

University Faculty Style of Dress and Students' Perception of Instructor Credibility

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Abstract

What someone is wearing often forms the first impression about the character of the person. This study focused on what university professors wear and the perceptions of students in terms of credibility, character, and likeability. Two hundred and fifty-seven participants completed a survey responding to questions relating to a photograph of a male or female university professor, with faces obscured, and dressed in casual, semi-casual, or formal attire. University professors in formal attire are perceived as more credible than less formally dressed faculty. Contrary to the hypothesis, female formally dressed professors were not perceived as less credible or competent than their male counterparts. Males in formal attire are less likeable than females in formal dress as well as males and females in casual styles of dress. These findings will assist faculty in determining the level of credibility or likeability they want to project in the classroom.

Keywords: faculty, dress, credibility, likeability, student perceptions University Faculty Style of Dress and Students' Perception of Instructor Credibility

1. Introduction

The Globe and Mail, one of Canada's national newspapers, is offering readers clothing suggestions in one of their 2010 Style reports ("Suited for Success," 2010, p. 1 Style). The section was titled "Suited for Success" and illustrated the modern 'power suit' as worn by two males. There was a female in the full page photo wearing a short leopard print fur coat, stilettos, and who is seen texting on a cell phone. The newspaper might be suggesting corporate attire only applies to men and women should be dressed in what might be interpreted as evening-wear. Clothing seen as acceptable in a professional work environment has changed over the years. Fortenberry, MacLean, Morris, and O'Connell (1978) examined the theory of perceived status as determined by dress code. Better dressed individuals are seen as having a higher status. Lukavsky, Butler, and Harden (1995) found a moderate level of dress by college faculty commanded respect from the students whereas a more formal level of dress also commanded respect but discouraged contact. They suggest "a possible explanation may be related to a recent trend in professional dress styles as seen in some businesses rejecting formal dress styles in favor of more casual dress" (Lukavsky et al, 1995, p. 238).

This is supported by Entzminger (2005) who states that casual wear and Casual Fridays, dressing down for one day a week, first appeared in the 1990s and early 2000s and has been attributed to the Dot.com Bubble. However, a survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management in 2005, as cited by Entzminger, (2005), found a decline in the number of organizations having either a casual dress code policy or one day a week that allowed casual dress compared to 2001. The change in dress has been attributed to the bust of the dot.com bubble and a return to more formal work wear. Therefore, research is needed to determine the current perceptions of acceptable dress styles. This issue is important for university faculty members who may be perceived as being less informed and expert in their field by virtue of the clothes they wear. Robertson's (2007) study focused on differences between generations with respect to dress code.

The population was divided into four, generation Y, generation X, baby boomer, and matures, representing different age groupings. Participants were stopped on their way into a local grocery store and interviewed about the type of dress required by their employer. Not surprising, Generation Ys are predominantly required to wear a uniform (46%) or casual attire (31%), presumably partly explained by their young age and the types of jobs they are likely to have; Generation Xs tend to wear business casual attire (48%); Baby boomers wear business casual attire (33%) followed by uniform (24%); and Matures' company dress code requires professional business attire or business casual (both 27%) (Robertson, 2007). The overall finding by Robertson (2007) was that respondents judged their co-workers' level of professionalism based on their dress. This perception of professionalism based on dress was the focus of Kwon and Johnson-Hillery's 1998 study. They "examine the differences in perceived occupational attributes associated with formal, semiformal, and informal work attire of men and women" (Kwon & Johnson-Hillery, 1998, p. 988). They argue that people make judgments about other people based on their clothing. They used 14 perceived occupational attributes developed by students in an economics class to administer to students enrolled in general education and business courses at an American university. Kwon and Johnson-Hillery (1998) found four of the attributes supported a powerful appearance dimension and 10 attributes supported a sociable appearance dimension.

