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Review of *Buttoned Up: Clothing, Conformity, and White-Collar Masculinity*, by Erynn Masi de Casanova

Trenton M. Haltom

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, thaltom2@unl.edu

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**Buttoned Up: Clothing, Conformity, and White-Collar Masculinity**, by Erynn Masi de Casanova. Ithaca: ILR/Cornell University Press, 2015. 275 pp. ISBN 978-0-8014-5418-9 (hb) 978-1-5017-0049-1 (pb)

Erynn Masi de Casanova's *Buttoned Up: Clothing, Conformity, and White-Collar Masculinity* (2015) draws on white-collar men's discussion of their fashion choices to shed light on how masculinity, work-type, class, race, and geographic region shape their styles of dress. Each chapter highlights a piece of what goes on in men's heads as they dress for work: workplace dress codes (both official and unofficial), family inspiration, for whom they dress, and the pitfalls of being too fashionable or not trendy enough. In addition to what to wear, Casanova also explores what *not* to wear in a white-collar professional work setting. The current dearth of research on the topic of men's bodies and fashion leads to a dialogue that is both insightful and thought provoking. Readers will enjoy not only well-done sociological research, but also moments of nostalgia for the fashions of our fathers, grandfathers, brothers, and uncles.

Casanova's work is based on interviews with 71 white-collar men in Cincinnati, San Francisco, and New York City, paying special attention to ethnicity and age variation within the sample along with different white-collar occupational types. She elaborates on certain themes with mini-ethnographic descriptions in short, topical inserts provided after each chapter. In one of these vignettes, the author takes her husband to a tailor to be measured and fitted for a custom suit. In this scene, Casanova describes not only the process of picking on-trend yet classic fabrics, but also how her spouse became increasingly uncomfortable being measured by another male as women entered the shop. Complimented by Casanova's conversational writing style, pieces like this effectively personalize the book.

One thread running throughout *Buttoned Up* is that of attention: men's battle between receiving wanted and unwanted attention from others for the ways they are dressed. To avoid standing out, some men prefer wearing suits because doing so limits options and makes fashion choices easier. Others express themselves through cufflinks or fun socks for flashes of personality in an otherwise drab office fashion environment. Meanwhile, in their talk about fashion as the new "f-word" (Chapter 6), Casanova's white-collar workers are hesitant to say they pay too much attention to fashion, preferring instead to safely label themselves as "trendy" rather than "fashionable". Indeed, for many of these men, *fashion* becomes a trigger word indicating that being too fashionable may lead to being labeled "metrosexual," a term and embodiment of style still receiving criticism today. Moreover, being too on-trend may also pique curiosities as to an individual's sexual orientation which, in the heteronormative office world, is still a taboo subject. In sum, Casanova paints a picture of the precarious nature (Vandello et al., 2008) of the embodiment of masculinity through men's office attire.

Boundaries were also a common theme throughout *Buttoned Up*: walking the many lines between too formal and too casual, too fashionable or too outdated, too fat or too thin. Falling on one side of the line or the other could result in workplace reprimands in the forms of formal and informal sanctions from coworkers or bosses. The way the boss dresses often inspires the wardrobe climate of a workplace (Chapter 7). To Casanova, this topic brought about the question: For whom do white-collar men dress? The short answer is: for other men. In the corporate world where women, particularly female bosses, are few and far between, men dress to impress their male coworkers and peers.

But there is more. The way a businessman dresses for a potential client could make or break a deal, reveal power dynamics in meetings, or simply reveal a certain level of commitment to the job. Furthermore, white-collar men must strike a balance between the uptight professional and relatable business peer. Casanova's white-collar men can be seen to illustrate the general observation that men police each other through accountability, thus entrenching a hierarchical order of masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Kimmel, 2011). Discussions of the neck tie as a symbol of manhood and the business world highlight the fragility of masculinity, however. The ability to tie a tie either leaves men feeling accomplished or their inability leaves them feeling vulnerable and not having learned an essential manly skill.

Pointing to the social construction of men's dress styles, Casanova emphasizes the regional differences in the way white-collar men dress for work. Comparing San Francisco, Cincinnati, and New York, Casanova illuminates how fashion dictates vary from city to city. From the author's conversations with businessmen, we learn that white-collar dress styles in these cities are reflections of clientele, workplace policy, boss's preferences, and city vibes. All in all, these characteristics make up how men construct attitudes towards workplace attire. In particular, those men who wore uniforms either as private schoolboys or military servicemen speak to the clone-like aspects of the requirement. Yet, as the author points out, though a style-guide has not been published for white-collar work attire, this does not mean there is not uniformity in style in this environment. In Chapter 3 the question is explicitly posed: *Do white-collar workers have a uniform?* Despite ambiguity in the answers of participants and varying by region, Casanova inserts that white-collar workers do in fact have a uniform.

While discussions on how men wear professional attire make up much of the book, readers are left without an idea about how various body shapes navigate workplace clothing styles. The author focuses on average bodied men and pays little attention to thin-framed or overweight men. Navigation of weight gain and slimmer, skinny fashion trends are talked about, but not necessarily how overweight men, for instance, choose their work attire. It would be interesting to know where bigger-bodied men shop, whether someone else shops for them, whether there are popular brands for overweight bodies, and whether men experience shame related to their weight in the workplace. More attention should also be paid to racial differences in dress styles among racial minority white-collar workers as their interpretations of dress and dress code may differ.

That said, *Buttoned Up* evokes sociological thought through considerations of the embodiment of gender, social constructions of dress style, and differences across age, region, or workplace. The book reads like a well-rounded documentary on white-collar dress: delving into histories, uncovering biographies, exploring workplace habitats, pondering symbolic meanings, and comparing geographies. Sociological theorists including Simmel, Mills, and Bourdieu are brilliantly woven into the subject of men's dress with their writings on fashion, white-collar workers, and habitus, respectively. Scholars can make use of this book in a myriad of interdisciplinary courses on fashion and identity formation, the body, gender, and masculinities.

TRENTON M. HALTOM  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
tmhaltom@huskers.unl.edu