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Personal image and the nurse executive

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PERSONAL IMAGE AND THE NURSE EXECUTIVE

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Nursing
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

By

Dixie Eisenhower

August, 1990

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ABSTRACT

PERSONAL IMAGE AND THE NURSE EXECUTIVE

by Dixie Eisenhower

This thesis addresses the topic of how nurses who are currently in or pursuing management positions perceive clothing and their personal image. The beliefs of the respondents regarding the relationship between their appearance, fashion, and success are discussed. In addition, the thesis questions examine the respondents' reactions to 12 clothing sketches.

There was a high degree of consensus among the respondents about which clothes were appropriate for themselves, a senior nurse executive, or a junior nurse executive. The results indicated that the respondents believe that dress is important in various aspects of professional relationships including self-image, success, and perceived ability to deal with others.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
 Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
The Problem.	2
Research Question.	3
Purpose and Need	4
Operational Definitions.	5
Research Design.	7
Scope and Limitations.	8
2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW . .	10
Introduction	10
Conceptual Framework	11
Selected Literature Review	15
3. DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	20
Research Design.	20
Instrument	20
Sample	23
Data Collection.	23
Data Analysis.	24
4. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION.	27
Introduction	27

Chapter	Page
4 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION	
Personal Profile	27
Question One: Clothing.	36
Question Two: Fashion	40
Question Three: Appearance.	42
5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.	47
REFERENCES.	51
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	55
APPENDIXES	
A. Survey Instrument.	58
B. Cover Letter	64
C. Post-card.	66
D. Letter to Thesis Reader.	68
E. Letter to <u>Savvy Magazine</u>	70

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1.	Number of Years Since Obtained Last Degree.	28
2.	Occupation of Nurses in this Study.	29
3.	Income for the Last 12 Months	30
4.	Place of Employment	32
5.	Number of Years in the Company.	33
6.	Percentage of Positive Responses for Values and Behavior Category	34
7.	Percentage of Positive Responses for Reactions to Personal Situations Category	35
8.	Percentage of Attitudes Towards Performance Competencies	45

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Researcher's Model of an Image Triangle. . . .	14
2. Clothing Sketches.	39

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Jeanette Lancaster (1986) has forecast that if nursing is to survive in the future, nurses will need to strengthen their image. "The business world discovered many years ago that one's personal image can communicate professionalism, intelligence, creativity, commitment, and autonomy" (Nerone, 1986, p. 35). Unless nursing can communicate these attributes, it will cease to be a professional career.

The delivery of nursing practice is dependent upon the allocation of healthcare funds on local, state, and federal levels. The disbursement of these limited funds is "closely tied to the quality and quantity of the images of nurses and nursing in the mass media" (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1987, p. 193). According to Kalisch and Kalisch (1987), the media has been instrumental in contributing to the negative image of nursing. The five dominant images of nurses in the media have been: "the nurse as an Angel of Mercy, Girl Friday, Heroine, Wife and Mother, and Sex Object" (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1987, p. x). Novels, magazines, newspapers, motion pictures, radio and television programs rarely portray nurses as educated, committed caregivers. Kalisch and Kalisch (1987) further contend that this negative image

affects the self-image and self-confidence of the individual nurse.

Stevens (1983) concludes that people must present an appropriate personal image in order to be personally effective. One aspect of personal image is the power inherent in appearance. Appearance does count. The manner, in which a person dresses and moves comprises a visual presence (Kooker, 1986, p. 54). Nurses need to understand that their visual presence has an impact on how others see them.

Problem

Clothing can be manipulated to optimize visual impact. "Clothing is a potent--highly visible--medium of communication that carries a flood of information about who a person is, who a person is not, and who a person would like to be" (Solomon, 1986, p. 20). Actors have mastered the craft of using clothing to project a role and to present an image.

Since 1873, nurses have used the white uniform to project their role and to present an image of professionalism and authority. Today, the nurse's role has expanded from the concept of the bedside nurse to a role of active participation in the power systems of hospitals, politics, education, and law. Rather than wearing the traditional white uniform, many nurses are required to adopt

a similar style of clothing and dress to their counterparts in the corporate world. Kalisch and Kalisch (1985) state that, in the process of nurses shedding the white uniform, nurses have "lost sight of the fact that their appearance is still a critical element in professional effectiveness" (p. 892).

The future direction of nursing will depend upon the professional effectiveness of the nurse executive. Nurse executives hold legitimate power positions that can be used to influence the public's view of nursing. The nurse executive's evaluation of his/her professional appearance will be a determining factor in her continued role and success within the environment in which she works.

Research Questions

The research questions are:

1. Are nurse executives concerned with clothing as it relates to their job?
2. Do nurse executives choose their clothing from fashion advertising?
3. Do nurse executives think their appearance affects their job performance?

The idea of clothing as a form of nonverbal communication is not a new one, but its application for nurses in management level positions has not been examined. Because of the wide variety of choice in feminine dress,

women in the business world are still unsure about "the appropriate mixture of masculine and feminine attributes desirable in female professional dress" (Solomon, 1986, p. 28).

Purpose and Need

One of the purposes of this study was to explore how nurses in management positions perceive clothing. Another was to assess how the nurse rates the importance of clothing.

Austin, Champion, and Tzeng (1985) conducted a crosscultural comparison of the relationship between the image of nursing and femininity. They reported that nurses were perceived as weak and dependent rather than strong and independent. As a result of the study, they concluded that nurses need to alter their image. Bampton, Weir, and Kyle (1986) developed a questionnaire "to determine the public's perception of nurses and the nursing profession" (p. 34). Kalisch's and Kalisch's (1987) book The Changing Image of the Nurse thoroughly explores the images of nurses in the mass media. Both sets of authors indicated that the general public's perceptions of nursing and the nurse personality are inaccurate. They advocate that nurses become more aware of their image and take an active role in influencing the media. Outdated and outmoded beliefs affect the recruitment of women and men into the profession, thus affecting how our

policy makers allocate resources, revenue, and research funds.

