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PROBLEMS IN THE SELECTION OF SCHOOL TROUSERS  
BY NINTH GRADE BOYS

by

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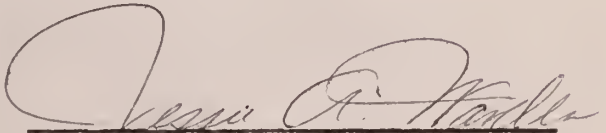
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## INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

It is a recognized fact that clothes play an important part in the life of the male. Parents, teachers, school administrators, and students have become more aware in recent years of the importance of dress in the academic and social life of the student. These facts created an interest in the writer to study clothing selection by boys of junior high age. Through the observance of teenagers as a teacher, through contact with parents and others interested in teenagers, as well as, through discussions with teenagers themselves, there seemed to the author for this age level to be a need to define and to investigate problems in the selection of clothing by boys. This study was undertaken to determine a specific problem area in the selection of boys' clothing; to investigate some reasons for choice of a specific garment; coupled with the author's desire to stimulate further and more complete research in the area of clothing selection for boys.

Joseph Manch (1947) found in his studies that certain styles of dress were identified with hoodlumism by police, educators, and citizens. In fact, many teachers feel that the way in which boys and girls dress is frequently reflected in their behavior. Accepting this as a premise, many schools have deemed it desirable to encourage better dress among

secondary school students in the hope that it would favorably affect attitudes as well as conduct.

The existence of a problem in the area of clothing selection has been indicated by the large number of "dress codes" that have been formulated and adopted by many student bodies. In the halls of the nation's schools can be seen far more well-dressed than poorly-dressed students (Time, 1963) yet, in much literature of today and yesterday, can be found reports of problems, both social and academic, connected with clothing selection of teenage boys (Handel, 1957; Manch, 1947; Rafferty, 1958).

There is no other factor in the life of a young person as important as how he feels about himself. What he wears has much to do with this personal evaluation. Hollingsworth (1938) re-emphasized the need of the adolescent boy for social approval, "the clothes must be 'right' or acute misery ensues." (p. 114) The nature of the teenage boy's self-evaluation depends much upon the degree of social approval that he earns. What he considers as "social approval" and the meaning that is given to the same term by parents and teachers, may vary greatly. Although there is much written, little research has been done connected with the selection of clothing by boys.

The investigator in this study teaches in a junior high school and has the opportunity daily to view boys and the clothes they wear. From the investigator's observation,



what may seem to be a problem area according to adult standards, may not prove to be an area of concern from the student's point of view.

Adolescent boys become keenly aware of their clothing as they feel it affects their social standing in their group. It is highly important to them that they, too, be dressed like other members of the group. This slave-like devotion to the "fashion of the gang" frequently results in conflicts with parents, who are called upon to provide the clothing and who may fail to appreciate the importance that the teenage boy places upon wearing the "correct" type of clothes. Teachers and other adults concerned with teenagers may lose sight of the adolescent's real concern with the style and appropriateness of the garments he wears.

It often becomes very difficult for teachers and parents to realize that many changes in today's society of the teenager have taken place. Desirable or undesirable, there are changes in students' school wear. There are many reasons for these changes: the vast number of teenagers; the media of television through which fads and styles of teenage "names in the news" are more quickly seen and adopted; the greater freedom of choice given to the modern teenager; and, a more informal atmosphere which pervades the school of today.

Being aware of these things, the author became interested in investigating some area of clothing selection

on the teenage level. Did a problem exist in the selection and wearing of clothing for ninth grade boys? If so, what specific garment offered them the biggest problem and was it only an individual problem or was it of importance to the adults in their lives, as well?

Ryan's study (1953) indicated that boys are just as much affected as girls are by feeling well-dressed or poorly-dressed and have similar attitudes toward clothing. It is important to the welfare and happiness of the family, as well as to authorities in the field of education to know how clothing affects the attitudes of teenage boys. To discover something about knowledge of clothing selection and what contributed to this knowledge of junior high school ninth grade boys was the secondary aim of this study.

The three major objectives of this study were: (1) to determine if a problem for ninth grade boys did exist in clothing selection, (2) to investigate reasons for choice of certain items of clothing by teenage boys, (3) to provide a background for further study in the selection of clothing for adolescent boys.



## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

"A man, in a sense belongs to his clothes; they are so much of part of him that, to take him seriously, one must know how he walked about, in what habit, with what air" (Calthrop, 1926, p. 9). Calthrop voiced this theory in 1926 in describing the costume and its effect on the English male.

The Psychology of the Adolescent by Hollingsworth (1928), also emphasized the male need for social approval by seeking this approval in the clothes he wears. "The clothes must be 'right' or acute misery ensues." (p. 14)

By comparing views of authorities in the field of adolescent psychology during the early part of the twentieth century with those doing research during the middle "forties" and those of the "sixties," a direct parallel becomes evident. Calthrop and Hollingsworth were both in agreement with Garrison (1945) and Rogers (1962). "Taste varies with localities but the one that will be followed by most boys is the one that meets with self approval and peer-approval" (Garrison, 1945, p. 134). A recent study by Rogers (1962) subscribes to this theory; "Self concept is probably the most important determinant in the choice of clothes by adolescents." (p. 134)

The adolescent is concerned with the style and appropriateness of the garments he wears. He selects garments appropriate to the occasion and is governed by the styles worn by others of his group. He wants to have a part in the selection for his clothing and is willing to accept some responsibility for its care (Hurlock, 1955).

Eve Macauley (1929), in an article written for The British Journal of Medical Psychology, stated that when young adolescents began to show increased interest in their changing bodies, this interest resulted in a changed attitude toward clothing. She further stated that after twelve years of age, interest in fashion seemed to be combined with an interest in the suitability of the clothing. This suitability, according to Macauley, was directly related to what other boys and girls considered suitable.

One survey (Symonds, 1936), in which 1641 subjects were questioned, found that in the fifteen areas of individual concern for the adolescent the items relating to personal attractiveness rated highest for interest and was one of the three mentioned as the greatest problems of all.

