AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Malissa S. Kraus _____ for the Master of Science _____

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Title: Effects of Dress, Ethnicity, and Gender on Latency to Service in

Retail Stores _____

Abstract approved by: _____

The purpose of this study was to investigate the degree to which appearance, ethnicity, and gender influence how promptly individuals are offered customer service in retail environments. The participants consisted of salesclerks in 84 one-entrance, service-oriented retail stores located in two large shopping malls in the midwest.

The stores were assigned to one of three categories: "male"-stores selling primarily male-oriented goods, such as electronics or sporting goods; "female"-stores selling primarily female-oriented goods, such as clothing or beauty aids; and "gender neutral" stores selling primarily gender neutral goods, such as jewelry or home furnishings.

Three men (one African-American, one Anglo-American, one Hispanic-American) and three women (one African-American, one Anglo-American, one Hispanic-American) in their 20s served as confederates in the conduct of the experiment. Two styles of dress, business and casual, were adopted by each confederate. The assignment of confederates and attire to type of store and shopping mall was random with the restrictions that: (a) each confederate was to participate at each mall in only one style of clothing (i.e., if the African-American male wore casual clothing in Mall 1, he wore business attire Mall 2), and (b) casual and business clothing be worn equal number of times at each mall.

Each confederate carried a silent, digital stopwatch in the palm of his or her hand. The stopwatch was activated as the confederate crossed the threshold of each store if an available salesclerk was in plain view or as soon as an unoccupied salesclerk became available. The confederates reported the latency to serve data to a data recorder positioned in the mall walkways outside the stores.

A preliminary analysis compared the latency to serve data (seconds) between two shopping malls. As the results of this analysis failed to yield a significant difference, $t(334) = 1.31$, $p > .05$, the malls were considered equivalent and this factor was not

evaluated in subsequent analyses.

A four-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) incorporating gender (male-female), race (African American-Hispanic American-Anglo American), type of dress (business-casual), and type of store (male-female-gender neutral) was used to analyze the latency to serve data. This analysis yielded significance for the race, $F(2, 468) = 85.44$, $p < .001$, type of dress, $F(1, 468) = 33.18$, $p < .001$, gender x dress, $F(1,468) = 24.05$, $p < .001$, and gender x race x dress, $F(2, 468) = 5.95$, $p = .003$, effects.

The Newman-Keuls procedure was used to probe the significant sex x race x dress interaction. The results of these contrasts indicated that regardless of type of dress the Anglo-American man and woman were waited on significantly faster ($p < .01$) than all other conditions, except the Hispanic-American man wearing business attire. The latency to serve the Anglo-American man and woman and Hispanic-American man wearing business clothing did not differ significantly.

Additional significant comparisons indicated that the African-American woman wearing either business or casual clothing, the African-American man wearing casual clothing and the Hispanic-American man wearing casual clothing received significantly ($p < .01$) slower service than did the African-American man dressed in business clothing, the African-American woman dressed in either business or casual clothing, and the Hispanic-American man dressed in casual attire. All other contrasts were not statistically significant.

The results of this study indicated salesclerks form unjust impressions of their customers based on easily observable characteristics including gender, dress, and most importantly their race. These initial impressions, in turn, drastically affect how promptly minority customers are serviced in retail environments. The findings support the essentially negative evaluation of African-American and Hispanic-American individuals in our country, with these customers experiencing longer response times from salespersons than their Anglo-American counterparts. Further research might also be extended to include other ethnic groups such as Caribbean-Americans, European-Americans, or Asian-Americans, which appear to be growing segments of our population.

