An Ethnographic Exploration of Chinese Males' Identity through Dress

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Abstract

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An Ethnographic Exploration of Chinese Males' Identity through Dress

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This ethnography examines the motivations behind the dress habits of Chinese university students studying at a Midwestern university in the United States. Symbolic consumption and self-discrepancy were implemented in the research design. Seven participants completed a demographics questionnaire and in-depth interviews designed to shed light on the relationship between identity, norms, and masculinity in the construction of the dress and behavior habits of university males. Differences in the construction of identity, masculinity, and the symbolism of dress-related goods were examined through the participants’ contributions. An index was also administered which measured participants’ conformity to (western) masculine norms. The results of the study indicated that the majority of the participants reported altering their dress in order to conform to masculinity norms. The majority of participants associated masculinity, casualness of dress, and athletic clothing as accepted masculine norms at Ohio University.
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Glossary of Terms

**Dress** is defined as “any intentional modifications of the body and/or supplements added to the body” (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992, p. 2).

**Educational Tourists** are “students who seek higher education internationally in order to satisfy educational and touristic desires” (Asgari & Borzooei, 2013, p. 131).

**Fashion** is “a form of collective behavior that is socially approved for a certain amount of time but is expected to change after a while” (Summers, Belleau, & Wozniak, 1992, p. 83).

**Fashion Consciousness** is “a person’s degree of involvement with the styles of fashion products” (Nam et. al., 2007, p. 103).

**Gender** is defined as “the psychological/social/cultural category of how you behave” (Miller-Spillman, Reilly, & Hunt-Hurst, 2012, p. 179).

**Ideal Self** is a concept within self-discrepancy theory defined as “the self-guide that involves aspirational goals” (Levinson & Rodebaugh, 2013, p. 171).

**Masculinity** is a construction involving “the endorsement and internalization of cultural belief systems about manhood and gender roles, rooted in a perceived relationship between the sexes” (Pleck, Sonenstein, & Ku, 1993, p. 12).

**Ought Self** is a concept within self-discrepancy theory defined as “the self-guide involves attributes that the individual feels should be possessed” (Levinson & Rodebaugh, 2013, p. 171).
**Reflexive Evaluation** is “the integration of the estimated appraisals of oneself by others” (Solomon, 1983, p. 321).

**Self-Discrepancy** is a theory that “focuses on different self-guides which represent hypothetical selves that a person may move toward” (Levinson & Rodebaugh, 2013, p. 171).

**Sex** is defined as “the biological category into which one is born” (Miller-Spillman, Reilly, & Hunt-Hurst, 2012, p. 179).

**Symbolic Consumption** is “the process whereby consumers utilize goods as tools to create, develop, and maintain their identity” (Elliott & Wattansuwan, 1998, p. 18).
Chapter 1: Introduction

Men’s relationships with identity and dress have been studied to a lesser extent than those of women. Furthermore, the majority of studies addressing men have based their understandings of this interplay primarily on Caucasian populations (Cho & Workman, 2013). As men continue to consume apparel in greater volumes and to participate in more beauty and personal care practices than in the past, the manner in which masculinity is expressed through dress warrants investigation. It has been held that excessive interest in personal presentation, fashion, and personal care deviate from masculine norms in the United States (Reilly & Rudd, 2007). However, with the rise of globalization and international marketing, as well as the relative availability and affordability of fashion apparel and personal care goods for men, changes in cultural perceptions of men’s dress are occurring. Comprehension of these phenomena is important for global brand owners, as men’s dress habits and preferences influence their consumption behaviors and choice of retailers (Bakewill, Mitchell, & Rothwell, 2006).

Self-discrepancy theory, which was proposed by Higgins (1987), introduces the tripartite relationship between the actual self, ideal self, and ought self. This framework is relevant to the study of consumer behavior and dress choices, as it illustrates competing social drives within consumers, especially the relationship between personal desires and social expectations. The actual self is the self at present. The ideal self is one’s most elevated future possibility for his or herself and the ought self is the satisfactory self which pleases others and fulfills expectations. In the context of consumer selection and the construction of dress, the postmodern consumer must navigate choices loaded with
conflicting symbolism in order to approach the ideal self, the ought self, or both. These concepts are relevant to the objectives of this research, as they inquire to the origin of consumer and individual behaviors. Succinctly, self-discrepancy theory as a theoretical framework, addresses the primary research objective regarding the examination of the expression of masculinity through dress due to its capacity to examine the degrees to which a male Chinese students dress for others or for themselves.

Globalization, greater racial and cultural diversity, the increased acceptance and representation of minority sexualities and gender identities, and complex social and economic influences all play roles in the ways in which men consume and employ clothing. Insight into the perceptions and motivations of male consumers of fashion goods has resounding relevance for the social sciences as well as the industry. These implications could include better understanding of the role of various constructions of masculinity in dress phenomena, the role of identity in the decision making process of male consumers, and the preferences and aversions of male consumers of fashion goods.

In a first-world, postmodern setting, and with access to global media, contemporary college students in the United States are faced with an abundance of influences and choices. The macro (including celebrities, musicians, comedians, models, etc.) and micro (including friends, peers, acquaintances, and passersby) spheres of influence exist within the frame of reference when observing and adopting presentational objects and styles. For the purpose of this study, ascertaining the most influential aspirational sources and figures on the construction of presentation for the participants could explain disparate phenomena among individuals or groups. This has the potential to
be especially relevant when considering personal presentation and identity among male Chinese students, who have been exposed to different social figures, influences, and social pressures than U.S.-born students.

Non-western consumers have been largely neglected within studies of masculinity and dress. In light of China’s title as the world’s largest consumer of fibers (ITC, 2011) and the unequal sex ratio between Chinese men and women (Poston & Glover, 2005), Chinese men represent one of the largest demographic groups in the world. Chinese men are estimated to outnumber Chinese women by 23.5 million by the year 2020 (Poston & Glover, 2005) and China’s GDP per capita is expected to continue growing in the coming years (Congressional Research Service, 2014). Additionally, the incidence of educational tourism among Chinese people has increased substantially since the year 2000 (Chen, 2012). The United States is one of the top five destinations for Chinese educational tourists, with 31 percent of all international students world-wide being Chinese (Institute of International Education, 2014). In light of these robust numbers, the study of dress phenomena among Chinese students at Ohio University is warranted.

The purpose of this research is to understand how cultural constructions of identity and masculinity affect dress among Chinese males who are educational tourists at Ohio University. Four specific objectives were identified:

• To determine whether (and if so, to what extent) male educational tourists from China encode their identity and/or masculinity into their dress.

• To (using self-discrepancy theory as a framework) map the components of the actual, ideal, and ought selves for each participant.
• To compile and analyze the methods Chinese males who are educational tourists at Ohio University employ to approach their ought and ideal selves.

• To learn the reference identities used by Chinese males who are educational tourists at Ohio University as they employ dress behaviors.
Chapter 2: Review of Literature

A review of relevant literature addressing the purpose of this research, which is to understand how cultural constructions of identity and masculinity affect dress among Chinese males who are educational tourists at Ohio University, is presented here. This review contains an explanation of the theories framing the research as well as supporting literature to further justify the four project objectives introduced in Chapter 1.

Theoretical Overview

Three theories were employed in this research - symbolic consumption (Veblen, Mead, Blumer, Levy, 1959), self-discrepancy (Higgins, 1987), and social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954). These theoretical frameworks were selected due to their relation to the concepts of the construction of identity and dress. The aforementioned frameworks and this literature review support the set of objectives explicated in Table 1:
Symbolic Interaction and Symbolic Consumption

George Herbert Mead’s *Mind, Self, and Society* introduced the concept of symbolic interactionism, which contains the assertion that human interaction involves the understanding of the symbolism of language and the ability to mentally “take the role” of others (Mead, 1934, pp. 160-161). This symbolism, in context of human communication, is based upon the meanings that words, behaviors, and attitudes have come to possess.

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**Table 1**

*Research Purpose, Objectives, and Theoretical Frameworks*

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<th>Objective</th>
<th>Corresponding Theory</th>
<th>Theorists</th>
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<td>To determine whether (and if so, to what extent) male educational tourists from China encode their identity and/or masculinity into their dress.</td>
<td>Symbolic consumption</td>
<td>Veblen (1899), Mead (1934), Blumer (1969)</td>
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<td>To (using self-discrepancy theory as a framework) map the components of the actual, ideal, and ought selves for each participant.</td>
<td>Self-discrepancy</td>
<td>Higgins (1987)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To compile and analyze the methods Chinese males who are educational tourists at Ohio University employ to approach their ought and ideal selves.</td>
<td>Self-discrepancy</td>
<td>Higgins (1987)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To learn the reference identities used by Chinese males who are educational tourists at Ohio University as they employ dress behaviors.</td>
<td>Social comparison</td>
<td>Festinger (1954)</td>
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through social interaction. This framework also views the human experience of reality as one that is primarily socially constructed, which exists within the physical reality of our surroundings.

Mead’s student, Herbet Blumer authored “Fashion: From class differentiation to collective selection” in 1969, which further developed the symbolic interactionist framework. The three concepts of symbolic interaction proposed by Blumer include (1) the position that humans act towards others based on their ascribe meanings, that (2) these meanings arise through social interaction, and that (3) these meanings can be interpreted and modified during subsequent social interactions (Blumer, p. 284).

Mead posited that the act of viewing oneself and one’s behavior from the perspective of the “generalized other” actualizes true self-consciousness (p. 195). In context of the construction of the social identity and the self, the dialectal relationship between the individual and society situates the “me” as the social self and the “I” as the individual’s constructed response to expectations of others (p. 197). However, the construction of the “I,” or personal identity, is influenced by social control. Social control, as defined by Mead, is a mechanism by which the community attains a considerable influence over the conduct of its individual members (p. 155).

Symbolic consumption theory was proposed by Sidney Levy in 1959. He contended that as human beings have acquired increased access to technology, wealth, and choice in the marketplace they have begun to consume products for their symbolic meanings, instead of solely for their practical uses (Levy, 1959, p. 119). Subsequent symbolic consumption research tells us that people use goods as tools to construct,
mediate, and develop their identity (Elliott and Wattanasuwan, 1998). Goods related to
dress, such as clothing, accessories, and personal care products are understood to have
embedded symbolic properties which are lent to the individual who employs or displays
those goods (Belk, 1988). Elliott (1999) describes the impetus for symbolic consumption
as a desire to outwardly express the individual’s self-concept and also to facilitate desired
connections to others and society.

Thompson (1995) related the development of the self-concept through the
symbolic consumption and utilization of goods as the “symbolic project of the self,” a
concept by which individuals continually use consumer goods to foster and convey their
sense of identity. However, because the expression of self-concept does not exist in a
vacuum, people must also be aware of the implications of their dress-related choices.
Consumers may reject certain goods or styles if their symbolic meanings are incongruent
with the preferences of significant referents (Elliott, 1999).

**Research questions.** Three research questions were generated that reflect the
framework of symbolic consumption and interaction:

- **RQ 1:** How do the participants define masculinity?
- **RQ 2:** How masculine, on a continuum, do the participants feel they are?
- **RQ 3:** How do the participants express their gender identity (e.g. level of
  masculinity) through their dress?
**Self-Discrepancy Theory**

Self-discrepancy theory, which was proposed by Higgins (1987), introduces the tripartite relationship between the actual self, ideal self, and ought self. The actual self is the self at present. The ideal self is one’s most elevated future iteration, and the ought self is the satisfactory self which pleases others and fulfills all obligations. An important dissimilarity between the ideal and ought selves lies in their origin; the ideal self is an imaginary construction based upon the person’s favorite and most desired physical and mental traits, while the ought self is solely an interpretation of the traits which would please others most. Self-discrepancy theory posits that discrepancies between the actual self and the other two selves lead to depression or anxiety. In the context of consumer selection and the construction of personal presentation, the postmodern consumer must navigate choices loaded with conflicting symbolism in order to approach the ideal and ought selves and to distance themselves from their the undesired self.

This theory was chosen to frame the following objectives:

- To (using self-discrepancy theory as a framework) map the components of the actual, ideal, and ought selves for each participant.
- To compile and analyze the methods Chinese males who are educational tourists at Ohio University employ to approach their ought and ideal selves.

In self-discrepancy, the delineation of current and possible selves provides a framework with which to determine the intentionality of the participants in relation to their construction of dress (Higgins, 1987).
Research questions. Two specific research questions were generated to address each of the respective objectives listed above:

- RQ 4: How similar (or different) are the three “selves”?
- RQ 5: To what extent do the participants value and conform to western masculine norms?

Social Comparison Theory

Social comparison theory was proposed by social psychologist Leon Festinger in his work “A theory of social comparison process” (1954). At the core of this theory lies the assertion that human beings hold a drive to evaluate their opinions and abilities. In the event that no objective criteria is available to judge one’s opinions or abilities against, Festinger hypothesized that people tend to look to other individuals as a way of comparatively gauging their own correctness or performance (Festinger, 1954, p. 118). This then pertains to the subjective scenarios of everyday life, such as preferences regarding one’s political beliefs, selection of favorite media, or adoption of clothing and styles of dress, as there exist social and cultural norms for these phenomena, but no agreed-upon objective criteria for which to judge related behaviors. Levy (1959, p. 120) posited that the selection of objects for social comparison is contingent upon an individual’s perception of that referent, such that people do not tend to compare their abilities with those they perceive to be much more or much less gifted than themselves and they do not tend to compare their opinions with others they perceive to hold opinions very divergent from their own (Festinger, 1954, p. 120).
Festinger derived from the framework of social comparison theory the claims that individuals tend to be more attracted to others and groups of others whose opinions or abilities are similar to their own (p. 123) and that people often desire to change themselves or others in order to create relative homogeneity with social groups (p. 126). Festinger also posits that, in the case of minority social groups, “pressures toward uniformity would be correspondingly stronger than in a majority group, as the minority group would seek stronger support within itself and would be less well able to tolerate differences of opinion or ability relevant to that group” (p. 137).

This theory was chosen to frame the following objectives:

- To learn the reference identities used by Chinese males who are educational tourists at Ohio University as they employ dress behaviors.

**Research questions.** One research question was formulated in order to address the aforementioned objective:

- RQ 6: Are participants’ reference identities self-driven or other-driven?

