

A STUDY OF THE PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY STOUT WOMEN
IN SELECTING READY MADE DRESSES

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IN SELECTING READY MADE DRESSES

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M. K. V.

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INTRODUCTION

There was a time when no gentlewoman deigned to wear a ready-made dress; it was too common. Elegance was found only in the custom-made garment; the ready-made was poor in fit, poor in construction, and often poor in material.¹

Fortunately the above condition no longer exists and women in increasing numbers buy all or part of their dresses in shops, department stores, or from mail-order houses rather than depending on local tailors and dress-makers. This has caused a phenomenal growth in the ready-to-wear industry with resulting problems and difficulties that can be solved only through the understanding and co-operation of the manufacturers, retail stores, and customers.²

The needs and desires of patrons of dress shops are of considerable interest to the manufacturer and retailer. Customer satisfaction is the primary aim of both, since a satisfied customer means increased use of the services given by the ready-to-wear dress business. It is hoped that an analysis of the present problems encountered in purchasing ready-to-wear garments by a special group of women may offer a definite contribution toward the solution of the problem.

¹ Eddy, Josephine, Wiley, Elizabeth, C. B., Pattern and Dress Design, p. 486.

² Ibid, p. 486.

CHAPTER I

SYSTEMS OF BODY PROPORTIONS

Beginning with the Industrial Revolution when garment making was taken out of the home and done wholly or in part in factories, the stout woman has found her problem of securing a dress that fits and has the necessary style features greatly complicated. As many of the ready-made dresses are purchased by persons who have no fitting difficulties, the manufacturer has been slow to see the needs of the smaller percentage who always require extra alterations when they buy a ready-made dress.

Stout figures are those requiring dresses in size 38 or above. Of the adult women in the United States who have been measured, 32 per cent come in this group.¹ Of this number, 10 per cent can wear "regular stout" dresses which begin with bust size 42 and are scaled as a continuation of regular sizes. The remaining 22 per cent furnish the real problems in fitting. They are classified as follows: short stout, 3 to 5 inches shorter than the regular stout, 8 per cent; stylish stout, more fully developed bust and longer waist, 6 per cent; long stout, cared for by hem extensions usually, 4 per cent; and stubby or odd stout with less developed bust and larger hips, 4 per cent.

¹Nystrom, Paul H., Economics of Fashion, pp. 465.68.

Regular stout sizes are designated by even numbers. Short stouts are usually designated by quarter sizes; stylish stouts by half sizes; and odd or stubby stouts by odd numbers beginning with 35 and extending to 55.

The first interest in body measurements of which we have any record arose among the early sculptors and painters and was used by them in their art work.² They developed imagined systems of proportions called "canons" by taking some part of the body as the foot, hand, head, or vertical column as the unit and attempting to force a relation between this and the rest of the body. One of the earliest canons published is a Sanscrit treatise entitled "Silpe Sasti" which has been traced to the remote civilization of India. In this the author divided the human figure into 480 parts, the head being about one-seventh of the whole form. Polycletus, the famous Greek sculptor, developed a system of his own known as "The Canon" which greatly influenced other theorists. Although he wrote a paper on his system and made a statue using its plan, neither have survived antiquity. Two other ancients, devising systems of sufficient importance to be worthy of mention in this study were Alberti who used one-sixth of the entire height for his modulus, and Albrecht Durer who took the entire height as his unit.

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O'Brien, Ruth, An Annotated List of Literature References on Garment Sizes and Body Measurements, Misc. Publication No. 78, p. 2.

Geometric schemes, elaborate and complicated, were developed by early writers in which they attempted to deduce all body proportions from one measurement. One writer asserted that all proportions of the human figure could be obtained from the number 7 while still another tried to find a harmony of numbers similar to musical harmonies. No serious attempts to obtain actual body measurements were made in any of these efforts and were it not for the fact that many of the present "systems of proportions" put forth by garment designers contain certain ideas of these "relative proportions" they might be disregarded entirely.³

Body measurements of more recent years made by investigators in different sciences have been voluminous in quantity but almost as useless in the clothing field as the canons of early artists. Most of them, including those made by the anthropometrists have been made by using body landmarks entirely different from those used in garment construction and practically no item can be used directly by a designer.⁴ The primary purpose of these measurements is checking of physical growth and development and the majority of them include only height and weight determinations which alone are insufficient for garment sizing.

³
Ibid, p. 3.

⁴
Ibid, p. 3.

A lack of statistical knowledge on the part of persons making these surveys makes their transfer to the clothing field difficult if not altogether impossible.

The first source of accurate measurements known to have influenced garment sizes, especially factory-made ones, is military records.⁵ These measures taken by trained officers or medical men served as a basis for the manufacture of uniforms during the Civil War and were made as a result of the poorly fitting uniforms issued the soldiers when they first enlisted. These measures, while made on a large scale, in most cases recorded only the height, weight, and chest measures. In some instances, dimensions of the head, waist and the sitting height were included. As these measures were especially designed for men's uniforms, their aid in sizing dresses has been negligible except that they represent the first attempt of garment makers to size garments from actual measurements. More measurements of men were accumulated during the World War and the demobilization period when scientific methods were first used. A total of 100,000 men was measured, securing those measures deemed necessary for scientific sizing of uniforms. This was the first published report of any kind made with clothing construction definitely in view.⁶

⁵ Nystrom, Paul H., Economics of Fashion, p. 453.

⁶ O'Brien, op. cit., p. 3.

The first measurements made of women, while not on the wholesale scale of the army records of men, were made among the women students of eastern colleges, including Vassar, Smith and Pratt.⁷ These records, dating back to 1884 in Vassar are interesting not only because of their value in arriving at standard or typical sizes but also in showing changes that seem to have taken place in the physique of women since that time. Weight, height, waist and foot sizes have all steadily increased. These measures could hardly be considered typical of the mature woman when we recognize the comparative youth of the students studied.

Measurements now in general use by manufacturers for garment sizing have been established by a more or less arbitrary method of trial and error.⁸ One method used is to call together a group of stylists and manufacturers and from round table discussions, plus previously taken measures of small groups of individuals, decide on the sizes most generally demanded by the trade as those requiring the least alteration for correct fit. They then agree among themselves to use these as standard measures.

⁷

Nystrom, op. cit., p. 453.

⁸

O'Brien, Ruth, Journal of Home Economics, September, 1930, p. 751.

At a style show held in Denver, fifty silk dresses purchased from different stores as size 38 were displayed on living models whose actual measurements showed that this was the size that should fit them. Only a glance was needed to show how much variation there was in the dimensions. This proved the fact that subtractions or additions of inches had been made to the standard size by the various garment makers without determining these variations by scientific methods.⁹

Typical of the measurements for women's ready-made dresses in use in dress factories of the United States at the present time are those given in Table I.¹⁰ These measurements show the specifications for regular size dress lines, also those used for special types of stout figures.

Despite efforts of manufacturers and distributors of apparel for many years, there is no carefully defined set of standard sizes for women's ready-made dresses; therefore, no dogmatic statement can be made regarding the correctness of any of the measures now in use.¹¹ However, those persons interested in improving present systems are working on a study designed to be more

⁹

Ibid, p. 752.

¹⁰

Nystrom, Paul H., Economics of Fashion, p. 495.

¹¹

Ibid, p. 468.

scientific in plan than any previously made.¹² While former studies have included few body measurements, this one uses forty different measures.¹³ It has been begun with children and it is planned to continue with adults. The results are being eagerly awaited by conscientious manufacturers as it is felt that they will aid greatly in reducing the sizing difficulties which now confront the makers of ready-made dresses.

12

O'Brien, Ruth, Report: Standardization of Pattern Sizes, American Home Economics Association Meeting, Kansas City, June 22, 1937.

13

Ibid.

