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Taste in appearance: self, cultivated dispositions, and cultural capital

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Taste in appearance: Self, cultivated dispositions, and cultural capital

by

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A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to develop a theory about taste in appearance and to investigate if cultural capital, proposed by Bourdieu (1984), is a relevant concept in explaining appearance-related consumption. Taste has been studied in two disciplines. Philosophers defined taste as an aesthetic aptitude or capacity to discover beauty from works of art. Sociologists conceptualized taste as a cultivated disposition in the guise of an innate disposition in a broad range of cultural products. While philosophers endeavored to conceptualized taste in relation to beauty, sociologists associated taste with social acceptance or attractiveness.

Phenomenological interviews were conducted with 16 participants from upper-middle and middle class backgrounds who lived in three Midwestern cities. Information about participants' demographic and family backgrounds was also collected. Participants were selected through a snowball sampling procedure to have varied background characteristics. A constant comparative approach to qualitative data analysis was conducted to find important themes and explore differences among participants related to their backgrounds (Strauss, 1987).

The content of the interviews indicated that taste in appearance is a cultivated disposition to direct consumption activities. Taste included preferences for putting together outfits as well as for particular aesthetic elements. Participants described taste in terms of how they related particular things to themselves (self-concept) and why they liked particular things (motives). Participants' preferences indicated their struggle with ambivalence about how much they wanted to fit in but remain somewhat different from others and how much they wanted to keep their appearance up-to-date and in fashion. Taste was actualized through
the exercise of appearance-specific motives and efficient appearance management strategies, including optimizing the use of given resources and negotiating conflicts among preferences and resources.

With respect to evaluation of taste, participants evaluated taste as a sum of the appearance and the consumption skills of a person, because taste was communicated through presentation of one’s appearance. Evaluation included judging how well appearance embodies an actor, how motives in clothing practice were successfully pursued and how an actor successfully managed constraints and balanced ambivalent factors.

Level of cultural capital possessed by the participants differentially shaped social actors' experiences of appearance consumption. The resources of cultural capital, including upbringing, education, and occupation (Bourdieu, 1984), provided participants with an aptitude for involvement in appearance consumption, including sensitivity to dressing appropriately, capacity to construct and communicate meanings, and opportunities and refinement of dressing practices. Among the participants, about half had background characteristics indicating fairly high level of cultural capital, and the other half had a middle range of cultural capital. For those with higher level of cultural capital, manifested taste was constructed with a higher degree of complexity than among participants with a middle level of cultural capital. High cultural capital individuals showed greater evidence of aesthetic involvement through clothing practices.

The findings have practical implications for apparel marketers. Knowledge of levels of cultural capital of target customers will help define strategies for advertising, store layout and merchandise display. The findings have useful implications for marketing of products other than clothing.
CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION

Taste in clothing is like a sixth sense for knowing what is right. If someone were to ask me why I purchased the cardigan that I am wearing, my answer would simply be: “Because I liked it.” If someone were to ask me why I chose to wear that cardigan with these pants today, I would probably answer, “Because I felt like wearing them together.” When looking at clothes, most people almost instinctively know whether they like them or not, even before their brains are able to generate rational explanations. Knowing that they like something does not necessarily mean they can articulate a reason. On the other hand, a sixth sense for clothing can be changeable. The love for a specific garment does not last forever. A garment exists as part of a person’s daily wardrobe until the garment is sentenced to the category of “I don’t like it any more” or “It doesn’t fit any more.” This study raises the question of why people tend to like a certain type of clothing; i.e., why people have certain preferences or tastes. Taste exerts a strong power over one’s decisions on the management of appearance, especially in such a varied market that provides endless, affordable alternatives which suffice for functional need or situational norm.

Despite conventional wisdom, taste does not only pertain to personal predilections or preferences. Cultural consumption and taste are symbolically communicated establishing social relationships, networks and status groups (Bryson, 1997). “Taste drives appetite and protects us from poisons” (Jacob, 2003). Although the “taste” in this quote refers to physiology, just as taste in food controls the pleasure of the table and protects us from eating harmful food, aesthetic taste in a similar vein controls the pleasure we obtain from objects and keeps us from consuming “poisonous” objects. Poisonous clothing, therefore, can be defined as that which is inappropriate or in bad taste, and which could, consequently, damage
one’s reputation in public. Because meaning is always constructed and negotiated in human interaction (Stone, 1962), one’s taste cannot exist free from interactions with others. What it means to prefer one thing over another arises through appearance-related interactions, like other symbolic interactions. Thus, the study of taste as a subject matter requires consideration of both individual and society. This study is conducted to understand how clothing is symbolically consumed, how taste is communicated through the consumption of clothing, and finally, how taste in clothing plays a role in establishing social relationships.

This study notes a judgmental aspect that underlies daily decisions in appearance-related consumption. An individual’s taste or preference is an expression of his or her judgment of a style, a reflection of standards or values, and a source of identity. Taste as judgment is different from other types of value judgments. Taste feels natural and almost spontaneous. One may or may not feel that one’s taste is formed on the basis of aesthetic, social or moral values because they are so deeply embedded in one’s disposition or hidden within one’s consciousness. Fashion and its presentation in the media transform political and critical issues into seemingly apolitical commodities (Morgado, 1996). Consequently, individuals have ambivalent feelings about taste, oscillating between taste as a personal preference without the intervention of any values, and taste as one’s appreciation of aesthetic quality, which is by definition laden with values (Kwon & Damhorst, 2004).

The study of taste in clothing is fairly exploratory. Studies of clothing have used the term preference more often than taste (Eckman, 1997; Feather, Ford, & Herr, 1996; Yoo, 2003). These studies used highly controlled visual stimuli that manipulated styling features such as length or width of garment details to investigate evaluations of attractiveness. Although some studies investigated personal preference in relation to social psychological
attributes such as body image, body cathexis, or identity (Chattaraman & Rudd, 2006; Rubin, Shmilovits, & Weiss, 1993), there have been few scholarly attempts made that conceptualize taste in clothing compared to the efforts devoted to the study of fashion. The self-dynamic nature of fashion as a social process has attracted scholarly attention (Gronow, 1997). This study, however, is concerned with taste as a relatively enduring disposition which survives the changes of fashion trends and clothing consumption as a cultural practice, encompassing instinct-like and habitual behavior as well as a means-end calculation in everyday life. Appearance or taste in clothing has never been a clear index of social status in the same way that income, occupation, residence, education, or social network are (see Coleman, 1983). In addition, taste in clothing is the least related to formal education, which is one of the important resources fostering cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984), while other cultural objects such as painting or music have ties with education to some extent. As a consequence, the study of taste in clothing is exploratory, and it is hoped that this study will be able to illuminate the rather unattended aspects of appearance management as well as the symbolic communication of clothing consumption.

This study takes an interpretative paradigm to explore taste in clothing as suggested by grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987). Phenomenological interviews were performed in order to uncover the essence, structure, or meaning of the lived experience of taste without relying on any of the a priori concepts suggested by the literature (Merriam & Associates, 2002). First, a pilot study was conducted with three people in their twenties. The findings of the pilot study helped the researcher understand the characteristics of taste in the lived experiences of clothing consumption and the conditions or issues related to taste in clothing.
Subsequently, relevant literature was intensively reviewed from two disciplines which are loosely connected: philosophy and sociology. Discussions on taste in philosophy began particularly in relation to art appreciation in eighteenth century aesthetics. Immanuel Kant is known for his seminal work on the aesthetics of taste, *Critique of Judgment*, in 1790 (Gronow, 1997). The aesthetic tradition conceptualized taste as the ability to feel the pleasure of beauty. Kant (1790) claimed that the intersubjective validity of the judgment of taste solved a long-standing problem in aesthetics: how is it that pleasure that is subjectively felt can be universally valid? In order to answer this question, Kant conceptually separated the empirical generality from the universal validity of a genuine judgment of taste (Gronow, 1997). According to Kant (1790), when a beautiful object is “genuinely” appraised, one feels the same pleasure in the harmonious free play of the cognitive faculties of imagination and understanding. Therefore, in order to make genuine appraisals, people should be disinterested (Kant, 1790). Disinterestedness is a state of mind that is free of practical concerns, goals, or desires. The judgment of taste is subjective, but universal; thus, taste can neither be questioned nor learned: the only way to have taste is to cultivate disinterestedness (Townsend, 2001). In this tradition, taste or feeling is the contemplative power of recognizing beauty, and, as a result, feeling becomes an intellectual quality.

The second part of the literature review covers the scholarship regarding social life. The term “taste” has appeared in sociological discussions since scholars first became interested in fashion as a phenomenon of modern consumption in the late nineteenth century (Blumer, 1969; Campbell, 1940; Simmel, 1957; Veblen, 1899, Chapter 6). Although taste was not the main interest of these scholars, the conceptualization of the topic and how the concepts are related to taste were carefully examined. Taste has gained sociological
significance since the latter half of the twentieth century through the work of Pierre Bourdieu and the practice-based researchers who theorized taste as an act of exclusion (Bourdieu, 1984; Lamont, 1992). Practice-based theory is interested in the underlying patterns and structure behind everyday consumption and regards consumption as a cultural practice which carries political implications both intentionally and unintentionally (Ortner, 1984). Practice theorists maintain that there is a circular relationship between taste and social structure (Swartz, 1997). They contend that taste is an acquired disposition which is conditioned by social structure and unequal social arrangements. The social structure is represented by the cultural practices that taste produces; thus, the status quo tends to be maintained.

On the basis of the findings of the pilot study and the literature review, the purpose and the research questions of the study were established. The grand purpose of the study is to theorize what taste in clothing or appearance is. This study is indebted to practice theory which proposes to overcome the limitations of subjectivism and objectivism (Ortner, 1984; Swartz, 1997; Warde, 2005). Through the constant comparison of the theories reviewed and the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), this study is conducted in order to conceptualize taste in appearance and to construct patterns of consumption as practice and social systems as structure grounded in the data.

Another purpose of this study is to apply the concept of cultural capital to the research of appearance-related consumption. The concept of cultural capital stems from the recognition of culture as a powerful resource in market societies (Bourdieu, 1984). This study answers Holt's (1998) call for investigation of the micropolitics of consumption. Although clothing has been included as one of the cultural objects in some sociological
studies (Bourdieu, 1984; Holt, 1998), this study is investigates if cultural capital is a relevant concept in explaining appearance consumption.

Qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews along with participant observation in three Midwestern cities. Sixteen people from the upper-middle or middle class were recruited by chain-referral snowball sampling. To investigate whether or not cultural capital serves to structure appearance consumption practices, participants were recruited to include a range of occupations. Interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions about their tastes and the tastes of people they know. During the interviews, participants were also asked to show and describe pictures of themselves wearing their favorite styles or clothes that reflected their taste. Participants filled out a simple questionnaire asking demographic information. Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. Data were analyzed through open-coding and focused-coding methods by comparing the themes that emerged with the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The emic meanings that the participants held were elicited and the emerging themes were discussed within socio-historical contexts to construct a theoretical structure grounded in data as suggested by post-structural analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Thompson & Hirschman, 1995).
CHAPTER TWO. BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Definitions of Taste

Taste is such a multifaceted term that its meaning can be different in a variety of contexts. The contextual uses of taste are reflected in definitions found in the dictionary. Going over these definitions should provide an overview of the attributes of taste as it is understood in everyday life. Taste literally refers to the physiological sense “that distinguishes the sweet, sour, salty, and bitter qualities of dissolved substances in contact with the taste buds on the tongue” or “this sense in combination with the senses of smell and touch, which together receives a sensation of a substance in the mouth” (*The American Heritage® Dictionary*, 2000). Taste also refers to the sensation of qualities that a person senses in the mouth as in “the sensation of sweet, sour, salty, or bitter qualities produced by or as if by a substance placed in the mouth” (*The American Heritage® Dictionary*, 2000). The word is used to refer to the sensing experience, “the act of tasting” or “a limited or first experience” of something (*The American Heritage® Dictionary*, 2000).

The use of the term taste is metaphorical, extending its focus beyond gustatory experience and its meaning to a cognitive ability, as in “the faculty of discerning what is aesthetically excellent or appropriate” or a quality, as in “a manner indicative of the quality of such discernment” (*The American Heritage® Dictionary*, 2000). The metaphorical sense of taste takes on the judgmental character of a subject. Taste also refers to “a personal preference or liking” (*The American Heritage® Dictionary*, 2000). Taste as a preference refers to the state of mind of liking, not implying any kind of judgment. Yet taste as a characteristic of ability or as judgment can also be identified as a person’s sensibility,
something that is likely to be assessed by others. People distinguish a person of good taste from one of bad taste. As a faculty of discernment, taste refers to a certain intellectual quality that makes judgments about the aesthetic value of something. Depending on context, taste refers to the entire range of sensibilities or the higher end of that range, “good taste” (Morreall, 2002); the word taste without any modifier often connotes the judgment power of a person who has “good” taste.

The self-evident nature of taste involves the moralistic connotation of “the sense of what is proper, seemly, or least likely to give offence in a given social situation (The American Heritage® Dictionary, 2000). The old saying that one cannot dispute over matters of taste originally meant that taste—or good taste—was self-evident and beyond dispute or no rational arguments would be provided (Gronow, 1997, p. 9). As people are thought not to err in discerning the taste of sugar or salt, taste is regarded as self-evident and something that cannot be mistaken. From this point of view, the possibility of failing to distinguish between the beautiful and the ugly as well as between the right and the wrong or to give good reason is excluded. As a result, people cannot legitimately have different opinions about good taste (Gronow, 1997). In the end, good taste is an expression of decency (Gronow, 1997, p. 9). And while the legitimacy of good taste may not always be agreed upon unanimously, no one would completely renounce normative aspects of taste.

The term taste is used inconsistently not only in ordinary language but also in scholarly works. In general, taste has been a more important concept to aestheticians than to social scientists. In philosophical aesthetics, taste contains two meanings: (1) taste as ability or sense of recognizing various aesthetic properties, and (2) taste as a metaphor for an immediate pleasure combined with judgment, i.e., as a preference for better things
(Townsend, 2001, p.350; Cohen, 2004, p.167). Taste indicates a mere preference or is not used as a value-laden concept in studies based on psychology or economics (Bennett, 1999; Holbrook & Schindler, 1994; Karni & Schmeidler, 1990; Lieberson, 2000; Schindler & Holbrook, 1993).

In social science or economics, taste tends to merely indicate what a person likes (Bennett, 1999; Karni & Schmeidler, 1990; Lieberson, 2000; Schindler & Holbrook, 1993). Taste and preference have been used interchangeably. At the same time, the judgmental aspects that are rooted in the philosophical or social values of the subjects have not received much attention from social scientists, except for those sociologists who find taste to be an important avenue to understanding contemporary consumption.

**Taste in Theories of Aesthetics**

With its emergence in the eighteenth century, the word “aesthetics” became identified with pleasure (Townsend, 2001). In classical thinking, beauty was thought of as a function of the order and harmony of the cosmos, which was believed to be reflected in the beauty of nature (Townsend, 2001). Eighteenth century writers began to associate natural beauty with the sensual experience of nature. They believed that the sensual experience of beauty could be enhanced by its arrangement by humans and by its associations with art (Townsend, 2001, p. 85). For example, painters looked for views or scenes that met aesthetic standards (Townsend, 2001, p. 85). Pleasure as a response to, feeling of, or sense of beauty in art and nature became the subject matter of aesthetics. Taste, which had been thought as a passive response, became conceived as an active mind that enables people to discern beauty (Townsend, 2001).
Theories of taste proliferated with the onset of modern aesthetics. Due to the diverse, private, and immediate nature of taste as analogous to the experience that art and beauty produce, the term has been recognized as an aesthetic term since the seventeenth century (Townsend, 2001). At the same time, the new science of Kepler, Galileo, Descartes, and Newton brought a significant shift in philosophy, putting emphasis on empirical evidence and the individual experience of the observer (Townsend, 2001). Modern aesthetics acknowledges the observer’s dependence on individual experience through the senses, and sense as the basis of aesthetic experience and judgment (Townsend, 2001).

The development of gastronomy among modern consumers coincides with the development of modern aesthetics (Gronow, 1997). In eighteenth-century England the affluence generated by the importation of colonial goods also renewed people’s interests in the aesthetics of the table, especially involving exotic foodstuffs and spices. Modern gastronomy has been active in disciplining and controlling the consumption of food by claiming civilized taste in new distinctions and classifications of food and drink. Before then, food was classified based on nutritional aspects and its need in society (Gronow, 1997). Gastronomic literature—cookery books, guides, and books on etiquette—introduced a finely divided system of classifications based on the taste of food instead of the nutritional components of food (Gronow, 1997). This process of refining taste reached its peak in the French cuisine of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Mennell, 1985, as cited in Gronow, 1997, p. 9). Even the physiological sense of taste became more sophisticated in the eighteenth century.

Fenner (2003) classified modern aesthetics into two streams: the judgment-oriented approach and the experience-oriented approach. The seventeenth and the eighteenth century
was the era of the judgment-oriented approach, which was concerned with the articulation of
the proper subjects and the proper methods of judgment. The aesthetics of Hutcheson, Hume,
and Kant, for example, tried to provide answers to the question, “How do we make
meaningful judgments about the aesthetic quality of objects and events?” (Fenner, 2003,
p.40). On the other hand, the twentieth century was the era of the experience-oriented
approach, where aesthetic philosophy reflected the influence of psychology and discussed
more of an active psychological experience (Townsend, 2001). This stream utilized the
concept of aesthetic attitude that had been understood simply as descriptive, and the
emphasis was on aesthetic experience: “Why do we separate those [aesthetic] experiences
from others [non-aesthetic experiences]?” (Fenner, 2003, p.40). In this case, an aesthetic
attitude as an active psychological state is cultivated and produces an aesthetic experience
(Townsend, 2001). Santayana, Dewey, and Stolnitz are among the experience-oriented
philosophers. For this study, it is relevant to go over the main points of the theories of taste,
as later sociologists drew on the tenets of taste theorists such as Kant to account for their
arguments.

**Hutcheson, Hume, and Kant**

**Hutcheson and Hume**

Because taste is a subjective feeling about objective things, theories of taste have had
to confront this contradiction and try to prevent the idea of taste from simply falling into the
mere subjectivity of identifying and evaluating art. Francis Hutcheson (1694-1747) was the
first empiricist who began to systematically think about art and beauty within the empiricist
tradition as influenced by Locke (Townsend, 2001). Hutcheson (1725) claimed that beauty
was an idea raised within us. He identified the internal sense, which was introduced by
Shasftesbury in the seventeenth century, as a source of ideas in morals and beauty (Townsend, 2001). The internal sense is what makes us perceive the ideas that God gives to all human beings (Hutcheson, 1725), which is a response to the ideas of things, not a response directly to the things themselves. The internal sense belongs to the mind rather than to the external senses, which are identified with organs of the body (Hutcheson, 1725). Through the internal sense, human beings are responsive to morals and beauty, which means that the mind has the power to combine separate, simple ideas, to compare their objects, and to observe their relationships and proportions by enlarging and diminishing its ideas of pleasure (Hutcheson, 1725, p. 92). This power of perceiving the idea of beauty is highlighted by the immediacy of experience. Pleasure does not arise from any knowledge of principles or proportions, but it arises from experience itself at first sight like external senses (Hutcheson, 1725).

Hutcheson believed in the original or absolute beauty of nature and artificial forms. He proposed that the “unity in variety” in objects “excites in us the ideas of beauty” (Eldridge, 2003, p.51; Hutcheson, 1725, p.95). Beauty is a feeling that is traceable to certain causal unities in our perceptions of objects. A feeling of pleasure is the empirical basis for our idea of beauty, but he considered comparative, or relative, beauty as an imitation of or resemblance to some original object in nature or some established idea. Although later writers did not agree with Hutcheson’s deep optimism towards perceived uniformity, he gave taste in aesthetics an empirical foundation (Townsend, 2001).

Hume saw weaknesses in the early empiricist ideas and confronted the problem that the subjectivism of aesthetics raised (Townsend, 2001). Hume (1757) did not believe that the faculty of taste for beauty constituted an internal sense like other natural senses (Townsend,
Different observers feel differently about the same painting. Such disagreement puts the concept of taste in jeopardy because the empiricist idea is contingent on the reliability of the senses. If so, taste would have nothing to do with knowledge and would not allow judgment (Hume, 1757).

Hume (1757) maintained that the uniformities came in two ways: some developed over time, while others were learned through objective standards. One may disagree with others about whether an object is beautiful, but everyone will agree that being beautiful is a desirable property. Hume (1757) believed that there were unanimously applauded virtues, such as elegance, propriety, simplicity, and spirit in writing. Those virtues implied praise by thenature of language and are generally accepted as good sense. But this general unanimity is lost when it comes to particulars (Hume, 1757, p. 107). The rules of composition are not fixed by reasoning a priori, but rather, as the result of general observations concerning what has been universally found to please people in all countries at all times (Hume, 1757, p. 107). Hume avoided reducing the subjectivity of taste to a mere personal reaction by setting up standards. Hume’s rules were essentially empirical generalizations, like Newton’s laws of motion (Townsend, 2001, p. 104).

Hume regarded taste as “a capacity to feel pleasure” (Cohen, 2004, p. 167). In his essay titled “Of the Delicacy of Taste,” Hume maintained that a more delicate taste meant a greater capacity to feel pleasure. But in another essay, “Of the Standard of Taste,” he also defined delicacy of taste as “the ability to detect every ingredient in the composition” (Hume, 1757, p. 109). This conception of taste as discrimination is illustrated in the story of Sancho Panza’s two kinsmen in Don Quixote where Hume paraphrases a story that Sancho tells:
Two of my kinsmen were once called to give their opinion of a hogshead, which was supposed to be excellent, being old and of a good vintage. One of them tastes it; considers it; and after mature reflection pronounces the wine to be good, were it not for a small taste of leather, which he perceived in it. The other, after using the same precaution, gives also his verdict in favour of the wine; but with the reserve of a taste of iron, which he could easily distinguish. You cannot imagine how much they were both ridiculed for their judgment. But who laughed in the end? On emptying the hogshead, there was found at the bottom, an old key with a leathern thong tied to it (Hume, 1757, p. 109).

Thus, two seemingly independent concepts are linked together by Hume’s idea that the beauty of a thing is “the thing’s capacity to induce certain feelings of pleasure in certain kinds of people” (as cited in Cohen, 2004, p. 169). Cohen exemplifies an application of Hume’s idea: there is a person who has better taste in wine than I, which means (1) he can identify types of grapes and vintages of wines with greater accuracy, (2) in many cases, he prefers one wine to another when it makes no difference to me, and (3) he can describe wines more copiously by using words such as earthy, bold, and complex (Cohen, 2004, p.169). In other words, a person who has better taste prefers one thing over another, while other people find no relative distinction. This is because this person is able to perceive every ingredient in the composition of that thing and, accordingly, sense a pleasure, while others are unable to distinguish any ingredient at all.

For Hume, beauty is not a quality in things themselves but what merely exists in the mind that contemplates them (Hume, 1757, p.107). Hume argues that the sense of a quick and acute perception of beauty and deformity is the perfection of the mental state (1757, p.110). But there is a difference between sentiment and judgment. Each mind perceives a
different beauty. All sentiments\(^1\) are right, but not all judgments, which are the expressions of
taste. He differentiated correct judgments based on good taste from feelings or sentiments
that people may have. While sentiment has a reference to itself, judgments have a reference
to something beyond itself. Hume turned away from properties in objects, and instead
focused on judges, acknowledged experts, as the basis of objectivity for the judgment of taste
(Townsend, 2001). Hume (1757) proposed a set of criteria for those who have ideas of
beauty. The standard of taste and beauty is established by the “joint verdict” of
acknowledged experts (Hume, 1757). Hume argued that the pleasures experienced by
qualified tasters are more natural or appropriate than others (Cohen, 2004). He listed five
features of the experts: “strong sense of plausibility and significance, delicate sentiment to
discern small-scale elements of a work, practice in art and its criticism, comparisons among
works, and lack of all prejudice” (Hume, 1757, p. 112). Teaching art, taste, or social decorum
is able to stand on the basis of the social authority given to experts. Otherwise, the object-
oriented standards will fall into functioning as support for baseless social authority in the
identifying and teaching of art (Eldridge, 2003).

Hume’s position is plausible as we do by and large defer to authority in the matter of
aesthetic objects (Eldridge, 2003). It is not surprising that people defer to art critics in
identifying and evaluating art. But the extent to which authority is given to experts varies
from area to area. Art critics are likely to receive more authority than do fashion critics. We
may assume that we do not rely so much on fashion experts for our judgments of taste in
clothing, but Hume’s criteria argues against seeing the judgment of taste as a mere subjective

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\(^1\) Sentiments for Hume refer to the whole range of passions, emotions, and feelings whether
we choose to have them or not (Townsend, 2001, p.106).
reaction. People take it for granted that some people are more sensitive to aesthetic features in objects than are others. Experts in clothing and fashion may be expected to have more of the features that are on Hume’s list. The significance of Hume’s criteria is that they brought to light the differences between the have-owners and have-nots in terms of aesthetic abilities.

It is noteworthy that Hume maintained that the standards of taste are constituted by joint verdict. The judgments of clothing are partly subject to what is akin to Hume’s joint verdicts; what is called “fashion trend.” The fashion trend here does not refer to an adoption of a particular design or an item, but the relatively enduring but changing custom in preference for clothing, such as the overall tendency of silhouette or fabric. People may or may not be aware of changes, because a new trend is constituted by the endorsement of a large number of people. Those who have more interest in fashion may notice that their selection of clothing reflects changing trends, but those who do not have an interest in fashion may not be aware that their preferences change along with overall fashion trends. If someone puts on a favorite tailored jacket from the '90s, the person may feel out of place. This would be because the fashionable rules for the combination of fabric, and the ratio between each feature, such as shoulder, lapel, and color, has changed, and the beauty of the jacket that once existed in the mind of the person does not exist anymore. The joint verdict of society for aesthetically pleasing jackets has changed. Most people choose to wear something not simply because they think it trendy, but mostly because it looks good to them at that point in time. Choosing something to look good is all part of an endorsement of a trend, i.e., acceptance of the joint verdict. Fashion trends are likely to be empirical generalizations of ever-changing dress culture. A fashion trend is like a joint verdict not only by fashion experts but also by a majority of people in general or in a group, and it functions like a verdict at the
same time. Campbell says fashion functions as a substitute for the standard of taste without actually being one (1967, as cited in Gronow, 1997, p. 91). Gronow (1997) interpreted Campbell’s thesis on fashion trends as functionally equivalent to the standard of good taste, although fashion does not share the same ideal and nature as the principle of good taste. One participant in the pilot study (Kwon & Damhorst, 2005) said, “It [fashion trend] helps me decide what I like from the past and combine it into what’s in the current trends.” The standard of taste in clothing is not determinate, but what determines this indeterminate standard is agreement among a number of people, which corresponds to the temporal or local joint verdict in Hume’s terms.

**Kant**

While Hume as an empiricist turned from seeking unities in objects to setting up the criteria of qualified arbiters to authenticate the objectivity of taste, Immanuel Kant was an advocate of universality in aesthetic judgment, and as such is the inventor of modern aesthetics. The term aesthetic is derived from the Greek word for “feeling” and, due to Kant, aesthetics became the principle term in discussions of beauty and art (Townsend, 2001). He established aesthetics as a domain of feelings in art and beauty and guided the intellectual tradition of aesthetics for the next 150 years (Townsend, 2001).

Kant’s seminal work, *Critique of Judgment*, first published in 1790, is about intuition as a starting point of the mind and the beginning of knowledge, while his other two writings, *Critique of Pure Reason* (1787) and *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) dealt with the condition of knowledge itself (theory) and the condition of knowledge as it leads to some form of action (morality), respectively. Feeling, intuition, and sense do not need to be thought of or decided on to provide a starting point of mind. “Pure intuition” is the “direct
encounter of a being that is conscious of his or her environment (Townsend, 2001, p.118).

Intuition leads to thoughts, theory, and considered action. Kant (1790) identified taste as the feeling that belongs to aesthetic intuition. Pure intuition² logically precedes thinking, which fits raw perception into logical categories. We make sense of the world by thinking, which leads to knowledge and action (Townsend, 2001). Intuition that creates feeling before experience would become a higher ordered form of knowledge which can be either theoretically or practically understood (Townsend, 2001).

Intuition is the basis for aesthetic judgment. According to Kant, aesthetic judgment refers to “paying attention to a work so as to determine whether it invites and sustains absorptive pleasure” (as cited in Eldridge, 2003, p.171). Every judgment is the result of the organization of the mind, but aesthetic judgments are more immediate, founded on pleasure or pain as compared with two other types of judgment: a theoretical judgment and a practical judgment. A theoretical judgment is “an experience of something as organized in a certain way according to a theory” (Townsend, 2001, p. 119). This judgment is based on a theoretical understanding of an object. Townsend (2001) illustrated theoretical judgment as follows: We judge that objects naturally fall when dropped because we implicitly organize the experience according to the law of gravity. Practical judgment is “an experience of something as having some purpose or end” (Townsend, 2001, p.119). This judgment involves actions that will satisfy desires or purposes.

Because aesthetic judgment belongs to pure intuition, which is prior to all practical concerns, it is free of concepts or goals (Kant, 1790). Thus, Kant emphasized that aesthetics

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² Townsend (2001) equated intuition with raw perception or initial perception, interchangeably.
is disinterested. Interest involves our desire to be satisfied by the existence of objects. For Kant, aesthetic intuition is disinterested, and contemplating art or nature does not require us to project our wishes. This is similar to Hume’s demand to be free from prejudice. A disinterested judgment is concerned with a subject’s experience. If disinterest is concerned with actual existence of objects, it already assigns some conceptual scheme to objects (Kant, 1790). For Kant, the path to taste necessitated the cultivation of disinterestedness (Townsend, 2001, p.119).

Kant distinguished kinds of satisfaction: the pleasant, the good, and the beautiful (Kant, 1790, p. 127). Among these, the satisfaction of the beautiful is concerned with aesthetic judgment of taste. The pleasant relates to sensual satisfaction conditioned by impulses. As the pleasant imply some desire, the pleasant accompany practical judgments. Goodness implies some objective standards. The good is the worth a person confers upon something after esteeming it. Something is good when it is the way it should be. The satisfaction in the good is the satisfaction with reason involving some kind of interest. However, the pleasure of the beautiful from the pure intuition is free of desire or approval. To make the distinction clear, pleasure related to the beautiful is called aesthetic or disinterested pleasure, and satisfaction related to the pleasant is called sensual pleasure (Kant, 1790; Townsend, 2001). Thus, Kant linked beauty and taste. The satisfaction of taste in the beautiful is disinterested and free of sensual satisfaction. In summary, taste is the faculty of judging an object or a method of representing it by an entirely disinterested satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The object of such satisfaction is called beautiful (Kant, 1790, p. 128).

In the judgment of taste in beauty, pleasure comes as a result of the harmonious free play of cognitive faculties, which makes the aesthetic pleasure different from pleasantness
If pleasure derived from a given object precedes judgment, such pleasure would be mere sensual pleasantness. Such pleasure could not have intersubjective validity but only private validity because it is dependent on the representation through which the object is given. Thus, the subjective condition of the judgment of taste must come first and the pleasure in the object follows as its consequence. The subjective condition of the judgment of taste refers to the universal capability of the communication of the mental state in the given representation (Kant, 1790). What are universally communicable are cognition and its representation because there is no limitation imposed by concepts; the cognitive powers involved in representations are in free play (Kant, 1790). The cognitive faculties required for aesthetic judgments are imagination and understanding: imagination for gathering intuitions together and understanding to unite representation (Kant, 1790). The universal subjective condition of judgment of taste is the state of mind in the free play of the imagination and understanding. Therefore, the subjective and aesthetical judgment of the object or its representation precedes pleasure because judgments are the grounds for pleasure in the harmony of cognitive faculties. Taste is then the faculty of judging a priori the communicability of feelings as if those feelings are bound up with a given representation without the mediation of a concept (Kant, 1790, p. 134). Kant (1790) termed this aesthetical taste the taste of reflection distinguished from the taste of sense.

Kant (1790) identified the meaning of “concepts” into different senses to resolve the antinomy of the following common principles about judgment of taste: that “everyone has his own taste” and “there is no disputing about taste.” The former statement does not allow concepts to become judgments, and the latter requires concepts as an objective and universal standard (Kant, 1790). Kant’s answer to those contradicting commonplace principles would
be stated as follows: that everyone has one’s own taste, which is ordered by indeterminate and supersensible concepts. Kant (1790) explained that the former statement means that the judgment of taste is not based on “determinate” concepts, and the latter means that the judgment of taste is based on an “indeterminate” concept (p. 140). It is necessary to pay attention to Kant’s use of “indeterminate concept” on which the judgment of taste is based. Kant regards the conceptual element that is built into experience as supersensible (Townsend, 2001). That is, that these concepts are independent of individual sensible things, and they organize sensible order. Thus, we know that there exists an order in our experience, but this ordered judgment is supersensible (Townsend, 2001, p. 122). Beauty is not inferred based on some specific features that satisfy the concept, but it is just experienced and felt without any determinate concept seen from the perspective of Kant (Townsend, 2001). Therefore, the Kantian judgment of taste is universal as well as subjective.

Kant resolved the problem of the antinomy of taste by allowing both subjectivity and objectivity of taste. Kant (1790) thought judgment of taste to be subjective and universal at the same time. Taste is one’s own faculty, so the Kantian taste can be neither learned nor acquired from others, whereas Hume thought aesthetic taste can be developed by the practice of enjoying and learning from great works of art that have achieved recognition over time (Townsend, 2001). Because an entirely disinterested satisfaction has no ground for any private condition, and genuine judgment of taste belongs to intuition that is given prior to any concept, judgment of taste is unconditionally valid to everyone and universal. Intersubjective universality is aesthetical3 and not grounded in any concept. For Kant, there is no need to rely

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3 “Aesthetical” means “felt” as compared to logical meaning, which is thought or reasoned (Townsend, 2001, p.130).
on experts for judgment. If we appreciate an object with complete disinterestedness, it is impossible to fail to make genuine judgments of beauty, according to Kant. An erroneous judgment just comes from misassessments, or misreports, of what has happened in oneself, not from disagreement with a standard (Eldridge, 2003).

Gronow (2002) found resemblances between autotelic changes in fashion and the Kantian concept of taste. Kant dismissed the relevance of the classical criteria of beauty, such as harmony and perfection (as cited in Gronow, 1997, p. 93). The objects of beauty have neither an internal end nor external purposes (Burnham, 2000). Taste as sensus communis (common sense) a priori offered grounds for resolving the antinomy of taste in Kant’s theory. Lyotard interpreted the sensus communis as “the kind of consensus … [which] is … allusive and elusive, endowed with a special way of being alive, combining both life and death …” (as cited in Gronow, 1997, p. 90). Gronow (1997) agreed with Lyotard that the sensus communis is the kind of consensus that is in a perpetual state, as is in the pattern of changes in fashion. As the sensus communis is a priori and supersensible, the principle of fashion is not sensible and demonstrates that people intuitively share taste (Gronow, 1997). Gronow (1997) also contended that fashion in part has the kind of pleasure that beauty provides: purposiveness without a purpose. Gronow (1997) thought there was something that sociological accounts of imitation and differentiation or utilitarian motivation could not explain sufficiently in fashion and that corresponded to the pleasure which comes from purposiveness without a purpose.

**Principles of Taste: Empirically Generalized vs. A priori**

Discussions called taste theories in modern aesthetics have a common assumption of the existence of the principles of taste. Theories or positions that completely repudiate
principles of taste should not be categorized as “taste” theories. Mothersill (1984) called the former positions as pro-theorists and the latter as anti-theorists. The taste theories built principles of relationships between objectivity and subjectivity in the experienced taste. Principles of taste discussed by philosophers come under either of two types: as empirically generalized or a priori principles. The differences arise in how a philosopher understands and interprets different judgments on the same object. On the empirical side, principles of taste are grounded on inductively established “laws of taste” (Mothersill, 1984, p.91). Beardsley believed that there are laws of taste, and that critics rely on them, while others, such as Lewis, believed with more caution that there are laws yet to be discovered (Mothersill, 1984).

In Hume’s (1757) view, beauty exists in the mind, and the objectivity of judgments of taste is attained by the delicate taste of qualified judges. Hume contended that subjective objectivity should be conferred upon qualified judges who have delicate tastes and who meet the standards of taste. The joint verdict of judges constitutes the standard of beauty. Thus, Hume’s criteria for judges and the standard of beauty are empirical generalizations obtained by experience and observation. Anthony Savile, who is categorized as an objectivist, insisted that survival over time ensures works of value. He maintained that if a work passes the test of time, it is reasonable to believe that it is a beautiful work (Savile, 1982, as cited in Eldridge, 2003, p. 163). Savile’s principle is empirical, like Hume’s. For Savile, a work is judged by diachronic generalization, while Hume’s joint verdict could be understood as a result of synchronic testing. Savile did not restrict audience qualification. Instead, a final verdict on a work of art is generalized by the cumulative approval of people. He attributes its survival to its features, which place it in a position to survive (Savile, 1982, as cited in Eldridge, 2003, p.163). Savile thought an analysis of beauty in a work of art to be a matter of whether the
work has those recognizable features. This idea resembles the emphasis put on empirical
evidence in science (Eldridge, 2003).

The principle of taste as empirical generalization raises a few questions. The principle
has an inherent problem when applied to the judging of the beauty of an object by testing if it
has some specific features listed in the principles of taste. Those features are generalized
from objects which are experienced as beautiful. Those features can be a necessary but not a
sufficient condition for something to be beautiful. For example, the intentional uses of all the
principles in a painting cannot guarantee that the painting will be beautiful.

The other problem is how we could understand different judgments of the same
object. Hume solved this by restricting audience qualifications. Art critics whom people
endow with authority have more of those characteristics that Hume prescribed. But an art
critic is also a status concept, as is art (Eldridge, 2003). There are no clear-cut boundaries
between those qualified and those unqualified. Hume’s joint verdict is conceptually the same
as Savile’s “test of time.” Cohen (2004) argued that Hume’s conception of those features is
more persuasive in intrapersonal cases rather than in interpersonal cases; a person would
regard the changes over time as improvement in one’s taste rather than simply as changes,
unless the changes are caused by aging or functional degeneration. It is hard to expect that
judgments of taste in one culture would be the same in another culture. If we admit the
possibility of different standards of taste in different cultures, how would we define a
boundary to which a standard of taste is applied? Would it be race, nationality, or a
community of leisure? There are not sufficient grounds for exacting judgments of taste from
one group to another.
On the other hand, taste for Kant is a priori and transcendental,\textsuperscript{4} which means this non-conceptual subjective universality has nothing to do with empirical generality (Eldridge, 2003; Townsend, 2001). Kant’s theory confers objective subjectivity upon an individual who makes genuine aesthetic judgments with disinterestedness. To account for the validity of intersubjectivity, Kant maintains that taste is a kind of “\textit{sensus communis}” (common sense) which implies the idea of a sense common to all human beings (Kant, 1790, p. 133). His theory of judgment of taste is based on the transcendental deduction of intersubjective validity.

Judgments of taste are reflective. Judgments are either determinative or reflective (Kant, 1790). It is a determinative judgment when concepts come first and we then look for instances of such concepts; it is a reflective judgment when there are representations first and we then look for concepts under which they might fall (Longuenesse, 2003). Reflection, however, does not start from a chaos of sensed data. To attain reflective judgment, the mind needs to have two types of rules available: the schemata of the categories and the concepts of comparison (Longuenesse, 2003, p. 145). The rule of the schemata is the a priori rule that demands specific modes of ordering of data referring to a mode of grouping what is given to sense through time (Longuenesse, 2003, p. 145). The rule of the concepts of comparison commands comparing groupings obtained (Longuenesse, 2003, p. 145). Therefore, Kant claimed that there is no need to look for empirical concepts. Reflective judgment is grounded on Kant’s principle of the “logical purposiveness” of nature; human beings, as part of nature, are purposive and have power of judgment, so human beings are born to have the schemata

of categories for grouping data and to have the ability to compare and connect individual events (Longuenesse, 2003, p. 145-7). Kant claimed that this principle underlies all the uses of reflective judgments in empirical cognition. In empirical knowledge, all determinative judgments have a reflective component and all reflection is geared toward concept formation.

However, not all reflective judgments lead to the formation of concepts (Longuenesse, 2003). According to Kant, the judgment that does not lead to cognition is “merely reflective judgment” of which the aesthetic judgment of reflection is an example (as cited in Longuenesse, 2003, p. 146). There are two kinds of reflective judgment in Kant’s “Critique of Judgments:” aesthetic and teleological judgment. An aesthetic judgment is characterized by “formal purposiveness” or “purposiveness without a purpose” (as cited in Longuenesse, 2003, p. 146). On the other hand, a judgment of reflection with the “objective purposiveness” of organisms is called a teleological judgment. Allison explained the difference as follows: “the imagination [in the mere reflection] does not exhibit the schema of specific concept under which the object can be subsumed in a determinative cognitive judgment (as cited in Longuenesse, 2003, p. 146). Instead, “it exhibits a pattern or order (form), which suggests an indeterminate number of possible schematizations none of which is fully adequate, thereby occasioning further reflection or engagement with the object” (Allison, 2003, as cited in Longuenesse, 2003, p.146). Therefore, the pleasure of judging, enjoying, and the failure of knowing constitutes the purposiveness without a purpose in aesthetic judgment (Longuenesse, 2003).

Kant is said to have ended the competition between empiricism and rationalism. His position, known as “critical philosophy,” retained the order and deductive reasoning of rationalism, but it applied them only to what was presented to the mind through the senses
(Townsend, 2001, p.117). Kant confronted the empiricist idea of treating the subjective judgments of taste as objective standards to resolve the antinomy. He instead conceptually separates the empirical generality and validity of taste from the universal validity expected from a genuine judgment of taste (Gronow, 1997). The intersubjective validity, a priori, logically resolves the problem. Kant’s position is idealistic, lacking the power to understand concrete cases of different judgments; it is difficult to impute differences simply to misassessment or misreport without considering all the possible interventions of social factors.

**Normative Aspects of Taste**

Taste theories contain a normative aspect of the judgment of taste. The antinomy of taste is not only a subject matter for philosophical inquiries, but also what people empirically experience in everyday life. It is hard to completely deny that people have different tastes (the subjectivity of taste), but it is taken for granted that people refer to standards or opinions of experts to some extent (the objectivity of taste) to make judgments. The normative aspect of taste refers to the fact that the judgments of taste are understood as making claims on others (Mothersill, 1984). The normativeness of taste arises from the objectivity of taste. Mothersill took a strong objectivist position and argued that judgments of taste have truth-value rather than being mere subjective reactions, which means some judgments of taste are true and some are not (Eldridge, 2003). Kant believed in genuine aesthetic judgment as intersubjective and universal. In Kant’s theory, when a person makes a judgment of taste—that is, when a person calls an object beautiful—the person judges not only for oneself, but also for everyone. The person supposes that others have the same judgment and demands it
of them as well (Kant, 1790). No one would claim that others should feel the same way about an object unless they believe in the truth-value of their judgments.

The intensity of normativeness in philosophical discussions ranges from prescriptive commands to relatively reserved attitudes, like avowal. Mothersill (1984) asserted that even anti-theorist positions, by implication, as well as taste theories have some normative aspects. She explained that how theorists vary is a matter of how seriously they take that normative aspect. George Santayana (1863-1952) led the movement to turn away from judgment-based views to experiential-psychological views (Fenner, 2003). He is not interested in the conditions or the framework of judgment at all. He instead argued that aesthetic pleasure cannot be alienated from interests (Fenner, 2003). His focus is on the individual, and he maintained, in defiance of Kant, that universality is unnecessary and meaningless (Fenner, 2003). In Santayana’s view, a judgment of taste is neither true nor false until it can be assigned to a particular speaker at a particular time in the form of a speech act (Mothersill, 1984, p. 80). Santayana acknowledged the existence of normativeness as well. Mothersill (1984) characterized Santayana’s view of the normative aspect of the judgment of taste as a sign of human frailty as a mixture of logical confusion and timidity. According to Santayana, people allow themselves to conform to the law although they think “it is unmeaning to say that what is beautiful to one man ought to be beautiful to another” (as cited in Mothersill, 1984, p. 80). It is because people hate to suffer another man’s doubt when we cannot tell why we believe so (as cited in Mothersill, 1984, p. 80). In the same essay, Santayana rephrased this: “If we were sure of our ground, we should be willing to acquiesce in the naturally different feelings and ways of others. … If we appealed more often to our actual feelings, our judgments would be more diverse, but they would be legitimate and instructive” (cited in
Mothersill, 1984, p. 80). Mothersill described the speech acts of calling some objects beautiful by a person who is described by Santayana as “defensive bluster” (Mothersill, 1984, p. 80).