In terms of gender, they found both formal men's and women's attire to project a higher powerful appearance attribute than semiformal or informal clothing. The components of the powerful appearance attribute are authoritative, credible, business-like and responsible. However, the scores on female attire were higher than the males' "indicating that people expect or prefer a generally more formal appearance from a working woman than from a man" (Kwon & Johnson-Hillery, 1998, p. 993). Stemming from previous research suggesting formal attire generates an impression of status and power, Brase and Richmond (2004) investigate the effect of wearing a white coat, doctor's uniform, on the perception of status and authority. The participants were university students from a Northern England institution. The findings suggest informal dress decreases authority and is not effective attire for doctors wanting to increase patient comfort or disclosure. Formal attire increases perceptions of authority, friendliness, and attractiveness. When accompanied by a white coat the perception of authority increases however this is seen as less friendly than just formal attire without the white coat (Brase & Richmond, 2004).

The previous discussion focuses on studies that sample university students to determine acceptable levels of dress in the business world (Brase & Richmond, 2004; Kwon & Johnson-Hillery, 1998). This study is interested in styles of dress that are appropriate for university faculty. Dress styles for university faculty may not be similar to acceptable dress styles in the corporate environment. Sebastian and Bristow (2008) studied whether formal or casual dress and form of address on college students' perceptions of business professors. However, they assigned a style of dress to professors based on their observations of interactions between students and professors. Other research has sampled university students and focused on instructor credibility but not whether style of dress affects credibility. For example, Patton's study of instructor credibility had both male and female instructors dress in the same clothing because it was felt that "a better-dressed instructor could be perceived as more credible" (1999, p.140). Instructor credibility is well researched particularly by McCroskey who with others has developed a teacher credibility scale (Banfield, Richmond & McCroskey, 2006; McCroskey & Teven, 1999; McCroskey & Young, 1981). Teacher credibility comprises three components, believability (also known as competence, credibility, or knowledgeable), trustworthiness (or character, or honesty) and goodwill (or caring) (Banfield et al., 2006). Teven and Herring (2005) use the teacher credibility measure to investigate perceived instructor power, credibility and student satisfaction among undergraduate students in a medium southwestern U.S. university.

The findings focus more on teacher power and the authors state that although power predicts roughly 33% of the variance in the teacher credibility components, the students' perception of teacher power may be mediating their perceptions of credibility. A study by Lavin, Davies, and Carr (2010) does focus on faculty dress attire and students' perception of faculty credibility. However, they do not define what constitutes the three levels of dress they use. Nor do they use the teacher credibility scale supported by other researchers such as Chory (2007), Eisend (2006), Martinez-Egger and Powers (2003), Patton (1999), Pratkanis and Gliner (2004-2005), and Teven and Herring (2005). Improvements on Lavin, Davies and Carr's (2010) study are warranted for several reasons. First, they show single page photographs of either females in all three styles or males in all three styles. All three styles are shown on the same page with only the ordering changing in each of two versions. Therefore, students are not randomly assigned a style of dress with which to assess instructor credibility. Secondly, they specifically point out to students that the study wasn't an evaluation of any particular faculty member (the photos did not depict an actual faculty member) but the survey was administered by a faculty member specifically selected to represent a cross-section of disciplines and reflect both genders.

Furthermore, students were told:

The instructor's attire was a matter of personal preference that could depend upon a number of factors including classroom conditions (e.g. heating, cooling and ventilation), the class setting (e.g. evening class, length of class session), delivery mode (e.g., face to face versus distance) and his or her individual preferences and comfort (Lavin et al., 2010, p. 54).

Students in the sample were also told the purpose of the study: "Students were asked how the professor's various styles of dress would influence their perceptions of the instructor's qualifications and ability to teach, as well as the overall quality of the course, program and institution" (Lavin et al., 2010, p.54). Lavin, Davies, and Carr (2010) found "the traits that have significant impact on credibility regardless of the attire of the faculty member are the instructor's level of preparation, knowledge of the subject matter, and ability to prepare students for a career" (p. 56). Therefore, their main finding is not affected by style of dress. Finally, Lavin, Davies, and Carr (2010) do not utilize the teacher credibility scale but adapt course evaluation measures suggested by Witcher, et al. (2003) to be indicators of effecting teaching. Therefore, a true experiment utilizing the teacher credibility scale, styles of dress, once defined, and random assignment of professors is needed.