In order to assure nursing an appropriate portion of today's scarce resources, nursing executives need to market nursing. They need to project an image of authority and competence. By establishing a professional dress standard, nurse executives can be assured they are portraying a professional image. "The point is that appropriate clothing will not make you powerful, but inappropriate clothing can destroy an otherwise powerful image" (Lamar, 1985, p. 44).

Operational Definitions

For the purposes of this study, the following terms were used as defined by the researcher:

1. Nurse executive refers to a registered nurse who is pursuing or currently in a management position such as president of a nursing organization, nursing educator, or nursing administrator in a hospital setting. These people dress in executive type clothing rather than in any form of a nursing uniform. "These nurses hold legitimate power positions and can exercise authority over clients and students . . . " (Eichenberger & Parker, 1987, p. 114).

2. Image refers to how others see the entire field of nursing rather than how we see ourselves. It is "the concept of a person, product, institution, etc. held by the general public, often one deliberately created or modified

by publicity, advertising, propaganda, etc." (Webster, 1988, p. 673).

3. Personal image refers to how we individually feel about ourselves. "Personal image is the reflection of one's self-esteem, self-confidence, and power in his or her appearance and mannerisms" (Stevens, 1983, p. 221).

4. Image of nursing refers to "the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that people have of nurses and nursing" (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1987, p. 2).

5. Clothing refers to wearing apparel (Webster, 1988, p. 265). Clothing is a non-verbal form of communication that can influence both the wearer's feelings and behavior, as well as the observers (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1985, p. 887).

6. Appearance refers to the "look or outward aspect of a person or thing." Look reflects specific physical details (Webster, 1988, p. 66).

7. Self-esteem refers to a belief in oneself (Webster, 1988, p. 1218). Self-esteem implies that one has a sense of confidence, commitment, and professional worth (Stevens, 1983, p. 220).

8. Self-confidence refers to an individual's orientation towards success and personal satisfaction with one's own job performance or abilities (Stevens, 1983, p. 220).

9. Job performance refers to successful or unsuccessful task accomplishment (Stevens, 1983, p. 220).

Research Design

The design of this study was exploratory. Data for the study were collected by a survey using a structured questionnaire. The purpose of the questions was to explore the topic, obtain information, and report the results of the responses, but not to infer cause and effect relationships between the variables. It was assumed that the respondents were telling the truth and not merely making socially desirable responses.

One advantage of this methodology is that a questionnaire is easy to distribute at minimum cost. Another advantage is that the respondents reply to the questionnaire anonymously. This produces a more unbiased examination of the results. Last, the questionnaire eliminates the personal bias that may occur with an interview type format. One frequent disadvantage of the mail survey questionnaire method is a low return rate of the questionnaire (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 1986, p. 167). In this study, 50 questionnaires were mailed and 30 were returned.

The questionnaire chosen for this study was selected from popular literature. The instrument was developed by Michael Solomon and Susan Douglas, Professors of Marketing

at New York University, for Savvy Magazine. Solomon and Douglas acknowledged the helpful assistance of Olivia Schieffelin Nordberg, a sociologist and contributing editor of American Demographics; David Fleischner, Leslie Marenberg, and Ramesh Nair, research assistants and graduate students in the Department of Marketing at New York University; and Nina Hyde, fashion editor of the Washington Post (Savvy, 1983, p. 60). Content validity is often evaluated by submitting the tool to a panel of experts in the field (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 1986, p. 186). However, neither in the article nor in correspondence with the authors was the issue of reliability addressed. The instrument was developed to survey women executives in business. For the purpose of this study, the tool was used to survey graduate level students in a master's program in nursing.

Permission to conduct the study was obtained through the San Jose State University Institutional Review Board-Human Subjects. The participants received a letter requesting their participation in the study. They were also provided with written assurance that all data would be kept confidential.

Scope and Limitations

The participants in this study were members of a graduate level class at San Jose State University consisting

of 50 nursing students, a small group compared to all graduate students of nursing in the United States. Therefore, a limitation of this study is the small sample size. The study group was readily available and limited to a specific geographic location in California. The conclusions from this study may not be generalized to other parts of the country or other nurses on local, state, or national levels. The study may be of interest to other nurses pursuing executive careers or in management positions.

Chapter 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

There is a paucity in the nursing literature of studies about the relationship between the nurse executive, clothing, and image. Studies from psychological, sociological, home economics, and business literature also have few published studies describing women's clothing and image. According to Susan Baird, Instructor of Business Communications at San Jose State University, most literature examines the male executive's image and resultant dress codes (personal communication, October 9, 1988). According to Solomon (1986), the study of women's fashion and clothing is just beginning.

Kalisch and Kalisch (1985) have done the most comprehensive studies of image and nursing; thus, their research work is presented as the basis for the conceptual framework. Stevens (1983) is presented in conjunction with Kalisch and Kalisch (1985) to support the concepts of non-verbal communication, behavior, and personal image.

This research confines itself to the narrow aspects of personal image as expressed in clothing. Clothing styles make a difference in the visual image each individual projects. It is important for each individual in an

emerging field to be aware of and responsible for a personal effect on the corporate image.

Conceptual Framework

The framework for this study was based upon the concept of image. According to Kalisch and Kalisch (1987), the image of nursing is not only influenced by the mass media, but also by nurses' outward appearance. Kalisch and Kalisch define the term image of nursing as "the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that people have of nurses and nursing" (1987, p. 2). The images that have epitomized nurses in the mass media have been "the nurse as an Angel of Mercy, Girl Friday, Heroine, Wife and Mother, and Sex Object" (Kalisch & Kalisch, 1987, p. x). These mass media portrayals stereotype nurses in a negative and unrealistic manner; thus perpetuating a distorted view of nurses by the public. These negative images of nurses influence nurses' own inner attitudes about themselves and their role in healthcare.

