

SOCIETY'S PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARD
SCHOOL UNIFORMS

By

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Abstract

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Members of society are studying the controversial issue of school uniform policies. President William Clinton brought school uniforms to everyone's attention in his 1996 State of the Union address. The purpose of this study is to find literature telling us what society's attitude is towards school uniforms. School districts with a school uniform policy in place can be compared to districts with no dress/code or uniform policy. Do the citizens of our country want to embrace a change in our school districts attempting to control many variables; attitude, self-esteem, attendance, academic achievement, community perceptions, inappropriate clothing, behavior and violence being the most noteworthy.

The review of literature presented will demonstrate a concern for our children's success. The researchers may not always agree when evaluating evidence of a positive significance, a negative significance or no significance at all. The literature is divided into four sections: (a) legal: reviewing law in relation to school uniforms, (b) anecdotal:

citing stories or anecdotes demonstrating how school uniforms fit in society, (c) empirical: observing experiences to glean ideas as to how we might go about incorporating school uniforms into our school's policy, and (d) theory: what theories are relevant concerning school uniforms.

School districts interested in positive changes in student success and achievement may wish to consider a school uniform policy. School uniform literature and studies have been linked to perceived and measured changes ranging from school climate to violence.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

According to the journal *Research in Middle Level Education*, “A school’s business and responsibility is to teach and to provide wholesome, safe experiences for its students and employees” (Stockton, 2002, p. 3). What, then, happened at Columbine? Why are test scores so low? Why is the teen suicide rate high? Why are there so many harassment charges in schools? Why are businesses so frustrated with their young employees who are undisciplined in attendance and in work ethic? Why are students making so many unhealthy choices for themselves? Why do we have a significant school drop out rate? We may never know the answer to all of the above questions. However, is there anything we can do in our schools to alleviate or deter behavior that may be hurtful or harmful to the positive success of our students?

The United States Department of Education stated that “a safe and disciplined learning environment is the first requirement of a good school” (United States Department of Education, 1996, p.1). How can students learn and feel any measure of self-esteem if they do not feel safe? How can students learn self-discipline and appropriateness in their behavior and choices?

School safety is definitely a concern and select members of society seem to be thinking in positive terms towards the adoption of school uniforms for their community schools as one way of creating a safe and disciplined environment. The *Manual on School Uniforms* noted that, “Uniforms by themselves cannot solve all of the problems of school discipline, but they can be one positive contributing factor to discipline and safety” (United States Department of Education, 1996, p. 3).

The issue of mandatory school uniforms in the public schools was brought to national attention during President Clinton's 1996 State of the Union address. The President addressed mandatory uniforms in the schools in the following way. "If it means that teenagers will stop killing each other over designer jackets, then our public schools should be able to require their students to wear uniforms".(Clinton-Washington Post, 1996, p. 3). Violence at school has recently been a concern of parents, teachers, principals, students, and law enforcement authorities as a fore-shadowing of negative health risks and lower academic achievement. King, a graduate assistant from the Department of Health Promotion and Human Performance at the University of Colorado stated "Approximately one in four students reports worrying about becoming a victim of crime or threats at school, and one in eight reports having been victimized at school" (King, 1998, p.1).

Some researchers suggest that there are other reasons for the concept of school uniforms being promoted and adopted across the country (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2000; Brown, 1998; Brunsmas, 2002; Nichols, 2002; Stockton, 2002; and Daugherty, 2002). Repeatedly, safety is of the utmost concern, but not the only benefit of a school uniform policy. Studies by Caruso (1996), Stanley (1996), and Brown (1998) found potential benefits attributed to school uniforms included:

improved discipline, increased respect for teachers, increased attendance at school, a decrease in distractions that keep students from concentrating on lessons, improved academic performance, an increase in student self-esteem and confidence, decreased overall clothing costs, promotion of group spirit, a decrease

in social stratification and fashion statements (which are indicated by the wearing of expensive clothing by those who can afford them compared to those who cannot), improved classroom behavior, decreased school crime and violence, and strangers on campus are easily recognized. (Brown, 1998, p. 2)

In societies where there are definite caste systems, the students wearing uniforms enjoy anonymity in the schools. Everyone dresses alike, therefore favoritism or humiliation, because of what is worn by the students, is almost non-existent. Classmates from India who wore school uniforms in their homeland, have mentioned that their classes were very homogeneous, which promoted peace in the classrooms (Personal communication, June 24, 2003). In American schools it has been reported that “students base the worth of peers on the kinds of clothes that are worn but distinctions in worth were not noted when the entire school population was dressed in uniforms” (King, 2002, p. 55). Other reports from middle schools mention that when a student is dressed neatly they are less likely to misbehave. Some researchers in Japan found that wearing a uniform curbed delinquency (Brunsma, 2002). How school uniforms might curb violent tendencies and promote healthy learning environments in school systems are major concerns deserving review.

Communicating by means of the clothes we wear is especially evident in the United States. Teachers may determine a student’s identity by their apparel. Pate (1999) found in her research that “School children, in elementary and middle schools, have a need to belong and look like their peers; consequently, school hours become the time for group bonding and identity formation” (p. 4). We may find out that school uniforms will help students communicate in a positive direction, making more healthy choices, and still

retain their identity with their peers while developing ownership and pride in their school and their own behavior.

According to the National Association of Elementary School Principals the first public school in the United States to require school uniforms was in Baltimore, Maryland in 1987 (NAESP, 2000). Since then many studies are continually changing our thoughts and attitudes towards the mandatory use of uniforms by school districts. According to Lumsden many administrators support school uniforms. However, Lumsden said that only 10% of schools supporting the idea of school uniforms now have a uniform policy, and only 11% were studying the idea of school uniforms (Lumsden, 2001).

Studies have looked at the many reactions, observations, and conclusions when researching the use of school uniforms in the public schools. There are some 'scientific' (quantitative) results, some studies seem to rely on observation as the main tool of evaluation, and other studies use both methods of research.

Statement of the Problem

Research will authenticate the hypothesis that school uniforms have a positive relationship with healthier school environments. Research will also suggest that much of our adult society approves of school uniforms and appreciates the benefits gleaned by the students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to use a literature review, to see what society's attitude, in the United States, is toward and how society perceives the use of school uniforms in our schools, kindergarten through twelfth grade. This study is arranged into four sections (a) legal: reviewing the law in relation to school uniforms, (b) anecdotal:

citing stories or anecdotes demonstrating how school uniforms fit in society, (c) empirical: observing experiences in the United States, to glean ideas in incorporating school uniforms into school policy, and (d) theory: what theories are there concerning school uniforms (Brunsma, 2002).

Rationale

Concern for our children and society have driven researchers to examine the challenges within our educational systems. School uniforms may conceivably be one of the answers for some school districts. When research has shown that a variable, like school uniforms, may set in motion or, at least, contribute to, a safe environment at school and student achievement, we should examine the feasibility of that variable's adoption (Lumsden, 2001; Essex, 2001; National Association of Elementary Principals, 2000).

Questions to Be Addressed

This literature review will address the following questions:

1. Legal Review. What are some of the prominent judicial cases involving the First Amendment and establishing law regarding the dress code and school uniforms?
2. Anecdotal Review. What are some of the personal stories or anecdotes that demonstrate how school uniforms might or have fit in our schools and society?
3. Empirical Review. What can be observed and discovered via research of school districts that already have a school uniform policy?

4. Theoretical Review. What are the theories that researchers are studying concerning school uniform policies?

Definition of Terms

Individuals define and give meaning to words based on their experiences. For the purpose of this study, the following terms need to be clarified.

Appropriate Clothing for School: Apparel that encourages engagement of learning or clothing that does not advertise or suggest unhealthy choices and behaviors by students. Examples of inappropriate clothing include: alcohol or tobacco advertising, jeans and dress pants with holes in private places, or pants that place the 'waist' under the gluteus muscle, excessively tight shirts, garments showing cleavage.

Equal or Equalizer: Students in schools have different economic backgrounds. School uniforms may create an atmosphere where affluence is indistinguishable.

Healthy Behavior: Choices made by students that would sustain a positive learning environment for themselves and others. Examples of healthy behavior are: (a) arriving at school on time, (b) finishing homework, (c) paying attention in class, and (d) respecting others.

Mandatory School Uniforms: The student has no choice in the decision to wear a uniform while attending a particular school. School uniforms are required. If a student did not wish to wear the appropriate school uniform they would not be admitted.

Opt Out: This option provides a parent with the means to extract their children from a school's uniform policy.

Schools: For this research we are discussing the use of school uniforms in the public school setting.

Self-Esteem and Self-Concept: These two terms may be interchangeable. They refer to how a student feels about themselves or how they value themselves (Huitt, 1998).