Santayana’s point is more about how human beings normatively respond to the judgments of taste of others, while Kant’s claim is more about why one’s judgment of taste is normative compared to another. Santayana’s reflection on human beings represents people’s experience as it is, because the relationship of judgments of taste and social norms are experienced and expressed ambivalently in everyday lives; people are neither absolutely certain of their judgments and blatantly insist assimilation, as Kant says, nor completely ignore what other people call beautiful. In Kwon and Damhorst’s (2004) pilot study, participants showed confusion. One participant said: “Maybe if I think someone looks good and my friends don’t agree, it’s [their] own personal taste”, and “If it’s something that I like, but I know that people here aren’t ready for that, I probably won’t wear it.” The person spoke as if he had given up making a claim of his judgment against his friends by not wearing a garment that is against the norm. When it comes to his own appearance, he is ready to conform to norms with reluctance. And he will ask the same reaction if he meets a person who disagrees with the norms of appearance. It is difficult either to completely negate the objectiveness of judgment and to obliterate the normative aspects of judgment of taste, or to completely negate differences in judgment and to exact agreement from everyone.

**Discovery of Beauty vs. Projection of Value**

Different approaches to the antinomy of taste are reflected in how scholars perceive beauty. Beauty is a matter of projection to subjectivists. The values are projected onto things from the subjective sentiment (Eldridge, 2003). Subjectivists like Barbara Smith or
sociologists who consider art appreciation as a social behavior place art within social systems and turn attention from objects to viewers. Bourdieu⁵ (1984) argues that aesthetic judgments of taste are conditioned and, in turn, they condition social formation. Smith argued that “all value, including artistic value, is projected onto things by human beings on the basis of contingent, changing needs and interests” (Smith, 1988, as cited in Eldridge, 2003, p. 153). Smith insisted that there is nothing in objects to be discovered. What theorists of art should do is “describe the dynamics of [the] system of [artistic valuing] and [to] relate its operations to everything else we know about human behavior and culture” (Smith, 1988, as cited in Eldridge, 2003, p. 154). Eaton (1999) calls this kind of beauty contextual, i.e., attributed to belief or moral judgment. Thinkers, who claim that beauty is contextual, such as Smith and Leo Tolstoy, have used the term value to refer to the significance of art rather than beauty. Calling the judgment-oriented taste theories pleasure-based theories, Tolstoy believed that not only pleasure can account for the tremendous value of art (as cited in Eaton, 1999, p. 11).

Instead of attributing differences to needs and interests on which tastes are contingent, objectivists believe that beauty and artistic values are inherent in objects and are independent of other human values and attitudes. The problem of the judgment of taste is a matter of discovery (Eldridge, 2003). Judgments that are different from a genuine judgment come from failure to recognize or discover the beauty and the artistic values in objects. Hutcheson’s internal sense responding to “uniformity amidst variety,” Hume’s different levels of the delicacy of taste that make people able to sense the properties in objects, or Kant’s “common sense” as the shared humanity of sense in the disinterested reflection all refer to the power of

⁵ The sociological positions, including that of Bourdieu, are discussed in the section “The Sociology of Taste.”
perceiving genuine beauty. These positions claim the unmediated attribution of beauty to objects or events (Eaton, 1999). In disinterested aesthetic experience, people directly apprehend properties such as rhythm, balance, proportion, form, etc. (Eaton, 1999).

Taste theorists are vulnerable to sociological questions: Why do we want to have good taste? Is it possible to completely stand aloof from one’s interests or beliefs when making judgments of taste? Will people make the same judgments after a hundred years? Taste theories deal with the conditions of aesthetic judgment and the experience of the pleasant feeling which is believed to be inherent in the beauty of art or nature. Relatively recent aesthetic discussions try to view taste or art as contextual or contingent on individuals or communities subsuming sociological or psychological conditions: social and cultural engagement of art (Croche, 1909), an ability to be distanced as a psychological condition (Bullough, 1912), or rejection of the entire history of aesthetics as a distinct psychological condition (Dickie, 1964).

**Taste in Sociology**

While aesthetic theories could be seen as an effort to converge principles of aesthetic judgment and individual experience, sociological interests encompass individual dispositions and behaviors in relation to groups or the society to which individuals belong. Aestheticians try to answer the question: “How can we make meaningful judgment of taste?” Sociologists question the assumption of taste and ask: “Why do people seek good taste?” Sociological inquiry regards taste as a reflection of social reality or taste as a social reality. How social stratification has been represented through taste and how a range of tastes can be interpreted in social structure are pertinent sociological questions. In this section, relationships between fashion and class, which are the common denominators in the sociology of taste, are outlined.
The discussion delves into theories and studies related to taste in sociology. Reviewing the history of status markers is useful. Just as Ortner (1984) claimed that any theory is a product of its times (p.160), the theories related to taste reflect newly emerging or observed social phenomena of consumption at particular periods of time.

**Sociological Issues of Taste: Fashion and Stratification**

Taste in sociology is perceived as a relative and society-dependent concept. Taste in clothing is defined as “prevailing opinion of what is and what is not attractive and appropriate for a given occasion” (Stone, 2004, p. 7). Stone (2004) even separated the concept of attractiveness from beauty, emphasizing the importance of social approval. She maintained that not every beautiful style is in fashion and that inartistic or ugly fashion is even accepted in some cases depending on the verdict of good or chic taste in a particular time and situation and for particular groups of people.

Taste is treated almost like a synonym of fashion in many writings. James Laver (1899) explained the relationship between taste and fashion in terms of its acceptance level. According to him, a style that is thought to be “smart” in its time may be indecent or shameless ten or five years before its time (p. 255). Moreover, the style may be hideous or ridiculous ten or twenty years after its time (p. 255). Laver’s account suggests that taste is subject to social value or what society thinks is important. Therefore, sociological deliberations on taste are often accompanied by discussions of modern fashion phenomenon and vice versa. In the following discussion, fashion refers to the changing nature of accepted or preferred styles. To be “in fashion” is a status accepted by society or groups at a particular point in time.
Nystrom distinguished taste from fashion. “Good taste essentially is making the most artistic use of current fashion … bridging the gap between good art and common usage” according to Nystrom (1928, p. 7). Not all clothes in fashion exhibit good taste, and taste is more than fashion. Good taste is an ability to maneuver current fashion trends into individual expression. Nystrom’s view implies that taste can be a status concept that makes distinctions between artistic and common use of fashion trends, while Laver (1899) attended to the influence of changing fashions on judgment of taste.

The object of taste is different in sociology and aesthetics. In aesthetics taste refers to “an ability to appreciate works of art”; by contrast, in sociology taste concerns “a preference for a broad range of objects of consumption,” including painting, clothing, or food. While aestheticians endeavor to conceptualize taste in relation to beauty, sociologists associate taste with social acceptance and attractiveness. Unlike aesthetics, sociological theorizing of taste and fashion began at the end of the nineteenth century. Campbell (1940) argued that fashion and related phenomena did not get proper sociological attention in part because of the productionist economic bias which pervaded most of social science in conjunction with an underlying strain of ascetic Puritanism (p. 7). Taste gained sociological significance as sociologists realized that good taste in consuming art and commodities serves as a status marker or a means of class distinction from the turn of the twentieth century.

Class or stratification is one of the most important concepts in the sociology of taste. Social stratification and structure are important sociological topics because these involve power, i.e., the authority or influence over others (Giddens, 1989). Giddens (1989) listed four characteristics of class compared to other systems such as slavery and estates. The boundaries in a class system are less clear-cut and more fluid (Giddens, 1989). Social
mobility is much more common, which means class is not only given, but in part achieved (Giddens, 1989). Class depends on economic differences in possessing and controlling material resources (Giddens, 1989). Inequalities in class systems are expressed mainly through impersonal large-scale connections, while inequalities between serf and lord are expressed in personal relationships of duty (Giddens, 1989).

Peterson (1997a, 1997b) draws on the writings of Max Weber (1864-1920) to explain status culture. Weber’s approach is built on Karl Marx’s theory which summarized class as “a group of people who stand in a common relationship to the means of production” (Giddens, 1989, p. 210). Like Marx, Weber thought that class is founded on economic conditions, but he saw economic differences of class division not only in the control or lack of control of the means of production but also in the availability of resources such as skills and credentials or qualification, which affect the types of job people engage in (Giddens, 1989). Weber added two more criteria of stratification besides class in Western industrial societies: status and party (Peterson, 1997b; Giddens, 1989). Status refers to the stratification of social groups according to the social honor or prestige accorded these groups by others. Party refers to a group of individuals who have common backgrounds or interests and who work together. Party formation can independently influence stratification (Giddens, 1989). Weber’s status honor is based on one’s relation to the means of cultural reproduction regarding the consumption of products and lifestyles (Peterson, 1997a, 1997b). Weber thought that there is only a loose fit between social class and status group ranking and that the criteria of status honor have varied from society to society and over time within a social context (Peterson, 1997b). Peterson (1997b) explained that most stratification researchers have ignored status as epiphenomenon or conveniently have focused on class because class is
easier to measure. He regarded Thorstein Veblen, Lloyd Warner, Herbert Gans and Pierre Bourdieu as those who paid serious attention to the importance of status group.

Social stratification in this study focuses on the relational aspect of the concept: “class is a dynamic process which is the site of political struggle rather than a set of static and empty positions” (Lawler, 2005, p.430). Traditionally, class was considered in relation to exploitation on account of the division of labor based at the national level, but class is also considered to arise from exchange relations between and among individuals (Savage, Warde, & Devine, 2005). Bourdieu approached stratification with the relational understanding of class (Bourdieu, 1984; Gershunny, 2000). Bourdieu associated class position with Weber’s status, which refers to the symbolic distinctions that emerge from the opposition and affinities among classes. Bourdieu believed that one’s position in the means of production is only one of several sources of power (1984, p. 372). Bourdieu made his view different from Marxist class analysis by integrating culture, tastes, and lifestyle indicators into a social-class framework that pays attention to cultural differences as markers of class differences (Swartz, 1997). Marxist class theory neglected the symbolic dimension of class relations. Bourdieu contended that social position is determined by one’s position in both the means of production and consumption (1984, p. 483). He conceptualized social class by relating it to class consciousness and action on the conditions of existence (Swartz, 1997, p. 149). Social class is defined in terms of similar positions in social space that provide similar conditions of existence and conditioning. Class therefore creates similar dispositions which in turn generate similar practices (Bourdieu, 1987, as cited in Swartz, 1997, p. 154). Therefore, class becomes a generic term for all social groupings sharing similar economic conditions and dispositions. Swartz (1997) saw that classes for Bourdieu resemble a Durkheimian category
of groups that share experiences and collective representations (p.154). Bourdieu’s concept of class also takes into account gender, race or ethnicity, place of residence, and age as stratifying features that create secondary social divisions within classes (Swartz, 1997).

**The Emergence of Taste: The History of Status Markers**

The history of status markers traces back to before the time when status honor in the U.S. was not based on taste (Peterson, 1997b). Before the American Revolution (1775-1783), the North American continent was colonized largely by groups from the countries of Europe. There was a tension between the colonists who sought status honor based on loyalty to their home countries and those who sought to form new criteria for status in the New World. In the final quarter of the eighteenth century, the democratic ideals of freedom and equality renounced aristocratic lineage as basis of status honor (Wecter, 1937, cited in Peterson, 1997b, p. 78). However, in the years between the Revolution and the U.S. Civil War (1861-1865), the idea of aristocracy developed, and family name, individual reputation and social standing again became the source for status honor (Wecter, 1937, cited in Peterson, 1997b, p. 78). Family-based status honor was restricted to metropolitan areas in the societies of Boston, New York, Baltimore, and Savannah (Peterson, 1997b).

After the mid-1850s, industrial development and the consequences of the Civil War exceeded in the number of national elites that could be recognized by personal reputation and family name. Instead etiquette, i.e., how to behave appropriately in social situations, worked as an indicator of status, because discreet behavior could be learned in the years growing up in a home of high status (Wecter, 1937, as cited in Peterson, 1997b, p. 79). The discreet behavioral norms codified elaborate details of rules in all categories of dress and demeanor and brought about the development of the deportment industry, publishing etiquette books,
As information became widely available, etiquette and behavioral distinction of status became unreliable. People then turned to a new status marker, affiliation (Peterson, 1997b). After the Civil War, guest lists of parties and ball dances served as a status marker. In 1888, a “Social Register” was first published and gained instant success. To get into the Social Register, a family had to apply and be recommended by three Register members. Then editorial staff members who are familiar with New York society examined applicant’s suitability. Name, address, occupation, club membership, philanthropic and civic associational officerhip, opera box ownership, and place of formal education were taken into account (Baltzell, 1953, as cited in Peterson, 1997b, p. 80).

As memberships became purchasable and status honor became uninterpretable across regions, associated and formal behavior-based status became obsolete. In the latter quarter of the nineteenth century, the criteria for status moved to what would be hard to acquire and could apply in all situations: Art appreciation received emphasis as a factor that distinguishes discriminating taste (Peterson, 1997b). Expressed in Bourdieu’s terms, stratification in the United States shifted from social, moral, and economic capital-based status to cultural capital-based status. Although music, poetry, literature, paintings, and plays had been the activities of those in the highest class since colonial times, it was not until the 1870s that art appreciation actually became a status marker (Peterson, 1997b). The fine arts became separated from popular arts, and the idea of highbrow was created, stigmatizing the popular as lowbrow (Peterson, 1997b). Peterson (1997b) illustrates an interesting example of creating the highbrow. The works of Shakespeare were known and enjoyed both by the rich and the
yet the works of Shakespeare were reinterpreted as high art that was complex and difficult to understand in the latter part of the nineteenth century (p. 82). The mode of linking fine arts appreciation with high status is consistent with Weber’s emphasis on class fractions with the status groups possessing distinctive taste and lifestyle (Laermans, 2002) and is also consistent with neo-Weberian studies such as those that involve cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984; DiMaggio, 1992, 1996).

Peterson (1997b) proposed that the taste-based system proceeded to recognize the existence of the middlebrow between highbrow and lowbrow taste. He found a number of commentaries recognizing middlebrows in literature. The term middlebrow was conceptualized as the group whose status is in-between high and low class. Middlebrows were said to learn taste from professional critics, magazines such as Readers’ Digest, educational classes, and compilations of the “best music” selected by those advertised as experts (Rubin, 1992, as cited in Peterson, 1997b, p.85). Highbrows, in contrast, distinguish art from entertainment and are engaged in fine art appreciation in such areas as classical music, poetry, literature, paintings, and plays (Peterson 1997).

With the hierarchy of taste established by the first quarter of the twentieth century, the practice of attacking the highbrow snob emerged. Social dislocation and cultural mixing driven by the Great Depression of the 1930s and World War II in the 1940s created elitist interest in the folk and working class-based popular culture, including enthusiasm for jazz (Peterson, 1997b). This change was noted by most conservative intellectuals and Marxists (Peterson, 1997b). There were mixed interpretations of this change as threatening the distinctions between “brow” levels or the new openness of elite taste (Peterson, 1997b).
Contradicting opinions of classed consumption between high and low culture and the concern over the degrading nature of the culture continue to this day.

However, studies done in the U.S. since the mid 1960s are not consistent regarding status and status markers. DiMaggio found in a number of studies a correlation between social class and fine arts consumption in the U.S. (DiMaggio, 1982, 1996; Peterson, 1997b). However, Peterson and colleagues found in a 1982 national survey that the U.S. elite sensibility is eclectic (Peterson & Kern, 1996; Peterson & Simkus, 1992). Petersen and Kern (1996) showed that highbrow snobbery has shifted to “cosmopolitan omnivorousness” in a comparison of 1982 and 1992 national survey data.

**Taste and Conscious Social Competition**

Theodore Veblen became famous for his theory of conspicuous consumption at the turn of the twentieth century. This period, known as *la Belle Époque* in France, the Edwardian period in England, and the Gilded Age in America, featured extravagant and elaborated fashions (Brannon, 2005). Extravagant travel and entertainment, philanthropy, art collecting, acquisition of homes, home furnishings, and apparel were the signs of conspicuous consumption. Veblen (1899) proposed three principles of dressing. One is conspicuous waste that displays the affordability of expensive goods. The second principle is conspicuous leisure, a concept laid out in the title of his book *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. Conspicuous leisure signifies that there is no need on the part of the leisure enjoyer to engage in any kind of productive labor. Veblen (1899) interpreted the dress of a gentleman, including spotless linen, patent-leather shoes, and lustrous hat, as the insignia of leisure. As the third principle, Veblen (1899) thought that dress must be up-to-date as well as expensive and inconvenient, symbolic of a life that is free from labor.
Veblen’s notion of taste lies in between sociological and aesthetic thinking, integrating the Kantian sense of genuine beauty and social acceptance of taste. Veblen (1899) maintained that the standard of reputability shapes tastes. Veblen (1899) was aware that his theory does not sufficiently explain change in fashion, but he asserted that the antagonism between expensiveness and artistic apparel, in part, explains the restless change of fashion. Veblen (1899) thought that expensive dress is intrinsically ugly, but the canon of reputability makes people feel that the prevailing fashion is beautiful and attractive. The alleged beauty of the styles at any given time is good only until the warrant of reputability is transferred to a new style. Veblen agreed with Rousseau’s idea that social competition creates something artificial in people (as cited in Gronow, 1997, p. 34). Gronow (1997) interpreted Veblen’s claim on the consumption of luxury to imply that taste and beauty was corrupted. Veblen (1899) differentiated pecuniary sense of beauty from inborn sense of beauty, which he thought was genuine beauty. To Veblen (1899), the beauty of the day was not real beauty, the taste of the day was not good taste, and the manners of the day were not decent.

According to Peterson’s (1997b) history of status markers in the U.S., it was not until the last quarter of the nineteenth century that taste for art appreciation began to function as a display of and a criterion of status. It is at approximately the same period of time that Veblen (1899) observed that capitalistic consumption was becoming conspicuous consumption. Those two perspectives are apparently contradictory. Peterson (1997b) proposed that good taste began to function as a status marker to distinguish upper class groups from lower status groups, but Veblen (1899) maintained that the industrial society drove the corruption of taste. The confusion arises from the subjects in which both scholars were interested. The emergence of taste as status marker refers to the changes in identifying and distinguishing
status; people turned to subtler and harder-to-acquire status markers as society became anonymous and a wider range of people could afford art and clothing (Peterson, 1997b). On the other hand, Veblen’s analysis focused on the new upper middle class, in particular the nouveau riche, at the end of the century. The former symbol of upper class, leisure as freedom from work and having domestic servants, was not available to the new middle class, so they instead had idle wives and vicariously consumed luxury to display their newly gained social value, pecuniary strength. Veblen viewed the middle class as pursuing pecuniary beauty through the consumption of fashionable goods. Gronow (1997) claimed that Veblen’s indignation was directed towards conspicuous consumption itself rather than to a life of leisure and good manners (p. 38). Veblen is as among the first to observe the downward-flow of fashion (Brannon, 2005; Stone, 2004). He had appreciation for the taste of the top stratum and disgust for what he called superficial and artificial imitation by the new middle class. Veblen’s stand against taste for fashionable goods reflected his elitism about good taste. He did not disapprove of taste-based distinction and the hierarchy of taste. What he disapproved of was the new middle class who imitated the taste of the elites. Veblen regarded middle class taste as superficial and artificial imitation, based on their pecuniary power rather than on good taste.

To Georg Simmel (1957), changes in fashion are driven by human tendencies toward conformity and individuality. These correspond to imitation and distinction, or identification and differentiation respectively. To Simmel (1957), the movement of fashion is a self-dynamic process in the class hierarchy; the elite class differentiates itself through fashion, the

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6 The original article was published in *International Quarterly*, Volume 10, October 1904, pp. 130-155.
adjacent lower class imitates the look, and the elite class moves on to a new look to further
distinguish itself, which entails successive processes of imitations and differentiations.

Integrating Simmel’s later essays, Gronow (1997) maintained that Simmel’s theory
does not simply claim hierarchical distinction and imitation in class competition. Gronow
(1997) placed the importance of Simmel’s theory on its analytic rather than critical aspects.
Gronow (1997) interpreted Simmel’s theory as highlighting inter-class distinction and intra-
class imitation, which means that the majority of the middle class participates in the imitation
of fashion trends rather than the act of differentiation from the lower class. As found in a
study by Kelly and Shapiro (1954), middle class members who have lower perception of
acceptance by their reference groups are likely to show conformity to norms. According to
Simmel, the middle class initiates rapid fashion changes by imitating the rich and
consequently imitating within the middle stratum (Gronow, 1997, p. 94). Simmel attributed
class competition in fashion to the simultaneous needs of union and isolation. Therefore,
fashion helps an individual overcome social distance by participating in the changing fashion
to create social consensus. The significance of Simmel’s view lies in the idea of the
simultaneous movement of social identification and differentiation, which does not
necessarily require a class hierarchy (Gronow, 1997).

Veblen and Simmel were aware of the process of duality that shapes taste, a duality
that looked like the problem of antinomy in aesthetics. Veblen (1899) thought that fashion
which is accepted as attractive at a given time is located at a particular point on the
continuum between pecuniary beauty, that would lead to excess and grotesqueness, and
genuine beauty, that would lead to the perfection of beauty. Simmel (1957) thought that the
duality is an inborn tendency that individuals and society have. However, Veblen and
Simmel interpreted duality from different perspectives. Veblen argued that people seek conspicuous consumption as a status marker, which shapes tastes into pecuniary beauty. But the inborn sense of beauty keeps taste from being senseless and endlessly chasing after luxury. Simmel’s interpretation is more social-psychological. According to Simmel (1957), individual experiences with fashion involve both adaptation to society and individual departure from its demands. Through fashion, the needs of union and isolation are satisfied, allowing people to express one’s loyalty to the norms of the time without losing their inner freedom (Simmel, 1981, as cited in Gronow, 1997, p. 85). As people adopt new fashions, they feel unique due to the distinction from those not yet wearing new fashions. Harman (1985) interpreted the situation from a slightly angle, as he also recognized that human beings have two extreme demands: needs for conformity and deviation. Yet he maintained that acceptable deviance that occurs in fashion (i.e., cutting edge, niche market style) is an apparent solution to the paradox. Acceptable deviance is a method of social control, which means social conformity is ensured in the guise of individual freedom through this mechanism (Harman, 1985).

Simmel was influenced by Kant (Gronow, 1997) who treated fashion as a case of unreflected imitation that has nothing to do with genuine judgment of taste (Gronow, 1997, p.83). Kant’s dismissal of thought behind fashion was the common attitude among learned men of his time (Gronow, 1997). Even though Kant did not consider that fashion allows genuine judgment of taste, Simmel found the characteristics of aesthetic judgment of Kant in fashion (Gronow, 1997). He noted that a need for constant change in fashion has little to do with utilitarian purposes. The non-utilitarian desire for new clothes would be a key feature that determines whether fashion is as an object of aesthetic judgments depending on whether
consumers make judgments about fashion products with complete disinterestedness in Kant’s sense of aesthetic judgment.

**Refuting Class Competition in Taste**

**Expression of Individuality**

As opposed to taste as a means of class rivalry, taste is considered as an expression of individual preference and private choices (Lipovetsky, 1994). Differences in taste are individual in nature. It is Colin Campbell who clearly broke with the idea of connecting taste with class competition. Campbell (1940) refuted class competition in modern fashion after scrutinizing consumption by the middle class. Campbell (1940) particularly paid attention to the individuality of consumption. He characterized consumption as imaginative or self-illusory hedonism. Campbell (1940) maintained that modern hedonism is marked by preoccupation with pleasure and emotions. Campbell (1940) maintained that the ethics of the middle class are self-directed and emotional, while the upper class showed social and mannered ethics. Daydreaming is the key to self-illusory hedonism (Campbell, 1940). Consumers project illusion into the near future by maximizing the pleasures of reality and illusion. The imaginative enjoyment of cultural products induce consumers to construct daydreams. The universality of daydreaming provides accounts for the pursuit of novelty. Even though modern consumers earn immediate gratification from consumption, their resources are still limited. Consumers are never satisfied, and maximum pleasure always remains just out of reach. The discovery of the discrepancy between reality and dreams results in longing for novelty to fill that discrepancy. Hence, consumers’ wants are continually created, leading to new goods (1940). Campbell (1940) characterized modern
consumer experience as the ceaseless alternation between a state of frustration and newly-created wants by daydreaming.

Campbell (1940) conceptualized taste as the product of linking imaginative hedonism with the institution of modern fashion. Campbell looked at the individualistic side of taste. He regarded taste as a typical pattern of a person’s preferences and a function of one’s daydreaming. Therefore, a person’s taste depends on the character of his/her fantasy-pleasure as well as personality and biographical experience (Campbell, 1940). Campbell (1940) distinguished the taste of the middle class from that of upper class. With the decline of classicism, aristocracy came to equate taste with “conformity” to the standards of propriety that they carefully defined. On the other hand, taste to the middle class was a sign of moral and spiritual worth with “an ability to take pleasure in the beautiful and to respond with tears to the pitiable” (Campbell, 1940, p. 205). This conception of middle class taste legitimizes the pursuit of emotional pleasure as sincerity. Campbell (1940) claimed that after a period of balance between taste as propriety and taste as sincerity, middle class taste as the individual pursuit of pleasure took over modern consumerism. Thus, taste took on a more active characteristic: a pattern of a person’s pursuit of pleasure (Campbell, 1940). Owing to the ceaseless consumption of novelty, the modern consumer acquires the psychological skill of autonomous daydreaming (Campbell, 1940). Consequently, the person is able to adjust one’s taste rapidly and continually. According to Campbell (1940), taste in modern consumption became hedonic, individualistic, voluntaristic and self-directed involving the creative process.

Both Simmel and Campbell, building on Kant, believed that fashion provides sociological solutions to the antinomy of taste—the problem that taste is both private and universal, and both subjective and objective at the same time (Gronow, 1997). Simmel
viewed Kant’s aesthetics as “attempts of reconciliation in the aesthetic sphere between the indispensable individual subjectivity of the modern man and the equally necessary overindividual community” (1905, as cited in Gronow, 1997, p. 85). Fashion that functions as a socially valid standard of taste is based on individual preferences and choices, which allows for both the universality and subjectivity of a time (Campbell, 1940). The antinomy of taste is solved daily and only provisionally by the self-dynamic process of fashion (Gronow, 1997).

**Expression of Collectivity**

Herbert Blumer (1969) used the concept of taste to assert that fashion is the process of collective selection. Blumer (1969) posited that collective taste is an expression of the *Zeitgeist* and that fashion introduces an order in a potentially anarchic and moving present society (p.283). Blumer criticized Simmel’s class competition as Campbell (1940) did, but Blumer concentrated on the collective aspect of taste in modern fashion in his theory of collective selection. “The fashion mechanism appears not in response to a need of class differentiation but in response to a wish to be in fashion, to be abreast of what has good standing, to express new tastes which are emerging in a changing world” (Blumer, 1969, p. 282).

Blumer accounted for his theory based on the definition of taste: “Taste has a tri-fold character—it is like an appetite in seeking positive satisfaction; it operates as a sensitive selector, giving a basis for acceptance or rejection; and it is a formative agent, guiding the development of lines of action and shaping objects to meet its demands” (Blumer, 1968, p. 344). This definition can be rephrased as: Taste functions like a sense organ that makes
judgments based on individual satisfaction and social norms, and structures individual behavior and experience.

Collective taste is basic to collective selection in Blumer’s theory. Collective taste develops through multiple stages: a state of vagueness, a state of refinement, and a state of stability (1969). Blumer (1969) employed this conception in order to explain his observation of the women’s fashion industry in Paris. He was amazed to see that the choice of more than a hundred buyers converged on six to eight designs out of more than a hundred designs by the Paris fashion houses. Blumer (1969) explained this phenomenon as resulting from the common experiences, concerns, and information of buyers and designers in the market. Through seeing and selecting from models and proposals, innovators are able to sketch out possible styles, and the incipient taste gains objective expression (Gronow, 1997).

Blumer gave a plausible explanation to how collective taste can be developed among buyers and designers within the institutionalized system. However, he failed to provide sufficient reasons for the continuous dynamics of fashion, how individual consumers who live different lives collectively develop the same taste, and how the collective taste coincides with the taste of buyers.

Blumer’s view relates to Maffesoli’s (1988) neo-tribalism. Maffesoli (1988) proposed an “affectual tribe” as a micro-group characterizing the society at the end of the twentieth century. Maffesoli (1988) abandoned class competition in fashion as did Blumer (1969) and Lipovetsky (1994), but he viewed the current society differently as follows: The process of individualization had advanced, and the function of individuals had become saturated. Thus society is currently experiencing deindividualization (Maffesoli, 1988). The affectual tribe refers to the affinity group that is rather unstable and shaped by a new type of affective
networks (1988). Maffesoli (1988) maintained that the identities of affinity groups were more fluid than already determined; identities of affinity groups are constructed and cohered through shared aesthetics and feeling rather than through the necessities of class identity or ideological rationality. Drawing on Maffesoli’s concept, Bennett (1999) pointed out that the term subculture is problematic because it implies a determinate and often deviant relationship or resistance to a dominant culture. The affectual tribes are characterized by a series of temporal gatherings, fluid boundaries and floating memberships (Bennett, 1999). The new network is maintained by the collective feeling of *puissance*\(^7\) (Maffesoli, 1988). The tribe is more like an ambience and a state of mind; it is expressed through lifestyles that favor appearance and form (Maffesoli, 1988, p. 98).

Blumer’s (1969) collective selection is a visible measure of unanimity which may or may not be applicable to the entirety of consumers. Employing the concept of collective taste to collectivity in a smaller scale may help account for the emotional community of Maffesoli’s neo-tribalism. Tribal identities serve to illustrate the temporal nature of collective identities in modern consumer society as individuals continually move between different sites of collective expression and reconstruct themselves accordingly (Shields, 1992 as cited in Bennett, 1999, p. 606). The notion of the neo-tribe is useful to understand the complexity of taste in a person who takes multiple and temporal roles and identities in contemporary society.

Gronow (1997) noted a common feature underlying the theories of Kant, Simmel, and Blumer. Gronow (1997) conceptualized a “form of finality” as what beats every style but

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\(^7\) The French word *puissance* refers to the enabling power of communal sociality, conveying the idea of the inherent energy and vital force of people as opposed to the institutions of power (*pouvoir*) (from translator note, Maffesoli, 1988, p. 1)
never actually exists. Because the form of finality is an indeterminate concept, to be in fashion is constantly transformed into being out of fashion (Gronow, 1997, p. 90). Lyotard interpreted Kant’s non-conceptual subjective universality of taste as only an idea of an expected consensus because Kant conceptualized universality as a non-existent status (as cited in Gronow, 1997, p. 89). Blumer’s expression of the Zeitgeist, a destination which Simmel’s self-dynamic process proceeds toward, and Campbell’s endless pursuit of desire may be interpreted as non-conceptual universality of taste, which could be simply called “to be in fashion” or “to be in style.”

**Revisiting Taste and Class: Unconscious Adaptation and Distinction**

Taste serves as “fences or bridges” in the process of social exclusion and inclusion (Douglas & Isherwood, 1979, p. 12) It is Pierre Bourdieu (1984) who raised a considerable interest in taste as a means or expression of social distinction. Shipman (2004) argued that conspicuity has shifted from quantity to quality, from waste to taste, and from Veblen to Bourdieu. Bourdieu asserted that class is defined by one’s position in relationship to consumption as much as by that of production and consumption which serves to determine that class is not necessarily conspicuous (Bourdieu, 1984). In other words, conspicuity has shifted from the appropriation of materially valued products to the appreciation of culturally valued ones (Shipman, 2004). Bourdieu’s sociology delineates society with the relationships between culture, power and reproduction. He was interested in understanding how objective culture is deployed by individuals to manage their cultural adaptations. Bourdieu claimed that “all cultural symbols and practices, from artistic tastes, style in dress, and eating habits to religion, science, philosophy, and even language itself embody interests and function to enhance social distinctions” (as cited in Swartz, 1997, p. 6). Bourdieu’s sociology of culture
and power provides insight into how cultural fields interlock individuals in social relations. Bourdieu (1984) suggested that individuals struggle and pursue strategies in appearance management to achieve their interests within a consumption field and unwittingly reproduce the social stratification order.

Bourdieu (1984) opposed the idea of taste of reflection, calling his theory anti-Kantian aesthetics or popular aesthetics. While Kant deliberately separated sensual pleasure from pure aesthetic pleasure achieved by the neutralization of any affective or ethical interest, Bourdieu (1984) reintegrated the aesthetic qualities of consumption into the world of ordinary consumption. Bourdieu mapped the definition of aesthetic on to classed relations. He claimed that Kant’s proposition reflects the classed position of Kant’s aesthetics. “Nothing is more distinctive than the ability to apply the principles of a pure aesthetic to the most everyday choices of everyday life” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 5). Bourdieu (1984) saw Kant’s *Critique of Judgement* as the very symbol of the philosophical distinction that takes the position of stigmatizing empiricism or historicism and distinguishing the middle classes. Lawler (2005) advanced Bourdieu’s critique of Kant: Kantian aesthetics regards taste, an ability to feel beauty, as a feature of an asocial and ahistorical human nature that every human being is supposed to possess. Those who are lacking in common humanity become regarded as coarse and ignoble, and accordingly morally lacking. Lawler (2005) claimed that the Kantian aesthetic of distinguishing the truly beautiful from the sensually pleasing was a mind/body dichotomy (p. 439). While bodily pleasure is enjoyed by anyone, appreciation of beauty that truly belongs to the mind is held only by some privileged classes, according to Kant.
The claim of taste as an exclusionary resource is nothing new, but Bourdieu (1984) positioned his theory to refute the emulationist approach of Veblen or Simmel. To Bourdieu, class differences in taste come about through the unintended consequences of everyday interaction (1991, as cited in Holt, 1997a, p. 94). Exclusionary consumption practices typically occur through the disinterested pursuit of taste rather than its intentional pursuit, and most signals are sent unconsciously (Holt, 1997a). Consequently, the political consequences of tastes are misrecognized as disinterested practice (Holt, 1997a).

Metatheoretical Understanding of Social Structure and Culture

The significance of Bourdieu’s study of taste lies in the meta-theoretical understanding of social structure and culture. He substituted a substantialist concept of social reality with a relational concept (Swartz, 1997). Holt (1997a) saw that Bourdieu’s critical view of consumption patterns are the synthesis of French structuralism, conflict theory, and phenomenology. His theory is consistent with those of post-structuralists like Michel Foucault who argued that social discourses and practices are linked to hegemonic social relations (Holt, 1997a).

Ortner (1984) generically called the approach to research that is interested in analysis of practice and agent a theory of practice. Terms such as practice, praxis, action, interaction, activity, experience, or performance are used interchangeably (Ortner, 1984). Practice refers to basically anything that people do and practice theorists make efforts to recognize the political implications that any practices carry intentionally or unintentionally (Ortner, 1984, p.149). Terms such as agent, actor, person, self, or individual refer to the doer of the action (Bourdieu, 1989; Swartz, 1997). Practice theory seeks to explain the relationship between human actions or practice and a global entity, the system. The movement in this direction
began relatively early in the seventies and has gained wide interest since the 1980s in linguistics, sociology, anthropology, history, and literary studies (Ortner, 1984). In sociology, symbolic interactionism and other forms of microsociology attracted new attention, and Anthony Giddens addressed the relationship between structure and agency as one of the central problems of modern social theory (Ortner, 1984, p. 142). Through an analysis of taste in everyday consumption, Bourdieu (1984) maintained that unacknowledged interests, what he called the social unconscious, reproduce the social system (Swartz, 1997, p. 10).

Bourdieu saw the subjective/objective dichotomy\footnote{In his subjective/objective dichotomy, Bourdieu put structuralism, functionalism marxism, empiricism, positivism, and materialism on the side of objectivism, and existentialism, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, and idealism on the side of subjectivism (Swartz, 1997, p. 53).} manifested in the social sciences and pursued the intellectual triangulation to grasp the dual character of social life, both its subjective and objective aspects (Swartz, 1997). Bourdieu advocated for a break with objectivism, calling for critical reflections on the character of practices. Criticizing strict structuralist approaches for reducing action to mere execution, he emphasized that practices are constitutive of structures as well as determined by structures (Bourdieu, 1989; Swartz, 1997). Bourdieu did not think that objectivist approaches can explain the genesis of structure because objectivism would miss socially and economically interested action by actors and their symbolic representation to accomplish practical purposes (Swartz, 1997, p. 59).

Therefore, practice theorists assume that society and history are governed by organizational and evaluative schemes rather than the simple sums of ad hoc responses and adaptations to particular stimuli (Ortner, 1984, p.148).
Bourdieu criticized subjectivism for reducing the social world to the representations that agents have of it (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 15). Subjectivist analysis is built on actor accounts. He rejected subjectivist approaches which focus on micro-interaction processes because they fail to see the hierarchically structured properties in every situation and interaction in which agents are involved (Swartz, 1997). Subjectivism fails to link patterns of face-to-face interaction and socially constructed meaning systems to larger patterns of hierarchy in society. It is because those approaches are likely to forget that agents construct their understanding from particular positions in a structured social space (Swartz, 1997, p. 57).

Bourdieu was influenced more by phenomenological methods than by the claims of phenomenology (Robbins, 2005). Robbins (2005) emphasize that the use of the word “understand” is significant because Bourdieu’s research pursued comprehension rather than explanation.

From a meta-theoretical perspective, Bourdieu (1989) spoke of his research as constructive structuralism or as structural constructivism. By constructive or constructivism, he meant that cognitive structures and structuring structures are socially constructed because those have a social genesis. Structuralism denotes that there exist objective structures independent of the consciousness and will of agents within the social world. The construction of social reality is subject to structural constraints, and it becomes a collective enterprise rather than remaining as an individual one (Bourdieu, 1989).

The claim of practice theory can be summarized as follows: that society is a system, that the system is powerfully constraining, but that the system can be made and unmade through human action and interaction (Ortner, 1984, p. 159; Warde, 2005). Bourdieu (1989) called the relations between the structure and representations dialectical; the objective
structures form the basis for these representations and constitute the structural constraints on interactions. Yet the representations must be taken into consideration if one wants to account for the daily struggles that transform or preserve the structures.

Bourdieu (1989) called for a relational mode of thinking. Drawing on the Durkheimian notion of social reality as an ensemble of invisible relations, Bourdieu (1984) asserted that the study of social life must identify the real not with substances but with relationships. In science, “the real is the relational” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, as cited in Swartz, 1997, p. 62). Relational thinking extracts an object of inquiry from the context of everyday assumptions and perceptions that reflect the interests of social life, and transforms practical representations to scientific knowledge (Bourdieu, Chamboredon, & Passeron, 1991, as cited in Swartz, 1997, p. 62). Through relational thinking, it is possible to construct systems of relations; that is, social space which presents itself in the form of agents endowed with different properties that are systematically linked among them (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 19). The objective relations are the relations between positions occupied within the distributions of the active and effective resources, including economic capital, cultural capital, social capital, and symbolic capital. These various forms of fundamental powers are perceived and recognized as legitimate (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 17).

Taste as dispositions and ethos involves understanding taste through a relational mode of thinking. Disposition is a concept comprised of structure and propensity (Swartz, 1997, p. 103). To Bourdieu (1984), “the system of classificatory scheme is opposed to a taxonomy based on explicit principles in the same way that the dispositions constituting taste or ethos are opposed to aesthetics or ethics” (p. 471). In lifestyle analysis, Holt (1997a) emphasized that relational differences are seldom part of people’s reflexive understanding of
their consumption practices. This type of knowledge is termed as “practical knowledge” by Giddens (1984 as cited in Holt 1997b, p. 339) or knowledge without concepts (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471). Practical knowledge is what people practically master to engage skillfully in consumption practices and to evaluate others’ tastes. People are not able to describe the abstract principles of these judgments and actions as with the case of language (Bourdieu, 1984). Discursive knowledge is rarely necessary for practical action (Bourdieu, 1984). Therefore, taste is practical and informal rather than a discursive or conscious form of knowledge (Swartz, 1997, p. 105).

**Taste as Habitus**

Habitus lies in the center of Bourdieu’s meta-theoretical effort to overcome limitations of objectivism and subjectivism by conceptualizing the relations between agency or actors and structure. Bourdieu’s habitus takes the French structuralist view of the system as patterns of relations between categories, or of relations between relations, but it also takes on the American concept of culture combining elements of ethos, affect, and value with cognitive schemes of classification (Ortner, 1984, p. 148). Bourdieu said that notions like habitus, practical sense, and strategy are tied to the effort to get away from objectivism without falling into subjectivism (quoted in Lamaison, 1986, p. 111). Bourdieu used the word in translating Ervin Panofsky’s *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism*. Panofsky’s insights into the effect of scholasticism on architecture provided the basis for Bourdieu’s conceptualization of habitus (Swartz, 1997). On the basis of the idea that scholasticism is “mental habits” that represent a set of implicit cultural assumptions as well as theoretical positions, Bourdieu employed the two aspects of these mental habits: scholasticism was structured by being transmitted by institutions, practices, and social relations, yet it also
functioned as a “habit-forming force” that generated schemes of thoughts and action (Swartz, 1997 p.102). The early conceptualization of habitus also bore the imprint of French structuralism (Swartz, 1997). Drawing on Saussure’s distinction between speech and language, Bourdieu conceptualized habitus as a kind of deeply structured cultural grammar for action (Swartz, 1997, p.102). Bourdieu’s idea is analogous to Chomsky’s “generative grammar.” As grammar organizes speech, the structure of habitus generates infinity of possible practices (Swartz, 1997, p.102). Bourdieu stressed the innovative capacity of habitus (Swartz, 1997). Unlike the assumption in structuralism or Chomsky’s generative grammar about innate capacity or universal mind, habitus is derived from an experience and a possession, that is, the class-specific experiences of socialization in family and peer groups (Swartz, 1997, p.102). Bourdieu intentionally used the esoteric term habitus instead of culture to avoid the risk of being misunderstood. He thought “culture” was an overdetermined concept whose validity has not been defined exhaustively (1968, as cited in Swartz, 1997, p.115).

Therefore, Bourdieu conceptualized habitus as a structured structure and a structuring structure. Bourdieu and Passeron explained the two sides of a coin with what they call a system of circular relations: “…objective structures tend to produce structured subjective dispositions that produce structured actions which, in turn, tend to reproduce objective structure” (1977, as cited in Swartz, 1997, p. 103). Swartz (1997) rephrased habitus as a system of disposition that sets structural limits for action. The structures are internalized through early socialization. On the other hand, habitus generates perceptions, aspirations and practices that correspond to the structuring properties of earlier socialization (Swartz, 1997, p.103). Habitus mediates between social structures and practices (Moore, 2004).
Bourdieu (1989) considered the socially conditioned perception of the world to be a product of double structuring. On the objective side, the properties owned by agents are distributed with unequal probabilities in social space. On the subjective side, the schemes of perception and appreciation express the state of relations of symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 20). Bourdieu (1989) observed that aspiration and practices of individuals and groups tend to correspond to the formative conditions of their habitus. By the dispositions obtained through class-based socialization, objective life chances that derive from inegalitarian social arrangements are unconsciously internalized.

Bourdieu’s sociological understanding of taste accounts for the relations between habitus and practice. He regarded consumption on a daily basis, such as choosing food, clothing, music or painting, as practice and taste as a function of habitus. Swartz (1997) pointed to two types of consequences in the concept of habitus: adaptation and distinction. Taste as a function of habitus contributes to social adaptation and distinction. On the one hand, practices appear as a functional adaptation to the necessities of objective economic conditions (Swartz, 1997, p. 114). Habitus transforms necessity into a virtue and is internalized and converted into a disposition by instituting choices that correspond to the socio-economic condition (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 170). By providing a practical and taken-for-granted acceptance of the fundamental conditions of existence, habitus legitimizes economic and social inequality (Swartz, 1997, p. 105). Practices accordingly reproduce social position. The dispositions imply an adjustment to the position which individuals occupy in social space. Therefore, even the most disadvantaged agents tend to perceive the world as natural and to accept it readily (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 17-18), and each taste feels itself to be naturally rejecting others as unnatural (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 56). Allen’s (2002) study illustrates how
social actors take objective conditions for granted. In his study the consumer choice of clerical school as postsecondary school was neither felt to reproduce unequal social arrangement nor led by purely rational calculation. Instead consumers stated that they experienced a perfect fit in their school choice.

On the other hand, habitus generates practices that differentiate actors from their competitors (Swartz, 1997, p. 114). Individuals seek to distinguish themselves—in effect establish their distinct social position—by adopting a pattern of consumption that provides an optimal level of final satisfactions from the combination of their financial resources with their consumption skills (Gershuny, 2000). For Bourdieu, making judgment based on one’s taste is an act of classifying. His argument begins with the idea regarding taste as a capacity of habitus; habitus is a socially conditioned system both of schemes of production of practices and of perception and appreciation of practices (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 170; Bourdieu, 1989, p. 19). The system of perception and appreciation of practices are taste (Bourdieu, 1984). The notion of taste includes judgment exercising one’s preference such as selecting one’s outfits or music to listen to and perceiving others’ selection of outfits or music. On one side, habitus produces practices and representations which are available for classification, and judgment presupposes taste as a system of schemes of classification that are objectively referred to as social condition (Bourdieu, 1989). Bourdieu (1989) said that “nothing classifies somebody more than the way he/she classifies” (p. 19). On the other side, the practices and the representations produced are perceived only by those who posses the classificatory schemes necessary to understand the social meaning of locating self and others in social space (Bourdieu, 1989). Judgment presupposes that “we are capable of perceiving the relations between practices or representations and positions in social space” (Bourdieu, 1989,
Therefore, the judgment of taste itself is classificatory (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu, 1989).