It is also important to investigate if there is a gender effect. From the Globe and Mail's ("Suited for Success" 2010) piece depicting only suited men to the Matures' perception in Robertson's (2007) study, men seem to be the main concern regarding appropriate dress. The business suit has been associated with power, authority, and goal-oriented behaviour (Entzminger, 2005; Robertson, 2007). Casual clothing such as jeans and T-shirts has been associated with creativity and innovation (Robertson, 2007). In Korea, where a suit and tie was traditional business attire, men began wearing loose-fitting cotton clothing mimicking Bill Gate's, head of Microsoft Inc., style (Choi, 2001). Are jeans and T-shirt seen in academia as fostering creativity and innovation? Is a suit seen in academia as fostering professionalism and commitment? Are women faculty perceived the same way as men faculty? Kelly and Stanley (1999) found no differences between male and female marketing faculty with respect to the number of classroom interruptions, requests for exceptions, or number of office visits. However, they did find female faculty reporting they were addressed less formally than their male counterparts (Kelly & Stanley, 1999, see also Sebastian & Bristow, 2008). Reasons for the less formal address stem from the literature and suggest students see themselves as equal in status, feel a connection with the female faculty member, or feel they know them better (Kelly & Stanley, 1999).

Sebastian and Bristow (2008) investigated styles of dress and forms of address on perceived instructor trustworthiness, expertise, attractiveness, credibility, and likeability by marketing students in a Midwestern state university. They used a bipolar celebrity endorser scale for measuring attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise. A four item scale measuring actors' likeability was also used. No discussion of the strength of the indexes created from these scales was provided. Sebastian and Bristow (2008) found formal dress led to greater attributes of expertise than casual dress; formal dress suggested less likeability than casual dress. They also found female professors in casual attire were more trustworthy and likeable than male professors. With respect to forms of address and the indexes of trustworthiness, credibility, and likeability, they found faculty in casual attire more credible, trustworthy and likeable than a formally dressed person.

Previous research provides an opportunity for improvement. There is no definition of what constitutes casual, semi-formal, or formal dress for university professors. Are they different from the business environment? Although, Sebastian and Bristow (2008) conducted a similar study to this one, they defined formal dress as a navy blue business suit and casual dress as a blue denim shirt and khaki pants for both men and women. They also revealed the faces of the stimulus person and used a 45-year-old woman and a 52-year-old man, thereby potentially affecting the findings. Controlling for the specific faculty member and style of dress as deemed appropriate for university provides another area of improvement over previous studies. The diversity in scales used in previous studies is an area of concern. Teacher credibility, honesty, and caring scales tested by previous research would be more appropriate for assessing university faculty than a celebrity or actor scale. Finally, most studies do not discuss the components of the scales relating to trustworthiness and caring. Are there any significant findings with respect to students' perceptions of university professors' trustworthiness or caring? The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between university faculty dress styles and perceived credibility, honesty, and caring by students at a medium-sized Canadian university. The hypotheses being tested are as follows:

H_1 : University professors dressed in formal attire will be perceived by students to have more credibility than professors in casual or semi-formal dress.

H_2 : Female university professors will be perceived by students to have less credibility than male university professors.

The study is also interested in whether university professors' style of dress affects their perceived level of honesty or character and caring or likeability.

2. Method

2.1 Pre-test

Research has focused on three styles of dress, professional, business casual, and casual. However, what constitutes appropriate clothing for each style is not consistent. Table 1 summarizes the different definitions by study. **Tables**

