

FACTORS AFFECTING CLOTHING UTILIZATION
OF ELDERLY WOMEN

By

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1972

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate College
of the Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
December, 1975

Thesis
1975
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer wishes to express appreciation to Dr. Grovalynn F. Sisler, Head, Department of Clothing, Textiles, and Merchandising for her guidance, assistance, and advice in directing this thesis. Appreciation is also extended to Dr. Donice Kelly for her interest and helpful suggestions during the initial stages of the study; to Mrs. Christine Salmon and Dr. Nick Stinnett for their assistance and helpful criticism of this manuscript and their participation as committee members.

Special thanks are extended to the participants who gave their time and interest to make this study possible.

Finally, a special gratitude is expressed to the writer's husband, Gerald, and to the writer's parents, for their encouragement during the course of this study.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In recent years scientific advances have enabled people to live longer causing an increase in the total population of the 65 and older age group. According to the 1970 census figures there were more than 20 million people past the age of 65 in the U. S. According to a recent lecture, 4,000 people in the United States celebrate their 65th birthday every day. Only 3,000 die every day in this age group, therefore, there is a net increase of 1,000 elderly people daily (4).

Many elderly people have health problems which limit their activities and cause changes in body proportions. Because of the bodily changes and limitations there are problems with clothing. Many elderly people have problems with fit and design of clothing, and some of them need clothing designed to accommodate a particular physical limitation.

Investigation of the needs, preferences, and problems of clothing for elderly women may lead to solutions to clothing problems. Several studies dealing with clothing for the elderly were conducted in the early and middle 1960's, but this information needs to be updated. Very little research has been conducted on this topic since the middle 1960's.

The Problem and the Objectives

In this study an attempt was made to identify clothing preferences

and problems of women 65 years and over who are living independently in their own homes. Data were obtained through personal interviews with 100 women age 65 and over living in Oklahoma, during the winter of 1974-1975.

The major objective, to identify clothing preferences and problems of women 65 and over living in their own homes in Oklahoma, was accomplished through the following sub-objectives:

1. To identify clothing preferences in daytime wear of older women.
2. To identify health problems and/or physical conditions as expressed by these women.
3. To determine how these problems and preferences affect the wardrobes of older women.
4. To determine how their clothing is acquired.
5. To determine clothing alterations necessary to meet their specific needs.

The Assumptions

Based upon the literature reviewed, the following assumptions were made:

1. Older women do have clothing problems.
2. Some older women have health problems which affect clothing needs and preferences.
3. The women interviewed will be able to identify their clothing problems and preferences.

Definitions of Terms

The following are definitions of terms as used in this study:

Arthritis--inflammation of the joints (27, p. 83).

Biological Changes--those changes occurring within the body such as in the brain and nervous system (14, pp. 95-96).

Chronic Diseases--diseases marked by long duration or frequent recurrence (27, p. 261).

Daytime Wear--garments worn during the day excluding shoes, lingerie, and accessory items.

Elderly--people who are 65 years of age and older.

Physical Changes--changes in outward appearance such as body stature (14, p. 96).

Rheumatism--one of the many forms of arthritis (7).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the United States there are more than 20 million people 65 years of age and over. This represents about 10 percent of the total United States population. As the number of elderly people increases, more attention is being directed toward their needs and problems.

Problems of the Elderly

Elderly people have many types of problems. Many elderly people have economic problems because of their limited, fixed incomes. Aging also brings many physical and biological changes which cause limitations in activity. Medical expenses may become a problem because of chronic diseases and other physical and biological disorders associated with the aging process.

Economic Status

In most cases resources for the elderly are limited because of the meager benefits available to them through retirement plans.

In the autumn of 1973, the cost of a retired couple's budget, excluding personal income taxes, amounted to \$3,763 at the lower level of living, \$5,414 at the intermediate level and \$8,043 at the higher level (all U.S. urban averages) (21, p. 57).

This could be compared to the average budget for a family of four which was \$8,181 a year at the lower level, \$12,626 at the intermediate

level, and \$18,201 at the higher level (5).

Although the goods and services needed by the elderly may decrease, they probably will not decrease in direct proportion to the decrease in income. The Bureau of Labor Statistics devised an equivalence scale to compare levels of consumption. The level of consumption for families between the ages of 55 and 64 as compared with a retired couple aged 65 and over shows only about a 13 percent decrease in goods and services needed (25).

Rich and Gilmore (17) found that half of the married couples 65 and over have insufficient income for a moderate standard of living and 50 percent of single persons 65 and over have an income of \$1,951 or less per year. The figures listed by the Census Bureau for the poverty threshold (the amount required to provide minimum physical subsistence) were \$2,000 for couples and \$1,750 for unmarried persons 65 or over (25). Therefore, many elderly people are at or below the poverty threshold.