EFFECTS OF DRESS, ETHNICITY, AND GENDER

ON LATENCY TO SERVICE IN RETAIL STORES

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A Thesis

Presented to

the Division of Psychology and Special Education

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In Partial Fulfillment

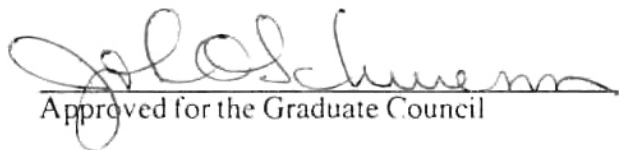of the Requirements for the Degree

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by

Malissa S. Kraus

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Approved for the Division of Psychology
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Cultural standards of beauty define people as physically attractive or unattractive and influence how they are perceived and treated in all settings. Research within the area of physical attractiveness has generally supported a "what-is-beautiful-is-good" hypothesis (Berscheid & Walster, 1974; Dermer & Theil, 1975; Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972) and the existence of a wide-ranging attractiveness stereotype. This stereotype typically results in attractive individuals being perceived in positive terms and having advantages in interpersonal interactions that are not available to unattractive individuals. Attractiveness, a characteristic valued positively by American society, greatly affects how individuals are perceived and treated by others who they interact with daily (i.e., salesclerks).

Initial Impressions and the Language of Clothing

The physical attractiveness component can be important in the formation of first impressions by salesclerks. For example, clothing or attire worn by a person influences other's perceptions about the wearer's characteristics of socioeconomic status (Heitmeyer & Goldsmith, 1990). Popular wisdom tells us, for example, never to underestimate the power of a first impression. Clothing is an important source of information during this process, unlike the contents of a wallet or one's personal values, clothing is highly visible. It is brimming with clues about the wearer's background (Solomon, 1986). Many clothing items, such as a priest's collar, are worn because they have symbolic significance. We are expected to draw conclusions about a person's identity from such symbols and to act accordingly.

Observers often use clothing to infer social status. People become more "legitimate" if they are dressed appropriately (Soloman, 1986). This effect has been documented experimentally since the 1950s, when researchers examined the willingness of pedestrians to violate the social norm against jaywalking. When strangers saw a well-dressed person of high status (actually a confederate in the experiment) jaywalk, they were more likely to follow his example than if the same accomplice was dressed in soiled and patched clothing (Lefkowitz, Blake, & Mouton, 1952).

In general, researchers find that people agree on the meaning of certain types of clothes. If there is widespread agreement about the meaning of clothing symbolism, then it stands to reason that we must all learn, to some degree, the language of fashion. When does the learning process begin? According to Mayer and Belk (1986), such clothing associations take root at an early age.

Even as young children, clothing cues are used to categorize people, but what is the effect of clothing on the wearer? Within the limits of the fashion market, people can and do exercise control over what they wear, spending a great deal of time, effort and money on clothing. The hours spent agonizing over clothing choices in the store, deliberating over what to wear or preening in front of the mirror, testify to the psychic importance of these decisions (Solomon, 1986).

Concern with such decisions extends well beyond the minority who are slavishly committed to wearing the latest fashions. Although many people profess not to be concerned with wearing fashionable clothing, most are concerned with owning clothing that is appropriate to the social, sexual, athletic, or professional roles they perform. Because people are aware that apparel clues are instrumental in communicating social information, the reason for being interested in clothing has changed from concerns about esthetics to concerns of strategy (Davis, 1987).

For thousands of years, human beings have communicated with one another through the language of dress; people are social animals and clothing is very much a social invention. It is laden with symbolism that provides information about social and occupational standing, gender-role identification, political orientation, ethnicity, and esthetic priorities (Solomon, 1986). Clothing is a potent medium of communication that carries a flood of information about who a person is, is not, and who a person would like to be. It is an important mediator of social life (Solomon, 1986).

Within the first few seconds after encountering strangers, people very quickly and confidently form judgments about their religious, political, and ethnic background and make snap decisions regarding their social, professional, or sexual desirability. Although first impressions are often wrong, psychologists have shown that such decisions may

persist, even in the face of later evidence to the contrary (Solomon. 1986). In the past, several studies have been conducted on physical appearance and the power of impression-formation theory, but more data needs to be accumulated with the added variable of race, especially utilizing African-American and Hispanic-American consumers.

