

PERCEPTIONS OF DELINQUENT AND NON-DELINQUENT  
MALE ADOLESCENTS IN RELATION TO  
CLOTHING IMPORTANCE

By

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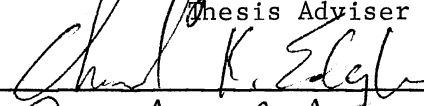
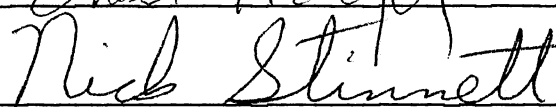

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

During the period of adolescence, clothing and appearance play a prominent role. Research has shown that peer acceptance is important among adolescents and that clothing is related to peer acceptance. Through clothing, a person announces his identity, shows his values, expresses his mood, and proposes his attitude (Stone, 1962). The challenge to those working with adolescents is neither to overemphasize nor to underestimate the importance of self and appearance but to understand its possible influence on adolescent life.

Previous research has indicated that clothing may be linked to delinquency. According to Hollingworth (1928, p. 114) clothing is of such importance that "a considerable amount of delinquency among adolescents, especially among girls, is directly traceable to the intense craving for the right clothes." School officials generally believe that extremes in appearance go hand-in-hand with extremes in undesirable behavior (Howard, 1967).

Langner (1959) stated that special kinds of behavior can be influenced by special kinds of clothes. He further indicated that males who wore clothes considered by some as indicative of the "tough group" derived a special courage not derived from ordinary clothing. These groups formed within the adolescent society are strongly reinforced through clothing symbolism.

The question arises whether perceptions of clothing among youth can be taken as a valid indicator of different types of behavior. Little research has been conducted to examine the relationship between clothing perceptions and behavior. The relationship between clothing and juvenile delinquency is a promising area of research which could provide data which might be helpful in working with youth.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine perceived clothing importance scores of delinquent and non-delinquent male adolescents and to determine the differences in the scores between the two groups. The following objectives were formulated:

1. To determine perceived clothing importance scores of delinquent and non-delinquent male adolescents.

2. To compare differences in overall clothing importance scores of delinquent and non-delinquent male adolescents and differences in the following specific categories:

- A. Importance of own clothing and appearance

1. Security
2. Happiness
3. Individuality
4. First Impressions
5. Satisfaction
6. Financial

- B. Importance of own clothing and appearance within the peer group

1. Opposite Sex



2. Friends
3. Leadership
4. Fads

3. To investigate opinions of delinquent and non-delinquent male adolescents regarding school dress codes and parental opinion of adolescent dress.

### Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested:

There are no significant differences between scores of delinquent and non-delinquent male adolescents on overall clothing importance.

There are no significant differences between scores of delinquent and non-delinquent male adolescents in the following categories:

A. Importance of own clothing and appearance

1. Security
2. Happiness
3. Individuality
4. First Impressions
5. Satisfaction
6. Financial

B. Importance of own clothing and appearance within the peer

group

1. Opposite Sex
2. Friends
3. Leadership
4. Fads

There are no significant differences between opinions of delinquent and non-delinquent male adolescents regarding school dress codes and parental opinion of adolescent dress.

#### Limitations

The study was limited to students enrolled in public schools and training schools in the state of Arkansas during the fall semester, 1975. Measure of clothing importance was limited to responses of students to the instrument used. Since the instrument was designed using middle class terminology and concepts, the respondents, most of whom were in the lower class, may have been at a disadvantage in expressing realistic views about clothing.

The definition of non-delinquent used in the study does not exclude those adolescents who may have been arrested and received suspended sentences or treatment while still attending public school; therefore, some adolescents considered non-delinquent by this definition might be classified as delinquent by a stricter definition.

#### Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions were used:

Delinquent - Individual incarcerated in a training school for either deviant or criminal behavior.

Non-Delinquent - Individual attending school in a public school system.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many physical, mental, and social changes occur during adolescence. These changes may be accompanied by a preoccupation with clothing and personal appearance. Clothing may be used as a means of self-expression and a method to gain entry and acceptance into a desired peer group.

#### Self-Concept and Clothing

Clothing plays a relatively important role in the establishment of the self-concept; conversely, the self-concept plays an important part in determining what one chooses to wear. Researchers are also finding that clothing has important uses as a therapy tool in improving and in developing the self-concept.

#### Use of Clothing to Express One's Self-Concept

Humphrey, Klaasen and Creekmore (1971) studied the relationship between the self-concept of adolescents and the ways that they utilized clothing. The subjects were 270 girls and 250 boys comprising approximately one-third of the students attending the only high school in a midwestern industrial city. The researchers concluded that particular uses of clothing reflect both feelings of self-worth and feelings of insecurity for adolescents. These findings supported the theory that

clothing may be a means of self-expression or a means of coping with society. Rewards (or punishments) received in connection with clothing behavior tend to reinforce the generalized feeling toward the self.

Stone (1962) stated when people clothe themselves they dress to appeal to an audience whose responses are essential to the establishment of the self. Reich (1970) stated that costumes of the adolescent are not masks but are expressions of an inner state of mind. The costumes allow the individual to be free, inventive, playful and humorous. In many different ways, clothing makes possible the direct, honest and natural interaction between people reflecting the belief that a person's body is one of the essential parts of the self. Therefore, clothing contributes to a stabilization of the concept of self (Horn, 1968).

#### Peer Acceptance and Clothing

Dress and appearance serve as a "security blanket" or as a means of identifying with the peer group. Although clothing represents an important tool in gaining peer acceptance and approval, it does not serve as the only factor in influencing social acceptance. Clothing should be seen as one variable which makes a great impact on an adolescent's ability to make and to keep friends.

#### Role of Dress Conformity in Peer Acceptance

Smucker and Creekmore (1972) analyzed filmed observations of the clothing of 121 boys and 110 girls from a high school sophomore class and reactions to questionnaires. Sociometric tests were used to identify reciprocal relationships between individuals within the informal

social system and to measure the extent of acceptance by all members of the system. They found significant relationships existing between awareness of and conformity to the clothing mode and peer acceptance. These findings indicated conformity in dress may be an important condition to adolescent peer acceptance.

