Dress and adornment, like other types of artistic expression, consist of form and content. The two dimensions are so inseparable and intricately intertwined with one another that attempts at comprehending either dress or adornment on the basis of one or the other would be somewhat like formulating a conception of green on the basis of attributes of either yellow or blue (Bevlin, 1984). Despite the interrelationships between the two, a bias toward form in dress and adornment prevails in contemporary society just as it does in the form of other cultural objects. If relationships among human needs are to be validated, form and content must be consistent with one another. The objective of this essay is to make a plea for an integrated approach to form and content in dress and adornment.

FORM

Form in any type of expression, is the result when an abstract idea of an individual or group has been converted into something which can be experienced or enjoyed, expressed or communicated, used or utilized. Form is the shape that materials take after human beings have modified and transformed them through techniques to meet needs, satisfy desires, fulfill functions, or accommodate whims. Form enables meaning to be shared with others. In writing about form in art, Ben Shahn states:

It is the visible shape of all man's growth; it is the living picture of his tribe at its most primitive, and of his civilization at its most sophisticated state. Form is the many faces of the legend—bardic, epic, sculptural, musical, pictorial, architectural, it is the infinite images of religion, it is the expression and the remnant of self. Form is the very shape of content. (Shahn, 1957)

Form consists of numerous interrelated components which cannot be isolated from one another. Any form is partially defined by the materials from which it arises. As the substance of form, materials have certain characteristics which exert themselves through ways in which they can be manipulated as well as utilized to create structure or define surfaces. The materials of form often tell a story about the resources that were at the disposal of a creator, available during a certain period of history, or that prevail in a given geographical area or region. At no other time in history has the selection of materials for garment forms been so available as it is during the present. In addition to natural materials, there is a plethora of man-made ones that have been engineered to yield special kinds of structures and surface effects.

Materials are a fundamental aspect of form in dress and adornment. Like other forms of artistic expression, interest in dress and adornment is often based on the compelling qualities of materials. Since the inherent qualities of materials vary, each type lends itself to a different kind of form. Many designers of dress and adornment have developed their expertise in relation to working with certain types of material. Just as some designers work exclusively with certain types of materials, so do some consumers exercise preferences toward materials when making selections.

Despite the impact that materials have on form, their qualities are seldom utilized without modification. Processes and techniques enable the physical and visual properties of materials to be altered, organized or refined to comply with some desired concept of form. High levels of creativity can be achieved by interrelating multiple techniques. The history of art documents the ingenuity of both individuals and peoples whose achievements in artistic form have been based on innovativeness through the use of processes and techniques. Although the recorded history of dress and adornment is relatively brief in comparison to the history of art, it documents the contributions of numerous individuals and groups who have excelled in the use of processes and techniques to create distinctive forms. Mario Fortuny and Madeleine Vionnet were designers of the past who made an impact on form through innovative techniques. Contemporary designers who are making comparable contributions include Ana Lisa Hedstrom who works with painting and
discharge through the technique of shibori and Tim Harding who cuts and frays multiple layers of fabric to achieve distinctive surface effects.

Structure is the aspect of form which pertains to organization. While made possible by materials and techniques, structure is also limited by them. Structure is also influenced by the underlying intent which, in turn, impinges upon materials and techniques. In addition to all those complexities, structure is subject to certain principles of organization. Some principles are dictated by the way in which materials and techniques lend themselves to being organized whereas others are the result of notions which prevail in a culture or society about what is considered to be acceptable approaches to organization. As such, principles of organization vary in terms of the extent to which they are defined or dictated as well as the degree to which they are susceptible to being modified. Violations in established approaches to organization can become the basis for innovations in form.

Like other forms which have prevailed during a given period of history or in a certain geographical location, form in dress and adornment constitutes a visual record of cultural expression. The various garment and accessory forms make statements about which materials and techniques were used and what principles of organization were followed or not followed. When considered along with other types of cultural expression such as fine furniture or jewelry, the various forms of dress and adornment contribute knowledge about the overall preferences of a people during a given period or within a certain geographical location.

CONTENT

Just as it is difficult to separate the various aspects of form, so are there problems in isolating content from form. Content is meaning whereas form is an entity with which it is associated. Content is a complex phenomenon because it prevails at both the individual and collective levels and is susceptible to changing rapidly at each. At the individual level, content or meaning arises when a person responds to an event in his or her environment. Since various environments are made up of objects, a considerable amount of meaning is generated in relation to them. When innovative forms of dress and adornment are among the objects of an environment, they often bring about responses because of their contrasting characteristics relative to more conventional types of dress.

Content can be as minimal as a preference for certain colors or as involved as a network of interrelated concepts. Materials with unusual characteristics, the unique effects of processes or techniques, new approaches to creating structure or surface effects, and principles of organization that are highly refined or intentionally disregarded all have the potential of defining form either independently or in concert with one another. In so doing, they can serve as a basis for initiating responses and thereby result in content. Responses can lead directly to the creation of content as they do when emotional responses to certain types of stimuli, such as the exquisiteness of structure, result in appreciation for beauty, or they can also involve cognitive processes which help to facilitate meaning. Meaning associated with dress and adornment, like meaning generated in response to other types of objects, is susceptible to being modified or replaced as responses to new events are created. Designers of garments and accessories, like other designers, often control various aspects of form with the hope of bringing about a desired type of content.

The content of dress and adornment becomes part of culture through the processes of socialization and education. As individuals respond to new garment and accessory forms, they not only formulate their own meanings but share them with others through interaction. Stores and boutiques help to socialize the public to prevailing trends in dress and adornment through visual merchandising and various types of advertisement. Galleries, museums and other institutions help to socialize the public to various aspects of dress and adornment as types of cultural expression by sponsoring exhibitions and runway shows. Journalists disseminate content by providing coverage of topics pertaining to dress and adornment through the popular press and scholars, researchers and critics advance knowledge of content through discussions in professional journals, textbooks and other forms of scholarly writing.

INTERRELATIONSHIPS OF FORM AND CONTENT

In comparison to form, content is more abstract, subject to more transformations, and
susceptible to being entirely lost or replaced. Although good form is a reflection of the integrity of content, noble content does not always result in purity of form. Aside from its ambiguous relationship to form, content is a slippery phenomenon because it is conceived in the minds of persons and as such not only varies from one to another but is subject to change with a person over time. Although meanings vary from person to person, their content is often similar when responses are made to common stimuli.

Content can either precede or follow the formation of form. It precedes form when it originates from some type of motivation. Motivations vary and include needs to fulfill utilitarian functions such as comfort and protection, urges for communication, desires for expression, and various combinations of all those factors. Some types of content arise in relation to a problem which can be resolved through form whereas others stem from a desire to bring about form. For example, the content or meaning that could arise from the desire, excitement or anticipated satisfaction of acquiring a whimsical garment might be strong enough to motivate the acquisition or creation of such a form. Similar motivations can arise from an appreciation or interest in the potential of certain materials or techniques for the creation of form.

Although form is brought about by some type of motivation to create meaning, the content can change or become more significant after the initial formation of form. Objects that were created to fulfill one type of purpose may be used to serve some other kind. For example, the meaning associated with containers created for carrying vegetables would change if those objects were to be used as handbags. Similar changes in meaning would occur if squares of painted fabric which were intended for decorating walls were to be used as shawls or scarves. In addition to changes in meaning which occur when an object which was intended to fulfill one type of purpose is used for another, meaning can also change as a result of circumstances. According to legend, the cuffs of men's trousers originated as a practical solution to the problem of keeping the bottoms dry. Through the years, the form continued to be used but the original meaning was no longer associated with it. Eventually, content became associated with the structural aspects of form rather than on how form had functioned earlier in relation to solving a problem.

CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON FORM

The history of dress and adornment, like the history of art, is a story of the interrelationships of form and content. In western culture, particular emphasis has been placed on form. Form, more than content, has fit in with the scientific paradigm that has dominated western culture for more than three hundred years. Form has been more conducive than content to being analyzed through reductionist techniques to determine the merits of constituent parts. The physical and visual characteristics of form in western dress and adornment are consistent with other forms of expression that tend to emphasize materialism.

A wide range of natural materials have been available for the creation of dress and adornment forms and many man-made ones have been engineered for specific purposes. The properties of materials have been studied through the scientific method and the knowledge gained has been utilized to produce forms with desirable and often long lasting characteristics. Systems of construction have been developed for creating garment and accessory structures and various approaches have been developed for classifying them.

Creating garment and accessory forms has been a significant enterprise in contemporary western culture. Businesses and industries have competed vigorously for the opportunity to present seasonal collections of dress and adornment forms for public acceptance. In addition to manufacturing and distributing goods, organized efforts have been carried out to encourage the adoption of new forms of dress and adornment and the abandonment of old ones. Allied businesses and industries provide goods and services which support the effort of making garment and accessory forms available.

Dress and adornment, like other cultural forms, is also a medium of artistic expression. Since the body is involved, human beings experience a special relationship to garment and accessory forms. Aside from utilitarian capabilities, garment and accessory forms serve as vehicles through which the very essence of beauty and harmony can be conveyed. The traditional materials and techniques provide continuity with the past, whereas new ones help
to carry the participants of a culture or society into the future. Because of the diversity with which garment and accessory forms can be created, designers have many outlets for their expression and expertise while consumers have a basis for numerous choices.

Educational programs have tended to emphasize form as opposed to content. The overall body of knowledge concerning all forms in the environment has helped to facilitate the specialized study of dress and adornment forms. The development of garment and accessory forms through history has not only been researched and written about extensively but continues to be updated and expanded. The study of textiles emphasizes the materials of garment and accessory forms according to morphology, construction, function and care. Courses are being offered in the technique of creating garment structure through methods of draping and pattern making. Experiences in sketching, selection, merchandising, and production provide additional opportunities for learning about various aspects of dress and adornment forms.

The media, too, emphasizes form. Press coverage of seasonal collections point out changes of silhouette, lengths of hemlines and characteristics of surface design such as color, pattern and texture. Both the print and electronic media have not only exposed the public to garment and accessory forms but have communicated the diversity with which they are available and the excitement which can be created by frequently changing them.

Much can be said for the emphasis on form in contemporary society. Whatever content it may be based on and regardless of the accuracy with which it might be interpreted, form makes a visual statement about human beings and where they are in time and space both individually and collectively. The form of dress and adornment depicts themes of life. It marshalls materials toward translating those themes into visual media for validation. In so doing, it is more than a vehicle for bringing about something to respond to through the senses but is, as well, an instrument or tool for enriching life. Form is more than a unit, an assemblage, an organized substance but a process which helps to trim away excessive content. It helps to eliminate unnecessary materials and structure. In this way, form is a discipline which provides more than a framework for useful objects. Through its relationship to content it can enrich life and help bring about more abundant meaning.

A PLEA FOR AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO FORM AND CONTENT

Despite the abundance of garment and accessory forms in contemporary society and the value placed on them, there is need for greater emphasis on the refinement of content. By observing human responses to events in the environment, one can learn about meanings which occur and then analyze ways in which they are organized into ideas and concepts. Such knowledge is beneficial in formulating a conception of content which ultimately serves as a basis for the creation of form. Although this process will not eliminate the re-use of forms which have already been introduced at some time, it will validate their relationship to human needs and in essence, help to create form which is consistent with the shape of content.

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A Critical Framework For Exploring The Aesthetic Dimensions Of
Wearable Art

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At the 1990 national conference of the Association of College Professors of Textiles and Clothing (now International Textile & Apparel Association), a special session, "Aesthetics of Apparel: Subject, Form and Content" was convened by DeLong and Hillestad to discuss the topic of aesthetics related to apparel. Their definition of aesthetics encompasses art theory and criticism.

Aesthetics was defined in its broadest terms, as understanding how we perceive visual forms, their characteristics and our reactions to them. Such an encompassing definition includes the study of history, philosophy, perception psychology, art theory and criticism, all pertaining to material culture. (p.33)

The need for assessing the visual experience using concepts from the fields of study mentioned by DeLong and Hillestad is important to advance scholarship in this area. For the purpose of this paper, we have addressed one of these areas, art criticism, as a means to explore the aesthetic dimensions of wearable art.

Clothing and textile researchers have studied various aspects of visual perception and the aesthetic components of apparel as perceived by the wearer or the viewer (DeLong, 1968; DeLong, 1977; DeLong, 1987; DeLong & Lamtz, 1980; Hillestad, 1980; Morganosky, 1987; Rothenburg & Sobel, 1990; Workman, 1991). Some of these studies examined viewer perceptions of design based on photographs of modeled outfits. Several proposed frameworks acknowledge the importance of the human body as a significant factor in understanding the visual perception of clothing. DeLong (1968, 1977, 1987) postulated the body--costume relationship. DeLong (1977) stated, "The study of aesthetics of clothing should have as a goal the understanding of the range of visual possibilities produced by combining the materials of dress with the human body form--the costume body form" (p. 214).

The influence of the body on appearance may include form, surface, motion, and elements of body expression. For example, a wearable art piece might include fringe or suspended ribbons that move in response to body motion. Hillestad's (1980) model of the structure of appearance includes both body and dress components.

Very little analysis has focused on the relational aspects of the aesthetic dimensions of wearable art, that is, how the creator, wearer, and viewer influence the understanding of the art object and each other. The aesthetic dimensions of wearable art include visual perception, but our intent is also to discuss the multifaceted aspects of other sensory perceptions including auditory, tactile, and kinetic perceptions of apparel. Arnheim (1974) supports the use of our senses in comprehension. He stated that "we have neglected the gift of comprehending things through our senses. Concept is divorced from percept, and thought moves among abstractions" (p. 1). Wearable art provides us with a circumstance that instantaneously engages our senses because the human body is the infrastructure that "carries" the artwork. Ostensively, the wearer and viewer interact with the qualities that the wearable artwork has to offer that invite sensory response.

Artists who create wearable forms borrow from the traditions of both art and fashion. As "fields of study," both art education and clothing and textiles scholars are informed by theory and research from other foundation areas. Wearable art, by its very nature links the two areas of art and clothing together and invites shared discussion that explores similarities and differences in history, language, and criticism.

Because art criticism is integral to the study of art, pedagogical strategies for teaching art
criticism have been a central issue for art educators. Art education publications and resources offer a wealth of methods and models to facilitate critical discussion of art objects. Current scholarship is directed toward metanalyases of criticism methods (i.e., a discussion of the appropriateness and usefulness of criticism models). For example, Ettinger (1990) examined art criticism in terms of purpose, organization, and accessibility. She suggested that there should be "a correspondence between the art criticism format one selects to use and one's goals and purposes" (p. 34). Our framework was created to reflect the special requirements a critique of wearable art may generate.

Our objective is to look at the relationships among the visual, tactile and auditory components of perception and the involvement of the moving, body-supported wearable art object to the key players of creator, viewer, and wearer. We will discuss definitions of wearable art, compare these definitions with other art forms, and provide a brief review of the wearable art movement. This discussion will be followed by selected perspectives of art criticism that appear in art education literature.

The unique circumstances of art criticism related to wearable art and why wearable art criticism is different from the critique of other art forms is discussed. A model of the aesthetic dimensions of wearable art is developed drawing on both art criticism and the nature of wearable art. It is hoped that this framework will be used by scholars from a variety of fields of study who are interested in the aesthetic dimensions of clothing and textiles.

Wearable Art

Wearable art is a unique art form because of its dependence on the special relationships between the artwork and its creator, the wearer, and the viewer of the artwork. The obvious distinction between wearable art and other art forms such as sculpture and painting is that wearable art is worn. There is an intimate relationship between the artwork and the wearer’s body. The language that we use to describe wearable art denotes the importance of the body. Words like headdress, arm band, necklace, and anklet exemplify the body interface with the object worn. When the human body enters as a variable into an aesthetic equation, the understanding of the artwork changes drastically. When the body is enveloped or used to support the art, the physical distance needed for the traditional stance to "stand back" and reflect on the balance and composition of a piece is altered. For example, the wearer’s perspective is limited to viewing only certain parts of the artwork.

Additional sensory input is provided for the wearer through the feel of the garment against the skin, the way the garment affects posture and movement, and whether the garment provides auditory sensations through surface abrasion (e.g., rustling) or embellishment (e.g., bells). Clothing is truly a "second skin" (Horn & Gurel, 1981) for its proximity to our senses provides tactile, auditory, visual, and olfactory possibilities.

Because the experience of wearing clothing is common to all of us, wearable art viewers are able to project an experiential understanding of wearable art. Wearable art can be viewed like kinetic sculpture, only infinitely more familiar, because viewers can imagine themselves wearing the clothing and/or body ornament. These dimensions of projected wearing and viewing that encompass various senses provide a rich, multilayered experience.

Wearable art is generally considered clothing or accessories, therefore it serves a functional purpose. In addition to its functional purpose, apparel designated as wearable art is also imbued with visual qualities aligned more with art than with "fashion" apparel. The relationship between art and fashion has been close throughout history. Fashion designers use artists' works for inspiration for costume form and textile motif (Boodro, 1990). The quintessential example of this would be Yves Saint Laurent's dresses of the 1970s and '80s that were inspired by the paintings of Mondrian and Picasso. Artists are now borrowing from fashion designers to create performance pieces. For example, artist Cindy Sherman used the Spring 1993 ready-to-wear collection to create a series of characters that were photographed and published—interestingly enough—in a fashion magazine (Lewis, 1993).

While it would seem that a definition of wearable art is necessary, this art form may resist a concise definition. Julie Dale (1986), author of Art to Wear, described wearable art as
A form of body adornment that celebrates personal expression, art to wear is as richly varied and unpredictable as the individuals who create it. By its very nature, the art to wear movement defies definition. The pieces conform to no established set of aesthetic criteria. (p. 12)

The vagueness of this "definition" supports the notion that wearable art is a unique art form dependent on artist intent and viewer interpretation.

In delineating between art and apparel production, the concept of the one-of-a-kind nature of art work is mentioned. Becker (1978) stated that the "uniqueness of the [art] object is prized. Artists and their publics think that no two objects produced by an artist should be alike" (p. 868). This concept of uniqueness versus limited or mass production is often used as one of the distinctions between art and craft—a common topic of discussion among artists and craftpersons (see Koplos, 1986). Dale (interviewed by Shea, 1978) also mentioned the aspect of uniqueness of the wearable art object.

Each piece is conceaved and made by the same person. These objects are not generally reproducible or made with reproduction in mind. They are made to express an idea. In a sense, these pieces are within the tradition in which art is made in our culture. (p. 22)

Another characteristic of art objects frequently mentioned in discussions among artists and craftpersons deals with the object's "utility." The aspect of utility calls into question the fact that wearable art is worn and thus it serves a "useful" function as well. This may be one reason why wearable art is difficult to define. In some respects, wearable art conforms to "standard" definitions of art, while in other respects it may be more closely aligned with fashion design that is influenced by market-driven considerations.

A final point of discussion of the uniqueness of wearable art deals with the purchaser (or, perhaps the wearer, in the case of wearable art). Works of art are created generally without a purchaser in mind. This is often true with those artists who create wearable art. The wearable artist who creates without a purchaser in mind forms a distinction between wearable art and "custom clothing."

Considering the attributes previously discussed, one can still offer a definition of wearable art as art composed of materials structured so they can be worn on the body and that exhibit visually exciting design elements and principles. Wearable art includes garments as well as body ornament such as headwear, jewelry, shoes, neckwear, and belts. California artist Candace Kling creates headwear (see Figure 1) that can be worn but is more frequently purchased for exhibit display. Wearable art can be one-of-a-kind, made without a specific user (wearer) in mind, and may or may not be truly "functional" as clothing or body adornment.

The Wearable Art Movement

The beginning of the wearable art movement in the United States can be traced to the 1960s. A leading specialist on the wearable art movement, Dale (1986, p. 13) wrote that the early pieces appeared in the late 1960s, in a kind of spontaneous combustion. Creativity was focused on the body as a vehicle to animate and display imagery. During that first decade, wearable artists relearned traditional crafts, such as fabric dyeing, knitting, and crochet,* connecting with their heritage." This generation wanted "to

Figure 1. Church and Steeple. Headress by Candice Kling. Photo by John Bagley.
slow down and create objects of lasting beauty to reflect its own worth in a frenetic, throwaway society."

For some of these early wearable artists, their products were the embellishment of existing apparel—denim jeans, jackets, and vests. Their work often reflected an expressive personal nature—sometimes a message about the culture at that time. Leafing through the 1974 Levi's Denim Art Contest Catalogue of Winners, one sees photographs of denim clothing decorated with yo-yos, bells, military insignia, flora and fauna motifs. Most of the award winners' pieces express the essence of the counter-culture movement of the time.

In the early 1970s, Julie Schaffer Dale began her quest to locate wearable art and artists on the West Coast. She wrote,

I had encountered the first full flowering of the sixties youth culture, which had been so intent on expressing itself and preaching individuality on every level, including decorated clothing. But these pieces from the early 1970s were not folk art by untrained individuals. They were the disciplined and sophisticated creations of artists. (1986, p. 10)

Dale opened Julie: Artisans' Gallery (a retail store) in Manhattan in 1973, "as a showcase for contemporary Americans creating art to be worn" (Dale, 1986, p. 10). Her retail business infused the wearable art movement with credibility, visibility, and a sales outlet. Throughout America, wearable artists experimented with new techniques in fiber and fabric manipulation, as well as dyeing, painting, printing, and embellishing. As Stabb (1988) explained, "Serious research into expanding the range of media and processes gave an added measure of depth to the work...It pushed the parameters of clothing as art toward new definitions" (p. 30).

What followed in the development of the wearable art movement might have been anticipated. Stabb continued her discussion of its evolution,

As if burdened by the incredible complexity of the technical virtuosity they had achieved, many artists began to seek relief in simpler, lighter, less time-consuming works. Others shifted gears and sought short cuts to the very processes they once treasured and entered the realm of limited production. (p. 30)

While some wearable artists struggled with the dilemma of meticulous one-of-a-kind pieces versus limited production to sustain their income during the 1980s, another impetus for wearable artists developed.

As the popularity of quiltmaking increased during this time, it was inevitable that piecing and quilting techniques would find their way into wearable art designs. Special design competitions offered by quilter materials manufacturers encouraged this merger. The Fairfield Fashion Show is one such example. Since its beginning in 1979, the Fairfield Fashion Show has been a showcase for the approximately fifty designers who are invited annually to create one-of-a-kind garments. The show debuts in Houston at the Quilt Market, then travels throughout the U.S. during the year. In 1987, the show made its international debut. The national and international exposure of wearable art has provided another avenue for the promotion of this art form. A number of other national and international fiber and wearable art shows continue to expand and promote the field.

Some authors have expressed concern over the future of the wearable art movement. Stabb (1986) wrote,

Like a person undergoing a midlife crisis [sic], the wearable art movement has come to terms with its own mortality. Is it inevitable that the movement will die? Can it be revitalized and overcome this apparent inevitability by responding to the potential of new technologies and changing tastes in personal adornment with solutions that are creative and fresh? (p. 31)

Now, six years after Stabb wrote that there were signs that the younger generation was leading in a different direction, it appears that the wearable art movement has taken on the challenge of new technologies as artists experiment with fabric dyeing and printing, computers, photocopying, and new "high-technology" fibers and fabrics. Oregon wearable artist Elaine Spence used laser copier photo transfer technology to integrate photographs of herself and film idol James Dean in what appears to the eye to be a screen printed, commercially-produced fabric.
Rob Hillestad, a Nebraska wearable artist, experiments with fabric dyeing technology.

The wearable art movement is now a generation old, thus it should not be a surprise that the movement has changed direction. Each generation’s art mirrors the spirit of the times. Talley (1988) interviewed Dale and wrote about her reaction to the wearable art movement.

The current wearable art movement reflects the output of artists who came of age in the Sixties, but [Dale] does not believe the movement is necessarily a single generation phenomenon. In the 80s, the tools of the trade have changed, a general technological shift—a greater tendency to explore the possibilities of high technology, whereas previously artists preferred the purity of all natural fibers. People are willing to explore with things like Xerox and plastic now to make a statement. (p. 22)

For those of us actively involved in creating and exhibiting wearable art, the synergy is strong and more, rather than fewer, juried wearable art shows are publicized now than previously. While the wearable art movement may have changed directions, it does not appear to be dwindling.

Art Criticism

Art criticism has been simply defined as organized talk about art (Feldman, 1973). It differs from aesthetics which focuses on the nature of art and how and why we value it. The critical response is a discussion of the meaning and significance a particular artwork has to the viewer (Hamblen, 1991a). It involves a direct personal encounter with a specific work of art that usually results in a verbal or written response (Anderson, 1991, p. 18). In essence, art criticism is a concentrated effort to attend to a singular example, though generalizations directed toward the study of aesthetics may follow.

There are many art criticism instructional models that lead the viewer to critical discussion. Critical discussion involves describing, analyzing, and interpreting the viewing experience. “Organized talk” implies an organizing format or strategy. Models can take many forms such as diagrams with explanatory text (Lanier, 1968); directed, sequential, instructional proce-

dures (Feldman, 1973); flexible phases (Chapman, 1978); dialogue journals (Stout, 1993); and questioning strategies (Nadaner, 1985).

Scholars who create art criticism instructional models or write about them are informed from foundational areas such as Aesthetics, Psychology, Linguistics, Philosophy, Anthropology, and Sociology (See Hamblen, 1991b). Each model "is intended to encourage new ways of seeing, to give us new perspectives on possibilities and suggest new directions for imagining and constructing reality" (Blandy & Congdon, 1991, p. 1). Critical frameworks for viewing art can be looked at as structures to help us discover some of the subtle aspects of an artwork that may be lost to cursory viewing.

