

SOME ASPECTS OF THE PERSONAL AND
SOCIAL FUNCTION OF CLOTHING
FOR THE OLDER WOMAN

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Harriet Maloa Ebeling

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AN ABSTRACT

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of Michigan State University
of Agriculture and Applied Science in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

School of Home Economics

Department of Textiles, Clothing and Related Arts

1960

Approved By Mary Lou Rosinera

The population trend in the United States, as in other industrialized countries, has been that a larger percentage of people reach the upper age levels. This change in our population structure has brought forth new challenges. In the field of clothing much has been accomplished in helping younger age groups with their clothing problems, needs and desires; relatively little has been done to aid older women. The purpose of this study was to gain an over-all view of the factors which influence social and personal aspects of clothing of women sixty years of age and over.

Data for this study were obtained from a questionnaire administered to one hundred and eighty women, sixty years of age and over, living in Lansing, Michigan, and in rural areas of Eaton and Clinton Counties in Michigan.

The extent of these women's interest in clothing was determined by the use of an interest scale designed for this study. Through the application of the chi square test, significant factors found to be related to clothing were age and place of residence. Women between sixty and seventy-four years of age were more interested than older women; rural women's interest in clothes was stronger than urban women's interest. In addition to age and place of residence, other factors significantly related to specific attitudes toward clothing were income and organizational memberships.

For the women in this sample, interest in clothing extended beyond the functional use of clothing. Their clothes affected aspects of their

social participation--their feeling of ease and their refusing invitations for lack of clothes. The majority of them wished they had more money to spend on clothes and they desired a wider selection from which to choose both their dresses and dress patterns. These facts indicate that more research designed to help older women gain greater satisfaction from their clothing would be of value.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In countries sharing Western Civilization, the trend has been for a larger proportion of the population to reach the upper age levels. These countries, having undergone the Industrial Revolution, have lower death rates due to social, economic and technological changes.

In the United States, from 1900-1950 the total population increased by ninety-eight per cent. The number of persons sixty-five years and over expanded two hundred and ninety-seven per cent.¹ During this period, life expectancy at birth increased eighteen years.² The number of women over sixty-five increased while the number of men decreased in this age bracket.³ This change in the population structure was not steady and uniform, for the three factors which influence population changes--births, deaths and migration--are not static. These variables working alone or together bring about demographic changes. Although it is difficult to

¹Lynn T. Smith, Ph.D., "The Changing Number and Distribution of the Aged Population," American Geriatrics Society Journal, III, 1955, p. 4.

²Federal Security Agency, "Population Changes and Economic Implications," Man and His Years (Raleigh, North Carolina: Health Publications Institute, Inc., 1951).

³Special Staff on Aging, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, "The Aging Population: National Totals, 1958, Fact Sheet No. 1, March, 1959, p. 4.

gauge these rates, due to the fact that all developments which could affect them cannot be foreseen, it is predicted that the proportion of older people will continue to grow.¹

With this group enlarging in proportion and number, its problems, needs and interests are becoming increasingly more important to the total society. There is a growing number of private and public institutions and individuals in all fields of knowledge working to help make the declining years of life more fulfilling. Through mass communication media, the housing, nutritional, medical, financial and recreational needs of our older citizens are being brought to the attention of the general public.²

The initial interest in the aged centered on their financial and health problems, for these had a direct effect on the total society. Recently, problems relating to other phases of their lives are receiving recognition. Work is being initiated to find solutions to problems dealing with housing, recreation and adjustment to their social world

¹G. Halsey Hunt, M.D., "Implications of Aging as Predicted by Population Changes," Geriatrics, XIV, No. 1, 1959, p. 5.

²Note: For instance, in 1959 Life magazine in a four-part series (July 13, 20, 27 and August 3 issues) pictorially depicted the life situation of the aged in the United States.

Recently, Senator McNamara of Michigan, who is the Chairman of a Senate Subcommittee on Problems of the Aged, made the statement that both political parties should consider the needs of this expanding segment of our population in formulating their 1960 party platforms for the presidential election.

Now in the planning stage is a White House Conference on Aging for 1961. (Public Law 85-908, 85th Congress, H.R. 9822, September, 1958.)

after retirement. More attention is also being given to the study of the positive characteristics, desires and potentials of older people.

Up to the present, the clothing requirements and preferences of this group have not received the consideration given to other age levels. Dr. Michael M. Dasco, director of physical medicine and rehabilitation at New York's Goldwater Memorial Hospital, in discussing what people can do for themselves and others to make the ending years of life more satisfying, makes the comment that merchants, engineers and designers should look upon old age as an influence on their professions. He cites this example:

Take the department store. Today it has a department for almost every age bracket from infants through "matrons." But how many have departments for old women? How many designers design clothes for the elderly? The old man can find suitable clothing without much trouble, but the old woman finds little that has taken her figure problems into account, and most of what she does find is dark and dismal. She still has her pride and she wants to wear something cheerful and appropriate.¹

He feels many new markets could be developed for the aged. These people do not need condescending treatment, but they do need some fulfillment of their needs as does any age group.

In the business fashion world, acknowledgement of the fact that certain designs are more attractive for women sixty years of age and over has been shown. One leading magazine in 1948² created a hypothetical figure as a model image for this group. Periodically, she is

¹Michael M. Dasco, M.D., "Practical Ways to Be Old and Happy," Part III: "Old Age: A Personal Crisis and U.S. Problem." Life, XLVII, No. 4, p. 89.