Although the studies indicated that clothing and personal appearance are important and do bear a significant relationship to social acceptance, clothing and personal appearance are insufficient alone to establish group acceptance or rejection (Kelley and Eicher, 1970). A person may isolate himself from a peer group by choice rather than by group exclusion just as a person may join a group for reasons other than dress. Even though dress may influence acceptance into a group, researchers rarely agree as to the underlying values and opinions concerning the reason for this.

A more recent study by a group of researchers (Kelley, Daigle, LaFleur and Wilson, 1974) confirmed the theory of peer acceptance according to dress. Samples were selected from all eighth grade adolescents in two rural and two urban junior high schools in a south Louisiana parish. The majority of the respondents indicated that they felt as well-dressed or better-dressed than their peers for all activities in which they participated. They also indicated there were other clubs or activities in which they would participate if they had the appropriate dress. Some respondents stated they had sometimes refused to go places for which they lacked the appropriate attire. Therefore, dress limits participation when students judge their clothing as inappropriate for the situation.

Hambleton, Roach, and Ehle (1972) examined the conformity of teenagers to group standards for appearance to determine whether the standards were related to the teenagers' self-concepts of personal appearance and whether the differences were related to the teenagers' socioeconomic levels. The research included data collected by interviewing and observing 191 sophomore students in a small midwestern city. The researchers found that for males, the desired appearance leading to group acceptance may be simply looking like the rest of the crowd, and looking like everyone else may be facilitated by fewer and slower changes in men's fashions with little cost involved.

The tendency for girls' dress and grooming to be affected by costly fashion changes may account for concepts of personal appearance being associated with the socioeconomic status of girls. Girls with fewer economic resources may find difficulty in keeping up or feeling like they are keeping up with peer group expectations. These girls from the lower socio-economic level may develop low self-concepts due to their personal appearance in relation to their peers because they lack the attire considered necessary for social acceptance.

Cannon, Staples, and Carlson (1952) rated 437 adolescents according to their personal appearance. These adolescents then completed a sociometric test. A significant relationship between appearance and popularity among high school girls was indicated. All of the most popular girls in the seventh through twelfth grades excelled in or conformed closely to group standards for personal appearance. The researchers were unable to conclude whether or not popularity resulted from self-assurance due to personal appearance or whether personal

appearance resulted from strong social interest and a desire to conform to group standards.

### Clothing as a Tool for Social Survival

Many times educators and parents overlook the concern adolescents have for dress and appearance. Allen and Eicher (1973) studied all girls in one grade of the only high school in a midwestern community. Data were obtained using two instruments: a background questionnaire and an open-ended interview schedule. The interview schedule sought the opinions of the girls about general acceptance, clothing, and appearance. The researchers concluded that dress may influence adolescents' popularity, friendships and social contacts. Educators and parents should realize that adolescents may attempt to gain peer acceptance by wearing bizarre dress and that dress may hamper those adolescents on the edge of the peer group in gaining peer acceptance.

Roach (1975) proposed that adolescents use clothing as a tool in the struggle for social survival, especially within the peer group which provides the environment for much of their significant interaction. By conforming to clothing customs of others, people acknowledge the influence of group pressure on their behavior and their willingness to exchange their individualism to some degree for security which comes from establishing relationships with other people. The security derived from identifying with others and gaining their acceptance and approval promises social survival.

### Delinquency and Clothing

Much information exists on delinquency, yet gaps remain concerning

the relationship of clothing and adolescent behavior. Several theories have been offered concerning the importance of clothing to the delinquent, but these theories are not backed by research.

### Beliefs About Delinquency and Clothing

Many school officials who establish rules and regulations for student dress and grooming believe that extremes in appearance go hand-in-hand with extremes in undesirable behavior (Howard, 1967). By encouraging a degree of conformity, school administrators believe that students get along with less conflict. Supporting this belief is the theory that some uniformity in appearance reduces the distraction caused by individual differences in appearance and serves as a means of controlling behavior (Ryan, 1966).

Langner (1959) posed the theory that the phenomenon of present day juvenile delinquency is associated with clothing, not only with gangs where members sport emblems on their jackets, but also with the clothes youth wear to challenge authority. According to Langner, "When these youth put on these garments, they also put on a behavior pattern of which the clothes are symbolic" (Langner, 1959).

Hersko (1962) stated that every adolescent faces the problem of achieving a stable sense of identity which satisfies his inner needs and is also acceptable in his social environment. The delinquent merely develops a particular solution to the identity crisis which all adolescents undergo.

Hamilton and Warden (1966) selected 294 students in a junior class of a midwestern high school located near an army base for a study on clothing behavior. A six point check list was used as a basis for



grouping students according to clothing behavior. Students were grouped according to acceptable, nonacceptable, and a tendency toward nonacceptable clothing behavior. Students who conformed to the accepted clothing standards participated in more extracurricular activities and held more offices than did students who did not conform. The students with the most extreme clothing behavior were reported as being ignored by peers. Some members of the sample exhibited inconsistency in clothing habits. The researchers explained this inconsistency as an example of personal conflict of whether to conform to group standards or be an individual. Due to this emphasis on and need for the right clothes, Hollingworth speculated that this may be a contributing factor to delinquency (Hollingworth, 1928).

#### Characteristics of Delinquency

##### Expressed Through Appearance

Relationships between disciplinary behavioral problems of adolescents and clothing and grooming attitudes and behavior were studied in a small high school in a rural county in Alabama (Wilder, 1968). One hundred sixty-three students from grades eight through twelve comprised the total sample. A clothing questionnaire was administered to the students and both students and faculty completed a clothing appropriateness scale. The study disclosed that students who rated clothing items with the greatest amount of difference from teacher ratings were more aggressive, more enthusiastic, more realistic, more unrestrained, and more undependable. In some cases, these traits are characteristic of delinquents. More often, the characteristics appeared as characteristics of delinquents who needed more careful guidance and direction by

adults in order to channel the enthusiasm into more productive areas.

