculinity with power is not as clear as it used to be. In recent years women seem to have embraced feminine styling in dress for all occasions. As women advance toward equality, femininity may no longer be associated with weakness.

The fact that the two instances of a significant relationship between perceptions of power and masculinity in women's dress were negative in direction and occurred for the social occasion categories of dress also suggests that, for certain social contexts, feminine appearance cues are seen as more potent. This supports previous suggestions that attractiveness in women is associated with power in social contexts (Kaiser, 1985, p. 267).

## **Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research**

People take into account many different cues in their perceptions and interpretations of clothed appearances. Individual cues vary in their saliency from person to person. Because the

present study utilized images of dress that were currently available in the marketplace, it was not possible to control all the combinations of style characteristics for the stimulus outfits. For this reason, it was not possible to isolate which aspects of the clothed appearances were influencing the subjects' perceptions and subsequent ratings. Further research might control and limit the variations in style among stimulus images and thereby identify specific characteristics of dress that shape perceptions of masculinity versus femininity and power in the current era.

Another limitation to this study is related to the format of the questionnaire. Each outfit image was shown in a separate PowerPoint slide, though each of the five images per context were shown consecutively. The subjects were unaware of the range of styles to be presented per context before rating them, which may have affected their evaluations. Future studies may present all the outfits associated with an identified context simultaneously so that the subjects may rate each outfit in relationship to the others in the context.

Further study should also include a more diverse subject group, including more males and/or different age groups and occupations. The limitations in gender, age, occupation, and course of study represented in the current sample may have biased the findings.



**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS**  
**SUPPLEMENTAL SCREENING FORM**

In instances where it is unclear whether activities constitute research with human subjects requiring IRB approval, please complete this Screening Form. If the project is clearly research with human subjects, the investigator need not complete it but should complete and submit the remaining pages of the application form. If, upon completion of this Screening Form, the project does NOT qualify as human-subjects research requiring IRB approval, keep a copy of the Screening Form (and any other materials submitted) for departmental records and send only the signed original Screening Form page to the Office of Research Compliance in the Graduate School.

**Part 1: Project Information**

Name(s):

Melissa Talley

Department:

Textiles, Apparel, and Merchandising (FCNS)

Project Title:

Fit to be Tied: Masculinity Versus Femininity in Women's Dress, Social Context, and Perceptions of Power in Women

Data Collection Start Date:

Upon IRB approval

**Part 2: Is IRB review required for this project?**

IRB review is definitely needed because human subjects are involved and the study is intended to contribute to generalizable knowledge via a:

- Thesis  
 Dissertation  
 Scholarly presentation  
 Scholarly publication  
 Other:

IRB review is not needed because:

- no living human subjects are involved.  
 results will be shared only with the client or stakeholder(s) for their private use for evaluation of an established program or for other non-research purposes.  
 the project utilizes only publicly available, anonymous data base(s).  
 the project is an internal evaluation intended for quality control of ongoing program only.

**Part 3: Guidelines for Submission of Student Projects**

IRB review is definitely needed because:

- it is a thesis/dissertation project (as indicated above).  
 the results of the project are intended for scholarly dissemination outside the classroom.

At the discretion of the course instructor, courtesy IRB review of this educational exercise is requested because:

- the project involves a risky or sensitive topic.  
 data will be gathered outside the classroom.

This educational exercise does not need IRB review because:

- the sole purpose is to teach students how to gather and evaluate data and the information will not be disseminated outside the class or instructional clinical setting.