Characteristics of Hispanic-American and African-American Consumers

African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans, the two largest ethnic minorities in the United States, are characterized by unique socioeconomic and demographic characteristics. Previous research involving ethnic consumers has been criticized for failing to control for the effects of these characteristics on behavior (Wagner & Soberon-Ferrer, 1990). Failing to control for these effects has caused a shortage of reliable and valid data in this area and perhaps hindered the formation of valuable conclusions.

Additionally, other variables besides dress and ethnicity might impact how consumers are perceived. An individual's age, gender, socioeconomic status, or sexual preference could impact a salesclerk's perceptions as well. In order to better evaluate the customer service offered to Hispanic-Americans and African-Americans, consideration should be given to understanding the lifestyles and shopping characteristics of these two growing ethnic minorities.

Distinguishing factors of Hispanic-American consumers. Although there is an extensive body of marketing research on the attitudes and opinions of Hispanic-American consumers, there has been little or no economic research on their shopping patterns. Hispanic-Americans are diverse in terms of both race and natural origin. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1990), 56% of the Hispanic-American population consider themselves to be Anglo-American, 2% consider themselves African-American, and the remaining 42% classify themselves as "other", presumably mixed races of Indian extraction. Research on Hispanic-American consumers suggests that they share certain values, beliefs, and attitudes (Wagner & Soberon-Ferrer. 1990). Hispanic-Americans in the United States continue to be dependent on the Spanish language and consider it an important vehicle for maintenance of their culture (Shield. 1984).

According to recent estimates, there are 18.1 million Hispanic-Americans in the

U.S. Given rapid growth in immigration and improvements in Bureau of the Census enumeration procedures. Hispanic-Americans are expected to be the largest ethnic minority in the U.S. before the turn of the century (Bureau of Census, 1988). The Hispanic-American population differs from the rest of the population in terms of income, family composition, characteristics of the household head, and location. Hispanic-Americans also differ from the rest of the population in that they are employed predominantly in blue collar occupations and have low overall educational attainment (Department of Labor, 1985).

Hispanic-American households differ from other households in family size and median age of members. Hispanic-American households tend to be large, with an average family size of 3.7 (Bureau of Census, 1994). Large family size may be culturally related to the tradition of the extended family and the prevalence of Catholicism. In 1990 the U.S. Bureau of the Census noted the median age of Hispanic-Americans as 23.2 years, compared to 24.9 years for African-Americans and 31.3 years for Anglo-Americans. The Hispanic-American population is also unique in its geographic distribution. Five states, California, Texas. Illinois, Florida, and New York, contain 73% of the Hispanic-American population (Bureau of Census, 1994). In addition to being regionally concentrated, the Hispanic-American population is centered primarily in metropolitan areas.

There has been a dramatic increase in interest in Hispanic-American consumers during the last decade. Hispanic-Americans have conservative values, which translate into the importance of family-oriented expenditures, such as food and many other items (Segal & Sosa, 1983). Hispanic-American consumers seem to be oriented toward expressive consumption and to be overly concerned with status (Loudon & Della Bitta, 1984). Since the consumption of clothing is thought to be both expressive in nature and status-oriented, it might be expected than that Hispanic-American households would spend more than other households for clothing.

Distinguishing factors of African-American consumers. Research on the behavior of African-American consumers has been extensive in both marketing and economics, especially during the 1960s and 1970s. However, the increase in interest in

Hispanic-American consumers has been accompanied by a dramatic decrease in research on African-American consumers.

Recent estimates indicate there are 29.2 million African-Americans in the United States, representing 11.8% of the population (Bureau of Census, 1988). Like Hispanic-Americans, although the African-American population is growing more rapidly than the rest of the population, it is at the low end of the socioeconomic continuum (Hirschman, 1985). The median income of African-Americans is lower than that of Anglo-Americans, but slightly higher than that of Hispanic-Americans. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1990), fewer African-Americans than Anglo-Americans have either high school or college degrees.

In addition, a record number of African-Americans are out of work (Harrington, 1983). Regionally, over one-half of the African-American population lives in the south. The African-American population is like the Hispanic-American population in that its median age is lower than that of Anglo-Americans. However, African-American households tend to be unique in terms of family composition, with a disproportionate number of female-headed households (Harrington, 1983).

