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**/A STUDY IN CLOTHING THE CHILDREN OF THE
ECONOMICALLY DEPRIVED/**

By

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A PROBLEM

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.	11
LIST OF TABLES	v
 Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem	
Definition of Terms	
Review of Literature	
Focus of the Study	
II. METHODOLOGY.	10
Selection of the Method	
Development of the Instrument	
The Pretest	
Selection and Description of the Sample	
The Community Setting	
Administration of the Instrument	
Method of Analysis	
III. AN APPRAISAL OF THE CLOTHING OF THE CHILDREN OF THE ECONOMICALLY DEPRIVED AS OBSERVED BY SOCIAL SERVICE PERSONNEL. .	26
Noticeability of Children by Clothing	
Characteristics	
Adequacy	
Practices Related to Clothing	
Needs Related to Clothing	
Pattern of Responses by Social Service	
Personnel	
IV. DESCRIPTION OF THEIR CHILDREN'S CLOTHING BY MOTHERS	41
Adequacy and Inadequacy	
Selection	
Care	

TABLE OF CONTENTS--Continued

Chapter		Page
	Appearance Factors Affecting the Interpretation of Results	
V.	AN ANALYSIS OF THE CHECKLIST CONCERNING THE APPEARANCE OF THE CHILDREN OF THE MOTHERS IN THE SAMPLE.	56
	Factors Affecting the Interpretation of Results	
VI.	SUMMARY.	60
	Summary Conclusions Recommendations	
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.	67
	APPENDIX A	69
	APPENDIX B	70

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Noticeable characteristics of clothing of the children of the economically deprived perceived by the five social service personnel	28
2. Number of times social service personnel mentioned adequacy and inadequacy of clothing of the economically deprived	30
3. Practices and philosophy of the economically deprived mentioned by five social service personnel as causing the clothing of the children to be noticeable	32
4. Suggestions made by social service personnel for kinds of help related to clothing the children of the economically deprived	37
5. Number of noticeable characteristics mentioned, practices cited, and suggestions by each social service worker	38
6. Adequacy or inadequacy of clothing for children of economically deprived as perceived by mothers	42
7. Sources of clothing for the children of the economically deprived with the number of families who receive clothing from each source.	43
8. Estimate of amount of clothing which comes from each source by the ten mothers	44
9. Method of payment for clothing by the economically deprived	46

LIST OF TABLES--Continued

10.	Features of clothing which the economically deprived mothers look for when shopping.	47
11.	Members of economically deprived families who select the clothing of the children	49
12.	Characteristics observed in the clothing of children at the time of the interview with the economically deprived mothers	57

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The economically deprived have been termed invisible by some, because they tend to live away from the heavily traveled streets, or in the heart of cities where people in suburbia seldom go. Thus, "they are obscured by The National Average."¹ Until recently it was taken for granted in the United States, a country with the world's highest standard of living, that poverty had been all but eliminated.

Just as a worm in an apple is barely visible, many Americans do not notice the poverty which exists in their cities and along their country roads. People who are not economically deprived themselves generally have little awareness of the actual conditions, habits, and feelings of this segment of the population. Yet poverty has not been eliminated and if this condition is to be decreased it is important to first understand how the economically deprived think, feel, and react to their problems.

The clothing needs of children have been chosen as the subject of this investigation. Young children are not strongly guided by peer group pressure, as are adolescents.

¹Ben Bagdikian, In the Midst of Plenty: The Poor in America (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 13.

Clothing, to youngsters, is not so much a symbol of identification with a group or of conformity; rather, it is important to each child as an individual form of self-expression.

"Very early in life a child discovers that his clothes attract attention to himself."² Adults comment about the newness, color, or style of a garment, while children, on the other hand, feel envy toward their peers who have attractive garments. Envy and comments lead the child to realize the powerful effect of clothes and their gratification to the wearer.

Clothing can affect a child's behavior. When he wears dressy clothing, a child tends to exhibit more restrained behavior than when he is in play clothes. Displeasing and ill-fitting clothes can cause misery.³

Today, it is understood that suitable clothes help to make childhood a happy time. They contribute to the child's developing character and increase his self-confidence. Furthermore, suitable clothes may influence a child's mental health by encouraging him to accept responsibility, to co-operate with his adults, and his peers, and to contribute socially. To look fit is to feel fit, which is the first step toward any accomplishment, whether it be on the playground or in the schoolroom.⁴

²Elizabeth Hurlock, Child Development (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1950), p. 509.

³Louise Langford, Guidance of the Young Child (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1960), p. 171.

⁴Mildred Tate and Oris Glisson, Family Clothing (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1961), quoting Fay Moeller and Katherine Tingley, Children and Their Clothing, Storrs: University of Connecticut Extension Service of the College of Agriculture, October, 1950.

The present survey is exploratory and descriptive. It is an attempt to investigate characteristics of clothing of economically deprived children, the practices of their families which contribute to the clothing characteristics, and suggestions of what assistance would be helpful in clothing this segment of the American population.

Definition of Terms

Various terms have been used by the researcher, and they need to be defined in order to show the scope of the author's definition and to clear any ambiguity in terminology.

Economically deprived, as used in this study, refers to that segment of American society which is characterized by minimal economic levels as evidenced by conditions of health, housing, and food. The sample is considered economically deprived because the children of these families are at a lower socio-economic level. See Appendix A. Although most economically deprived are in the lower class, according to Warner,⁵ it should not be assumed that most lower class families are economically deprived.

Children have been defined for the purposes of this study as youngsters who attend elementary school. See Appendix A. Many families in the sample have children four years old who are in pre-kindergarten nursery school. The

⁵William L. Warner and Paul S. Lunt, The Social Life of a Modern Community (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), p. 444-450.

nursery school classes are conducted in the elementary school building; therefore, children in the pre-kindergarten program are included in the study.

Clothing refers to all garments worn by the children which are visible under normal conditions.

Review of Literature

Many books and articles have been written about poverty in America; however, the literature seldom mentions the clothing of the people. Very little research attention has been directed toward the clothing conditions, the clothing problems, or the clothing needs of the economically deprived.

Although publications concerning poverty are voluminous, four books have been considered basics and authoritative and have been very useful in developing an understanding of the situation of the poor.

John K. Galbraith⁶ presents a picture of the whole economic structure of America in his book, The Affluent Society. Until recently the entire history of mankind has known an economy of poverty; disease, war, and limited food supply have restrained the economies of the past. America in the middle twentieth century has largely broken away from the yoke of mass poverty to become a nation of affluence. People are poverty-stricken when their income falls markedly behind that of the community and they cannot have what the larger community regards as the minimum for decency and

⁶ John K. Galbraith, The Affluent Society (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1958).

therefore are judged by the larger community as indecent.⁷
In a culture with such a high standard of living, Galbraith feels poverty should be eliminated or considerably decreased.

Gunnar Myrdal,⁸ an internationally respected Swedish economist, wrote of the American economic situation in his book, Challenge to Affluence. As a citizen of another country, he objectively views the structure of America's economy, the governmental policies that affect the economy, and America's attitudes toward economics. Myrdal, discussing unemployment and poverty together, refers to the "underclass" as the unemployed and gradually unemployable persons and families of the bottom of society.⁹ Unemployment is described as a "damaging way of life, particularly for the young, and above all when their educational and cultural level is low. Crime, prostitution, and all sorts of shady methods of passing time will thrive as they did in the slums during the depression of the thirties: they are beginning to do so already and the trend is increasing."¹⁰ Like Galbraith, he feels that America should eliminate poverty by economic and social methods.

⁷Ibid., p. 251.

⁸Gunnar Myrdal, Challenge to Affluence (New York: Pantheon Books, 1962).

⁹Ibid., p. 40.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 45-46.

Michael Harrington's The Other America¹¹ presents a very detailed picture of poverty in the United States. Harrington describes the invisibility of the poor and discriminates between the various types of poverty. Throughout the entire book there is an effort to present daily existence as the poor experience it. According to Harrington, clothing is one of the factors which makes the poor invisible. "There are tens of thousands of Americans in the big cities who are wearing shoes, perhaps even a stylishly cut suit or dress, and yet are hungry. It is not a matter of planning, though it almost seems as if the affluent society has given out costumes to the poor so that they would not offend the rest of society with the sight of rags."¹² "America has the best-dressed poverty the world has ever known."¹³

In the Midst of Plenty by Ben Bagdikian¹⁴ is a more recent book about the poor in America. Although it is basically much like The Other America, Bagdikian has a more personal presentation. He cites many situations of families who are impoverished. The book vividly portrays the unhappiness and hopelessness of poverty. Bagdikian describes one clothing problem as the "regular economic catastrophe

¹¹Michael Harrington, The Other America (New York: Macmillan Co., 1962).