²Personal letter from Jessica Daves, Editor-in-Chief, Vogue magazine, November 13, 1959.

featured in the magazine modeling clothes specially chosen for women in this age bracket.¹

Clothing, as well as food and shelter, is an essential of daily life. It not only provides protection against the elements, but the psychological aspects of clothing influence the social relationships of people. Doctors writing on the psychology of retirement recommend building elderly people's self-esteem and suggest it is just as important for them to create a favorable impression through personal appearance as through behavior. Careless grooming shows feelings of disregard for others and this attitude contributes to withdrawal and increased introspection.²

Robert J. Havighurst, who is well-known for his research in social psychology of later maturity, states that adequate clothing, a need common to all people, is also a rational defense against aging. By dressing even more carefully than younger people, older people can make better use of their physical attractiveness.³

With the increasing growth of the number of women in the expanding upper age brackets of our society, it is expected that in the future,

¹ _____, "Who Is Mrs. Exeter?" Vogue, July, 1954, p. 54.

²Edward L. Allen, M.D., Hollis E. Clow, M.D., "The Psychology of Retirement," American Geriatrics Society Journal, II, 1954, p. 802.

³Robert J. Havighurst, "Social and Psychological Needs of the Aging," CCLXXIX: Social Contribution by the Aging (Philadelphia: The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, January, 1952), p. 16.

their clothing demands will have a greater bearing on the kind of clothing produced and more thought will be given to their clothing needs and desires.

Review of Literature

Clothing research has been conducted by consumer organizations, trade associations, labor unions, government, industry, and by the division of textiles and clothing in the Bureau of Home Economics, since its organization in 1925.¹

Dr. Hartmann, professor of educational psychology, in an address to the Eastern Regional Conference of College Teachers of Textiles and Clothing in 1948, made the statement that clothing is a matter of intimate individual concern and is an appropriate subject for serious systematic psychological study.²

In 1949 and in 1951, sociologists and college teachers in the clothing field from all areas of the country attended a seminar on the Development of Studies and Research in the Sociological Aspects of Clothing offered by the Department of Sociology and the Textiles, Clothing and Related Arts Department of the School of Home Economics at Michigan State University.³ Since this time, several studies on the

¹Karlyne Anspach, "Clothing Research in Home Economics, 1925-1958," Journal of Home Economics, LI, No. 9, (November, 1959), p. 767.

²George W. Hartmann, "Clothing: Personal Problem and Social Issue," Journal of Home Economics, XLI, No. 6 (June, 1949), p. 295.

³Michigan State University, July 25 to August 12, 1949, Seminar on Development of Studies and Research in the Sociological Aspects of Clothing, cooperatively offered by the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and the Department of Textiles, Clothing and Related Arts of the School of Home Economics at Michigan State University.

social character of clothing behavior have been completed at Michigan State University by the Sociology and the Textiles, Clothing and Related Arts Departments.

Although clothing research has grown in the last twenty-five years with women forming the largest group studied,¹ no studies concerned specifically with clothing in relation to women over sixty years of age could be found. However, there have been studies from which the findings could be applied to this age group.

In the 1953 June issue of the Journal of Home Economics, the University of Georgia published the results of a study conducted there on the "Changes in Appearance of Women 45 to 65 Years of Age Which Affect the Use of Ready-to-Wear Garments and Commercial Patterns."² The findings included these changes in appearance: added weight, thickened waistline, double chin, heavier upper arms, sagging bustline, rounding shoulders, dowager's hump and less shapely legs. The researchers felt that the letters they received after a New York radio interview and newspaper articles describing the study, and the high per cent of responses to the questionnaire sent out were a good indication women are not only very interested but also feel in need of help in solving their clothing problems. This study was to be a part of a continuing study dealing with clothing in relation to the mature woman and what consideration

¹Anapach, op. cit., p. 768

²Margaret Harris Blair, "Changes in Appearance of Women 45 to 65 Years of Age Which Affect Use of Ready-to-Wear Garments and Commercial Patterns," Journal of Home Economics, XL, No. 4 (April, 1953), pp. 248-250.

manufacturers of commercial patterns and ready-to-wear give to their needs. Results from further research on this subject have not been published.¹

The School of Home Economics at Oregon State College and the Oregon State Extension Station in 1951 conducted a study on the design and construction of functional house dresses for the mature figure. One hundred and twenty-seven women with mature figures, from under thirty to over sixty years of age, checked a questionnaire so that their preferences of fabric, style details and desired use of a house dress could be determined. From the information gained, a house dress was designed and tested for wearability. Out of this study came a design for a sleeve which eliminated the strain and retarded the signs of wear usually found in the sleeve area before other parts of the garment show wear.²

¹Note: An example of what can be accomplished to help groups of people with special needs to receive greater satisfaction from their clothing is the project initiated by the Institute of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, New York University Bellevue Medical Center to design functional clothing for the handicapped. In the New York State Journal of Medicine, LIX, No. 9 (May 1, 1959) pp. 1859-1861, is an article describing the project. The major result of this three-year research project is a nonprofit organization developed to manufacture and distribute new attractive garments especially designed to fit the needs of handicapped individuals.

In the October, 1959 issue of the Journal of Home Economics, LI, No. 8, pp. 709-713, work on a similar project was reported. The Clothing and Housing Research Division of the United States Department of Agriculture is completing a study of the clothing problems and requirements of physically handicapped homemakers. From their findings, principles will be drawn up and used as guides in developing clothing designs with features that either eliminate or lessen common problems.

²Clara Edaburn, "Functional House Dresses," Journal of Home Economics, XLIII, No. 6 (June, 1951), pp. 423-425.

Dr. Beegle, professor of sociology and anthropology at Michigan State University, lecturing on "Population Trends and Clothing" in the seminar described previously, stated:

Perhaps, the most significant trend is that of the aging of the population..... This trend suggests that clothing experts might well give extensive study and thought to the clothing needs and desires of aged persons.¹

From the results of the clothing studies reviewed here, it can be seen that clothing research can aid people in receiving more satisfaction from their clothing. Perchance, clothing could be designed for older women from which they would receive more gratification from their dress as other age and special groups have through clothing research.