**Social Groups and University Males**

While there may be components of masculinity in the United States that are common to all of its interpretations and iterations, various “routes” to masculinity have been established with their own understood social implications. Bauman (1991) explored the concept of social “neo-tribes,” which function as social groups or distinctions constructed through presentational cues, which exist due to individuals who identify and align themselves with that neo-tribe. Ascription to one of these groups involves a negotiation between personal identity and social identity. However, as noted by Elliott
(1998), self-identity is contingent upon social interactions, whereby it gains affirmation and validation, thus one’s personal identity is molded by dealings in the social realm and by one’s perceptions of the social judgments and valuations they receive.

The neo-tribe concept is relevant to the dynamic between masculinity and fashion as neo-tribes represent contemporary manifestations of cultural archetypes and contain social messages which are implicit to viewers. An exploratory study was conducted by Li, Martin, Purpura, and Noh (2015) revealed that college males tended to use neo-tribe terminology as a primary way of describing their clothing and social identity, and also tended to express strong aversions to the clothing of others which represented neo-tribes they personally disliked. Although this was a small-scale, survey-based study which relied on response coding to aggregate the most common terminology regarding college males” most preferred and least preferred clothing styles, it serves as a useful pilot for further inquiry.

Firat and Venkatesh (1993) argue against the case of clothing as simply a way to exhibit personal identity. They favor the idea that consumers seek approval through their style of dress, which can be adapted in various situations for optimal positive reception. Through this lens, ascertaining which sources of approval are most beneficial to a consumer, with consideration of that consumer’s goals and settings, ultimately affects the style of dress they will adopt and to whom they will attempt to appeal. In the case of many college males, same-sex friendships and admiration from females are extensible primary social motivations. Parsing out the components and requirements that young men
believe are necessary to gain social legitimacy provides direct insight to the presentational choices they make in pursuit of those intangible acquisitions.

The process of constructing personal presentation with selective approval as a primary motivation invariably involves observation of the habits and characteristics of those within the social groups or neo-tribes one admires. Burnkrant and Cousineau (1975) studied the influence of others’ consumption choices and concluded that “after observing others evaluating a product favorably, people perceive the product more favorably themselves than they would have in the absence of this observation” (p. 207). Observing and mimicking the characteristics of an aspirational group (one which appears to receive the emotional, professional, or social benefits desired by the observer) is a process of assimilation which requires the adaption of personal presentation; this method treats conformity with the aspirational group as a route to belonging. This objectivistic approach to presentation favors dressing with the intention of fulfilling social, emotional, and physical needs over self-exploration and fidelity to one’s current self-concept. In competing for these social rewards, performance, role-fulfillment, and superiority become elements of the construction of social identity and personal presentation (Watson, & Helou, 2006).

Firat (1992) argued that approval-seeking behaviors have now overshadowed identity-seeking behaviors. The model of categorization proposed by Rosch (1978) delineates group members as “good” or “bad” representatives of their category, with those achieving the highest fidelity to the ideal as good (or strong) representatives of a group. While melding approval-seeking and identity-seeking efforts into one approach
might fulfill portions of both desires, even slight deviation from an established social prototype is likely to reduce the approval garnered from social membership with that group. In the case of the masculine ideal, anomalous or non-conforming expressions could easily be interpreted as signifiers of a “bad” representative of the masculine exemplar. In this way, individualistic behaviors which do not align cleanly with the masculine ideal must be quashed or hidden in-order to maintain the full social benefits of belonging to the group.

Piacentini and Mailer’s (2004) findings related to the motivations of UK youths suggests that clothes are used by young people to identify similarities they may have with peers and as a channel for the establishment of potential friendships and relationships. This understanding is insightful, as the construction of personal presentation may be used to represent one’s inner-self and to find like-minded peers, or as a tool to attain social currency with aspirational groups. Additional research on symbolic consumption and the construction of identity suggests that personal presentation can be used symbolically to enhance or protect self-esteem (Banister & Hogg, 2004). In complex social environments, young peoples” identification of “in groups” and “out groups” (Ogilvie, 1987) can be used to align their appearance with a desired social group and to differentiate themselves from the undesired, or avoidance, reference group (Banister & Hogg, 2004). In studying young males specifically, driving motivational forces, such as aspirations or fears can be analyzed for their influence on certain presentational phenomena.

Through the symbolic understanding of dress, symbolic interaction (Blumer & Mead, 1969) is elucidated. The theory’s supposition that fashion and dress are a result of
the “micro” level of social interaction, rather than from the “macro,” such as from culture. This theoretical framework calls to mind the questions of the daily generalizations, attributions, and inference-making which are perpetrated by individuals. Products become engendered with meaning and associations based upon who is likely to own the brand or product. Inferences and assumptions about the product owner are transmuted to the object, and those of the object are ascribed to the owner. Hyatt (1992) addresses this phenomenon, writing “the essence of a product, then, becomes not the physical product itself, but the relation between the product, its owner, and the rest of society” (p. 299).

While one’s public self encompasses a person’s desired and intentional projection of identity, the concept of the “extended self” (Belk, 1988) stands as an expression of the product-owner-melded symbolism which exists in social environments. Postmodern culture is heavily saturated with consumer content, so much so that consumption has become a primary way of exploring, creating, and advertising the self. In order to engage in the contemporary social dynamic, one must consume goods and their cultural meanings (Wattanasuwan, 2005). Rather, identity is shown, not told. Thompson and Hirschman (2005) write “we consume numerous products and services to construct our body images to match our self-concepts… the body is ultimately a symbolic site for socialization” (p. 146).

**Processes of Fashion Behaviors**

Miller-Spillman, Reilly, and Hunt-Hurst (2012) explain the process consumers utilize in the contemporary market environment as “choice, confusion, and creativity.”
Each of these terms represents a phase of the process which parallels the consumer’s experiences from the time a need is sensed through the time during which the solution to that need is employ and/or exhibited. The “choice” portion of the framework represents the plethora of options consumers face, including brands, styles, prices, silhouettes, and colors of products. In the inundation of advertisements, commercialism, and prescriptive messages which pervade most elements of daily life, contradictive and mutable directives can cause what Miller-Spillman, Reilly, and Hunt-Hurst refer to as “confusion” (2012, p. 123). They posit that, while this uncertainty can spur impetus for personal exploration, it can also have a paralytic effect.

“Creativity” is the subsequent reaction to confusion and is caused by the abundance of choice (Miller-Spillman, Reilly, & Hunt-Hurst, 2012). However, creativity does not necessarily consist of innovativeness or the desire to differentiate one’s self. Creating or constructing one’s personal presentation can be understood as a visual interpretation and projection of one’s desired public self (Elliott and Wattanasuwan, 1998). As Giddens (1991) notes, in postmodernity wherein donning a discernible social alignment is normative, “we have no choice but to choose” (p. 81). Through this lens, every presentational choice that is made becomes a political one; the implicit and symbolic meanings and associations which are embedded in nearly every brand, style, fit, and color are understood to be a reflection of the tastes, beliefs, and lifestyle of the wearer. This, coupled with the sheer volume of choices which is available to slake any need (real or perceived) comprises the “confusion” phase of the consumer’s experience.
The deluge of choice complicates the construction of self as it necessitates perpetual decision making, which multiplies the number of possible erroneous choices. In the context of consumer selection and the construction of personal presentation, the postmodern consumer must navigate choices loaded with conflicting symbolism in order to approach the ideal and ought selves and to distance themselves from their the undesired self.

Creativity is the temporary and recurring solution to confusion, by which the consumer selects goods which they believe adequately or best fulfill their unique needs and desires, with regard to their resources, proclivities, and economic or locational limitations. For some consumers, the creativity stage may be a simple act of mimesis; observing others with which one identifies or those one admires provides a concrete model to replicate. Furthermore, if the model is chosen from the subject’s local social environment, a context-specific example provides the viewer with the assurance of a safe precedent; trailblazing contains an element of risk, whereas following an apt role model minimizes these risks. In context of this research, college males”’ response to confusion and creativity stand at the crux of the phenomenon of college male identity and attire.

Self-Monitoring and Reflexive Evaluation

In support of the connection between the fear of gender-role deviation and the phenomenon of conformity of dress, Goldsmith & Clark (2008) found that attention to social comparison relations was more indicative of fashion opinion seeking behaviors, or looking to peers for fashion choices, rather than fashion opinion leadership behaviors. Additionally, self-monitoring tactics were found to be more prevalent among the fashion
opinion seeking group; this includes considering consumption options in context of possible peer reception and negative evaluation. Self-monitoring is the process by which individuals adapt to become more like whichever social group they have identified as the premier community. This process involves the “reading” phase, wherein one observes social codes and hierarchies, and the “writing” phase, wherein personal identity and appearance are mediated to align with the desired group’s (Auty, 1999).

The act of “reading” the social landscape for solutions to confusion consists of observing others and employing what Solomon (1983) calls “reflexive evaluation.” This mental tool involves the use of one’s imagination and ability to perceive and evaluate the reactions of others. When attempting to predict potential responses to adopting new clothing or styles, an individual uses their knowledge of the social environment to forecast whether they will likely receive the responses they desire. Once the new article has been employed, the wearer attempts to read the cues and feedback they receive from others in-order to monitor the success of their creative attempt. Through this process, the wearer’s perception of themselves and the quality of their newly adjusted personal presentation is highly contingent upon the way they are seen and perceived by others.

Douglas and Isherwood (1996) described the environments in which values are transmitted through visual cues as a “live information system,” through which messages are transmitted, interpreted, and participant behavior is influenced. Additional research has corroborated this, evidencing consumption of goods as a manner of encoding messages with the intent of accurate decoding from viewers (Holman, 1980). Piacentini and Mailer (2004) found that UK youths tended to prioritize “fitting in” and sometimes
used clothing to “symbolise the link between the individual and the group they wish to be accepted by” (p. 200). Although the negotiation of personal appearance is ultimately a “balancing act” between one’s own proclivities and their appraisal of pertinent social expectations, avoiding the projection of a negative image remains a means of maintaining self-esteem (Banister & Hogg, 2004). The “undesired self” or “avoided self” can thus be evaded through low-risk consumer behaviors, which is especially relevant to males, who are, in certain capacities, held to narrower gender-role expectations.

**Masculinity and Fashion**

The construction of masculinity is relative to the society within which it is studied. Pleck’s (1995) Gender Role Strain Paradigm posited that masculinity is a socially constructed phenomenon based from the prevailing masculinity ideology of a historical era or culture. Masculinity ideologies are defined as culturally determined sets of beliefs about the stands for male behavior (Levant et al., 2015). Brannon (1976) identified four qualities of masculinity: status and achievement, aggressiveness and adventurousness, inexpressiveness and independence, and anti-femininity (Brannon, 1976). In the context of this study, masculinity is examined in relation to its ties to private and public identity, as well as its negotiations through social comparison, symbolic consumption, self-discrepancy, and gender role expectations. Brannon’s criteria for masculinity presents a fundamentally complicated relationship with fashion, as fashion and elaborate adornment are considered the territory of the feminine, and of the object of the gaze, rather than the subject. Western masculinity’s requirements of stoicism and
independence highlight the importance of personal autonomy and a seemingly self-determined confidence which is not contingent upon external approval.

Banister and Hogg (2004) studied British consumers and found that many responses regarding dress exposed consumers’ preferences to “avoid censure” and to “play it safe,” rather than to risk wearing ill-received or risky items. While these fears of negative attention may be present in the majority of consumers, certain commonalities among male consumers may be identifiable. Men’s fashion conservatism could be partially attributed to the generalized fear of appearing “feminine” (Kimmel, 1994), which is a quality sometimes associated with the culture of fashion and displaying an elaborate personal presentation. Eisler and Skidmore (1987) propose that gender-role expectations of men contribute to fears regarding: lack of athleticism, emotional intimacy, intimacy with other men (or homophobia), and unsuccesfulness. If feminine, unathletic, or impotent males are exemplary of the undesirable male, symbolic identifiers of those traits would be avoided by the majority of this population.

In line with Banister and Hogg’s (2004) research analysis, which revealed the fear of censure as a considerable factor in the construction of personal presentation in UK consumers, researchers of fashion opinion leadership and fashion opinion seeking behaviors among American consumers have found that the need for presentational uniqueness was rare among those who were categorized as “fashion opinion seeking” (Goldsmith & Clark, 2008). Major motivations for fashion opinion leadership are: a desire for creative counter-conformity, desire for unpopular counter-conformity, and the avoidance of similarity. Within the context the Goldsmith and Clark’s research, creative
counter-conformity represents the desire for novelty while unpopular counter-conformity represents a desire for antagonistic non-conformity. Deviation from traditional masculine gender-roles is considered counter-conformity and thus reduces the individual’s access to the benefits of masculinity. If fashionableness is associated with femininity, and thus gender-role deviation, fashion leadership represents social deviation and an increased potential for censure and rejection from others.

Fears of de-individualization are pertinent in the exploration of dress-related phenomena. Schiermer (2010) detailed the potential effects of the “fashion object,” and cites the aversion to “the loss of individual autonomy and creativity on behalf of others and/or oneself” (p. 84) as a motivation in the avoidance of fashion and trends. The fashion victim has fallen victim, not only to excess and conspicuity, but also to the influence and authority of fashion, which is understood to be superfluous and ephemeral (Shiermer, 2010). Ruangewanit and Wattanasuwan (2011) contend that, in addition to a man’s ability to achieve through the archetypes of the athlete and breadwinner, his ability to “alleviate from any influence” is a component of his value and legitimacy.

The construction of masculinity in the United States is a product of its cultural, religious, and historical antecedents. Its tenets stem from proletariat and puritanistic values, which extol simplicity, utility, conservatism, and tradition (Keyes, 2013). The Great Male Renunciation, which began in France in the seventeenth century, served as an impetus and ideology for the French revolution, criticized the indulgent and indolent lifestyles of the ultra-rich. The jewels, heels, and tassels of the upper echelon were branded as signifiers of privilege, moral corruption, and physical and mental feebleness.
(Bourke, 1996). The American Revolution was spearheaded by rebelliousness and a desire for a distinct identity from England, whose authority was viewed as deleterious by its colony. These political and ideological influences, coupled with the puritanical reverence for hard work and conservatism of conduct, have shaped U.S. masculinity’s present-day values. It is through this lens that masculinity and fashionableness may be viewed as incompatible. When American masculinity favors the reliable, sober, and unchanging, fashion revels in frivolity, peculiarity, and transience.