TABLE I
 SIZE SPECIFICATIONS FOR WOMEN'S DRESSES

A. Women's Regular Sizes							
Sizes	32	34	36	38	40	42	44
Bust	35	37	39	41	43	45	47
Waist	26	27	28	30	31	33	35
Hips	37	39	41	43	45	47	49
Sleeve Length	18	18	18	18	18½	18½	18½
Around Arm		13	13	14	14½	15	15½
Width of Back	13½	14	14	14½	14½	15	15½

Women's Regular Large Sizes						
Sizes	46	48	50	52	54	56
Bust	49	51	53	55	57	59
Waist	37	40	42	44		
Hips	50	53	55	57	59	
Sleeve Length	18½	19	19	19	19	20
Around Arm	15½	17½				
Width of Back	16½	17	17			

TABLE I (Continued)
 SIZE SPECIFICATIONS FOR WOMEN'S DRESSES

B. Stylish Stouts									
Sizes	38 $\frac{1}{2}$	40 $\frac{1}{2}$	42 $\frac{1}{2}$	44 $\frac{1}{2}$	46 $\frac{1}{2}$	48 $\frac{1}{2}$	50 $\frac{1}{2}$	52 $\frac{1}{2}$	54 $\frac{1}{2}$
Bust	43	45	47	49	51	53	55	58	59
Waist	31	33	35	37	39	41	43	45	47
Hips	42	44	46	48	50	52	56	58	60
Sleeve Length	18	18	18	18	18	18	18 $\frac{1}{2}$	18 $\frac{1}{2}$	18 $\frac{1}{2}$
Around Arm	15 $\frac{1}{2}$	16	16 $\frac{1}{2}$	17	17 $\frac{1}{2}$	18	18 $\frac{1}{2}$	19	
Width of Back	14	14 $\frac{1}{2}$	15	15 $\frac{1}{2}$	16	16 $\frac{1}{2}$	17	17 $\frac{1}{2}$	

TABLE I (Continued)
 SIZE SPECIFICATIONS FOR WOMEN'S DRESSES

C. Odd Stouts						
Sizes	35	37	39	41	43	45
Bust	37	39	41	43	45	47
Waist	28	30	32	34	36	38
Hips	41	43	45	47	49	51
Sleeve Length	18	18	18	18	18	18
Width of Back	14	14 $\frac{1}{2}$	15	15 $\frac{1}{2}$	16	16 $\frac{1}{2}$
Sizes	47	49	51	53	55	
Bust	49	51	53	55	57	
Waist	40	42	44	46	48	
Hips	53	55	58	59	61	
Sleeve Length	18 $\frac{1}{2}$	18 $\frac{1}{2}$	18 $\frac{1}{2}$	18 $\frac{1}{2}$	18 $\frac{1}{2}$	
Width of Back	17	17 $\frac{1}{2}$	18	18 $\frac{1}{2}$		

TABLE I (Continued)
 SIZE SPECIFICATIONS FOR WOMEN'S DRESSES

D. Short Stout Sizes					
Sizes	36 $\frac{1}{2}$	38 $\frac{1}{2}$	40 $\frac{1}{2}$	42 $\frac{1}{2}$	44 $\frac{1}{2}$
Bust	41	43	45	47	49
Waist					
Hips	48	50	52	54	56
Sleeve Length	17 $\frac{1}{2}$	17 $\frac{1}{2}$	17 $\frac{1}{2}$	18	18
Around Arm at Fullest Part	16 $\frac{1}{2}$	16 $\frac{3}{4}$	17	17 $\frac{1}{2}$	17 $\frac{1}{2}$
Width of Back	14	14 $\frac{1}{2}$	15	15 $\frac{1}{2}$	16
Sizes	46 $\frac{1}{2}$	48 $\frac{1}{2}$	50 $\frac{1}{2}$	52 $\frac{1}{2}$	
Bust		51	53	55	57
Waist					
Hips		58	60	62	64
Sleeve Length		18	18	18	18 $\frac{1}{2}$
Around Arm at Fullest Part		17 $\frac{3}{4}$	18	18 $\frac{1}{2}$	18 $\frac{1}{2}$
Width of Back		16 $\frac{1}{2}$	17	17 $\frac{1}{2}$	18

CHAPTER II

DESIGN, LINE AND COLOR FOR THE STOUT FIGURE

The stout woman's clothes can be a powerful weapon when wielded by a knowing hand. Unwisely chosen they add breadth and thickness to the figure. If chosen wisely, they impart a suggestion of length and slenderizing lines that make for pleasant distinction.¹

Fashion designers seem always to assume that overweight women must look matronly. No overweight person wants to look one year older than she really is nor appear in a garment which does not add to her charm. All women have their good features as well as their poor ones but most of them spend so much time worrying over their bad ones that they neglect the good ones.

Any woman who wears dresses sized larger than 38 needs to understand the principle of optical illusion and apply it to her choice regardless of whether the dress is purchased ready-made, made at home, or made by a dress-maker.² The "slenderizing stouts" we find in shops with their long, surplice effects and drab colors more often call attention to one's stoutness than act as an aid in concealing it. These garments are good for only the matronly woman, not for the large figure who wants to look

¹ Stote, Dorothy, Making the Most of Your Looks, p. 59.

² Wells, Jane Warren, Dress and Look Slender, p. 15.

young and smart. This does not mean that every large person is young nor that the mature figure should select girlish lines. Rather it should be interpreted as meaning that most designers associate size with years, therefore most stout sizes are planned for older women.

Wise is the stout woman who is not a slave of "Fashion." She who has learned the advantage of adapting current styles to her individual proportions has taken a forward step toward smartness that no one can deny. Omission rather than addition improves her position.³ She can best be slim by being trim, and be attractive by being immaculate. She cannot afford at any time to yield to a misuse of color, line, or fabric. It is best to hide the means and let it not be visible to anyone that she has deliberately and intently worked to achieve slenderness in dress.

Many women do not become stout until after forty.⁴ This is a trying time for them to continue appearing attractive and pleasing and requires much more planning of styles, selection of becoming colors, and fabrics than they have probably been accustomed to giving to their clothes. Each woman must be a law unto herself and avoid Fashion's fads and fancies but at the same time use good judgment in regard to every part of her costume.

³

Ibid, p. 181.

⁴

Picken, M. B., The Secrets of Distinctive Dress, p. 170.

The stout woman's complaint that manufacturers ignore her is no longer entirely true. Fashion designers, realizing the difficulties encountered by this group of persons, give extra attention to designing attractive garments for them. Of course, their choice is probably less extensive than that for the average size since, naturally, the designers are most interested in the more slender group. Especially within recent years has the size and style range for stout figures been broadened through the addition of half size, quarter size, and odd size lines to those carried as regular large size or stout sizes.⁵

Two things the stout woman should always keep in mind when trying to camouflage her size are that up and down lines give slenderness while crosswise ones tend to accentuate thickness.⁶ Waists with straight or surplice lines and skirts as long as possible and simple in line, plus sleeves plain and soft in appearance with a tendency to cling to the arm, are lines she should use in all her planning. Buttons or trimmings in single rows or broken lines add to this illusion of slenderness. Radiating trimmings, however, may easily destroy the up and down lines so desired, as well as loose trimming effects that float away from the figure.⁷

5

Nystrom, Paul H., Economics of Fashion.

6

Picken, Mary B., Secrets of Distinctive Dress, p. 172.

7

Ibid, p. 173.

Every time a curve is repeated, it increases the rotundity of the one decorated.⁸ The stout person should carefully avoid all curves. This should include round necklines as well as circular designs in fabrics, large round beads, short strands of beads, or round earrings either large or small. Other "rounds" in clothing or accessories that are taboo for her are round-toed shoes, large round dots on veils, round buttons, or a large round handbag.

Diagonals carefully used may be more effective in giving length lines to a costume than vertical ones. This is very effective if achieved through the use of bias-cut garments. Bias garments require a third more material but the result may be sufficiently smart to justify the extra expenditure.⁹

The woman with the tall heavy figure should approach severity in her clothes.¹⁰ Her chief concern is to keep the quality of dignity and poise her size demands, making it an asset rather than a liability. Very short skirts are unbecoming while ones that are too long make her appear old and heavy. She may use both horizontal and vertical construction lines but must avoid fluffy, dainty trimmings.

⁸Story, Margaret, How to Dress Well, p. 156.⁹Ibid, p. 158.¹⁰Stote, op. cit., p. 69.