Practice approach stresses an unconscious or low-involvement aspect of action, understanding, and feelings compared with a paradigm of rational choice theory (Allen, 2002). Bourdieu (1984) maintained that habitus functions below the levels of consciousness and beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control by the will (p. 466). Bourdieu adopted the term “strategy” to distance his argument from the agentless action that structuralism assumed (quoted in Lamaison, 1986). Bourdieu saw action as governed by strategy. Choices are not directly determined by transcending rules, norms, patterns, and constraints. Strategy is action that is patterned and interest-oriented at a tacit and prerreflective level of awareness (Swartz, 1997, p. 67). Whether or not conforming to norms, all actions are interest-oriented (Swartz, 1997).

Interested action is not necessarily a means-end mode of organizing action (Swartz, 1997, p. 71). Bourdieu considered individual interests as embodied dispositions of actors defined by an actor’s position within the social hierarchy at a taken-for-granted level (Swartz, 1997, p. 71). Interest is historically arbitrary (Wacquant, 1989, as cited in Swartz, 1997, p. 71). Interest is practical and dispositional, and does not have the goal orientation associated with a utilitarian framework (Swartz, 1997, p. 71). Habitus orients action according to anticipated consequences toward individual interests as embodied dispositions (Swartz, 1997). Dispositions predispose individuals to select behaviors in which they are more likely to succeed with given resources and past experience (Swartz, 1997, p. 106). Bourdieu asserted that action is a product of a practical sense or of a particular social game (quoted in Lamaison, 1986). Bourdieu used the metaphor of an athlete’s “feel for the game” to explain
the strategy of an actor in a social game; the actions performed are experienced as spontaneous and instinctual based on situations (1990 as cited in Allen, 2002, p. 34). Much of daily experience takes on this instinctual feel for the game (Allen, 2002). According to Bourdieu, actors are strategic improvisers who dispositionally respond to the opportunities and constraints offered by situations (Swartz, 1997, p.100).

Taste as practical dispositions are acquired since childhood through participation in social activities (Bourdieu, quoted in Lamaison, 1986). The practical dispositions incorporate ambiguities and uncertainties that emerge from acting through time and space, so even in normative situations, action involves uncertainty (Swartz, 1997). Bourdieu’s conceptualization of strategy for the social game stresses the role of past socialization as well as opportunities and constraints presented by situations (Swartz, 1997, p. 100). Habitus is durable and obtained through socialization over years, but interacts with contemporaneous and external social factors (Allen, 2002). Holt (1997b) stressed the need for diachronic analysis, including how lifestyles evolve over time, how the relationships change in social and cultural structures, how people adopt a new lifestyle, and how lifestyle meanings can change even though consumption patterns remain. Thus, diachronic analysis and comprehensive consideration of contexts are considered important in the practice approach.

However, not every behavior and situation is applicable to the concept of habitus. The concept of habitus is useful in relatively undifferentiated societies where power is organized through an informal system of honor than through formal law or explicit normative rules (Bourdieu, 1977, as cited in Swartz, 1997, p. 113-4). Highly ritualized situations reduce opportunities for strategy and innovation (Swartz, 1997, p. 113). However habitus still works in daily routines even in highly differentiated societies. Another situation in which Bourdieu
acknowledges habitus does not work is where material interests are high or the threat of violence is eminent (as cited in Swartz, 1997, p. 113). Those situations of crisis disrupt the immediate adjustment of habitus and encourage highly conscious and rational calculation (as cited in Swartz, 1997, p. 113). According to this logic, daily routines of consuming clothing or commodities are likely to be governed by habitus.

**Forms of Taste**

Holt (1997a) made distinction between objectified and embodied forms of taste. Objectified tastes signify status through a distinctive set of consumption objects, as Simmel observed (Holt, 1997a). What differentiates Bourdieu’s point from Veblen or Simmel is that the stratificatory power of cultural objects results from the cultural aptitude of consumers for consuming the objects not because of economic scarcity or group consensus, but because of the fact that different categories of cultural objects including goods and activities require different levels of skills, knowledge, and resources that are obtained in one’s social position (Holt, 1997a). Taste in the objectified form is measured by preferences for particular categories (DiMaggio, 1992; Peterson & Kern, 1996; Peterson & Simkus, 1992). The objectified forms are easy to measure and allow for sophisticated statistical analysis, but the utility of goods as class marker has substantially weakened (Holt, 1997a).

Holt (1997a) pointed out that the particular object change and simple identification is not enough. Goods are not only physically used, but also symbolically consumed, drawing lines of social relationships (Douglas & Isherwood, 1979). Meanings are not pre-determined by a single abstracted semiotic system, but are constituted by the ways in which people act in particular social contexts that are part of historically accumulated culture (Holt, 1997b, p. 328). Holt’s (1997b) study illustrated that people had different ways to enact their taste for
antique furniture according to their sociocultural and historical background and context:

Consumption of antique furniture meant a showcase of winning bargains, a way of learning to be a connoisseur, an expression of personal aesthetics, or resource of constructing bricolage depending on people. Holt (1997a) maintained that embodied forms of taste became popular for cultural elites to emphasize the distinctiveness of consumption practices, as popular cultural objects become aestheticized and elite objects become popularized. By conversing about particular goods with others, the goods are culturally and symbolically consumed. Holt (1997a) contended that having conversational competence in the specialized, esoteric, and dynamic aesthetic sets a hierarchical boundary. The conversational competence reflects the mastery of a cultured person including how to use and consume appropriately with natural ease in every situation as well as natural mastery of information (Featherstone, 1991). Holt viewed that theorists such as Goffman, Bourdieu, and DiMaggio all argued that affiliative bonds and boundaries are sustained through fine-grained tastes, styles of interaction, and protean sensibilities (1997a, p. 105).

Embodied taste requires understanding of qualitative differences of lifestyle. Habitus is a generative and transposable disposition over all areas of life (Bourdieu, 1984). Thus there is a stylistic affinity for individuals regardless of arenas such as family planning, dress, choice of sport, and diet (Bourdieu, 1989, as cited in Swartz, 1997, p. 108). In Distinction, Bourdieu (1984) showed how habitus accounts for class differences across a broad range of aesthetic tastes and lifestyles and how habitus is a useful tool to understand class difference qualitatively. Bourdieu (1984) distinguished four distinct lifestyles that correspond to each class habitus in France: ostentatious indulgence and ease within the upper class, aristocratic aestheticism among intellectuals, awkward pretension by middle-class strivers, and anti-
pretentious ignorance and conformity within the working class (as cited in Swartz, 1997, p. 109). He identified underlying mastery patterns that represent structural patterns; and demonstrated that cognitive, moral, and corporeal dimensions of action are inseparable (Swartz, 1997).

From his arguments about the relations between agent and structure, Bourdieu would be understood as paying attention to the collective basis of taste. According to Bourdieu’s logic, individuals who internalize similar life chances share the same habitus. He argued that “personal style … is never more than a deviation in relation to the style of a period or class so that it relates back to the common style not only by its conformity … but also by the difference” (1977 as cited in Swartz, 1997, p. 105). Bourdieu’s concept is fairly persuasive to explain conformity. Conformity, particularly private conformity, is defined as what operates through internalization and the voluntary acceptance of influence when the referent behavior is congruent with one’s value system (Lascu & Zinkhan, 1999). Integrating the definition of conformity and Bourdieu’s notion of habitus, one’s value system is structured to develop dispositions which are accepted as natural by legitimization of the dominant. Consequently people are predisposed to conform to the tastes of those who are located closely in the social space.

However, Bourdieu left a possibility of different ways of perception and expression open. The objects of the social world always include a degree of vagueness and semantic elasticity, which Bourdieu thinks provide the plurality of visions of the world and a base for symbolic struggles over power (1989, p. 20). Symbolic struggles over the perception of the social world take two forms (Bourdieu, 1989). One is struggle by actions of representation meant to display certain individual or collective realities clearly; and the other is struggle to
transform categories of perception such as manipulating one’s image, as analyzed in Goffman’s *Presentation of Self* (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 21). Because of the evaluative component of taste, taste in clothing is a valuable topic for investigating symbolic striving. Bourdieu focused on the differences of tastes as an expression of inter-class differences, which Swartz (1997) thought is not sufficient to explain the complexity and ambiguity of individual practices and perceptions. Swartz (1997) pointed out that the assumption that the process of internalization of objective chances occurs flawlessly is problematic, and the failure to capture varying degrees of incongruity between hopes, plans, and chances for different groups still remains vulnerable in Bourdieu’s notion of habitus. However, Bourdieu dealt with the issue of disjunction between aspirations coming from expansion of education and opportunity that did not meet educated worker needs in the ’60s and ’70s labor market in France.

**Taste and Cultural Capital**

Bourdieu extended the idea of capital that came from an economic perspective into all forms of resources that function as social power (1989, as cited in Swartz, 1997, p. 73). The stock of capital allows for gaining advantages within each field (Savage et al., 2005). Bourdieu’s notion of capital is rooted in labor theory, in which capital is accumulated labor, but he extended that labor can be embodied in a variety of forms: economic capital, cultural capital, social capital (acquaintances and networks), and symbolic capital (legitimation) (1986, as cited in Swartz, 1997, p. 74). With the concept of cultural capital, Bourdieu drew attention to the power dimension of cultural resources in market societies (Swartz, 1997). Cultural capital can be an asset because it carries cultural value at the time (Throsby, 1999). Burt (1997) clarified functions of taste and cultural capital: When an actor utilizes
opportunities for improvement, the direction of strategy is led by cultural taste, and the power taken in that direction is determined by cultural capital. The power exercised through cultural capital is not a power over specific decisions, but it is a power to legitimize specific cultural norms and practices, shaping other people’s lives through exclusion and inclusion (Lamont & Lareau, 1988, p. 159). Power is symbolic imposition.

The concept of cultural capital has proliferated in sociology, because it has improved understanding of the process through which social stratification systems are maintained (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Despite the usefulness of the concept, the concept suggested by Bourdieu and other scholars contains ambiguities and has changed. The concept of cultural capital originally came out of 1964 studies analyzing the ways in which cultural differences consolidate or even constitute those social differences (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). The studies showed that unequal scholastic achievement of children was explained better by the cultural capital inherited from the family milieu than by a measure of individual talent (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Bourdieu and Passeron did not mean to claim that cultural differences were the consequences of different social origins. Instead the research was designed to show that social and cultural differences are inseparable and the social situation is a context of constant oscillation between natural and acquired cultures, within and between generations (Robbins, 2005, p. 23). Consequently, cultural capital consisted of informal academic standards which are class attributes of the dominant class (Lamont & Lareau, 1988, p. 155). In Bourdieu’s Distinction, cultural capital became an indicator as well as a basis of class position and a power resource, with taste being conceptualized as cultural attitudes, preferences and behaviors (Lamont & Lareau, 1988, p. 155). In this sense, taste is the symbolic sum of the holdings of cultural capital (Savage et al., 2005, p. 40). Consequently,
literature suggests cultural capital existing in various states: an embodied state (as a durable cultivated disposition of an individual’s mind and body), an objectified state (as cultural goods that require specialized cultural abilities to use them), and an institutionalized state (as the educational credential system) (Swartz, 1997; Throsby, 1999). Throsby (1999) defined cultural capital as the stock of cultural value embodied in an asset (p. 6). Yet cultural capital does not quantify into absolute value. It only possesses value in exchange, and the exchange is a social struggle as much as a struggle of a cultural value judgment (Robbins, 2005, p. 23).

Reflecting the various conceptualizations of cultural capital, studies operationally measured cultural capital variously. Some studies used resources for acquiring cultural capital including social origin, education credentials, and occupational status as an indicator of cultural capital, assuming taste are cultivated according to one’s cultural competence that those resources would likely to foster (Caldwell & Woodside, 2003; Holt, 1998). On the other hand, other studies equated cultural capital with informal academic standards and cultural competence and measured participation in cultural activities and cultural knowledge and values (DiMaggio, 1982, 1992; DiMaggio, 1996; see Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Leshkowich & Jones, 2003; Peterson & Simkus, 1992; Sullivan, 2001; see Warde, Martens, & Olsen, 1999). A number of these studies investigated an impact of cultural capital on educational attainment because education attainment was expected to lead to achievement in occupational success. For example, DiMaggio (1982) developed a scale of cultural capital to examine an impact of cultural capital on school achievements of the U.S. high school students. He measured attitude (interest in specified artistic activities and occupations), participation in activities, and familiarity, appreciation, and historical knowledge about art, music, and literature. The results of the study showed that cultural capital has a significant
impact on grades even after controlling for family background and the measured ability (DiMaggio, 1982).

Cultural capital as the aesthetic disposition refers to the aptitude for perceiving and deciphering stylistic characteristics (Radford, 1988). In addition to ability to appreciate stylistic features, the aesthetic disposition requires a capacity to keep oneself distant from necessity (Bourdieu, 1984). The aesthetic disposition premises an experience of the world free from urgency and autotelic activities, an existence that demands economic power as well as cultural competence (Bourdieu, 1984). Seriousness without the spirit of seriousness, in other words, the playful seriousness, is needed to play the games of culture (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 54). Bourdieu’s concept of taste in everyday consumption almost corresponds to connoisseurship in art appreciation. Connoisseurship in art as well as fashion is acquired through experiences over extended periods of time by possessing appropriate cultural capital in order to recognize aesthetic qualities such as color, form, or line and to associate the aesthetic with conceptual deliberation or metaphysical contemplation (Radford, 1998). Kwon and Damhorst (2004) discussed connoisseurship in clothing as an ability to synthesize clothing elements, to create diverse looks, and to recognize aesthetic qualities including technical quality, fashion trends, sophistication, and the like.

Bourdieu (1984) maintained that social origin, formal education and adult experience were important sites where cultural capital is acculturated. Bourdieu (1984) differentiated between inherited capital (social origin) and acquired capital (education) to explain differences in cultural competence. Social origin refers to family upbringing that influences early socialization. Bourdieu maintained that especially extra-curricular culture such as furniture, clothing, and food reveals deep-rooted dispositions associated with social origin.
Holt (1998) used education and occupation of father as an index of family upbringing in addition to education and occupation of the participant to rate cultural capital. However, Erikson (1984) reported that considering both mother and father in class analysis is more proper. It will be particularly important to include mother as well as father in studies of consumption of products for which women play an important role in acquisition and use. Bourdieu (1984) showed not only differences in cultural consumption between classes and between groups who have different cultural capital, but also considered the trajectory of cultural capital tabulating social origin and educational capital. Holt (1998) listed the social milieu of cultural elites in which cultural capital is fostered:

upbringing in families with well-educated parents whose occupations require cultural skills, interaction with peers from similar families, high levels of formal education at institutions that attract other cultural elites studying areas that emphasize critical abstract thinking and communication over the acquisition of particularized trade skills and knowledge, and then refinement and reinforcement in occupations that emphasize symbolic production (p.3).

In addition to family background and education credentials, occupation is considered an important resource of cultural capital. In class analysis, occupational status which is usually determined by income and education credentials that an occupation requires, is used as an index of class (Crompton & Scott, 2000; Devine, 1998; Laermans, 2002). Education credentials are generally seen as a reliable index of cultural capital, but Lamont (1992) differentiated the cultural and social specialist occupation group from the profit-related occupation group to explore cultural boundaries they create. Adult experiences that influence acquisition of cultural capital would extend beyond occupation culture. Burt (1997) studied
Japanese adoption of Western music, explaining the formation of cultural capital and taste in Western music planted in Japan along with the concept of cultural innovation. Burt (1997) proposed that cultural capital and taste are formed by increasing sensitivity in response to repeated consumption of a cultural good at an individual level in the process of adopting an innovation. Cultural capital and taste are also formed through social interaction and communication in which inequalities of power are embedded (Burt, 1997). Therefore, adult experiences including experience and skills of consumption and communication need to be considered in forming taste and cultural consumption, especially in studies of clothing in which criteria of good taste changes rapidly.

From economic perspectives, forms of capital are distinguished differently from what Bourdieu classified. Throsby (1999) discussed physical capital (the stock of real goods), human capital (knowledge, skills, or expertise embodied in people), natural capital (the stock of resources provided by nature), and cultural capital (cultural phenomena such as heritage building and works of art) (p. 3). Among these, Bourdieu’s cultural capital appears to be similar to human capital. Gary Becker is an economist who asserted that human capital is acquired through investments in formal or informal education, training, or learning by doing (Ratchford, 2001, p. 397). Ratchford (2001) employed consumer knowledge as human capital and proposed an alternative reading of the consumer behaviors in Holt’s (1995) lifestyle analysis. Ratchford (2001) contended that consumers specialize their consumption in areas that they know the best because this provides the most efficient—cheapest—path to maximum utility through the life cycle. Ratchford (2001) explained consumer information search, brand loyalty, and choice of features of products by the same logic. While the human capital model analyzes individual or societal returns in productivity, Bourdieu focuses on the
impacts of cultural investments on the perpetuation of social class structure and more subtle dimensions of cultural socialization and transmission that cannot be easily quantified (Swartz, 1997, p. 76). Cultural capital is mostly converted into symbolic capital (legitimacy and prestige), while human capital theorists ignore symbolic profits (Lamont & Lareau, 1988).

**Taste in Consumption Field**

“Field” is a spatial metaphor defining the structure of the social setting in which habitus operates and structured spaces that are organized around specific types of capital or combinations of capital (Swartz, 1997, p. 117). Bourdieu conceptualized relatively autonomous fields consisting of production, circulation, and appropriation of goods, services, knowledge, or competitive positions such as politics, religion, social connections, various intellectual fields, or cultural fields (Laermans, 2002; Savage et al., 2005; Swartz, 1997). Weber’s market metaphor was replaced by the notion of cultural field by Bourdieu (Laermans, 2002). Field suggests rank and hierarchy as well as exchange and relations between buyers and sellers, with the assumption that interactions are shaped by the relations among actors (Swartz, 1997, p. 120).

Due to the autonomy of fields, fields mediate external influences. In other words, external influences are retranslated into the internal logic of a field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, as cited in Swartz, 1997, p. 128). For example, the class background of the artist does not directly influence the work of art; rather, the effects intersect with the dynamics of field and conflict with where the artist is situated (as cited in Swartz, 1997, p. 128). Bourdieu did not think that cultural consumption is explained in terms of a supply-demand function. Cultural tastes are neither imposed by cultural producers nor do cultural tastes stem from cultural producers’ attempt to respond directly to consumer demand (Swartz, 1997, p. 131).
Field analysis posits that the relations are mediated by field structures and processes; producers struggle within the field of cultural production and their products reflect their respective positions in that struggle. Consumers, in turn, select cultural products, also reflecting their own positions in the struggle for distinction (Swartz, 1997, p. 131).

The notion of relative autonomy of fields entails the concept of field-specific capital. Possessing appropriate types and amounts of capital in particular fields is crucial, because fields are arenas of struggle for legitimacy. For example, cultural capital is important in the intellectual field, so is economic capital in the business world (Swartz, 1997). Religion, politics, arts or education require capital that is specific for each field. Strategies are also field-specific. For example, Bourdieu observed differences in artistic styles and ideas as strategies in the struggle for intellectual recognition (as cited in Swartz, 1997, p. 123). Actors compete for positions in the social hierarchy through acquisition of the status distinctive to the field (Holt, 1998). In *Distinction*, Bourdieu (1984) illustrated how cultural capital is enacted in the fields of consumption. Holt (1997b) termed art, sports, food, décor, hobbies, and vacations as fields of consumption, and asserted that the field of consumption should be analyzed as a particular status game rather than lumped together with work, religion, education, and politics (Holt, 1998, p. 4).

**Studies of Taste and Cultural Capital in the U. S.**

Bourdieu (1989) thought that symbolic strategies would be intense in the United States, where the uncertainty of relations between practices and positions is high. A series of studies by DiMaggio and his colleagues showed consistency with Bourdieu’s theory of social and cultural reproduction, such as positive effects of socioeconomic background and cultural capital and school achievement (DiMaggio, 1982, 1992, 1996). DiMaggio (1996) found
associations between museum visiting as one kind of artistic participation and social, cultural, and political attitudes and values which are embedded in the larger system of meaning. Museum visitors were likely to have higher socioeconomic achievement: they were more educated and had higher income; they were more likely to be professionals, Euro-American, and female (DiMaggio, 1996). Yet, not all researchers have found supporting results for Bourdieu’s theory (see Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Cultural sociologists have debated the applicability to the United States about how the deployment of tastes helps to reproduce social class boundaries (Holt, 1997a, p. 93). Holt (1997a) attributed the relative stagnation of Bourdieu’s theory of taste to different traditions in sociological thinking. American sociological presuppositions are more congruent with Warnerian structural functionalism rather than the synthesis of French structuralism, conflict theory, and phenomenology (Holt, 1997a). Holt (1997a) pointed out definitional confusion of class, cultural capital, and contents and forms of taste that cause failure to isolate consumption field from other fields, misinterpretation of taste for popular culture, and failure to examine embodied taste as well as objectified form. Art history is not a regular part of either academic training or informal family socialization in the U.S., which are two primary channels of cultural capital acquisition (Holt, 1997a).

Savage et al. (2005) employed the Marxist stages of accumulation of capital in capitalism to the concept of cultural capital. From the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, stock of capital was created through the direct exploitation of producers as a mode of production. Capitalism became institutionalized and capital became accumulated routinely through the established subordination of labor to capital in the nineteenth century. Savage et al. (2005) maintained that a similar process of primitive cultural capital accumulation in the
nineteenth century differentiated scholastic culture from popular culture along with the Kantian aesthetic and institutionalized cultural capital in schools, museums, and libraries. By the mid-twentieth century, cultural capital and its sustained relations between educational provision and class advantage was fully formed, and there became no need to contrast high and low culture (Savage et al., 2005).

Lamont (1992) found that Americans are less scornful toward the tastes of those in lower social strata than are the French. Holt (1997a) interpreted this catholic taste as a potent form of embodied cultural capital, because parochial attitudes and harsh scorn for the tastes of others are considered as vulgar in the United States. Cultural relativism characterizes American elites (Holt, 1997a). In the study by Peterson and Kern (1996), those with high cultural capital are the most ardent consumers of popular culture. Taste for either popular or highbrow culture itself is not linearly related to class distinction (Holt, 1997a). Holt explained the taste for popular culture as demonstrating that “the highest qualified subjects assert their aesthetic dispositions by declaring that any object can be perceived aesthetically” (p. 100).

reasons for the changes in taste are associated with the changes in social structure, value, art-world dynamics, generational politics, and status-politics (Peterson & Kern, 1996; Turner & Edmunds, 2002).

Holt’s (1998) study of consumption in America illustrated differences that cultural capital created such as the different meanings attached to practices as intellectual experience versus entertainment (Gans, 1992). Holt (1998) found six sets of themes that differed between the high cultural capital group and low cultural capital group. Differences in materiality in taste emerged; the low cultural capital group showed more materialism or taste of necessity, while the high cultural capital group expressed their sensibilities for formal aesthetics in consuming interior décor, furniture, clothing and leisure (Holt, 1998). Generally those with low cultural capital preferred durable and comfortable clothing. Yet, some of high cultural capital group had a preference for functional clothing, because it has a distinctive aesthetic based on parsimonious design. Cultural texts are interpreted from a referential perspective by the low cultural capital group, while the high cultural capital group provided critical interpretations of cultural texts. The high cultural capital group pursued cosmopolitan taste and consumer subjectivity as individuality produced through authenticity and connoisseurship even in the mass produced society. In contrast, the low cultural capital group pursued local and collective identity through consumption. For the low cultural capital group, leisure was autotelic sociality and intrinsic enjoyment resulted from the application of skills and talents, while leisure is a means for self-actualization for the high cultural capital group that gained intrinsic satisfaction accrued from learning and creating (Holt, 1998). Distinctive consumption of mass-produced goods are found even in the consumption of kitsch which used to be considered bad taste (Morreall, 2002) or imitation of elite style aimed at the
middle class and produced by mass production (Gronow, 1997). Parish (2004) found that the collectors of kitsch legitimized their taste by distinguishing kitsch items into good and bad tastes. Their tastes and the representations of kitsch constituted the intimacy and identity of the group.

Studies have shown that taste for cultural consumption is not simply a manifestation of cultural capital. Caldwell and Woodside (2003) examined a number of consumption motivations that were found in previous studies (Holt, 1998; Lamont, 1992; Peterson & Kern, 1996; Peterson & Simkus, 1992) to investigate if the motivations implicitly mediate between holdings of cultural capital and patronage of performing arts. They classified affective intensity, intellectualism, connoisseurship, individualism, traditionalism, innovativeness, humanism, cosmopolitanism, omnivorousness, cultural exclusionism, and critical detachment for motivations of the high cultural capital group, and diversion, naïve evaluation, communalism, imitation, familiarity, conspicuous consumption, parochialism, univorousness, and self-reference for motivations of low cultural capital group (Caldwell & Woodside, 2003). There were, however, complementary factors such as occupation situations such as temporary unemployment, gender identity, or age that modified cultural capital influence on consumers’ practices. Rubin, Shmilovits and Weiss (1993) reported that preference for color and style changed to what accentuated physical attributes after people lost weight and their identity changed from “fat” to “thin”. Identity is a situated concept establishing what and where a person is in social terms (Stone, 1962, p. 23). Identity becomes a meaning of the self when placements of a person as a social object by others coincide with announcements by self (Stone, 1962). As claimed by the practice theory, taste is generally shaped by general patterns of lifestyles—or habitus—and general sources of cultural capital. However,
particularly for taste in clothing, one’s appearance would be a significant mediator between
taste and socially conditioned factors such as class or cultural capital. For those who recently
became a thin person, a new taste for light color and fitted style is appropriate for a newly
acquired identity as thin (Rubin et al., 1993). The fat body is stigmatized and the thin body is
socially desirable. The thin body is presumed to be acquired albeit erroneously through
discipline and activities in leisure time. Rubin et al. (1993) observed that those who recently
became thin felt like obtaining resources, which means the thin body functions as a kind of
capital which allows for a particular taste in clothing.

Research Questions

The major guiding light for research questions on taste in appearance are assumptions
and propositions of practice theory. Entwistle (2000) proposed viewing dress as embodied
practice in the study of dress, inquiring not only about the discursive and representational
aspects of dress but also about the way the body or dress is caught up in relation to power
issues and the use of the dressed body as a social entity which is the outcome of both social
factors and individual actions. This perspective was taken in studies on lifestyles (Holt,
1997a), consumers’ self-concepts and body image (Thompson & Hirschman, 1995), and
consumption of clothing as practices derived from different social positions of consumers

The present study delves into taste in appearance. An intensive investigation of the
concept of taste in clothing will reveal components specific to taste in clothing. In the pilot
study, there were common threads of themes connecting cultural products like art works and
clothing; consumers identified as having high levels of taste demanded an ability to
recognize aesthetic quality and possession of appropriate cultural capital to consume properly
across many product categories (Kwon & Damhorst, 2004). However, themes unique to clothing emerged, too; participants suggested taste in clothing involved active consumption and negotiation between self and others (Kwon & Damhorst, 2004). Clothing practices demand ability not only of perception and appreciation of styles and appearances but also of creating diverse looks by assembling clothing items (Kwon & Damhorst, 2004). Although Bourdieu emphasized taste as a scheme of perception and appreciation in consuming cultural objects, taste in clothing also involves a scheme of producing practices. Each clothing item is produced by designers and manufacturers, but appearance is perceived and appreciated as a whole, that is, a look coordinated by consumers. In clothing, an ability to incorporate fashion trends into an individual expression was perceived as a criterion of tastefulness (Kwon & Damhorst, 2004). People simultaneously pursued uniqueness as a way of self expression and trendiness, showing some conformity to society. While Simmel (1957) accounted for the changing dynamics of fashion trends as a consequence of the ambivalence of human needs, ambivalence was observed as endless negotiation between self and others when people talked about taste and daily decision about clothing in the Kwon and Damhorst’s (2004) pilot study.

On the basis of literature reviewed and the findings from the pilot study, four research questions were identified. The four questions are neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive. Those questions suggest the overall boundaries that this study explores. The first research question pursues the umbrella concept of taste in clothing followed by three questions that examine sociological interests focused on understanding culture and society.

**Research Question 1: What is taste in appearance?**

The first research question explores the concept of taste in appearance, borrowing a method from existential-phenomenology (see Thompson, Locander & Pollio, 1989). The
The purpose of this research question is to ground a definition of taste in clothing in emic meanings of consumers by investigating how consumers understand, evaluate, appreciate, and use consumption objects in particular contexts (Holt, 1997b, p. 334). Through this interpretive research question, rich concepts of taste in clothing and patterns and regularities across people were examined. This research question is related to the propositions that practice theory posits. Taste exists as an objectified and embodied form (Holt, 1997a). Objectified taste, particularly in clothing, results from rapid changes, and fashion becomes available to people from all social standings. Therefore, it would be meaningful to explore embodied tastes to reach an understanding of the concept of taste in clothing. Embodied taste is dispositional and is a kind of practical knowledge that people may feel is difficult to articulate even though their tastes serve as the basis for their daily judgments of their own and others’ clothes. Thus, the notion of taste would be induced not so much through observation of what people like to wear as through how people understand, describe, appreciate, or interpret their own or others’ daily practices of clothing.

**Research Question 2: How is taste in appearance constructed?**

Clothing is a physically intimate object more than any other cultural product. Clothing is consumed ultimately by wearing, that is, by constituting a consumer’s appearance. Even though Bourdieu (1984) viewed the importance of everyday consumption practice of cultural objects, there was little consideration of clothing consumption as part of one’s appearance which contributes to establishing self and identity.

This research question consists of three aspects of taste: development, maintenance and change of taste. These sub-questions explore many factors that influence taste, including social conditions such as family upbringing, formal education and occupation, and other
influences like adult experience of consumption, gender identity or personal situation. The development of taste concerns how people describe the development of their tastes and to what influences they attribute the construction of their tastes. Questions related to maintenance of taste explore individual strategies of managing one’s appearance, maintaining one’s taste, maneuvering fashion trends into self-expression, and purchasing and selecting what to wear everyday. Questions regarding alteration or change of taste concern what people identify as factors causing changes of their tastes and how people perceive the changes of their appearance and their taste.

**Research Question 3: Does cultural capital shape appearance-related consumption?**

One of the propositions of Bourdieu’s theory of taste is that taste is conditioned by cultural capital in the consumption field. This research question is a clothing version of Holt’s (1998) study, “Does cultural capital structure American consumption?” This research question investigates if taste in appearance-related consumer goods is a manifestation of cultural capital and how cultural capital shapes consumption of clothing and appearance management. I examined if there were different meanings in adopting fashion trends, purchasing clothing, daily choices of clothes, or judging others’ tastes by people who possess different levels of cultural capital. Through examination, it is hoped that the study contributes to identifying the concept of cultural capital.

**Research Question 4: What is the significance of having good taste?**

A number of questions helped in pursuing Question 4: Do people want to have good taste? If so, why do people want to have good taste? What is the consequence of having good taste? How does taste in clothing serve to communicate social status? Does taste in clothing contribute to obtaining symbolic capital?
Sociologists examine social and political implications of everyday consumption practices. Bourdieu (1989) maintained that, in any society, there are always conflicts between symbolic powers that aim at imposing visions of legitimacy in organizing the world by social classification (p.22). Status boundaries are reproduced by expressing tastes and social actors view appearance-related consumption as symbolic struggles to reproduce status boundaries (Holt, 1998; Bourdieu, 1984).

This study also explores whether cultural capital structures taste and the consumption of clothing and status boundaries are reproduced as a consequence of taste in appearance. The data were examined for evidence that reveals ambivalence created by the pull and tension between collective and individual preferences that comprise taste.
CHAPTER THREE. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A qualitative method was chosen for this study because of the exploratory and inductive nature of the inquiry. This study took a poststructuralist method of grounded theory, aiming at understanding and developing a theory of taste in clothing embedded in consumers’ practices of and reflections upon everyday clothing consumption. Grounded theory was first presented by Glaser and Strauss in their book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967). The aim of grounded theory is to develop theory that is grounded in the empirical world. There are some fundamental differences between grounded theory and phenomenology (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Pure phenomenological research gives primacy to the subjective experience, but grounded theory contextualizes phenomenological findings and emic meanings within the existential framework of meaning provided from literature review (Goulding, 1998; Thompson et al., 1989). While phenomenology relies only on the words of the informants, grounded theory allows for multiple data sources including observation and published reports (Goulding, 1998).

Poststructuralist analysis is useful for research into consumer experiences (Thompson & Haytko, 1997; Thompson & Hirschman, 1995; Holt, 1997b). The approach stresses idiographic analysis of consumer practice in particular social contexts rather than focusing on meanings formed prior to expression and meanings constructed by association with other cultural objects and practices that are historically accumulated (Holt, 1997b). From the poststructuralist perspective, participant reflections are viewed as personalized expressions of larger sociocultural discourses (Thompson & Hirschman, 1995). Researchers assume the task
of identifying social conditions (Thompson & Hirschman, 1995). Thompson and his colleagues presented two levels of interpretation: emic meanings and accounts. At the first level, the researcher becomes immersed in the interview transcripts and develops themes around key experiential issues (p. 141). Then the researcher seeks to situate the emergent themes within a poststructural framework to provide a rich historical account of the culturally shaped patterns and the taken-for-granted assumptions that were implicit to the participants’ viewpoints (p. 141).

**Sample**

Participants were selected by a combination of purposive and chain referral sampling called snowball sampling (Esterberg, 2002). Sixteen female participants were recruited from the upper-middle and middle classes in three Midwestern cities. Participants were recruited with the purpose of comparison according to their level of cultural capital.

Participants were asked to answer a short questionnaire that included demographic information including contact information and age, education, and occupation of themselves, their spouses, and their parents. Participants were in their 20s to mid 40s, and the average age was 32.8 years old. This stage of the life cycle corresponds to early adulthood which is the time for forming and pursuing youthful aspirations, establishing a niche in society, and raising a family (Levinson, 1986, p. 5). Ten of the participants were married, and six were single, divorced, or never married. Most of them had received a bachelor’s degree or

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9 Upper-middle class is comprised of college-educated managers, professionals and middle businessmen who tend to have the self-imaging of “spending with good taste.” Middle class consists of occupations of white-collar and top level blue-collar who are likely to follow the recommendations of experts in the media with affordable modification; to “do the right thing” and buy “what’s popular” (see Coleman, 1983). This classification of social class has been viewed as describing social class hierarchy for at least 50 years in the United States (Mowen & Minor, 2001).
graduate education. Fourteen were European American in heritage. There were three
participants who were born outside the United States: one was Caucasian who came from
Europe about twenty years ago and two were Asian Americans living in the United States for
sixteen and over thirty years, respectively. Recruiting was done with the intention of
including people with various occupations in order to include people holding a wide range of
levels of cultural capital (Lamont, 1992; Peterson & Simkus, 1992). Thirteen of the
participants worked fulltime or part-time. Occupations included professor, museum director,
small business owner, sales service representative, and former dietician.

To investigate the impact of cultural capital on appearance-related consumption,
participants were divided into two groups: people with high and mediums level of cultural
capital, hereafter referred to as HCs and MCs, respectively. For convenience, pseudonyms
of HCs begin with H such as in Helen, and those of MCs begin with M such as in Megan.

Participants were temporarily split into two groups based on the level of education
and occupational status of self, spouse, and parents. Holt (1998) argued that education,
occupation, and social origin are important fields that foster cultural capital, and he used

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10 The terms HC and MC were used to connote a hierarchy of cultural capital as Holt (1988)
did, but the terms are not intended to denigrate MCs or the opposite.
11 Criteria of occupation status were employed from Peterson and Simkus’s study (1992).
Their study suggested three occupation status groups. Participants and most of their parents
and spouses had occupations that corresponded to either the top or medium tier. A few
parents had occupations that corresponded to the bottom tier. Occupations of the first tier
included higher cultural professionals and lower cultural professionals, higher technical
professionals, artists, higher managers, higher sales people, and lower technical professionals.
The medium group included lower service, lower sales, clerical, and lower managerial people.
The bottom group included farmers, manual workers, and laborers. As Peterson and Simkus
(1992) discussed, it was hard to make distinction among managerial occupations. Higher and
lower managers were distinguished by the amount of power wielded on the job, but it was
difficult to identify the level of small business owners only on the basis of information self-
reported by participants.
education and occupation of parents as indicators of social origin. There were two
participants who seemed to be on the border between the two groups. The responses of the
two groups were compared and one participant was finally moved from medium level to high
level. Finally, there were nine participants in the group of HC and seven in the group of MC.
The classification was not clear-cut, but it was confirmed on the basis of patterns of
responses.

Most of the HCs were in or received graduate education and were professionals. Their
parents mostly had bachelor’s or higher degrees, and either one or both parents had
occupations in the first tier. Most of MCs had a bachelor’s degree. Their current or former
occupations are either in the second tier or one of the lower occupations in the first tier. Most
of their parents had high school or some vocational school education. Parents’ occupations
ranged from the second or third tier. See Appendix A for more information about participants.

**Data Collection**

In-depth interviews were the main data source because the method was useful for
eliciting the content and pattern of daily experience (McCracken, 1988). Semi-structured
interviews were conducted to explore the topics more freely and to allow participants to
express their opinions and experiences in their own words (Esterberg, 2002). In terms of
strategies of interviewing, the phenomenological interview was useful. Phenomenological
interviews attain a first-person description of experience, whereas experience may be missing
in third-person descriptions (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989). The role of interviewer
was defined not to direct the interview but to provide a context for conversation. The
interviews attempted to create circular dialogue rather than linear in order to gain full and
detailed description of a lived experience (Thompson et al., 1989). Direct asking the concept
of taste in clothing is unlikely to yield appropriate data, because taste in clothing is a kind of practical knowledge (Holt, 1997b).

Interviews were conducted for 84 minutes on average at their residence, with the exceptions of two participants who wanted to meet at their offices. Participants were first asked to fill out a questionnaire asking for demographic information (see Appendix B). Interview questions included questions about the participants’ own tastes and other people’s taste. They were asked to talk about other people’s tastes: those who have similar tastes to their own, those who they think have good taste, and those who they think have bad taste. These questions were meant to elicit first-person experiences by describing their tastes as a scheme of perception and appreciation (Bourdieu, 1984).

During the interviews, participants were also asked to show and describe pictures of themselves wearing clothes that reflected their taste or some of their clothes that reflected their taste. Twelve of them showed either pictures or clothes. Pictures of the individuals were taken for analysis. Because a researcher is the instrument in qualitative research (Strauss, 1987), field notes and memos were taken. It was important to record field notes of what occurred during the interviews and the details about the interaction and the initial sense of what was happening in the field immediately for greater accuracy because memory is reconstructed (Esterberg, 2002). Analytic memos included reflections on data and themes, and they were written at each phase of the study (Esterberg, 2002).

Analysis

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The transcripts of the interviews and field notes were analyzed. The constant comparison approach to data analysis was used. The process involves comparing data and themes until the themes developed are saturated
with data, and the incremental improvement to the theory by adding further data is minimal (Esterberg, 2002; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Preliminary themes were developed through open coding. Open coding entails unrestricted coding, going through data line by line very closely and identifying themes and categories that seem of interest (Esterberg, 2002). Through open coding, some recurring themes, categories, and patterns emerged (Esterberg, 2002; Strauss, 1987). After seven interviews were analyzed with open coding, a coding guide was developed. A coding guide was developed by sorting and grouping the codes obtained from open coding. The coding guide was developed to contain two or three levels under each major category. For example, preliminary codes relating preferences to different aspects of self or different roles that one performs were grouped together under the category of “The extended self.” See the Appendix E for more information about a coding guide.

Once the coding guide was finished and tested on one transcript, six randomly chosen transcripts, including three of MC’s and three of HC’s transcripts, were coded by another doctoral student in Textiles and Clothing to establish the trustworthiness. Inter-coder reliability was calculated by dividing the number of items in which the two coders disagreed by the total number of items coded. Intercoder reliability was assessed at 95.4% from the coding of six transcripts, which is very acceptable. The researcher finished coding of all transcripts with the coding guide.

Focused coding included selecting and developing categories or major themes based on the preliminary coding process (Esterberg, 2002). In order to identify major themes and relationships among categories for focused coding, prominent codes were selected and data were sorted according to the prominent codes. On the basis of the sorted data, reflection memos during data collection, and analytical memos, major themes were identified and a
framework of analysis was determined. Once a framework of analysis was determined, the researcher scrutinized transcripts to find out if there were any missing data related to the themes and repeated going back and forth between data and themes identified. Particularly in the comparison of HCs and MCs, selective coding (Strauss, 1987) was conducted and data were sorted to examine differences among groups. In the final stages of the comparison, data were tabulated according to key categories and participants to solidify the differences identified between the two groups.
CHAPTER FOUR. ANALYSIS

This chapter consists of five subsections. A brief introduction to the terms frequently used in each subsection is given here to help the reader follow the discussion. The first three sections are based on participants’ descriptions of their own taste. The first section, *Taste as Embodiment of Self*, discusses taste in relation to self-concept. It was found that taste as preference in personal appearance included not only preference for particular formal properties such as color or line, but also preference for assembling an outfit in certain ways. *Assembling an outfit* refers to coordinating clothing, shoes, accessories, makeup, and hairdo. *Assembling, putting together, and ensemble activity* are used interchangeably. A feature that participants frequently described was their preference for a particular level of formality in appearance. This was experienced on a continuum between *formal* and *informal*. Perceived strictness of dress code was likely to increase with an increase in the level of formality. Participants described two paths of formality in their experience: one for clothes at work and the other for clothes outside of work. Level of formality was expressed by the relative terms *dressing up* and *dressing down* or sometimes on a continuum of *dressy* to *casual*. And the level of formality in dress for work was often expressed on a continuum of *business (professional)* to *casual*. Therefore, a *casual* look refers to fairly informal attire for both work and outside of work.

The second section, *Taste and Motives in Appearance*, discusses motives that drive taste in appearance. Six motives for consumption activities, including purchasing and assembling an outfit, emerged: *to be appropriate, to be creative, to feel in control, to feel comfortable, to look up-to-date, and to look put together*. These motives are seen as driving forces behind individual consumption activities related to appearance (Mowen & Minor,
Individuals differently ascribe relative importance to these motives. One’s taste is to a large extent the result of their unique combination. Note that the use of the term *motive* does not mean that this study is based on behavioristic research. The meaning of motives may be socially constructed and symbolically communicated in the same way as the meaning of self-concept (Franklin, 1982). Motives here are close to the concept of situational motives, specific to appearance and actualized in a socially constructed manner. Thus to understand someone’s taste in appearance, it is important to understand situational motives in the context of appearance consumption.

The third section, *Taste and Appearance Management*, discusses strategies that individuals have heuristically developed in managing their appearance. Social actors are faced with limited resources as they exercise taste in their daily lives. To actualize taste as a preference for appearance requires the efficient use of financial resources, time and labor, and the cognitive effort required for appearance management, as well as negotiation of a variety of conflicts between aesthetic desires and the constraints of reality.

The fourth section, *Judgment of Taste in Appearance*, discusses the evaluation of taste. The term *judgment* could be misinterpreted here. In Kant’s sense, *taste* as in “judgment of taste” serves as subject of the verb *judge*, as in “Taste judges an art object.” If a person says something is beautiful, it is because the person’s taste judged something as beautiful. Therefore, for Kant, taste is an exercise in judgment. However, in the interviews conducted for this study, *taste* was an object of the verb *judge*. *Judge* in this chapter means “to evaluate the quality of a person’s taste.” Through an analysis of the way participants evaluated others’ taste, the concept of taste that emerged in the earlier sections was confirmed.

The fifth, the final section of this chapter, *Cultural Capital and Taste in Appearance*,
investigates whether appearance consumption in current American society is related to cultural capital as proposed by those who have done research on taste (Bourdieu, 1984, 1989; Holt, 1997a, 1998; Peterson & Kern, 1996).

**Taste as Embodiment of Self**

Drawing on the theory of extended self (Belk, 1988) and the theory of practice (Warde, 2005), the foremost theme emerging from the interviews is that taste in clothing and appearance is conceptualized as an embodiment of self. Belk’s (1988) perspective on possessions as the extended self suggests that clothing and appearance are extensions of self because a person feels attached to the clothing that he or she possesses. Drawing upon Sartre (1943), Belk (1988) claimed that having, doing, and being are inseparable, because what a person possesses can extend what a person can do and who a person would be. The theme “taste as embodiment of self” emerged from responses to the open-ended question asking participants to describe their taste in clothing. The answers suggest that taste in clothing can be rephrased as “what I like to wear.” “What I like to wear” constitutes, in part, “who I am.”

Belk (1988) explained three means of self-extension: controlling, creating, and knowing. Expanding the scope of Belk’s thinking from owning possessions to taste in possessions, this study pays attention to preference and patterns of personal appearance rather than possession of clothing per se. Taste in appearance-related commodities involves all of three ways of self-extension. To control appearance, one must master the choice of products that are the right design for a person and for a situation. Sartre (1943) felt that buying an object is another form of creating. Appearance requires not only buying garments but also creating a look by putting things together. Regarding knowing, taste is more likely to be an extension of self when a person is fully conscious of his or her own taste or preference.
Taste is an enduring tendency or pattern of preference, and taste in clothing is likely to embody a sense of “who I am” more than any single item possessed.