The male fashion victim risks losing his personal autonomy and his membership with collegiate masculinity in their quest trendiness and novelty. Their presentational preoccupation opposes traditional values and conventions, and represents an influence which fails the expectations of U.S. gender roles. The ubiquitous jeans, sneakers, and t-shirt represent utility and simplicity. Their ubiquity disguises them as clothing, rather than fashion. This type of simple, comfortable, casual attire represents the “bubble up” trend directionality, wherein inventions of lower classes and subcultures become appropriated and popularized by the mainstream and middle and upper classes (Miller-Spillman, K.A., Reilly, A., & Hunt-Hurst, P, 2012). In this way, these components of dress become representative of no-frills normative culture and symbolic of the sober proletariat.

It can be argued, however, that the athletically-inspired, minimalistic signature of the U.S. college male represents its own subculture, with its own values and fetishisms. While it tends to resist changes in its choices of colors, brands, and silhouette, its “anti-fashion” position resembles other sub-cultures who reject fashion for ideological and
ethical reasons (Schiermer, 2010, p. 90). Punk and grunge cultures criticized mainstream fashion and consumerism as thoughtless and problematic, while sporting their own dress expectations and desired styles and brands. However, athletic and minimalistic styles are symbolic of the masculine and American ideals, and as such, are viewed as non-deviant expression, whereas the punk and grunge sub-cultures are considered deviant or counter-cultural due to their criticisms and rejection of norms. For the collegiate man in the United States, the desire to exist outside of the realm of fashion and deviation can be expressed through purposeful inconspicuous dress habits.

**Minorities and Western Masculinity**

International students studying in the United States experience new norms and expectations relative to the location of their educational institution. While some social expectations are pervasive to all or nearly all people regardless of their race or origin, scholars have attested that expectations can vary for minority groups from those of the majority. Masculinity is one example; Kimmel (1994) asserts that masculinity “is essentially a white, heterosexual, middle class phenomenon. As such men who do not belong to this privileged group, although marginalized, are freer to adopt and convey practices that are considered to be „feminine.“ One such „feminine” practice is appearance concern with its concomitant clothing and fashion interests” (Bakewell, Mitchell, & Rothwell, 2006, pp. 171-172).

The understanding of western masculinity as a phenomenon monopolized by the racial, sexual, and economic majority, as Kimmel posits, extensibly creates certain exclusions and liberties for minorities, such as Chinese men. However, despite these
potential liberties, Chan (2001) found in that male students of Asian descent tended to prefer to follow mainstream, hegemonic masculinity rather to align themselves with other subaltern social groups due to the rewards available to its members (Shek, 2006). The degree to which an individual identifies with mainstream is subject to many variables; Chua and Fujino (1999) found in their study involving administering a telephone questionnaire to 239 White and Asian men that immigrant Asian men exhibited “greater variation compared to White men of what they considered masculine” (p. 384). The authors also discovered that while the Asian and Asian-American participants associated masculinity with physical affection behaviors, sense of humor, and sociability, the White participants associated strong demeanor, dominance, independence, and following traditional sex roles with masculinity.

Hsu and Kenji Iwamoto (2013) postulate that while many non-white and/or non-native men in the United States might conform to mainstream masculine norms, their construction of masculinity might also be influenced by other sources (Hsu & Kenji Iwamoto, 2013, Lui, Iwamoto, & Chae, 2010; Wong, Owne, et al., 2012). Chua and Fujino (1999) identified variability between men of Asian descent and White American men regarding their perceptions of masculine norms. White American men in the study tended to view masculine and feminine characteristics as opposites, while men of Asian descent (who were Asian American or Asian immigrants) did not perceive masculinity and femininity as incompatible or opposites.

Wong, Owen, et al. (2013) conducted a study involving 158 Asian American college students that evidenced Asian American men experiencing stereotypes regarding
their identity and character. The stereotypes identified in that study were “interpersonal deficits, intense diligence, intelligence, perpetual foreigner status, unflattering physical attributes, sexual/romantic inadequacies, and physical ability distortions.” Men of Asian descent in United States may be influenced by stereotypes and emasculation in the construction of their own identities and masculinities (Wong, Owen, et al., 2012).

Stereotypes affect our perceptions of ourselves (Spencer et al. 1997), and people sometimes adapt their behavior to become incongruent or oppositional to stereotypes which might be attributed to them; one longitudinal study of minorities in a U.S. middle school found that participants reported a strong desire to resist or defy racial stereotypes, including avoiding dress styles associated with their race or cultural group (Way et al., 2013, pp. 419-422).

**Research questions.** The following research questions emerged from the literature related to minorities and western masculinity:

- RQ 7: Do the participants report constructing their dress differently than they did prior to coming to Ohio University?
- RQ 8: Do the participants construct their dress in reference to masculinity norms and/or American masculinity norms?

**Summary of All Research Questions**

Below is the complete list of research questions for this study:

- RQ 1: How do the participants define masculinity?
- RQ 2: How masculine, on a continuum, do the participants feel they are?
• RQ 3: How do the participants express their gender identity (e.g. level of masculinity) through their dress?

• RQ 4: How similar (or different) are the three “selves”?

• RQ 5: To what extent do the participants value and conform to western masculine norms?

• RQ 6: Are participants’ reference identities self-driven or other-driven?

• RQ 7: Do the participants report constructing their dress differently than they did prior to arriving at Ohio University?

• RQ 8: Do the participants construct their dress in reference to masculinity norms and/or American masculinity norms?
Chapter 3: Methodology

Participants

The population for this study was limited to Chinese males who are “educational tourists” at Ohio University. The term “educational tourists” refers to individuals who lived in their home country (in this instance, China) until deciding to relocate in order to pursue post-secondary education in another country. Seven individuals participated in the study. Four participants were undergraduate students, while three were graduate students. There were no age restrictions for participation, however, convenience sampling and the snow-ball method of participant acquisition yielded a participant age range of 20 to 30 years of age. The number of years participants had resided in the United States ranged from one year to seven years.

Participant profiles. Using the demographic data collected during the study, a profile was created for each participant. A pseudonym has also been selected for each of the participants. These profiles serve to introduce and differentiate participants, while allowing the reader a contextual framework with which to consider the contributions of each participant. A table was also constructed in order to easy refer to the information relevant to each participant (see Table 2).

Deming. Deming is from the Hunan province of China. He was 28 years old at the time of his participation and had been living in the United States for about two years. He identified as single and reported that his father is a physician in China. He selected an annual income for his family which indicated a lower socio-economic status, relative to the other participants. Deming is enrolled in a Ph.D. program in a field of medicine. He
also identified as heterosexual and was the only participant to identify as Buddhist.

Deming reported spending the lowest amount on personal care products of any participant, at just $8 monthly.

**Gan.** Gan is from the Henan province of China. At the time of his participation, he was 26 years old and had been living in the United States for just under one year. He identified himself as single and reported that his mother and father are a doctor and an engineer, respectively. Gan selected an annual income for his family which indicated a low to medium socio-economic status. He was between his freshman and sophomore year as a finance undergraduate student. He also provided that he identified as an atheist and heterosexual. Gan reported spending an above-average amount on personal care products (in comparison with the mean for all participants), at around $80 monthly.

**Jinhai.** Jinhai is from the Xinjiang province of China. He was 25 years old at the time of the study and had been living in the United States for roughly six years. Jinhai identified as heterosexual and was the only participant to identify as Christian. He was also the only participant who was married. His father owned his own company; Jinhai selected an annual income for his family which indicated a high socio-economic status. He was studying graduate-level Graphic Design. Jinhai reported spending the highest amount of any participant on personal care products, at around $150 monthly.

**Liwei.** Liwei is from the Beijing province of China. He was 22 years old at the time of his participation and had been living in the United States for one year. He identified as single, heterosexual, and an Atheist. His father is a professor. Liwei selected an annual income for his family which indicated a lower socio-economic status, relative
to the other participants. He was a freshman studying Mechanical Engineering. Liwei reported spending a roughly average amount on personal care products, at $50 monthly.

**Qianfan.** Qianfan is from the Hubei province of China. He was 21 years old at the time of the study and had lived in the United States for six years. Qianfan identified as single and an Atheist. He was the only participant to identify as homosexual. His father was a police officer. Qianfan selected an annual income for his family which indicated one of the lowest socio-economic statuses of all the participants. He was a senior studying Media Arts & Studies. Qianfan reported spending a below average amount on personal care products, at $20 monthly.

**Renshu.** Renshu is from the Jilin province in northern China. He was thirty years old at the time of the study and had lived in the United States for seven years. Renshu identified as single, heterosexual, and an Atheist. His parents were retired. Renshu’s selection of his family’s annual income indicated that he belonged to one of the lowest socio-economic statuses. He was studying for a Ph.D. in Communication Sciences and Disorders. Renshu reported spending an amount on personal care products which was roughly average, at $50 monthly.

**Shen.** Shen is from the Beijing province of China. He was 24 years old at the time of participation and had lived in the United States for six years. He identified as single, heterosexual, and an Atheist. Shen’s parents were both engineers. His selection for his family’s annual income indicated that he was, by far, from the highest socio-economic background. He was a senior studying Industrial and Systems Engineering. Shen reported spending an above average amount of personal care products, at $100 monthly.
Materials

Two types of fliers (Appendix A) were used as the initial participant recruitment strategy. One flier requested people who speak Chinese and English to be interpreters for the study, while the other requested participants. When a prospective interpreter contacted the researcher, a meeting was set up at Ohio University’s campus to review the interpreter consent form and confidentiality agreement (Appendix A). This ensured the rights and compensation of the interpreter and bound the interpreter to uphold the confidentiality of participants with whom they might interact. In the case that a prospective participant contacted the research, they collaborated with the researcher to schedule a meeting time in the campus library to review the participant consent form (Appendix A). When the participant agreed to the rights and responsibilities there within, they were free to participate immediately.

The study process was comprised of three components: a 14 question demographics questionnaire (Appendix B), a 30 question interview (Appendix B), and a 46 question survey intended to measure conformity to masculine norms (referred to as the “CMNI-46,” Appendix B). The demographics questionnaire and the CMNI-46 were completed by participants using an electronic tablet device owned by the researcher. The data was collected using the Qualtrics platform, which aids in the collection, analysis, and organization of data. Additionally, a participant informed consent form (Appendix A) was devised. This form was composed in English and explained the purpose, procedure, and relevant details of the study. This form also contained information regarding the
rights and responsibilities of participants and an explanation of the optional member checking procedure.

Procedure

Research design. Thirty interview questions were devised to specifically address the objectives and the research questions of the study. The following section details which interview questions were derived from each research question. Relevant information pertaining to the theories employed in the study is also included. Some interview questions were designed to be applicable to two or more areas of inquiry in order to reduce redundancy of questions and to limit the total number of questions. This was intended to optimize the participants’ time and attention.

Research question one. The first research question of the study was “how do the participants’ define masculinity?” In order to explore the participants’ ideas regarding masculinity, five open-ended interview questions were formulated. These questions are as follows:

1. Please give a brief definition of masculinity.
2. What traits does a person who is masculine possess?
3. What traits are the most un-masculine?
4. What types of clothing do you feel are the most masculine?
5. What types of clothing do you feel are the most un-masculine?

These interview questions were designed to first ascertain how the participants understood the concept of masculinity, and then to discover what types of physical and personality traits they associated with masculinity. The final two questions focus
specifically on the participants’ associations pertaining to clothing and masculinity. The combination of the responses to these questions not only exposes the participants’ understanding of masculinity, but also the physical and behavioral markers they associate with masculinity and counter-masculinity.

**Research question two.** The following research question, which was also related to masculinity, was “how masculine, on a continuum, do the participants feel they are?” One interview question was formulated to explore this.

1. On a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being not masculine at all and 10 being totally masculine, where do you feel you fall?

The interview question was constructed in this way in order for participants to be able to approximate their levels of masculinity. It was worded carefully, so not to suggest that masculinity or the lack of masculinity was preferable. This interview question was also intended to be a complement to the first five interview questions, as it assessed the participants’ perception of themselves in relation to their ideas of masculinity, which they were asked to explain in earlier interview questions.

**Research question three.** The last masculinity-related research question was “how do the participants express their gender identity through their dress?” Three interview questions were devised to address research question three.

1. What do you think your dress tells others about you?
2. Describe the relationship between your identity and the way you dress.
3. Does your personal style reflect your gender identity? If yes, how so? If no, why not?
The first interview question related to research question three was constructed as a broad inquiry, so that the participants would not be limited by the question in regards to their response. The second was designed as an “open-ended” question, so that participants would be encouraged to provide an explanation for a response indicating there was or was not any relationship between their identity and the way they dress. The final question was included to explore directly address the research question by inquiring whether the participants do or do not dress in relation to their gender identity.

**Research question four.** Eight interview questions were devised in order to address the fourth research question, which was “how similar (or different) are the three selves (the ideal, ought, and avoid self) theorized in social discrepancy theory?” This research question required in-depth inquiry, as it relates to a research objective of the study, which was to create a descriptive map of the participants” three selves.

1. Describe yourself as you see yourself. This can include details about your personality, values, appearance, or social groups.
2. If you could change or improve anything about yourself, what would it be? Why?
3. If your friends could change anything about you, what would they choose?
4. If you family could change anything about you, what would they choose?
5. Which people in your life are you most concerned with pleasing? Why?
6. Are there things about yourself that you like, but you think others do not approve of? If yes, why do you like them and why do you think others dislike them?

These interview questions were constructed to identify various elements described in self-discrepancy theory as did or did not pertain to each participant. The first interview
question was designed to encourage the participants to provide a summation of their self-image, or how they view and understand themselves. This provided information about the participant’s actual self. The second interview question in this section was formulated to inquire about the participant’s desired changes, which provided information about the individual’s ideal self. The third and fourth interview questions related to the ought self, by inquiring about the pressures and influences the participant experiences from friends and family. The final two interview questions were designed to explore if the participant valued others’ desires to influence their identity, and if so, which sources were most valued.