Cox and Higginbottam (1985) suggest the behavior of African-American consumers is multicultural. Although much of the behavior is consistent with the European heritage of the United States, some of their behavior may reflect the values of their African ancestry, such as affect, communalism, and expressive individualism, behaviors similar to values related to clothing consumption (Boykin, 1983). However, much of this research has been criticized for ignoring the effects of socioeconomic and demographic variables, including African-American ethnicity on behavior (Wagner & Soberon-Ferrer, 1990).

Information on the effect of ethnicity on expenditures is important to marketing practitioners in planning strategies to better meet the needs of ethnic consumers and to economists in developing the economic theory of consumer behavior. The marketing establishment has taken the lead in studying the expenditures of ethnic consumers at the individual and brand levels (Wagner & Soberon-Ferrer, 1990). The effect of ethnicity on

expenditures in broad categories of goods and services is, however, of more interest to economists. Consumer economists have studied the effects of income and a host of other socioeconomic and demographic characteristics on household expenditures for a wide range of goods and services. One demographic factor that has been neglected, however, is ethnicity (Wagner & Soberon-Ferrer, 1990).

Effects of the Buyer-Seller Dyad on Retail Interaction

For many types of marketing exchanges, some form of interpersonal contact is required. Numerous studies have focused upon the interaction process found in marketing exchanges - specifically the buyer-seller dyad (Busch & Wilson, 1986; Gabel, 1964; Schurr & Ozanne, 1985; Stafford & Greer, 1965; Vredenburg, 1987; Williams, 1978; Woodside & Davenport, 1974). Typically, as in the studies above, the evaluation of the buyer-seller dyad utilizes the transaction process as the base unit of analysis, with a general conclusion being that the greater similarity (or attraction) between buyer and seller, the more likely a transaction will be successfully completed (Evans, 1963).

There is clear evidence perceivers initially categorize individuals on the basis of easily observable characteristics, such as ethnicity and/or gender (Allport, 1958; Taylor, Fiske, Etcoff, & Ruderman, 1978). Zajonc's (1980) research indicates an almost instantaneous precognitive affective reaction can take place towards other individuals' physical features with cognitive support for those feelings being generated afterwards, thereby creating a first impression upon the individual's initial approach.

Zajonc (1980) contends that upon meeting someone for the first time, an individual can seldom escape formulating affective reactions and forms these reactions in a relatively effortless, almost instantaneous fashion. It is inferred feelings represented by an internal state appear more valid to the individual and those feelings have their roots in primitive man's adaptive behavior. This point is echoed by Broadbent's (1977) verification hypothesis that posits an early stage of global perception followed closely by a "verification stage" which is an active interrogation of stimulus features.

The initial global perception involves the recognition of gross, configural global features of an object (e.g., a customer's face). This global perception, in turn, forms a

vague set of precognitive affective criteria (Broadbent, 1977; Zajonc, 1980). The following verification stage is an active cognitive interrogation of stimulus features subsequent to exposure to the stimulus object (Bourne, 1977; Broadbent, 1977; Davis & Lennon, 1988; Fiske & Taylor, 1984; Zajonc, 1980).

Influence of Predispositional Racial Views

Karlins, Coffman, and Walters (1969) and Lippmann (1922) point out that perceivers commonly attribute to those individuals all lifestyle characteristics that the perceiver associates with that stimulus group (e.g., racial). This initial impression provides the perceiver with a long-lasting, though possibly inaccurate, predispositional view of the individual (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1987).

For example, Katz and Braly (1933) conducted one of the first empirical studies concerning the prevalence of racial predispositional views (or stereotypes). The results of their study indicated that significant predispositional views existed even with those individuals who had limited previous contact with racial subcultures.

Allport (1958) has described such a racial predispositional view as a "faulty and inflexible generalization." Although, it has been shown that previous personal experience does contribute to greater accuracy in the initial stereotyping (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1987; Taguiri, 1969).