Stevens (1983) writes, "a person has high self-esteem when the [external] evaluation is positive and low self-esteem when the evaluation is negative" (p. 220). He contends that a high self-esteem leads to energy that enables one to influence others. Stevens further concludes that in order to influence others, one must present an appropriate personal image and that clothing is one facet of

this image. He asserts that there is power in appearance, and that clothing can be skillfully used to elicit a desired response from others. He concludes that a person's personal image is comprised of verbal and non-verbal messages. "When there is disharmony between the two, the non-verbal message will be trusted" (Stevens, 1983, p. 222). By increasing the awareness of non-verbal behavior, the nurse executive not only derives power over a non-verbal personal response but can more accurately interpret the messages sent by others.

Kalisch and Kalisch (1985) have expressed a similar viewpoint. They suggest that clothing is a form of non-verbal communication that stimulates judgmental or behavioral responses in others as to the wearer's behavior and self-perception. They conclude it is important to understand the meanings conveyed through clothing so nurses can project an image of professionalism and authority.

In conclusion, by combining the ideas of Kalisch and Kalisch (1985) and Stevens (1983), a conceptual framework was developed to describe the relationship between the importance of clothing and image. The conceptual framework also includes Solomon's (1986) words of "wearer" and "observer" to differentiate between the person wearing the clothing and the person viewing the clothing.

Clothing is any wearing apparel that is used to cover the human body. Clothing visually communicates the wearer's

feelings of social, sexual, and/or professional desirability (Solomon, 1986, p. 21). The wearer's desirability as perceived by the observer influences the outcome of their interpersonal interaction and influences their attitudes towards each other. The concept of clothing importance is the basis for the image triangle and this study.

Image is the resultant effect of the relationship between appearance, behavior, and personal image. Figure 1 represents these relationships as conceptualized by the author. The three corners of the image triangle are represented by the concepts of appearance (perceived impression of clothing), personal image (how the wearer of clothing feels about themselves), and behavior (conduct). The three concepts (appearance, personal image, behavior) combine to form the concept of image (a total impression).

The arrows between each corner of the triangle denote the two-way inter-relationships of each concept and the behavior patterns between the wearer and observer. The image triangle is described as follows. The choice of clothing not only influences the wearer's personal image, feelings, and behavior but can also influence the feelings and behaviors of the observer. In turn, the observer's behavioral responses to the wearer's appearance can influence the wearer's choice of clothing in the future as well as the tone of the initial meeting (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. An approach to the concept of image. The triangle illustrates the relationships between appearance, behavior, and personal image.

Clothing also conveys a message regarding the wearer's personal image, reflecting the wearer's own self-esteem and self-confidence. In turn, the wearer's personal image can influence the observer's behavior. The wearer's interpretation of the observer's behavior can influence feelings of personal image and choice of clothing in the future.

In conclusion, the inter-relationships of clothing, behavior, and personal image can be demonstrated through the image triangle. This visual portrayal may improve understanding of the relationships of the concepts in this study.

Selected Literature Review

After a manual and computer literature research was conducted, little published research was found relating to the nurse executive and clothing. A research study by Lafferty and Dickey (1980) presented evidence that nurses' attitudes towards their role and their attitudes toward clothing role symbols were in the process of change. Individuals were found to reject the traditional symbols associated with the nurse--hats, pins, and uniforms--viewing their role differently from the expected values and norms associated with the role. Baccalaureate educated nurses rejected the traditional symbols more frequently than nurses with less education. Thus, baccalaureate degree

nurses with attitudes in favor of role autonomy had a less favorable attitude toward role symbols and wore them less frequently.

Kelly (1985) stated that it does matter how nurses look. In her article, she discussed American Medical International, a health care corporation that has developed an "Image and Apparel Care Team" to focus on grooming and self-image of nurses. Their image-building workshops have been found to improve morale, increase cohesiveness, and increase the sense of power to all those who participate.

Kooker (1986) states that "before anyone can sell herself successfully to others, she must be completely sold on herself" (p. 54). Kalisch and Kalisch (1987) reported that nurses lack professional self-identity and self-esteem. They attribute this to the negative portrayals of nurses and nursing in the media.

Most research relating to women and clothing has been focused on women in the business world. Historically, Molloy (1977) was the first to develop guidelines to demonstrate how women should dress in the business world. He was also the first to forcefully state that women needed to pay attention to what they wear if they are going to be effective in their jobs. Molloy (1977) further indicated that women needed to eliminate from their dress those costumes specifically designed to attract the opposite sex.

He suggested that dress attire that was too masculine was just as unacceptable for a woman as dress attire that was too feminine.

DeLong, Salusso-Deonier, and Larntz (1983) studied male and female responses to the business and social dress continuum. They found males evaluated feminine business dress lower and feminine social dress higher than females. Feminine business dress was recognized by males to be less liked, less fashionable, less attractive, and less exciting than social dress. Females appeared to more easily accept the idea that any one category of dress represents a singular intention of purpose, leaving them free to vary their wardrobe to suit the occasion.

Lurie (1983) indicated that women in general have difficulty in choosing dress attire that is not intended to attract the male species. Women have not found the fine line that communicates both professional and female.

Rabolt (1984), in her unpublished dissertation study, found that the women who felt clothing was important and were aware of their own and other's appearance were those who had worked the shortest amount of time in their careers and were concerned about their career. Solomon and Douglas (1983) also found that the women most concerned with projecting the proper image were the women on the way up and not the women already on top. They reported that

appropriate dress was found to be different for each respondent's company, the respondent's position in the hierarchy, and the region of the country where the company was located. This is in opposition to the view of a universal dress standard that Molloy (1977) has advocated for all women in managerial type positions regardless of the region of the country where the company is located. Conservative dress, in any case, is generally accepted as more appropriate than stylish or trendy fashion.

Forsythe, Drake, and Cox's (1984) results showed that women, when applying for a managerial position, could manipulate their dress to project the characteristics of self-reliance, decisiveness, and forcefulness. Johnson (1984), in her unpublished dissertation, reported that applicants in appropriate dress were rated by recruiters as having the personality characteristics of competence, independence, and sociability. Those so-rated had a greater potential for being hired.