School Uniforms: Designated clothing required to be admitted to attend a particular school.

Violence: Violence in schools would involve any act of aggression. Examples would be (a) a physical or verbal attack on another individual, (b) destroying property, or (c) criminal activity.

Assumptions and Limitations

In this literature review the following are assumed:

1. The research found has been administered in an objective fashion.
2. There is research to promote both sides of the issue; the use of school uniforms and free choice of student apparel.
3. There is consistency in definitions for terms described in the studies reviewed.

This literature review may have some limitations.

1. There may be some researchers who may have been sponsored by a specific school; therefore, results may be skewed in favor of what is currently promoted in that school.
2. Most of the schools participating in research and using school uniforms appear to be in the southern or western United States.
3. Society in different parts of the country and in urban versus rural areas may have different values or issues associated with their children and schools.
4. There may be unknown variables to the researcher that influence the results of the studies reviewed.

5. The author of this research paper may have biases that may influence research techniques.

In the United States there is a desire to leave no child behind (No Child, 2002) and provide a safe and the best learning environment possible for each child. Tax payers wish to have a return on their investment with a K-12 education resulting in responsible and caring citizens (School District, 2002). School uniforms may have an impact on our children's safety, their school climate, and their academic achievement and behavior. School uniforms may create a positive learning environment by assisting students in becoming good citizens who contribute to society.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

School uniforms and dress codes have been examined, discussed, and debated in schools, court rooms, and back yards for the last quarter century. Students may be crossing the line established by educators and parents on what is appropriate clothing for school. Behling (1994) states “The basis for stricter codes is the perception that typical fashionable clothing worn to school may be distracting in an academic environment. ...clothing may be used by students who are members of gangs as means of identifying fellow members” (p.2). Researchers have found “that uniforms lessen emphasis on fashion, reduce the financial burden of low-income families, and promote peer acceptance, school pride, and learning” (Lumsden & Miller, 2002, p. 2). Conversely, there are researchers who are not convinced that school uniforms can solve the educational issues identified as troublesome by society.

The right to a public school education is the right of every child in the United States. The wearing of a uniform should not determine whether a child will get an education; therefore, an opt out provision must be included in the uniform policy in order for it to be legal (Williams, n.d.).

This review of literature will acquaint us with the legal history of school uniforms; why schools became interested in adopting school uniforms and how schools have set in motion the school uniform requirement; and the theories that concern themselves with child development and the adoption of school uniform policies as being a success or a failure.

Legal Review of School Uniforms

According to Uerling (1997), Americans have been concerned about governmental power and personal liberties since 1943. Uerling states:

In *West Virginia State Bd. of Educ. V. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624 (1943), the Court stated that “The very purpose of a Bill of Rights was to withdraw certain subjects from the vicissitudes of political controversy, to place them beyond the reach of majorities and free expression; and if the incidental restriction on alleged First Amendment freedoms is no greater than is essential to the furtherance of that interest. (p. 1)

Uerling also cites the court decisions of *Tinker v. Des Moines School Dist.*, 393 U.S. 503 (1969), *Bannister v. Paradis*, 316 F. Supp. 185 (D.N.H. 1970) and *Wallace v. Ford*, 348 F. Supp. 158 (E.D. Ark. 1972), which are more concerned about dress codes and appearance in the schools (Uerling, 1997). The schools have been challenged in court over the length and style of boys’ hair cuts, messages on clothing, and gang-related clothing. Administrators and school boards have authority to regulate student appearance, with limitations.

Under the Bill of Rights, the First Amendment is used as a premise for non-compliance of school uniform policies. The First Amendment stated:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. (Encarta Microsoft Corporation, Bill of Rights, 1993-2003, p. 1)

An example of a Supreme Court decision used as a guideline in the lower courts when presented with dress code (school uniform) cases is *Tinker v. Des Moines School District* (1969) (Uerling, 1997). Students protesting the Vietnam War chose to wear black armbands to school. Based on this apparel choice, students were suspended from school. The court found the meaning of arm bands did not infringe on learning or anyone's rights. Therefore, the student had the right to wear the armbands to school. "It involved direct, primary First Amendment rights akin to 'pure speech'" (Supreme Court cited by Uerling, 1997, p. 5). The Supreme Court also "...reaffirmed the authority of school officials to maintain an orderly learning environment" (Uerling, 1997, p. 5). Any behavior stemming from the wearing of the armbands that caused a disruption would result in the armbands being removed. It is then the resulting behavior as opposed to the apparel that is the primary issue.

Each court case is approached individually with different variables. This is demonstrated by several cases involving the wearing of buttons to school. *Burnside v. Byers* in 1966 decided that the children can wear buttons. *Blackwell v. Issaquena*, *Buzick v. Drebus* and *Melton v. Young* were prohibited from wearing buttons or patches or something similar because of the disruption of learning that occurred (Uerling, 1997).

Brown (1998) suggests contradictory statements concerning the court decisions he has researched. (*Bannister v. Paradis*, *Richards v. Thurston*, *Westley v. Rossi*, and *Fowler v. Williamson*). The *Bannister v. Paradis* case in 1970 brought about the right of students to wear blue jeans to school. The courts also stated in 1970, according to Brown (1998) in the *Richards v. Thurston* case:

No right is held more sacred, or is more carefully guarded, by the common law than the right of every individual to the possession and control of his own person, free from all restraint or interference from others, unless by clear and unquestionable authority of law. (p. 5)

The courts have also ruled in *Bannister v. Paradis* that schools can suspend students who are not sanitary or who are scantily clad. The justices mentioned the wearing of proper clothing to avoid distracting others and to avoid disrupting a learning environment as appropriate (Uerling, 1997). In 1989, *Texas v. Johnson* required certain conditions to be met concerning clothing or anything else worn by students, before the courts would favor “expressive conduct to be protected by the First Amendment” (Uerling, 1997, p. 26). First the person involved must purposefully communicate a message. Secondly, observers of the message must be able to understand what was being communicated.

Brown (1998) referred to two important cases that applied to safety in the school. *Jeglin v. San Jacinto Unified School District* (1993) and *Olesen v. Board of Education* (1987) upheld the school boards’ decisions to not allow the wearing of any gang clothing or symbols related to gangs in school (Brown, 1998).

With the adoption of school uniform policies, there have also been other lawsuits filed. In Long Beach, California, 26 families filed a lawsuit against the school district because of the cost of the uniforms (Brown, 1998). The ACLU, American Civil Liberties Union, became involved stating that poor families were not informed about their ‘opt out’ rights. To ‘opt out’ a family needed to notify their school of religious or personal reasons

for not complying with the mandatory school uniform rule. The school board decided to change the way they implemented the policy and the lawsuit was dropped.

The Citizens for Parental Rights from Louisiana wholeheartedly disagreed with the school uniform policy. They believed it was the right of a parent to teach their children how to dress. This group also stated that school uniforms taught their children how to be intolerant of those who were different. The parents' rights group stated that "Parents must be presumed to act in the best interest of their children" (Citizens for Parental Rights, n.d, p. 3). They also quoted the Supreme Court ruling:

(a)The Fourteenth Amendment's Due Process Clause has a substantive component that "provides heightened protection against government interference with certain fundamental rights and liberty interests," *Washington v. Glucksberg*, 521 U.S. 702, 720, including parents' fundamental right to make decisions concerning the care, custody, and control of their children, see e.g., *Stanley v. Illinois*, 405 U.S. 645, 651. (p. 3)

Personal liberty is discussed as a point of consideration when creating a dress code and a school uniform policy. The courts have stated that they need to consider the locality of the school, the presence of violence, and other safety issues when making decisions. According to Brown a state court in Arizona determined the first ruling considering mandatory school uniforms. This judge mentioned that requiring everyone to wear uniforms in school did infringe on an individual's freedom of expression (Brown, 1998). However, each case should be treated individually by the courts. The judicial system should ask why the school required uniforms. When debating our First Amendment rights the judge needed to determine the overall interests of everyone in the

school versus that individual's right to freedom of expression. Brown reflected "The First Amendment balancing test was also utilized, determining that the overall interests of the student body outweighed the defendants' freedom of expression rights" (Brown, 1998, p. 6).

Contemporary cases involving the First Amendment (free speech) and the Fourteenth Amendment (family's right to bring up their children) was brought before the courts January 23, 2001 and January 10, 2002. The *Canady v. Bossier Parish School Board* (2001) involved many families who were against school uniforms. The school board rationalized their utilization of school uniforms with valid reasons; the most valid being safety. The court agreed and judgment was for the school (Canady v. Bossier, 2001). In *Vines v. Board of Education of Zion School District* (2002) the plaintiffs did not want their daughter to wear school uniforms (modified dress code). The judge found that they did not have cause to claim religious reasons, lack of free speech or lack of regulation of their family. The school had presented their reasons for the dress code and the court agreed (Vines v. Board of Education of Zion School District, 2002). This case is important in today's society because we have given the schools some leeway in attempting to create a safe and healthful environment for their students.