Impact of Social Perception on Initial Impressions

Research in the area of social perception has a long and progressive history in the field of social psychology. Much is known about underlying processes and content of impressions individuals form of others. Based on the work on impression-formation conducted by Asch (1946), experimental researchers have investigated the content of impressions (Park, 1986), agreement among observers in impressions formed (Bourne, 1977), whether impressions change over time (Park, 1986), and how impressions are used by perceivers in interactions with target persons (Davis, 1987).

Using experimental designs, researchers studying effects of clothing on person perception have been prolific in demonstrating that clothing variations have an impact on first impressions formed of target persons (Davis, 1987). The typical procedure used in

these studies has been varying the clothing of a target person and measuring the effect of clothing variations on subjects' first impressions of the target person's personality or behavioral characteristics (Davis & Lennon, 1988).

Researchers typically have varied the type and style of clothing to convey a particular image to perceivers. A common theme of many studies has been to investigate perceptions of women's professional image by comparing target persons dressed in suits with target persons dressed in casual wear (Christman & Branson, 1990; Damhorst, 1984; Davis, 1987; DeLong, Salusso-Deonier, & Larntz, 1983; Forsythe, Drake, & Cox, 1984; Thurston, Lennon, & Clayton, 1990). Results of most studies support the conclusion that clothing of the target person affects first impressions made of that person.

From a theoretical perspective, social perception can be organized by factors that influence the perceptual processes used in forming impressions of others. Research demonstrates that social perception can be affected by perceiver variables, object or target variables, and situational variables (Davis & Lennon, 1988). Most studies focus on the effect of object or target variables (i.e., examining the effect of clothing variations of the target person on perceptions of that person), whereas few studies examine the effects of situational variables or of perceivers' characteristics on social perception.

According to research in social perception, perceivers bring to the perception situation physical traits, personal traits, and cognitive structures which may affect what is perceived and what impression is formed (Fiske & Taylor, 1984). Damhorst (1990) indicated that gender differences in person perception were often reported, but that few other perceiver characteristics have been examined.

Exceptions include studies that have investigated perceivers' sensitivity to appearance cues (Miller, Feinberg, Davis, & Rowold, 1982) or the influence of perceivers' demographic characteristics such as occupational role (Littrell & Berger, 1985) and religion (Long, 1978) on person perception. The question remains, however, whether it is perceiver variables or target person variables (such as clothing or race) that have a greater impact on the impression formed.

Race as a Concept in Forming First Impressions

Despite the considerable evidence that we fail to distinguish among people of a race different from our own, there is reason to believe we can make such distinctions. Anthropologists question the validity of race as a scientific concept, noting the lack of a precise definition. However, race is a widely accepted concept in folk psychology and social conceptions of race can have a significant impact on social perceptions (Zuckerman, 1990).

Additionally, research has shown people are better at recognizing faces from their own racial group than those from a different racial group (Anthony, Copper, & Mullen, 1982). Moreover, there is evidence to indicate this "other-race" effect is quite pervasive, extending to judgments other than recognition. Specifically, there is also support for the homily "they all are alike." People perceive out-group members, including other racial groups, as more homogeneous in their traits and behavior than in-group members (Linville, Salovey, & Fischer, 1986).

Research suggests that when perceivers are explicitly requested to compare faces on physical dimensions, they make similar distinctions among the faces of targets of their own and another race. Thus, people of different races make similar distinctions among faces even though the facial features they use to distinguish among faces of their own race may differ from those they use for another. People of different races also perceive similar variability in appearance among faces of their own and another race, and they show crossrace agreement in appearance judgments (Berstein, Lin, & McClellan, 1982; Cunningham, 1986).

That people can detect similarities and differences in the appearance of members of another race when making on-line judgments has implications for homogeneity in crossrace trait ascriptions. According to the ecological theory of social perception (McArthur & Baron, 1983), social stimulus information, such as that provided in appearance, can communicate intentions, emotional states, and traits. Thus, perceivers who attend to variations in the appearance of targets of another race should show individuated judgments about the psychological attributes of those targets.