Hoffman (13, p. 15) pointed out many factors contributing to insufficient income of older people. She stated:

The socioeconomic status of most older persons is, in a sense doubly negative. Many older persons have never had high socioeconomic status. . . . Older persons as a group have less education than younger adults. And transcending these factors is the low level of income received and the paucity of assets held by older persons. In other words, the level of income of most older persons would tend to lower their socioeconomic position: it is in itself an index to low socioeconomic status.

Amount of retirement income available is a factor which influences clothing habits of many elderly women. Richards (18, p. 21) found that older Americans spend most of their income on food, housing, and medical care. Items such as "clothing, house furnishings and equipment,

transportation, and recreation are simply left by the wayside because, even though they may need them they cannot afford them."

Because the median income of many older people is so near the poverty line, clothing expenditures are affected. Ryan (19, p. 311) stated:

There is a sharp decline, both in the actual and the relative amount spent for clothing after the age of sixty-five. For those under sixty-five, 10.9 to 12.3 percent of the total budget is spent on clothing, but this drops to 8.8 percent for those sixty-five to seventy-five and to 7.8 percent for those over seventy-five.

Aging brings about many changes and problems which are economic in nature. Income is limited so a larger proportion must be spent on necessities such as food and medicine. This limits the amount available for clothing and household items.

The Aging Process

To better understand the needs of the elderly, it is important to know about the process and effects of aging. The aging process carries with it many uncertainties. No one knows exactly what the process actually involves. Henderson (12) stated that some general ideas are well known to medical research but a fundamental understanding of the aging process is yet to be achieved.

Accumulating years bring many physical and biological changes. Physical changes taking place are evident in general body stature and hair and skin color. Biological changes include those of the brain and nervous system, vision and hearing, and total blood flow. A decrease in blood flow is affected by an increasing rate of heartbeat and a slower breathing rate (14).

Changes in body appearance are also caused by factors relating to a changing distribution of fat. Trunk dimensions increase due to

a continuous layer of fat, connective tissue, blood vessels, and water covering the entire surface of the body. In this subcutaneous adipose tissue, fat is deposited with age, becoming thicker in some places than in others. Almost all of this fat is concentrated in the trunk, increasing waist, hip and chest measurements (18, p. 10).

There is also a loss of height. Among the causes are a settling of the vertebrae and a bone disease called osteoporosis. It begins during the middle years and causes mobility problems during the later years. There is a marked loss of spinal mobility and loss of freedom in rotary motion. A gradual bowing of the spine is evident causing the unwanted humped back and rounding shoulders (9, p. 441).

Skin texture and color also change during the aging process. Skin becomes inelastic, wrinkled and tough because the fatty layers just beneath the skin shrink and disappear (10, p. 2). Skin pigmentation also changes in some women causing a yellow coloration and limiting the range of colors that can be worn (19). Skin temperature is slightly lower in the elderly than in younger people because of the decreased circulation in the skin of the elderly (28).

Hair color and texture also change with the accumulation of years. The hair of the head tends to become thinner and changes to gray and sometimes white (23).

Limitations Caused by Diseases

The diseases of significance to this study are those causing physical disabilities to the elderly. Rich and Gilmore (17) found that of the 80 percent of the elderly living in their own homes, 30 percent

have chronic diseases with some limitation of activity, 50 percent have health problems with no limitation of activity, and only 20 percent are free of health problems. As Nicholson (16) has pointed out, many older people are suffering from conditions that handicap them in greater or lesser degree.

The diseases that are chief causes of illness and disability among older people are predominantly the so-called chronic diseases in which the onset is gradual and the chances for control depend heavily upon early recognition (16, p. 702).

Disorders of the skeletal-muscular system often result in chronic diseases. Some familiar types of such disorders are osteoporosis, back problems, and arthritis.

Rheumatic diseases or rheumatism are terms used by physicians as a general category of all diseases that cause pain and disability affecting the joints and their supporting structure

Arthritis is the term used for conditions arising from involvement of the joints and their immediate surrounding structure by disease. It is also frequently used as a general term to describe rheumatic disease which primarily attacks the joints (7, p. 62).

According to Henderson (12), the leading disease among elderly people is cardiovascular in nature. According to Rich and Gilmore (17) changes in the cardiovascular system interfere with cell nutrition. When there is a change in the blood supply and in the use of sugar taken in as food, muscle tone may be decreased. Decreased muscle tone in turn leads to less use of the muscles and as a result of less use, the muscles may become even weaker.