Another case, decided in 2001, was *Littlefield v. Forney Independent School District* (2001). Similar to *Canady v. Bossier* (2001) in content it also was decided for the defendant. The case questioned First Amendment rights, parenting issues and religious freedom. The judge ruled that the students' free speech was not hindered, the parent's right to control the upbringing of their children was not hindered and that to opt out of the policy they did need to bring a sincere document to the school stating their beliefs. The

reasons for the school uniform policy were dictated for the good of the school and all students (Lumsden & Miller, 2002 and 5th Circuit, 2001).

Bivens v. Albuquerque Public Schools (1995) (Uerling, 1997) challenged the first amendment rights of a young black youth who wanted to wear sagging pants to declare his identity. The court said that clothing was not necessarily a way to express free speech and defiant acts may not be protected speech under the Constitution of the United States (Uerling, 1997).

In Appendix A is an overview of studies mentioned in this review of literature. Note the progression of classic cases in our judicial system defining one's First Amendment rights (favoring the individual) as a student in school to invoking more rules and regulations for the entire school environment. The courts scrutinized each case because every case had different variables which resulted in a separate and different decision.

How Do School Uniforms Fit in Our Society?

There are contradictory thoughts by administrators when considering school uniforms in our society. In the survey administered to 755 principals in the United States school uniforms had not even been discussed in most (75%) rural areas of our country. Forty percent of urban principals surveyed were looking at the feasibility of adopting a school uniform policy, or already had a policy in place (National Association of Elementary Principals, 2000).

Many in our society today believe violence is the threat in schools which may retard the potential of success in our students. King states "approximately one in four students reports worrying about becoming a victim of crime or threats at school, and one

in eight reports having been victimized at school” (King, 1998, p. 1). This may be one reason why our administrators and parents are looking for any assistance or change that may keep the children safe.

Behaviors that involve violence and/or gangs in schools have been the topics of many studies. Gang clothing is usually color related; if someone unknowingly wears a specific color they may end up being the target of violence from another gang member.

Milwaukee County Sheriff, David A. Clarke, had pressured administrators in Milwaukee to adopt a mandatory school uniform policy or at least, to modify the existing dress code (Carr, 2002). According to Clark, some Milwaukee students had adopted a strategy to misuse hooded sweatshirts. The students would participate in some form of misconduct or criminal behavior in the school, but no one could identify them because so many students wore the same sweatshirt and they would pull their hoods over their head. This had created a safety issue for law enforcement.

In the Delta Kappa Gamma study there were many participants who did not see the relationship between school uniforms and school violence. It was stated that violence originates in the home and society, not how a person dresses. Some of the participants in this study believed there was not enough evidence to require a mandatory school uniform policy (King, Walker & Minor, 2002).

Ray Rivera was a kindergarten through eighth grade principal in El Paso, Texas. He was convinced that school uniforms were part of the equation in controlling violence in schools and creating quality education. Rivera stated:

Occurrence of fighting among students was pretty much an everyday event, but last year, we had only two ... fights. We don't have gang problems and drug problems anymore. It makes it easy for 'have-nots' and 'haves' to get along because they all look alike. (Cook, 2000, p. 1)

Another concern communities have for their educational system, which may cause them to consider school uniforms, is the achievement level of their student body. When reviewing the academic achievement in schools, low test scores and low socio-economic income areas of the United States have been steadily referred to as having a positive correlation. Daugherty (2002) stated:

Many schools with low academic achievement scores, low attendance rates, and high transiency percentages have high rates of students eligible for free or reduced lunches which researchers frequently use as a poverty indicator. Similarly, studies have found that the strongest predictor of school crime is the nature of the surrounding community, i.e., communities with high levels of poverty and crime tend to have schools with high levels of crime. (p. 390)

The parent/teacher organization in Washoe County, Nevada aspired to improve their school both academically and socially. They implemented many new programs; including school uniforms. They researched and observed other systems that had already adopted the school uniform policy. The parents in the planning stage knew they had to confront problems before they began. The parents found donations and grants to cover the cost of uniforms for needy families.

Time is a contributing factor when choosing to require school uniforms. Students do not need to spend much time in the morning deciding what outfit to wear.

Administrators have found that they do not spend as much time addressing the apparel of the students. In middle and high school, inappropriate clothing was a major concern in learning environments. Current popular, but distracting apparel, include spaghetti strap or cleavage revealing garments, wide leg and low slung jeans or slacks, skin or underwear showing around the torso, clothing with inappropriate advertising or phrases/words, dirty/smelly garments, face/skin painting, and body piercing.

The research against school uniforms brings about discussion of First Amendment rights to freedom of expression, individual creativity, possible discrimination, cost, and mention of research methods and lack of quantitative results. (Encarta Microsoft Corporation, 1993-2003). Williams very strongly stated “In light of the lack of positive empirical research results, costly potential legal challenges, and enforcement abuses, perhaps mandatory school uniforms in our public schools are not a viable tool with which to help fix our limping educational system” (Williams, n.d., p. 6). The American Civil Liberties Union is busy with many complaints about mandatory school uniforms: requiring girls to wear dresses at graduation, hair color, religious affiliations, loss of parental control, and schools harassing those who oppose their school uniform policy (ACLU, 2000 and C.P.R., 2003). James Brady wrote a sarcastic article in the periodical, *Crain’s New York Business*. Brady (1998) stated: I do “not believe school uniforms are an infringement on anyone’s rights” (p. 1). He makes fun of the ACLU’s reasons for objecting to uniform policies. There are differing views on this controversial subject.

Brunsma mentioned several studies or surveys that were empirical in nature, and included statistical segments (Brunsma, 2002). Another study, mentioned in the introduction of this research, in Kentucky involving 74 schools, found “Some schools

report that students base the worth of peers on the kinds of clothes that are worn but distinctions in worth were not noted when the entire school population was dressed in uniforms” (King, 2002, p. 55). Yunhee Kim (1998) found that the teachers perceived an increase in the student’s self esteem. Contradicting the teachers’ perceptions, Kim also gave the students Offer’s Self-Image Questionnaire and found that school uniforms had no effect on their self-image (Brunsma, 2002). The concept of relating self-esteem with school uniforms is also addressed in the ‘theories’ section of this study. Interestingly, in a study done in west central Wisconsin involving 71 teachers, 98.6% of the teachers agreed there is a positive correlation between self-esteem and academic achievement or effort (Fiege, 2000).

West and his associates surveyed 426 parents of fourth graders in Mississippi. Approximately 34% of the parents replied and over half of the parents favored the use of school uniforms. In the survey the parents determined that uniforms would “eliminate cultural expression through dress, eliminate visible socio-economic differences, cost less than other types of clothing, do not violate a child’s rights under the law and do not limit a child’s creativity or individuality” (Brunsma, 2002, p. 3). Stanley mentioned schools participating in fashion wars because of the pressure to dress in costly, name brand apparel (University of Oregon, n.d.). Horyn stated “academic achievement is compromised when attendance, punctuality, attention to instruction and grades suffer as a result of preoccupation with clothing” (King, 2002, p. 53). Holloman, who also supports the researchers, mentioned: “It is time for students to develop a healthy perspective on the importance of cultivating a positive sense of self versus valuing material possessions” (King, 2002, p. 53).

There was also a positive correlation between school uniforms and attendance and school uniforms and grades in math and language arts (Brunsma, 2002). Sue Stanley was one of the first to do research on the well known Long Beach, California school system. Her findings indicated that in kindergarten through eighth grade, the incidence of suspensions and crimes decreased when school uniforms were required. The number of suspensions and crimes statistically went down after the uniform policy was instated, depending on the crime, for example, assaults and batteries went down 34%, fighting went down by 50%, and sex offenses went down 74% (Brunsma, 2002, p. 6).

A conflicting study published by the Educational Testing Service (Brunsma, 2002) examined violence and criminal behavior in our schools. They found the occurrence of dependent delinquency behaviors did not differentiate between schools with uniforms and without uniforms (Brunsma, 2002).

Gregory also demonstrated a positive significance between the use of school uniforms and attendance and achievement. This study used the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory which was given to 335 randomly sampled middle school students. Gregory's important study appears to have the least number of variables. Two schools were used that were demographically similar (inner city middle schools). Grade averages in mathematics and language arts were acquired to determine if the group of students wearing school uniforms (n=165) performed at a higher level than the students who did not wear school uniforms (n=170) (Gregory, 1998).