*Amiee D. Prawitz*  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of Authorized Departmental Reviewer

*4/05/05*  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

**APPLICATION FOR INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW OF RESEARCH  
INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS**

**Note:** Please complete this form and provide brief responses to the issues raised, keeping in mind that the primary concern is the potential risk, (economic, ethical, legal, physical, political, psychological/emotional, social, breach of confidentiality, or other), to the subjects. Provide copies of all stories, questionnaires, interview questions, recruiting materials, or other documents to be used in the investigation. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) must have enough information about the transactions with the subjects to evaluate the risks of participation. Assurance from the investigator that subjects are at no risk, no matter how strong, will not substitute for a description of the transactions.  
\*\*\*\*\*

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**Project Title:**

Fit to be Tied: Masculinity Versus Femininity in Women's Dress, Social Context, and Perceptions of Power in Women

**Data Collection Start Date:**

Upon IRB approval  Other (specify):

**Note:** Unless the authorized departmental reviewer (e.g., chair or designee) has deemed on the cover page that IRB review is not needed, all projects must receive formal written clearance from the IRB Chair (or an IRB member designated by the Chair) prior to the start of data collection.

**Type of Project (Check one)**

Externally Sponsored Research

A complete copy of the grant proposal or contract must accompany this application form for IRB review to take place.

• Source of Funding:

• Office of Sponsored Projects file number:

Departmental Research

Graduate School Fund

Thesis/Dissertation (IRB application should be submitted AFTER proposal defense)

Advisor/Committee Chair (& e-mail):

Other

Specify: Honors Capstone Project

\*\*\*\*\*

**FOR ALL PROJECTS**

1. Briefly provide, in nontechnical, lay-terms, the following information:

Describe the purpose of your study and the reason(s) this study is needed. Include a description of your hypothesis or research question.

Dress is a form of non-verbal communication. We often formulate first impressions based upon a person's appearance. Studies have shown that perceptions of power vary with style of dress. Because the masculine gender role is traditionally viewed as more powerful than the feminine gender role, evidence suggests that masculine styling in women's dress may be associated with perceptions of power in women in a traditionally male-dominated social context (e.g., the professional work setting). This study will examine the relationships among masculinity versus femininity in women's dress, three selected social contexts, and perceptions of power in women.

a) Explain precisely what your subjects will be asked to do, provide, answer, etc.

Subjects will respond to images of women in various styles of dress using semantic differential scales that measure dimensions of power as well as the degree of masculine/feminine styling represented in each ensemble. Demographic questions (e.g. sex, age, etc.) will be included. The research instrument will be administered to study participants in a PowerPoint presentation format.

a) Attach copies of all questionnaires, surveys, interview questions, listing of all information/data to be collected, etc. If the research involves an oral interview or focus group discussion that could evolve as it progresses, include a list of discussion topics and any "starter" questions for each topic that can reasonably be expected to be covered. If a *draft* of a written questionnaire or survey is attached, it should be clearly labeled as such and a final version must be submitted *before* data collection begins.

A draft of the PowerPoint instrument is attached with this document.

2. Risk/Benefit assessment: Explain the following:

a) The knowledge/benefit(s) to be gained from the study;

To add to the body of scholarship on dress and social cognition with particular focus of the perceptions of power as well as the importance of context in shaping meanings associated with dress.

b) The benefit(s) to the subject(s) (if any) from the proposed research;

Study findings will be shared with subjects after the data have been analyzed and interpreted. Participants will earn extra credit points toward their course grade.

c) Any potential risks (economic, ethical, legal, physical, political, psychological/emotional, social, breach of confidentiality, or other) to the subjects posed by the proposed research. (Note: Some studies may have "no reasonably foreseeable risks." In other cases, although risk may be minimal, it is seldom totally absent.) It is the content of the questions asked and answered, not the risk of completing a questionnaire, etc., that must be considered in describing risk. Investigators are required to report all unexpected and/or adverse events to the IRB. Incidents that have not been listed as anticipated risks are considered protocol deviations and NIU may be required to report them at the federal level.

There are no foreseeable risks to the subjects.

d) What procedures will be used to minimize each risk and/or deal with the challenge(s) stated in "c" above.

N/A

e) How the potential benefits of the study *justify* the potential risks to the subjects.

