

Facial Affect and Dress and its Impact on a Person's "Yes" to Survey-Taking

Vanesa Chavarria

California State University, Northridge

## The Effects of Facial Affect and Dress on an Individual's Responsiveness to Taking a Survey

First impressions often predict whether or not an individual will receive a response from another person. Most people look at a person's facial features, what they are wearing, how they present themselves, etc. When researchers approach outside individuals about participating in a study, they are either met with denial or an agreement. An individual's likelihood to agree to participate in a study is contingent on the first impression the researcher gives off. Because facial affects and dress constitute a significant component of first impressions, someone's willingness to participate in a study can also be contingent on these two factors.

In the following paragraphs, I will be reviewing literature that focuses on how specific components of first impressions and multiple factors affect an individual's responsivity, perception, and judgment on another individual. The research included will pose simple ideas of how gender, clothing, and facial features alter perceived personality.

### **Facial Affects and its Effect on Responsiveness**

Judgments on personality are mainly made from first impressions, whether it is in person or not. Research suggests that a person is seen as more approachable when their facial cues are broad and natural, such as smiling (Sutherland, Rowley, Amoaku, Daguzan, Kidd-Rossiter, Maceviciute, & Young, 2015). Facial cues, such as smiling, show to not only have positive feedback in a naturalistic setting but even when depicted in a photograph (Sutherland, et al., 2015). When an individual is approached with a smile on their face, it is often a sign of welcoming and agreeableness, making it more likely for an individual to receive a better judge of character and have a more persuasive effect on another party. When participants in a research setting examined individuals who were smiling in photographs, they perceived these people as open, agreeable, extraverted, and emotionally stable. The counterparts to the individuals that

were smiling were seen as more neutral and masculine (Sutherland, et al., 2015). This assumption most likely contributes to smiling facial features as being more noticeable on an individual (Sutherland, et al., 2015). Judgments are made through a dimension and which facial cues are utilized primarily.

Aside from agreeableness and extraversion, trustworthiness can also be perceived by emotionally neutral faces (Matarozzi, Todorov, Marzocchi, Vicari, & Russo, 2015). Being able to judge whether or not an individual can trust someone is dependent on first impression and interaction, and it can take as little information as facial affects to conclude. Depending on the individual, faces that are seen with the absence of a smile and having higher levels of anxiety and aggression are seen as less trustworthy and less friendly (Matarozzi, et al., 2015). Individual differences in facial affect influence whether neutral or unfamiliar faces are approachable or trustworthiness. Smiling often-times leads to presumptions of openness, while emotionally withdrawn faces are seen as closed off; perception of agreeableness affects one's ability to be trustworthy (Matarozzi, et al., 2015). If one is seen as reliable, they are more likely to get a response from another party.

The facial affect of smiling continues to be supported as signs of attractiveness, sociability, competency, and reliability (Magda & Goodwin, 2008). Present studies suggest that smiling and having a positive facial affect not only increases a person's attractive levels but also operationally defines what is attractive, for example -being likable, friendly, and approachable (Magda & Goodwin, 2008). The hypothesis and deduction that the presence of a smile can positively influence attraction are proven in several studies, including one conducted by Loyola College in Maryland. Even if an individual has been stigmatized in any way, adding a smile increases societal preference and affirmation (Magda & Goodwin, 2008).

### **Dress and its Effect on Responsiveness**

More present studies continue to expand their research on how clothing affects the judgment of the observer (Fasoli, Maass, Volpato, & Pacilli, 2018). When looking at how women dressed for their graduation, researchers concluded that females who wore more professional clothing were seen as more competent, having higher scores, and performing better in their thesis (Fasoli, et al., 2018). As seen in research and the naturalistic environment, clothing plays an essential role in one's appearance. The way the participants in this study conducted by Fasoli, et al. made commentary on how these females wanted to be conveyed (2018). Instead of utilizing casual clothing for the opposing argument, the participants dressed in more revealing attire, taking away much-perceived competency and intelligence; however, individuals were more concerned with beauty (Fasoli, et al., 2018). This perception of attractiveness and beauty was translated into their attire and openness but diminished their credibility. The research suggests that some clothing is better accepted in an academic setting as opposed to a more casual environment (Fasoli, et al., 2018).

