

# Career and Technical Education Administrators' Perceptions of Secondary teachers' Attire as Indicated by Selected professional Attributes

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study was to assess the perceptions of career and technical education (CTE) administrators toward secondary teachers' attire as indicated by 10 occupational attributes. The population consisted of CTE administrators employed by West Virginia Department of Education during 2006-2007 academic school year. The top three attributes perceived by CTE respondents as influencing women's and men's traditional clothing were: professionalism, responsibility, efficiency. In the leisure attire category, the top three attributes for women's and men's clothing were: responsibility, honesty, and knowledgeability. Commonalities existed between women's and men's business casual clothing on the following top two attributes: responsibility and professionalism. Business casual was perceived by CTE respondents as the dominant category of attire on their campus. Overall, CTE administrators perceived that secondary teachers' attire does affect the professionalism of teachers.*

Many times in life situations a person may be judged by how well dressed they appear. The same holds true for teachers, whether in the classroom setting, during a job interview, their appearance at a parent conference or open house. Gorham, Cohen, and Morris (1999) reported on the importance of teachers to dress "professionally" and be attentive to impressions made during the first few weeks of class. According to Molly (1975), clothing can be regarded as a primary impression management tool. Delisio (2006) reported that, "dressing appropriately" was once considered to be a phrase with universal meaning. However, in an age where flip flops appear in White House photos, some school districts want to make it clear how they expect all staff members – including teachers – to dress" (p.1). Damhorst, Miller-Spillman, and Michelman (2005), noted that, "dress is an essential part of human experience. Perhaps because of its closeness to the body, dress has a richness of meanings that express the individuals, as well as groups, organizations, and the larger society in which that person lives" (p.XIV).

According to Storm (1986), dress is defined as "a body covering, attachment, or treatment; it is essentially our appearance" (p.vii). A study by Underwood, Kenner, and McCune (2002) suggests that an individual's appearance is essentially non-verbal communication and influences the perception and validity of the spoken word. Failure to dress appropriately can impact the way administrators, teachers, students, and parents perceive the teacher in question.

## Dress in the Workplace

Saiki (2006) reported that:

In recent years there has been confusion about what is appropriate to wear at work. A whole generation has been raised in jeans, t-shirts, and sweats. Popular media has described a shift back to a preference for formal dress in the workplace as many companies are attempting to change expectations of work place attire.

The CEO of Managers Recruiters International said that managers, when surveyed, were upset with the open-toed shoes, tank tops, and sweat pants worn to work. Companies have been calling in fashion experts to teach their employees about appropriate workplace dress. (p.1)

It appears that selection of professional attire enhances occupational attributes of teachers. Attire is important and can give a degree of authority, even in today's casual school environment (Underwood, et al., 2002). In this era of teacher accountability, career and technical education administrators should be in the forefront in setting the standards for dress in public schools. Appropriate attire has become extremely important in many professions. The clothing industry has been quick to meet the symbolic need for attire that translates into power, success, and desired outcomes (Kwon, 1994). This trend appears to be true in today's more casual world and increasingly diverse environment. Although professional attire is, in fact, of major importance in winning respect in the classroom and in conveying the appropriate public image of what happens in schools, little has been written on the subject. According to Underwood, et al. (2002), all of the research in this area was prior to the business casual dress-down movement in the 1990's.

Damhorst et al. (2005) noted that:

Dress in the workplace is important because most working people spend 40 to 60 hours a week at their job. That is a lot of human interaction to consider. Appropriate dress can make the difference in receiving a job offer, appearing effective in a job role, and receiving a promotion. Understanding how dress can facilitate or hinder human interaction in the workplace can give employees a head start on making favorable impressions at work. Most importantly, dress is a powerful communicator – especially in the workplace. (p.222)

### **Theoretical Base/ Conceptual Framework**

Sybers and Roach (1962) reported that, “the first formal exploration of areas of possible research in textiles and clothing related to social sciences was at a conference of family and consumer sciences, sociologists, psychologists, and economists held in 1947 at Teacher's College, Columbia University” (p.185). Roach (1997) argues that, “many initial and enduring perceptions of an individual are formed by observation and evaluation of the clothing he/she wears” (p.126). Clothing may serve as an indicator of the type of profession or career track the wearer has. Attitudes, beliefs, and values of an individual, may also be influenced by their attire (Roach, 1997). Rozenfeld and Plax's study suggests that the personality or psychological disposition of the wearer can be attributed by their clothing (as cited in Roach, 1997).

