Style and Attraction: The Power of Attractiveness and Similarity of Attitudes

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In Experiment 1, men and women were more attracted to an opposite sex target who was dressed in a stylish manner than they were to an opposite sex target who was dressed in an unstylish manner. Experiment 2 examined explanations for the impact of style on attraction and replicated the initial style-attraction link. High style targets were perceived as more attractive and as possessing attitudes that were more similar to the participants' than low style targets. Perceived attractiveness of the target and the perceived similarity of attitudes with the target both mediated the style-attraction link. Our results suggest that (a) clothing style is a strong cue that is used as a basis for interpersonal inferences and (b) individuals tend to associate themselves with a person of high style.

Americans spend an enormous amount of time, energy, and money in pursuit of the right clothes. According to a recent study, parents spend an average of $11,000 to clothe a child until he or she is 17 and regularly spend more than $1,000 per year to clothe a typical teenager (Lino, 2000). Additionally, last year apparel giants GAP and Abercrombie & Fitch reported revenue of $3.5 (Gap, 2002) and $1.5 billion (Abercrombie & Fitch, 2002), respectively. Clearly, people are motivated to not just clothe themselves, but to clothe themselves well. Recent empirical research on clothing has focused on various topics, including but not limited to, the motives for wearing different clothes (Frith, 2004), cognitive confusion created by changing clothes (Seitz, 2003), and the cognitive consequences of uncomfortable clothes (Bell, 2003). Indeed, clothes and fashion are becoming more popular topics of research; however, we find it interesting that investigations of the impact of clothing on self or interpersonal perception are rare (notable exception: Hill, Nocks, & Gardner, 1987). The current study contributes to this sparse literature by investigating how clothing style impacts interpersonal attraction.

Style is commonly defined as "prevailing fashion, as in dress, the fashion of the moment " (Random House Webster's College Dictionary, 1997). In general, clothing style has a dynamic character – what is considered stylish changes across age groups, sexes, and historical contexts. Thus, style is a particular cohort's view about how to wear clothes in order to be most aesthetically pleasing. Although there has been little research investigating the link between style and attraction, we were guided by the research of Hill et al. (1987) regarding the impact of other clothing factors on attraction. In their research, participants expressed more attraction to targets who were dressed

in tight-fitting, rather than loose-fitting, clothes and in clothes that suggested high, rather than low, status. Following from this research and from the definition of style reported above, we expected that individuals would be more attracted to high style, rather than low style, targets. We tested this proposition in Experiment 1.

A second goal of this project was to investigate the possible mediators of a style-attraction link. Physical attractiveness, status, and similarity have been linked by previous research to attraction and are likely to mediate a relation between style and attraction.

Physical attractiveness is among the most potent predictors of interpersonal attraction. As an example, Walster, Aronson, and Abrahams (1966) randomly assigned individuals to a "computer" date and found that the only predictor of liking and future interaction was the partner's physical attractiveness. The effect of physical attractiveness on attraction is far reaching and has even been observed in television programs. Chapdelaine, Levesque, and Cuadro (1999) found an overwhelming tendency for observers and daters of the television dating show *The Love Connection* to select the most physically attractive individuals as the preferred date. Importantly, the impact of attractiveness on preference was potent for both sexes. Similar results showcasing the potent effect that physical attractiveness has on attraction have been observed in numerous studies (e.g., Berscheid, Dion, Hatfield, & Walster, 1971; Krebs & Adinolfi, 1975; Reis, Wheeler, Spiegel, Kernis, Nezlek, & Perri, 1982). With regard to the current study, it is our hypothesis that highly stylish clothes will increase an individual's physical attractiveness, which will, in turn, lead to attraction.

Of course, physical attractiveness is not the only potential mediator of the style-attraction link. Hill et al. (1987) showed that status can be conveyed via clothes and that status-enhancing clothes lead to attraction. Evolutionary psychologists argue that a preference for high status individuals is an evolutionary adaptation that increases reproductive fitness. According to the evolutionary hypothesis of mate selection, women should be particularly sensitive to, and should differentiate strongly between, high and low status characteristics. Indeed, in personal ads women seek wealth and other status-labeled characteristics more often than do men (Baize & Schroeder, 1995). Further, Buss and colleagues (Buss, Abbott, & Angleitner, 1990) found that women displayed a stronger preference for high status mates than did men in almost all of 33 cultures from which they sampled participants. Of course, this is not to suggest that men do not prefer high status, to low status, partners; women simply display a stronger preference of this sort. Speaking to the current project, it is likely that the stylishness of clothes is linked to the status that they convey. That is, highly stylish clothes suggest high status, which will guide attraction.