In other research literature, dressing professionally may lower someone's perception of empathy but increase their level of competency (Kuster, Krumhuber, & Hess, 2018). Varying by gender, one's occupation and temperament can be judged by the way the individual was dressed. The clothes people wear have an incredible impact on what they do occupationally but also how they fall on personality assessment (Kuster, et al., 2018). Being in occupational uniform did not drive a perceived sense of competence in females; however, males were more likely to be seen as empathetic when dressing in a professional matter that was not usually seen as masculine; therefore, men were seen as more competent was judged to be more empathetic primarily (Kuster, et al., 2018).

Clothing has a significant impact on how an individual is thought of and seen by others, whether it be professionally or socially (Gurney, Howlett, Pine, Tracy, & Moggridge, 2017). This concept is supported by the psychological term *enclothed cognition*, which states that individuals take on the identities and properties of the clothes that they wear (Adam & Galinsky as cited in Gurney, et al., 2017). As researchers suggest, clothing leaves impressions; for example, a professor is seen as intelligent when wearing professional clothes but is seen as more impressive when wearing casual dress (Gurney, et al., 2017). Positive perceptions can be formed when an individual is wearing and representing the right clothing styles.

### **Present Study**

My research has the capability of understanding how and why some college students are more willing to take a survey as opposed to others. Research suggests that facial affects and dress alter a participant's perception of the researcher. We can determine if facial features and attire have a solid persuasion on one's responsiveness and agreeability. If researchers can determine the best way to approach young students on a college campus, they are more likely to have more participants for future studies and research.

Our research question is: does facial affect and dress affect an individual's responsiveness to taking a survey. Our hypothesis states that 1) individuals are more willing to participate when approached by someone who is smiling and 2) they are also more likely to agree to take a survey when contacted by someone dressed casually. Based on this, we believe that 3) individuals will be more responsive to receiving a survey when approached by an individual who is dressed casually and smiling.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The participants in our study were all university students on the campus of California State University, Northridge, recruited near the University Student Union, outside Sierra Hall, and at the Oviatt Library. We focused on recruiting students who identified as either male (n=13) and female (n=26). The total of students asked to participate in the demographic survey was 60; thirty-nine of those 60 agreed to participate in the study. Our ethnic diversity included those that identified as Hispanic or Hispanic descent (n=19), Caucasian (n=5), Asian (n=7) multi-ethnic (n=6), Middle Eastern (n=1), and African American (n=1). Participants fell within the age range of 18-35 years old.

### **Materials**

In our study, we administered a survey that measured. It was provided by the researcher in the form of a Google Form via the researcher's phone. The form included the survey, the debrief and consent form. The survey we administered included multiple-choice questions on the participant's age, gender, ethnicity, college classification, and major. Casual dress included shorts, jeans, plain tee-shirts, and tennis shoes. Professional attire included a dress, blazer, heels, slacks, button-up/collared shirt, and dress shoes. Smiling included corners of the mouth pointing upward with teeth showing, while non-smiling comprised of a neutral expression and absence of teeth.

### **Design and Analysis**

In the present study, we used a 2 x 2 factorial design. Our first independent variable was the facial expression of the researcher and if they were approaching the participant with a smile (L1) or a neutral expression (L2). Our second independent variable was professional dress (L1)

or casual apparel (L2). The dependent variable in our research experiment was whether participants refuse to participate or engage in participation. We used a Two Chi-Square of Independence to analyze for the main effect for the way the researcher approaches the participant (smiling or not smiling) and the way the researcher is dressed and to check for a two-way interaction between the way researchers approaches the participant and the way the researcher is dressed.

### **Variable Operationalization**

In the study, participation was measured on the facial expression of the researcher. Both researchers would approach different students with either a smile/friendly expression (level 1) or with a serious expression/no smile (level 2). The second independent variable was based on the way the researcher was dressed. Level 2 included the researcher approaching the participant with casual apparel -jeans, t-shirt, light sweater, etc. Level 1 involved the researcher going to the participating party wearing professional clothes -slacks, skirt, dress, button-up, etc.

Our dependent variable was measured by whether the participating party gave a verbal yes or no response in regard to the survey provided by the researchers.