Several researchers (as cited in Gorman et al., 1999) suggest that clothing affects four kinds of judgments: credibility, liability, interpersonal attractiveness, and dominance. Gorham et al. (1999) reported that:

On the whole, studies of a person's perceptions related to dress consistently suggest three conclusions: (1) clothing does affect observer perceptions, especially “cool” perceptions such as a wearer knowledge, educational background, preparation or poise, level of

sophistication, and competence (e.g., Bassett, 1979; Bickman, 1974; Harris et al., 1983; Lefkowitz, Blake, & Mouton, 1955; Miller & Rowald, 1980); (2) clothing that enhances “cool” perceptions may decrease “warm” judgments such as interpersonal attractiveness, trustworthiness, sociability, likability, and enthusiasm (e.g., Leathers, 1992; Raiscot, 1983; Smith & Malandso, 1985); and (3) females appear to be more responsive to clothing cues than are males (e.g., Kuehwe & Creekmore, 1971; Miller & Rowald, 1980; Solomon & Schloper, 1982). (p.282)

Perception is the process of taking in data through our senses and transmitting that data to the brain where it is selected and identified and given significance through organization and interpretation (Storm, 1986). Perception is determined by our unique life experience such as our culture, the people significant to us who have formed our frame of reference, and our education (Storm, 1986). Rosencranz (1972) suggests that the association of greater clothing awareness with higher socioeconomic level, higher educational level, and higher participation in more social groups, reflects opportunities for building more command of the language of dress.

### **Self-Perception Theory**

Self-perception theory and implicit personality theory provided the theoretical models for this study. According to Banks (2007):

Self-perception theory is a theory that examines how individuals assess themselves when asked to respond to information, situations and circumstances. Bem (1972) identified two postulates that explain self-perception theory: (a) individuals come to “know” their own attitudes, emotions, and other internal states partially by inferring them from observations of their own overt behavior and/or the circumstances in which this behavior occurs; (b) to the extent internal cues are weak, ambiguous, or uninterruptible, the individual is functionally in the same position as an outside observer who must necessarily rely upon those same external cues to infer the individuals inner states (p.2). Individuals also use self-perception to explain their behavior by noting the conditions under which it occurs (Irving & Meyer, 1985). When assessing decisions that have been made by individuals, researchers should consider that the decision made is based upon the person’s self-perception and their expectations at the time of the decision. (p.3)

According to self-perception theory (as cited in Kwon, 1994) individuals evaluate themselves just as they evaluate others. Specifically, the processes people use to infer their own attitudes and other internal states from the observation of overt behavior are not substantially different from those they apply in inferring others’ attitudes. Self-perception theory suggests that variables, such as appearance or clothing, are likely to affect perceptions of others, and may affect perceptions of self (Kwon, 1994). Clothes often become external cues which are accessible to us and others for observation (Kaiser, 1990). Researchers (Asch, 1946; Scheneider, 1973) suggest that people often infer particular traits of a person based on other characteristics possessed by that individual. This tendency to infer some traits from knowledge about other traits has been termed “implicit personality theory” (Bruner & Tagiuri, 1954; Scheneider, 1973). Kwon (1994) suggests that individuals tend to form mental constructs concerning proper modes of dress over a period of time and embodies a range of situations based on experiences.

Many people experience the positive psychological effects of wearing an appropriate outfit in a work setting. Morale can be boosted when an outfit elicits positive comments and compliments from others. Conversely, the feeling of being inappropriately dressed for a job can generate fear of negative evaluations and reactions from others, leading to an undermining of self-confidence (Solomon & Douglas, 1985). Research has shown that first impressions are primarily based on demeanor, including posture, behavior, and dress (Storm, 1986). The importance of attire in first-impression formation is so significant that the “universe of appearance may, in fact, be regarded as the guarantee, foundation, or substrate of the universe of discourse” (Stone 1970, p.231). Evidence also suggests that when people dress according to their role expectation(s), others are more likely to respond to them as the roles would dictate. Thus, students have been found to work harder for teachers who are more formally attired (Storm, 1986).

### *Rural-Urban*

People have been found to be more cooperative with other individuals whose appearance is similar to their own. Thus, they have been found to be more likely to talk with, sign a petition for, or provide information to an individual dressed similarly to them (Suedfeld et al. 1971, 1972). First impressions and dress cues are generally more important in urban than rural or small-town settings. Urban contacts are brief and infrequent. Rural or small-town contacts are more repetitive and longer, and some things about the other individual have usually already been ascertained. For these reasons, it is also easier to use attire to mislead others in an urban setting (Storm, 1986).