**Research question five.** Six interview questions were created relevant to the research question five, which was “to what extent do the participants value and conform to western masculine norms?” Participants were asked questions regarding any adaptive behaviors they have adopted since arriving at Ohio University. Those questions appear below:

1. In what ways have you changed since you came to Ohio University?
2. Have you done anything to try to blend-in with the people at Ohio University? If yes, what types of things have you done and why?
3. Have you changed the way you dress since you arrived at Ohio University? If yes, how and why?
4. In what ways are the expectations about your appearance different in China than at Ohio University?
5. Can you list any styles or types of clothing you would wear in China but would not wear at Ohio University? If yes, why?

6. Have you attempted to change your body at all since you came to Ohio University? If yes, how?

The first two interview questions related to research question five also used an open-ended format, in order to explore whether the participants had conducted any changes to their clothing or dress without leading or prompting them to consider that specifically. The third interview question was included in case the topic of dress had not been explored in the previous two questions, but was relevant to the participants’ experiences. The fourth interview question was included to inquire about any differential expectations the participants noticed between China and Ohio University, without leading them to discuss masculine norms specifically. Interview question five in this section further explored differential norms and expectations between the two locations. The final interview question relevant to research question five focused specifically on body norms, which allowed the participants to discuss the expectations of men’s bodies and any difference in masculine body norms they perceived.

**Research question six.** The sixth research question was “are participants reference identities self-driven or other driven?” The follow interview questions were designed to determine if the participants use dress referents to create and modify their dress, and if so, which referents were used by those participants.

1. How do you decide which new clothes or styles to adopt?

2. What sources do you use to find new clothing or style examples?
3. Can you name any celebrities, models, or actors whose style you would like to emulate?

4. Is it more important that you like how you are dressed or that others like how you are dressed?

5. Do you compare the way you dress to others at Ohio University? If yes, which people do you tend to compare your dress with?

6. If yes, do you compare yourself to other Chinese students differently than you compare yourself to other students?

7. How important to you is it that you look like the people around you?

These interview questions were designed to explore whether the participants construct their dress more in reference to their own preferences, or if they look to other sources for dress and appearance models. The last three interview questions related to this research question were designed to discover whether the participants value and adhere to their own dress preferences more or if conforming to external dress models is preferable to them. Furthermore, exploring which individuals or groups were influential to the participants’ construction of dress was another objective of this inquiry.

**Research question seven.** The seventh research question was “do the participants report that they construct their dress differently now than they did prior to coming to the Ohio University?” This research question was addressed by three previously mentioned interview questions which also relate to research question five. These questions were designed to produce answers for both areas of inquiry in order to avoid posing repeated or rephrased questions to participants.
1. In what ways have you changed since you came to Ohio University?

2. Have you done anything to try to blend-in with the people at Ohio University? If yes, what types of things have you done and why?

3. Have you changed the way you dress since you arrived at Ohio University? If yes, how and why?

The interview questions above were designed to allow the participants multiple opportunities and formats to share any dress and appearance changes they have implemented since arriving at Ohio University, and also an opportunity to explain their reasoning, motivations, and the experiences which led them to makes those changes. The first two interview questions are broader, allowing participants to speak to many possible types of changes (including personality, identity, demeanor, etc.), while the final interview question specifically inquires about dress-related changes the participants have chosen.

**Research question eight.** The eighth research question was “do the participants construct their dress in reference to masculinity norms and/or American masculinity norms?” While no interview questions were formulated to solely address this inquiry, the interviews were designed to ascertain a profile of the participants’ construction of identity, dress, and masculinity. The follow ten interview questions produced responses which address research question eight:

1. What types of clothing do you feel are the most masculine?

2. What types of clothing do you feel are the most un-masculine?

3. Describe the relationship between your identity and the way you dress.
4. Does your personal style reflect your gender identity? If yes, how so? If no, why not?

5. Have you done anything to try to blend-in with the people at Ohio University? If yes, what types of things have you done and why?

6. Have you changed the way you dress since you arrived at Ohio University? If yes, how and why?

7. How do you decide which new clothes or styles to adopt?

8. What sources do you use to find new clothing or style examples?

9. Can you name any celebrities, models, or actors whose style you would like to emulate?

10. Do you compare the way you dress to others at Ohio University? If yes, which people do you tend to compare your dress with?

These interview questions provided individuals with opportunities to express and explain the way they perceive dress, masculinity, and their identity. Additionally, participants were free to cite examples of masculine and non-masculine dress, as well as to articulate which referents they relate to and prefer. Questions five through ten especially provide participants with an opportunity to reveal which cultural or social groups and role models influence their construction of dress.

*Additional study components.* The demographics questionnaire was designed to obtain a general background profile of each participant that could be used, in conjunction with the other study components, to create a descriptive portrait of the individuals. The CMNI-46 was incorporated to identify any specific types of masculine norms in which
the participants might have scored relatively higher or lower, so that this phenomenon could be explored. It was also incorporated to examine the participants’ results in comparison with the interview data they provided. In this case, the highest and lowest scoring participants of the seven were selected in order to examine the antecedents and personal information which may have influenced such results.

**Interpreter acquisition protocol.** Fliers were posted in the campus library and in facility which hosts the English Language Proficiency program at Ohio University. Prospective interpreters contacted the researcher at the email address included in the study flier in order to schedule a consultation regarding the details of the study and the rights of and responsibilities of interpreters. Prospective interpreters were met in the campus library in order to review the interpreter consent form and the confidentiality agreement. Individuals who agreed to the contents of both documents, which included the rate of compensation, interview structure, and the confidentiality protocol of the study signed the forms and registered as interpreters for the study. Three individuals, in total, were registered as interpreters for the study. In order to mitigate a potential limiting factor pertinent to the quality and veracity of interview data, the interpreter consent form included a clause stating that interpreters would notify the researcher should they personally know the study participant, in which case, an alternate interpreter could be selected.

Interpreters were compensated in cash at the flat rate of $10 for attending the informed consent portion of the study process, during which they were present to assist participants with translation or comprehension of the participant informed consent
document. This ensured that all participants, regardless of their level of English fluency, fully understood their rights and responsibilities before agreeing to participate. Had a participant opted for the interpreter to stay for the interview, the interpreter would be compensated at an hourly rate. However, none of the seven participants elected for the interpreter to remain during the interview.

**Interview protocol.** Seven Chinese men participated in the study. These participants and were also found using fliers posted in the campus library and a classroom building at Ohio University. Once a prospective participant contacted the researcher via email, an overview of the study was shared. Individuals interested in participation collaborated with the researcher to schedule a meeting in order to review the informed consent and, should they agree, participate in the study. The participant was met by the interpreter and the researcher in one of the private study rooms in the campus library at Ohio University. The informed consent form was written in English, but participants were encouraged to ask the interpreter or researcher if they desired translation or assistance with comprehension of any component of the form. The informed consent form included two elective options, including an optional consent signature for participants who wished to take part in a member checking validation strategy, whereby they would be contacted via e-mail should any of their interview contributions be used (with a pseudonym) in a publication of the study.

The other option allowed participants to decide to allow the interpreter to stay for the remainder of the interview to assist the participant in completing the interview. All seven participants elected that the interpreter not be present during the interview.
Interpreters left the room once the informed consent portion of the study was complete with each participant and the participant had expressed their understanding and agreement to the details of the study.

After the interpreter vacated the study room, participants were asked to complete a demographics questionnaire via an electronic tablet device. Once completed, the researcher informed the participant that the interview was beginning and that audio recording was initiated via a personal cellular device with audio recording capability. Interviews consisted of 30 open-ended questions (questions which cannot be answered completely with single word responses like “yes” and “no”). The interview questions related to the participants’ clothing choices, preferences, and judgments, their personal experiences transitioning cultural landscapes, as well their definition of masculinity and their opinion of the concept. Interview portion of the study varied in duration depending on the length of the participants’ responses, ranging from 30 minutes to one hour.

Subsequent to the conclusion of the interview portion, participants completed the CMNI-46 measure using the aforementioned electronic tablet device. The measure contains 46 statements regarding conformity to masculine norms. Participants could select “strongly agree,” “agree,” “disagree,” or “strongly disagree” as a response to each statement. Once the measure was completed and submitted, the participant was thanked for his time and effort and was given the study incentive of one $20 gift card to Amazon.com. Participants were also encouraged to refer additional eligible participants to the researcher. Several participants connected new prospective participants with the
researcher via email and/or SMS. This process continued over a period of eight weeks until seven individuals had completed the study.

**Pseudonyms.** After the conclusion of the last interview, the researcher selected a pseudonym for each participant (as seen in “Participant Profiles” above) that was included in the electronic document containing his interview transcription. A separate document was created to maintain a temporary record of the participants’ names and their pseudonyms. This procedure was devised to allow readers to easily remember and associate responses and data with individual participants, while protecting the privacy of the participants. The participants’ actual names are not used anywhere within this document.

**Member checking.** Four of the seven participants indicated they were interested in taking part in a member checking option explained in the informed consent. Those four participants received an individual email to the address they provided on the informed consent form which included interview excerpts they contributed. They were informed of the pseudonym they had been given, and each excerpt remained in its original paragraph so that the participants could understand the context in which their contributions were being used. The composition used for email communication with each such participant appears below:

Hello, (participant’s name). This is (researcher’s name). You participated in my interview about clothing and identity a few months ago. I'm contacting you because you selected on the informed consent form that you might be interested in reviewing your interview quotes to make sure I have used them in an appropriate
manner. It's optional, but if you would like, you can review the attached document and let me know if you are pleased with the way I've incorporated your quotes. I've given you the pseudonym ____________. If you are interested in this, please try to respond within four days from today’s date.

One of the four participants responded, conveying that he was pleased with the way his contributions had been included and represented. The remaining three did not reply to the email communication.
Chapter 4: Results

Participant Data

**Age and geographic origin.** The mean age of participants was 25, with an age range of 20 to 30 years of age. Participants originated from six different Chinese provinces including Xinjiang, Beijing, Hubei, Henan, Hunan, and Jilin. These provinces represent diverse geographical locations from Western China to Eastern China and from the northern border to the southern portion of the country. See *Figure 1.*

![Map of Chinese Provinces](image)

*Figure 1. Map of Chinese Provinces.*

**Socio-economic Background.** Participants were asked to report their parents’ occupation and annual income per the demographics questionnaire. Ranges were supplied
for participants to select that, when converted to U.S. dollars, equaled $25,000 range
intervals (i.e. $0-$24,999, $25,000-$49,999, etc.). During the time of the study was
conducted, the mean parental income range approximated by participants was 310,000-
465,000 Chinese yuan annually, which converted to $25,000-$49,000 U.S. dollars.

Marital status, sexual orientation and religious affiliation. Six of seven
participants (86%) were single, while one (14%) was married. Similarly, six of seven
participants (86%) self-identified as heterosexual, while 1 (14%) self-identified as
homosexual. Over half (4 or 57%) of participants reported Atheism as their religious
affiliation, while the remainder reported Buddhism (1 or 14%), Christianity (14%), or
“other” (14%) as their religious affiliation.

Duration in United States and academic program. The mean duration
participants had lived in the United States was 4 years, ranging from one year to seven
years. Four (57%) participants were undergraduate students and three (43%) were
graduate students. The programs of study reported by participants varied. Four categories
were determined, including: Engineering (2 or 29%), Health Professions (2 or 29%),
Media & Design (2 or 29%), and Economics (1 or 14%).

Monthly personal care spending. Participants were also asked to approximate
the amount of money they spent on personal care products, which were described to
include hygiene and hair and body care products, in addition to clothing and grooming
services. Results ranged from as little as $8 to as much as $150 per month. The mean of
the amounts reported was $65.42.
Table 2
*Participant Demographic Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>S.E.S.</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
<th>Religious Affiliation</th>
<th>Years in U.S.</th>
<th>Academic Status</th>
<th>Academic Field</th>
<th>P.C. Spending</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deming</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>$25-49k</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>$8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gan</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>$50-74k</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>Atheist</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>$50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jinhai</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>$75-99k</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Design</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liwei</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>$25-49k</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>Atheist</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>$50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Qianfan</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>&lt;$25k</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Homosexual</td>
<td>Atheist</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Media Arts</td>
<td>$20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renshu</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>&lt;$25k</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>Atheist</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>$50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shen</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>$175-199k</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>Atheist</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**CMNI-46 Results**

The CMNI-46 is comprised of nine subscales which comprise the components of masculinity, per the measure. These nine subscales are (1) winning, (2) emotional control, (3) risk-taking, (4) violence, (5) power over women, (6) playboy, (7) self-reliance, (8) primacy of work, and (9) heterosexual self-presentation. Each subscale was scored for every participant and then aggregate scores were determined for the complete participant group. The results are presented in percentages, which represent the extent to which the participant group conformed to each masculine norm.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Deming</th>
<th>Gan</th>
<th>Jinhai</th>
<th>Liwei</th>
<th>Qianfan</th>
<th>Renshu</th>
<th>Shen</th>
<th>Subscale Score</th>
<th>Subscale Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WIN</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>55/126</td>
<td>43.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>59/138</td>
<td>46.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>46/105</td>
<td>46.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIO</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>58/126</td>
<td>46.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POW</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22/84</td>
<td>26.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLAY</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>34/84</td>
<td>40.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>52/105</td>
<td>49.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRIWO RK</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>41/84</td>
<td>48.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSP</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>66/126</td>
<td>52.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partic. Mean</td>
<td>42.75%</td>
<td>65.22%</td>
<td>34.78%</td>
<td>47.83%</td>
<td>41.30%</td>
<td>41.30%</td>
<td>40.58%</td>
<td>44.83%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Table 4  
*CMNI-46 Standard Deviation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale Title</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>StDev</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WIN (Winning)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43.67</td>
<td>2.8499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC (Emotional Control)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>46.83</td>
<td>2.4411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT (Risk-taking)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43.81</td>
<td>1.2776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIO (Violence)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>46.03</td>
<td>3.8065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POW (Power over Women)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26.19</td>
<td>2.0996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLAY (Playboy)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>40.48</td>
<td>2.2315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR (Self-reliance)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>49.52</td>
<td>2.6650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRIWORK (Primacy of Work)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>48.81</td>
<td>2.2315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSP (Heterosexual Self-presentation)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>52.38</td>
<td>3.5400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Subscale scores.** Heterosexual self-presentation (52.38%), self-reliance (49.52%), and primacy of work (48.81%) garnered the highest scores, while the power over women (26.19%) and playboy (40.48%) subscales generated scores which were significantly lower than the mean for all subscales aggregated (44.83%).