N/A

3. Provide the following information about the study participants (Note: WOMEN, CHILDREN, AND MINORITIES MUST BE INCLUDED IN THE SUBJECT POOL, OR THEIR EXCLUSION MUST BE JUSTIFIED TO THE SATISFACTION OF THE IRB. VISIT THE IRB WEB PAGE AT [www.grad.niu.edu/orc](http://www.grad.niu.edu/orc) FOR ASSISTANCE):

a) Participant demographics:

- Gender: M  F  Both
- Are any subjects under age 18? Yes  No
- Age(s):

As university students will serve as study participants, the expected age range of the participants is 18 - 24. If non-traditional students are in the classes surveyed, some ages may be older.

- Vulnerable populations
  - Pregnant women & fetuses
  - Prisoners

Decisionally impaired/mentally disabled

Specific ethnic group(s) (list in box):

If any "vulnerable populations" have been indicated above, please explain the necessity for using this particular group.

- Number of participants in study (including controls):

60+

b) Explain in detail how and where subjects will be recruited or introduced to the study.

Student subjects will be recruited in various FCNS classes with the permission of the professor or instructor. In arrangement with course professors or instructors, students will be offered an incentive for participating in the study in the form of extra credit points toward their course grades. Student who choose not to participate will be able to complete an alternate class assignment for the opportunity to earn the same amount of extra credit points as the study participants. Data will be collected during the class period that recruitment takes place.

c) All subject recruitment/introductory materials (advertisements, mailings, fliers, Internet postings, etc.) to be used must be attached.

4. Describe the procedures for obtaining informed consent as provided for in the Code of Federal Regulations, sections 46.116 and 117.

Participants will be given a consent form to read and sign prior to data collection. This form is attached with this document.

a) If minors are involved, describe the procedures for obtaining:

i. individual assent to participate from the minors capable of giving assent AND

ii. the procedures to obtain parental or legally authorized representative permission.

b) Append any form(s) to be used. Appropriate informed consent documents should be prepared for each group of subjects participating in the study. Consent forms should be prepared for adult participants (age 18 or over). Assent forms should be prepared for minor subjects appropriate to their ages, and permission form(s) for parents or legally authorized representatives should also be prepared. For children too young to comprehend a simple explanation of participation, parental permission is sufficient only if the research will provide direct benefit to the subject, a member of the subject's family, or other children with the same condition as the subject.

c) Does this study involve deception? Yes  No

Describe the deception and why it is necessary and attach a copy of the debriefing statement.

d) For projects requiring Subcommittee or Full-board Review, if requesting a waiver of the requirement for obtaining the written informed consent of research participants, justification for the requested waiver is required. Complete and attach the "Request for Variation of Consent" form.

5. Explain what, if any, support services will be provided in the event of harm to a subject.

n/a

6. Confidentiality:

a) Describe precautions to insure the privacy of the subjects, and the confidentiality of the data, both in your possession and in reports and publications.

Research findings and specific data will not be associated with any individual person. Subjects will only be described as a group using basic demographic information provided during data collection (e.g., age, major course of study) in any presentations or publications reporting this research.

b) Will audio, video, or film recording be used? Yes  No

If yes:

i. Specify the recording format to be used.

[Empty box for recording format]

ii. Specific consent must be sought in the informed consent document(s) by including a separate signature/date line giving consent for recording. This is in addition to the signature/date line giving consent to participate in the research project.

c) What will be the disposition of the records (data and recordings) when the research is completed?

[Empty box for disposition of records]

7. State the research qualifications of the individuals who will have direct contact with the subjects.

a) In addition to listing the investigators' names, indicate their qualifications to conduct procedures to be used in this study.