### *Impact of Gender*

Men's attire has been found to be a less important cue than women's, although dress seems to be used as a cue by men more than women. Evaluations of others appear to be more extreme when made about individuals of the opposite sex (Storm, 1986). In fact, it appears “that dress is one of the most salient cue sexes stereotyping... [and this] is so marked that sex stereotype origins may be a result of the predominance of dress as a cue in early socialization” (Hamid, 1969, pp.193-94). Several researchers (Forsythe, Drake, & Cox, 1984; Kelley, Blouin, Glen, Sweat, & Arledge, 1982), have investigated women's employment attire and perceptions of appearance related to career orientation. Forsythe, et al. (1984) reported that career dress had a positive effect on the perception of selected personal characteristics. Such studies suggest that people perceived “dressing well and appropriately” as important for career advancement.

According to study by Singer and Love (1988) which investigated gender differences in self-perceptions of occupational efficacy in law enforcement workers, females indicated less favorable self occupational images than male officers. Both sexes reported similar levels of psychological well-being, job satisfaction, and job involvement. Research has found certain items of attire are associated with specific stereotypes. Some of these associations are glasses with intelligence, religiousness, shyness, naiveté, lack of physical attractiveness, conventionality, and dullness; make-up, bright colors, and high hemlines with sophistication, immorality, and physical attractiveness (Storm, 1986). Mathes and Kemper (1976) reported that “people do

believe that certain kinds and styles of clothing are indicative of liberal sexual attitudes and behavior” (p.497). For men, these items were: tank tops, bare feet, open shirts. For women, they were, cut-offs, hip-hugger pants, hoop earrings, tops exposing midriiffs, work shirts, T-shirts, blue jeans, short shorts, halter tops, sun dresses, sandals, sweaters, and bare feet. As revealed by decades of research, clothing is an important form of non-verbal communication that affects perceptions of others.

### **Purpose and Objectives**

The primary purpose of this study was to assess the perceptions of CTE administrators toward secondary teachers’ attire as indicated by selected attributes. A secondary purpose of the research was to add to the knowledge base concerning the impact of teachers’ attire on CTE administrators’ perceptions. The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. Determine CTE administrators’ level of satisfaction regarding secondary teachers’ attire.
2. Describe impact of selected issues and trends on secondary teachers’ attire as perceived by CTE administrators.
3. Ascertain factors most influencing secondary teachers’ attire as perceived by CTE administrators.
4. Describe CTE administrators’ perceptions toward leisure, business casual and traditional category of attire.
5. Assess CTE administrators’ perceptions regarding secondary teachers’ attire as indicated by selected professional attributes.

### **Limitations of the Study**

1. Due to the small sample size, findings and conclusions should be inferred only to the selected participants of this study and not CTE administrators in general.
2. Because of the scant research data available on CTE administrator’s perceptions of secondary teachers’ attire, the study sought to develop important baseline data. Thus, the entire population of CTE administrators was surveyed. Consequently, the data do not lend themselves to tests of statistical significance.

### **Procedures**

The population for this study consisted of 78 career and technical education administrators employed by West Virginia Department of Education during 2006 – 2007 academic school year. Due to the small number ( $N=78$ ) of individuals in the population, a census was used for this study. In order to control frame error, a current list of CTE administrators and their mailing addresses were requested from West Virginia State Department of Education.

The research instrument consisted of a questionnaire tested by Kenner, Underwood, and McCune (2002a). Appropriateness and permission for the use of this instrument was discussed

with the primary author. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. Part I consisted of line drawings of dress modes: traditional, business casual, and leisure for both male and female. Participants were asked to rank the three sets of styles per gender according to ten occupational attributes (Kwon, 1994) on a five- point Likert scale. Part II consisted of selected demographic variables and background information. Content and face validity of the instrument was assessed by a panel of experts in career and technical education and educational administration. Cronbach's alpha was used to estimate the internal consistency of the instrument. The reliability coefficient was .98 for the instrument used in this study.