Compton (1967) conducted a study to investigate clothing fabric and dress style preferences in relation to body build and personality characteristics of delinquent as compared to non-delinquent adolescent girls. Twenty-two delinquent girls participated in the study along with twenty-two girls from a local high school who acted as a control group. Compton pointed out that delinquent girls appeared to differ from non-delinquent girls in physical characteristics which included larger weight, height, and busts. These characteristics for delinquents appear to be related to several personality characteristics as measured by the Rorschach test. These characteristics also appeared to be projected in the girls' preferences for warm colors over cool colors, weak color contrasts and small designs in clothing fabrics. The Gleucks (1950) reported similar results for boys, with delinquent boys evidencing superiority in gross body size, especially the shoulders, chest and upper extremities. Delinquent boys were found to be more impulsive and aggressive than non-delinquent boys.

#### Use of Clothing as a Therapy Tool

Although much information appears in the literature concerning the self-concept of delinquent and non-delinquent adolescents, relatively little documented effort has been directed toward attempts to induce changes in these self-concepts.

In a study of 70 male college students at a large eastern state university Thomas (1973) sought an index which would be useful in identifying those members of the current youth culture who are adopting a new set of attitudes and values while trying to establish a

self-concept. Based on observations and responses to a questionnaire, Thomas advocated the use of clothing as a tool in the study of youth and their self-concepts.

Thomas (1973) drew several conclusions from his study on dress behavior which he felt would be important in guiding future research in relation to youth. The conclusions were:

(1) If clothing can be used as an indicator of attitudes and values in unrelated areas, then appearance holds promise as an important social-psychological variable.

(2) The current changes in dress among youth may indicate widespread change in masculine sex-role standards.

(3) Dress behavior serves as a tool of youth in communicating. Thomas also suggested when adults label deviant dress and appearance as unimportant, they fail to recognize important cues youth are giving.

The psychology of clothing fortifies the self-esteem of the institutionalized person. Baker (1955) reported on the psychology of clothing as a treatment which was practiced at the Larned State Hospital at Larned, Kansas. Dr. J. T. Naramore, Superintendent, felt institutionalized persons should be given more of the "better things of life," including the psychological uplift that nice, clean clothing provides.

The community forms first impressions of institutionalized persons based on the clothing they wear, then later considers the persons' features and speech. Clothing not only protects the body, but the decorative effect of clothing builds up or tears down the person's ego, hurts his vanity or fosters his pride, depresses his daily life, or brings joy and pleasure to his routine existence.

Collins (1972) conducted research concerning the effects of a self-improvement course on the self-concepts of thirty female adolescents with behavioral problems. The subjects were divided into three groups with twelve subjects enrolled in a self-improvement course, eight subjects who were involved in case-work therapy but not in a self-improvement course, and ten subjects who acted as a control group from the public schools. All three groups were pretested and post-tested with a five week interval separating the testing. Results indicated that the self-concepts of the twelve subjects enrolled in the self-improvement course improved over the five week period. As a result, exposure to, and participation in, self-improvement courses appears to hold promise in improving the self-concept of adolescent girls with behavioral problems.

#### Summary

Much information on the importance of clothing to adolescents exists, but little data exists concerning the relationship of clothing and behavior. In the process of satisfying the need for acceptance, an individual becomes involved in developing and implementing his self-concept. Clothing plays an important part in this process of social adjustment.

Clothing also plays an important role in the adolescent's struggle for social status and acceptance. The way a person dresses expresses much about the way he sees himself and, in many cases, reveals the group with which he wishes to identify. Interest in clothing varies with the degree of importance an individual places on the role he believes clothing to play in creating a desired impression.

Clothing is of such importance to the adolescent that the emphasis on and need for the right clothing has been linked to delinquency. School officials believe that extremes in appearance are associated with extremes in undesirable behavior. Some researchers believe that special kinds of behavior can be influenced by special kinds of clothes.

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD AND PROCEDURE

The purpose of this study was to determine perceived clothing importance scores of delinquent and non-delinquent male adolescents and to determine the differences in the scores between the two groups. An overall clothing importance score was obtained as well as scores relating to specific categories within the overall clothing importance instrument.

#### Selection of Sample

The sample for this study consisted of two groups of students enrolled in schools in Arkansas during the fall of 1975. Students attending the Arkansas Boys Training School located at Pine Bluff were identified as delinquents and students attending the Watson Chapel Public Schools near Pine Bluff were identified as non-delinquents. Students from the two schools were compared socio-economically using the McGuire-White Socio-Economic Scale (McGuire and White, 1955). All of the 98 questionnaires completed by the delinquent males were used in the study. Out of a total of 183 questionnaires collected from non-delinquent males, only the 106 questionnaires which were completed correctly were used. This resulted in a total sample of 204 males.

### Instrument

The first part of the questionnaire was designed to collect background information about the respondents. Information concerning age, race, religious orientation, marital status of parents, community size and family income were collected.

Part of an instrument developed by Kirby (1966) on clothing importance and conflict was used as the second part of the questionnaire to determine the importance of clothing to the adolescents. (See Appendix A, p. 40.) Since the focus of this study was on importance of clothing, only the statements from the Kirby questionnaire relating to clothing importance were included. One statement was eliminated because it indicated neither a positive nor negative attitude related to importance of clothing. Because of a high degree of interest in parental attitudes toward adolescent dress and school dress codes, two other statements from the Kirby instrument were included to determine adolescent attitudes in these areas.

Responses were made on a modified Likert scale with four alternatives: (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) disagree, and (4) strongly disagree. The "no opinion" choice was eliminated to create a forced choice situation. Kirby had previously administered the clothing importance instrument in a pre-test to determine clarity in directions, to determine the power of each item to discriminate, and to observe general reactions to the study. The final instrument was a modified version of the pre-test. Internal consistency was measured by including four sets of items with the same subject matter stated in different terms. A high degree of internal consistency was noted among items of like subject matter.