Finally, similarity of attitudes is a powerful predictor of attraction that may also contribute to the style-attraction relation. Individuals are more attracted to individuals who have attitudes similar to, rather than dissimilar from, their own (Byrne, 1961,1971; Byrne & Nelson 1965; Clore and Baldridge 1968; Condon & Crano 1988). Additionally, individuals sit closer to someone who shares their attitudes (Byrne, Baskett, & Hodges, 1971) and will spend more time fostering a student-mentor relation when the attitudes of student and mentor are similar (Turban, Thomas, & Lee, 2002). In short, the literature suggests a very strong link between similarity of attitudes and attraction.

Importantly, clothes are a medium by which individuals convey internal information about themselves. More specifically, Swann (1987) suggested that individuals try to verify their internal beliefs by expressing those beliefs publicly via visible media (such as clothing). According to Swann, one way that people proclaim their identity is by "looking the part." To quote Swann (1987, p. 1040), "The clothes one wears can be used to tell others whether one is liberal or conservative, wealthy or destitute, easygoing or meticulous, prudish or promiscuous." In support of this notion that clothing reflects one's attitudes, a recent investigation of attitudes and purchasing behavior found that environmental attitudes influenced purchasing of certain types of clothes and that individuals with similar environmental attitudes purchased, and presumably wore, similar clothing (Butler & Francis, 1997). Further, Johnson, Schofield, and Yurchisin (2002) have shown empirically that people use and understand clothing as a representation of internal attitudes. Given that clothing can suggest one's attitudes, it is possible that the style of clothing may convey attitudes that are either similar or dissimilar to one's own. If this notion has merit, the similarity or dissimilarity one infers about a target from his or her clothes may impact attraction.

Overview

We conducted two studies to investigate the impact of style on attraction and potential explanations for this effect. In Experiment 1 we manipulated the style of an opposite sex target and assessed participants' attraction to the target. Experiment 2 again manipulated style and assessed attraction to the target as well as attractiveness, similarity, and status of the target. We expected that participants would be more attracted to high style, rather than low style, targets and that

attractiveness, similarity, and status would mediate this effect.

Experiment 1

Study 1 attempts to establish a nexus, or lack thereof, between style and attraction. Our research will add to the sparse amount of literature on clothing and attraction.

Method

Participants and Design

Twenty male and twenty female college students (age range 18-22 yrs) participated in exchange for extra credit in their psychology classes. Male ($M = 19.9$, $SD = 1.27$) and female participants ($M = 19.6$, $SD = 1.43$) did not differ significantly in age, $F(1, 36) = .34$, $p = .56$. Participants were assigned randomly to answer questions about a high or low style opposite sex target. No additional information about the target was provided. Gender of participant created a second non-experimental factor resulting in a 2 (style of target; high/low) X 2 (gender; male/female) design.

Measures

In order to assess attraction, we developed a seven-item attraction assessment (AAS). The first two items assessed the participant's desire for interaction with the target (e.g., Do you believe you would like to meet this individual?, endpoints: $1 = No$; $9 = Yes$). The remaining five items assessed the likelihood that the participant would behave in a friendly and "attracted" way towards the individual (e.g., How likely would you be to approach this person in a situation with hopes of sexual (kissing etc....) interaction? Endpoints: $1 = not at all likely$; $9 = very likely$). We averaged the seven items to give one composite attraction score (Cronbach's alpha = .74). It is important to note that the AAS has not been empirically validated; however, the items are certainly face-valid as assessments of attraction.

In addition to the AAS, participants completed a one-item style manipulation check. This item read "How stylish do you believe this person to be?" (endpoints: $1 = not very$ and $9 = very$).