In 1937, Block did a survey in the area of conflicts of adolescents with their mothers. By means of a questionnaire, an index of conflicts that high school students were facing was obtained. A study was made of fifty problems indicated by the students. The result from the study by Block pointed

to the possibility that more mother-son conflicts were due to differences in thinking regarding personal appearance, habits, and manners than to any other causes.

Several investigations have been undertaken in the area of clothing choices of teenage girls, but very little research was available to use in determining the importance of and the problems that arise in the area of clothing selection for the teenage boy. No studies were found in which the mothers' and sons' feelings about an adolescent son's clothing were compared.

Do boys have worries about being well-dressed? This question was given an affirmative answer in a survey done by Ryan (1953). The indication was that boys were affected in much the same way as girls by feeling well or poorly dressed. It was further reported by Ryan that, in general, the high school boys seemed to have greater confidence in their appearance than the high school girls. She further stated that one of the factors that influenced confidence in clothing was that boys tended to feel more secure than girls.

Baldwin (1960) in her study of clothing problems of the teenage boy, showed that boys often wore clothing that they disliked just to please their mothers. What the boy might prefer personally, often took second place in his choice to that of his mother. What their friends wore often was a determining factor when choosing their own clothing.

This study was done in three different age groups: (1) fourteen and fifteen, (2) sixteen and seventeen, and (3) eighteen and nineteen. The content, size, and cost of the wardrobe, grooming habits, and the conflicts between parent and adolescent were considered. Baldwin in a study of 111 boys and their clothing problems, found that the younger (14-15) age groups were highly concerned with style and identification with their age groups. The older age group considered comfort to be a more important factor than style when choosing their clothes. There was a significant indication shown in the desire of boys at the junior and senior high school age to please the opposite sex (Crow, 1961). Crow concluded that this desire was true as low as the eighth grade for some boys, but by the ninth grade through high school, it was considered of prime importance.

Hurlock (1955) believed that the adolescent's interest in clothing stems from a realization of the importance that clothing plays in group status. "When dressed like other members of the group, the individual identifies himself with the group and feels that he belongs to it." (p. 246) That, this "belonging" is a very necessary feeling at the junior high age level is believed by Hurlock.

A project in which rules and regulations were set by school officials in order to have a positive influence on students' dress, is reported upon by Spray (1961). He



believed that this project was carried out for the following reasons:

- (1) The belief that clothes directly influence a student's behavior and attitudes toward school and learning.
- (2) The teenager's dress was reflected in his entire personality.
- (3) A young person's social and moral character was often judged by his dress and grooming.

Most educators agreed that schools have a responsibility for providing guidance in personal dress and grooming, according to Arnstein (1958). Even though there was this agreement among educators, Manch (1947), in the study done with the cooperation of students in the Buffalo, New York, school system, emphasized the importance of the students' participation in the program. "The progress of the program must not overshadow its fundamental purpose." (Manch, 1947, p. 45)

Literature reviewed for this investigation mainly consisted of theses written in the area of clothing selection for the teenager; psychological effects of clothing on the teenager; interests of students as related to their selection of clothing; and, selection of clothing and its relationship to academic standing and social acceptance. Also, reviewed were periodical and magazine articles pertaining to the

teenager and his selection of clothing. Books which discussed the psychology of the teenage youth were used as background material in order to better understand the place that clothing selection plays in the developmental task concept of growth in adolescents.

The American Institute of Men's and Boys' Wear has done much to instill the desire for proper dress in the habits of American teenage boys. The "Dress Right" program carried on in high schools throughout the United States, sponsored by the men's and boys' apparel industry, has been very influential in making the teenage boy aware of correct dress and good grooming habits (American Institute of Men's and Boys' Wear, Inc.).

The conclusion drawn by Forbes (1957) in her master's thesis on the clothing interests of high school boys, seemed to agree with the general opinion of other studies; boys, to some extent, are interested in all areas of clothing. The three problems related to clothing that she found boys most interested in were the following: (1) what's new in fashion for boys, (2) how to press boys' clothes, and, (3) how to make some boys' garments.

In "Men's Wear Important," an article published in The Journal of Home Economics, February, 1954, Gilbert observed that style cues were taken from leaders or from popular figures. "Boys imitate what they like, respect or



admire. The well-dressed man is impressive. If he feels confident, he inspires confidence. To be successful in school, socially, or in later life, one must have pride in himself, and must reflect that personality to others."  
(Gilbert, 1954, p. 271)

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

The interpretation given to the following terms used in this study was in accordance with the definitions noted in references concerning young people and the vernacular of the teenager himself.

The definitions of these terms were submitted to a committee of ninth grade boys and were revised as they suggested.

1. "Blue" jeans refers to a type of boys' trousers of western design usually made of a denim-type fabric.

2. Continentials include those trousers made from various fabrics but of a slim-cut design that fits low on the hips.

3. "Cords" designate any school trouser regardless of design, which is made of corduroy fabric.

4. Ivy-leagues refer to a slim-cut type trouser which fits low on the hips and is beltless and the pockets are usually slash pockets with button-down flaps on the back.

5. Levis refer to the western-cut blue jeans that are more slender in the legs and shorter in the rise of the trouser and have riveted pockets like those of true western wear.

6. Pants is the term used to designate the various types of trousers worn by the boys used in the study and is used interchangeably with "trousers."

7. Teenager refers to any young person between the ages of thirteen through nineteen.

8. "White" jeans refers to a type of trousers that are made from a twill-type fabric and designed with a cut which is similar to that of the western jean, however, the color is more beige than white.

## METHOD OF PROCEDURE

The participants in this study were boys in the ninth grade, Curtis Junior High School in Wichita, Kansas. The boys were a selected group only in that they were members of the ninth grade at Curtis. The boys had only grade level in common; they were of varying socio-economic levels; their ages varied from thirteen plus, to sixteen years. It was expected that their likes and dislikes, home backgrounds, "clothes sense," and personalities were as varied as those of any group of boys of similar environment.

