

PREFERENCES FOR GIRLS' DRESSES AS DETERMINED
BY OBSERVATION OF MOTHERS' SHOPPING

by

MARIE MARJORIE ROOT

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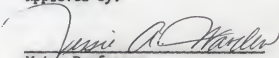
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One of the most recent developments and also one of the most rapidly growing areas in the clothing industry today is ready-made clothing for children of preschool and elementary school age. This age is a critical period in the development of the child. It is reported by Thompson and Rea (15) that well-fitted, comfortable and attractive garments which are suitable for the child and his activities contribute to a feeling of well-being and self-confidence. This study of mothers' preferences was conducted to learn by observing and questioning, what characteristics of girls' dresses the mothers actually desire.

According to the United States Department of Commerce, there are more preschool and elementary age children today than ever before, with 55,786,173 persons or 31.1 per cent of the population under 15 years of age. In 1950 there were 40,482,524 persons or 26.9 per cent of the population under 15 years of age (United States Census of Population: 1960 and 1950, 19 and 20). This was an increase of 15,303,649 persons under 15 years of age or 37.8 per cent. At this same time there was a 50.7 per cent increase in the quantity of children's and girls' dresses cut in sizes 3 to 14. There were 4,454,000 dozens cut in 1950 and 6,712,000 dozens cut in 1960 (Annual Survey of Manufacturers: 1962 and 1951, 17 and 18).

With 22,409,760 women or 34.5 per cent of all women 14 years and

over in the labor force, there are more mothers working outside the home. Less time is left for the mothers to sew, making them ready customers for the children's ready-to-wear industry which, according to Tate and Glisson (13), is the major source for the preschool and elementary school age child's clothing. The more rapid increase in the production of children's and girls' dresses than in the population under 15 years of age emphasizes this point.

Between April, 1951, and March, 1962, the total number of married women in the labor force rose by 4.4 million, representing nearly half of the nation's labor force growth during this period. Approximately two million of this increase was among women with children of school age only (Schiffman, 11). It seems, therefore, from the mothers' standpoint that the children's clothing should be durable and easy to care for. As the amount of money available for family clothing expenditures affects the child's wardrobe, it was suggested by Tate and Glisson (13) that it is better to have a few garments which are suitable for all occasions and purposes. This would allow the child to get more wear out of each garment than if he had a large quantity, thus enabling him to get greater benefit from the price paid even though he is in a period of rapid growth.

The present study of mothers' preferences for girls' dresses was undertaken as a result of the writer's interest in children's clothes fostered through her employment in a children's and maternity wear shop. It was assumed that the majority of customers in the Manhattan area do not closely examine the merchandise when they are shopping. The writer believes that the often heard complaints of customers about

the price of children's garments are due to the customers' failure to carefully examine the merchandise and make sure they get good quality for the price they pay. This study was therefore undertaken to fulfill the following objectives:

1. to find out selected characteristics consumers look for and/or ask about when shopping for girls' dresses in the 3 to 14 size range.
2. to find out specific desirable characteristics and features consumers say they believe to be most important when purchasing girls' dresses.
3. to determine if there is any relationship between the price of the dresses purchased and the consumers' thoroughness in shopping. This information was obtained in stores through observation and questioning.

Previous literature concerning clothing preferences for children has dealt with the type of clothing rather than specific desirable characteristics of the garments worn by the children. A study of the specific characteristics and features consumers say they believe to be important in girls' dresses could be beneficial to designers, manufacturers, and the Manhattan retailers of girls' dresses in improving the over-all quality of the garment by detecting characteristics and features desirable to the consumers. Results of this study may be of value also to teachers and extension workers. Areas might be pointed out for emphasis to consumers of the importance of carefully studying the merchandise available in order to obtain the best product available for the money spent. It is also hoped that this study may aid future

researchers concerned with problems related to girls' dress both through the method used and the findings reported.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of related literature revealed that little has been done to incorporate the findings regarding the physical and psychological growth and development of the child into the fulfillment of their clothing needs.

Clothing the preschool and elementary school age child is a major problem for many families in the United States. Not only is clothing for the small child expensive for the short length of time it can be worn, but it is often unsuited to the use to which it is put. As the preschool child matures and becomes better able to take care of himself, he enters into widening social relationships which make him increasingly clothes conscious (Tate and Glisson, 13).

Clothes can make childhood a delightful period. They may contribute to the developing character of the child and to his self-confidence and good cheer. They may influence his mental health by encouraging him to accept responsibility and to cooperate (Thompson and Rea, 15). In order to contribute to the child's sense of personal and social well-being, it is important that each garment be suitable to the age and sex of the child and yet be sufficiently like those of his friends so that he is not contrasted unfavorably with the group (Young, 22).

The child at an early age is influenced by the clothes he wears. A child should be allowed to wear the clothes he enjoys to the extent

that they fit the occasion. A taste for good fabrics should not be instilled at the expense of keeping the child from enjoying his clothes. They should be suitable for the occasion and capable of withstanding the wear and tear that a normal child will give them.

Even at preschool age, the child should be given a chance to help purchase his clothing. If the child has a favorite color which is also becoming, let him choose it. Thompson and Rea (15) suggest that when shopping and the selection is narrowed down to two choices either of which would be a good buy, the mothers should point out the good and bad qualities of each and let the child decide which to purchase. If it is later regretted, there is no one but himself to blame and the child will be on his way to a more critical selection the next time.

In Kennally's (7) study of preschool children's preferences, the majority of the fifty parents interviewed kept remarking that their children did not have preferences. Only a few of the parents recognized and respected the preferences of the young children. Forty-six per cent of the mothers actually selected the clothing themselves. Sixteen per cent of the mothers explained that the problem of clothing selection was decided between the mother and child. In fourteen per cent of the cases, the mother and father together selected the clothes. The mother, father, and child did the selecting in fourteen per cent of the cases interviewed. Thus in the majority of cases the preschool children were not given a voice in the selection of their clothing.

To the contrary was a statement by F. O. Yates, Jr., children's wear division manager of Hudson-Belk Company, Raleigh, North Carolina. He said that children let their parents know what they like and dislike

in apparel and that what the children want is what the parents wind up buying (Women's Wear Daily, 21).

Between two and four years, youngsters should be perfecting their technique of dressing and undressing, but it is not until they are six that they can manage both processes entirely by themselves. Dressing and undressing require use of bones, muscles and nerves, and the wise mother will see that these are not overtaxed. Self-help clothes are a safe guard against this (Young, 22). These style features should not be achieved at the expense of attractiveness or make the garments appear too different from those worn by other children in the group. It is essential that the clothing of the child be such that the child feels a part of the group with which he associates and also that the clothes meet with the approval of the parents (Boettke and Zook, 1).

Until the habit of dressing is firmly established, it is best for the child to have one general style with the opening always in the same place, preferably in front. It is also best to use the same type fastener. Good-sized armholes, sleeves and necks make garments easier to get into as well as more comfortable. The backs of the garments should be easily distinguishable from the fronts (Boettke and Zook, 1; Tate and Glisson, 13; Thompson and Rea, 15; Young, 22).