Style Manipulation

Manipulation of style was based on two aspects of the targets' clothing; accessories and color combination of clothes. We made a conscious effort to keep the tightness and color of clothes constant. We used one male and one female target, and we manipulated only the clothing and accessories the target was wearing. In the high style condition the male target was dressed in a yellow shirt, brown slacks, and a matching stainless steel watch; in the low style condition, the male target was dressed in red slacks with a green shirt and an unmatching scarf. The high style female target was dressed in a purple shirt and brown slacks with matching earrings, and the low style female was dressed in red slacks, a green-based multicolored shirt, and an unmatching necklace.

Procedure

Participants completed the experiment in a classroom that had been reserved for the purposes of research. Each participant was presented with a packet that consisted of a picture of an opposite sex individual (dressed in either the high or low style clothing combination) and the 8-item questionnaire (consisting of the AAS and the manipulation check item). Participants were given instructions and completed the task individually without time constraints. After completion of the task, participants were debriefed.

Results

Manipulation Check

A Participant Gender Style (High, Low) X (Male, Female) analysis of variance showed there was a significant difference in the perceptions of style as a function of the style manipulation. The high style target ($M = 6.65$, $SD = 1.98$) was regarded as more stylish than the low style target ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.69$), $F(1, 36) = 35.32$, $p < .0001$, $d = 1.79$.[1] Importantly, neither the Participant Gender main effect, $F(1, 36) = 3.24$, $p > .05$, nor Participant Gender X Style interaction, $F(1, 36) = 2.63$, $p > .05$, reached significance suggesting that style was manipulated effectively for all participants.[2]

Main Analysis

We expected that style would positively affect attraction. A two-way ANOVA revealed a significant

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Footnotes

[1] Cohen's *d* utilizes a pooled standard deviation. Cohen (1988) suggests that a *d* of .20, .50, and .80 represent small, medium, and large effect sizes, respectively.

[2] The astute reader may argue that the average style rating in the "high style" condition ($M = 6.65$) was nearer to the middle than to the upper limit (9) of the style rating scale. However, we do not believe that this absolute rating compromises the value of the project for speaking to the influence of style on attraction. We would point out, first, that 6.65 on a 9 point scale is above the "average" point of the scale, and given the relatively rare use of the extremes of a scale, we feel that this rating does reflect "high" style. What is more critical is that the absolute ratings of style in each condition are not as important as are the relative ratings of the high and low style targets. Given that these targets were regarded as significantly different in stylishness means that differences in attraction may be confidently linked to the difference in style. Again, the relative, rather than the absolute, ratings of style are the critical evidence of an effective style manipulation and for the possibility of attributing attraction differences between the conditions to style differences.

main effect of style on attraction, $F(1, 36) = 11.41$, $p = .0018$, $d = .84$. Participants were more attracted to high style ($M = 6.09$, $SD = .96$), relative to low style ($M = 5.18$, $SD = 1.20$), targets. This result is consistent with our original hypothesis. The main effect of Participant Gender also reached significance, $F(1, 36) = 26.03$, $p < .01$, $d = 1.44$. Women ($M = 6.32$, $SD = .54$) expressed more attraction to the targets than did men ($M = 4.95$, $SD = 1.23$). The interaction effect did not reach significance, $F(1, 36) < 1$, $p > .45$ (see Table 1).

Discussion

In accordance with our hypothesis, high style targets elicited higher ratings of attraction than did low style targets. There was a main effect of gender, but that effect could be attributed to differences in stimuli. That is, the female and male participants were shown two different targets. It is possible, and even likely, that the two targets were not equally attractive in non-style-related ways. For our purposes, it is important to note that gender did not interact with style. Thus, the impact of style on attraction was similar for men and women.

What we can conclude from this experiment is that style impacts attraction. Participants were more attracted to a high style, rather than a low style, target. However, what we do not know is why style affects attraction. There are a number of factors that might mediate the observed effect, and we tested these potential mediators in Experiment 2.

Experiment 2

Experiment 2 was procedurally similar to Experiment 1; participants expressed their attraction to a high or low style target. However, there were two critical modifications. First, we used only male participants in Experiment 2. Given that participant gender did not interact with style in Experiment 1, we expected to replicate the critical finding of Experiment 1: participants should be more attracted to high, rather than low, style targets. Second, participants completed items assessing their perceptions of the physical attractiveness, status, and attitude similarity (to themselves) of the target. These items allowed us to investigate the possible mediation of the style-attraction link by each of the three variables.