### **Procedure**

Two researchers, either dressed in casual wear or professional clothing, recruited a total of 60 participants throughout the week (30 participants each researcher) at times where the campus was bustling with activity (12:00-3:00 pm). All individuals that were targeted were those sitting in isolation on their phones, reading a book, doing homework, etc., showing visible signs of having the time to participate. Researchers approached students with a combination of the two IVs and their levels (smiling-professional, smiling-casual, no smile-casual, and no smile-professional). Students were randomly sampled with no systematic selection. We asked the

student if they were willing to take a short eight-question survey regarding basic student demographics (Appendix A), administered by Google Forms. For the student that agreed to take the survey were first given a consent form (Appendix D), also provided by Google Forms. The consent form stated that students could skip questions or opt-out. If they consented to the demographic survey, participants would take 2-3 minutes completing the survey. Once they finished, they were verbally debriefed about the true purpose of the survey; they were also given a virtual debrief of the study via Google Form (see Appendix C). The debrief included an overview of how first impressions, including dress and facial affect, may influence someone's willingness to participate in a survey. Researchers then thanked the student for their time and continue to the next participant. All responses and variable combinations were recorded on a previously constructed data collection table (see Appendix B). Both "yes" or "no" responses were counted for data collecting purposes of the study. If they refused, we would thank them for their time and leave.

## Appendix A

## Demographic Survey

1. How do you identify culturally or ethnically? Use whichever term(s) you identify with most (for example, Armenian, Iranian, Mexican American, African American/Black).

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

2. In terms of your race, how do you identify?

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

3. What is your gender?

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

4. Are you a transfer student?

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

5. What is your major?

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

6. What year are you in?

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

7. What is your age?

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

8. Where do you live? (please pick the option that applies)

- At home
- I room with other students
- I live with another family member
- I rent a room/converted garage

NEXT

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

## Appendix B

ID	Facial Affect	Dress	Response	Date	Time	Location	Researcher
1	Smile	Casual	Yes	1-28-2021	3:48pm	Gym	OR
2	No Smile	Professional	No	1-29-2021	4:01pm	Gym	OR

**EXAMPLE OF DATA COLLECTION TABLE**

## Appendix C

Section 3 of 3



## Debriefing Form

---

Experiment Name/Title: Willingness to Participate in Research

Thank you for participating in this research study. This study was conducted as part of my/our PSY 321: Psychological Research Methods course. The purpose of this study was to investigate how willing one would be to participate in research when approached by someone with a friendly expression and casually dressed. In this study, we manipulated researchers' facial expression (whether or not they are smiling) and how they were dressed (casually or professionally) and measured the effects of this on a student's willingness to participate in research. My/Our hypothesis is that a student would be more willing to participate in research when approached by someone who is either smiling/not smiling or dressed casually/professionally. |

Thank you for being a part of our research. If you have further questions you can contact me/us at [vanesa.chavarria.440@my.csun.edu](mailto:vanesa.chavarria.440@my.csun.edu). You are also welcome to contact my professor for PSY 321 Dr. Omar Ruvalcaba at [omar.ruvalcaba@csun.edu](mailto:omar.ruvalcaba@csun.edu). Department of Psychology, 18111 Nordhoff St., Northridge, CA 91330- 8255. If you have concerns or complaints about the research study, research team, or questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Research and Sponsored Projects, 18111 Nordhoff Street, California State University, Northridge, Northridge, CA 91330-8232, or phone 818-677-2901.

The class professor is Dr. Omar Ruvalcaba. Please free to contact him if you have any questions at [omar.ruvalcaba@csun.edu](mailto:omar.ruvalcaba@csun.edu)



## Appendix D

# Demographics Survey: Consent Form

**EXPERIMENT PSY 321**

You are being asked to participate in a psychological research study. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything that you do not understand before deciding if you want to participate. A researcher listed below will be available to answer your questions.

**Procedures:**

The following procedures will occur: You will be given a questionnaire to fill out. It should take approximately 5 minutes.

**RESEARCH TEAM**

Researcher Names: Vanesa Chavarria and David Fraser

18111 Nordhoff St.

Northridge, CA

91330-2855

Contact Email: [vanesa.chavarria.440@my.csun.edu](mailto:vanesa.chavarria.440@my.csun.edu)

Purpose of Study: To see how willing one is to participate in a study depending on the way they were approached

**RISKS AND BENEFITS****Risk**

This study involves no more than minimal risk. There are no known harms or discomforts associated with this study beyond those encountered in normal daily life. Most of you will use this text. Talk to me if your study may include some discomfort (e.g. sharing dating experiences or experience)

**Benefits**

This experiment will benefit the participants and researchers by providing a learning opportunity for the participant as well as for the researcher. It may or may not have any tangible benefits to the participant.