Rich, elegant materials, smooth woolens and all dignified heavy-looking fabrics are hers. Again, a happy medium is the wisest choice.¹¹

A buyer with a highly successful dress department made the statement that she always gave the bulk of her business, especially orders for larger size dresses, to a house not specializing in larger sizes because they had never discontinued the use of pleats.¹² Pleats, according to this woman, have two important advantages; they are becoming to most women and they make a dress easier to fit on a woman with large hips or thighs. Pleats, if used in soft, supple, and non-bulky material, if fairly small in size, and if pressed in tightly so that the skirt does not flare broadly at the bottom, are extremely slenderizing. They supply sufficient width to permit graceful movement; they possess that concealing fullness which disguises unsightly bulges of hip, thigh, or back, and yet they give a slender, narrow silhouette. Pleats in panels or spaced arrangements may be more interesting than those which extend evenly all around the skirt and if they extend up into the bodice, even greater apparent height and slenderness is obtained. They are easily extended into the bodice by means of tucks or seaming as well as by the use of the pleats themselves.

¹¹

Buttrick, H. G., Principles of Clothing Selection, p. 64.

¹²

Hempstead, Laurene, Becoming Lines for Your Hard to Fit Customers, p. 27.

The large woman never conceals her size by trying to wear dresses designed for slender figures.¹³ A size 36 increased to a 46 does not become a slenderizing dress. She requires different vertical structural parts, panels, or drapery from the average figure which is not obtained in this manner. The large woman is not a wider, slender woman but rather a rounder person.¹⁴ Her chest and back measures are probably not more than 1 or 2 inches larger than the slender person yet her bust measure may be 10 inches larger. This means flesh put on from back to front as well as from side to side which must be considered when designing her dresses. The shape of the armseye is changed, being cut out more in front and up higher under the arm to allow for the greater dart space necessary to care for the larger bust. This problem has received special consideration from dress manufacturers because of their ability to check from the volume of complaints and returns on dresses and they consider it partly solved while the pattern companies have made much less satisfactory progress due to the slowness of their returns.

If attention is concentrated on the head and face, it helps to keep the body inconspicuous.¹⁵ This is best

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Story, op. cit., p. 156.

¹⁴

Eddy, Josephine; Wiley, Elizabeth C. B., Pattern and Dress Design, p. 29.

¹⁵

Buttrick, op. cit., p. 64.

accomplished by concentrating the decorative features of the costume around the neck or down the front of the garment. The neckline itself is governed by the shape of the face as well as the general figure. Pointed necks are usually the most slenderizing as they draw attention from the roundness of the face and give added length. Vests or collars that produce a flat, narrow line increase the illusion of length, especially if all trimmings are kept flat and smooth. High collars are generally unkind to stout persons, especially if the neck is inclined to shortness. However, a collar that stands up in the back may help to give length and should not be classed with a collar that extends high around the entire neck.

The stout woman never achieves slenderness by trying to crowd her figure into a dress too small for her.¹⁶ Properly fitted gowns, yes, but never garments too snug for comfort both in sitting and standing. If one's greatest breadth comes at the bust, a dress fitted too tightly makes the figure appear top-heavy. Sleeves that are overtight give a bulging appearance that is to be avoided, while garments with tightly swathed hips not only reveal contours but actually increase the apparent size of the hips.¹⁷

¹⁶

Stote, op. cit., p. 68.

¹⁷

Hempstead, Laurene, Color and Line in Dress, p. 164.

As to colors suitable for the larger figure, brilliant hard colors are ruled out since they increase the wearer's apparent size.¹⁸ Deep, soft, rich colors are those to use for the most flattering effect on the figure. If designs are used, small inconspicuous ones are the only suitable type. These might include geometric, conventional, or small floral ones. Even stripes, if in too brilliant colors, may lose their effectiveness. Shades instead of tints and carefully avoiding "pure" colors will do much to add to the illusion of slenderness. Pure white is especially unkind to the large figure as most of us have observed by seeing large men dressed in white suits.

One manufacturer, making a line of dresses especially for stout women, uses only the darkest navy blue in the best grade of material.¹⁹ Some of the dresses are trimmed in white but the most of them are untrimmed, tailored, and pressed to a turn. This type dress permits at least one remodeling and always looks nice, though one might not care for all the dresses in her wardrobe being in a single color no matter how attractive that color might be.

When the subject of color is mentioned, it is well for us to remember that colors which give an impression of warmth increase the apparent size of the figure, while cool

¹⁸

Wells, Jane Warren, Dress and Look Slender, p. 121.

¹⁹

Ibid, p. 126.

colors are receding and seem farther away from the eye which makes the surfaces they cover seem smaller.²⁰ This is especially true if the color is neutralized, or grayed, which makes the silhouette less conspicuous thus adding to the illusion of smaller proportions.

From a study of customer attitudes toward color and line in dress directed by New York University School of Retailing, we have the following summary: Vivid blondes dislike black; pale blondes and composite blondes dislike reds and yellows; red haired women have excellent ideas of what they should and should not wear; purple is disliked by pale brunettes and olive-skinned brunettes; composite brunettes think they are more limited in colors they can wear than they really are; women with white or gray hair fail to realize the need for colors to contrast hair tones; blue is the favorite color of half the women studied; horizontal stripes, bright plaids, and large, flowered prints are disliked by many people; small figured prints, and light and bright solid colors are liked by the great majority of women.²¹ Many customers studied indicated that the questionnaire called attention to points in color they had never considered before and that it would make them more observant in future buying. The study

²⁰

Hempstead, op. cit., p. 159.

²¹

Newton, Edith, "Customer Attitudes Toward Color and Line in Dress", Journal of Retailing, October, 1936, p. 83.

also showed that women have inadequate and erroneous ideas in regard to what they can and cannot wear and that expert salesmanship is necessary to sell them the right garment.

The rule of color may be varied. It is in interesting variations that we secure the most distinctive effects. Color has so much to do with the final appearance of any costume that each individual must find her particular color pace. The stout woman cannot stray from the less colorful by-ways to the brilliant main road trod by her slim sisters.²² She should never lose sight of the fact that true artistry may be expressed in the subtle shades to a much greater degree than by the use of brilliant colors, and that her size should be her first consideration in choice of colors for her costume.

Another important consideration with materials is texture. Glossy, shiny surfaces and stiff materials like taffeta are never as good as those soft enough to fall straight on the figure. Neither should flimsy materials like lace be considered unless they are weighted before being used. Likewise, stiff wiry fabrics are ruled out for the woman of larger proportions.²³ To her belong rich, heavy silks, brocades, velvets and all dignified-looking fabrics.²⁴ Clinging fabrics that reveal contours

²²

Wells, op. cit., p. 138.

²³

Ibid, p. 100.

²⁴

Buttrick, op. cit., p. 64.

call attention to unusual size.²⁵ For this reason, an elastic fabric such as jersey is particularly unbecoming. Any bulky, cumbersome fabric like rough tweeds and wool cloths would be considered unsuitable because of its tendency to make the large woman appear massive, however, lightweight materials of these same types may be very becoming. Soft pile fabrics are classed with becoming materials for the stout woman's dress while thick, erect pile fabrics not only add much more apparent bulk than the actual dimensions added, but also create heavy, rounded lines, no matter how straight the lines of the design.

Skillfully chosen textures contribute much to the becomingness of garments for the woman with a figure hard to fit.²⁶ The tall, heavy woman has great freedom in choice of texture. She can either emphasize her Amazonian appearance or render it inconspicuous by her choice in textures. The short, stout woman, on the other hand, is much more limited in her choice of textures. She needs to do much judicious planning if her ample bulk is concealed by the texture of the material chosen.

The path of the stout woman, like the path of the righteous, must always incline to the straight and narrow way, for it is thus that the solution of slenderizing lines is gained.²⁷

²⁵ Hempstead, op. cit., p. 230.

²⁶ Buttrick, op. cit., p. 75.

²⁷ Stote, op. cit., p. 77.

If the woman of ample proportions chooses fashions to suit her own type instead of accepting them blindly she at once sets herself apart from the ordinary woman who uses no discrimination and so immediately takes a step towards developing her own personality in her clothes.²⁸

²⁸

Ibid, p. 80.

CHAPTER III

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE READY-TO-WEAR INDUSTRY

The first factories for making clothing for women began operating as early as 1840. This was only a few years later than the opening of garment factories for men. The early factories made only cloaks and mantles which were offered for sale in retail stores. The demand for women's apparel increased following the Civil War and to the cloaks and mantles, was added coats, followed in a few years by a large demand for suits. The cloak and suit business showed a steady growth until 1910 when it suffered reverses and barely held its own for the next five years.

