

PERCEIVED COMPETENCE AS A FUNCTION OF
ATTIRE IN A BUSINESS CONTEXT

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ATTIRE IN A BUSINESS CONTEXT

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Table of Contents

I Acknowledgements	2
II Abstract.....	3
III Introduction	4
IV Preliminary investigation	6
V Experimental study: design and hypotheses	8
VI Methods	9
VII Results	12
VIII Tests of order effects and the hypotheses	13
IX Discussion	14
X Conclusion	17
XI References	19
XII Appendixes	21
A: Manager Survey Form	21
B: Student Consent Form	29
C: Five Factor Model of Personality Traits	30
D: Student Survey, Form 1	31
E: Student Debriefing Form	39
XIII Tables	40

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Abstract

Drawing from “person perception” literature, the present study evaluated how 224 college students judged two fictional male job applicants’ levels of professional competence based on the applicants’ attire. Each college student was randomly assigned a hiring manager role in the finance, sales, or research and developments branch of a company. One applicant wore “formal” attire, and one applicant wore “informal” attire. From the experimental survey it was concluded that participants rated formally dressed applicants as more “competent” ($M = 3.962$, $SD = .57$) than informally dressed ones ($M = 2.014$, $SD = .70$), $F(2, 181) = 746.73$, $p < .001$, and hired formal applicants significantly more than informal ones (97% vs. 14% hiring rate), regardless of the participant’s assigned business role. The implications and application of these findings are addressed.

Perceived Competence as a Function of Attire in a Business Context

What is the purpose of “professional attire”? Common sense and countless professional development articles argue that the purpose of professional attire is to communicate to others a level of maturity, capability, and success (Goldstein, 1999), or in a word, competence. But are we so superficial? Despite what our mothers teach us, are we really so quick to judge one another’s capabilities based on clothing? The present study set out to test these types of judgments. These types of judgmental phenomena fall under the area of study in psychology called “Person Perception”, the collection of processes that occur when observing someone else and drawing inferences about their personality.

Theory

Schneider (1970, pg. 16) proposes an integrative model of how all of the processes of person perception work together when one perceives and makes judgments about another person, which Schneider calls a “stimulus person”. The model begins with “the perceiver’s” attention, immediate perception, and categorization of the information presented by the stimulus person and the context. For example, information about the body type, clothes, and facial features, and the particulars about the context or situation is processed (pg. 20). Then, the particular behavior the stimulus person is performing is

explained by the perceiver. Schneider argues that one spends cognitive effort in determining “the cause” of the stimulus person’s behavior. Schneider calls this second process Attribution Theory (pg. 41). For example, we may attribute a person’s fall to clumsiness or a situational factor such as a wet sidewalk, etc. A dispositional attribution is more likely to be made if situational information is insufficient. For example, we may attribute a person’s fall to a “clumsy” personality trait. Jones and Davis’s Correspondent Inference Theory (pg. 47) explains why dispositional attributions are made of the stimulus person as causes of their behavior (Schneider, 1970). From this single-trait attribution, Schneider argues that the perceiver may continue to the more elaborative process of forming a complete impression of the stimulus person by assuming other personality characteristics and predicting future behavior (Implicit Personality Theory, pg. 156). For example, a person we think of as clumsy may also be perceived as being dim-witted and awkward.

While Schneider’s model makes sense in this linear construction, he points out that the processes of person perception and impression formation are very fluid. Depending on the perceiver and the situation, steps in this process may be performed in different orders, or to varying degrees, or omitted completely (Schneider, 1970, pg. 17, 248). Also, Schneider argues that the literature is lacking theories of snap judgments, the primary step before attributions and implicit personality judgments are made. This snap judgment step is precisely where the utility of professional attire is located. As Schneider argues, people do draw inferences from static features (i.e. height, weight, clothing, cosmetics) of a stimulus person. These inferences are usually rather immediate and do not involve complex cognitive processes. However, sometimes certain appearance variables,

particularly clothing, are seen as intentionally controlled and we may use static cues as the basis of a more considered, more reflective judgment involving intentionality (pg. 20). Specifically, the perceiver may wish to make some composite judgment about the actor, say of overall trustworthiness or suitability for a job (pg. 247). This situation, in which we judge someone based on their clothes, is a psychological enmeshment of the processes of stereotypical snap judgments, dispositional attributions, and impression formation outlined in Implicit Personality Theory.

Preliminary investigation

To begin addressing the question of how men's professional attire functions in the business world, and whether these functions vary, I interviewed and surveyed local hiring managers from businesses such as IBM, Ameriprise Financial, and Dell (Appendix A). I asked them how important they thought someone's attire is when forming a first impression of them during an interview, which clothes qualify for the different levels of formality, what are the effects and purposes of professional attire, whether someone's attire reflects their personality and/or their skills, and if they would hire someone who was under-dressed. I found that while there was consensus among the different managers in their opinions concerning the relevance, purpose and appropriateness of professional attire, there was also variance. Specifically, the managers differed in their opinions when asked if someone's attire reflected their skills, and if they would hire someone not wearing professional attire. For example, when asked if a person's clothes reflect their skills (i.e. capabilities and competency), managers in sales and financial industries (n = 5) all answered in the affirmative, while managers in technical, developmental, and research

positions ($N = 7$) were divided where 43% ($n = 3$) answered “no” and 57% ($n = 4$) answered “yes”. Similarly, when the managers were asked if they would hire an applicant who was not wearing professional attire, managers in sales and financial industries all answered in the negative, while managers in technical, developmental, and research positions ($N = 7$) were divided where 43% ($n = 3$) answered “no” and 57% ($n = 4$) answered “yes”. Thus, managers in sales and financial industries were more inclined to judge someone more critically based on their clothes than were managers in technical, developmental, and research positions.