There is much healthy debate in the field of art education concerning how we look at and talk about art. Art criticism strategies have been analyzed in terms of language (Hamblen, 1984; Congdon, 1986); context (Berger, 1972; Jones, 1988); feminist thought (Garber, 1990; Hicks, 1992) and political agenda (Lippard, 1986; Nandan, 1985). How these concerns may appear in criticism for wearable art have an impact on how we as clothing and textile specialists develop questioning strategies. For example, language used by clothing and textile specialists to critique wearable art, exhibits knowledge of fiber, fabric structure, fabric finishes, and garment structure. We have a specialized vocabulary such as "hand" or "scroop" to describe fabric texture. Our language may enrich wearable art criticism, but may also limit an outsider’s understanding. If accessibility to knowledge is a goal of educators, specialized language and format should be analyzed in terms of exclusionist characteristics. Prerequisite knowledge may be necessary for the use of certain criticism strategies.

Context relates to the social milieu of the artist and viewer and the conditions under which the wearable artwork is seen. For example, the theatrical context of a runway show influences our perception of the objects shown. Runway models provide multiple perspectives for viewing as posture, gesture, movement, lighting, proximity, and setting provide variables. The static aspects of "hanger appeal" provide a different mode of appreciation than the kinetic qualities of a runway performance. Context also acknowledges the age, sex, race, class, and experience of the artist and viewer.
Hicks (1992) stated, "We need to analyze how we as viewers and critics construct meaning within the works that we investigate by drawing on the background of cultural beliefs and values through which we see the world" (p. 24).

The growing field of feminist thought may have important contributions to the development of an art criticism framework for wearable art. The cultural construction of gender, the predominantly female focus of wearable art, and the differences between the male and female "gaze" are provocative areas of interest that generate comment and questions.

Some garments are made to reflect an interest in a political agenda. Social issues may inspire the artist to communicate these concerns. For example, in response to recently proposed anti-gay legislation, Elaine Spence created "Straight Jacket" to reflect her stance on human rights. "Elephant Walk" (a wearable art coat created by the authors) was made to draw attention to the endangerment of elephants due to ivory poaching and habitat loss (see Figure 2).

Critical models evolving from formalist theory are primary and popular choices for wearable art critiques (Ettinger, 1990, p. 34). Formal models (see Feldman, 1973) rely on the description, analysis, interpretation, and judgment of art objects as isolated entities. Models such as these consider the essential, visual qualities such as the elements and principles of design central to the understanding of the artwork. In applying these models, critics may create a monologue as their critical discussion.

The proposed critical framework differs from the previous models described. It includes a diagram that illustrates the wearable art experience as a composite of relationships. Sample questions are provided that amplify our perceptions of the essential qualities of wearable art, but also stress the relational aspects among creator, viewer, and wearer. By emphasizing the relational, interactive components of the wearable art experience we propose a criticism model that promotes dialogue rather than monologue. By identifying six relationships in the wearable art experience and presenting a model that encourages entry into critical discussion through a variety of roles (i.e., creator, wearer, and viewer) one critic can experience multiple perspectives. We also offer suggested sample questions that direct users to consider the possibilities of sociocultural and feminist perspectives. This critical framework is not meant to exclude other critical perspectives of wearable art due to its format. Instead, we invite plural approaches and encourage those with a particular viewpoint or interest to add their questions to the framework for critical discussion.

**A Critical Framework for Understanding Wearable Art**

By selecting, isolating, and examining six relationships among the art object, the creator, the wearer, and the viewer (see Figure 3), we intend to amplify these components of the wearable art experience. We acknowledge this arrangement has limitations because of the overlay between components and the simultaneous processing of information that may occur especially in instances where the creator is the wearer and/or viewer, etc. A description of possible expectations, influences, and satisfaction determined from the relationships is presented. This is followed by sample questions that encourage discussion of the featured relationship. These sample questions, together with Figure 3, create the framework that is our art criticism model for wearable art.
Figure 3. Model of critical framework for exploring the aesthetic dimensions of wearable art.

**Creator – Object Relationship:**

The *creator <-> object* relationship is a familiar one, for much of the discussion of an art object focuses on the creator's objective, inspiration, and intended message of the object. It tends to be a self-oriented creative process rather than have a user-oriented focus. Although speaking from a marketing viewpoint, Hirschman (1983) articulated this self-oriented creativity:

> self-oriented creators create to communicate a personal vision or satisfy an inner need for self-expression. Rather than seeking creative guidance from peers or the public, they follow their own inclinations and then present their creations to others—desiring to receive approval from peers and/or the public. Such self-oriented creators often hope to achieve peer and mass audience approval of their products, yet they do not start out with these audiences in mind. Rather, they believe that by creating something that vividly expresses their values and emotions, the audience will be moved to accept their perspective. (p. 48)

Thus, the artist works to create an object that expresses first and foremost the artist's creative image, without focusing on, or being controlled by, viewer reaction to the object.

Of the six interrelationships under discussion, the *creator <-> object* relationship is the only category for which much has been written previously. Wearable artists who have been interviewed (Bullis, 1987) often speak about the *creator <-> object* relationship. Wearable art pieces go beyond adornment for the artists who create them. Just as artists who work in other media say, the creations of wearable artists are the outpouring of their personal visual messages—from their dreams to their realities. Shea (1978) stated, "Because it is in necessity so personal—needing to be worn—clothing lends itself well to the expression of a created personal fantasy" (p. 22). Dale (1986) understands the *creator <-> object* relationship for she has worked with the artists by representing their work in her retail gallery since 1973. She stated, They are each distinguished by an intensity of personal content. They are about the artists who created them, unabashedly autobiographical, signaling an eruption of personal information from private spaces. They speak of vulnerability, innocence, discovery, joy, pain, sensuality, outrage, celebration—always with a vitality of emotion rarely found in adornment. These works are the physical embodiment of interior worlds and intangible ideas. (p. 12)

The creator may make choices in materials, techniques, and form due to an understanding of how a wearable art piece will be presented. A runway show, for example, may require more drama than another setting, thus reflective fabrics or embellishments in larger scale may be selected for use. Because garments will be seen in motion, those garment features that enhance gesture may be exaggerated. Because the body is seen as integral to wearable art, placement of detailing may be found near the face or hands, since those are body areas where communication is extended (i.e., where viewers generally focus for communication clues).

The vision of the artist may not be fully realized in the wearable art piece. The creator may also be restricted to placement of design elements. If it is desired that large motifs be visible, the chest or back provides the largest areas for presentation. Kimono shapes have been popular in wearable art because of their simple rectangular shapes that allow for the greatest amount of "canvas" to convey the artist's message.
Critical discussion of the relationship between the creator and the object may be prompted by the following questions. Posing questions that highlight the special qualities of the relationships presented in this paper provide a framework for critical discussion to enrich the understanding of the wearable art experience. The following sample questions are general in nature. It is expected that specific questions would be developed depending on the wearable art piece and other variables such as setting, artist's intent, viewer experience and conceptual focus of the critique. We acknowledge that some questions require projection and/or conjecture by the user of the critical framework. Since most art criticism models are from the viewer perspective, the role of wearer or creator may be more difficult to discuss.

Sample creator <--> object questions to encourage discussion may include:

1. What do you think is the artist's intent?
2. Are the choices of materials and techniques compatible with the artist's intent?
   Was the artist successful?
3. What questions about the artwork would you ask the artist?

Wearer <--> Object Relationship:

The wearer's body comes in direct contact with the fabric, creating a tactile experience for the wearer. The tactile sensation of fabrics against the skin, the movement of the garment when the wearer is in motion, the sound of fabrics or trims as the wearer moves, and glimpses of sleeve decoration as the wearer sees part of the clothing contribute to the wearer's appreciation of the object. Emotional and psychological benefits to the wearer may occur by wearing an object the wearer considers beautiful. Artist Marian Clayden stated,

Garments and wall hangings are different aspects of the same idea. One sculpture moves, the other doesn't. One goes on to another life, the other carries its only life within itself. They have the same ability to move the beholder to appreciate what wasn't perceived before. But fashion can be rearranged and reinterpreted by the wearer and thus become a conversation between us. You can't do that with something on the wall. (Bullis, 1987, p. 37)

Clayden promotes the wearer as an interactive component in the wearable art experience. Since one piece can be displayed by more than one wearer, it is assumed that a variety of "conversations" can take place depending on wearer attributes (e.g., physical appearance, theatrical intent). Different wearers allow for the same piece to be reinterpreted by viewers at different times and sites. Wearers may respond to the sensual qualities of specialty fabrics such as velvet in varying degrees of appreciation. The emotional pleasure of the wearer may project to the viewer. Some art pieces especially invite wearer-object interaction. The textural qualities of Rob Hillestad's piece titled Celebration Cape IX promote interaction between wearer and object (see Figure 4).

![Figure 4. Celebration Cape IX. Cape created by Hillestad illustrates the wearer interacting with garment.](image)

Some wearable art authors discuss the concept of transformation in the wearer <--> object relationship. Porges (1989) shared some insights regarding the work of California artist Jean Williams Cacicedo,

[Cacicedo] admits that her pieces may spend most, if not all, of their lives on display. It is essential to her, however, that they are garments because of what happens when they come off the wall and go on the body. For as much as each wearer might be changed by getting in-
side of Cacicedo's "parable," he or she transforms it as well. (p. 49)

The concept of a wearable art piece being transformed by the wearer has fascinating aspects. The wearer transforms the artwear into a kinetic sculpture integral with the wearer's body shape, size and personal coloring, but perhaps the wearer is also transformed into a different personality by wearing the art object.

Dale (1986) discussed another wearer object aspect—that of the fantasy the wearer may want to experience by wearing an object. "Not only can I look at these pieces on a wall but I can become them. I found you can assume a role by wearing something. Wearing it becomes a form of theater" (p. 58). To exchange one's identity for another persona through appearance has been an inviting and common occurrence throughout fashion and social history. For example, people enjoy the opportunity to dress in role-playing costume on Halloween. Wearable art may allow the wearer to engage the imagination in playful exercise.

Sample wearer object questions include:

1. How does the wearer's appearance interact with the object? Would this interaction be different in another environment?
2. What emotions is the wearer communicating? What qualities of the wearable art elicit these emotions?
3. How would the object be perceived if it were hanging on a wall rather than supported by the wearer?

Viewer Object Relationship:

The wearing of apparel is an experience understood by all viewers, although they may have different expectations for garment satisfaction. The viewing experience may also be subject to varied interpretations based on one's background and experience. DeLong (1977) stated,

Seeing is a function that is molded in the social processes by individuals in order to carry on day-to-day activities and is thus inevitably very subjective. An individual learns to perceive his world within a frame of reference based on his past experiences, expectations, and feelings. (p. 214)

One's reaction to a wearable art piece may be influenced by one's visualization of the object on one's own body. Since the wearing of clothing is common experience, an empathic projection of the wearer's experience naturally occurs. Interestingly, this projection doesn't usually involve the concern about whether the garment fits. However, one may reject a certain palette or garment style if perceived as unbecoming. We tend to personalize our reactions to wearable art by considering whether or not we would like to wear a piece. Objectivity in analyzing the creation as an art form in and of itself therefore may be difficult to achieve. In this way wearable art is a unique viewing experience as compared to viewing other art forms because the viewer (using the wearer as referent) can imagine wearing the garment while viewing it from a distance.

Frequently, one's first response to wearable art is as clothing rather than as an art form. An understanding of wearable art changes as the viewer develops greater knowledge of and experience with this art form. For those individuals who have viewed considerable wearable art objects, enjoyment may be heightened by the exposure to a wide variety of artists' visual statements. Knowing about the artist, or having some background about what an artist is communicating also can heighten the enjoyment of viewing an object.

Sample viewer object questions include:

1. Project what it would be like to wear this garment. How would it feel to wear this garment? What are the visual, tactile, auditory, and kinetic qualities of the garment that elicit these feelings?
2. What are the salient essential qualities of the artwork that are important for its success (e.g., shape, line, color)?
3. What special language as metaphor might you use to describe the wearable art?

Creator Wearer Relationship:

The creator of wearable art may take into consideration the wearer's gender, personality, emotional associations, and physical factors to achieve the highest level of physical and psychological comfort and satisfaction for the wearer. These qualities may dictate the formal aspects all artists consider (e.g., line, shape, color) depending on the relationship between the creator and wearer (e.g., provider/client,
artist/model). Julie Dale has had the opportunity to wear many of the pieces from her retail gallery. She is quoted by Kaufman (1988): "The wearing of the pieces is very satisfying. I never thought I'd have the chance to participate so closely in a creative act. Wearing the clothes is a way of having the magic rub off" (p. 65). Stabb (1991) considered the importance of the wearer to the creator in the completion of the creative process, "She [Hedstrom] is intrigued by the clothing's dependency on and collaboration with the wearer, as if her work were not quite finished until worn" (p. 34).

During the creation process, the artist often is not concerned with whom the eventual wearer of the object will be, though gender and setting requirements are usually known. The artist may focus solely on the object during the creation process and may not consider the specific needs of the individual wearer when the wearer's identity is not known. Wearable artists think in generalities about how the garment will look, feel, envelope the body, and perhaps sound to the as-yet unknown wearer.

Fabrics may be selected based upon the tactile qualities of textiles that feel wonderful. Artist Marian Clayden was quoted by Talley (1988): "One has to consider the tactile qualities of the cloth—it's feel against the skin, the way it drapes, and so on. When you get the wonderful garment that someone looks and feels really great in, then you feel it's all worth it" (p. 16). Some artists consider auditory elements in their designs. This could take the form of fabrics that rustle, or perhaps little bells might be attached to a Christmas jacket to provide a special sound for the wearer.

Sometimes the creator is the intended wearer. In these instances, the artist can create with great command of visual, tactile and auditory preferences, for the creator will know precisely what is to be conveyed. The wearable art object can be tried on by the creator and new ideas experimented with during the creation process. The creator may be more critical of little changes that can be made to make the piece more wearable. The creator/wearer has a vision of the piece and can decide if the object is fulfilling that vision as the process of creation unfolds.

Sample creator <---> wearer questions include:

1. Do you think the creator designed this garment for a specific wearer? If so, do you think the creator met the wearer's expectations?
2. What is the relationship between the wearer's body shape to the artist's design?
3. Are there variables introduced by the wearer, such as fit, that limit the creativity of the artist if it is a commission piece? Or, do these special challenges provide parameters for the artist to structure her work?

Creator <---> Viewer:

The relationship of the creator and viewer depends on the intent of the artist and the expectations of the viewer. The creator may use the art object as a vehicle to communicate to the viewer a social or political message. The viewer may or may not interpret the message as the artist intended.

Many of the early pieces of 1960s wearable art were expressions of social and cultural commentaries such as the anti-establishment youth movement. More recent examples are Gaza Bowen's shoe creations that challenge social values by using symbolic materials like sponges and kitchen scrubbers to make high heels for a piece titled "Shoes for the Little Woman" and wing tips made from shredded then woven dollar bills and titled "In God We Trust" (See Bowen, 1986). Some of these artists' visual messages are obvious, others are subtle, some not known to anyone save the creator.

One goal of the creator may be that the object make a powerful visual statement to the viewer. The viewer may be a juror selecting wearable art pieces for entry into exhibitions. If slides are the required medium for the selection process, the creator may take into consideration the juror's viewing situation. Tiny, intricate garment details are not as easily seen or appreciated when viewed as slides as they are when a garment is seen live and at close viewing range.

Perhaps the creator used the visualization of an outfit moving down a runway in a wearable art show to spark the design process. The artist may decide to add design components on the object that move with the model's motion—float-
ing sleeve panels, or ribbon streamers for example. These details that provide movement can add to the visual excitement of a wearable art object.

When the creator becomes the viewer of her or his wearable art object, other perceptual perspectives occur. The creator can step back and observe the success of the creation when viewed on a model. From a distance, or when seen in a photograph, the wearable art object may become more or less successful in the creator’s eye. Distance may be needed by the creator for more objective viewing. This distance can be physical or apparent when art objects are reproduced in other media such as camera or video. As wearable artists, we are frequently surprised at how different a wearable art piece looks to us in a photograph. On occasion, changes have been made to a piece after initial photographs have been viewed.

Sample creator <--> viewer questions include:

1. Is it apparent that the wearable art was created for a specific audience? Do you think viewer reaction would be different if the audience were predominantly male? Predominantly female?
2. Does it appear that the viewer had an influence on the creative process?
   What aspects of the object suggest this?
3. Is the creator trying to influence or persuade the viewer to act on a political or social cause through materials used or themes presented?

Wearers <--> Viewers Relationship:

The viewer’s perception of the wearable art object is quite different from that of the wearer, for the viewer sees the entire garment, both front and back views, in motion and related to the human form wearing the apparel, and under varying conditions of light and environment. The wearer "sees" very little of the garment being worn.

The viewer and the wearer do not share the same sensory experiences. The viewer does not share the direct interaction with garment and body that the wearer experiences. During the viewing process the viewer may imagine him or herself as the wearer. Merchandisers encourage viewer projection by choosing wearers who show the garment to best advantage. Stylists may choose wearers by coloring, image, or fit to enhance wearable art. For example, in a recent wearable art runway show, Bryant’s “Be-ribboned and Tied” turquoise coat was shown to best advantage by a model with copper colored hair.

The wearer incites the viewer’s appreciation by theatrical gesture or exaggerated stance to show off the art work. Because the wearer becomes part of the wearable art experience he or she may respond to applause or vocal kudos feeling that the audience is cheering for the wearer as well as the wearable.

Sample wearer <--> viewer questions include:

1. How does the wearer respond to the viewer’s reaction to the wearable art?
2. How does viewing distance affect the perception of wearable art?
3. What special characteristics of the artwork are apparent to the viewer, but not the wearer and vice versa?

Summary and Future Direction

An understanding of the aesthetic dimensions of apparel design as wearable art requires an examination of the relationships involved. The critical framework presented in this paper consists of a diagram that illustrates six selected relationships identified by the authors as integral to the wearable art experience. This diagram is accompanied by sample questions that may be used to enrich the discussion of each selected relationship. Other configurations may elicit different discussions.

Because the relationships in the wearable art experience are very tightly interactive and the creator, viewer, wearer roles may overlap, the wearable art experience is richly complex. By isolating the relational aspects of wearable art using this critical framework, this complexity can be explored.

Creating and viewing wearable art differ from creating and viewing a painting. Critical to our discussion is the concept of the body in relation to the artwork. The human form not only inspires but also establishes the parameters within which the apparel creator must work. For example, the human form in motion defines the limits and the structure of the creation.

Future directions for discussion and research are many and varied. Possibilities for
related research include examining the parameters of fashion, wearable art, and dance and theater costume. Does wearable art have closer ties to theater and dance costume than fashion? Another area of investigation concerns the relation between social cognition and wearable art. How does person/social perception influence wearable art discussion?

Building art critical models that encourage multiple perspectives and viewing stances celebrate the richness of the wearable art experience. Multiple perspectives provide interdisciplinary study. For example, this critical framework employs knowledge from the fields of art education and textiles and clothing.

References

Clothing and Aesthetic Experience

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Philosophers have spent little time applying aesthetic theory to everyday life and its objects. The stuff of common life such as furniture, cookware, automobiles, and computers are neglected in favor of the fine arts. It is no wonder, then, that clothing has also escaped philosophical scrutiny. To remedy this, I shall adopt the orientation found in John Dewey's aesthetic theory (Dewey, 1934). This is not only fruitful, but is squarely in the spirit of Dewey's philosophy, which aims at establishing continuity between art and everyday life.

Centering on aesthetic experience, Dewey's aesthetics can be applied to virtually any object of interest or activity—whether a frying skillet or garden hoe, whether the activity of preparing a meal or garden. I have looked at classroom education as well as violence, for example, in terms of aesthetic experience (Kupfer, 1983).

Aesthetic experience is characterized by differentiated and individualized parts, but these parts are also integrated—mutually enhancing each other’s effect. The result of this mutual enhancement is an intense, growing experience which is rounded out, complete in itself. The experience is defined by a pervasive quality or mood, often an emotion or feeling. The more detailed and particularized the quality, the more aesthetic the experience.

Aesthetic experiences don’t just happen to us, rather, we must take an active part. Our interaction—in the classroom, on the ballfield, driving our car—requires a balance between activity and receptivity. What we do is a response to what we take in, and what we perceive is shaped by our actions. Action includes physical behavior, thinking (such as noticing the interplay of parts), and imagining (such as anticipating what is to come).

The following discussion focuses on how clothing can enter into aesthetic experience, as the object of perception and as worn—in various situations and for various activities.

1. Clothing can be appreciated simply as designed material. This can mean viewing the clothing abstractly, apart from being worn, like a dress on a hanger or kimono on a frame. Some clothing is designed with this in mind, as wearable art, and some clothing is exhibited apart from human bodies, such as chain mail in museum cases. Its function as clothing plays little role since we attend to the textures, colors, and patterns, much as we would to wallpaper or carpet exhibited apart from a building's interior. That a particular article might not look good on someone, anyone, doesn't enter into our aesthetic perception. We are not viewing the clothing as human adornment. The material and its aesthetic features just happen to be in the recognizable shape of a dress or coat, but this defines the boundaries of the material, rather than playing an aesthetic role.

Appreciating clothing in abstraction from human form can occur even when it is being worn. All that is required is that we attend to the article of clothing apart from how it looks on the this or any person. To view it as clothing, however, requires taking into consideration how it looks on someone (Bosanquet, 1915). This level of appreciation includes the former in that we perceive color, line, texture, and the like, but adds their relation to the body. For this reason, discussion of the abstract way of perceiving clothing will be incorporated into the following examination of the aesthetics of clothing as worn.

When perceiving clothing as worn, we notice how it looks on anyone or on someone in particular. Clothing that looks good on anyone is likely to be aesthetically interesting in the abstract sense discussed above. Since its style is so versatile, its aesthetic strength must reside in its composition as designed material. But the aesthetic of much apparel would seem to vary with body type. The person's configuration is an ingredient in the clothing's aesthetic: his or her coloring, height, weight, angularity-roundedness, hairstyle, even posture or personality as expressed in body language.

We can apply Dewey's concept of aesthetic experience to clothing using the specific categories of complexity, unity, and intensity. In Monroe Beardsley's theory, these are merits,
reasons for a positive evaluation; their absence makes for aesthetic weakness (Beardsley, 1958). Although Beardsley's use of these criteria of evaluation is confined to the fine arts, we can employ them in examining anything aesthetically, including clothing.

A. Among the ways complexity can be achieved is in the relationships among the articles of clothing. Contrasts among garments or the way garments set off portions of the body can generate complexity. Differences in textures, perceived weights or densities, as well as shapes and patterns shift attention and redirect perceptual energy. An ensemble's appearance can also be enriched by changes in color, depth of hue, saturation or shading.

Complexity can be created through detail in construction; stitching, buttons, folds, gathers, tucks, and eyelets can add as much complication or subtlety as can differences in color or pattern. Irregularities in material, such as silk or linen, also insinuate variation to pattern, texture, even color. Accessories like belts, gloves, and scarves can define portions of the body, breaking lines or volumes. This complexity of differentiation of spaces may be independent of whatever complexity the accessory introduces on its own, by virtue of color, shape, or texture.

Still greater complexity enters when we consider the body in motion. The change or dynamism in the appearance of a flowing gown, pleated dress, or vented jacket creates new visual, sometimes auditory perceptions. Change in shape, line, shading, or density increase complexity as the individual alters posture or gait. Perhaps it's just one area of the clad body that changes in an interesting way, such as the torso in a wind-blown rayon blouse. Perhaps it's the whole form, as when a robe is suddenly set in motion.

Complexity is valuable because it's interesting. Our senses, imagination, and thought are stimulated by variety in color or shape, texture or line. Without complexity, in clothing as in art, the experience becomes dull or monotonous. Unremitting repetition or homogeneity in perception numbs our imagination and smothers thought. Even if what is presented is intense, as with bright colors or rich materials (leather or tweed, for instance), we are soon irritated or fatigued rather than captivated.

Another way of achieving complexity in attire is through "mixed diction." When writers pepper formal language with slang, for example, the contrast opens up new layers of suggestion. So, too, with clothing, in which a mix of styles or genres can create tension or reveal overlooked aesthetic qualities. Wearing sport coats with jeans or running shoes was once mixed diction, but now is old hat.

Complexity is compatible with simplicity in line and color. Consider a Roman style, unadorned, white dress drawn over one shoulder. Without accessories or color, differences in texture or pattern, its line is complicated only by the folds in the material. Yet it has complexity. Line and volume are modulated by the wearer's form, at rest and moving, creating an array of shapes and shadows, motions and rhythms. Like Brancusi's gleaming bronze sculpture "Bird in Flight", this garment's simplicity of means and cleanliness of line harbors a host of possibilities unlocked by the play of light and movement.

B. Complementing complexity is unity. Complete aesthetic experience has both. Just as unity without complexity is tepid or empty, so complexity without unity is disorienting or overwhelming. Too much variety in color, pattern, style, texture, or volume is a hodge-podge. What is wanted is complexity with integration so that the whole "makes sense," "hangs together," "works." When appreciating an article of clothing abstracted from a person wearing it with other attire, this aesthetic constraint is absent. It's like appreciating a sofa by itself, apart from its relationship to table, chairs, carpet, drapes, or lamps.