¹²Ibid., p. 13.

¹³Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁴Bagdikian, op. cit.

of disintegrated shoes."¹⁵ He, too, feels that clothing is a factor which contributes to the invisibility of the poor; clothing no longer develops a faded or dull appearance.¹⁶

Studies have been conducted to determine the quantity of clothing necessary for minimal physical standards and the amount of clothing owned by the lower class. The interest of this survey is with minimal clothing for children and with practices related to clothing in their particular family situations; therefore, the relationship between the present survey and previous studies is limited.

Katherine B. Hall¹⁷ investigated the clothing situation of lower class families. The members of her sample had steady factory employment and did not seem to live below minimal standards. Inventories were stressed, as was satisfaction or dissatisfaction in the clothing of families.

Many other studies have primarily used inventories in researching the lower income families. Recently the U.S. Department of Agriculture published a study titled Rural Family Spending and Consumption,¹⁸ in which expen-

¹⁵Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁷Katherine B. Hall, "A Study of Some of the Factors that Contribute to Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction in the Clothing of 92 Urban, Low-Income Families" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University Park, Pa., Pennsylvania State University Library, 1955).

¹⁸Jean Pennock, Rural Family Spending and Consumption. Washington, D.C., United States Department of Agriculture, 1964.

ditures and consumption patterns were the focus of the investigation. In this study, the researcher's interest is primarily with clothing characteristics and practices, which are not specifically described in studies of this nature.

These two representative studies were reviewed to show that previous studies concerning clothing of the lower class families have been undertaken. In addition, the researcher acknowledges the existence of a large number of studies concerning quantity of clothing and consumption from an economic point of view. None of these relates directly to the present survey.

Focus of the Study

Writers, as previously indicated in the Review of Literature, have tended to say that economically deprived people are largely invisible because their dress is indistinguishable from the clothing of people who are not economically deprived. The statement is made without reference to research and therefore an effort to determine its validity would seem valuable. If clothing is found to be a distinguishable characteristic, then it could be suggested that the impact of this difference be studied as a possible contribution to problems of the economically deprived families.

The assumptions and objectives which guided this survey are as follows:

Assumptions:

1. The responses of the professional sample refer to the same population as represented by the economically deprived sample.
2. The responses given to the questions are essentially honest.
3. Every respondent refers to an inexact but fairly stable clothing standard when questioned.

Objectives:

1. To determine what, if any, clothing characteristics are perceived as noticeable for children of the economically deprived.
2. To determine what practices and conditions are believed responsible for any noticeable characteristics perceived in clothing the children of the economically deprived.
3. To determine if there is any need for assistance and to suggest remedial measures.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

This study is necessarily greatly limited for it is a preliminary exploration of the condition. It is hoped that the investigation will add objective information to stimulate further study of the distinguishability of the clothing of children of the economically deprived.

This chapter will describe: (1) selection of the method, (2) development of the instrument, (3) the pretest, (4) the community setting, (5) selection and description of the sample, (6) administration of the instrument, and (7) method of analysis.

Selection of the Method

Personal interviews were chosen as the technique for collecting data in this study. Since many of the participants in the sample, defined as economically deprived, have only limited literacy,¹ they would have considerable difficulty merely reading a printed question. Problems involved with responding in a written form would be even greater. Because of limited literacy, members of the sample

¹Myrdal, op. cit., p. 51.

would find it almost impossible to spell the words they would desire to use. "Even many college graduates have little facility for writing, and of those who do, few have the patience or motivation to write as fully as they might speak."² For these reasons, it seemed fitting to use oral questions.

A small portion of the selected group has a very limited vocabulary in English and functions with greater fluency in Spanish. An interview is valuable because it is an oral communication and also because it incorporates the possibility of rephrasing and rewording sentences into a group of words which is understood. This also allows for more validity because the interviewer is not always sure that the Spanish-oriented person is answering the intended question. Thus, the nature of the interview allows the responses to be challenged and checked.³

Although the advantages of greater flexibility and the ability to check validity are most important factors for foreign language-oriented samples, their importance should not be overlooked in the samples with limited literacy. These people frequently have a very meager vocabulary and would not understand the terminology in a question if it were not explained to them.

²Claire Sellitz and others, Research Methods in Social Relations (Revised One-Volume Edition; New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p. 241.

³Ibid., p. 242.

Another point to consider is that these people may not have the pencil or pen necessary to answer a mailed questionnaire. It is appropriate to recall that a very inexpensive ball-point pen equals in cost a quart of milk, a loaf of bread, a small package of luncheon meat, or a pound of margarine. Another possible handicap would be having a broken pencil and no convenient method of sharpening it nor the motivation to do so.

Another reason for choosing a direct interview was to establish rapport. Much of the information desired was of a rather personal nature. Travers points out that, "the interviewee may be put at ease" and thus it is possible to "build up a feeling of confidence that makes for both cooperation and truthfulness."⁴ The establishment of good rapport was very important because the researcher did not wish to reveal particular interest in these people as a group. The economically deprived are very sensitive about their situation and resent being thought of and referred to in somewhat negative terms. Stuart noted that "some parents resent inferences that their children are culturally deprived," (another term frequently used in referring to these people.)⁵

⁴Robert M. Travers, An Introduction to Educational Research (Second Edition; New York: Macmillan Company, 1964), p. 232.

⁵Robert Stuart, "A Better Beginning," Lansing State Journal (July 11, 1965), p. E-1.

Selltiz notes that "where there may be strong emotional involvement...an understanding and permissive manner on the part of an interviewer is likely to be more successful than the anonymity of a questionnaire in eliciting frank responses."⁶ The need to establish good rapport was emphasized by the fact that not only was the interviewer the teacher of these children, but also because the researcher represented an educational institution. Frequently people from low-income levels find it difficult to communicate with educators; they frequently have rather negative attitudes towards schools. A recent survey of the community services was conducted by Greenleigh Associates, Inc., which states that school is often a strange and hostile experience to these people.⁷

For this study it was necessary to establish a technique to collect data not only from the economically deprived but also from social service personnel who work directly with this group. The interview technique was particularly appropriate because it afforded needed rapport and greater flexibility for both groups.

Finally, the personal interview was chosen because it is usually possible to obtain a much higher percentage of respondents with an interview than when questionnaires are

⁶Selltiz, op. cit., p. 240.

⁷Walter Rugaber, "Hospitals, Schools, Parks--How the Poor See Them," Detroit Free Press (July 14, 1965), p. A-9.

used.⁸ "Many people are willing and able to co-operate in a study when all they have to do is talk."⁹

Development of the Instrument

For this survey, two interview schedules were developed. The instruments differed in approach and to some degree in content. The social service personnel were asked directly to respond to practices responsible for the characteristics of clothing and the recognized need for assistance.

A checklist to be completed by the writer was devised to give the study one measure of clothing characteristics of the children in the sample and was not dependent upon recall. It would serve as a concrete reference with the general impressions of the mothers and the social service personnel.

Since the social service personnel were professionally trained and experienced, the researcher felt it was not necessary to confine the questions to specific content or to conceal the major interest of the study. The schedule for the social service personnel contained broad questions designed to gain a free and unprompted response. Broad general questions were chosen to enable the respondees to volunteer all remarks and to avoid suggesting a response. Each professional worker was given the title of the study,

⁸Travers, op. cit., p. 232.

⁹Selltiz, op. cit., p. 241.

and the working definition of terms such as: children, economically deprived, and clothing.

In developing the questions to be used for interviewing the mothers, considerable attention was directed to the vocabulary. An attempt was made to use phrases and words which the mothers would understand and respond to readily. Frequently, the economically deprived use less precise and sophisticated patterns of speech than do academically-oriented individuals.

The questions for the interview were designed so that the selected individuals would not realize the researcher was exclusively interested in the economically deprived. To the poor, life is discouraging and without hope. Rugaber refers to their existence as a "dull blur of boredom and despair."¹⁰ Although these people feel most inadequate to cope with problems, they are very sensitive about the situation. Being referred to as "economically deprived" is a rather depressing experience. Due to the current publicity on this topic, the poor are particularly sensitive about it; therefore, any question which might have led the interviewee to suspect that the study was concerned primarily with the economically deprived was reworded or not used.