Effects of Appearance and Race on Customer Service: A Summary

As mentioned. previous research has touched on many variables affecting customer service offered in retail settings. The customer service function has evolved as an important variable in developing competitive marketing strategies. Retailers will be more competitive in today's marketplace if they target consumers who need assistance and not just those perceived as being members of upper-middle or high socioeconomic status households.

The literature has suggested that customers' clothing is a primary indicator to sales personnel in forming first impressions. Clothing is highly visible and provides information about the wearer's lifestyle, including, socioeconomic status and ethnicity. Additionally, you announce your gender, age, and class through what you're wearing- - and possibly give information (or misinformation) as to your occupation, orgin, personality, opinions. tastes, sexual desires, and current mood.

The statement that clothing is a language is not new. Today, as semiotics becomes fashionable, researchers tell us that fashion too is a language of signs, a nonverbal system of communication. Of course, as with human speech. there is not a single language of dress. Individuals of all ethnic backgrounds wear different styles of attire with many different dialects and accents, some almost unintelligible to members of the mainstream culture. It is important for sales personnel to look past this appearance aspect in order to assist minority consumers uniformly.

Furthermore. the economic and marketing literature has indicated that research on minority consumers has failed to control for unique socioeconomic and demographic characteristics on behavior. Failing to account for these important aspects has hindered the formation of reliable conclusions regarding customer service. Little research has been conducted to evaluate the shopping patterns of the two largest ethnic minorities, Hispanic-Americans and African-Americans. According to recent estimates, these two minorities are rapidly growing and make-up a large segment of the shopping population.

Information on the effect of ethnicity is important to marketing practitioners in planning strategies to better meet the needs of ethnic consumers, and to economists in

developing theories of consumer behavior. Consumer economists have studied the effects of many characteristics on customer service. However, the demographic factor of ethnicity has been neglected.

The present study assesses the degree to which appearance and race influence how promptly individuals are offered customer service. As mentioned previously, these factors contribute to the formation of initial impressions by sales personnel and may effect overall latency to retail service. Research of this type will expand the knowledge base in an underdeveloped topic and add to the understanding of how the language of dress and ethnicity might impact uniform retail service assistance.

Research findings have indicated that a positive interaction within the buyer-seller dyad is necessary in order to facilitate quality customer service. There is evidence that sales personnel initially categorize customers on the basis of easily observable characteristics, such as ethnicity and/or gender. Because of the lack of knowledge concerning ethnicity and appearance as it relates to customer service in the retail atmosphere, there are three possible hypotheses.

First, it may be that well-dressed Anglo-American consumers will be waited on and serviced more promptly than well-dressed Hispanic-American or African-American consumers. Researchers have indicated that one of the fastest growing market segments in the United States is what they called the "affluent superclass" - those families earning more than $50,000 annually (Vrendenburg, 1987). They noted that this affluence can be attributed to several causes, including the increasing number of women employed outside the home, rising levels of education, and changes in tax laws. Unfortunately, this segment of consumers has been stereotyped as including predominantly Anglo-American individuals.

Second, it may be that all well-dressed ethnic groups will be waited on and serviced at a consistent pace regardless of the predispositional racial views held by salesclerks. The motivation of salespeople is functionally related to their perception of performance-reward instrumentalities of their job activities. Activities of great importance to sales need to be perceived as likely to lead to personal reward if they are to be engaged in consistently.

Perhaps, well-dressed individuals, regardless of race, will attract the salesclerks attention because business dress implies high socioeconomic status and a greater likelihood of making a purchase.

A third alternative hypothesis is that all ethnic groups, whether well-dressed or casually dressed will be waited on and offered assistance consistently. The way one approaches customers in a sales setting along with the way one approaches sales tasks are likely to be influenced by financial incentives related to sales performance. It is generally accepted that financial incentives can influence sales performance if the incentive is understood, is perceived to be fair, is perceived to be attainable through the efforts of those for whom it is developed, if there is sufficient feedback about one's performance related to incentive payoffs. Sales personnel may be interested in assisting all consumers in order to increase their chances of making a sale and gaining a financial commission.