Dewey articulates unity as interdependence of parts, "the intimacy of the relations that hold the parts together," (Dewey, p.117) and "reciprocal interpretation of parts and whole" (Dewey, p.171). For clothing, unity means that garments enhance one another's appearance instead of detracting from it or merely coexisting. Any aspect of a garment can be strengthened by its relationship to other garments. The subdued grain of a woven tie, for instance, can be accentuated in the tweed of an accompanying jacket. The beige in a print skirt can echo a blouse's color, complement a teal jacket, and soften the chocolate of a coordinated hat.

Whatever the aspect—color, texture, pattern, shape—garments and their constituents rein-
force one another's effect, the way plot develops a novel's theme or rhyme meshes with a poem's meaning. Part-to-part and part-to-whole: aesthetic values build upon one another so that a garment has greater aesthetic value in this ensemble than alone, and the ensemble as a whole is better for this garment's contribution.

A tie, for example, might not be especially attractive in isolation, but could be just the highlight to bring together a shirt, jacket, pants, and hat. On the other hand, a paisley blouse might be too detailed for a particular pants suit. Are the different textures and visual weights of leather and rayon, for instance, integrated—perhaps by virtue of style or color? Do the rhythms set up by repeated lines and volumes in a skirt and jacket integrate their different styles?

Unity includes continuity, "every successive part flows freely...without unfilled blanks, into what ensues. At the same time there is no sacrifice of the self-identity of the parts" (Dewey, p.36). In aesthetically organized clothing, our eye is drawn from one garment to the next, as in good painting it is drawn from one region to the next. Whether by blending color, repeating line, or modifying texture, unity results from part leading into part. Tensions between competing colors or patterns, changes in volume and shape, are reconciled as visual rhythm establishes continuity among the garments.

Our ordinary language indicates what is often an unreflective feel for lack of unity in clothing. We speak of an outfit being too choppy or busy; we notice a shoe style as out of place for a dress line; we find the color or sheen of an accessory overbearing for an ensemble's effect. Unity is the alternative to clothes banging up against one another, a jumble of texture and color, shape and volume. The tedious or monotonous is not so much excess of unity as lack of complexity. This is why the ideal is complexity with unity, in which diverse emphases and directions cooperate. When this succeeds, the third criterion, intensity, is realized.

C. Intensity refers to the mood, feeling, or character emerging from the interplay of clothing. The apparel's organization is intense when it yields a definite thrust. We refer to the overall effect with terms denoting this quality. We say the grouping is rugged or elegant, sleek or bold, whimsical or professional. The criterion of intensity speaks to the strength with which the clothing impresses us, grabs us, holds us. For an ensemble to be intense, it need not be exciting or imposing. It can be warm and yielding. Attire composed of soft fabrics in pastels could convey a calm and subdued mood intensely. Intensity lies in the strength of focus, the degree to which a singular effect is produced.

Intensity is clearly contrasted with blandness—the combination of clothes yielding no particular look or mood. It just isn't much of anything. Sometimes this happens when we sense a lack of direction, perhaps because different styles are being combined. But lack of genuine intensity can come from the opposite quarter—overt forcefulness without substance. This is where we have the garish, flashy, or cheap. Beardsley's description of the pompous in music can be translated into the idiom of clothing: "Pompousness is the outward form of grandeur and greatness—it is a long symphony with enormous crescendos—combined with an inner emptiness, lack of vitality and richness" (Beardsley, p.464).

It's the obvious attempt at intensity without real integration of tensions needed for a strong voice—splashes of bright colors, exaggerated lines, puffed up volumes of material. Other garments, other details, haven't been adapted or adjusted to the innovation, and the effect seems forced or superficial. This bespeaks a lack of real intensity, as a talk-show host's profusion of enthusiasm indicates lack of real interest.

When varied articles of clothing are integrated, a strong, distinctive character is created. "A single quality...pervades the entire experience in spite of the variation of its constituent parts" (Dewey, p.37). This intensity is valued just as we value art works or people with distinctive personalities. The result is a definite look, a singular, vivid quality to which each element of attire contributes.

Garments also have meaning. Colors can express attitudes, styles can connote values, and shapes or patterns can function symbolically (Hungerland, 1944; Stevenson, 1969; Weitz, 1954). When articles of clothing are combined in particular ways, meanings can be magnified or altered. Humor and criticism, for example, can emerge from a well-chosen accessory or modification in line. This area of
clothing aesthetics is worth pursuing in its own right and can be taken in many directions.

It could concentrate on a particular culture or period, daily wear versus festive occasions, or take up cross-cultural themes of similarity and difference. The evolution of social, economic, political, and gender meanings of particular garments or contexts of use, for instance, has surely conditioned our aesthetic experience of clothing. In addition, the strong philosophical tradition of Expression Theory of art can be appropriated for examination of the expressive properties of clothing (Tolstoy, 1925; Casey, 1971; Benson, 1967). Because this question of meaning in clothing is so broad and deep, I just mention it here and turn my attention to how the experience of wearing clothing is aesthetic.

2. Before addressing the aesthetics of interacting with and by means of clothing, a bit needs to be said about these criteria in general. They are criteria, not formulae for arriving at judgments of aesthetic value. No rules can be laid down in advance for telling the difference between the gaudy and the lively, the bland and the subtle. Judgment or taste is needed to apply the general criteria to painting or poetry, cars or clothing. What emerges are principles specific to the various art forms (unity is achieved differently in painting and music) and their genres—complexity in a murder mystery is brought about differently than in a Greek tragedy. As we shall see with clothing, differences in context and function yield differences in the orchestrating of unity, complexity, and intensity.

Cultures may differ in these specific principles. We find greater latitude for color vibrancy and combination in Mexican fashion than in British. But in any culture, there must be a place for excess, even those championing exuberance. And even the most sedate have room for the bland or monotonous. When we add the symbolic or referential meanings assigned clothing within cultures, the range of aesthetic standards widens. The task of philosophy is not to explore these cultural variations—that's for the aesthetic branches of comparative anthropology and sociology. These descriptive enterprises explain how in fact different cultures make aesthetic appraisals. Philosophy articulates the aesthetic criteria which enable us to take into account cultural variations.

What if there were a culture for which no conglomeration of textures and colors or sizes and shapes constituted a jumble, a mess, a cacophony rather than a symphony? Would this show that there is no aesthetic criterion of unity? Not necessarily. It might show that this culture has no standards, no sense of good or bad, no taste. The existence of such a culture doesn't prove there are no criteria any more than mass murderers without remorse prove there is no moral evil. Moreover, comparative anthropology suggests that few if any cultures are without aesthetic standards of some sort. But neither does this establish the objectivity of these criteria, regardless of people's attitudes.

What we can argue for philosophically is the following conditional statement. If we wish to make aesthetic judgments which are more than our preferences, then there must be criteria of aesthetic appreciation of clothing. This leaves open the possibility of cultural or individual relativism: that good and bad is relative to what happens to please a culture or individual. The logical consequence of this is that anything goes. No ensemble can "objectively" lack in unity, complexity, or intensity. It's just a matter of cultural or personal preference. Yet even here, what are the bases for these preferences? If the culture or individual tries to defend them consistently, I suggest that we will find the criteria being discussed here. They are at work even when aesthetic judgments are relativized to cultures or individuals.

The reason is found in everyday life. Complexity, unity, and intensity characterize the experiences and activities we value most. More generally, lives that are complex, unified, and intense are more worthwhile than those barren of variety, fragmented, and lacking defined contour or personality. These lives tend to be empty, alienated, and directionless. My suggestion, then, is that the general criteria employed here to assess the aesthetics of clothing are derived from what we value in life as we ordinarily live it.

3. The aesthetic appreciation of clothing includes our interaction with it when worn. Clothing is an immediate environment, moving with and against us, like a second skin. When we wear clothing, others can appreciate the aesthetic of how we look in it better than we can. But the aesthetic of direct interaction is available only to the wearer. This interaction is above all
sensuous; seeing, hearing, smelling, and feeling the clothing adorning us has great aesthetic potential. As we raise our arm, we notice the color and texture of our sleeve; looking down, we enjoy the cut and gleam of our shoes; standing up, we appreciate the shadows created by our pants' pleats. Some fabrics stimulate us auditorily: crisp crinoline, swishy satin, whispering cotton. Still other materials have distinctive odors. An important aspect of leather's aesthetic, for example, is its thick, inundating scent.

Especially significant is the way clothing provides tactile interaction, often missing in other dimensions of daily life. Consider the aesthetic differences produced by a stiff, constraining leather coat and a soft, yielding cashmere one. Depending on other garments, context, and interests, each could enter into a rewarding aesthetic experience. The leather coat affords a sense of security in its resistance to our movement, defiance of wind, and armor-like impenetrability to rain or snow. The cashmere coat feels luxurious, caressing our neck and clinging to our legs as we stride down the street. This contrast indicates how opposite qualities can be aesthetically valuable in the appropriate context. Clothing that constrains or resists us may be as aesthetically rewarding as more pliable attire.

The same is true of weight and weightlessness. The sense of touch is compound. In addition to the surface affects on our skin are proprioceptive influence on our muscles and joints. Clothing can be heavy, weightless, and anything in between. When the experience of weight reinforces the clothing's tactile qualities, unity is increased. A dense, wool suit or coat which never lets us forget its presence can be coarse-textured so that we feel as if we are moving within a malleable shell. On the other hand, lack of pressure on our muscles can combine with gossamer surface sensations to create an easy, carefree quality, as in a lightweight silk outfit.

Forgetting what we are wearing or ever mindful of our garb—each can produce a valuable aesthetic of interaction. Still another possibility is contrast between surface tactility and proprioceptive pressure. For example, a slightly rough or scratchy cotton that is nonetheless weightless creates a disparity between surface awareness and muscle serenity.

Conversely, a heavy but smooth sweater exerts pressure but with little stimulation of the skin.

When movement is involved, proprioceptive stimulation can translate into kinesthetic sensation as the clothing's pressure deepens our awareness of movement and bodily position. In the case of the light, airy outfit mentioned above, kinesthetic awareness is provided solely by our bodies. Heavier garments can supplement our sense of bodily movement. This kinesthesia can be general or localized in a body part or region. For example, walking in heavy boots through the snow, but wearing a lightweight, insulating jacket and cap, we may feel as though our head and torso are floating above our earthbound, hard-working feet and legs. Such contrasting sensations occurring simultaneously can add complexity to the aesthetic enjoyment of interacting with our clothing.

Sometimes when we move, our clothing moves against us—a winter coat flapping against our legs as we walk. The rhythm of the repeated, regular pressure provides a steady foundation on which transitory melodies of sight, sound, and smell may play. Some people enjoy the way a voluminous blouse or robe billows and wafts about them as they move, only to envelop them gently when they sit. This alternation also sets up a unifying rhythm, and even though we may not be aware of it, such rhythms inform our aesthetic attraction for certain garments and their combination.

Think of the feel of being snugly hugged by a wool watch cap. Its mild tightness and the warmth it contains is so different from the featherly feel of a barely noticeable Panama. The Panama's brim casts a cool shadow over our face and varies its pressure on our head as the wind catches it. Tactile cues such as the feel of a crease against arm or leg, the crispness of a starched shirt, or the constriction of elasticized undergarments punctuate our aesthetic interaction with clothing.

As several of the examples discussed indicate, the experience of wearing clothing occurs within our interaction with the environment. The clothing we wear often shapes this interaction, fostering or hindering aesthetic experience.

4. From the standpoint of fashion and wardrobe selection, how clothing looks by itself and on us is paramount. But for the aesthetic of everyday life, our interaction with and by means
of our attire is more central. Where the look of clothing is what most of us think about when considering its aesthetic features, how clothing facilitates our interaction with the world probably has a more pervasive impact on our lives. To consider this, we must take into account context, activity, and function. This way of looking at the aesthetic of clothing situates us and our attire in the world: indoors and out, in rain or shine, at work and play.

We interact with the world by means of our clothing, but not the world in the abstract. Rather, we interact with a portion of it, for this or that purpose. We shouldn’t expect the same aesthetic experience from an evening dress as from a bathing suit, just as we don’t expect the same aesthetic delight from a night dining and dancing as a day spent at the shore. Our expectations of clothing must be tailored to the context and situation: the season and time of day, whether we are outdoors or inside, engaged in strenuous or relaxing activity.

Obviously, this subject is vast, as vast as all the possible contexts and purposes people can have. To narrow the discussion, let’s consider the extremes of foot and head, each critical to whether our interaction with the environment is as aesthetically rewarding as it could be. Depending on ground surface, for instance, one kind of shoe will promote aesthetic experience and another will not. Hiking boots will probably inhibit our cutting a fancy figure at the dance, but ballroom footwear won’t enable us to negotiate rocky hills or the wet forest floor.

Generalizing from this example, we see that footwear is essential to any activity in which locomotion is required. Different shoes facilitate different movements and so vary with context in their ability to promote aesthetic experience. By moving easily, at the dance or on the hike, we can enjoy the aesthetic of our bodies in motion—the rhythm of dancing, or walking and climbing. Ease in motion also enables sensory exploration of the environment which in turn frees our imagination and thinking to contribute aesthetically to our experience. Difficulty in movement, on the other hand, restricts the range of bodily aesthetic and sensory awareness. Imaginative and cognitive capacities are consequently muffled.

Wearing a broad-brimmed, beaver Stetson is ideal for walking in cool (but not frigid) weather during mild precipitation such as snow or drizzle. The material provides warmth and the brim shelters us from the precipitation. But for bicycling, the Stetson is unwieldy, its brim creating unwanted lift. In this context, a cap with protective bill enables appreciation of the bicycle’s and our body’s movement, as well as the environs of town or country. Not worrying about losing our hat, not being distracted by its wayward tugs, we can pay attention to the areas of experience with the greatest aesthetic potential.

What we wear on our head is important because it is the site of so much sensory input. Comfort and protection facilitate aesthetic perception. Preventing unwanted intrusions on our senses and thoughts, appropriate headgear promotes aesthetic appreciation of the environment and our movement through it.

Examples of movement underscore that aspect of aesthetic unity involving a balance between being active and receptive, what Dewey calls a synthesis of "doing" and "undergoing". "It is not just doing and undergoing in alternation, but consists of them in relationship" (Dewey, p.44). When balanced, our active doing is a response to what we perceptually undergo or take in. Similarly, our perceptual field is conditioned by what we do—the physical, mental, or imaginative effort we make. "Perception is an act of the going-out of energy in order to receive" (Dewey, p.53).

Too often our lives are characterized by excessive doing, as in performing household tasks like cleaning, or undergoing, as in passively listening to a lecture. Experience is more complete when we are both active and receptive, as in a good conversation or teamwork in a sport. On such occasions, what we say or do is a response to our perception of what others’ are saying or doing; and our perception itself is governed by the possibilities of our anticipated participation.

Appropriate clothing furthers this balance of doing and undergoing in our interaction with the environment. Protective, insulating attire can enable us to explore freely what can be a forbidding winter evening. The simple activity of walking (doing) creates the audible crunch (undergoing) which in turn suggests variation in gait, pace, or direction. Because our head is protected, we are encouraged to leave the shelter of trees and look at the descending flakes
sparkle in the lamplight, the perception of which leads us to seek out the moon. Perceiving its muted, milky light in turn prompts us to imagine other possibilities of movement and perception.

Clothing’s capacity to further the harmonizing of our activity (doing) with receptivity (undergoing) is dramatic in sports. Goggles and bathing cap, for example, enable us to see underwater. Perceiving something of interest or danger leads to the necessary movement which consequently reveals new perceptual opportunities. Even swimming in the relatively drab environment of an indoor pool is enhanced by cap and goggles.

Undistracted by tearing eyes, blurred vision, or seaweed-like hair, how we move our arms, legs, and head can be a response to kinesthetic perception. We can pay closer attention to the sound of our breathing and the texture of the water gliding over our bodies. Changing our stroke (doing) from breast to butterfly, for example, changes our visual-auditory-kinesthetic perception (undergoing) from steady-hushed-smooth to bobbing-thumping-jerky. Perception of the new visual-auditory-kinesthetic field can then alter our tempo, pace, or subsequent stroke selection.

In the best experience, appearance and use (form and function) reinforce each other’s aesthetic impact. Improving the look of a garment can enhance its aesthetic function as we interact with our environment. For example, venting a skirt or jacket adds line, movement, and shadow to the garment, thereby making it more aesthetically complex. The venting may also enable us to move more freely which can contribute to the spontaneity with which we engage our surroundings.

Designing for greater function can also contribute to the aesthetic quality of the clothing’s appearance on us. A muffler or scarf provides protection and warmth in cold weather by covering up an otherwise exposed area at the throat. But its color and texture can complement or accent the color and texture of our overcoat. Woven shoes not only keep our feet cool by circulating air, they also add texture and line to the rest of an ensemble.

Of course, mutuality in the aesthetic of form and function is not always possible and one may have to be sacrificed to heighten the other’s aesthetic. Too often, however, we assume this sacrifice is necessary, and give up looking for ways of promoting aesthetic partnership.

Clothing can promote or limit the complexity, unity, and intensity of our interaction with the environment. By encouraging free exploration, the opportunity for variety in sensory and imaginative experience is increased. When clothing facilitates a balance between doing and undergoing, our relationship with the world is more unified. Protected, able to move, feeling a comfortable weight and temperature, we are more likely to have an experience that fills out into a definite mood or character: an exhilarating bicycle ride; a tranquil saunter in the woods; a frivolous sprint and splash in the sea; a serious, invigorating conversation on the front porch.

Ideally, each level of aesthetic appreciation encompasses the others. Our aesthetically enriched interaction with the environment includes aesthetic interaction with our attire in which we look good and which looks good by itself. Admittedly, this might be an ideal to be striven for, rarely achieved. At which level the sacrifice should occur will depend on priorities and, again, context. When we are making a public speech, then perhaps a little discomfort is a small price for looking our best. But if we are on safari or just gardening, then how we interact with our clothes, and by means of them with our environment, might matter more than how we look.

5. The discussion has moved to increasingly larger contexts or wholes within which the aesthetic parts become more varied. In a single garment, viewed abstractly, independent of someone wearing it, its parts are pattern, texture, color, shape, style, volume, and the like. Viewed as worn, the human body, or this particular one, is an additional visual element. When we are wearing and not merely viewing clothing, sensory interaction with our attire creates a wider aesthetic field. And when we consider our interaction with clothing as part of involvement with the environment, the aesthetic whole has grown still greater. At each successive level, new elements become parts of aesthetic experience: human form, sensory interaction with clothing, interaction with environment by means of clothing.

Some cultural differences in aesthetic appreciation of clothing may be due to differences in context and activity. Instead of simply looking
at a garment in isolation from use, we may have to see it in action in order to appreciate the aesthetic experience it makes possible. The plain white bunoose may be the best garment for a desert aesthetic: reflecting sun, allowing circulation of air, not restricting bodily movement. To appreciate the joys of snowmobiling, or simply shoveling a walkway, a one-piece, thermal suit is appropriate. Yet the aesthetic of bunoose and thermal suit apart from function is probably of minimal interest.

Clothing is like architecture. Both are so much a part of our daily lives that we easily miss their aesthetic impact on how we live. We tend instead to focus on how clothing and buildings look in abstraction from use. Like architecture, clothing is at its best when it aesthetically wed its appearance and function. But function is here understood as including the aesthetic: functioning so as to enable and enhance our aesthetic interaction with the world.

References


From Wealth to Sensuality: The Changing Meaning of Velvet 1910-1939

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Theoretical Background

Scholars of the history of dress have long held that clothing style expresses the spirit of an era. The discipline of material culture asserts that artifacts embed aspects of their maker’s culture—beliefs, values, ideas, attitudes and assumptions—and these can be discovered through systematic study of the physical attributes of individual artifacts (Prown, 1982). The analysis of garment design requires detailed scientific observation of the interaction between garment, body of wearer, and context of use (DeLong, 1987).

Forms of dress that are cut and sewn from pre-constructed fabric constitute a complex type of material artifact. The pre-constructed fabric is itself a material artifact embedding culture. In the cut and sewn garment cultural meanings originating in past use of the particular type of fabric are viewed and manipulated in the context of the present. By creating, wearing, observing or commenting upon new garments constructed of preexisting types of fabric new meanings combine with and alter earlier meanings through the medium of the garment and are transmitted into the future.

The wearer and the observer of the wearer of garments are recognized as people who move and interact rather than remain stationary, as in a fashion plate. Additionally, the wearer and observer experience each other and the garments through several senses at a time, not through sight alone (Eicher and Roach-Higgins, 1992). Consideration of the feel, sound, and sight of garments (and less frequently relevant, smell and taste) raises the issue of sensuality, which is often misconstrued as sexuality or eroticism.

Historically changing conventions of garment forms reflect and influence a changing perception and experience of the human body (Hollander, 1978). Yet the interpretation of sexuality strictly on the basis of garment form is fraught with peril (Steele, 1989) and does not constitute the focus of this paper. Following Benner (1983) I distinguish “public sensuality” from “private sexuality”. A wearer’s or observer’s sensory experience of a garment does not necessarily imply private sexual behavior. Nevertheless in colloquial expression, garments can be conceived, perceived or described as sexy without implying sexual behavior by the wearer or the observer.

Discovery of the meaning of a textile occurs in several stages of systematic observation and analysis. First, the physical properties of the textile, and then its utilization in garments are examined. Next interaction of the textile in its garment forms with the wearer and observer in the context of its historical use is analyzed. Placement of textile, garment, wearer and observer within historically appropriate events requires the study of historical sources of information outside the garments themselves.

The present study of velvet garments in the costume collection of the Goldstein Gallery, University of Minnesota, adapts material culture and aesthetics of dress methodologies with a motion-oriented and multi-sensory appreciation of the experience of wearing or observing garments to understand the shift in meaning of velvet during the period 1910-1939, elucidating a chapter in the cultural history of the use of velvet.

History of Velvet

Supplementary weft and supplementary warp pile fabrics have been dated to second century BC Egypt and ninth century AD France, respectively (Harris, 1993; Wilson, 1979). The Italian Renaissance is credited with the first memorable velvets. Because its weaving re-
quired great amounts of yarn and time, velvet production early occurred within the social context of religious and political institutions and personages. The association of this weaving technique with wealth naturally called for utilization of the yarn of the wealthy—silk. Rich fabrics of extreme intricacy were woven of silk, and in combinations of silk with other fibers or precious metals and jewels, in the centers of power in southern Europe, northern Africa, Asia Minor and India through many centuries. Historical velvets are extremely complex, combining areas of ground cloth with areas of velvet pile (voided velvets), employing different cut and/or uncut pile heights (cisele and pile-on-pile), combining voided velvet with gold brocade grounds, and employing different colored yarns for different decorative motifs in ground and pile areas.

These rich fabrics were used to dress the bodies and homes of the aristocracy and were also used in association with religious rites and institutions (Dhamija, 1989; Harris, 1993; Latour, 1953; Smart & Gluckman, n.d.; Wilson, 1979).

The rejection of class privilege during the French Revolution led to a long abandonment of velvet for garment use, due to its undemocratic association, in French society and other Western societies strongly influenced by French fashion in clothing. Celebrations of the highest ceremonies of state and religion were the exception, as for example the dressing of heads of state and their families for public ceremonies. After the middle of the 19th century velvet sporadically reappeared in the dress of the wealthy classes but it most commonly appeared in women's dress in the form of ribbon and trim, contributing touches of luxury and importance to a garment or hair arrangement.

Mechanization of velvet production came late in the industrial revolution. Industrially produced velvets nevertheless continued to utilize more time and yarn than the production of other forms of cloth, maintaining velvet's relatively expensive character. Production of complex velvets continued to employ many unmechanized production methods until well into the 20th century.

The invention and perfection of rayon technologies over several decades around the turn of the century facilitated the creation of less expensive velvets (Kauffman, 1993; Raheel, 1993; Summers et al, 1993). In the 1930s rayon yarns were being used interchangeably with silk yarns in all relevant areas of weaving (Russell, 1983).

The convergence of mechanized weaving and less expensive fibers in the early decades of the 20th century set the stage for the re-emergence of velvet as an important primary garment fabric in contrast to its familiar use as trim fabric. The wearing of ornate silk velvets played a significant role among the new American "aristocracy" in the enjoyment and display of wealth accumulated in the years before creation of the progressive income tax. With the stock market crash and onset of economic depression in the 1930s less expensive rayon facilitated the continued spread of velvet utilization in dress to a broader sector of the population.

Analysis of the Garments

I examined approximately 300 garment ensembles, many consisting of two and three pieces, and dating between 1890 and 1950. The garments included dresses, wedding dresses, slips, jackets, coats, capes, lounge wear and accessories. Many were trimmed with velvet. All garments within this period found to be constructed primarily or entirely of velvet were selected for detailed observation. They numbered seventy-nine, of which only twelve fell outside the three decades 1910-1939. Additionally I selected a few lace and other transparent fabric garments of the same three decades for close examination because they represented prevalent styles concurrent with the velvet garments; they were also trimmed with velvet ribbon. The earliest of the selected garments was dated 1890-1910 and the latest, 1940-49.

I began the garment analysis with a focus on the physical properties of the textile, garment design, and garment interface with the body both at rest and in motion. I examined the garments one at a time in approximate chronological order, treating ensembles both as integrated wholes and as separates. The garments were placed on hangers and laid and manipulated on a table to facilitate observation. Unusual garments were placed on a mannequin to aid examination. I relied upon my experience as fitter and seamstress/tailor to understand issues of body fit and textile drape in various layouts. Periodically stopping to review observations I recorded in notes, sketches and mem-
ory, I discovered repetitions and gradual shifts in design characteristics.