Method
Participants and Experimental Design

Forty-six college-aged male participants (29 White, 7 African American, 8 Hispanic, 2 Unknown) who ranged in age from 18-22 years ($M = 19.4$) were randomly assigned to answer questions about a high or low style target. All participants received the questionnaire in a classroom specifically reserved for the purpose of the study. All participants received extra credit towards a psychology class in exchange for participation.

Manipulation and Measures

The questionnaire consisted of five types of items: the attraction assessment (AAS; identical to the one used in Experiment 1), the style manipulation check (identical to the one used in Experiment 1), an attitude similarity item (How similar do you think your attitudes are to this person's attitudes?; endpoints: 1 = *not at all similar*, 9 = *extremely similar*), a perceived attractiveness item (How attractive do you think this person is?; endpoints: 1 = *not at all attractive*; 9 = *very attractive*), and a perceived status item (How wealthy do you think this person is?; endpoints: 1 = *poor*; 9 = *wealthy*). As in Experiment 1, the AAS proved to be reliable (Cronbach's alpha = .86). We created a composite attraction score by averaging all seven items.

Manipulation of style was the same as the manipulation in Experiment 1. The female target was the same for both levels of style. In the high style condition she was dressed in a purple shirt and brown slacks with matching earrings. In the low style conditions, she was dressed in red slacks, a green-based multicolored shirt, and an unmatching necklace. We reused the pictures of the female target from Experiment 1.

Procedure

Each participant was presented with a packet that consisted of a picture of a high style or low style female target and the 11-item questionnaire (consisting of the AAS, the manipulation check item, and the items

TABLE 1

Attraction as a Function of Participant Gender and Style Condition in Experiment 1

	High Style Manipulation	Low Style Manipulation	Row Mean
Men	5.50	4.40	4.95
Women	6.67	5.96	6.32
Col. Mean	5.18	6.09	

Note: *n*=40
The style and gender main effects were significant, but a significant interaction of style and gender was not present.

assessing similarity, attractiveness, and status). No additional information about the target was provided. Participants completed the task individually without time constraints. After completing the task, participants were debriefed.

Results
Manipulation Check

Analysis of variance revealed a significant difference in the perceptions of style as a function of the style manipulation. Participants regarded the high style target ($M = 6.83$, $SD = 1.13$) as more stylish than the low style target ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 2.20$), $F(1, 44) = 36.05$, $p < .0001$, $d = 1.77$. Style was manipulated effectively.

Does style influence attraction?

We expected that participants would be more attracted to the high style, as compared to the low style, target. To assess this hypothesis, we subjected the attraction assessment to a one-way ANOVA. Indeed, participants expressed more attraction to the high style target ($M = 6.37$, $SD = 1.24$) than to the low style target ($M = 5.12$, $SD = 1.41$), $F(1, 44) = 10.24$, $p < .01$, $d = .94$, $R^2 = .17$. This result effectively replicated Experiment 1.

Which variable(s) mediate(s) the impact of style on attraction?

In order to investigate the mediation of the style-attraction link via perceptions of similarity of attitudes, physical attractiveness, and status, we used the mediational procedure described by Baron and Kenny (1986). In order to establish mediation, (a) the independent variable (style) must predict the dependent variable (attraction), (b) the independent variable must predict the potential mediator (attractiveness, status, or similarity), (c) the potential mediator must predict the dependent variable, and (d) when the potential mediator and the independent variable are both used to predict the dependent variable, the impact of the mediator must be significant, whereas the impact of the independent variable should be reduced significantly (for partial mediation) or drop to zero (for full mediation). It is important to note that the first mediational step is established by the significant impact of style on attraction (described above). We also computed indirect effects of the independent variable on the dependent variable via the mediator using Sobel's test (see Baron & Kenny, 1986). Mediation analyses involving each of the three proposed mediators are provided below. We centered all potential mediators and the outcome variables (Aiken & West, 1991).

