

Getting shirty

swanky casino). But since we had no money we wondered if could design T-shirts to do a similar job.

We photographed male students wearing a plain white T-shirt and jeans. We then superimposed an upright T shape across the chest or an inverted (upside down) T shape across the stomach. We presented the photos to 30 female students and asked them to rate each body on a 1–9 Likert scale for attractiveness and health.

The power of the upright T

The images of men with the upright T were judged to be more attractive and healthy than those with an inverted T. Overall there was a shift up (more attractive/healthy) or down (less attractive/healthy) of about 10–12% relative to the plain T-shirt images (control condition).

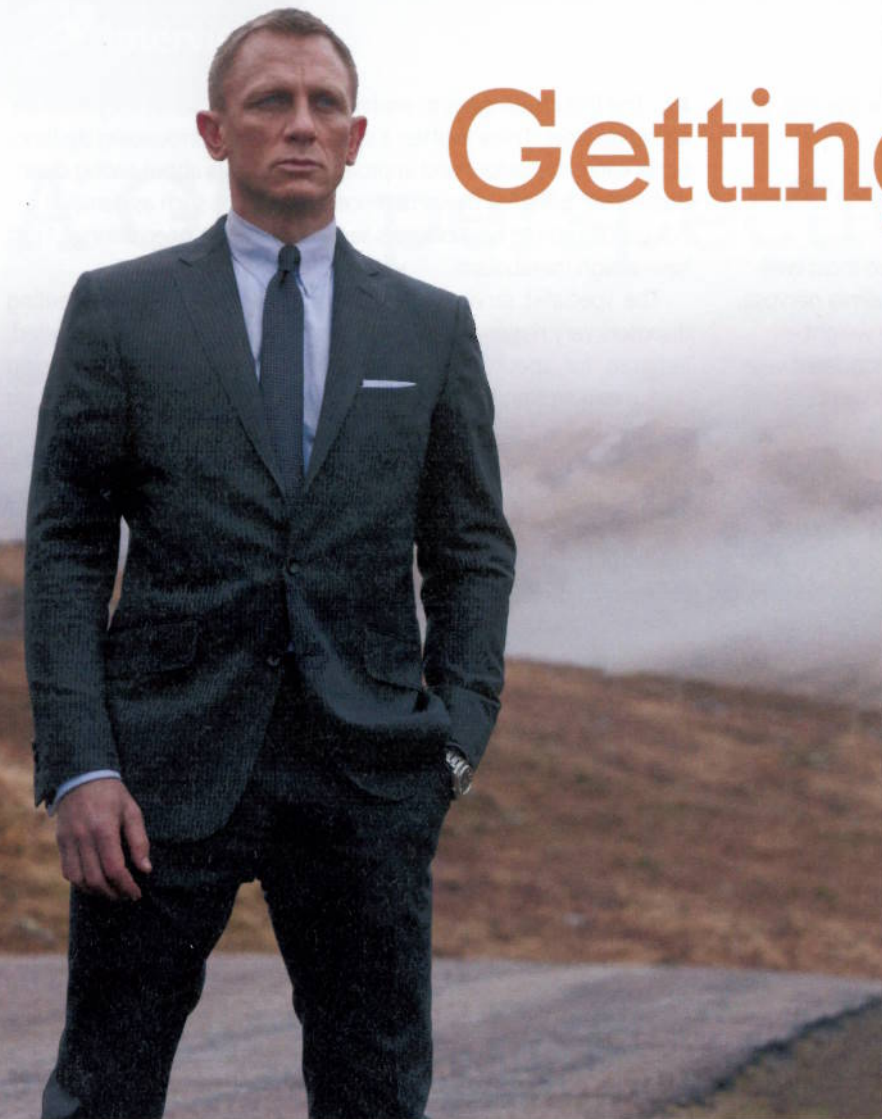
Why? Well, the superimposed T creates an illusion called the T-illusion in which the length of the horizontal and the vertical lines (and the space around them) are distorted. The effect is such that when the lines are exactly the same length, we actually see the horizontal bar as being shorter than the vertical one. For them to appear to be the same length you need to make the horizontal bar longer (or the vertical bar shorter).

In our experiment, the T-illusion made the chests appear narrower or wider than they actually were. This in turn changed the CWR towards or away from the preferred (ideal) V-shaped torso.

Conclusion

There aren't many people who have a perfect body shape. Fortunately, the human eye can be fairly easy to fool. By wearing certain clothes, we can use our psychology to make others believe that we are fashionable, healthy and attractive.

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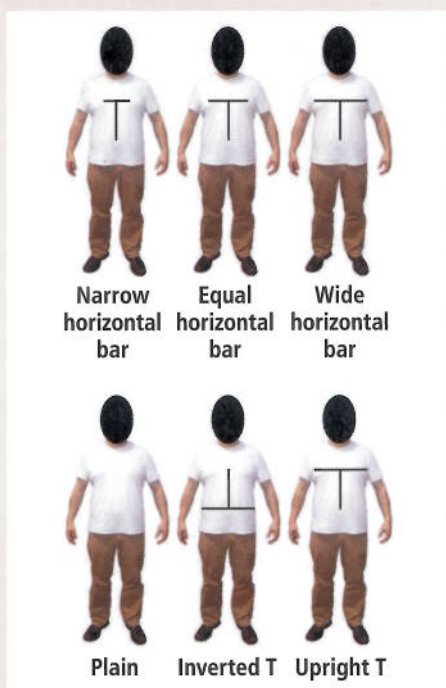


Wanting the perfect body is not a new phenomenon. Human beings have evolved to signal (through our body shape) and detect (with our senses) important social and biological information. Body-part ratios — such as waist-to-hip ratio (WHR) and chest-to-waist ratio (CWR) — are linked to our health, social dominance and reproductive success.

Investigating chest-to-waist ratio

Researchers at Nottingham Trent University (Daniel Clark, Captain Philip Taylor and myself) wondered if we could use visual illusions to make men look more or less attractive and healthy.

We knew that a male CWR of around 0.75 is judged as very attractive. This ratio gives a V-shaped male torso (think Daniel Craig in shorts in *Skyfall*). A good suit also creates this illusion (think Daniel Craig in a



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