Curtis Junior High School is a large school of over 1100 students. It is situated in Wichita, Kansas, a city of over 265,000 population. There are fourteen junior high schools in the city. Curtis is located on the same campus adjacent to a high school and a grade school. The campus encompasses in excess of eighty acres of land. The fact that students can complete twelve years of schooling on the same campus might or might not have any bearing on the boys' choice of clothing for school. Since the junior high years are thought to be "hero worship" years, being close to a high school could prove to be a determining factor in the choice of clothing selected by the boys at Curtis.

Curtis is made up of boys and girls from all levels of socio-economic standing. There is a strong school loyalty prevalent in the student body. Charles Curtis Junior High School, being located on the fringe of an above-average income area, has a large number of students who have many of life's advantages, so far as money can provide. On the west boundary of the school district is an area of government housing. This area houses many students who come from lower income families; i.e., aircraft plant laborers, day-laborers, and others. By checking the school's cumulative file, the writer discovered that many of the homes were supported financially by two employed parents. During the school year in which this study was done, the school assumed the responsibility for financial aid to only six indigent students. This situation would appear to be a low percentage for a school the size of Curtis.

Information from the school files further showed that about six per cent of the school's students were from homes in which the father held an executive position comparable to Level One of Roe's (1956) classification. This situation indicated that the number of students in the higher socio-economic level was also low. These observations helped to support the author's conclusion that the student body of Curtis Junior High School consisted of a large percentage of students from the middle socio-economic level. Perhaps this

observation would account for the apparent lack of cliques or extremely segregated groups at Curtis.

The predominant characteristic of dress at Curtis, from general observation, appeared to be more in "being like everyone else." To a casual observer, there appeared to be no serious problems. With this as a beginning, a preliminary questionnaire was administered to fifty-eight ninth grade boys in order to determine whether or not a problem was indicated, and to define the problem area.

The fifty-eight boys were a select group only in the fact that they were available at the home room period of the school day. Six ninth grade home rooms were chosen, in the vicinity of the building immediately accessible to the writer. The boys were not briefed prior to administering the questionnaire. The questionnaire was explained and the respondents were informed that they were not required to participate if they did not choose to do so. All of the original group responded willingly. (Appendix, p. 45)

Since trousers were the item selected most often by the boys as a problem, it seemed important to further define the reasons for their selection. By tallying the results it was discovered that the preliminary questionnaire did not provide enough information as to the reasons for problems in the selection of trousers. Other sources of information were sought.



The principal, vice-principal, and counselors were interviewed concerning the article of boys' clothing that was the source of most discipline problems. All agreed that trousers, their style and how they were worn, were the greatest source of disagreement. This was the opinion the author reached after informal discussions with the boys themselves. Teachers contacted concerning this problem were in agreement on this point, also.

In order to obtain opinions of mothers as to a problem area in the selection of boys' clothing, eleven mothers were informally interviewed; six by telephone and five by a pre-arranged meeting following a Parent-Teachers meeting. Eight of the eleven agreed that there were conflicts with their sons in their selection of clothing and that the garment causing this conflict was trousers, however, other questions were asked and discussed. (Appendix, p. 46)

All things considered, pants appeared to be the garment most important for study.

On the basis of the preliminary questionnaire, ideas and suggestions from the boys' mothers, the boys themselves, school administrators, teachers, and counselors, a questionnaire of twenty-six questions was devised. It was designed in such a manner so as to provide information for studying the problem area that of the selection of trousers for school wear by ninth grade boys.

General classification areas in which the questions were structured to fall were: (1) socio-economic information, (2) consumer knowledge, (3) satisfaction, (4) conformity, (5) desire for approval, and (6) freedom of choice.

In order to gain meaningful information from the questionnaire, certain socio-economic information pertaining to age of respondents, sex and age of persons living in the home, and occupations of parents was necessary.

Boys are consumers, either directly or indirectly, and to discover the knowledge of the boys as to the cost, style, place of purchase, and other consumer information, several questions were included that would reveal this information.

It is common knowledge (Baldwin, 1960) that the ninth-grade age-level is a period of group conformity but did the boys at Curtis fit this inference? It is assumed that if there is conformity there must be a desire for social harmony, either with friends or family or both. Several questions had this theory behind their wording. In conforming, social approval is usually sought by the conformer. The importance was this social approval to the boys at Curtis, was another aim of the questionnaire.

In accordance with reviewed literature, boys must be satisfied with their clothing or their own self evaluation suffers. To determine the degree of satisfaction that was

experienced by the participants, was another aim of the questionnaire.

While the child is growing to adulthood, the teen years are a time when more freedom of choice is desired and many experts feel that it should be given (Gesell, 1956). Some questions were designed to impart knowledge as to the freedom of choice that was allowed the respondents in this study.

After many revisions, the questionnaire was given and explained to sixty ninth grade boys. The boys were given opportunity to ask questions concerning the information requested before checking it. All boys who were in the home rooms that were selected to participate willingly cooperated. The home rooms that were used for the final questionnaire were different from the ones used on the preliminary questionnaire. They were selected simply because they were the only ones remaining in the school that were not used in the first sample.

## COMPILATION OF DATA AND DISCUSSION OF THE CHECK LIST

Boys in the ninth grade vary in age from almost fourteen years of age and a few months to sixteen years plus a few months. Table I shows the age distribution of the respondents used in the preliminary questionnaire and the final questionnaire.

TABLE I

### AGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS ON THE PRELIMINARY QUESTIONNAIRE AND THE FINAL CHECK LIST

Preliminary Questionnaire			Final Questionnaire	
Age	Number of Subjects	Percentage	Number of Subjects	Percentage
14	30	52	36	60
15	23	39	21	35
16	5	9	3	5
Total	58	100	60	100

The number of boys used in the preliminary questionnaire (Appendix, p. 45) was slightly lower and also was an entirely different group of boys than that used in the final questionnaire (Appendix, p. 47).