Albuquerque parents initiated a school uniform policy in two of their middle schools (Lumsden & Miller, 2002). Their apparel included tuck-in polo shirts and khaki pants or skirts. They used interviews, focus groups, surveys, statistics from the

administration on discipline referrals and student academic success measured by the number of kids on the honor roll to evaluate the uniform policy. There was a dramatic significance between school uniforms and positive performance in the schools. Examples of the positive effects: discipline referrals went from 1,565 first semester to 405 second semester; all personnel, including students, agreed that students were not labeled by peers and staff because they did not stand out when everyone wore uniforms. Truman Middle School did have a small decrease in the number of honor roll students. There were other new programs put into place at the same time which may have influenced the results.

Brunsma noted several studies where the researchers dismissed the results of their studies because they could not control all of the variables. Brunsma (2002) listed Williams-Davidson's case study which discussed the results of her study being dependent on whether the individuals were opponents or proponents of the school uniform policy. Murphy's study included the fact that the school had begun a new academic program and problem-solving curriculum the previous year. Another school did not use valid or reliable sampling techniques. Texas researcher, Stevenson, investigated middle and high school significance between uniforms and "attendance, suspensions, expulsions, and incidences of disciplinary action, weapons, possession, assault and battery, vandalism, fights and school crime" (Brunsma, 2002, p. 5). He found a positive significance with the mentioned variables, but because he did not account for the demographic variables some are discounting his study.

Teachers and principals have been involved in many surveys. Fifty state superintendents from the District of Columbia and 66 Louisiana superintendents were surveyed. According to Brunsma about 30% of the superintendents from the District of

Columbia said uniforms would “improve discipline, reduce gang activity, increase school harmony, and positively affect the learning environment” and two-thirds of the Louisiana superintendents agreed (Brunsma, 2002, p. 5). Brunsma also used a national telephone survey in his research; “of 755 principals indicated that more than two-thirds believed uniforms improve a school’s image in the community, improve classroom discipline, decrease peer pressure, increase school spirit, enable students to concentrate on schoolwork, and improve school safety” (Brunsma, 2002, p. 3).

Mentioned previously in this paper were several court cases brought into the judicial system. According to Isaacson the First Amendment claims provided a “clash between students’ rights of free expression and the responsibility of public-school authorities to provide a safe learning environment...” (Isaacson, 1998, p. 2). Any discrimination mentioned seemed to involve the cost of uniforms. Individual school systems addressed financial hardship cases with donations, grants, or developed a budget for needy families.

Creativity can be measured in many ways, by appearance, choice of work, types of play, choice of hobbies, contributions as a citizen, and forms of human interaction. According to King “Adolescence is a period when youths attempt to find their own uniqueness and individuality in various ways. One way is through fashion” (King, 1998, p. 4). Proponents of school uniforms may use this as a means to enable students to be creative using their talents instead of their apparel. Those who do not support the school uniform policy may use this statement to vindicate their ideas that uniforms extinguish all creativity.

A study conducted by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (1998) with assistance from Lands' End, Inc. questioned 958 principals, elementary and middle school, from a regionally diverse sample. Some of the principals' schools had already adopted a school uniform policy. Most of the administrators were in charge of schools where a school uniform policy was not in effect. Christine Perry Hess is the manager of the school uniform division at Lands' End Kids. Ms. Hess states "every day, we talk to parents and educators across the nation at schools considering uniforms, or have recently adopted them. There are always requests for more information, and I think these survey results will be very useful to schools" (NAESP, 1998, p. 1). According to this study, the chart below tells us that a school's image in the community is more positive when school uniforms are adopted, along with classroom discipline, school spirit, student safety and academic achievement (NAESP, 1998, p. 1).

Table 1

Schools Image in a Community

	Positive Effects, as Rated by Schools Without Uniforms	Positive Effects, as Rated by Schools With Uniforms
Peer Pressure	77%	76%
Image in the Community	65%	86%
Classroom Discipline	64%	80%
School Spirit	60%	82%
Student Safety	46%	75%
Academic Achievement	45%	52%
Attendance	36%	48%

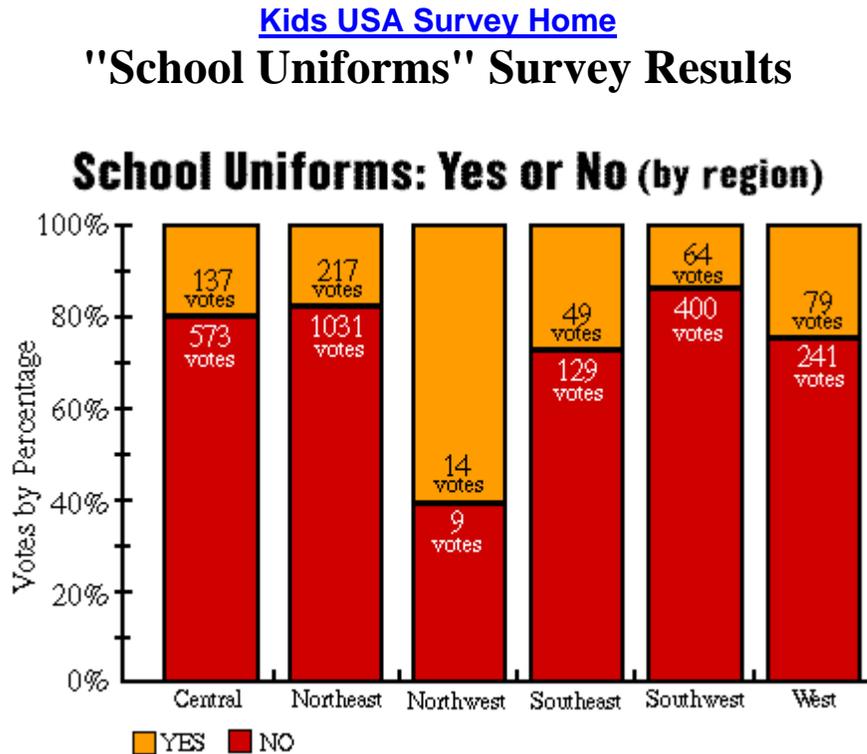
A study comparing two middle schools in South Carolina (one with school uniforms and one with no school uniform policy), demonstrated how school uniforms

may affect the students' attitudes. Over 300 students were surveyed and the students with a mandatory school uniform policy gave their schools higher scores. An increase in school spirit or school climate has been frequently mentioned in research (Lumsden, 2001).

Another study found a South Carolina high school principal, Richard Murray who wanted to test the significance of wearing school uniforms and school spirit. Murray used the National Association of Secondary School Principals' Comprehensive Assessment of School Environments School Climate Survey. Randomly selected sixth, seventh and eighth grade students were surveyed; 153 from a middle school with a uniform policy and 153 from a similar middle school with no uniform policy. He found that there was no significance (Brunsma, 2002). Here, again, are contrary results when compared to other studies (NAESP, 1998 & Lumsden, 2001).

There was not an abundance of research found measuring students opinions on mandatory school uniforms. Stevenson and Chun (Brunsma, 2002) surveyed 2,257 students in grades 5–11 in the District of Columbia. They found that 69% objected to a dress code and a school uniform policy (Brunsma, 2002). Another study was discovered in the Scholastic magazine for children. Students from six different regions of the country voted Yes or No when given the question of school uniforms. Approximately 80% of the 2,943 children participating voted no to school uniforms (Teacher Resource Center 1, 1996-2003).

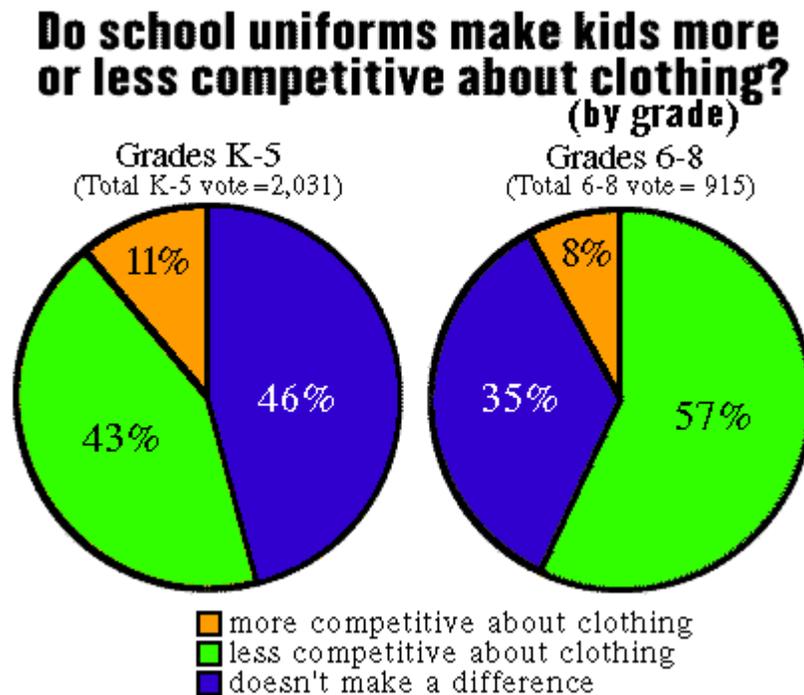
Figure 1. School Uniforms: Yes or No



American students tend to dislike school uniforms (Haley, 2003). The loss of freedom of expression is commonly stated as the reason for dislike. In school districts that have adopted a school uniform policy or are researching the feasibility of adopting a school uniform policy, in most cases, according to Haley the push for uniforms has been maneuvered and pressured by “parents who are less concerned about their child’s self-expression and more concerned about violence and sub-par school systems” (Haley, 2003, p. 2).