There is always a notion of self at the core of taste in clothing. Participants described their taste with examples of clothing that they had worn in the past, wear now, or would wear in the future. Thus, participants’ answers were about the clothes that they possess or may possess. Participants tended to think of clothing as it would appear on their bodies. Taste in clothing refers to taste in clothing “for myself.” The way participants described their taste shows that they verbalized the characteristics of their taste in clothing as characteristics of themselves. Instead of saying “I like basic clothes” or “my taste is basic,” participants answered, “I am basic:”

I am pretty basic. (Michelle)

I would say that I would consider myself conservative with flair. (Hollie)

The intimate relationship between self and taste in clothing comes not only from the fact that clothing is possessed, but also from the combined effect of having and wearing clothes. The behavioral aspect of taste contributes to the concept of taste in clothing. Taste in clothing is manifest in practice and behavior. In addition to acquiring clothing as a purchase or gift, taste drives the manner in which the clothing is put on a person’s body. Wearing practice is inseparable from the extended self. Participants explained their taste in terms of behavior patterns:

I probably say I am more conservative. I like to buy things that are … (Megan)

For the most part I’m pretty casual … I wear jeans, t-shirts, just regular shirts. (Martha)

12 Emphasis is added to highlight parts of the text relevant to the discussion.
While the music, painting, or novels that have been typically studied in taste research involve leisure time, clothing practice involves nearly every minute of life, encompassing leisure, work, private, and social activities. Clothing practices are habitual as well as deliberate, and so is taste in clothing. Participants are likely to consider their everyday dressing practice and behavior as their taste in clothing. In other words, participants do not necessarily have strong emotional attachment to every item of clothing they have or wear; rather, they tend to equate their appearance in the aggregate over time with their taste in clothing, i.e., what they like.

I was thinking, ok if I had to answer this question [to describe my taste in clothing] how would I answer? I feel like I have a very different taste or appearance in clothing. (Hillary)

People perceive tendencies or patterns of the dressed self to be their taste. It is partly because taste is a type of practical knowledge. People dress themselves every day, but they are not necessarily aware of any abstract principles or concepts guiding their choices, just as people speak a language without a conscious knowledge of its grammatical structure. Taste is a practical and informal form of the embodied self. Taste in clothing is perceived as a sense of who I am expressed through appearance.

Taste in appearance is exposed to public view at all times. People cannot figure out someone’s taste in music unless they talk about it with the person, but people learn about or judge other’s taste in dress simply by observing that person. Taste in appearance speaks for itself in every context where social interaction occurs. The theory of symbolic interactionism maintains that people act on the basis of meaning that grows out of social interaction with
other people (Blumer, 1969). Self-concept, which is embodied by our taste, is particularly
developed and shaped by our perception of how other people see us, as suggested by looking-
glass self theory (Cooley, 1902). Evidence for the development of self concept through the
symbolic interaction of appearance was found in the interviews:

I think that you would get different reactions [when you dress nice and when you do
not]. But it goes both ways. I’ll get different reactions, and I think I am expecting
different reactions. If I am wearing something that I feel uncomfortable … I don’t
know if people kind of do [see] or not, but I just assume that people can see that I am
not comfortable with that. (Heather)

That is how I perceive other people. Based on my perception of other people, I
assume that is how I would be seen by people. (Helga)

The quote by Hannah showing the influence of self-perception of appearance on
social interaction suggests that people’s perception of their own taste affects the way they
interact within society:

*If I don’t look the way I think I should* on a particular day, then it might *influence the
way that I interact* with someone. (Hannah)

People develop meanings and judgment of taste out of their social interactions, and
the meanings and judgment they learn shape their social interaction with others. Taste as
embodiment of self and perception or judgement of taste is an outcome of social interaction.

Thus taste in appearance constitutes a concept of who I am, because it involves
possession of clothes and related commodities which are incorporated into self-concept (Belk,
1988) and because it is embedded in everyday life and practice. The self-concept is
constructed through symbolic interaction. Therefore, taste as well as self-concept cannot be
thought of without considering social interaction and construction. In the next section, taste
as an embodiment of self is discussed from two aspects which cannot be separated: extension
of body and extension of self. Although taste as an extension of body is a sub-concept of
taste as extension of self, it is discussed separately because it pertains so uniquely to taste in
clothing and appearance.

**Taste as an Extension of the Body**

Body is one of the core things that constitute self (Belk, 1988). A body is dressed
according to the body image of a person. Body image is the mental image that people hold of
their bodies, including perceptions and attitudes (Fallon, 1990). Body image consists of how
people feel about these body attributes and how their feelings direct behaviors as well as the
perception of the size, shape, weight, features, movement, and performance of the body.
Clothing is one of the possessions closest to the body. Unlike taste in other things, body
image plays an important role in determining taste in clothing. Taste as embodiment of self
not only reflects body image, but also is disposed to enhance a sense of self, particularly
body image. Nearly every participant expressed a taste for types of clothing that are
perceived to enhance their body image: either to compliment attributes of their bodies or to
camouflage or minimize defects:

I think that it looks good on me. I don't know, it is my own, and I just like them [black
and white]. (Harriet)

Probably a big thing is comfortable and compliments my body and not accentuates
the bad part. … I think it [tighter clothes] looks better. It makes me look thinner. That
is more complimentary. That is more of a type of dress I would wear now. (Michelle)

People like clothes that enhance their body image, because their clothes enhance their
sense of self. What participants wanted to improve through clothing practice ranged from
particular body parts, features on face, complexion, height, to posture and figure type:

I like natural fibers. … I like that they are putting more Lycra and spandex in the
fabric. I think that they can fit better because they have a little bit of the stretch, and they are not so rigid. I think that can hide your flaws and camouflage something some times. (Hollie)

I love brown. … But the real tan colors look terrible on me, like the color of oat meal looks horrible. I really have to stick to the dark color palette; I can’t really go pastel. … if it was lighter … it would just wash me right out. I have to stick to the bright and the darks. (Madison)

Body image consists not only of positive perception that one wants to accentuate, but also negative perception that one wants to conceal with clothing. Current cultural standards of the ideal body are almost impossible to attain, and most people are vulnerable to unrealistic images of the ideal body (Gimlin, 2002). Due to the discrepancy between image of actual self and ideal self, people develop dissatisfaction with some part of their body. The dissatisfaction results in distaste for something that people perceive emphasizes the unsatisfactory part. Taste includes strategies to distract attention from unsatisfactory parts of the body.

I don’t like it [wearing tight clothes], because I don’t like this part, my stomach. I don’t want to draw attention to it. (Heather)

I don’t wear belts because I have a thicker waist so I'm not going to accent or I'm not going to put a belt that's going to draw a lot of attention there. (Madison)

A disposition to avoid something or to develop distaste for something involves not only body image, but is also more related to a sense of self than taste in any other area. Because of the strong bond between taste and perception of who I am and who I want to be, some participants had developed distaste for something that represented who they were not or who they did not want to be:

In a social setting I don't think I would ever wear black. … It makes me feel like it's a little more laid back in a brown … In a black I always feel like I'm dressed up a little
bit more. (Martha)

There are certain smells that are very strong and traditionally perceived as female perfumes such as Chanel No.5. And I don’t like that type of perfume. … Somehow I am a woman and its identity should be portrayed. But it’s not necessarily that the waistline should be that slim and women have to be very glamorous [as in fashion history book]. … It’s [The feeling of my favorite perfume] feminine in a delicate way not in a way that femininity was traditionally defined. (Helga)

Having distaste for something relates to construction of identity through distancing self from least favorite clothing or group (Freitas et al., 1997; Freitas, Kaiser, & Hammidi, 1996). Both Martha’s and Helga’s case were related to negating identities that were associated with particular designs. Martha expressed distaste for black as well as taste for brown to emphasize her self-concept as a laid back person. Helga also expressed strong distaste for Chanel No.5, because what she pursued for femininity was constructed based on negating the traditional feminine image associated with Chanel No.5.

Because body image is subject to socially constructed norms and ideal beauty is defined by the aesthetics of the time, participant taste reflected the current ideal of beauty, including a preference for thin and tall bodies and ideal proportions. For example, colors (e.g., black) and particular cuts or lines (e.g., wide-legged pants) were preferred because they are believed to create a tall and lean illusion:

I think that [shorter skirts] look better because I am short. Knee length or longer doesn’t look good on me. … I think it [tighter clothes] looks better. It makes me look thinner. That is more complimentary. (Michelle)

It looks best with a black tank and my favorite black trousers and pointy shoes because then I look slim, but it's interesting. (Madison)

Because I’m short and have broad shoulders, a round neckline that is close to my neck makes me look more top-heavy, so I go with more v-necks. If I do go with a round neck, it would be more plunging without being too low. I have to worry about
my shoulders. I like v-necks, though I can’t always find them. (Helen)

For a problem like being short, both Michelle and Hillary liked to wear heels so that they can physically make themselves taller than they are. Heels were especially likely to be perceived as an extended body part:

I consider myself short so I always feel like I'm dwarfed by people. I think that's half the reason why I very rarely wear flat shoes. … I don't believe personally in wearing a chunkier heel because I think we've all kind of learned if you're not happy with your legs or if you have bigger legs you shouldn't wear a thicker heel because it just makes you look bigger. (Hillary)

Hillary stated that making an effort to look tall is one of the important dispositions of her taste. Shown by the perception of a heel and leg together as a gestalt, heels are perceived as part of her body image, and her taste for narrow heels or distaste for chunky heels reflects anxieties about her body image. However, fondness for high heels is also a matter of the perception of being tall.

It can even be an inch tall it doesn't matter as long as there's some height. (Hillary)

I am a short person … I like the heel, I like having the height. I think it makes you look better in your clothes. (Megan)

Therefore, heels provided participants not only an actual height, but also a self-perception of becoming taller regardless of the number of inches that the heel added to their height. In other words, the behavior of wearing heels per se provides a feeling of being tall as well as actually making a person taller. That taste is shaped to meet the need to enhance body image shows strong self-interestedness, contrary to Kant’s demand for disinterestedness in judgment of taste, because taste in clothing or appearance involves clothes that are put on one’s own body on a daily basis.
It was found that an appearance problem could have multiple solutions. There is more than one way to make a person look slimmer: wearing skirts (Megan), wearing black (Megan, Helen, and Madison). Participants also had multiple strategies to achieve a goal: Hillary believed that wearing heels, a turtleneck, wide-legged pants, choker, and a high veil with a wedding dress are the things that created an illusion of tallness. On the other hand, participants expressed the same taste for different reasons. Hazel and Megan stated a taste for turtlenecks to make up for the defects of their bodies. Hazel was conscious of having a complexion similar to the shade of her hair, and thus she liked to “break up the color at the top half of her body” with a turtleneck, whereas Hillary liked a turtleneck because it gave her illusion of tallness. The complicated pattern suggests that taste in consumption practices should be investigated as it is embodied. Although Hazel and Megan have the same taste for turtlenecks in terms of an objectified form, their taste embodies different intentions.

Cash and Pruzinsky (1990) stated that body image is a construct encompassing cognitions, emotions, and actions regarding the body: body image consists of the perception of one’s body, the emotions accompanying the perception, and the actions that follow from the perceptions and emotions. Taste might be seen as an extension of this construct of body image. Taste is strongly disposed to enhance the perception of the body and drives actions to maximize satisfaction and minimize the dissatisfaction that people get from their body.

**Taste as an Extension of the Self**

Taste relates to what participants want to express through their appearance. In addition to body image, taste embodies self concept in a more comprehensive sense. Participants were aware of the message their appearance conveyed, and the message strongly reflected self-concept. They described the message as a component of taste. The next two
examples show how participants relate their taste to the organization they are engaged in.

Hollie described her taste in relation to herself as a small business owner:

I think that to me it also goes back to the feeling, being a business owner, everywhere I go I might represent my business. I am always aware that that I might run into someone on the street and they would say know you or I would meet someone that says what you do, I would say I own the XX shop. I am always aware that I am representing the business. (Hollie)

Especially for business owners, reflecting an identity as an entrepreneur is big part of her taste, the business is more than a job. It is their livelihood.

Hillary’s taste for school logo clothes also showed taste in relation to an organization; she liked to express support for her alma mater:

I like to wear a lot of my school clothes; I like to wear XX sweatshirts and t-shirts. … I grew up my entire life everything has been XX. … Some people are die hard alumni. You have this affinity towards the school and it’s almost like it’s a child to you or something that you need to support, like supporting a cause, like some people are very religious, or political; to me that’s like my political affinity, that’s my religion. … I think it will be something that I’m always involved in so that’s my way of showing my support. (Hillary)

Hillary was a very fashion conscious person and, interestingly, she explained wearing school logo shirts as her taste in casual wear. Different aspects of taste embody one’s identities in a different manner. While Hillary’s identity as a hardcore alumnus is embodied by wearing t-shirts in her leisure time, Hollie’s example is much more comprehensive and her identity as an entrepreneur has much more global impact on her clothing practice.

Taste as the embodied self is not only literally translated into a particular look. It also reveals subjective visions of one’s identity. The subjective meanings that participants embody through their appearance are enormously diverse, encompassing attributes of personality, belief, value, and attitude. For example, creativity was what Hazel thought
should be embodied in her identity as a person who works for a museum. Being creative was
a very important part of her self, including her job, values, and taste in appearance:

I think it [appearance] is important for me, because I work for an art museum, and part of my job is being creative. I want for my look to be creative too. ... If I looked like everybody else, that would be incongruous to what I do. ... I have the luxury of working in a very creative and liberal environment. ... Part of what you can't escape is that I feel like I am myself a creative person. I like that. I value that. I'm not the best person in math or writing, but I do feel I have creative ideas. (Hazel)

When a person has had a taste for one particular item for a long time, it is likely that
the person has developed a strong sense of self through the item:

I've just worn them for so many years that I feel like it's [the bracelet] part of me. ... It's [the necklace] kind like another extension of me. (Martha)

I've been wearing Ralph Lauren Romance since I started wearing perfume. That's my scent. ... I kind of like it because I once dated a guy and then when we broke up he was like, “now I can't smell that perfume anywhere because it reminds me of you.” That's what I was going for. (Hilda)

Hilda was loyal to one kind of perfume, while she enjoyed enacting different looks
with clothes. By wearing one kind of perfume, she created an association with the scent and
accordingly made other people feel that the scent was part of her. Her taste in one particular
scent resulted in incorporating the scent into the extended self. The association is almost not
logical, because scent is non-logical.

Taste as an extension of the self is related to where a person conceptually locates self
in relation to society. Every participant had a perception of themselves blended in a group
or organization and tried to dress accordingly, not standing out or attracting too much
attention:

I think you have to blend in wherever you are. And, there is a spectrum and degree of
how people dress. If you go much below or higher than that, you will cause attention
to yourself. When we go to a party, you rarely see people off the scale. (Helen)

The concept of blending-in leads to ideas of appropriateness. The purpose of blending in is to be accepted by the group or society where a person belongs. Thus, social acceptance requires conforming to social norms. However, how participants arrived at a self-image of blending-in is not as simple as it sounds and varied by individuals. While Monica tried to minimize attention drawn to her appearance, Hillary pursued small degrees of uniqueness as well as blending in through appearance:

I do **try to blend in and not stand out** in the crowd. … Sometimes what I wear underneath, it would be colored so it brings a little bit, but not really. I stand out in the crowd a lot because I am tall and so that kind of gets me the attention that sometimes I don’t want. (Monica)

I respect the people that I’m with; that I want to be at the same level. But I do think it’s really all about who you are with and where you are. … But I just believe there are **appropriate levels of fashion for each setting.** … You want to stick out but you don’t want to stick out in a bad way. … I think where I can be a little bit different is the vintage or creating my own jewelry or going overseas and traveling and getting different things. Or going to people who make handmade items. I think that’s just where I **try to be a little bit different.** (Hillary)

While Hillary pursued differentiation by having some unique things, Hollie tended to make herself stand out by dressing in a more formal way, but not to the extreme:

I would say I want to be **appropriate for the situation.** If any thing I would say I want to be just **a little bit overdressed** versus a little bit underdressed. … I don’t want people to think, I don’t want to feel like I **should have gone one step further, but I don’t want to go more than one step over.** I don’t want to get too extreme. I want to be **middle of the road.** (Hollie)

The statements above show that the participants are seeking a niche that satisfies themselves as social beings and individuals, which recalls Simmel’s theory of fashion. Simmel (1957) explained the perpetual change of fashion with the human need for both
union and isolation. The way participants explained their taste reveals the same ambivalence. Participants wanted to be similar enough to be accepted, but they also wanted to be different enough to distinguish themselves within the boundary of appropriateness.

A slightly different but related kind of ambivalence was found. Participants expressed ambivalent attitudes towards “dressing for others” and “dressing for self.” They tended to have strong other-centeredness, usually in a work setting (Helen), or interaction with someone whom they meet for the first time (Heather), or someone whom they really care about (Michelle):

When I go to court I'll just wear a wedding band … I won't wear it [diamond] to court or to represent my clients because my clients are usually poor… So I think it would be mean of me to go and make them feel beneath me. I'm going to be better dressed than they are, because I'm an attorney. And they would want me to be dressed like an attorney because they want me to represent them. Yet I think it would be unkind of me if I wore flashy things. So I try to look appropriate but dress down. … (Helen)

I kind of dress for other people. … I think it is not necessarily different selves, maybe just different outfits. So if it is someone I don’t know, but I want to have a good professional relationship with the person, then I try to dress what I consider professionally. Even when I go to the same place, I think about the person I will meet and the reason why I am there. (Heather)

It [dressing nice] suddenly becomes more important. It’s really because of my husband, it is important to him so I want to put more effort for him. (Michelle)

On the other hand, participants also expressed self-centeredness. As participants achieved differentiation of their appearance by increasing the formality (Hollie) and choosing unique things (Hillary), self-centeredness was also achieved by the level of formality and the choice of clothes. Harriet expressed a taste for dressing up because it made her feel good, and Hillary’s self-centeredness was about the choice of a look according to her mood of the day:

You like to dress nice. You dress for yourself because you want to look nice. You don't dress always for the other people. And it makes you feel better I guess. (Harriet)
I dress different just depending on my mood or where I'm going. I would say I am all over the board. I am one of those people that just buy something because I like it or wear something because I like it. It has nothing to do with if it's traditional, if it's trendy. I've always been really a different kind of dresser. (Hillary)

Like the standing-out versus blending in tendencies, dressing for both self and others coexists in one person. The relative inclination toward either self or others is determined by self concept in relation to others and the importance of the social interaction in each context. When people see themselves among other social beings and value the relationship with others, they pursue identification by appropriate attire and factor in other people’s attitudes or feelings so that they can be connected to them. When people see themselves as unique and independent individuals, they pursue differentiation by dressing up, down, or differently, and are less concerned with other people’s judgment. By controlling their conformity to dress codes and considering others’ reactions, people sometimes try to connect themselves to others and sometimes to isolate themselves.

**Multiple Selves and Clothing Practices**

One of the common patterns when describing taste was the distinction of taste according to different kinds of self. The most frequent distinction was that between taste in clothes at the workplace and out of the workplace.

I guess the types of clothing or fashion that I like, there are two different kinds. One is for more professional outfits at work. And the other one is things I like to wear in social settings when I go out with friends and sisters. (Helga)

Yes, you know, trying to be professional at work, and then if I am going out with friends, or going out dancing or something like that, I will be a little bit more revealing and risqué. (Hannah)

Participants conceptually separated their taste in clothes for the two places. The work
self is bound to a contractual relationship and duties. The work self is disposed to manage appearance at work to meet expectations and improve performance. Thus, appropriateness and other-centeredness are important in dressing for work.

[When I go to work]… to be more, I guess, business professional appropriate. (Martha)

The color is my choice but I tend to think about the customer I am serving, which is the financial institution so bankers are pretty conservative. I try to stay in a neutral black, brown, blue, and I try not to go too crazy with the patterns. (Monica)

However, taste in work clothes is not one-dimensional. If a job involves different types of social interaction and formality, people develop a complicated pattern of different versions of work clothes according to the level of formality. The following is an example of a pattern of clothes at work:

Monday the museum is closed to the public. … we don't have to dress as professional as we would throughout the week, because we won't have interactions with the public. So, I might wear something a little bit more basic that day, maybe pants and no high heels, probably a sweater or a button up blouse. … Tuesdays and Wednesdays are generally the days I have a lot of morning meetings, so I like to look professional those days. I might wear something like what I have on today, a skirt and mock turtleneck. I might wear a shoe with a little bit of a heel. Thursdays are the days we train our volunteers. They are generally a little bit older, and they love to comment on what you are wearing, so I try to dress up for them. I usually try to wear a much dressier outfit on Thursdays, even though Thursdays I'm on my feet more because we are in class from 9:30 to noon. I feel it is what I started when I first worked there, so I just continue that. Fridays are more casual, because I don't have as many meetings.

Hazel’s explanation about the weekly pattern of appearance at work shows that choices of clothing are determined by whom she worked with and the level of formality of activities of the day. She was highly attuned to context and people. Her taste allowed her intricate variations of level of formality. Although not every working participant showed as complicated a pattern as Hazel, for most participants, there were different levels of formality
associated with work clothes. The situations that are perceived to require dressing more formally are interactions with people from outside the company, professional conferences, and business meetings either with colleagues or outsiders.

The level of formality in clothes, the degree of dressing up or dressing down in a work setting is perceived on a continuum between “professional” and “casual.” Formal clothes are associated with a self-concept as professional. Depending on job responsibility, types of clothes at work ranged from the most formal to the most casual look: a business suit that consisted of a matching jacket and a skirt or pants was the most formal; a semi-formal look consisted of separates like pants and tops (jackets, sweater sets, or shirts); khaki or Capri pants with shirts looked casual; and jeans and sweat pants were the most informal or casual. The most diverse and versatile look at work was found to be the separates look. The type of pants first distinguished the professional look from the casual look. Participants used the terms “nicer” pants or “dress” pants to indicate pants that were formal enough to wear at work. In addition to coordination of pants and shirts, they tended to feel more formal if they added outer layers, including a cardigan or jacket. Woven fabric was likely to be perceived as more formal than knit if it was the same type of item. Woven button-down shirts or jackets were likely to be perceived as more formal than knit shirts or cardigans.

In a work context where it is expected to wear formal attire, participants were likely to express a strong sense of self as professional:

With work I am more polished; I make sure things fit better, more tailored … It's pretty conservative at work. … I definitely want to come off as a professional. (Hilda)

The more professional and formal work clothes were, the stricter perception of the dress code participants were likely to have. Few workplaces had written dress codes—the
dress code is usually a perception of the appropriate appearance expected for employees.

Participants specified situations when they dressed the most formally (e.g., a suit), while for other situations it was their voluntary choice whether they dressed in suits or just in separates.

I usually pretty much do wear [suits], but I just say you really want to make sure you wear suits when you have a special meeting. … If you have a meeting where you have to get up and talk or sometimes you have to meet with a vendor, you really have to wear a suit. (Megan)

Strictness of dress code shapes the perception of possible alternative looks or clothing within an appropriate range. For occupations which somehow require dressing up, appropriate designs for work clothes are more predictable and less diverse. Thus, the code for work clothes is perceived to be stricter than for clothes worn outside of work. Hilda called her work clothes a “uniform”:

I pretty much have like a work uniform which consists of nice dress pants, like black or khaki colored or pinstriped, with a long sleeved collared shirt. (Hilda)

The dress code is effective at work through internalization, which results in accepting appropriate appearance as desirable. As people embrace their roles as an employee, the dress code is incorporated into their taste for clothes at work with the development of work-self. Therefore, participants expressed their taste for work clothes identifying with their sense of work self:

When you meet with vendors obviously you want to dress up or if you have a special presentation or you’re the person running the meeting and you have people that you need to talk to like at other agencies; you want to show you’re professional. (Megan)

If I want someone to perceive me in a certain way or if I know someday I want to be at a higher level, I believe in dressing like that person; who I want to be ultimately. (Hillary)
Moreover, some of the participants explained their taste at work with a more concrete image of themselves as professionals: as a young professor (Helga), a creative person (Hazel), an attorney who cared about have-nots (Helen), and an entrepreneur (Hollie). For example, Helga liked to dress herself trendy at work as a professor. Rather than a mere identification of her occupation, her taste for trendy styles at work reflects her sense of self as someone who feels close to her students and as someone who is relatively young among colleagues:

In class I feel more connected with students when I wear trendy clothes, because students are sensitive to fashion and trends. I think it goes with how I position myself as a professor. I am not at the age that is too young to be a professor, but relatively I am very young at my department. So I consider myself as a young and trendy person and I dress myself in the same way. (Helga)

Outside-of-work clothes are classified by diverse purposes including casual gathering with friends, shopping, dancing, church, wedding, sporting event, workout, bar, and socials like a baby shower, a bridal shower, and black-tie event. As in the case of clothes at work, participants tended to describe their taste by different situations and their self-concept for each situation. The more diverse occasions a person has been engaged in, the more complicated the pattern of taste the person has developed.

In terms of level of formality, a black-tie event was the most formal occasion that demanded conformity to a specific dress code. Participants stated that they had to make a separate purchase when they needed to participate in such an event. A wedding was one of the occasions when participants perceived the need to be dressed formally. Although not necessarily every participant wore dresses to a wedding, they all described participation in a wedding ceremony as a practice which requires deep involvement in dressing.
Appearance for most of outside-of-work occasions would be under the category of “trendy casual,” which refers to a look with consideration for some trendiness. Trendy casual varies so widely by individuals that it is almost impossible to specify by garment types. Compared to clothes at work, there was less consideration of a dress code in taste for the occasions. Instead perception of roles and relations with other people were important. For example, participants explained their taste in terms of self as a mom with her kids, a mom with other parents at school, a married woman with in-laws, a wife, a single woman, and a family member at a family function.

*Being a stay-home mom, I wear things that are casual and comfortable. And, no dry cleaning, because things are getting messy all the time. (Mary)*

*… whereas if I was going to an event that was with my son and there would be a lot of other parents and like a stay-at-home mom types of things, I found that they dress a little differently, more casual, trendy so it kind of depends on the situation and whom I perceive will be in that situation. (Hollie)*

Even though Mary as a mom with six- and one-year-old children attributed dressing casually to practical reasons, Hollie’s decision to dress casually had nothing to do with practicality. Hollie’s choice to wear casual was based on the perception of a casual and trendy look as appropriate for moms and her self-concept as a mom. In relation to self-concept in outside-of-work practices, participants explained their taste as a wife who values her husband’s aesthetic sense (Michelle), a considerate friend (Helga), a laid-back and not too feminine person (Martha), and a low-maintenance person (Monica).

Figure 1 illustrates different contexts experienced in clothing practice. Those contexts were described in terms of level of formality of attire and perceived strictness of dress code. One’s taste is exercised in the context where the person is; contexts apparently shape one’s
taste. There were two different paths—at work and outside of work. There was no clear
distinction between at-work and outside-of-work clothes at the most casual or informal levels,
shown at the bottom left side of the figure, including the sweat pants, jeans, and khaki pants
look. At the next level of formality, appearance at work and outside of work begins to
diverge. A person’s appearance in at-work clothes were described in terms of different levels
of formality in the workplace. A person may apply one or more of the different looks
depending on contexts. Outside-of-work practices included different kinds of social events
with people related to work as well as from outside work. For example, many of the parties
participants attended were work-related, and participants enacted looks based on
appropriateness for occasions, self-concept at work, and self-concept at the party.

Participants experienced “separates look” or “dress pants look” at work and “trendy
casual look” outside of work, which led to higher overall perception of strictness for clothes at work than those for outside of work. Although fashion trends are considered for all of the contexts and the importance varies by individual and by the nature of a practice, trends were generally more important for outside-of-work practices, particularly trendy casual looks that encompassed the wide range of functions (e.g., dining-out, shopping, or hanging out with friends) as shown by the darker-colored circles in the figure.

Taste for bar clothes was difficult to locate on the continuum between casual and formal. Participants were engaged in multiple outside-of-work practices in the flow of clothes outside of work except for going to the bar. Not every participant included a taste for bar clothes, because not everyone goes to a bar as a frequent practice. And tastes for bar clothes were very diverse, including ragged jeans and revealing and fitted tops with shorter skirts and jackets. But all of the bar-going participants distinguished a taste for bar clothes from clothes for other outside-of-work practices in the daytime such as going shopping or meeting friends. Participants were likely to dress up with trendy clothes for bar going, but did not express that there was an expectation of a trendy look or that a trendy look is perceived as appropriate at the bar. The parameters of trendy casual were determined by what type of bar participants visited, who they were with, and what self-concept they had at the bar:

If I were going to go play pool or go to a bar, something like that then I’m not so worried about holes and stuff in my jeans (Martha)

If we are going to the bar or something, I try to wear maybe a little bit more like a flashy shirt, maybe more clothes that are close fitting, you know a little bit more low cut … (Hilda)

I do have a couple of jackets that I wear for just going out to dinner or the bar. I wear them with tank tops. (Hazel)
Taste should be understood as an individual project to maintain multiple aspects of self. Multiple tastes for at-work and outside-of-work practices do not simply come from different norms expected for each practice, but they are a consequence of the development of multiple selves. Belk (1988) maintained that people maintain multiple levels of selves, including individual, family, community, and group and that personal possessions need to be understood in terms of multiple selves. The multiple levels of self are outcomes of multiple social engagement and different locations in a plurality of practices (Warde, 2005). Warde (2005) contended that patterns of consumption are subject to volume of practices, commitment of practices, and the nature of the social organization of practices. Belk (1988) and Warde (2005) attended to the multiplicity of selves from individual level to collective level. The finding of this study does not necessarily suggest the multiplicity in a hierarchical sense, but it emphasized the multiplicity of clothing practice as a function of multiple aspects of self. This multiplicity of practices is different from the fragmented identity that postmodernists claimed (Muggleton, 2000). Participants have developed multiple tastes as the combined effect of development of multiple selves, engagement in roles that their selves perform, body image, and consumption patterns of diverse social practices.

**Taste and Motives in Appearance**

In this section, taste in appearance is discussed in terms of how participants’ motives shape their appearance. Participants described their taste by explaining the motives behind their preference for particular clothing items or designs. Six kinds of motives specific to appearance were identified in the interviews. The motives express the pursuit of an ideal in appearance according to their tastes. The motives are situational, defined contextually, and never fulfilled. Appearance is an ongoing project. The ideal clothing or appearance that
satisfies all of the motives would be conceptually similar to “a form of finality” (Gronow, 1997), an ultimate style that has not been yet determined. The six motives are not mutually exclusive, and some are more comprehensive than the others. How these motives are processed and visualized through appearance is unique to each individual.

**To Be Appropriate**

Most participants described their taste with some effort to dress themselves appropriately. As discussed earlier, symbolic interaction based on appearance is inevitable in social contact, and a need for social acceptance leads to appropriate choices. Appropriateness is determined by parameters of age, figure, situation, and audience.

First, participants had a taste for dressing age appropriately. When it comes to fashion, youth is particularly perceived as a virtue, and new fashion trends in recent years are perceived to be appropriate for young people. No participants addressed the problem of dressing more maturely than their actual age, but participants even in their 20s exercised caution not to dress too young for their age:

> Because I am not a high school kid anymore, I am not a young college student that you know, so I guess in the last couple of years, I have tried to look for more age appropriate [design]. (Monica)

> But I’m trying to find my way to get the young feel, at the same time, not inappropriate for my age. (Helga)

Concerns with age-appropriate appearance included discomfort with heels, too much exposure around the neckline, length of skirt, fitted garments, and change of body shape by aging. Participants also emphasized dressing appropriately for body type, because the figure changes as people grow older. Change of body is related to the current ideal body image portrayed in the media:
What you see mostly on those fashion shows and the magazines is young people wearing cheery clothes … I don't know if I would be able to wear because they are not age appropriate and also not figure appropriate, if you have a nice figure to wear some of those clothes …(Harriet)

Whether a person is old or not, dressing appropriately for his or her figure was considered important. Dressing the figure appropriately is based on self-perception of the body, i.e., body image, and thus it is directly related to the taste to enhance one’s body image discussed earlier. Fashion and the current aesthetics feed consumers with an image of the desirable figure and discriminate against figure types that deviate from the standard. Effort to make up for the body or compliment the body suggests an implicit consent to the standard.

For the majority of consumers who are not fully satisfied with their bodies, it is necessary to be selective about clothes in pursuit of the desirable figure. The image of the desirable figure predisposes individual consumers to be fond of “figure-appropriate” styles.

While dressing appropriately for age and figure is a disposition to be adjusted to given standards, dressing appropriately for situation and audience is a proactive disposition to maneuver social relationships. To participants, dressing appropriately for occasions meant choosing a look based on an understanding of the nature of practices either at work or outside of work and how formal they should get dressed. Abiding by dress code generally refers to dressing situation appropriately, which includes dressing with a proper level of formality and relevant to a social site whether it is for work or outside of work. Because it is rare that people are mistaken with the nature of the site, i.e., if it is work or outside of work, the level of formality was frequently mentioned as a major factor determining whether a look is appropriate or inappropriate for a situation:

Definitely wherever I go I definitely make a calculated decision about what I'm
wearing or how I appear. Because I do believe there are appropriate appearances for appropriate matters. Wherever you are going it could be different. … Kind of goes back to the overdressed, underdressed type of thing. (Hillary)

Overdressed refers to appearance which is more formal than what is expected and underdressed is what is less formal than expected. As long as it is not extreme, being overdressed is somewhat acceptable; sometimes participants were strategically overdressed to differentiate themselves. Dressing up is perceived as seriousness toward a situation and respect for other people. When a person is dressed up more than expected, the person’s appearance draws attention, but it does not necessarily lead to a negative judgment.

For instance, a job interview is a perfect example. You wouldn't go to a job interview for a corporate setting and wear jeans. It's just about the appropriateness and about the seriousness and about the respect. (Hillary)

On the other hand, being underdressed is judged negatively. People would probably be embarrassed when they are accidentally underdressed. Being underdressed could cause suspicion of a person’s abilities and could be an obstacle to social acceptance:

You know you have to dress appropriately because otherwise they will think you have poor judgment or they will look down on you. … I would say it is better to be overdressed for something than underdressed. I made that mistake. I went to a bridal shower one time and showed up in a real casual outfit and everybody had dresses on. I felt like an idiot. After that I’m never going to underdress again for anything. I’m always going to overdress if I am not sure what the dress code is. … Like we had a party last night. One of my friends had on like a suit; it was like a pant suit which I thought was really dressy. But she probably didn’t know if people were going to dress up, but she looked nice. … She looked fine; she fit in well (Megan)

Receiving negative evaluation by miscalculation of the formality of appearance relates to the degradation of performance (Goffman, 1959). Goffman (1959) compared everyday presentation of self to performance on stage. He said that “unmeant gestures”
misunderstood by audience give a degrading impression of the performer conveying a message such as incapacity, impropriety, or disrespect. As Megan described, appearance as part of presentation of self is subject to cultural standards and appropriateness is a must to pass the test of the standards.

Appropriateness for a situation indicates being sensitive to and appropriate for an audience. Being audience-appropriate shows consideration for the people with whom one socializes. It represents an intentional effort to form favorable relationships and is usually achieved by dressing similarly to peers in the belief that similarity will create an emotional bond:

*I adjust my appearance according to who I meet that day.* For example, I have a colleague. … she tends to wear something very simple, nothing flashy, tracksuit or something like that. So if she is the only person whom I meet with that day, I would rather wear clothes like her. That makes me feel comfortable. On the other hand, I have another colleague who likes to dress up. When I hang out with her, I tend to dress up more so that I would look a little similar to her. And I have another friend. She likes to wear jeans. I tend to wear jeans more often when I hang out with her. (Helga)

Patterns of social life are “consequences of the established understanding of what courses of actions are not inappropriate” (Warde, 2005, p. 140). A motive to dress appropriately shows that clothing practice is based on an established understanding of what is appropriate and inappropriate in terms of age, body type, situation, and companions.

**To Be Creative**

Practice theory asserts that the concept of practice accounts for both reproduction and innovation (Bourdieu, 1977; Ortner, 1984; Warde, 2005). While taste for appropriateness relates mainly to reproduction, taste for creativity relates to innovation. Campbell’s (2005) concept of craft consumption can be integrated with participants’ taste for uniqueness and
strategies of ensemble activities to characterize taste for creativity. Participants expressed a
desire for uniqueness:

It [the wedding dress] had what I was looking for. *It didn't look like everyone else's* bride's dress with beading and strapless. (Hazel)

I like the beads, because I *like the things that are different*. I didn’t see another skirt with beads on it. I don’t want to wear something that everybody else wears. (Heather)

The above quotes show taste as a way to achieve uniqueness, which relates to the
need for differentiation, as Simmel (1957) argued. Taste for uniqueness can also be viewed
as a motive to personalize objects that are mass produced and commodified. Campbell (2005)
argued that craft consumption characterized a consumer reaction to progressive
commodification in modern consumption. Taken from the traditional sense of handcraft
production, craft consumption refers to both designing and making the products that
producers consume (Campbell, 2005). A craft consumer is a modern consumer who creates a
new “product” using any number of mass-produced products as raw materials. A craft
consumer transforms commodities into unique, singular, and personalized objects (Campbell, 2005). Thus, through craft consumption, commodities are used as raw materials to produce a
whole new object. As a producer, craft consumers invest their personality or self into the
object produced (Campbell, 2005).

Consumers are aware that they are purchasing the same products that millions of
other consumers purchase. Participants personalize their appearance through creative
shopping and creative ensemble activity. Some participants tried to shop from alternative
retailers such as small independent shops, vintage shops, or boutiques, hoping for unique
things as well as looking for unique things in the mass market:
I buy a lot of things [jewelry and accessories] from what I would consider artists, ... I like again small independent type places and quite often sometimes they are mass produced but quite often they are something from an artisan of some sort whether it is a gold or silver smithing where they have things they’ve made or they also bring in things that other people have made. (Hollie)

Henderson and DeLong (2000) viewed shopping at alternative retailers as a significant identifier of postmodern consumers. They argued that the alternative shoppers like to communicate a personal message through dress rather than adopting a prescribed look. The motive for alternative shopping is to seek out unique things to personalize one’s appearance and to use one's appearance as a means of self-expression.

The essence of Campbell’s (2005) notion of craft consumption is actualized in creative ensemble activity by consumers. Because the majority of items we purchase are mass-market products, it is not too much to say that ensemble activity is the only way to personalize one’s appearance. Hollie’s strategy was to make sure that she had one unique piece in her outfit:

I think of accessories as an opportunity to take a basic outfit and use some accessories to individualize it. I guess is what I think about it. A unique necklace or a scarf, or a unique jacket over just a basic turtleneck and pants, or that type of thing to add my own sense of style by doing that. (Hollie)

Helga intentionally put an outfit together using a shawl or cardigan as an alternative to a jacket for work, because she thought of a jacket as an item that everybody wore to be appropriate in the workplace:

Compared to other people, I don’t wear jackets much. That’s one thing different and unique.... When it comes to formal wear at work, they always wear suits. ... To me, unless suits are really really chic and good, they are just usual. I don’t see much uniqueness and differences from the suits they wear. ... I’d wear button-down shirts with trousers. Sometimes I wear a sweater or big wrapping scarf over my shirts when it is a little chilly. (Helga)
Warde (2005) maintained that innovative practice invites constant change through adaptation, improvisation, and experimentation. Clothing practice was also found to involve such innovation. Fashion trends are one of the things to which consumers have to adapt. Participants found a way to make the new trends work for their age, and figure:

I tried on those [shrugs] and I figured out that I don’t have a slim waistline. Unless I am really really physically high-maintenance, I don’t think people in thirties and forties have that body shape that can afford shrug. … Recently I learned from shopping with my sister, I guess. … When you have a little loose top, then it can go with a shrug. I think I’ve found a way to wear a shrug. I have a couple of shrugs … I found a way to wear shrugs that I have. (Helga)

In the ensemble process, improvising is putting a combination of different items together to make an outfit. As ensemble activity is a form of creation with purchased items, improvising a new array is another form of creation by a consumer. Participants improvise multiple outfits:

Well, I think I will buy an item with at least one thing in mind with what I can wear it with in my closet … When I get home, I find that multiple things can go with it … a lot of things in my closet mix and match and I am not afraid to try things. Some days, I will put together an outfit and I would get to work and it would bug me all day long, knowing it did not really work the way I thought it was going to. It is all trial and error, and I will not wear it that way again. I will try with something different the next time. You keep discovering and creating outfits and I add a piece here and there. (Hollie)

In the above quote, improvising is directly related to experimenting. One cannot improvise without experimenting. Consumers who view taste as creativity are not afraid of trial-and-error and experiments:

I’ve experimented with a lot of things. I feel comfortable putting [hair] rollers in. I feel comfortable putting half of it up. I feel comfortable putting it up in a clip. I feel comfortable doing it really straight. Doing it in different ways. … If I showed you a
bunch of different pictures, my hair is so different in all of them. (Hillary)

Tian and Bearden (2001) found that there are two different dimensions of consumer need for uniqueness: pursuit of creative choice and pursuit of unpopular choice. What participants expressed in the interviews would be understood as the pursuit of uniqueness as a creative choice. Participants created personal looks either by purchasing unique and different things or by ensemble activities including adapting, improvising, or experimenting. The taste for personalizing appearance is motivated by consumer creativity and a desire for self-expression.

**To Feel in Control**

A motive to be creative in craft consumption relates to a motive for feeling in control over one’s appearance. A craft producer is someone who exercises personal control over goods (Campbell, 2005). Consumers personalize their appearance by exercising control over their choice of clothes when purchasing and enacting a look. Belk (1988) also noted that self-extension occurs through control and mastery, creation, knowledge, and habituation of an object. It was found that participants wanted to have full control when it comes to shopping for themselves. Although availability of products and design are beyond the control of consumers, they wanted to be in control of their shopping practice. When it comes to design, to feel in control is found in wanting to feel the maximum appeal of a product without any external factors such as a mission to buy something today or newest fashion trends:

*It has to hit me,* it has to have an appeal, it has to be something, it might be the color, feeling the fabric, the line, the style. I find out that when you shop you have to go in with no preconceived ideas or not going with “I’ve got to find this today”. Because when you go with that you will never find it. There is never the perfect thing, but when you shop with an open mind, when you have some time to browse, that is when you find the best things. (Hollie)
Hollie’s thought on shopping is fairly close to the disinterestedness that is needed to make genuine aesthetic judgment in Kant’s (1790) theory of taste. Similarly, browsing around a shop without any interest in finding something is another strategy to be independent from the market:

I feel like I am at a point now where I don’t really need clothes. I haven’t changed sizes in a long time, and I have kind of like been building my wardrobe so if I do find some things that I feel like may be nice, I get them. … Most of the time I don’t feel at all pressure to find something. If I try things on and nothing looks good or I don’t like it, then I just leave and not buy anything. (Hannah)

Hannah’s strategy shows that a consumer can be empowered to choose whether to buy or not by being free from urgent needs, which reveals her confidence in her control over her wardrobe. Taste to feel in control also related to participants’ feel for fashion trends:

I love shopping and … I love to have new pieces but I'm not a slave to it either. I'm not going to wear something because nobody else is. … I'll buy trendy pieces but it's not necessarily because I want to look like everybody else. Because I like them. (Hilda)

They did not want to feel that their choice of design was directed by a retailer or anonymous others, i.e., fashion trends. People want to be in control of shopping and hunt for the perfect product for them. Another disposition to feel in control is to be proactive in discovering a treasure in the market:

I almost have to go to every store before I'll make a decision. … the other part of it is thinking that I'll find something that I'll like better. Because I always tell the sales person, you know they'll say “are you looking for something in particular today?” I'll say, “no, I'm looking for something that doesn't exist.” I just want to see if there's something that's close, ’cause in my mind I say this is what I need. I haven't seen it anywhere, but in my mind I know something that is close exists. (Hillary)
To this type of consumer, shopping is almost another form of production. They produce by seeking out objects. When they finally find what they really like, they feel that they are not subject to choice of particular brands. It is almost a feeling that they have overcome availability in the market and won control from market producers. Some participants denied having loyalty to brands even though they did buy some brands or shop at some retailers more frequently than others.