**WITHDRAWAL FROM THE STUDY & COMMENTS****Withdrawal**

You are free to withdraw from this study at any time. If you decide to withdraw from this study you should notify the research team immediately. The research team may also end your participation in this study if you do not follow instructions, if you do not fit their subject requirements, or if your safety and welfare are at risk.

If you are withdrawn from the study, the researcher can let you know if you will receive any credits.

**Comments**

If you have any comments, concerns, or questions regarding the conduct of THIS research please contact the research team listed on the first page of this form.

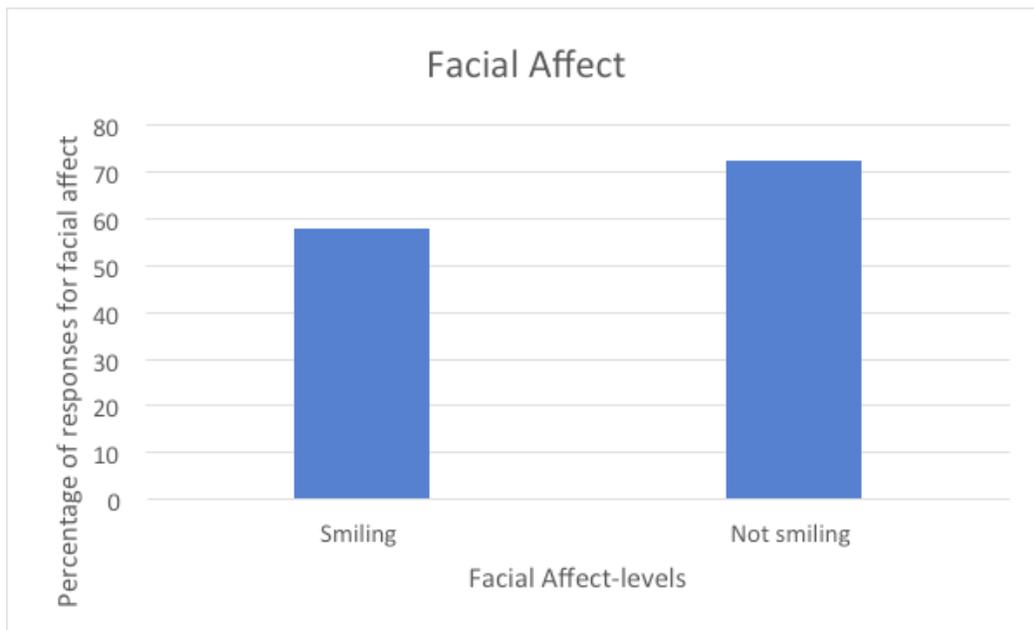
If you have concerns or complaints about the research study, research team, or questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Ruvalcaba at [omar.ruvalcaba@csun.edu](mailto:omar.ruvalcaba@csun.edu).

**NO DATA WILL BE KEPT PAST THIS SEMESTER. ALL NAMES AND IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION WILL BE REMOVED FROM THIS EXPERIMENT.**

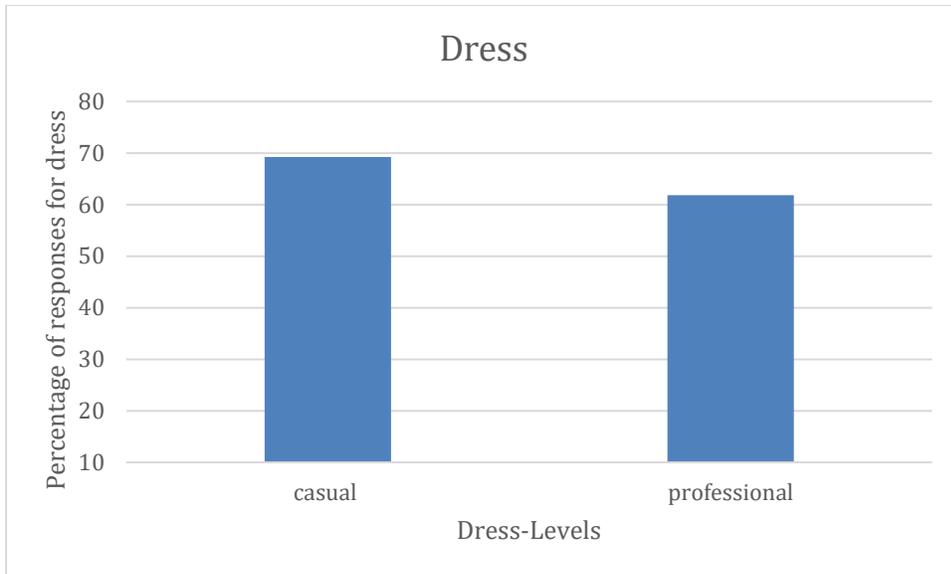
Participation in this study is voluntary. You may discontinue your involvement at any time. Your decision will not affect your relationship with California State University, Northridge. By continuing in this study, you acknowledge that you have read the information in this information form and have had a chance to ask any questions that you have about the study.