Purpose of Study

The general purpose of this study is an attempt to disclose the significance of clothing in the lives of women sixty years of age and over. Specific goals are: (1) to determine whether or not they themselves feel that their clothing needs and preferences are being met, (2) to ascertain the extent of their interest in clothing, (3) whether or not there is a relationship between their clothing and such factors as age, social participation, and income, and (4) to attempt to determine some of the important factors upon which their clothing choices are based.

¹Seminar, Michigan State University, op. cit., Lecture I, Dr. A. Beegle, "Population Trends and Clothing" (mimeographed).

It is hoped that the findings from this study will indicate cues for the direction of further clothing research in relation to this age group. Since clothing does affect the psychological, sociological and economic aspects of women's lives, people in the clothing field can be of assistance, as well as doctors, nutritionists, psychologists, and other professional people, in helping to find ways to fulfill the needs and desires of this group.

CHAPTER II

PROCEDURE

Data for this study were obtained from the compilation of responses to a questionnaire administered to one hundred and eighty women sixty years of age and over. A purposive quota sample technique was used; in other words, the women asked to fill in the questionnaire were chosen on the basis of their age and residential area.

Questions were asked to obtain the degree of clothing interest, relationship between social participation and clothing, attitudes toward effect of clothing in interpersonal relationships, opinions of the availability of clothes in desired style and size, and the influence of income on clothing expenditures. The following points were also used as criteria for the formulation of the questionnaire¹ used in this study:

1. The questionnaire must not contain too many questions, as the author in the administration of a clothing preference survey previous to this study found that elderly women become confused and tired and have a tendency not to complete a questionnaire if it is too long.

2. Since the questions were to be answered in a group situation, they must be easily understood and elicit an immediate response which could be expressed by checking a descriptive phrase.

¹See Appendix for a copy of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was voluntarily and anonymously done in an attempt to obtain reasonably accurate information.

To pretest the questionnaire, it was given to several women, sixty years of age and over, who were asked to evaluate the questions as to clearness of information sought and conciseness. On the basis of their evaluation, some of the questions were reworded for clarity. Question number fourteen was changed so that the alternatives given could be ranked.

During the months of January, February and March, 1960, small groups of women sixty years of age and over were asked to fill in the revised questionnaire designed for this research. These women were attending Senior Citizen's Drop-In Centers, church meetings and Home Economics Agricultural Extension meetings.

The urban portion of the sample was comprised of one hundred women living in Lansing, Michigan. The rural group consisted of eighty women living in rural and small town areas of Eaton and Clinton Counties in Michigan. Comparisons were made between the urban and rural group responses.

In order to obtain the degree of clothing interest, answers to questions involving thinking and reading about clothes, shopping for clothes, and spending time and money on clothes were arbitrarily weighted. The groups were divided into three categories--high, medium and low. A score of thirty-nine and above was considered high; twenty-eight to thirty-eight inclusive, medium; and ten to twenty-seven indicative of low interest in clothing.

For the purpose of further analysis of these data, the effect of age in relation to the answers given was augmented by dividing the women into two groups. Women sixty to seventy-four years of age were considered the younger segment of the sample and women seventy-five years of age and over the older portion of the sample.

The groups were also divided into high, medium and low economic categories. Individuals with an annual income of less than one thousand dollars were placed in the low category, one thousand to two thousand dollars in the medium, and those whose income was two thousand dollars or more in the high category.

Individuals were also placed in high or low categories depending on the number of organizations to which they belonged. Those attending one or two organizations were designated as low. The high category consisted of those who were members of three or more organizations.

As indicative of specific clothing preferences for women of this age bracket (sixty years of age and over), responses from seventy women concerning their likes and dislikes for dresses, shoes, sportswear and accessories will also be included.¹

Statistical Techniques

The chi square test was used to aid in discovering degrees of association between the various factors relating to attitude and interest in clothing. Age, income, urban-rural residence and participation in

¹This particular study was conducted in May of 1959, in Lansing, Michigan.

organizations were the main factors considered in this study.

The formula for the chi square test is as follows:¹

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(F_o - F_e)^2}{F_e}$$

Chi square equals the sum of squares of the differences between the observed frequencies divided by the expected frequencies. This answer read from a table² corresponding to the number of degrees of freedom, n, equals its probability of exceeding the given value of chi square, or the probability of the number of times in a hundred that the distribution tested would be due to chance. The number of degrees of freedom is found by multiplying the (columns - 1) by the (rows - 1) or the cell frequencies given subject to the restrictions set by the marginal totals.

¹Margaret J. Hagood and Daniel O. Price, Statistics for Sociologists, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1947), p. 400.

²Ibid., p. 904.

CHAPTER III

URBAN AND RURAL GROUP COMPARISON

A comparison of the sum total of the responses made by the urban and rural women in this study to each question disclosed the following general similarities and variances between the two groups.

Both groups revealed a similar interest in style changes. Approximately twenty-five per cent of each group were very interested, one-third were somewhat interested, and about one-third were seldom interested. Fifty per cent of the rural women often looked at fashion magazines which was twice as many as the urban women who often did. A majority of both liked to attend fashion shows.

A greater percentage of both groups liked to spend time shopping for clothes to some extent than those who never liked to shop for clothes. The largest proportion of these women liked to spend time buying clothes. Fifty per cent of the rural women often window shopped. Nearly half of the urban women did. About the same per cent of both groups seldom or never window shopped. When asked if they ever bought an article of clothing to "cheer them up," over fifty per cent of all the women replied they often or sometimes did.¹ More urban women replied that they often

¹It is interesting to note that in another survey conducted by the writer when the same question was asked of seventy women sixty years of age and over, the proportion of the sample answering "yes" was the same.

bought clothing to "cheer them up" than did rural women. A larger per cent of rural women never bought clothing for this reason. "Sometimes" was checked by more of each group than seldom or never.

For most of the women the design and fit of a dress was the most important factor in deciding what dress to buy. It was the decisive factor for fifty per cent of the rural women and for almost half of the urban women. Price and how easy it would be to care for the dress were similar in importance to less than one-fourth of each group. Over half of all these women often or sometimes found it easy to find a dress in their size as opposed to those who seldom or never were able to find their size in a dress. The greatest percentage of all the women wished stores carried a wider style selection from which they could choose a dress.