Summary

Aging brings about many changes. After retirement income may be limited, causing a change in spending habits. Biological changes also

take place involving the brain and nervous system. Skin texture changes due to shrinkage and disappearance of fatty layers just beneath the skin. Coloration also changes to a yellowish color in some women.

Many elderly people have chronic diseases which cause physical disabilities. Many of the disabling diseases are caused from some form of arthritis; other diseases are cardiovascular in nature.

Clothing for the Elderly

Clothing is as important for elderly women as for women in all other age groups. Besides serving the functional need of covering the body, clothing also serves psychological needs. Research shows that the psychological needs of the elderly are fundamentally the same as for any other age group.

Both popular writers and psychologists have recognized that psychological aspects of clothing influence social relationships. Adequate clothing helps elderly people maintain a positive self-image and promotes increased social activities (2, p. 3).

A well known social psychologist stated that "adequate clothing is a need common to all people and is a rational defense against aging," and "by dressing even more carefully than younger people, older people can make better use of their physical attractiveness" (11, p. 16).

Figure Changes and Clothing Fit

As a person grows older, figure changes occur. The spinal column begins to bend, causing the shoulders to droop and the head to bow somewhat. As these changes are coming about, fat deposits are relocated causing larger and lowered breasts. Fat is also deposited in the abdomen and hip area and there may be a loss of fat deposits in the

limbs and face causing wrinkling and sagging (2).

These figure changes will bring about problems with the fit of clothing. Some areas which are commonly altered are shoulder length, length of front and back bodice, and skirt length. Since the waist and hip circumference increase and the abdomen protrudes, alterations may also need to be made in these areas (18).

All of these appearance changes, along with limited mobility in some, make clothing acquisition more difficult.

Skin Changes Affecting Clothing

Skin changes which take place during later years cause many clothing problems. The skin temperature is slightly lower in older persons because of diminished circulation. Temperature changes feel more extreme, causing a need for warmer clothing than usual in winter and cooler clothing in the summer.

Skin also becomes dry, thin and inelastic, so soft fabrics and construction processes that will not irritate or scratch the skin must be used. Another skin problem which affects clothing selection is that "the blood vessels become dilated and more visible through the thinning skin" (23, p. 342). This gives the skin a bluish cast and results in a limitation of colors which are becoming. Some older women also develop a yellowish tinge in the skin. This change usually eliminates yellow shades from the wardrobe and the "reddened eyelids and bluish-purple skin areas rule out red and purple" (23, p. 342).

General Considerations

Clothing selection for most elderly women requires some general

considerations. The particular needs of the individual should be considered first. Some may have limited movement of the limbs caused by stiff joints and most also undergo numerous figure changes. Limited movement of the limbs makes it necessary for fasteners to be placed in easy to reach places and for fasteners to be used which are easy to grasp. Limited movement of the joints also makes clothing which is easy to put on and take off desirable. Other convenient features are wrap around type openings, short sleeves to provide more freedom of arm movement and safety, and front closures (2, 23).

Clothing Research for Elderly Women

Various studies have been done in relation to clothing for older women. Hoffman (13, p. 280) suggested that the emphasis placed on clothing is more than just on clothing as a basic need.

Clothing has always been regarded as one of the essential needs of people but it has only recently become an area of serious scientific research among the social scientists and home economists.

Hoffman (13) also stated that attractive clothing is very important for the self-image and self-esteem.

Availability and Satisfaction With Ready-To-Wear for Elderly Women

A general dissatisfaction with the clothing available for older women was indicated in several studies. Richards (18) found that 86 percent of the 52 women interviewed felt that the local stores did not carry a satisfactory selection of garments from which to choose.

"Eighty-one percent of the women felt that most dresses are styled for a much younger person" (18, p. 73).

Bader (1, p. 22) found that because clothing needs of older people cannot be clearly defined, the manufacturers and merchandisers are in a dilemma.

On the one hand, they are criticized for failing to recognize the older segment of the population and for failing to meet their needs. On the other hand, they find that many older people do not wish special identification or to be set apart as a group.

A study was done by Shipley and Rosencranz (22, p. 854) concerning older women's clothing preferences. Results of the study indicated that "more than three-fourths of the 148 women interviewed were interested in style changes and most of the women indicated that they would like a wider selection of styles." Approximately one-third said that the clothes they found sometimes made them feel older. The 24 buyers interviewed for this study did not place any emphasis on clothing for the older age group and a low percentage of stock was considered suitable for the older women.

✓ Walker (26) conducted a study on clothing preferences and purchasing concepts of 170 older women and six retail clothing buyers. She found that the majority of the buyers disagreed with the older women on color preferences and many of the style preferences. Most of the buyers did not emphasize clothing for older women in the types of garments stocked in their stores.