The relationship of certain factors concerning the socio-economic background of the boys to their selection and the number of pants for school wear was based on the number of persons living in the home and the occupations of their parents. The family status of the respondents is shown in Table II.

TABLE II

NUMBER OF PERSONS LIVING IN THE HOME AND  
FAMILY SIZE OF RESPONDENTS

Family Size	Number of Respondents
Lived with both parents	58
Had one brother or sister	23
Had two brothers or sisters	14
Had three or more brothers or sisters	12
Was an only child	11
Lived with only one parent	1
Lived with guardian	1

The largest family consisted of five brothers and sisters living at home. Sixteen of the boys had high school age brothers and/or sisters. Four of the participants had older brothers and/or sisters still living in the family



group. College students were present in the home in only three of the families.

Comparable to the national average of employed women was the thirty-two per cent (25) of the mothers who were employed outside the home in this study. According to Roe's (1956) classification of occupations, sixteen of the mothers worked at jobs classified in the fifth level. (Appendix, p. 50) Six were in Level Three and only three of the mothers employed outside the home were in jobs classified in Level Two. Sixty-four per cent (16) of the mothers worked full-time, while thirty-six per cent (9) held part-time positions. Three of the mothers (in Level Two) were teachers in junior and/or senior high schools; seven worked in the secretarial field; three did work connected with selling, either as a store clerk or door-to-door selling, and four mothers were beauticians either in full or in part-time capacity. The remaining eight had jobs in food service work, in aircraft industry, and as receptionists.

The occupations of the fathers of the participants were also classified by level of function as described by Roe (1956). Roe bases this classification upon degrees of responsibility, capacity, and skill. The distribution of occupations of the fathers is shown in Table III.



TABLE III

## OCCUPATION OF FATHERS BY LEVEL AND FUNCTION OF WORK

Level	Ser- vice	Business Contact	Organi- zation	Tech- nology	Out Door	Gen'l Culture	Science
1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2	—	—	5	6	—	3	1
3	2	3	4	1	1	—	—
4	1	—	2	17	2	—	—
5	1	—	—	8	—	—	—

It was interesting to note that fifty-seven of the sixty respondents gave the occupation of their fathers. It was further gratifying to discover that these fifty-seven gave the type of work as well as the general job title. Only two boys did not know their fathers' occupation and one participant lived with his brother-in-law and sister because his parents were both deceased.

As part of the consuming public, it was of interest to this investigator to discover that nearly half (29) of the boys stated that their trousers cost in the price range of \$4.00 to \$4.99. Twenty-four gave the range of \$5.00 to \$5.99 as approximate cost of their trousers. Eight boys had no idea of the cost and one boy, checked \$1.99 or less as being his price range.

Of the sixty boys responding, forty stated that they alone decided which style of pants to buy. Mothers' suggestions had some bearing on the boys' choices in thirteen cases. Only three credited father with making this decision, while three stated that mother was the sole decider as to the style of trouser to purchase. "Why should anyone help me to decide what kind of pants to buy? After all, I am in the ninth grade," was the written remark on one boy's check list. Still another rationalized by saying, "Dad pays the bill, he has the right to help make the decisions."

Fifty per cent (30) of those questioned replied that they "usually" noticed what other boys wore to school. Twenty-seven, or forty-five per cent, checked "sometimes" and a negative "never" was the answer given by only two boys.

In the area of "consumer ability" the question asked was "when you purchase pants for school, are you most concerned with color, style, fit, fabric, wearing qualities, or the fact that your friends have some like them?" Table IV gives the results of the boys' choices in order of their importance.

TABLE IV

FACTORS CONSIDERED BY RESPONDENTS IN CHOICE  
OF TROUSERS IN THE ORDER OF IMPORTANCE

Factors in choice of trousers	Number of times checked by respondents
Fit	48
Style	45
Color	27
Similar to friends	18
Wearing qualities	14
Fabric	14
All factors important	3

It was a slightly different story in making decisions as to "when to buy." Forty-six (28) per cent of the boys gave their mothers credit for deciding when it was necessary to purchase new trousers. Twenty-one (13) per cent of the boys checked "sometimes" mother helped decide the purchase time. Father held a position of lesser influence on this point. Only two boys gave all the credit to father, and father assisted in the decision in five cases. Eleven boys stated that they made this purchasing decision alone. In one case in which father was the sole decision maker, the mother worked on the day shift and father worked at an

aircraft plant on the four-to-midnight shift. Outgrown trousers was the reason chosen for purchasing new ones by forty-four boys, while twenty-seven checked "worn out" as their answer. Eighteen respondents stated that new pants were purchased for both reasons. "Style change" was checked by only eighteen respondents as the deciding factor. Only four boys indicated that they were influenced by the kind of trousers their friends purchased.

Half (30) of these ninth grade youths indicated that their pants for school were purchased at large, nationally-known department stores. Men's and Boys' ready-to-wear stores were checked as the place of purchase by twenty-nine respondents. Locally owned department stores accounted for sixteen responses. Only six boys stated that discount house were the main place of purchase. Only one boy gave variety-type stores as the place of purchase and this same boy also checked \$1.99 or less price range as the price most often paid for his school pants. Two or more of the different types of stores were checked by some of the boys. It was interesting to note that this particular boy was the only one to state that he did not know the occupation of his father, nor did he know how old his brother or sister were. He had no idea of the number of trousers he possessed, reported that his mother thought he "wore 'em to dirty, too tight, just plain messy," [sic] that most of his clothes

were second hand, but, on the other hand, he thought that his pants were about as good as those of any of his friends, felt he had about the right amount of trousers and about the right amount of money was spent on his pants, usually tried to please his mother in his choice of pants to wear to school, and "never" liked to receive compliments on his clothes from adults.

Terms used in identifying the trousers that were used for school wear and the quantity of each is shown in the following listing: blue jeans--76; continentals--36; "cords"--19; Ivy Leagues--5; levis--67; white jeans--88. Only three boys indicated that they had some of each in their wardrobe. The terms blue jeans, white jeans, and Ivy Leagues were most often checked.