The results of the preliminary investigation corroborates what is common sense concerning male professional attire, that there is a long-standing tradition of what qualifies as “professional” for men in western cultures: a blue or white long-sleeve button-down shirt, a pair of polished black shoes and dress socks, a dark jacket, a pair of slacks that complement the jacket, and a conservative tie (Reeves, 2006). Short-sleeved shirts and non-slack pants and shorts, and athletic shoes qualified as “casual attire” for the managers. We used these results as the operational definitions for someone who is dressed “casually” or “informally”, and “professionally” or “formally”. The manager surveys were also in line with the established theory (attribution and impression formation) and previous research indicating that if a person is wearing more professional attire they are judged as higher ranking, and have more expertise and credibility (Sebastian, 2008).

Something that stood out in the surveys from the local hiring managers was how the impressions of a person wearing either formal or informal attire varied based on the field the manager works in. As previously mentioned, it appears that financial and sales

managers form stronger impressions of someone based on their clothes. Schneider (1970, pg 36) points out that during person perception, one may attend more to certain cues, like attire, if the situation calls for it. For instance, an interviewer may pay closer attention to how an applicant is dressed while judging them, and will notice how appropriate the applicant's clothes are for the position which they are applying. The appropriateness of the applicant's attire may indicate their competence to the interviewer. Correspondingly, Kwon (1998) found that when business students – those most likely to aspire to managerial positions in sales or finance—were asked to make judgments of people wearing formal and informal attire, their scores were significantly lower than non-business students; indicating that business students have higher expectations and judge more critically than do other students. This research indicated that there could be variance among different fields of industry in what attire qualifies as appropriate, and how someone is perceived as “competent”.

Experimental study: design and hypotheses

Based on the literature review and the feedback received in the preliminary analysis, an experimental survey was designed to test whether impressions of someone's professional competence are influenced by their attire and also the specific context in which they are judged. Each survey participant was assigned a hiring manager role in either the financial branch, the sales branch, or the research and development branch of a large company. Then, the participants were asked to evaluate two equally qualified people applying for positions under their management. One applicant was depicted wearing “formal” attire, and the other was depicted wearing “informal” attire. The

participants were asked to rate the two applicants on a list of personality traits derived from the five-factor model of personality (McCrae, 1992), i.e. active, organized, competent, worrying, artistic, etc. The methodology used was an analysis of trait relations (Schneider, 1970, pg 157). The following hypotheses were advanced:

Hypothesis 1: Participants will rate the applicants dressed formally as more competent than those applicants dressed informally.

Hypothesis 2: Dress X Role interaction: Participants in the financial manager role will rate applicants dressed formally as most competent, while participants in developmental role will rate applicants dressed informally as most competent. The rating of competence depends on how applicants are dressed, but also on the interviewer (role).

Hypothesis 3: Participants in all manager roles will “hire” the applicants dressed formally more often than those applicants dressed informally.

Hypothesis 4: Participants in the development manager role will hire those applicants dressed informally more often than participants in the financial and sales management roles.

Methods

Participants

Data were collected anonymously from 224 undergraduate students at Texas State University—San Marcos from one section of economics, one section of business finance, two sections of social psychology, and two sections of research methods in psychology. Two hundred and one students were between the ages of 18-25, 19 students were between the ages of 26-35, 3 students were between the ages of 36-45, and 1 student was between the ages of 46-55. Ninety five of the students were male and 128 were female. Twenty—one participants reported themselves to be African-American, 2 Asian-

American, 56 Hispanic-American, 141 White, non-Hispanic-American, and 1 reported being Other.

Materials

The following documents were the requisite materials for the present study per participant: a consent form outlining the procedure, purpose, and IRB exemption of the study (Appendix B), one of the six randomly assigned survey forms—one of three manager role assignments by 2 counterbalanced orders of the applicants (Appendix D), a ED99 Scantron answer sheet, a debriefing form outlining the variables of interest and hypotheses (Appendix E).

Procedure

Prior to data collection ED99 Scantron forms were numbered for identification, individually inserted into survey forms, and labeled according to their corresponding survey condition number (1 through 6). Upon survey administration, consent forms were distributed to students. The researcher described the consent form, and instructed the students to read it thoroughly and sign if they agreed to participate in the survey. Survey forms and corresponding Scantron answer forms were then distributed to participants in a sequential and counterbalanced fashion. Instructions for the survey were given: “Do not write on the survey forms in order to save paper. Answer sheets are provided inside the survey. Do not provide personal information; only translate your answers to the answer form. After you complete the survey please pick up a debriefing form”. In the survey participants first indicated their age, sex and ethnicity. Then they were assigned to one of

three managerial roles in the finance, sales, or research and development branch of a large company, and asked to evaluate two people applying for positions under their management. Each participant was randomly assigned one of the following three instructions conditions:

A) You are the hiring manager for the financial branch of a large company. Your branch's duties are to coordinate with clients, investors and banks in managing the appropriation of funds within your company. As the financial branch, you and your employees sometimes have direct face-to-face contact with the customers. Today you will be assessing two applicants for positions under your management...