**Analysis of participant scores.** Five of the seven participants produced scores within five percentage points of the aggregated participant mean of 44.83%. Gan scored significantly higher (65.22%) than the mean; while Jinhai scored significantly lower (34.78%). Information provided by participants for the demographics questionnaire and interview supplements these scores with descriptive and biographical information. When considered holistically, all three components provide an avenue for analysis of these statistically significant outliers.
Profiles of Selected Participants

**Highest scoring participant.** Gan scored the highest of all participants in six of the nine subscales of the CMNI-46, with a particularly high score in heterosexual self-presentation (88.89%). His responses to selected interview questions complement his scores descriptively. Gan described a masculine person as “For personality, it’s kind of aggressive – and they are always willing to do something or help a person who is weaker than you, like females – like your girlfriend.” He rated himself a “9” of 10, in relation to his degree of masculinity. Gan also remarked that he prefers to flirt and change girlfriends often. He reported that he avoids dressing in colors and generally only wears white, navy, or gray. Gan claimed to avoid dressing like other Chinese men at Ohio University, due to his perception that they are too fashionable.

Gan’s CMNI-46 scores and interview responses suggest that he possesses a more rigid and dichotomous understanding of gender roles. His emphasis on the aggressive and protective role of masculinity, in addition to his desire for attention from women and his avoidance of colorful and fashionable dress align with traditional masculine norms. Gan also expressed that he takes pride in masculinity, sharing that he feels masculinity “is a good thing.”

**Lowest scoring participant.** Jinhai scored the lowest of all participants per the CMNI-46, with particularly low scores in the power over women (16.67%) and playboy (8.33%) subscales. Jinhai’s age and his marital status are likely to have influenced his perspective, thus impacting his CMNI-46 scores and interview responses. Jinhai rated himself a “5” of ten, in relation to his degree of masculinity, which was tied for the
lowest self-assessed degree of masculinity of the participants. He expressed no aversion to wearing clothes others might perceive as feminine, providing the example “I might wear something a little more feminine, it never bothers me. When I was little my mother dressed me up in pink flower shirts and flower decorations. My mom always wanted a girl. I wear pink shirts. I have one or two and I think they look really good.” Jinhai also spoke highly of his partnership with his wife and the importance of her happiness and respect for him. Jinhai’s de-stigmatized view of deviating from masculine norms, his strong bond with his mother and wife, and his status as a newly graduated 28 year old are plausible influences on his more relaxed stance on gender roles.

Emergent Themes

Muscularity as a component of masculinity. Every participant associated muscularity, physical size, and/or gym attendance with masculinity. Renshu defined a masculine person as “strong, [with] male hormones. Goes to the gym on a regular basis and does weightlifting.” Qianfan simply used the term “athletic” to describe masculinity. Deming said that a masculine man “should be dominant and large.” Jinhai produced two adjectives to associate with masculinity, which were “muscle” and “sport.”

Additionally, other physical features were associated with masculinity, including possessing an angular face and broad shoulders. Gan’s definition of a masculine man was someone who is “angular, with broad shoulders.” He also added that “some people’s faces are round, but that’s not this person; [he] works out every day and has the muscle.” This description relates the shape of the face to both masculinity and physical fitness. Shen expressed a similar opinion, stating “masculinity is wanting to look like a really
tough guy – like a man. Someone with muscles and maybe tall. [He] has a structure that has bones that are rigid.”

**Independence and responsibility as masculine.** Several participants categorized independent and responsible behaviors as masculine and irresponsible behaviors as nonmasculine. Gan emphasized that a man who is not masculine “has difficulties in choosing” and is “always afraid of being responsible.” Liwei related a lack independence and personal accomplishment to non-masculine behaviors. He stated that someone who is not masculine “uses their parents” money to buy something, like lots of luxury things” and that “they don’t respect their parents or teachers.” Jinhai, who has spent six years in the United States, made a distinction between his perception of U.S. masculinity and Chinese masculinity, saying “I feel like, in the U.S., masculinity is aggressive, leadership, and confidence. In China, masculine is about persistency in pursuing something – you never give up on your goal.”

**Business attire as a masculine symbol.** The majority of participants related business attire, such as suits, dress shirts, and dress pants with masculinity. Renshu reported that “suit and tie – business casual” looks most masculine. He added “the most boring type of clothing, for me, definitely looks masculine on a man.” Shen also expressed that suits were masculine. He responded “A suit, or military uniforms – something like that. Anything that shows you have a really good body.” In this way, Shen suggested that the form the clothing gives the wearer’s body is an element of masculinity. Gan, also responded that “suits,” “dress shirts,” and “dress pants” were masculine. However, he added “I don’t think t shirts are masculine or the that sport dressing is
masculine.” His response suggests that he feels more formal clothing for men is more masculine than sports-related clothing.

**Avoidance of colorful and conspicuous clothing.** Several participants expressed a desire to avoid wearing bright and colorful clothing, or clothes which are conspicuous or heavily embellished or patterned. Color and fit were two commonly avoided clothing elements. Gan said “[I dress] active and masculine. I don’t like to dress in colors. I like totally white or totally blue. I choose colors like gray.” He said he prefers less colorful clothing because “it’s simple.” Regarding fit, tightness of clothing was also reported to be undesirable. Gan also disliked tight clothing, stating “[I avoid] tight jeans. It’s not something in American culture or in China. Other guys have issue with it.” Jinhai said he avoids clothing that’s “too hipster-ish” like “really tight jeans – that type of style. They just dress over-complicated with all the bracelets.” One participant, Shen, not only reported to avoid these types of clothing, but also negatively related them to masculinity. When asked which what an un-masculine man looks like, Shen responded “physically, I think weak and very thin – or just someone that wears skinny jeans or tight clothes like that.” When asked what clothing is not masculine, he responded “girly clothes – like large v-necks, or very tight jeans that show you have very thin legs.”

**Desire to avoid Chinese dress stereotypes.** Four participants vocalized their desire to distance themselves from their perception of Chinese fashion and behavior stereotypes. This included the perception that some Chinese students do not attempt to integrate to American cultural norms and that their dress style is too Chinese for their setting. Gan’s expressed a dislike for the level of fashion involvement some Chinese
students exhibit. He stated “[I compare myself] more with American students. I don’t like the Chinese guys” dressing here. They are over fashion – too much fashion.” Shen criticized the dress style of some other Chinese individuals, including the style present in his home city of Beijing. He said “in China, people will wear everything – sometimes really weird. I’m from Beijing and there are so many different people. The average person wants to dress more like Europeans, but the style is not as good as European people.” Regarding Chinese students at Ohio University, Shen said “I try to look not like Chinese. I’m also seeking different clothing, but not too different. I probably dress a little bit different from American students – but some Chinese students, I can see their clothes are actually from China.” This response was echoed when the researcher asked Shen if there are any clothes he would not wear at Ohio University. He responded “The bubble coat in winter. I wouldn’t wear it here. My American friend said only Chinese wear it here. I don’t want to be seen as a stereotype.”

Two participants expressed a dislike for their perception that some Chinese students do not try to integrate well enough at Ohio University. Liwei confessed “truthfully, I don’t like the Chinese group here. I think when I come to the U.S., I need to know more American friends than Chinese friends.” Shen also expressed a level of discomfort with Chinese students not integrating, though his reason related to their clothing rather than their social contacts. He said:

The Chinese style here, it’s not weird, it’s just that they don’t blend in. So it might seem a little weird here, but it’s totally fine in China. I don’t want to be like that. I don’t want to be looking weird in this kind of environment. It’s normal in some
big cities, like New York. My ex-roommate really liked to dress up. It doesn’t look bad, but he just doesn’t blend in because everyone here dresses casual.

Desire for muscularity and height. Several participants expressed a desire to become more muscular and to be taller. Many reported having lifted weights since arriving in the United States, stating that they did not conduct this practice while living in China. Qianfan, Shen, Gan, and Jinhai spoke about their desire for muscularity and height, in addition to their attempts to alter their body shape.

Regarding the desire to become more muscular, Qianfan reported “I tried working out. I used to want to be thin, but now I want to be fit. Now I don’t care about how big I am, I just want to be fit. I [used to] want to be small. I think it’s a culture thing, but also about my age difference.” When asked if he could change anything about his body, Jinhai responded “[I would like] to get fatter and stronger.” He followed with this anecdote:

Yesterday I posted a selfie on Facebook with my wife. My mom commented that I’ve gotten skinnier and I should eat more. I am from Zhenjiang province, which is next to the Middle East. Our diet has a lot of lamb and meat. Everyone looks bigger and stronger than other parts of China. Last time I visited, I got fatty liver. I gained like twenty pounds.

Jinhai’s response revealed his desire to meet the culture norm of his area of origin, in addition to the pressure he feels from his mother to adhere to that norm.

Gan expressed a desire for a greater level of fitness, but in his case, it involved both the loss of weight and the acquisition of muscle. He responded:
In China, it’s different – the food. I have lost weight since I came here – 10 kg (22 lbs). I didn’t do it on purpose. It’s the new environment. I’m more busy here, but in China, my life is more happy. That makes me lose weight. I do some working out regularly, like swimming or going to the gym. I never went to the gym when I was in China.

Though Gan did not express that losing weight was a major priority, his response highlights the changes Chinese students can experience when adapting to new food culture and availability, emotional changes, and new social settings.

Shen spoke extensively about body image and fitness. When asked if he would like to change anything about his body, he replied “appearance-wise, maybe I want to lose some weight and gain more muscle.” He shared that he was immediately influenced to work to change his body upon arriving to Ohio University, stating “I work out. As soon as I got here, I work out harder and run every day and do sit ups and pushups, things like that.”

In addition to seeking greater levels of fitness and muscularity, Shen expressed a desire to avoid footwear that he feels makes him look shorter. When asked if his social contacts disapproved of any of his clothing choices, he responded “some of my friends don’t like me wearing boots because then I look a little bit shorter - like Marten? Dr. Martens.” Qianfan also expressed a desire to appear tall. He expressed that this involves comparing himself with others at Ohio University, saying “I compare my body type with Americans more. People consider Chinese and Asians as short, so sometimes I ask myself ‘am I taller than him?’ I compare my body type to Americans more than
Chinese.” Shen and Qianfan’s responses suggest a desire to meet male body standards at Ohio University and a level of insecurity regarding those standards.

**Observation of American casual style.** Three participants spoke about their perception of the popularity of casual clothing at Ohio University. They all shared information regarding the changes they have made to their personal dress style to adjust to this environment. Gan spoke extensively about the dress-related differences he noticed while at Ohio University. He shared

- When I was in China, I used to dress like a professor - very official. I brought two suits from China, but I never dress them, because no one dresses them here. It looks so weird, walking down the street. This suit is different, not like the one you wear for internship - This suit is casual, like a [more] casual suit. The students in this university, they just come from gym. It does impact me. It makes me dress casual, too.

Gan also spoke about the differences between his expectations for U.S. students in his academic discipline, and the reality he experienced after arriving at Ohio University.

- In my imagination, people here, especially because my major is finance, they were always dressing up. When I came here, I saw a lot of people in my major - they just dress like they came from the gym. It’s different, they separate their life. When they are at work they always dress official, but when are on a bus, when they are having fun, they dress very casual. You like casual, you like the materials which are comfortable. The dress shirt and dress pants are not comfortable.
Jinhai also spoke regarding his dress-related changes since arriving at Ohio University. His statement reveals his perception of the differences in dress between some Asian students and American students.

[Before] I was way more sophisticated in the way I dress. Now I just don’t care. Nobody cares; why should I? The funny thing is you can walk down Court Street and see an Asian who took an hour getting ready with all of his accessories next to a guy with a sleeveless shirt. Most of the guys [here] just wear a sleeveless shirt.

Jinhai expressed changing his dress to be less sophisticated in order to meet local dress norms, while also citing his perception that some Asian students at Ohio University do not meet local dress norms due to the intricacy of their dress style.

Shen shared similar responses. He noted that, since coming to Ohio University, he has “started to wear flip-flops and hoodies” adding “I don’t [sic] usually wear hoodies before.” He related this to a desire to emulate casual American style, reporting “I’ve changed a lot. American people dress very differently, very casually. [During] the first few years, I started wearing flip-flops, shorts, and t-shirts. Before, I never liked to wear flip-flops and I only wore pants instead of shorts.” Shen, however, did express a reluctant desire to wear more formal clothes, saying “I really like wearing shirts with buttons and collar, but other people here don’t like them. They prefer t-shirts.”
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

In this chapter, the research questions are presented with the findings supported by data that lead to conclusions for this project. The conclusions are discussed relative to the theoretical frameworks of the study and with respect to relevant findings presented in the literature. The qualitative nature of this study enabled development of questions for future research, which are presented in the final portion of this chapter.

Findings and Discussion for Research Questions

The research questions are addressed and discussed below using the data acquired during the study.

RQ 1: How do the participants define masculinity? Five of the seven participants included the term “muscle” or “muscular” in their definition of masculinity. Four of seven participants included concepts of athleticism, working out, and sports participation. Only one participant included knowledge, personality, or clothing style in their definition of masculinity. One participant, Jinhai, made a distinction between his perception of American masculinity and Chinese masculinity. He responded “in the U.S., masculine traits are aggressive, leadership, and confidence. In China, masculine is about persistency in pursuing something – you never give up your goal.” When asked which traits were most un-masculine, the responses varied greatly. Three participants felt that irresponsibility, disrespecting authority, and relying on parents were most un-masculine. Two participants responded that a being weak and thin was the most un-masculine.

Regarding masculinity and clothing, there was a divide in perception. Three participants felt that suits and men’s dress wear were the most masculine-looking
clothing. Two participants expressed that showing off muscles or the body was the most masculine-looking. Other responses included sports-related clothing, and simple clothing. While two participants felt that sports and workout clothing were expressly masculine, two different participants listed those types of clothing as un-masculine, relating them to immaturity. Other types of clothing which were described as un-masculine were tight jeans, accessories such as bracelets and earrings, colorful clothing, and sandals.

**RQ 1 discussion.** The most prevalent elements the participants associated with masculinity related to physicality, musculature, working out, and sports participation. Only one participant included any information about a masculine person’s personality in their response. Less consistent responses were yielded regarding what traits are un-masculine. The lack of masculinity was more often related to both weak and thin physiques, as well as to behaviors which were viewed as immature, rebellious, or lazy. These responses indicate that the participants viewed masculinity as a phenomenon primarily related to the appearance and lifestyle an individual, while the lack of masculinity was described as a combination of a weak body and character flaws that indicate immaturity and a lack of personal responsibility.