The majority of women in both groups wished they had more money to spend on clothes. The ratio between the women in the rural group who did and those who did not was larger than in the urban group; three times as many rural women wished they had more money to spend on clothes than those who did not. In the urban group this ratio was less than two.

Fourteen per cent more of the rural women in this sample sewed than the urban women. More women in both groups had difficulty in finding a pattern which would fit than those who did not have this trouble. Rural women were equally divided as to whether pattern companies offer enough choices in selection of style. Twice as many urban women felt pattern companies did not provide enough styles from which to choose than those who thought they did.

In their interpersonal relationships, the following importance was placed on the type of clothing worn. The largest majority of both groups wanted to know what other people thought about their clothes. In the rural group only eight per cent were seldom interested and none were never interested. In the urban group only six per cent were seldom interested and only seven per cent never cared to know other peoples' reactions towards their clothing.

Approximately one-third of each group felt that other people often paid attention to the kind of clothes they wore. Nearly fifty per cent felt they sometimes did. In both groups less than eighteen per cent were of the opinion that other people seldom or never noticed their clothing. In answering how often they themselves thought about the clothing they wore, the same per cent of rural women often thought about the clothes they wore as those who felt others often paid attention to their dress (thirty-seven and a half per cent). In the urban group, thirty-two per cent also frequently thought about the clothes they wore.

When asked, "Do you think women who dress well are better liked than those who do not dress as well?" a greater percentage of rural women answered "no" than did the urban women. Nearly three-fourths of the rural women replied "no." In the urban group, the difference was less than double. Slightly over twenty-five per cent thought well-dressed women are better liked; over fifty per cent believed this was not true.

Seventy to seventy-five per cent of both groups seldom or never refused invitations to go out because they felt they did not have appropriate clothes to wear. Five per cent or less replied this was often

the case. Less than one-fourth of each group sometimes refused invitations because of inappropriate clothing. However, seventy-five per cent of the rural women said that the clothes they wore to a social gathering often or sometimes had an effect on whether they felt at ease or not. Sixty-four per cent of the urban women answered the same. Less than ten per cent of each group said clothes never had an effect on their feeling at ease at a social function.

CHAPTER IV

SIGNIFICANT BACKGROUND FACTORS

The chi square test was used to find factors which could be considered influential in the answers given. The probability of any distribution being due to chance in those considered significant was at the .05 level or less; relationships at the .10 level were also described as tending toward significance.

There was a significant relationship between place of residence and frequency of looking at fashion magazines. Rural women looked at fashion magazines more often than the urban women did. (TABLE I). Only nine out of eighty rural women seldom looked at fashion magazines and only one out of eighty never looked at them. Out of ninety-seven urban women, twenty-five often looked at fashion magazines and twenty-one women seldom or never looked at them. There was also a significant association between place of residence and sewing. Within the rural group three times as many women sewed as those who did not. Slightly more than half of the urban women sewed. (See TABLE II.)

The number of organizations a woman belonged to was significantly related to whether or not the clothes worn to a social gathering affected her feeling at ease and whether invitations were ever refused because of

TABLE I

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF LOOKING AT
FASHION MAGAZINES BY RURAL-URBAN RESIDENCE

Do you look at fashion <u>magazines?</u>	<u>Rural</u> N	<u>Urban</u> N	<u>Total</u> N
Often	43	25	68
Sometimes	26	51	77
Seldom	7	15	22
Never	<u>1</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>
Total	77	97	174

$$\chi^2 = 17.24$$

$$p < .001$$

$$d.f. = 3$$

TABLE II

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF SEWING
HABITS BY RURAL-URBAN RESIDENCE

<u>Sewing Habits</u>	<u>Urban</u> N	<u>Rural</u> N	<u>Total</u> N
Sews	43	58	101
Does not sew	<u>37</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>56</u>
	80	77	157

$$\chi^2 = 8.02$$

$$p < .01$$

$$d.f. = 1$$

the lack of the right clothes to wear. The majority of women in the low organizational category responded that the clothes they wore often or sometimes had an effect on their feeling at ease at a social gathering. Out of ninety-eight women in the high organizational category, fifty-two responded that the clothes they wore to a social gathering affected their feeling of ease, whereas fewer women responded that this was seldom or never true. (See TABLE III.) This finding is significant at the .01 level.

More women in the high organizational category responded that they never refused invitations to go out because they felt they did not have the right clothes to wear than those who often, sometimes or seldom refused for this reason. More women in the low organizational group refused invitations often, sometimes and seldom than those who never refused invitations because of the lack of appropriate clothes for the occasion. TABLE IV shows this relationship to be significant at the .01 level. These results seem to reveal that women belonging to more organizations have more clothes to meet their social needs.

Income was a significant factor in relation to whether or not more money was desired for clothes; income as a factor tended toward significance when related to whether it was difficult to find a pattern which fit and whether an article of clothing was ever purchased as a means to "cheer up." In the high income group, slightly over half of the women wished they had more money to spend on clothes; in the middle and low income groups over three times as many women wished they had more money for clothes than those who did not. (See TABLE V.)

