

IMPACT OF TEACHER ATTIRE ON STUDENTS' VIEWS OF  
TEACHER CREDIBILITY, ATTITUDE HOMOPHILY, AND  
BACKGROUND HOMOPHILY WITHIN SCHOOL-BASED  
AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS



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# Introduction

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Challenge of supplying growing population with food from limited resources (STEM Food and Ag. Council, 2014)

More expertise in agricultural production is needed

Human capital is lacking

Lack of awareness of the scope of careers (Coalition for a Sustainable Agricultural Workforce, n.d.; National Academy of Sciences, 2009)

“Misconceptions steer students in the basic sciences away from careers in the agricultural sciences” (Coalition for a Sustainable Agricultural Workforce (n.d.) overview, para. 5).

# Instructors are the Key

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Agricultural education programs can assist in filling need

Enrollment in SBAE classes associated with positive perceptions of agriculture (Smith, 2010)

Agriculture teachers are influential mentors (Terry & Briers, 2010) and represent AFNR industry

There are different standards for dress

Influence of instructors' clothing on perceptions of profession (Workman and Freeburg, 2010)

Instructors can face conflicting role obligations (Workman & Freeburg, 2010)

# Theoretical Framework

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## Gottfredson's (1981) theory of occupational aspirations

- Individual's self-concept is shaped over time and guides the individual toward and away from occupations that align with self-concept
- Guided this study's independent and dependent variables

# Theoretical Framework

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## Expectancy violations theory (EVT) (Burgoon & Hale, 1988)

- “Clothing behavior is an area for obvious application of EVT given that we hold expectations for what appropriate attire is and what certain types of dress mean when they violate these social norms. There is little doubt that style of dress influences the attributions made about the **wearer**” (Dunbar & Segrin, 2012, p. 2)

# Why do clothes matter?

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Previous studies warranted examination

The AFNR industry shift in occupational image

- Increase in science-based and professional disciplines

Agriculture instructors have opportunity to define students' images of AFNR careers

Interactions shape expectations of what agriculture instructors should know and do

- Perceptions of other teachers (Burgoon & Hale, 1988) and if students are compatible with agricultural education (Gottfredson, 1981)

# Methods

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EVT guided the design of the study

## Multiple case study design

- “To understand a real-world case and assume that such an understanding is likely to involve important contextual conditions pertinent to your case” (Yin, 2014, p. 16)
- Students’ previous interactions with teachers shapes their expectations of teacher attire
- Four SBAE programs, purposively selected
  - Purpose, objectives, treatments, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis were uniform

## PURPOSE

To determine the impact of teacher attire on students' perceptions of teachers' credibility and homophily between themselves and the teacher

## OBJECTIVES

Describe students' attitude homophily, background homophily, and perceptions of teacher credibility after experiencing a lesson delivered by a teacher dressed in business professional attire, business casual attire, or casual attire

Determine differences between students' perceptions by treatment group

# Treatments

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Two graduate assistants (guest instructors)

Two 50-minute lesson plans developed, meeting school and national standards

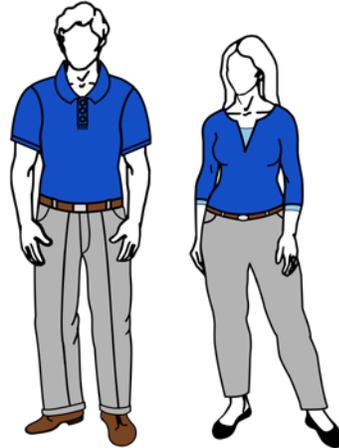
- “How does ice cream get to our table?”, taught in survey of agriculture and food science courses
- “Repairing an Extension Cord”, taught in agricultural mechanics courses

Lesson plans evaluated for face and content validity by a panel of experts

One researcher observed each instance of guest instruction to confirm treatment

# Operational Definitions of Attire

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# Instrumentation

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## Students' perceptions of teacher credibility

- 15 items with 5 point bipolar descriptors
- Descriptors: competence, character, sociability, composure, and extroversion (Morris et al., 1996)

## Perceived Homophily (similarity)

- Attitude homophily- "This person shares my values.", 10 item evaluation
- Background homophily- "This person and I grew up in similar settings.", 7 item evaluation