B) You are the hiring manager for the sales branch of a large company. Your branch's duties are to present the projects and products to investors, customers, and clients in an effort to gain their financial support. As the sales branch, you and your employees frequently have direct face-to-face contact with the customers. Today you will be assessing two applicants for positions under your management...

C) You are the hiring manager for the development and research branch of a large company. Your branch's duties are to design and manufacture the products for the customers and clients. As the development and research branch, you and your employees rarely have direct face-to-face contact with the customers. Today you will be assessing two applicants for positions under your management...

The applicants' face, hair, and skin were obscured in order to eliminate assumptions of their ethnicity. One applicant was pictured wearing formal attire, and the other was pictured wearing informal attire. These conditions were counterbalanced, so that half of the participants rated the formally attire person first, while the other half rated the informally attired person first. Participants evaluated the formality of each applicant's attire, and then rated each applicant on twenty nine adjectives derived from McCrae and John's list (1992) of the five factor model of personality traits (Appendix C). Based on their impressions of the applicant, participants were asked to rate the extent to which each of the adjectives described the applicant. Each adjective was Likert scaled

with values “Not at all”, “Not much”, “Somewhat”, “Quite a bit”, to “Extremely”. Lastly, the participants indicated with a “Yes” or “No” whether they would hire each applicant. After the surveys were completed the participants returned all materials, and the debriefing forms were distributed.

Results

Preliminary analyses

Forty participants failed to report their role assignment correctly at the end of the survey. This was a key manipulation check to assure that participants had assumed their role correctly. On the basis that this data would prove unreliable, they were excluded from the analyses. Chi—square tests were run on the remainder of the manipulation checks. A statistically significant proportion of participants ($n = 118$, 70%) rated attire as “extremely important” when assessing an applicant for a job, $\chi^2(1, N= 168) = 27.52, p < .01$. A statistically significant proportion of participants ($n = 149$, 89%) reported they were able to identify with their assigned managerial role, $\chi^2(1, N= 167) = 102.76, p < .01$. A statistically significant proportion of participants ($n = 161$, 96%) reported their agreement that these assessments of personality based on attire were realistic, and occurred for hiring managers in the same way as designed in the survey, $\chi^2(1, N= 168) = 141.17, p < .01$. Lastly, a statistically significant proportion of participants ($n = 126$, 75%) reported their agreement that they would assess people in the same way as designed in the survey, $\chi^2(1, N= 167) = 43.26, p < .01$.

Principle components factor analyses with a varimax rotation were performed on each set of 29 variables used to rate the informally and formally dressed actors. For each

analysis, eigenvalues were set at 1 and coefficient values set at or above .35. Both analyses yielded five factors and the same clustering of coefficient variables for each factor. Thus, the following factors were created for each of the ratings of the formally and informally dressed actors: Competence, Creativity, Extroversion, Kindness, and Neuroticism. However, for the purpose of this study only the competence factors for the formally and informally attired applicants were used.

Reliability analyses were run on the competence factors. Reliability tests provide an index of how interrelated are the items of variables within each factor. For the informal applicant, the reliability for the competence factor was 0.92. For the formal applicant, the reliability for the competence factor was 0.91. An acceptable level for reliability is at least 0.80, and thus, these figures show a very robust interconnectedness of the variables within the competence factors.

Tests of order effects and the hypotheses

In a 3-way ANOVA analysis of how applicant attire, participant role, and applicant order influence the perception of the applicants' competence was run. The analysis showed that there was no significant order based on which applicant was seen first, $F(2,178) = .001, p = .99$. The hypotheses were then tested.

To test the first two hypotheses, a two factor mixed ANOVA was run. The results indicated a statistically significant main effect from the within-subjects manipulation of the applicants' attires on their competence scores, $F(2, 181) = 746.73, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .81$. The formal applicant was rated significantly more competent ($M = 3.962, SD =$

.57) than the informal applicant ($M = 2.014$, $SD = .70$). The means and standard deviations for all conditions are presented in Table 1.

The between-subjects manipulation of the managerial role, and the interaction of role X Applicant's attire showed no significant differences in perceived competence of the applicants (see Table 2). Thus, hypothesis 1 was supported, but not hypothesis 2.

The hiring frequencies for the applicants mirrored the competence scores. The informal applicant was not hired by 86% of participants across roles, $n = 158$, and the formal applicant was hired by 97% of the participants across roles, $n = 175$ (see Table 3). However, participants in the developmental role did not hire applicants dressed informally more often than those hired formally. Thus, hypothesis 3 was supported, but not hypothesis 4.

Discussion

Regardless of the hiring role, participants perceived a formally dressed applicant significantly more "competent" than an informally dressed one. This finding supported hypothesis 1 but not hypothesis 2, which proposed an interaction effect between the assigned manager roles and the ratings of competence. Furthermore, participants hired a formally dressed applicant significantly more than an informally dressed one, regardless of the assigned business role. This finding supported hypothesis 3, but not hypothesis 4, which proposed more leniency from the participants assigned to the research and developmental manager role. Key limitations of the study and the future directions of this work are addressed.

Methodological and theoretical issues

The most immediate problem with this study was that fifty-four participants failed to correctly report their assigned manager role at the end of the survey. This figure includes the participants who completed the entire survey but incorrectly reported their assigned role and the participants who seemed to provide reliable data but failed to answer the last five questions of manipulation checks on the back page of the survey. The latter, seen as reliable, were ultimately included in analyses. Although the results were not altered significantly after the exclusion of the unreliable participants, the failure rate of this manipulation check was alarming and needs to be addressed in future studies.