In the research conducted by Johnson (6) more mothers expressed a preference for back closings than did for front closings of dresses and apparently they were not considering the needs of the child for developing initiative and self-reliance in dressing. It was Johnson's opinion that mothers need to be made more aware of the clothing needs of children within the preschool age group "to develop initiative, self-reliance

and good habit formation in dress." She reported that some mothers lacked enough information about fabrics and styles of children's clothes to clearly express a preference.

Intelligent selection of clothing for the infant and small child is based on an understanding of physical growth and development during the early years. There is a great variation among infants in size at birth. After the second year, the annual weight gain slows down somewhat, but the average child can be expected to gain five pounds a year until he is nine or ten years of age. His height at the same time will increase at the rate of about two inches a year.

In order to fit the child properly, a mother must know what size garment to buy and what the given sizes mean. According to Tate and Glisson (13), the standardized sizes used by most manufacturers of ready-to-wear children's clothing are determined on the basis of four measurements: height, weight, chest circumference, and waist circumference. The sizes are based on measurements, not age, and the correct size garment for a child is one that corresponds to the actual measurements of the child at these points. Following are size charts for pre-school and elementary school age children:

Standard Sizes for Preschool Children's Wear

Measurements	Sizes*					
	2	3	4	5	6	6X
Height (inches)	34	37	40	43	46	48
Weight (pounds)	28½	32½	37	42	48	52
Chest (inches)	21	22	23	24	25	25½
Waist (inches)	20½	21	21½	22	22½	23

*Based on measurements, not age. (Tate and Glisson, 13, p. 201)

Younger Girls' Sizes

Measurements (inches)	Regular Sizes				
	6	8	10	12	14
Breast	24	26	28	30	32
Waist	22	23	24	25	26
Hip	26	28	30	32½	35
Back-waist length	10½	11½	12½	13	13 3/4

(Tate and Glisson, 13, p. 267)

Poor fit is the most frequent reason given by the elementary school child for not wearing his clothes. He feels uncomfortable or not well dressed when clothes are too small or too large, too short or too long, and when he is forced to wear clothes that he does not like. The importance of comfort as a selection factor changes somewhat in the older elementary girl. Although she still wants comfort, she will at times select a garment on the basis of style, whether or not it is

comfortable (Tate and Glisson, 13).

According to the 1949 survey of mothers' opinions of fiber in selected items of children's clothing by the United States Department of Agriculture (9), three-fourths of the mothers in the United States with children twelve years of age or younger said that they bought most of their children's clothes. More than half of these mothers said they could not tell how large a child the garment would fit by reading the size on the tag.

In a study by Ingalls (5), the eighteen dress brands surveyed showed little standardization of measurement. The cost of the dress did not appear to be a dependable indication of its quality, either in measurement or construction. In an earlier investigation, Kannally (7) found that forty-six per cent of the parents mentioned a need for standardization by all commercial companies on sizes of children's clothes. A standardization of sizes by weight and height was desired. Due to the repeated complaints that sizes vary according to the type of garment, the name of the manufacturer, and the purchase price, Langford (8) expressed surprise that parents have not demanded some changes in size ranges by the manufacturers of children's clothing.

Girls in the age range six through twelve need clothing for a number of different occasions and activities. After the amount to be expended has been determined, the distribution of funds for school, play, and sports clothes must be considered. Tate and Glisson (13) and Thompson and Rea (15) suggest that whatever the income, it is better to select a few garments that will serve for all occasions and purposes since garments are so quickly outgrown during this period. In this way

extra garments which are soon outgrown will not be on hand.

The child from six to twelve years of age is intensely motivated to gain peer-group acceptance. He joins groups to demonstrate his independence and ability to do things on his own. This desire to belong influences the child's clothing needs and wants. The nine- to twelve-year-old girl is at an "in between" age. She is no longer a "little" girl and neither is she grown up. Her clothing problems stem from adolescent emotional developments and also from her developing figure. Approval of her associates is of vital importance, and her personal appearance is closely tied up with her happiness and social adjustments (Ingalls, 4; Tate and Glisson, 13). As girls approach twelve and are given more freedom in selecting their own clothes, they also are increasingly anxious to have their parents'--particularly their mothers'--approval of garments selected. As they gain confidence in their ability to make good choices, girls become more willing to experiment with new ideas that meet with the approval of their "crowd" (Tate and Glisson, 13). The important thing is to keep to the delicate middle ground between individuality and the peas-in-a-pod type of dressing. Youngsters like to be distinctive and yet not be set apart for it (Young, 22).

There is considerable difference in the clothing interests of older and younger elementary school children. The younger child is still more interested in the detail on a garment, in the belief that it is "cute" or "pretty." The younger child prefers bright colors and decorative effects, while the older one tends to choose pale colors and plainer designs.

Hunt (3) found in her interviews with 128 children, ranging in

age from three through ten that red, yellow, green, and blue were about equally preferred whereas orange and violet were considerably less favored. Among the three- and four-year-olds, the gap between the more preferred and the less favored colors was much smaller than the corresponding gap in the results for any of the older groups. With increasing age, there was an increasing preference for green and a decreasing preference for red. When the children were asked to make a choice of a solid color, a stripe, a check, or a geometric design, the solid color and the geometric design were the two most preferred patterns. The check was only slightly less preferred but the stripe was considerably less favored. Results for the checked pattern showed increasing popularity with increasing age, whereas results for the solid color showed decreasing popularity with increasing age. The striped pattern was ranked last by the three older age groups, but there was a slight increase in its popularity with increasing age.

Fashion is more important than detail to the older child; however, the basis for fashion is determined largely by what members of the group are wearing. As the girl gets older, she is chiefly interested in finding garments of a color and design that become her best. Thus with the older child, there is a growing interest away from the specific design detail or trim to the over-all effect of clothes that flatter and enhance her appearance (Tate and Glisson, 13).

Thompson and Rea (15) suggested that in planning the wardrobe the first consideration is probably the amount of money the family will have available for clothing and how much of this amount will be a fair proportion for each member. Care must be taken or too large a portion of the

income will be used needlessly for this age child. Tate and Glisson (13) stated that the climate will affect the amount of clothing required. The social status of the parents will determine the quality as well as the quantity of the wardrobe, as will the number of occasions for which the child is required to dress up.

In regard to the selection of clothing, Thompson and Rea (15) state that the health and comfort of the child should be one of the first considerations. Scott (12) emphasizes certain points to consider in choosing little girls' dresses in regard to comfortable styles. In preferring dresses without fancy trimmings, she states that dangling trim and sashes and bows that come untied get in a child's way, hampering action and may even be dangerous. Dresses without belts are recommended since little folks do not have waistlines; and fullness which is gathered, pleated, or circular, fit in at each side of the front and back looks best and allows for action and growth. Dresses should be short enough that they are not under foot when a child stoops to play.

Both of the latter sources state that sleeves must not be binding at the armcye or lower edge. Bands hamper arm movements and become tighter as the child grows. If long sleeves are desired, the raglan style or kimono sleeves with gussets are best. The neckline should be low enough in front that it does not rub and choke and should not be so high in back that it will pull the head forward. Collarless necklines are best as collars are bulky and inconvenient under wraps.