Table 1: Styles of Dress Used in Previous Studies

| | Professional/Formal | Business Casual/Moderate | Casual/Informal |
|-------|--|--|--|
| Men | suit, tie, sportcoat and slacks, leather soled shoes or loafers (Robertson, 2007); suit tie, white shirt, dress shoes (Brase & Richmond, 2004); navy blue blazer, white dress shirt, slacks (Patton, 1999); dark suit and tie (Kwon & Johnson-Hillery, 1998); business suit, shirt, tie (Fortenberry <i>et al.</i> , 1978) | khakis, knit shirts, sweaters, rubber soled shoes or loafers (Robertson, 2007); sport coat, no tie (Kwon & Johnson-Hillery, 1998) | sweatpants, shorts, jeans, tennis/athletic shoes, sweatshirts, T-shirts (Robertson, 2007); jeans, white T-shirt, trainers (Brase & Richmond, 2004); shirt and pants (Kwon & Johnson-Hillery, 1998); levis, tennis shoes, T-shirt (Fortenberry <i>et al.</i> , 1978) |
| Women | skirt, pantsuit, blouse, jacket/blazer with skirt/pants, nylons, leather shoes with or without heels (Richmond, 2007); suit, white blouse, dress shoes (Brase & Richmond, 2004); navy blue blazer, white dress shirt, slacks (Patton, 1999); dark-skirted suit and white blouse (Kwon & Johnson-Hillery, 1998); dark two-piece skirted suit, white blouse (Lukavsky <i>et al.</i> , 1995)*; two piece suit, high heeled shoes (Fortenberry <i>et al.</i> , 1978)** | khakis, knit shirts, turtlenecks or sweaters, rubber soled shoes or loafers (Robertson, 2007); plaid jacket and pants (Kwon & Johnson-Hillery, 1998); pleated, button-front skirt, long-sleeved button-front cardigan sweater, white blouse (Lukavsky <i>et al.</i> , 1995) ^a | sweatpants, shorts, jeans, tennis/athletic shoes, sweatshirts, T-shirts (Robertson, 2007); jeans, white T-shirt, trainers (Brase & Richmond, 2004); blouse/shirt and pants (Kwon and Johnson-Hillery, 1998); dark jeans and long-sleeved sweater with a high neckline (Lukavsky <i>et al.</i> , 1995)*; levis, tennis shoes, T-shirt (Fortenberry <i>et al.</i> , 1978) ^b |

Note. ^a Lukavsky, Butler and Harden (1995) study didn't include men, ^b Fortenberry *et al.*, (1978) only had two levels of dress.

Due to the variation in styles of dress used in previous research and because none relate specifically to university faculty dress codes, it was important to determine suitable attire for this environment. A pre-test was undertaken to examine various outfits representing three levels of dress for the university environment. Previous research used individual articles of clothing as asked respondents to assess suitability (Brase & Richmond, 2004). However, this does not address the pairing of suitable and unsuitable clothing such as a T-shirt, deemed informal, and dress pants, deemed formal, which may result in an outfit that is considered semi-formal. Therefore, pictures of 36 outfits were presented to two university business classes, one second-year and one third-year, each of approximately 50 students. Style of dress was judged on a 5-point scale (1= *casual* and 5= *formal*). Based on the pictures with the highest means, a male and a female, were photographed wearing outfits depicting casual, semi-formal, and formal attire. The female wore jeans and a T-shirt and the male was in shorts with a T-shirt under an open checked dress shirt representing casual dress. Semi-formal dress was depicted by the female in a black shirt dress with leggings and the male in Khakis and a white T-shirt under a blazer. Both sexes wore suits with pants representing formal dress. The photographs had the faces blanked out. This approach makes it difficult for respondents to determine the instructors' age or introduce any other biases based on facial appearances.

2.2 Scale Measures

Instructor competence and character was measured using the well researched and validated bi-polar scale (Banfield, Richmond & McCroskey, 2006; Chory, 2007; Eisend, 2006; Martinez-Egger & Powers, 2003; McCroskey & Teven, 1999; McCroskey & Young, 1981, Patton, 1999; Pratkanis & Gliner, 2004-2005; Teven & Herring, 2005). This scale asks respondents to place an X on one of 7 lines stretching between two adjectives. There are twelve adjectives in total: intelligent-unintelligent, untrained-trained, expert-inexpert, uninformed-informed, competent-incompetent, stupid-bright, sinful-virtuous, dishonest-honest, unselfish-selfish, sympathetic-unsympathetic, high character-low character, and untrustworthy-trustworthy (Patton, 1999). Three additional adjectives were added to measure the caring scale.

These were cold-warm, unattractive-attractive, and unlikeable-likeable (Banfield et al., 2006).

2.3 Participant Characteristics

Students taking a second-year accounting course were primarily targeted for this study. The aim was to include students who were enrolled in the commerce program but taking a course that is mandatory for all business students. This group comprised of 362 students who would mostly be full-time second-year students attending a medium-sized Canadian university. Kwon and Johnson-Hillery (1998) found differences between business and non-business students with respect to perceived occupational attributes. "The results of the present investigation indicate that business students (compared with nonbusiness students) generally perceived lower occupational attributes for all three levels of formality of men's and women's business attire" (Kwon & Johnson-Hillery, 1998, p. 993). Therefore, students enrolled in psychology classes were also included in the study. The psychology department has a database of surveys that students can complete for bonus marks in their psychology classes. All participants were asked to complete the on-line survey and could choose bonus marks in either psychology or business or coffee cards (\$4 value) as a reward.