CHAPTER TWO

Method

Participants and Sampling Procedure

The participants consisted of salesclerks in 84 one-entrance, service-oriented retail stores located in two large shopping malls in the midwest. The stores were assigned to one of three categories: "male"- stores selling primarily male-oriented goods, such as electronics or sporting goods; "female"- stores selling primarily female-oriented goods, such as clothing or beauty aids; and "gender neutral"- stores selling primarily gender-neutral goods, such as jewelry or home furnishings. The stores sampled in the present study were randomly selected from a larger number of stores from which permission and informed consent previously had been obtained from the manager. The number of each type of store evaluated in the two malls is shown in Table 1.

Procedure

Three men (one African-American, one Anglo-American, one Hispanic-American) and three women (one African-American, one Anglo-American, one Hispanic-American) in their 20s served as confederates in the conduct of the experiment. Two styles of dress, business and casual, were adopted by each confederate. A description of each style of dress for the two genders appears in Table 2. None of the confederates had shopped in the malls used in the experiment. The assignment of confederates and attire to type of store and shopping mall was random with the restrictions that: (a) each confederate was to participate at each mall in only one style of clothing (i.e., if the African-American male wore casual clothing in Mall 1, he wore business attire in Mall 2), and (b) casual and business clothing be worn an equal number of times in each mall.

Each confederate carried a silent, digital stopwatch in the palm of his or her hand. The stopwatch was activated as the confederate crossed the threshold of each store if an available salesclerk was in plain view or as soon as an unoccupied salesclerk became available. When a salesclerk approached the confederate and offered help, the stopwatch was stopped. An offer of assistance was defined as consisting of comments such as "May I help you?," "Is there something in particular you are looking for?," or "If I can be of

Table 1

Number of Each Type of One-Entrance Store Evaluated in Each Shopping Mall

	Type of Store		
	Female *	Male**	Gender Neutral***
Mall 1	15	11	18
Mall 2	13	11	16

*Stores selling primarily female-oriented goods, such as clothing or beauty aids.

**Stores selling primarily male-oriented goods, such as electronics or sporting goods.

***Stores selling primarily gender-neutral goods, such as jewelry or home furnishings.

Table 2

Style of Dress, Business versus Casual, Worn by the Male and Female Confederates

Male - Casual Dress:	Non-namebrand, faded blue jeans, a worn sweatshirt, carried a used bluejean jacket, soiled tennis shoes with holes in toes, no socks.
Male - Business Dress:	Two-piece suit with a white button down collar shirt and conservative tie, dress socks and leather shoes.
Female - Casual Dress:	Same as male casual.
Female - Business Dress:	Skirted business suit and white blouse, hose and matching leather pumps, gold jewelry.

assistance, or show you something, please let me know." If the salesclerk responded, "I will be right with you," the confederate did not stop timing. The confederates reported the latency to serve data to a data recorder positioned in the mall walkways outside the stores.

CHAPTER THREE

Results

A preliminary analysis compared the latency to serve data (seconds) between two shopping malls. As the results of this analysis failed to yield a significant difference, $t(334) = 1.31$, $p > .05$, the malls were considered equivalent and this factor was not evaluated in subsequent analyses.

A four-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) incorporating gender (male-female), race (African-American, Hispanic-American, Anglo-American), type of dress (business-casual), and type of store (male-female-gender neutral) was used to analyze the latency to serve data. This analysis yielded significance for the race, $F(2, 468) = 85.44$, $p < .001$, type of dress, $F(1, 468) = 33.18$, $p < .001$, gender x dress, $F(1, 468) = 24.05$, $p < .001$, and gender x race x dress, $F(2, 468) = 5.95$, $p = .003$, effects. The mean latencies to serve for the conditions represented in the significant triple interaction are shown in Table 3.

The Newman-Keuls procedure was used to probe the significant gender x race x dress interaction. The results of these contrasts indicated that regardless of type of dress the Anglo-American man and woman were waited on significantly faster ($p < .01$) than all other conditions, except the Hispanic-American man wearing business attire. The latency to serve the Anglo-American man and woman and the Hispanic-American man wearing business clothing did not differ reliably.