In the area of "being like everyone else" only two of the boys stated that they "never" wanted to dress like their friends. There was a different picture presented by the thirty-four who checked that they "usually" preferred to dress in a way similar to the way their friends dressed. The twenty-six remaining respondents agreed that "sometimes" they preferred to conform to the style of dress of their friends.

A somewhat different opinion was expressed in the answers to the question, "would you be the first in your



school to wear a new style of pants?" These results as reported by the boys were:

Usually .....	9
Sometimes .....	37
Never .....	14

The questions "do you try to please your mother in your choice of pants worn to school?" and "do you like to receive compliments from adults on your selection of school clothing?" presented a different view of the boys' desire or lack of desire to conform. Table V presents this tabulation.

It was interesting to note that six of the respondents "usually" tried to please mother but "never" liked to receive compliments from adults. Only two checked "never" to both questions. Another combination marked by four boys was that they "never" tried to please their mother but they "usually" liked to receive compliments from adults.

The fourth area explored was satisfaction to the wearer as well as harmonious relationships with parents. When asked if they considered their school trousers as good as those worn by most of their friends, eighty-three per cent (50) of the respondents answered in the affirmative. Two young men thought their school trousers were not as good as their friends and eight believed theirs to be better. As to money spent for their school pants, again the positive side, "about the right amount," was chosen by forty-one boys. Six believed



TABLE V

PERCENTAGE COMPARISON BY AGE OF RESPONDENTS' ANSWERS  
TO QUESTIONS, "DO YOU TRY TO PLEASE MOTHER IN  
SELECTION OF PANTS?" AND "DO YOU LIKE COM-  
PLIMENTS FROM ADULTS ON CLOTHING WORN?"

Text of question asked and possible responses	Per cent	14 Yr.-old Students	Per cent	15 Yr.-old Students
Try to Please Mother in Selection of Pants				
Usually	61.1	22	48	10
Sometimes	30.6	11	24	5
Never	8.3	3	28	6
Total	100	36	100	21
Likes Compliments from Adults on Clothing Worn				
Usually	44	16	24	5
Sometimes	37	13	67	14
Never	19	7	9	2
Total	100	36	100	21

that more money should be budgeted for school trousers, while twelve participants were of the opinion that too much money was going for this particular garment. Forty boys had about the right number of trousers, however, thirteen believed that

they could use a few more pairs, and only seven boys thought they had more pairs than were necessary.

Mothers were reported to be in some disagreement with their sons in choice of trousers worn to school. In only three cases "usually" disagreement on this matter between mother and son was checked. Those checking "sometimes" disagreeing and those "never" in disagreement were nearly equal with twenty-nine checking "sometimes" and twenty-eight checking "never."

Reasons for disagreement on choice of trousers worn to school were also similar. Eighteen boys reported that reasons were mainly in the area of style and the manner in which they wore their pants, i.e.: wore them too tight, wore them too soiled, wore them too low on hips, wore pants that were too tapered, and, wore them without belts. Mothers of ten boys were reported as wishing that their sons would "dress better." However, the exact opposite opinion was expressed in such reports as "I dress up too much" and "mother thinks I wear too many clean pants which makes her wash too much." "I get sick and tired of wearen' hand-me-downs," [sic] was the terse statement of one respondent and this was the cause of disagreement with his mother. The seriousness of this problem was lessened by twenty-eight boys checking "never" any disagreement.

"Would you prefer to be the first boy to wear a new style of trouser to school?" was another question asked of the boys. In only nine cases was the response "usually." Thirty-seven of the boys indicated that "sometimes" they might choose to set a new style trend but fourteen admitted to "never" wishing to be the first in school to wear a new style of trouser. The exact reverse was true with the answers to the question of "would you prefer that someone else wear the new style first?" Thirty agreed that they would "usually" prefer to wear a new style after it had been first introduced by someone else and twenty-eight preferred someone else set the style pace.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

From a review of literature, it would appear that clothing selection by teenage boys has undergone some revision in the last few years. Some of the findings in this master's degree report did not comply with findings by Forbes (1957) in a study done to discover clothing selection interests of 132 ninth grade boys. Three problems in which boys were most interested according to Forbes were: (1) what's new in fashion for boys, (2) how to press clothes, and, (3) how to make clothes for myself. This researcher found no evidence of interest in these areas by Wichita ninth grade boys while analyzing the data for this study. The kind and scope of information asked for in the questionnaire, perhaps, would account for limitations concerning agreement in the two studies in the area of boys' interests.

The number of respondents for this study was too small to draw general conclusions about all ninth grade boys but perhaps there are a few generalities that could be stated about the ninth grade boys in Curtis Junior High School. No statistical tests were made because of the small number of respondents and because of the exploratory nature of the study.

Relationships between level of income of the family and the number of trousers owned by the boys, was not apparent. The author would suggest this as an area in which there is need for further research.

Socio-economic information collected on the respondents failed to show any non-statistical relationship between age of respondent's brothers and sisters and the number of trousers the boys owned. The occupation of parents, and the number of trousers owned or the price paid by the majority of the boys for school pants did not appear to be related. While it has been proved by researchers (Brew, 1956), that such characteristics as family income, age of boy, family size, amount and kind of employment of the father are important determinants of the size and type of wardrobe, the results of this study did not support any such conclusion. Because of the lack of sufficient amount or kind of data, neither did this study disprove this conclusion.

Thirty-two per cent of the mothers of the respondents were employed outside the home. This figure was comparable with the thirty per cent which was the 1963 average for the United States. It was noted that more mothers were working away from home in families where the father was employed in a presumably lower paying occupation.

Among the boys of this study the general price range for their school trousers was \$4.00 to \$6.00. A majority of



the boys agreed that there was sufficient money spent for their trousers. However, twenty (12) per cent of the boys were of the opinion that too much money was spent. This might lend support to the conclusion that the boys, if they were consulted on the expenditure to be allowed for new trousers, could be an aid in determining the family budget.