Following the business depression of 1893,¹ other lines were added to manufactured clothing for women. These included waists, dresses, underwear, house dresses, and goods for children and infants. By far the largest selling item was shirt-waists which reached an annual production of at least \$60,000,000 in 1910 but declined to the vanishing point in 1919.

House dresses or wrappers as they were first called, led the manufactured field from 1900 to 1910, but were gradually replaced by the demand and manufacture of kimono.² Since 1916, house dresses have been in greatest demand with better dresses a close second.

¹Nystrom, Paul H., Economics of Fashion, p. 413.²Ibid, p. 414.

Following a decline in volume during the World War when many factories were given over to the production of clothing for soldiers, manufactured clothing for civilians again started the upward climb.³ This lasted until 1921 when a general business depression, plus factory disturbances in the form of strikes, caused a decline in manufactures and great losses on machinery and buildings. To the loss from the depression was added another loss caused by the growth of fashion interest among customers which led to style piracy, a problem of manufacturers which has not yet been solved.

Before 1921, manufacturing organizations were of the type known as "inside", that is, the entire product of the factory was made under its own roof.⁴ Since that time, the rise of the jobber or stock house has changed production of women's ready-to-wear until by 1924 as much as 80 per cent was made by sub-manufacturers for jobbers. This was largely due to the fact that increased demands made it impossible for the factories to fill orders as rapidly as needed and the jobber stepped into the industry to help satisfy this need. His work has been so effective in speeding production that he remains in the industry as a necessary part of the group needed to meet consumer demands.

³Nystrom, Paul H., op. cit., p. 419.⁴Ibid., p. 442.

The number of adults in our present population equals 60 per cent of the total population.⁵ Of a number approximating 120 million, there are 80 million adults almost equally divided between men and women. These 40 million women furnish the market for ready-made clothing in the United States. Of this number, 50 per cent can be fitted with garments of standard size by making only slight alterations, thus exacting no unusual demands on the garment makers. It is the other 50 per cent that require special types of garments. As previously stated, 32 per cent come under the outsize group, and only 10 per cent can be fitted by the dress known as "standard outsize." The remaining 22 per cent demands special consideration if they are to be satisfactorily served by dressmaking concerns.

Of course, there is no such thing as a perfect figure.⁶ There may be women who are perfectly proportioned but even then, the personal preferences of others would be considered in judging these proportions as perfect. The perfect figure so far as the American manufacturer is concerned is the woman who measures 5 feet, 7 inches in height and wears a size 16 dress with no alteration. This is the type person who has the widest possible choice of wearing

⁵
Ibid, p. 462.

⁶
Enright, Kathleen, How to Sell Ready-to-Wear, p. 31.

apparel from the manufactured product only having to consider personal preferences in color, fabric, and style in her selections.

For many years no effort was made to fit the special group of hard-to-fit customers with ready-made garments. The first special consideration they received was shortly after 1900 when sizes for stouts were first made.⁷ As attention was called to fitting difficulties by the persons selling these sizes, changes were made in factory specifications which were designed to lessen the buyer's difficulty and decrease the number of alterations, thus leading to increased customer satisfactions.

One manufacturing company has been most successful in fitting stout women of varying types.⁸ After making a study of over five hundred stout figures, they selected forty for closer study. The proportions of this group were carefully analyzed and it was found that different patterns must be used for the various types. The company developed their own sets of patterns such as would care for both design and fitting problems for the different groups. They make frequent changes in both in order to suit the changing conditions of women's lives. In this way, sales are not retarded because of the addition of

7

Nystrom, Paul, Economics of Fashion, p. 463.

8

Eddy, Josephine F., Wiley, Elizabeth C. B., Pattern and Dress Design, p. 487.

from \$3 to \$5 for alteration costs and the consumer does not feel a hesitancy in selection because of the danger of dissatisfaction after the dress is altered. This firm does a large business with a very small percentage of returned goods and one which serves individual outside people as well, all because of the time spent in correct sizing.

Manufacturers have done more than check size specifications in attempting to increase trade and good will among buyers. They have tried to classify purchasers according to color types and make up clothing in becoming color for different complexion types.⁹ They also realize that not all persons who buy clothing are the same age level and have attempted, in some cases, to fit the garment to older or younger women according to their standards for the needs of these two groups.

A possible explanation for the limited choice of colors in stout sizes is that only a few colors have been found to decrease the wearer's apparent size. Manufacturing companies try to confine their output to these colors, knowing full well it will be their loss if a color does not sell. This is another way of economizing to prevent increased selling prices. Color is a variable quality, preferences are largely personal, and manufacturers have few guides to aid them in selecting ones that will sell.

⁹

Nystrom, Paul H., Economics of Fashion, p. 476.

Another aid from the manufacturer is the classification of customers into personality types.¹⁰ Bullock's of Los Angeles have been very successful in using this scheme. They find that it flatters the customer to know that her mental as well as physical qualities have been considered in trying to satisfy her needs.

Manufacturers of women's dresses have long had to combat the argument of poor workmanship on factory products as compared with the better quality workmanship of the garments made at home.¹¹ This they do by emphasizing the better style of the ready-to-wear garment plus the saving to the purchaser in time and health which is considered more valuable than a dress with perfect seams.

The manufacturers have listed the following as their greatest difficulties in fitting dresses: The shoulder line too long; armseye too deep; too much looseness in the armpits; hips cut too scant; upper arm of sleeve too tight and armseye too tight; back of neck fitted poorly; sleeve too tight from shoulder to elbow; sleeves cut on wrong grain of material; insufficient width across back of blouse; not enough material in the seams; and the wrong length.¹² They have found that some of these alterations cannot be made without changing the design of the dress,

¹⁰

Ibid, p. 479.

¹¹

Eddy, Josephine F., Wiley, Elizabeth C. B., Pattern and Dress Design, p. 488.

¹²

Ibid, p. 489.

while others can be made quite successfully. If the salesgirl is sufficiently trained, she will recognize these limitations and not attempt a sale which involves the extremely difficult alterations, if not, then the customer's knowledge of line and design is doubly useful in helping her to secure the proper type garment. Definite rules cannot be given in all these changes as individual differences enter into each problem in such a way as to prevent generalizations.¹³

Rather than practicability or durability, manufacturers aim for the style effect in their output. Ready-to-wear dresses may display a smartness by the "carefully careless" way they are put together that is lost by the home dressmaker who may sew too carefully and too well. When both perfection in style and good workmanship are combined in the same dress, the triumph is complete.¹⁴

Individual manufacturers have been guilty of skimping measurements in the lower-priced lines of women's dresses in order to cut production costs and undersell competitors.¹⁵ This practice has been most prevalent in the larger size dresses as it is in this line that material must be saved or selling prices elevated in order to secure profitable production. Skimping is most often found in the sleeves

¹³

Ibid, p. 498.

¹⁴

Picken, Mary B., The Art of Distinctive Dress, p. 191.

¹⁵

Nystrom, Paul H., Economics of Fashion, p. 471.

where there is insufficient grading of length, or the entire sleeve is cut too small. Other practices involve figures, stripes, or plaids cut on the wrong grain of the fabric, and several sizes cut at the same time and designated by different sizes. This situation is difficult for honest manufacturers to solve as long as there are no generally accepted standard sizes, or sufficient pressure from some central authority to prevent unscrupulous manufacturers from following these practices.

Dress factories, as an American institution, fill a need in our economic life that could not be met by any other means. With our hurried scheme of living and many outside activities, few women will spend the time and energy necessary to construct all the garments they need. It is very desirable, then, that present-day manufacturers endeavor as never before to meet the exacting demands of the trade, which includes a special effort on their part to solve the problems of the large woman with the hard-to-fit figure. How well they are succeeding is revealed in the consumer studies of chapters that follow.

While manufacturers have been working on the problem of fitting the larger woman with correctly proportioned dresses, the retail stores have shared in this responsibility. There has always been a spirit of cooperation between the two because each realizes that solving problems of one will aid in solving problems of the other.

In the earlier days when women generally felt that only inferior dresses were on the market and hesitated buying them, the average retail store carried few garments in the larger sizes since this stock moved very slowly. Today, it is not unusual to find one entire floor of a department store given over to selling only the larger sizes.

Retail stores have profited by their earlier experiences in fitting the large woman and no longer do they carry one size range in stout women's dresses and expect it to care for the needs of anyone who comes to buy. They have learned that line is of as much or more importance in customer satisfaction than merely securing a dress that can be worn and that it is not always safe to cut off enough of the skirt to make the dress as short as the purchaser requires. Instead, any store really desiring to please the customer carries sizes designed for the different figure demands of its trade.