TABLE III

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF EFFECT OF CLOTHES
ON EASE BY ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERSHIP

Clothes you wear affect your ease at a social gathering?	High	Low	Total
	Organizational Group	Organizational Group	
	N	N	N
Often	22	23	45
Sometimes	30	28	58
Seldom	16	11	27
Never	<u>30</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>34</u>
Total	98	66	164

$$\chi^2 = 15.86$$

$$p < .01$$

$$d.f. = 3$$

TABLE IV

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF REFUSING INVITATIONS FOR
LACK OF APPROPRIATE CLOTHING BY ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERSHIP

Ever refuse invitations because <u>of lack of right clothes?</u>	High Organizational <u>Group</u>	Low Organizational <u>Group</u>	<u>Total</u>
	N	N	N
Often	1	7	8
Sometimes	19	11	30
Seldom	24	21	45
Never	<u>54</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>77</u>
Total	98	62	160

$$\chi^2 = 11.79$$

$$p < .01$$

$$d.f. = 3$$

TABLE V

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF DESIRE FOR
MORE MONEY FOR CLOTHES BY INCOME

	High Income <u>Group</u>	Middle Income <u>Group</u>	Low Income <u>Group</u>	<u>Total</u>
Desire more money for clothes?	N	N	N	N
Yes	22	32	35	89
No	<u>19</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>38</u>
Total	41	41	45	127

$$\chi^2 = 7.73$$

$$p < .05$$

$$d.f. = 2$$

More women in the low income group had difficulty in finding a pattern which fit than those in the middle and high income group.

(TABLE VI) W. H. Whyte, Jr., in his book, "The Organization Man," also observed that the wives in the higher income groups were slimmer than the wives of the men holding positions paying a lower salary.¹ Of course, largeness in physical size is not the sole reason why it is difficult to buy a pattern to fit. Figure irregularities and posture also often require that patterns be altered before use. However, increase in size due to added weight was found to be one of the major figure changes of the maturing woman in the study done at the University of Georgia on the changes of appearance in women from 45-65 years of age.² It is possible that the women in the low income category in this sample weighed more and had figure irregularities resulting from work and nutritional habits which would differ from the work performed and eating habits of women living on a higher income.

¹"These differences in average income may seem small, but they are translated into palpable differences in what has come to be called "life style." Even the degree of wives' slenderness: as incomes rise, waistlines go down. In their Levittown survey, Allied Stores found that in the area settled long enough for income to have risen to between \$5,000 and \$7,000, 59 per cent of the women wore the small "misses" sizes; by contrast, in the newer, \$3,000 to \$4,000 area, the sizes were larger--only 42 per cent wore the small sizes and 7 per cent wore the large 38-44 sizes (versus only 3 per cent of the wives of the \$5,000 to \$7,000 area)."

William H. Whyte, Jr., The Organization Man (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1956), p. 350.

²See page 6 in the REVIEW OF LITERATURE

TABLE VI

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF
FINDING A PATTERN TO FIT BY INCOME

	<u>High Income Group</u>	<u>Middle Income Group</u>	<u>Low Income Group</u>	<u>Total</u>
Have trouble finding a pattern to fit?	N	N	N	N
Often	7	2	11	20
Sometimes, Seldom, Never	<u>22</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>67</u>
Total	29	23	35	87

$$\chi^2 = 4.11$$

$$p < .10$$

$$d.f. = 2$$

TABLE VII shows that buying something new often had a cheering psychological effect on more women in the low income bracket than those in the high income group. Although this finding only tended toward significance, it is considered to be worth noting.

It should also be mentioned here that there was an association between income groups and organizational groups in this study. Women in the higher income category often were in the higher organizational category. The largest number of women in the low income group were in the low organizational category. Perhaps being more active socially would cause these women in the high income group to be more conscious of their appearance, which could result in better posture, dieting and the use of proper foundation garments. As pointed out above, these along with other factors could influence the fit of a paper pattern.

Age was found to be an influential factor in whether or not the women liked to attend fashion shows. In the older group, those women seventy-five years and over, approximately half liked to attend fashion shows. In the younger group, women sixty to seventy-four years of age, more than twice as many liked to attend fashion shows. This difference with $p < .10$ has been considered one that tends towards significance. This finding then suggests the fact that interest in fashion shows declines with age. (See TABLE VIII.)

TABLE VII

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF BUYING
CLOTHING TO "CHEER YOU UP" BY INCOME

Frequency of buying <u>clothing to "cheer you up"</u>	High Income <u>Group</u>	Middle Income <u>Group</u>	Low Income <u>Group</u>	<u>Total</u>
	N	N	N	N
Often	3	4	11	18
Sometimes	25	17	16	58
Seldom	6	8	11	25
Never	<u>7</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>29</u>
Total	41	42	47	130

$$\chi^2 = 11.67$$

$$p < .10$$

$$d.f. = 6$$

TABLE VIII

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF "DO YOU LIKE
TO ATTEND FASHION SHOWS?" BY AGE

	<u>Older Group</u>	<u>Younger Group</u>	<u>Total</u>
Do you like to attend fashion shows?	N	N	N
Yes	21	80	101
No	<u>18</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>54</u>
Total	39	116	155

$$\chi^2 = 2.9$$

$$p < .10$$

$$d.f. = 1$$

CHAPTER V

INTEREST IN CLOTHING

The degree of clothing interest for each woman in this study was obtained by arbitrarily weighting questions number one to thirteen inclusive and questions number sixteen, eighteen and nineteen. The following is the listing of the numerical weights given to the responses to these questions--often or very much 4, sometimes or somewhat 3, seldom or very little 2, never or not at all 1, yes 2, no 0. Questions number 3, 12, 16, 18, and 19 required a "yes or no" answer; thus, the highest number of points for these questions was two. For questions number 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11 and 13, the highest number of points which could be received was four. If a respondent answered all of the questions, the lowest score which she could receive would be ten. The highest score would be equal to fifty points.

For the purpose of analysis of these scores, a score of thirty-nine or above was placed in the high interest category, twenty-eight to thirty-eight in the medium, and ten to twenty-seven in the low category. The total number of scores falling into each of these three categories were forty-two high, one hundred medium and thirty-eight low.

The scores ranged from twelve to forty-eight. Figure I shows the distribution of scores for the total group. Figure II shows urban and rural distributions.

The arithmetic mean of the total one hundred and eighty scores was selected as the average score. This was calculated by dividing the sum of all the scores by the total number of scores. The arithmetic mean was found to be 33.3. Ninety-four of the women had a score of thirty-four or better. The median score was 34.5.