Another feature mentioned by Thompson and Rea (15) and also by Tate and Glisson (13) is that garments should be light in weight since heavy cumbersome garments cause stoop shoulders and awkwardness.

Nothing about the garment should be tight enough to restrict the activity of the child or constrict the body and stop natural circulation. Elastic, when used, should be placed so that it goes only part way around a leg, arm, or waist and should never be tight enough to leave red marks on the skin.

The selection of fabric also plays an important part in regard to the health and comfort factors. At no other time will an individual give clothing as steady hard usage as in the preschool period; therefore, material for children's clothing should be selected on the additional basis of durability. This does not mean durable in the sense of lasting several years, but durable enough to free the child from worry about soil and wear and tear that dainty materials impose upon him.

Fibers differ in respect to their ability to maintain cleanliness. Cotton is a collector of much dirt and bacteria; but it can be easily laundered, withstands high temperature in sterilization, and is sold cheaply. It is the most satisfactory year-round fabric for children's garments (Young, 22). Special finishes to provide crease-resistance, spot-resistance, water-repellency, and non-inflammability have increased the desirability of cotton fabrics. The extent to which any of these finishes will stand repeated laundering or cleaning should be questioned before the purchase is made. Additional charges for special finishes which will not stand washing are seldom a good investment when a grade school girl's dresses are being purchased.

The desire for strong sturdy clothes that are attractive as well as functional and launder well was expressed by mothers in the study conducted by Kennally (7). Colorfastness seemed a major concern to

mothers in 1950 as their laundry problems were increased because many cottons were not colorfast. They believed that the price paid for an article of clothing did not seem to have any relation to the colorfastness of the garment. In Ingalls (4) study in 1956, the greatest complaint regarding fabric was fading which thirty-two per cent of the mothers checked. In the study conducted by Johnson (6), it was found that the low income group was most concerned with finishes which were colorfast, fadeproof, and sunfast. This seemed to Johnson to indicate the desire of this income group to get the most for their money. The color should be fast to sunlight and washing and should be so stated on the label. If the words "washable" or "fast color" are used, it should not be assumed the color will be fast to light and laundering (Thompson and Rea, 15).

Shrinkage of garments was also cited by the parents as a problem but dresses were not mentioned as one of the articles causing trouble along this line (Kennally, 7). Johnson (6) found that a preshrunk or Sanforized finish was the one most desired by the largest number of respondents. Tate and Glisson (13) stated that all fabrics for children's clothes should be preshrunk. If they are not, a garment may shrink the equivalent of two sizes in the first washing and thus become unwearable.

Scott (12) suggests that the consumer look for printed tags on the garment for facts about shrinkage and colorfastness. Since some fibers and finishes require special care, consumers will find it necessary to depend on the information which should be found on labels, especially with the advent of new fibers and finishes. The consumer

should know the fiber content and directions for cleaning.

Fitzsimmons (2) pointed out that there are at least three sources from which household buyers can obtain information about textiles or clothing. These three are informative labels, brand, and certification labels. The informative label would be the most useful for the consumer as it should include fiber content, fabric structure, special finishes that give specific appearance or serviceability qualities, directions and precautions on proper use and care. The label should also include size of the item and the manufacturer's name (Textile Handbook, 14; Todd, 16).

Of the 72 dress styles examined in Ingalls' study (5), 60 per cent had labels with some consumer information. Today, according to the Textile Fiber Products Identification Act of 1958 which became effective March 3, 1960, the constituent fibers and percentages of each and the name of the manufacturer must be affixed to the garment by some means (14). This act was not in effect at the time of Ingalls' study however, in which only one dress (\$4.95) had information on all points considered. The fabric manufacturer's name was carried by 61 per cent of the labels, and twenty-nine per cent carried both the name and address of the fabric manufacturer. The fiber used was given on twenty-nine per cent of the labels, and 56 per cent indicated to varying degrees the service that could be expected from the fabric. Some instruction as to care and laundry was given on 68 per cent of the labels. Price had little to do with the presence and the adequacy of the label. Of the thirteen dresses costing \$3.95 and under, 69 per cent had informative labels; in the \$4.95 to \$5.95 group, 50 per cent; in the \$7.95 to \$8.95 group, 63 per

cent; and dresses costing more than \$10, 67 per cent. Two of the eighteen brands surveyed showed measurements such as length, waist, and chest on the label.

Since children's garments are chiefly wash garments, the workmanship needs to be of the sturdiest quality. All children's clothing should be made to withstand frequent laundering, the strain of hard wear, and the jerks of the inexperienced hand of the child putting it on and taking it off (Thompson and Rea, 15). Shoddy workmanship in ready-made garments appears to be a major complaint of mothers according to Tate and Glisson (13). Cheap buttons and poorly made buttonholes, poor stitching and inadequate seam allowances, snaps and hooks and buttons not securely attached, decoration which is difficult to iron, and poorly constructed openings are the biggest problems. These points of construction were also criticized by the mothers in Ingalls' (4) study. Armholes showed the first signs of wear with waistlines also appearing to be a weak spot.

Parents awareness of the lack of suitable finish on seams of children's clothes was noted in the study conducted by Kennally (7). The majority of parents complained about the lack of reinforcement of seams. Since children's garments usually wear out in the same places time after time, Thompson and Rea (15) suggest that the life of garments may be lengthened if the places that get the hardest wear are reinforced before the garment is worn.

Seams should be soft and flat to prevent irritation and should be finished as securely as possible. The manner in which seams are finished depends on the material used, the kind of garment, and the use

to which it will be put. Clothing worn for play needs to have a sturdier finish than clothing for dress-up occasions, for it will be worn and laundered more often. Children's hems are better and more secure if they are stitched on the machine to prevent a finger or toe getting caught in a stitch which was made by hand and slipped loose.

Fasteners should also be as flat as possible. There should be no sharp or pointed edges or long shanks to cut, scratch, or gouge the child.

In selecting garments for the elementary school child, consumers complain about the lack of growth allowance. Observation of the buying habits of these consumers indicate that they have little familiarity with growth allowance features other than hem allowance and controlled shrinkage. In order to be assured of getting their money's worth out of children's clothing some mothers resort to buying less expensive clothes with the idea of limited wear, or buying garments to fit with the idea of passing them on to other children in the family. The mothers select styles that are as undated as possible, so that the age of a garment is not revealed when it is worn another season or is passed on to another child. Mothers sometimes take advantage of after-season sales in order to have clothing on hand for the following year. They might also buy very few clothes so that garments are kept in continuous use, as a child is usually satisfied to wear a garment over and over as long as he likes it and feels comfortable in it. The mothers sometimes buy clothes that are suitable for year-round wear (Tate and Glisson, 13).

The practice of buying garments too large with the idea that the child will grow into them is false economy and is psychologically bad

for the child in that it affects both his physical comfort and personal appearance. One of the greatest needs for the preschool and elementary period is for longer-wearing apparel that maintains both good fit and appearance throughout its life. There are some features that will permit longer wear during this growing period and yet will not give the effect that the garment is too large. To provide for growth in height, dresses might be made with deep hems or tucks at the bottom, and tucks at the waistline to lengthen the upper part of the dress. Dresses can have indefinite or be without waistlines. Yokes may have crosswise tucks that can be released as the trunk of the body lengthens.