The 27 statements from the Kirby questionnaire were randomly ordered on the research instrument and represent the following categories and variables:

1. Importance of own clothing and appearance
  - A. Security
  - B. Happiness
  - C. Individuality
  - D. First Impressions
  - E. Satisfaction
  - F. Financial
2. Importance of clothing and appearance within the peer group
  - A. Opposite Sex
  - B. Friends
  - C. Leadership
  - D. Fads.

#### Collection of Data

The researcher visited the superintendent of each school to ask permission to include students of those schools in the research sample. Arrangements were made for teachers in the schools to administer the questionnaires. Participants from the public schools completed the questionnaires during a homeroom period. Participants from the training schools completed the questionnaire during individual interviews with school counselors. By administering the questionnaires on a one-to-one basis to the delinquent group, individual explanation was available resulting in correctly completed questionnaires. Questionnaires were collected from the superintendents by the researcher. A listing



of the questions and the categories they represent is included in Appendix B, page 44.

#### Analysis of Data

Responses to the general information questions were tabulated and used for descriptive purposes. The Mann-Whitney U-Test was used to determine whether differences between the two groups to responses within the various categories were statistically significant. Differences in responses to the two questions concerning parental attitude toward adolescent dress and school dress codes were analyzed using the chi square test.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The purpose of the study was to determine perceived clothing importance scores of delinquent and non-delinquent male adolescents and to determine the differences in the scores between the two groups. Data were obtained from 106 adolescent males in an Arkansas public school and 98 adolescent males in an Arkansas boys training school during the fall of 1975.

Data were obtained through a questionnaire consisting of two parts. Questions in the first part were designed to collect background information about the respondents. The second part of the instrument dealt with clothing perceptions.

#### Characteristics of the Sample

The sample consisted of a total of 204 adolescent males. The 106 males in the non-delinquent group were enrolled in the Watson Chapel Public Schools and the 98 delinquent males were attending the Pine Bluff Boys Training School. All data were collected early in the fall semester, 1975.

This particular community was chosen for the study because the researcher was familiar with the school system. In addition, students in these schools had not participated recently in research studies;

therefore it was hoped they would have little bias toward research studies.

Responses to the section of the questionnaire on background information indicated that the groups were similar. Sixty-one percent of the delinquent males were between the ages of 13-15 and 39 percent were between the ages of 16-18. Fifty-nine percent of the non-delinquent males were between the ages of 13-15 and 41 percent were between the ages of 16-18. (See Table I.)

In the delinquent group, 67 percent were white and 33 percent were black; in the non-delinquent group 57 percent were white, 42 percent were black and one percent was Indian. Both groups reported similar degrees of religious orientation with 74 percent of both groups identifying themselves as religious.

Much has been written about the marital status of parents of delinquent adolescents. Several sources support the theory that broken homes are a factor to consider in delinquency. Results from the questionnaire supported this theory. Seventy percent of the non-delinquents reported that their parents were living together while only 28 percent of the delinquents reported their parents living together. Only 19 percent of the parents of the non-delinquents were divorced while 46 percent of the delinquents reported that their parents were divorced.

Delinquents as a whole were from smaller communities than non-delinquents. Fifty percent of the delinquents indicated that they spent a major part of their lives in small towns of under 25,000 populations while 52 percent of the non-delinquents indicated that they were from cities of 50,000 to 100,000 population. The reason for this may be that the non-delinquents were taken from a school system on the

TABLE I  
DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

Classification	<u>Delinquent</u>		<u>Non-Delinquent</u>	
	N	%	N	%
AGE				
13-15	60	61	63	59
16-18	38	39	43	41
RACE				
White	66	67	60	57
Black	32	33	45	42
Oriental	0	0	0	0
Indian	0	0	1	1
Other	0	0	0	0
RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION				
Very religious	1	1	11	10
Religious	72	74	78	74
Non-religious	23	23	15	14
Anti-religious	2	2	2	2
MARITAL STATUS OF PARENTS				
Living together	27	28	74	70
Divorced (with no remarriage)	21	21	9	8
Divorced (with remarriage)	24	25	11	11
One of parents deceased (with no remarriage)	12	12	9	8
One of parents deceased (with remarriage)	7	7	2	2
Separated	7	7	1	1
COMMUNITY SIZE				
On farm or in country	12	12	23	22
Small town under 25,000 population	49	50	3	3
City of 25,000 to 49,999 population	12	12	14	13
City of 50,000 to 100,000 population	15	16	55	52
City of over 100,000 population	10	10	11	10
MAIN SOURCE OF INCOME				
Father	53	54	86	82
Mother	33	33	18	16
Grandfather	1	1	0	0
Grandmother	2	2	1	1
Stepfather	7	8	0	0
Aunt	1	1	0	0
Uncle	1	1	1	1

TABLE I (Continued)

Classification	<u>Delinquent</u>		<u>Non-Delinquent</u>	
	N	%	N	%
PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME				
Inherited savings and investments	0	0	0	0
Earned wealth, transferable investments	0	0	0	0
Profits, royalties, fees	2	2	1	1
Salary, commissions	7	7	30	28
Hourly wages, weekly checks	54	55	62	58
Odd jobs, seasonal work, private charity	5	5	6	6
Public relief or charity	30	31	8	8
OCCUPATION OF PRINCIPAL EARNER				
Unemployed	30	31	11	10
Maid, janitor, waiter, waitress, cook, chauffeur	5	5	5	5
Farm workers, station attendants, sales clerks, guards, railroad, repairmen	28	29	28	26
Factory, plant and construction	24	24	30	28
Nurses aid, real estate and insurance, managers, operators, mechanics, clerks, electricians, firemen	9	9	26	25
Psychologist, counselor, teachers, pilots	2	2	6	6
HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT				
Less than grade 8	17	17	14	13
Completed grade 8, but not beyond grade 9	12	12	4	4
Attended high school, completed grade 9, but did not graduate high school	28	29	17	16
Graduate high school	35	36	43	41
Attended college or university for two or more years	5	5	14	13
Graduated from 4-year college	0	0	11	10
Completed graduate work for profession	1	1	3	3

outskirts of Pine Bluff, a city of approximately 65,000, and the delinquent group were sent to the Pine Bluff Training School from all areas of the state.