## Results

Two chi-square tests of independence were performed to examine the relationship between facial expression and students' willingness to participate in a research study and researcher style of dress and students' willingness to participate in a research study. The first chi-square showed that there was no significant difference between participant participation rate based on researchers' facial expression,  $\chi^2(1) = 1.356, p = .244$ . Regarding researcher facial expression, 72.4% approached by a non-smiling researcher participated, and 58.1% of participants approached by a smiling researcher agreed to participate. The second chi-square showed that there was no significant difference between participant participation rate based on researcher style of dress,  $\chi^2(1) = .361, p = .548$ . Regarding researcher style of dress, 69.2% approached by a casually dressed researcher participated and 61.8% of participants approached by a professionally dressed researcher agreed to participate.



**Figure 1.** This bar graph illustrates the percentages of responses for smiling (58.1%) and non-smiling (72.4%).



**Figure 2.** This bar graph illustrates the percentages of responses for casually dressed (69.2%) and professionally dressed (61.8%).

**Case Processing Summary**

	Valid		Cases Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
facial_affect_coded * response_coded	60	100.0%	0	0.0%	60	100.0%

**facial\_affect\_coded \* response\_coded Crosstabulation**

		response_coded		Total	
		yes	no		
facial_affect_coded	smiling	Count	18	13	31
		% within facial_affect_coded	58.1%	41.9%	100.0%
		% within response_coded	46.2%	61.9%	51.7%
		% of Total	30.0%	21.7%	51.7%
	not smiling	Count	21	8	29
		% within facial_affect_coded	72.4%	27.6%	100.0%
		% within response_coded	53.8%	38.1%	48.3%
		% of Total	35.0%	13.3%	48.3%
Total	Count	39	21	60	
	% within facial_affect_coded	65.0%	35.0%	100.0%	
	% within response_coded	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	
	% of Total	65.0%	35.0%	100.0%	

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.356 <sup>a</sup>	1	.244		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	.799	1	.371		
Likelihood Ratio	1.366	1	.242		
Fisher's Exact Test				.287	.186
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.333	1	.248		
N of Valid Cases	60				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 10.15.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

**Symmetric Measures**

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	-.150	.244
	Cramer's V	.150	.244
N of Valid Cases		60	

**Case Processing Summary**

	Valid		Cases Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
dress_coded * response_coded	60	100.0%	0	0.0%	60	100.0%

**dress\_coded \* response\_coded Crosstabulation**

			response_coded		Total
			yes	no	
dress_coded	casual	Count	18	8	26
		% within dress_coded	69.2%	30.8%	100.0%
		% within response_coded	46.2%	38.1%	43.3%
		% of Total	30.0%	13.3%	43.3%
dress_coded	professional	Count	21	13	34
		% within dress_coded	61.8%	38.2%	100.0%
		% within response_coded	53.8%	61.9%	56.7%
		% of Total	35.0%	21.7%	56.7%
Total		Count	39	21	60
		% within dress_coded	65.0%	35.0%	100.0%
		% within response_coded	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	65.0%	35.0%	100.0%

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2- sided)	Exact Sig. (1- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.361 <sup>a</sup>	1	.548		
Continuity Correction <sup>b</sup>	.107	1	.743		
Likelihood Ratio	.363	1	.547		
Fisher's Exact Test				.595	.373
Linear-by-Linear Association	.355	1	.551		
N of Valid Cases	60				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.10.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

**Symmetric Measures**

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.078	.548
	Cramer's V	.078	.548
N of Valid Cases		60	