After the retailer does all he can in stocking correct sizes for the larger woman, he supplies special services in the alteration department. Experienced alteration women will make all alterations needed, or if the customer prefers doing her own altering, the fitter will give a free pin-fitting at the time of purchase. Charges for altering in small stores are usually free or quite small unless a large amount of work is required. Most stores

do not accept the return of merchandise which has been changed to fit the customer's individual measurements thus making it imperative to satisfy the customer with any alterations made.

CHAPTER IV
PLAN OF SURVEY

In order to secure information on the problems encountered by stout women when they shop for ready-made dresses, contacts were made with the three agencies considered most capable of furnishing material that would give the facts needed for the study. These were: first, the manufacturers who make dresses designed especially for the larger figure; second, the retail dress shops or department stores selling a line of dresses in the larger sizes; third, the consumers who purchase dresses in sizes 38 and larger.

Dress manufacturers were written personal letters asking them for copies of their size charts used in scaling the line of dresses they make, also for any information available as to the method of determining these sizes and why they were chosen as standard sizes.¹ In addition, they were asked to give any particular information concerning their special line of dresses that was available. It was from these replies that the data on size standards, size variations, and figure limitations was obtained.

The retail dress dealer's point of view was secured through personal letters and interviews with several of

¹

Appendix, p. iii.

the leading retail stores of Oklahoma and Texas.² The stores in northern Texas were included since many Oklahoma women shop in these larger cities as well as in their home towns. In most instances, the buyer of women's dresses or the manager of the store gave the information which was as follows: size ranges in stout women's dresses carried by the store; demands on the various sizes by the store's trade; the store's policy regarding alterations, also the number and type of the more usual alterations; and the effect of alterations on consumer satisfactions with dresses purchased. This information was used in checking the services of the retail store to the ready-made dress business, especially in relation to stout sizes. It also helped to determine how fully consumer demands were being met by present manufacturing standards.

Finally the women who wear larger size dresses were contacted by means of a questionnaire and asked for certain information on their fitting problems and buying habits.³ Since the field of ready-made clothing for the stout woman is a very large one, it was decided to consider only the problems arising in the selection of ready-made dresses.

A preliminary letter was sent to fifty teachers of home economics in Oklahoma high schools asking for their

² Ibid, p. ii.

³ Ibid, p. i.



cooperation in distributing questionnaires in their locality, also the probable number they would need. Replies were received from sixteen of these letters asking for numbers of questionnaires varying from four to fifty.

No attempt was made to select any particular size women in the different groups. The only requirement was that the person must wear a size 38 or larger in order to be included in the survey. The replies received represent problems of women in widely separated localities and include about an equal number of rural and urban population of Oklahoma.

Replies were received from 230 women wearing dresses ranging in size from 38 to 56. These represent only replies from women who indicated all or part of their dresses were bought ready-made.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS OF INVESTIGATIONS

Letters to Manufacturers

In response to letters written to manufacturers who specialize in dresses for stout women, ten replies were received. Five of these replies included size charts or information on the methods used in determining the various sizes, three said no material on the subject was available for distribution, and two suggested other agencies as being more likely to have the material wanted.

From the information received, the types of dresses that are being made for stout women in garment factories of the United States may be grouped in these classes:

1. Regular Large Size, or regular outside line, as it is called by some manufacturers and including dresses in regular sizes from 38 to 54 inches bust measure.
2. Half-Size dresses from size $20\frac{1}{2}$ to $26\frac{1}{2}$ and designed for short stout figures of regular and irregular proportions.
3. Odd Sizes, sometimes called odd outsizes, ranging from 39 to 45 inches bust measure and designed especially for the woman whose hips are larger in proportion than her bust and who is too tall to wear half-size dresses. This is the same line of sizes that is sometimes designated as "odd half-sizes."

The tables given below show some of the size specifications received. Table II is from Anderman-Bob Burns Inc., New York, makers of stout size dresses for Marshall Field and Company, Chicago.¹ These measurements were established after the results of a survey extending over a three-year period had been compiled and tabulated. During this time, through the cooperation of retailers and women's clubs throughout the United States, a total of 650,000 women of all sizes, heights, and nationalities were measured. The following measures were taken: height, bust, hips, shoulders, and waist. It was found that 50 per cent of the women measured were size $20\frac{1}{2}$, the equivalent of size 40; 30 per cent were sizes $17\frac{1}{2}$ and $22\frac{1}{2}$, the equivalents of sizes 38 and 42; 12 per cent were size $24\frac{1}{2}$, the equivalent of size 44; and 8 per cent were size $26\frac{1}{2}$, the equivalent of size 46. No figures were given in this report on sizes smaller than forty nor larger than forty-six, although the resulting tables include measurements for persons wearing dresses sized as large as $52\frac{1}{2}$ inches bust measure. Those above size 46 are scaled proportionately, using the measurements made as a basis of enlargement.

Another group of statistics taken from insurance files and dealing exclusively with height was used in making Table III also used by Marshall Field and Company.² Of a

¹ Marshall Field and Company, A Letter, August 25, 1936.

² Ibid.

total of 135,000 records taken at random from the files, 81 per cent of the women were between 5 feet 2 inches and 5 feet 6 inches and 50 per cent between 5 feet 3 inches and 5 feet 5 inches in height. This caused the use of two separate size charts, one the "Missitype Half Sizes for Shorter Women" using a shorter waist line, sleeves, and skirt length, the other "Missitype Half Size Stouts for Tall Stout Women using longer waist lines, sleeves, and skirt.

Table IV shows the size scale of the Superior Model Form Company of New York, makers of dresses for Billy Miller Company, a concern specializing in what is known as half sizes designed especially for the "stylish stouts."³

Relative proportions in chart form are shown in Figure I which is used with the permission of the Baxley Manufacturing Company of Seattle, Washington, makers of "Betty Baxley" dresses.⁴ Rather than a chart for determining size specifications, this is designed to aid the salesperson in correctly fitting the customer. If she first measures her customer, then checks the measurements with this chart, it saves much time in that figure defects are shown before there is any attempt to show the stock and only suitable models need be shown.

³ Billy Miller Half-Size Dress Corporation, A Letter, June 12, 1937.

⁴ The Baxley Manufacturing Company, A Letter, June 12, 1937.

TABLE II
 SIZE SPECIFICATIONS RESULTING FROM STUDY
 OF BODY MEASUREMENTS

A. Missitype Half Sizes for Shorter Women						
Sizes	16 $\frac{1}{2}$	18 $\frac{1}{2}$	20 $\frac{1}{2}$	22 $\frac{1}{2}$	24 $\frac{1}{2}$	26 $\frac{1}{2}$
Hip	41	43	45	47	49	51
Bust	38 $\frac{1}{2}$	40 $\frac{1}{2}$	42 $\frac{1}{2}$	44 $\frac{1}{2}$	46 $\frac{1}{2}$	48 $\frac{1}{2}$
Waist Length (Back)	16	16 $\frac{1}{2}$	17	17	17 $\frac{1}{4}$	17 $\frac{1}{2}$
Arm Muscle	13 $\frac{1}{2}$	14	14 $\frac{1}{2}$	15	15 $\frac{1}{2}$	16
Across Back	14	14 $\frac{1}{2}$	15	15 $\frac{1}{2}$	16	16 $\frac{1}{2}$
Skirt Length	48	48	48	48	48	48
Sleeve Length	17	17	17 $\frac{1}{2}$	17 $\frac{1}{2}$	17 $\frac{1}{2}$	18

B. Equivalent Sizes in the Short Stouts

16 $\frac{1}{2}$ fits the average shorter 16 or 36 size woman.

18 $\frac{1}{2}$ fits the average shorter 20 or 38 size woman.

20 $\frac{1}{2}$ fits the average shorter 40 size woman.

22 $\frac{1}{2}$ fits the average shorter 42 size woman.

24 $\frac{1}{2}$ fits the average shorter 44 size woman.

26 $\frac{1}{2}$ fits the average shorter 46 size woman.