2.4 Sample Size

It is difficult to determine the population for the psychology students because they choose which surveys to complete from a database. However, the population of the business students comprised 362 students. Five e-mails were returned as undeliverable leaving a total population of 357 students. Given that there are six images in total, three female and three male, and based on previous research, it was estimated that approximately 100 undergraduate students were needed to participate in this study to achieve an acceptable level of power ($G*Power = .95$).

2.5 Research Design

This study was a true experimental design with individual faculty images randomly assigned to participants. The manipulation, or independent variable, is the image respondents are presented with in terms of style of dress and gender. The dependent variables are the scores on the three scales, credibility, character, and likeability. All statistical analyses were performed using PASW Statistics Version 18. Commerce students were invited to participate in the study via an email including a link to the on-line survey. Psychology students had access to the survey via the database of surveys. Once accessed, the participants had to consent to the study in order to continue to the first image and set of questions. The system randomly assigned one faculty picture – male or female casually, semi-formally or formally dressed, and had students complete the credibility, character, and likeability scales. It then assigned a second faculty picture of the opposite sex but in the same class of dress and the same questions addressing credibility, character, and likeability.

Finally, background information such as sex, age, program of study/major, year of study, first language, and ethnicity was also collected. There was a possibility of a student being eligible to complete the study twice, once as a student taking a psychology course and again from taking a business course. However, no duplicate responses were found. The actual survey contained far more questions than those related to this study, however, only the findings related to the credibility, character, and likeability scales will be discussed. The on-line survey provided one image to students followed by 24 questions related to measuring power; 15 questions measuring credibility, character, and likeability; then a second image followed by the same 24 power and 15 credibility, character, and likeability measures; 11 questions measuring the respondents' neosexism level; and finally background questions.

3. Results

3.1 Preliminary Analyses

The final sample consisted of 257 surveys. With respect to frequencies by image, each image represented between 12-19% of the total sample. The lowest was males in formal attire which contained 33 responses and the highest was males in semi-formal attire with 51 responses. It was concluded that no image was underrepresented in the study. Statistical assumptions were checked with the data separated by group. All variables were first checked for range before being recoded so the responses consistently ran from low to high for each one. Descriptive statistics were run to ensure all scales were normally distributed and had an average skew and average kurtosis. No assumptions were violated. Then, the composite variables were computed to form the scales as described in the literature. Descriptive statistics were run on the three composite variables to ensure normal distributions, and average skew and kurtosis. Z-score residuals were created to check for outliers. Both the likeability and the credibility composite variables had Z-scores greater than 3.29 standard deviations. It was determined that Winsorizing these cases would be appropriate. One case in the likeability composite variable and two cases in the credibility composite variable were recomputed. Finally, homogeneity of variance was tested by running a one-way ANOVA. No violations were found.

3.2 Missing Data

Upon further review it appeared as though many students had completed the first 24 power-related questions, skipped the 15 credibility, character, and likeability questions, answered the second image 24 power-related questions, skipped the 15 credibility, character, and likeability questions, and then answered the 11 neosexism questions and the background questions. A missing value analysis was run and found four variables relating to this study with more than 10% missing data. A multiple imputation was run to analyze the missingness. The overall summary indicated that 100% of the variables had at least one missing value; 76 of the 257 cases had missing values, and 630 of the 7,710 values were missing. Of the variables with more than 10% missing values, one variable was from the first image with the scale measuring dishonest-honest. Three variables were from the second image and set of questions. These bi-polar adjectives were sinful-virtuous, selfish-unselfish, and unattractive-attractive. All graphs were obtained to ensure there was no discernable pattern among the multiple imputations. Subsequent analyses were run with cases sorted by imputation and layered by imputation number.

To further analyze the variables with missing data, each variable was recoded into a new variable representing system missing (given a value of 0) or present (given a value of 1). A Chi-square test was then conducted for each recoded variable to determine if the two groups, missing and not missing, were statistically different with respect to the background variables, ethnicity, year of study, education, gender, first official language, and major program of study. For most results Pearson's chi-square asymptotic significance is greater than 0.1, therefore indicating the variations are due to chance. When the significance is less than 0.05 it suggests the variations are real and not due to chance and a relationship exists. However, looking at the symmetric measures, the Cramer's V statistic although statistically significant is not very strong because the value is less than 0.3 in all cases.