The interpretation of meaning of the garments rests on an understanding of their context of use gained from historical study. While mentally placing each garment in the context of use, I asked a series of questions of each garment. How did the design characteristics of the garment affect the historical wearer’s experience of self and the historical observer’s experience of the wearer? How did the garment relate to the situation in which it was worn? What undergarments were worn? How did the design characteristics of each garment relate to the characteristics employed elsewhere in the collection of garments? Patterns in the answers to these questions led to an understanding of the meaning of fashion eras which the garments represent.

Design Characteristics in Context

Velvet. The use of velvet itself as the fabric out of which a garment is mainly or solely constructed constitutes the central focus of this project. By means of its pile and nap velvet adds both visual and tactile texture to a garment. Texture experienced through touch was important in an era when social dancing was becoming extremely popular.

A social dance revolution was underway in the United States at the beginning of the 20th century. Buckman (1978) reports "... around 1914, the Maxixe was the third most popular dance after the One-Step and the Hesitation Waltz (as performed by the Castles), which just goes to show how wide was the range of dances in vogue at any one time" (pp. 170-171). The Waltz and Tango, and from the 1920s the Foxtrot, remained staples of the dance floor (Coll & Rosiere, 1922; Ballwebber, 1938; Hostetter, 1930, 1942). These were joined by a constant stream of new Latin dances. The Maxixe, various Tangos, the Rumbe and the Samba succeeded each other in popularity between 1910 and 1939. They were always perceived as sensual in character, though the definition of sensual varied over time. Pictures of dancing couples in dance instruction books published in the early 1910s as well as the later 1930s depict men and women in new, sensuous dance positions (e.g., Castle and Castle, 1914; and Ray, 1932) and diagram or photograph "forbidden" dips (Malnig, 1992).

Between 1912 and 1915 dancing took the new form of afternoon teas. Professional dance team Irene and Vernon Castle promoted the afternoon format in order to counter criticisms of the debauched character of the new dances (Malnig, 1992).

Contemporary observers noted a strong relationship between the physical activity of dancing and the direction of fashion in women’s clothing.

The increased number of society dances in the United States alone during the past year, has resulted in an enormous development in the silk trade. The silk dresses required for "Tango Teas" have been responsible for many million more yards of silk than were ever before imported into that country. . . . The modern fashion in dress and hats has been largely modified and even dictated by "Tango Teas." Small close hats, and a simple compact style of hair dressing, a close-fitting skirt, and loose-fitting blouse, with conspicuously neat shoes and stockings, have become universal at those dances. (Urlin, 1914, pp. 172-173)

Dancing has had its influence upon the materials that have come into vogue. . . . A stiff, heavy material looks awkward and makes harsh lines about the figure in the charming measures of the dance. In consequence there has arisen a tremendous demand for soft crepes de Chine, chiffon velvets [italics added], delicate crepe detors, and the softest and most supple of taffetas, which are at the moment the most fashionable of all. (Castle and Castle, 1914, p. 146)

In addition to the important tactile texture of velvet, visual texture was created by the interplay of light with the pile and nap of velvets, by the manner that light was absorbed or reflected. Alternately the ability of velvet pile to absorb light could be used, by planning for the effects of nap, to produce garments that nearly completely obliterated surface visual texture. Such garments provided a strong visual silhouette and focused attention on those uncovered parts of the wearer that reflect more light and thus become visible (see Figure 1). Black velvet garments of this design encouraged the observer to move in closer in order to better see
the hidden surface detail. Possibilities for manipulating the relationships among light, pile and nap became important as the Hollywood film industry grew.

The importance of velvet's historical association with wealth, luxury, royalty, the divine right of kings, ecclesiastical robes and spiritual power lent a strong presence to a garment that is aptly described as historical weight. This importance facilitated the creation of very brief garments in the 1920s "flapper" era, by justifying the radical new exposure of female limbs.

Figure 1. Black velvet ensemble of jacket, dress and scarf, Goldstein Gallery acquisition #59.002.016 a, b & c, ca. 1930-39. (This illustration and all others by Holly Ryan.) Black solid velvet scarf [not shown] and jacket are lined with nude fabric. Jacket: note continuous line created by circular-cut collar-cum-edge ruffles; nude lining of jacket and ruffle occasionally becomes visible with wearer's movement. Dress: note V-neck openings, front and back; gathered fit separating the two breasts; and nearly floor length skirt with train. Scarf: when worn around the neck the scarf adds to the confusion of patches of bare skin and nude lining.

Velvet also contributed physical weight to a garment. Increased physical weight altered the way garments interacted with the moving body of the wearer. The manner in which physical weight interacted with specific design characteristics will be described in subsequent sections of this paper.

![Figure 2. Navy and beige printed solid velvet dress, Goldstein Gallery acquisition #83.050.003 a & b, ca. 1920-1929. (This photograph and all others by author.) Coordinating trim of plain navy velvet and beige plain weave silk fabrics. Note pleated jabot dividing breasts. Slightly gathered emphasis on hips does not extend around the back; it focuses on the front pelvic area with beige lined velvet ties formed into a bow. Pleated velvet skirt is mid-calf length. Strong shadows against the background indicate the intensity of lighting necessary to enable viewers to see the detail of dark velvet garments.](image)

Color and Surface Pattern. The advent of velvets in the 1910s is marked by a broad range of color and surface pattern innovations. The
Table 1. Distribution of Surface Design Characteristics of Velvet.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textile Characteristics**</th>
<th>1910s</th>
<th>1920s</th>
<th>1930s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dresses</td>
<td>coats &amp; capes</td>
<td>dresses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Color</td>
<td>1 17%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4 27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Colors</td>
<td>5 83%</td>
<td>3 100%</td>
<td>11 73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pattern in Pile or Color</td>
<td>2 33%</td>
<td>1 33%</td>
<td>6 40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voided Pile</td>
<td>1 17%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5 33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Presented in real numbers and percentages by decade.  
**While Black Color and Other Colors are mutually exclusive categories, relationships with and among the remaining categories are not mutually exclusive. For example, a predominantly navy dress may also be patterned with multi-colored small voided pile flowers.

new velvets appeared in several light and bright colors as well as dark colors, in multi-colored patterns (see Figures 2 and 3), and with patterns imprinted in gold and silver (see Figure 4). This trend broadened in the 1920s and was strengthened by another innovation, the creation of voided velvet pattern on transparent ground weaves. The new weaves often also combined the pattern of voided pile with the pattern of multiple colors. Color variation in both plain and patterned velvets occurred along the three dimensions of hue, value and chroma.

The new velvets continued in popularity into the 1930s, but slowly gave way to the use of darker colored and black solid velvets in dresses as well as the long popular use of dark colors in coats and capes. The number of multi-colored velvets decreased and generally grew darker as the 1930s progressed. Patterned voided velvets also decreased in the 1930s and

![Figure 3. Detail of velvet dress fabric, Goldstein Gallery acquisition #61.014.015, ca. 1920-29. Light coral transparent ground weave with multi-colored voided pile floral pattern. The colors of the voided motifs are medium coral, yellow, beige, navy, and teal. The large blossom is four and one-quarter inches at its widest point. Note the visibility of a square piece of black paper through the transparent ground.](image)

![Figure 4. Detail of garment and fabric, Goldstein Gallery acquisition #61.003.038, ca. 1910-1920. Gold-printed pattern on muted light green solid velvet is edged with blanket stitch embroidery in teal and bears yellow glass-bead and looped-braid closures. The printed bird motif measures three and three-quarter inches high.](image)
were replaced by plain solid velvets. (See Table 1.)

The darker velvets absorbed more light than they reflected and drew the observer's attention to the wearer's silhouette, where the body was covered, and to the exposed portions of the body when the wearer's skin color contrasted with the color of the unpatterned cloth. The focus on the curving silhouette and visible skin of arms, shoulders and back of the 1930s dresses matches well descriptions of the tenor of dances popular in that era. Of the original Cuban Rumba that inspired the American version Buckman wrote "to an insistent and arousing beat the woman performed sinuous movements of hip, trunk and shoulders, while the man did his best to respond" (1978, p. 197). Malnig described the Samba as "distinguished by its subtle undulations of the chest and lifting rising and falling motion of the body" (1992, p. 117). Appreciation of these dances was facilitated by garment designs that exposed portions of undulating torso and layout structures and fabrics that encouraged garments to cling to the surface of the covered areas of the wearer's body.

Though social dancing continued to play an important role in fashion, both through the social events themselves and their prevalent depiction in popular films of the 1920s and 1930s (Delamater, 1981; Parker & Siegel, 1978), it is the cinema itself that most affected color and pattern in velvets. The beauty of velvets patterned with voided pile or multi-colored designs did not show well through the medium of black-and-white film and could serve as obstacle to the communication of the story. Consideration for the camera's eye led to a preference for light reflecting fabrics like satin and the new rayon lingerie in which many actresses were filmed for boudoir scenes (Holt, 1988).

It was very important that materials harmonize with the action of the scene. Often, the movement of a fabric was photographed even before the gown was made. If the director wanted the action to stand out, the dress could not be so striking that it competed with the action. If the gown was to stand out, the designer had to insure that the materials photographed to their best advantage. If the dress was to emphasize the action of a scene, it had to flow with it, or the design had to reinforce a movement. (Bailey, 1982, p.45)

Color and pattern in many fabrics utilized in women's dress were influenced by these choices made in Hollywood.

Though velvet did not reflect as much light as satin, the nap and soft pile of plain solid velvets in combination with light or dark color and careful lighting were used to advantage by the film industry to indicate either the shapely form or curvaceous silhouette of an actress. Plain dark velvets were also used to create images of richness and importance.

Red velvet was used in film costumes because it could communicate both form and silhouette through black-and-white film (Bailey, 1978, p. 50). Aside from black, of course, the viewing audience could not discern which dark color of velvet was being used in the movie costume. As a result of Hollywood's preferences, dark “jewel tones” and black displaced the lighter colors in velvet. Plain velvets also displaced patterned velvets by the end of the 1930s. Daytime use of velvet diminished and the black velvet evening dress became the predominant form in which velvet appeared in the Goldstein Gallery collection by the mid 1930s.

Ruffles and Falls. Many of the garments were characterized by ruffles or falls which hung loosely and freely from the body. They focused attention on the motions of the wearer by echoing and enlarging the wearer's every movement.

Four principle methods of construction were employed. Large straight-edged pieces were attached along vertical seams or edges or were attached at a single point, particularly on the sides of dresses where they fell from the hips. Pieces cut in circular shape were attached in straight lines or pieces cut in straight, on-grain shapes were attached in circular seams; both these latter methods created a bias fall of the fabric.

Narrow on-grain ruffles reacted to body movement more quickly than wide or bias ruffles. They were found only on the 1920s garments. This period was associated with the more frenetic social dances of Charleston, Black Bottom, Varsity Drag and Shimmy (Buckman, 1976, pp. 179-184). Wide ruffles appeared in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Falls
in various shapes were found on garments of the late 1910s, throughout the 1920s, and into the early 1930s.

The long popularity of garment designs that magnified a wearer's movement occurred in the context of the previously described social dancing and a growing participation of women in active sports. A survey of the photographic and drawn images of women engaged in social dancing and sports pursuits in the articles and advertisements of Vogue magazine in the years 1910-1939 revealed a steady increase of depictions of physically active women. From a very few small images, under two inches in height, in the 1910s depictions of sports women in Vogue showed continued increase in size and number through three decades. Full-page images of physically active women and articles about actual sports women occurred in the 1930s. The inclusion of falls and ruffles on the garments that women wore indoors kept observers' attention focused on the physically active aspect of women even when they were not engaged in sports activity.

**Interior Construction of Garments.** The dresses were unlined and unboned. The matching or alternately nude-colored slips accompanying the voided velvet dresses were constructed of very light materials. Dress jackets were sometimes lined with a thin fabric, except when constructed of transparent fabric. Only one ensemble jacket from the early 1910s seemed bulky; it consisted of a blouse, jacket and skirt suitable for cold weather wear. Coats, alone, were padded and heavy, making up for the thinness of the garments underneath. Velvet linings added bulk, warmth and tactile pleasure to some of the coats.

The lack of boning and padding and the thinness of the matching slip or jacket linings of the dress ensembles allowed the outer dress fabric to lie as close to the wearer's skin as the undergarments would allow. Though undergarments were still substantial and numerous in 1910, by the early 1920s they had lightened considerabily and continued to do so through the 1930s (Boehlke, in press; Cunnington and Willett, 1981). Hollywood films helped promote the new lighter underwear by setting many scenes in private areas of homes or otherwise contriving to show actresses in states of semi-dress (Holt, 1988).

A survey of advertisements and articles in Vogue magazines published between 1910 and 1939 showed a continued decrease in the boning and closure complexity of foundation garments. Also reduction in the number of undergarments worn together occurred through the development of simpler "combination" undergarments.

The lightening of corset bones began early in the 1910s for some individuals. In 1914 Irene Castle wrote

but all these precautions as to the outward gowning are wasted if you continue to wear the long, stiff corsets decreed by fashion when she dismissed our hips and other curves. No amount of grace, no amount of clever training, and no amount of the knowledge of the most intricate steps will help you to dance charmingly unless your corset has "give" to it and allows you to move with supple ease and comfort. Personally I use and recommend a special corset made almost entirely of elastic [italics added], very flexible and conforming absolutely to the figure, which at the same time it supports. It is known as the Castle Corset, and is designed especially for dancers. Many corsets are now being brought out, however, with elastic in place of whalebone; and the late word from Paris that we may again display a waist-line and hips allows even the fairly stout woman to don shorter and more comfortable "stays." (Castle and Castle, 1914, p. 142)

**Bias Cut or Placement.** Utilization of velvet on the bias was repeatedly employed to create several effects. In the 1930s garment layout in women's wear became especially complex for most fabrics (Collard, 1983). This complexity is seen in velvet dresses of the Goldstein Gallery collection in which pieces of cloth were cut to curve around the body to hang on grain in some areas and on bias in others. Unconstructed areas gave an impression of naturalness and simplicity while the bias contoured the garment to the curves of the body underneath. Prevalent use of black velvet in the 1930s meant that grain and layout were often indiscernible and the observer was left only with the impression of the curving silhouette or a need to move closer to
the wearer in order to better see the garment detail.

Garments cut on the bias also hugged and revealed the shape of the body underneath, especially breasts, abdomen, hips, and thighs, creating a sensual mood. The clinging nature of the bias fabric was exaggerated by the weight of velvet. It was also facilitated by the absence of outer garment boning or lining. Simplification of undergarments intervening between outer garment cloth and wearer’s body enabled the velvet fabric of bias layout dresses to lie closer to and reveal the shape of the wearer’s body.

Some of the ruffles, falls, gathered skirts and draped areas were also created on the bias, both in the 1920s and ’30s. They moved in a more languid manner than similar designs constructed of lighter, on-grain, fabrics. The interaction of velvet pile weight with the stretch of bias draping caused fabric reaction to the wearer’s movements to be delayed. It also caused the fabric’s reactive movement to stretch out over a longer period of time. Together, these fabric movements created a relaxed mood, particularly in the 1930s when bias was utilized most frequently.

*Exposure of Body Extremities.* A slight raising of the hem in the narrow skirts of the 1910s gave increased freedom of movement when associated with openings in the bottoms of skirt seams. In the earliest versions these openings revealed undergarments rather than areas of the body, if we are to judge by Irene Castle’s prescriptions.

Therefore, while fashion decrees the narrow skirt, the really enthusiastic dancer will adopt the plaited one. A clever woman may, however, combine the two by the use of a split skirt, carefully draped to hide the split, and a plaited petticoat underneath. Thus when she dances the skirt will give and not form awkward, strained lines, and the soft petticoat, fluffing out, will lend a charming grace to the dancer’s postures. The openings in a skirt of this sort can be fastened with tiny glove-snaps, so that on the street the wearer may appear to have the usual narrow costume, while at the same time she has a practical one for the daily *dansant.* (Castle and Castle, 1914, pp. 139-140)

When hemlines reached their highest point in the garments of the 1920s, legs were covered only by stockings and arms were completely freed for evening wear by the removal of sleeves in the flapper dresses.

The new solo dances popular in the 1920s enabled women to dance whether or not they had been invited to do so and these dances made full use of the new mobility afforded arms and legs. The Charleston, in fact, appears to be a celebration of women’s freedom to move extremities. The increasing physical activity of women’s bodies was both facilitated and made visible by the garments. This brought women’s new physical activity levels to the fore of consciousness of observers and wearers alike.

Open necklines characterized garments in the 1920s and this was expanded in the 1930s to include both front and back scoop as well as V-shaped necklines. Exposure of the back extended to the waistline in some dresses. Radical exposure of the back took some attention away from the front, but front necklines were also low. Exposure of low back and low front necklines, particularly in garments that included both features, may have slowed movement due to the manner in which such clothes made their wearers ever conscious of their clothing’s potential to slip from a shoulder. One such garment in the collection was altered to prevent such a mishap; the back bias-draped scoop neckline was seamed up the middle to reduce the size of the opening. The back exposure of the garments of the 1930s works with the longer hemlines and trains to slow down the quick movements of the 1920s to a more languid pace.

*Transparency.* See-through fabrics were employed in two manners, both revealing the arms, neck, shoulders (down to the upper bosom in front), and back (down as far as the waist). In the 1920s and 1930s voided velvet woven on a transparent ground (see Figure 3) was used to construct entire garments. A matching under-slip completed the ensemble to cover the middle and lower torso and thighs (see Figure 5). In some cases the slips were created in nude or similar colors raising, in the case of light-skinned wearers, questions in the mind of observers regarding degree of body coverage. The same teasing occurred whenever the transparent garment and matching slip.
color approximated that of the skin of the wearer.

In the 1930s transparent fabrics were combined with velvet in strategic locations in the garments to expose selected body parts, usu-

ally arms, shoulders or back. Though lace and netting had long been used in women's clothing in this manner, these see-through fabrics had usually revealed layers of undergarments. In the 1930s transparent fabrics revealed bare skin. One garment from the 1910s showed the transition from the earlier use of transparency by combining a deep V-shaped net inset plunging to front mid-torso with the new multi-colored velvet fabric. Fabric transparency brought consciousness of women's bodies to the fore and in association with teasing turned this awareness into an anticipatory tension akin to sexual stimulation.

**Peekaboo.** Several methods of construction created the effect of suddenly, quite casually revealing areas of the body and then covering them up again. In one type of design the lower portions of seams in skirts, in tiered ruffles, and in sleeves remained open and periodically exposed parts of the wearer's body as she moved. In the 1910s the garment openings were more likely to reveal undergarments than skin, but the character of these undergarments could vary considerably.

Of course it is dancing that has made the vogue for the charming plaited petticoats of chiffon edged with lace to wear under the dance-frock or the slit skirt, because without these the foot and ankle are shown too much. It is dancing, too, that has made the vogue for the new garters, with their deep lace ruffles, and the little lace pantaloons—all to hide those slender ankles that show in the dip. (Castle and Castle, 1914, p. 147)

Elsewhere the Castles decry "dark stockings showing through a filmy petticoat and a split skirt" (Castle and Castle, 1914, p. 140). Such proscription would not have been necessary unless the behavior was frequently practiced.

By the 1920s undergarments were significantly lighter and nude stockings were coming into fashion (Holt, 1988). Slips made especially for garments of revealing design or fabric were camouflaged to match either outer garment or wearer's skin color. Such underwear left observers with doubts about the extent of undergarment coverage when necklines and armholes gaped open so easily. Alternately, the new brightly colored underwear of the 1920s (Holt, 1988) would boldly announce their char-
acter even if only a momentary glimpse of them was afforded by gaping openings in outer garments. By the end of the decade undergarment coverage of the body surface had diminished considerably, just panties and brassiere sufficing (Cunnington and Willett, 1981).

Peekaboo designs over the briefer 1930s undergarments revealed a lot of bare skin. Cross-draped, deep V-shaped back closures often revealed more than they covered. Bias-cut, classic-draped scoop necklines also fulfilled a promise to reveal more of a bosom at the motion of the wearer. When deep open necklines were coupled with deep open backs, the shoulders of a dress became very unstable, potentially revealing more of the body than the wearer may have wished. However, the wearer’s next movement could bring back under cover what had just been revealed.

A more sedate version of peekaboo is constructed of overlapped garment closures, most prevalent in the 1910s and early ’20s, and openings in the lower portion of seams in sleeves, skirts, skirt tiers and ruffles which occurred through all three decades. Such garments were lined with coordinating underslips. While these garments may fail to actually reveal any additional undergarment or part of the body, they presented the possibility of such revelations to the wearer and the observer.

An equally illusory, but startling, peekaboo design utilized nude colored non-velvet fabrics to line jackets or trim dresses of black velvet ensembles (see Figure 1). Working in concert with the color of a light-skinned wearer, the nude trim and lining could give a momentary impression that private areas of the body are being revealed as the jacket swung open or a ruffle with nude lining outwardly turned.

Increasingly through all three decades various forms of real and illusory openings in garments encouraged observers to become more acquainted with women’s bodies. Observers were teased into a subtle anticipation that turned the tactile physical experience of velvet into a more sensual perception of the wearers of velvet garments. Whether sedate or startling, all these versions of peekaboo developed a sense of anticipation and drew attention to a woman’s body. The observer was encouraged to look twice.

Droop. This characteristic was created by incorporating extra length or width of fabric into garment layout, securing the excess into relevant seams with pleats or gathers, and often providing a shorter or narrower attached lining.

Figure 6. Bright Goldenrod Yellow solid velvet wedding dress, Goldstein Gallery acquisition #91.059.003 s, ca. 1916-1923. Note open neckline, classic drape, front and back surplice with overlapped openings at sides and center front, inner front bodice of cloth of gold, droop of outer folded skirt hem line, beaded medallions with bead fringe at sides of inner hem line, and gold not fall at back left hip.
By mimicking the muscles of the body at rest or the rolls of fat of a well-fed person, droop alluded to relaxation, indolence, abundance, and luxury. By mimicking the relaxed fall of sexual organs (breasts and testicles) droop brought to mind sexual associations.

Train. Several of the velvet garments exhibited short or long trains, a characteristic that drew upon historical associations with wealth, royalty and formal occasions. When designed into solid velvet, unlined garment trains had the effect of pulling the garment a little more taut across the abdomen, hips and thighs as the wearer walked, further revealing the body's form. Additionally the power of the body was exaggerated when bended knee and thigh distended the fabric of the skirt as the wearer walked.

The velvet train emphasized the process and direction of movement of the wearer by providing evidence of where the wearer had just been. The movement of the train provided an echo of the directional movement of the wearer. Velvet trains heightened an observer's awareness of the wearer's body form and activity.

The wearer, too, became more aware of her movement as she dealt with the cumbersome skirt. Her movement had to be calculated in order to avoid tripping on or ripping her train by any sudden change of direction. Velvet trains slowed down movement and made it more deliberate.

Unlike trains constructed of lighter fabrics, voided and solid velvet trains remained on the ground and did not float. In effect, velvet trains visually grounded wearers in their environments and associated wearers with basic and powerful things like the earth and nature.

Drape. This characteristic consisted in the gathering of extra width or length of fabric and attaching it so that it fell in loose parallel folds around or down from the body in a manner recalling classical Greek and Roman statues of important historical figures, gods, and goddesses (see Figure 6). Draped velvet called upon the power of long-standing tradition, history and religion to contribute importance to garments. It also contributed physical weight. The inclusion of drape in these garments justified the new activity levels and exposure of the female body and the generalized sensuality of
the garments and their wearers. Drape was used in garments in all three decades.

Gathered Fit. This complex design characteristic consisted of areas of extra fabric simply gathered and stretched over an protruding body part so that the fabric became tensed, drawing attention to that body part and its shape. In women's garments of the 1920s hips and the front pelvic area were the focus of this characteristic; often the extra gathered fabric that stretched over the hips ended in a tied knot or similar effect with fabric ends dangling over one hip or centrally over the lower pelvic region. In the 1930s gathered fit was used to draw attention to the breasts, notably bringing them out of the mono-bosom of preceding fashion eras and the flit chest of the 1920s to become separated into two distinct full entities (see Figure 1).

In the case of either breast or hip-and-pelvis emphasis, attention was being focused on body areas whose precise form or even location had remained hidden from public view. As the bosom became two breasts in the 1930s, bifurcated lower garments worn by women working in factories during the first World War (Ewing, 1992) and by Hollywood film actresses on and off the set in the 1930s also helped determine where a woman's crotch was located.

Overview of Garment Design Characteristics

The disparate meanings associated with the various design characteristics analyzed above, when unified within a garment or group of garments, often created a balanced tension between relaxation and the indolence of wealth on the one hand and physical activity and the stimulation associated with sensual arousal on the other. The gathered fit characteristic best exemplifies this balance by the way it conjoined opposites; relaxed, easing, gathered fabric encases active hips and stimulating full natural breasts.

The tension entailed in this concert of characteristics is one that the wearers of these garments had to live and resolve in their lives. Unencumbered by their clothes, women could become more active. They also found themselves more physically exposed. Physical and sexual boundaries that had previously been defined in part by the clothing now had to be defined and defended by the actions of the wearer.