An interview was thought to be advisable for obtaining responses of the mothers. Authorities feel that econom-

¹⁰Walter Rugaber, "Poverty's Portrait is Dull Blur of Boredom and Despair," Detroit Free Press (July 12, 1965), p. A-2.

ically deprived people generally have difficulty organizing and conceptualizing their thoughts. Davis says that they are unfamiliar with most types of regular or systematic training.¹¹ All questions directed to the mothers were limited to quite specific topics, to help eliminate the need to conceptualize and organize their ideas for a comprehensive answer.

For the social service personnel, open-ended questions, very general in nature, were used. The first question asked if there was anything about the clothing of the economically deprived which would make them noticeable. This question was designed to encourage a free response to the clothing characteristics of the children without suggesting specific factors. The second question covered suggestions for the probable causes of any noticeability mentioned. Question three dealt with suggestions for assistance. An impression of adequacy of clothing was the subject of question four. See Appendix B.

In the questionnaire for the social service workers, adequacy was the only characteristic which this group was specifically questioned about, and it followed their free responses. The writer believed that social workers might not associate adequacy with noticeability, and she did not want to risk losing their responses on this important aspect.

¹¹Allison Davis, speech delivered to a meeting of the American Home Economics Association workshop, "Working with Low-Income Families," (March 15-19, 1965).

For the mothers, the questions dealt with four topics related to clothing, namely adequacy, procedure in selection, fit, care and method of washing. Adequacy and appropriateness were covered in questions related to having enough clothing for different occasions and climatic conditions. The sources of clothing and shopping practices were investigated in questions asking where the clothing is obtained, how it is paid for, whether any is made at home, what features are noticed when buying, and who shops for the clothing. Sensitivity to appearance of fit was dealt with when the mothers were asked if they were satisfied with the fit of the clothing, if the children try on clothing before it is purchased, and if they adjust the clothing to make it fit. Information concerning care was gained from questions involving whether the mothers mend clothing, have problems mending the clothes, or if they know how to mend the clothing. State of cleanliness was covered in questions related to the mother's stated ability to keep enough clean clothes, frequency of washing, washing problems, and method of washing the clothing. See Appendix B.

Since the questions are different in the two interview schedules, direct comparisons between the responses of the social service personnel and the mothers are difficult. It will be possible only to generalize according to what distinguishable characteristics are perceived, and what casual factors are associated and whether any need for assistance is recognized by either group in the sample.

With respect to the checklist of clothing characteristics which was devised by the author, the writer felt that there would be some value in recording an observation of the children's clothing on the day the mothers were interviewed. The checklist contained words which would describe the clothing as adequate or inadequate, clean or dirty, mended and otherwise cared for or in need of attention, and a reasonably good fit or poor fit for the wearer. It is recognized that many children including those not economically deprived do not wear clothing for leisure activities which meets the highest standard of dress. Rather, it was expected that reasonable allowances could be made for informal attire in order to gain one kind of reaction not subject to recall. An attempt was made to objectively determine the state and characteristics of the clothing without reference to past experience with the children.

It was thought that the author's knowledge in the field of clothing would enable her to make this observation in an objective manner.

The Pretest

The pretest for the interview schedule to be used with the social service personnel involved interviewing two teachers who are colleagues of the author. The teachers, who are instructors of the children of the economically deprived mothers in the sample, not only helped the researcher test the interpretation of the questions, but also

volunteered information relative to the approach to use in the interview sessions with the mothers.

Three mothers from the Lansing community were contacted to pretest the interview schedule to be used with the economically deprived mothers. It was found that some of the questions were misleading and thus were not conveying the desired interpretation. Changes were initiated in order to clarify the questions and they were pretested again with two mothers who are students in the Textiles, Clothing and Related Arts Department of Michigan State University. Since the schedule was not pretested on a group of economically deprived mothers, it is recognized that the omission places a limitation on the study because there was no fore knowledge as to whether these questions would elicit the desired type of responses. The modified instrument, however, did appear to communicate the ideas clearly to the mothers used in the second pretest; and because of time limitations the interview schedule was considered acceptable.

Selection and Description of the Sample

The sample was made up of five social service personnel who have direct contact with the children of the economically deprived and of ten mothers of families which were classified as economically deprived.

The social service personnel were chosen carefully because not all people in this type of work deal with children of the economically deprived. Although most social service

personnel work with lower class children,¹² they do not always associate with the children of the economically deprived. Poor children seldom attend camps, join the Y.M.C.A. or Y.W.C.A., Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, or similar organizations.¹³ Parents in the economically deprived classification usually will not give the child money for dues, nor will they help the child find a way to get to the organization. Because the children are unfamiliar with organization in their daily lives, they frequently do not understand or enjoy organized activity. Therefore, the social service personnel who would know these children best would be those who go to the poor neighborhood, and those who offer a program and activities which the children understand and enjoy.

The social service personnel in this sample direct widely varying activities. The only woman in the sample is a Visiting Teacher in the Lansing Public Schools; she is not a classroom teacher, but counsels children on an individual basis. The Visiting Teacher works with children who have difficulty adjusting to the classroom and helps children overcome their problems and adapt their behavior to the classroom situation.

Another professional worker included in the sample is the director of the Lansing Big Brothers Association,

¹² Warner and Lunt, op. cit., p. 444-450.

¹³ Interview with Barrett Lyons, Department of Social Work, Michigan State University, July 2, 1965.

which tries to help boys without fathers by finding them Big Brothers. He trains the men for their role as Big Brother and guides the relationship between them and the boys. Since many unstable homes are also economically deprived, the director has considerable contact with boys from economically deprived homes.

Two social service workers in the sample were Y.M.C.A. personnel. The Youth Program Director was interviewed, although his work deals with activities in the Y.M.C.A. building. Because the Y.M.C.A. provides so many scholarships and attractive activities, it was felt that the director would have at least some contact with these children. Since he represents only limited contact, this professional's opinion probably would most closely resemble the feelings of the general public, which also has limited contact with the economically deprived.

The director of the Gra-Y Program of the Y.M.C.A. was the fourth member of the sample. The Gra-Y is a Y.M.C.A. program of activities in the school for boys of grade-school age. Because the program is conducted in their own neighborhood, it provides popular activities for the children of the economically deprived.

Another member of the sample has recently been appointed as the Human Relations Director of the City of Lansing. Before this position, the director had been on the staff of Lincoln Center for many years. Lincoln Center is a community center for children and adults in a solidly

Negro area. At the Center, as the Director of Men's and Boy's Activities, his job also involved walking along the sidewalks and becoming acquainted with those people he met.

The researcher teaches elementary school in Lansing in an economically deprived neighborhood, and it was decided that mothers of the children of her class would be used in the sample. Since the author had become acquainted with the mothers of these children through Parent-Teacher Conferences and Parent-Teacher Association meetings, some rapport had already been established with them.

Mothers of economically deprived families were selected for the study on the basis of those children who receive free milk daily from the Lansing Board of Education. The necessity for free milk is decided by the teacher and the school secretary and is authorized by the school attendance officer. Since children who do not have adequate food, clothing, or shelter are generally chosen to participate in the free milk program, it was decided that this was a satisfactory measurement technique for this study.

In June, 1965, thirteen children in the researcher's class were receiving free milk. Of the thirteen mothers who thus qualified for the study, only ten were chosen, for the following reasons: one family moved in June and was not available, the mother in the second family worked and was unavailable, and the children in the third family were placed in the father's custody by the Juvenile Court of Ingham County and for this reason, the mother was not interviewed.

The Community Setting

This study was conducted in Lansing, Michigan. Lansing, the capital of Michigan, with a population of 107,807, is rapidly expanding, having increased 17 percent in population in ten years. The percentage of Negroes in Lansing is 6.5, which is relatively low, compared with a 10 percent Negro population for the State of Michigan.¹⁴ Large factories in Lansing include Oldsmobile and Fisher Body Divisions of General Motors, R.E.O. Division of White Motor Co., and Motor Wheel Division of Goodyear Co.¹⁵ These four firms employ the majority of the factory labor force in Lansing.