Lurie (1983), in her book The Language of Clothes, thoroughly explores the subject of clothing. She states, "We put on clothing for some of the same reasons that we speak: to make living and working easier and more comfortable, to proclaim (or disguise) our identities and to attract erotic attention" (p. 27).

Koch (1985), in her unpublished dissertation, found that even feminists accepted society's definitions of career appearance to increase their social, political, and economic power. She further asserted that the study of dress and the explanations of clothing-related behavior are very complex. Solomon (1986) states that we are just beginning to understand the importance of fashion and the importance of clothing to behavior and interpersonal relationships.

In summary, clothing is a non-verbal medium that reflects image and influences behavior. Clothing is an integral part of one's visual presentation. It is the non-verbal visual message that will leave the lasting impression. The conclusions formed about an individual's identity affects any future interactions. The impression of the wearer's role and image are projected through that person's clothing and behavior.

Chapter 3

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In order to discover the attitudes of the nurse participants regarding the relationship between clothing, behavior, and personal image, they were asked to respond to a questionnaire. The design of this study was exploratory, and the purpose of the questionnaire was to explore and obtain information and to report the results of the responses, but not to infer cause and effect relationships between the variables. The advantages of this methodology are that it is easy to distribute at minimum cost, respondents reply to the questionnaire anonymously, and the questionnaire will limit any bias that may occur with an interview type format.

A disadvantage of this methodology is a possible low return response rate. A low rate of return is more likely to produce a biased sample. Those participants who were more interested in the topic of the nurse executive and clothing could be the more likely to respond (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 1986, p. 208).

Instrument

"One of the problems in nursing research is locating an appropriate tool that is psychometrically satisfactory" (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 1986, p. 201). After an extensive

search for a data gathering device that would collect information on personal attitudes towards clothing, this researcher discovered that nursing lacks measurement devices related to the purposes of this study, and other disciplines (psychology, sociology, home economics, business) lack such devices as well. Solomon (1986) states that most studies have ignored the importance of fashion as an important factor in the issues of self-image and interpersonal relationships.

Upon reviewing popular literature, one questionnaire was found that addressed the questions proposed by this study. The questionnaire was developed by Michael Solomon and Susan Douglas, Professors of Marketing at New York University for Savvy Magazine. Other contributors were a sociologist, a fashion editor, and graduate students. In the survey research project for Savvy Magazine, over 8,000 responses were elicited. Verbal permission was obtained from Savvy Magazine to reprint the questionnaire (see Appendix E).

The content validity and reliability of the questionnaire has not been established. Solomon and Douglas (1983) acknowledged the helpful assistance of Olivia Schieffelin Nordberg, a sociologist and contributing editor of American Demographics; David Fleischner, Leslie Marenberg, and Ramesh Nair, research assistants and graduate

students in the Department of Marketing at New York University; and Nina Hyde, fashion editor of The Washington Post. They further acknowledged that the clothing illustrations were considered by "clothing experts (i.e., fashion editors of women's fashion and business magazines) to represent a range of styles which might be worn to work by a female executive" (Douglas & Solomon, 1983, p. 1).

The instrument consists of 4 pages of questions accompanied by sketches of 12 different clothing styles that might be worn by a female executive (see Appendix A). The first group of questions (1-12) and the last group of questions (27-35) sought demographic information regarding the respondents' executive positions, gender, age, education, and income. The second group of questions (13-26) sought information regarding the respondents' attitudes towards clothing and fashion. Included in this set of questions were the 12 clothing sketches, and the respondents were asked to evaluate their appropriateness or inappropriateness for their particular job situation.

All questions in the survey required a forced response except for three questions. These questions related to the respondents' years of nursing experience, the type of company for which they worked, and a brief description of their jobs. For this study, it was assumed that the respondents had held more than one job; thus, question

number 8 was altered from "Is this your first job?" to "Number of years nursing experience?"

Sample

The 50 participant sample was non-random, chosen from the graduate nursing students enrolled in the masters degree program at San Jose State University, Fall, 1988. All had completed the program's coursework, but none had completed their thesis work. These 50 students were both accessible and available. These students were considered to be typical nurses who were not only pursuing higher education, but were being educated in preparation for executive careers within their profession if they so desired.

Data Collection

The questionnaire was mailed to the graduate students in the San Jose State University's Masters Degree Program in Nursing. Due to the confidentiality problem of obtaining 30 of the graduate nursing students' addresses, the questionnaire was sent to the students' primary thesis reader with a cover letter requesting assistance in distributing the survey (see Appendix D). A stamped envelope was included for the thesis reader to mail the questionnaire to each student. The remaining 20 students were colleagues with whom this researcher had previously exchanged addresses. The questionnaire was mailed directly to them.

All students received a cover letter (see Appendix B), a stamped, addressed envelope in which to return the survey, and a stamped, addressed post-card (see Appendix C). The cover letter described the purpose of the study, instructions for completing the questionnaire, how to return both the questionnaire and the post-card, and where the results of the survey could be obtained. The post-card was to be returned independently of the survey. The post-card requested the student's name and address. The post-card further requested that the student indicate if the survey had been completed and mailed or if they did not wish to participate in the survey. Fifty questionnaires were mailed and 30 were returned. Of the 50 post-cards mailed, 24 were returned.

Data Analysis

The Statistical Program for the Social Sciences/Personal Computer software program was used to process the data. The study was a descriptive study, thus, basic descriptive statistics were used to explore the respondents' attitudes and opinions regarding clothing. Statistics included:

1. The use of percentages to organize and summarize the demographic data (questions 1-12, 15, 23, 24, 26, 27-35), the source of the respondents' ideas about wardrobe (question 14), the respondent's feelings of competence in

various areas of performance (question 16), and the respondent's feelings regarding the importance of dress and their job (question 25);

2. The use of the mode to tabulate the respondents' preference regarding the 12 clothing sketches (question 17-22); and

3. The use of the mean to report the respondents' feelings regarding the 18 clothing statements (question 13).

Questions 13.2, 13.12, 13.14 (statements about clothing and job), 17-22 (respondents' perception of clothing sketches), and question 25 (respondents' feelings regarding the importance of dress and their job) were used to answer the first research question, "Are nurse executives concerned with clothing as it relates to their job?"