While there was no singular consensus on the types of dress the participants understood as masculine, themes which emerged were (1) business professional clothing, (2) clothing that reveals the wearer’s musculature, and (3) sport-branded and sport-related clothing. Business professional clothing was associated with maturity and professional and financial success. Muscle-revealing clothing was related back to the notion that masculinity is primarily a body phenomenon. Sports clothing was selected as masculine
by some participants and un-masculine by others. The individuals who described sports clothing as masculine related it to athleticism and sports participation, which was included in four of the seven participants’ definitions of masculinity. Interesting, those who selected sports clothing as un-masculine related it to immaturity and a lack of professionalism. So, while both perceptions related to aforementioned definitions of masculinity, the interpretations of sports clothing as a signifier varied. In this study, the two most prevalently identified components of masculinity, an athletic lifestyle and mature professionalism, were sometimes interpreted as incompatible in relation to dress-related masculinity.

These findings support symbolic consumption as a relevant theoretical framework for the study. Five of the seven participants selected a singular element as a marker of masculinity. Additionally, while there was less of a consensus regarding masculine clothing, two genres of clothing were selected as masculine for reasons related to different qualities of masculinity in the minds of the participants. In this instance, business professional clothing was associated with the symbolic masculine qualities of responsibility, capability, and professionalism, while muscle-revealing clothing and sports clothing were associated with the symbolic masculine qualities of physical power, confidence, and competitiveness.

**RQ 2: How masculine do the participants feel they are?** The responses of participants ranged from 5 to 9 (using a “1 to 10” scale). The mean of the self-reported scores was 7. This indicates that participants, on average, felt that they were moderately to highly masculine. Only two participants rated themselves a “5,” meaning five of the
seven participants felt they were more masculine than the midpoint of the scale. Gan, who was the participant who rated himself the highest, selecting “9 of 10,” also scored the highest on the CMNI-46. Jinhai, who selected “5 of 10” for his degree of masculinity (which was tied for the lowest self-scoring), scored the lowest on the CMNI-46.

**RQ 2 discussion.** While no participant assessed himself to be less than moderately masculine, only Gan, who had the highest score (65.22%,) scored above 50% on the CMNI-46. Although the CMNI-46 was designed to measure subscription to masculine norms, in this study, every participant scored substantially lower on the CMNI-46 than their self-assessment might have predicted. Potential influences to this finding could include (1) that the psychological phenomenon of “illusory superiority” (a cognitive bias whereby individuals overestimate their own qualities) existed in the participant’s self-assessment of their masculinity, (2) that the participants’ assessment of their own degree of masculinity was not strongly related to conforming to masculine norms, or (3) that the CMNI-46 was designed to assess conformity to masculine norms among Euro-American individuals, and so atypical findings were yielded in this study.

**RQ 3: How do the participants express gender identity through dress?** Every participant felt that his dress closely reflected his masculinity and gender identity. One participant felt that this was due to the serious tone of the clothing expected of males in his field of academics. Two participants expressed a desire to exercise flexibility with their dress, such as dressing a little more masculine or traditional on certain occasions and a little more experimental on other occasions. However, every participant agreed that his clothing was a reflection of his identity, such as their profession, age, or personality.
Participants suggested that their dress tells others about their personality. This most often was related to the participant’s level of seriousness, accountability, or professionalism, or to their good judgment and moderation. Several participants emphasized that their clothing tells others that they are balanced individuals who avoid both excessiveness and sloppiness in their dress.

**RQ 3 discussion.** These findings support symbolic consumption as a theoretical component relevant to this study. All of the participants felt that the degree of masculinity of their dress was similar to their degree of masculinity as an individual. All participants also agreed that their clothing tells others about their personality and lifestyle. These results strongly suggest that the participants select clothing and dress which reflects their identity and informs others accordingly. Interestingly, the most common signified qualities related to the participants’ maturity and moderation, while no mention was made of other qualities commonly associated with university students (such as sociability or adventurousness).

**RQ 4: How similar or different are the three selves?** The interview questions above were designed to relate to the three selves of self-discrepancy theory. Using the responses each participant provided, “maps” were generated for each participant that encapsulate his desires for himself and the desires he felt others held for him. These questions were also designed to ascertain how the participants prioritize the desires of others in relation to their own desires.

**Deming.** Deming presented the simplest and most succinct identity portrait of the participants. When asked if his friends would want to change anything about him,
Deming replied “I don’t know - each friends their own idea. So I don’t know.” Similarly, when asked if his parents would want to change anything about him, Deming replied “No. I think for each child, in their parent’s view, their child is the most perfect one.” Furthermore, when questioned regarding any censure he had received regarding his identity or dress, Deming replied “I have never experienced anybody criticize my dress. The Chinese people will rarely speak that out; even if in their mind they say „that‟s inappropriate,‟ they will rarely speak it out to you.” He also reported that he has not changed his style of dress since beginning to attend Ohio University one year prior.

These inquiries were all designed to explore the pressures and expectations the participant has experienced from influential individuals and groups in his life. Deming’s responses suggest he had experienced very limited role conflict. These responses suggest that the ought self was not a powerful or distinct consideration in relation to his dress. Interestingly, Deming did express that pleasing his family was most important to him, even more so than pleasing himself. When asked to expound, he reported “I think it‟s based on Chinese traditional values. Society is based on the family – the individual families. It‟s kind of like the minimal unit in the society – it‟s the closest and most relevant unit to yourself.” This excerpt suggests that, while Deming expressed no conflict regarding his own desires and his family‟s desires for him, he still greatly valued their approval. Deming demonstrated the least role conflict and the least adaptive behaviors in relation to his identity and dress at Ohio University.

Gan. Participant two, Gan, reported several discrepancies between his desires and those of his parents. Gan, 26, expressed that he would like to become calmer and less
aggressive, because he feels he is usually too quick to anger. He also expressed a desire
to become more focused and a harder working student. While he felt little pressure to
change his behavior from friends, Gan conveyed that he and his parents have conflicting
preferences. He believes his parents most want for him to get good grades, make a large
wage, and to acquire a large amount of material possessions. He said “they don’t care if
I’m truly happy or not. They just say „if you have money, you can buy anything.” So I
have difficulties communicating with my parents.” Gan also revealed that his parents
have tried to influence him to begin a long-term, exclusive, relationship. However, he
preferred to flirt and to see different women often. Gan shared that it is most important to
him to please authority figures in his life, such as future supervisors and employers.

Gan’s contributions suggest role conflict related to his own desires (components
of the ideal self) and those of his parents (components of the ought self). Gan’s desire to
find happiness through means outside of money, marriage, and a career conflict with his
parents” desires him to become financially and professionally focused. Gan’s selection of
finance as his program of study and his selection of “employer” as the most important
individual in his life suggests that he wishes to, to some degree, fulfill the desires of his
parents. However, his defiance in regards to entering a long-term relationship and his
preference to see multiple women provides an example for which Gan is willing to fulfill
his desires instead of his parents”.

Jinhai. Participant three, Jinhai shared his desire to please his parents, especially
his father. He expressed feelings of indebtedness to his father and a desire to meet his
fathers’ expectations for him. When asked who he would like to please the most, Jinhai
responded “I want to make my dad happy because he sacrificed a lot - his free time and money. I want to make him happy and proud. Also my wife, too, but I would say in this case, my father – to bring honor to the family.” While Jinhai did not express areas of conflict between himself and his father, he did emphasize that conforming being successful is key to pleasing his father. He added “you are raised by your family – it makes me want to be successful. This makes me observe what’s common, what’s the way.” In this instance, Jinhai’s feelings of gratitude and indebtedness made his father a large influence over his desire to meet expectations and conform to norms; Jinhai’s ought self was comprised of the qualities he felt his parents wanted him to embody.

**Liwei.** The fourth participant, Liwei, 22, expressed that he would like to make more new friends, that he admires the “openness” he feels Americans often display, and that he most desires to adopt that type of disposition. This aligned with his perception of his friends” and family”s desires for him. Regarding his parents, Liwei reported “first, they”d want me to be more open. Second, they”d want me to study harder.” He also conveyed that some of his friends would like him to dress less simply and consume more luxury goods. Liwei stated “some of my friends don’t like (my) simple clothing. One of my friends at Michigan told me I need to buy luxury clothes so I can attract lots of girls - they will think I am really rich.” This suggestion conflicted with Liwei”s preference to dress simply and to not emphasize his clothing too much. Liwei revealed that his parents” opinions are the most important to him, followed by his grandparents”. These contributions suggest that Liwei”s ought self is comprised of a more outgoing and more expensively dressed version of himself. While Liwei”s ideal self shares the quality of
being more outgoing, it deviates in regards to clothing choice. Liwei prefers simple clothing to extravagant brands and styles.

**Qianfan.** Participant five, Qianfan, expressed some role-related tension between his own desires and that of his friends and family. Qianfan, 20, expressed his desire to continue living his life according to his personality and desires, but also mentioned his parents’ desire for him to be more masculine and his friends’ desire for him to align his interests to theirs. Qianfan prioritized his personal lifestyle and proclivities over those of his friends and family, but admitted that he has difficulty refusing to help his friends and participate in certain social activities. Overall, Qianfan conveyed a desire for freedom to experiment through dress and style and reluctance to disappoint others. Role conflict was identified to exist due to Qianfan’s concurrent desires to express his personality and individuality and to please his friends and family. This suggests that Qianfan’s ideal self is comprised of individualistic traits while his ought self includes more cooperative and social traits.

**Renshu.** Participant six, Renshu, provided a very focused and single-minded portrait of the selves related to self-discrepancy theory. Renshu, 30, expressed limited role discomfort and conflict, due to the similar desires he and his parents held for him. His personal goals were to become more competitive for jobs in academia, to improve his resume, and to be more diligent in his job search. He most wanted to acquire a full-time position at a university. Renshu described his parents’ greatest desires for him similarly, reporting that they would most like for him to acquire gainful employment at a prestigious institution (partially so that he would no longer be financially dependent upon
them). In this way, their desires overlapped. However, Renshu did express tension from his parents and friends regarding his lack of communication and social participation. He described the demands of teaching and searching for jobs as a deterrent to participating in social outings and calling his family in China. When asked to prioritize his desires and the desires of other individuals or groups in his life, Renshu responded (from most important to less important) “myself - I want to make myself happy, (followed by) my academic advisor, my family, and my girlfriend.”

**Shen.** The seventh and final participant, Shen, listed many changes that he feels his friends and family would prefer he adopt. Shen, 24, reported that the only things he would change about himself is to lose some fat and gain some muscle, and that he would like to utilize his time better. However, he reported that his ex-girlfriend “didn’t like his clothes” and resorted to buying clothes for him to wear that she favored. Shen also expressed that his ex-girlfriend disliked his acne. He revealed that his friends have criticized him when he wore boots because they felt they made him look shorter, which they disliked. Shen also articulated that he likes to wear shirts with collars, but he feels his peers and friends would probably prefer him to wear less formal clothing, such as t-shirts. When asked about his parents’ desires for him, Shen revealed “they want me to study harder. Appearance wise, they would want me to grow a little taller – and they want me to dress more powerful. My mom told me that a few years ago.” Shen shared that, besides himself, his parents’ opinions are the most important to him. This interview data suggests that Shen’s ideal self is comprised of a leaner, more muscular version of himself
who utilizes his time better. His ought self, however, is taller, free of acne, dresses more powerfully, and earns improved grades.

**RQ 4 discussion.** Every participant except Deming expressed at least one conflicting desire to which influential parties have expressed he should conform. Every participant also conveyed at least some desire to please their parents. Common components of the ought self pertained to (1) body changes, including increased weight, increased height, and improved complexion, (2) increased academic, professional, and financial success, and (3) dress style, including more powerful, heightening, and high status clothing. The participants Gan, Qianfan, and Shen produced responses suggesting they experienced the most role conflict and largest disparities between the actual, ideal, and ought selves. Deming and Jinhai expressed the least role conflict and the smallest disparity between the aforementioned selves. Through analysis of the interview data, the degree of disparity appeared to be potentially influenced by several factors, including (1) the participant’s desire to please others, (2) the amount of social pressure the participant felt was applied by influential parties, and (3) the existence of conflicting desires between the participant and those influential parties.

Self-discrepancy theory was supported by the interview data related to this research question. Qualities related to the three selves were ascertained for each participant during the interviews, and the presence of a distinct ideal and ought self emerged in the case of six of the seven participants. Those participants described making personal changes to approach both the ideal and the ought selves; this suggests that the participants tended to value both selves because they made attempts to fulfill both.
RQ 5: To what extent do the participants value and conform to western masculine norms? Each participant identified at least one norm associated with masculinity to which they have adapted or refused to adapt. While Renshu embraced the masculine norms of male academics and professors, including the seriousness and subtle dress style he perceived individuals in the role to adopt, he rejected the American culture norm of college drinking and partying, which is sometimes related to both youth culture and masculine norms. Renshu shared “I felt like this university has a big culture of binge drinking, partying, (like) the Halloween celebration block party? I never tried to blend-in to that culture.”

Several masculine norms participants identified related to clothing norms. Qianfan communicated that he never wore athletic (or “basketball”) shorts before coming to Ohio University, where he perceived them to be common and embraced. Jinhai shared that he has adapted his personal style greatly since arriving at Ohio University, largely due to discomfort he felt deviating from local dress norms for males. Jinhai stated “I was way more sophisticated in the way I dress. I had long hair… Now I just don’t care. Nobody cares, why should I? The funny thing is you can walk down Court Street and see an Asian who took an hour getting ready with all of his accessories next to a guy with a sleeveless shirt. Most of the guys [here] just wear the sleeveless shirt.” This contribution suggests that Jinhai felt unrewarded and out-of-place by maintaining his previous dress style at Ohio University, where casual and athletic clothing are more accepted for males. Liwei said “I think here you don’t need to care about others very much. In China people care about my clothing more than here.” Similarly, Gan stated “The students in university
they just come from gym. It does impact me. It makes me dress so casual.” Liwei and Gan’s statements echo Jinhai’s sentiments. They suggest that norm-conforming men’s dress at Ohio University appears simple, athletic, and casual.