Melissa Talley is a university honors student who is carrying out this research for her capstone project. She has completed a course the Social Psychology of Dress and Appearance and several courses toward her Communications minor. Dr. Sarah Cosbey is supervising Melissa's capstone research. Dr. Cosbey is an associate professor in the School of Family, Consumer and Nutrition Sciences. She has conducted and published research studies as part of her requirements for tenure.

b) List the Human Subjects Protection training program(s) completed by the individuals listed in 7a and the date(s) of completion. Indicate any workshops, courses, tutorials, or other educational experiences attended, at NIU or elsewhere, which have covered issues relevant to human subjects research. (If none, indicate "none" rather than "not applicable".)

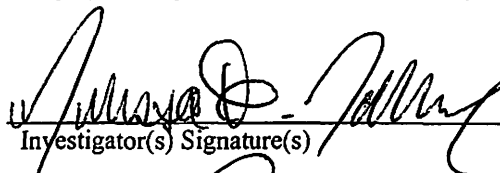
Dr. Cosbey has had research methods coursework at Northern Illinois University as part of her M.S. program and has audited an additional research methods course during her doctoral program at Iowa State University. Both courses addressed issues relevant to human subjects research. Dr. Cosbey also attended a presentation given by the Sandy Arntz from the Office of Research Compliance entitled "Institutional Review Board Review of Research Involving Human Participants" at a School retreat in August, 2003.

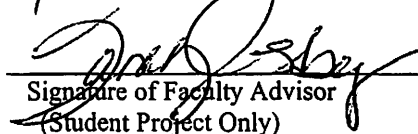
\*\*\*\*\*

**REQUIRED SIGNATURES: ALL PROJECTS**

**CERTIFICATION**

I certify that I have read and understand the policies and procedures for research projects that involve human subjects and that I intend to comply with Northern Illinois University Policy. Any changes in the approved protocol will be submitted to the IRB for written approval prior to those changes being put into practice unless it involves an immediate safety issue for the subject during a procedure. (In such instances, the researcher is required to promptly notify the IRB after the fact.) I also understand that all non-exempt projects require review at least annually.

  
Investigator(s) Signature(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

 4-12-05  
Signature of Faculty Advisor \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(Student Project Only)

**To be completed by investigator and confirmed by advisor (if student project) and departmental reviewer. Initials indicate all required parties ratify that application is complete:**

**Checklist of items required to accompany completed application form:**

1.  Complete grant proposal/contract (for externally funded projects)
2.  All surveys, questionnaires, interview questions, or other instruments to be used
3.  Subject recruitment/introductory materials
4.  Informed consent documents (must select at least one):
  - Consent form for adults (if participants are age 18 or over)
  - Assent form for minors (if participants are under age 18)
  - Parental permission form (if participants are under age 18)
  - Waiver of written consent requested (for Subcommittee and Full-board Review projects, must complete and attach *Request for Variation of Consent Attachment* form in order to provide justification that requested waiver meets criteria listed in 45 CFR 46.116(c) or 45 CFR 46.117(c))

**Initial indicating all listed materials are attached and application is complete; INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE PROCESSED.** The investigator will be notified of deficiencies in the application via e-mail from the Office of Research Compliance (ORC); if no response is received by the ORC within five (5) working days the application will be considered void.

Investigator  Advisor (if student project)  Department Chair/Designee ap

↑ Melissa  
Cosbey ↑

**Departmental Determination according to 45 Code of Federal Regulations 46: (to be completed by Department Chair or Designee)**

Project qualifies for Administrative Review.

Cite the appropriate exempt category:

Project qualifies for Subcommittee Review.

Cite the appropriate expedited category:

Project is referred for review by the convened IRB.

Amiee D. Prawitz

Signature of Authorized Departmental Reviewer

4/05/05

Date



April 13, 2005

MEMORANDUM

OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
DEKALB, ILLINOIS 60115-2864  
(815) 753-8588  
FAX (815) 753-6366  
E-MAIL lbross@niu.edu  
WEB www.grad.niu.edu/orc

TO: Melissa Talley  
School of Family, Consumer, & Nutrition Sciences  
1307 W. Lincoln Hwy., Apt. 8130  
DeKalb, IL 60115

FR: Jeffrey B. Hecht, Chair  
Institutional Review Board #1

RE: Undergraduate student research involving the use of human subjects for the project titled *Fit to be tied: Masculinity and femininity in women's dress, social context, and perceptions of power in women*

This is to inform you that your above-named research project has been approved by Administrative Review as exempt from the Code of Federal regulations (45 CFR 46) for the protection of human subjects. The rationale for exemption is section 46.101b, paragraph 2.