Ebeling and Rosencranz (8) studied the social and personal aspects of clothing for older women and found that most of the 180 interviewed in rural areas of Michigan could find a dress easily in their size but they felt that the selection from which to choose was limited. Those who sewed also wished to have a wider selection of patterns available for them to choose from.

Hoffman (13) recognized the market problems of older women and the problems of reaching the older market. She suggested a special size range proportioned to the changes of body proportions of older women with a name for the size range that would not suggest age identity.

Preferred Design Features

Design features are important to older women. Studies show that older women have established preferences in design features. Studies by Walker, Richards, Bartley and Warden, Ebeling and Rosencranz, and Schuster (26, 18, 3, 8, 20) show the consistency of preferences for certain design features. Design features consistently preferred were dresses with no waistline, front openings, V-shaped necklines, three-quarter sleeves, A-line skirts, hemlines just below the knee, and coat and dress outfits.

In addition to the above features Richards (18) found that most women preferred zippers and collars. Bartley and Warden (3) found dresses with front openings to the waistline and underarm zippers were desirable. Ebeling and Rosencranz (8) also found that skirts and blouses were worn often.

✓ As women age there is evidence that some have more limited abilities than others. Special clothing designs are desired for those with limited abilities. Schuster (20) conducted a study to identify style preferences in outerwear for physically handicapped women 65 and over living in nursing homes. Ten handicapped women and 20 nursing home staff members were interviewed. Style preferences indicated, in addition to those listed above, were front zipper closures from neck to hem, action pleats in the back bodice and convertible

collars.

Madsen (15) concentrated on the clothing problems of arthritic women in a study conducted at Purdue University. Twenty arthritic women were interviewed. Readymade dresses were adapted with comfort, attractiveness, and ease of dressing in mind.

Problems With Clothing Fit

Physical changes of the elderly cause problems in correct fit. Due to changes caused by aging and because clothing is manufactured with the younger average size as a model, clothing does not always fit older persons properly.

Tate and Glisson (23) revealed that fit was among the factors most important to older women in selecting their clothing. Shipley and Rosencranz, and Walker (22, 26) found that although fit was important in garment selection by older women, style was equally as important.

Richards (18) found that 67 percent of the 52 women she interviewed needed to have their dresses altered. The most common alterations were in the areas of dress length and front and back waistline adjustments. Other alterations needed were to shorten shoulders and have side seams taken in.

Baker (2, p. 14) included standards for fit in her study. She stated that:

A well fitting garment will never show any strain on the crosswise or lengthwise grainlines. It should conceal rather than reveal figure faults. A garment that is too tight will make you look larger. A garment that is too large will give a dowdy, tired look.

The physical changes causing problems with fit are enlarged waistline, protruding abdomen, sagging upper arms, rounded shoulders, and

lowered bustline. These changes cause garments to be strained around the waist and abdomen area, binding in the sleeve area, and too short in the back bodice. The lowered bustline will cause the ordinary fullness in the bustline area to be too high.

Summary

Several clothing studies have been conducted concerning clothing for elderly women. Researchers have found that clothing is important for the self-image and that elderly women believe there is a limited selection of clothing available to them. Many would like a wider selection of styles.

Design features are also important to elderly women. Results of several studies indicated consistency in preferences for certain design features. Some problems with clothing fit were related to design features. Many changes in body stature cause clothing to fit improperly. Elderly women regarded fit as a major factor when selecting clothing.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The study was conducted to identify clothing preferences and problems of women 65 and over living in their own homes in Oklahoma. A review of literature revealed that studies of this nature were conducted in the early and middle 1960's but this information has not been updated.

Selection of Sample Group

The sample in this study consisted of 100 women 65 years and older who lived in their own homes in Oklahoma. Most of the women (74%) were from Stillwater. These women were selected from data available in the 1970 Census (24). An attempt was made to include women from different income levels. The other women in the study were acquaintances of the researcher in other parts of the state.

Development and Use of Instrument

The interview method was used because of the age of the participants. More accurate information can be obtained through interviewing this age group than by asking them to respond to a questionnaire.

According to Compton and Hall (6):

A person may be willing to spend more time giving information when he has direct personal contact than when he is asked to take time to complete a questionnaire It may yield

more accurate information and greater depth of response than could be obtained through a questionnaire (pp. 241-242).

An interview schedule (Appendix A, p. 35) was designed to simplify the collection of information from the women. During the development process the interview schedule was pretested with four women 64 years and older and very minor revisions were made.

The instrument was designed to identify 1) clothing preferences of women 65 and over, 2) how their clothing was acquired, 3) physical problems that affected their clothing and 4) alterations necessary for the clothing to fit properly and be comfortable. The interview schedule also included questions regarding general background information about the respondents.