3.3 Analyses

Table 8 shows the means and standard deviations for each of the variables included in this study.

Table 2: Means and standard deviations for study variables

| Variable | Mean | SD |
|---------------------------------|------|------|
| 1. Unintelligent-intelligent | 5.06 | 1.22 |
| 2. Uninformed-informed | 4.72 | 1.40 |
| 3. Inexpert-expert | 4.72 | 1.36 |
| 4. Incompetent-competent | 5.13 | 1.46 |
| 5. Untrained-trained | 5.17 | 1.42 |
| 6. Stupid-bright | 5.18 | 1.22 |
| 7. Dishonest-honest | 5.01 | 1.30 |
| 8. Low character-high character | 4.72 | 1.40 |
| 9. Sinful-virtuous | 4.52 | 1.21 |
| 10. Selfish-unselfish | 3.34 | 1.31 |
| 11. Untrustworthy-trustworthy | 4.99 | 1.31 |
| 12. Unsympathetic-sympathetic | 4.48 | 1.45 |
| 13. Unattractive-attractive | 4.67 | 1.53 |
| 14. Unlikeable-likeable | 5.05 | 1.30 |
| 15. Cold-warm | 4.83 | 1.43 |

The first six variables comprise McCroskey and Young's (1981) competence scale. Variables seven through 12 comprise the character scale. The final three variables comprise a likeability scale. These variables were used to generate three composite variables representing competence, character, and likeability. A One-way ANOVA showed significant results for competence $F(5, 256) = 5.66, p < .001, \eta^2 = .10$, and likeability, $F(5, 256) = 3.01, p = .01, \eta^2 = .06$. There was no significant result for the character scale $F(5, 256) = 0.74, p = .60$. To test the first hypothesis that university professors dressed in formal attire will be perceived by students to have more credibility than professors in casual or semi-formal dress, a One-way ANOVA with contrasts was used. The first contrast is for casual dress versus formal, the second for casual dress versus semi-formal, and the third contrast for formal versus semi-formal attire. For competence, or credibility, casually dressed faculty ($M = 4.77$) are perceived as less competent or credible than formally dressed instructors ($M = 5.44$), $t(251) = -3.98, p < .001, d = 0.67, 95\% \text{ CI } [4.78, 5.42]$. There was no significant result for the second contrast, $t(251) = -0.58, p = .054$, thereby suggesting little difference between casual dress ($M = 4.77$) and semi-formal dress ($M = 4.86$). The third contrast testing if formal ($M = 5.44$) is more credible than semi-formal attire ($M = 4.86$) was also significant and positive, $t(251) = 3.74, p < .001, d = 0.67, 95\% \text{ CI } [4.85, 5.45]$.

These results support the first hypothesis. There were no significant results with respect to character and likeability. To test the second hypothesis, that there was a gender effect, the image variable was recoded into females (0) and males (1) and then a One-way ANOVA with Hochberg's GT2 post hoc test was run. As previously stated, there was a significant difference between male and female instructors with respect to competence. Formally dressed females ($M = 5.49$) were positive and significantly different than males who were casually dressed ($M = 4.50$) $p < .001$, $d = 0.98$, 95% CI [4.68, 5.30], and females who were semi-formally dressed ($M = 4.83$) $p = .026$, $d = 0.67$, 95% CI [4.87, 5.45]. Also, males in formal attire ($M = 5.38$) are positive and significantly different than casually dressed males $p = .005$, $d = 0.86$, 95% CI [4.70, 5.28]. With respect to likeability there was a significant overall result. Formally dressed females ($M = 5.09$) are positive and significantly different from formally dressed males ($M = 4.31$) $p = .037$, $d = 0.66$, 95% CI [4.33, 5.08]. Previous research has suggested that non-business students have different perceptions of university professors than business students. The major area of study variable was recoded into business (0) and non-business (1) students. An independent samples t-test with Hochberg's GT2 tests found no significant differences for business and non-business majors with respect to competence $t(208) = -0.37$, $p = .071$, character $t(208) = -1.81$, $p = .070$, and likeability $t(208) = -0.59$, $p = .559$.