A garment that initially seemed to have little to relate it to its contemporaries fits exception- ally well into its era when viewed in the light of the above analysis of the spirit of early 20th century fashion in women's dress, as revealed in the velvet garments in the Goldstein Gallery collection. A black, solid velvet one-piece, long-sleeved, full-length garment, soft and gathered at high neckline and waist, encouraged relaxation. Its nearly complete coverage of the body would seem to make a less overt sexual statement than its contemporaries which revealed much more of the body.

However, the bifurcated-leg design was risqué in its time and both drew attention to the wearer's crotch and associated her with the greater physical activity level of the trouser-dressed world of men. Rhinestone buttons and dangling drawstring tie front closures juggled references to both wealth and simplicity. They also boldly advertised how the garment might be opened if an observer were inclined to do so, making this a close ally of the peekaboo garments of the era. The formality of velvet and the dressiness of rhinestones also counterbalanced the leisure nature of the garment form, repeating the tension seen in garments analyzed above.

The prevalence of garments made entirely of transparent materials, contemporary to the velvet garments being analyzed herein, also makes sense in light of the above analysis of the spirit of the collection. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, for example, such transparent dresses were typically composed of yards of fabric arranged in voluminous skirts or masses of effusive ruffles which obscured the view of the body underneath promised by the transparent nature of the fabric. The skirts and ruffles exaggerated the movements of the wearer, giving her even more active appearance than counterparts in velvet. The overall tenor of the garments remained within the meanings described for the velvet garments above and most importantly maintained a balanced tension, between the visible and the obscured body of the wearer, teasing the observer into arousal. The use of velvet and transparent fabrics together in this period, either side by side or within single garments, dramatized both the tactile pleasure of velvet and the visual excitement of viewing the female body.
The heavier velvet garments on the one hand and the busy transparent garments on the other employed different amounts of many of the same ingredients to create the same sense of wearer's presence. The transparent garments permit views of the body and greatly exaggerate the activity of the wearer so as to counterbalance the lightweight nature of the fabric. The velvet of the other garments contributes a greater weight and sensuality to garments that employ less cloth, may cover less of the body and give a more languid view of the wearer's activity.

The tension of meanings created in the velvet garments of the decades 1910-1939 occurred because new meanings were created on top of earlier meaning associated with the fabric. To a history of use by the rich, powerful, and important individuals of society, the 1910-1939 years contributed an association of velvet with women's bodies. First, as women's lives changed through participation in sports and social dancing, velvet was employed in designs that focused attention on and accentuated the rising activity levels. Then, with the increasing simplification of women's undergarments through three decades, and under the influence of the growing popularity of the black-and-white film industry, plain colored solid velvet became associated with the surface, silhouette, and form of the female body. In this manner, velvet acquired a strong feminine character that was physically based and sensual. The earlier meaning of wealth and its associates—luxury, power, leisure, and indolence—interacted with the new meaning to create garment designs of sometimes exquisite tension, particularly in the 1930s as the feminine meaning grew strong. Thus sensual arousal intertwined with relaxed indolence by the 1930s in women's fashions in velvet garments.

Conclusions: A Cultural History of Velvet

The meaning of velvet, while sometimes attaching to specific physical characteristics of the fabric, such as weight and ability to absorb light, is always manipulated by the design of the garment into which the fabric is sewn or draped and interpreted in the context in which it is worn or viewed. It is not always possible when analyzing single garments to separate out the meanings of specific characteristics into physical activeness, sensual enjoyment, sexual stimulation, relaxation, indolence, wealth, and enjoyment of luxury. The garments of the 1910s, '20s, and '30s interwove all these meanings, in varying proportions from one garment to the next, often using single design characteristics to refer to more than one meaning at a time. Moreover, there is hardly a garment in this period group that employs only a single design characteristic.

This analysis points out specifically, however, how velvet was utilized in the creation of complex meanings. Meanings that had become embedded in velvet through its history of use; its inherent physical properties of pile, nap, and weight; and applied physical characteristics of color and pattern were all utilized to design women's garments during 1910-1939.

Fashion in women's dress conversely redefined velvet as the fabric not only of wealth, luxury and power, but also the fabric of women and sensual enjoyment. The redefinition is most clearly seen in the changes through light and bright colors and complex patterned velvets to dark plain solid velvets. Velvets imprinted with gold, voided of pile to reveal textural patterns, or printed or woven in multiple colors gave way to monochromatic voided velvets, and finally to plain darker jewel tones and black solid velvets.

Redefinition was accomplished by alteration in the manner that the fabric related to the female body. Glimpses of first undergarments, later bare skin, afforded by peekaboo openings and transparent grounds of voided velvets teased and titillated both wearers and observers. Ruffles and falls in garment designs magnified the movements of women. Short-skirted, sleeveless, scoop-necked dresses afforded open views of areas of women's bodies not previously shown in public; moreover, they allowed observers to see what activity levels women's bodies could attain when unencumbered by restrictive, multi-layered clothing. Subsequent placement of plain solid velvet against the surface of women's bodies forged a closer association between body and fabric in the 1930s. Transformation in women's undergarments, popularity of social dancing and Hollywood films, and women's increasing participation in sports activities influenced velvet's redefinition.

Velvet was simultaneously feminized and sensualized. This occurred in an era when the
boundary dividing public sensuality from private sexuality was shifting. Areas of women’s bodies that had previously been designated as belonging to the private domain moved into the public domain where they could be enjoyed sensually. In the cultural shorthand of our contemporary era, velvet became sexy through association of its physically stimulating characteristics with the boundary-challenging garment designs of the 1910s, '20s and '30s. The forging of velvet’s past significance with the new meaning developed by the velvet garments of these decades—an active sensuous femininity—produced a tension of meaning that has endowed these garment designs, particularly in the peak of that development in the 1930s, with a long standing power to hold the interest of observers of later generations.

**Endnotes**

1 On the interplay of touch with sight in the experience of textiles, see Winakor, Chang, and Kim (1987).

2 Analysis of sexuality in a given historical era constitutes a much broader topic than can be adequately covered in a paper about the utilization of a textile in garment design.

3 A cheaper version of the pile fabric, woven from cotton, was developed in Europe to dress the servants of the aristocracy in the Middle Ages. This ribbed cloth was called corde du roi, predecessor of modern corduroy (Wilson, 1970).

4 The velvet that is most commonly known today, a ground weave completely covered with cut pile of uniform height, is designated by the term solid velvet. Solid refers to the uniformity of pile coverage and pile height, and does not refer to color.

5 Tortora (1992) describes three different methods of weaving velvet. The wire method employs extra warp yarn that is woven over thin wire rods at a regular interval. The rods may be removed with or without cutting these warp loops. This technique was automated in 1849. The filling pile method developed next: weaves extra weft yarn floats, which are subsequently cut with a fursten knife, to create the pile. This cutting technique was still employed in 1953 for the production of some corduroy (Latour, 1953). The double cloth method weaves two parallel fabrics simultaneously employing a single extra warp yarn to create the pile of both. The two fabrics interlocked by the extra warp yarn are separated in the action that cuts and creates the pile as they come off the loom (Tortora, op cit). Though invented in 1838 this technique was not incorporated into an automated machine design until 1857. The patent was sold by the inventor for reason of financial distress in 1867 to a company that did not put such machines into production until the patent expired (Latour, op cit).

6 One of the most luxurious materials for cinema was velvet. It definitely added bulk to a figure, but the richness of look and feel was easily appreciated by audiences. The finest velvet was from Lyons, France, and the most popular evening color was black. . . Velvet looked best with simple designs that used the heaviness of the fabric to outline or create attractive silhouettes. . . . the camera could not distinguish small details in a sea of black, so shapes of collars or skirts, a few large jewels, or a minimum of light accents, . . . were the maximum styling points for elegant velvet creations. Black velvet was perfect for highly dramatic scenes or to convey the rich status of a star or role* (Bailey, 1982, p. 48).

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The Look And The Feel:
Methods For Measuring Aesthetic Perceptions Of
Textiles And Apparel

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Consider the following scenario: a consumer enters an apparel store in search of a new sweater. She approaches a table stacked with sweaters and begins to feel the fabrics while visually inspecting the color and style of the sweaters. In her mind, she describes the feel of the sweaters as "soft" or "warm". She selects two of the sweaters to try on. In trying on the sweaters, she feels the fit of the sweater and again feels the fabric on her body while at the same time visually assessing the fit, color, and styling. Her mental descriptions are reassessed, "yes, the sweater feels soft and comfortable." She compares the look and the feel of the two sweaters "this sweater is softer, but I like the style of the other one better."

This scenario, typical of the process consumers use to evaluate aesthetic products, such as textiles and apparel, highlights the importance of the interaction of touch/feel and sight in the consumers' appreciation of the aesthetic product. Typically the consumer responds to an aesthetic product on many levels simultaneously, including sensory (tactile, visual), cognitive (identification, purpose), and aesthetic (Ripin & Lazarsfeld, 1937). Consumers' sensory perceptions of aesthetic products, such as textiles and apparel, include visual and tactile perceptions primarily, although the smell (Fiore, 1993) and sound of the product may also come into play. In addition, in the consumer decision making process, the sight and touch of the fabrics often interact with kinesthetic perceptions of garment fit and movement. Responses to visual and tactile sensations lead to affect (feelings toward a stimulus which can lead to preference or evaluation) to form the basis for subsequent attitudes toward the textile or apparel product. These perceptions of "the expressive organization of physical and sensory aspects" of an aesthetic object, such as textiles, are sometimes defined as aesthetic perceptions (Cupchik & Heinrichs, 1981, p. 475). However, we will take a broader perspective and define aesthetic perceptions as perceptions of aesthetic objects which involve the sensory stimulation and resulting evaluative, preferential, or affective responses to the stimulus. These evaluative, preferential or affective responses might be, for example, a judgment of liking for an object, or a judgment of the degree to which an object is beautiful, or a judgment of the extent to which an object evokes pleasure in the perceiver.

Not all stimuli evoke pleasure or displeasure. In the vast, permanent flux of inputs from the sensors to the central nervous system, the large majority elicits an indifferent sensation. For example, the sight of most objects is neither pleasing nor displeasurable as such. If affectivity is involved, a sense of esthetics is the source of it (Cabanac, 1979, p. 2).

Thus we define aesthetic perceptions as involving both a sensory stimulation and the resulting preferential or affective interpretation of the sensations.

There has been a running debate in the psychological literature (Lazarus, 1982; 1984; Tsal, 1985; Zajonc, 1980; 1984; Zajonc & Markus, 1982) regarding research on preferences. Although this research has not focused on textile and apparel products, it has some important implications for consumer behavior and advertising. For example, a series of earlier studies has shown that positive evaluations of items can be acquired through repeated exposures (Kunst-Wilson & Zajonc, 1980; Matlin,

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1971; Moreland & Zajonc, 1977; 1979). Similarly, DeLong and Salusso-Deonier (1983) found that repeated exposures to slides of women’s business suits led to an overall preference for all costumes. It may be that repeated exposures to advertising stimuli functions in the same way.

Recognizing that the study of preferences has important marketing implications for the textiles and apparel industry, Brannon (1993) recently provided an overview of the literature dealing with the dual framework of affect and cognition and applied it to the process of apparel selection. She urged researchers to study not only the cognitive/perceptual factors, but also affective factors involved in the process. This mirrors our view of aesthetic perceptions as perceptions of aesthetic objects which contain an evaluative, preferential, or affective component.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the methods used to measure aesthetic perceptions of apparel and textile products. This body of literature comes from research conducted in a variety of disciplines including psychology, physiology, marketing, textile science, and art. Although consumers’ appreciation (sensory stimulation and resulting affect/preference evaluation) of textiles and apparel is a result of multi-sensory assessments, research methods have primarily included analyses of consumers’ responses to textiles and apparel based upon tactile sensations alone, visual sensations alone or combined tactile and visual sensations. However, the multi-sensory nature of the appreciation process should not be overlooked. The advantages of experimental control achieved by isolating the senses for investigation may be outweighed by the limitations in eliciting realistic (multi-dimensional) assessments from such studies. Indeed, the external validity of many studies may be questioned because senses have been isolated for investigation.

In this survey of methods used in aesthetic perception research, we do not include an exhaustive review of aesthetics literature. Instead we will cite published papers as examples of the primary measurements and procedures used in this area. In reviewing the relevant literature we searched major indexes of published work in the areas of sensory perception, tactile and visual perceptions of textiles and apparel, clothing comfort, and consumer aesthetics. We also included studies from a variety of other sources based upon our own work in this area. Abstracts were not included in our review as methodological details were often unclear in abstracts.

We will begin our survey of methodological issues surrounding the study of aesthetic perceptions of textiles and apparel with a discussion of ways in which aesthetic perceptions are measured; that is, ways in which subjects describe their perceptions. These various means of measuring aesthetic perceptions are used across procedures. We will follow with a discussion of procedures used to investigate aesthetic perceptions of textiles and apparel based upon tactile and visual sensations. In studying aesthetic perceptions of apparel and textiles researchers have used a variety of stimuli, including names of fabrics, actual fabrics which were touched and not seen, actual fabrics which were touched and seen, garment names, verbal descriptions of garments, line drawings of garments, photographs of garments, and actual garments and garment parts which were touched and seen. In many of these studies the authors did not set out to study aesthetic perceptions, but because of the nature of their dependent variables they may have collected responses which can be classified by our definition as aesthetic perceptions. In other words, they included at least one item which tapped an evaluative, preferential, or affective response. We conclude our discussion by offering some suggestions for the use of other techniques to measure aesthetic perceptions of textile and apparel products.

**Descriptions of Aesthetic Perceptions**

The study of aesthetic perceptions of textiles and apparel is dependent upon humans’ ability to describe their perceptions. The descriptions of these multi-sensory perceptions are formulated by learning and by experience. In fact, the integration of information from eyes and hands begins when a child begins to learn language. According to Abravanel (1981),

> Once a child begins to acquire conventional language...she names or labels information that is acquired perceptually. These stored symbols are activated whenever an object is perceived by sight or by hand, and serve to link the otherwise different and disparate forms of information (p. 73).
Thus, as noted by DeLong (1987, p. 69) "a sweater may be viewed as soft because we have previously experienced its softness by touch." Ripin and Lazarsfeld (1937) found that subjects who could not see the fabrics being assessed often described their appearance based upon previous experience with similar fabrics. For example, subjects were quoted as saying, "I get the feeling it has a glossy finish" or "Distinctly gives the feeling that it's shiny."

The importance of language in research on aesthetic perceptions of textiles and apparel is reflected in the controversy in the literature over terminology used to describe the fabrics or garments studied and subsequent reliability and validity of the dependent measures used in the studies. Indeed, an underlying assumption of this research is the belief that the fabric and garment properties that lead to aesthetic perceptions can be described by individuals; and that these descriptions have meaning beyond the individual. Researchers have taken two approaches in investigating subjects' descriptions of fabrics and apparel. Some have allowed subjects to describe the fabrics as they wish. Others have attempted to define standardized terminology so that the same terms can be used across studies.

Several researchers have used open-ended measurements allowing subjects to describe fabrics. For example Wauer (1965) asked respondents to orally describe twelve different fabrics. Descriptions were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. Through a content analysis, descriptions were found to fall in the following categories: color, design, fiber content, fabric name, texture, use, method of weave or construction, and weight.

For the most part, researchers have asked subjects to respond to specific terms with regard to their perceptions of fabrics. For example, based upon a factor analysis of subjects' descriptions of fabrics, Howarth and Oliver (1958) identified four categories of fabric hand perceptions: smoothness, stiffness, aspect of bulk or compactness, and thermal characteristics. Other researchers have subsequently used these terms in their studies (Lundgren, 1969; Paek, 1985; Paek & Mohamed, 1978). The use of researcher-provided polar adjective scales is undoubtedly the most common measurement instrument. Terms used have included fuzzy-clean, full-lean, harsh-soft, rough-smooth (Brand, 1964); soft-hard, silky-harsh, crisp-limp, thick-thin, scratchy-slick, tight-loose, cool-warm (Chen, Barker, Smith, & Scruggs, 1992); prickly-smooth, stiff-limp, cool-warm, thick-thin (Laing & Ingham, 1983-84); coarse-fine, crisp-limp, sleazy-firm, stiff-flexible, heavy-light (Winokor, Kim, & Wolins, 1980); or evaluations of acceptability (Paek, 1975). Researcher-provided adjective checklists have also been used (Hoffman, 1965) to measure how a fabric feels (e.g., waxy, dry, bristly), how a fabric appears (e.g., matte luster, fine texture), and the fabric's aesthetic value (e.g., smart, boring, pleasing).

Some of the terms used have an evaluative or affective component whereas others are more purely descriptive in nature. For example, terms such as harsh, prickly, and scratchy possess a negative connotation; whereas terms such as thick, stiff, crisp, or heavy may possess either a positive or negative connotation depending upon the context in which the consumer is perceiving them. The terminology used in these studies has been derived in a number of ways. For example Chen, et al. (1992) developed a list of qualities of knit fabrics in consultation with expert knitters. Brand (1964) developed a list of words most often used in talking about fabric aesthetics with consumers in general.

Another methodological issue involved with aesthetic perceptions of fabrics is inclusion of the context of use for the fabric in the information given to subjects. Ripin and Lazarsfeld (1937, p. 211) noted that "many individuals were incapable of making a purely aesthetic judgment and refused to compare fabrics as such without knowing the purpose for which they were intended." When subjects were asked "How do you like it?", responses such as "It all depends what for" or "for what purpose" were not uncommon. Few studies of perceptions of fabrics have included the context of use. One exception is Paek's (1975) investigation of flame-retardant fabrics in which subjects were told the fabrics being studied were to be used for sleepwear with skin contact in their end use.

Similar methodologies as these for textiles have been used for assessments of perceptions of and preferences for clothing. In many of the clothing wear studies conducted by Hollies and his colleagues (e.g., Hollies, Custer, Morin, & Howard, 1979) subjects' responses to garments were assessed using a "subjective comfort rat-
ing scale." This scale measured the intensity of subjects' perceptions of clothing using the following descriptive terms: snug, loose, heavy, light weight, stiff, flat, sticky, non-absorbent, cold, clammy, damp, clingy, picky, rough, scratchy. In later work Hollies (1989) developed a clothing rating chart using 37 terms obtained from interviews of users of each product type. Again, these terms may possess varying degrees of positive/negative connotations depending upon the context of perception.

In the area of consumer aesthetics researchers have typically measured aesthetic responses using verbal bipolar rating scales such as good/bad, like/dislike, or beautiful/ugly (Holbrook, 1987). However, in textiles and clothing research aesthetic responses have also been measured by having subjects freely respond to open-ended questions (DeLong, 1977; Eckman, Damhorst, & Kadolph, 1990; Lennon & Fairhurst, in press; Schultz & Phillips, 1976).

It should be noted that individual differences have been found in the number and quality of descriptions of textiles and apparel. Hollies (1989) found that after "repeated applications of comfort protocols to perception analysis of clothing... that people differ from one another not in how they evaluate garment differences, but rather in how many terms they use to describe performance" (p. 12). For example, during a wear protocol thirty subjects described the feel of the clothing using an average of nine descriptive terms, although the range was from 4 terms to 16 terms.

In addition, several researchers have found differences in descriptions made by "expert" versus "naive" judges. Wauer (1965) found that although consumers of varying educational levels gave similar descriptions of fabrics, these descriptions were different from those of experts who were more likely to describe the fabric name, weave, and weight than were consumers. Windakor, Kim, and Wolins (1980, p. 602) suggest "quantification of hand by trained judges is information that should be compared with physical measures; the assessments of consumers should be compared with consumer preferences."

Aesthetic Perceptions of Textiles and Apparel Based Upon Tactile Sensations

Fabric Hand

Methods and procedures used to study the touch and feel of fabric take into account the skin's different sensory receptors (touch/pressure, heat and cold receptors, and pain receptors) as well as the area of the body in which the fabric is felt. For several reasons, the majority of the research on the feel of fabric has focused on the touching senses of the fingers. From a physiological perspective, the fingers have a greater number of nerve receptors than other parts of the body and there are no hairs to interfere with sensing. In addition, consumers typically make initial assessments of a fabric by feeling it with their fingers. The term used to describe "the tactile sensations or impressions which arise when fabrics are touched, squeezed, rubbed, or otherwise handled" is fabric hand (AATCC, 1993, p. 353). Thus fabric hand implies the ability of the fingers to make a sensitive assessment of fabric characteristics. The constituent elements of fabric hand are "those components, qualities, attributes, dimensions, properties or impressions which make the sensation of touching one fabric different from that of touching another" (AATCC, 1993, p. 353).

Procedures Used in Studying Fabric Hand

From Binns' early studies on the touch of fabrics (1926, 1934) to more recently developed sorting methods (Lennon, Dallas, & Smitley, 1993), a variety of procedures have been used to test fabric hand. A variety of dependent measures have been used with each procedure, although for the most part, subjects are asked to describe the test fabrics according to specific terms. Therefore, it is typical that descriptive and affective perceptions resulting from the tactile sensations are measured. These procedures include the following:

(1) subjects consider each fabric sample individually and assess the feel of the fabric on some arbitrary subjective scale (e.g., Bogaty, Hollies, & Harris, 1956; Byrne & Bennett, 1992; Paek, 1985; Schneider & Holcombe, 1991).

(2) as a refinement of the previous procedure, one fabric sample is established as a reference and subjects assess additional fabric
samples against the reference fabric (AATCC, 1993),

(3) subjects rank or place fabrics in order of the degree or magnitude of the quality being assessed (Binns, 1926, 1934; Dawes & Owen, 1971),

(4) as a refinement of the previous procedure, two extremes for the quality being assessed (such as limp to stiff) are established. The (limp) fabric is arbitrarily assigned a value of 1 and the (stiff) fabric a value of 10. Subjects place the fabric samples closer to the ends of the scale or in the middle of the scale according to the differences felt (AATCC, 1993),

(5) subjects compare two fabrics on the quality of interest and choose one fabric over another as more representative of that quality (Bogaty, Hollies, & Harris, 1956; Howorth & Oliver, 1958; Paek, 1985; Paek & Mohamed, 1978; Ripin & Lazarsfeld, 1937),

(6) subjects sort fabrics into stacks according to how similar or different the fabrics feel to them (Lennon, Dallas, Smitley, 1993). Subjects responses in this procedure include written explanations as to why they grouped the fabrics as they did. Although aesthetic perceptions were not specifically elicited, subjects’ explanations often included both descriptive and affective responses.

Although the relative advantages and disadvantages of all the various procedures used have not been systematically investigated, in comparisons of single fabric and paired comparison methods, both were found to be equally effective in assessing fabric hand (Bogaty, Hollies, & Harris, 1956; Paek, 1985). In their assessment of techniques to measure fabric hand, Ellis and Garnsworthy (1980, p. 231) noted “when only a few items are to be ranked, it is simple to present all samples together for comparison. However, for more than about six items the technique of comparison in pairs is to be preferred.” Recently, Lennon, Dallas, & Smitley, 1993) found subjects could effectively sort 60 different fabrics used in terms of similarity in fabric hand, although sorting 75 fabrics proved tedious.

Tactile Sensations and Clothing Comfort

There is limited work on assessing responses to textiles and apparel based upon tactile sensations from specific areas of the body other than the fingers/hand. Noted exceptions include work on perceptions of fabrics including fabric texture, pleasantness (Gwosdow, Stevens, Berglund, & Stolwijk, 1986) and prickle (Naylor, Veitch, Mayfield, & Kettlewell, 1992) when the fabric is systematically pulled across the forearm.

However, an extensive body of literature exists on clothing comfort, that is, the “state of satisfaction indicating physiological, social-psychological and physical balance among a person, his/her clothing, and his/her environment” (Branson & Sweeney, 1991, p. 99). Reviews of literature on clothing comfort include Markee and Pedersen (1991) and Branson and Sweeney (1991). The goal of much of the research on fabric hand and clothing comfort is to discover the relationships between the physical and mechanical properties of fabrics and the subjective assessments of fabric hand or comfort. By doing so, the development or refinement of textiles or textile products for specific end uses can be facilitated. For example, Hollies (1989) described studies designed to compare subjects’ comfort responses to military combat clothing made from manufactured fibers with combat clothing made from 100% wool, to compare subjects’ responses to sport shirts made from polyester/cotton blends with shirts made from 100% cotton, and to compare cotton shirts with durable press or fire-retardant finishes with those with no finishes. Thus, research on comparing subjective assessments of fabric hand and clothing comfort between fabrics or clothing has practical implications for textile and apparel producers.

Aesthetic Perceptions of Textiles and Apparel Based Upon Visual and Tactile Sensations

The perception issues surrounding the visual aspects of textiles and apparel are complex. In describing her framework for a visual analysis of dress, DeLong (1987, chapter 5) suggested that the visual components of fabrics include the surface structure (e.g., color, texture, print), layout structure (i.e., physical arrangement of the fabric on the body), and light and shadow structure (i.e., reflecting character of the fabric) of the two-dimensional fabric. She noted that these visual components interact to create appearances that may be simple or complex in nature.
Typically the visual interpretations of textiles and apparel are studied in conjunction with other sensory assessments. As noted by DeLong (1987, p. 69) "Though the visual aspects of materials and the way they can interact in viewing are primary considerations, our other senses are very much present in visual interpretation." Thus it is difficult to separate the visual and tactile bases for aesthetic perceptions of textiles and apparel. Other researchers have noted this inherent sensory interaction. For example, according to Brand (1964) "fabric aesthetic character is defined as a relationship among a minimum of six concepts: style, body, cover, surface texture, drape and resilience." Similarly, Hollies (1989, p. 16) states that "changes in textile products as seen and felt will certainly be directly related to the fibres used and the method of assembly. The perception information, however, will be organized quite naturally, in terms of the whole picture of performance and each quality in that picture."