The arithmetic mean of interest scores was determined for the following groups: high, medium and low income; rural and urban; younger and older; high and low organizational. (See TABLE IX.)

The average (arithmetic means) of the three income groups varied slightly. The difference between the high income group with the highest average and the middle income group with the lowest average was less than two. The average interest score for the women in the low income group differed only by .4 from the mean of the high income group.

The rural women's average interest score (arithmetic mean) was 34.6. This was 2.4 higher than the urban group. The range for the urban group was thirty-six points, whereas for the rural group it was twenty-four points. The highest and lowest scores belonged to urban women. The highest rural score was forty-four and the highest urban score was forty-eight.

The arithmetic interest mean for the younger group of women was 3.7 higher than the average interest score for the older group. The range of the scores for the older group was thirty-four, which was wider than

FIGURE I

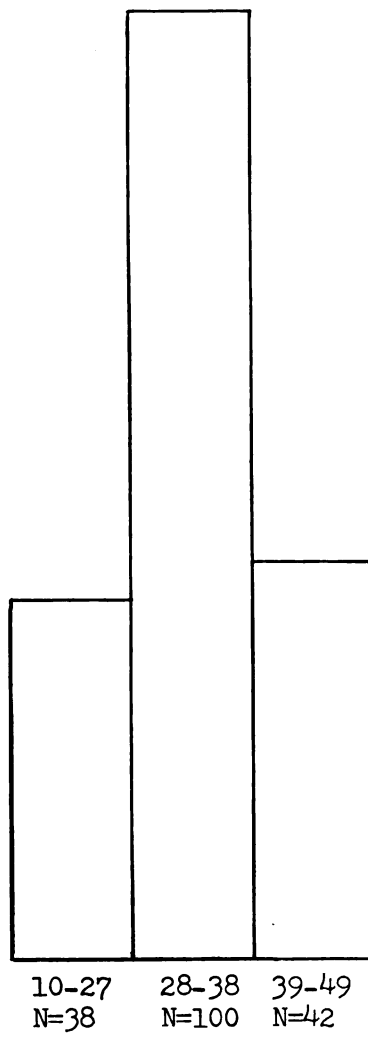
FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF 180 INTEREST IN CLOTHING SCORES

FIGURE II

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF INTEREST IN CLOTHING
SCORES FOR URBAN AND RURAL WOMEN

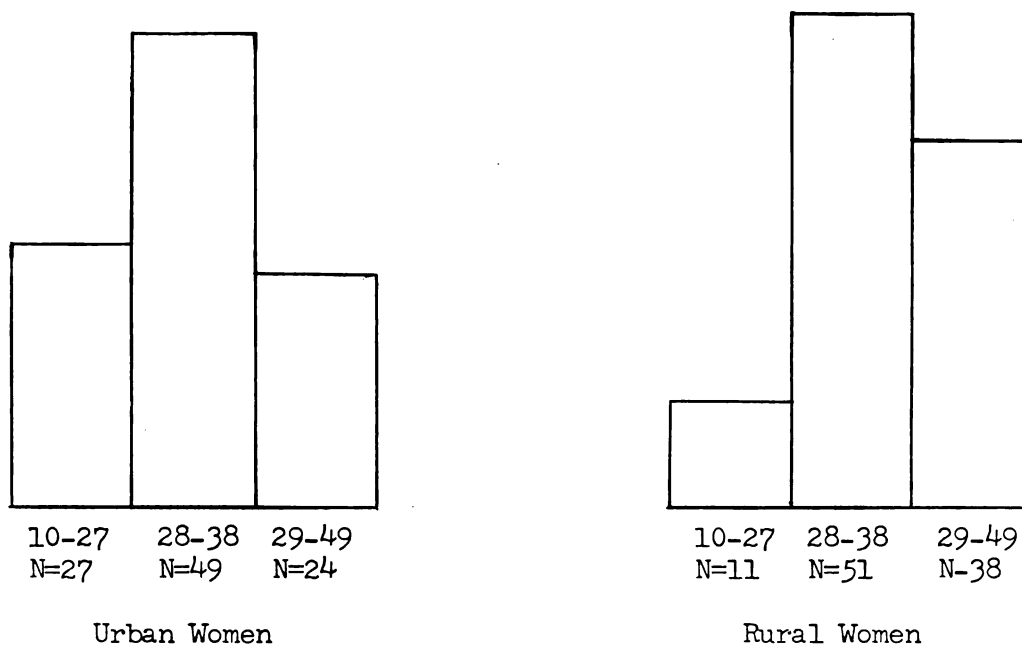


TABLE IX

AVERAGE SCORES AND RANGE OF
SCORES FOR SELECTED GROUPS IN
RELATION TO INTEREST IN CLOTHING

<u>Group</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Arithmetic Mean</u>	<u>Range of Scores</u>
High Income	42	34.9	22-48
Medium Income	41	33.6	23-43
Low Income	49	34.5	14-44
Younger Women	120	35.1	23-44
Older Women	42	31.4	14-48
Rural Women	80	34.6	20-44
Urban Women	100	32.2	12-48
High Organizational Membership	100	34.2	14-44
Low Organizational Membership	68	33.5	14-48

that of the younger group. A woman whose age was in the 74-79 age bracket received the highest score in the sample. It was two points less than the maximum points possible for the interest scale devised for this study. The younger women's score range was not as broad as the older group. The lowest score was twenty-three and the highest was forty-four.

There was a difference of only .7 between the interest score means of women in the high and low organizational categories. The average interest score for women belonging to three or more organizations was 34.2 and for women attending only one or two organizations it was 33.5. The score ranges of the two groups varied only by four points. Both had a low of fourteen points. The highest score was forty-eight, which belonged to a woman in the low organizational category.

The chi square test revealed that age and residential area were statistically significant factors influencing interest in clothing. Age was significant at the .001 level; place of residence was significant at the .05 level.