TABLE III
 SIZE SPECIFICATIONS BASED ON STUDY OF INSURANCE
 STATISTICS CONCERNING HEIGHT OF WOMEN

Sizes	40 $\frac{1}{2}$	42 $\frac{1}{2}$	44 $\frac{1}{2}$	46 $\frac{1}{2}$	48 $\frac{1}{2}$	50 $\frac{1}{2}$	52 $\frac{1}{2}$
Hip	47	49	51	53	55	57	59
Bust	45	47	49	51	53	55	57
Waist Length (Back)	18 $\frac{1}{2}$	18 3/4	19	19 $\frac{1}{4}$	19 $\frac{1}{2}$	19 3/4	20
Arm Muscle	15 $\frac{1}{2}$	16	16 $\frac{1}{2}$	17	17 $\frac{1}{2}$	18	18 $\frac{1}{2}$
Skirt Length	50	51	51	51	51	51 $\frac{1}{2}$	51 $\frac{1}{2}$
Sleeve Length	18 $\frac{1}{2}$	18 $\frac{1}{2}$	18 $\frac{1}{2}$	19	19	19	19 $\frac{1}{2}$

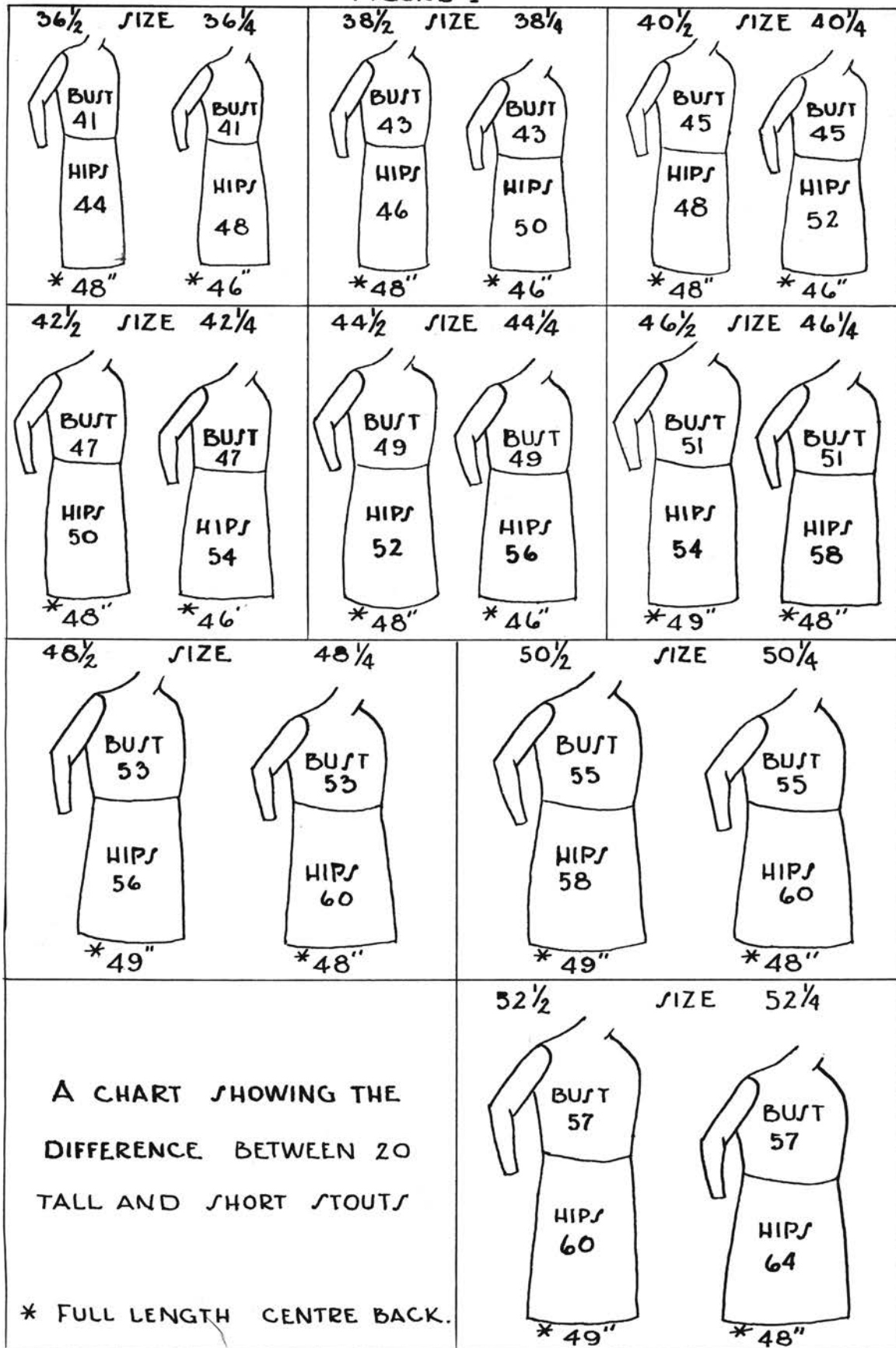
B. Equivalent Sizes in the Tall Stouts

40 $\frac{1}{2}$ fits the average tall 42 size woman.
 42 $\frac{1}{2}$ fits the average tall 44 size woman.
 44 $\frac{1}{2}$ fits the average tall 46 size woman.
 46 $\frac{1}{2}$ fits the average tall 48 size woman.
 48 $\frac{1}{2}$ fits the average tall 50 size woman.
 50 $\frac{1}{2}$ fits the average tall 52 size woman.
 52 $\frac{1}{2}$ fits the average tall 54 size woman.

TABLE IV
 GARMENT SIZE SPECIFICATIONS USED BY SUPERIOR
 MODEL FORM COMPANY, NEW YORK

	Size	Bust	Normal Waist	Hips	Across Back
Ladies	36	39	31 $\frac{1}{2}$	42	15 $\frac{1}{8}$
	38	41	33 $\frac{1}{2}$	44	15 $\frac{5}{8}$
	40	43	35 $\frac{1}{2}$	46	16 $\frac{1}{8}$
	42	45	37 $\frac{1}{2}$	48	16 $\frac{5}{8}$
	44	47	39 $\frac{1}{2}$	50	17 $\frac{1}{8}$
Half Sizes	16 $\frac{1}{2}$	36 $\frac{1}{2}$	30	40	14
	18 $\frac{1}{2}$	38 $\frac{1}{2}$	32	42	14 $\frac{1}{2}$
	20 $\frac{1}{2}$	40 $\frac{1}{2}$	34	44	15
	22 $\frac{1}{2}$	42 $\frac{1}{2}$	36	46	15 $\frac{1}{2}$

FIGURE I



Sizing of dresses seems to have been one of the first problems receiving consideration by manufacturers. At first, the standards of sizing did not fully parallel the measurements of the human body but as studies have been made of persons, new size standards have been established. Manufacturers do not consider the sizing problem solved and they frequently make changes when customer difficulties seem to warrant these changes.

Since women vary in height, different scales of measures are needed for tall and short figures which has led to three types of dresses for stout persons being found on today's market.

From the charts given, we note that similarity exists in the scales of measurements used by various companies. One retail store says that specifications are the same from most manufacturers and that they have been determined from a "standard system of measurements."⁵

All companies use bust, waist, and hip measures in arranging their charts. In some cases length of back of waist and skirt is included. This seems to be especially needed in the half size ranges. Width of back is considered in one chart for half sizes.

The average manufacturing company is quite willing to send out charts showing their size specifications while mail order companies do not seem to care for their charts

5

Rothschild's B. and M., A Letter, June 22, 1937.

being known to the public. Of letters written to five of the leading companies of the United States selling by mail, only one reply was received.⁶ It simply stated that there was no material on the subject available for distribution.

⁶ Montgomery Ward and Company, A Letter, August 25, 1936.

Retail Stores--Letters and Interviews

The buyers of women's dresses in the different stores contributed the data given below. They were contacted by means of letters and personal interviews and asked to contribute to the study from the viewpoint of goods and services the retail store has to offer stout women when they shop for ready-made dresses. Twenty-one stores in Oklahoma and North Texas supplied the information which is given in this outline.⁷

Method of Buying: All stores purchase their stock of ready-made dresses by specification from the manufacturer's size lines, choosing those sizes most in demand by the women in their locality. The retail stores feel that specifications from different manufacturers show only slight variations in sizes, and are satisfactory buying guides.