Physical attractiveness. Consistent with the second requirement of mediation, the style manipula-

tion predicted significantly perceptions of physical attractiveness, $B = .64$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .17$. Participants rated the high style target ($M = 6.35$, $SD = .88$) as more physically attractive than the low style target ($M = 5.06$, $SD = 1.72$). Additionally, perceptions of physical attractiveness predicted attraction significantly, $B = .75$, $p < .01$. The more attractive the participants perceived the target to be, the more attraction to the target they expressed, $r(46) = .76$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .57$. Finally, when both style and physical attractiveness were entered as predictors of attraction, physical attractiveness predicted attraction significantly, $B = .70$, $p < .01$, whereas the impact of style on attraction dropped to non-significance, $B = .18$, $p > .25$, model $R^2 = .57$. The indirect effect of style on attraction via physical attractiveness was significant, $z = 2.86$, $p < .01$. Thus, perceptions of physical attractiveness mediated the impact of style on attraction.

Status (wealth). Consistent with the second requirement of mediation, the style manipulation predicted perceptions of wealth significantly, $B = .51$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .12$. Participants rated the high style target ($M = 5.75$, $SD = .79$) as wealthier than the low style target ($M = 4.72$, $SD = 1.64$). Additionally, perceptions of wealth predicted behavioral attraction significantly, $B = .48$, $p < .01$. The wealthier the participants regarded the target, the more attraction to the target they expressed, $r(46) = .45$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .18$. Finally, when both style and wealth were entered as predictors of attraction, both wealth, $B = .35$, $p < .03$, and style, $B = .44$, $p < .04$, predicted attraction significantly, model $R^2 = .25$. Importantly, the indirect effect of style on attraction via wealth was not significant, $z = 1.71$, $p < .10$. Thus, perceptions of wealth were related to style and to attraction but did not mediate significantly the style-attraction link.

Attitude similarity. Consistent with the second requirement of mediation, the style manipulation predicted perceptions of attitude similarity significantly, $B = .63$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .15$. Participants rated the high style target ($M = 5.75$, $SD = 1.42$) as more similar to them than the low style target ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 1.37$). Additionally, perceptions of attitude similarity predicted behavioral attraction significantly, $B = .54$, $p < .01$. The more similar to themselves the participants regarded the target, the more attraction to the target they expressed, $r(46) = .57$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .30$. Finally, when both style and attitude similarity were entered as predictors of attraction, similarity predicted attraction significantly, $B = .44$, $p < .01$, whereas the impact of style on attraction dropped to non-significance, $B = .35$, $p > .05$, model $R^2 = .34$. Importantly, the indirect effect of style on attraction via attitude similarity was significant, $z = 2.23$, $p < .03$. Thus,

perceptions of attitude similarity mediated the impact of style on attraction.

The mediation of style and attraction by similarity of attitudes and attractiveness is shown in Figure 1.

Discussion

Experiment 2 increases confidence in the fundamental impact of style on attraction and provides valuable insight into exactly which factors drive the style-attraction relationship. As in Experiment 1, participants expressed more attraction to high, rather than low, style targets. Additionally, and in accordance with our hypothesis, style did not affect attraction directly. Rather, style affected attraction indirectly through the perceived attractiveness of the target and through the perceived attitude similarity to the target. Importantly, status was associated with both style (the stylish target was regarded as higher in status than the low style target) and attraction (the higher the perceived status of the target, the more attraction participants expressed), but status was not a significant mediator of the style-attraction link. Of course, status could be an effective mediator of the style-attraction link for women. After all, women, relative to men, weigh status and wealth more heavily in mate selection (Buss et al., 1990). Such weight could also translate into an emphasis by women on the status-

enhancing or deflating aspects of style. We leave it to future research to investigate this possibility.

General Discussion

In two studies, stylish clothes positively affected attraction to an individual. The second experiment elaborated on the style attraction link and showed that the style-attraction effect was mediated by perceptions of physical attractiveness of the target and perceptions of attitude similarity between the participant and target.