Data of family income were obtained primarily for use in the McGuire-White Socio-Economic Scale. Fathers were reported as the main source of income for both groups. Fifty-four percent of the delinquents indicated that the father was the main source of income and 33 percent indicated that the mother was the main source of income. Eighty-two percent of the non-delinquent group indicated that the father was the major source of income and 16 percent indicated that the mother was the major source of income.

Both groups indicated that the primary source of income was hourly wages and weekly checks. Thirty-one percent of the families of delinquents were on public relief or charity while only 8 percent of the families of non-delinquents received their main income from this source.

The principal wage earner in more than 50 percent of both groups was employed as a farm worker, truck driver, sales clerk, factory, plant or construction worker. Only eleven percent of the parents of delinquents had jobs such as nurses aid, fireman, department store manager, or teacher while 31 percent of the non-delinquent parents held these jobs. Thirty-one percent of the delinquent group reported that their parents were unemployed.

More than 50 percent of the parents of the delinquent group never graduated from high school while only 33 percent of the parents of the non-delinquent group never graduated. Only six percent of the parents of the delinquent boys attended or graduated from college while 26

percent of the parents of the non-delinquent group attended or graduated from college.

Students from the two schools were from similar socio-economic backgrounds as determined by the McGuire-White Socio-Economic Scale (McGuire and White, 1955). Using this scale responses to questions on income, occupation and educational attainment were used to determine socio-economic level. Each of these questions was assigned a score and the total of all three responses indicated the socio-economic level of the family of the respondents. Three-fourths or more of both groups were from the lower socio-economic level. (See Table II.)

TABLE II  
SOCIO-ECONOMIC LEVEL

Classification	<u>Delinquent</u>		<u>Non-Delinquent</u>	
	N	%	N	%
Upper	0	0	0	0
Upper middle	4	4	8	7
Lower middle	12	12	18	18
Upper lower	49	50	53	50
Lower lower	33	34	27	25

#### Summary

The majority of respondents in both delinquent and non-delinquent groups were between the ages of 13-15 and identified themselves as

religious. Thirty-nine percent more delinquents than non-delinquents reported that their parents were divorced. The majority of delinquents were from towns of under 25,000 while the majority of non-delinquents were from cities of 50,000 to 100,000.

The majority of both groups indicated that the father was the main provider of income and that the primary source of income was hourly wages and weekly checks. Respondents in the two groups were from similar socio-economic backgrounds.

#### Clothing Perception Instrument

The results of the clothing perception instrument completed by the delinquent and non-delinquent male adolescents in the study were analyzed by applying the Mann-Whitney U-Test. The two questions used to investigate opinions on parent approval of adolescent dress and school dress codes were analyzed by using the chi-square test. A significance level of .05 was chosen for the analysis.

#### Overall Clothing Importance

The adolescent stage of development is often characterized by a preoccupation with clothing and appearance. Adolescence is also characterized by a strong desire for peer approval and acceptance. The overall clothing importance score covers all aspects of the adolescent's clothing including his own clothing and appearance and clothing and appearance within the peer group. There was a significant difference at the .01 level between delinquent and non-delinquent males on the overall clothing importance scores. (See Table III.) Non-delinquent males had a median score of 86.57 while delinquent males



had a median score of 83.22. This suggests that overall clothing has a higher degree of importance to the non-delinquent males than to the delinquent males.

TABLE III  
DIFFERENCES IN SCORES OF DELINQUENT AND  
NON-DELINQUENT MALES ON OVERALL  
CLOTHING IMPORTANCE

Classification	Number	Median	Z	Level of Significance
Delinquent	98	83.22	-2.47	.01
Non-Delinquent	106	86.57		

Importance of Own Clothing and Appearance

Within the overall clothing importance instrument a significant difference was found in the scores relating to the importance of own clothing and appearance. (See Table IV.) Non-delinquents had a higher median score (54.81) than the delinquents (52.51). This category consisted of the variables of security, happiness, individuality, first impressions, satisfaction and financial situation.

TABLE IV  
DIFFERENCES IN SCORES OF DELINQUENT AND  
NON-DELINQUENT MALES ON IMPORTANCE  
OF OWN CLOTHING AND APPEARANCE

Classification	Number	Median	Z	Level of Significance
Delinquent	98	52.21	-2.39	.01
Non-Delinquent	106	54.81		

Differences between scores of the two groups were identified for each of the variables within the category own clothing and appearance. A significant difference was noted in the variables of security and financial situation. (See Table V.) For both of these variables the non-delinquent males had higher medians than delinquents. This suggests that clothing is more important to non-delinquents than delinquents regarding security and financial situation. Non-delinquents indicated clothing and appearance influenced the security of the individual when reacting to statements such as 'teenagers who do not wear the right clothing to a high school dance feel ill at ease,' and 'nice clothes give a teenager self-confidence.' More non-delinquents than delinquents also indicated that the financial variable influenced clothing and appearance. They responded to statements indicating that the price tag on a garment is not as important to a teenager as the appearance and fit of the garment, and that teenagers are happier if they have a clothes allowance. No significant difference was found

between delinquent and non-delinquents on the variables of happiness, individuality, first impressions and satisfaction.

TABLE V  
DIFFERENCES IN SCORES OF DELINQUENT AND  
NON-DELINQUENT MALES ON VARIABLES  
RELATING TO IMPORTANCE OF OWN  
CLOTHING AND APPEARANCE

Classification	Number	Median	Z	Level of Significance
SECURITY				
Delinquent	98	14.11		
Non-Delinquent	106	14.64	-2.04	.02
FINANCIAL				
Delinquent	98	7.00		
Non-Delinquent	106	8.46	-3.03	.01
HAPPINESS				
Delinquent	98	6.91		
Non-Delinquent	106	6.93	-1.21	.11*
INDIVIDUALITY				
Delinquent	98	8.26		
Non-Delinquent	106	8.26	-1.19	.12*
FIRST IMPRESSIONS				
Delinquent	98	8.42		
Non-Delinquent	106	8.61	-1.45	.07*
SATISFACTION				
Delinquent	98	10.40		
Non-Delinquent	106	10.69	-0.77	.22*

\* Not Significant

Importance of Own Clothing and Appearance

Within the Peer Group

There was no significant difference between responses of delinquent and non-delinquent males in the category of importance of own clothing and appearance within the peer group. (See Table VI.) Since .05 was chosen as the significance level the score of .06 was not significant; however, it should be noted that the score was very close to being significant and may indicate a relationship. The median of the non-delinquent group was slightly higher than the median of the delinquent group.