Large nationally-known department stores, men's and boys' ready-to-wear stores, locally owned department stores were ranked in this order, as the places of purchase for the boys' school trousers. Although there were two very large, well-known discount houses in the area where the respondents live, few trousers were purchased in these stores according to the boys. This situation might be explained by reference to the socio-economic information obtained, that the respondents were largely from middle class families.

A majority of the boys made the decision as to the style and fit of the trousers purchased, but forty-six per cent of the boys gave mother the credit for deciding when to purchase new pants. The modern trend is said to be for the teenager to be allowed more freedom of choice, and this trend was further supported in this study. Many of the boys stated that they purchased their trousers for the simple reason that "I liked them." It would appear that there is considerable freedom in decision-making as to clothing

selection left to the discretion of the ninth grade boy in Curtis School.

With knowledge of the physical maturation of the ninth grade boy, it is easy to accept the answers given by seventy-three per cent of boys that new pants were purchased because the old ones were "outgrown." The second highest reason given by forty-five per cent of the boys might also have been expected, the present trousers "worn out."

Only two boys stated that they never wanted to dress like their friends. The majority of the boys preferred to wear trousers similar to those of other boys in their class. It was interesting to note that only nine indicated that they would be the first to wear a new style. These findings were in accordance with the literature reviewed. The boy of this age level will follow but rarely prefers to set the "style pace" (Baldwin, 1960).

This study agreed with Block's study (1937), the boys at Curtis were experiencing many of the same type of conflicts with their mothers. Baldwin (1960) discovered similar mother-son conflicts in relation to clothing selection. Sixty-one per cent of the fourteen year old boys stated that they tried to please mother in their choice of trousers worn to school and only forty-eight per cent of the fifteen year olds admitted that they tried. Generally speaking, the boys expressed satisfaction with the quality and quantity of their

trousers. The few boys, six in all, who thought more money should be spent for school trousers, were doubled in number to twelve who indicated that they felt they had more trousers than they needed and there was too much money spent for their trousers.

Reasons for disagreements with mothers as to the trousers worn by the boys, were generally concerned with style and fit. The degree of disagreement did not appear to be a major factor in this study. There were twenty-eight "never" having any disagreement with mother in their choice of school pants and "sometimes" disagreeing was checked by twenty-nine boys. Since only three boys of the sixty respondents checked "usually" to the question indicating mother-son disagreement, it appeared to this investigator that conflict at this point was not a serious problem.

The results of the study were in agreement with Baldwin (1960), for the boys in this group were interested in style and identification with their age group. Responses from fifty-one participants showed they did approve of favorable comments from others about the clothing they wore to school. The responses to the question "do you try to please your mother in your choice of school pants?" showed sixty-one per cent of the fourteen year-old boys trying to please in comparison with forty-eight per cent of the fifteen year-old boys making the effort to please mother. Only eight

per cent of the younger group of boys "never" tried to please while twenty-eight per cent of the older boys checked "never" to this question. This reaction could be attributed to the maturity of the boys. In answer to approving of compliments from adults concerning their clothing, the older boys were more apt to like compliments than the fourteen year-old boys.

In view of the findings in this study, the following conclusions were made after recognition that their general application would be limited:

1. There was evidence that ninth grade boys make many of their own decisions as to style of pants purchased.
2. Teenage boys placed emphasis on being dressed like their friends.
3. There was evidence of disagreement problems between mothers and sons as to choice of trousers worn by ninth grade boys, but the disagreement did not appear to be of a serious nature.
4. The majority of the teenage boys were satisfied with their pants for school wear both in quantity and quality.

Because of certain limitations in this study, it is evident that further research in the area of clothing selection by ninth grade boys would prove beneficial if:

- (1) The preliminary questionnaire should contain more questions directed toward defining the problem for study more clearly.
- (2) In order to make the knowledge of

"consumer ability" more meaningful, questions having to do with how the money for clothing was acquired by the boys, would provide usable data. (3) A larger sample of mothers for an informal or formal interview might prove helpful in improving information sought in the questionnaire.

There is a need for further research in the area of clothing selection by boys. It was evident as the investigation was being conducted, that there had been very little research in boys' selection of clothing; either in the field of selection by boys or selection for boys.

Several of the mothers interviewed expressed a desire for this type of research. One mother remarked, "It isn't difficult to find information as to girls' clothing but we mothers of boys need help, too." Most of the mothers agreed that their boys wished to dress well but did not assert themselves as their girls did. Still another mother ventured to add that perhaps some of the unusual things that boys did in their habits of dress might be done because of boredom with the "sameness" of their clothing. This thought suggested another possible area for research, that of "fads" and the importance of fashion to boys.

Perhaps some of the recognized problems of conflict between mothers and sons could be alleviated by a study being done comparing mothers' and sons' feelings about the teenage sons' clothing. Even though disagreement between mothers and



sons could be classified as a "minor irritant" in this study, it would be interesting and important research to test this finding in a further, more complete investigation.

Another study could be made comparing clothing selection by boys when they spend their own money and when money is allocated by parents. This study could prove helpful to teachers who are involved with boys in home economics classes as well as to store personnel in assisting boys to spend money wisely.

An appropriate note on which to close this paper, it seems to the author, is a quotation from Wattenberg (1955), The Adolescent Years: "the power of motives leading to faddism in dress becomes apparent when grown-ups try to interfere." (p. 146)

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## APPENDIX

## (PRELIMINARY QUESTIONNAIRE)

If you were allowed to buy any article of clothing that you desired, what would you buy? Mark your first three choices.

pants <u>23</u>	suits <u>2</u>
shirts <u>14</u>	top coat <u>0</u>
sweaters <u>4</u>	sox <u>0</u>
coats <u>1</u>	shoes <u>8</u>
jackets <u>0</u>	others <u>0</u>

What item of school clothing is the biggest problem to you?

pants <u>25</u>	sox <u>8</u>
shirts <u>10</u>	shoes <u>5</u>
sweaters <u>1</u>	no problem with school clothing <u>8</u>
jackets or coats <u>1</u>	

In which area do you have a problem, if you have any? (No need to answer these if you checked the last one above.)