Questions 13.8, 13.10, 13.16, 13.18 (statements about clothing and fashion), and question 14 (where the respondents obtained their ideas about what to wear) were used to answer the second research question, "Do nurse executives choose their clothing from fashion advertising?"

Questions 13.2, 13.3, 13.5, 13.6, 13.9, 13.13, 13.14, 13.15, 13.17 (statements about clothing and appearance), and question 16 (the respondents' assessment of their competence in various areas of performance) were used to answer the third research question, "Do nurse executives think their appearance affects their job performance?"

Only a description of the sample under study was attempted. The research questions served as the guideline for analyzing the data. When appropriate, data were summarized for clarity.

Chapter 4

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Introduction

This chapter describes the results of this study to explore how graduate nurses who are currently in or pursuing management positions perceive clothing. Initially, a demographic description of the population is presented. Next presented are the responses to the three research questions:

1. Are nurse executives concerned with clothing as it relates to their job?
2. Do nurse executives choose their clothing from fashion advertising?
3. Do nurse executives think their appearance affects their job performance?

The complete survey instrument is in Appendix A.

Personal Profile

The participants were asked questions to determine general demographic information, descriptions of education, income, employment levels, and their attitudes toward their job. The responses to the demographic questions 1-12, 15, 23, 24, 26-28, and 32-35 are summarized as follows.

Sex, Age, Education

A total of 27 females and 3 males returned the survey. These respondents were between the ages of 26 and 55 and had pursued higher education either towards a master's or doctoral degree. The number of years since the respondents obtained their last degree is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Number of Years Since Obtained Last Degree (N = 30)

Years	Frequency	Percent
Less than a year	8	26.7
1 - 5 years	6	20.0
6 - 10 years	9	30.0
Over 10 years	7	23.3
Total	30	100.0

These respondents, upon successful completion of their graduate studies, will have not only the educational standing, but the potential to pursue executive careers within their profession if they so desire. All the respondents were registered nurses. Only one of the respondents was not working. The occupations of the nurses are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Occupation of Nurses in this Study (N = 30)

Occupation	Frequency
Nurse Administrator	1
Nurse Manager	1
Assistant Manager	2
Nurse Consultant	1
Director of Adolescent Services	1
Nurse Educator	9
Infection Control Nurse	1
Mental Health Counselor	1
Nurse Marketing Agent	1
Nurse	4
Patient Care Planner	1
Public Health Nurse	3
Research Nurse	1
School Nurse	1
Utilization Management	1
Not Working	1
Total	30

Income

Ninety-six percent of the respondents were employed for pay. The income level (before taxes) of the respondents is reported in Table 3. The largest single number of respondents in any one category (11) earned between \$40,000 and \$49,999.

Table 3

Income for the Last 12 Months (N = 30)

Income	Frequency	Percent
\$5,000 - \$9,999	1	3.3
\$10,000 - \$14,999	0	0
\$15,000 - \$19,999	1	3.3
\$20,000 - \$24,999	1	3.3
\$25,000 - \$29,999	3	10.0
\$30,000 - \$34,999	3	10.0
\$35,000 - \$39,999	5	16.7
\$40,000 - \$49,999	11	36.7
\$50,000 - \$74,999	2	6.7
\$75,000 - \$99,999	0	0
\$100,000 or more	1	3.3
Missing	2	6.7
Total	30	100.0

Employment

Seventy percent of the nurses worked in companies with more than 100 employees. All of the respondents who were working were employed in jobs related to nursing and held positions that required customer/client contact. In response to question 6b, "How many people are under your administrative control?" responses indicated each respondent who was working supervised at least 5 people. The respondents' place of employment is presented in Table 4. Fifty-three percent of the nurses worked in an office environment. All but one lived in California in urban/suburban areas.

The number of years the respondents had been employed in their present job is presented in Table 5. The largest single number of respondents being in their present job between 1 and 5 years.

In response to question 9, "How long have you been working full-time?" responses indicated 14 (47%) of the respondents had been working full time for more than 10 years. Most were satisfied with their job and felt that their job performance was good to excellent. The respondents' years of nursing experience varied from 4 to 30 years.

Table 4

Place of Employment (N = 30)

Place	Frequency
College	4
Community Health Agency	1
County Agency	3
Healthcare	4
Hospital	10
Private Firm	3
Public School	1
U. S. Army	1
Veterans	1
Missing	2
Total	30

Table 5

Number of Years in the Company (N = 30)

Years	Frequency	Client
Less than 6 months	3	10.0
6 months - 1 year	7	23.3
1 year - 5 years	9	30.0
5 years - 10 years	5	16.7
More than 10 years	5	16.7
Missing	1	3.3
Total	30	100.0

Values and Behavior

Table 6 presents the respondents' responses to statements regarding their values and behavior. Almost all said they were ambitious, had more physical stamina than most, and hated interruptions. Ninety percent felt that their personal life was more important than their professional career. In concurrence with the last point, 36% only said they would prefer to work shorter hours.

Personal Reactions to Different Situations

The respondents' reactions to a number of different personal situations is presented in Table 7. Eighty percent of the respondents believed that their behavior was an

Table 6

Percentage of Positive Responses for Values and Behavior
Category (N = 30)

Statements	Yes Responses
Hard to leave office and go home	7
Ambitious	76
Hate to be interrupted	52
Have physical stamina	61
Personal life more important than work	90
Prefer shorter hours	36
Happy career condition for happy personal life	55
Have to work	69

Note. Responses are not mutually exclusive, thus do not total 100%.

expression of their true feelings, attitudes, and beliefs. Sixty-three percent felt that they would not change their opinions to please someone else or win favor, although 57% would look to the behavior of others to guide them in unfamiliar social situations.