When I look at my closet, there are brands like Banana Republic, GAP, BCBG or Kenneth Cole of which I have several. But I got those, because they are accessible and available. … I bought them not because I like the brands. The purchase situation is like this. I happen to buy things in Banana Republic. I went there and I found something I like. If there is a store that has lots of different brand names that I do not know and if their prices are reasonable, then I am willing to shop there. (Helga)

Denying loyalty to brands could be interpreted as having only behavioral loyalty, not attitudinal; behavior and attitude are the two main dimensions of the consumer loyalty construct (Rundle-Thiele, 2005). However, what is of interest here is that participants did not want to feel that they are controlled by the brands that they frequent. They also emphasized that they liked to buy clothes from different brands in different price ranges and mix things together:

I like to buy separate things, so that I have the liberty to wear a skirt, pants, or jeans with it. I can mix and match. (Helen)

I rarely buy a whole outfit from one store. Take for example; it would be rare that my top, pants, shoes, and jewelry would all be from Anne Taylor. I would definitely try to pull pieces from other name brands and maybe other seasons. (Hazel)

By staying on top of market and clothing practice, participants felt confident and built up self-esteem. A motive to feel in control indicates the self-interestedness of clothing practice; even the disinterested attitude is a strategy to feel in control.
To Feel Comfortable

Comfort is one of the most frequently mentioned words relating to taste. Comfort is perceived as a virtue that nobody will question. Comfortable clothes were explained in terms of physical attributes of fabric, cut, maintenance, and body movement. Comfortable is a grand word for taste as well as for those positive features of clothing:

*Comfortable* is the key. (Monica)

I wear a lot of jeans, so that I can sit down comfortable. If I want to wear a skirt, it is usually a skirt – you know with shorts underneath a skirt. … So, it has to be *comfortable* and friendly with the kids. (Helen)

Participants addressed the comfort issue particularly for their taste in work clothes. This is not because comfort is not important for casual and outside-of-work clothes. Except for outfits for highly formal situations outside of work such as a formal party or a wedding, most requirements for appearance outside of work are relatively lenient and less formal than for appearance at work. Some items that are particularly associated with work clothes such as a jacket are perceived to restrict body movement. For a social gathering, one can choose not to wear something if it is not comfortable, but a jacket or dress pants are a must for most workplaces. Moreover, clothes at work are worn at least eight hours a day, five days a week on average. Therefore participants have developed a deep concern for comfort and emphasized their taste for comfort in work clothes:

I would say *comfort*; as of right now is a very important issue, both in my professional life and in my personal life. For example, when I get dressed to go to work, I generally base my outfit around what kind of day I'm going to have. (Hazel)

What can I wear all day and almost all night that's going to be comfortable? … Definitely if there's an item that I have in mind; … *if it's for work then it needs to be comfortable.* Or if it's jeans, then it needs to fit a certain way. (Hillary)
Saying something is comfortable to wear does not mean that it affords only physical comfort. Mental comfort was important to participants because it relates to contentment, security, and confidence. Comfort came from the feeling that participants were not violating any social norms with their appearance and that they were successfully making up for their weaknesses:

I don’t really like low cut...you know, I don’t like things that you have to put something underneath. Low cut, I don’t like that stuff, because then I feel uncomfortable. I’m always like wondering, ok does this look okay? With a turtleneck sweater you know it’s always good. You can pretty much put it with anything. (Megan)

I think part of the reason I might gravitate toward the turtleneck is because I don’t have a very clear complexion, and I feel the turtleneck might kind of hide my face a little bit. … I feel like it gives me a little bit of comfort versus keeping it wide open. (Hazel).

In this sense, taste for feeling comfortable sounds like a concept subordinate to the taste for appropriateness and enhancing body image. People have a taste for feeling comfortable because it adds up to self-confidence and self-esteem. Comfort was an expression of self-esteem in the following:

I don't want people to feel like I have bad taste, but I think being an individual and who you are is that that is good taste. If you're comfortable in who you are I think that that's good taste. If you're comfortable in what you wear and you feel good about it then that's good taste to me. But if you are not taking the time out to like clean your shirt or brush your hair. … I think that if you're not taking the time out to do that then that's bad taste. No matter what you're wearing. I just think I'd rather be true to who you are and look nice while doing it. That's my motto. (Hilda)

So, very adaptable to the situation and comfortable in whatever [situation] is appropriate. … I can be comfortable in a business setting in a business suit, and I can be comfortable in a soccer game with all the parents in jeans and sweatshirts. But I won’t come to dress the wrong way (Hollie)

A motive to feel comfortable is a grand motive for seeking physical and mental
comfort. It is a highly self-interested motive to attain high self-esteem through their clothing practice as well as to pursue physical comfort. A social actor not only wants to enact a good and appropriate look, but also wants to maintain high self-esteem through appearance. In other words, comfort is combined with confidence when people feel like they are performing good dressing practice and when their clothing practice resonates with their self concept.

To Look Up-to-Date

While the motive to feel in control and comfortable were about how one wants to feel about self, the next two motives are about how one wants to be seen in the eyes of other people: a motive to look up-to-date and to look put together. A motive to look up-to-date is related to the fact that clothing fashion change is more rapid than are any other consumer goods. Although there was a difference between individuals in how much taste they had for trendy clothes, no participant wanted to look behind the times; they at least wanted to look like they were keeping up:

For my social outfit, I think I like trendy styles and things that are fashion right now. Things that shows the real taste of me in terms of style, and then things that can show the playfulness of myself. … I want to look trendy and fashionable. (Helga)

I’d say I try to find a cross between the real conservative stuff and the stuff that has the new fashion. (Megan)

As discussed earlier, it was important to be age- and figure-appropriate with fashion trends, and thus participants stated that they selectively adopted fashion trends and adapted trends chosen for themselves.

I adopt a modified or toned-down version of trendy clothes. If I do not do that at my age, it’s almost impossible to keep up with current fashion. If I completely ignore what’s in fashion I will look like a very boring forty-year-old working woman or working mom. … Not doing anything is socially unacceptable. I have to pay attention to fashion, but I have to be selective about what is good for me or what is not or what
is acceptable or what is not. At work, some people who look trendy [and fashionable] adopt some young trendy looks, but they digest those into their styles. (Helga)

Some of the strategies for looking up-to-date were adopting just a signature detail that gave a feel for the trend (Hollie), following color palette trends (Harriet), or finding a trendy piece of good quality (Helga):

I might not go to the extreme of what you see on the runway, but I might take out a detail about it and capitalize on that, if I think that fits me. (Hollie)

I go for right colors. I kind of like the trendiest colors. Probably I would go more with the colors than with some of the designs. (Harriet)

When it comes to trendy clothes, it is very important for me to get a good quality one to be age-appropriate. Because trendy clothes are typically targeted at young people, and trends starts from young fashion, I can find a toned-down version for my age from good and high-end brands. (Helga)

Helga learned that trendy designs from high-end brands were good for her age from her experience. It can be interpreted that those brands had already modified fashion trends to fit older consumers, which is their target market. Another possibility is that clothes with better quality of fabric and workmanship are likely to look good on older consumers because good quality provides a rationale for wearing young design. Maybe they feel the need to have better clothes to offset the age factor, or they have learned to appreciate quality.

Because fashion trends mean change to consumers, a question was asked whether their taste had changed to understand how participants related to taste, fashion trends, and changes. Perceptions of change in taste were different depending on what is of interest to each person. When participants attributed a particular attribute to their personality, they tended to see that taste as unchanged:

I think that I have always liked that [simple style]. And I like the [simple] fabrics, too.
Some silk and nice kind of wool. … Right, natural. Well, you know, *I'm a natural, simple person.* (Harriet)

When participants talked about change in their taste, the most frequent response was that they are less concerned with the latest trends than when they were younger. However, it does not mean that they care less about updating their appearance. They are sufficiently self-assured of their style that they attribute their taste to themselves rather than to conformity to fashion trends. Thus they perceived that they had become less reliant on fashion trends:

It has changed. When I was young I always wanted to wear the more fashionable or the latest trends in fashion. *But now I'm not so concerned.* (Harriet)

I probably am a little *more confident and self-assured* in my own personal sense of style now than I was when I was younger. … When I was in high school, college, I was very much aware of other people and wanting to be in fashion whereas now I have developed that personal sense of style and this is what looks good on me. … So I think that has developed with age. (Hollie)

Looking up-to-date signifies coming along with the world and openness to the world, because the world is changing. Stagnant appearance signifies a closed mind and is perceived to be anachronistic:

I think it [change in makeup and hair] is an ongoing progression, and I think with all clothing and that’s sort of the concept of fashion. It’s always changing, it’s always a work in progress, and so *your whole body is always a work in progress.* (Hollie)

There's one guy I work with and … he just is stuck in a time warp. He's always wearing … It looks like he's straight out of the 70's. … they just get stuck in the time that they thought they looked the best. A lot of people just don't evolve. (Hillary)

As seen from the Hillary’s comment, taste for looking up-to-date does not merely mean purchasing new clothes. It is a capability to conduct the ongoing project of producing one’s own look out of the constant flow of new trends. Thus, nobody wants either to look out
of fashion or like a slave to new fashion.

*I'm not a slave to any trends anymore.* I like to look nice and I like to look in style and current. (Hilda)

Trying the latest fashions to look up-to-date is similar to omnivorousness in taste as a signifier of good taste in the current United States (Peterson & Kern, 1996). As omnivorous taste signifies the assertion that any object can be perceived aesthetically (Holt, 1997a), a motive to look up-to-date relates to the confidence that one can make any fashion trend work for oneself.

**To Look Put Together**

*Put together* refers to an action of assembling an outfit by collecting clothing items, accessories, and shoes. *Put-together* used as an adjective refers to the finished status of appearance. Participants stated that they wanted to look put together:

Through my appearance, um, I guess [I want to present myself as] *put together*. I don’t want to appear messy or disorganized, so that’s probably why I try to not go too far out of the norm. (Monica)

Put-together refers to a successful outcome of ensemble activity. It encompasses well maintained, well matched, up-to-date, and appropriate clothes, proper choice for each person, good-looking makeup and hairdo, and completion with proper shoes and accessories. For most people, being put together was not something that can be explained simply:

I always try to look like I put thought into what I'm wearing; that I'm *put together*. That I'm *not dirty* or that my clothes are *ironed*. They are *not old; up to date*. (Hillary)

You can have a beautiful suit. But if your hair or your makeup or your shoes aren’t appropriate, that can completely throw the whole look off. So I think that *the accessories* are very important. (Hollie)
Thus, looking put together can be achieved when all those components are harmonized and every criterion is satisfied. Finished, complete, and streamlined were used similarly. Although looking put together is a gestalt perception, participants have developed diverse and concrete taste to achieve the goal of looking put together.

In terms of matching, matching color was most frequently cited. Participants were conscious of matching colors between tops and bottoms, between jackets and clothes underneath, and between clothes and shoes or socks. Acceptable combinations between two or more items were not simple at all; when one wears a suit or a matching top and bottom, then it is okay to wear shoes in the same shade or in a different color, depending on what look the person is going for. When one wears separates, if one item has multiple colors, then one of the colors could be picked out to match. When one is to match multiple solid colors, then the combination of patterns is complicated, depending on if they are layered, if one color is dominant, or if a relationship between colors is analogous or non-analogous. Several participants expressed concerns about wearing multiple items in the same shade together when those items are made of different fabrics, except for blacks and whites. Black in fabric, silver in metal, indigo denim in a casual look were considered handy solutions to color coordination; participants would use these all-round players when they felt items were hard to match or they did not possess the right color to match:

If you are wearing matching pants and shirt, then you should wear socks and shoes of the same color. … If you wear pants of one color and shoes of another, then your socks can be different too. (Mary)

To me, different shades aren't bad. But when it tends to be very similar, I see that as a problem. … They would just put things together that they thought were close enough. … Not generally [I don’t wear the same shade in top and bottom] other than black. (Hazel)
Usually if I have earrings that match, like brown earrings with a brown shirt, I would. If I don’t, I would just wear sliver earrings. (Michelle)

One of the things that determined put-togetherness was a strategic use of clothing and non-clothing items. Non-clothing items, including bags, shoes, and accessories, were used to complete an outfit either by echoing the look of the clothes or by adding flair or interest or to individualize the look:

I like to accessorize and match clothing with jewelry. I have fun with that. Sometimes a necklace and bracelet can just put an outfit together. (Helen)

Jeans and t-shirts are not very unusual items. I think the overall look of wearing them with trendy and beautiful shoes matching with purse is very flattering. … I have to wear heels to make jeans special. … When I pick shoes for jeans-t shirt look, I can go really extreme. Then I would put very good make up with that look. (Helga)

Another common strategy was to mix a classic and trendy design item together to look up-to-date without to looking over the top or too plain:

Because the [classic] cardigan is so plain, I would wear that in some nylon or more contemporary-looking fabric. … I guess so [put both classic and non-classic items together]. Mix-and-match with different styles is what I want (Helga)

So we have a trendy shirt, a classic jacket. And then I'll do this [necklace] right at the neckline, up tight so it's sitting higher, like this at the neckline. And then my wooden bracelets. Because then it still looks fun. … you know it looks a little more put together. If I take the jacket off and I still have the t-shirt, the bracelets on the wrist. (Madison)

Seen from Madison’s quote, a put-together status is achieved by integrating multiple strategies, e.g., trendy clothes + classic clothes + trendy accessories, on top of basic maintenance including cleaning and ironing. Taste for looking put together includes many different tastes and is thus a superordinate concept like taste for feeling comfortable, as discussed earlier.
All six motives are different dispositions of one’s taste, and priority given to the motives varies by individual. One person may have a strong taste for appropriateness, then taste for looking up-to-date. One thing in common is that no one completely ignores any of the motives. The difference is that all six motives are well balanced for some people, whereas one or more of the motives is dominant for others.

**Taste and Appearance Management**

Taste in clothing and appearance-related products directs people as they embody their self-concept through appearance and pursue social motives in clothing practice. The characteristics of taste discussed earlier are expressed in people’s everyday practice of appearance management. Kaiser (1997) defined appearance management as a process of self-identification that involves enacting one’s look in order to express, to accomplish, to communicate. At a practice level, appearance management involves purchasing, storing, and taking care of clothes as well as assembling an outfit in pursuit of specific motives and self-embodiment using the given resources: time, money, and effort. This section discusses heuristic rules or strategies for appearance management developed by participants. The heuristics strategies are important mediators between one’s taste and reality. Taste is actualized through appearance management and the process of management sometimes contributes to shaping taste.

The following quote describes a typical process that people go through when getting dressed in the morning:

> But my process would be, okay what am I doing that day? How much time do I have? Do I have to iron it? But it also is, what shoes should I wear with this outfit? And will I be doing a lot of walking that day? (Hillary)
The checklist could be much longer if people were to sit down and list every consideration that goes into dressing, and their shopping rationale could generate another long list. However, people neither put the list on their closet door nor carry the list when they go shopping. They have a practical sense or a feel for the day and participate in appearance consumption according to their intuitions. Because habitus predisposes individuals to select behaviors in which they are likely to succeed with given resources and past experience (Swartz, 1997), individuals develop a practical sense or a feel for a particular social game (Bourdieu quoted in Lamaison, 1986), i.e., a disposition to manage their appearance under given conditions.

Financial Management

As in every consumption practice, appearance management is constrained by economic resources for most consumers. Individuals’ consumption patterns are developed to distinguish themselves and to obtain optimal satisfaction from the combination of their financial resources and their consumption skills (Gershuny, 2000). The heuristics and strategies discussed here show how participants use their resources and skills to maximize benefit and to minimize cost in appearance management. Participants had developed their own ways of managing their wardrobes within their budgets.

As Bourdieu (1984) argued, taste is structured by habitus, which is structured by the conditions of existence. Consumption patterns, including deal proneness, differentiating between where to spend more and where to spend less, and allocating money and development of taste for a classic look, reflect practices that are conditioned by limited economic resources. Financial management reflects the disposition of middle- or upper-middle class consumers to maximize satisfaction with appearance using limited disposable
Nearly every participant liked purchasing clothes on sale. Shopping at discount retailers (e.g., Target) or off-price retailers (e.g., TJ MAXX) was also mentioned. Some participants purchased secondhand clothes at vintage stores or garage sales, or on Internet sites such as eBay, to save. Value-conscious participants particularly showed strong preference for shopping at a marked-down price or on clearance. They thought that markdown was inevitable in the system of the market and believed that they could always find a better deal:

It's so funny the whole, what's not on sale anymore anyway? We've been conditioned to wait or we've been conditioned to know that until next week I wait because it will probably be on sale. (Hillary)

These value-conscious consumers do not necessarily believe in a price–quality association. They do not want to sacrifice the features they look for because they buy at bargain prices. Thus participants suggested that if they did not feel rushed to buy something and they did not have any urgent need, they were likely to find a satisfactory deal:

Sometimes I buy something for $5 and I keep it for years and years, so it is not the price. (Helen)

The purpose is very specific and clear. I have to buy things at good prices not sacrificing the look or the qualities of products. I have that goal when I go out for shopping. If there is nothing that satisfies my goal, then I would not get anything. I don’t think intentionally I set my goal like “I have to get a blouse or a jacket.” Even though you don’t get new ones, you know that you still have something in the closet so that you can manage to dress in an okay way every day. (Helga)

Helga’s financial strategy is to keep browsing until she discovers satisfactory clothes at an acceptable price, which can be practiced when someone has enough wardrobe alternatives so that she can put off buying until the next shopping trip. This is similar to
consumers’ disposition to feel in control in the marketplace. Value-conscious consumers are disposed to seek out control in managing the costs associated with appearance.

Another heuristic is allocation of spending. Participants were selective about where to invest their appearance dollar. People make decisions about financial investments based on an expected increase in value that will potentially return a profit. Participant investment strategy depended on what they valued in relation to appearance. The most common consideration was how long or how often the clothes would be worn. Participants were willing to spend more on things that they could wear for several seasons or would like to wear many times:

I'm not looking to spend an enormous amount of money, but I’m willing to spend a little bit of money for it, because if I'm going to wear it fairly consistently for 2-3 years, I feel it is worth the investment. (Hazel)

When I'm heading to the winter months, … that's a jacket where I don't mind spending a little bit more money and I've worn it over and over. (Madison)

Participants were willing to invest in clothes for work:

I put a lot of time and effort and money into the clothes I wear for work because these are the people who can promote you. These are the people who you work with. And they need to know that you're taking the time to look nice. It's very important. On suits, I spend more money on work clothes than I spend on anything else. (Hilda)

I probably would go to a place [to buy clothes for work] that's a little better quality only because I wear them a lot. I think it definitely is how often I'm going to wear a certain item. (Hillary)

Investment in clothes for work can be interpreted in terms of several motives. As Hilda said, appearance at work is perceived as important for individual professional advancement. Clothes for work are viewed as less sensitive to trend changes. Thus people believe that they will wear suits for work longer than outside-of-work clothes. People also
believe that work clothes will be worn more often than other things, so it worth spending more on them. Taste for versatile clothes, garments that are well matched with multiple items, can be understood in the same way. Participants felt that versatile clothes were worth more than they actually paid:

I'm looking for something that I think I will wear that has some diversity to it, so that I can wear it with more than one other piece of clothing. (Hazel)

I guess because my thinking is everything should mix and match. … I am looking for items that go with something I already have. I feel like I get more by doing that. I get to buy this to go with something I already have and this to go with this. Then I already have two items instead of buying this to go with this as an outfit. (Hollie)

According to Hollie, if she buys a new jacket that would go with one skirt and one pair of pants that she has already owns, then she ultimately gets two new outfits by buying one piece. Thus, participant disposition to buy something versatile is a practical strategy to increase the efficiency of their investment. Participants’ ability to create diverse ensembles with clothes they already have can be understood as efficient financial management.

On the other hand, people are hesitant to pay a high price for what they cannot wear next year. Trendy clothes are one of the things that participants would not invest in:

I guess if I decide to buy something, if there were things that were trendier and they have a particular look to them and probably won’t be around for very long, I guess I won’t spend a lot of money on it. (Hannah)

Consumers generally are aware that the aesthetic lifespan of fashionable clothing is relatively short, but people generally want to keep up with the current look as discussed earlier. Therefore, participants had to come up with solutions that would allow them to have the current look without spending an enormous amount of money. The operative principle turned out to be combining trendy with non-trendy elements. For example, a new blouse
could update the look of an old suit. Therefore participants tended to buy fewer or inexpensive trendy clothes. Ensembles of trendy accessories and classic clothes can be viewed as the same strategy:

I like everything from whatever is current, like this season long necklaces are very big. … The necklace that I have on today, it looks like it has a little more natural stones. Of course it's just inexpensive jewelry that if I don't want to wear it next year it's no big, it's no loss. … The trendy items with the necklaces or handbags … I wanted a little more fun. And I'm not going to spend a lot of money on a handbag that I'll only wear for one season, because that goes back to the real practical side. (Madison)

Recently I have some financial constraints and I did not have much chance to explore that area [casual wear]. Classic items like jeans with some trendy accessories are the styles I can afford. Of course I like the style as well. (Helga)

The strategy of dressing up classic items with trendy accessories suggests that the choice of classic design is conditioned by financial constraint. Hillary’s strategy is innovative in that she makes an effort to overcome these constraints. She also agreed with other participants that she would rather spend more money on basic styles. However, her goal was to find something that is cheap, but does not look it, when buying trendy clothes:

There’re a lot of times you would never know the difference. And I think I look for that too. I think I look for kind of the quality of the item or the style of the item. I almost make it a mission to try and find something trendy that doesn't look cheap. Some of the things at Forever 21 can look cheap or sometimes plastic buttons or polyester unlined jackets. You know that that's perceived as cheap in a way. So try to look for things that are better fabrics maybe (Hillary)

In line with Bourdieu’s (1984) thesis, Hillary utilized her consumption skill in recognizing the quality fabric as the best use of her financial resources. With the help of her shopping skills, she tried to create an appearance of having spent more than she actually did. By doing so, she would outclass those in the same economic bracket, establishing a social
Thus taste for classic styles can be viewed from the perspective of the strategic use of financial resources. Participants implied that their taste for classic style is their attempt to manage appearance with limited economic resources:

I think you get what you pay for. … There are things that are more classic that you are willing to spend a couple hundred dollars for it because you feel confident that it’s classic enough that it would be good for three four five seasons and be able to wear it multiple seasons, so you are willing to pay more for it. … the things that are tempered a little with the trend, I would feel comfortable wearing it again next season. (Hollie)

Sometimes I think they are really cute. I just know that it’s going to go out of style very quickly, so if I am going to invest money in that, I am not going to get the use out of it and the wear as long. … I like stuff that has that classic look. It’s still cute and it has a little bit of flair, but it’s still nice and conservative so I don’t have to worry about going out [of style], you know. (Megan)

Most people know that quality clothing is more expensive. Because they have a limited budget, they have to choose between more items of lower quality or fewer items of better quality. The choice of classic design would be based on the conclusion that it would be advantageous to choose quality because appearance presents one outfit at a time. The choice could be understood with the attention paid to how a person presented herself at the moment: Does the person look capable and tastefully dressed? Or does the appearance give a poor and tacky impression? In their mental accounting, they could accept spending in excess of their budget for a suit as long as they do not need to buy a new suit next year. In other words, they advance themselves the money from the next year’s budget. Therefore, they have developed a taste for designs or items that are less influenced by fashion trends or that change slowly.
Time and Labor Management

Money is not the only resource needed when it comes to consumption. Consumption demands time and labor to shop for and use products. The economic value of time is not a recent idea. Veblen (1899) noted that the waste of time, i.e., conspicuous leisure, is a status marker because only those who are wealthy enough can spend time on nonproductive activities. People juggle money, time, and labor in everyday life. The example below shows the economic aspect of time and labor in comments on off-price shopping:

You have to invest time. If you do shopping everyday, you have a better chance to buy things on sale at good prices. But we all work and cannot do that. From time to time, once every other week or once a month, we go to shopping and devote time long enough to look around, compare different brands and department stores. Through that process, you find deals. (Helga)

Deal-prone shoppers are aware of the cost of finding good deals. The costs include trying on clothes, travel to outlet malls, time to browse around stores, and labor to check out every garment in unorganized clothes racks, often ending up buying nothing. In addition to the direct cost of time and labor, participants had to take the risk of buying things that might not match any of their clothes or things that were out of fashion. If participants thought that the cost was acceptable, they decided to invest time and energy to earn a financial benefit:

A lot of times when you buy things on clearance you are getting things that are past that year trends or whatever. I don’t have problems with buying things for the next year. I just don’t buy things for the year. (Hannah)

Participants reported some shopping strategies that they had developed as an attempt to control the cost of off-price shopping:

I'm not looking at everything else. I'm just looking at the clearance rack. So then the weed down in prices is already done for me. … You see I'm not looking for an outfit; I'm looking to see what's on sale. And if I like it and I think I have a black top to go
with this skirt, then I'll buy it if it's a good deal. So because I'm not going and hunting for things constantly, it's not that much extra time or extra effort. (Helen)

I think over the years I have learned or have tried a few shopping strategies. One is for example, I like to also shop at Target, and what I find at Target is I like to look through their clearance stuff, so if you find like a hundred of the same shirt or pants at Target, there’s probably something wrong with it, they probably don’t fit right. So I have learned that even if it looks like it might be okay, and it’s like only five dollars. But it’s probably not good, because there wouldn’t be that many left over, so I wouldn’t even try them on. (Hannah)

In addition to the off-price shopping strategies, shopping loyalty to stores and brands also saves time. If participants were particular about the fit of some items, they knew which brand products would be satisfactory. The fit of garments cannot be checked without trying them on in person, and trying on garments is one of the most time-consuming aspects of apparel shopping. If people have a satisfactory experience with the fit of a brand, then they would start browsing products from that brand when they go shopping, or they can even order online and skip trying them on. Knowing brands that worked for participants saved time and labor spent on shopping:

I guess I kind of went with cuts and … I know that, for some reason, the clothes the way they design them really fit well on me. So once I figured that out, the pants, I can try on parts there and I can get in different colors or different styles there because they’re kind of made the right way for my body shape and a lot of places really aren’t. (Hannah)

Several participants including Hannah above commented that they had bought or would buy the same products in different colors if they found the fit and cut of the product highly satisfactory.
People exercise time and labor management in the everyday use of clothing and appearance-related products. From the perspective of efficiency, participants were concerned with the time involved in maintenance of clothes, particularly ironing:

As much as I would love to buy him a beautiful French cuff, cotton and nice shirt, he's going to complain to me about ironing it. And I know I'm not going to iron his clothes, so I'll buy something wrinkle free that is close enough to the standards. (Hillary)

Some days people spend more time on finding matching clothes and on accessories, hair, and makeup—when it is an important day or they have more time in the morning—but other days they get dressed quickly and apply minimal makeup. Or people have their own order of priority for clothes, makeup, hair, perfume, and accessories:

It [curling my hair] takes me an hour to get ready…. I spend way more time on my hair than makeup; I spend like five minutes on my makeup. (Megan)

But sometimes, I really do not have time or mental capacity to dress or present myself in the way it should be. There are times that I have to give it up. But I know that that’s not what I want. (Helga)

Helga’s comment suggests that one of the attributes of successful appearance management is keeping self-presentation consistently good. Because taste is evaluated as an enduring quality of appearance management, which is discussed later more, social actors must conduct time and labor management in clothing practice.

**Cognitive Effort Management**

This section is about participant dispositions and heuristic strategies to facilitate appearance management, particularly making the process of creating and finding an outfit easy. Dressing demands not only time and money, but also mental effort to decide which
clothing items go well together, including purchasing the items and assembling them when one gets dressed. The following quotes show the burden of dressing for a participant:

I work for a publishing company, and so I don't work with other people. It's nice because I see different people every day so I can wear similar things. … I don't see the same people every day. … I've worn the same thing two days in a row. Or I like to change it up a little bit. (Hilda)

Participants explained their taste for particular garments such as jeans, turtlenecks, or the color black as being easy to coordinate. Because they believed that jeans could go with anything, they felt it was easy to look put together with jeans:

I was always in jeans. Almost everything matched jeans. (Hillary).

I like to wear those turtleneck ribbed sweaters. … With a turtleneck sweater you know it’s always good. You can pretty much put it with anything. (Megan)

Thus the taste for versatile design or garments can be viewed from the perspective of cognitive effort management. People prefer designs, colors, or items that are easy to coordinate to facilitate the mental process of managing appearance, including creating an outfit. As a shortcut to achieving a put-together look, a matching suit was favored for clothes at work. A suit is convenient not only because it is perceived as professional attire, but also because a wearer does not need to worry about mismatch between a jacket and bottom:

There were times … when I used to shop a lot, when I was young I can remember what was in stores, … if I bought a pair of pants somewhere, more times than not I would know that this color would match something somewhere else. But who has time for that any more really. So now I always try to wear suits; the pieces that match. (Hillary)

Suits are safe in terms of matching. There is no risk of putting wrong colors or wrong textures together. Suits are less likely to be judged as inappropriate, because suits are viewed
as fairly formal. As discussed earlier, overdressing is less likely to be criticized than
underdressing. Although not a suit, some pieces have been pre-selected to be worn together
as an outfit. Many participants described their favorite clothes as a unit of outfits that they
usually wear together:

   My standard outfit would be black turtleneck, big hoop earrings, black belt, jeans, and
   black boots [when I hang out with my friends]. That is my default outfit (Hazel)

   So I usually do skirts, with a blazer and something underneath it. Or I would do a
   sweater set with a cute little plaid skirt, like a wool skirt that’s plaid. Maybe just wear
   tights and loafers with it. (Megan)

   Pre-set outfits included a combination of tops and bottoms, clothes and accessories, or
clothes that are layered. Set-up outfits are those proven to be satisfactory or at least
acceptable through past experience. Once they are set up, people do not need to think twice
or check if they coordinate. The set-up outfits are either planned at the time of purchase or
empirically developed through improvisation:

   Yeah, I’m really into that [make an outfit when you buy something]. I like to make
   coordinating. (Megan)

   Well, sometimes I think it matches and maybe it doesn't. But if I think it looks what I
   want it to look like, then I just wear it. It's a color that, I think, brings, like some of
   my long underwear shirts, if it looks like it brings out another color in the shirt than I
   wear that. But I try and make it contrast a little bit. (Martha)

   Creating an outfit entails calculation of the degree of formality, colors, texture and
weight of fabric, and comfort. Pre-set outfits enhance the efficiency of appearance
management.
Some participants reported a shortcut to setting up outfits. Those participants who expressed attitudinal loyalty to stores explained that it was easy for them to set up outfits in their favorite stores:

If you go to a store like The Limited, you walk in, it’s all coordinated… They have things matched up. They have outfits matched up. And I really liked Casual Corner because they would have the coordinating all done. They would have the suit; they have the coat, the shirt underneath it, and the skirt or the pants. They have it all in a grouping on one wall and so it’s so much easier to shop. (Megan)

Participants who particularly expressed a preference for specialty stores often expressed distaste for shopping at department stores. Department stores provide more variety and options, but some participants commented that it was difficult to find clothes items that go together:

Right [I want more options]. If I had lots of time, it would be fine … I just want to go and find what I want. There is more option there [department stores], but it is more frustrating. Or I just want to go to a nice, neat, clean, and organized store that is easy to find what you are looking for. I prefer that. (Michelle)

Another aspect of cognitive effort management was found in participants’ overall sense of wardrobe management. Not only were they conscious of the coordination of designs, but they were also aware of the overall trend of their wardrobe and tried to view a new purchase in consideration of their entire possession in clothing:

Is it a purpose to the shopping visit or is it to replenish my wardrobe for the season. So I kind of take an inventory before the season and I’ll look at all my clothes and I am like, because I forget like what clothes I have from the previous season so I’ll bring it all out and I’d look and say, ok I need a brown sweater to match with that. I need a new skirt. And then other times I would just pick out outfits that I like. It will have a purpose and then other times it would just be fun. (Megan)

Maybe that’s because I have built my wardrobe around the black basic and they can go from season to season and from year to year. And I can build on that, based it around black. I can base the brighter colors around more causal things. Not that I
would not wear a brighter color to work, but I tend to take that more towards the causal, weekend type of work. (Hollie)

Hollie’s explanation clearly shows that she perceived her taste for work and casual wear as a way to manage her collection of clothes. Having a sense of wardrobe management provides guidelines for consumers on their shopping trips. Knowing what one owns, lacks, or needs or knowing the overall pattern of one’s taste will help a consumer make decisions or narrow down options in a retail environment flooded with merchandise.

**Aesthetic Management**

Taste as a disposition in appearance management was discussed from the perspective of financial, time and labor, and cognitive effort management. Those dispositions should increase the efficiency of appearance management, particularly in shopping and getting dressed for everyday life. The disposition discussed in this section relates to managing the aesthetic of one’s appearance. Kaiser et al. (1995) proposed that individuals faced with a variety of cultural ambivalences take advantage of the ambiguity as an opportunity to express themselves through appearance. Kimle and Damhorst (1997) found that women in a work setting sought to maintain the ideal image as appropriate and competent by negotiating a variety of ambivalences arising from the juggle between conservatism and fashion, conformity and creativity, and masculinity and femininity/sexuality.

The interviews in this study also revealed that individuals are faced with a variety of ambivalences. The interviews brought out several ambivalent pairs of concepts. The pairs are continuous as Kimle and Damhorst (1997) found, and they were what individuals juggled in everyday clothing practice. Participants negotiated these ambivalent aesthetics with their taste as a social statement of self-concept. An individual’s taste in appearance could be
compared to a set of coordinates indicating a position in a multidimensional space that consists of aesthetic dichotomies. Meanings were contextual, and the same term was sometimes used in different senses, depending on the context and participant.

Regarding taste as embodiment of self, the conformity–individuality continuum represented the most important aesthetic decision in managing appearance, as discussed earlier. Participants had needs to both blend in and stand out. They sought to dress appropriately with a little bit of individuality that would differentiate them from others. Regardless of the judgments that they might receive, participants believed that they were similar enough to be appropriate, different enough to satisfy the need for individuality, or sophisticated enough to receive the desired attention when they dressed:

Situations are actually more complicated. For example, I had been to an environmental group meeting on campus. . . . I wore a similar type of clothes that I may wear to the work place, a little bit trendy but not too much. When I was there, I felt that my appearance stood out. All of the other professors or researchers were dressed pretty dull and plain as you would imagine how environmentalists would look like. Since I was new to the group and I was looking for someone who I can work with, I felt that I should’ve worn like them. I feel that my clothes interfered with the intention and the message I wanted to be conveyed. I have worn more plain clothes to that meeting since then. You need to be strategic with clothing. (Helga)

Helga’s experience showed that the degree of normalcy and individuality one wants for his or her appearance entails endless appearance management decisions based on interpersonal and situational context. Thus conformity–individuality is an embodied form of taste for how much one wants to stand out from the crowd at a particular time and place. Particularly at work, participants had to manage how professional (which relates to conformity to dress code) versus how fashionable their appearance was:

I want to wear something professional and classic, but looks like a little bit of twist. I don’t want to look too simple or not fashionable. (Heather)
It's just a huge realm of people so there's really not necessarily a dress code, but today I would consider myself kind of relaxed only because I knew I didn't have any meetings to go to per se. But generally at work I will wear a suit or some sort of dressier outfit. ... If I want someone to perceive me in a certain way or if I know someday I want to be at a higher level, I believe in dressing like that person [at a higher level]; who I want to be ultimately. ... Sometimes I feel like I'm a little underdressed or I'm a little too trendy for work ... And we [my supervisor and I] don't always want to be stuck wearing the same thing every single day to work. We still are expressive types of people and I would wear this to something outside of work so sometimes you have to play that game of what can I wear to work and what can I wear out? (Hillary)

Hillary’s comment shows not only that she presents multiple aspects of self at work with her appearance, but also the ambivalent aesthetic between what looks professional and what looks fashionable. fashionable here does not only mean wearing a trendy design. It is a concept relative to the professional look that refers to a fairly predictable style. fashionable included up-to-date, expressive and individualized, and diverse. Suits are associated with a professional image, that suggests a higher managerial rank and not much individuality. Participants managed the levels of professional and fashionable aesthetics in their appearance, juggling between self-concepts as a competent professional and as an expressive individual.

While a professional aesthetic was perceived to be the opposite to fashionable, it was also associated with a high level of formality as opposed to a casual look. Thus in a work situation, dressing professionally is equated with dressing formally, i.e., dressing up:

I found that my employees are students, they would tend to dress a little more casual and I usually am a little more professional than that. ... It gave me the credibility to the customers, I think that you really portray your position through your appearance. (Hollie)

Dressing formally at work represents a serious attitude toward the profession.

Although dressing formally versus casually is not the motive or goal that people pursue, the
decision of how formally or casually one will dress is an important part of what people practice every day, both at work and outside of work out of the grand motive to be appropriate.

Another ambivalence that participants faced related to body image. As discussed earlier, enhancing one’s body image is a major component of taste. In deciding whether to adopt a new fashion trend or not, participants experienced conflict when the trend did not enhance their body image. Some participants tried to find a happy medium as a process of negotiation, and others took either one side or the other—adopt or reject. Even though Hillary was a very fashion-conscious person, she stated that she would never give up heels regardless of fashion trend changes, whereas Hollie chose to compromise:

I consider myself short, so I always feel like I'm dwarfed by people. I think that's half the reason why I very rarely wear flat shoes. That's where I'm not like trend setters; flat shoes are very much in style now and I do not own a pair unless they are like flip flops that I wear in the summer or tennis shoes. So that's where sometimes I just don't want to conform. No way, will I ever, I don't care if something's in the fad. I won't wear it. (Hillary)

The other thing that I think of is the trend of the lower rise in pants. You see it for the high school girls and the college girls that is as low as low can be and it’s like wow…. to reflect the trend to someone in their forty to fifty age range is not as high as your natural waist but it is not as low, it is kind of in-between, because you have to deal with an older woman who has a little more of tummy so you want that look or the illusion of the lower waist band, but still being able to fit her correctly hiding her flaws. (Hollie)

To Hillary, heels related her wish to look taller were not something negotiable, while low-rise pants were negotiable to Hollie. Body image also created conflict between what looks good on a person versus what a person likes:

I used to wear pretty much all black. … But now in stores, you see more colors like a fashion trend. So now I feel I experiment more with color. I wear colors that I have never worn such as that green and brown jacket…. I went shopping and I tried on.
And it was okay, so I tried it. And people say, “It looks good.” And that makes me want to wear more. So that’s green color, red, and pink. (Heather)

Heather experienced that she had to choose black which she liked and colors which looked good on her. This can be viewed as the ambivalence between *intrinsic interest* and *extrinsic interest*, which is discussed more later. If a person needs social approval or external rewards, the choice will be more likely to be affected by a disposition to enhance one’s body image. If a person feels free from social expectations and pursues internal rewards, the choice will more likely be affected by disinterested judgment.

Similar to the conservative versus fashionable at the workplace continuum (Kimle & Damhorst, 1997), participants expected different levels of trendiness and managed their appearance between *conservative* and *trendy*. The taste to look-up-to date discussed earlier does not mean that the disposition is directional towards the trendiest look:

I would say that I would consider my self *conservative with flair*. A little bit of individualism but nothing too extreme. … I appreciate quality and I am willing to pay extra for quality, but I want to feel like I stay within some trend. My things aren’t old, they are fashionable and yet conservative. (Hollie)

Trendy clothes or accessories were perceived to provide a wearer with individuality and uniqueness, so the opposite aesthetic to trendy is called *classic*, *basic*, or *conservative* design. A happy medium between conservative and trendy is determined by a process of managing financial, time, and mental resources; types of work; strictness of dress code; and lifestyle. For example, Megan expected stay-at-home moms to be trendier because they are not restricted by a dress code at work, but Mary who did not work outside the home felt that their wardrobe became less trendy after they quit their jobs. They did not need to dress up often, and they need more practical clothes such as jeans and t-shirts. Thus people’s decision
on trendy versus conservative is affected by the perceptions of other people they are with as well as the situation and their management of resources.

A trendy look was perceived by some participants as a style conforming to society and a style that is mundane, although it was not a dominant opinion. Fashion trends are something that is accepted by consumers, so trendy things were believed to provide uniformity to appearance:

I didn’t feel the need to go get them [gaucho pants]. And I may or may not like them or like the way they look on me, but sometimes when something is in style, I’m not getting that. I’m kind of not into “oh, I want to look like everybody else.” So sometimes there is a turn-off and I won’t follow the trend. … I wouldn’t really have a problem wearing when no one else wears. I don’t care, but there are other things that I think would look really ridiculous. (Hannah)

Therefore in some cases, the decision on whether to adopt a trend is a matter of resolving the ambivalence between conformity to trends and individuality, making unpopular choices as well as something between classic styles and trendy styles, as individual expression.

The last management concept participants were engaged in relates to a motive to look put together. People cannot show their best look every day for all kinds of different reasons. They have to compromise between look and comfort and between look and reality, including time and money. Some desirable aesthetics demand sacrificing physical comfort. For example, high heels are uncomfortable and fitted clothes restrict the body. And as discussed earlier, socially approved appearance requires affordability of quality clothes and requires time to dress, apply make up, and do hair:

I do like things that feel comfortable and it is kind of complicated to pick comfortable and tighter fitting. (Michelle)
Every day it's different, kind of like my clothing I guess. Everybody always says, “How did you do that?” Or “You should wear your hair up more”, which generally I do and I think it all goes back to how much time I have. (Hillary)

Social actors are disposed to select behaviors according to anticipated consequences for individual interests and to choose what they are likely to succeed with, given resources and past experience (Swartz, 1997). Through appearance management, consumers as social actors manage to reach the optimal look that they can create with their resources and consumption skills.

Ahuvia (2005) proposed that consumers attempted to reconcile identity conflicts in three ways: (1) demarcating, which refers to choosing either one or the other side of identity; (2) compromising, which refers to giving up some of the attractive features of each identity position to stake out a middle ground; and (3) synthesizing, which refers to a dialectical synthesis of two opposing identities. Participants in this study resolved the ambivalences mostly by compromising or synthesizing, although there were some cases when participants said they would not compromise for particular things. The strategies that participants used are not predetermined, but they are contextual and changing.

Taste is a driving force for choice of clothes and appearance-related commodities. Social appearance is created as a consequence of juggling multiple conflicting dispositions. Participants had to deal with constraints of economic resources, time, and labor. In addition, to maximize efficiency, participants had strategies to facilitate the cognitive processes of dressing and shopping, such as creating set-up outfits or discovering several good stores or brands. It was found that taste as an objectified form, e.g., preference for particular things such as classic design or mix-and-match, is an outcome of the management behaviors.
Judgement of Taste in Appearance

That no participants questioned the existence of different levels of taste suggests that social actors are engaged in judging taste as a type of ability. Because taste in appearance is communicated through presentation of appearance, judgments of taste were likely to be the comprehensive evaluation of consumption skills of others in pursuit of embodying self, satisfying motives in appearance, and efficient management of resources related to appearance.

Judging Embodiment of Self

Evidence of taste as embodiment of self was found in statements indicating evaluating taste as good or bad. When participants talked about other people’s taste, they tended to evaluate their appearance program as part of a judgment of the person as a whole, including personality, demeanor, and taste in other things:

I just don’t think it [her appearance] was very tasteful. It wasn’t just her dress. It was a combination of how she acted. [There were other] women who wore a pure white dress, but acted appropriately like a lady, wasn’t offensive. It truly depends upon the person. (Helen)

Because I think taste is kind of pervasive, something throughout your whole personality. I don’t think it’s just your clothing. I think it’s a global thing. You can pick out, when you see the lineup of people, the car they would drive and those inferences. I think it all goes together. (Heather)

Because participants project their self-concept onto their taste, they view other people’s taste as an embodiment of the entire person rather than viewing appearance as a discrete feature. However, participants showed self-consciousness about mixing judgement of appearance with judging a person. This may reflect the Cartesian dualism rooted in the Western tradition of thinking. The Cartesian dichotomy divides mind from body and subject
from object. In ordinary thinking, people are likely to associate their mind—consciousness, memories, and expectations—with subject and their body with object. In other words, a Cartesian self-concept distinguishes self, which is inside, from body, which is outside. However, the theory of extended self (Belk, 1988) suggests that our identity is actually constructed on the basis of our mind, body, and possessions, including appearance. Some participants consciously pointed out that they make discrete judgments between appearance and character particularly in the case of bad taste:

[She wore] A kind of long skirt that a librarian would wear. And she was very into some [clothes] from Africa, so sometimes she wore ethnic patterns or fabrics. I think she would have looked better if she didn’t wear the long skirts. Long skirts make her look taller. She would’ve looked better in a shorter skirt and a slightly longer top. The sweater she would wear is so tight. I feel like I am being mean. I just didn’t like her taste. I mean her taste is different, I guess. Bad must be just different than mine (Heather)

In Cartesian thinking, appearance is excluded from self, because self consists of mind. From that point of view, it would be unfair or incorrect to judge a person on the basis of appearance. Participants were hesitant about spending excessive money and time on appearance, which also reflects the Cartesian dichotomous thinking embedded in society. This dualism would lead to giving more positive credit for production as opposed to consumption, and investment in mind as opposed to body. Thus participants showed an ambivalent attitude in that they viewed people who maintained a consistently good appearance as having good taste, but looked at strong involvement in fashion and obsession with appearance as a sign of lack of self-esteem and substance of character.

In spite of the hesitant attitude towards judging a person by their exterior, there was evidence of taste in appearance interpreted as an extension of self:
For example, there’s a young lady. I mean people call her beautiful. If I don’t like the person for some reason, I tend to pick out something I do not like about [her appearance]. I guess I attribute that to her look. If someone is very outgoing and not considerate and something is irritating, I attribute my feeling to her look. She doesn’t look good to me. I think how someone dresses is all connected to personality. I described my taste as more reserved and I like that in someone’s personality. For those people I do not happen to like their style, how they dress is not appealing to me. (Helga)

In Helga’s comment, judgment of taste and personality intersect. Helga discovered connections between a person’s personality and taste in appearance. Whether she first found what she did not like about the person’s dress or what she did not like about her personality is not clear. In short, although they sometimes voice reluctance about judging the interior (personality) by the exterior (appearance), people in practice tend to judge others as a total package of personality and taste.