Most of the economically deprived families in this survey reside in a very small section of the City of Lansing known as "Urbandale." About half of "Urbandale" was removed to put in a superhighway; however, the half that remains has old dirt roads, no sidewalks, and very small, shabby dwellings. Plumbing and utilities frequently do not function satisfactorily. This community has an average annual income of \$4,105 per household and an average of 3.89 people living in each dwelling. One half of the houses in the community are described as deteriorating or dilapidated. This dreary

¹⁴U.S. Bureau of the Census. U.S. Census of Population: 1960. General Population Characteristics, Michigan. Final Report, P.C. (1)-24B U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1961.

¹⁵Lansins State Journal, Facts and Figures on Greater Lansing Trading Areas (Lansing, Michigan: The State Journal, 1964), p. 13.

and discouraging setting is the residence of the mothers in this survey.¹⁶

Administration of the Instrument

In order to have optimum co-operation, the researcher went directly to the homes of the economically deprived families for the interviews. Since few homes of the mothers in the sample have telephones, the researcher could not easily make appointments. It was the feeling of the researcher that the mothers would respond more readily to a rather informal interview.

Each interview took at least thirty minutes. Many mothers desired to talk about Welfare, Aid to Dependent Children, or other financial problems. These discussions extended the length of the interview.

The researcher was introduced by letter to the social service personnel; by telephone, she made an appointment for the interview.

Each social service worker was interviewed where he conducted his daily professional activities. The interviews ranged from one hour to three hours in length. The professional workers offered extensive information relating to the topic and gave personal insight into the problems of this segment of American society.

¹⁶U.S. Bureau of the Census. U.S. Census of Population and Housing: 1960 Census Tracts, Lansing, Michigan. Final Report P.H.C. (1) 73 U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1962.

Method of Analysis

Responses to the interviews were tabulated. Every different idea that was presented by the respondent at an interview was listed. From this initial list, groupings were developed to organize the data into concise categories. Because of the limited nature of the study, a few items which could not be placed in categories were listed individually. It would have been desirable to have had a reaction panel to help determine if the categories were mutually exclusive and meaningfully defined. This, however, was not done due to a time limitation.

CHAPTER III

AN APPRAISAL OF THE CLOTHING OF THE CHILDREN OF THE ECONOMICALLY DEPRIVED AS OBSERVED BY SOCIAL SERVICE PERSONNEL

The responses of the social service personnel have been considered according to the content of the question in the interview. Their perceptions are presented in five sections: (1) noticeability of children by clothing characteristics, (2) adequacy, (3) practices causing noticeability related to clothing, (4) needs related to clothing, and (5) pattern of responses by social service personnel.

Noticeability of Children by Clothing Characteristics*

One of the purposes of this study was to explore the possibility that there are characteristics which make the economically deprived identifiable. Social service personnel who have direct personal contact with the children of the economically deprived provided the information for the investigation.

It has already been noted in the Review of Literature that some current authorities are of the opinion that clothes are not an identifiable characteristic. Bagdikan¹ and

¹Bagdikan, op. cit., p. 9-14.

*In this study identifiable, noticeable, and distinguishable characteristics are synonymous.

Harrington² have pointed out that clothing tends to make the economically deprived group of people invisible. This invisibility was attributed to the quality of dyes used in modern clothing and the casual and carefree styles which are presently predominant.

The researcher explored the notion of invisibility to determine if the social service personnel also held this opinion. Table 1 gives the opinions of the professionals as to whether clothing is a distinguishable factor for these youngsters. When asked, "Is there anything in the way the children of the economically deprived dress which would make them noticeable to others?", all members of the sample felt that there were definite characteristics.

Table 1 shows the characteristics of clothing classified under three categories which the social service personnel said made the children of the economically deprived noticeably different from other youngsters. Nearly two-thirds (19) of all the responses specified characteristics which fell within the category, condition of clothing. There was greatest agreement among the social service personnel concerning unclean clothing, deteriorated shoes, inadequate care, and lack of mending. Unclean clothing was mentioned by all five social service personnel. Shoes which were deteriorated or inadequate for the child's needs (such as gym shoes) were referred to by four of the five professional workers. Two professional

²Harrington, op. cit., p. 9-20.

Table 1.^a Noticeable characteristics of clothing of the children of the economically deprived perceived by the five social service personnel

Characteristics of Clothing	Number of Mentions ^b
Condition of lothing	
Unclean	5
Shoes worn out	4
Generally inadequate care	3
Unmended	2
Wrinkled	1
Urine smell	1
Patches	1
Poor fit	1
Old (appearance of)	1
Total	19
Appropriateness of Clothing	
Inappropriate for snow	2
Inappropriate for rain	1
Inappropriate for occasion	1
Inadequate footwear for inclement weather	1
Unusual color combinations	1
Total	6
Selection of Clothing	
Poor quality	2
Inadequate amount	1
Bought for style	1
Total	4

^aTable 1 refers to responses to question one in the social service personnel's interview. See Appendix B for questions on the interview.

^bNumber of mentions possible equals five.

workers thought unmended clothing was important; three mentioned generally inadequate care.

Appropriateness of clothing was mentioned six times. Four responses described inappropriate clothing for inclement weather; two responses mentioned snow, one referred to rain, and one to footwear for inclement weather.

Characteristics related to the quality of selection were mentioned in only four responses, with little agreement as to what these characteristics were. Two social service workers, however, felt that poor quality in clothing contributes to noticeability.

In summary, all five social service workers perceived characteristics which, to them, make these youngsters noticeable. Characteristics reflecting condition of clothing were mentioned most frequently, especially lack of cleanliness, deteriorated shoes, inadequate care, and unmended clothing. Other characteristics about which agreement was apparent were poor quality and inappropriate clothing for inclement weather.

Adequacy

Adequacy is important in this study only because it is a way of identifying noticeable characteristics. Hoyt and others pointed out that there are not only physiological standards but psychic standards which affect the individual. "The vast majority are forced by public opinion to wear the type, style, and number of garments which others are wearing."³

³Elizabeth Hoyt and others, American Income and Its Uses (New York: Harper and Bros., 1954), p. 35.

For example, in a very hot climate people do not present themselves in public with only the amount of clothes necessary for the weather conditions, but rather they are forced to wear considerably more because of social pressures. The same clothing standards affect the economically deprived but they are not always able to cope with them.

Table 2 reflects the perceptions of the social service personnel concerning adequacy of clothing. Four out of the five social service workers reported that these youngsters were poorly shielded from both rain and cold weather. Boots for rain and snow, raincoats, and heavy coats were mentioned most frequently as inadequate. For example, the social service workers explained that children wear light-weight jackets for all conditions, with a sweater underneath in severely cold weather.

Table 2.^a Number of times social service personnel mentioned adequacy and inadequacy of clothing of the economically deprived

Type of Clothing	Adequate	Inadequate	Limited Provision
	No. of Mentions	No. of Mentions	No. of Mentions ^b
Everyday	2	2	1
Rain	1	4	--
Snow	1	4	--
Special occasions	2	2	1

^aTable 2 refers to responses to question four in the interview.

^bNumber of mentions possible equals five.

The members of the sample were evenly divided in their perceptions of the adequacy of clothing for everyday and for special occasions. Two professional workers stated that most children have at least one set of clothes for special occasions. One social service worker pointed out that families who go to church regularly are apt to have one special set for each child. In other words, three felt there are usually provisions for special-occasion clothing.

In summary, the majority of social service workers perceived inadequacy in the clothing which is worn for inclement weather, while there was little agreement as to the adequacy of the provisions for clothing for special occasions or everyday wear.

Practices Related to Clothing

Another major objective of this survey was to describe some of the practices of the mothers of the economically deprived which might affect the clothing of the children.

In the responses of the social service workers, the cause for noticeability mentioned most frequently was lack of parental concern for the children. See Table 3. Of the five social service personnel, four referred to the parents' neglect of their children. The members of the sample remarked that the "parents think of themselves and their own pleasure;" "the parents want to get but not give," and "they are continuously endeavoring to have a good time." Four perceived poor management and planning as a factor. Economically

Table 3.^a Practices and philosophy of the economically deprived mentioned by five social service personnel as causing the clothing of the children to be noticeable

Practices Mentioned by the Social Service Personnel	Number of Mentions ^b
Parents' Practices toward Children	
Neglect Poor management and planning	4 4
Total	8
Parents' Practices toward Clothes	
Poor general care Rely on others to provide Don't teach care to children Clothes allowed to become too dirty before washing	3 2 1 1
Total	7
Parents' Personal Philosophy and Attitude toward Community	
Personal satisfaction before community expectations Lack of awareness of com- munity expectations Attitude of defeatism Lack of psychic energy	2 1 1 1
Total	5

Table 3--Continued

Practices Mentioned by the Social Service Personnel	Number of Mentions
<hr/>	
Children's Practices toward Clothes	
Lose things easily	1
Don't use appropriate clothes for play	1
Rough behavior in "good" clothes	1
	<hr/>
Total	3
<hr/>	

^aTable 3 refers to responses to question two of the interview.