Data for the study were collected by mailed questionnaire. The questionnaire, along with a cover letter and a stamped return envelope, was sent to all CTE administrators ( $N = 78$ ) in this study. After 10 days, a second mailing was sent to all non-respondents. Ten days after the second mailing, a reminder letter was sent to all non-respondents stressing the importance of participation. Approximately 10 days following the third mailing, telephone calls were made to non-respondents. Fifty seven CTE administrators completed and returned the questionnaire for a final useable response rate of 73 percent. Babbie (1998 p. 262) argues that a response rate of 70 percent is regarded as "very good." Non-response error was controlled by comparing late respondents to on-time respondents as outlined by Krushat and Molnar (1993) who noted late respondents tend to reply similarly to non-respondents. A comparison of these groups revealed no differences in the responses of late and on-time respondents.

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (Version 14.0 for Windows). Descriptive statistics were used to describe the distribution of the data.

## Findings

Individual characteristics for CTE administrators participating in the study are presented in Table 1.

*Table 1*

### *Characteristics of CTE Administrators Participating in the Study*

*( $N = 57$ )*

Characteristic	Category	<u>n</u>	(%)
Gender:	Female	23	(40)
	Male	34	(60)
Age:	25-49 years	19	(33)
	50-55 years	22	(39)

	56 and above	16	(28)
Education:	Master	53	(93)
	Doctorate	2	(3.5)
	Other	2	(3.5)
Years as an Administrator:	1-5 years	14	(24)
	6-10 years	13	(23)
	11-20 years	22	(39)
	Over 20 years	8	(14)
Location of School:	Rural area/less than 5,000	20	(35.1)
	Rural area/5,001 – 10,000	19	(33.3)
	Town of 10,001 – 50,000	15	(26.3)
	Town of 50,001 – or more	13	(5.3)

**Objective 1.** Determine male and female CTE administrators' level of satisfaction regarding secondary teachers' attire.

Forty seven percent of the CTE administrators were somewhat satisfied with secondary teachers' attire on their campus. Male participants indicated a higher level of satisfaction of secondary teachers' attire on their campus when compared to their female counterparts (Table 2).

*Table 2*

*CTE Administrators' Perceptions of Dress Satisfaction by Gender*

*(N = 57)*

Dress Satisfaction	Gender		Total
	Female	Male	
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	
Satisfied	16	28	44

Somewhat Satisfied	19	28	47
Not Satisfied	5	4	9
Total			100
V = .132			

**Objective 2.** Describe impact of selected issues and trends on secondary teachers' attire as perceived by CTE administrators.

Table 3 lists selected issues and trends impacting secondary teachers' attire as perceived by CTE administrators.

*Table 3*

*CTE Administrators' Perceptions about the Impact of Selected Issues and Trends on Secondary Teachers' Attire  
(N = 57)*

Question	Yes	No
	<u>n</u> <u>%</u>	<u>n</u> <u>%</u>
In the last year, has a teacher been required to leave campus due to inappropriate dress?	2 3.5	55 96.5
Do you have dress exceptions for certain faculty?	26 45.6	31 54.4
In your opinion, does attire affect the professionalism of teachers?	54 94.7	3 5.3
Have you encountered problems with body piercing and/or tattoos among teachers?	10 18	47 82
Do you foresee current trends in body adornment becoming problematic in teachers' attire?	38 67	19 33
Do you think your teachers would benefit from a workshop on professionalism which includes dress and business etiquette?	37 65	20 35
Would you like to see teachers on your campus in a required uniform?	23 40	34 60

A majority (94.7%) of the respondents reported that attire does affect the professionalism of secondary teachers. However, just over two-thirds (67%) foresee current trends in body adornment becoming problematic in secondary teachers' attire. Over three-fifths (65%) of CTE administrators perceived that secondary teachers would benefit from a workshop on professionalism which includes dress and business etiquette. Almost 4% of the respondents reported cases of inappropriate attire on their campus.

**Objective 3.** Ascertain factors most influencing secondary teachers' attire as perceived by CTE administrators.

Choices of comfort, school setting, lack of knowledge of appropriate attire, and lack of income were listed as the factors influencing secondary teachers' attire. Table 4 lists comfort as the number one factor in apparel selection.

*Table 4*

*Rank Order of Factors Most Influencing Secondary Teachers' Attire as Perceived by CTE Administrators*

Factor	Rank	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
Comfort	1	3.64	0.64
School Setting	2	2.96	0.94
Lack of Knowledge of Appropriate Attire	3	1.85	0.78
Lack of Income	4	1.59	0.72

**Objective 4.** Describe CTE administrators' perception toward leisure, business casual and traditional category of secondary teachers' attire.