The second evidence for taste as an embodiment of self of the other was that participant judgment of other’s taste reflected self-interestedness. Without exception, every participant described good taste as optimally similar to their own, i.e., participants explained good taste as the good performance of particular features which they had earlier listed as the characteristics of their own taste. Some participants did not realize that they were repeating the same criteria for good taste for themselves and others. Some simply began a sentence by comparing another to themselves:

*She is very much like me* in that … (Hollie)

Or others finally discovered the parallel in their discussions of good taste:

I thought of someone that I think has good taste that I know. Her name is Ann. … Anyway, she’s a little shorter than I am, but she always looks really good. Like her clothes fit her body well. And she doesn't wear anything too obnoxious, like colors or patterns. Sometimes she wears things that are from another culture, like a necklace or
something. Just accents. And they coordinate well with the rest of her outfit, which is just like pants and a sweater or something like that. She always has her body covered, never anything too tight. And her hair and make-up are always done and it's natural. … I guess I think she has good taste because her outfits coordinate and seem to be consistent with her personality and her age. But they aren't boring and old-lady like. *I guess it sounds like I like her taste because her taste is like mine.* (Heather)

If a participant stated that she liked conservative styles with just a little flair, she praised a person who was able to wear conservative styles without making them too plain. If a participant stated that she enjoyed creating diverse looks and had a strong sense of individuality, she identified someone who was very versatile in her style and did not compromise as a person with good taste.

An explanation of the psychology of optimally similar taste can be found in the similarity-attraction relationship described in social psychology. Studies on attraction in interpersonal relationships have shown that similarity leads to interpersonal attraction (Herbst, Gaertner, & Insko, 2003; LaPrelle, Hoyle, Insko, & Bernthal, 1990). Attraction was primarily led by the ideal self rather than the actual self, and similarity to the actual self was associated with attraction only when it was perceived that the actual self was similar to the ideal self (LaPrelle et al., 1990). Participant’s perception of their taste would be close to the actual self, and their idea of good taste would be equivalent to the ideal self, because they incorporate their taste, the perception of their appearance, into self. Thus they would be attracted to a person who was similar to their ideal self, i.e., their image of good taste. Herbst et al. (2003) found that particularly the cognitive component of attitudes such as the perception of competency of another person increased when that person became more similar to or surpassed the ideal self. This suggests that people would feel that the person who dresses as they want to dress is closer to the ideal self, and they would perceive that person to be
competent. Thus taste is perceived as an attribute of the ideal self, and we perceive persons who show optimally similar taste as competent.

Lastly, participants viewed taste as an indicator of the commitment to taking care of self. Taking care of oneself was a virtue and a sign of good taste, while a person with bad taste was perceived to be indifferent to self:

So if you wear things that looks like “oh, I don’t really care about what I am wearing, I’m going to throw this on,” or you know…um… I think that makes you look kind of lazy, um…or like you just don’t really care about yourself, you don’t care about making yourself look good, and I think, you know, especially if you’re looking at someone, if you’re interested in dating them, for example, you want people who look like they take care of themselves. And I think that the clothes that you wear give that idea. (Hannah)

Taking care of self was not brought up when participants were asked to describe their taste. Apparently they did not need to articulate a motive to take care of self, including appearance, because having that motive is like common sense or asocial or ahistorical human nature. When they judge other people’s taste, they evaluate those people with good taste as taking good care of themselves versus those with bad taste as indifferent to appearance and caring for themselves poorly. It is basically the logic that Bourdieu used to criticize Kant’s claim about pure aesthetics; Kant’s demand for pure aesthetics as common sense leads to the conclusion that those who are not able to appreciate art objects with complete disinterestedness are lacking in basic humanity (Lawler, 2005). A person with bad taste or a person who does not appear to be taking care of self is perceived to be lacking in basic humanity, which provides a ground for negative criticism.
Judging Exercise of the Motives in Appearance

What participants listed as characteristics of good and bad taste were analyzed according to the classification of motives they pursue in clothing practice, with the motives functioning as a schema for judgment of taste. The characteristics of good and bad taste are generally opposed, but not always.

To be Appropriate

As dressing appropriately for situations and personal features including age, size, and figure was an important motive, participants appreciated someone wearing clothes that are age appropriate, fit properly, and compliment the figure. Bad taste was described as wearing clothes that were inappropriate for age, too tight or too loose, and not flattering on a wearer. Regarding inappropriate dressing, participants pointed out too much exposure of skin; revealing clothes were criticized for age inappropriateness. Participants thought that those who wore too revealing clothes for their age did not understand that age had altered their body. Dressing based on the understanding of self included understanding one’s personality as well as more physical features like age, size, and figure type:

Mostly I think it [wearing too tightly] looks trashy. (Heather)

I see people wearing stuff that I wouldn’t wear myself, but it’ll still be good on them. So maybe knowing enough about yourself so that it fits you and your personality. It’s kind of the way you carry it off. (Heather)

Situation appropriateness was valued or criticized as an ability to adapt to various situations with attire:

I think it is important to fit the mold. (Helen)

You're not going to die if you have to wear a tie. It's not going to be the end of the world if you have to wear khaki pants. It's kind of like showing up somewhere on
time. I think it goes back to the respect. (Hillary)

Dressing within the boundary of the level of formality prescribed by the dress code was almost taken for granted; straying outside the boundary was taken as a lack of respect for others. This reaction to underdressing suggests that social actors take offense because it is interpreted as nonconformity that shows a lack of humanity or lack of solidarity with the group or organization.

As discussed earlier, several participants explained how sensitive or considerate they try to be towards the people they are with as an advanced level of situation appropriateness. Interestingly, sensitivity or consideration was not mentioned as a good feature they detected in others. No one praised someone for dressing with discretion. Because dressing with discretion includes situation-appropriateness, we may not sense that the wearer adapted the appearance for us. Showing discretion is unlikely to affect judgment, but it facilitates social interaction as a function of similarity-attraction from the perspective of a wearer. One may fail to recognize a feeling of connectedness to the discreet appearance of the person with whom one interacts. From participant responses regarding appropriateness of taste, both one’s own and others’, whether taste is appropriate or not is judged in terms of an ability to understand oneself or a person, situation, and social interaction.

**To Be Creative**

Out of a motive to be creative, social actors buy unique designs, try unique coordinates, and keep improvising and experimenting. Those attempts result in drawing attention in a crowd. Participants valued a person’s creativity in taste when the person had some experimental or creative components in styling, as long as the person’s appearance
satisfied all other motives, including being appropriate for the person and situation and keeping with current styles. Whether participants were able to articulate what specifically made that person’s style unique or not, they expressed respect for the uniqueness the person created. They valued that the creative person took some risk and made it look put together:

I like it when people wear the cute little fitted jacket with jeans and a cowboy boot. Things that you wouldn't think look good together but they really pull it off. Also, they have a particular eye for those types of things. (Hazel)

I have a friend who dresses very eclectic, and I know she doesn't buy whole outfits at a time. I know she buys something here and something there, yet she's very, very colorful. And she wears very bold jewelry like big beads or stuff or very colorful. She doesn't always match her earrings with her necklace. I mean it doesn't always match, but the way she pulls it together in her outfit, she always looks nice. (Helen)

In response to the question about bad taste, not being creative was articulated as being very predictable. Participants defined predictable appearance as the result of putting little effort into personalizing outfits. While some participants enjoyed shopping for items when an outfit is put together and suggested by stores as a safe way to assemble a matched outfit, other participants stated that catalogue looks are a sign of non-creativity, which is bad taste:

I watched a television show last night. The woman had a lavender shirt and pants with a white shawl or sweater. And, it was just awful. You express nothing when you wear something the department store has picked out for you. On the TV show, the outfit was meant to be sarcastic and say something about the character. But it made me think about the person at work, although that person probably wouldn't pick out a whole outfit from JC Penny. They would just put things together that they thought were close enough. (Hazel)

While participants related good attention of successful appearance to creativity in a personal style, they did not necessarily referred bad attention to lack of creativity. Participant description about bad taste suggested that if a wearer shows poor performance in any aspects of clothing practice, the appearance draws bad attention. If any of the motives, including
appropriateness for a person and situation, looking up-to-date, looking put together, and being comfortable, does not reach or exceeds the acceptable level, negative attention is automatically drawn to the person no matter how good the performance is with respect to the other motives. Goffman (1959) maintained that a single note off-key can disrupt the tone of an entire performance in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. As any single off-key note can ruin an overall music performance and create the perception of failure, presentation through appearance would negatively stand out and be perceived as failure if one wears either inappropriately informal clothes or clothes that are completely out of fashion no matter how well the wearer put together an outfit. Therefore, good attention and bad attention are not opposite concepts in judgment of taste. To avoid drawing bad attention and to be accepted, appearance should reach at least minimum standards of different aspect of appearance. However, attention that good performance in appearance draws results from out-performance with creativity in one’s personal style.

**To Feel in Control**

Related to the motive to feel in control, people with good taste were described as possessing their personal styles:

I don’t think she is beautiful by an American standard or glamorous. She is not like that at all. She has *her own style* in terms of color and style, and it just works. I don’t think many people say she is attractive by her look. Sometimes things she wears are very old ones like ten or twenty years old. She still wears them. I can tell she will wear the same thing ten years later. I see some *consistency that works over time* and she looks good to me. (Helga)

She just *always looks like she has put thought into* what she chooses to wear. (Mary)

Having one’s own style suggests that the person has distinctive and consistent characteristics without offending any social expectations. A good personal style was
perceived as an achievement, as self-actualization and intentional efforts. The person with
good personal style was expected to be presentable all the times, someone who would not
dress down as a compromise with situational factors.

Despite the fact that good taste was regarded as a person’s production, participants
believed that tasteful appearance should not show off or emphasize the intention or effort.
Even if there is a great deal of effort behind a good appearance, participants maintained that
it should look effortless:

I recognize that from working with her and seeing her. It’s not overly done; it is like
everything has to match. Some people are like your earrings match, your necklace
matches. That’s almost stuffy and overdone. There is a level of having the right things
done and not looking like you really worked at it, so just comfortable. (Hollie)

Good taste is always when the clothing is *casually looking put together*. (Heather)

Good taste looks conscious of put together, but also has an element of spontaneity.
This concept of the adept but effortless-looking presentation suggests that participants value
a person who has the ability to exercise full control over appearance, but does not exert too
much effort. Otherwise it would violate the rule of too much effort on the body.

There was not much discussion on bad taste as a lack of personal style. Not having
one’s own taste was not criticized, while having a personal style was appreciated. Thus one’s
appearance can still be acceptable as long as it looks put together, appropriate, and properly
up to date. It is interpreted that having a unique and personal style is an additional virtue that
advances one’s taste into “good” level.

Opposite to looking effortless, if the effort to enhance body image overpowers the
overall appearance, negative attention is drawn:

I'm having a hard time with the platforms too. I won't wear any other type of platform
heel or anything because I just feel like you're getting to the point where you're trying to be something you're not in a way. You're trying to be taller. *Even though that's my whole main goal, but I think that is noticeable.* Like the inch platform at the bottom to me and when I see shorter women wearing those, it says they want to be taller in a way that people can notice. (Hillary)

Hillary’s comment suggests that the pursuit of the ideal self through appearance is judged negatively when a wearer fails to attain balance between intention and other elements. As a result, the defect that a wearer wants to hide or the actual self onto which a wearer wants to project the ideal image stands out and receives more attention. In addition when outfits looked unbalanced because of over-accessorizing or because they consisted uniformly of trendy designs, they were considered to be bad taste:

Her [her mother-in-law’s] clothes are almost too matched. She will purchase whatever she sees the mannequins dressed in. A lot of people say she looks good, and I’m sure she does. But, for my tastes, she looks a little *too planned and forced.* I don’t think you’ll ever see me all in one color. That is her thing. She is always wearing *a lot of jewelry.* She doesn’t really look comfortable (Mary)

I read somewhere that before you leave the house you should take off one accessory. … You don't want to look too matchy-matchy or too trendy head to toe. Like I've got huge earrings, huge necklace, gaudy shirt, pants and shoes. (Hilda)

According to what Hilda said, Mary’s mother-in-law falls under the category of “matchy-matchy” with too many accessories. Mary did not appreciate mannequin-like matching because she felt that overmatching outfits forced a viewer to approve the put-together look, or a wearer’s intent was too obvious. As Hilda said, those desperately matching outfits are perceived to consist of too many eye-catching elements, i.e., an overload of sensory stimulus. If there is no distinction between major and minor and no focal points, the appearance is perceived to have no sense of balance, and the wearer looks like he or she cannot prioritize. Obsession with enhancement of body image or dissonance among
components because they visually compete with each other exemplifies a poor control of appearance. Evaluation of overmatching outfits is related to the earlier discussion of lack of creativity, and is discussed further in the section on looking put together.

To Feel Comfortable

The motive to feel comfortable relates to how social actors pursue physical and mental comfort. Pursuing only physical comfort was problematic:

I think that people should wear things that are flattering to them, and I think that some people don’t really care much about that. They might be too concerned about comfort. It’s not saying that you should wear uncomfortable things, but some kind of balance, that’s what I go for, some kind of balance (Hannah)

Looking uncomfortable and only looking comfortable were viewed as bad taste. Seeking only comfort means that a person gives up everything else, including enhancing body image, personal expression, appropriateness, and keeping up with current fashion. Even though comfort may be used as an excuse for those who do a poor job in managing appearance, people make negative judgments on their taste not because they pursue comfort, but because they ignore the many other goals of managing appearance.

As discussed earlier, a person with the motive to feel mentally comfortable seeks to increase self-esteem and to feel confident. Thus, a person with good taste looks confident about who he or she is and what he or she has:

I think good taste comes with that ease and confidence and not trying too hard and just being comfortable with whatever it is, and not trying to put on a façade or put on a front to others and just being comfortable with what you are. (Hollie)

Although Hollie’s comment can be interpreted as equating good taste with being satisfied with whatever one is, the point is that a person with good taste looks comfortable to
other social actors. Because those who are thought of as having good taste are aware of the evaluation of their taste, they are confident, they look confident, and accordingly they look comfortable with themselves. Michelle’s comment suggests this:

Usually you can read or feel if they are uncomfortable with themselves, like if they are not confident or they are confident. It seems like people who dress nicely and put more time into their appearance, they are usually more confident. So they appear confident. If you don’t, then you feel less confident, maybe. (Michelle)

Looking comfortable becomes a consequence of a highly strategic performance in the field of consumption:

There are people who put too much time and money on their appearance, too fashion conscious. Although I apply basic makeup and dress nice, I do not put priority on looks over family and so on. I think that is a sign of lack of confidence and self-esteem. (Madison)

Therefore, people with good taste are those who present themselves nicely through appearance and look confident, but who act and look as if they are not trying to attract others’ attention and social approval.

**To Look Up-to-Date**

Regarding the motive to look up-to-date, participants described tasteful style as changing with fashion trends and displaying the current aesthetic. Participants elaborated on stagnant style as an example of bad taste:

I see some people who I have known wearing the same clothes for years whenever I visit my parents in my home town, like wearing high-waistline jeans tapering at the ankle. They do not look healthy, not fresh. Change is normal. It is not just money. They can afford a new pair of jeans every five years. (Madison)

Proper consumption is a virtue in contemporary society, and change is assumed to be normal. Thus if one’s style does not change along with the trends, it is regarded as abnormal.
The fact that keeping up with the current look was an issue more for bad taste than good taste suggests that looking up-to-date is a necessary condition of acceptability. Dressing according to trends does not alone constitute good taste, but having no sense of the current look is definitely interpreted as bad taste.

Habitus, including the idea of good taste, dictates that social actors should be alert to trend changes and continually participate in shopping practices. In other words, social actors are constantly subject to judgment of consumption skills; this includes how skillfully they select new trends based on an understanding of self and incorporate them into their own style. And they are constantly challenged to put together new purchased items with their existing wardrobe to create newness in their appearance without making over-trendy outfits. The motive to look up-to-date puts social actors’ shopping skills and ensemble activity to never-ending tests.

**To Look Put Together**

Judging taste in terms of looking put together, participants appreciated the ability to put an outfit together as a sign of good taste. Whether it is a casual look consisting of jeans and t-shirts or a more dressed-up look, a well-coordinated outfit gives an impression of looking polished or put together:

I don't know if I can put my finger on it, but she [her friend] always looks coordinated and nice and not overly stuffy or too dressed up. Even when she's just wearing like a t-shirt and jeans I just feel like she looks better in that t-shirt and jeans than anybody else would. She just *puts things together* very well. Her hair's always done. Her makeup's always really nice. … I really like the way that Lauren incorporates. She's really subtle in her style. She always looks really nice. (Hilda)

It was difficult for participants to pinpoint the key features of a well-done ensemble. They tended to describe it in an abstract way as *put together well*. Participants also tended to
attribute a put-together appearance to the wearer’s efforts on assembling items beyond clothing such as accessories, makeup, or hair:

She [her friend] just always looks cute. I guess she does a lot of layering and always has earrings that match, cute shoes that go with everything. (Michelle)

Accessories are an important clue about taste. It is relatively easy to evaluate or articulate whether accessories or shoes are properly placed in the ensemble. As discussed earlier, participants in fact expressed a strong intention to create a complete look with accessories and shoes when they talked about their own clothing practice.

In regard to bad taste, participants talked about overmatching, not to mention mismatch, of color or patterns of clothes. Overmatching refers to matching every garment and every accessory or shoe in the same color or pattern. Overmatching was discussed earlier as a lack of creativity and trying too hard to look put together. Because an overmatched look is too predictable, the wearer does not get credit for it: anyone can create the look, or a wearer is trying to portray an identity lacking in personal expression:

To me, that [overdoing it] is sometimes a sense of insecurity; they are relying on the clothes. They are portraying an image that they are not, versus being comfortable with your personal sense of style or your personal image, by going over the top, because you are not comfortable, and you are trying to be someone you aren’t. You might be but you are not comfortable with what you are. (Hollie)

In Hollie’s statement, overmatching leads to a verdict of a lack of self-esteem and confidence. Judgment of ensemble activity, i.e., how put together an outfit looks, was based on such things as the synthesized effect of matching clothing items, properly accessorizing, and not being too predictable.
Judging Appearance Management

Although a disposition to manage appearance emerged as an important theme when participants talked about their own taste, they did not talk about judging other’s taste from that perspective. This can be interpreted to mean that the disposition to manage appearance is not considered something that other people can judge. A disposition to manage appearance refers to a process of enacting a look. Time, labor, and money management skills are embedded in lifestyle, and cognitive efforts and aesthetic negotiations are almost subconscious. Thus it is difficult for others to judge appearance management skills. People as audience see only the performance onstage, not the backstage preparation and practice behind the scenes. Thus it is not surprising that participants did not pass judgment on taste as a disposition to manage appearance.

The only comments related to judgment of appearance management skills related to judgment of taste as a long-term project. The people whose taste participants judged were mostly those they had known for quite some time such as colleagues, family, or friends. They seemed to be familiar with the personalities and lifestyles as well as the style of clothing of the people they judged.

Taste is an enduring disposition. Participants’ judgment of taste was based on observation of the appearance of a person for the time they had known the person. Participants described those people who have good taste as consistently showing a good presentation through their appearance:

In good taste, I guess there is some consistency in it. If you don’t see somebody who has good taste just show up one day and looks hideous, and then show up the next day and looks all put-together. I think it is more of enduring and it’s more of traits that stay. (Heather)
Good or bad taste in appearance is more than having a good or bad hair day. Even if a person has the ability to enact a great look one time, the person cannot look good consistently over time unless that person manages resources and constraints well and maintains a balance between conflicting aesthetics. Judgment of taste is rather a final verdict after comprehensive review of clothing practice and appearance management for a long enough time to understand the person.

The answers to the question about good and bad taste reveal that the evaluation of taste in appearance is the evaluation of consumption skills in terms of how the motives in clothing practice are successfully pursued and how people successfully manage constraints and balance ambivalent factors in appearance management.

**Cultural Capital and Taste in Appearance**

Although the notion of cultural proficiency as an exclusionary resource in the United States is controversial, this section examines how the cultural capital resources discussed in the literature contribute to the growth of capital specific to appearance consumption and formation of taste. It examines differences in the level of cultural capital among participants to see whether cultural capital is related to the consumption of appearance-related products.

**Resources of Cultural Capital Specific to Appearance Consumption**

**Education: Linguistic Competency and Information Processing**

Holt (1998) described the contribution to cultural capital of a high level of formal education that emphasizes critical thinking. *Critical thinking* refers to an entire process, including stating a problem, formulating a hypothesis through inductive reasoning to solve the problem, inferring a conclusion from the hypothesis, and evaluating the strength of the conclusion by situating that conclusion in a broader context (White & Robinson, 2001).
Although participants did not directly attribute their taste to formal education, people who received more than a bachelor’s degree clearly showed a tendency to elaborate and felt it less difficult to articulate their taste or their judgment of others’ taste. The interviews with the HC individuals, who mostly had graduate degrees, lasted 101 minutes on average, and the average for MC participants was 70 minutes for the same set of questions. The numbers of words in the HC transcripts is approximately 30% more than in the MC transcripts. The length of the interview may indirectly suggest that HCs tended to answer with rich descriptions and a level of linguistic competency, abilities that had been considered as high cultural status signals by previous scholars (Lamont, 1992). The following are explanations of why Hillary and Megan did not like wearing flats and liked wearing heels:

I consider myself short so I always feel like I'm dwarfed by people. I think that's half the reason why I very rarely wear flat shoes. That's where I'm not like trend setters; flat shoes are very much in style now and I do not own a pair unless they are like flip flops that I wear in the summer or tennis shoes. So that's where sometimes I just don't want to conform. No way, will I ever, I don't care if something's in the fad. I won't wear it. I don't know, I think I feel short to people especially in a work situation too. I just feel like I'm not necessarily happy with the way my legs look in certain things, so height, I like height. … I say, oh I feel short; dwarfed around people at work. But when I'm around my friends, family, even new people that I meet it doesn't bother me that I'm short. I don't have a complex of being short but I think it's always, to me if I can feel a little taller, especially around people at work. (Hillary)

I don’t wear flat shoes because they are not really flattering, and I mean I am a short person anyway. I like the heel, I like having the height. I think it makes you look better in your clothes. (Megan)

Two women basically expressed the same desire to look taller, but Hillary explained that her taste for heels takes precedence over a motive to be up-to-date, and she clearly pointed out the relevant context where she feels dissatisfaction. The deeper explanation is not just a matter of rhetoric or persuasion at the time of the interview. To Hillary, wearing heels
is a personal statement of being free from unconditional conformity to fashion trends and empowers her to perform in a professional world, while heels simply meant enhancing body image to Megan. Cultural capital enables social actors to review the expected outcome of a particular clothing practice in a broader context, and thus social actors construct extended meanings for their clothing practice which are related to other social practices.

Participants rarely attributed their taste to be a consequence of formal education, except for those who had majored in art in college. Two participants, Hazel and Madison, majored or minored in art, and they were both good at articulating the characteristics of their taste and associating taste in clothing with that in art or other things. It is not surprising that those who received an art education had aesthetic awareness of their taste in clothing and had the linguistic competency to explain it. Aesthetic education traditionally aims to develop the capacity to obtain aesthetic gratification from subtle and complex objects that are characterized by various forms of unity. Aesthetic education consequently allows people to feel pleasure from intrinsic properties of objects such as color, line, shape, proportion, harmony, or symmetry (Haynes, 1999). In short, aesthetic education trains people to contemplate objects disinterestedly. Since the current study did not have a large participant group, the researcher intends neither to discuss the impact of art education nor to compare art and non-art majors. Hazel’s answers showed HC patterns with few exceptions. Although Madison was classified as MC on the basis of the education and occupations of herself, her husband, and her parents, she shared Hazel’s characteristics of aesthetic and intellectual consumption, which is attributed in part to education.

With respect to accumulating cultural capital, Holt (1998) characterizes what people learn through a high level of formal education as developing the capacity for communication
over “the acquisition of particularized skills and knowledge” as well as critical thinking (p. 3). Desirable appearance requires continuous learning of new trends to stay appropriately current. Participants mentioned interpersonal influences and mass media including magazines and television as their resources. Some participants had a personal source for the latest trends. The personal source would usually be someone whose taste they approved and who was close and trustworthy enough to feed trend information to them. The personal source functions as a gatekeeper who filters, condenses, interprets and legitimizes an enormous amount of fashion information for them. Acceptance of trend information from personal sources appeared to be fairly literal, involving little processing.

Yeah, she’s really into fashion. I kind of watch what she wears; you know she’s like an influence. Now she’s telling me gold is coming back in. Yeah and you wear it with brown and so here I have all this silver jewelry, so I probably look behind. You know if the gold continues to stay in I’ll eventually get it, but I don’t rush to get it. … She’s my source. She’ll tell me what’s like, oh this is the newest thing, you know. Then she’ll say, have you seen those, they are really cute. And she’ll show me what she bought and stuff. She shops a lot more than me. (Megan)

However, the way participants explained how they update themselves with the latest fashion trends from mass media showed differences between HCs and MCs. HCs indicated that they went through an inductive reasoning process to learn what the new trends are, while MCs did not show such a sense:

If I buy any magazine, it will probably be an Us Weekly, and I'll see what the stars are wearing. I rarely buy Cosmo or Vogue, because I never have time to look through those, and I'm more of a celebrity-gossip-type person. I also look a little bit on E on the Internet to check out the fashion police. That is more for formal clothes. They don't cover a lot of casual things. I would say commercials are the other place I see what is happening inside fashion. I see what people are wearing and what they are advertising on the commercials. … What people are actually wearing around me is an influence also. … My sister has good taste. She still lives in Michigan, near Detroit. She works at a hair salon, and they are very fashion-conscious. I should mention that she is someone else that I look to for trends. If I'm uncomfortable about a trend that is
out, I will call her …she is usually very current with what is happening. (Hazel)

I look at what they are putting out on the mannequins; I use that as a judge, if I catch something on TV whether it be *Entertainment Tonight* or you know like the gossip channel. (Monica)

Hazel stated that she reasoned out what is trendy and current through inductive thinking and searching for additional verification via celebrity fashion, what people on commercials wore, and what ordinary people around her wore. She even mentioned the personal source, her sister, as assisting her with pulling information together. On the other hand, Monica did not show a tendency to synthesize information from different sources. MCs tended to explain celebrity fashion or what their personal sources like as evidence of latest trends. HCs were disposed to think that they gained new knowledge through induction.

Harriet’s comment showed a subtle contrast with Monica’s comment above:

I read some magazines or watch on the TV, not too often, some fashion shows to see when they say what the trends are. When I go to the store and if I see something similar to what they say is popular, that is trendy. (Harriet)

While Monica explained that she found something first and then confirmed its trendiness in the mass media, Harriet suggested that she gathered information through mass media first and verified the information on the market. HCs were more likely to describe themselves as making evidence-based decisions through an inductive process regarding new trends, while MC responses suggested a search for information after a purchase to solve post-decisional cognitive dissonance rather than using inductive reasoning. This study did not focus on information processing, and further investigation is needed to examine whether HCs and MCs actually process trend information differently.
Bourdieu (1984) tried to call attention to education, believed to be a major channel for upward mobility, as a means of maintaining social distinction (Foster, 1986). Owing to the nature of higher education and graduate education, the HC explanations reflected training in critical thinking. HCs presented how they constructed meaning in clothing practice and how they saw themselves as adapting to an ever-changing fashion environment.

**Social Origins: The Influence of Upbringing**

Social origin that provides a good upbringing is one of the critical channels to acquire cultural capital according to Bourdieu (1984). He emphasized the importance of social origin in forming taste, particularly in extra-curricular culture such as clothing, furniture, and food. Studies on intergenerational influence have focused on identifying content that is carried over from parents to children (refer to Moore-Shay & Lutz, 1988). What is of interest here is how social actors view the influence of upbringing.

Most of the HCs found similarities in clothing practice between themselves and their parents, mostly mothers, and expressed appreciation of the parent’s influences. What they valued was dressing appropriately for occasions or keeping appearance consistently presentable. They interpreted those lessons as equipping them with a mentality of maintaining a good appearance:

Again, that goes against my upbringing too. I just remember growing up, my mom and dad were different. I think my parents didn't spend a lot of money on their clothes, but they thought it was very important to dress appropriately for the occasion. So I remember my dad saying, “Even though you don't need a coat today it's coat weather,” so even though I personally don't need a coat today, “You carry a coat.” That meant you needed to be appropriate in your dress. You don't want somebody to go, “Gosh, today's pretty cold, don't you have a coat?” Part of it is my upbringing, in that my parents thought it was important to dress, and I never thought my parents were inappropriately dressed for school meetings or concerts or anything like that. … But I think because my parents were college educated, they were both professional. I attribute that to their education. (Helen)
In response to the question about where they think their taste came from, even if they felt that they did not share preferences for particular formal elements such as taste in color, HCs tended to attribute their taste to parents’ philosophy, education, and occupation, whereas MCs simply denied similarities to or influences from parents when they did not share a preference for formal elements such as color. HCs attributed to parents more abstract beliefs about clothing and shopping practice rather than specific preferences: a tendency to dress up or dress down, emphasis on appropriate attire, valuing quality, or open-mindedness to differences.

On the other hand, MCs were likely to try to find similarities in specific shopping habits and designs or styles with family member. They would be less likely to find similarities in specifics, because participants and parents experienced different fashion trend eras and are different in age, figure, and social position, and therefore had different standards of appropriateness. Even if they found some similarities, MCs did not necessarily express appreciation of or place significance on those similarities.

Some of HCs who had a mother who sewed or knitted reported that seeing their mother sew taught them to have a proactive attitude towards personalizing or customizing commodities, whether the participant viewed her mother as fashionable and creative or not. Growing up watching a parent craft clothing communicated that they did not need to be passive consumers and encouraged them to be creative in consuming clothing. Regardless of how much parents intended, upbringing shaped participants patterns of creating and maintaining desirable appearance.
**Occupation: Opportunity**

One of the attributes of good taste is the ability to enact diverse looks tailored for wearer, audience, and occasion. Occupation played an important role in generating various social functions in dress. Social actors who need to attend various social functions are obliged to dress appropriately and consequently become appearance-literate. As discussed in the section *Multiple Selves and Clothing Practices*, work provides needs and motivations to dress up, and taste in work clothes constitutes a major part of one’s taste. Margaret, who does not work outside the home, said that she had only two occasions for which to dress: when home with her children and when out with her husband.

HCS usually made a clear distinction between taste in clothes at work and outside of work, but not all MCs drew such a distinction. Some occupations do not have implicit or explicit dress codes of professional attire or require wearing uniforms. Work clothes for the participants in those occupations are more casual, including khakis, jeans, and sweat pants. Those participants did not classify those looks as either at-work attire or outside-of work attire (see Figure 1).

To understand the role of cultural capital in relation to occupation, the analysis was based on classification of occupational status (Peterson & Simkus, 1992). To study occupational status groups in relation to cultural taste, Peterson and Simkus (1992) classified types of occupation into nineteen groups and measured relative distance between occupation groups based on taste in musical genres. Among the nineteen groups were two types of professionals, including cultural and technical professionals, managers, salespersons, clerical workers, production/construction workers, service workers, and farm workers. Both cultural and technical professionals were divided into higher and lower level, respectively, and
managers were divided into higher and lower level. Peterson and Simkus (1992) defined professionals, especially higher cultural professionals, as those who shape and interpret the symbolic order that comprises the laws of social interaction and who display cultural capital in the course of their work. Lower cultural professionals are defined as those who primarily apply and teach ideas according to the standards created and supervised in a bureaucratic manner. Technical professionals are those who manipulate the physical world in occupations that require technical training. Higher technical professionals require advanced graduate training and are given a broad scope of work, and lower technical professionals require education beyond high school and generally work under the supervision of higher technicians or managers in a highly bureaucratic setting. In the managerial and sales occupations, higher and lower distinctions were made by the power to control and ability to allocate resources, and by the monetary value of sales made.

Peterson and Simkus (1992) found out simultaneous ranking of musical tastes and occupation groups. There were three tiers of status groups identified: top (7), middle (5), and bottom (7). In the top tier, there were seven occupation groups, including higher cultural professionals and lower cultural professionals, higher technical professionals, artists, higher managers, higher sales people, and lower technical professionals, in order from the highest to lowest status.

The need to distinguish professional from not-professional attire is related to the nature of an occupation. Except for lower technical professionals, those occupations in the top tier were usually associated with professional attire. In addition, participants who belonged to the lower manager group dressed to look professional at work. Participants reported that dressing up at work, in other words, looking professional, brings respect and
trust, which facilitates their performance at work. At most workplaces, participants agreed that they do not need to dress up in suits all the time, but they made sure that they dressed up more formally on the days they had business meetings or contacts with people outside of the company.

Another thing that occupation appeared to foster was the ability to negotiate between professional and personal elements. Workers had to incorporate personal fashion statements into collective symbols such as appropriate clothing for business contexts. The need for controlling ambivalence leads to the development of skills that support good taste. Occupations that involve shaping ideas, symbolic communication, and control over social contracts and interactions require social actors to manage appearance in the professional context.

Occupation provides opportunities to develop more than taste in professional attire. It also entails different types of social activities outside of the workplace. For example, participants who regularly attended formal parties related to their own or their spouses’ work described their taste in formal dress, whereas those with limited social demands had a relatively simple unidimensional pattern of taste. In contrast to Margaret, participants who were professionals with high level of cultural capital, including professors and a museum director, described complicated taste with subtle differences, depending on the people they met with and the work of the day. Holt (1998) stated that occupations provide refinement and reinforcement of cultural capital. The complexity of taste that HCs described could be attributed to a high level of cultural capital allowing them to strategically create various looks and balance different aesthetics to meet the needs of occupations; their occupations enabled
them to obtain more cultural capital while requiring them to perform well and ultimately to gain symbolic power at work.

**Social Boundaries and Taste in Appearance**

The sociological significance of cultural capital is determined by whether cultural capital becomes a power resource, i.e., whether cultural capital constitutes symbolic power. Symbolic power is “the power granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition” (Bourdieu, 1989: 23). Social boundaries reflect how symbolic power is wielded in society. The efficacy of cultural boundaries drawn by cultural competency in the United States is controversial. Lamont (1992) maintained that the American upper-middle class stresses socio-economic and moral boundaries more than cultural boundaries and contended that Bourdieu underestimated the importance of moral boundaries. However, Kern’s (1997) study did not find supporting results for an emphasis on moral boundaries. To add confusion, there are conflicting interpretations among American intellectuals of cultural tolerance as a new status marker in cultural consumption and as evidence that cultural boundaries have become weaker and less important (Holt, 1998; Peterson & Kern, 1996).

The pursuit of desirable appearance—well-dressed and well-groomed—has been believed to entail extrinsic rewards such as credibility or respect in social life, particularly in the context of a profession. However, extrinsic motivations of social actors toward appearance management or differences in clothing practice do not sufficiently answer the question of whether cultural competency or cultural taste draws social boundaries. Toward answering this question, participant comments on those to whom they attributed good and bad taste were subjected to close analysis.
Participant responses were confusing with respect to cultural boundaries. That some participants pointed out bad as well as good examples among their close friends or that some urged caution against hasty judgment by appearance seems to negate the efficacy of cultural boundaries. Like the conflicting results of Lamont (1992) and Kern (1997), some responses suggested cultural boundaries in association with appearance and some did not. The confusion is partly due to the circular relationships between taste and appearance. Taste is perceived as a distinctive feature attached to a person, but taste in appearance is only communicated through appearance. People infer taste of a person from consistent features of the person’s appearance they observe throughout time. Participants took precaution against judging people on the basis of appearance at first sight. Taste was employed as a resource in drawing and deciphering cultural boundaries when it was seen as an enduring quality of appearance or a personal style of pursuing motives in clothing practice rather than appearance on only one day or in a first impression.

There was a subtle difference in a sense of boundary among participants. Some had judgmental opinions and the others reported neutral differences about other’s taste:

By my definition, I think most of my friends wear things that are nice. … Again, most of the people that I see are pretty much similar economic background and similar education background so I think, I don't know of anybody with personally, like close person with bad taste, but I've seen people out in public where I wouldn't wear. … Especially I think the thing that offends me is when people are exposing themselves. I think that's the case with most people. But I don't really know people with bad taste. (Helen)

Most of my friends have similar taste; actually a lot of my friends are very similar. … I think we all dress pretty similar. Some of my friends are dressier, more European or stylish. … I guess we all wear the same type of clothing and shop at most of the same stores. We usually go to Des Moines. We all dress pretty modestly, too. And that is another commonality. (Michelle)
Helen showed a sense of social boundaries drawn by describing her friends having good taste and distancing herself and her friends from those with bad taste. In another part of the interview, Helen equated educational background with socioeconomic status, thus equating socioeconomics with cultural standing. HCs tended to have more confidence in their taste and to describe friends as having cultural competency as well as being similar to themselves. On the other hand, MCs showed a less class-based understanding of taste in appearance. Michelle’s comments did not imply a hierarchical notion of taste. Michelle thought that she shared taste with her friends, but she did not necessarily mean good taste. MCs also said that they shopped where their friends shop, which suggests they are of the same social strata. Margaret said she might use appearance as a cue for knowing whether she can socialize with someone:

I know who I can be friends or who I talk to. If someone is wearing casual, then I feel I can be friends even if the person is wearing different colors together which is not my taste. If a person is dressed up too much, I would not talk to her. She may not understand me being a stay-at-home mom and my lifestyle. (Margaret)

It appeared that degree of formality in appearance was an important cue for MCs about similarity in stature. Taste mattered to HCs in forming boundaries to distinguish themselves from those with taste at a lower level. Only HCs used taste to establish social position as suggested by Bourdieu (1984; 1989). This does not mean that HCs exclusively socialized with those whose taste they approved:

Helga: It [this jacket] has a lot of interesting details, but when I show this to someone, the person would just say “it’s a dark navy jacket.” If you pay attention to this jacket, you’d see the bodice and the sleeves are separate but loosely connected with chain stitch. The lining is shown in the front part. It is a navy jacket in typically wool fabric, but the arm holes are shown and the lining is also shown. I think it is an interesting jacket. It is timeless. I can wear this in ten years. … It is very unique, but you cannot tell that the uniqueness from ten feet away. … But eventually I want that recognized.
It is not necessary for everybody in the room to notice. But if a few people notice, it is successful.

I: Who are the people whom you want to recognize the differences?
Helga: A few people with good taste. Yeah, social approval by those people.

HCs’ strategy may be to use subtle distinctions to draw a boundary that looks harmless to those they exclude. Exclusion by cultural boundaries is related to exclusion by moral boundaries. The example of Helen’s purposely dressing humbly for her poor clients or the employees of her husband suggests that she connected the discretion of her taste to morality:

So I think you have to be sensitive to your peers. Again, and then when I go to a party where it's my husband's peers or my peers, then I feel more comfortable dressing like I would like to. Again, I don't need to impress them but then I don't want to look like I don't, that I wore the same black dress as I did last year. I want to look a little bit special but not to the point that I'm going to cause a lot of attention either. So I think every situation is different. … I think you mainly think how I would deliberately think about how to dress in an office party versus a hospital party when the peers are nurses. Because they already have impressions of people about doctor's wives or whatever and to me when I see something like that because not everybody's sensitive to dressing appropriately then I think that's unkind. Not because you are trying to hide something but I think it's just unkind to not think about those things. (Helen)

In the context of a hospital party, Helen’s social position of was pre-established as superior to her husband’s staff and nurses, and she did not need to fight for one. She endowed dressing humbly or not displaying higher status with moral value, calling it appropriate or unkind not to do. On the other hand, Helen pursued what she thought was tasteful in the context where her position was unstable or similar to others.

Unlike Lamont’s inquiry as to whether cultural or moral boundaries are drawn, the interviews in this study showed that cultural taste and morality are complementary.
Appropriateness is a key concept that mediates the relationship. Judging taste includes evaluation both of aesthetic proficiency and a moral sense of whether the appearance is appropriate. Appropriateness covers a variety of elements, as discussed earlier. It includes choosing clothes that are appropriate for age, size, figure, personality, situation, and companions. Appropriateness is based on understanding a person, whether it be self or another, and understanding context. It may be hard to obtain social support for preference based purely on aesthetic criteria, but when it acquires the value of appropriateness, the legitimacy of the choice is assured. Helga’s previous statement that she wanted social approval by those who have good taste, is apparently contradicted by her next claim of negating social boundaries drawn by cultural proficiency:

What I am trying to say is I don’t think there is a person who has really bad taste aesthetically. You may not tell why a person dresses like that in the first place. If you talk to the person and get to know the person, you will find the reason. So I don’t think there is such a thing that you can call bad taste. When you encounter a situation that you have to say that the person has bad taste, it usually is a personality problem, not a problem of an artistic or aesthetic taste. My answer to your question is no. I don’t think anyone can have really bad taste. (Helga)

Helga stated that bad taste was actually a personality problem and that taste is not something to be judged. Through this statement, she was claiming that she had a high level of understanding of people, which is a prerequisite quality of good taste. Throughout the interview, Helga had been judgmental on other’s taste. However, she attributed the unfavorable judgment of someone’s taste to the problem with personality and claimed that there was no genuinely bad taste. By doing that, she was able to stay politically correct conveying a message that all tastes are personal and therefore acceptable. This reflects
American culture that is cautious about judging a person by outside and that values social responsibility and open-mindedness.

Helga’s comment also gives hint that the evaluation of taste is socially constructed. Helga’s negative evaluation of a person became legitimate when undesirable appearance or taste is attributed to a problem of personality. Although Helen denied the validity of evaluating someone’s taste, she retained negativity by discovering or constructing a problem with the person’s personality. She was able to avoid being blamed for judging a person by the outside surface. In reverse, Helga may be likely to find good features about a person from whom she receives an impression of good taste. Taste of those who are capable of assuring people that they are good people is likely to be judged positively. In other words, taste of those who have symbolic power is likely to be constructed as good taste. Helga’s comment can be interpreted as a much more strategic way of drawing boundaries based on cultural competency.

Appropriateness as a normative aspect of taste is a concept defined by society. Ideas of appropriate taste were one of the differences between HCs and MCs. HCs were considerably more conscious of situation appropriateness than were MCs. HCs were particularly concerned about negotiating between a normative choice and an individualistic one:

We are getting married outside, so I didn't want anything really formal. And, I wanted it to feel very summery. I felt like, it felt like a fancy dress you could wear to a summer party, but it was still definitely a wedding dress. I tried on a ton of strapless dresses, and I didn’t like any of them. So, I wanted something with a strap. I liked the different fabrics. I think that will help to keep it casual. I'm getting married in Aspen on a mountain, and I think this will not be too overpowering. (Hazel)
The normative thinking of HCs reflects that appropriateness in appearance is a set of ideas that people internalize, and HCs tried to incorporate appropriateness into creative consumption in pursuit of good taste. Symbolic power is world-making power (Bourdieu, 1989). People in higher cultural professions take the role of creating and disseminating ideas in society. It is expected that cultural professionals will contribute to producing and elevating the perception of good taste, including appropriateness in appearance more than others do. HCs who participate in constructing meanings of appropriate and good taste are advantaged in learning and competing in the field of appearance consumption and thus in legitimating social differences caused by performance.

The interviews also hinted that appearance-related consumption could provide opportunities for gaining symbolic power to disrupt socioeconomic boundaries. Some HCs explained that creative consumption combined with smart shopping, including off-priced shopping or buying vintage, could make a person look like she spent more than she actually did:

I just think so many people overlook vintage clothing and that's how you can get a tiny bit of individuality but being trendy at the same time. Plus a lot of times people don't know that vintage clothing is really inexpensive. They are beautifully made items, but you have to look for them and a lot of people don't know that. (Hillary)

Campbell (2005) maintained that craft consumption is populist rather than elitist in nature, because craft activity exists at the intersection of populist folk knowledge with fashion and high art. Because clothing practice involves a popularized type of consumption, it is not taught in formal educational institutions. Consumption skills specific to appearance are passed down through upbringing, but they are also widely informed through mass media. Dispositions and skills to maintain good appearance are relatively easier to learn compared to
consumption of fine art such as enjoying opera. As some participants suggested, a person can achieve a look of higher status by utilizing one’s consumption skills. In the field of appearance consumption, social actors may be able to overcome a hurdle of economic class. In short, appearance functioned as social reproduction by drawing or maintaining social boundaries in a complicated manner. Appearance consumption also had potential or opportunities to disrupt socioeconomic boundaries by outstanding performance of clothing practice.

**Cultural Proficiency and Aesthetic Experience**

This section discusses examples and evidence for different meanings and experiences in cultural consumption between the two groups presumed to have different levels of cultural capital. If HCs possess a higher level of cultural capital and this capital allows them to cultivate taste of reflection claimed by Bourdieu (1984), they would show more evidence of aestheticizing the clothing consumption experience. Fenner (2003) stated that aesthetic experience contains formal analysis of aesthetic properties, associations, and reactions to contexts. Comparison of the HC and MC discourses found substantial differences in terms of aesthetic experience. In addition, taste in relation to self-actualization (Lamont, 1992) and taste for cultural variety (Peterson & Kern, 1996) were examined in relation to the difference between the two groups.