Each of the 100 participants was interviewed by the researcher during the winter of 1974-1975. The women were asked questions and the replies were recorded on the schedule. A list of the garments included in the study was given to each participant so they would keep in mind the different types of garments to be discussed. Large letters were used in presenting the list so that it could be read more easily by those with failing eyesight.

The majority of the participants were eager to help with the interviews. Those who were hesitant usually said they did not know much about clothing styles or that they did not buy clothes very much anymore. When they were assured it was primarily designed to identify types of clothing they wore and the problems they had with clothing they were cooperative. Some participants not only responded to the schedule but also showed garments they most preferred from their wardrobes or that they had sewn for themselves.

Results of the interviews are recorded in Chapter IV. Responses were tabulated and analyzed according to utilization, acquisition, problems and alterations necessary. Results were analyzed by frequency and percentage distribution.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

One hundred women 65 years and older participated in the study. Background information for this sample is noted in Table I and includes age, marital status, education level, living arrangements and employment status.

Age of the participants ranged from 65 to 89 with almost three-fourths of them in the 65 to 76 age range. Slightly more than half of these participants were widowed. Approximately one-third were married, while 10 percent were single or divorced.

Forty percent of the sample had less than a high school education. Twenty-five percent of the participants had finished high school and nine percent had some college or additional training. Twenty-six percent had a bachelor's or master's degree.

Fifty-seven percent of the participants indicated that they lived with others and 43 percent lived alone. Of the 57 participants living with others 39 lived with their husbands, 8 lived with a sister, 5 lived with a daughter, 3 lived with landlords and 2 lived with friends.

About half of the participants were retired and 10 percent were employed either part-time or full-time. Approximately one-third of the participants were not employed. These were the women who had not been employed before retirement age and, therefore, did not retire.

TABLE I
BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE 100 RESPONDENTS

Classification	Number
<u>Age Range of Respondents</u>	
65-67	25
68-70	16
71-73	15
74-76	16
77-79	9
80-82	8
83-85	7
86-89	4
<u>Marital Status</u>	
Widowed	53
Married	37
Single	9
Divorced	1
<u>Education Level Achieved</u>	
Sixth	6
Seventh	2
Eighth	21
Ninth	2
Tenth	8
Eleventh	1
Twelfth	25
Some College	6
Bachelor's Degree	18
Master's Degree	8
Nurses Training	2
Business College	1
<u>Living Arrangements</u>	
With others	57
Alone	43
<u>Employment Status</u>	
Retired	54
Not employed	36
Employed part-time	9
Employed full-time	1

The married women were asked to give the former occupation of their husbands, and the single women were asked to give their former occupation. Of the 100 occupations listed, about a third were laborers and approximately 20 percent had owned their own business. About 25 percent were farmers and 25 percent were professionally employed. All 10 single women had been former instructors at Oklahoma State University. The list of occupations is included in Appendix B.

Garment Utilization

The participants were asked how often each garment type was worn. All garment types were worn often by 25 or more of the women. Coats, sweaters, dresses, jackets, housecoats, and pant suits were listed by 50 percent or more of the women as garments worn often. The garment worn most often was a coat with 90 participants indicating that they wore a coat often.

Approximately one-third of the women indicated that they never wore a pant suit, slacks, jeans, or shorts with a blouse, a suit with a skirt, a shawl, and a skirt with a blouse or top. A summary of garment utilization is presented in Table II.

Two piece outfits, generally, were not popular with the women interviewed. Some indicated that they never became accustomed to wearing slacks and that skirts and blouses cut them in two and made them look heavier. Other reasons given were never having an occasion to wear certain garments and some types of outfits were too expensive. A complete list of the reasons given by the participants for not wearing certain garments is in Appendix B, p. 40.

TABLE II
 GARMENT UTILIZATION OF THE
 100 PARTICIPANTS

Garment Type	How Often Worn		
	Often	Seldom	Never
Coat	90	9	1
Sweater	73	21	6
Dress	70	28	2
Jacket	67	24	9
Housecoat, robe or duster	56	41	3
Pant suit	50	18	32
Slacks, jeans or shorts with blouse	44	20	36
Suit with skirt	37	37	26
Shawl	36	34	30
Skirt with blouse or top	27	39	34
Others Dress with jacket	27	--	--

Acquisition of Garments

Participants were questioned about how they acquired their clothing. Categories listed by the researcher were (1) buying ready-to-wear, (2) sewing for themselves, (3) as a gift, or (4) by having someone sew for them. Methods of clothing acquisition for the 100 participants are shown in Table III.