Because this research project has been designated "exempt", this approval is final. You will not need any further review of this project unless you decide to modify it. If you intend to change the procedures, subject pool, or otherwise to modify the protocol so that it would no longer qualify as exempt, you will need to contact the Office of Research Compliance to obtain approval of the changes.

It is important for you to note that as a research investigator involved with human subjects, you are responsible for retaining any signed consent forms obtained from your subjects in a secure place for a minimum of three years after the study is concluded. If consent for the study is being given by proxy (guardian, etc.), it is your responsibility to document the authority of that person to consent for the subject. The committee also recommends that the informed consent include an acknowledgment by the subject, or the subject's representative, that he or she has received a copy of the consent form. In addition, you are required to promptly report to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects and others.

Please accept my best wishes for success in your research endeavors.

JBH/ska

cc: A. Prawitz  
~~S. Gosbey~~  
ORC (#1475)

### **Directions for Participants**

My name is Melissa Talley and today I am inviting you to participate in my honors capstone research project. My study looks at personal characteristics or traits associated with different styles of dress.

Your participation is completely voluntary and anonymous. Your input will not be associated with you by name. Your instructor/professor has agreed to give each participant five extra credit points toward his or her course grade. If you choose not to participate, your instructor/professor will give you an alternate assignment for which you may earn up to five extra credit points.

I will show you fifteen images of clothed female figures and ask you to respond to items that measure various characteristics or traits with respect to these images. **SHOW SAMPLE SLIDE.** The occasion for which each outfit is intended will be specified. Each item is a 7-point scale anchored with antonyms or descriptive opposites. Please select the number on the scale that you think best represents the pictured outfit in regard to the measured characteristic and then fill in the appropriate circle on the scantron answer sheet. I will also ask you basic demographic information about yourself, such as your age and your year of college.

The data collection should take about 20 minutes. Before we begin, I will give those of you who are willing to participate a consent form to fill out. You may keep the bottom portion for yourself and I will collect the completed top portion when I collect your scantron forms.



## CONSENT FORM

The purpose of this study is to examine personal characteristics people associate with different styles of dress in different social contexts. Your participation involves looking at several images of women dressed in various outfits and then, for each image, responding to several questions on a SCANTRON answer form. You will be shown the images and questions in a PowerPoint presentation. The procedure will take about 20 minutes. Your help with this research project will give scholars a better understanding of how dress shapes the impressions we form of others. Additionally, you will earn 5 extra credit points for your participation. We ask that you **DO NOT** place your name on the SCANTRON sheet. This is to assure that all of your answers are completely anonymous, and your responses cannot be connected with your name. When you sign this consent form, it will be separated from the SCANTRON sheet. If you have any questions about this research, you may contact Dr. Sarah Cosbey at 815-753-6336 or [scosbey@niu.edu](mailto:scosbey@niu.edu). Questions about subjects' rights should be directed to the NIU Office of Research Compliance, 815-753-8588. Participation in this study is voluntary, and you may stop at any time. Students under the age of 18 years and any other students who choose not to participate may complete a brief alternate activity in order to earn the same number of bonus points as study participants.

I understand and agree to the above stated conditions and have been given a copy of this consent form.