Additional significant comparisons indicated that the African-American woman wearing either business or casual clothing, the African-American man wearing casual clothing and the Hispanic-American man wearing casual clothing received significantly ($p < .01$) slower service than did the African-American man dressed in business clothing, the African-American woman dressed in either business or casual clothing, and the Hispanic-American man dressed in casual attire. All other contrasts were not statistically significant.

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Table 3

Mean Time (Seconds) to Serve as a Function of Gender (Male-Female). Race (African-American, Hispanic-American, Anglo-American), and Type of Clothing Worn (Casual-Business)

	Race					
	African-American		Hispanic-American		Anglo-American	
	Type of Clothing					
Gender	Casual	Business	Casual	Business	Casual	Business
Male	230.70	125.85	168.96	25.41	45.02	9.47
Female	171.99	143.03	87.34	110.80	33.02	15.74

CHAPTER FOUR

Discussion

The results of this study indicate salesclerks form unjust impressions of their customers based on easily observable characteristics including gender, dress, and most importantly their race. These initial impressions, in turn, drastically affect how promptly minority customers are serviced in retail environments. The findings support the essentially negative evaluation of African-American and Hispanic-American individuals in our country, with these customers experiencing longer response times from salespersons than their Anglo-American counterparts.

Due to a shared history of discrimination and the traditional hostility (overt and subtle) experienced in the marketplace, some minority shoppers place higher significance on the understanding and friendliness component of the salesclerks offering them assistance. Historically, African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans have not received "warm" treatment in some shopping establishments. Given the gargantuan strides in the plight of minorities, there remain vestiges of mistrust and uneasiness in some retail shopping environments.

It is important for African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans to be accepted and appreciated as individuals of worth first. If retail sales personnel appeal to this need initially, then they can proceed to share their expertise regarding a particular product or service. The element of perceived trust indelibly affects the initial impressions construct. After some semblance of trust has been established, the perceptions made by the clerk should become a dominant factor in servicing all consumers uniformly.

It has been demonstrated (Busch & Wilson, 1986) that African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans feel defensive and alienated in some retailing environments because of the belief that they must somehow prove themselves part of the American mainstream. Partially as a result of this, African-American and Hispanic-American males and females may be more likely to respond favorably to an environment emphasizing friendliness, understanding, and one that practices consistent, timely service to all consumers regardless of their appearance or ethnic background (Busch & Wilson, 1986).

If mainstream acceptance is a goal or need of African-American and Hispanic-American shoppers, then it is incumbent upon retail sales management to address and respond to this issue in a positive and proactive manner. Sales managers need to recognize the uniqueness in the first impressions formed by salesclerks towards African-American and Hispanic-American shoppers. The responses tend to be unique to specific races and in some situations to specific race/gender combinations.

Information provided by this research could also be used to aid retailers in understanding their consumers better and in adapting their businesses to meet the needs of their consumers more effectively. Retailers may need to change their merchandising strategies and to refocus their promotional efforts in order to serve all store patrons (i.e., utilizing African-American and Hispanic-American manikins).

Similarly, merchandising educators could utilize this information in preparing their students as future retailers. Students who better understand the issues raised by gender, race, dress, consumer lifestyle, and shopping patterns will have greater chances of success in the marketplace in the future.

Although generalizations beyond the confines of this particular sample are not encouraged, the results lend additional support and substance to previous works concerning initial impressions and the buyer-seller dyad (e.g., Broadbent, 1977; Zajonc, 1980). It is clear those retailers who become aggressive agents of change, making certain all customers are being offered quality service and responding accordingly, will be the major beneficiaries in the always changing retail environments to come.

Future research may wish to concentrate on additional aspects of communication in the buyer-seller dyad as a function of one's racial background and appearance. The implications of which may be a further understanding of the intricacy of this dyad relationship. Additional research might also be extended to include other ethnic groups, such as Caribbean-Americans, European-Americans, or Asian-Americans, who appear to be growing segments of our population.

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