Per Cent of Stock in Large Sizes: In regard to the percentage of stock carried in large sizes, it was found that 15 of the stores carried from 10 to 20 per cent of their dress stock in sizes 38 and above. Four of the stores carried one-third of their stock in large sizes, and only two of the number reporting did not stock dresses larger than size 40.

Size Distribution: Most stores stock dresses in sizes 38 to 52 with the greatest number being in sizes

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Appendix, p. iii.

38 to 44. No specific figures were given on the number of dresses larger than 44 in stock; however, each buyer mentioned the fact that "only a few" dresses larger than size 44 were carried.

Nineteen of the stores carried half-sizes in stock and found them growing in favor among their stout customers. This line requires fewer alterations than any other in their opinion.

Eight stores carried odd sizes, and one store listed odd half-sizes as part of its regular stock. These sizes are known in some stores as "Marie Dressler" dresses named after the late motion picture actress.

The development of the chain store has had an interesting effect on the variety of dresses in stout sizes carried in one store's stock.⁸ In a national organization composed of hundreds of retail stores, many dresses in the larger sizes are needed to supply the demand of all the stores. By purchasing in quantity from one manufacturer, the company is given a very attractive price and great variety in sizes. This makes it possible for the individual stores to feature dresses in sizes as large as 56. Most of the larger sizes are carried in "house dresses" made of various types of cottons; however, they carry more than the usual number of better dresses in these larger size

8

J. C. Penny Company, An Interview, July 25, 1936.

ranges. Silk crepes, sheers and rayons are the usual materials shown in their better dresses.

Percentage of Alterations: The highest percentage of alterations reported by any store was 75, while the lowest was 15 per cent. The average per cent of alterations in large size dresses is 50 per cent.

Alterations: Some of the alterations commonly needed in dresses are:

1. Length of skirt.
2. Size of waist line.
3. Adjusting side seams.
4. Length of sleeve and fit of armseye.
5. Fit of neck.

The length of skirt and size of waist line were given by each store as being the adjustments they most often had to make in their larger size dresses.

Charges for Alterations: Alteration was free in ten of the stores while a minimum charge, set by the retail stores, was made by eleven stores reporting. A table of alteration charges used in an Oklahoma City store is typical of the prices charged for this service.⁹

Hem--shortened or lengthened by machine-----	\$1.00
Rolled or hemmed by hand-----	1.50
Pleated or circular skirts-----	2.00
Sleeves--shortened and cuff adjusted-----	1.00
Set in gusset-----	1.00

Waistline--shortened-----	\$1.00
Shortened and adjust size-----	2.00
Shoulder alteration-----	2.00
Adjust side seams and underarms-----	1.50

Pin fitting, if done by the clerk was free; if the alteration woman did it, there was a small charge made.

Effect of Alterations on Returns in Dresses: The stores do not accept returns on dresses that have been altered in individual measurements. This was the rule given by each of the twenty-one stores contacted.

Consumer Questionnaire

Replies to the questionnaire sent to consumers were received from 230 stout size women.¹⁰ Considerable difficulty was experienced in securing data from this group of persons as most of them seemed very sensitive regarding size and were reluctant to check their problems on a printed form. For this reason, the study is much smaller in number than was anticipated.

Sizes of the women checking the questionnaires ranged from 38 to 56 inches bust measure. The distribution of size and the number and per cent in each size is shown in the following table.

TABLE V
SIZE DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN

Size	Number	Per Cent
38	76	33.04
40	59	25.65
42	35	15.21
44	28	12.17
46	14	6.21
48	9	3.91
50	4	1.73
52	2	.86
54	2	.86
56	1	.43

¹⁰
Appendix, p. i.

Only nine of the women who replied to the questionnaire said dresses they purchased did not require any alterations. These were distributed as follows:

Size 38 - 4

Size 40 - 2

Size 42 - 2

Size 42 - 1

Of the two hundred and twenty-one women requiring alterations, the number of alterations needed by each person ranged from one to eight. Tabulations, including percentage distributions, are shown in Table VI.

TABLE VI
NUMBER OF ALTERATIONS REQUIRED IN
READY-MADE DRESSES

Dress Size	Number of Alterations									Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
38	4	9	15	13	13	10	5	5	2	76
40	2	9	1	12	12	9	4	4	1	59
42	2	3	7	7	4	5	6	1	-	35
44	1	1	5	3	6	4	5	3	-	28
46	-	1	1	5	4	2	1	-	-	14
48	-	1	-	1	3	2	-	2	-	9
50	-	-	-	2	1	1	-	-	-	4
52	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	2
54	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	2
56	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Totals	9	24	35	43	44	33	22	17	3	230
Per Cents	4	10	15	19	19	14	10	7	2	

The type of alterations most often needed included adjustment of blouse length, waist measure, and length of skirt. Other alterations varied in number and were considerably less than those included in the first group. The figures given in Table VII show the number listing each alteration required; also the per cent.

TABLE VII
NUMBER AND PER CENT OF ALTERATIONS LISTED

Alteration	Number	Per Cent
Blouse shortened	130	56
Blouse lengthened	30	13
Armseye made larger	53	23
Armseye made smaller	26	11
Sleeve lengthened	40	17
Sleeve shortened	66	28
Sleeve made larger	27	11
Waist made smaller	92	40
Waist made larger	26	11
Bust fullness increased	42	18
Bust fullness decreased	63	27
Skirt lengthened	73	31
Skirt shortened	99	43
Hip size increased	82	35
Hip size decreased	57	24

Of the entire number of women, 96 per cent required some altering on the dresses they purchased. Seventy-three per cent of this number felt that the alterations made were satisfactory, while the remaining 23 per cent were not satisfied with altering after it had been done for them. Alterations were made free of charge for 71 per cent, while 29 per cent paid a minimum charge for the work. Forty-five per cent of the women said the stores would give a free pin fitting if they wished to do the sewing themselves or have their own dressmaker do it for them.

Three shopping centers were used by the women in shopping for dresses. Eighty-seven per cent made their purchases in their home towns; 30 per cent shopped in their home towns and also in nearby cities; and 11 per cent did some of their shopping from mail order houses.

Eighty-four per cent found their size in stock when they shopped, and 62 per cent could buy their size at sales. Of the group buying dresses at sales, only 44 per cent felt that quality was the same as in regular stocks. In addition to the variation in quality at sales, 49 per cent said sale garments they purchased usually required extra alterations which were not always satisfactory.

The size on the dress was no indication that it had the same measurements of previous garments purchased in this same size. Ninety-three per cent said the same size

dress did not always fit them in the same way, and only 7 per cent felt that they could depend on garment sizes for correct fit.

The stout woman seems to have less difficulty in choice of styles, materials, and colors than she does in correct sizing. Sixty-nine per cent could find styles in ready-made dresses suited to their age; 56 per cent could secure wanted materials in their size; and 78 per cent had sufficient choice of colors to satisfy their needs.

As size increased, the cost of the dress increased. A total of 52 per cent of the women had to pay more for their dresses because of the size they wore. Only 22 per cent of this number was in sizes 38-40, while 58 per cent of the dress sizes included in the survey were in these two groups.

In 32 per cent of the replies, it was said the sleeves of ready-made dresses drew or pulled, an indication that they were cut on the wrong grain of the material.

Thirty-two per cent felt they could buy a dress that fit them better than one they made themselves or had a dressmaker make for them. The remaining 68 per cent did not buy ready-made dresses because of the superior garment they obtained but rather to save time and energy for other activities.

The greatest demand in stout size dresses is for the regular large size, or regular outside as it is sometimes

known. This is also the size available in most shopping centers which possibly accounts for its popularity among shoppers. Sixty-two per cent of the women replying purchased this size range. The next most popular line, and one which is rapidly increasing in demand among stout women shoppers, is that known as half-sizes. Shoppers and retailers alike say these dresses require fewer alterations than any other large size garments. Twenty-five per cent of the women said the half-size gave them the best fitting dress. The third and newest line in large women's dresses is the odd outsize, or odd half-size, as it is sometimes called, which is now carried in most of the larger city stores but is seldom found in the smaller towns according to replies received from the consumers. Since this is a size range made especially for large women with special figure defects, it is not suited to a great many persons. However, 13 per cent of those replying felt that odd size dresses fit them better than either the regular large sizes or the half-sizes.

A summary of the stout women's shopping habits is given in Table VIII on the following page.