TABLE VI  
DIFFERENCES IN SCORES OF DELINQUENT AND  
NON-DELINQUENT MALES ON IMPORTANCE OF  
OWN CLOTHING AND APPEARANCE  
WITHIN THE PEER GROUP

Classification	Number	Median	Z	Level of Significance
Delinquent	98	32.22	-1.59	.06*
Non-Delinquent	106	33.71		

\* Not Significant

Differences in each variable within this category were identified. (See Table VII.) There were significant differences for the variables

of opposite sex, leadership and friends. For the variables of opposite sex and leadership, non-delinquent scores were higher and for the variable of friends delinquent scores were higher. Participants reacted to statements indicating most teenagers wear clothes which attract the opposite sex even when they don't personally approve of the type of dress and one of the most important factors in choosing a boy or girl friend is appearance. Within the variable of leadership, participants responded to statements such as 'teenagers usually choose friends who wear clothes that are similar to their own.'

TABLE VII  
DIFFERENCES IN SCORES OF DELINQUENT AND NON-  
DELINQUENT MALES ON VARIABLES RELATING TO  
IMPORTANCE OF OWN CLOTHING AND APPEAR-  
ANCE WITHIN THE PEER GROUP

Classification	Number	Median	Z	Level of Significance
OPPOSITE SEX				
Delinquent	98	13.60	-1.70	.04
Non-Delinquent	106	14.83		
FRIENDS				
Delinquent	98	6.42	-2.72	.01
Non-Delinquent	106	6.05		
LEADERSHIP				
Delinquent	98	6.35	-0.55	.03
Non-Delinquent	106	6.37		
FADS				
Delinquent	98	8.18	-1.57	.06*
Non-Delinquent	106	8.24		

\* Not Significant

Authorities have suggested that adolescents were faddish clothing so they will feel like part of the group. Since .05 was chosen as the acceptable significance level the significance level of .06 for variable fads was not significant; however, it should be noted that the score was very close to being significant and may indicate a relationship. The median for the non-delinquent group was slightly higher than the median for the delinquent group.

### Opinion Statements

School dress codes and parental approval of adolescent dress were frequently referred to in the literature reviewed on adolescent clothing behavior. According to responses to the statements regarding these concepts approximately two-thirds of both delinquents and non-delinquents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that teenagers approve of having dress codes established by school officials and student council members, and there was no significant difference between scores of delinquent and non-delinquent males. (See Table VIII.)

TABLE VIII  
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN OPINIONS OF DELINQUENT AND  
NON-DELINQUENT MALES ON SCHOOL DRESS CODES

Classification	Delinquent		Non-Delinquent		$\chi^2$	Level of Significance
	N	%	N	%		
SCHOOL DRESS CODES						
Strongly Agree	6	6	6	5	6.03	7.82*
Agree	21	22	32	31		
Disagree	53	55	41	39		
Strongly Disagree	17	17	27	25		

\* Not Significant

Delinquent and non-delinquent males were also in agreement when responding to the statement that parents disapprove of the clothes their teenager wants to wear. More than two-thirds of each group agreed with the statement. When analyzed using the chi-square there was no significant difference between the groups. (See Table IX.)

TABLE IX  
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN OPINIONS OF DELINQUENT  
AND NON-DELINQUENT MALES ON PARENT  
APPROVAL OF DRESS

Classification	Delinquent		Non-Delinquent		X <sup>2</sup>	Level of Significance
	N	%	N	%		
PARENT APPROVAL						
Strongly Agree	12	12	27	25	7.27	7.82*
Agree	56	57	46	44		
Disagree	26	27	26	25		
Strongly Disagree	4	4	7	6		

\*Not Significant

#### Summary

An analysis and discussion of the data collected was presented in this chapter. Respondents in both delinquent and non-delinquent groups had similar backgrounds. Significant differences between the two groups were found in perceptions of clothing importance.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During the period of adolescence, clothing and appearance play a prominent role. Research has shown that peer acceptance is important among adolescents and that clothing is related to peer acceptance. Previous research has indicated that clothing may be linked to delinquency.

#### Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine perceived clothing importance of delinquent and non-delinquent male adolescents and to determine the differences in the perceived clothing importance between the two groups. Data were obtained from 106 adolescent males in an Arkansas public school and 98 adolescent males in the Arkansas Boys Training School during the fall of 1975.

A clothing instrument developed by Kirby (1966) was used to determine the importance of clothing to adolescents. Only the statements from the Kirby questionnaire relating to clothing importance were included. Because of a high degree of interest in parental approval of adolescent dress and school dress codes, two other statements from the Kirby instrument were included to determine adolescent attitudes in these areas.

The Mann-Whitney U-Test was used to determine whether differences in responses assigned to the various clothing perception statements by



the members of the two groups were statistically significant. Differences in responses to the two questions concerning parental approval toward adolescent dress and school dress codes were analyzed using the Chi-Square test.

The overall clothing importance score covers all aspects of the adolescent's clothing including his own clothing and appearance and clothing and appearance within the peer group. There was a significant difference at the .01 level between delinquent and non-delinquent males on the overall clothing importance score.

A significant difference was also found in the scores relating to the importance of own clothing and appearance. Non-delinquents had a median score of 54.81 in contrast to the median of 52.21 for the delinquents. This category included the variables of security, happiness, individuality, first impressions, satisfaction and financial situation. When differences in each of the variables were identified, a significant difference was noted in the variables of security and financial situation. In both variables the non-delinquent males had higher median scores than delinquents.