In summary, the respondents were nurses who were highly educated and were employed in jobs that entailed

Table 7

Percentage of Positive Responses for Reactions to Personal
Situations Category (N = 30)

Situation	Yes Responses
My behavior expresses my true feelings	80
I do not say/do what others will like	30
I put on a show to impress people	17
I look to the behavior of others for cues	57
I act differently with different people	17
I pretend to enjoy myself when I don't	47
I am not the person I appear to be	27
I would not change my opinions to please	63
I do what people expect me to do to be liked	13
I feel awkward in company	23
I may deceive people when I dislike them	27

Note. Responses are not mutually exclusive, thus do not total 100%.

customer/client contact. They appear to be ambitious and believe in their abilities. These respondents believe that their behavior is an expression of their true inner feelings, attitudes, and beliefs.

Question One: Clothing

The first research question asked was, "Are nurse executives concerned with clothing as it relates to their job?" This research question was answered by questions 13.2, 13.12, 13.14 (statements about clothing and job), 17-22 (respondents' perceptions of clothing sketches), and question 25 (respondents' feelings regarding the importance of dress and their job).

The following questions 13.2, 13.12, and 13.14 were selected as those statements whose content related to clothing and job. The respondents were requested to rate each statement from 1 (strongly disagree) through 7 (strongly agree). A score closer to 7 demonstrates that the respondents strongly agreed with the statement. A score closer to 1 shows that the respondents disagreed with the statement.

- 13.2 Dressing well is important for advancement in one's career. $\bar{M} = 5.30$, $SD = 1.76$.
- 13.12 When I get dressed in the morning, much of my decision of what to wear is influenced by the various situations I expect to find myself in at work. $\bar{M} = 5.30$, $SD = 1.84$.

- 13.14 I often feel self-conscious if I find myself dressed inappropriately for some occasion (for example, either overdressed or underdressed).
 $\bar{M} = 4.67$, $SD = 1.71$.

Based on these three responses, it appears that the respondents agree to strongly agree that what clothing they wear to work is important. The scores of 4.67 and 5.30 are closer to the 7 (strongly agree) end of the scale and indicate the respondents agreed with the statements regarding clothing and job.

Question 25 asked the respondents if they considered dress important in client relations, male/female relations, top management relations, career advancement, and relations with secretarial staff. Responses to question 25 indicated that 28 of respondents (93.3%) believe that dress is important in client and top management relations. In addition, 83.3% believe that dress is important in male-female relationships, and 80% believe that dress is important for a career. Only 63.3% believe that dress is important for relationships with secretarial staff. Overall, a majority of the respondents believe that dress is important in all aspects of job relations.

Questions 17 through 22 provided further information on the respondents' perceptions of clothing and their job. The

respondents were asked to evaluate 12 clothing sketches (see Figure 2, p. 39). The respondents were to choose the sketches most appropriate and inappropriate in three categories: their particular job situation, a senior level executive position, and a junior level executive position. There were no right or wrong answers. The respondents could select as many or as few of the sketches as they wanted in each category.

A high degree of consensus was found regarding what constitutes proper dress standards for: self (number of respondents who found a particular sketch suitable for themselves), senior (number of respondents who found a particular sketch suitable for senior executives), and junior (number of respondents who found a particular sketch suitable for junior executives). Twenty of the respondents indicated sketch #1 was the most suitable for themselves and their job. None of the respondents chose sketch #6 as suitable for their job. Twenty-nine of the respondents indicated sketch #12 was the most suitable for a senior executive. None of the respondents chose sketch #4 or sketch #11 as suitable for a senior level executive. Twenty-six of the respondents indicated sketch #5 and #12, respectively, as the most suitable for a junior executive. The sketches least chosen for a junior level executive were sketches #4 and #11.

Figure 2. Clothing Sketches

Note. From "The Power of Pinstripes--A Survey of Executive Dress: by Saavy Magazine, 1982, p. 92. Reprinted by permission.

In summary, in response to research question one, "Are nurse executives concerned with clothing as it relates to their job?" the respondents indicated dressing was important for advancement in their career and that their decision about what to wear was influenced by the various work situations in which they expected to find themselves. Most felt dress important in client/customer relations, male/female relations, top management, and career advancement. In addition, the clothing sketches suggested that the respondents felt that there was an appropriate level of dress for themselves, a senior, and a junior executive. In general, the respondents indicated a preference for wearing tailored clothing (blazers or suits) over casual clothing (ruffles or boots).

Question Two: Fashion

The second research question asked was, "Do nurse executives choose their clothing from fashion advertising?" This research question was answered by questions 13.8, 13.10, 13.16, 13.18 (statements about clothing and fashion) and question 14 (the source of the respondents' ideas about wardrobe).

The following questions 13.8, 13.10, 13.16, and 13.18 were selected as those statements whose content related to clothing and fashion. The respondents were requested to rate each statement from 1 (strongly disagree) through 7

(strongly agree). A score closer to 7 demonstrates that the respondents strongly agreed with the statement. A score closer to 1 shows that the respondents disagreed with the statement.

13.8 I am often the first to buy a new fashion.

$\bar{M} = 2.75$, $SD = 1.86$.

13.10 My friends and co-workers often come to me for advice about what to wear. $\bar{M} = 2.80$, $SD = 1.65$.

13.16 I usually have one or more outfits of the very latest style. $\bar{M} = 3.60$, $SD = 1.75$.

13.18 When I must choose between the two, I usually dress for fashion, not comfort. $\bar{M} = 2.37$, $SD = 1.35$.

The scores of 2.37, 2.75, 2.80, and 3.60 are closer to the strongly disagree end of the scale. These ratings indicate the respondents do not appear to attach a great importance to choosing clothing based on the latest fashions.

Question 14 asked the respondents the source of their ideas about what to wear. Responses to question 14 indicated that 77% of the respondents primarily obtained their ideas about what to wear from department stores, 73% from friends, and 63% from boutiques. Only 33% obtained their ideas about what to wear from fashion magazines. The least likely sources for wardrobe ideas were business

women's magazines (17%), books about dressing (20%), and T.V. advertisements (23%).