In the study conducted by Kennally (7), thirty-four per cent of the mothers preferred to buy clothing to fit the child while 64 per cent preferred to buy clothing a little larger. Two per cent were uncertain as to their preferences and remarked that it depended on the type of clothing. Those who preferred to buy clothing to fit the child commented further by stating that clothes look better when they fit the child and if purchased large, get shabby by the time they fit properly. Some of the parents purchased clothes one size larger while others made purchases with the idea of having them last two seasons.

CHAPTER III

METHOD OF PROCEDURE

The method of procedure used in conducting this study consisted of (1) developing the observation form and questionnaire, (2) pretesting the observation form and questionnaire, (3) making the observations, and (4) analyzing the data.

Developing the observation form with questionnaire. A form was developed to secure information obtained by observing mothers shopping for dresses in the 3 to 14 size range and to question mothers after a decision to purchase or not to purchase a dress had been made in order to study their preferences in regard to girls' dresses. The form, which was prepared to achieve the objectives of this study, was set up in the following manner:

- A. To find out selected characteristics consumers look for and/or ask about when shopping for dresses for girls as obtained by observation in stores.
 1. Outside of dress
 - a. fabric
 - b. trimming
 - c. fasteners
 - d. other
 2. Inside of dress
 - a. hem
 - b. seams

c. other

3. Label or hang tag

B. To find out specific desirable characteristics and features consumers say they believe to be most important when purchasing girls' dresses as obtained through questioning.

1. Construction details
2. Style or type of dress
3. Growth features
4. Self-help features

C. To determine whether or not the mothers say they read the labels or hang tags on the dresses and to learn what information they are seeking.

1. Fiber content
2. Instructions for use and care
3. Manufacturer's name
4. Price

D. To determine if there is any relationship between the price of the dresses purchased and the consumers' thoroughness in shopping through information obtained in stores by observation and questioning.

General questions were asked to obtain socio-economic information concerning the place of residence, the husband's occupation, and the number and ages of the children.

Dresses specifically were chosen for this study since most of the previous research deals with various items of children's clothing with little information specifically related to dresses. The writer chose to

observe mothers who were shopping for dresses in the 3 to 14 size range rather than on the basis of age. The former criteria would be more reliable because standard sizes for children's clothes used by most manufacturers are based on measurements. It was stated in Thompson and Rea (16, p. 237) that "stating size by age has no relationship to the job of fitting clothes to children."

Pretesting the observation form with questionnaire. The final draft of the observation form with questionnaire as it was originally formulated was used on a sample of ten mothers shopping for girls' dresses. The pretesting was done to see if the observation portion of the form was adequate, to seek clarity of questions, to catch unforeseen problems, and to provide experience for the investigator. Several changes were made in the questionnaire portion of the form as a result of the pretesting. A tally was kept at one of the stores where the observations were to be done to ascertain the approximate number of mothers who would be looking at dresses on various days of the week and to determine the times of day the largest number of mothers would be shopping.

Making the observations. The fifty observations were done over an extended period from mid-April to mid-June, 1965, in a total of approximately thirty-four hours of observing time. The mid-April to mid-June time period is the most accurate indication of the actual time required of the investigator in obtaining the fifty observations. There were numerous times which the investigator believed, after checking in stores, that the rate of business was too slow to merit her staying to observe.

Twenty-one of the observations were obtained in approximately thirteen and one-half hours at a specialty store whose girls' dresses ranged in price from \$3.29 to \$12.98. This store was located on the city's main street and was entirely on one level. Two other stores in which observations were done were members of large nationally-known chains. Twenty observations were obtained in approximately fourteen hours in the chain store having a \$2.99 to \$5.98 price range whose children's wear department was located in the basement. Nine observations were obtained in approximately six and one-half hours in the other chain store which had a \$2.99 to \$7.99 price range. These stores were located approximately one-half block and one block respectively, off of the city's main street. The latter store's children's department was located to the left of the main entrance with the girls' garments located toward the rear of the store near the side entrance.

Analyzing the data. A descriptive analysis was made of the information received from the observation forms with questionnaires. The observation portion of the form was analyzed according to the specific items the mothers looked for and/or asked about when shopping. Each question was analyzed separately. The conclusions and recommendations were based on the findings according to the total number of respondents and to the number who responded in a specific manner as each item was analyzed separately.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The purposes of this chapter are to discuss and relate findings obtained from the observation and from the questionnaire forms concerning mothers' preferences for girls' dresses in the 3 to 14 size range.

Of the fifty mothers interviewed, six were members of rural families and forty-four were members of urban families. This division was made according to the respondents residence. If they lived within the city limits of incorporated towns or cities they were classified as urban families; if they did not they were considered rural families.

The size of the families ranged from those with one child to those with six children. The majority of the families had two or three children. Table I shows the number of children by total number of families having the specified number of children.

TABLE I
NUMBER OF CHILDREN PER FAMILY

No. of children	No. of families having specified no. of children	Total no. of children
1	7	7
2	12	24
3	15	45
4	8	32
5	5	25
6	<u>3</u>	<u>18</u>
	50	151

The ages of the 92 girls ranged from less than one to twenty-one with 56 of the girls' ages falling between three and ten. The ages and number of girls each age are shown in Table II. The 92 girls were not all in the 3 to 14 size range. The 92 included all of the daughters of the fifty mothers who had at least one girl in the 3 to 14 size range.

TABLE II
NUMBER OF GIRLS IN FIFTY FAMILIES
REPRESENTED AT EACH AGE LEVEL

Age	No. of girls at specified age	Age	No. of girls at specified age
less than 1 yr.	1	11 yr. to 11 yr. 11 mo.	8
1 yr. to 1 yr. 11 mo.	3	12 yr. to 12 yr. 11 mo.	4
2 yr. to 2 yr. 11 mo.	4	13 yr. to 13 yr. 11 mo.	6
3 yr. to 3 yr. 11 mo.	11	14 yr. to 14 yr. 11 mo.	1
4 yr. to 4 yr. 11 mo.	7	15 yr. to 15 yr. 11 mo.	3
5 yr. to 5 yr. 11 mo.	10	16 yr. to 16 yr. 11 mo.	1
6 yr. to 6 yr. 11 mo.	7	17 yr. to 17 yr. 11 mo.	1
7 yr. to 7 yr. 11 mo.	4	18 yr. to 18 yr. 11 mo.	1
8 yr. to 8 yr. 11 mo.	10	19 yr. to 19 yr. 11 mo.	0
9 yr. to 9 yr. 11 mo.	7	20 yr. to 20 yr. 11 mo.	0
10 yr. to 10 yr. 11 mo.	2	21 yr. to 21 yr. 11 mo.	1

Twenty-seven of the 92 girls were with their mothers when they were shopping, but only twelve girls tried on dresses. Nine girls tried on only one dress, while one tried on two dresses, and two tried on three. Two girls had dresses held up to them for size estimation; one of these girls had already tried on one dress.

Fifteen of the fifty mothers purchased twenty-two dresses with twelve purchasing one; two purchasing two; and one mother purchasing six dresses. The prices of dresses purchased ranged from \$1.99 to

eight dollars and ninety-eight cents as shown in Table III. The majority of the dresses purchased ranged from \$3.00 to \$4.99.