^bNumber of mentions possible equals five.

deprived parents bring up children in extremely disorganized conditions. Therefore, not only were there more practices cited as causal factors in the category of parents' practices toward family, but there was also the greatest agreement among the social service personnel concerning these practices. Only two causes were mentioned and four of the five social workers identified them.

Parents' practices related to clothes was mentioned seven times, under four different factors describing the causes of noticeability. Poor general care of the children's clothing was referred to by three workers, while two felt that these people too often rely on others to provide clothing for the children. These professionals stated that economically deprived families come to expect some agency to provide clothing for their children.

Parents' personal philosophy and attitude toward community was mentioned five times during the interviews. There seems to be little agreement among the social service personnel concerning this aspect of the practices of the economically deprived.

Two social service personnel pointed out that economically deprived parents put personal satisfaction before community expectations. Two felt that an attitude of defeatism and lack of psychic energy also contribute to the problem. The social service workers stated that frequently parents satisfy personal desires before community expectations and therefore such conditions as clean, neat and well fitted

clothing, which the community expects parents to provide, are simply not important to many economically deprived parents.

Children's practices in relation to clothes was mentioned only three times. There was no agreement within the category. Whether the social service personnel didn't expect the children to be responsible for their clothing or whether they neglected to think of this aspect is not known.

In summary, the social service workers associated neglect and poor management with noticeability by mentioning these factors four out of five instances. Parent's reactions to the community, their family, and their children's clothing are other factors seen as related to the noticeability of these children.

Needs Related to Clothing

To determine what might be most helpful to the economically deprived is a rather difficult endeavor of the study. Practices and conditions are based on recalling something observed or experienced, while needs are conjecture. To understand this more fully, a comparison might be made to an international situation. It is not difficult to decide that the people of India are poor, nor to establish that the problem lies in the nature of their whole civilization. It is much more difficult to establish whether machines should be given to them for agriculture or industry; whether birth control should be taught; or whether education should come

first so the people can understand machines and science. Likewise, to establish or suggest needs for the economically deprived section of the American society is a rather abstract consideration.

The suggestions of the social service personnel for help needed to improve the clothing of the children of the economically deprived is shown in Table 4. The need for additional education was mentioned most frequently, with ten responses referring to this category. Clothing classes were suggested by four social service workers, three mentioned budgeting and two stated that increased education in general would be of great benefit.

Other needs for assistance of a more general nature were mentioned six times. Five members of the sample felt that it was important to teach these people not to rely on Welfare or Aid to Dependent Children but rather to develop a sense of responsibility for their needs. One professional worker felt that in order to receive relief from the government, these people should be required to enroll in a course offered by the contributing agency, or produce something of value to the community.

These needs of the economically deprived which have been observed by the professionals were seen as help needed by the parents rather than as needs of the children. Perhaps this is because the parents are considered to be most responsible for the present clothing conditions of the youngsters, and therefore are believed to need the most help and guidance.

A variety of possibilities for assistance were mentioned. Education of the parents in clothing, budgeting, and general education was referred to most often.

Table 4.^a Suggestions made by social service personnel for kinds of help related to clothing the children of the economically deprived

Suggestions Made by S.S.P.	Number of Responses ^b
Educational	
Budgeting	3
General education	2
Clothing care, construction, and selection	4
Nutrition	1
	<hr/>
Total	10
General	
Responsibility not to rely on Welfare	2
Better jobs	1
Change values	1
Community should expect them to improve	1
More shoes	1
	<hr/>
Total	6

^aResponses refer to question three of the interview.

^bNumber of mentions possible equals five.

Pattern of Responses by Social Service Personnel

Every social service worker perceived the clothing of the children of the economically deprived as noticeably

different from the clothing of children not economically deprived. See Table 5. The number of observed characteristics differs widely, from eight to three. The entire group mentioned practices which cause the noticeability of clothing. Again, the number of causal factors differs widely, from eight to two. The need for assistance in clothing the children was also recognized by every social service worker. The differences in the number of needs cited varied from one to six.

Table 5. Number of noticeable characteristics mentioned, practices cited, and suggestions by each social service worker

Social Service Personnel	Characteristics Cited	Practices Cited	Needs Cited	Total
S.S. Worker I	8	8	2	18
S.S. Worker II	5	5	4	14
S.S. Worker III	6	5	5	16
S.S. Worker IV	7	3	6	16
S.S. Worker V	3	2	1	6

The table reveals considerable variation in numbers of total responses and responses within categories from one social worker to another.

The number of hours in contact with the children may be related to the number of characteristics, problems, and needs perceived. Perhaps those people who have frequent

association with these children notice more factors while those who see them only rarely do not notice as many. Social service worker V had the least amount of contact with these children and he also mentioned the fewest factors.

The number of economically deprived children for whom the social service worker is responsible may also affect the number of factors mentioned. A few economically deprived children among many children who are not deprived may be largely unnoticed or they may simply appear to be somewhat carelessly dressed but not radically different. However, a large group of poor children, all with a rather unkempt appearance, may present a total impression recognized as noticeably different.

Another aspect which may account for the pattern of responses presented in this survey is that three of the five social workers deal exclusively with boys, while a fourth, likewise, dealt exclusively with boys until, about four months ago, and more than three-fourths of the cases of the final social service worker are boys. Thus these professional people are apt to be largely referring to boys and their families in the discussions. The characteristics which would commonly be noticed in boys' clothing may be quite different from the characteristics commonly noticeable in girls' clothing.

Because the group of social workers interviewed for the study were predominantly male, the responses recorded may be largely the characteristics, problems, and needs

noticeably different to men. Certain factors may not seem as important to men as to women.

One possibly valuable observation of the data reveals that the female social service worker was among those mentioning the largest number of noticeable characteristics. Further study might indicate that women are more sensitive to certain aspects of clothing.

Thus, an increase in the validity of the results could be obtained from a sample which was more representative with respect to: sex of respondents, contact hours, and sex of children with whom the professional workers deal.

CHAPTER IV

DESCRIPTION OF THEIR CHILDREN'S CLOTHING BY MOTHERS

This chapter is concerned with a description of the clothing of children of the economically deprived, as stated by their mothers. The findings have been presented in four sections: (1) adequacy and inadequacy, (2) selection, (3) care, and (4) appearance.

Adequacy and Inadequacy

In the interviews, the mothers were asked to evaluate the amount of clothing their children had. The researcher did not attempt to make an inventory of the amount of clothing belonging to the children. The researcher was primarily interested in the mothers' impressions of adequacy.

According to the mothers, inadequacy in the clothing is largely in garments for rainy and cold weather. However, it appears that there is less inadequacy in clothing for everyday and special occasions. Eight mothers said their children did not have suitable clothing for rainy weather, and seven mothers felt that their children were inadequately clothed in cold weather. In contrast, half of the mothers felt their youngsters did have something suitable to wear for special occasions, and six mother stated that their children had enough everyday clothing.

Table 6.^a Adequacy or inadequacy of clothing for children of economically deprived as perceived by mothers

Type of Clothing	Families with Adequate Clothing	Families with Inadequate Clothing
	Number of Families	Number of Families ^b
Everyday	6	4
Rain	2	8
Snow	3	7
Special Occasions	5	5

^aTable 6 refers to responses to question one in the mothers' interview.

^bNumber of mentions possible equals ten.

Selection

The selection and the process of acquiring clothing for the children of the economically deprived was examined as an attempt to begin developing a framework for understanding the noticeability of the clothing. Although an understanding of the selection process for economically deprived children's clothing would not aid in determining the identifiable characteristics of their clothing, it might indicate some associated factors.