The findings of question 14 were consistent with question 13. The respondents neither attached a great importance to the concept of fashion nor did they choose their clothing through fashion advertising (magazines, books, or T.V.).

Question Three: Appearance

The third research question asked was, "Do nurse executives feel their appearance affects their job performance?" This research question was answered by questions 13.2, 13.3, 13.5, 13.6, 13.9, 13.13, 13.14, 13.15, 13.17 (statements about clothing and appearance) and question 16 (the respondents' assessment of their competence in various areas of performance).

The following questions 13.2, 13.3, 13.5, 13.6, 13.9, 13.14, 13.15, and 13.7 were selected as those statements whose content related to clothing and appearance. The respondents were requested to rate each statement from 1 (strongly disagree) through 7 (strongly agree). A score closer to 7 demonstrates that the respondents strongly agreed with the statement. A score closer to 1 shows that the respondents disagreed with the statement.

- 13.2 Dressing well is important for advancement in one's career. $\bar{M} = 5.30$, $SD = 1.76$.
- 13.3 I would like to be considered one of the best-dressed people in my office. $\bar{M} = 4.53$, $SD = 1.53$.
- 13.5 You can tell a lot about a woman by the way she dresses. $\bar{M} = 4.28$, $SD = 1.73$.
- 13.6 One of the last things I do before I leave my home is look in the mirror. $\bar{M} = 4.63$, $SD = 2.03$.
- 13.9 I keep my wardrobe in top condition at all times. $\bar{M} = 3.73$, $SD = 1.72$.
- 13.14 I often feel self-conscious if I find myself dressed inappropriately for some occasion (for example, either overdressed or underdressed). $\bar{M} = 5.33$, $SD = 1.65$.
- 13.15 The appropriateness of my clothing for a certain role affects the quality of my performance in that role (for example, being dressed "properly" for work, wearing a professional-looking tennis outfit when I play tennis, etc.). $\bar{M} = 3.90$, $SD = 1.81$.
- 13.17 An important part of my life and activities is dressing smartly. $\bar{M} = 3.53$, $SD = 1.48$.

The majority of the following means of 5.30, 4.53, 4.28, 4.63, 3.73, 5.33, 3.90, and 3.53 are closer to the 7

(strongly agree) end of the scale and indicate the respondents considered clothing and appearance important. Of the preceding scores, the lower means of 3.73 (wardrobe condition), 3.90 (ability of clothing to affect performance), and 3.53 (dressing smartly) indicate that the respondents do not appear to attach as great an importance to these statements regarding clothing and appearance.

Question 16 asked the respondents to assess their competence in various areas of performance. The percentage rate of responses to question 16 are found in Table 8. Responses indicate that the respondents are able to make fast decisions effectively, attain goals, are satisfied with their performance, and are able to work independently.

In summary, in response to research question three, "Do nurse executives feel their appearance affects their job performance?" the respondents were concerned with clothing as it related to their appearance. Furthermore, the respondents demonstrated by their scores that the majority were confident in their job performance.

In conclusion, 27 females and 3 males returned the survey. All the respondents were nurses. The 29 respondents who were employed held job positions related to nursing that required customer/client contact. The

Table 8

Percentage of Attitudes Towards Performance Competencies(N = 30)

Attitudes Towards Performance Competence	Percent
Fast, effective, decision-making	83
Attain goals	89
Fail to receive cooperation	17
Fail to impress person of the same sex	15
Increase work speed without sacrificing quality	75
Satisfied with performance	92
Ability to influence a group	68
Fail to function adequately in unfamiliar situations	22
Handle things on own	90

Note. Categories are not mutually exclusive, thus do not total 100%.

respondents believed that they were ambitious and that their behavior was an expression of their true inner feelings.

The respondents agreed that what clothing they chose to wear to work to be important. They primarily considered dress important in client and top management relations. The respondents indicated a preference for wearing tailored clothing over casual clothing. The primary sources of the respondents' ideas about what to wear were obtained from department stores, friends, and boutiques. They did not appear to choose their clothing based on the latest fashion advertising.

Overall, the respondents indicated appearance to be important. They did not attach as great importance to the appearance statements on wardrobe condition, the ability of clothing to affect performance, and dressing smartly. The respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their job performance capabilities.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A part of nursing's future will involve promoting a positive public image. Kalisch's and Kalisch's (1987) research into the image of nurses and the media indicate nurses are rarely portrayed as well-educated, committed caregivers. Nurses in the media are portrayed as the selfless, caring person; the submissive woman; the virtuous woman; the seductive woman; and the sadist who derives pleasure from causing pain. These portrayals reinforce outdated and outmoded beliefs of both women and nursing. This picture of nursing does not show the numerous services that nurses perform. Furthermore, this negative portrayal affects the recruitment of women and men into the profession. It influences our policy makers who allocate resources, research, and revenue funds, thereby affecting nurses' own self-image and self-confidence.

It is crucial that nurses develop a strategy to counteract the current media portrayals. Nurse executives are the leaders of today who have the power to determine what image to project and what role to play (Kooker, 1986, p. 53).

The results of this study should be interpreted with caution. Not only was the sample size small, but the

validity and reliability of the instrument was not determined. Solomon (1986) states that research involving the multiple aspects of women executives is just in the beginning stages. No conclusions can yet be drawn. However, the results of this study suggest some beginning directions for future research.

In this study, the respondents agreed that clothing was important for job advancement. The evaluation of the 12 sketches indicated a relatively high degree of consensus among the respondents about which clothing was appropriate for self, senior, and junior level executives. The respondents did not appear to choose clothing from fashion advertising, but obtained their ideas about what to wear from department stores, friends, and boutiques. Overall, the respondents felt dress is important in client/customer relations, male/female relations, top management, and career advancement.