TABLE III
NUMBER OF DRESSES PURCHASED AT EACH PRICE RANGE

Price Range of Dress	No. Purchased
\$1.99	3
2.00-2.99	2
3.00-3.99	8
4.00-4.99	4
5.00-5.99	2
7.00-7.99	2
8.00-8.98	<u>1</u>
	22

When approached by the saleslady, ten of the mothers said they were "just looking." Of the fifty mothers observed shopping, thirty-three of them just casually looked through the dresses while seven others took dresses off of the rack and looked at the fronts and backs. Only four of the mothers felt of the fabric and three looked specifically at the trimming on certain dresses with one looking at the hem outside of the dresses. Two mothers looked inside of the dresses at the hem and two at the seams. Five mothers gave a general look inside of the dresses--one of them presumably at the attached petticoat. Twenty mothers looked at the label or hang tag on the garments.

After making a purchase one of the mothers commented that she would come back and get some more dresses but she wanted to check the size first. The dress she purchased was especially designed for girls

"in-between" sizes. One of the mothers said she was just looking and happened upon a shift which she purchased and another, although she had a daughter in the 3 to 14 size range, was looking for a gift for another girl. Another mother just looked through the dresses while the saleslady was writing up a purchase she had made.

While shopping, two of the mothers asked about the price and two stated preferences in regard to the design of the dresses. One of the mothers said she was interested in self-help and growth features and another remarked about growth features in clothing as she was wanting to purchase sale goods in the spring which would fit the girl in the fall. Four of the mothers were looking for dresses for specific occasions and were therefore interested in finding specific features in the dresses. One of the mothers asked the saleslady if a particular dress was cotton, then if it was rayon when the saleslady said it was not cotton. The material and the style of the dress in relation to the suitability for the child were of importance to one of the mothers. While shopping, one mother's comment was about a particular style being cool for summer. Another mother's comments regarded the care, comfort, and brand of the dresses.

When asked the question "What specific construction details do you look for?" only fifteen of the fifty mothers or thirty per cent gave replies specifically regarding the seams of the dresses. Four just stated "seams" and four more "seam finish." The other seven mothers made further comments concerning the seams as may be seen in Table IV.

Hems were another construction detail in which mothers expressed interest. Four mothers mentioned the "hem" with two more mentioning the

"width" of the hem. The remarks pertained to the mothers' concern for being able to let the hem out as may be seen in Table IV.

TABLE IV

COMMENTS ABOUT SEAMS AND HEMS IN REGARD TO CONSTRUCTION
DETAILS LOOKED FOR BY NUMBER OF MOTHERS*

Comment	No. of mothers
Seams	4
Seams, if sewed well	1
Seams, if well done	1
Seams that do not ravel	1
Seams, not too scanty	1
Seams, how they are put together at the waist	1
Seam finish	4
Seam finish, so they do not ravel; flat-felled, French or whipped by machine	1
Seam finish, nicely	1
Hem	1
Hem because she is growing fast	1
Hem, if sufficient and well done	1
Hem that can be let down	1
Hem width	
Hem width, small or large; better dress if hem is larger	1
Hem width in case you wanted to let them down	1

*Quotations of mothers concerning seams and hems when asked
"What specific construction details do you look for?"

There were eighteen mothers or thirty-six per cent who replied regarding the general construction of the dresses such as the workmanship and if the dresses were well made. One mother stated that she could not say she looked specifically at construction.

The material from which dresses were made was another construction detail looked for by thirteen mothers. Eight mothers mentioned style;

one mentioned design. Two of the mothers were interested in a specific style or design. One mother said that she looked for detail, something smart looking, saying that she could make plain dresses. Four mothers wanted something simple; tailored; or straight while four others said they desired something pretty; cute; and becoming to the child. One mother stated that it depended on whether she liked the dress and if it was "not extremely badly made." Other things looked for which were not actual construction details included color mentioned by three mothers and trimming by two. Two of the mothers did not and one did want something frilly. Two mothers were interested in something easy for the child to put on. Twelve comments were made regarding the care of the garments, such as the washing and ironing and serviceability.

Eight others answered the question on specific construction details looked for by saying they usually made their daughters dresses. One of the mothers replied that she "doesn't look that close" and another replied "nothing really" and said she had such a hard time fitting her daughter that if she found something she liked she bought it. Four mothers mentioned the fit and appearance of the dresses and three stated quality and durability. One mother stated price and another said she preferred a more expensive dress saying she trusted them a little more. One mother said she bought by brand name. Two mentioned the occasion for which the dress was to be worn and one wanted something cool. One mother wished the dresses would button in front so the girl could dress herself.

When the mothers were asked "Do you read the label or hang tag?" thirty-six said yes and ten indicated that they sometimes did. Four

mothers indicated they did not read the labels or hang tags. When asked "What information are you seeking?" one mother replied "none." Twenty-nine of the mothers or fifty-eight per cent mentioned fabric or fiber content, type of material or what the garment is made of. Four of the mothers said they look for ironing information and forty-four mothers or eighty-eight per cent mentioned laundering or washing information. Detailed answers regarding the washing and laundering replies are shown in Table V.

TABLE V
MOTHERS' COMMENTS REGARDING WASHING AND LAUNDERING INFORMATION
SOUGHT ON GARMENT LABELS OR HANG TAGS

No. of times mentioned	Comment
16	washable
12	washing information
9	wash and wear or easy care finish
3	care
1	care, if washable
1	washable or drycleanable
1	if not cotton, looks to see if it is washable
1	like something can wash easily by hand and dry in dryer
<hr/> 44	

Some specific items noted on labels and hang tags and the number of times they were mentioned included shrinkage--seven; colorfast--four; sanforized--two; stain-resistant--one; crease-resistant--one. One mother said she avoided those garments that required drycleaning. Three mothers mentioned durability; and whether the dresses were well made and

would hold up well. Two mothers remarked that they did not want frills or "nothing fancy that can't be taken care of." Nine or eighteen per cent of the replies concerned the manufacturer or brand, with another mother saying that as a rule she did not like to buy anything imported. Four mothers stated price and two stated size as items they looked for on the labels or hang tags. One mentioned fit and one commented on the looks of the dress for her child. One mother said she made her daughter's dresses a lot of the time instead of buying them and another said she did not like "bleeding madras that bleeds."

When answering the question "Is there any particular style or type of dress you believe especially desirable?" eight of the mothers said yes. Fifteen of the mothers indicated there was no particular style or type of dress that they preferred. In twenty-seven cases the mother expressed a preference for a particular style or type without first giving a "yes" reply.

Of those eight mothers answering that they preferred a particular style, five mentioned A-line or shift; one--sporty, grown-up like; one desired either sleeveless or puffy sleeved dresses, and not a straight sleeve because of her daughter's small arms; and one wanted fullness gathered on yokes.