Eight of the women indicated they shop at the discount stores. Four families use the discount stores as a source for at least two-thirds of their clothing, three families said they obtained from one-third to two-thirds of the children's clothing from this source, and only one family

indicated they relied on the discount stores for less than one-third of the clothing. From the mothers' estimates, it appears these discount stores are the primary source of clothing. See Table 7 and Table 8.

Table 7.^a Sources of clothing for the children of the economically deprived with the number of families who receive clothing from each source

Mothers Who Shop at Each Source	
Source of Clothing	Number of Mentions ^b
Discount	8
Gifts and "Hand-me-downs"	8
Department stores and Specialty shops	6
Second-Hand sales and Stores	6

^aTable 7 refers to question two of the interview.

^bNumber of mentions possible equals ten.

Gifts and "hand-me-downs" were also mentioned as a source of clothing by eight of the mothers. They reported the following: six families receive less than one-third from others, only two families receive between one-third and two-thirds of their clothing as gifts or hand-me-downs, while no family receives greater than two-thirds of the children's clothing by these means. Only two families reported they do not receive any from this source. For these reasons, gifts and "hand-me-downs, along with depart-

ment stores and specialty shops are the least used sources for the total clothing supply.

Table 8.^a Estimate of amount of clothing which comes from each source by the ten mothers

Estimate of Amount of Clothing From Each Source				
Families	Discount	Department & Specialty	Second-Hand	Gift & Hand- me-downs
#1	less than $\frac{1}{3}$	less than $\frac{1}{3}$	less than $\frac{1}{3}$	$\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$
#2	$\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$	less than $\frac{1}{3}$	-----	$\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$
#3	more than $\frac{2}{3}$	-----	less than $\frac{1}{3}$	less than $\frac{1}{3}$
#4	-----	all	-----	-----
#5	-----	-----	more than $\frac{2}{3}$	less than $\frac{1}{3}$
#6	$\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$	-----	$\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$	less than $\frac{1}{3}$
#7	more than $\frac{2}{3}$	less than $\frac{1}{3}$	-----	less than $\frac{1}{3}$
#8	all	-----	-----	-----
#9	$\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$	less than $\frac{1}{3}$	$\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$	less than $\frac{1}{3}$
#10	more than $\frac{2}{3}$	less than $\frac{1}{3}$	less than $\frac{1}{3}$	less than $\frac{1}{3}$

^aTable 8 refers to question 2 in the interview.

Second-hand sales and stores are patronized by six of the women in the sample. About the same kinds of clothing are purchased at the second-hand sources as at discount houses. Only one family purchases $\frac{2}{3}$ of the youngsters' clothing at second-hand shops or sales. Two families buy

between $1/3$ and $2/3$ of the clothing at these establishments, while three families used the second-hand facilities as a source of less than $1/3$ of the clothing. Four families do not receive any clothing from this source. Used clothing sources appear to account for the second largest amount of all the clothing for the economically deprived youngsters.

The last source, department stores and specialty shops, is patronized by six of the families. Most frequently mentioned was the Sears, Roebuck, and Company store. Welfare coupons for the section of Lansing in which the sample lives are frequently cashed at the local Sears store. Families, other than those on Welfare or A.D.C., purchase shoes, warm coats, or dressy clothing from Sears. Only one mother mentioned patronizing a shoe store; she also buys her children's dressy clothing at the semi-annual sales in a local children's clothing shop. A few mothers stated that they go to department stores other than Sears, but these other stores account for very little of the business of the economically deprived. Five mothers buy less than $1/3$ of their youngsters' clothing at various department stores and specialty shops, one mother buys more than $2/3$, and four do not use this type of business as a source of children's clothing. A small portion of clothing appears to come from this source.

The method of payment for the purchases is shown in Table 9. Most of the mothers use cash to pay for clothing purchases. Some women stated that they could not get charge accounts, while others felt that charge accounts just "louse up everything."

Table 9.^a Method of payment for clothing by the economically deprived

Method of Payment	Number of Mentions ^b
Cash	7
Welfare and A.D.C.	4
Lay-away	3
Charge	3

^aTable 9 refers to question 2 in the interview.

^bNumber of possible mentions equals ten.

Although they are a less important method of payment, charge accounts comprise a method of payment for three of the mothers. Charge accounts are most frequently used for shoes and winter clothing, which are considered large purchases for the economically deprived families.

Lay-away was used by about three of the women. Usually winter clothing is purchased in this way. However, many of the mothers have difficulty in getting to the store with their installments, or remembering to make the payments. Frequently it is necessary to skip a payment, after which the item usually goes back to the store's selling shelves. Some of the mothers commented that when the article is completely paid for it is often too small.

Finally, four of the mothers purchase clothing with funds provided by county relief benefits, or Welfare supplements to A.D.C. provisions. The purchases on government funds are either made in cash or in Welfare order coupons.

When shopping for clothing for their children, the number of clothing features looked for vary. See Table 10. The most frequently mentioned aspect was style.

Table 10.^a Features of clothing which the economically deprived mothers look for when shopping

Features of Clothing	Number of Mentions ^b
Style	6
Workmanship	5
Sturdy material	4
Color	3
Easy care	1

^aTable 10 refers to question 2 in the interview.

^bNumber of mentions possible equals ten.

Workmanship was mentioned by one-half (5) of the mothers. Four of the women were concerned with adequate hems; they looked for some material to let down as a little girl grows.

Four of the women said they looked for durable material and remarked that they were interested in clothing that could take hard, rough wear and considerable soil and yet wash easily. They did not seem interested in easy care items. One social service worker suggested this might be indicative of less concern for this property of clothing or that they have found easy care items are more difficult to get clean if excessively soiled.

Only one mother makes clothing for her children. Clothing made at home is a very limited source of clothing for the children of the economically deprived mothers in the sample.

Eight of the mothers in the sample shop at sales. The newspaper seems to be a useful source of information about the sales; six mothers use this source. Three women buy merchandise on sales which they became aware of by passing the counter. The radio and neighbors are limited sources of information about sales. The women who did not shop at sales indicated they didn't know about them. One woman felt she was not interested in knowing about them because she was on welfare and that agency provided the funds for the children's clothing.

Sources of information mentioned by mothers who stated they shop at sales^a

Sources of Information	Number of Mentions ^b
Newspapers	6
Pass them in the stores	3
Radio	1
Neighbors and friends	1
No source	2

^aRefers to question 2 in the interview.

^bNumber of mentions possible equals ten.

When asked, "Do you ever wish you had more information (knew more) about the clothes?", half of the women

wished they did, while the others felt their knowledge was adequate. The comments made by the women who wanted more information reflected an interest in fabrics, fibers, durability, dyes, finishes, and workmanship.

Considerable variety exists regarding the individuals responsible for the selection of clothing for the children of the economically deprived. In three of the families, the mothers shop alone entirely for the clothing of their elementary school children. Mothers are the exclusive clothing buyer in these families.

Table 11.^a Members of economically deprived families who select the clothing of the children

Members of the Family	Number of Mentions ^b
Mother alone	3
Child selects--mother supervises	2
Sometimes mother selects with child along, other times child selects-- mother supervises	2
Sometimes child selects--mother super- vises, other times child alone	2
Sometimes mother alone and other times mother selects with child along	1

^aTable 11 refers to question 2 in the interview.

^bNumber of mentions possible equals ten.

Women who shop without their children purchase almost any type of clothing, even, on occasion, the purchase of shoes. They often buy clothing, particularly at second-hand sales, while the children are in school. It is often

difficult to get all the children dressed to go shopping and it is hard trying to keep track of them in the store.

In two families the children are allowed to select the clothing; however, the mothers supervise the purchases. In this way the child gets the clothing he likes and the mother is able to purchase family clothing with the features she desires. These two methods account for one-half of the families.

Five families use a combination of purchasing methods. In two families the mother and children always shop together; however, sometimes the mother makes the selection and other times the children are allowed to decide. In one family the mother shops alone part of the time and selects the clothing with the children along at other times.

In these eight families, the mother plays a prominent role in the purchasing of clothing. The mother is present for the selection and frequently controls the purchasing entirely.

Children play an important role in the selection of clothing in two families. Sometimes the children select with the mother present to supervise, while other times the children shop alone. Some purchasing of clothing, it appears, is controlled largely by the mother or at least highly influenced by the mother's opinions.

In summary, the largest amount of clothing of the children of the economically deprived seems to come from discount and second-hand stores. Mothers were chiefly

interested in style and durable material in their selection of purchased clothing. Mothers either supervise or personally buy most of their children's clothing.