The primary implication of this study is that more research is needed to investigate the significance of clothing. The results cannot be generalized to other population groups, but the following recommendations based on this preliminary study can be made.

First, there is a need to do a comparison study where the same survey would be given to other than graduate nurses to determine if similar results would be obtained. This

could also be further expanded to study actual senior and junior nurse executives.

Second, the same study could be conducted on a variety of populations of nurses of different age groups to determine if similar results would be obtained. It is possible that the age of the nurse and the length of time that the nurse has been in nursing practice affects their perspective on the importance of dress. Rabolt (1984) and Solomon and Douglas (1983) reported that the women most concerned with clothing were those women beginning in their careers, not those women already established.

Third, a new study could be developed where nurse respondents are not only asked to complete a questionnaire on professional dress and clothing, but also requested to participate in a filmed interview. The objective of this format would be to determine if the respondent's written responses and attitudes towards clothing correlated to their actual dress presentation in the filmed interview. It is important that nurses not only think about clothing as a part of their role, but be able to dress appropriately for their job situation.

Last, a new instrument could be developed to collect information on professional dress and image. The objective of this new tool would be to eliminate some of the problems encountered with the questionnaire used in this study. The

questionnaire used in this study was ultimately designed to survey marketing aspects of clothing and women in business. The questionnaire was lengthy and elicited a large amount of demographic data. Furthermore, neither the validity or reliability of the instrument has been established. Solomon (1986) states "as more systematic research is performed, we will better appreciate the role played by clothing in the fabric of social life" (p. 28).

Clothing is one aspect of appearance that not only influences the observer but can influence the wearer as well. The clothes that a nurse executive chooses to wear will have an impact on others. Actors have mastered the craft of using clothing to present an image. The most skilled actors look the part so people believe in their role. Nurse executives cannot afford to be ambivalent about the effects of dress on their profession.

In conclusion, each nurse does have his/her own personal image and style. "Image is an individual possession. Group image is dependent upon self-image . . ." (O'Health, 1984, p. 55). From this sample, it was perceived that nurses recognized a dress appearance most appropriate for themselves, a senior executive and a junior executive. By focusing on his/her image, each nurse can enhance how others see the individual nurse as well as enhance nursing's image as a whole.

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Appendixes

Appendix A
Survey Instrument

PLEASE NOTE

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They are available for consultation, however,
in the author's university library.**

59-63

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Appendix B
Cover Letter

School of Applied Arts and Sciences • Department of Nursing • Graduate Program
One Washington Square • San Jose, California 95192-0057 • 408/924-3134

February, 1989

Dear Graduate Nursing Student:

As a fellow graduate student, I am also pursuing a Masters of Science Degree in Community Health Nursing at San Jose State University. I am writing my thesis on how nurses who are currently in or pursuing management positions perceive clothing and their image. At this time, most research has been directed towards the female executive in business. Little research has been directed towards nurses and their choice of appropriate clothing for their non-traditional, out-of-uniform roles. I am seeking to determine, "What you think?" Would you please spend 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire and return it to me in the enclosed stamped, addressed envelope? Please remember to complete both sides of the questionnaire.

Consent to participate in this survey is implied when you return the completed questionnaire. All responses are anonymous and voluntary, thus you can be assured of confidentiality. Please do not feel obligated to answer any questions you find disagreeable or distasteful. Your standing in the graduate nursing program is not affected in any way by whether or not you choose to participate in this study. Please return the enclosed stamped, addressed postcard independent of the survey.

The final copy of this project will be available in the library at San Jose State University upon the completion of my thesis. If you are interested in the outcome of this survey, please write to me and I will be happy to share the results with you once they are compiled. If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact me:
Home: or work: , Monday through Friday, 9:30 AM - 4:30 PM. Any other questions or complaints may be directed towards Serena Stanford, Ph.D., Associate Academic Vice President for Graduate Studies & Research, 408-924-2480.

Thank you for your time and consideration in helping us better understand clothing as it relates to our visual image.

Sincerely,

Dixie Eisenhower
Graduate Nursing Student

Appendix C
Post-card

Appendix C

Post-card

_____ I have completed and mailed the survey
questionnaire.

_____ I do not wish to participate in the Executive Dress
Survey.

Name and address.

Appendix D
Letter to Thesis Reader

School of Applied Arts and Sciences • Department of Nursing • Graduate Program
One Washington Square • San Jose, California 95192-0057 • 408/924-3134

February, 1989

Dear Thesis Reader:

I am a graduate nursing student at San Jose State University pursuing my Masters of Science Degree in Community Health Nursing. In order to complete the research process for my thesis, I need a response from other San Jose State University graduate nursing students (sample population).

Due to the confidentiality problem of obtaining graduate nursing students' addresses, I would greatly appreciate it if you would distribute the enclosed questionnaire to your graduate nursing students for which you are the first reader. For your convenience, each questionnaire is enclosed in a stamped envelope that can be addressed and then mailed to your student. Enclosed with the questionnaire is a stamped, addressed envelope in which the student may return the survey.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours truly,

Dixie Eisenhower
Graduate Nursing Student

Appendix E
Letter to Savvy Magazine

School of Applied Arts and Sciences • Department of Nursing • Graduate Program
One Washington Square • San Jose, California 95192-0057 • 408/924-3134

January 2, 1989

Savvy Magazine
3 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10016

Dear Pia Todd:

As per our telephone conversation on December 29, 1988, I am a graduate student at San Jose State University pursuing a Masters of Science degree in Community Health Nursing. I understand I have verbal permission to use the survey published in the October, 1982, issue of Savvy Magazine:

"The Power of Pinstripes, A Survey of Executive Dress"

for my thesis project. I also understand that credit has to be given to Savvy Magazine for the permission to reprint the questionnaire. The original copy of the survey that you are sending to me is greatly appreciated in order to make clear reprints for my research.

I am looking forward to hearing from you regarding the possibility of an update of this survey in the April issue of Savvy Magazine. This would help validate my research project as to timeliness and appropriateness.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dixie Eisenhower
Graduate Student