TABLE III
METHOD OF ACQUISITION OF CLOTHING
FOR THE 100 PARTICIPANTS

Method of Acquisition	Frequency*	Percent
Ready-to-wear	651	59
Sew for self	257	23
Gift	135	12
Someone sews for you	<u>65</u>	<u>6</u>
Totals	1108	100

*Frequencies equal total number of responses indicating that clothing was acquired through the above methods for all garment types indicated.

The greatest proportion of the total responses indicated that ready-to-wear was the most common method of acquisition among the participants. More than twice as much clothing was purchased ready-to-wear than was obtained through any other method. Approximately one-fourth of the clothing was acquired through sewing for themselves.

Only 12 percent of the clothing was received as gifts and six percent was obtained through having someone else sew for them.

Methods of acquisition for specific garment types are shown in Table IV. Ready-to-wear was the most common method of clothing acquisition for each of the garments listed. The garments that were most often sewn by the participants were dresses and housecoats. Housecoats and sweaters were the garments received most often as gifts and the most common items that were sewn by someone else for the participants were dresses and housecoats.

Health Problems

Health problems were indicated by only 24 percent of the women. The health problem mentioned most frequently was arthritis. Twelve of the women had arthritis in the shoulders, three women had arthritis in the legs, and two had arthritis in the hip. Two other participants had cancer of the colon. The following problems were each mentioned once: broken hip, broken shoulder, emphysema, hay fever and asthma, heart trouble, multiple sclerosis and paralysis. A summary of the health problems is presented in Table V.

Health problems affected clothing in various ways. Those who had arthritis indicated that they needed extra warmth in these particular areas. Front closures were preferred by those who had arthritis in the shoulders, the one whose shoulder was broken and the participants with emphysema and heart trouble.

Those who had cancer of the colon needed clothing that was loose through the waist and hip areas. The participant with the broken hip found it hard to put on slacks because of the stiff hip.

TABLE IV
 METHOD OF ACQUISITION FOR
 SPECIFIC GARMENT TYPES

Garment Type	R-T-W ^a		S-F-S ^b		Gift		S-S-F-Y ^c	
	F ^d	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Coat	94	14	13	5	3	2	4	6
Sweater	83	13	4	2	34	25	2	3
Jacket	76	12	21	8	3	2	6	9
Housecoat, robe or duster	72	11	37	14	34	25	10	15
Dress	69	11	49	19	20	15	19	29
Shawl	51	8	6	2	23	17	1	2
Skirt with blouse or top	49	7	26	10	2	1	4	6
Slacks, jeans or shorts with blouse	47	7	30	12	5	4	1	2
Pant suit	44	7	25	10	7	5	5	8
Suit with skirt	44	7	29	11	2	1	5	8
Other								
Dress with jacket	22	3	17	7	2	1	8	12
Total	651	100	257	100	135	98*	65	100

^aR-T-W -- Ready-to-wear

^bS-F-S -- Sew for self

^cS-S-F-Y- Someone sews for you

^dF ----- Frequency

*Does not equal 100% because of rounding.

TABLE V
HEALTH PROBLEMS OF THE 100 PARTICIPANTS

Health Problems of Respondents	Number
<u>Do you have any health problem or condition?</u>	
Yes	24
No	76
<u>Specific Health Problem</u>	
Arthritis in Shoulders	12
Arthritis in Legs	3
Arthritis in Hip	2
Cancer of the Colon	2
Broken Hip	1
Broken Shoulder	1
Emphysema	1
Hay Fever and Asthma	1
Heart Trouble	1
Multiple Sclerosis	1
Paralysis	1

Hay fever and asthma caused one woman to avoid clothing with high and close fitting necklines. A woman with multiple sclerosis found it difficult to use zippers and buttons. Paralysis caused clothing fit problems for one woman because one shoulder was lower than the other. A complete summary of the health problems and effects on clothing is presented in Table VI.

Clothing Alterations

The number of women requiring clothing alterations and the specific alterations required are presented in Table VII. Fifty-nine

TABLE VI
HEALTH PROBLEMS AND EFFECTS ON CLOTHING

Health Problem	Effect on Clothing
Arthritis in Shoulders	Prefer garments to fasten in front. When weather is cool, an extra layer of clothing was desired by some.
Arthritis in Legs	Some like to wear slacks for warmth when weather is cool or wear dresses that cover the knees.
Arthritis in Hips	An extra layer of clothing is worn around the hips for warmth.
Cancer of the Colon	Need loose fitting clothing in the waist and hip area.
Broken Hip	Hard to put slacks on.
Broken Shoulder	Prefer garments with front closures.
Emphysema	Cannot wear bras or back fasteners.
Hay Fever and Asthma	Does not like clothes that fit tight or close around the neck.
Heart Problems	Cannot use arms to reach behind, so need clothing with front closures.
Multiple Sclerosis	Hard to use zippers and buttons.
Paralysis	One shoulder is lower than the other. Have to alter on shoulder.

participants indicated that they did have to make alterations in their clothing so that it would meet their specific needs.