### Discussion

Our study does not support our hypotheses. There were no significant differences when it came to the interaction between dress and facial affect and its impact on a person saying yes to taking a survey. There is no significant difference between dressing casually or professionally and someone's willingness to take a survey. There is also no significant difference between smiling or not smiling and someone's willingness to take a survey or not. Much research has been published about a person's appearance and its effect on first impressions. When an individual is approaching another person with the hope of having them take a survey, first impressions are seen as an essential indicator of whether or not a researcher will get a positive response. Research suggests that a person is seen as more approachable when their facial cues are broad and natural, such as when they are smiling (Sutherland, Rowley, Amoaku, Daguzan, Kidd-Rossiter, Maceviciute, & Young, 2015). When approaching individuals with the question of whether or not they would take our survey, we received many positive responses and yeses, which allowed us to assume at the time that there would be a significant difference. As our research progressed, we also realized that we continued to receive positive responses, even in the absence of a smile. Research shows that faces that seen with the absence of a smile are less trustworthy and less friendly (Mattarozzi, Todorov, Marzocchi, Vicari, & Russo, 2015). When approaching individuals with a serious expression, we assumed that we would receive fewer yeses. However, the number of yes responses stayed relatively similar to when we were smiling- 72.4% yeses to unsmiling researchers and 58.1% of yeses with smiling researchers. When it came to clothing/dress, research implied that some clothing is better accepted in an academic setting rather than a more casual environment, especially when it came to competency (Fasoli, Maass, Volpato, & Pacilli, 2018). Other research also suggests that wearing casual clothing may

raise a person's level of interest but lowers one's perceived competence and professionalism, especially in an academic environment (Gurbey, Howlett, Pine, Tracy, & Moggridge, 2017). Based on these research findings, we believed that dress would have a significant difference/impact on a person's response to taking a survey, but we saw very little difference between dressing professionally and casually.

One explanation for our findings is that there was poor internal validity; we believe that gender played a major role as a confounding variable. We noticed that more people were willing to say yes to our female researcher when she was dressed casually, regardless of her smile or absence of a smile. Our male researcher, on the other hand, was more willing to get yes responses when he was dressed professionally, regardless of whether he was smiling or not. We believe that gender was a third variable that had significant influence in our study,

### **Limitations**

The limitation of our study was the lack of variance. Because there were only one male and one female researcher, there was not much opportunity to experiment with different combinations of the two IVs and the two levels for each variable. The sample size also proved to be a limitation because it allowed for outliers and the third variable of gender to have a more significant impact.

### **Future Directions**

I believe that the entire study can be modified completely. I think first impressions are impactful when it comes to someone's willingness to participate in a study/survey, but I do not believe that it is the sole reason why people agree to take a survey; it has an impact, but it is not the concluding factor. I also think the future researching of this study should consider gender. The combination of the way a female researcher dressed and if she was smiling was significantly

different than how a male researcher combined IVs and levels. Further studies should be conducted to test whether or not this study has true internal validity or not.

### **Conclusion**

Facial affect and dress are two of the many ways a first impression can be established. While first impressions are important, they are not the only factors that contribute to an individual's willingness to participate in a study. Several conditions, such as gender, time of day, mood, etc. all have an impact that mingles with one's first impression of a situation or individual. Levels, such as facial affect and dress, do alter a party's perception and opinion of an individual according to our research, but not at a significant level. Although the original hypothesis was rejected, readers and researchers cannot argue the importance of first impressions but can be confident that they are not influentially mandatory.

## References

- Fasoli, F., Maass, A., Volpato, C., & Pacilli, M. G. (2018). The (Female) Graduate: Choice and Consequences of Women's Clothing. *Frontiers in Psychology, 9*. Doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02401
- Gurney, D. J., Howlett, N., Pine, K., Tracey, M., & Moggridge, R. (2016). Dressing up posture: The interactive effects of posture and clothing on competency judgements. *British Journal of Psychology, 108*(2), 436–451. doi: 10.1111/bjop.12209
- Kuster, D., Krumhuber, E. G., & Hess, U. (2018). You are What You Wear: Unless You Moved—Effects of Attire and Posture on Person Perception. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior*. doi: 10.1007/s10919-018-0286-3
- Magda, L. A., & Goodwin, K. A. (2008). Consequences of Negative Information on Perceptions of Facial Attractiveness. *Perceptual and Motor Skills, 106*(2), 508–516. doi: 10.2466/pms.106.2.508-516
- Mattarozzi, K., Todorov, A., Marzocchi, M., Vicari, A., & Russo, P. M. (2015). Effects of Gender and Personality on First Impression. *Plos One, 10*(9). doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0135529
- Sutherland, C. A. M., Rowley, L. E., Amoaku, U. T., Daguzan, E., Kidd-Rossiter, K. A., Maceviciute, U., & Young, A. W. (2015). Personality judgments from everyday images of faces. *Frontiers in Psychology, 6*. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01616