Another question in the survey was “Do school uniforms make kids more or less competitive about clothing?” (Teacher Resource Center 2, 1996-2003). It appears that middle school students are more aware of what other students are wearing.

Figure 2. Clothing Competition



Students that were surveyed appear to dislike the uniforms, but at times they admit the positive aspects of wearing school uniforms. A 16-year-old girl from California, after being required to wear a uniform for the last eight years, admits that she has slowly gotten used to wearing uniforms and has said, “all I have to do is grab some khaki bottoms and a white shirt with a collar and I’m out of the house” (Wingert, 1999, p. 2). Dick VanDerLaan, an information officer in the Long Beach Unified School District, concerning the students’ attitude toward the adoption of a school uniform policy, also stated: “Students were not thrilled about the idea, but they’ve accepted it very well” (Haley, 2003, p. 3). Morgan Grygutis, a seventh grade student at Mansfield Middle School, in Tuscon, Arizona mentioned that it took a year for her classmates to accept the

uniforms. Her comment: “My friends sometimes say ‘I hate it’. But people don’t really talk about it that much. So I don’t think they care anymore” (Mancini, 1997, 2nd P).

Quentin Lawson, the executive director of the National Alliance of Black School Education in Washington, D.C. believes that students want to know why changes are taking place and want to be part of the decision making process. Lawson believes if students have some ownership of the decision to adopt a school uniform policy they will respond in a positive manner (Will School Uniforms, 1996).

The evidence is contradictory concerning the success of school uniforms. Results seem to be inconclusive. The following table will sequentially list some of the studies and comments concerning school uniforms. Notice the polarized viewpoints.

Some researchers report that there are no empirical statistics to support the use of school uniforms. At the same time, other researchers report positive effects and some even report no change at all.

Table 2

Studies and Quotes

View	Date	Researcher/Source	Findings/Quotes
Pro	1995	Holloman	Clothing related issues, violence, theft, gang-related clothing, status clothing (uniforms would nullify clothing related problems)
Pro & Con	1995	Long Beach Schools	Uniforms suggested safer schools, but findings did not offer evidence of less violence
Pro	1996	Stanley	Uniforms would do no harm – may have a positive effect
Con	1997	Brunsmas & Rockquemore	No direct effect on drug use, attendance or behavior
Pro & Con	1997	Pate	Improvement in academics in elementary no decrease in discipline in middle school
Pro & Con	1997	Volokh & Snell	Each school is unique – strategy for each school is unique
Pro	1999	Elder	In two middle schools positive changes occurred-attributable to several changes including school uniforms
Pro	2000	Land's End	Principals surveyed- positive effects on community image, discipline, peer pressure, school spirit, focus, & safety
Pro	2000	French Toast	Positive observations by parents & counselors
Con		Pedro Aoguera	"I have never seen any study that showed a connection between style of dress and academic achievement."
Pro		Paul Houston	"Everyone I've talked to who has gone to uniforms likes it, felt it's increased discipline and respect, and will even claim achievements have gotten a little better because kids are more focused on their studies."
Pro		William Ellis	"(With uniforms) schools have fewer reasons to call the police. There's less conflict among students. Students concentrate more on education, not on who's wearing \$100 shoes or gang attire."
Con		Nadine Strossen	"There is absolutely no evidence documenting even a correlation between dress codes and better test scores, let alone a causal connection."

(University of Oregon, n.d., quotes from p. 4-5).

School Uniforms Put Into Motion

The evidence supporting school uniforms has encouraged many schools to adopt a school uniform policy. There were many directions taken by different school systems. The most important beginning step was to poll or survey the different groups involved. Administrators agreed that one needs the majority of parents to approve and support the policy before it will work. The National Association of Elementary School Principals surveyed 755 principals who have a uniform policy already in place. To determine the amount of support for school uniform policies, many of the schools had polled parents (82%), school staff (66%), students (47%), other schools (45%) and the community (32%) (NAESP, 2000). Lumsden and Miller stated in their results that “75% of parents and 89% of staff supported uniforms and believed they decreased violence, theft, and gang activity” (Lumsden and Miller, 2002, p. 2). They also noted that only 15% of the students supported the use of school uniforms, and almost 60% of the students admitted that uniforms helped administrators identify intruders on campus. Parents, teachers, and students also agreed that wearing school uniforms would “place all students on an equal level” (Lumsden & Miller, 2002, p. 2). Repeatedly, parents and school personnel supported the use of uniforms in the schools and those that choose to incorporate a uniform policy worked hard at being pro-active in setting up the policy.

Parent support was found to be the most important variable in student compliance with the wearing of school uniforms. In the study done by the National Association of Elementary School Principals, 60% of the students with a mandatory policy complied and 40% of the students with a voluntary school uniform participated in the policy. The

following table informs us as to the reasons for non-compliance by students (NAESP, 1998).

Table 3

Reason Students Do Not Comply

Reasons students do not comply	Voluntary Policy	Mandatory Policy
Lack of parental support	40%	19%
Philosophical differences	12%	23%
Too expensive/families can't afford	6%	15%
Students don't like	6%	6%
Policy not implemented adequately	4%	6%
Some other reason	31%	30%

The following is a list of other positive actions a school uniform committee can participate in or direct to create a school uniform policy according to the National Association of Elementary School Principals:

- * visits area schools with uniform policies;
- * reviews other schools' written uniform policies;
- * researches information on how schools state-wide and nationally have responded to the school uniform questions;
- * investigates the cost of a typical uniform and obtains samples from vendors;
- * determines whether the policy should be mandatory or voluntary to have the desired impact;
- * discusses the possible legal ramifications of establishing a school uniform policy; and

- * considers having students model uniforms in a “style show” (NAESP, 2000, p. 6).

Students have a variety of styles, colors, materials and items to wear when adopting a school uniform policy. Giving students the power to decide on the apparel will give them ownership. Refer to Appendix C for examples of school uniforms sold in the United States (Images, n.d.).

Selling uniforms is now big business. In 2000 retailers created a 1.1 billion dollar business. To make more sales retailers are getting creative and are adding pockets, zippers and differing styles (slacks, skort, skirt, pleats) to school uniforms, which give students choices and makes the uniform more attractive. The principals in schools seem to care more about the continuity of color in uniforms and not the extra notions and varied styles (School uniforms, 2001).

Daugherty wrote about a middle school principal in Washoe County, Nevada, who gained nearly unanimous parental support with her presentations of studies, costs and advantages. See Appendix B for a chart of benefits the principal found in reviewing the literature and school studies (Daugherty, 2002).

There were several schools where school uniforms were worn four days during each week. Students could wear whatever they wanted on the fifth day. One elementary principal from Michigan stated that on the fifth day, 50% of their student body still wore their uniforms.

Another decision for a school adopting a uniform policy is to define the parameters of the policy. The school community has two choices: (1) mandatory policies-

the students are required to wear uniforms with an opt-out provision; (2) volunteer policies-the students may choose to wear uniforms.

In the Manual on School Uniforms the government has eight suggestions when attempting to implement a school uniform policy.

1. Get parents involved from the beginning,
2. Protect students' religious expression,
3. Protect students' other rights of expression,
4. Determine whether to have a voluntary or mandatory school uniform policy,
5. When a mandatory school uniform policy is adopted, determine whether to have an "opt out" provision,
6. Do not require students to wear a message,
7. Assist families that need financial help, and
8. Treat school uniforms as part of an overall safety program. (United States Department of Education, 1996, p. 2-3)

Essex (2001) had other suggestions that may affect the outcome of how school uniforms are accepted in the community. Cost may be a factor for some families.

Assisting financially disadvantaged families with acquiring the uniforms may be in the plan. Schools with a uniform policy in place tended to call on the community or local businesses to help pay for the uniforms.