TABLE VII
ALTERATIONS TO CLOTHING REQUIRED
BY THE 100 PARTICIPANTS

Classification	Number
<u>Does anything special have to be done to the clothing you wear so that it meets your specific needs?</u>	
Yes	59
No	41
<u>Specific Alterations Required</u>	
Lengthen skirt	16
Shorten shoulders	15
Shorten skirt	13
Let out in hips	11
Shorten slacks	5
Take up in hips	3
Increase waistline	2
Lengthen sleeves	2
Let out in abdomen and hips	2
Make sleeves larger	2
Lengthen slacks	1
Lengthen from backneck to waist	1
Make bust larger	1
Make clothing loose	1
Make sleeves smaller	1
Move bust darts down	1
Shorten from frontneck to waistline	1
Shorten waist length	1
Take up side seams	1
Take up waist	1
Take up bust	1

The specific alterations listed indicated a predominance of individual problems rather than problems common to a large number of women. Ten alterations involved enlarging some part of the garment and ten involved making some part of the garment smaller. Twenty had to lengthen some part of a garment while 35 had to shorten some part of the garment.

Summary

All garments included in the study were worn often by one-fourth or more of the participants. More garments were acquired through ready-to-wear than through any other method of acquisition. Twenty-four of the 100 women listed health problems that affected their clothing. Clothing alterations were required by 59 of the women.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the study was to identify clothing preferences and problems of women 65 years and over who are living in their own homes. Data were obtained through personal interviews with 100 women 65 and over living in Oklahoma during the winter of 1974-1975.

Findings from this investigation indicated that coats, sweaters, dresses and jackets were worn more often by the women interviewed than any other garments. Housecoats and pant suits were worn often by approximately half of the women.

Clothing was acquired by the 100 participants mainly through buying ready-to-wear. The second most popular method for acquiring clothing was for the women to sew for themselves. Some clothing was received as gifts but very little was acquired by having someone sew for them.

Only 24 of the women indicated that they had health problems. Arthritis was the health problem experienced most. Health problems affected clothing in various ways. The major clothing needs indicated were extra warmth in the areas affected by arthritis and front closures for those with limitations of arm movement. More than half of the women indicated that they did require alterations in their clothing.

Recommendations for further studies include the following:

1. Investigate style features and colors preferred for the

garments indicated in this study as those worn most often by older women.

2. Conduct a study of availability of ready-to-wear clothing appropriate for women 65 and older in a specified community.
3. Design and test clothing for arthritic women to incorporate insulation through the areas affected by the arthritis.
4. Conduct a study by comparing measurements of elderly women and younger women of the same height and weight and compare these measurements to determine the extent to which clothing designed for younger women would fit older women.
5. Investigate clothing care practices and fabric preferences of elderly women.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Garment Type	Often	Seldom	Never	Reason	Purchase *R-T-W	*S-F-S	*S-S-F-Y	Gift	Other
Dress									
Suit with skirt									
Pants suit									
Skirt with blouse or top									
Slacks, jeans or shorts with blouse									
Sweater									
Shawl									
Coat									
Jacket (not short coat or suit jacket)									
Housecoat, robe or duster									
Other (identify)									

*R-T-W -- Ready-to-Wear

*S-F-S -- Sew for self

*S-S-F-Y -- Someone sews for you

WARDROBE INFORMATION

During the day people wear many different types of garments. Here is a list of clothing items worn by many women. You may or may not wear all of the types listed. You may wear some types of clothing not listed.

1. Which of the garments listed do you wear often?
2. Which of the garments listed do you wear sometimes or seldom?
3. Which of the garments listed do you never wear?
4. During the day, do you wear garments that are not on the list?
Record response under OTHER
5. You have indicated that you never wear _____.
Why is this? Record response under REASON
6. Many people have a health problem or physical condition that affects their clothing needs and preferences. Do you have any such problem or condition? Yes _____ No _____

If "no" skip to question 9.
7. What health problem or physical condition do you have that affects your clothing needs or preferences?
8. How does this problem affect your clothing needs or preferences?
9. Does anything special have to be done to the clothing you wear so that it meets your specific needs? Yes _____ No _____
10. What do you do to your clothes so that they better meet your needs?
11. How do you obtain most of your _____? Repeat question for items often and sometimes worn.

Interviewers observations:

Comments by interviewee:

CLASSIFICATION INFORMATION

Now I need some general information about you.