Of those mothers who did not give a "yes" reply but expressed preferences for particular styles, nine mentioned shifts; seven--simple and/or tailored types; and three mothers said full or gathered skirts with one of these mothers stating that her daughter preferred shifts and lowered waistlines. Five of the mothers when asked about a particular style or type of dress which was desirable, indicated that their

preferences depended on the season or occasion for which the dress would be worn. Two mothers said their style preferences varied depending on what really looked nice on their daughters, and one mentioned color. Another mother commented that since her daughter was fourteen years of age and wore a size 12, she wanted something that was not too babyish or too young. Two mothers noted jumpers and blouses, and skirts and blouses or sweaters as being desirable styles.

When asked "Does the child try to dress herself?" the mothers replied that six of the girls did not. The six girls who did not try to dress themselves and three who could put on shoes, socks, and panties but not dresses were all under four years of age. When asked "Do you try to buy clothing which will help in this respect?" there were nine mothers who indicated they did, eighteen who did not, and eleven who did not answer. Eleven other mothers indicated that their daughters could dress themselves.

When asked how they purchased garments which would help their girls in dressing themselves, eight of the mothers replies concerned the girls' ease in fastening garments or in putting on slip-over garments. Two comments were made regarding shorts and pants and one concerned slips which the mother thought were made too narrow for the child to put on herself. When asked about buying clothing which would help the child in dressing herself, one mother answer "yes and no." She went on to say that for her four-year-old she liked simple things and that the girl could get the clothing on and off by herself. The mother also reported she liked something easy to wash and iron that would look nice afterward and she did not care for frills. She said sometimes

shorts did not have a definite front and back and that the girl put them on backward, but generally the girl could handle everything except back buttons. The mother said that she and her eleven-year-old could not even do back buttons.

Of those mothers who said they did not try to buy clothing which would help the children in dressing themselves, seven of the mothers' comments concerned girls who could not manage back openings, specifically buttons and sashes. Three of the mothers reported their daughters could dress themselves. One mother said she bought what she liked and if her two girls could not manage by themselves she just helped them. Three mothers commented that their three-year-old daughters had to be dressed. One mother remarked that she thought it would be a nice feature if the dresses would button on the side or front and she thought shifts were good because they do not have tie sashes.

Eight of the mothers who did not answer whether or not they tried to buy clothing which would help their children dress themselves said their girls could not manage back openings. One mother reported that her three-year-old could slip things on but could not button anything and sometimes put things on backward. One mother commented on the type of shoes she bought for her daughter as her daughter did not like to tie shoes.

No relation was found in the observation and questionnaire forms of the fifteen mothers who purchased dresses between the price of the dresses purchased and the number of items the mother looked at or mentioned upon questioning. The mother who purchased a \$4.29 shift and the \$8.98 dress mentioned and looked at the least number of items. Two

mothers purchasing in the \$4.00-4.99 and \$7.00-7.99 price ranges looked at and stated the largest number of items while shopping and being questioned regarding specific items they looked for and found desirable in girls' dresses. The next largest number of items was looked at and mentioned by three mothers purchasing in the \$2.00-2.99, \$4.00-4.99, and \$7.00-7.99 price ranges. Twelve of the fifteen mothers or 80 per cent of the mothers purchasing dresses had their daughters with them when they were shopping. This was in comparison to only twelve or thirty-four per cent of the thirty-five non-purchasers who had their daughters with them.

The heads of the households were classified according to the six occupational levels given in Roe (10). The levels and the number of heads of the households in each level are shown in Table VI. These levels were based upon degrees of responsibility, capacity, and skill of the workers. The majority of the heads of the households were classified as Level 2, Professional and managerial; medium-level responsibility; and Level 3, Semi-professional and small business. In three cases, the mother was the head of the household. Two were widows and were classified as professional and managerial; medium-level responsibility and skilled worker. The third was separated from her husband. She was classified as a semi-skilled worker.

When asked about specific construction details looked for and information mothers sought from the label or hang tag, it was found that the mothers whose families were classified as Level 3 stated more items than the mothers in families of other levels. Families from occupational levels 4 and 5 showed the largest percentage of mothers

TABLE VI
 NUMBER OF HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS ACCORDING
 TO OCCUPATIONAL LEVELS

Level No.		No. of heads of households
Level 1	Professional and Managerial: Independent Responsibility	7
Level 2	Professional and Managerial: Medium-level Responsibility	11
Level 3	Semi-professional and Small Business	17
Level 4	Skilled	9
Level 5	Semi-skilled	5
Level 6	Unskilled	<u>1</u>
		50

who had their daughters with them while shopping. Six of the nine mothers, or 66.7 per cent, whose head of household's occupational level was 4 and three of the five mothers, or 60 per cent, whose head of household's occupational level was 5 had at least one of their daughters with them while shopping.

No difference was found between the mothers according to the families' occupational levels in regard to a particular style or type of dress desired and whether they tried to buy clothing which had self-help features.

A more detailed analysis of the observation and questionnaire forms divided according to their occupational level classifications may be found in Appendix B. A copy of the form used for the observation and questioning of the mothers may be found in Appendix A.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

It is believed that the group of mothers shopping for girls' dresses observed in this study is representative of the population in this area. Although due to the small sample size, the conclusions reached are not applicable to the entire population. As this study was conducted on an assumption that the majority of mothers in the Manhattan area do not carefully examine the merchandise when they are shopping, the conclusions reached as a result of this study seem to verify the assumption.

It was observed that very few of the mothers did more than just casually look through the dresses with only a very few looking at any specific details. Yet when the mothers were questioned about specific items which the writer believed should be important to the mothers as shoppers, the answers given indicated they looked for more items on the dresses than was actually observed.

The largest number of responses on information sought concerned washing and laundering facts given on the labels or hang tags. This type of knowledge would seem to be important to the mother both as a time factor since she probably cares for the family's clothing and as a durability factor regarding the life of the garment. If the latter were the case, however, it seems there should have been a follow-through of label information desired apparent in regard to the construction of the dress. The mothers would be expected to have been interested in

the seams and hems to have an indication if the construction of the garment was durable. On the contrary, only thirty per cent of the mothers gave replies specifically regarding the seams of the dresses and only twelve per cent commented on the hems when asked what specific construction details they looked for. Only thirty-six per cent of the mothers' replies concerned the general construction of the dresses such as the workmanship and whether the dresses were well made.

In regard to the style or type of dresses desired, only four mothers mentioned the appearance of the dresses on the children and only one stated her daughter's preference. For the mothers who said there was not a particular style or type of dress they believed especially desirable, the ages of their children were frequently mentioned in relation to various styles. This seems to indicate that although the mothers did not express a definite preference, they were concerned with the style or type of dress as it affected the needs of their children. It is believed that the frequent mention of the A-line and shift as style preferences is due to the fact that they are currently fashionable and also that their straight and simple designs are time-savers for the mothers when it comes to upkeep.

Only nine mothers or eighteen per cent said they tried to buy clothing which would help the children in dressing themselves. This indicates a need for informing mothers of the effect of self-help features in dresses on the development of "initiative, self-reliance and good habit formation" of children as was found in Johnson's study (6).

It is believed that a study of mothers' preferences conducted in

this manner using an actual store situation more accurately reveals what the mothers look for than the interview or questionnaire method alone or a mock store situation would reveal. The interview method used in addition to the observation of the mothers while they are selecting garments makes it possible to find out what the mothers actually look for. It is also possible to find out what they say they are interested in which cannot be determined in all cases by observation alone.