Mediation by Physical Attractiveness

There seems to be a logical explanation for the mediational power of perceived attractiveness. As stated previously, numerous studies have shown that physical attractiveness is related to attraction (e.g., Berscheid et al., 1971; Chapdelaine, Levesque, and Cuadro, 1999; Krebs & Adinolit, 1975; Reis, et al., 1982; Walster, Aronson, & Abrahams, 1966). Logically, if an individual is dressed in a manner that others perceive as aesthetically pleasing, as is the case in our high style targets, then they will look more attractive than an individual who is dressed in a less pleasing manner (as were the low style targets). This attractiveness then guides attraction.
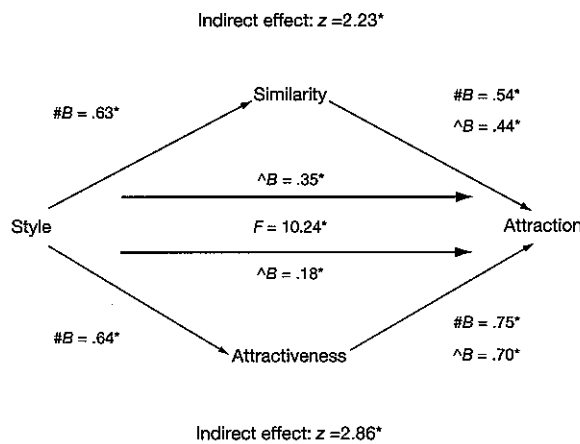
What is particularly interesting about this effect is that our style manipulation was unrelated to the physical qualities of the target. That is, we put forth great effort to ensure that the clothes that we used to manipulate style did not differentially accentuate body shape or any other physical characteristic. As a reminder, the tightness of clothes has also been linked to attraction (Hill, Nocks, & Gardner, 1987), and this relation appears to be a direct one (i.e., clothes emphasize attractive physical qualities, and thus, lead to attraction). However, the current study suggests a less direct link between clothes and physical attractiveness. Although we have no data to suggest the specific mechanism by which style increased physical attractiveness, one might imagine that the evaluation of target physical attractiveness results from the association (in proximity) between attractive clothes and the target. Alternatively, stylish clothes may combine, in some artistic way, with certain facial features of an individual to subtly, but powerfully, influence attractiveness. Such possibilities provide interesting fodder for future investigation.

Mediation by Attitude Similarity

With regard to the mediating power of perceived attitude similarity, Swann (1987) suggested that individuals use clothes to express their disposition and beliefs. Individuals are relatively good at reading these

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FIGURE 1.

Mediational model of style and attraction effect by similarity of attitudes and attractiveness, Experiment 2

Indirect effect: $z = 2.23^*$

$\#B = .63^*$ Similarity $\#B = .54^*$ $^\wedge B = .44^*$

$^\wedge B = .35^*$

Style $F = 10.24^*$ Attraction

$^\wedge B = .18^*$

$\#B = .64^*$ Attractiveness $\#B = .75^*$ $^\wedge B = .70^*$

Indirect effect: $z = 2.86^*$

Note: $n = 46$

$^*p < .05$

$\#B$ = slope in univariate regression.

$^\wedge B$ = slope in multiple regression with both style and mediator in the model.

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cues (Johnson, Schofield, & Yurchisin, 2002), but our results suggest that there is another factor other than pure cue interpretation affecting the results. We suggest that the mediational power of attitude similarity is a result of the "better than average effect," the tendency for people to view themselves as better than average (Alicke, 1985). Research has shown that individuals tend to evaluate themselves more favorably than others. As an example, the College Board in (1976-1977) conducted a survey of high school students and found that a majority of individuals rated themselves as above average in the areas of leadership, athletic ability, and ability to get along with others. The better than average effect is also evidenced in self-ratings of driving ability (Svenson, 1981), ethics (Baumhart, 1968), health (Weinstein, 1980, 1982), managerial skills (Larwood &Whittaker, 1977), depression (Tabachink, Crocker, Alloy, 1983), risk misfortune (Perloff & Fetzer, 1986; Weinstein 1980, 1982, 1984), and conforming to social norms (Codol, 1975). So, how is it that the better than average effect contributes to the association of attitude similarity with the high style target?

It is possible that our participants perceived themselves as stylish, regardless of objective evidence. If so, participants may have created a cognitive association between themselves and the high style target (i.e., "we are similarly stylish."). If clothes, and more specifically style, provide cues to attitudes, then perceptions of style similarity may have led directly to inferences regarding attitude similarity. The perceived attitude similarity, in turn, guided attraction. Fortunately, the notions that participants regard their style as (1) better than average and (2) similar to the high style target are both testable. Unfortunately, the current study did not assess these notions directly. Future investigations would do well to include such ratings in order to flush out the proposed explanation.