**KEEP THIS COPY**

---

(fold and tear here)

**SUBMIT THIS COPY**

## CONSENT FORM

The purpose of this study is to examine personal characteristics people associate with different styles of dress in different social contexts. Your participation involves looking at several images of women dressed in various outfits and then, for each image, responding to several questions on a SCANTRON answer form. You will be shown the images and questions in a PowerPoint presentation. The procedure will take about 20 minutes. Your help with this research project will give scholars a better understanding of how dress shapes the impressions we form of others. Additionally, you will earn 5 extra credit points for your participation. We ask that you **DO NOT** place your name on the SCANTRON sheet. This is to assure that all of your answers are completely anonymous, and your responses cannot be connected with your name. When you sign this consent form, it will be separated from the SCANTRON sheet. If you have any questions about this research, you may contact Dr. Sarah Cosbey at 815-753-6336 or [scosbey@niu.edu](mailto:scosbey@niu.edu). Questions about subjects' rights should be directed to the NIU Office of Research Compliance, 815-753-8588. Participation in this study is voluntary, and you may stop at any time. Students under the age of 18 years and any other students who choose not to participate may complete a brief alternate activity in order to earn the same number of bonus points as study participants.

I understand and agree to the above stated conditions and have been given a copy of this consent form.

---

(Print name here)

---

(Sign name here)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please Print)

Course Number : \_\_\_\_\_

**Alternative Activity for Earning 5 Bonus Points**

1. Select an article (within the past two weeks) from any of the following major newspapers: the Chicago Tribune, the New York Times, or the Wall Street Journal. The article must be related to a topic that has been covered in this course.
2. Write a paragraph summarizing the content of the article.
3. Write one or two paragraphs telling how the information in the article relates to what you have learned in this course.
4. Word-process your answer, attach the article, and submit the assignment in class within one week from the date the survey was conducted. Be sure to place your name on the assignment so that you will receive the bonus points for your work.

**Outfit #1, Formal Social Occasion**



- |                    |               |            |
|--------------------|---------------|------------|
| 1. strong          | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | weak       |
| 2. assertive       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | passive    |
| 3. confident       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | uncertain  |
| 4. self-sufficient | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | dependent  |
| 5. masculine       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | feminine   |
| 6. dominant        | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | submissive |

4 = neutral

**Outfit #2, Formal Social Occasion**



- |                     |               |            |
|---------------------|---------------|------------|
| 7. strong           | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | weak       |
| 8. assertive        | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | passive    |
| 9. confident        | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | uncertain  |
| 10. self-sufficient | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | dependent  |
| 11. masculine       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | feminine   |
| 12. dominant        | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | submissive |

4 = neutral

**Outfit #3, Formal Social Occasion**



- |                     |               |            |
|---------------------|---------------|------------|
| 13. strong          | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | weak       |
| 14. assertive       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | passive    |
| 15. confident       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | uncertain  |
| 16. self-sufficient | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | dependent  |
| 17. masculine       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | feminine   |
| 18. dominant        | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | submissive |

4 = neutral

**Outfit #4, Formal Social Occasion**



- |                     |               |            |
|---------------------|---------------|------------|
| 19. strong          | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | weak       |
| 20. assertive       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | passive    |
| 21. confident       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | uncertain  |
| 22. self-sufficient | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | dependent  |
| 23. masculine       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | feminine   |
| 24. dominant        | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | submissive |

4 = neutral

**Outfit #5, Formal Social Occasion**



- |                     |               |            |
|---------------------|---------------|------------|
| 25. strong          | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | weak       |
| 26. assertive       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | passive    |
| 27. confident       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | uncertain  |
| 28. self-sufficient | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | dependent  |
| 29. masculine       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | feminine   |
| 30. dominant        | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | submissive |

4 = neutral

**Outfit #6, Casual Social Occasion**



- |                     |               |            |
|---------------------|---------------|------------|
| 31. strong          | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | weak       |
| 32. assertive       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | passive    |
| 33. confident       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | uncertain  |
| 34. self-sufficient | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | dependent  |
| 35. masculine       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | feminine   |
| 36. dominant        | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | submissive |