**Procedures to Study Aesthetic Perceptions Based Upon Visual and Tactile Sensations**

To better understand this natural interaction between sight and touch in aesthetic perceptions of textiles and apparel, a variety of procedures have been used. These procedures can be organized around the stimuli that have been used including actual fabrics (touched only or both seen and touched), names of fabrics, names or verbal descriptions of garments, drawings of garments, photographs/slides of garments, garment sleeves, and actual garments.

**Actual fabrics.** Research methods have attempted to isolate the senses and compare the perceptual responses given when subjects could see and touch the fabrics with those given when subjects could only touch the fabrics. In a study of aesthetic perceptions of suitng fabrics, Byrne and Bennett (1992) found very little difference in the subjects' descriptions of tactile sensations and descriptions of visual and tactile sensations. In comparing touch only with sight and touch, Paek (1985) found that when subjects could see and touch a variety of fabrics that wool was rated stiffer, burlap was rated thicker, silk was rated warmer, and cotton and linen were rated cooler than when they could only touch them. Lennon, et. al (1993) found evidence of sensory interaction on how fabrics were sorted. For example, non-viewers produced categories that were more homogeneous than were those produced by viewers. Viewers seemed to sort by probable end use, while non-viewers seemed to sort by fiber content and fabric structure.

**Names of fabrics.** In one study women rated 46 fabric names on seven-point rating scales for their appropriateness on 48 attributes (Schutz & Phillips, 1976). Some of the attributes, which had all been generated in an earlier pilot study, were aesthetic in nature. Examples include "has an unpleasant smell" (p. 4), "enjoy wearing it" (p. 8), and "like to run my hand over it" (p. 4).

**Names or verbal description of garments.** Both open-ended responses and rating scales have been used to measure aesthetic responses to garment names (DeLong, Minshall, & Larnzt, 1986; 1987; Lennon & Fairhurst, in press). In one of a series of three studies, DeLong, Minshall, and Larnzt (1986) asked subjects to generate responses to the statement: "When I think about sweater, I think about..." (p. 20). A content analysis of responses revealed no evaluative properties. In the second study, the subjects rated their "schema for sweater" on 29 semantic differential word pairs which included several aesthetic perceptions; e.g., like/dislike, unpleasing/pleasing, and attractive/unattractive. Lennon and Fairhurst (in press) asked respondents to indicate what quality factors they would look for (1) in apparel items and (2) in a blouse. They were asked to write at least three sentences for each item. In describing the quality of apparel items, 26% of the responses generated were classified as aesthetic criteria. In describing the quality of a blouse, 44% of the responses generated were classified as aesthetic criteria.

Holbrook and Moore (1981) presented some of their subjects with verbal descriptions of sweaters. Descriptions contained information on pattern, fit, sleeves, neck style, and length. Subjects made evaluative judgments by rating the sweater descriptions on 20 bipolar adjectival scales. When subjects were contacted after the experiment the authors found that some of them were forming mental images of the sweater descriptions before rating them.

In these studies although subjects were not exposed to a visual stimulus which resembled an actual apparel or textile product, they were exposed to a visual stimulus of an apparel or
textile name or description and aesthetic responses sometimes were affected. It is clear from these studies that people form schemata for textile and apparel items which may include an expectation of aesthetic components. Since expectations for garment appearance and quality will certainly affect consumers’ satisfaction with apparel purchased through catalogs, consumers’ aesthetic responses to textile and apparel words are important to study.

Drawings of garments. Holbrook and Moore (1982) presented simple black and white drawings of sweaters which were rated on 20 bipolar adjective scales. Results of a canonical correlation analysis revealed a two-dimensional product space such that one of the dimensions was an evaluation dimension. In another study Holbrook (1986) presented black and white drawings of men’s clothing ensembles including a shirt, tie, jacket and pants. Two levels for each of the four items were combined factorially and presented to subjects who rated the stimuli on 20 bipolar adjective-pair scales. Embedded within the 20 items was a four-item affect index which included good/bad, I like it/dislike it, beautiful/ugly, and pleasing/displeasing. In these studies the authors cautioned readers that while black and white drawings allow for precise experimental control, they fail to reproduce other dimensions important to aesthetic responses such as color, smell, and touch. They may also fail to reproduce elements such as texture and pattern as accurately as photographs.

Photographs/slides of garments. Studies which have used photographs or slides of garments as stimuli come from work in design and apparel aesthetics. Luborsky (1988) presented subjects with 26 pictures of women’s daytime dress. Pictures were selected from fashion magazines and costume history texts to represent a variety of women’s fashions from the period of 1840 through 1980. Subjects rated each costume on five-point scales according to the extent to which they liked it. In a series of studies DeLong and her colleagues (DeLong & Larntz, 1980; DeLong & Salusso-Deonier, 1983; DeLong, Salusso-Deonier, & Larntz, 1983) presented subjects with slides of magazine photographs of women’s dress. In each of these studies subjects rated each of the stimuli on semantic differential scales. In each case over ten of the items tapped an evaluative component; e.g., beautiful/ugly, attractive/unattractive, like/dislike.

Garment sleeves. In order to generate comfort descriptors, subjects wore 15 different pairs of fitted sleeves which differed according to fabric structure (woven, knitted), color, fiber content, fabric thickness, weave construction, and hand (Hyun, Hollies, & Spivak, 1991). Subjects were allowed to examine the sleeves in any way that would help them write about the sleeves. Forty-eight comfort descriptors were generated which were each mentioned by three or more subjects. Although aesthetic perceptions as a topic was not a focus of this pretest, one of the descriptors so generated was "feels good," which is clearly an aesthetic response.

Actual garments. In the third of a series of studies, DeLong, Minshall, and Larntz (1986) provided 10 sweaters for their subjects to assess. Subjects were able to see and touch the sweaters and rated each of the actual sweaters on 29 semantic differential word pairs. A factor analysis of responses to the sweaters revealed that an evaluative factor was the most important factor in explaining the variation in responses to the 10 sweaters. The evaluative factor included responses to word pairs such as like/dislike, like to own/not like to own, and attractive/unattractive.

Holbrook (1983) provided his subjects with 20 actual sweaters to evaluate on 34 bipolar adjectival scales. Subjects were able to both see and touch the sweaters. Results of a canonical correlation analysis revealed an evaluative dimension (e.g., good/bad and pleasing/displeasing) which was closely associated with sweaters’ tactile qualities. Sweaters evaluated favorably tended to be rated as more gentle, soft, and smooth than sweaters evaluated negatively.

Aesthetic assessments are likely to occur when people purchase fashion garments. In such a setting consumers can not only touch and see the garment, but they can also assess how the body and garment interact with respect to fit. Eckman, Damhorst, and Kadolph (1990) used an open-ended format and interviewed shoppers after they had tried on a specific garment. Respondents were asked to indicate why they wanted to buy/not buy the garment and what they liked or disliked about the garment. Nearly 55% of responses to questions about
specific garments related to aesthetic factors. It is also important to note that over 50% of respondents who did not purchase the garment they tried on gave aesthetic characteristics (color/pattern, styling, appearance) of the garments as attributes they disliked about the garments.

In the main part of Hyun, Hollies, and Spivak's (1991) study (a wear test), subjects rated their comfort on five-point scales. Comfort was rated using the 48 descriptors previously described which includes "feels good" as one of the descriptors. Subjects wore leotards, pantyhose, socks, and sneakers and filled out the rating forms after various lengths of time operating exercycles.

Conclusion

Aesthetic perceptions are complex and elusive. Olson (1980) described three factors that influence consumers' aesthetic responses: (a) characteristics of the aesthetic object, (b) the environment in which the aesthetic response occurs, and (c) characteristics of the consumer. The majority of research methods related to aesthetic perceptions of textiles and apparel have focused on characteristics of the aesthetic object. Although most studies have examined the effect of characteristics of the aesthetic object, the measurement of aesthetic perceptions has varied across studies. In addition, few studies have focused on either the environment or context of the aesthetic perception or characteristics of the consumer which may affect these perceptions. In this section we would like to discuss issues that have emerged from our literature review that have implications for the conceptualization of aesthetic perceptions and the external validity of studies examining aesthetic perceptions. We end with suggestions for other techniques that may be useful in this area of research.

The multi-sensory nature of aesthetic perceptions should not be overlooked when operationally defining and measuring this concept. In fact, in an early study of the relationship between tactile-kinesthetic perception and preferences of fabrics, Ripin and Lazarsfeld (1937, p. 208) noted "we found that judgments of elements were so influenced by the totality of experience in which they occurred that a consideration of the one without the other was meaningless." Therefore, researchers should be cautioned that the external validity of studies may be questioned when isolating senses for investigation. We have reviewed methods used in examining perceptions based upon visual, tactile, and some scent sensations (Fiore, 1993); although the sound a garment makes when worn (e.g., rustling, swishing petticoats) may well affect aesthetic perceptions. Indeed, Forrest (1991) in a discussion about aesthetic perceptions of textile products (quilts) noted that quilts make "soft, crumpling, rustling" (p. 51) sounds when one moves under them. Therefore, in addition to tactile and visual sensations, scent and sound should also be investigated in terms of aesthetic perceptions of textile and apparel products.

Dialogue continues regarding the development of terminology used in dependent measures designed to describe aesthetic responses. Many of the studies included in the review were not intended to measure aesthetic perceptions, but by virtue of the fact that the researchers included at least one item in the dependent measure which tapped an affective response, the research fit within our definition of aesthetic perception. However, there are limitations to a single-item measure of this concept. For example, an item such as "I like it" does not tap all aspects of aesthetic perceptions. Personal taste or favor may strongly be influenced by contextual factors. For example, a positive aesthetic response to fabric qualities may be overridden by the fact that the consumer would not choose a garment in that fabric for him/herself. Thus, researchers need to be consider the validity of their operational definitions of aesthetic perceptions.

To create more valid and reliable operational definitions, some researchers believe standardized terms should be developed and used. Hollies (1989, p. 18) recommends that when assessing perceptions of and preferences for textiles and apparel the "most important step in perception analysis is the actual evaluation involving the use of an established language and an established evaluation protocol." However, it is assumed that the terms used in these instruments are similarly defined by subjects and that subjects would use these terms in "real life" when evaluating textile and apparel products. Because these underlying assumptions may not be true, the external validity of the measurement instruments being used may be in question.

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Brannon (1993) suggests many techniques for the study of appearance product selection which might also be used to measure aesthetic perceptions. In addition, a strong case can be made for the use of an ethnographic approach to the study of aesthetic objects (Forrest, 1991). Context of use is seldom studied in terms of aesthetic perceptions of textiles and apparel. Thus it may be important to (a) evaluate aesthetic perceptions of apparel and textile products within their context of use, and (b) evaluate the effect of context of use on aesthetic perceptions in our future work.

In addition, most studies have been conducted in laboratory settings, the artificial environmental setting in which the aesthetic objects are perceived may affect the aesthetic responses obtained. Settings for further research should provide for greater realism for the consumer as they perceive and respond to the stimuli.

Finally, new sophisticated statistical techniques exist for measuring aesthetic perceptions in terms of consumer preferences which offer some exciting possibilities. Pairwise preference ratings or paired comparison consumer preferences might be analyzed by using: (a) regression analysis in combination with ladder ing (in-depth interviews) to get at the personal meaning of preferences (Perkins & Reynolds, 1988), (b) new stochastic multi-dimensional unfolding methods to provide a product preference space (DeSarbo, 1987), or (c) nested logit models (Moore, 1989) which have been used to examine perceptual and preference data using soft drink products. Finally, product attribute ratings and purchasing histories can be used in consumer preference structure analysis to define a hierarchy of buyer preferences (McDonald, 1993). In order to fully understand aesthetic perceptions of textiles and apparel, we challenge researchers to move beyond the traditional procedures and measurement instruments to explore social and psychological meanings consumers attribute to these aesthetic products.

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Axiology, Aesthetics, And Apparel:
Some Reflections On The Old School Tie

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There are the joys of leisure
with their enriching, ordering,
revealing experiences...
the making of love...
the mystery of music...
laughter...
the religious experience....
Why explore these things?....
Why analyze ourselves?....
Because...if we don’t, we speak as fools.

- Robert Osborn,
On Leisure

The business school where I teach has recently redesigned its curriculum to emphasize four themes that I refer to as "The Four E’s": Environment (the global economy), Excellence (the role of quality), Ethics (the moral aspects of management), and Empathy (human relations and human resource management). All four themes bear directly on the topic for this chapter - namely, Customer Value. Yet - despite all the talk about international competition, quality, morality, and meeting human needs - something important, indeed something vital, seems to be missing from the new curriculum. I refer to the role of aesthetics, its connection to management in general, to marketing in particular, to customers especially, and to the lives of human consumers above all. With all the fuss about building better products (to compete with the Japanese) and avoiding scams or other scandals (to stay out of jail), the aesthetic aspects of the consumption experience seem to have slipped through the cracks.

Thus, during the Fall of 1992, my class on Consumer Behavior followed one on Operations Management taught by an esteemed colleague who focused primarily on his interest in quality. As I stood waiting in the wings at the close of his lectures, I heard him discuss Quality Circles, the Baldridge Awards, the Total Quality Concept, and other aspects of the growing managerial obsession with functional performance and freedom from defects. Then I would enter and tease my colleague that he had just finished teaching our students about Quality, whereas I had arrived to tell them about Beauty.

Beauty - in my view - pervades the everyday consumption experiences of ordinary consumers and prompts appreciative responses that run the gamut of emotional reactions all the way from simple hedonic pleasure to profound aesthetic experience. Virtually any product - any good, service, event, or idea - can provide aspects of aesthetic value. Quite obviously, art or entertainment frequently promotes the experience of beauty. But other more mundane consumption experiences may also contain aesthetic components in general and aspects of beauty in particular. These include recreational activities, food, furniture, and - of course - apparel. The present chapter will use clothing, accessories, and related fashion products as examples; but similar points could be made by focusing on anything from peanut butter to Italian Renaissance Masterpieces.

The primary point I wish to make is that one can understand a given type of value only by considering its relationship to other types of value. One cannot understand Quality without considering Beauty or Beauty without considering Fun or Fun without considering Morality. In

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short, we can understand one type of value only by comparing it to other types of value with which it is closely related. Thus, we can understand Quality only by comparing it to Beauty, Convenience, and Reputation; we can understand Beauty only by comparing it to Quality, Fun, and Ecstasy.

Toward bringing these issues to bear on the topic of the Aesthetics of Apparel or the Beauty of Clothing, I shall borrow some concepts from the philosophical field of Axiology or the Theory of Value. As a field of study, Axiology has important lessons to teach marketing and consumer researchers concerned with the nature of customer value. Yet it is a perspective that has been seriously neglected in research on the consumption experience.

More specifically, I shall borrow from the literature on Axiology to address two main themes: (1) The Nature of Customer Value and (2) The Types of Customer Value. A full discussion of these themes - with what I hope will strike the reader as helpful scholarly references to the relevant literature - appears in a recent contribution to another publication (Holbrook 1993; see also, Holbrook and Corfman 1985). Here, rather than posing further philosophical conundrums - learned or pedantic, depending on one's point of view - I wish to apply the relevant concepts concerning the nature and types of customer value to the area of aesthetics in general and to the case of beauty in clothing or other wearing apparel in particular.

The Nature Of Customer Value

Since the beginning of Western Philosophy as we know it today - that is, for over two thousand years - virtually every attempt to make firm statements concerning the nature of value has prompted counterarguments and debates that have shaped this field of inquiry into a hotbed of intellectual controversy. I anticipate no chance that my comments on the nature of value will prompt wide or even narrow agreement among the readers of this chapter. Rather, every reader will entertain doubts and contradictory positions that she or he will wish to hold dear and to develop for herself or himself. Hence, my purpose is not so much to deliver an "answer" as to provide a framework to assist in prompting some appropriate and helpful questions. Toward that end, I propose to define Customer Value as an interactive relativistic preference experience:

Thus, in general, I define value as a relativistic (comparative, personal, situational) preference characterizing a subject's experience of interacting with some object. By "object," I mean any "intentional object" - that is, any possible contents of consciousness or, as some philosophers have said (rather ungrammatically), "that which consciousness is conscious of." With respect to customer value in particular, the "subject" of interest is a consumer whereas the relevant "object" may refer to any product (i.e., any good, service, person, place, thing, event, or idea) (Holbrook 1993, p. 6).

In what follows, I shall argue briefly for each of the four aspects of value just introduced. Whenever possible, I shall illustrate with an example based on the consumption of clothing.

Interaction

In the view presented here, value involves an interaction between some subject (a consumer) and some object (a product). However, throughout history, various thinkers have focused on one or the other side of the subject-object dichotomy.

Thus, subjectivists suggest that value occurs entirely within the subject who experiences the value (Lamont 1955; Parker 1957; Perry 1954) so that - in the words of the familiar aphorisms - "(h)uman is the measure of all things" or "beauty is in the eye of the beholder." In marketing, this view of value appears conspicuously in the argument by Levitt (1960) on behalf of customer orientation or the conviction that "if the customer says it's good, it's good" (Steenkamp 1989, p. 59). If one takes a sober look at the fashion industry, one cannot help but notice the large subjective component that underlies judgments of physical beauty. Indeed, the quixotic manner in which fashions change from moment to moment seems to require the assumption of a large degree of subjectivity. (Few besides the author can claim to have consistently maintained grunge in their customary style of dressing for decades.)

By contrast, objectivists claim that value resides in the object under evaluation as an inherent property (Osborne 1933; Lee 1957; Hall 1961; Loring 1966; Hartman 1967). Thus, Tuch-
man (1980) views quality as "inherent" (p. 39), while Osborne (1933) sees beauty as "a formal property" (p. 124) and Adler defines "admirable beauty" as "objective, not subjective" (p. 117). In marketing, the objectivist position would correspond to the product orientation (Levitt 1960) in which a manufacturer argues that some product possesses value because he or she has put value into it via the use of some scarce resource(s) (e.g., the classical or Marxist "labor theory" of value), via excellence in manufacturing or engineering (e.g., a low rejection rate in quality control), or via the achievement of cost efficiencies (e.g., a low price by virtue of mass production). For example, a dress designer might claim objective value because of using rare antique ivory buttons or very strong stitching or bargain-basement prices.

However plausible the extreme subjectivist or objectivist positions might appear on the surface, I believe that only an interactionist perspective can withstand careful scrutiny. This position claims that value always entails some interaction between a subject or customer and an object or product (Pepper 1958; Morris 1964; Frondizi 1971). Colloquially, in this light, recall the old philosophical puzzle about whether a tree falling in the forest makes a sound if there is no one there to hear it; the point is that, even if it does make a sound, the fact that no one hears it means that the sound can not have any value. In Frondizi's (1971) words,

The correct assertion that nothing can be valued if there is no subject to appraise it, can only lead one to infer legitimately that the subject who appraises cannot be discarded when one examines the nature of value (p. 55).

Along similar lines, the economist Alfred Marshall compared value to a pair of scissors: The subject is one blade; the object is the other blade; and you need both blades to get any results (Fallon 1971, p. 47). Thus, a piece of clothing has value only when it is appreciated as part of a consumption experience - perhaps by someone who wears it (e.g., quality) or admires it (e.g., beauty).

Relativism

In my view, value is relativistic in at least three important senses. Specifically, it is (1) comparative (among objects), (2) personal (across people), and (3) situational (in a given context).

(1) Value Is Comparative. One cannot legitimately make utility comparisons between people. For example, it would not be legitimate to claim that I like Madonna's ball gown more - or less - than you like Madonna's ball gown. It follows that the only valid utility assessments involve comparisons among objects within the same person. That is, it does make sense to assert that I like Madonna's ball gown more - or less - than I like her dominatrix outfit. Further, the evaluative judgment may well shift if one changes one's target of comparison. I might, for example, feel that Madonna's metal-studded brassiere is bad (compared, say, to her ball gown) or that it is good (compared, perhaps, to her black leather dominatrix suit). This general point has been argued (somewhat more technically) by any number of philosophers (e.g., Frondizi 1971; Hilliard 1950; Leudal 1977; Lewis 1946) but was captured (more intuitively) by a New Yorker cartoon showing two men at a bar with the caption, "For years, I'd been saying I preferred classical music to jazz, but I suddenly realized the other day that I don't like any kind of music." This joke makes sense only if one completes the man's statement with the implicit phrase "compared with drinking whiskey at this bar." In other words, the man has changed his level of comparison. He used to compare one type of music with another. Now he compares all types of music with something else that he likes better - namely, getting drunk.

(2) Value Is Personal. Most philosophers agree that value is personal in the sense that it varies from one individual to another (Bond 1983; Frondizi 1971; Hilliard 1950; Lewis 1946; Parker 1957; Von Wright 1963). We express this principle in the old apothegm to the effect that "one man's meat is another man's poison." I suspect, for example, that - unlike the author - some readers might actually prefer Madonna's dominatrix suit to her studded bra or her ball gown; they might even feel that Madonna looks more beautiful than, say, Julie London or that she sings more pleasingly than, say, Chris Connor and Rosemary Clooney. (It is at times like this that one's ability to maintain a relativistic position is pressed to the limits.)

(3) Value Is Situational. Value also depends on the situation or context in which the evaluative judgment occurs (Frondizi 1971; Hilliard 1950; Lewis 1946; Morris 1964; Von Wright 1963). In other words, the standards on which
evaluative judgments hinge tend to be context-dependent, changing from one situation to the next (Taylor 1961). For example, a fur coat might look ravishing to audience members at a Winter Meeting of the National Rifle Association, but it would probably look pretty tacky to those attending a Summer Conference of the Animal Rights Activists.

Preference

The most fundamental point we can make about customer value is that it embodies a preference judgment (Morris 1964; Perry 1954). Various social scientists have supplied a wide variety of terms to cover this basic phenomenon: Positive-Negative Predisposition; Favorable-Unfavorable Attitude; Pro-Con Opinion; Approach-Avoidance Behavior; Good-Bad Judgment; Like-Dislike Evaluation. All these terms refer essentially to value (singular) as opposed to values (plural), where the latter represents the standards or criteria on which the former evaluative judgment depends. Thus - if one applies the standards of traditional styling, careful workmanship, and warmth - one might develop a strong preference for a Laura Ashley dress. Different values-based criteria (e.g., chicness, inexpensiveness, lightness) might dictate a very different value (e.g., preferring something from The Gap).

Experience

From everything said thus far, it follows that value resides not in the product purchased but rather in the consumption experience derived therefrom (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). This claim is the fundamental tenet in my own approach to consumer behavior and receives support from any number of axiologists (e.g., Baylis 1958; Hilliard 1950; Lewis 1946; Mukerjee 1964; Parker 1957). Among economists, the importance of the consumption experience emerged clearly in the work of Abbott (1955):

The thesis...may be stated quite simply. What people really desire are not products but satisfying experiences. Experiences are attained through activities. In order that activities may be carried out, physical objects or the services of human beings are usually needed. Here lies the connecting link between man's inner world and the outer world of economic activity. People want products because they want the experience-bringing serv-

ices which they hope the products will render (p. 40, italics added).

Thus, my emphasis on experience is "radical" only in the sense that a radish is a radical vegetable: It has roots. It is firmly grounded in axiology, economic theory, and marketing thought. From the latter perspective, experience is the basis for value. Value is the basis for exchange. And exchange is the basis for marketing (Kotler 1991). When some well-heeled customer at Saks Fifth Avenue trades $700 for a fine Pucci print, she not only derives value from the shopping experience itself (the department store as theater) but also anticipates the special satisfaction gained by wearing the costume to her next cocktail party (dress for success), not just to mention the sensuous pleasure of the fine silk against her skin (hedonic gratification) and the beautiful appearance of the colorful pattern imprinted on the fabric (aesthetic appreciation).

The Types Of Customer Value

Dimensions of Value

As suggested by the typology shown in Table 1, I propose that the different types of customer value vary along three key dimensions: (1) Extrinsic versus Intrinsic, (2) Self-versus Other-Oriented, and (3) Active versus Reactive. Each deserves a few words of introduction.

Dimension 1: Extrinsic Versus Intrinsic Value. Value is extrinsic when it pertains to a means-end relationship, when some product is prized for its functional performance, when some consumption experience is appreciated for its instrumentality in accomplishing some further purpose, or when the worth of some object is viewed as utilitarian or banausic. By contrast, intrinsic value occurs when some experience is appreciated as an end in itself - for its own sake - as self-justifying or autotelic, from a ludic point of view. (Helpful discussions appear in work by, among others, Baylis 1958; Brandt 1967; Brightman 1962; Deci 1975; Frankena 1962, 1967; Hilliard 1950; Lee 1957; Lewis 1946; Mukerjee 1964; Nozick 1982; Olson 1967; Osborne 1933; Perry 1954; Rokeach 1973; Taylor 1961; Von Wright 1963.) For example, in the case of apparel, money has extrinsic value as a means to the end of acquiring a new wardrobe; but wearing the clothing may have intrinsic value, as when one secretly enjoys admiring oneself in the mirror.
Dimension 2: Self-Versus Other-Oriented Value. Value is self-oriented when I prize a product or experience selfishly or prudentially for my own sake, for how I react to it, or for the effect it has on me. Conversely, other-oriented value looks beyond the self to some other(s) (family, friends, neighbors, colleagues) or some Other (Country, Planet, Universe, Mother Nature, Cosmos, Deity) where something is valued for their sake, for how they react to it, or for the effect it has on them. (See Buber 1923; Fromm 1941; Hilliard 1950; Kahle 1983; Koestler 1978; Lamont 1951; Osborne 1933; Parsons 1951; Pepper 1958; Riesman 1950; Rokeach 1973; Siegel 1981; Von Wright 1963; and especially Mukerjee 1964.) For example, one might put on comfortable underwear primarily to please oneself; but one wears black to a funeral primarily out of respect for others.