CHAPTER VI

RECOMMENDATIONS

Another study might be conducted with a questionnaire which could include in addition to the factors considered in this study, the mothers' interest in comfort factors and whether the children's preferences are considered when purchasing clothing.

The sample in a similar study could include mothers, teen-age, elementary, and preschool children. Findings might reveal who does the purchasing and a comparison could be made of the mothers' and children's preferences at the different age levels. It might also be determined whether the children's preferences are respected when their clothing is purchased. A large sample would allow comparison of the age groups to see if the older children's preferences have more influence on mothers in the purchase of the children's clothing.

It also might be useful to conduct a follow-up study involving the mothers who purchased dresses to obtain information about the mothers' satisfaction with their purchases. This follow-up study might be made approximately three months after the purchase of the garments since the change in seasons and the rapid growth of the children might prevent their wearing the same garments at a later date.

It might be worthwhile to inform salesclerks that the mothers who purchased dresses showed a larger percentage having their daughters with them than the non-purchasing mothers. This does not indicate, however, that the mothers who do not have their daughters with them are not

prospective purchasers. In many cases the mothers first go shopping by themselves. After narrowing the selection, they later return with their daughters before a final decision is made.

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APPENDIX A

OBSERVATION AND QUESTIONNAIRE FORM

No. of children	Husband's occupation	
Age and sex	Residence	urban rural

Outside of dress	LF	AA
Fabric		

Trimming

Fasteners (buttonholes)

Other

Inside of dress

Hem

Seams

Other

Label or hang tag

Girl with mother

Dress tried on

Comments about observation:

Just looking

Purchased dress

Price of dress

What specific construction details do you look for?

sms	wdth	fnsH
hem	wdth	mthd
fstnr	type	atth

Do you read the label or hang tag? yes no

What information are you seeking?

fb cnt									
cln	hw	mw	dc	td	dd	cf	sf	sh	

ir ni loni temp

mfg

pr

(Observation and questionnaire form continued)

Is there any particular style or type of dress you believe especially desirable? yes no

If yes, how is it made?

sty-gd

col

fish

f-des

gr-f

Does the child try to dress herself? yes no

Do you try to buy clothing which will help in this respect? yes no

If yes, how?

APPENDIX B

TABLE VII (continued)

Occupational Level	OBSERVED				QUESTIONED											
	Rural or Urban	No. of Children	Items Looked At and/or Asked About		Dresses Tried On	Purchase Price	Construction Details Reported		Read Label or Hang Tag	Information Sought from Label or Hang Tag			Style or Type of Dress Desired	Tries to Dress Her- self (No. of Girls)	Tries to Buy Clothes with Self-Help Features	
			Outside	Inside			Construction	Other		Fiber Content	Care	Manufacturer				Price
<u>LEVEL 1</u> (Purchasers cont.)	U	3	1	1	X	\$4.75	3	2	Y	6			Y-2	D		
			front & back						Y	2	X		Y-5	N		
	U	5	"just looking"			\$3.25 3.98	4	1	Y							
<u>LEVEL 2</u> (Non-purchasers)	U	3	2	X	2		2	3	Y	X		X	Y	Y-2	N	
	U	3					3	1	Y	X	3	X	P	Y-3	NA	
	U	2						1	N				N	Y-1	Y	
	U	2	front & back		1		2	2	S	1			1	N	Y-1	Y
	U	3			1		2	2	Y	3			P	Y-2	D	

X indicates item was looked at or mentioned

Y signifies a "yes" reply

N signifies a "no" reply

NA means no answer was given

S means "sometimes"

P means a preference was stated without a "yes" reply

D indicates girls dress themselves

H indicates dress was held up to girl

TABLE VII (continued)

OBSERVED			QUESTIONED										
Occupational Level	No. of Children	Items Looked At and/or Asked About		Construction Details Reported		Read Label or Hang Tag		Information Sought from Label or Hang Tag			Style or Type of Dress Desired	Tries to Dress Her self (No. of Girls)	Tries to Buy Clothes with Self-Help Features
		Outside	Inside	Construction	Other	Fiber Content	Care	Manufacturer	Price	Other			
<u>LEVEL 2 (Non-purchasers cont.)</u>													
U	4	"just looking"		2	1	Y	X	2			P	Y-3	Y
U	1			1		Y		1	X		P	Y-1	Y
U	4	"just looking"		3		X	X	1	X		P	Y-1	Y
U	1	"just looking"		1	1	S	X	1			P	Y-1	N
<u>LEVEL 2 (Purchasers)</u>													
U	5			2	2	S		2	X		P	Y-3	N
U	3	1	1	2	2	Y	X	2			P	Y-2	D
<u>LEVEL 3 (Non-purchasers)</u>													
R	3	"just looking"		2	2	Y	X	3			N	Y-1	NA

X indicates item was looked at or mentioned

Y signifies a "yes" reply

N signifies a "no" reply

NA means no answer was given

S means "sometimes"

P means a preference was stated without a "yes" reply

D indicates girls dress themselves

H indicates dress was held up to girl

TABLE VII (continued)

OBSERVED		QUESTIONED												
Occupational Level of Families	Rural or Urban	No. of Children	Items Looked At and/or Asked About		Construction Details Reported	Read Label or Hang Tag	Information Sought from Label or Hang Tag				Style or Type of Dress Desired	Tries to Dress Her- self (No. of Girls)	Tries to Buy Clothes with Self-Help Features	
			Outside	Inside			Label	Construction	Other	Price				Manufacturer
LEVEL 3 (Non-purchasers cont.)	U	1												
	U	3			3	Y	Y	1	1	Y	Y-1	Y-1	NA	NA
	R	3			1	Y	Y	2	2	Y	Y-2	Y-2	D	D
	U	2			2	Y	Y	3	3	Y	Y-1	Y-1	D	D
	U	4			2	Y	Y	1	1	Y	Y-3	Y-3	D	D
	U	4			1	Y	Y	1	1	Y	Y-2	Y-2	N	N
	U	2			1	4	S	X	2	Y	Y-2	Y-2	N	N

X indicates item was looked at or mentioned

Y signifies a "yes" reply

N signifies a "no" reply

NA means no answer was given

S means "sometimes"

P means a preference was stated without a "yes" reply

D indicates girls dress themselves

H indicates dress was held up to girl

TABLE VII (continued)

OBSERVED			QUESTIONED													
Occupational Level	Rural or Urban	No. of Children	Items Looked At and/or Asked About		Purchase Price	Dresses Tried On	Girls with Mother	Construction Details Reported		Read Label or Hang Tag	Information Sought from Label or Hang Tag			Style or Type of Dress Desired	Tries to Dress Her-self (No. of Girls)	Tries to Buy Clothes with Self-Help Features
			Outside	Inside				Label	Construction		Other	Fiber Content	Care			
LEVEL 3 (Non-purchasers cont.)	R	3														
	U	2					1	Y	Y	Y	X	1			Y-1	NA
	U	5					2	Y	Y	Y	4				Y-2	N
LEVEL 3 (Purchasers)	U	6				1	1	Y	Y						Y-4	D
	U	4				1	2	Y	Y	X	1				Y-1	D
	R	2	3	X	1	1	2	4	Y	Y	X	1			Y-1	NA
	R	5	1	X	1	1	1	Y	Y	X	1				Y-3	Y&N

