

Research Assessment 11: Influence of Attire

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Sources:

1. ANDREA HEIMAN. "The Picture of Innocence?" Los Angeles Times. Los Angeles Times, 04 Apr. 1993. Web. 17 Feb. 2017.
<http://articles.latimes.com/1993-04-04/news/vw-18896_1_amy-fisher-michael-milken-jury-behavior-research>.

Analysis:

As mentioned in my final product proposal, juries are influenced by many factors when deliberating a verdict such as the crime, severity, and the sincerity of the defendant's testimony. However, one factor unfailingly sways juries in either direction; appearance. According to Psychology Today, "the influence of appearance in the courtroom is so great, in fact, that an entire industry has emerged to advise lawyers, plaintiffs, and defendants on their aesthetic choices" (Psychology Today, Paul).

Whether an individual in court facing charges after being arrested looks like an inmate or a regular person makes all the difference. In fact, "consultants often try to 'humanize' their clients, making them appear more appealing and accessible, they also seek a certain anonymity. The generic-looking defendant becomes a blank screen upon which jurors can project their own fears: that could be my neighbor, they may think, or that could be me" (Psychology Today, Paul). Taking this all into account, it is important to

fully understand how a jury is influenced by attire. This assessment will delve deeper on this subject.

Numerous image experts, attorneys, and jury consultants unanimously agree that though evidence and testimony matter the most, attire definitely has influence on the jury. In fact, it has enough of an influence that there are many consulting businesses, such as Jury Behavior Research Inc., that advise attorneys and clients on how to dress, what colors to wear, what makeup to wear or not wear, what hairstyles work, what body language to use and avoid, and speech patterns. This industry is currently booming, and such businesses charge \$115 an hour of advice.

So what specific tricks do attorneys and consultants use to help their client? One interesting and odd one I learned about was the common practice of lawyers to spray "potentially shifty-eyed defendant's glasses with PAM cooking spray" or a pair of fake glasses so that the individual's on a jury cannot see the person's eyes. Why do they do this? What is the benefit? According to an article by the LA Times, "Studies show people have a harder time remembering what was said, even if it was incriminating, if you can't see the person's eyes." There are numerous other tricks and manipulations utilized. Wearing bigger than normal clothes can make a defendant look weak, frail, and more like a victim. Wearing not too pricy clothes makes the defendant look humble and down to earth.

With that basic foundation laid and background information given, we can move onto the specific situation that my mentor and I discussed at our last mentor visit and is the reason of my final product. Jail clothes. Criminal court judge, Judge Bernard J. Kamins weighed in on this subject in an concise and easily understandable way, "jail clothes can cut two ways, it can hurt the defendant, because the jury figures if he has jail clothes on, he must have done something wrong. Or it can give sympathy to the defendant, and the jury has a natural inclination to feel some pity." However, it is important to realize that the two options are drastically different and as a result crucial. During my mentor visit at the Collin County Courthouse, I learned about how civilian clothing not only gives the defendant confidence but it also normalizes the defendant in the jury's eyes. Instead of being a unsympathetic, seasoned criminal, they become a regular citizen who made a mistake.

Now, many in the general public can afford or already have appropriate and pristine clothing to wear to court. An average individual will wear a suit, a professional dress, or a button down and either a reasonable length skirt or ironed slacks. When walking into court, the average individual does not wear bright color or eye catching patterns. Why is that? This is because when in a courtroom, the 'average individual' does not want to stand out because similar to jail attire, such clothing has two outcomes. A negative or positive reaction. As a result, people tend to try to dress as

neutrally as positive with a inclination towards the positive side. Hence the neat, nice and professional clothing. However, some individuals are homeless and/or cannot afford such clothes. Due to this fact, they end up in court in either very unsuitable and worn down clothing or in jail clothes.

In schools, when a student can not afford an essential item needed for a class the teacher or school will oftentimes provide it for them. The school takes care of their students to ensure they are enabled to reach their highest potential. Why don't we do the same for those heading into a trial? Many courts already have designated clothes set aside for those about to head into court. Unfortunately, the Collin County Courthouse no longer has a court closet and cannot offer this service. Interestingly enough, the Courthouse used to have a court closet. However, there was a misunderstanding when a judge ordered the closet to be shifted to the jail. The hope was that it would be time efficient if the defendants changed at the jail before being transported to the courthouse for a court appearance. When the closet got to the courthouse though, the jail was uncertain what to do with them and ended up throwing it all away.

By exploring this topic in depth, the information I have learned has given me a better understanding of the specifics of how clothing influences juries. This will help me with my final product because I now know details on what type of clothing will be best

to gather when I have have my clothing collection drives. For example, I had no idea that dark colors though acceptable, are not preferable. The following page has a chart of do's and dont's for court room attire.

Do's	Dont's
Pastel colors	Unkempt hair and beard
Less makeup for youthful look	Jail Clothes
Looser fitting clothes	Jeans
Tied up hair	Mismatched clothes
Ties	Dark suits
Cardigans	Leather
Shirts with collars	Plunging v-necks
Long sleeves	Sunglasses
Lighter colors	Dirty clothes