**Aesthetic Reasoning**

Radford (1998) said that cultural capital enables a connoisseur to recognize aesthetic qualities such as color, form, or line and to associate the aesthetic with conceptual deliberation or metaphysical contemplation. Three themes that emerged –aesthetic reasoning, formal analysis, and associations– are direct evidence for aesthetic consumption of
appearance-related products and enjoyment of aesthetic experience.

During the interviews, participants were asked to describe taste in things other than clothing and were asked if they found any commonality between taste in clothing and taste in other things. HCs were able to find and articulate commonalities, but not every MC was able to do so. What HCs explained as commonality was likely to be abstract. HCs discerned abstract aesthetic principles behind different genres:

I think the type of voice I like, opera singers or pop music singers, the type of food I like, are consistent with my taste in clothing. I like things that are delicate. For opera singers, … Some of the voices are so strong. I could tell the voices are special but not really appealing to me. I knew that they were great stars. The reason was… let’s say someone has talent showing 80% versus 100% of the talent. If someone approaches to that extreme, the person looks so capable and it sounds wonderful, I think, that turns me off. More reserved singing styles are what I like. That is same in food and clothing style as well. … That restaurant is everyone’s favorite in the town, but I’ve never had even a single good meal there. When I taste delicate things, I like a mixture of tastes of ingredients including both non-processed taste and processed tastes. I think I want both of those together in one dish. … In that restaurant, everything is so processed, I think. Yeah… too much of a human touch. I have never figured out why I don’t like it, but that’s what it is. So for food, whatever the main ingredients, they have to taste fresh as they are. And you have to have a very tasteful sauce or dressing coming with the main ingredients. Dressing probably has so many different ingredients melted, so you cannot tell what those are. But it tastes good and compliments the fresh ingredients. (Helga)

Before Helga talked about her taste in voice and food, she described her taste as liking delicate and reserved expression. She found the same type of taste for subtlety and delicacy and distaste for displaying vocal talent too much or processing ingredients too much in food. As discussed in the section Education, finding principles that carry across diverse aesthetic experiences suggests the capability of inductive reasoning that critical thinking requires.
Some of the MCs also found commonalities, but these were rather concrete and direct such as taste for one particular color in clothes and interior décor. Some of the alleged commonalities presented by MCs did not show a clear logic. Other MCs did not see any connections among tastes in different genres.

**Formal Analysis**

*Formal analysis* refers to the evaluation of aesthetic properties such as line and color. HCs and MCs showed a difference in complexity of perception of formal properties. Matching aesthetic properties is one of the processes of ensemble activities. As mentioned, color was the most common property that concerned participants. However, HCs’ analysis and calculation were multi-dimensional; they attended to the aesthetic effect of textures and weight of fabrics, cuts or lines, shapes, size, and spatial relations as well as colors, while MCs mostly assembled outfits based on color relations:

In my opinion, the finished look would mean everything in color and tone; the tone, I mean like your shirt matches in *emotion* to your pants. Now I do like the current look of mixing a jacket with jeans, something dressy with something casual. But, definitely, your shoes would match your slacks and shirt. I always finish with two pieces of jewelry. Another pet peeve is to wear matching necklace and earrings. But, you can wear matching bracelet and earrings in my opinion. I think the *space or distance* between where they are on your body. (Hazel)

I like it when your shoes and your shirt and your earrings all match. … mostly colors. (Michelle)

While Hazel listed color, spatial relations between jewelry items, and mood of design, Michelle pointed out only color. It is not that Michelle ignored all the other elements; she was not able to analyze or appreciate what other formal properties work to create a satisfying outfit.
Next to colors, texture was the second most frequently analyzed, and lines, shapes, size, or distance were occasionally mentioned. Regarding aesthetic principles, creating unity by repetition was most frequently pursued by both groups. Contrast was mentioned almost as much as repetition:

If you are wearing matching pants and shirt, then you should wear socks and shoes of the same color. [repetition and unity] If you wear pants of one color and shoes of another, then your socks can be different too. [contrast] (Mary)

In addition to repetition, unity, and contrast, matching strategies included balance and dominance (emphasis). There was no clear distinction of principles used between the two groups, but the more aesthetic elements a participant analyzed, the more diverse aesthetic principles the person used:

If I wear [this skirt with] too much beading then it's just too much, too overwhelming. I didn't want to wear too much. But then this shrug is only colorful on the shoulders so then I could wear just a simple black tank top underneath and then it worked fine. But yeah, I thought even though it's black because of the beading work, I had a hard time finding what I felt comfortable wearing with it. And I found a top that is more like mesh. That dresses it down a little bit too, so then it's not as, like obviously that's not something that I can wear everyday. But with just the regular material, this kind of mesh material on top, I can wear it. Even if I was going to church or something I'd feel ok with that because it's not too dressy with the top. (Helen) [dominance and unity]

Helen exercised dominance by leaving the beaded part of the skirt as the main emphasis of the outfit for a party, and she exercised repetition and unity by wearing the same type of fabric on the top underneath and the skirt, and by using a casual fabric (mesh) to lower the formality of the outfit.

Participants did not necessarily prefer matching outfits that consisted of items made of the same fabric, but repeating colors or wearing similar shades between clothes and
accessories were most common. Some participants expressed distaste for matching outfits, and several expressed a taste for assembling an outfit with separates. Those who did not like matching outfits associated matching outfits with old taste or a lack of creativity. There was a range of mix and match: some preferred mixing and matching items of the same brand, or some picked out items from multiple different brands or stores. Mix-and-match outfits were valued overall. Although polished usually signifies a positive state, a too polished look was used to refer to excessively matching every element in appearance. Harmony is associated with a modernist aesthetic, while bricolage and juxtaposition of incongruous elements are typical of postmodern aesthetics (Henderson & DeLong, 2000; Morgado, 1996). The taste for mix-and-match outfits or the distaste for matching outfits reflects that some components of postmodern aesthetics prevailed among consumers. All in all, participants’ formal analysis of their preferred outfits and taste suggested the coexistence of modernist and postmodernist aesthetics. The complexity of level of aesthetic formal analysis differed according to the level of cultural capital.

**Associations**

Associations and reactions based on seeing objects within a context, as well as formal analysis, are aspects of aesthetic experience (Fenner, 2003). Association is the operation of one’s mind, imagination, and attentive contemplation allowing one to experience more fully the nature of the object (Fenner, 2003). The tendency to form associations appeared almost exclusively in HC discourse. Themes that emerged from associations included intellectual speculation, emotional reactions based on other aesthetic experiences, and sentimentality based on past experience. These types of associations correspond to a classification (Fenner, 2003). Fenner (2003) argued that aesthetic association ranges from cognitive and emotional
to recollective.

Even in aesthetic matters, association is not purely subjective in that the subject’s memory and an objective stimulus are coupled (Fenner, 2003). Cognitive associations link an object and some other element perceived cognitively. The following example shows how Harriet, who majored in economics, associated compromise of her taste and taste for colored shapes on fabric with her knowledge as an economist:

I kind of try to find the middle ground. Because now we have family utility function. It's an economics term. So we have to maximize our family to get the function where you have all the different tastes of the family members. (Harriet)

Sometimes I kind of like to look at some shapes. More abstract shapes and more mathematical shapes. I don't know, because I'm an economist and it's more math and I like math, I try to see some kind of shape in the fabric or the color. You can't do it in only one color, but there are some kind of shapes in the fabric. If you have a black with white which form shapes like some kind of an abstract shape or different lines or shapes. I kind of like that. (Harriet)

Some aesthetic reactions involved more feeling than thinking. The reactions described were on the basis of personal experience or pre-existing aesthetic associations. Participants did not seem to think twice in explaining the associations because they felt them immediately:

Sometimes I think in your mind if you see a woman with a really pointy, pointy, high, high stiletto platform you associate that with people in the adult film industry. I'm just going to say whatever I'm thinking. The same thing with I'm not really into the trend lately with short, short skirts and the high heels. To me, street walker; that's what I think. That's immediately in my mind because I think when I was young that's what it was associated with and now I can not get that out of my head. So you'll never see me in a shorter skirt, like some of the girls are wearing jean skirts or flowy skirts with high heels. (Hillary)

Emotional associations provided rich descriptions of some styles. Recollective associations are the most personal. Participants felt a sentimental attachment to some of their
clothes related to good memories of some time in the past. The recollection was not necessarily in accord with their taste, but they tended to feel attached to the clothes or objects:

And then these are a little beat up but they're Charles David so they were like my first big splurge buy when I got my job. So they hold a special place in my heart. I don't get rid of them. (Hilda)

Because recollective associations are based on personal experience and about a particular item, they did not appear very often in discourse about taste as an enduring liking; however, recollective associations suggest HCs’ aesthetic experiences with clothing or appearance-related products.

Negotiation and Creation of Ambiguity

As discussed in the section *Aesthetic Management*, social actors are forced to confront and negotiate different aesthetics and practical constraints. HCs showed a stronger tendency to negotiate, whether their conflicts were with practical matters or differing aesthetics. Negotiation appears to entail highly intellectual calculation of the potential ramifications of a choice:

But it [jewelry I make] has to be dressy-casual, so that I can dress it up or dress it down. I can put it with a skirt, and it will be more dressed up. And, I can put it with jeans and it will be more dressed down. So, it has to be versatile that way. Usually, I’m out with the kids at school or something. I don’t want to look shabby, but I don’t want to look too dressy either, unless it is a meeting with a teacher or something. So I have to be mindful of being clean-cut and presentable, but not like I’m going to a fashion show or something. (Helen)

Helen tried to negotiate a formal and casual aesthetic in the design of her craftwork so that she could wear it a lot and her taste could be fitted across social contexts. On the other hand, MC answers tended to be simple and showed them avoiding negotiation. For example,
Mary praised her friend who was pregnant and had a child but still dressed up. In spite of a good opinion of her friend, she described herself as choosing comfort and fabric that laundered over looking good.

Another negotiation discussed earlier is that of multiple selves in everyday life. Social actors have multiple identities, and participants negotiated multiple selves by synthesizing elements of different selves into their appearance. One of the main negotiations is to manage the work-me and outside-of-work-me. Negotiation between anonymous professional attire and individual expression that personalizes outfits is ongoing. Martha’s description of her work clothes was nothing different from clothes of other office workers, and she did not view her professional outfit as attached to her self-concept:

I hate buying black shoes. I only have one or two pairs that I'll specifically wear only for work and then all my casual shoes are all brown. (Interviewer: So when you go to work, is it correct that you give up some of your tastes or preference to be appropriate?) Yes, definitely. Yes, to be more, I guess, business professional appropriate. My actual style, I don't wear [at work] at all. (Martha)

The dissonance between a professional look and a taste for casual wear was more likely to appear in younger participants. As time goes by, social actors come to incorporate identities at work as part of their self-concept, and older participants described the same situation as an internal negotiation between multiple selves rather than a confrontation between me and not-me. Overall, MCs showed less sign of negotiation or exhibited a willingness to give up one of two conflicting identities in creating outfits.

Similar to the negotiation of outfits, HCs were was likely to construct ambiguity, while this was rare in MCs’ responses:

I think one of the reasons why I like these tailored shirts is because I think they kind of show your body. It’s not skin tight but people still get a sense of it, but if it’s not
fitted, people don’t really get a sense of that’s you are thin or not thin, in shape or not in shape. So I think that’s one thing that I do. … And I guess just trying to wear clothes that I think are right, and that accentuates things in the right way, not too tight in some places (Hannah)

Sometimes I find shirts that have tailored or where the lines are form fitting or um I think I should say tailored, you know, that kind of goes with your figure. (Monica)

*Tailored shirt* refers to a woven shirt with darting or seaming so that it conforms to the body line without revealing an actual body line as tight knit clothes do. Hannah described what she meant by *right* and the conception of fit as ambiguous with respect to body contour, while Monica viewed woven shirts as objects with an straightforward relationship to the human figure describing *form fitting*. Hannah constructed ambiguity of the fit by proposing contextual understanding of fit. Fenner (2003) explained that aesthetic experience includes reactions based on seeing an object within a context.

The next comment by Heather shows how she constructed ambiguity in the aesthetic appreciation of animal print design:

I think I like animal prints for accessories like shoes, purses, bags. I probably started with a scarf, a leopard print scarf and then… I like it because it’s *tacky a little bit but not tacky at the same time*. Because if you think about people who would wear fur or animal prints. … Like people who live in a trailer park, you know the totally fake animal prints not real fur coat. That wouldn’t be someone in high class. It’s like an animal print shirt. A shirt with animal prints, then it’s like Peggy Bundy from *Married with Children* or something like that, not very high class. I think one of those things like fur is high class, so it’s like tacky and not tacky at the same time. Usually I would just like as accents. (Heather)

Heather developed two contradictory meanings by drawing contexts for each and stated that she enjoyed the ambiguous and floating connotations of animal prints. HCs generally tended to add complications such as negotiation and ambiguity to their taste.

Complications of HCs discourse suggested their possession of cultural capital that allowed an
aptitude for perceiving and deciphering stylistic characteristics. Discourse in line with their actual practice made the taste of HCs less accessible and more complex.

**Cultural Variety**

Omnivorous taste has been found to be an indicator of cultural proficiency in current American society where there is the social consciousness to deny hierarchical notions regarding cultural genres. Studies on omnivorous taste choose one genre such as music and find patterns of preference for subcategories of the chosen genre such as classical, country, or jazz, which were conventionally thought to be status markers. In this study, it was irrelevant to classify subcategories of clothing in a similar manner due to the nature of fashion. Currently there is no particular design or style that is exclusive to higher strata. Appreciation of cultural variety as an aesthetic consumption capability was examined through open-ended questions on taste in other cultural consumption and through responses about taste in clothing.

When asked about taste in things besides clothing, participants brought up different genres. Some were particularly interested in music and some in television. Art and cultural activities were considered to be part of leisure activities. It was hard to find patterns across genres of leisure activities in the interviews, because participants did not have any sense of their own taste in genres in which they were not interested. Music was a genre where most participants were able to describe their taste. Similar to having both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards and motivations for clothes, participants who liked a variety of music explained omnivorous taste with both kinds of reason. They explained that they liked some genres because they improved their mood or that they chose music genres depending on their mood, which corresponds to rewards and motivation. In other cases, they attributed their liking to aesthetic experiences or disinterested pleasure:
I own every one of Tori Amos' CDs. She has strong and creative lyrics. It is not all immediately spelled out for you. The story is *pieced together for you through interpretation*, kind of like *the way you would interpret visual art*. I like that delaying of immediate gratification, where the lyrics are haunting and they just stick with you. On the reverse of that, I like Madonna's music too. It is peppy, upbeat, and fun. It is not necessarily the deepest thing with a lot of embedded symbolism, but it is definitely *pleasing to the ear*. (Hazel)

The distinction of interested and disinterested consumption is similar to the dichotomy of affective intensity and diversion found in previous studies (Caldwell & Woodside, 2003; Holt, 1998). Those studies found affective intensity to be a characteristic of people with a high level of cultural capital, and diversion as a characteristic of those with a low level of cultural capital. However, it was also found that participants with a high level of cultural capital had both characteristics.

Taste in food was a subject that participants felt comfortable talking about. Food is similar to clothes in that food is both functionally indispensable to anyone and a practice that carries cultural and expressive value. Fondness for international cuisine was a fairly good indicator of capital competency and aesthetic consumption. All HCs expressed a taste for international cuisine with rich descriptions about why they liked it, analyzing the aesthetic properties of flavors:

I love spicy food. I love the spiciness of wasabi, which is immediately hot, but then goes away. And, I like the slow burn of a jalapeno. I think I'm kind of a junky for the hot food endorphin rush. And, I like how different cuisines present hot food, because the hot are so different. (Hazel)

Their explanations included emotional associations, reactions to flavors, analysis of different ways of presenting flavors, and appreciation of different cultures. The interviews were conducted in the Midwest where the local food was perceived to be bland by
participants. Thus strong flavors such as spiciness were discussed frequently as the uniqueness of foreign food. On the other hand, MCs did not particularly show a fondness for international food:

We like to eat out at Applebee’s, but I am a more of a B-Bop person. (Margaret)

I like Italian and I like nachos so I guess I like Mexican. I’m not real picky with food. (Interviewer: What do you like about Mexican and Italian?) It’s all the meat, the cheese, the vegetables. Chips and salsa is my favorite snack. I don’t know what it is about it, but I think the fresh. ... Same thing (with Italian). Fresh. Depends on where you have it, I guess, but I prefer to have it where it’s freshly made rather than pre-packaged. (Monica)

Little interest in international food signifies a fondness for American food with which they are familiar. Those participants described their taste for American food as not picky, which sounded like parochialism as opposed to cosmopolitanism (Caldwell & Woodside, 2003) and sounded modernist in thinking of valuing self over others. Even though some MCs expressed a taste for some international food, it was not because they liked the cultural differences, but because of their general sense of the attributes of good food such as freshness or healthiness that they ascribed to the international food.

Holt (1997b) explained that social actors assert that they are qualified and thus capable of perceiving any object aesthetically by declaring a taste for popular culture, which was supported by the way HCs explained their taste for international cuisine. Taste for international cuisine represented a disposition to aesthetic experience and openness in the HCs. With respect to clothing and appearance, appreciation for cultural variety was expressed by only some of the HCs. It was expressed as an experimental mentality, interest in diverse styles, and appreciation of different but good taste:
I don’t share her taste, but I think she has good taste. Like the way she decorated is very kind of country. She has couches with flowers; it’s more like antique looking, and I’m definitely not, I’m not into antique, more into modern, international kind of things. But her clothes I think are, she wears things that look good on her, she’s a little tall, so I think she has to find things that kind of work for her frame. (Hannah)

In spite of those hints of openness, omnivorous taste in clothes was not as strong with HCs as in food. Taste in appearance could be restricted by a motive to enhance one’s body image within the current fashion system. This could hinder trying on diverse styles or designs. The opposite conception was rather more obvious. Some of the MCs emphasized that they consistently liked one style, which sounded like univorousness as a sign of less cultural capital:

I find myself always going towards the same things. She tends to and other people tend to make the same comment, “Don’t you already have something like that at home?” And I have to stop and think, yeah, you are probably right because I pick similar items that I have at home. I just…it’s what I go to. (Monica)

This type of participant occasionally purchased the same design in different colors or repeatedly purchased very similar designs. The symbolism of appearance related products is more accessible and representative of self to others than any other type of products. This result suggests that the continuum of omnivorousness–univorousness may exist in a different form in clothes and appearance-related products or it may need to be investigated using a more sophisticated method.

In an investigation spanning 1900 to 1992, one study found that the values that people put in their personal ads has changed from utilitarian features such as industriousness or good character to expressive features including sensitivity, openness (tolerant or intelligent) and self-fulfillment (independent or unconventional) (Buchmann & Eisner, 1997). Similar
observations were made regarding the taste of HC participants. They valued sensitivity to people and situations, showed aesthetic sensitivity and openness to cultural variety, and placed confidence in taste as self-actualization. What is preferred or valued changes over time, but the taste of those who produce cultural ideas and who own the means to distribute ideas reflects those changes.

**Intrinsic and Extrinsic Interests**

Kant (1790) claimed that a disinterested appreciation of objects is the basis of genuine aesthetic judgment and that judgment of beauty should be based on taste of reflection. Bourdieu (1984) criticized the claim as evidence of the elitism of Kantian aesthetics. The interviews revealed that taste in appearance involved different types of interests to individuals, both intrinsic and extrinsic. In this study, intrinsic interests refer to satisfaction including aesthetic pleasure by reflection and subjective sensual pleasantness from a choice of clothes or outfits. Intrinsic interests are enjoyment out of possessing or wearing beloved clothes regardless of social or utilitarian rewards. Extrinsic interests are satisfied when social goals of appearance such as occupational or status advancement are achieved. Kant excluded taste of sense from genuine aesthetic judgment of taste; Nevertheless participants’ satisfaction both by reflection and sense related to taste in appearance. Appearance-related consumption is not something conventionally thought of as art consumption. The conventional difference between popular and fine art culture is found in

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13 Distinction of intrinsic and extrinsic originally refers to the different nature of motivation of behavior in psychology. Intrinsic motivation refers to the performance of an activity for no apparent reinforcement other than the process of performing the activity per se. In contrast, extrinsic motivation is defined as the performance of an activity because it is perceived to be instrumental in achieving valued outcomes that are distinct from the activity itself (Teo, Lim, & Lai, 1997). Intrinsic motivations are associated with hedonic in experiential behaviors and extrinsic motivations are associated with utilitarian benefits in goal-oriented behaviors.
audience participation (Bourdieu, 1984). According to Bourdieu (1984), popular culture encourages real participation and affective connections, while fine art requires distancing audience selves and disinterested appreciation. We cannot understand taste in appearance without understanding various types of interests and rewards involved in appearance and taste. In fact, taste in appearance showed that clothing practice was highly self-interested practice, possibly including popular enjoyment and abstract distancing through aesthetic experience.

Extrinsic interests were found in both HCs and MCs. Extrinsic motivations for taste comprise the utilitarian functions of appearance. They included gaining respect and credibility in social interaction, accurate and efficient communication, and enhancing self-esteem through appearance:

I think it has to do with the perception of being taken seriously and if I do want to be an upper level manager, or obviously I'm going to law school and I'd like to be an attorney. I don't know if I've ever, or you could say you've ever seen an attorney not wear a suit. I don't necessarily think that people who don't wear suits, I don't look down upon them. I just feel like a lot of things stem back from I'm young, I'm a woman, I'm in an industry or department that all the women are generally secretaries. Most of the men are higher-level managers. …If I'm in a meeting with someone who's wearing jeans and a t-shirt generally I'm going to say, you know why should I believe this person if I don't know who they are. I would think that if you're in a professional setting and you're trying to portray ideals or trying to convince somebody of something or if you're, if people have to abide by your rules in that specific instance, then you probably should look the part. (Hillary)

When you have a special presentation or you’re the person running the meeting and you have people that you need to talk to like at other agencies, you want to show you’re professional. You want to gain the respect of people that you are meeting with. … Management looks highly on that too. … Actually they commented to me, one of the managers said “you’re looking really professional lately.” You’re looking really good and we like the professional dress; and I was going for a promotion. (Megan)

My husband really likes that he gets more compliments and more of that, and I feel better too. And I feel more confidence in myself when I dress nice. (Michelle)
Concerns about treatment or respect usually mattered in a situation at work. Different reactions or the expectation of different reactions to different appearances are understood as a function of attribution. Participants believed that people attributed the quality of appearance to qualifications. For example, people attribute sloppy appearance to a lack of ability to take care of self, and lack of this ability is equated with a lack of ability to direct control of all other things that are required in a professional world. As Hillary stated, success in a professional world requires entering a pre-existing system, and thus social actors need to accept the rules to play the social games. Outside of work, participant rewards were not as utilitarian as at work, but they reported raising self-esteem through good reviews from others and building good relationships through social contacts as extrinsic rewards. Therefore, extrinsic interests were subject to body image and social norms.

On the other hand, intrinsic interests were found mainly in the responses of HCs. These included feeling pleasure from particular clothes or shopping activity regardless of other peoples’ expected reactions:

I would never really ever look at a color and say, “I don't think that would look good on me.” … There used to be something called “color me beautiful” or something. It was this service that said if you have this color eyes and this color hair and this color skin you should only wear these types of colors. Never believed that. Yeah there probably are some colors that don't look great on me, but if I see a sweater that I think is really cool I'm going to buy it no matter what the color is. I wear yellow, and orange, and green, and blue, and purple, and pink, and gold, and silver; it doesn't matter to me. But my favorite color, my favorite color is something that I don't wear very often. It's turquoise. I think it's beautiful, but I don't necessarily think there are a lot of really beautiful turquoise things to wear. (Hillary)

Hillary was highly cautious in choosing cuts or lines for her clothes on the basis of her body image, but delight in color seemed to free her from her body image. Her choice of color came out of what Kant called disinterested appreciation. Which color would look good
on her was not important. Instead she tried to appreciate the color of clothes per se. To experience intrinsic pleasure, participants sometimes had to sacrifice extrinsic interests such as enhancing body image or an image of having sophisticated taste. Intrinsic interests are personal in that sensual enjoyment is subjective and not every one feels pleasure from reflection. Because desirable body image or tastefulness is likely to be socially constructed, intrinsic may not necessarily be in one’s interest. Similarly, participants needed to spend time and energy browsing to experience shopping enjoyment. In such cases, social actors are forced to make either disinterested or interested choices. There seems to be an order of priority affecting the choices. Although some participants stated that they chose something for an aesthetic reason over body image or their reputation for tastefulness, no one would choose something that would damage their performance at work. Intrinsic interests including clothing consumption for fun and beauty, or shopping enjoyment was pursued usually in outside-of-work or private situations which are freer from prescriptive norms. At work, normative pressure is expected to take precedence over disinterested pleasure.

Interests including intrinsic and extrinsic in a broad sense encompass interested and disinterested consumption. As shown by extrinsic interests, clothing practice is definitely an interested activity for social actors. However, they also seek pleasure for pleasure’s sake through appearance-related consumption, whether it is expected to be in accord with their interest or not, which corresponds to disinterested aesthetics. It was clear that HCs consumed clothing for both intrinsic and extrinsic reasons, while MCs did not express much sign of obtaining intrinsic interests from clothing consumption.

Intrinsic and extrinsic interests correspond to what Warde (2005) called internal and external rewards of practice, respectively. He argued that internal rewards are a function of
the complexity of particular practice and external rewards are a function of the prestige of the practice in particular culture. Internal rewards that a social actor obtains indicate level of proficiency in a particular practice; external rewards often provide with access to privileged networks, attribution of cultural honor, or economic advantage (Ward, 2005, p. 143). That HCs showed more signs of intrinsic enjoyment suggests that they are more comfortable with the complexity of shopping and dressing and that they possessed higher level of proficiency in clothing practice.

**Self-Actualization**

In this study, self-actualization was evidenced when participants talked about taste in appearance. Appearance was described as something they accomplished by purposeful action, and taste was evaluated on the basis of appearance. When participants talked about others’ taste, they praised or criticized someone’s *putting together* action and described good appearance as looking like the person *thought about it*. The appearance of these two expressions was not anticipated in the literature review. It shows that appearance is considered to be a rational choice that provides a ground for judgment. Therefore having a personal style as a sign of good taste was considered as a personal achievement, particularly for HCs:

I do *like to have a strong sense of style*. I like bold colors, and I like a lot of design in my clothing. (Hazel)

They may not recognize me in the first place as a good dresser. When they see me the second time, they would realize “Oh she has a style.” I like to hear “she has a style,” even though it is not really visible. In part, it is related to how I was born. Naturally, I am not really a looker, and *this is what I can achieve* realistically. I’m trying to understand my psychology. That might be a reason. But whatever the reason is, I think the sophisticated look is more reserved. That is how I want to look and how I want my style perceived by other people (Helga)
Hazel and Helga had different ideas about good taste. Hazel valued creativity, and Helga valued sophisticated and reserved expression. However they both viewed their own taste as what they wanted to achieve and what they had achieved. HCs’ sense of self-actualization is reflected in expressing confidence with their taste. While some of the MCs described their taste neutrally and some even expressed diffidence, HCs seemed confident. Only a few HCs directly expressed confidence, but most HCs described those whom they nominated as an example of good taste as having taste highly similar to their own. MCs also showed a tendency to view optimally similar taste as good taste, but they did not necessarily equate their taste with the examples of good taste. Good taste was described as an ultimate destination of the journey by MCs, while HCs described as the place where they are currently. Hillary’s comments about her mother and Michelle’s description of her husband as an example of good taste provide a good contrast:

It's funny when we go out, because sometimes I look at other people's mothers and mine and she's so different from all of them. Hair, it's short. And she's always watching. Watching what's on TV and reading updated magazines to see what people are wearing and what's cool. I mean she doesn't really ever compromise her style either though. She would wear something that was fashion forward or in style because she thought she should. So I think that I'm definitely the same way. (Hillary)

We have the same taste, but I am not just good at visualizing them, doing them, or figuring them out. So I would say that is connected with him. (I: So you feel you have the same taste with him?) Yes, I definitely have the same taste with him. I am not just as good as figuring them out. (Michelle)

Although the interviewer did not ask participants to evaluate their own taste, HCs described their taste in clothing and other cultural products with more confidence. HCs tried harder to provide more rationale for their selection and spending. Along with price-consciousness or deal-proneness, some HCs stated that they sometimes purchased a very
expensive thing if they really liked it. This shows that those HCs wanted to emphasize that both bargain shopping and the opposite are the ways to actualize their taste.

Taste in appearance directs choice of aesthetic properties and coordination of items according to the way people want to look including creative, up-to-date, and blended-in. The way people want to look is based on how they see the self. The comparison of HCs and MCs reflects how social actors see themselves and how taste in appearance and the meanings of appearance consumption of HCs are differently structured from MCs. This study did not measure or analyze the differences in preference of aesthetic properties or coordination of styles, so it is difficult to draw a conclusion that there is a tangible difference in preference. The analysis instead showed evidence for different consumption experiences according to cultural capital.
CHAPTER FIVE. CONCLUSION

Philosophers defined taste as an aesthetic aptitude or sensibility (Hume, 1757; Kant, 1790). It refers to capacity to discover beauty from works of art by intuitive reflection with complete disinterestedness (Kant, 1790). According to Kant, taste is not learned, but there is truth value in whether someone’s taste is correct or incorrect. Whether a person is completely free from one’s own interest or not determines the legitimacy of judgment that one’s taste made. Philosophical discussion provided basis of understanding some of major concepts and themes that emerged, such as appropriateness as a normative aspect of taste and characteristics of aesthetic experience in clothing consumption.

Sociological inquiry does not limit objects to fine art. Instead it applies the term taste to manifested preferences for a broad range of objects of consumption including paintings, clothing, or food; sociologists attend to the social significance behind the preferences. While aestheticians endeavor to conceptualize taste in relation to beauty, sociologists associate taste with social acceptance and attractiveness. Bourdieu (1984) defined taste as a manifested preference and a cultivated disposition in the guise of an innate disposition. He thought that taste is actually cultivated, but due to habitus people naively think that taste is inherent due to the function of habitus. Bourdieu reintegrated taste of reflection with taste of sense by using the concept of habitus. He also claimed that people with a high level of cultural capital make themselves distinctive and establish their social position by manifesting their taste. Through the communication of taste and social competition, the legitimacy of taste is established by those who have symbolic power. Consequently, social boundaries are drawn (Bourdieu, 1984). Therefore, evaluation of someone’s taste does not have truth value, but reflects the social structure. Scholars in this research stream have tried to identify the patterns of
preference in relation to social structure or status, treating taste as reflection of social structure (Bourdieu, 1984; DiMaggio, 1996; Holt, 1998; Peterson, 1997; Peterson & Kern, 1996; Peterson & Simkus, 1992).

Taste in appearance is manifested preference for one’s appearance. On the basis of the researcher concludes that taste is a cultivated disposition to direct one’s appearance-related consumption activities. Taste in appearance included preferences for putting together outfits as well as for particular aesthetic elements. The preferences embody self-concept and motives in appearance such as how much the person desires to fit in but still be different from others and how much the person wants to keep his or her appearance up-to-date. Through the interviews, participants explained their taste in terms of how they related particular things to themselves (self-concept) and why they liked particular things (motives). Because clothing is part of one’s appearance or near and ever-present environment, taste in appearance may be more likely to embody one’s self-concept than would taste in any other types of product or behavior. The findings of the study suggest that self-concept is expressed through the presentation of one’s own motives in appearance. Those motives and their presentation skills are cultivated in relation to development self-concept that cannot be thought of separate from the process of socialization in upbringing, education, occupation, and through other social interactions.

Taste in appearance is a disposition to create one’s appearance in order to actualize self. It was found that taste was exercised through unique composition of appearance-specific motives and efficient appearance management, including optimizing the use of given resources—financial, time, energy, and cognitive effort—and negotiating conflicts among the motives and the resources.
Figure 2 summarizes how taste in appearance of a social actor is actualized. Self-concept, including body image, personality, and self-esteem, is placed at the center. Taste is an embodiment of self. A social actor as a subject of a practice wants to feel in control and to feel comfortable, which refers to confidence about self as well as physical comfort. These two motives, a motive to feel comfortable and to feel in control, are more abstract, while other motives, including the motives to be appropriate, up-to-date, and creative, function by influencing more practical aspects of appearance. Motives to be appropriate, creative, or up-to-date are influenced by norms or fashion trends. For example, specifics of appropriate appearance for a wearer’s age or body shape and context are suggested or prescribed by society. To be appropriate, wearers need to incorporate the prescribed components into their taste. On the other hand, comfort and feeling in control are more inward motives to bolster one’s self-esteem, entailing few style recommendations by society.
The motives sometimes conflict and are negotiated in order to actualize what self pursues in appearance. For example, appropriate and creative motives conflict when a wearer feels ambivalence between blending in and standing out, and thus the wearer finds a way to resolve the ambivalence by giving up one element, compromising between the two, or synthesizing the two. Also, negotiation occurs not only between motives but also between self-concept and motives. A new fashion trend is reviewed in terms of one’s body image and negotiated when there is conflict. In a variety of negotiation processes, constraints and expenses interfere, and a social actor has to find a way to obtain maximum satisfaction by juggling what he or she wanted to achieve and what resources are available. All in all, the ultimate goal of the management of these motives is to create an appearance that looks put together, leading to enhanced self-esteem and satisfaction.

The participants talked about how they evaluated others’ taste. Figure 3 illustrates the perception of good taste and bad taste in appearance when judging others’ taste. As shown in the middle part of Figure 3, looking up-to-date and appropriate for a person’s age, size and figure, and situations are necessary conditions for acceptability. If any of these fail to reach the marginal level, the appearance would not be accepted. Regarding a motive to look up-to-date, many of the people whom participants praised were innovative in adopting new trends, but participants did not necessarily point out that dressing in a highly trendy manner as desirable. Being too trendy, that is, controlled by trends, would indicate lack of self-control. In addition, they expressed strong disapproval of a stagnant look. Thus, dressing appropriately and keeping current are primary conditions of acceptability. On top of looking appropriate and up-to-date, good taste is perceived to be creative and to make a person look to be under self-control. These two features advance appearance from acceptable taste to
good taste. Participants were not able to articulate the dynamics of a unique appearance or looking effortless, while it seemed easy for them to explain appropriateness and being up-to-date. Not all acceptable taste is thought to create a respectably unique, effortless, and personal look. Looking put together is the ultimate perception of well-created appearance and the final characteristic of good taste, as shown in the bottom left side of Figure 3. As a consequence, someone who looked put together was interpreted as being comfortable about self and looking confident.

The upper part of Figure 3 shows that an excessive pursuit of physical comfort is the force that pulls appearance away from good taste. When participants talked about judgment
of others’ taste, physical comfort was not considered much, but they interpreted all the signs of bad taste, including stagnant looks, too baggy clothes (a choice of inappropriate size), and dressing down inappropriately as coming out of the pursuit of only physical comfort by wearers. When the pursuit of comfort wins the negotiation between comfort and looks, it results in unacceptable appearance and bad taste. Dressing inappropriately is also unacceptable. Too tight or too revealing clothes are perceived to be inappropriate for age, size, and figure. Both dressing inappropriately and only for comfort were viewed as evidence that a wearer did not take care of self.

Another type of bad taste is found at the bottom right side of Figure 3. When a person’s appearance took on excessive trendiness, excessive accessorizing, or uniform-like matching, the person is perceived to be trying to draw too much attention. This type of poor performance of assembling was described as *trying too hard* or looking *mathchy-matchy*. An overmatching outfit was interpreted as a sign that a wearer lacked self-esteem by participants.

Appearance and taste are often confused. The concepts are actually in a circular relationship. Appearance is a final product of assembling clothes, accessories, shoes, makeup, and hairdo. An appearance actualizes one’s taste within the limit of available resources. A wearer will feel satisfaction or dissatisfaction from an appearance, because appearance is symbolically communicated and meaning is socially constructed. If the appearance gives a wearer satisfaction, taste will be reinforced. If not, either the taste or the process by which the taste is negotiated with resources would likely be altered. Therefore, one’s taste shapes an appearance, and appearances that entail social interaction influence taste in the long term.

With respect to evaluation of taste, participants evaluated taste as a sum of the appearance of a person. Because appearance is achieved through negotiating one’s taste and
practical resources, evaluation of taste becomes that of consumption skills as a whole. Evaluation includes judging how well the appearance embodies an actor, how the motives in clothing practice are successfully pursued and how a social actor successfully manages constraints and balances ambivalent factors in appearance management.

This study supports the sociological concept of taste as a cultivated and developed disposition because self-concept, appearance-related motives and their meanings are subject to social interaction. The findings support the theory of taste by Bourdieu (1984). Taste in appearance directs highly self-interested consumption activities in pursuit of intrinsic and extrinsic interests. The conception of taste from the perspective of consumers was fairly comprehensive, and the study revealed a few points that are unique to appearance-related consumption. First of all, the intimate relationship between taste in appearance-related products and self-concept emerged. Belk’s (1988) theory of extended self provided good guidance for understanding participants’ conception of taste as an embodiment of self. Particularly body image emerged as one of the major component of self-concept that contributed to one’s taste. Second, taste in appearance was evaluated as comprehensive consumption skills, including the ability to manage resources such as money, time, and labor, and the ability to incorporate different aesthetics and social norms into self-concept. Little consideration was given to these resources by previous studies, but the results of this study show that strategies for dealing with resource constraints were a main component in understanding taste in appearance of consumers. Clothing practice is part of everyday life that is conditioned by those constraints, whereas taste in music, for example, could be relatively less restricted by money and time owing to the development of mass media and technology. Third, taste is not only cultivated but also evolves over time, because motives of
appearance are situational. The motives individuals pursue (e.g., wanting to be unique or to blend in) change when they go through different stages of life. The motives are actualized through appearance, varying with contexts and fashion trends.

Drawing on Bourdieu’s (1984) notion of cultural capital as a resource for cultural consumption and recent studies on taste in the United States, the discourse of participants was compared to investigate if different meanings are embodied through appearance consumption according to one’s level of cultural capital. The comparison suggested the impact of upbringing, education, and occupation. These resources provided participants with an aptitude for playing a game in the field of appearance consumption, including sensitivity to dressing appropriately, capacity to construct and communicate meanings, and opportunities and refinement of dressing practices.

Regarding contribution of taste in appearance to drawing social boundaries, participants with high level of cultural capital overall were more conscious of the boundaries drawn by judgment of taste. Those with high level of cultural capital pursued making distinction of taste in appearance within their stratum rather than distinction from a lower stratum. It suggests that Bourdieu’s theory of distinction indeed provides insights into understanding social competition by subtle differences in cultural taste, but that further investigation on social interaction within and between social classes is needed.

For those with higher level of cultural capital, taste was constructed with higher degrees of complexity and aesthetic experience in clothing practice. The result of the study adds understanding of how cultural capital is exercised in the field of consumption particularly in appearance-related consumption and further supporting evidence to the research question of whether cultural capital structures American consumption (Holt, 1998).
Limitations and Suggestions for Future Study

The study has limitations. Age, occupation, education, region, and ethnicity of participants were limited to a small sample. This study does not intend to generalize the results, but is intended to propose the concept of taste and issues to be further investigated to understand taste in appearance. There probably was a cohort effect. What is valued and pursued in appearance by the participants of this study may be different in other age cohorts. For example, older consumers in their sixties may not evaluate perfectly matching outfits as negatively as did the participants of this study. Older consumers may be subject to the value system which reflects more modernist or less postmodern aesthetic than are consumers in their thirties. It would be also interesting to expand the study into investigating if there are different value systems applied when participants judge taste of their own cohort and older or younger cohorts.

Gender particularly may be a big factor. Women have been the traditional consumers and purchasers of soft goods, and fashion trends are geared toward women in the apparel and fashion industry. Norms of access to social power through appearance may have resulted in different results between genders. Thus, research on the taste of male participants is needed in the future.

The data offers deep understandings that indicate multiple paths for future research. The findings of this study drew out a wide range of research questions in taste research. One of the interesting results was how much body image was important for participant taste. The relation between body image and taste is one area that needs to be studied more. The results also suggest further investigation on complex dynamics of appearance management. Research on appearance management including actualization of taste will reveal various
aspects of consumption of appearance-related products. There were several comments about reciprocal influences between participants and their spouses, which also suggest future study in the area of communication and interaction with significant others and its effects on taste in appearance.

Taste develops, evolves, and stays with a person like a companion to self through one’s life. This study hopes to provide better understanding of taste in appearance, because taste is related to satisfaction at a personal level and socially significant at a social level as well. The findings have practical implications for apparel marketers. Knowledge of levels of cultural capital of target customers will help define strategies for advertising, store layout and merchandise display. The findings have useful implications for marketing of products other than clothing. Another implication for marketers is that it is important to understand situational motives and the process of exercising taste in strategic planning and executing of product development and marketing. It is also important for marketers to understand consumers’ development of strategies and needs in appearance management to serve the needs and interests of the consumers. In the long run, it is also hoped that research on taste would make contributions to helping consumers maximize satisfaction in clothing practice.
REFERENCES


and the making of inequality (pp. 152-186). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.


APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION
### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Self (Education**, Occupation***.)</th>
<th>Spouse (Education, Occupation)</th>
<th>Father (Education, Occupation)</th>
<th>Mother (Education, Occupation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Post-doctoral fellow</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>G Doctor</td>
<td>B Home maker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harriet</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>G Professor</td>
<td>B Business owner</td>
<td>B Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazel</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Museum education director</td>
<td>H+ Computer technician</td>
<td>G Teacher</td>
<td>G Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>B Sales</td>
<td>H+ Home maker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Volunteer attorney</td>
<td>G Doctor</td>
<td>B Retail manager</td>
<td>B RN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helga</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>G Professor</td>
<td>B Home maker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillary</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Governmental analyst</td>
<td>H+ Carpenter</td>
<td>B Engineer</td>
<td>B Editor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hollie</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Business owner</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>G Small Business owner</td>
<td>H+ Home maker (former secretary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilda</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Editor and publishing representative</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>G Doctor</td>
<td>B Home maker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Part time retail sales</td>
<td>B Director of insurance company</td>
<td>H Small Business owner</td>
<td>H+ Home maker (former secretary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Home maker (former dental assistant)</td>
<td>B General contractor/firefighter</td>
<td>H+ Accountant owner</td>
<td>H+ Customer support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Coordinator at NGO</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>B Sales manager</td>
<td>H Home maker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Home maker</td>
<td>B Bank manager</td>
<td>H Plant manager</td>
<td>H Clerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megan</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Governmental buyer</td>
<td>H+ Technician</td>
<td>B Insurance consultant</td>
<td>H Clerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Home maker (former dietician)</td>
<td>B Real estate agent</td>
<td>H Farmer</td>
<td>H Factory worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Sales service representative</td>
<td>H+ Sales</td>
<td>H Insurance sales</td>
<td>H+ Administrative assistant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Ethnicity: C (Caucasian: people with European ancestral heritage), A (Asian). Among Caucasian participants, only Harriet emigrated from Europe.

**Education: G (Graduate school, medical school), B (4-year college), H+ (Vocational school), H (High school)

***Occupations in the shaded cells are those in the top status group and occupations underlined are those in the bottom group (Petersen and Simkus, 1992).
APPENDIX B: PRELIMINARY QUESTIONNAIRE
PRELIMINARY QUESTIONNAIRE

Today’s Date:                                                                  Time:
Place:

1. What was your age on your last birthday?   __________ year old
2. What is you gender?   ☐ male   ☐ female
3. Which of these categories best represents your ethnic background?
   ☐ African American
   ☐ Asian American
   ☐ European American
   ☐ Native American
   ☐ Hispanic/Latino/Latin American
   ☐ Others (Please specify) ____________________________________________
4. What is the highest formal education you have completed?
   ☐ less than high school
   ☐ high school graduate
   ☐ vocational school/ some college
   ☐ college graduate (Please specify) ____________________________________
   ☐ Masters/ some graduate school
   ☐ PhD
5. What is your occupation?
   Please specify the job title (or job description if it is a generic term like “manager”) and the company name you work for.
   ____________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________
6. What is you marital status? (If you are not married, go to no.9.)
   ☐ married    ☐ divorced/separated    ☐ widowed    ☐ single
7. What is the highest formal education your spouse has completed?
   ☐ less than high school
   ☐ high school graduate
   ☐ vocational school/ some college
   ☐ college graduate (Please specify) ____________________________________
   ☐ Masters/ some graduate school
   ☐ PhD
8. What is your spouse’s occupation?
9. What is the highest formal education your father has completed?

☐ less than high school
☐ high school graduate
☐ vocational school/ some college
☐ college graduate  (Please specify) _____________________________
☐ Masters/ some graduate school
☐ PhD

10. What is your father’s occupation?

Please specify the job title (or job description if it is a generic term like “manager”) and the company name he works (or worked) for. If retired, provide information of the previous occupation.

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

12. What is the highest formal education your mother has completed?

☐ less than high school
☐ high school graduate
☐ vocational school/ some college
☐ college graduate  (Please specify) _____________________________
☐ Masters/ some graduate school
☐ PhD

14. What is your mother’s occupation?

Please specify the job title (or job description if it is a generic term like “manager”) and the company name she works (or worked) for. If retired, provide information of the previous occupation.

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX C: SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Due to the nature of qualitative study, questions that are not listed below could be asked in response to the answers of participants. The followings are an outline of the questions to ask.