X indicates item was looked at or mentioned

Y signifies a "yes" reply

N signifies a "no" reply

NA means no answer was given

S means "sometimes"

P means a preference was stated without a "yes" reply

D indicates girls dress themselves

H indicates dress was held up to girl

TABLE VII (continued)

OBSERVED				QUESTIONED										
Occupational Level	Rural or Urban	No. of Children	Items Looked At and/or Asked About		Purchase Price	Construction Details Reported		Read Label or Hang Tag	Information Sought from Label or Hang Tag			Style or Type of Dress Desired	Tries to Dress Her- self (No. of Girls)	Tries to Buy Clothes with Self-Help Features
			Outside	Inside		Label	Construction		Other	Fiber Content	Care			
<u>LEVEL 3</u> U 1		1	1	1	2H \$3.98	1	2H	1	Y	X	1	Y	Y-1	N
U 3		1	1	X	\$4.98	1	1	Y	X	3	N	Y-2	N	
<u>LEVEL 4</u> U 2						1	1	Y			X	N	Y-1	N
U 4		1	X			1	2	Y	X	2	Y	Y-2	N	
U 3		1	1	X		1	1	S	X	1	P	Y-1	D	
R 2		2				1	1	N			P	Y-2	NA	
U 2		2	1	1	X	1	1	Y	X	1	P	Y-1	N	
U 6		6	X			1	1	S	X	1	X	Y-1	NA	

X indicates item was looked at or mentioned

Y signifies a "yes" reply

N signifies a "no" reply

NA means no answer was given

S means "sometimes"

P means a preference was stated without a "yes" reply

D indicates girls dress themselves

H indicates dress was held up to girl

TABLE VII (continued)

OBSERVED		QUESTIONED														
Occupational Level	No. of Families	Rural or Urban	No. of Children	Items Looked At and/or Asked About		Girls with Mother	Dresses Tried On	Purchase Price	Construction Details Reported		Read Label or Hang Tag	Information Sought from Label or Hang Tag		Style or Type of Dress Desired	Tries to Dress Her-self (No. of Girls)	Tries to Buy Clothes with Self-Help Features
				Outside	Inside				Construction	Other		Fiber Content	Care			
<u>LEVEL 4</u> (Purchasers)																
	U 4			X		1	1	\$3.98	2		Y	1		P	Y-1	D
	U 1		1	X		1	3	\$2.98	2	S X	S	1	X	P	Y-1	NA
	U 1					1		\$4.29 8.98	1	S	S	"none"		P	Y-1	N
<u>LEVEL 5</u> (Non-purchasers)																
	U 1								2		N			N	Y-1	N
	U 3			"just looking"		1			3	1	S X			P	Y-3	N
	U 6		1			1	1		3		Y X	3		P	Y-4	NA
	U 3			"just looking"		1			1	1	Y	1		N	Y-4	N

X indicates item was looked at or mentioned

Y signifies a "yes" reply

N signifies a "no" reply

NA means no answer was given

S means "sometimes"

P means a preference was stated without a "yes" reply

D indicates girls dress themselves

H indicates dress was held up to girl

TABLE VII (concluded)

OBSERVED				QUESTIONED											
Occupational Level	Rural or Urban	No. of Children	Items Looked At and/or Asked About		Purchase Price	Construction Details Reported		Information Sought from Label or Hang Tag		Style or Type of Dress Desired	Tries to Dress Her- self (No. of Girls)	Tries to Buy Clothes with Self-Help Features			
			Outside	Inside		Label	Other	Construction	Other				Fiber Content	Care	Manufacturer
<u>LEVEL 5</u> (Purchasers)	U	3	X		3@ \$1.99 1@ 2.99 1@ 3.22 1@ 3.99			2	Y	2			N	Y-2	Y
<u>LEVEL 6</u> (Non-purchasers)	U	2		1				1	N				Y	Y-1	Y

X indicates item was looked at or mentioned

Y signifies a "yes" reply

N signifies a "no" reply

NA means no answer was given

S means "sometimes"

P means a preference was stated without a "yes" reply

D indicates girls dress themselves

H indicates dress was held up to girl

PREFERENCES FOR GIRLS' DRESSES AS DETERMINED
BY OBSERVATION OF MOTHERS' SHOPPING

by

MARIE MARJORIE ROOT

B. S., Kansas State University, 1964

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

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This study of mothers' preferences was undertaken to learn by observing and questioning, what characteristics of girls' dresses the mothers actually desire and believe to be important when purchasing clothes. A form was developed to secure information by observing mothers shopping for dresses in the 3 to 14 size range and by questioning the mothers after a decision to purchase or not to purchase a dress had been made. Fifty observations were done over an extended period from mid-April to mid-June, 1965. The observations were obtained in a specialty shop and in two large nationally-known chain stores. Their regular prices ranged from \$2.99 to \$12.98. A descriptive analysis was made of the information received from the forms with the observation portion of the form being analyzed according to the specific items the mothers looked at and/or asked about when shopping. Each question was tabulated separately.

Of the fifty mothers interviewed, six were from rural communities and forty-four were from urban communities. The majority of the families had two or three children. The fifty mothers had a total of 92 daughters ranging in age from six months to twenty-one years. Twenty-seven girls were with their mothers when they were shopping but only twelve girls tried on dresses. Fifteen of the fifty mothers purchased twenty-two dresses ranging in price from \$1.99 to \$8.98.

Thirty-three of the mothers just casually looked through the dresses and twenty mothers looked at the label or hang tag on the garments. When asked "What specific construction details do you look for?" only thirty per cent of the mothers gave replies specifically regarding the seams of the dresses. Thirty-six per cent gave replies pertaining

to the general construction of the dresses.

When the mothers were asked "Do you read the label or hang tag?" thirty-six said yes and ten indicated they sometimes did. Four mothers said they did not read the labels or hang tags. When asked "What information are you seeking?" eighty-eight per cent of the mothers indicated they looked for laundering and washing information. Fifty-eight per cent mentioned the type of material the garment is made of. Twenty-two per cent of the replies concerned the manufacturer or brand.

When answering the question "Is there any particular style or type of dress you believe especially desirable?" eight of the mothers said yes. Fifteen of the mothers indicated there was no particular style or type of dress they preferred. In twenty-seven cases the mothers expressed a preference without first giving a "yes" reply. Fourteen of the mothers mentioned A-line or shifts with seven others stating simple and/or tailored styles.

The mothers reported that only six of the girls did not try to dress themselves. These girls were all under four years of age. When asked if they tried to buy clothing with self-help features nine mothers indicated they did and eighteen did not. Eleven other mothers indicated that their daughters could dress themselves.

No relation was found in the observation and questionnaire forms of the fifteen mothers who purchased dresses between the price of the dresses purchased and the number of items the mother looked at or mentioned upon questioning. The heads of the households were classified according to six occupational levels with the majority being classified as professional and managerial: medium-level responsibility; and

semi-professional and small business. It was found that the mothers from families of the latter socio-economic level looked for more construction details and sought more information on the labels or hang tags than the mothers from families of the other levels.