There are many retail stores involved in selling uniforms at a very reasonable cost. Sears™, Target™, J.C. Penney's™, Kohl's™, and K-Mart™ are just a few. These are also in any specialized stores. These stores have increased the number of styles they sell

to benefit from the demand of students wanting 'style' in their uniforms (School uniforms, 2001). There are critics of the school uniform policies that believe they are not cost effective. The Target™ store in Chicago offers school uniforms at a very reasonable cost. The items may range from a \$5.00 polo shirt to a \$20.00 sweater (School uniforms, 1997). Compared to \$150.00 pair of tennis shoes or a \$100 sweater the cost of school uniforms appears very reasonable.

A pilot program using one grade within the school district may help determine potential problems and the type of support received. How a school might consistently and legally enforce the school uniform policy may need to be considered. Creators of the policy also need to be ready to revise the plan when flexibility is needed to make the policy work after assessing the effectiveness of using school uniforms (Essex, 2001).

According to the Education Commission of the States not all states have a dress code or school uniform policy. In our north central states, Wisconsin does not have anything written that is legal or can be used in the judicial system. According to the Education Commission of the States, Minnesota has a clause pertaining to school uniforms:

require students to furnish or purchase clothing that constitutes a school uniform if the board has adopted a uniform requirement or program for the student's school. In adopting a uniform requirement, the board shall promote student, staff, parent and community involvement in the program and account for the financial ability of students to purchase uniforms. (ECS, 2001, p. 2)

Iowa and Illinois have a similar clause, including thoughts about violence and creating a safe environment. In the state of Washington, if the dress code policy is not adhered to,

specific consequences are written out for many different infractions of the school uniform rule. Out of 50 states, only 21 states and the District of Columbia have written authorization to include school uniforms in their state school districts (ECS, 2001).

Schools that already have a school uniform policy in place are resources for those who may be interested in adopting the policy. Recommendations cited from King, Walker and Minor (2002) are:

Everyone must be informed and every voice must be heard. Establish the policy for the right reasons, keeping the environment child-centered and proactive. Above all, go slowly and involve parents and students in every step of the process. (p. 55)

Reno, Nevada parents, at Traner Middle School, initiated a voluntary school uniform policy. The principal received permission from the board to adopt the policy. They had the students choose the color and styles of the uniforms. This school's students were considered very low academically and had low attendance rates. They were living in a high crime, high poverty community. The school assisted many families with cost issues and the community stores offered the uniforms at a discounted rate. Laundry facilities were offered and those who stayed to do laundry were furnished with transportation home. The Nevada school began with 70% participation (including teachers) in the uniform policy. By the end of the year approximately 50% of the students were participating in the school uniform policy. Enough of their goals were achieved to recommend to the school board the adoption of a mandatory school uniform policy for the next year.

Theories and Thoughts

There has been much conjecture concerning the theories surrounding school uniforms and its' successes or non-successes. To consider a theory worthy of consideration we may need to become familiar with the development of children and how school uniforms may affect their thoughts, behavior, and choices.

How we learn is debated by many theorists. The following are some classic examples of theorists and a very brief overview of their theories (Cobb, 2001).

- * Ivan Pavlov – with a stimulus there will be a learned response
(conditioning)
- * B.F. Skinner – our environment will determine our behavior
(reinforcement)
- * Albert Bandura – we learn by observation of others and their reactions
- * Sigmund Freud – our actions come from our thoughts within ourself
- * Erik Ericson – definite stages of development, when experienced will
determine a healthy personality
- * Nancy Chodorow – much of an individual's growth is determined by their
relationship with their mother
- * Jean Piaget – experiences only have meaning if you think about or
interpret events
- * Lev Vygotsky – learning takes place from being an apprentice (follow and
do)
- * Barbara Rogoff – learn by doing (activity)

- * Carol Gilligan – there is a definite need to distinguish the differences in learning by males and females

- * Robert Kegan – can learn by making sense of events or environment

Referencing the above theories about how a child learns may be integrated in how a child defines the impact of a school uniform as they develop their self-esteem.

Culture can be one theoretical variable in the learning process that determines how we assimilate and make meaning about what is going on around us. Interviews of Chinese, Korean and American children demonstrated “that children acquire the values of their cultures at an early age and that these values shape the way they talk, and presumably think, about themselves” (Cobb, 2001, cited from Han, Leichtman, & Wang, 1998, p. 338). The children from American tend to focus on themselves. The Asian children spoke about themselves in relation to others. This theory may demonstrate that students in American schools may think more about how school uniforms may make them feel individually; not how school uniforms may help the school or society as a whole. Cobb explains that not only a child’s age will determine how he/she thinks of the self but also their culture (Cobb, 2001).

A theory relative to the use of school uniforms is: a positive correlation exists between academic and social success, and self-esteem. Cobb defines self-esteem as evaluating oneself in a positive or negative way. The University of Maryland has released information concerning self-esteem using Rosenberg’s self-esteem scale. It is stated in their web site that “It is also unrealistic to think that self-esteem can be ‘taught’, rather, it is developed through an individual’s life experiences” (University of Maryland, n.d., p. 2). Children feel more important when they have positive self-esteem, are more likely to

challenge themselves and are more likely to interact with others (Building Self-esteem, 2000). A pediatrician (unknown) in a Keepkidshealthy (Building Self-esteem, 2000) article states:

Teenage children with low self-esteem may avoid challenging activities or may give up quickly, quit, or cheat when things aren't going their way. A child with low self esteem may also be a bully, bossy, controlling, have a low level of self control, and have difficulty making friends.

Children with high self esteem feel a sense of trust, security and feel accepted by others. They understand their own self-worth, have self control and are willing to take on challenging or difficult tasks. (p. 1)

A study presented by Gregory (1998) found the “ANOVA determined significance in self-esteem, attendance and achievement between the school with uniforms and the school without uniforms” (p. 1). This study supports the theory that school uniforms will increase a student's self-esteem. From what is being taught concerning the development of a child students wearing uniforms will have a higher chance of being more successful academically and socially. There are authors in the psychology field that discuss and support self-esteem determining our achievement level.

Huit states:

there is a great deal of research which shows that the self-concept is, perhaps, the basis for all motivated behavior. It is the self-concept that gives rise to possible selves, and it is possible selves that create the motivation for behavior. (Huit, 1998, cited from Franken, 1994, p. 439)

When raising a family, parents expect certain behaviors from their children. If there are consequences (good or bad) for behaviors, there is a better chance the wanted behavior will exhibit itself (Family Fun, n.d.). When teachers expect more of their students, the students may produce at a higher level. Haley states (2003, p. 3): “Uniforms have to be part of setting higher standards – higher standard of dress, behavior and achievement. You get what you expect. If you expect little, you get little” (Haley, 2003, p. 3).

Human nature sometimes assumes characteristics of an individual from a person’s appearance. Dress, personal hygiene, and appearance is a form of non-verbal communication in society. Self-confidence is assumed in an individual who is well-groomed and dressed neatly (Emperor, n.d.). “Clothes do not make the person, but they certainly send out some signals.” Sybil Selfe, a counselor at an elementary school, believes when more is expected of individuals, the result may be better and a better attitude toward academics. School uniforms cause students to achieve at a higher level because of the need to act appropriately when wearing school uniforms (Will School Uniforms, 1996).

School uniforms may be the determining factor in a study that examined a community’s attitude toward the school. Earlier in this review it was noted in a study that the community’s attitude toward students in schools with a uniform policy was positive (Brunsma, 2002). School districts with an invested interest in their students’ success, and making an effort to adopt a school uniform policy, are likely to encourage those students to demonstrate their strengths, talents and skills in positive ways; such as, music, art, athletics, and service to others (Haley, 2003).

An article in the July 28, 2000 Boston Globe discussed adults wearing clothing that promoted self-assurance and a more productive work attitude (Wen, 2000). An investment banker whose company had decided to allow its' employees to dress casually for the summer was complaining about the clothes he wore. He mentioned the fact that he did not know what to wear to work. It was more difficult figuring out appropriate coordinates for business that were casual in nature. He also stated he felt more confidence going into meetings wearing a suit; he was only 29 and his fellow employees were older than he. A clinical psychologist, mentioned in the article, likened men's suits to students' school uniforms; they may be thought of as "competition-reducing". A study done by Jackson Lewis (Wen, 2000), a New York employment law firm, found 44% of the companies that allowed casual dress at least one day a week recorded an increase in tardiness and absenteeism among the employees. Another surprising statistic; behavior that was flirtatious went up 30%. The staff members against casual dress stated (Wen, 2000, July 28, p. A1) "these policies are naively supported by young professionals who never had to scramble to win new clients, even if only marginally through the image of suits and ties" (Wen, 2000, July 28, p. A1).