There was no significant difference between delinquent and non-delinquent males in the category of importance of own clothing and appearance within the peer group. Differences in scores of delinquent and non-delinquent males on the variables of opposite sex and leadership were significant with non-delinquents having higher median scores. Differences between the groups on the variable of friends was significant and was the only variable in which delinquents had a higher median score than non-delinquents.

School dress codes and parental approval of adolescent dress are

often discussed in relation to adolescents and participants reacted to statements regarding these concepts. A chi-square was calculated and there was no significant difference in responses of the two groups.

### Discussion

Several factors should be considered when examining the findings of this study. The questionnaire used in this study was designed using middle class terminology and concepts. This may have affected the responses, since the majority of the males in both groups were from the lower class. An instrument designed particularly for this group might have proven more effective.

Since the institution furnished clothing for the adolescents in their care, the males in the delinquent group may have been uninterested in clothing while institutionalized. Funds and wardrobes for these males are very limited. Also there are no girls in the institution so a desire for boy-girl relationships probably would not influence their attitudes toward clothing during this period of incarceration.

All of the institutionalized males in the training school may not have been classified as juvenile delinquents by the courts. They may have been there for reasons such as running away from home, repeated curfew violations, truancy and other situations where guardians may have been unable to handle the individual.

### Conclusions

Conclusions drawn from the study were:

1. There was a significant difference in overall clothing importance scores between delinquent and non-delinquent male adolescents.

2. Within the overall clothing importance scores there was a significant difference between delinquent and non-delinquent males in the categories importance of own clothing and appearance and in the variables of security, financial, opposite sex, leadership and friends.

3. Both delinquent and non-delinquent males agreed on opinions concerning parent approval of dress and school dress codes, and there were no significant differences in responses of the participants.

#### Recommendations

1. Attempt to identify reasons for the significant difference in overall clothing importance scores between delinquent and non-delinquent male adolescents.

2. Compare the actual dress of delinquent and non-delinquents in specific areas of the country.

3. Use different instruments and methods to determine the importance of clothing such as observation, case studies and pictures or slides showing various styles of dress in certain situations.

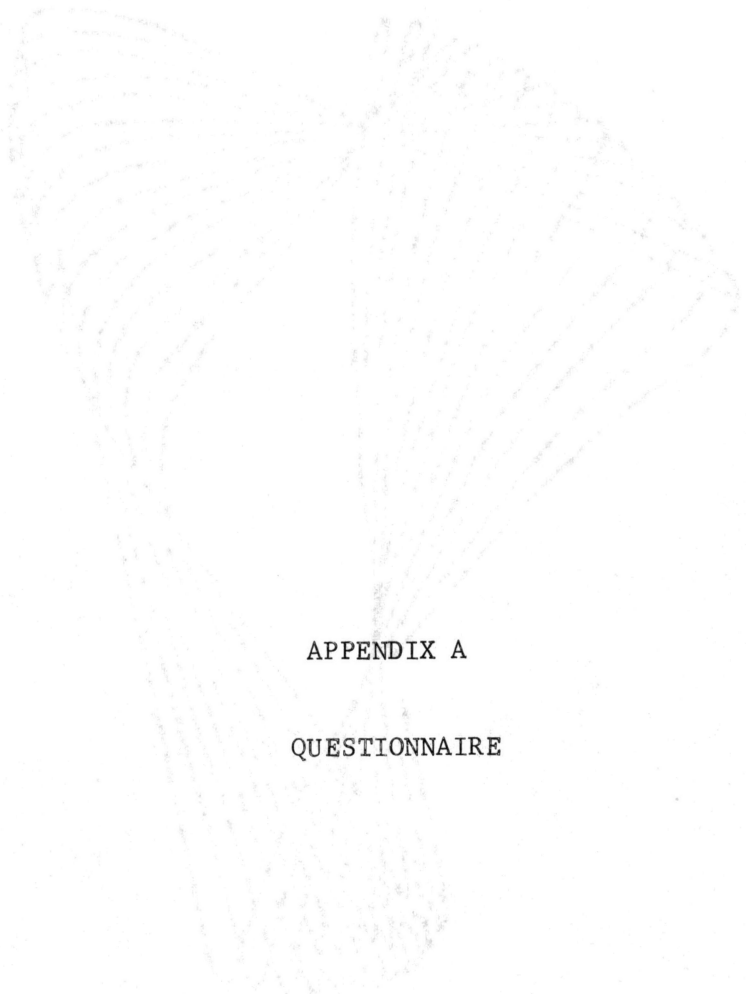
4. Attempt to identify delinquents who are not incarcerated and investigate the importance of clothing to them as compared to a control group of non-delinquents.

5. Investigate clothing importance scores of adolescent females in the delinquent and non-delinquent samples.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

Thesis Board

1962 COTTON CROP

General Information

Your cooperation in this research project is greatly appreciated. The absence of your name assures anonymity. Please check or fill in the answers as accurately as you can.

1. Sex     Male  
           Female
  
2. Age     12 or under  
           13-15  
           16-18  
           over 18
  
3. Race     White  
           Black  
           Oriental  
           Indian  
           Other
  
4. Indicate below your degree of religious orientation:  
 Very Religious  
 Religious  
 Non-religious  
 Anti-religious
  
5. Marital status of parents:  
 Living together  
 Divorced (with no remarriage)  
 Divorced (with remarriage)  
 One of parents deceased (with no remarriage)  
 One of parents deceased (with remarriage)  
 Separated
  
6. For a major part of your life, have you lived  
 On farm or in country  
 Small town under 25,000 population  
 City of 25,000 to 49,999 population  
 City of 50,000 to 100,000 population  
 City of over 100,000 population
  
7. Who is the main source of income in your family?  
 father  
 mother  
 other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  
8. What is the primary source of the above income?  
 inherited savings and investments  
 earned wealth, transferable investments  
 profits, royalties, fees  
 salary, commissions (regular, monthly or yearly)  
 hourly wages, weekly checks  
 odd jobs, seasonal work, private charity  
 public relief or charity