The largest per cent of older women¹ were in the medium interest score category. This was also true for the younger women; however, a higher per cent of the younger women had a higher interest score than the older women. There was a higher per cent of older women in the low category than younger women. These results seem to indicate that interest

¹Women seventy-five and older were placed in the "older women" class. Younger women were sixty to seventy-four years of age.

in clothing declines with increase in age.¹ TABLE X shows age in relation to interest in clothing. In the urban group, forty-nine per cent of the women's scores were in the medium category; sixty-four per cent of the rural women's scores were in the medium category. The rest of the urban women's scores were nearly equally divided between the high and the low categories. A higher per cent of the rural women were in the high interest category than in the low; twenty-four per cent had a high interest score and twelve per cent had a low interest score. The fact that eighty-eight per cent of the rural women were in the medium and high interest categories as compared to seventy-three per cent of the urban women seems to imply that rural women sixty years of age and over are more interested in clothing than urban women in the same age bracket. (See TABLE XI.) This is contrary to Ryan's findings in her study on urban and rural high school girls' and boys' attitudes towards clothes.² She found that urban girls were more interested in clothes than rural girls. Rosencranz also found in her study on women's interests in clothing that an urban or rural background was significantly related to clothing interest.³ However, the women in her study with the highest interest scores were from an urban background.

¹This agrees with findings by Rosencranz that younger women were more interested in clothing. See Mary L. Rosencranz, "A Study of Interest in Clothing Among Selected Groups of Married and Unmarried Young Women," (unpublished Master's thesis, Michigan State University, 1948), p. 35.

²Mary S. Ryan, Psychological Effects of Clothing, Part II, "Comparison of College Students with Urban Students, and Boys with Girls," (Cornell University Agricultural Station Bulletin 898, July, 1953).

³Mary L. Rosencranz, op. cit., p. 36.

TABLE X

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF INTEREST
IN CLOTHING BY AGE

<u>Groups</u>	<u>High</u> N	<u>Middle</u> N	<u>Low</u> N	<u>Total</u> N
Older	6	21	14	41
Younger	<u>33</u>	<u>73</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>118</u>
Total	39	94	26	159

$$\chi^2 = 13.52$$

$$p < .001$$

$$d.f. = 2$$

TABLE XI

FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF INTEREST
IN CLOTHING BY RURAL-URBAN RESIDENCE

<u>Groups</u>	<u>High</u> N	<u>Medium</u> N	<u>Low</u> N	<u>Total</u> N
Rural	18	51	11	80
Urban	<u>24</u>	<u>49</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>100</u>
Total	42	100	38	180

$$\chi^2 = 5.69$$

$$p < .05$$

$$d.f. = 2$$

Specific Dimension of Preference

The following information regarding clothing preferences of women sixty years of age and over was gained from a questionnaire administered to seventy women of this age level in the Spring of 1959.

Generalizing from the results of this survey, it was found:

Women in this age bracket preferred a slip-on shoe with a medium height cuban heel and a rounded toe. Open cut shoes and sandals were also worn at times. They liked colored dress shoes as much as brown, white and black shoes.

For dress they preferred medium weight stockings, though many also liked sheer hose. The lighter shades with seams were the most popular. A few women wore colored hose; the majority did not.

A one-piece dress with a belt and matching jacket or sweater was their favorite costume. They liked a fitted bodice with a V neckline, three-quarter length sleeves and a gored skirt. The most popular length was calf length. About half liked an opening which buttoned down the front and half a side zipper. In the summertime many liked dresses of sheer fabrics, although most preferred opaque materials. Fabrics of subdued colors, basic colors and prints of small design were preferred more than brighter colors and larger print designs.

Fifty per cent of the women wore skirts and blouses. The majority did not wear skirts and sweaters. Most of the women did not wear slacks, pedal pushers and Bermuda shorts. If any of these three were chosen,

slacks were preferred to pedal pushers. On the other hand, pedal pushers were selected in place of bermuda shorts.

Their preferred accessories included hats, purses, gloves, scarves and jewelry. Hats were worn by the majority. A medium size handbag with a small handle was usually chosen. Wrist length gloves were preferred to longer lengths. Colored gloves were worn to harmonize with their costume as well as gloves of neutral shades. Scarves were liked better than artificial flowers. Earrings, pins and necklaces were their favorite jewelry.

One-third of the women felt that their wardrobe was inadequate.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

A questionnaire was designed and administered to one hundred and eighty women sixty years of age and over, in an attempt to learn the opinions of women in this age group concerning factors which influence the personal and social function of clothing. Groups of women living in Lansing, Michigan, and rural or small town areas of Eaton and Clinton Counties in Michigan answered the questionnaire. A specific comparison was made of the rural and urban group responses, a scale was created to measure interest in clothing, and the chi square test was used to determine significant factors influencing clothing attitude and behavior.

A general overview of the data revealed the sequent picture of this age group in relation to their clothing:

The majority of women in this age level frequently looked at fashion magazines. They were interested in style changes and liked to attend fashion shows.

Most of them window shopped and did not mind the time they spent shopping for clothes. Buying articles of clothing often had the psychological effect of making them feel happier. When deciding which dress to purchase, the design and fit of a dress was more important to them than the price or how easy it would be to care for the dress.

Most of them could easily find a dress in their size, but they wished stores would carry a wider selection from which to choose a dress.

Many of the women who sewed had trouble finding a pattern which fit and wished pattern companies, too, would give them more choices of design.

The majority of women would like to have more money to spend on clothes. They felt that people paid attention to the kind of clothes they wore and they liked to know what others thought about their clothes. However, they did not necessarily feel that women who dress well are better liked than those who do not dress as well. At a social gathering the clothes they wore had an effect on whether they felt at ease or not. At times invitations were refused if they did not have the right clothes to wear for the occasion.