Another important limitation of this study is that even though participants reported their assigned roles correctly and reported that they were able to identify with their role, we are not certain that their decisions would have mirrored real world situations. In other words, this study involved undergraduate students, and the study manipulated simple role playing situations and not real world conditions. While this study shows what judgments students make of others, this may not necessarily be valid for experienced hiring managers making actual hiring decisions. Future research might examine how real world managers evaluate real applicants.

Third, there is a lack of stimulus sampling in this study (Davis, 1988). In other words, the present study only used one “person” and two outfits that were extreme opposites. There was no variation in the kind of person being evaluated, nor the kind of clothing in which they were presented. This research would benefit greatly from evaluating a variety of stimulus persons wearing a variety of different clothing outfits (Lennon, 1986). Especially limiting in this study was the sole use of “male” clothing for

the stimulus person. This decision was made for the sake of simplicity and focus, since men's attire and dress code expectations are much more clearly defined than are the dress code expectations for women, and avoids extra variables such as the influence of accessories and cosmetics, and gender biases (Kwon, 1998). Also, the stimulus person's identity was hidden in an effort to control for the extra variables of ethnic or racial biases. Thus, this study excludes the influences of these variables on how people make judgments of others in reality, for the sake of looking at the singular variable of professional attire.

Similarly, this study reduced its focus to a business interview setting, in which a manager assessed a job applicant. For simplicity's sake, only an interview situation was used. However, judgments of others are made in countless other situations both inside and outside business settings. Certainly co-workers also make judgments of their peers' professional competences outside of the context of an interview.

As Dr. Schneider points out, while there are established theories for attribution and impression formation processes, the literature on person perception is lacking theories for the process of "snap judgments". It is often assumed as common sense which factors play roles in snap judgments, like a stimulus person's appearance, posture, gestures, and the context in which they are seen (Schneider, 1970, p. 246). Also there is a separate literature in psychology on biases and stereotypes (Kassin, 2008, pg. 131). However, even in recent texts there are no theories combining the two and describing the process of snap judgments of stimulus persons in the area of "person perception" or "social perception" (Kassin, 2008, pg. 94). Thus, for this study there was a lack of

theoretical foundation for the process which is likely most utilized by students making professional assessments without real-world experience, and based on clothing.

Conclusion

The present study set out to test the influence of a person's attire on how they are perceived as competent for a position for which they are applying. It was learned that students assigned a fictional role as a manager, regardless of what area of business, perceived applicants dressed formally as significantly more competent than ones dressed informally, and furthermore would hire formally dressed applicants significantly more than informally dressed ones. This finding is important to anyone in a situation where personal presentation influences an evaluation of them. It matters to look your best, because that communicates to others a favorable impression of capabilities. It is important to note the influences of all the factors people use to form an impression of what you are like.

As addressed in the methodological and theoretical problems sections above, future research in the area of person perception and impression formation processes should focus on defining theory for snap judgments based on culturally learned stereotypes. Also, studies similar to this one should vary the stimuli situation in which participants are making judgments by using different contexts, and varying the stimulus person both in gender and race, and the kinds of clothes in which they are viewed. Furthermore, future research should analyze competence's relationship and interaction with the other four factors not addressed in this study: creativity, extroversion, kindness, and neuroticism. The relation between these factors and the competence factor would be

studied well under the domain of Implicit Personality Theory. Lastly, future research could analyze participants' opinions of the extent to which the applicants' attire reflects their competence, and compare those findings to the present study. It may be the case that participants believe that attire does not reflect a person's capabilities, but may still use it as a cue for making judgments of them.

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Appendix A

Manager survey form

Professional Attire Survey Questions

A. Descriptive information

- 1) Employer: _____
- 2) Job Title: _____
- 3) Job Description:

B. Rate the importance of each of the following items in influencing your impression of an applicant when conducting an interview. In the space provided beside each item indicate how important or unimportant (1 through 5) each is using the scaled values below.

1	2	3	4	5
<i>Not important</i>		<i>Moderately important</i>		<i>Extremely important</i>

○ **Appearance**

4. Attire: _____

5. Greeting: _____

○ **Non-Verbal Communication**

6. Eye contact: _____

7. Hand shake: _____

8. Attentiveness: _____

9. Posture: _____

○ **Verbal**

10. Speech Clarity: _____

○ **Questions**

11. Answers the question clearly: _____

12. Answers the question fully: _____

13. Answers the question quickly: _____

14. Responsive to the interviewer : _____

- C. **Casual/street wear:** Checkmark all of the clothing items for each of tops, bottoms and shoes that would be appropriate for a guy for casual street wear use.

15. TOPS:

- ☐ Tank Top
- ☐ T Shirt—solid color
- ☐ T Shirt—with graphic design
- ☐ Short-sleeve collared button up—solid color
- ☐ Short-sleeve collared button up—striped
- ☐ Polo—Solid color
- ☐ Polo—Striped
- ☐ Long-sleeve collared button up—solid color
- ☐ Long-sleeve collared button up—striped
- ☐ Blazer Jacket
- ☐ Suit Jacket
- ☐ Blazer Jacket—with neck tie
- ☐ Suit Jacket—with neck tie
- ☐ Neck tie with shirt

16. BOTTOMS:

- ☐ Casual (non-athletic) shorts
- ☐ Blue Jeans—worn repair, with holes
- ☐ Blue Jeans—good repair, no holes
- ☐ Trousers
- ☐ Khaki slacks
- ☐ Dark slacks
- ☐ Suit pants

17. SHOES:

- ☐ Flip flops
- ☐ Slip-on flats—i.e. Toms
- ☐ Athletic Shoes—i.e. tennis, cross training, running, basketball, etc.
- ☐ Casual (non-athletic) shoes
- ☐ Loafers—including Sperry's
- ☐ Dress Shoes

D. **Business Casual wear:** Checkmark all of the clothing items for each of tops, bottoms and shoes that would be appropriate for a guy for business casual use.