TABLE VIII
SUMMARY OF CUSTOMER BUYING HABITS

Shop in home town	87 %
Home town and nearby city	30
Shop by mail	11
Size wanted usually in stock	84
Number purchasing half-sizes	23
Half-sizes fit better	25
Purchasers of odd outsizes	12
Odd sizes usually in stock	35
Regular size fits best	62
Half-size fits best	25
Odd size fits best	13
Size found at sales	62
Quality the same at sales	44
Sale garments require extra alterations	49
Dresses required altering	96
Alterations satisfactory	73
Store does all the altering	89
Store gives free pin fitting	45
Altering done free of charge	71
Minimum alteration charges	29
Size always the same	7
Sizes varied	93
Styles suited to age available	69
Wanted materials available	56
Wide choice of colors	78
Size required increased price	52
Sleeves cut on wrong grain of material	32
Ready-made dress fits better	32

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

The difficulties stout women encounter when they shop for ready-made dresses began with the rise of the ready-to-wear industry following the close of the Civil War. Previous to this time with all sewing done in the home or by the individual tailor, each person was fitted according to the demands of her own figure. With the development of an industry designed to supply the dress needs of all women, naturally, problems of the majority group received first consideration. It is only in more recent years that the smaller group of persons, hard to fit because of their size, have been given special study by those agencies desiring to increase the volume of the ready-made dress business.

In order to secure more adequate size ranges in stout women's dresses, numerous studies of figure measurements have been undertaken by manufacturers and other interested persons in recent years. Some of these studies have been worthwhile and have supplied data useful in determining the measurements best suited to the greatest number of individuals, while others have been practically worthless from the garment maker's point of view. Perhaps the greatest criticism of these studies is based on the fact that fewer persons have been measured than is necessary to secure correct generalizations. This is especially evident in the measurements regarding length, both of skirts and

of blouses. Judging from the number of persons requiring both these measurements shortened, manufacturers might well make anthropometric studies of larger size women in order to check on their average height and determine the best length for these two measurements.

✓ The stout woman's dress receives hard wear and much strain on the seams. Scrupulous manufacturers realize this fact and try to avoid skimping measurements when making these garments. Since both large and average size lines of similar dresses are sold by the retail stores in the same price range, manufacturers are forced to resort to all possible economy practices in cutting the larger sizes. In the hands of less scrupulous persons these economies sometimes result in skimpy seam allowances or by using the wrong grain for some part of the dress. While this practice results in lower prices it also decreases satisfaction with the purchase and lessens the service the shopper has a right to expect from her dress.

✓ The women who purchase ready-made dresses in stout sizes are not so sure the stores meet their needs in sizes as the stores themselves are. While practically every store reported dresses in stout sizes carried in their stocks, many women who needed these sizes did not find them in stock when they shopped for dresses. This leads to the conclusion that while some stout size dresses are usually available to women shoppers, they do not include

sufficient variety to care for all the size demands made on the average retail store.

There is more agreement on colors and styles of dresses in stout sizes among customers, manufacturers, and retailers than there is concerning size. A majority of this group of shoppers demands the darker colors, either in solids or prints as they understand the principle of optical illusion well enough to know that dark colors do more to camouflage size than any others. Manufacturers and retailers realize that conservative colors and styles leave them fewer garments on hand, therefore, they are most willing to offer only the more conservative lines to their stout customers.

Stout women do not find the same satisfactions in seams and fit in many of the low priced ready-made dresses that they obtain from the ones made at home or by dress-makers. However, the saving in time and energy afforded by purchasing all or part of their dresses ready made so far overbalances the lack of perfection in construction and fit that the number patronizing the shops is steadily increasing. Because of this fact, the difficulties they encounter in shopping are of great interest to the ready-made dress business. It is only when the nature of a problem is known that a satisfactory solution may be obtained, therefore, it is necessary for the women who require large size dresses to place their needs before the agencies designed to

serve them. These needs are determined mainly by the respective size, age, personal appearance and activity of the individual concerned.

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Correspondence

Manufacturers:

The Baxley Dress Manufacturing Company, Seattle, Washington.

Baron Dress Company, Boston, Massachusetts

Bloomfield Dress Company, Cleveland, Ohio.

Lane Bryant Company, New York City.

Nelly Don Garment Makers, Kansas City, Missouri.

Billy Miller Half-Size Dress Corporation, New York City.

Melba Dress Company, New York City.

Perfect Dress and Costume Company, New York City.

Berth Robert Company, New York City.

Sunny Dress Manufacturing Company, New York City.

Simon Costume and Dress Company Inc., New York City.

Retail Stores:

Adams Department Store, Holdenville, Oklahoma.

John A. Brown Company, Oklahoma City.

The Brown-Dunkin Dry Goods Company, Robertson, Harry,
Tulsa, Oklahoma

The Empress, Holdenville, Oklahoma.

G. and G. Store, Stillwater, Oklahoma

A. Harris and Company, Joyce, Joan, Dallas, Texas.

Harry Katz Company, Skinner, Ruth, Oklahoma City.

Katz Department Store, Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Kerr Dry Goods Company, Oklahoma City.

Kelly-Wilder Shop, Holdenville, Oklahoma.

McEwen's, Oklahoma City.

J. W. Madden Company, Denison, Texas

Marks Bros., Sherman, Texas.

R. H. Macy and Company, New York.

Montgomery Ward and Company, Kansas City.

The J. C. Penny Company, Holdenville, Oklahoma.

Perkins Bros. Company, Durant, Oklahoma.

The Parisian, Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Peyton's, Jarvis, L. H., Oklahoma City.

Rothschild's B. and M. Waterman, Robert, Oklahoma City.

Sanger Brothers, Rowley, Helen M., Dallas, Texas.

Obera Sherman Shop, Durant, Oklahoma.

Streets, Oklahoma City.

Vandever's. Day, Dorothy, Tulsa.

APPENDIX

A Study of the Problems Encountered by
Stout Women in Selecting Ready-made Dresses

Questionnaire

Part I. Please check the alterations you usually require in ready-made dresses.

Blouse shortened

Blouse lengthened

Armseye made larger

Armseye made smaller

Sleeve made longer

Sleeve made shorter

Sleeve made larger

Waist made smaller

Waist made larger

Bust fullness increased

Bust fullness decreased

Skirt lengthened

Skirt shortened

Hip size increased

Hip size decreased

Part II. Please answer the following:

1. What size dress do you usually purchase?

2. Where do you usually shop for dresses?

Home town _____

Nearby city _____

Mail order houses _____

3. Is your size usually in stock?
4. Do you ever buy half-sizes?
 - a. Do they fit better than regular sizes?
5. Do you ever buy odd size garments?
 - a. Are odd sizes usually available in the stores where you shop?
6. Which type of dress fits you best?
Regular size _____
Half-size _____
Odd size _____
7. Can you buy your size at sales?
8. Is quality the same at sales?
9. Do sale garments require extra alterations?
10. Do your dresses usually require altering?
11. Are alterations you have made satisfactory?
12. Does the store do all the altering?
13. Does the store pin-fit with you doing the sewing?
14. What is the charge for altering?
15. Does the same size always fit the same?
16. Can you find styles suited to your age?
17. Can you find wanted materials in your size?
18. Do you have a wide choice of colors?
19. Do you have to pay more because of the size you require?
20. Do your sleeves ever draw or pull because they are cut on the wrong grain of material?
21. Can you buy a dress that fits better than one you make or have made?

Letters to Manufacturers

The following questions were asked in personal letters written to manufacturers of women's dresses.

1. Will you send me a copy of size specifications for stout women's dresses that you use in your factory?
2. Have you any information available as to how these measures were established?
3. What are the ranges of stout sizes made in your factory?

Letter to Retail Stores

Questions:

1. Do you purchase ready-made dresses by specification from garment factories or do you have your own size scales?
2. What per cent of your stock is carried in outsizes?
3. How is this distributed?
4. Do you carry half-sizes?
5. Do you carry odd sizes?
6. What is the demand for half-size and odd size dresses?
7. What is the percentage of alterations?
8. List the more common alterations?
9. Does the store pin-fit, or do all the altering, or both?

10. What are the usual alteration charges?
11. Does altering increase or decrease returns
on dresses?
12. What colors do you carry in stout sizes?

Typist:

Florence Lackey

Stillwater