A panel of experts in agricultural education evaluated instrument for validity

A pilot test was conducted to evaluate the validity and reliability of the combined instrument

# Data Collection and Analysis

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## Case A Environment:

- 3 Survey of Agriculture classes
- Male guest instructor taught in business professional attire, business casual, and casual attire

## Case B Environment:

- 2 Survey of Agriculture classes and 2 Agricultural Mechanics classes
- Male guest instructor taught in business professional attire and casual attire

## Case C Environment:

- 2 Survey of Agriculture courses
- Female guest instructor taught in business professional, business casual, and casual attire

## Case D Environment:

- 2 Food Science courses and 2 Survey of Agriculture courses
- Female guest instructor taught lesson in business professional attire and casual attire

# Results- Case A

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## *Survey of Agriculture Classes*

	<b>Attitude Homophily</b>	<b>Background Homophily</b>	<b>Source Credibility</b>
<b>Business Professional (n = 13)</b>	3.39	3.05	<u>4.31</u>
<b>Business Casual (n = 9)</b>	<u>3.40</u>	<u>3.14</u>	4.07
<b>Casual (n = 15)</b>	3.21	3.01	4.06

# Results- Case B

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## *Agricultural Mechanics Classes*

	<b>Attitude Homophily*</b>	<b>Background Homophily*</b>	<b>Source Credibility</b>
<b>Business Professional (n = 16)</b>	2.73	3.01	3.71
<b>Casual (n = 10)</b>	<u>3.45</u>	<u>3.10</u>	<u>4.38</u>

\* Denotes a large effect size (Cohen, 1988)

# Results- Case B

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## *Survey of Agriculture Classes*

	<b>Attitude Homophily</b>	<b>Background Homophily</b>	<b>Source Credibility</b>
<b>Business Professional (n = 11)</b>	<u>2.90</u>	<u>3.03</u>	<u>4.10</u>
<b>Casual (n = 11)</b>	2.85	2.90	4.05

# Results- Case C

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## *Survey of Agriculture Classes*

	<b>Attitude Homophily</b>	<b>Background Homophily</b>	<b>Source Credibility</b>
<b>Business Professional (n = 13)</b>	3.08	3.05	3.80
<b>Business Casual (n = 14)</b>	<u>3.29</u>	<u>3.07</u>	<u>4.41</u>
<b>Casual (n =13)</b>	2.85	2.90	4.05

# Results- Case D

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## *Food Science and Survey of Agriculture Classes*

	<b>Attitude Homophily*</b>	<b>Background Homophily**</b>	<b>Source Credibility*</b>
<b>Business Professional (n = 16)</b>	<u>3.22</u>	2.68	<u>4.07</u>
<b>Casual (n = 39)</b>	3.09	<u>2.91</u>	3.75

\* Denotes a small effect size, \*\* Denotes a medium effect size (Cohen, 1988)

## CONCLUSION

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Business professional attire aligns with societal expectations of professional agricultural careers

- Case A- Survey of Agriculture
- Case D- Food Science and Survey of Agriculture

## RECOMMENDATION

**More professional attire led to increased student perceptions of teacher credibility**

(Butler & Roesel, 1989; Carr et al., 2009; Lukavsky et al., 1995, Morris et al., 1996)

## CONCLUSION

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As occupational roles shift, so do students' expectations of agriculture teachers' attire (Workman & Freeburg, 2010)

- Case B: Agricultural Mechanics and Survey of Agriculture

## RECOMMENDATION

**Dress in a manner that displays the ability and willingness to participate in occupational practices** (Gordon, 2010)

## CONCLUSION

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Business casual attire scored the highest most frequently

- Case A and C- Survey of Agriculture

## RECOMMENDATION

Business casual attire is a “middle ground”

- Allows versatility
- Some lessons require exceptions
- Provides a way students still see themselves as professional and teachers perceived as credible

## CONCLUSION

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### Findings support principles of EVT

- Previous experiences with teachers in SBAE programs shape students' perceptions of what a credible agriculture teacher looks like (Burgoon & Hale, 1988).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Carefully consider attire, plays a role in shaping students' perceptions of those within AFNR careers (Gottfredson, 1981)

Consistency among agriculture teacher dress can lead to higher, more consistent expectations

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.  
WHAT QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS DO YOU HAVE?