Relating to success with dress and school uniforms; Easley, South Carolina has an interesting consequence when a student violates the Easley High School dress code. They are given a T-shirt to wear. On one side of the shirt the printing reads "Tomorrow I will dress for success". The other side of the shirt has the words "Today I did not meet the SDPC dress code policy for proper attire." SCPC stands for Pickens Country School District (Dress code, 2002, p. 1). Susan McFall, a second grade teacher, who has taught

for 30 years, responded, “The uniforms make a difference. Children feel good because they’re looking great” (Will School Uniforms, 1996, p. 3).

Behling (1994) conducted a study concerning the perceptions of teachers in regards to their students. Her study observed how apparel worn by students determined other students’ and teachers’ thoughts about the wearer’s intelligence, behavior and potential. High school sophomores and teachers were shown pictures of students wearing different clothing. The participants rated the students in the pictures on a scale indicating what their perception was of the picture, evaluating the person’s behavior, grade point average and academic potential. Generally, Behling found that those who wore less than casual clothing were thought of in a very negative manner. The students who were wearing a dressy uniform were rated with a higher academic ability. She called this the “halo effect” (Behling, 1994, p. 728).

The way teachers may treat a student may determine or, at least, influence the way students perceive themselves. Thomas, when comparing theories of child development, states that “we can conclude that the child’s self-concept – her feeling of adequacy is at least partially the result of social stereotypes...” (Thomas, 1992, p. 37). He also believed, a student of any age, would like to be associated with those who tend to enhance their self-esteem.

CHAPTER THREE

Discussion

After looking at the research collected the researcher agrees with the hypothesis that school uniforms do affect schools in a positive way. The surveys also demonstrate that parents, school staff, administrators and the community tend to view school uniforms as a contributing factor in a school's success. Most of the studies seemed to be implemented between the first and third year of their adoption of the school uniform policy. It is important to judge the long term effects of school uniforms as related to a society and the individual's contributions to their community. Conversely, with society's seemingly negative view of the outcomes of public education today, why not try a variable like school uniforms to improve the learning environment within schools. Can adopting a school uniform policy harm a school? Even if an improvement is only perceived, is that cause to discontinue a policy that assists in a positive view of the community's school?

Critical Analysis

The hypothesis, school uniforms affect schools in a positive way, appears relative only when the school and community have pro-actively done their homework. The successful schools first compiled reasons for wanting school uniforms and then decided if they were relevant or not. Surveys were taken of parents, staff and the community to find out what the level of support was for the administration if they had to enforce a school uniform policy. Steps suggested in the United States Department of Education and by the National Association of Elementary School Principals were very complete and appeared to work for many school districts (U.S. Department of Education, 1996 and NAESP,

2000). As mentioned earlier in this literature review, it is very important to listen to everyone concerning the adoption of a uniform policy (King, 2002). Moving slowly to give the community time to think about the positives and negatives of their decision is a must. The students should always be involved in the decision making and choices, but they may not make the final decision. The parents and schools need to decide what is safest and healthiest for “all” and not just the individual.

When reviewing the research a common complaint by those opposed to school uniforms appeared to be the method of testing. They stated that observation is not the most reliable form of testing. However, as noted in this literature review there were several quantitative surveys (Daughterty, 2002, Brunsmas, 2002, NAESP, 1998, Stockten, Gullatt, & Park, 2002, Brown, 1998). Statistics were found in the number of discipline referrals in a school, attendance records supplied, suspensions recorded, self-esteem measured by familiar standardized tests, and grades were perused.

Another common criticism of the research was the adoption of other changes incorporated in the schools at the same time the school uniform policy was adopted. Examples of changes aligned with the uniform policy adoptions were; more teachers in the hallways between classes, changes in curriculum, new problem solving curriculums and new discipline procedures. Changes are continuous and therefore it is difficult to isolate one variable.

It was interesting that students were not mentioned as being surveyed very often. When students were included they strongly denounced the use of school uniforms and yet recognized, begrudgingly, that uniforms may assist in the attempt to make schools safe. At the same time, the majority of adults seem to support the uniform policy in question.

The judicial system was busy determining if each case brought into court was worthy of challenging the First Amendment, the Fourth Amendment or the Fourteenth Amendment. Should questionable rights of individuals infringe on the rights of many in the classroom?

Stockton, Gullatt and Parke (2002) found that since the 1960's society has become more conservative in both the social and political arena. They mentioned that we still have free speech, which was determined in *Tinker v. DesMoines*, "however, a student's more general interest in expressing himself through his appearance will be accorded minimal constitutional protection" (p. 10).

Administrators have a very difficult job developing safe and healthy schools. However, there seem to be times an administrator may be a determining factor in the success of a school's dress code, no dress code, or uniform policy. Consistency is a very important variable. A study was cited in this paper banning hooded sweatshirts in a high school. The ban was later retracted because it was too difficult to control. The students appeared to ignore the rule. Some of the students mentioned that the ban made them angry because the school officials were inconsistent in their application of consequences and allowed some students to continue to wear the hooded sweatshirts (Carr, 2002, December 15).

The dress codes in some schools are so specific it is very difficult to monitor. An administrator stated:

We don't allow 5's, 6's, and 13's on shirts. We don't allow stars and crowns. We don't allow headgear, sweatbands, do-rags, hairnets and caps. We don't allow belt buckles with the number 13." (Carr, 2002, December 15, p. 1B)

How does the staff keep track of and notice all of the forbidden items? The researcher ventures to say that school uniforms would allow the staff to engage students in learning rather than focus on what the students are wearing and what might be forbidden and unsafe!

Summary

School uniforms as a means of improving our efforts to assist students in becoming healthy, contributing citizens in their community is an interest of many in our society. Realizing that the success of this policy may depend on each individual school system and their needs, and knowing a school uniform policy is not good for every school is of utmost importance. There are studies that appear to lack empirical evidence that supports school uniforms. Conversely, there may be schools that would definitely benefit from a school uniform policy as realized by the researcher. If this sounds confusing, it is. There are many variables to consider. To quote Dr. Amy Gillett, Research Foundations instructor at U.W. Stout, “it depends” (Personal communication, June, 2003).

It is very easy to judge people by what they wear. If students are wearing uniforms both teachers and students may not be able to label anyone immediately. Schools may be a place where you would need to get to know someone before forming an opinion about them! Khrista Kahl was a teacher in the Long Beach, California schools, which was one of the first schools to adopt a school uniform policy. She appeared adamant that school uniforms assisted the student as a learner and also assisted the teacher.

As a teacher, I could always immediately identify my less affluent students by what they were wearing. Some of these students wore the same clothes almost

everyday. They were teased by their peers, and this was very difficult for these kids. After uniforms, I had a much more difficult time telling which child came from which type of home environment. It really made me think – was I treating these children differently based on their socioeconomic level? I would certainly hope not, but I cannot be sure.” (Mancini, 1997, p. 3)

The Citizens for Parental Rights believes that parents have a right to show and teach their children decision making in regards to grooming and apparel (CPR, n.d.). The courts say expressive conduct is fine as long as other individuals’ rights are not affected and their ability to learn is not hindered. Research in education has evaluated a school’s business as their “responsibility . . .to teach and provide wholesome, safe experiences for its students and employees” (Stockton, 2002, p. 3). Many agree with Holloman’s quote mentioned in Chapter 2, when she spoke of the importance of each individual valuing themselves and not what they wear (King, 2002).

When adopting a school uniform policy many schools also adopted other new programs at the same time. It was unclear as to what exactly created the successes that were notable in the studies. If a combination of actions or changes created a positive result, why not continue to use those policies together? A good example would involve a baseball player. A player’s batting average improved this year. There were two new variables that were included in his workout over the past year. He practiced batting more often and he had one-on-one instruction by a batting coach. Probably both variables were factors in the baseball player’s improvement! When school uniforms are a variable in a success story, why not continue in the same fashion?

When society looks at the environment we have created in our schools, actions to improve and create a safe and healthy learning environment must be attempted. Meier (2002) states:

“...But I know that the kind of learning environment we have created also exists in schools that insist on last names, even uniforms. What doesn't work are schools that think we can be made uniform, that the messy business of learning to deal with each other can be bypassed by rules imposed by people who don't know us in all our particularities.” (p. 40)

Can one do this and still require the students to wear school uniforms? Can one be an individual even though we are dressed in a similar fashion? Referring to the article discussing the productivity of people in business, we know self-confidence improves with the wearing of a uniform (business suits) (Wen, 2000). When everyone at a law firm wears a business suit, according to this article, quantity and quality of work improves, creativity is not stifled. The new fashions, and competition with clothing have become distracting and teachers are having a difficult time attending to their job of school. Benjamin Bushman, a principal at Beverly Hills High School, states: “Students should come to school dressed like they are coming to work” (Scholastic Action, 2001, p.1).