1. Are you single _____, married _____, or widowed _____?
 2. Do you live alone or with others? Alone _____ Others _____
 3. Relationship?
 4. If you don't mind telling how old are you? _____
 5. Are you employed for pay full-time, part-time or not employed?

Full-time _____	Not employed _____
Part-time _____	Retired _____
 6. If employed What is your occupation?
 7. If retired What has been the major occupation of you or your husband most of your life?
- Education level achieved _____.
- R _____.

LIST OF GARMENTS USED BY PARTICIPANTS
DURING THE INTERVIEW

Dress

Suit with skirt

Pant suit

Skirt with blouse or top

Slacks, jeans or shorts with blouse

Sweater

Shawl

Coat

Jacket (Not short coat or suit jacket)

Housecoat, robe or duster

APPENDIX B

OCCUPATIONS OF THE 100 PARTICIPANTS

OR THEIR HUSBANDS

OCCUPATIONS OF THE 100 PARTICIPANTS
OR THEIR HUSBANDS

Occupation	Number
Farmers	30
Teachers and professors	20
Office workers and insurance salesmen	9
Custodian and maintenance men	8
Owner of business	8
Factory workers	4
Carpenters and construction workers	3
Extension agents for OSU	3
Engineers	2
Mail carriers	2
Railroad workers	2
United States Department of Agriculture employee	2
Clock repairman	1
Coaching assistant	1
Fireman	1
Military officer	1
Newspaper editor	1
Pharmacist	1
Public service worker	1

APPENDIX C

REASONS GIVEN BY THE 100 PARTICIPANTS
FOR NOT WEARING CERTAIN GARMENTS

REASONS GIVEN BY THE 100 PARTICIPANTS
FOR NOT WEARING CERTAIN GARMENTS

Garment	Number Never Wearing Garment	Reasons For Not Wearing Garment	Number*
Slacks, jeans or shorts with blouse	36	Do not like any of them	8
		Did not have them when growing up	5
		Do not believe in them	5
		Never started wearing them	5
		Would not look good on me	4
		Out of place for a woman	3
		Does not feel comfortable	3
		Rather buy a comfortable dress	3
		I am too old	2
		Hard to get pants on	1
		Can not keep them together	1
Skirt with blouse or top	34	Too large to wear them	8
		Do not have them	6
		Do not look good on me	6
		I am too short	3
		Not comfortable	3
		Too short and broad	3
		Can not keep them together	3
		Do not like skirts	2
		Too old for skirts and blouses	1
		Never have worn them	1
		Exposes stomach too much	1
		Have a sway back, makes my skirts too long in the back	1
		Need a jacket to cover up bag on side	1
		Hips and legs too large	1
		Only wore them when young	1
Would rather wear pant suits	1		

Garment	Number Never Wearing Garment	Reasons For Not Wearing Garment	Number*
Pant Suits	30	Never got used to wearing them	9
		Do not like them	7
		Do not believe in them	5
		Do not feel comfortable	3
		Rather buy a nice dress	2
		Did not have pants when growing up	2
		Have not been able to afford new clothes	2
		Not practical at my age	1
		Women should not wear men clothes	1
		Rather wear separates	1
		Never seemed necessary	1
		Hard to get pants on	1
		Too old	1
Shawl	27	Do not have one	10
		Do not like them	7
		Too much trouble to keep on shoulders	6
		Do not need one	2
		Makes me look dumpy	2
		No reason to wear one	2
		Not warm enough	1
		Need sleeves	1
		Not comfortable	1
		I am too heavy	1
Suit with skirt	27	I am too short	10
		Too heavy	8
		Hard to keep them together	7
		Never have worn them	2
		Does not seem to be for me	2
		Rather put my money into a dress with jacket	1
		Not comfortable	1

Garment	Number Never Wearing Garment	Reasons For Not Wearing Garment	Number*
(Continued)			
Suit with skirt		Do not own one	1
		Have a sway back, so makes skirts too long in back	1
		Hard to get a jacket that fits well	1
		Does not look good	1
		Dresses are easier to put on	1
		Makes me look short and big around	1
		Rather wear pant suits	1
		Do not like them	1
		Too expensive	1
Jacket	9	Do not have one	8
		Can not afford them right now	1
Sweater	6	Shows off figure too much	1
		Too tight	1
		Hot natured--binds too much	1
		Not pretty on me	1
		I am too heavy to wear a sweater	1
		Does not look good on me	1
Housecoat, robe or duster	3	Get up and get dressed as I did before I retired	3
Dress	2	Do not like them	1
		Rather wear pant suits	1
Coat	1	Coats are too heavy	1

*Numbers will not equal the number never wearing garment because more than one reason was given by some participants for a garment.

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