The chi square test showed that place of residence, age, income and social participation were related to interest and selection of clothing for women sixty years of age and over.

It was found that the rural women in this sample had a stronger interest in clothing than those from urban areas. They also sewed and read fashion magazines more often than the urban women.

There was a tendency for the desire to go to fashion shows to decrease after seventy-five years of age. Interest in clothing also seemed to decline with age. More women sixty to seventy-four years of age had a stronger interest in clothes than did women seventy-five years of age and over.

There appeared to be a relationship between income and being able to buy a pattern which fit. More women in the low income category had

difficulty in purchasing a pattern which fit than those in the high and middle income groups. Income was also related to the desire for more money to spend on clothes and to receiving a psychological "lift" from buying something new. Although more women in each income category wished they had more money to spend on clothes, this desire tended to increase with a decrease in income. The purchasing of articles of clothing as a means to "cheer up" appeared to be stronger in the higher income group.

There were relationships between the amount of social participation and the lack of appropriate clothing to wear to a social gathering and whether or not the clothing worn had an effect on feeling at ease at a social function. Women who belonged to less than three organizations seemed to refuse more invitations for lack of appropriate clothing than those women who attended three or more organizations. Women who attended fewer organizations more often stated that their clothing affected their feeling at ease at a social gathering than those who participated socially to a greater extent.

Another questionnaire ascertained some of the following clothing preferences for women over sixty years of age. In general, the women liked medium height heels; medium weight hosiery in light colors; one-piece dresses with jackets; V necklines; three-quarter length sleeves; gored skirts at calf length; and fabrics with small designs in subdued colors. Some wore sport clothes and about half wore skirts and blouses. They usually wore hats and liked a medium sized handbag with a small handle. They also liked colored gloves, scarves and jewelry. However, one-third of the women believed that their wardrobes were inadequate.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions seem valid in view of the findings of this study:

1. Women sixty years old and over have an interest in dress that extends beyond the functional use of clothing.
2. Income, age, place of residence and social participation are factors related to certain aspects of clothing behavior for older women.
3. There appear to be some differences between urban and rural women's interests in clothing; in this particular group of older women, rural women had higher interest scores.
4. The willingness and the low percentage of "no responses" indicate women in this age group have both the interest and ability to participate in this type of clothing research.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

There have been so few studies concerning clothing in relation to women in the upper age brackets that any information which can be obtained to help them increase the satisfaction they receive from their clothing would be of value. The results of this study seem to indicate that research on the following suggestions would be helpful.

1. Studies should be done in other geographical areas of the country in order to obtain a more complete picture of the clothing needs and desires of older women.

2. An examination of problems related to the purchasing of clothes could be made. Women in this study expressed the desire for a wider selection of dresses from which to choose a garment. One could probably determine whether or not older women feel the present selections are usually restrictive as to design, fabric, size, color or price.

3. Other studies might be designed to ascertain what help is desired in the planning and maintaining of their wardrobes. It is essential that the social consciousness of older people does not deteriorate. Since clothing affects their feelings of ease in a social gathering, it is important that older women have clothing which contribute to their effective social participation.

4. Since this study was of a general exploratory type, other studies are needed that are narrower in scope with more attention given to the complex of background factors related to the sample. There is need to know more about the relationship of background factors to each other.

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APPENDIX

WOMEN'S CLOTHING

This questionnaire has been made in an attempt to find out how you feel about clothing and what your clothing problems are. The information gained will be used for a course of study at Michigan State University.

Directions:

1. Do not write your name on the questionnaire.
2. Please check only one answer for each question. Choose the best answer for you. There are no right or wrong answers.
3. When you are through checking your answers, fold the questionnaire and seal it in the envelope which has been given you.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Maloa Ebeling

1. Do you look at fashion magazines?
often____, sometimes____, seldom____, never____
2. Do you ever want to know what other people think of your clothes?
often____, sometimes____, seldom____, never____
3. Do you like to attend fashion shows? yes____, no____
4. Do you think people pay any attention to the kind of clothes you wear?
often____, sometimes____, seldom____, never____
5. How much do you like to spend time shopping for clothes or material?
very much____, somewhat____, very little____, not at all____
6. How often do you think about the clothes you wear?
often____, when dressing____, when buying clothes____, special occasions____.
7. Do you ever buy an article of clothing to cheer you up?
often____, sometimes____, seldom____, never____
8. Do you window shop in clothing store windows?
often____, sometimes____, seldom____, never____
9. How interested are you in style changes?
very much____, somewhat____, very little____, not at all____
10. How many clubs or organizations do you attend?
none____, 1____, 2____, 3____, 4____, more____

11. Do you ever refuse invitations to go out because you feel you do not have the right clothes to wear?
often____, sometimes____, seldom____, never____
12. Do you think women who dress well are often better liked than those who do not dress as well?
yes____, no____
13. Do the clothes you wear to a social gathering have an effect on whether you feel at ease or not?
often____, sometimes____, seldom____, never____
14. After the following three reasons given for buying a dress, mark 1 for the most important, 2 for the second most important, and 3 for the least important.
how easy it will be to care for____, the price____, the design and fit____
15. If you sew for yourself, do you have trouble finding a pattern which will fit?
often____, sometimes____, seldom____, never____, do not sew____
16. Do you think pattern companies give you enough choices from which to choose a dress pattern?
yes____, no____
17. When you go shopping is it easy for you to find a dress you like in your size?
often____, sometimes____, seldom____, never____
18. Do you wish stores carried a wider style selection from which you could choose a dress?
yes____, no____
19. Do you wish you had more money to spend on clothes? yes____, no____
20. In which of these age groupings do you belong?
60-64____, 65-69____, 70-74____, 75-79____, 80-84____, 85 and over____
21. In which of these brackets would you say your yearly income falls?
less than \$999____ \$2000 to \$2999____ \$4000 to \$4999____
\$1000 to \$1999____ \$3000 to \$3999____ \$5000 and over____

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