Three-fifth (60%) of CTE administrators reported that the current secondary teachers' attire on their campus was business casual. Over two-thirds (66.7%) of CTE administrators indicated their attire preference as a teacher was business casual (see Table 5)

*Table 5*

*CTE Administrators' Perceptions Toward Leisure, Business Casual, and Traditional Attire*

Statement	Category of Dress		
	Leisure	Business Casual	Traditional
	<u>n</u> <u>%</u>	<u>n</u> <u>%</u>	<u>n</u> <u>%</u>

In general, the current teachers' attire on my campus is:	24 40	33 60	0.0 0.0
The dress code on my campus should be more:	7 12.3	41 71.9	9 15.8
I foresee teachers' attire on campus becoming:	28 49.1	26 45.6	3 5.3
When I was a teacher, my attire was:	4 7.0	38 66.7	15 26.3
As an administrator, my attire is:	2 3.5	11 19.3	44 77.2

A majority (49.1%) of the CTE respondents perceived leisure attire as becoming the current dress on their campus in the future. Over two-thirds (77.2%) of the respondents wore traditional attire as an administrator.

**Objective 5.** Assess CTE administrators' perceptions regarding secondary teachers' attire as indicated by selected professional attributes.

Table 6

*<sup>a</sup>Means and Standard Deviations of Professional Attributes of Secondary Teachers' Attire as Perceived by CTE Administrators*

Professional Attributes:	Women's Clothing						Men's Clothing					
	Traditional		Business Casual		Leisure		Traditional		Business Casual		Leisure	
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
1. Responsibility	3.89	1.20	4.01	0.95	2.56	0.96	3.89	1.22	4.01	0.97	2.57	0.94
2. Competence	3.64	1.30	3.77	1.05	2.40	0.92	3.66	1.32	3.79	1.11	2.43	0.94
3. Knowledgeability	3.54	1.31	3.66	1.10	2.40	0.90	3.54	1.32	3.63	1.09	2.45	0.94
4. Professionalism	4.00	1.16	3.89	0.77	2.24	0.95	4.07	1.09	3.87	0.82	2.26	0.97
5. Honesty	3.40	1.29	3.54	1.15	2.42	0.96	3.36	1.31	3.49	1.18	2.45	1.00
6. Reliability	3.63	1.24	3.71	1.01	2.29	0.90	3.59	1.26	3.66	1.05	2.35	0.97
7. Intelligence	3.54	1.33	3.61	1.14	2.33	0.98	3.49	1.35	3.59	1.16	2.42	1.01
8. Trustworthiness	3.47	1.35	3.52	1.19	2.33	0.95	3.42	1.36	3.56	1.16	2.40	0.97

9. Willingness to work hard	3.59	1.36	3.71	1.03	2.26	0.95	3.61	1.37	3.73	1.06	2.35	1.02
10. Efficiency	3.66	1.27	3.77	0.98	2.29	0.98	3.66	1.28	3.71	1.01	2.29	0.92

<sup>a</sup>Scale: 1 = None; 2 = Little; 3 = Some; 4 = Very Much; and 5 = Excellent.

The means for the top three attributes (Table 6) for *females* were: **traditional attire:** professionalism ( $\underline{M}$  = 4.00), responsibility ( $\underline{M}$  = 3.89), and efficiency ( $\underline{M}$  = 3.66); for **business casual:** responsibility ( $\underline{M}$  = 4.01), professionalism ( $\underline{M}$  = 3.89), and efficiency ( $\underline{M}$  = 3.77); for **leisure attire:** responsibility ( $\underline{M}$  = 2.56), honesty ( $\underline{M}$  = 2.42), and knowledgeability ( $\underline{M}$  = 2.40).

The means for the top three attributes for *males* were: **traditional attire:** professionalism ( $\underline{M}$  = 4.07), responsibility ( $\underline{M}$  = 3.89), and efficiency ( $\underline{M}$  = 3.66); **business casual:** responsibility ( $\underline{M}$  = 4.01), professionalism ( $\underline{M}$  = 3.87), and competence ( $\underline{M}$  = 3.79); **leisure attire:** responsibility ( $\underline{M}$  = 2.57), knowledgeability ( $\underline{M}$  = 2.45), and honesty ( $\underline{M}$  = 2.45).

The professionalism attribute was rated by CTE administrators with a mean score of 2.24 and 2.26 respectively for women's and men's clothing in the leisure category of dress attire.