Part1:

1. Tell me about your taste in clothing or appearance as a whole.
   In addition to clothing, make-up, perfume, hair, shoes, accessories

2. Do you see any connections between your taste in clothing and tastes in other things?
   E.g. music, painting, interior decor, book, food and the like

3. What is important for you when you decide to buy your clothes and when you choose what to wear everyday?

4. Tell me about brands/stores you like to shop and brands/stores you do not like. Why?

5. How long do you think you have had this taste?

6. Where do you think your taste come from?
   E.g. family, education, innate sense, friends, peers, job, hobby, environment …

7. What do you do to maintain your taste, style, or appearance?

8. Do you think your taste changes? If so, tell me about the changes you have observed.

9. What do you think makes your taste change?

10. Do you like the way your taste has changed?

Part2:

11. Do you have any friend or family member who has similar tastes to yours? Tell me how similar to and how different his or her taste is from yours.
12. Tell me about someone you know who has good taste in clothing. Why do you feel he or she has good taste?

13. Do you know anyone who you think has bad taste? Tell me about the person and the taste of the person.

14. What do you or can you read from other people’s appearance?

15. Do you think their appearance or their taste affects their interactions with others? If so, how?

16. What do you think is good taste and what is bad taste?

Part3:

17. Please show me some pictures of yourself that reflect your taste in clothing or your favorite styles. Or please show me an outfit you own that well reflects your taste.
APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT
INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Title of Study: Taste in Clothing
Investigators: Yoo Jin Kwon, Ph.D. Student
Textiles & Clothing, Iowa State University

This is a research study. Please take your time in deciding if you would like to participate. Please feel free to ask questions at any time.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to understand the concept of clothing. You are being invited to participate in this study because you are comfortable with talking about clothing. As a participant in this study, you will be both interviewed and observed through your picture and in person. The information gained from the interviews and observations will be used in the written report of this study. If you agree to participate in this study, you may expect the following study procedures to be followed. You will be interviewed at least twice for about an hour to an hour and a half each. During interview, you will be asked to talk about the your thought on clothing and taste. After the first interview, the researcher will contact you in order to verify researcher understands your meaning properly and to ask follow-up questions. You could be asked to do another interview or to answer by email. Your interview will be audio recorded and I will ask to take your picture. All the records will be erased by Feb 28, 2007. You may skip any question that you do not wish to answer or that makes you feel uncomfortable.

RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks at this time from participating in this study.

BENEFITS

It is hoped that the information gained in this study will benefit society by providing in-depth understanding about taste in studies on clothing.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION

You will not have any costs from participating in this study. You will not be compensated for participating in this study.

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or leave the study at any time. If you decide to not participate in the study or leave the study early, it will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
The respondent has the right to withdraw at any time from the study, for any reason, and the data will be returned to the respondent upon request.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by applicable laws and regulations and will not be made publicly available. However, federal government regulatory agencies and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves human subject research studies) may inspect and/or copy your records for quality assurance and data analysis. These records may contain private information.

To ensure confidentiality to the extent permitted by law, the following measures will be taken: Real names will not be used during data collection nor in the written study. The data will be transcribed and will be kept password protected computer files. Audio tape will be locked filing cabinet. The data will be retained for ten years and will be destructed and erased. If the results are published, your identity will remain confidential.

**QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS**

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study. For further information about the study contact Yoo Jin Kwon, 28 MacKay Hall, (515)294-3131, yoojin@iastate.edu; Mary Lynn Damhorst, 1068 LeBaron Hall, (515)294-9919, mldmhrst@iastate.edu. If you have any questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact the IRB Administrator Ginny Austin, 1138 Pearson Hall, (515) 294-4566; austingr@iastate.edu or the Research Compliance Officer Dian Ament, Vice Provost for Research Compliance, 1138 Pearson Hall, (515) 294-3115; dament@iastate.edu

***************************************************************************

**SUBJECT SIGNATURE**

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given the time to read the document and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You will receive a copy of the written informed consent prior to your participation in the study.

Subject’s Name (printed)  

(Subject’s Signature)  (Date)

(Signature of Parent/Guardian or Legally Authorized Representative)  (Date)
INVESTIGATOR STATEMENT

I certify that the participant has been given adequate time to read and learn about the study and all of their questions have been answered. It is my opinion that the participant understands the purpose, risks, benefits and the procedures that will be followed in this study and has voluntarily agreed to participate.

(Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent)             (Date)
## CODING GUIDE

### 1. The Extended Self: what I like is what I wear and who I am

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Concept of the code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Enhancing body image</td>
<td>Express taste for styles of clothing that enhance the body image that a person has for oneself: like to complement or camouflage one’s body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Self-expression</td>
<td>Express inner self or one’s personality through appearance rather than what is shown outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Compliments</td>
<td>Taste for styles or colors that bring positive feedback from others Ex. “I like it because I get compliments whenever I wear that”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Multifaceted self</td>
<td>Describe taste in terms of different aspects of the self or by different roles that one performs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4.1 Work self</td>
<td>Describe taste in work clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4.2 Business function self</td>
<td>Describe taste in clothes for business function outside work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4.3 Family function self</td>
<td>Describe taste in clothes for family function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4.4 Mom self</td>
<td>Describe taste in clothes for self in a role of mom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4.5 Married self</td>
<td>Describe taste in clothes as a married woman or as a spouse of a person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4.6 Single self</td>
<td>Describe taste in clothes as a single woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4.7 Casual self</td>
<td>Describe taste in casual clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4.8 Social self</td>
<td>Describe taste in clothes for socials/parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4.9 Hang-out self</td>
<td>Describe taste in clothes when a person hangs out with friends informally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4.10 Wedding self</td>
<td>Describe taste in clothes when a person go to someone’s wedding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4.11 Church self</td>
<td>Describe taste in clothes for going to church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4.12 Other self</td>
<td>Describe taste in clothes for other functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Locating self</td>
<td>Discuss one’s taste in relation to society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5.1 In</td>
<td>Preference for appearance to be blended in or accepted by society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5.2 Stand-out</td>
<td>Preference for appearance to stand out from majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Dressing for whom</td>
<td>Ambivalence experienced with clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6.1 Other-centeredness</td>
<td>Explain one’s taste with a notion of dressing for others: paying attention to the moral and ethical role of appearance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 1.6.2 Self-centeredness
Explain one’s taste with a notion of dressing for self: taking care of self or giving self a treat

### 1.7 Appropriateness
Describe one’s taste in relation to appropriateness

#### 1.7.1 Age appropriate
Wear something because a person thinks it appropriate for one’s age

#### 1.7.2 Age appropriate Not
Wear something because a person thinks it inappropriate for one’s age

#### 1.7.3 Context appropriate
Describe importance or will to dress appropriately for place and occasions

#### 1.7.4 Others_app
Other things about one’s taste related to appropriateness

### 1.8 Others

### 2. Construction of Taste: what influences and what contributes to one’s taste

#### 2.1 Upbringing
Describe taste in association with upbringing environment and parents

- **2.1.1 Upbringing_Yes**
  Value parents’ taste and influence or attribute taste to one’s parents

- **2.1.2 Upbringing_No**
  Deny the influence from parents or do not find similarities between one’s taste and their parents’

#### 2.2 Occupation
Contribution of one’s occupation to one’s taste

#### 2.3 Education
Contribution of one’s education to one’s taste including education in general and particular majors such as Art

#### 2.4 Trends
Contribution of fashion trends to one’s taste

- **2.4.1 Trends_Important**
  Think that fashion trends are important for one’s taste

- **2.4.2 Trends_Not care**
  Not care much about fashion trends

- **2.4.3 Trends_Changing**
  Be aware of or acknowledge the fact that one’s own taste changes when the fashion trends of the day changes
  “I liked something back then, because it was in style, but not any more”

- **2.4.5 Selective**
  Be selective about adopting what is in fashion

- **2.4.6 Adapting trends for self**
  Individual strategies to process fashion trends to make one’s own taste or to make it appropriate for self
  “I wear lower-rise pants than what I used to wear, but not as low as what young people do, because I am in my 40s”

#### 2.5 Social interaction
Contribution of social interactions to one’s taste or influences from others

- **2.5.1 Friends**
  Influence of friends

- **2.5.2 Siblings**
  Influence of siblings

- **2.5.3 Others**
  Influence of other people besides friends and siblings

#### 2.6 Post-educational experience
Changes of taste influenced by various experiences after their college years
2.6.1 Spouse  Change of taste by that of spouse
2.6.2 Children  Change of taste after having kids
2.6.3 Aging  Change coming from aging itself
2.6.4 Earning  Change coming from increase in income
2.6.5 Int'l experience  Contribution of international experience including travel or job-related one
2.6.6 Others  Contribution of other post-educational experiences

2.7 Geography  Contribution of region where a person grows up and lives

2.8 Change of taste
2.8.1 See change  Feel that one’s own taste has changed
2.8.2 Not much change  Do not see much of change in one’s own taste
2.8.3 Like  Satisfied with the way one’s own taste has changed
2.8.4 Not like  Do not like the way one’s own taste has changed; unwanted changes

2.9 Other influences  Contribution of what is not listed above

3. Taste in Clothing: particulars of taste when participants describe their taste

3.1 Comfortable  Express taste for comfortable clothes
3.1.1 Comfortable_Physical  Concerned about physical comfort of clothing
3.1.2 Comfortable_Mental  Concerned about mental comfort of clothing, which is perceived as comfortable regardless of physical properties
3.2 Conservative  Express taste for conservative clothes
3.3 Classic  Express taste for classic or traditional clothes
3.4 Trendy  Express taste for trendy clothes
3.5 Black  Express taste for clothes in black
3.5.1 Black_Convenient  Like black because of the convenience of black, e.g., easy to match things
3.5.2 Black_Aesthetic  Like taste for black for aesthetic reasons
3.5.3 Black_Flattering  Like black because black is flattering, especially makes a person look smaller
3.6 Casual  Express taste for casual clothes
3.7 Dress-up  Express taste for being dressed-up or tailored
3.8 Diverse  Express taste for diversity when it comes to clothes
3.9 Simple  Express taste for clean or neat look
| 3.10 Fitted | Express taste clothes that fit well. Concerned about the fit of clothes or have taste for form-fitted clothes  
“Fit is important to me when it comes to clothes selection”  
“I like to wear form-fitted clothes” |
| 3.11 Unique | Express taste for unique design |
| 3.12 Finished/Complete | Express taste for a finished look rather than taste for a single item: it is important to create a complete and finished outfit. |
| 3.13 Easy-care | Express taste for clothes with easy care such as machine washable or wrinkle free fabric |
| 3.14 Good fabric | Express taste for good quality of fabric |
| 3.15 Workmanship | Express taste for good quality of sewing, pattern, and more |
| 3.16 Modest/Not revealing | Express taste for modest clothes related to exposure |
| 3.17 Cut/lines | Express taste for particular cuts and lines |
| 3.18 Color | Express taste for particular color(s) besides black |
| 3.19 Versatile | Express taste for clothes that can be worn in a versatile way |
| 3.20 Symmetric | Express taste for symmetric design |
| 3.21 Others | What is not listed above |

**4. Strategies to develop/maintain taste:** all kinds of individual strategies related to appearance and styling

| 4.1 Control | Control either one’s own or others’ taste, styling or wardrobe |
| 4.1.1 Consultation | Provide consultation to, guide or help family, friends others with styling, which leads to controlling others’ taste |
| 4.1.2 Controllability | Value a style that provides an opportunity to control one’s own appearance and being independent from other’s control  
“I do not like the kind of hair cut that I cannot change or do hair by myself everyday, that’s why I have my hair cut plain” |
| 4.1.3 Nothing urgent | Not rush to shop because a person is equipped with full wardrobe already and has no urgent need, so that the person can make decision only by how much the person likes it  
“I don’t buy anything if I don’t find anything interesting at a store, because I have enough to choose for tomorrow” |
| 4.1.4 Change other people | Try changing other people’s taste or preference according to one’s own opinion or taste |
| 4.1.5 Loyalty not | Deny having loyalty to a particular brand name or store, although there are several stores one frequents |
| 4.1.6 Passive choice | Select from just what is available or sometimes be forced to buy something because a person cannot postpone any longer or do not want to go shopping again  
“I had to buy one because I waited until the last moment.” |
| 4.1.7 Mission-oriented | Go shopping with a clear mission to accomplish  
“Once I decide to buy a suit, I go out and buy one” |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>4.2 Creation</strong></th>
<th>Put together clothing items with an intention to create, or do sewing, altering, or crafting to create one’s own style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **4.2.1 Ensemble activity** | Have one’s own strategies to create an outfit: putting-together strategies  
“I like to wear basic and classic clothes and spice up with trendy accessories” |
| **4.2.2 Buying different brands** | Shop from all different brands or stores and mix and match things |
| **4.2.3 Improvising** | After shopping, a person continues to create multiple outfits with one item by putting different things together |
| **4.2.4 Customizing** | Have clothes tailored by a tailor or alter clothes by oneself to fit the body or to meet needs |
| **4.2.5 Crafting** | Have own skills to create one’s own clothes including sewing or beading or other needle works |
| **4.2.6 Rejecting creation by others** | *Hate or reject* outfits suggested by retailers (mannequin or catalogue) because those are not the creations by oneself |
| **4.3.7 Mixing old and new items together** | Put old and recently bought clothes together to create an outfit |
| **4.3 Knowledge** | Keep updating new fashion trends or have knowledge about clothes such as terms, fabrics, or history to enact one’s look |
| **4.3.1 Shopping knowledge** | When it comes to clothing, a person knows where to shop to find out something |
| **4.3.2 Trend info** | Make effort to *update oneself on latest fashion* such as subscribing to magazines or watching particular TV channels to get information |
| **4.3.3 Involuntary learning** | Get to know what is in fashion by clothes in stores or what people wear without effort |
| **4.3.4 Personal source** | Have a person who always provides me with information about current fashion: sister or friends who are good at fashion |
| **4.4 Financial management** | Manage money spent on clothes to be economical |
| **4.4.1 Save money only** | Buy things on sale or used ones to save money |
| **4.4.2 Save & find design** | Buy things on sale or used ones because of design |
| **4.4.3 Save & value conscious** | Buy things on sale or used ones because of value consciousness |
| **4.4.4 Invest_length** | Willing to invest money on items which would be worn for a long time or often |
| **4.4.5 Invest not_trendy** | Buy inexpensive one it is trendy |
| **4.4.6 Shopping strategy** | Have one’s own strategy or tips when shopping |
| **4.4.7 Others** | |
| **4.5 Cognitive management** | Adapt oneself to spend time, energy, and effort on appearance economically |
| **4.5.1 Matching suits** | Wear matching top and bottom because it is easy and like a standard uniform |
| **4.5.2 Set-up** | Wear outfits that are already set up before, that work like a matching
suit, and that consist of items from one or a few brands

| 4.5.3 Loyalty | Shop at several favorite brand names or stores because they have a good selection and it is easy to shop (when choices are screened by brands) |
| 4.5.4 Displayed outfits | Buy and wear outfits suggested on mannequin or catalogue |
| 4.5.5 Easiness | Taste for particular colors, silhouettes or items because it is easy to create an outfit |
| 4.5.6 Organize Closet | Organize closet to make it easy to find and put together |
| 4.5.7 Pattern and solid | Put a solid fabric with a patterned fabric; pick a color from the pattern |
| 4.5.8 Depend on time constraints | How complete a look is or how elaborate makeup or hair depends on how much time one has on the day |
| 4.5.9 Others |  |

| 4.6 Aesthetic complexity | Regarding what people care about when it comes to appearance |
| 4.6.1 Matching color | Care about matching colors |
| 4.6.2 Matching texture | Care about matching textures of fabric |
| 4.6.3 Space | Consider spatial relations or distance between body parts or each item |
| 4.6.4 Relations/proportion | Consider proportions or relations between items such as skirt and heels |
| 4.6.5 Others | Care about other things that are not listed above |

| 4.7 Commitment | Individual importance or commitment to appearance |
| 4.7.1 Cannot bear | Cannot stand clothes that accompany physical discomfort |
| 4.7.2 Dealing with discomfort | Manage to deal with physical discomfort such as heels when a person is to create a look wanted |
| 4.7.3 Hate maintenance | Hate clothes that require maintenance such as ironing or dry cleaning |
| 4.7.4 Accept maintenance | Accept the need for maintenance for appearance |
| 4.7.5 Important | Think that appearance is important for oneself |
| 4.7.6 Slave to fashion not | Devalue being too dependent of appearance and fashion |
| 4.7.7 In-between | Describe oneself as caring about fashion not extreme |

5. **Aesthetic characteristic and Cultural variety**: index of aesthetic proficiency

<p>| 5.1 Aesthetic proficiency | Index of one’s aesthetic proficiency related to appearance |
| 5.1.1 Awareness of preference | Be clearly aware of one’s own taste |
| 5.1.2 Unclear | Be unclear about what one really likes or describe one’s taste in a vague way |
| 5.1.3 Know why | Be specific about why the person like it: articulate explanation more than just attributing to comfort |
| 5.1.4 Confidence | Have confidence about one’s preference and choice of clothes |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5.1.5 Negotiation</th>
<th>Find a way to satisfy different selves at the same time regarding appearance—norms, work self, casual self, and body type—rather than giving up one of them</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1.6 Vocabulary</td>
<td>Be knowledgeable about clothing, fabric, and the like, which are reflected by the abundant use of clothing-related terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.7 Synesthesia</td>
<td>Describe one kind of sense impression by using words that normally describe another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.8 Literacy of appearance</td>
<td>Differentiate delicate differences of looks rather than simply making distinction of formal vs. casual or read and infer lots of information from people’s appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.9 Aesthetic disguise</td>
<td>Be aware of that people can be misunderstood by their appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.10 Across</td>
<td>Find essential commonality running across one’s taste in different things such as clothing, food, and art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.11 Association</td>
<td>Describe something with aesthetic association based on one’s experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.12 Others</td>
<td>Other things that tells about the person’s aesthetic proficiency, e.g., lack of confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Cultural engagement</td>
<td>A degree of cultural variety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1 Shop_Nationwide</td>
<td>Shop clothes when one visits to other bigger cities in the State to find something different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.2 Shop_Int’l</td>
<td>Shop (regular) clothes when one go abroad to find something different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.3 Shop_Local</td>
<td>Usually shop locally and buy what is available locally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.4 Memorabilia</td>
<td>Have or purchase clothes as memorabilia of a travel or a person related to the clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.5 Cosmopolitan</td>
<td>Taste for and experiences of travel abroad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.6 Int’l food</td>
<td>Taste for international food for a different reason for each food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.7 Music_Variety</td>
<td>Taste for different genres of music for different reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.8 Regular</td>
<td>Regularly engaged in cultural activities such as going to concert or museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.9 Other cultural activities</td>
<td>Describe taste for cultural activities or art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Innate sense</td>
<td>Feel judgment of taste like an innate sense: feel like a person choose to buy/wear something without much thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.1 Innate sense_NotArticulate</td>
<td>Feel like an innate sense, and the wearer has hard time articulating when asked why</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.2 Innate sense_Articulate</td>
<td>Feel like an innate sense, and the wearer can articulate the style choices and decision made when asked why</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Tolerance for difference taste</td>
<td>Be tolerant towards others’ having different taste</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 6. Judgment of Taste: people’s description about good taste (6.1-6.5) and bad taste (6.6-6.8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6.1 Appropriate</th>
<th>Relate appropriateness of dressing with a sign of good or bad taste</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1.1 Situation app</td>
<td>Value taste of a person who is good at observing a dress code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1.2 Age app</td>
<td>Value taste of a person whose dress is appropriate for wearer’s age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1.3 Size app</td>
<td>Value taste of a person who wears proper size clothes: not too tight and not to baggy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1.4 Figure app</td>
<td>Value taste of a person who wears clothes that flatters one’s body</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6.2 Aesthetic sophistication</th>
<th>What is valued by people in addition to appropriateness of appearance or what people list as index of good taste</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.2.1 Ensemble creativity</td>
<td>Value taste of a person who is good at putting things together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.2 Discreet</td>
<td>Value taste of a person who is sensitive and considerate for audience/peers and respectful of their sides and their situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.3 Complete look</td>
<td>Value someone’s taste because of the appearance that looks complete (from head to toe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.4 Respectably unique</td>
<td>Value someone who looks blended into groups, but stands out in a sophisticated way: unique but reserved in a way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.5 Optimally trendy</td>
<td>Good taste should not be too dependent from or too resistant to fashion trends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.6 Achieved</td>
<td>Value styles or looks polished and achieved by effort rather than naturally given to a person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.7 Understanding of self/body</td>
<td>Value styles or looks that reflect other’s understanding of self and body</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 6.3 Optimally similar | Value taste that is optimally similar to one’s own taste. Find similarities to one’s taste from someone else’s good taste or tend to appreciate taste that is similar to oneself |

| 6.4 Look confident | Value looking confident in clothing choices and appearance |

| 6.5 Consistently good | Value taste of a person who consistently keeps appearance good. “She always looks nice” |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6.6 Lack of common sense</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.6.1 Stagnant</td>
<td>Devalue a person who resists or ignores changes of fashion trends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6.2 Not take care</td>
<td>Devalue a person who looks like not taking care of oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6.3 No thoughts</td>
<td>Devalue an outfit that looks like the wearer gave no thoughts to it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6.4 Don’t care</td>
<td>Don’t care much about what others think about my appearance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6.7 Inappropriate</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.7.1 Situation inapp</td>
<td>Devalue one’s taste when his/her appearance is inappropriate for a given context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7.2 Age inapp</td>
<td>Devalue taste of a person whose dress is inappropriate for wearer’s age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7.3 Size inapp</td>
<td>Devalue taste of a person who wears proper size clothes: too revealing,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7.4 Exposure inapp</td>
<td>Devalue taste of a person whose dress is too revealing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7.5 Figure inapp</td>
<td>Devalue taste of a person who is dressed inappropriately for one’s body type</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6.8 Lack of sophistication

| 6.8.1 Trying too hard | Devalue an outfit that looks like the wearer tried too hard to impress |
| 6.8.2 Bad attention | Devalue an outfit that stands out too much |
| 6.8.3 Matchy-matchy | Devalue outfits that are matching too much |
| 6.8.4 Mismatching | Devalue outfits that do not match |

### 6.9 Taste vs. Person

| 6.9.1 Combined judgment | Make a judgment of taste and personality (of oneself or other people) as a unified whole or that it is hard to make judgment of taste separate from judgment of personality |
| 6.9.2 Discrete judgment | Make judgment of a person’s taste without getting interfered by judgment of personality. |
| 6.9.3 Similarity | Point out a person whose taste, a participant thinks, is similar to one’s own taste (when asked) |
| 6.9.4 Individuality | Deny the existence of a person whose taste is similar to one’s own taste and instead emphasize individuality or uniqueness of taste |

### 6.10 People with good taste

| 6.10.1 Family | People who participants refer to as a person with good taste. |
| 6.10.2 Friend near | Close friends |
| 6.10.2 Friend far | Friends who are not so close |
| 6.10.3 Colleague | Colleagues |
| 6.10.4 Neighbor | Neighbors |
| 6.10.5 Acquaintance | Acquaintance |
| 6.10.6 Celebrity | Celebrities |
| 6.10.7 Others | |

### 6.11 People with bad taste

| 6.11.1 Family | People who participants refer to as a person with good taste. |
| 6.11.2 Friend near | Close friends |
| 6.11.2 Friend far | Friends who are not so close |
| 6.11.3 Colleague | Colleagues |
6.11.4 Neighbor  Neighbors
6.11.5 Acquaintance  Acquaintance
6.11.6 Celebrity  Celebrities
6.11.7 Others

6.12 Other characteristics of good taste
6.13 Other characteristics of bad taste

7. **Communication of Judgment of Taste**: outcome of communication of judgment of taste

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7.1 Internal rewards (InR)</th>
<th><strong>Just for oneself</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1.1 Fun</td>
<td>Have fun and be entertained simply by wearing or owning particular clothes apart from social interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1.2 Disinterestedness</td>
<td>Have <em>disinterested</em> experience from styling oneself without interruption of extrinsic motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1.3 Other_InR</td>
<td>Other internal rewards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1.4 Shopping enjoyment</td>
<td>Express one’s taste for shopping per se</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7.2 External rewards (ExR)</th>
<th><strong>Through social interaction</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.2.1 Aesthetic respect</td>
<td>Earn respect from others by dressing well: treated as a sophisticated/stylish person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2.2 Treatment</td>
<td>Get treated seriously from other by dressing well (particularly in work situation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2.2 Boundaries</td>
<td>Earn or lose access to social groups or networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2.3 Other ExR</td>
<td>Other external rewards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 7.3 Other comm. through dress | Other effects of communication through appearance that are not listed above or results of judgment of taste |
| 7.4 Different communication impacts | Impact of communication of judgment of taste varies by contexts. E.g., the communication effect works more powerfully for a first time meeting or professional meeting |

8. **Conceptual relations**: perception underlying clothing choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8.1 Trendy/Fashionable</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.1.1 Trendy_Young</td>
<td>Trendy clothes/accessories are for young people, not appropriate for my age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.2 Trendy vs. Comfortable</td>
<td>Trendy clothes/accessories are uncomfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.3 Trendy_Expressive</td>
<td>Trendy clothes/accessories are self-expressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.4 Trendy_Revealing</td>
<td>Trendy clothes expose too much of skin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.5 Trendy_Dressed-up</td>
<td>Trendy clothes are dressed-up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.6 Trendy vs. Casual</td>
<td>Trendy and casual are opposite concepts in appearance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.7 Trendy_Casual</td>
<td>Trendy clothes are casual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.8 Trendy vs. Conservative</td>
<td>Trendy and conservative are opposite concepts in appearance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.9 Occasion</td>
<td>Occasions when a person wear trendy clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.10 Example</td>
<td>Examples of trendy clothes/accessories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2 Formal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2.1 Formal_Polished</td>
<td>Formal clothes are polished.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2.2 Formal_Classic</td>
<td>Formal clothes are classic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2.3 Formal_Trendy</td>
<td>Formal clothes are trendy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2.4 Formal_Revealing</td>
<td>Formal clothes are revealing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2.5 Formal vs. Casual</td>
<td>Formal and casual are opposite concepts in appearance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2.6 Occasion</td>
<td>Occasions when a person wear formal clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2.7 Example</td>
<td>Examples of formal clothes/accessories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3 Professional/Work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3.1 Professional_Conservative</td>
<td>Professional clothes are conservative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3.2 Professional_Expressive</td>
<td>Professional clothes are self-expressive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3.3 Professional vs Expressive</td>
<td>Professional clothes are not self-expressive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3.4 Professional vs. Casual</td>
<td>Professional and casual are opposite concepts in appearance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3.5 Professional_Nice</td>
<td>Professional clothes are nice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3.6 Professional_Normative</td>
<td>Professional clothes conform to norms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3.7 Occasion</td>
<td>Occasions when a person wear professional clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3.8 Example</td>
<td>Examples of professional clothes/accessories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3.9 Professional_Dressed-up</td>
<td>Professional clothes dress up wearers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3.10 Professional vs. Comfortable</td>
<td>Professional clothes are not comfortable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4 Classic/Traditional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4.1 Classic_Practical</td>
<td>Classic clothes are practical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4.2 Classic_Formal</td>
<td>Classic clothes are formal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4.3 Classic_Casual</td>
<td>Classic clothes are casual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4.4 Classic_Conservative</td>
<td>Classic clothes are conservative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4.5 Occasion</td>
<td>Occasions when a person wear classic clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4.6 Example</td>
<td>Examples of classic clothes/accessories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.5 Conservative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8.5.1 Conservative_Age</th>
<th>Conservative clothes are appropriate from my age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.5.2 Conservative_Modest</td>
<td>Conservative clothes are modest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5.3 Conservative_Patterned</td>
<td>Conservative clothes have some patterns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5.4 Conservative_Symmetric</td>
<td>Conservative clothes have symmetric design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5.5 Conservative vs. revealing</td>
<td>Conservative clothes are not revealing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5.6 Conservative vs. fitted</td>
<td>Conservative clothes are not so fitted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5.7 Conservative vs. expressive</td>
<td>Conservative clothes are not expressive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5.8 Occasion</td>
<td>Occasions when a person wear conservative clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5.9 Example</td>
<td>Examples of conservative clothes/accessories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.6 Casual

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8.6.1 Casual_Expressive</th>
<th>Casual clothes are expressive.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.6.2 Casual vs. Expressive</td>
<td>Casual clothes are not expressive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.6.3 Casual_Revealing</td>
<td>Casual clothes are revealing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.6.4 Casual_Modest</td>
<td>Casual clothes are modest and do not expose too much of skin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.6.5 Casual_Comfortable</td>
<td>Casual clothes are comfortable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.6.6 Casual_Practical</td>
<td>Casual clothes are practical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.6.7 Casual_Fitted</td>
<td>Casual clothes are fitted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.6.8 Casual vs. Feminie</td>
<td>Casual clothes are not feminine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.6.9 Casual_Less nice</td>
<td>Casual clothes are less nice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.6.10 Occasion</td>
<td>Occasions when a person wear casual clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.6.11 Example</td>
<td>Examples of casual clothes/accessories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.7 Others
APPENDIX F: HUMAN SUBJECT REVIEW
The Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed the project, “Taste in clothing”, and declared the study exempt from the requirements of the human subject protections regulations as described in 45 CFR 46.101(b)(1) and (2). The applicable exemption category is provided below for your information. Please note that you must submit all research involving human participants for review by the IRB. Only the IRB may make the determination of exemption, even if you conduct a study in the future that is exactly like this study.

The IRB determination of exemption means that this project does not need to meet the requirements from the Department of Health and Human Service (DHHS) regulations for the protection of human subjects, unless required by the IRB. We do, however, urge you to protect the rights of your participants in the same ways that you would if the project was required to follow the regulations. This includes providing relevant information about the research to the participants.

Because your project is exempt, you do not need to submit an application for continuing review. However, you must carry out the research as proposed in the IRB application, including obtaining and documenting (signed) informed consent if you have stated in your application that you will do so or if required by the IRB.

Any modification of this research should be submitted to the IRB on a Continuation and/or Modification form, prior to making any changes, to determine if the project still meets the Federal criteria for exemption. If it is determined that exemption is no longer warranted, then an IRB proposal will need to be submitted and approved before proceeding with data collection.

CC: Mary Lynn Damhorst

Exempt Categories

(1) Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.
ISU NEW HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW FORM

SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Principal Investigator (PI): Yoo Jin Kwon
Phone: __________________________ Fax: 515-294-6364

Degrees: MS
Correspondence Address: ________________________________________________________
Department: AESHM: Textiles & Clothing
Email Address: yoojin@iastate.edu
Center/Institute: College: Human Sciences

PI Level: ☐ Faculty ☐ Staff ☐ Postdoctoral ☑ Graduate Student ☐ Undergraduate Student

Title of Project: Taste in Clothing

Project Period (Include Start and End Date): [mm/dd/yy][3/1/06] to [mm/dd/yy][9/30/06]

FOR STUDENT PROJECTS

Name of Major Professor/Supervising Faculty: Mary Lynn Damhorst
Phone: 515-294-9919
Campus Address: 1068 LeBaron
Department: AESHM: Textiles & Clothing
Email Address: mldmrst@iastate.edu

Type of Project: (check all that apply)
☒ Research ☐ Thesis ☒ Dissertation ☐ Class project
☐ Independent Study (490, 590, Honors project) ☐ Other. Please specify: ________

KEY PERSONNEL

List all members and relevant experience of the project personnel. This information is intended to inform the committee of the training and background related to the specific procedures that the each person will perform on the project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME &amp; DEGREE(S)</th>
<th>SPECIFIC DUTIES ON PROJECT</th>
<th>TRAINING &amp; EXPERIENCE RELATED TO PROCEDURES PERFORMED, DATE OF TRAINING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yoo Jin Kwon, MS</td>
<td>Ph.D. student, will interview participants and analyze data</td>
<td>ISU Human Subject Training 2/13/04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Lynn Damhorst, PhD</td>
<td>Faculty in Textiles &amp; Clothing, major professor</td>
<td>ISU Human Subject Training July 2000 7/20/2000 1OAKA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Add New Row

Research Assurances 12/01/2005
SECTION II: IRB SECTION - STUDY SPECIFIC INFORMATION

STUDY OBJECTIVES

Briefly explain in language understandable to a layperson the specific aim(s) of the study.

The purpose of the study is to increase understanding of taste in clothing, what shapes a person's taste and how taste affects consumer behavior toward clothing.

BENEFIT

Explain in language understandable to a layperson how the information gained in this study will benefit participants or the advancement of knowledge, and/or serve the good of society.

It is hoped that the information gained in this study will benefit apparel business by providing in-depth understanding about taste in clothing.

PART A: PROJECT INVOLVEMENT

1) ☐ Yes ☒ No Is this project part of a Training, Center, Program Project Grant? Director Name: Overall IRB ID:

2) ☐ Yes ☒ No Is the purpose of this project to develop survey instruments?

3) ☐ Yes ☒ No Does this project involve an investigational new drug (IND)? Number:

4) ☐ Yes ☒ No Does this project involve an investigational device exemption (IDE)? Number:

5) ☐ Yes ☒ No Does this project involve existing data or records?

6) ☐ Yes ☒ No Does this project involve secondary analysis?

7) ☐ Yes ☒ No Does this project involve pathology or diagnostic specimens?

8) ☐ Yes ☒ No Does this project require approval from another institution? Please attach letters of approval.

9) ☐ Yes ☒ No Does this project involve DEXA/CT scans or X-rays?

PART B: MEDICAL HEALTH INFORMATION OR RECORDS

1) ☐ Yes ☒ No Does your project require the use of a health care provider's records concerning past, present, or future physical, dental, or mental health information about a subject? The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act established the conditions under which protected health information may be used or disclosed for research purposes. If your project will involve the use of any past or present clinical information about someone, or if you will add clinical information to someone's treatment record (electronic or paper) during the study you must complete and submit the Application for Use of Protected Health Information.

PART C: ANTICIPATED ENROLLMENT

| Estimated number of subjects contacted to reach required enrollment: 40 |
| Number of subjects to be enrolled in the study Total: 15 | Males: | Females: 15 |

Research Assurances 12/01/2005
☑ Yes ☐ No Does this project involve human research participants? If the answer “no” is checked, you will automatically move to a question regarding the involvement of radiation producing devices in your project.

SECTION III: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY INFORMATION (EH&S)

☐ Yes ☑ No Does this project involve laboratory chemicals, human cell lines or tissue culture (primary OR immortalized), or human blood components, body fluid or tissues? If the answer is “no” is checked you will automatically move to a question regarding the involvement of human research participants in your project.

ASSURANCE

☐ I certify that the information provided in this application is complete and accurate and consistent with any proposal(s) submitted to external funding agencies.

☐ I agree to provide proper surveillance of this project to ensure that the rights and welfare of the human subject or welfare of animal subjects are protected. I will report any problems to the appropriate assurance review committee(s).

☐ I agree that I will not begin this project until receipt of official approval from all appropriate committee(s).

☐ I agree that modifications to the originally approved project will not take place without prior review and approval by the appropriate committee(s), and that all activities will be performed in accordance with all applicable federal, state, local and Iowa State University policies.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

A conflict of interest can be defined as a set of conditions in which an investigator’s or key personnel’s judgment regarding a project (including human or animal subject welfare, integrity of the research) may be influenced by a secondary interest (e.g., the proposed project and/or a relationship with the sponsor). ISU’s Conflict of Interest Policy requires that investigators and key personnel disclose any significant financial interests or relationships that may present an actual or potential conflict of interest. By signing this form below, you are certifying that all members of the research team, including yourself, have read and understand ISU’s Conflict of Interest policy as addressed by the ISU Faculty Handbook (http://www.provost.iastate.edu/faculty/) and have made all required disclosures.

☐ Yes ☑ No Do you or any member of your research team have an actual or potential conflict of interest?

☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, have the appropriate disclosure form(s) been completed?

SIGNATURES

[Signature]

Signature of Principal Investigator 3/29/06

Date

[Signature]

Signature of Department Chair 2/20/06

Date

PLEASE NOTE: Any changes to an approved protocol must be submitted to the appropriate committee(s) before the changes may be implemented.

Please proceed to SECTION II.

Research Assurances 12/01/2005
SECTION II: IRB SECTION - STUDY SPECIFIC INFORMATION

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   Director Name: Overall IRB ID:

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9) □ Yes ☒ No Does this project involve DEXA/CT scans or X-rays?

PART B: MEDICAL HEALTH INFORMATION OR RECORDS

1) □ Yes ☒ No Does your project require the use of a health care provider's records concerning past, present, or future physical, dental, or mental health information about a subject? The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act established the conditions under which protected health information may be used or disclosed for research purposes. If your project will involve the use of any past or present clinical information about someone, or if you will add clinical information to someone's treatment record (electronic or paper) during the study you must complete and submit the Application for Use of Protected Health Information.

PART C: ANTICIPATED ENROLLMENT

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<th>40</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of subjects to be enrolled in the study</td>
<td>Total: 15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Assurances 12/01/2005
PART D: SUBJECT SELECTION

Please use additional space as necessary to adequately answer each question.

11. Explain the procedures for selecting subjects including any inclusion/exclusion criteria (i.e., Where will the names come from? Will a sample be purchased, will ads, fliers, word of mouth, email list, etc. be used?).

The researcher will recruit young adults with diverse occupations such as academics, lawyers, social workers, museum curators, artists, accountants, plant managers, business owners, bankers or realtors from middle and upper-middle class. The researcher will contact institutions to recruit volunteers for interviews and, in snowball fashion, ask participants to refer someone who may be good for the interview and comfortable with talking about the topic.

12. Attach a copy of any recruitment telephone scripts or materials such as ad, fliers, e-mail messages, etc. Recruitment material must include a statement of the voluntary and confidential nature of the research. Do not include the amount of compensation, (e.g., compensation available).

Note: Please answer each question. If the question does not pertain to this study, please type not applicable (N/A).

PART E: RESEARCH PLAN

Include sufficient detail for IRB review of this project independent of the grant, protocol, or other documents.

13. Describe the flow of events used in this research protocol. Include information from the first contact with the volunteers to the end of the study. Use a diagram or flow chart if appropriate. Also, include a description of the study procedures or tasks that participants will be exposed to or asked to complete. This information is intended to inform the committee of the procedures used in the study and their potential risk. Please do not respond with “see attached” or “not applicable.”

Participants will be interviewed and observed in their own houses or apartments. Participants will be interviewed for about an hour for the first interview. During the interviews, participants will be asked to talk about their thoughts on the meaning of taste in clothing. Participants also will be asked to show pictures of themselves and explain their taste in dress. Participants will be asked to fill out a questionnaire about their demographic information. After the first interview, the researcher will contact participants usually by phone in order to verify that the researcher understands their meaning properly and to ask follow-up questions.

14. For studies involving pathology/diagnostic specimens, indicate whether specimens will be collected prospectively and/or already exist “on the shelf” at the time of submission of this review form. If prospective, describe specimen procurement procedures; indicate whether any additional medical information about the subject is being gathered, and whether specimens are linked at any time by code number to the subject’s identity. If this question is not applicable, please type N/A in the response cell.

Research Assurances 12/01/2005
15. For studies involving deception, please justify the deception and indicate the debriefing procedure, including the timing and information to be presented to subjects. If this question is not applicable, please type N/A in the response cell.

N/A

PART F: CONSENT PROCESS

16. Describe the consent process for participants who are age 18 and older. If the consent process does not include documented consent, a waiver of documentation of consent must be requested.

The researcher will contact participants by email, phone, or in person to ask if they are interested in participating in the project. If they inform the researcher of their interest, the researcher will meet them for an interview, explain the project before starting the interview, and give them the informed consent form. They may decide to participate or not. If they agree to participate, they will sign and return the form to the researcher and the interview will commence. Participants will be informed in the consent form that the interviewer will contact them for a follow up interview.

17. If your study involves minors, please explain how parental consent will be obtained prior to enrollment of the minor(s).

N/A

18. Please explain how assent will be obtained from minors (younger than 18 years of age), prior to their enrollment. Also, please explain if the assent process will be documented (e.g., a simplified version of the consent form, combined with the parental informed consent document). According to the federal regulations, assent "...means a child’s affirmative agreement to participate in research. Mere failure to object should not, absent affirmative agreement, be construed as assent."

N/A

PART G: DATA ANALYSIS

19. Describe how the data will be analyzed (e.g. statistical methodology, statistical evaluation, statistical measures used to evaluate results).

This is a qualitative study. The interview will be audio-taped and transcribed. The researcher will keep a journal after every interview. Verbal data will be analyzed qualitatively, using the constant comparative process.

20. If applicable, please indicate the anticipated date that identifiers will be removed from completed survey instruments and/or audio or visual tapes will be erased:

2/28/07 Month/Day/Year

PART H: BENEFITS

21. Describe the benefit to the volunteer from participating in this study, if any, and the benefit to society that will be gained from the study. Please note that monetary compensation is not considered a benefit.

Research Assurances 12/01/2005
The information gained in this study will benefit society by providing in-depth understanding about taste in studies on clothing. The understanding of taste may be useful to academic researchers and to apparel marketers.

PART I: RISKS

The concept of risk goes beyond physical risk and includes risks to subjects' dignity and self-respect as well as psychological, emotional, legal, social or financial risk.

22. □ Yes  X  No  Is the probability of the harm or discomfort anticipated in the proposed research greater than that encountered ordinarily in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests?

23. □ Yes  X  No  Is the magnitude of the harm or discomfort greater than that encountered ordinarily in daily life, or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests?

24. Describe any risks or discomforts to the subjects and how they will be minimized and precautions taken. Do not respond with N/A. If you believe that there will not be risk or discomfort to subjects you must explain why.

   This study does not include any questions that would make subjects vulnerable. Interview questions concern purchasing and selecting clothes in daily life.

25. If this study involves vulnerable populations, including minors, pregnant women, prisoners, educationally or economically disadvantaged, what additional protections will be provided to minimize risks?

   N/A

PART J: COMPENSATION

26. □ Yes  X  No  Will subjects receive compensation for their participation? If yes, please explain.

   Do not make the payment an inducement, only a compensation for expenses and inconvenience. If a person is to receive money or another token of appreciation for their participation, explain when it will be given and any conditions of full or partial payment. (E.g., volunteers will receive $5.00 for each of the five visits in the study or a total of $25.00 if he/she completes the study. If a participant withdraws from participation, they will receive $5.00 for each of the visits completed.) It is considered undue influence to make completion of the study the basis for compensation.

PART K: CONFIDENTIALITY

27. Describe below the methods that will be used to ensure the confidentiality of data obtained. For example, who has access to the data, where the data will be stored, security measures for web-based surveys and computer storage, how long data (specimens) will be retained, etc.

   Transcripts will be kept in password protected computer files. Audio tapes will be locked in a filing cabinet in the researcher's office. The data will be retained for ten years and will be destroyed and erased. Names of participants
PART A: HUMAN CELL LINES

☐ Yes ☒ No Does this project involve human cell or tissue cultures (primary OR immortalized cell lines/strains) that have been documented to be free of bloodborne pathogens? If the answer is "yes," please attach copies of the documentation. If the answer is "no," please answer question 1 below.

1) Please list the specific cell lines/strains to be used, their source and description of use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CELL LINE</th>
<th>SOURCE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION OF USE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Add New Row

2) Please refer to the ISU "Bloodborne Pathogens Manual," which contains the requirements of the OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standard. Please list the specific precautions to be followed for this project below (e.g., retractable needles used for blood draws):

Anyone working with human cell lines/strains that have not been documented to be free of bloodborne pathogens is required to have Bloodborne Pathogen Training annually. Current Bloodborne Pathogen Training dates must be listed in Section I for all Key Personnel. Please contact Environmental Health and Safety (294-5359) if you need to sign up for training and/or to get a copy of the Bloodborne Pathogens Manual (http://www.ehs.iastate.edu/bw/bbp.htm).

PART B: HUMAN BLOOD COMPONENTS, BODY FLUIDS OR TISSUES

☐ Yes ☒ No Does this project involve human blood components, body fluids or tissues? If "yes", please answer all of the questions in the "Human Blood Components, Body Fluids or Tissues" section.

1) Please list the specific human substances used, their source, amount and description of use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBSTANCE</th>
<th>SOURCE</th>
<th>AMOUNT</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION OF USE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E.g., Blood</td>
<td>Normal healthy volunteers</td>
<td>2 ml</td>
<td>Approximate quantity, assays to be done.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Add New Row

2) Please refer to the ISU "Bloodborne Pathogens Manual," which contains the requirements of the OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standard. Specific sections to be followed for this project are:

Research Assurances 12/01/2005
Anyone working with human blood components, body fluids or tissues is required to have Bloodborne Pathogen Training annually. Current Bloodborne Pathogen Training dates must be listed in Section 1 for all Key Personnel. Please contact Environmental Health and Safety (294-5359) if you need to sign up for training and/or to get a copy of the Bloodborne Pathogens Manual (http://www.ehs.iastate.edu/bio/bbp.htm).

FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY USE ONLY

Signature of Biological Safety Officer

Date

Research Assurances 12/01/2005