4 = neutral

### Outfit #7, Casual Social Occasion



- |                     |               |            |
|---------------------|---------------|------------|
| 37. strong          | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | weak       |
| 38. assertive       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | passive    |
| 39. confident       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | uncertain  |
| 40. self-sufficient | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | dependent  |
| 41. masculine       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | feminine   |
| 42. dominant        | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | submissive |

4 = neutral

### Outfit #8, Casual Social Occasion



- |                     |               |            |
|---------------------|---------------|------------|
| 43. strong          | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | weak       |
| 44. assertive       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | passive    |
| 45. confident       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | uncertain  |
| 46. self-sufficient | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | dependent  |
| 47. masculine       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | feminine   |
| 48. dominant        | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | submissive |

4 = neutral

### Outfit #9, Casual Social Occasion



- |                     |               |            |
|---------------------|---------------|------------|
| 49. strong          | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | weak       |
| 50. assertive       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | passive    |
| 51. confident       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | uncertain  |
| 52. self-sufficient | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | dependent  |
| 53. masculine       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | feminine   |
| 54. dominant        | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | submissive |

4 = neutral

### Outfit #10, Casual Social Occasion



- |                     |               |            |
|---------------------|---------------|------------|
| 55. strong          | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | weak       |
| 56. assertive       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | passive    |
| 57. confident       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | uncertain  |
| 58. self-sufficient | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | dependent  |
| 59. masculine       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | feminine   |
| 60. dominant        | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | submissive |

4 = neutral

### Outfit #11, Business Professional Occasion



- |                     |               |            |
|---------------------|---------------|------------|
| 61. strong          | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | weak       |
| 62. assertive       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | passive    |
| 63. confident       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | uncertain  |
| 64. self-sufficient | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | dependent  |
| 65. masculine       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | feminine   |
| 66. dominant        | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | submissive |

4 = neutral

### Outfit #12, Business Professional Occasion



- |                     |               |            |
|---------------------|---------------|------------|
| 67. strong          | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | weak       |
| 68. assertive       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | passive    |
| 69. confident       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | uncertain  |
| 70. self-sufficient | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | dependent  |
| 71. masculine       | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | feminine   |
| 72. dominant        | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | submissive |

4 = neutral

Outfit #13, Business Professional Occasion



73. strong	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	weak
74. assertive	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	passive
75. confident	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	uncertain
76. self-sufficient	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	dependent
77. masculine	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	feminine
78. dominant	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	submissive

4 = neutral

Outfit #14, Business Professional Occasion



79. strong	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	weak
80. assertive	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	passive
81. confident	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	uncertain
82. self-sufficient	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	dependent
83. masculine	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	feminine
84. dominant	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	submissive

4 = neutral

Outfit #15, Business Professional Occasion



85. strong	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	weak
86. assertive	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	passive
87. confident	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	uncertain
88. self-sufficient	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	dependent
89. masculine	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	feminine
90. dominant	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	submissive

4 = neutral

91. Your age group

- a. 18 – 22
- b. 23 – 27
- c. 28 and over

92. Your sex

- a. male
- b. female

93. The college in which your first or only major resides

(if you have a double major with one major in FCNS, indicate "d" for this item)

- a. College of Business
- b. College of Education
- c. College of Engineering and Engineering Technology
- d. College of Health and Human Sciences
- e. College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
- f. College of Visual and Performing Arts

94. The college in which your second major course of study resides

- a. Not applicable (I have no second major)
- b. College of Business
- c. College of Education
- d. College of Engineering and Engineering Technology
- e. College of Health and Human Sciences
- f. College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
- g. College of Visual and Performing Arts

95. Your major program of study in FCNS

- a. Not applicable (I do not have a major in FCNS)
- b. Textiles, Apparel and Merchandising
- c. Nutrition, Dietetics, and Hospitality Administration
- d. Family and Child Studies or Early Childhood Studies
- e. Other

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