The gender of the respondents has not been considered in previous research. An independent samples t-test was run for competence with no significant result $t(249) = -1.69$, $p = .091$. However, likeability, $t(249) = 2.08$, $p = .037$, $d = 0.26$, 95% CI [0.02, 0.59], as well as character, $t(249) = 2.29$, $p = .022$, $d = 0.27$, 95% CI [0.29, 0.38], were significant. Females ($M = 4.97$) rated faculty higher with respect to the likeability scale than males ($M = 4.67$). As well, females ($M = 4.59$) rated faculty as having higher character than males ($M = 4.39$). Further investigation revealed significant participant sex and faculty sex interactions. There was a significant difference on the likeability scale depending on the gender of the respondent and the gender of the faculty they were rating $F(1, 250) = 6.63$, $p = .013$, $\eta^2 = .03$. Female respondents rate female faculty ($M = 5.06$) higher in terms of likeability than male faculty ($M = 4.90$). As well, male respondents rate female faculty ($M = 5.03$) in terms of likeability higher than male faculty ($M = 4.12$). However, female respondents rate male faculty ($M = 4.90$) higher than male respondents ($M = 4.12$). There was no significant difference between male and female respondents rating female faculty. With respect to character, $F(1, 250) = 2.20$, $p = .151$, and credibility, $F(1, 250) = 0.26$, $p = .616$, there were no significant participant sex and faculty sex interactions.

4. Discussion

This study found some similarities with previous research as well as some differences and some unique findings. The first hypothesis was supported and is consistent with previous findings. University professors dressed in formal attire, defined as a business suit, are perceived by students to have more credibility than professors in casual or semi-formal dress. Casual dress for faculty was defined as being a T-shirt and jeans for females and shorts, a T-shirt, and open long-sleeved button-down shirt for male faculty. A unique contribution of this study is the definition of the attire for university faculty. This is something that has not been investigated, but rather presumed and derived from attire acceptable in a corporate setting, in previous research.

The second hypothesis was not supported. Female university professors were not perceived by students to have less credibility than male university professors. Kwon and Johnson-Hillery (1998) found females scored higher on credibility than males in formal attire. This is consistent with the findings of this study however the results were not significant ($p > .05$). They suggest people expect working women to be more formally dressed than working men. But these are other possible explanations for this. For example, perhaps more families have working professional mothers and therefore the respondents are accustomed to working females and perceive them to be competent based on their own exposure. Also, it is possible that the increase in female students attending universities in recent years explains this finding. Sandler's (1991) study focusing on women faculty acknowledges that progress had been made with respect to attitudes towards female professors. It has been some years since this study and the finding of the current study suggests things have improved. Future research should investigate the background of the respondents to determine if they come from working mother and father families and the type of work. The exposure to working professional females may account for the credibility scale not being significantly different from males.

Casual or semi-formally dressed faculties are perceived as being more caring or likeable than more formally dressed instructors. These findings are contrary to those of Sebastian and Bristow (2008) who found that a formally dressed male was more likeable than a formally dressed female. They also found no significant difference between the casually dressed men and women. This is also refuted by this study which indicates that a formally dressed male is perceived as less likeable than both the casually dressed male and female professors. Sebastian and Bristow's (2008) study did not consider a semi-formal style of dress.

Perhaps students do not perceive much of a difference between the casual and semi-formal styles of dress, particularly for female professors. What constitutes semi-formal attire for university faculty should be investigated further to determine if there is a perceived difference between the other two styles of dress. To the best of our knowledge, the gender of the respondent has not been considered. This study found that females rated faculty higher than males with respect to character and likeability. Furthermore, in terms of the specific gender of the faculty, females and males rated female faculty higher than male faculty in terms of likeability. Female respondents also rated male faculty higher than male respondents. Interestingly, there was no difference between likeability and the ratings of female faculty by either male or female respondents. In summary, all faculty need to be well dressed to be perceived as credible by both male and female students. Male faculty, however, will not be perceived as likeable as female faculty, but they will be more likeable by their female students than their male students. This study's findings may be limited to universities of a similar size, student diversity, and location.

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5. References

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