Not enough clothes 11

Not enough clothing that I like 15

I have outgrown too much of my clothing 10

My clothing is not what the other boys  
are wearing 3

I usually like all the clothing I wear 10

----

Hard to fit (added by one boy)

QUESTIONS THAT WERE DISCUSSED DURING INTERVIEW WITH EACH OF  
ELEVEN MOTHERS.

1. Is there any disagreement over the clothing that your son chooses to wear to school?
2. If so, what article of clothing would you say causes the most disagreement?
3. For what reasons is there disagreement?
4. If your son had the opportunity to buy any article of clothing that he wished to buy, what do you think he would choose to purchase?
5. Do you believe that there is a real problem in the selection of clothing by the ninth grade boy?

---

ANSWERS AS INTERPRETED BY RESEARCHER

1. \* 8 yes 2 no
2. pants 6 shirts 4

The general opinion here was not so much that there was disagreement as to style as there was to fit.

3. The way the boys wished to wear their trousers and the fit of the trousers were the main reasons given by the mothers as to the conflicts.
4. shirts 8 sweaters 2
5. All eleven mothers thought there was enough of a problem to warrant a number of studies in the field of selection of clothing for the boy.

\*One mother gave no specific answer except number five.

This is a questionnaire in the area of school clothing for boys in 9th grade and is being given as a part of graduate study at Kansas State University.

Your help will be appreciated. This questionnaire does not require your name. Answer the questions as honestly and sincerely as possible. There are no right or wrong answers. Your name will not be used. The information is confidential.

Your help and cooperation is sincerely appreciated.

---

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR A STUDY IN THE SELECTION OF PANTS FOR THE NINTH GRADE BOY

1. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What persons live in your home?
 

_____ father	_____ brothers, ages _____, _____, _____, _____
_____ mother	_____ sisters, ages _____, _____, _____, _____
	_____ others, please list _____
3. What is your father's occupation? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Is your mother employed outside the home? \_\_\_\_yes \_\_\_\_no  
 If yes, what does she do? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Is your mother's job full or part-time? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Which term do you use to describe the style of pants that you wear to school?
 

_____ blue jeans	_____ slacks
_____ white jeans	_____ levis
_____ ivy leagues	_____ "cords"
_____ continentals	_____ others, please name _____
6. How many pairs of the above styles do you have that you wear to school?
 

_____ blue jeans	_____ slacks
_____ white jeans	_____ levis
_____ ivy leagues	_____ "cords"
_____ continentals	_____ others, please name _____
7. What do you think is the approximate price per pair of your school pants?
 

_____ \$1.99 or less	_____ 4.00 to 4.99
_____ 2.00 to 2.99	_____ 5.00 to 5.99
_____ 3.00 to 3.99	_____ above \$8.00
	_____ have no idea
8. Who decides what style and type of pants you can purchase for school wear?
 

_____ you	_____ you and your mother
_____ your mother	_____ you and your father
_____ your father	_____ others, who _____

9. Who decides when you should purchase new trousers for school wear?
- |                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> you         | <input type="checkbox"/> you and your mother |
| <input type="checkbox"/> your mother | <input type="checkbox"/> you and your father |
| <input type="checkbox"/> your father | <input type="checkbox"/> others, who _____   |
10. For what reasons do you usually purchase new trousers?
- |   |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> present ones worn out                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> present ones outgrown                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> styles have changed                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> your friends have new ones                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> mother and/or father think new ones are needed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other reasons, list _____                      |
11. Check the type of store where most of your school pants are purchased.
- |  |
|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> nationally known department store<br>(example: J. C. Penny, Sears, Montgomery-Ward, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> discount houses<br>(example: Giant, David's, Gem, Atlantic Mills, etc.)                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> men's and boys' ready-to-wear stores<br>(example: Henry's, Woolf Bros., Kern's, etc.)     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> local department stores<br>(example: Buck's, Innes, Hinkel's, McDonald's, etc.)           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> variety stores<br>(example: Grant's, T.G.&Y., Kresge's, etc.)                             |
12. How do you decide the type of pants to buy for school wear:
- |   |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> the same type your friends buy?                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> those advertised on TV?                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> those displayed in store windows?                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> those shown to you by sales people?              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> those shown in fashion magazines and catalogues? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> those suggested by mother or father?             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other reasons, list _____                        |
13. Do you and your mother disagree on the pants you wear to school:
- |                                   |                                     |                                 |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> usually? | <input type="checkbox"/> sometimes? | <input type="checkbox"/> never? |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
14. If you disagree, what are some of the reasons? Please list.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
15. Do you ask your father's advice on which pants to wear to school:
- |                                   |                                     |                                 |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> usually? | <input type="checkbox"/> sometimes? | <input type="checkbox"/> never? |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
16. Do you ask your mother's advice on which pants to wear to school:
- |                                   |                                     |                                 |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> usually? | <input type="checkbox"/> sometimes? | <input type="checkbox"/> never? |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|