Care

Cleanliness was not mentioned as being a problem to the mothers of economically deprived families. The mothers were asked if they were usually able to keep enough clean clothes for the children, and all but one woman answered affirmatively. Most of the mothers wash clothing at least twice a week; three wash every day.

Frequency of routine washing of clothes^a

Frequency of Wash	Number of Mentions ^b
Every day	3
Every other day	2
Twice a week	2
Once a week	2
Every other week	1

^aRefers to question 5 in the interview.

^bNumber of responses possible equals ten.

A variety of methods is used by the women in washing clothing: six women use the wringer type of washer, two mothers have an automatic washing machine, one woman uses the facilities at the local laundromat, and one mother washes the clothing by hand.

Type of washing method ^a	
Method	Number of Mentions ^b
Wringer machine	6
Automatic machine	2
Laundromat	1
Handwashing	1

^aRefers to question 5 in the interview.

^bNumber of responses possible equals ten.

The mothers in economically deprived families seemed satisfied with the cleanliness of the children's clothing. Although most of the women use rather inconvenient methods of washing clothes, seven women felt that they did not have any particular problems in caring for clothing. Three mothers felt they had difficulties, particularly in color-fastness, in bleaching, and with nylon in picking up colors in the laundry.

In summary, cleanliness is not seen as a particular problem to the mothers of economically deprived families. The mothers feel that they keep the children's clothing adequately clean and have few problems doing so.

Appearance

Appearance of clothing is dependent upon selection, care, and fit of the garment. Selection and care have been considered in an earlier section of this chapter. While fit is only one aspect of appearance, fit figured prominently in comments by mothers about clothing for their children.

One of the easiest ways to have clothes that fit is to purchase clothing that fits. In talking to the mothers, it was found that six mothers said they were able to buy clothing that fits the children, while two mothers buy well-fitted clothing sometimes. This may be because much of the clothing was reported to have been purchased from second-hand stores and sales, where little information about size is known, or from discount stores where lower priced clothing is often cut smaller in size.

Clothing for children is not always tried on before it is purchased. Only half of the mothers regularly try clothing on their children prior to purchase, while three said sometimes children try clothing on. In three families the children don't try clothing on because they shop during the school day, or because it is inconvenient to take the children along.

Inconsistency seems to arise upon considering all the responses made by the mothers. When asked, "Do the children wear clothes that fit them?", nine women answered affirmatively and one responded sometimes. Yet in answer to the question, "Do you ever adjust your children's clothing to make it fit them?", only two mothers indicated they did, four stated that they never adjust clothing, and another four sometimes adjust clothing. Of the women who responded "sometimes," three stated they would only adjust a hem. The inconsistency exists between buying clothing that fits, adjusting clothing to make it fit, and the children wearing clothing

that fits. Perhaps the standards for the amount of fit necessary for clothing in everyday experiences is different from the standards of fit used in judging an article of clothing before the purchase is made.

Also related to adjustment of clothing is the degree to which torn clothing is mended. Only two mothers regularly mend their children's clothing, another six sometimes mend the clothing, and two never mend clothing. The women who do not mend clothing say they do not know how to mend.

In short, fit and mending are not things that particularly concern the economically deprived; they are satisfied with the way their children's clothes look, and although they do not feel the garments they buy always fit, rarely will they make any adjustments.

Factors Affecting the Interpretation of Results

The researcher made several observations which should be taken into consideration when reviewing this study. In order to put the mothers more at ease in the interview an attempt was made by the researcher to write as little as possible in the mother's presence and to record additional details of the responses after the interview was completed. Although this method seemed to accomplish its purpose in gaining rapport, there was some loss in the preciseness of the responses of the mothers. Additional practice would be beneficial in gaining accuracy in recording very rapidly but inconspicuously.

Since the researcher is a professional working with children of the economically deprived, she had a fairly accurate conception of the type of responses which would be recorded in the social service personnel's interview. On the other hand, the researcher had a very limited notion of what to expect from the mothers.

Lack of experience in developing questions for mothers of economically deprived children was responsible for what seemed to be the use of less meaningful questions than those employed with the social service personnel. Pre-test sessions with mothers of economically deprived children probably would have revealed some of the weaknesses in this portion of the study.

CHAPTER V

AN ANALYSIS OF THE CHECKLIST CONCERNING THE APPEARANCE OF THE CHILDREN OF THE MOTHERS IN THE SAMPLE

At the conclusion of an interview with a mother, the researcher filled out a check-list concerning the appearance of the clothing the children were wearing at the time of the interview. The interviews were conducted in the summer so the researcher felt that play clothes would be reasonable attire. Fit and cleanliness expected in school clothing was judged to be unnecessary for a reasonable leisure appearance.

In Table 12, the results concerning the clothing characteristics exhibited by the children observed while interviewing the mothers were summarized. In nine of the families the children had on clothing appropriate to the activity in which they were engaged.

Clothing which fit the child in a manner suitable for play was seen in seven of the families interviewed. On the other hand, in three of the families the children wore clothing with a poor fit. This seems to suggest there is little difficulty in the area.

Cleanliness seems to be noticeably neglected; in five of the families, the children had on dirty clothing.

Table 12.^a Characteristics observed in the clothing of children at the time of the interview with the economically deprived mothers

Characteristic	Number of times observed
Appropriate	9
Inappropriate	1
Total	10
Well fit	7
Poorly fit	3
Total	10
Clean	5
Dirty (more than play or activity warranted)	5
Total	10
Old	5
In-between	5
New	-
Total	10
Miscellaneous:	
Messy and sloppy	5 ^b
Neat	3
Attractive	3
Good appearance	2
Mended	2
Torn and unmended	3

^aObservations were made in terms of families rather than individual children.

^bMultiple responses: Each family was checked for all the characteristics which applied.

Messy clothing was a problem in five of the families. The characteristics of dirty and messy are related but were not always characteristic in the same family. Some children had dirty shirts but the shirt was tucked in the pants and buttoned. Others wore clean shirts which were unbuttoned and worn in a very careless manner.

None of the children wore new appearing clothing at the time of the interview. Half of the children were dressed in clothing which appeared old and worn while the rest had clothing which had an "in-between" appearance; in other words, it was partially worn.

Only three of the families were dressed neatly and two of the families presented a good appearance. Although the children in these families did not exhibit every one of the characteristics felt to make poor children noticeable, most children had one or more observable features.

Factors Affecting the Interpretation of Results

The children observed in this study were entirely engaged in leisure and recreational activities. It may be that economically deprived children in situations for which more refined or formal clothing is generally worn may differ in degree of noticeability and also the types of causal factors may differ.

The information gained from the check-list was limited by the words chosen for the list. The choice of these words may have distorted the results. Other meaning-

ful words added to the list probably would increase the value of the instrument.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

This research was developed in order to study the clothing characteristics of the children of the economically deprived, the practices and the conditions giving rise to these characteristics, and to learn what types of assistance would appear helpful.

Clothing of the children of the economically deprived was reported as noticeable to all of the social service personnel. Characteristics related to the condition of clothing were mentioned most frequently as creating this distinguishability; in particular, unclean clothing was described by all of the professionals. Deteriorated shoes were discussed by all but one social worker.

Inadequate clothing, especially clothing for rain and snow, was felt to contribute to the noticeability of the deprived children because the remaining children would be adequately protected.

Each social service worker felt that practices of the economically deprived parents were responsible for the noticeable condition of the children's clothing.

The need for remedial assistance was mentioned by all the social service workers. The need for educa-

tion in clothing care, construction and selection received the largest number of mentions.

The mothers of the economically deprived children expressed noticeability through acknowledgement of inadequacy in clothing for rain and cold weather. About half of the mothers felt that clothing for everyday and special occasions was less than adequate; otherwise one would not infer from the responses of the mothers that their children's clothing was noticeable.

Discount stores seem to be the primary source of the children's clothing. Second-hand sales and stores appeared second in importance as a source of clothing for the economically deprived children. Gifts and hand-me-downs, together with department stores and specialty shops seemed to be the least used sources for the clothing.

Clothing was paid for by four methods. Payment by cash was mentioned by most mothers. Welfare and A.D.C. assistance, lay-a-way, and charge accounts were other methods used.