The final genre of masculine norms presented by the participants was masculine norms related to men’s bodies at Ohio University. Interview contributions from Qianfan, Gan, Shen, and Liwei highlight the types of adjustments the participants have made to accommodate male body norms at Ohio University. Qianfan shared the change in attitude he has acquired related to his body, declaring “I’ve tried working out. Usually, I wanted to be thin, but now I want to be fit. Now I don’t care about how big I am, I just want to be fit. Usually, I wanted to be small. I think it’s a cultural thing and also about my age difference.” Qianfan’s statement exposes that his desire to become fit has replaced his former preference for a small body over a large one. Shen stated “I work out. As soon as I got here I work out harder and I run every day and I do sit ups and push-ups. Things like that.” Liwei admitted “I want to have more muscle because I think people here are very muscle.” These contributions expose the participants’ observation of and desire to conform to the masculine body norms at Ohio University.

**RQ 5 discussion.** Every participant, except Deming, shared adaptive behaviors they have implemented or attempted to implement in order to meet the masculine dress and body norms at Ohio University. The detailed responses provided support the argument that masculine norms at Ohio University were influential enough to the participants in order for them to attempt to change their dress and bodies. These adaptive behaviors included working out, buying different clothing, and abandoning previous
dress and style preferences. This strongly suggests that conforming to western masculinity norms was important to the participants.

The data relevant to research question five supports self-discrepancy as a valid framework for this research. The participants’ desires and efforts to conform to western masculinity indicate willingness to adopt normative behaviors and dress at Ohio University. These behaviors were revealed to be specific to body and dress norms for males. Normative expectations an individual perceives comprise the ought self in self-discrepancy theory; it stands to reason that the participants adopting masculine body and dress norms at Ohio University signifies the use of approach behaviors which align the actual self with the ought self. The ought self is relevant to the social and cultural environment of the individual; in the context of this study, the ought self has shifted from containing the normative expectations of the participants’ former locations to containing the normative expectations perceived to exist at Ohio University.

RQ 6: Are participants’ reference identities self-driven or other-driven? Only two participants named specific dress referents from the media. Liwei identified the former CEO of Apple, Steve Jobs, as his style referent. Liwei cited Steve Jobs’ simple and casual dress style as admirable and easy to attain. Gan identified the English actor, Michael Fassbender, as his dress referent. The remainder of participants reported that they do not notice of the dress of media figures, or they were unable to list any extemporaneously during the interview.

When asked about which sources they use to find new clothing and dress styles, the three most common sources supplied were (1) TV shows and movies, (2) select
brands, and (3) the internet. Gan and Qianfan reported using TV shows and movies to observe dress styles. Deming, Jinhai, and Renshu all reported referring to specific brands in order to select new clothing and dress styles. Deming named Mossimo as his favorite brand, Jinhai named Armani Exchange and Hugo Boss, and Renshu listed Aeropostale, Hollister, Abercrombie & Fitch, and Ralph Lauren. Three participants said they used the internet in order to select clothing and dress styles. However, each of these participants clarified that they use companies” commercial websites to view clothing, rather than using style sites or blogs. Deming shared “I will go to real sites. I do not depend on the media – I think the media is kind of deceptive.” Shen stated “Sometimes if I want to buy pants or shoes, I go online. To the store”s website. I don”t usual look at the style websites.”

These responses, in conjunction with the responses to other interview questions, suggest that reference identities the participants held were more self-driven than other-driven. Four of the seven participants shared that it is more important that they like their dress style than that others approve if it. Two participants said it was equally important that others approve of their clothing. Gan shared that he valued the opinions of others more, but that his opinion in changing. He contributed “I am changing. I am focusing more on myself and the clothes that are comfortable to me. In China, I highly valued other peoples” clothing.” These responses support that the participants tended to value their own opinion of their dress as much or more than the opinions of others.

Other responses from participants suggested that they dressed in way to avoid social affect. Gan, who had only been in the U.S. for about one year at the time of
participation, stated “I am changing. I am focusing more on myself and the clothes that are comfortable to me. In China, I highly valued other peoples’ clothing.” His statement suggests that, at Ohio University, his desire to dress for others was shifting to a desire to dress for physical comfort. Liwei was adamant about developing his dress independently, stating “I do not copy others – I have my own opinion. Sometimes I and the other guy have the same shirt – I don’t mind. But I have my own opinion. Sometimes I will get idea from others, but I will not copy others.”

Interestingly, the majority of participants reported referring to non-Chinese individuals at Ohio University, in regards to appearance, dress, and style, rather than looking to other Chinese students. Gan expressed an aversion to dressing like other Chinese students, disclosing “(I compare myself) more with American students. I don’t like the Chinese guys’ dressing here. They are over fashion – too much fashion.” Similarly, Shen contributed “I try to look not like Chinese. I’m also seeking different clothing, but not too different. I probably dress a little bit different than American students. Some of the Chinese students, I can see their clothes are actually from China.” Renshu replied that he does not compare himself with Chinese students often, largely due to demographics of his social circle, stating “I don’t know a lot of Chinese students. The majority of my friends have graduated. I know more international and American students than I know Chinese students.” Only one participant, Qianfan, express he compares himself with both groups equally. He stated “I compare myself to both equally. Sometimes I compare the way I dress to Chinese students more. Other times I compare my body types to Americans more. People consider Chinese and Asians as short, so
sometimes I ask myself “am I taller than him?” I compare my body type to Americans more than Chinese.”

**RQ 6 discussion.** The interview data supports that the participants, in general, utilize external dress sources selectively. Only two participants were able to name a single media figure whose style they admire or emulate. Four of the seven participants shared that they prioritize their own dress preferences over the preferences of others. Additionally, while two participants listed TV shows and movies as style sources, five preferred to look only at certain brands or to shop directly from apparel companies’ websites. This suggests that the majority of participants prefer to construct their dress from narrowed selection sets (such as by brand or website). This strategy can facilitate decreased shopping time and dilemmas, while still allowing the individual to shop according to their tastes and preferences. This data suggests that the participants’ reference identities are a mixture of self-driven and other-driven, but tend to be comprised of more self-driven qualities.

The findings relevant to research question six partially support the presence of social comparison behaviors among the participants. While the participants were likely to observe and compare the dress of other students and university employees, they displayed limited comparison behaviors toward media figures. The motif of participants rejecting fellow Chinese students as objects of comparison implies the participants’ rejection of that group as a desirable model to emulate. This phenomenon potentially contradicts the third hypothesis of Festinger’s (1954) social comparison framework, which states that people are less likely to compare themselves with others they perceive as much different.
from them. However, it is plausible that the participants who rejected social comparison with other Chinese students feel they have shared more tastes and opinions with other groups on campus. Additionally, pre-existing research on minorities and western masculinity suggests individuals belonging to a minority group sometimes tend to make extra efforts to differentiate themselves from that group. Chan (2001) found in that male students of Asian descent tended to prefer to follow mainstream, hegemonic masculinity rather than align themselves with other subaltern social groups due to the rewards available to its members. Regardless, this finding warrants additional future investigation.

**RQ 7: Do the participants report constructing their dress differently than they did prior to arriving at Ohio University?** All of the participants, except Deming, reported that they dress differently than they did before arriving at Ohio University. Five of those six participants explained different ways that they have adapted to dress more casually than before. Jinhai shared “Before, I wore a raincoat or a button-up shirt all the time. I wouldn’t wear shorts or even a t-shirt. And I wore more dark colors, like gray and black. Now I wear more colors. I at least wear a polo, now; I need a collar.” Similarly, Shen stated “American people dress very differently - very casually. For the first few years I start wearing flip-flops and shorts and a shirt. I also wear shirts that are just like plaid and kind of colorful. Before that I never liked to wear flip-flops and I only wear pants instead of shorts.” Qianfan said “[before coming to Ohio University] I usually don’t wear the sporty shorts, like basketball shorts.” Though Renshu admitted to dressing differently than before arriving at Ohio University, he felt that could have been due to his
preferences and habits changing with age during those seven years. He felt he dressed about equally as casually as before.

**RQ 7 discussion.** Six of the seven participants said they dress differently than they did before arriving at Ohio University. Five of those participants described ways that they have come to dress more casually. This data suggests that, summarily, the participants were influenced by the dress style and norms at Ohio University. They adapted their dress to include articles they preferred not to wear before. While the participants did not all give their explicit reasoning for these changes, it stands to reason that the participants felt a need to conform to Ohio University’s dress conventions in order to avoid psychological discomfort and/or social repercussions.

The results for research question seven strongly support the presence of self-monitoring behaviors. Self-monitoring is described by Goldsmith & Clark (2008) as the process by which individuals adapt to the social group they identify as the premier community. Six of the seven participants described various ways they had altered their body and style of dress to align with mainstream norms at Ohio University; this suggests that self-monitoring behaviors were present among participants and that a “premier community,” generally speaking, was identified by those participants. The adaptive behaviors the participants shared indicate the body and dress qualities they identified as belong to the premier social community at Ohio University; these qualities were most often related to masculinity, casualness, and athleticism. In summary, self-monitoring was supported for six of the seven participants, and a single premier social community was selected by those participants.
RQ 8: Do the participants construct their dress in reference to masculinity norms and/or American masculinity norms? All of the participants except Deming described dressing to conform to norms and masculine norms at Ohio University. General masculine norms participants reported following included (1) avoiding colorful clothing, and (2) dressing in reference to professionalism. Gan and Liwei stated they avoid wearing colorful clothing because it is not masculine. Gan, Jinhai, and Renshu reported dressing to appear professional. Masculine norms typically associated with western masculinity were also identified by participants; these included (1) dressing casually, (2) dressing athletically, and (3) avoiding fashion clothing.

As stated previously, five of the seven participants reported dressing more casually since arriving at Ohio University. Additionally, Gan and Qianfan reported dressing in reference to athleticism and gym culture. Finally, Gan, Jinhai, and Shen expressed avoiding clothing that appears too fashionable or eccentric at Ohio University. For example, Gan claimed many Chinese students at Ohio University are too fashionable. Jinhai shared “I was way more sophisticated in the way I dress. I had long hair.” He added “I wouldn’t wear raincoats here. I spent $700 dollars for a Burberry raincoat. Over here, wearing it, I looked like a monster. The only place you’re okay to wear a cardigan is in Donkey [a coffee shop near campus]. After you leave, you take it off.” Shen contributed “I don’t want to be too much like the Chinese style. Just not too weird. The Chinese style here, it’s not weird, it’s just that they don’t blend in. So it might seem a little weird, but it’s totally fine in China. I don’t want to be like that, I don’t want to be looking weird in this kind of environment.”
RQ 8 discussion. The interview data supports that the majority of the participants dressed in reference to both generalizable masculine norms and western masculine norms present at Ohio University. Several participants reported dressing in reference to masculinity before coming to Ohio University, citing such behaviors as avoid colorful clothing, avoid accessories like earrings and bracelets, and avoid tight jeans. However, five of the participants reported implementing new adaptive behaviors after arriving at Ohio University. These behaviors were made to conform to western masculinity standards the participants encountered at Ohio University. These adaptive behaviors included discarding or retiring formal and fashionable clothing brought to Ohio University, purchasing and wearing more casual and athletic clothing, and avoiding clothing perceived as too stereotypically Chinese. Masculine norms for male bodies were also adopted; Deming, Gan, Jinhai, Qianfan, and Shen all reported attempting to build muscle after arriving at Ohio University (which was a new behavior for them). This data strongly supports that the participants construct their dress in reference to masculinity norms.

These findings support existing literature related to minorities and western masculinity, including those of Chan (2001) and Way et al. (2013), during which participants reported a strong desire to resist or defy racial stereotypes, including avoiding dress styles associated with their race or cultural group. The adaptive behaviors reported by the seven participants in this research was expressed as being motivated by a desire to conform to the social norms and expectations at Ohio University, but also as
being motivated by a desire to avoid stereotypes about Chinese students which do not align with body and dress norms related to western masculinity.

Summary of Conclusions

Symbolic consumption. Symbolic consumption behaviors were identified in relation to the first research question and also in the emergent themes which were identified. The participants identified dress articles and styles as symbolic of masculinity or lacking masculinity and provided responses which demonstrated they construct their dress in direct reference to those symbolic characteristics. The emergent themes “muscularity as a component of masculinity,” “business attire as a masculine symbol,” “avoidance of colorful and conspicuous clothing,” and “desire to avoid Chinese stereotypes” were all identified due to detailed descriptions by participants which explained the positive or negative symbolic significance of each contention.

Self-discrepancy. Self-discrepancy behaviors were also identified, primarily in relation to research questions five and six. Descriptive portraits of the ideal and ought qualities of each participant were created, during which common themes were identified; while friends and peer groups were not emphasized as influential actors on the ought self, parents, grandparents, and other authority figures were described as more influential to the behaviors of the participants. Two of the six participants who reported the existence of normative expectations associated with ought self in their lives, Gan and Qianfan, expressed discomfort or anxiety regarding these undesired expectations. This aligns with the framework of social comparison theory, which states that larger discrepancies
between an individual”s ideal self and ought produce sadness or anxiety in the individual (Higgins, 1987).

Social comparison. Social comparison behaviors were identified to be utilized by the majority of the participants. However, these behaviors were expressed to only apply in certain instances and to certain extents. The majority of participants (five of seven) reported comparing their body and dress with others at Ohio University. However, only a minority of participants (two of seven) were able to list any dress or style referents. Additionally, no participant reported utilizing style blogs or periodicals as a comparison tool. These findings align with others identified within the study which indicated that participants, on the whole, tended to avoid clothing they related to fashion or fashionableness. These findings were reinforced by the rejection of other Chinese students as a desirable comparison group by four of the seven participants; these individuals rejected styles associated with Chinese students for being too fashion-oriented, too stereotypical, or “too weird.” This phenomenon runs counter to some social comparison literature, which has suggested that individuals look to groups most similar to themselves for comparison (Festinger, 1954).