Cheri, a young woman in her thirties, when working as a telemarketer, was told by her employer that she must dress in a businesslike or formal manner. Even though no one saw her, besides other employees, her employer believed when you are dressed nicely, you may feel more self-confident, therefore, more sales will occur when calling people (Personal communication, July 25, 2003).

Meier (2002) also profoundly stated:

For me the most important answer to the question “Why save public education?” is this: It is in schools that we learn the art of living together as citizens, and it is in public schools that we are obliged to defend the idea of a public, not only a private, interest.” (p. 176)

This statement supports the idea that schools need to consider the “whole”, not only the individual, when making decisions and policies. What will help our children become healthy, contributing citizens of our society? School uniforms may assist schools in this goal.

Recommendations

When reviewing evidence, for the support of school uniforms, or the lack thereof, The researcher recommends that each school system review the literature concerning school uniform policies. Observing a school uniform policy in action would be recommended. Committee members involved should find a school similar to their own to observe; rural, urban or suburban, size and community standards? Anyone involved in the conception of a school uniform policy should recognize and consider steps taken by other schools when they first adopted a school uniform policy. It is important to learn from other’s mistakes and consider possible successful alternatives.

Administrators need to be consistent in administering the policy and consequences. Part of that consistency is modeling for the students. Teachers should also have a dress code or uniform. Just as the studies on job production and self-assurance projected more success when dressed well; teachers would fare better with their self-

confidence and discipline if they dressed in a manner worthy of respect and respecting others (Wen, 2000).

Putting a school uniform policy in place should involve discussion by citizens in the community and decision making should include the students. Students, parents, teachers, support staff, administration, school board members and community members are all citizens needing to be heard.

In a survey released in 1999 a majority of “Americans described teens and children with words like ‘lazy’ and ‘irresponsible’, and few say it is very common to find young people who are friendly or respectful” (Public Agenda Online, 1999, p. 1). This statement has not shown itself to be true in this researcher’s experience as a teacher for 25 years. However, I believe that part of this skepticism can be lessened with the use of school uniforms. School uniforms can not solve all problems in education. If there is some success or any positive significance between uniforms and a student’s life, why not adopt that policy?

Teenagers tend to compare themselves to other teens. The community (includes parents and teachers) should remind young citizens to look at themselves, find out what is important to them and what makes them “special and unique”. When we try to be someone else or like someone else we tend to lose confidence (Lade, n.d., p.1). School uniforms may somewhat equalize the physical appearance of students; most students will then look at the value of that person and who they are. A wonderful Dr. Seuss book has a story about the “Sneetches”. There were Sneetches who had a star on their fur and Sneetches who did not. The Sneetches with stars thought they were much better than those with no star. When “Fix-It-Up Chappie” came to town he offered to put stars on the

starless for money. Then he took stars off of the other Sneetches for money, so they could be different again. “‘Good grief!’ groaned the ones who had stars at the first. ‘We’re still the best Sneetches and they are the worst. But, now, how in the world will we know,’ they all frowned, ‘If which kind is what, or the other way round?’” (Dr. Seuss, 1961, p. 13). The end of the story: “The day they decided that Sneetches are Sneetches and no kind of Sneetch is the best on the beaches” (Dr. Seuss, 1961, p. 24).

Making sure we do not infringe on any of the rights our forefathers gave us in the United States Constitution, when creating a school uniform policy, is necessary for success. The courts are very serious about following the letter of the law so the rights given to us by our forefathers are not compromised. Most United States citizens know that the” first ten amendments are the cornerstones of democracy in the United States” (Encarta Microsoft Corporation, 1993-2003, p. 2). Several authors referred to the importance of allowing individual freedoms and respecting the constitution. They also agreed with the courts’ decisions “which allows for the fullest exercise of individual student rights consistent with the paramount public interest in educating youth in an orderly environment conducive to learn” (Avant, 1984, p. 4).

I appreciate what a school board member in Florida, Linda Sutherland, has communicated. “There are no magic answers to school violence, but there are pieces of the puzzle, and uniforms are one” (Require school uniforms?, 1999, p.1).

As a researcher, I believe all students deserve a safe learning environment supportive of each person’s self esteem. The future of our society depends on confident, inclusive and caring citizens focused on valuing the skills, abilities and talents of all decision makers. School uniforms may be the variable public education needs to equalize

the competitiveness of dress and create collaborative learning environments anchored in student achievements and positive social outcomes.

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Appendix A
Litigations in Court

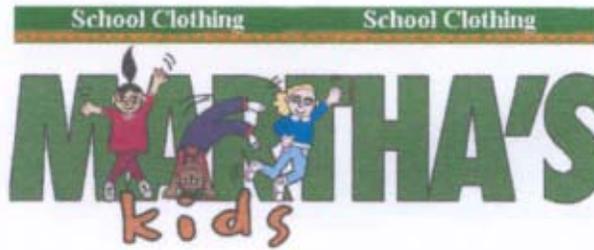
Year	Case
1943	West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette (First Amendment – salute flag as you believe) (Uerling, 1997)
1966	Burnside v. Byers (school children could wear freedom buttons, no evidence they interfered with their education) (Uerling, 1997)
1966	Blackwell v. Issaquena County Board of Education (children could not wear freedom buttons because of the evidence showing interference with learning) (Uerling, 1997)
1969	Tinker v. DesMoines (black arm bands-as long as they do not hinder learning or cause a disturbance) (Uerling, 1997)
1969	Westley v. Rossi (cleanliness & hair – school board could insist on good hygiene but the length of the hair is a personal freedom) (Brown,1998 & Lumsden, 2002).
1970	Guzick v. Drebus (prohibited students from wearing buttons,etc. unless they were related to a school activity- because of disruption caused by such) (Uerling, 1997)
1970	Bannister v. Paradis (jeans-wearing jeans does not curb learning) (Uerling, 1997)
1970	Richards v. Thurston (hair-individuals have a right to control own person) (Brown, 1998)
1972	Melton v. Young (student suspended for wearing a Confederate flag patch on his sleeve-court upheld schools' decision) (Uerling, 1997)
1972	Wallace v. Ford (hair does not get in the way of learning) (Uerling, 1997)
1972	Stanley v. Illinois (parents' right to make decisions concerning their children-unwed father) (CPR, 2003)
1978	Fowler v. Williamson (Principal can set dress code-graduation) (Brown, 1998)
1987	Olesen v. Board of Education (earrings and gang apparel are not protected by First Amendment when considering the safety of the student body) (Brown, 1998)
1993	Jeglin v. SanJacinto Unified School District (stop the wearing of gang clothing and paraphenalia) (Brown, 1998)
1995	Bivens v. Albuquerque Public Schools (prohibited wearing sagging pants) (Uerling, 1997)
1989	Texas v. Johnson (for non-verbal conduct to be protected by First Amendment-two tests created: 1)intent to convey message, 2)message will be understood (Uerling, 1997)
1997	Washington v. Glucksberg (protects individuals against government interference with personal issues – suicide) (CPR, 2003)
2001	Canady v. Bossier Parish School Board (uniforms used for safe learning environment-does not violate the Fourteenth Amendment) (Canady v. Bossier, 2001)
2001	Littlefield v. Forney Independent School District (uniform does not hinder free speech, does not take away right of parents to parent, and the opt out policy for religious reasons may require a sincere statement) (Fifth Circuit, 2001 & Lumsden, 2002)
2002	Vine v. Board of Education of Zion School District #6 (black and white dress code adopted for a more adept learning environment-dependent on reason for policy) (Vine v. Board of Education of the Town of Zion School District, 2002)

Appendix B

Selected Benefits of School Uniforms as Determined by Principal Debbie Femster

School safety	School attendance	Academic performance	Social benefits	Preparation for the future	School administrator benefits	Parental benefits
Decreased violence and theft	Less embarrassment over clothing could increase attendance	Increased attention on academics (less on clothing)	Uniforms may promote a sense of community and camaraderie	Uniforms can prepare students for work world where expectations are greater	More time spent on instructional leadership	Eliminating the discussion over what to wear to school
The identification of nonstudent intruders	The safer the school, the more likely students will attend	Higher expectations from teachers	School uniforms lessen the difference between the rich and the poor	Uniforms create a sense of “teamwork”	Less time spent on clothing-related conflicts	Uniforms promote efficiency and organization
Prevention of gang attire			Less fashion-conscious school environment	Students are more likely to have a businesslike attitude		Less pressure from children to purchase trendy, high-priced clothing
			Reduction in clothing-related peer conflict			

Appendix C
School Uniform Examples



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