17. Do you feel the pants that you wear to school are:  
\_\_\_\_\_ as good as most of your friends?  
\_\_\_\_\_ not as good as your friends?  
\_\_\_\_\_ better than most of your friends?
18. Do you feel that the number of pants you have for school wear is:  
\_\_\_\_\_ about right?  
\_\_\_\_\_ less than you need?  
\_\_\_\_\_ more than you need?
19. Do you feel that the amount of money spent on your school pants is:  
\_\_\_\_\_ about what should be?  
\_\_\_\_\_ less than should be?  
\_\_\_\_\_ more than is necessary?
20. Do you try to please your mother in your choice of pants worn to school:  
\_\_\_\_\_ usually? \_\_\_\_\_ never? \_\_\_\_\_ sometimes?
21. Do you like to receive compliments from adults on your selection of school clothing:  
\_\_\_\_\_ usually? \_\_\_\_\_ never? \_\_\_\_\_ sometimes?
22. Do you prefer to wear pants to school that are similar to those your friends often wear:  
\_\_\_\_\_ usually? \_\_\_\_\_ never? \_\_\_\_\_ sometimes?
23. Would you be the first in your school to try a new style in school pants:  
\_\_\_\_\_ usually? \_\_\_\_\_ never? \_\_\_\_\_ sometimes?
24. Would you prefer to wear a new style pants after you had seen other boys wear it:  
\_\_\_\_\_ usually? \_\_\_\_\_ never? \_\_\_\_\_ sometimes?
25. When you purchase pants for school are you most concerned with the:  
\_\_\_\_\_ color? \_\_\_\_\_ fit?  
\_\_\_\_\_ style? \_\_\_\_\_ wearing qualities?  
\_\_\_\_\_ fabric? \_\_\_\_\_ what is being worn by the boys  
your age?
26. Do you particularly notice what type of pants other boys wear:  
\_\_\_\_\_ usually? \_\_\_\_\_ never? \_\_\_\_\_ sometimes?

TABLE 11.3. TWO-WAY CLASSIFICATION OF OCCUPATIONS

Group								
Level	I. Service	II. Business Contact	III. Organization	IV. Technology	V. Outdoor	VII. Science	VII. General Cultural	VIII. Arts and Entertainment
1	Personal therapists Social work supervisors Counselors	Promoters	United States President and Cabinet officers Industrial tycoons International bankers	Inventive geniuses Consulting engineers Ships' commanders	Consulting specialists	Research scientists University, college faculties Medical specialists Museum curators	Supreme Court Justices University, college faculties Professors Scholars	Creative artists Performers, great Teachers, university equivalent Museum curators
2	Social workers Occupational therapists Probation, truant officers (with training)	Promoters Public relations counselors	Certified public accountants Business and government executives Union officials Brokers, average	Applied scientists Factory managers Ships' officers Engineers	Applied scientists Landowners and operators, large Landscape architects	Scientists, semi-independent Nurses Pharmacists Veterinarians	Editors Teachers, high school and elementary	Athletes Art critics Designers Music arrangers
3	YMCA officials Detectives, police sergeants Welfare workers City inspectors	Salesmen: auto, bond, insurance, etc. Dealers, retail and wholesale Confidence men	Accountants, average Employment managers Owners, catering, dry-cleaning, etc.	Aviators Contractors Foremen (DOT I) Radio operators	County agents Farm owners Forest rangers Fish, game wardens	Technicians, medical, X-ray, museum Weather observers Chiropractors	Justices of the Peace Radio announcers Reporters Librarians	Ad writers Designers Interior decorators Showmen
4	Barbers Chefs Practical nurses Policemen	Auctioneers Buyers (DOT I) House canvassers Interviewers, poll	Cashiers Clerks, credit, express, etc. Foremen, warehouse Salesclerks	Blacksmiths Electricians Foremen (DOT II) Mechanics, average	Laboratory testers, dairy products, etc. Miners Oil well drillers	Technical assistants	Law clerks	Advertising artists Decorators, window, etc. Photographers Racing car drivers
5	Taxi drivers General houseworkers Waiters City firemen	Peddlers	Clerks, file, stock, etc. Notaries Runners Typists	Bulldozer operators Deliverymen Smelter workers Truck drivers	Gardeners Farm tenants Teamsters, cowpunchers Motor's helpers	Veterinary hospital attendants		Illustrators, greeting cards Showcard writers Stagehands
6	Chambermaids Hospital attendants Elevator operators Watchmen		Messenger boys	Helpers Laborers Wrappers Yardmen	Dairy hands Farm laborers Lumberjacks	Nototchoolical helpers in scientific organization		

(Roe, 1956)

PROBLEMS IN THE SELECTION OF SCHOOL TROUSERS  
BY NINTH GRADE BOYS

by

HELEN DUNBAR FRIEZE

B. Sc., Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, 1938

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Clothing and Textiles

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1964

Parents, teachers, school administrators, and students have become more aware in recent years of the importance of dress in the academic and social life of the teenager. Many teachers believe that the way in which boys and girls dress is frequently reflected in their behavior. The objectives of this study were (1) to determine if a problem did exist for ninth-grade boys in clothing selection, (2) to investigate reasons for choice of certain items of clothing by teenage boys, (3) to provide a background for further study in the selection of clothing for adolescent boys.

Informal interviews were held with school administrators, counselors, teachers, and students. Questionnaires were administered to sixty ninth-grade boys from home rooms in a junior high school in a large midwestern city.

Findings from the preliminary questionnaire administered to fifty-eight boys showed that the greatest problem in clothing selection by ninth-grade boys was in their choice of school pants. A final questionnaire which was submitted to sixty ninth grade boys, was developed in such a manner so as to discover reasons for problems of trouser selection by the boys. Some generalities were made from the findings of the final questionnaire.

While there was some conflict between boys and their mothers as to the choice of school pants, it appeared to be of a minor importance. The sources of disagreement most often expressed between the boys and their mothers were derived from the style of pants and the manner in which the boys wore them. Money spent or the number of pants owned by the boys did not present problems. There was general satisfaction among the respondents as to the quality, quantity, and cost of their school pants.

The boys agreed that dressing like their friends was important, however, in the purchasing of their trousers, this was not indicated as an important reason for their choice of a particular style. Style and fit were the qualities that were considered most important in their choice of school trousers.

Mothers of approximately forty-six per cent of the ninth-grade boys were responsible for deciding when to purchase new trousers. It was found that fifty-five per cent of the boys made the decision as to trouser style to be purchased. The majority of the boys did approve of compliments on their clothing from adults. This finding appears to support the belief that teenagers desire the approval of adults in their choice of clothing.



The need for further research in clothing selection by boys and for boys was expressed by the mothers. Further research in the area of clothing selection by boys could prove helpful to teachers of home economics for boys as well as to retail stores' personnel in assisting boys to spend money wisely.