Limitations

As a small-scale study utilizing a convenience sample, the results of this research cannot be generalized to represent social phenomena in their entirety. As a fellow student at the same university as the participants, there also existed the potential for reputation-management behaviors and responses from participants. This could be influenced by the participants” motivation to protect their privacy or reputation, even despite the informed
consent briefing and confidentiality statements. Additionally, the participants’ levels of self-awareness regarding their motivations and attitudes towards dress influenced the depth of the interview data. Finally, though the interpreter option was included in the study design, no participant opted for an interpreter to be present. While the strictly one-on-one interviews may have encouraged more intimate responses from some participants, there also existed language-based limitations of expression and articulation due to the “English as second language” status of the participants.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

In response to the findings of this research, the following suggestions for future research were developed. These research directions were selected due the prevalence of the emergence during the participant interviews or due to results which exposed areas for future inquiry that have yet to be explored.

**The CMNI-46 and non-Western participants.** The CMNI-46 was used in this study as an exploratory tool meant to ascertain potential correlations between participants’ interview contributions or demographic backgrounds and their CMNI-46 results. Parent and Moradi (2009) tested the CMNI-46 with a population comprised of 59% white males, 24% Asian or Asian American males, with the remainder belonging to other racial groups. However, within that study, there was no distinction made between Asian males and Asian American males. This researcher proposes a study using the CMNI-46 or a similar western masculinity instrument which examines the roll of nationality and cultural origin and potential trends related to the duration of time the participants have lived in a location exposed to western masculinity. Exploring potential
similarities, interactions, and contradictions between the components western and non-western masculinities could shed light on the adaptations transnational men are called to adopt.

**Avoidance of cultural stereotypes in dress.** The prevalent theme presented by participants of avoiding Chinese behavioral and dress stereotypes warrants further investigation. Though extensive research has been done on the role of stereotypes on behavioral processes, the case of stereotypes as related to Chinese international students is especially relevant, given the increasing numbers of Chinese students studying in the United States and elsewhere. A study with a large sample could help explore the conceptions Chinese international students possess for their peer group; specifically, such a study could investigate the themes belonging to clothing which is viewed as “stereotypically Chinese.”

**Asian men and Western masculine body norms.** The emergent theme of musculature and masculinity of the body was one of the most prevalent of this research. An additional study of Chinese male international students and body image could potentially expound upon these findings. More specifically, the participants’ statements regarding their parents’ influence on their dress and body is a research direction which could yield additional data regarding the influence of family on the dress and body-related behaviors of Chinese international students. Such a study could also explore instances during which conflicting male body standards exist in an individuals’ home culture and the location of their educational tourism.
References


college students’ perceptions of people’s stereotypes about Asian American men. 

*Psychology of Men & Masculinity* 12 (1), 75-88.
Appendix A: Forms

Interpreter Consent and Confidentiality Agreement

Interview Protocol
Interpreters are being sought for the interviews in this graduate thesis study in order to allow participants to respond in the manner and language in which they are most comfortable expressing their responses. Interpreters will accompany me to interviews. Study participants will read an informed consent form, which tells them about their rights and the details of the study. If they choose to have the interpreter stay, you will assist me by interpreting responses spoken in Chinese to English. These interviews will be audio recorded. Interviews are not expected to exceed 90 minutes, but in some cases may be briefer.

Compensation
You will be compensated at a rate of $16 per hour. If a participant requests that only he and I are present during his interview, you will be free to leave and you will be compensated $10 for attending the beginning of the meeting. You will be paid in cash or by check by me directly after the interview is completed and the participant has left. You will be given a carbon copy receipt for your records and I will retain one for mine.

Participant Confidentiality
Interpreters will be asked not to participate in interviews with study participants who are their friends or acquaintances. You will be asked prior to scheduling to attend the interview if you know personally the study participant. This is so study participants feel freer to express their honest responses without negative social repercussions. Additionally, by signing below, you are agreeing not to share any information you gain about participants with anyone else. The contents of the interviews will be kept completely confidential to protect the privacy of the study participants.

Interpreter signature ________________________________ Date ________________
Participant Informed Consent Form

Research Title:
An Ethnographic Exploration of Chinese Males’ Identity through Dress

Researcher:
Kaleb Martin, Human & Consumers Sciences graduate student

General Information

You are being asked to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your participation in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Explanation of Study

This study is being done to better understand the dress habits of Chinese males studying at Ohio University. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in an interview containing questions regarding your view of clothing, personal care activities, your identity, and how you express yourself through the way you dress. You will also complete a short questionnaires and a short demographics form.

You should not participate in this study if you are uncomfortable discussing the topic of dress, personal identity, masculinity, and your perceptions of the dress of others. Your participation will last the duration of the interview, which will take approximately 90 minutes. There will be an interpreter present during the beginning of the process. When the interview commences, you can choose whether you would like the interpreter to stay or leave.

Benefits

This study is important, in that it gives a voice to Chinese men studying in the U.S. regarding their dress and identity, which is rarely discussed. It also aims to highlight challenges and inequities and challenges faced by international students regarding their appearance and outward identity. While no direct personal benefits are expected as a
result of participation, the opportunity to discuss personal beliefs, practices, and opinions can lead to increased self-awareness.

**Risks or Discomforts**

This interview and questionnaire process might be uncomfortable if you prefer not to speak about your identity, appearance, beliefs, gender, or sexual preference. The interview contains questions regarding your clothing choices, identity, and opinions about the appearance of others. Additionally, the demographics questionnaire and participant questionnaire contain questions regarding your gender beliefs and sexual orientation. Note: this information will be kept confidential and will not appear with your name or other identifiable information.

**Confidentiality and Records**

- Your information (including your name and demographics information) will be kept confidential. The interview will be audio recorded, but only Kaleb Martin will have access to these recordings. Small excerpts from interviews may appear in the final document, but your real name will not be included. These recordings will be destroyed in May of 2016.
- A thesis committee comprised of four Ohio University faculty members may also have access to the typed transcriptions of the interviews. They will not be informed of your identity.
- The interpreter has signed an agreement not to share any of your responses with anyone. They will not have access to you demographics information or participant questionnaire responses.

Only this document and a confidential list of names will contain your actual name, and those will be stored on a password protected device belonging to Kaleb Martin. Only I will have access to that information, with the potential exception of the instances below:

* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU;
* Because participants are being compensated for this study, Ohio University may request contact or compensation information for participants, in the case of a tax audit or other tax-related procedure.
Compensation

As a token of gratitude for your time and effort, you will receive a $20 Amazon.com gift card, which will be given to you after the interview is complete. Please note if you receive more than $600 of research income from Ohio University, you are responsible to file this income according to IRS rules.

Member Checking

Member checking is an optional process whereby you can be involved in reading segments of the study for which your contributions have been used in order to give feedback on the way your comments have been represented. This process will be conducted in English. This is optional, but if you are interested, write your email address below so that you can be contacted for your input. Your contact information will only be used for member checking purposes. It will not be shared (unless required by a federal agency or Ohio University).

Yes, email address: ____________________________________________ Not interested: [ ]

Contact Information

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact Kaleb Martin at kh467013@ohio.edu or (937)481-3600, or my advisor, Dr. Ann Paulins, paulins@ohio.edu

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Chris Hayhow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, at (740)593-0664 or hayhow@ohio.edu.

By signing below, you are agreeing that:

- you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered;
- you have been informed of potential risks and they have been explained to your satisfaction;
- you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this study;
- you are 18 years of age or older;
- your participation in this research is completely voluntary;
- you may leave the study at any time; if you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits to
which you are otherwise entitled.

Signature ________________________________ Date __________

Printed Name______________________________

I agree to have the interpreter stay for the interview:

Yes: ☐ No: ☐ Initial __________

Note: You may request that the interpreter leave at any time.
Appendix B: Instruments

Demographics Questionnaire

Please fill out this questionnaire to the best of your knowledge. Write-in responses where there is a blank and circle the desired option when a list is provided.

1. Year born: _______________________
2. Country of Origin: ________________________________
3. Which province are you from? __________________________
4. How long have you lived in the U.S.? _______________________
5. Are you a (circle one): Chinese citizen, U.S. citizen, dual citizenship
6. Do you have a green card? ______________
7. Please circle your religious affiliation:
   Christian (Protestant, Catholic, etc.), Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Taoist, Atheist, Agnostic, Other: __________________________
8. Parent’s occupations:

9. Parents” Annual Income (circle one option):
   Less than ¥155,000 | ¥155,000-309,999 | ¥310,000-464,999 | ¥465,000-619,999 | ¥620,000-774,999 | ¥775,000-929,999 | ¥930,000-1,084,999 | ¥1,085,000-1,239,999 | ¥1,240,000 or more |
10. How much do you spend on clothing and personal care products each month? __________________________
11. Current Academic Standing (circle one):
    Freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, master’s student, doctoral student
12. College Major or Program of Study: ________________________________
13. Marital Status (single or married): __________________________
Interview Introduction
Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. This will be an informal interview about your personal background, your opinions, and your dress habits. I will be audio recording the interview. Are you ready to begin?

Interview Questions

RQ1:
How would you define the term masculinity?
What traits does a person who is masculine possess?
What traits do you feel are most un-masculine?
Which types of clothing for men seem most masculine to you?
Which types of clothing for men seem most un-masculine to you?

RQ2:
On a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being not masculine at all and 10 being completely masculine, where would you say you fall?

RQ3:
What do you think the way you dress tells others about who you are?
Describe the relationship between your identity and the way you dress?
Does your personal style reflect your gender identity (such as how masculine or non-masculine you feel you are?) If yes, how so? If no, why not?

RQ4:
Can you describe yourself as you see yourself? This can include details about your personality, your values, your appearance, or your social groups.
Can you describe yourself as others see you? This can include details about your personality, your values, your appearance, or your social groups.
If you could improve anything about yourself what would you change? Why?
If your friends could change anything about you, what do you think they would want to change?
If your family could change anything about you, what do you think they would want to change?
Is who you are now similar to who you would most like to be? Why or why not?
Which people in your life are you most concerned with pleasing? This could be people such as friends, family, professors, bosses, or classmates. Why?
Are there things about yourself that you like but you think others do not approve of? Why do you like them about why do you think others dislike them?

RQ5:
In what ways have you changed since you came to Ohio University?
Have you done anything to try to blend-in with the people at Ohio University? If yes, what types of things have you done and why?
Have you changed the way you dress since you arrived at Ohio University? If yes, how and why?
In what ways are the expectations about your appearance different in China than at Ohio University?
Can you list any styles or types of clothing that you would wear in China but would not wear at Ohio University?
Have you attempted to change your body at all since you came to Ohio University, and if so, how? This can include behaviors such as working out, running, or changing your eating habits.

RQ6:
How do you decide which new clothes or styles to adopt?
Is it more important that you like your dress or that others like your dress? Why?
RQ7: What sources do you use to find new clothing or style examples? This can include, but isn’t limited to, media like websites, magazines, advertisements or friends, family, or strangers.
Can you name any celebrities, models, or actors whose style you like or try to emulate?

RQ8: Do you compare the way you dress to others at Ohio University? If yes, which people do you tend to compare your dress with?
Do you compare yourself to other Chinese students differently than you compare yourself to other students at Ohio University?
How important to you is that you look like the people around you?
How important to you is that you look different from the people around you?
Participant Questionnaire

The statements are designed to measure attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors associated with both traditional and non-traditional masculine gender roles. Thinking about your own actions, feelings and beliefs, please indicate how much you personally agree or disagree with each statement by circling SD for "Strongly Disagree" (0), D for "Disagree" (1), A for "Agree" (2), or SA for "Strongly agree" (3) to the left of the statement.

There is no right or wrong responses to the statements. You should give the responses that most accurately describe your personal actions, feelings and beliefs. It is best if you respond with your first impression when answering.

Completion of this survey is voluntary and you may discontinue at any time without penalty. Completion of this survey implies consent to use your data.

[Response scale: Strongly Disagree – Disagree – Agree – Strongly Agree]

1. In general, I will do anything to win.
   0   1   2   3

2. If I could, I would frequently change sexual partners.
   0   1   2   3

3. I hate asking for help.
   0   1   2   3

4. I believe that violence is never justified.
   0   1   2   3

5. Being thought of as gay is not a bad thing.
   0   1   2   3

6. In general, I do not like risky situations.
   0   1   2   3
7. Winning is not my first priority.
   0 1 2 3

8. I enjoy taking risks.
   0 1 2 3

9. I am disgusted by any kind of violence.
   0 1 2 3

10. I ask for help when I need it.
    0 1 2 3

11. My work is the most important part of my life.
    0 1 2 3

12. I would only have sex if I was in a committed relationship.
    0 1 2 3

13. I bring up my feelings when talking to others.
    0 1 2 3

14. I would be furious if someone thought I was gay.
    0 1 2 3

15. I don’t mind losing.
    0 1 2 3

16. I take risks.
    0 1 2 3
17. It would not bother me at all if someone though I was gay.
   0  1  2  3

18. I never share my feelings.
   0  1  2  3

19. Sometimes violent action is necessary.
   0  1  2  3

20. In general, I control the women in my life.
   0  1  2  3

21. I would feel good if I had many sexual partners.
   0  1  2  3

22. It is important for me to win.
   0  1  2  3

23. I don’t like giving all my attention to work.
   0  1  2  3

24. It would be awful if people thought I was gay.
   0  1  2  3

25. I like to talk about my feelings.
   0  1  2  3

26. I never ask for help.
   0  1  2  3
27. More often than not, losing does not bother me.

0 1 2 3

28. I frequently put myself in risky situations.

0 1 2 3

29. Women should be subservient to men.

0 1 2 3

30. I am willing to get into a physical fight if necessary.

0 1 2 3

31. I feel good when work is my first priority.

0 1 2 3

32. I tend to keep my feelings to myself.

0 1 2 3

33. Winning is not important to me.

0 1 2 3

34. Violence is almost never justified.

0 1 2 3

35. I am happiest when I’m risking danger.

0 1 2 3

36. It would be enjoyable to date more than one person at a time.

0 1 2 3
37. I would feel uncomfortable if someone thought I was gay.
   0 1 2 3

38. I am not ashamed to ask for help.
   0 1 2 3

39. Work comes first.
   0 1 2 3

40. I tend to share my feelings.
   0 1 2 3

41. No matter what the situation I would never act violently.
   0 1 2 3

42. Things tend to be better when men are in charge.
   0 1 2 3

43. It bothers me when I have to ask for help.
   0 1 2 3

44. I love it when men are in charge of women.
   0 1 2 3

45. I hate it when people ask me to talk about my feelings.
   0 1 2 3

46. I try to avoid being perceived as gay.
   0 1 2 3