18. TOPS:

- ☐ Tank Top
- ☐ T Shirt—solid color
- ☐ T Shirt—with graphic design
- ☐ Short-sleeve collared button up—solid color
- ☐ Short-sleeve collared button up—striped
- ☐ Polo—Solid color
- ☐ Polo—Striped
- ☐ Long-sleeve collared button up—solid color
- ☐ Long-sleeve collared button up—striped
- ☐ Blazer Jacket
- ☐ Suit Jacket
- ☐ Blazer Jacket—with neck tie
- ☐ Suit Jacket—with neck tie
- ☐ Neck tie with shirt

19. BOTTOMS:

- ☐ Casual (non-athletic) shorts
- ☐ Blue Jeans—worn repair, with holes
- ☐ Blue Jeans—good repair, no holes
- ☐ Trousers
- ☐ Khaki slacks
- ☐ Dark slacks
- ☐ Suit pants

20. SHOES:

- ☐ Flip flops
- ☐ Slip-on flats—i.e. Toms
- ☐ Athletic Shoes—i.e. tennis, cross training, running, basketball, etc.
- ☐ Casual (non-athletic) shoes
- ☐ Loafers—including Sperry's
- ☐ Dress Shoes

- E. **Business/Smart Casual/Semi Formal wear:** Checkmark all of the clothing items for each of tops, bottoms and shoes that would be appropriate for a guy for business, smart casual and semi-formal use.

21. TOPS:

- ☐ Tank Top
- ☐ T Shirt—solid color
- ☐ T Shirt—with graphic design
- ☐ Short-sleeve collared button up—solid color
- ☐ Short-sleeve collared button up—striped
- ☐ Polo—Solid color
- ☐ Polo—Striped
- ☐ Long-sleeve collared button up—solid color
- ☐ Long-sleeve collared button up—striped
- ☐ Blazer Jacket
- ☐ Suit Jacket
- ☐ Blazer Jacket—with neck tie
- ☐ Suit Jacket—with neck tie
- ☐ Neck tie with shirt

22. BOTTOMS:

- ☐ Casual (non-athletic) shorts
- ☐ Blue Jeans—worn repair, with holes
- ☐ Blue Jeans—good repair, no holes
- ☐ Trousers
- ☐ Khaki slacks
- ☐ Dark slacks
- ☐ Suit pants

23. SHOES:

- ☐ Flip flops
- ☐ Slip-on flats—i.e. Toms
- ☐ Athletic Shoes—i.e. tennis, cross training, running, basketball, etc.
- ☐ Casual (non-athletic) shoes
- ☐ Loafers—including Sperry's
- ☐ Dress Shoes

F. **Business Professional/Formal:** Checkmark all of the clothing items for each of tops, bottoms and shoes that would be appropriate for a guy for business professional and formal use.

24. TOPS:

- ☐ Tank Top
- ☐ T Shirt—solid color
- ☐ T Shirt—with graphic design
- ☐ Short-sleeve collared button up—solid color
- ☐ Short-sleeve collared button up—striped
- ☐ Polo—Solid color
- ☐ Polo—Striped
- ☐ Long-sleeve collared button up—solid color
- ☐ Long-sleeve collared button up—striped
- ☐ Blazer Jacket
- ☐ Suit Jacket
- ☐ Blazer Jacket—with neck tie
- ☐ Suit Jacket—with neck tie
- ☐ Neck tie with shirt

25. BOTTOMS:

- ☐ Casual (non-athletic) shorts
- ☐ Blue Jeans—worn repair, with holes
- ☐ Blue Jeans—good repair, no holes
- ☐ Trousers
- ☐ Khaki slacks
- ☐ Dark slacks
- ☐ Suit pants

26. SHOES:

- ☐ Flip flops
- ☐ Slip-on flats—i.e. Toms
- ☐ Athletic Shoes—i.e. tennis, cross training, running, basketball, etc.
- ☐ Casual (non-athletic) shoes
- ☐ Loafers—including Sperry's
- ☐ Dress Shoes

27) How would you define “Professional” Attire? Which categories above qualify?

28) What in your opinion, is the purpose of “Professional Attire” or a “dress code”?

29) What are the effects of seeing someone wearing “Professional Attire”? What are the impressions you form of them?

30) To what extent do a person’s clothes reflect them as a person? i.e. their character, personality, values, etc. (circle one)

1

2

3

4

*Not at all**Minimally**Moderately**Extremely*

31) To what extent do a person’s clothes reflect their skills? i.e. capabilities and competency. (circle one)

1

2

3

4

*Not at all**Minimally**Moderately**Extremely*

32) Does your Business have a Dress code? If so, explain.

33) In your field, what percent of the time are you expected to wear professional attire?
(circle one)

0-25%

26-50%

51-75%

76-100%

34) How do you usually dress on a daily basis?