Dimension 3: Active Versus Reactive Value. Value is active when it entails some physical or mental manipulation of some tangible or intangible object; whereas reactive value results from apprehending, appreciating, or otherwise responding to some object. In the first, I act upon it; in the second, it acts upon me. (See Hall 1961; Harré and Secord 1973; Mead 1938; Mehrabian and Russell 1974; Morris 1956, 1964; Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum 1957; Parker 1957; Pepper 1958; Rokeach 1973). For example, one might play an active role in sewing, knitting, or tie-dying one’s own dresses, sweaters, or t-shirts, whereas one might react with admiration to the haute couture displayed at an exclusive Parisian Fashion Show.

A Typology of Customer Value

By treating each of the dimensions just described as a dichotomy and combining these three dichotomies into a 2x2x2 cross-classification, we may produce the eight-celled Typology of Value in the Consumption Experience that appears in Table 1. Each cell of this taxonomy represents a logically distinct type of value (with an example shown parenthetically) and deserves a brief explanation along with an illustration drawn from the area of apparel, clothing, and fashion that pertains directly to the present context. As a challenge, I have taken all such examples from advertisements contained in the December 1992 issue of Vogue. The fact that we easily find pertinent illustrations in just one issue of a fashion magazine suggests that the various types of value distinguished here bear considerable relevance to the case of clothing and apparel-related consumer products.

Efficiency. As defined here, efficiency results from the active use of a product to achieve some selfish purpose - as measured, for example, by the ratio of outputs to inputs (Bond 1983; Diesing 1962; Hilliard 1950; Lamont 1955). When the key input of interest is time, we typically call this O/I ratio "convenience." In the case of apparel, such convenience may refer to ease of shopping, ease of washing-drying-ironing, or ease associated with some other time-saving feature.

An ad for watches produced by Swiss Army Brands Ltd. shows a picture of two gleaming stainless steel chronometers and proclaims: "The two-tone Swiss Army Brand...watch reflects a bold simplicity and elegant efficiency. Easy-to-read numerals. Precision accurate Swiss quartz movement.... the main effect is functional and straight-forward. It’s tooled to perfection.

Excellence. As conceived here, efficiency differs from excellence in that the latter entails an inherently reactive response in which one admires some object for its capacity to serve as the means to a self-oriented end in the performance of some function. Such a utilitarian emphasis on the appreciation of instrumentality appears to constitute the essence of what we mean by "quality" (Abbott 1955; Bond 1983; Juran 1988; Pettitjohn 1988; Steenekamp 1989; Tuchman 1980; Zeithaml 1988).

An ad for Saks Fifth Avenue presents the Swarovski Jeweler’s Collection as the closest thing to "perfection": "A Diamond Isn’t The Only Thing That’s Forever.... Because of the extraordinary quality and hand craftsmanship lavished on these pieces, each one is guaranteed for a lifetime.... Swarovski crystals are regularly rated 'IF' - internally flawless."

Politics. I employ the term politics in a general sense to designate the active use of one’s own consumption behavior toward the other-oriented end of achieving a favorable response from someone else (Nozick 1981; Perry 1954). A conspicuous example of this push toward "success" occurs when one dresses with an eye to the role of clothing and accessories in impression management.
Presumably, how one smells may determine how successfully one appeals to the targets of one’s amorous inclinations. Hence, an advertisement for Narcisse Parfums Chloé - Paris shows a naked woman in bed with a handsome, French-looking fellow and suggests a direct connection between the superimposed perfume bottle and her ability to attract this Gallic Hunk: “How I longed for him to hold me, to be in his arms....”

Esteem. The reactive counterpart to political value involves the esteem that may result from a somewhat passive ownership of objects whose mere possession is appreciated as a means to building one’s “reputation” with others (Bond 1983; Duesenberry 1949; Scitovsky 1976; Veblen 1899). Such Veblenesque examples of conspicuous consumption might include owning clothes or hats or jewels that are too uncomfortable or impractical or expensive to wear but that can be displayed in one’s home to inspire the envy of friends and neighbors.

Such signals are greatly facilitated by the use of initials to register the cachet of prestigious brand names - as in the ad for Louis Vuitton, which features some fine leather luggage marked with the insignia “LV” and boasts that these aristocratic objects “bear witness to the rigorous standards of the House that has given the brand its stamp of nobility since 1854.”

Play. As a self-oriented experience - actively pursued and enjoyed for its own sake - play leads to having “fun” (Berlyne 1969; Bond 1983; Dearden 1967; Huizinga 1938; Santayana 1896; Stephenson 1967). For example, one can wear one’s clothes playfully (a sweat shirt with a facetious motto or humorous quote), can don apparel suitable for playing an enjoyable game (golf or tennis), or can dress appropriately for a pleasurable leisure activity (jogging or swimming).

In an advertisement for B and B Liqueur, a brightly smiling woman wears a wedding dress, pearls, and dark glasses; she runs through the water along the beach and holds her wedding corsage plus two glasses in one hand, a bottle of B&B in the other; the message calls our attention to her “joie de vivre”: “A joyous celebration of life’s unexpected moments. Moments meant for B&B.... B&B excites the palate and delights the imagination.

Aesthetics. On the reactive side of play, aesthetics in general refers to a self-oriented appreciation of some object where this experience is valued for its own sake, for example as a potential source of “beauty” in particular. This view of aesthetic experience as involving intrinsic value can be traced back to the work of Shaftesbury in 1709 (Beardsley 1967), but owes its most influential exposition to Kant’s Critique of Judgment in 1790: “Kant discovered the essence of beauty in design enjoyed simply for itself” (Rader 1979, p. 331). Kant’s perspective found further support in Bullough’s (1912) concept of “psychical distance” and has since commanded a broad consensus among aesthetic philosophers (Budd 1983; Coleman 1966; Hampshire 1962; Hilliard 1950; Hosper 1967; Iseninger 1981; Lee 1957; Lewis 1948; McGregor 1974; Olcamps 1965; Perry 1954). Thus, in short, my aesthetic appreciation for a work of art (the intrinsic value of that experience) has nothing to do with any extrinsic purpose that the artwork might serve (as the means to an end). True, one could use an artistic masterpiece to perform some utilitarian function. A sculpture by Jean Arp might serve as an excellent doorstep, for example; or a Picasso painting held over one’s head in a rain storm might make a handy umbrella. But the moment one used such an object primarily for that kind of a purpose, the value of the consumption experience would stop being purely aesthetic and would become largely instrumental. As noted by Budd (1983):

A person can value an object that is a work of art for many different kinds of reason.... his reasons...may or may not be because he finds the experience of the work of art intrinsically rewarding. Only if he finds the experience of the work of art intrinsically rewarding does he value the work as a work of art (p. 153).

Fashion too is often prized for its aesthetic merits (e.g., on the grounds of beauty). For example, in the case of clothing, one may sometimes ignore comfort (efficiency or excellence) and even propriety (politics or esteem) in one’s admiration for a style of dress that appears “stunning” or one’s appreciation for an outfit that
seems "smashing" (so that considerations of beauty may take precedence over those of convenience or success).

Clearly, many cosmetic products serve little useful purpose other than to beautify the faces and bodies on which they are patted and smeared. In an ad for Cover Girl Lipcolor, the lovely visage of Christy Brinkley beams at us - her perfectly even and brilliantly white teeth flashing brightly through lips painted with a shade called "Redwood" - while the copy describes this visual impression as "luscious lasting color like no other": "Cover Girl Lip Advance. Now more luscious, more beautiful than ever."

Morality. The active and other-oriented pursuit of morality aims at "virtue" sought for its own sake as its own reward (Alicke 1983; Lewis 1946; Morris 1958; Nozick 1981; Parker 1957; Pepper 1958; Von Wright 1963, 1983). Thus, deontological value entails the concept of duty or obligation to others (Bond 1983; Hilliard 1950; Perry 1954) with a heavy emphasis on the connection between ethics and intrinsic motivation (Frankena 1973; Parker 1957). Such ethical obligations often appear in the form of socially accepted rules of conduct or conventions that dictate proper behavior, as when one feels an obligation to wear a white dress at one’s wedding or a tuxedo to the prom.

Unless one counts the advertisements for social causes such as Children, Inc. - "Serving Needy Children Since 1964" (not exactly a fashion ad) - one needs to read between the lines a bit to extract ethical implications from the ad copy found in our sample issue of Vogue. For example, an advertisement for Flemington Furs shows a model completely naked beneath her "Denim-Dyed Black Cross Mink Trench Coat"; presumably, this flagrant flaunting of virtuous concerns for animal rights is morally justified by the young lady’s apparent need to keep warm.

Spirituality. As a more reactive counterpart to morality, spirituality entails an adoption, appreciation, admiration, or adoration of the Other in which a self-motivated “faith” may propel one toward a state of “ecstasy” involving a disappearance of the Self-Other dichotomy (Frondizi 1971; Mukerjee 1964; Parker 1957; Perry 1954; Pepper 1958). Generally, we think of spirituality as attached to religious experience involving the Deity, some broad view of the Cosmos, or some profound concept of the otherwise inaccessible Inner Self. However, one should note that an ecstatic disappearance of the self-other dichotomy may also occur when one becomes so involved in the “flow” of a consumption experience that one loses all sense of one’s own selfhood in the rapture of the consuming moment. Such a phenomenon may characterize some shopping behavior wherein one’s search for the ideal hand bag, the most becoming shoes, or the perfectly matching scarf becomes so obsessive or fanatic that people have coined the telling phrase "Shop 'Til You Drop" to describe it.

An ad for Safari by Ralph Lauren appears to evoke the spiritual side of experience when it shows a young woman in various suggestive poses - astride a massive horse, walking into a vast mountainous desert terrain, and smiling foolishly in some sort of giddy rapture: "Safari by Ralph Lauren. A world without boundaries. A personal adventure and a way of life."

Aesthetics Again

I hope to have shown that the nature of aesthetics as a type of value can best be understood by placing it in the context of the other types of value that we have distinguished. Specifically, I have proposed that aesthetic value in general or the experience of beauty in particular is self-oriented, reactive, and prized intrinsically for its own sake as an end in itself. Of equal importance, however, are the ways in which aesthetic value resembles and differs from other closely related types of value.

For example, Beauty is often confused, collapsed, or otherwise confounded with Quality (e.g., Garvin 1988) - perhaps because both involve a reactive self-orientation. However, in the present conceptualization, the latter entails a banausic utilitarian instrumentality, whereas the former stands on its own as a self-justifying end in itself. Thus, in the typology that appears in Table 1, Beauty is to Quality as Fun is to Convenience:
Aesthetics/Excellence/Play/Efficiency.

Similarly, aesthetics has close connections with play in that both involve self-oriented intrinsic value - the difference being that the latter is active whereas the former is reactive in nature. In other words, Beauty is the reactive counterpart of Play, just as Quality is the reactive counterpart of Conveniences and Faith is the reactive counterpart of Virtue:

Aesthetics/Play:Excellence/Efficiency:Spirituality/Morality.

Finally, this parallelism between Beauty and Faith deserves special mention in its own right. The two resemble one another in their intrinsically motivated reactivity, but differ in that the latter is other-oriented, whereas the former is oriented toward the self:

Aesthetics/Spirituality:Play/Morality.

It should be added, however, that sometimes aesthetic consumption experiences can become so powerful that they verge on ecstatic rapture (Hilliard 1950; Makkreel 1975; Straus 1981). For example, in listening to the finale of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, gazing at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, reading Milton's epic poetry, watching a dramatic sunset, or even looking at a splendidly attired fashion model or movie star, we sometimes feel almost as if we become part of the object of our admiration. We seem to lose our independent consciousness and to merge with the artistic object. At such moments, the self-object dichotomy seems to dissolve. We enter a state of ecstasy.

Conclusion

A final crucial point concerns the fact that any or all of the value types distinguished earlier may and often do occur simultaneously to varying degrees in any given consumption experience (Eisert 1983; Hilliard 1950; Lee 1957; Lewis 1946; Morris 1956; Parker 1957; Taylor 1961). This co-occurrence, commingling, or co-presence of value types provides a conceptual justification for the common multidimensional representations of customer value in marketing (e.g., as an ideal point in a perceptual map or preference space). More importantly, it reminds us that one may value (say) an architectural design because of both its beauty (as art) and its quality (as shelter); a church service because of both its politics (as a social event) and its spirituality (as worship); a piece of sugar-free chewing gum because of both its fun (blowing bubbles) and its virtue (avoiding cavities). In a sense, any consumption experience unfolds like a flower whose petals represent many different kinds of value, each contributing to the overall effect.

Hence, I might summarize everything that I have said on the subject of "Axiology, Aesthetics, and Apparel" with one final illustration that encapsulates the distinctions I have proposed within one example of clothing worn by one consumer - namely, me. In this connection, consider my Old School Tie - a navy blue rep cravat made of silk (dry clean only) with little silver-colored insignias of Hermes (the Greek God of Commerce and Patron of Thieves) that resemble the Arabic numeral "4" with two horizontal bars running across the lower stem (the official emblem of the business school where I teach). Clearly, this mythically enriched piece of attire provides every conceivable type of customer value:

Efficiency by giving me an excuse for fastening the top button of my shirt so as to keep my neck warm;

Excellence in the high-quality of the weaving and stitching;

Politics when worn to a cocktail party at the Dean's house to impress him with my loyalty to the School shortly prior to the annual salary adjustments;

Esteem when hung conspicuously in the closet of our guest room to remind visitors that I come from a "Good School";

Play in the fun-loving manner with which I speak about this object of consumption (especially my whimsically irreverent references to Hermes as the Patron of Thieves);

Aesthetics in the subtle harmonization of the tie's blue-and-silver tones with the charcoal grey of my wool suit and the white expanse of my Oxford cloth shirt;

Morality in the charitable contribution represented by paying the School approximately three times what the tie is actually worth;
Spirituality in the deep sense of community that fills me with School Spirit as I proudly don this Sacred Garment.

In short, without wishing to push my point too far, I might suggest that the Axiology of Apparel - so intimately intertwined with the Beauty of Clothing - pervades all aspects of consumer attire and the consumption of costumes. Figuratively, every time we get dressed and wrap ourselves with garments heavy in evaluative meanings, we put on - for better or worse - some version of our Old School Tie.

Table 1. A Typology Of Value In The Consumption Experience

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<td>Other-Oriented</td>
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References


Apparel Preferences: Underlying Dimensions and Measurement

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"Aesthetics" was coined by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten as the name for the "science of perception" (Collinson, 1992, p. 112). According to Collinson, Baumgarten's word was a derivation of the Greek word "aesthesis" which referred to both sensation and perception, "perception by means of the senses." As Collinson stated, aesthetic response involves a full range of responses from those described as cognitive in nature to those that are more affect-based. Berlyne (1971) stated that a study of "aesthetic behavior" (human response to objects) should include the behavior of the "appreciator" (i.e., perceiver) when exposed to objects (p. 7).

An element of the individual's appreciation process regarding objects involves the development and expression of preferences. Since 1865, researchers have attempted to examine the relationship between expressed preferences and the properties of objects (Berlyne, 1971). Apparel preferences, the favoring of one apparel object over another, are therefore considered to be a behavioral phenomena; tendencies that exist not just in how an individual thinks about an apparel object, but how the individual behaves toward the object. Studies of apparel preference should, therefore, include all aspects of the product's characteristics and those of the individual engaged in response to the product.

Preferences are also thought to be derived from a series of value judgments (Pepper, 1949; Zajonc & Markus, 1982). These value judgments are frequently based on the innate approach/avoidance tendencies of human beings toward other human beings and objects. Preferences may be modified by cultural ideals and the sensory perception of the arrangement or structure of apparel objects by the observer. Understanding preferences and how they are developed is of great interest to individuals involved in the design, production, and marketing of apparel. Knowing how individuals respond to and develop preferences for apparel objects would assist manufacturers in the marketing of these products. The purpose of this paper is to review preference research, both theoretical and as applied in apparel research, and to identify issues influencing the measurement of apparel preferences.

Structure of Preference

According to Mandler (1982), the act of making an evaluative judgment of an object requires the individual to process mental representations of similar objects and to search for some degree of congruity between the object and the schema. When the individual's personal expectations are congruent with the characteristics provided by the object, a positive judgment will be made. The following sections provide an overview of the formation and development of preference schemata.

Dimensions of Preference: Knowing and Likng

Preferences are believed to consist of two general dimensions: a cognitive component and an affective component. The relationship between these two dimensions has become the source of debate among attitude and preference researchers (Mandler, 1982; Mandler & Shebo, 1983; Zajonc, 1980; Zajonc & Markus, 1982). George Mandler (1982) suggests that the cognitive and affective dimensions could also be referred to as "knowing" and "liking."

In general, the cognitive dimension of preference for an object is considered to be based on information that is inherent in the object or that is considered to be "descriptive." For example, the "shirt is red." The affective dimension of preference is tied to the emotional response elicited by an object, both the experience of emotion and the expression of emotion. Two basic judgments associated with the affective dimension include measures of "beautiful/ugly" and "like/dislike." For example, the "shirt is beautiful."

Preference Acquisition

Many propositions have been set forward which attempt to identify how preferences are formed. Zajonc and Markus (1982) utilized examples of food preferences to hypothesize that
preferences can be established by affective means as well as by cognitive means. For example, they cite the innate aversion of the human palate to spicy foods, yet the development of a preference for these foods on the part of Mexican children, as an example of preference developed by affective measures. In this example, spices are gradually introduced into the foods of the children so that the palate comes to like and ultimately to prefer these tastes. Factors such as parental reinforcement, social conformity pressures (neighbors and relatives eat seasoned foods), and the need for identification with the group are used by the group to influence and reinforce this preference.

Zajonc and Markus (1982) point out that many preference studies have focused on feature-based preferences. As a result, the traditional notion holds that affect is postcognitive, implying that a feeling of preference is generated once the specific properties of an object are observed, noted, and evaluated, and organized into a product that represents overall preference.

Zajonc and Markus (1982) stressed that cognitive and affective factors may interact with each other and that in some cases the cognitive factors may dominate whereas in others, the affective factors may be predominant. However, they believe that under certain conditions, affective responses and cognitive responses may be independent of each other; that it is possible for the affective response (preference) to come first with the cognitive evaluation occurring afterwards, possibly as a justification for the affective response.

An opposing view has been presented by George Mandler (1982). Mandler stated that a cognitive process always precedes an evaluative judgment. He described evaluative judgments as evaluative cognitions and considered them the basis of the experience of liking, preference, or acceptability. Mandler cited several research reports which establish the idea that people prefer the known to the unknown, the usual to the unusual, and the familiar to the strange.

Mandler and Shebo (1983) proposed that liking and disliking are not opposites on a single psychological dimension, but are, instead, evaluations derived from different cognitive associations with the object. As individuals experience or encounter similar objects, they process and store information about the objects (e.g., preferences, likes, dislikes) and are able to invoke this knowledge when evaluations of an additional similar object are needed. Under Mandler and Shebo's model, preferences are based on cognitions which appear on a continuum from feature-oriented, descriptive cognitions to evaluative cognitions based on the overall relationship of the features. For example, the "sweater is yellow" (descriptive), the "sweater is warm" (relational), the "sweater is good" (evaluative).

In an earlier work, Stephen Pepper (1949) presented a discussion of the development of likes and dislikes. Pepper stated that all humans are born with instinctive drives which lead them to develop basic preferences. He included such examples as drives stimulated by hunger, thirst, maternal instincts, and risk aversion. In Pepper's stratification of likings, objects which satisfy instinctive likings are generally considered to be universally accepted; thus explaining why some works of art appeal across cultures. The next level in Pepper's stratification would include likings influenced by family traits or social sub-groups. The most discrete level is represented by individual or idiosyncratic likings. Preferences are therefore likely to be categorized as universal, familiar, or individual.

**Development of Preference Schemata**

If preferences are considered to be based on a series of value judgments, some means must be available for the observer to make these judgments whether they are cognitive or evaluative in nature. The structure for these judgments is derived from schema theory (Wyer, 1980). A preference schema is considered to be a mental representation that guides observer action, perception, and thought. Schemata containing organized knowledge relevant to an object (both object attributes and relationships among attributes) are developed as a function of the experience the observer has with the object category. Individuals must be able to first identify the category to which an object belongs, and then the schematic process allows them to describe their object preferences (Fiske & Taylor, 1984). In relation to apparel products, this means that consumers will base their preferences on prior experiences with similar apparel products, and the match between the
apparel product and their corresponding preference schema.

When a new object is encountered, it will be evaluated in comparison to existing preference schemata. Mandler (1982) proposed that when the structure of the object is congruent with the relevant preference schema, the observer will develop positive evaluations of familiarity, acceptability, and liking. Mandler does not insist that the "mapping" be a perfect match. He allows that deviations from the preference schema are acceptable and that a judgment of liking will occur when there is a "reasonable fit" between the object and the schema. When the object's structure is incongruent with the preference schema additional mental activity may be required to determine if the evaluation will be positive or negative.

*Preference as Related to the Perceptual Process*

Gibson (1971) stated that in the perception process there is a greater emphasis on the cognitive aspects of an object than there is consideration for the emotions or stimulation derived from the object.

According to Cupchik (1992), Gibson's reduction of the perceptual process to simple cognition disregards a central component of the aesthetic experience, sensory stimulation, the physiological response to an object.

Molnar (1992) adheres to the belief that the perceptual process consists of a strictly sensory part and a strictly cognitive part. According to Molnar:

...meaning does not yet exist at the level where aesthetic behavior begins. One can therefore speculate that "lower order" relations encompassing the retina, thalamus, and primary visual cortex might produce more information relevant to aesthetics than can the more traditional emphasis on "higher order" relations involving perception and meaning. Aesthetic pleasure seems, at least at the start, to be independent of the cognitive system. (p. 110)

Molnar defines aesthetic behavior as the sensory processing of a stimulus and aesthetic pleasure as an affective state or emotion, a response to a stimulus processed through sensory channels. Basically, the form must exist before meaning can be attached via processing in the central nervous system. As such, affective and cognitive processing of an object are considered to be complementary. During this interpretive processing, meaning is attached to an object and preference schemata are either formed or revised. The issue of which comes first in preference formation, a cognitive or an affective response, has not been resolved in the literature. A cause and effect relationship between cognitive and affective responses is difficult to establish due to the unconscious, and therefore unreportable, processing activities associated with the perceptual process (Tsai, 1985).

*Role of Stimuli in Preference Measurement*

Preference researchers have attempted to identify characteristics associated with a stimulus that can elicit an affective response. Berlyne's theory (1971, 1974) was based on the notion that preference for a stimulus is triggered by the object's arousal potential. Berlyne's theory was based on the notion that human beings express the greatest amount of liking for stimuli that hold only a medium amount of arousal potential. As arousal potential increases, preference will move from neutrality to maximal liking. If there are further increases in the arousal potential of an object, human beings will respond with a decline in preference and ultimate displeasure.

Berlyne (1971, 1974) stated that the potential of a stimulus to arouse response is determined by the collative, psychophysical, and ecological properties of the object. Collative properties (e.g., novelty, complexity) refer to the comparison of the stimulus with prior objects or to relationships among features of a stimulus. Psychophysical properties are the measurable physical qualities of the stimulus (intensity, hue, texture). Ecological properties refer to the meanings or values associated with the stimulus object.

According to Martindale, Moore, and Borkum (1990), preference for a stimulus can be determined from the additive effect of these three dimensions. They stated that,

If we accept the view that semantic categories are defined in terms of prototypical stimuli, there is evidence that preference is generally related to meaningfulness in either a positive monotonic manner or in a U-shaped fashion.....
cases, the most prototypical stimuli are maximally preferred. (p. 56)

Martin, Moore, and Borkum (1990) further stated that their research has not substantiated the belief that collative variables are the most important in determining preference. In a series of seven experiments, using random polygons and drawings of real objects, Martin, et al. found that when respondents were presented with stimuli with ecological variation (variation in associated meanings), meaning overshadowed the collative variables in determining preference. In four of the seven experiments, ecological variation accounted for 47% of the variation in preference, complexity accounted for 15%. "It is well known that learned meaning is more important than complexity in accounting for reactions to some stimuli" (Martin et al., 1990, p. 74).

Martin, et al. proposed that aesthetic processing of objects involves the association of stimuli with mental schemata (p. 77). In fact, they stated that Berlyne's discussion of collative properties allowed that "collative properties are not in stimuli but are products of the interaction that would now be called mental representations" (p. 77). This approach would explain why typicality, or congruence with schema, accounted for the larger variation in preference in the experiments conducted by Martin, et al. Thus an individual's preference schemata, representing all prior experiences an individual has had with a product category, can have a greater impact on determining preference than the individual object.