## Discussion, Conclusions, and Implications

It appears that secondary teachers' attire represents an emerging concern among CTE administrators. Results of this study revealed that the following professional attributes were likely to have an impact on secondary teacher's attire as perceived by CTE administrators: professionalism, responsibility, and competence. The typical respondent in this study was 50 years and older (67%), completed a master's degree (93%), served in the capacity as a CTE administrator for 6 years and above (76%), worked in a secondary school district located in a rural area (68.4%), and more likely to be a male (60%). Female CTE administrators were less likely to be satisfied with the perceptions of secondary school teachers' attire when compared to their male counterparts. This finding implies that women are socialized to pay more attention to appearance than men are. On the other hand, males' perceptions of clothing are probably connected to social status and hierarchy (Kwon, 1994). In a multistate [Texas, North Carolina, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, and Utah] study by Kenner, Underwood, and McCune (2002b), over two-fifths of the principals were somewhat satisfied with faculty dress on their campus.

The following issues and trends were perceived by respondents as impacting secondary teachers' attire: professionalism of teachers, current trends in body adornment becoming problematic, and the need for a workshop on dress and business etiquette. Fashion changes over time, as do attire rules and expectations (Gorham, et al., 1999). According to Damhorst et al. (2005), "dress is a chronicle of a historical era. As fashion or norms of dressing change over time, trends in technology, the economy, religion, the arts, notions of morality, social organization, and patterns of everyday living are reflected in dress" (p.2). Several researchers (Strauss & Howe, 1991; Paul, 2002; & Damhorst et al., 2005) argue that tattooing and piercing grew in popularity with Generation X (born between 1965 and 1976).

Parkay and Stanford study's (as cited by Simmons, 1996) revealed that parents and teachers alike are counseling some of our most able young people not to go into teaching. The reasons ranged from low salaries to lack of status. Noesfirwan and Crawford (1982) perceived the manner of one's attire as critical to the way in which the public regards their profession, and Molly (1975) noted that teachers are not paid like professionals because they do not look like professionals.

Comfort was ranked as the most important apparel selection affecting secondary teachers' attire. This finding is supported by a multistate study done by Kenner et al. (2002b). It appears that the variable "comfort" is likely to be a reliable predictor accounting for the choice of dress attire as perceived by CTE administrators.

CTE administrators perceived business casual as the dominant category of attire on their campus. In contrast, traditional attire was worn by most (77.2%) CTE administrators. However, a surprising finding revealed that over two-fifths (49.1%) the respondents perceived secondary teachers' attire on their campus becoming "leisure." It appears that acceptance of diversity of appearance is becoming a trend in today's global society.

Simmons (1996) reported that teachers' attire is a touchy subject because of the legal implications of the possible infringement on personal liberties. Simmons (1996) further argues that teachers' attire has become a matter of individual choice. CTE administrators perceived that if traditional attire was worn, the teacher was perceived as being overwhelmingly professional, responsibility, and efficiency. This finding is similar to a study reported by Kenner et al. (2002b). However, in their study, the three attributes were: professional, responsibility, and competence. Rollman (1980) reported that teachers dressed formally were rated "most organized."

Leisure attire accounted for a reduction in mean scores, when compared to traditional and business. In this study, leisure attire was not perceived by CTE administrators as the recommended dress attire for their teachers. If business attire was worn, the teacher was perceived as being overwhelmingly responsible, professional, and competent. The "responsibility attribute" was the only common attribute in the top three means for both men's and women's clothing across all three modes of dress attire. This finding suggests that CTE administrators perceived the responsibility attribute as a powerful communicator of secondary teachers' attire when compared to the other professional attributes. Damhorst et al. (2005) noted that "appropriate work dress conveys that individuals not only understand their work roles but can perform them effectively" (p.218).

## **Recommendations**

1. Since family and consumer science teachers are generally regarded as having expertise in selected areas of attire, they should be consulted by CTE administrators to serve in an advisory capacity to a committee charged with conducting workshops on: dress and business etiquette, current trends in body adornment, and general professionalism in the classroom.

2. Qualitative research targeting CTE students and their parents' perceptions of secondary teachers' attire should be done.
3. Further research should explore whether attire is linked to stereotypes / prejudices, or whether attire has implications for the way CTE administrators treat their teachers.
4. Comparative research on CTE teachers and administrators' perceptions regarding secondary teachers' attire should be done in both rural and urban school districts.
5. Additional research on the role of nonverbal communication in CTE classrooms will provide valuable instructional insights for CTE administrators and secondary teachers.

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