- A. Casual/ Street ware
- B. Business Casual
- C. Smart Casual/ Semi-formal
- D. Business Formal

35) In your field, what percent of the time are entry-level employees expected to wear professional attire? (circle one)

0-25%

26-50%

51-75%

76-100%

36) How do entry-level employees in your field usually dress on a daily basis? (circle one)

- A. Casual/ Street ware
- B. Business Casual
- C. Smart Casual/ Semi-formal
- D. Business Formal

37) How often do you interact directly with clients? (circle one)

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

38) In your field, how often do entry-level employees interact directly with clients?
(circle one)

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

39) How important is a person's attire when assessing them for a job? (circle one)

1. *Not at all Important*
2. *Somewhat Unimportant*
3. *Neither Important nor Unimportant*
4. *Somewhat Important*
5. *Extremely Important*

40) Would you hire an applicant applying for a position in your business who is not wearing "professional Attire"? (circle one)

YES

NO

Appendix B

Student Consent Form

IRB: EXP2012W5446

This is a research study with the intended purpose to evaluate the concept of professional attire dress codes and their role in how people make judgments of others in a business setting; as well as college students' opinions on these matters. Michael Bell (Email mb1697@txstate.edu, 512-569-0203) will be conducting this study under the supervision of Dr. Roque Mendez (Email rm04@txstate.edu, 512-245-2526) of the Texas State University—San Marcos, Department of Psychology.

You will be asked to complete a 20 minute survey by imagining yourself in the role of a hiring manager and completing the 71 questions concerning your opinions about fictitious characters applying for positions under your management. You have been asked to participate in this study to serve as a sample of the students attending Texas State University—San Marcos, and you and the other participants may vary in how you make judgments of others.

The benefits of participating in this study are that you gain the experience of contributing to exploratory research, add to the body of knowledge in psychology known as “impression formation”, as well as learn to monitor your thoughts and emotions in impression-forming situations with other people.

You may experience some anxiety while answering questions about your beliefs and how you make judgments of other people, but answering these questions is non-threatening and poses no risk. In the event that any participant might experience unanticipated distress, the contact information for the University Counseling Center is <http://www.counseling.txstate.edu/intro.html>. The email address is counselingcentet@txstate.edu. As a registered Texas State University student, mental health services at the counseling center are free, though the number of sessions allowed is limited. Any questions about the research, research participants' rights, and/or research related injuries to participants should be directed to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) chair, Jon Lasser (512-245-3413, Lasser@txstate.edu) or to Ms. Becky Northcut, Compliance Specialist (512-245-2102).

As compensation for your time and participation in this study, participants may receive extra credit at the discretion of their professor. If any student is unwilling to participate in this study, an alternative opportunity for extra credit will be made available to them.

Participation in this study is voluntary; participants may choose to not answer any question(s) for any reason, and/or may withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice or jeopardy to their standing with the University and any other relevant organization/entity with which the participant is associated.

All data from participants will be collected anonymously, and this consent form will be kept separate from the participants' answers sheets. All data will remain in safekeeping with previous research and private records for no less than a period of two years, upon which it will be destroyed.

A copy of this signed consent form and/or a summary of the findings will be provided to participants upon completion of the study if requested via email to either Michael Bell (mb1697@txstate.edu), or Dr. Mendez (rm04@txstate.edu).

Thank you,
Michael Bell and Dr. Roque Mendez

I have read and understand this consent form. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research.

Your Name (Printed)

Your Signature

Date

If your professor or instructor is providing extra credit for participating in this study, please provide his or her name. Class Instructor _____

Appendix C

Five Factor Model of Personality Traits

McGraw & John

Table 1
Examples of Adjectives, Q-Sort Items, and Questionnaire Scales Defining the Five Factors

Factor		Factor definers		
Name	Number	Adjectives ^a	Q-sort items ^b	Scales ^c
Extraversion (E)	I	Active	Talkative	Warmth —
		Assertive	Skilled in play, humor	Gregariousness
		Energetic	Rapid personal tempo	Assertiveness —
		Enthusiastic	Facially, gesturally expressive	Activity —
		Outgoing	Behaves assertively	Excitement Seeking —
		Talkative	Gregarious	Positive Emotions —
Agreeableness (A)	II	Appreciative	Not critical, skeptical	Trust —
		Forgiving	Behaves in giving way	Straightforwardness —
		Generous	Sympathetic, considerate	Altruism —
		Kind	Arouses liking	Compliance —
		Sympathetic	Warm, compassionate	Modesty —
		Trusting	Basically trustful	Tender-Mindedness —
Conscientiousness (C)	III	Efficient	Dependable, responsible	Competence —
		Organized	Productive	Order —
		Planful	Able to delay gratification	Dutifulness
		Reliable	Not self-indulgent	Achievement Striving —
		Responsible	Behaves ethically	Self-Discipline —
		Thorough	Has high aspiration level	Deliberation —
Neuroticism (N)	-IV	Anxious	Thin-skinned	Anxiety —
		Self-pitying	Brittle ego defenses	Hostility —
		Tense	Self-defeating	Depression —
		Touchy	Basically anxious	Self-Consciousness —
		Unstable	Concerned with adequacy	Impulsiveness —
		Worrying	Fluctuating moods	Vulnerability —
Openness (O)	V	Artistic	Wide range of interests	Fantasy
		Curious	Introspective	Aesthetics
		Imaginative	Unusual thought processes	Feelings —
		Insightful	Values intellectual matters	Actions
		Original	Judges in unconventional terms	Ideas —
		Wide interests	Aesthetically reactive	Values —

a. Adjective Check List items defining the factor in a study of 280 men and women rated by 10 psychologists serving as observers during an assessment weekend at the Institute of Personality Assessment and Research (John, 1989a).

b. California Q-Set items from self-sorts by 403 men and women in the Baltimore Longitudinal Study of Aging (McCrae, Costa, & Busch, 1986).

c. Revised NEO Personality Inventory facet scales from self-reports by 1,539 adult men and women (Costa, McCrae, & Dye, 1991).