Limitations

Based upon the two studies described here, we feel confident in suggesting that stylish clothes reap the reward of interpersonal attraction. However, it is also important for us to acknowledge certain methodological factors that limit the generalizability of this finding. First, we operationalized style in clothing that an individual in a photograph was wearing. While photographs are commonly used in interpersonal attraction research (e.g., Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972; Horton, 2003), reactions to photographs are not likely to perfectly mimic reactions to real-life targets. More specifically, the use of a photograph limits the amount of information that the participant has about the target. Participants only see the target. They do not experience the complexity of an actual interaction, the subtle interpersonal cues that are passed from person to person and that weigh so heavily on the judgments that we form of others.

Having acknowledged the artificiality of the experimental situation, we should note that this critique is one that has been leveled upon robust interpersonal attraction phenomena (e.g., the similarity effect; Sunnafrank & Miller, 1981), and the critique is primarily a threat to the power of the effect, rather than to its existence. That is, following a model of basic psychological research, our goal was to investigate the possible existence of an effect of style on attraction. In the service of this goal, we created conditions that could isolate the impact of style from what is a complex network of factors that affect attraction. The generalizability of our finding is threatened by the control that was necessary to effectively explore the effect. It is entirely possible that, just like the power of similarity on attraction (see Montoya, Horton, & Kirchner, 2004), the impact of style on attraction is attenuated (diluted, if you will) in the presence of other personal and interpersonal factors that affect attraction (e.g., exposure, reciprocity, similarity, physical attractiveness). Now that the style-attraction effect has been described here, future research should investigate the power of the effect and its relative place within the network that impacts interpersonal attraction.

Another limitation of the project was the use of only male participants in Experiment 2. We based this decision upon the fact that Experiment 1 found that both genders were influenced equally by style. However, it was only in study 2 in which we investigated the possible mediators of the style-attraction effect. Thus, the similarity and physical attractiveness mediators identified in study 2 may hold true only for men. It is likely (as observed in study 1) that women are more attracted to high style, rather than low style, men; however, the reason for this increased attraction may not be similarity or attractiveness. The style-attraction link for women may be mediated by a different variable, possibly status. After all, and as noted previously, status seems to be a particularly important influence on women's attraction to men (see Buss, Abbott, & Angleitner, 1990). Thus, it is reasonable to suggest that the impact of men's style on women's attraction for them may be mediated by perceptions of status.

Finally, both studies described included samples of men that were drawn from an all-male college: Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Indiana. Although we deem it unlikely that Wabash students are systematically different from other male college students, we must be conservative in generalizing our findings beyond this group. We would support future investi-

gations of the style-attraction effect and its mediators in more diverse samples than the ones described here. After all, there is a possibility that the effect and its mediators vary across race, gender, region, and, of course, age.

Future Directions and Applications

As noted above, there are a variety of ways that future research could extend the current findings. First, replications of the style-attraction effect in diverse samples would increase confidence in the importance, and pervasiveness, of the effect. Second, further investigations of the mediators of the style-attraction effect are critical in order to either confirm or refute similarity and attractiveness as consistent mediators of the style effect. Such research would also do well to investigate exactly why perceptions of similarity, or other mediators, flow from perceptions of style. We have mentioned the possibility that the inference of similarity results from inflated views of the self, the resultant perception of style similarity, and generalization of that similarity. These possibilities are empirically testable. Third, in order to investigate the power of the style-attraction effect, future research should embed style manipulations in real-world interactions between participants and targets. Such experiments would provide a more accurate sense of when, and how powerfully, style affects attraction.

Conclusions

In summary, there is a link between style and attraction for both genders during the "college years." Men seem to use style information as a basis from which to judge attractiveness but also to form beliefs about a target's internal attitudes. Stylish clothes, defined by an effective manipulation grounded in color combinations and accessory additions, make a woman more attractive to men, and men tend to associate themselves more strongly with a woman of higher style, possibly due to the better than average effect. We must admit that is it is refreshing to see that (a) our complex cognitive structure is utilized in the evaluations of others and (b) young males are not entirely visual, contrary to colloquial beliefs, when evaluating members of the opposite sex. Although we cannot be certain that the men's and women's responses to style are mediated by the same variables, it seems that we can reassure GAP and Abercrombie & Fitch customers that their clothing expenditures do not go for naught and do reap interpersonal gain.

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