

**Pictures *can* speak louder than words.**

College professors have never been known for their keen fashion sense, tending toward the tweedy, the frumpy, and the rumpled, though of course, there are numerous exceptions. Some would say that academics’ presumed devotion to the life of the mind should replace any thought of impressing people or being stylish.

But when a candidate for a professor’s job went for an interview at a university wearing a bold plaid suit and polka-dot bowtie, the hiring committee noticed, commented among themselves, and ultimately didn’t offer the man a job.

You can imagine how such a conversation might have gone:

“Was that suit stolen from a clown?”

“Wearing a boxy plaid suit to an interview doesn’t show a person with very good judgment.”

“It looks like he got dressed in the dark.”

And so on. As the hiring committee talked, they began to dramatize what they saw as the candidate’s fashion errors, each building on others’ comments and questions. Sometimes such events and discussions might lead to inside jokes or what are called “**symbolic cues**.” For instance, in the future, any fashion-challenged would-be professor might be called **Mr. Boxy** and everyone who’d been part of the committee or who had heard about it would understand the reference.

You’ve no doubt had similar experiences where you and your friends repeated and elaborated something about an individual or an event. This is the kind of communication that led Ernest Bormann to develop Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT) and its associated method of Fantasy Theme Analysis (FTA).