9. What is the occupation of the principal earner of the income in question 8? \_\_\_\_\_
10. What is the highest educational attainment of the principal earner of the above income?
- \_\_\_ less than grade 8
  - \_\_\_ completed grade 8, but did not attend beyond 9
  - \_\_\_ attended high school, completed grade 9, but did not graduate
  - \_\_\_ graduate from high school
  - \_\_\_ attended college or university for two or more years
  - \_\_\_ graduated from 4-year college
  - \_\_\_ completed graduate work for profession

### Clothing Perceptions

This questionnaire is concerned with the perceptions that teenagers have about clothing. There are no right or wrong answers. Read each statement carefully, then circle the answer that BEST describes your feelings about the statement. Please circle only one answer for each statement. The response code is as follows:

SA=Strongly Agree  
A=Agree  
D=Disagree  
SD=Strongly Disagree

- SA A D SD 1. Nice clothes give a teenager self-confidence.
- SA A D SD 2. Today, teenagers have as many clothes as they want.
- SA A D SD 3. Most teenagers wear clothes which attract the opposite sex even when they don't personally approve of the type of dress.
- SA A D SD 4. Even though clothing fads are expensive to buy, they are necessary in a teenager's wardrobe.
- SA A D SD 5. Teenage leaders in high school are well-dressed.
- SA A D SD 6. Teenagers approve of having dress codes established by school officials and student council members.
- SA A D SD 7. Most teenagers dress to please themselves rather than their parents.
- SA A D SD 8. Appearance is the most important factor in forming first impressions.
- SA A D SD 9. Teenagers like to wear "the latest" so they will feel like part of the group.
- SA A D SD 10. Clothing is not an important factor in choosing friends.



- SA A D SD 11. If a person is not attractive, there is little that can be done to improve his appearance.
- SA A D SD 12. Even a teenager who is very popular with his classmates will feel ill at ease if he is wearing clothing that is different from his friends' clothing.
- SA A D SD 13. The price tag on a garment is not as important to a teenager as the appearance and fit of the garment.
- SA A D SD 14. Teenage boys and girls choose their dates without regard to the kind of clothes they wear.
- SA A D SD 15. Teenagers usually choose friends who wear clothes that are similar to their own.
- SA A D SD 16. Teenagers are happier if they have a clothes allowance.
- SA A D SD 17. A teenager who does not wear the right clothing to a high school dance will feel ill at ease.
- SA A D SD 18. Clothing is not important enough in the life of a teenager to affect his happiness.
- SA A D SD 19. When meeting someone for the first time, a teenager usually dresses especially nice.
- SA A D SD 20. Teenage boys are usually not concerned with the selecting of their own clothing.
- SA A D SD 21. One of the most important factors in choosing a boy or girl friend is appearance.
- SA A D SD 22. Most teenagers want more clothes than they now have.
- SA A D SD 23. Self-confidence is part of a person's character and has nothing to do with the clothes he wears.
- SA A D SD 24. Teenagers with very nice clothes will have more dates than teenagers with average clothes.
- SA A D SD 25. Teenagers choose leaders because of ability and personality and not because of appearance.
- SA A D SD 26. Parents usually disapprove of the clothes their teenager wants to wear.
- SA A D SD 27. Teenagers are happier if their clothes are as nice as their friends' clothes.

APPENDIX B

STATEMENTS BY CATEGORIES

## I. Importance of Own Clothing and Appearance

### A. Security

1. A teenager who does not wear the right clothing to a high school dance will feel ill at ease. (17)\*
2. Nice clothes give a teenager self-confidence. (1)
3. Even a teenager who is very popular with his classmates will feel ill at ease if he is wearing clothing that is different from his friends' clothing. (12)
4. Self-confidence is part of a person's character and has nothing to do with the clothes he wears. (23)

### B. Happiness

1. Teenagers are happier if their clothes are as nice as their friends' clothes. (27)
2. Clothing is not important enough in the life of a teenager to affect his happiness. (18)

### C. Individuality

1. Most teenagers dress to please themselves rather than their parents. (7)
2. Teenage boys are usually not concerned with the selecting of their own clothing. (20)

### D. First Impressions

1. Appearance is the most important factor in forming first impressions. (8)
2. When meeting someone for the first time, a teenager usually dresses especially nice. (19)

### E. Satisfaction

1. Today, teenagers have as many clothes as they want. (2)
2. Most teenagers want more clothes than they now have. (22)
3. If a person is not attractive, there is little that can be done to improve his appearance. (11)

### F. Financial

1. Teenagers are happier if they have a clothes allowance. (16)
2. The price tag on a garment is not as important to a teenager as the appearance and fit of the garment. (13)

## II. Importance of Clothing and Appearance Within the Peer Group

### A. Opposite Sex

1. Most teenagers wear clothes which attract the opposite sex even when they don't personally approve of the type of dress. (3)
2. One of the most important factors in choosing a boy or girl friend is appearance. (21)

---

\*Parentheses indicate number of item in final form.

3. Teenagers with very nice clothes will have more dates than teenagers with average clothes. (24)
4. Teenage boys and girls choose their dates without regard to the kind of clothes they wear. (14)

B. Friends

1. Teenagers usually choose friends who wear clothes that are similar to their own. (15)
2. Clothing is not an important factor in choosing friends. (10)

C. Leadership

1. Teenage leaders in high school are well-dressed. (5)
2. Teenagers choose leaders because of ability and personality and not because of appearance. (25)

D. Fads

1. Teenagers like to wear "the latest" so they will feel like part of the group. (9)
2. Even though clothing fads are expensive to buy, they are necessary in a teenager's wardrobe. (4)

III. Relationship of Parents and Teenagers in Teenage Clothing Behavior

1. Parents usually disapprove of the clothes their teenager wants to wear. (26)

IV. Influence of School Upon Clothing Behavior

1. Teenagers approve of having dress codes established by school officials and student council members. (6)

VITA

Margaret Lee Kelly

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Master of Science

Thesis: PERCEPTIONS OF DELINQUENT AND NON-DELINQUENT MALE ADOLESCENTS  
IN RELATION TO CLOTHING IMPORTANCE

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