Appendix D*Student Survey, Form 1*

IRB: EXP2012W5446

1) Age (select one):

- A. 18—25
- B. 26—35
- C. 36—45
- D. 46—55
- E. 56+

2) Sex (select one): A. *Female* B. *Male***3) Ethnicity (select one):**

- A. *African-American*
- B. *Asian*
- C. *Hispanic*
- D. *White, non-Hispanic*
- E. *Other*

You are the hiring manager for the financial branch of a large company. Your branch's duties are to coordinate with clients, investors and banks in managing the appropriation of funds within your company. As the financial branch, you and your employees sometimes have direct face-to-face contact with the customers. Today you will be assessing two applicants for positions under your management. Both of whom have impressive resumes and recommendations, and are satisfactorily qualified for a position with your team. For each of the applicants below, review their photo then complete the adjective checklist questionnaire that follows. Please answer your review honestly, and based on your first impression of each applicant.



What level of formality would you classify this applicant's attire? (select one)

Casual

Business Casual

Semi-formal

formal

From your impression of the applicant, to what extent would you rate him as...

5) Active? (select one)

A.
Not at all

B.
Not much

C.
Somewhat

D.
Quite a bit

E.
Extremely

6) Assertive? (select one)

A.
Not at all

B.
Not much

C.
Somewhat

D.
Quite a bit

E.
Extremely

7) Energetic? (select one)

A.
Not at all

B.
Not much

C.
Somewhat

D.
Quite a bit

E.
Extremely

8) Enthusiastic? (select one)

A.
Not at all

B.
Not much

C.
Somewhat

D.
Quite a bit

E.
Extremely

9) Outgoing? (select one)

A.
Not at all

B.
Not much

C.
Somewhat

D.
Quite a bit

E.
Extremely

10) Talkative? (select one)

A.
Not at all

B.
Not much

C.
Somewhat

D.
Quite a bit

E.
Extremely

11) Appreciative? (select one)

A.
Not at all

B.
Not much

C.
Somewhat

D.
Quite a bit

E.
Extremely

12) Forgiving? (select one)

<i>A.</i>	<i>B.</i>	<i>C.</i>	<i>D.</i>	<i>E.</i>
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

13) Generous? *(select one)*

<i>A.</i>	<i>B.</i>	<i>C.</i>	<i>D.</i>	<i>E.</i>
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

14) Kind? *(select one)*

<i>A.</i>	<i>B.</i>	<i>C.</i>	<i>D.</i>	<i>E.</i>
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

15) Sympathetic? *(select one)*

<i>A.</i>	<i>B.</i>	<i>C.</i>	<i>D.</i>	<i>E.</i>
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

16) Trusting? *(select one)*

<i>A.</i>	<i>B.</i>	<i>C.</i>	<i>D.</i>	<i>E.</i>
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

17) Efficient? *(select one)*

<i>A.</i>	<i>B.</i>	<i>C.</i>	<i>D.</i>	<i>E.</i>
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

18) Organized? *(select one)*

<i>A.</i>	<i>B.</i>	<i>C.</i>	<i>D.</i>	<i>E.</i>
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

19) Planful? *(select one)*

<i>A.</i>	<i>B.</i>	<i>C.</i>	<i>D.</i>	<i>E.</i>
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

20) Reliable? *(select one)*

<i>A.</i>	<i>B.</i>	<i>C.</i>	<i>D.</i>	<i>E.</i>
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

21) Responsible? *(select one)*

<i>A.</i>	<i>B.</i>	<i>C.</i>	<i>D.</i>	<i>E.</i>
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

22) Thorough? *(select one)*

<i>A.</i>	<i>B.</i>	<i>C.</i>	<i>D.</i>	<i>E.</i>
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

23) Competent? *(select one)*

<i>A.</i>	<i>B.</i>	<i>C.</i>	<i>D.</i>	<i>E.</i>
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

24) Anxious Self-pitying? *(select one)*

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

25) Tense? *(select one)*

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

26) Touchy? *(select one)*

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

27) Unstable? *(select one)*

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

28) Worrying? *(select one)*

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

29) Artistic? *(select one)*

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

30) Curious? *(select one)*

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

31) Imaginative? *(select one)*

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

32) Original? *(select one)*

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

33) Wide-interested? *(select one)*

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

34) Would you hire this applicant? *(select one)*

A. YES	B. NO
--------	-------



i) What level of formality would you classify this applicant's attire? (select one)

Casual

Business Casual

Semi-formal

formal

From your impression of the applicant, to what extent would you rate him as...