It appears that mothers use a limited number of features in selecting clothing to be purchased. Only five different features were mentioned by all the mothers. More than half mentioned style and half indicated that they were interested in workmanship; specifically, generous hems to be let out as a girl grows. Less than half of the mothers expressed concern for sturdy material, color fastness, and easy care.

Lack of information necessary to make wise purchases was recognized by half of the women. They were interested in information about fabrics, fibers, durability factors, dyes, finishes, and workmanship.

Three-fourths of the mothers said they shopped at sales. Most of these women received information about the sales from newspapers, others by radio, neighbors and friends, or by passing the sale in the store.

Considerable variety reportedly exists concerning which members of the economically deprived family select the children's clothing. Almost an equal number of families use each of the following shopping patterns for selection: (1) mother shops alone; (2) the child selects while mother supervises; (3) sometimes the mother shops alone, other times the mother selects with children along; (4) sometimes the mother selects with child along, other times the child selects while mother supervises; and finally (5) sometimes the child selects while mother supervises, other times the child shops alone.

Responses indicated more than half of the mothers in the sample used a wringer machine to wash clothing; automatic washers, laundromats, and hand washing are methods which were used less often.

The frequency of routine washing varied from every day to every other week. More than half of the women washed more frequently than once a week.

Most of the mothers felt that they had no particular problem caring for their children's clothing. A few, however, mentioned difficulties with colorfastness, the use of bleach, and the discoloration of nylon.

The last feature of clothing discussed with the mothers was fit and mending. Half of the mothers said they were ordinarily able to purchase clothing for the children to fit. The rest of the mothers said clothing which they purchased for the children did not always fit and that clothing is not always tried on before it is purchased. Only half of the families said children usually try on clothing. In situations where the mother purchased clothing alone, the articles were purchased without being tried on.

Mothers in economically deprived families seem to do very little mending or adjusting of clothing to make it fit and almost no clothing is completely home made. In spite of this, the mothers almost unanimously reported that the clothing worn by their children fits well.

Observations concerning the characteristics of clothing of children were made at the time of the interview with the economically deprived mothers. The clothing was seen to be appropriate, and fairly well fitted. Half of the children wore dirty clothing, half wore clothing which was old-appearing, and half appeared to be more "messy" than play would ordinarily warrant.

Conclusions

The three objectives established to direct and guide the study were:

1. To determine what, if any, clothing characteristics are perceived as noticeable for children of the economically deprived.
2. To determine what practices and conditions are believed responsible for any noticeable characteristics perceived in clothing the children of the economically deprived.
3. To determine if there is any need for assistance and to suggest remedial measures.

To professional people the clothing of the children from economically deprived families is noticeably different. Differences were attributed to the condition of the clothing; for the most part, unclean garments, deteriorated shoes, generally inadequate care and inadequate clothing for rain or cold weather.

The mothers expressed an awareness of the inadequacy of their children's clothing for inclement weather. This was the only characteristic of clothing about which there was agreement between the mothers and the social service workers. Although the mothers were not asked to indicate if their children's clothes would be noticeably different, responses to all other questions seemed to indicate the mothers felt no differences would be present.

The researcher's observations largely confirm the noticeability as seen by the social service personnel. The economically deprived children's clothing appeared somewhat dirty, unkempt, and worn. Also, the clothing was appropriate, which agrees with the small number mentioned regarding inappropriateness by the social service personnel. Just as most of the mentions of the social workers regarded poor condition of the clothing, the researcher recorded largely impressions of clothing in poor condition.

Professional social workers believed the parents were responsible for the poor condition of the children's clothing. Neglect of the children, poor management and planning were suggested as the biggest causal factors.

Little agreement was apparent between the statements of the mothers and the statements of the social service personnel. Although the social service workers felt that the poor condition of clothing is a problem, the mothers felt that the clothing of their children, except for one exception, was not a problem. This might indicate a difference in standards used by the professional personnel and the mothers. Another possible explanation is that the mothers felt sensitive to questions regarding the condition of their children's clothing and therefore gave negative responses.

The remedial measures which were suggested as the most valuable in reducing or eliminating noticeability of the clothing were in the area of education. Classes covering

clothing care, construction, and selection and information about budgeting were mentioned as the greatest needs of these parents. Half of the mothers agreed that they could profit by education and gave specific recommendations in spite of the fact that they had not indicated deficiencies in their children's clothing other than a shortage for inclement weather. Apparently the five mothers felt there was room for improvement. This recognized need for education was to some extent in agreement with the social workers. Noticeable is the fact that these five mothers said they needed help even though earlier in the interview they had indicated that their children's clothing presented no problem.

Finally, this limited study would support the statement that the clothing of the economically deprived children is noticeable, and not invisible as several current authors (see Review of Literature) would lead their readers to believe. Since there was considerable disagreement between professional workers and mothers, concerning care and fit, an explanation of this discrepancy might be found in an investigation of standards and sensitivity to the questions asked. The establishment of an educational program for the mothers would appear to receive support from the social service workers and at least half of the mothers in the sample.

Recommendations

Because this study was limited in scope, a larger study of a similar nature would undoubtedly give more definite

findings. Investigations in greater depth into specific problems in clothing the children of the economically deprived would result in increased understanding of the situation.

An interesting possibility would be to gain the responses of peers in situations where children (whose parents are economically deprived) are being bussed to school in neighborhoods of a higher socio-economic level for the first time.

Another study might be undertaken with a larger professional sample in contact with the children. It would be of importance to learn if responses vary with the amount of direct contact they had with the children, or with the type of contact. Non-professionals, such as salespeople, as well as ministers and teachers, could be included in the sample. A larger sample of mothers could also include mothers not classified as economically deprived, to learn if they give different responses than mothers of deprived children.

The instrument and findings from this study could be used as a basis for refining the methods of investigation. The development and use of a checklist and other devices suitable for extensive observation could be constructed to give a more precise picture of the actual clothing situation.

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APPENDIX A

Appendix A

INFORMATION CONCERNING THE LANSING PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Free-milk program in the Lansing Public Schools is payed for out of the municipal Board of Education budget. The attendance officer for the Lansing Public Schools authorizes the milk upon recommendation of the classroom teacher and school administrative personnel, such as the principal or secretary. The criterion considered for selection are per capita income and a combination of the health status, housing conditions, and food availability for the family.

The mothers were asked to consider all the children attending elementary school in her family when answering the questions and to exclude any children not attending elementary school. Usually elementary school involves children from ages five to eleven. However, many of the families had children attending pre-kindergarten nursery school. These four year-olds were also considered by the mothers in answering the questions.

APPENDIX B

SOCIAL SERVICE PERSONNEL

NAME _____

1. Is there anything is the way the children of the economically deprived dress which would make them noticeable to others?

2. What causes the clothes to be as you just described them?

3. What would you suggest are the greatest needs in clothing the economically deprived children? Do you have suggestions of ways to help them?

4. Do you feel the children of economically deprived have enough clothing for everyday wear? For rain? For snow? For special occasions, such as trips, parties, plays, or assemblies?

SOCIAL SERVICE PERSONNEL - 2

NAME _____

Other comments:

MOTHERS

NAME _____

Name and age of elementary school age children

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

1. Do you feel your children have enough "everyday" clothes?

For rain?

For snow?

For special things--such as field trips, parties, or school trips?

2. Where do your children's clothes come from? (3)

Do you ever make clothes for them?

How do you pay for them?

Do you ever shop at sales?

How do you find out about them?

OTHERS

NAME _____

Do you ever wish you had more information (knew more) about the clothes?

What do you look for when you are buying clothes?

Do your children ever shop for clothing by themselves?

When shopping with you, do they make their own selections?

3. Are you usually satisfied with the way your children's clothes fit?

Do you take the children to be fitted before buying?

Are you able to get clothes that fit?

Do you ever adjust clothes to make them fit?

Do you ever buy packaged clothes for them?

MOTHERS

NAME _____

4. Do you ever have problems keeping clothes mended?

Do you ever mend clothes?

Do you know how to mend?

5. Are you usually able to keep enough clean clothes for the children?

How often do you wash?

Do you ever have problems in washing your clothes?

Do you have your own washing machine? or where do you wash?

Other comments -

MOTHERS

NAME _____

Condition of clothes on the children which were seen:

Clear

Neat

Good appearance

Attractive

Messy

Dirty

Well fit

Poorly fit

Old

New

In-between

Appropriate

Inappropriate

Mended

Torn and unmended

Sloppy

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