36) Active? (select one)

A.
Not at all

B.
Not much

C.
Somewhat

D.
Quite a bit

E.
Extremely

37) Assertive? (select one)

A.
Not at all

B.
Not much

C.
Somewhat

D.
Quite a bit

E.
Extremely

38) Energetic? (select one)

A.
Not at all

B.
Not much

C.
Somewhat

D.
Quite a bit

E.
Extremely

39) Enthusiastic? (select one)

A.
Not at all

B.
Not much

C.
Somewhat

D.
Quite a bit

E.
Extremely

40) Outgoing? (select one)

A.
Not at all

B.
Not much

C.
Somewhat

D.
Quite a bit

E.
Extremely

41) Talkative? (select one)

A.
Not at all

B.
Not much

C.
Somewhat

D.
Quite a bit

E.
Extremely

42) Appreciative? (select one)

A.
Not at all

B.
Not much

C.
Somewhat

D.
Quite a bit

E.
Extremely

43) Forgiving? (*select one*)

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

44) Generous? (*select one*)

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

45) Kind? (*select one*)

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

46) Sympathetic? (*select one*)

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

47) Trusting? (*select one*)

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

48) Efficient? (*select one*)

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

49) Organized? (*select one*)

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

50) Playful? (*select one*)

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

51) Reliable? (*select one*)

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

52) Responsible? (*select one*)

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

53) Thorough? (*select one*)

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

54) Competent? (*select one*)

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

55) Anxious Self-pitying? *(select one)*

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

56) Tense? *(select one)*

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

57) Touchy? *(select one)*

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

58) Unstable? *(select one)*

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

59) Worrying? *(select one)*

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

60) Artistic? *(select one)*

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

61) Curious? *(select one)*

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

62) Imaginative? *(select one)*

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

63) Original? *(select one)*

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

64) Wide-interested? *(select one)*

A.	B.	C.	D.	E.
<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Quite a bit</i>	<i>Extremely</i>

65) Would you hire this applicant? *(select one)*

A. YES	B. NO
--------	-------

66) How important do you think is a person's attire when assessing them for a job? (select one)

- A. Not at all Important*
- B. Somewhat Unimportant*
- C. Neither Important nor Unimportant*
- D. Somewhat Important*
- E. Extremely Important*

67) Which manager role were you assigned? (select one)

- A. Manager of the Financial Department*
- B. Manager of the Sales Department*
- C. Manager of the Research and Development Department*

68) Did you identify to your role as a hiring manger? (select one)

- A. YES*
- B. NO*

69) Do you think real hiring managers make these same judgments? (select one)

- A. YES*
- B. NO*

70) Had you actually been in this situation would you have judged this applicant in the same way? (select one)

- A. YES*
- B. NO*

Appendix E

Student Debriefing Form

IRB: EXP2012W5446

Debriefing

Thank you for participating in my person perception, impression formation study. As stated in the consent form, the purpose of this study was purpose to evaluate the concept of professional attire dress codes and their role in how people make judgments of others in a business setting; as well as college students' opinions on these matters.

The design of this study was such that there were three different kinds of manager roles for which each participant could be assigned: a manager of either the financial branch, sales branch, or research and development branch of a large company. After the role was assigned, each participant was asked to evaluate two fictional "applicants", applying for positions under the participant's management, with the only difference between the two being the clothes they were wearing in their pictures—either formal or informal attire.

I expect to find differences between the different branches in how strictly they evaluate the applicants, both on an adjective-cluster scale measure of competency, as well as how often each applicant is hired. In addition, I expect that the adjectives clustering with "competence" will vary with the different management roles—reflecting the different skills most pertinent for that field.

My hypotheses are that the financial branch will rate the applicants more strictly and have the most divergent scores between the two applicants, where the formal attire will rate very high for "competence" and will be hired very frequently, while the informal attire will rate extremely low for "competence", and will rarely be hired. Also, I think that "competence" for this branch will cluster with a more organizational skill set.

I think that the sales branch will show similar data to the financial branch.

However, I think that the research and development branch will show the most leniency between the two applicants. While I still hypothesize that the formal attire will rate higher than the informal group within this role, I think that they will not rate as high on "competence" as the financial and sales groups, and that they will rate the informal group and much more competent. For this branch, I think that the traits which will cluster with "competence" will be a more creative skill set. Also I think this leniency trend will reflect in the hiring frequencies, where the formally-dressed applicant will be hired more often than the informally-dressed one within the development group, but the formal attire will not be hired as often as the other branches, and the informal attire will be hired much more frequently than the other branches comparatively.

Table 1

Competence Factor Values as a Function of Applicant Attire and Manager Roles

Manager role	<i>M</i>		<i>SD</i>	
	Informal attire	Formal attire	Informal attire	Formal attire
Finance	2.09	3.94	0.74	0.57
Sales	2.00	3.96	0.64	0.55
Development	1.95	3.93	0.71	0.58

Note. The competence factor was measured on a Likert scale in which the values were labeled as 1) “Not at all”, 2) “Not much”, 3) “Somewhat”, 4) “Quite a bit”, to 5) “Extremely”

Table 2

Analysis of Variance for Competence Scores

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	η^2
Within subjects			
Attire (A)	1	746.733**	.805
A \times R	2	.245	.003
Within-group error	181	(.445)	
Between subjects			
Role (R)	2	.931	.010
Within-group error	174	(2.83)	

Note. Values in parentheses are mean square errors.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 3

Hiring Frequencies as a Function of Applicant Attire and Manager Roles

Manager Role	Informal applicant		Formal applicant	
	Hire	Not hired	Hired	Not hired
Finance	8	62	70	0
Sales	8	46	51	1
Development	9	50	54	4
Total	25	158	175	5

Note. There was 1 missing value for the informal applicants, and 4 missing values for the formal applicants