Change in Preference Schemata

Researchers have focused not only on identifying preferences, but have also been interested in examining how preferences change, or if preferences can be forcefully changed. Pepper (1949) discussed preference change as a function of "mechanized habit mutation." Out of habit, individuals tend to develop preferences that, over time, tend toward neutrality in the amount of pleasure or pain derived from an object. As a result, through repeated exposure, objects which are originally disliked come to be much liked, and vice versa.

Zajonc and Markus (1982) discussed the difficulties encountered when trying to initiate preference changes. Their research indicates that if a preference is affect-based, the method used to change the preference should aim directly at the affective component. An appeal to the emotions would need to be made with little emphasis on cognitive components. To change preferences developed on a cognitive basis, however, generally requires persuasive communications that stress the "features" of the object.

As individuals acquire more information about, or experience with, an object's category, the associated preference schema will change. The ability of others to force a change in preference will therefore require an understanding of the formation of the schemata. Depending upon the nature of the schemata (was it developed on a cognitive basis, or was it affect-based), a variety of appeals or learning activities may need to be provided to elicit a preference change.

Preference for Apparel Objects

Behavior, as related to the selection of apparel objects, is an area that provides an opportunity to study the formation and influence of preference schemata (Miller, McIntyre, & Mantrala, 1993). Zajonc and Markus (1982) highlighted the importance of including a study of preference schemata in any field in which preferences are considered to be a subjective measure of an object's utility or value. Preference schemata will have an impact on what forms of apparel individuals choose. The following sections highlight the impact of (a) symbolic meanings in a cultural context, (b) experience, and (c) fashion on preference measurement in apparel-based research.

Influence of Symbolic Meanings in a Cultural Context

The existence of different symbolic meanings associated with apparel objects has led to varying preferences among cultural subgroups. Miller, McIntyre, and Mantrala (1993) have stated that:

Though most products, product attributes, services, and actions have utilitarian value to the consumer, the symbolic meaning attached to them provides additional value. When items are similar in their utilitarian value, their symbolic value may become a major determinant of choice. In many examples, the symbolic meaning can overcome seemingly large utilitarian deficiencies, as in the cases of
tightly laced corsets, high-heeled shoes, and Elizabethan wigs. (p. 143)

Miller, McIntyre, and Mantrala further illustrated this concept with a comparison of a "black leather jacket" to a "brown leather jacket." The two jackets, while functionally equivalent, differ in symbolic associations. As the authors stated, "Because symbolic meanings, in general, evolve only in the context of social interaction, preferences between functionally equivalent styles exist only within a specific context and do not exist prior to the consideration of that context" (p. 146).

Erickson and Sirgy (1992) examined the relationship between self-congruity, ideal congruity, and the clothing preferences of employed women. Employed females were found to prefer to wear outfits congruent with their actual and ideal self-image. This suggests that respondents preferred outfits that match the schema for their position of employment; outfits that matched the context of their ideal self-image.

Worth, Smith, and Mackie (1992) examined the relationship between subjects' masculine or feminine self-schemas and preference for gender-typed products. Female subjects were asked to evaluate a gender-neutral apparel product (blue jeans); however, some subjects were provided a distinctly masculine product description, others a feminine description, or one combining elements of both. They found that,

Regardless of the traditional image of the described product itself, and regardless of the actual gender of the perceiver, subjects preferred a product described in terms that matched the gender attributes that they perceived as both characteristic of and important to themselves. (p. 28)

Influence of Experience

Sugan (1985) noted that expert consumers (i.e., consumers who had experience with the product) were more likely than nonexperts to complete an in-depth analysis of object attributes when they were presented with objects which differed from their stored schema. Nonexperts were more likely to continue to utilize their prototypic schema representations. This suggests that experience with the stimuli will result in differing processing strategies when attributes in the object description vary in congruence with the schema.

DeLong, Kim, and Larntz (1993), hypothesized that a lack of experience with proportionally-sized garments would leave consumers less sensitive to proportional differences in part-to-whole relationships within garments. The assumption being that the existing schema for jacket would have been based on greater experience with non-proportional jackets. After providing respondents with information on proportion associations, DeLong, Kim, and Larntz found that their respondents preferred the stimuli representing jackets that were length-proportioned or totally-proportioned to their stimulus control. The control stimulus was a similar jacket with Misses-sized details. As a result of the training they had received, their respondents were better able to focus on object attributes and to discern subtle differences in proportion.

Influence of Fashion

Minshall, Winakor, and Swinney (1982) noted in a study of fashion preference that current and classic styles were preferred by both sexes over newly-introduced and outdated styles. Current or classic styles are more likely to match, or represent "typicality" in fashion, than are newly-introduced or outdated styles. The acceptability of styles currently in fashion or considered to be classic is a form of acceptance of prototypicality. DeLong, Minshall, and Larntz (1986) found that when real products (sweaters) were measured against respondents' schema for sweater, the products that were closer to matching the schema were evaluated more favorably than the sweaters that were judged as atypical.

There is also evidence to suggest that the preference schema for "fashionable" garments will change over time. DeLong, Salusso-Deonier, and Larntz (1981) compared re-
sponses to visual stimuli at two different points in time. A set of stimuli were presented to respondents with a 12-week gap between the first presentation and the second. This gap corresponded to a change from Winter to Spring in fashion. The researchers noted differences in the perceptions of the garments during the two time periods. An assumption underlying the study was that by Spring the fashion image would be different enough to change the observers’ schema for suits. DeLong, Salusso-Deonier, and Larntz observed that when their Spring subjects responded to suits that varied in correspondence to the images, the response pattern did indicate a difference from the schema used by Winter observers.

In an additional study, DeLong and Salusso-Deonier (1983) noted that when repeatedly exposed to the same apparel stimuli there was an over-all shift in preference. This change was more pronounced for the evaluative measures utilized than for informational measures relative to the stimuli; thus supporting the belief that apparel preferences can be changed by repeated exposure.

Noting that “fashionable” reflects a societal influence, which in turn influences the development of the schema prototype and its revision over time, careful selection of stimuli for apparel preference research becomes an important consideration. When respondents are presented with stimuli that are congruent with the schema for “fashionable,” a positive evaluation is obtained. As stated earlier, typicality can be shown to account for the largest variation in apparel preference. These studies also illustrate that, as Pepper (1949) suggested, there is the potential for a shift in preference to occur over time through repeated exposure.

Methodological Issues in the Measurement of Apparel Preference

Research focused on apparel products has included elements of both the cognitive and affective dimensions of preference; however, most of the research has been focused on the cognitive aspect of preference. Studies have focused on the relationship between preference, experience, and collative properties such as preferred colors, styles, fit, and other characteristics inherent in the stimulus object (DeLong, Kim, & Larntz, 1993). Efforts have been made to examine the relationship between the schema prototype for a given product category (sweaters) and subsequent evaluations of real apparel products (DeLong, Minshall, & Larntz, 1986). In addition, other studies have addressed the relationship between preference and the symbolic meanings (ecological variation) attached to apparel products in varying subcultural contexts (Erickson & Sirgy, 1992; Worth, Smith, & Mackie, 1992).

The complexity and multidimensionality of preference raises certain methodological issues that need to be addressed by future researchers. In particular, issues influencing the selection of stimuli and measurement scales are discussed in the next section.

Selection of Stimuli

Selection of appropriate stimuli for use in preference studies is crucial to the question itself. As shown in the previous studies, the congruency between the stimuli presented and the schema prototype held by individuals can have an impact on the processing strategies utilized by respondents during preference measurement.

Use of artificial versus real apparel products. Holbrook (1983) discussed two contrasting methodological approaches to the selection of stimuli for preference measurement: (a) the manipulation of artificial stimuli (such as pictures or verbal descriptions); and (b) the use of real products (or prototypes) to obtain affective responses. Holbrook noted that when presented with real apparel products as stimuli, respondents appear to base their evaluation less on the visual factors and more on the tactile aspects of the object. Presentation of real products as stimuli allowed respondents to consider a variety of multisensory cues all relevant to the preference decision. The use of actual products may allow the respondents to consider aspects of the apparel which may be more obscure in artificial stimuli.

DeLong and Larntz (1980) found that a collective response to clothing as a whole form does exist. They noted that, “In this age of mass produced, ready-to-wear clothing, there is an obvious value in studying the collective response to clothing in a state close to what an observer would actually experience” (p. 293).

Use of typical versus atypical stimuli. When selecting apparel products for preference studies it is important to distinguish between typical and atypical stimuli. According to the
perspective offered by Berlyne (1974), typical objects may be evaluated on the basis of extrinsic motivations (e.g., practicality), while atypical stimuli may be evaluated on the basis of intrinsic motivations (e.g., beauty). It may be possible that preference schemata for everyday dress are based on exposure to typical or prototypic examples, the variations that the individuals are likely to encounter in their daily lives. Atypical dress would include variations of items of dress that are not encountered in daily life.

In apparel studies focusing on everyday dress, it is therefore important to select stimuli relevant to the respondents' schema for everyday dress. This would allow the researcher to concentrate on the relationship between the collative properties of the objects and preference. If studying dress for purely affective response, stimuli which deviate from the schema for everyday dress (e.g., special occasion dress), and which are more atypical, may prove more beneficial in eliciting affective responses. For example, if examining preferences for apparel for the mass market consumer, the researcher would need to select apparel consistent with that available in the mass market. If a more affective response was desired, the researcher could select examples of "everyday dress" as presented by the haute couture.

Cupchik (1992) reiterates the notion that the processing of objects for aesthetic purposes differs from the processing strategies utilized with stimuli as everyday objects. According to Cupchik, aesthetic theorists characterize 'diversity' in objects by examining (a) the physical/sensory aspects of an object, and (b) the semantic aspects. Each of these are considered to be "multilayered, with each layer possessing its own 'qualitatively' distinct principles of organization" (p. 91). Cupchik stated that the physical/sensory level of an object can be examined in psychophysical terms (e.g., hue or tone) or in terms of "grouping" principles (e.g., symmetry or rules of organization). The semantic level includes the measurement of implicit or inferred meanings associated with the object.

The diversity in stimulus objects coupled with their congruency with schema prototypes can influence the researcher's ability to measure preference. Attention should be given to whether or not the selected stimuli elicit cognitive or affective responses. Preference will be more completely measured when the stimulus objects and scales used by researchers elicit both the cognitive and affective dimensions of preference.

Selection of Measurement Scales

Russell and Gray (1991) have questioned the equivalency of evaluative scales used in studies of aesthetics. It has been common practice to assume that preferability, likability and pleasingness scales "are simply interpretable and essentially equivalent" (p. 76). In studies conducted by Russell and Gray, findings have indicated that the preferability scale contains more heterogeneity than previously thought. Russell and Gray suggest that "the question of what people 'prefer,' therefore, may not be simply answerable, and closer attention needs to be paid to the nature of this and other scales" (p. 76).

Most studies have used only one type of response scale (Russell & Gray, 1991) from a larger set of possibilities including "preferability," "likability," "pleasingness," "pleasantness," and "interestingness." (This has also been the approach used in apparel-based preference studies.) These "evaluative" scales (Berlyne, 1974), are used to measure the perceivers' degree of positive or negative response, to both the affective (e.g., like) and aesthetic (e.g., pleasant) qualities of stimuli. According to Russell and Gray, however, why a researcher has selected a certain scale is rarely explained in research studies. Russell and Gray (1991) stated that the assumption that these various scales are measuring the same construct can lead researchers to erroneous conclusions:

To treat terms as synonymous in this way is to imply that the various scales all measure the same underlying psychological variable. To rank (or to rate) stimuli on, say, preferability, is assumed to be equivalent to ranking them on pleasingness, likability or any of several other properties. The main justification for this assumption comes from correlational and factor analytic studies. (pp. 76-77)

Russell and Gray concluded that the use of single item scales for preferability (e.g., most preferred to least preferred) or likability (e.g., like to dislike) may result in an incomplete or inaccurate measurement of aesthetic and affective response. For example, in some cases, the most "preferred" object may not be rated the
most "pleasing." Likewise, the most "preferred" may not be the most "interesting."

The use of what appears to be a relatively homogeneous, unidimensional preferability scale may be masking the underlying basis for preference among sub-groups of respondents. In a study conducted by Russell and Gray (1991), they found that "some subjects base their preferability judgments on the degree to the which the stimuli 'please' them, whereas others base their judgments on the degree to which they find the stimuli 'interesting'" (p. 77). On this basis, they proposed that pleasingness and interestingness may be regarded as causally prior to, or as determinants of preferability. Due to its high correlation with preferability, likability may share similar characteristics.

In three studies on the relationship between fashion preference and perceived risk, Lubner-Rupert and Winakor (1985), and Minshall, Winakor, and Swinney (1982) found that evaluative word pairs were closely related to preference rankings of the stimuli. Minshall, Winakor, and Swinney found that preference rankings for stimuli appeared to be related to the position of each stimulus relative to the least-liked style in the group. Preferability in this instance may actually have been determined by the degree to which the stimuli "pleased" them. Winakor and Goings (1973) were unable to establish a correspondence between style preferability and purchase behavior. The relationships between the dimensions of preferability, likelihood of owning, and actual buyer behavior have not been clearly established in apparel research.

The varying results obtained by apparel preference researchers indicate that the limited nature of the evaluative measures utilized may not be capturing all dimensions of apparel preference. According to Russell and Gray (1991), "studies that seek to link preferability to such stimulus properties as style, content, familiarity and complexity" (p. 83) should incorporate a variety of evaluative measures to examine in greater depth the content of preference judgments.

Summary and Recommendations for Future Research

Most of the research on preferences has focused on the cognitive dimension, the intellectual awareness and comprehension of the visual object by an observer. More recently, the affective or evaluative dimension, which is closely related to the emotional response of an observer to an object, has become important in preference research. Apparel, as a product category, allows observers to respond both cognitively and affectively. Therefore, a more complete study of apparel preferences should include both the affective and cognitive components of preference, as well as their interaction. Apparel preference researchers may find it useful to examine whether or not there are particular categories of apparel which evoke strong affective response while other items yield more cognitive responses. For example, how do viewers' responses to lingerie items (which are worn close to the body) differ from responses to raincoats (which are worn at a relative distance from the body). Greater attention should be given to the relationship between the research question to be addressed, the physical nature of the stimulus objects and their relationship to the category schema, and the varying influences affecting the preference schemata utilized by respondents.

Researchers generally accept the idea that preferences for apparel objects may change while the properties of the objects remain constant; that preferences will change with aspects of the perceiver's characteristics. When these preference changes are likely to occur, how they occur, and whether or not they can be induced by external forces is of great interest to individuals involved in timing the availability of products to coincide with the preferences of consumers. Questions here might include: What degree of product saturation, or length of exposure, leads to preference neutrality?; Should an apparel advertising campaign focus on the cognitive or affective dimensions of preference?

Preferences are not static and can be quite complex. Apparel preference research should combine the feature-oriented cognitive dimension and the affective, or evaluative, dimension, and should be constantly re-evaluated to determine whether the methodology used actually measures preference for apparel objects. For example, attention should be given to the use of stimuli that are at the appropriate level of detail (ranging from line drawings, to photographs, to real products) to evoke the desired responses. The mere presence of a stimulus
can force a differing processing strategy than what would occur in the absence of stimuli, when individuals are more dependent on their mental representations of a given category of apparel.

In addition, studies in the area of aesthetics should incorporate a variety of scales to measure evaluative response. While a single scale may be useful in establishing rank order, it may not provide sufficient information for the subgrouping of respondents to examine more subtle variations in preference rankings. If respondents are asked to rank stimuli that they do not like their responses may reflect their preferences for particular items, but may not indicate where these preferences fit in their individual stratification of likings. Greater use of forced-choice, paired comparisons may yield more information on preference rankings than can be obtained from a single item scale.

As stated by Russell and Gray (1991), "future research may well benefit from becoming more 'multivariate' in character, allowing especially for the essentially multifactorial nature of dependent variables such as preference" (p. 83). The complexity of apparel preferences makes them difficult to measure and interpret, but also make them an interesting and challenging area of study.

Endnotes

1 Sensory perception includes a variety of responses such as those derived through visual, tactile, olfactory, and auditory senses.

References


ments of paintings. Visual Arts Research, 17(1), 76-84.
Cultural Foundations of Aesthetic Appreciation: Use of Trope in Structuring Quiltmaking Sentiment

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Today we recognize that social life in the United States is culturally diverse. While we share common values as Americans, we are also individuals whose social lives reflect a vital mix of subcultural influences, including age, gender, ethnicity, and lifestyle. The post modern perspective, according to Best and Kellner (1991), encourages exploration of the dynamic interplay of these social forces on people's lives by favoring a world characterized by "multiplicity, plurality, fragmentation, and indeterminacy"; it acknowledges a relativist world in which individual knowledge is "historically and linguistically mediated" (p. 4). Correspondingly, aesthetic appreciation, as positioned within this perspective, combines both individual and collective viewpoints, integrating the unique experience of an individual and the particular sociocultural circumstances that frame the experience.

Fiore, Moreno, and Kimle (in press) have defined aesthetics as the study of human response to products, specifically internal processes, the product's multi-sensory characteristics, and the psychological and socio-cultural factors of the individual that affect response to the non-instrumental quality of the product.

The focus of this analysis is on the appreciation process, what is qualified as "the internal processes that take place during the aesthetic response" to a quilt (Fiore, Moreno, and Kimle, in press). However, the nature of this appreciation is not to be considered in isolation as simply an emotion, feeling, or thought but must be understood by examining of the circumstances that frame the viewer's knowledge of and reaction to the object. If we are to formulate a critical, comprehensive aesthetic theory about the textile/apparel object, we must recognize how psychological, social, and cultural factors interrelate to constitute the aesthetic experience whether during the creative process or in the object's appreciation.

This paper yields insight into the nature of aesthetic appreciation by suggesting how a cultural ideology may shape sentiments toward the aesthetic form. Sentiment, "an attitude, thought, or judgment permeated or prompted by feeling; a complex of emotion and idea" (Webster's Third New International Dictionary, 1981, p. 2069), arises when personal reactions are informed by culturally based meanings and reflects individual emotions mediated by cultural obligations. By embodying the complexity and creativity of ideological thought, the play of tropes enriches an individual's emotional experience of an aesthetic object by offering potential meanings. Tropes include figurative devices, such as metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony, and refer to "the use of a word or expression in a different sense from that which properly belongs to it for giving life or emphasis to an idea" (Webster's Third New International Dictionary, 1981, p. 2542). The correspondence and interaction of several tropes (i.e., play of tropes) within a specific event or text potentially integrates each person's experience around the unifying cultural theme(s).

In developing this perspective on aesthetic theory, the researcher must acknowledge the individual's cultural viewpoint. A semiotic orientation to the nature of culture, the role of language, and their importance in structuring individual knowledge can expand understanding of aesthetic appreciation. In this case, I draw upon the concept of cultural bricolage to characterize the creative role of tradition in shaping contemporary quilting and the concept of play of tropes to describe the influence of ideology in structuring quilters' sentiments.

Interpretive Perspective

Post modern assumptions shape the interpretive perspective: A person's knowledge of the world and his/her subsequent perception of and reaction to the aesthetic object are seen as historically and linguistically mediated. The mediation that links the person to the social circum-
stance, can be defined conceptually through understanding ideology as cultural bricolage. Aesthetic appreciation responds to a dialectic that juxtaposes individual and cultural attempts to resolve the paradoxes extant in social life. Attention to the play of tropes embedded in the subcultural traditions can reveal the complex juxtapositions of meaning that bind a person to the culture and lend significance to individual action.

**Cultural Bricolage**

Susan Kaiser (1990a, 1990b) urged apparel scholars to acknowledge the post modern conditions influencing apparel use in late twentieth century American society. She observed that people react to mass culture in favor of more individualistic styles and use clothing selectively in managing appearances and in going processes of creating the self. Kaiser (1990b) characterized this individualistic expression as bricolage:

>a French word referring to the idea of "do-it-yourself"—of finding solutions to problems by examining, using, and combining cultural signs in ways in which they were not initially intended. (p. 468)

A re-examination of Levi-Strauss' discussion of bricolage suggests that we must look more closely at the mythological context of cultural discourse to understand the impact of its meaning. In making Levi-Strauss' discussion pertinent to American subcultures, I expand his conception of bricolage to include the ideological context of a culture: Ideology is comparable to mythological thought. Both serve as logical models, or explanatory systems, which structure understanding of reality; ideology "tries to solve social contradictions," while mythology "tries to solve contradictions with nature" (Larrain in Noth, 1990, p. 378). Both underlie quilt tradition to the extent that the quiltmaker positions a genetically determined body within a culturally defined space.

Levi-Strauss (1966) referred to mythological thought as a form of "intellectual bricolage." Like science, it represents knowledge that has been systematically observed and ordered. But unlike science, mythological (and by extension, ideological) explanations of reality may appear random, irrational, and without basis in fact. These explanations are preconstrained yet enriched by the limited, heterogeneous bricolage that is a culture's history: While new meanings about an event or object are shaped by its place within this history and by the significance of its features within the semiotic system, they need not replicate historic patterns or relationships. The signs themselves are permutable: Although signs draw from a rich and extensive repertoire of knowledge that is continually generated within social life, the new meanings are the consequence of random explanations, appropriate for their potential in accounting for current contradictions, ambiguities, and ambivalence, rather than representing a logical evolution of form or ideas over time.

Levi-Strauss' notion of bricolage can be applied to post modern social life. Understanding of the contemporary American quilt subculture can be expanded by acknowledging that women's involvement in quiltmaking involves reference to traditional conceptions of female identity and social roles. Lasansky (1988) positioned contemporary quiltmaking as recent manifestation of the colonial revival movement; she noted that the colonial past was valued "to educate us, to console us, to distract us, and to lend credibility ..." (p. 97). Gunn (1993) commented on the persistence of quilt myths throughout the twentieth century even as quilt historians became more rigorous in their documentation. Williams (1992), in her study of an Indiana guild, demonstrated that quilters can clearly relate the concept of tradition to contemporary quiltmaking; the utility of the quilt links "lives and sentiments" and recalls "traditional images of womanhood and women's work" (p. 137). At the same time Langellier (1991), in her study of a Maine quilt guild, found that quiltmaking empowers a feminine identity, one that "re-fashions, but does not reject, dominant meanings for femininity" in light of "the changing roles of women in society and the changing culture of quiltmaking" (p. 49). Embedded in the literature of contemporary quiltmaking (i.e., popular quilt books and magazines) and in the activities of a quilt guild (i.e., show-and-tell and programming) lie both the ideological foundations of quilt tradition and the infusion of new ideas, techniques, meanings, and opportunities that reflect changing society (see also, Langellier, 1993; Williams, 1992).

**Play of Tropes**

The orientation to culture as a complex meaning system used by people to make sense
of themselves and the surrounding world (Geertz, 1973; Spradley, 1979) has challenged researchers to examine the semiotic constituents of society, especially language. However as suggested by Levi-Strauss’ view of culture, the access gained to a person’s conceptual world through language will not yield straightforward relationships or simple explanations of meaning. James Fernandez (1991) noted that we are living at a time when the referential value of language, its ability to provide us with an accurate, transparent view through to and mapping of the reality of things—an “immaculate perception,” as it is called—is profoundly questioned, and we have become acutely aware of the figurative devices that lie at the very heart of discourse, defining situations and grounding our sense of what is to be taken as real and objective and, therefore, entitled (by means of the figurative entitlements we employ) to have real consequences. (p. 1)

The words of a language can be described as signs, arbitrary relations between sound images (i.e., signifier) and concepts (i.e., signified) (Saussure, 1916/1983). But meaning, as suggested in the discussion of cultural bricolage, is a far more complex formulation.

Attention to tropes, or figurative devices such as metaphor, helps sort out the complex associations and permutations of signs evidenced in the discourse, behaviors, and objects of social life. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) (see also, Johnson, 1987; Lakoff, 1987) demonstrated the pervasive nature of metaphorical processes as metaphors frame a person’s understanding of reality. Anthropologists and art historians (Adams, 1975; Neich, 1982; Nunley, 1981; Schwarz, 1979; Turner, 1980) have applied metaphor to define the significance of textiles and dress in culture. They noted that parallels between object form and social order underlie the object’s significance. Levi-Strauss (1966) suggested that the correspondence between social life and ideology evidenced by the object involves the individual in its appreciation:

aesthetic emotion is the result of this union between the structural order and the order of events, which is brought about within a thing created by man and so also in effect by the observer who discovers the possibility of such a union through the work of art. (p. 25)

An observer’s understanding of reality, as constituted by culture, not only informs the making and use of the object, but shapes its appreciation.

Noth (1990) found that the definition of metaphor in Webster’s Third New International Dictionary, combined key criteria evidenced in its conventional applications. Metaphor is:

a figure of speech in which a word or a phrase denoting one kind of object or action is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them. (p. 128)

For example, the metaphoric association of the quilt as a history draws upon the similarity between the quilt pieced with diverse, colorful fabrics and a history composed of diverse stories of women’s lives. Debates among scholars about the semiotic implication of metaphor have been extensive (see Fernandez, 1974; Johnson, 1981; Ricoeur, 1981). Recognizing analogies between society and the individual, we expand our understanding of metaphor. Building upon the work of Bicchieri (1988), Terence Turner (1991) argued that metaphors “take on more, and deeper, ‘life,’ that is, deeper and more central meanings for the system in which they arise” (p. 129). The implications of this view are that metaphor is not a unique cognitive faculty or a privileged construct; rather, that metaphor, as well as other tropic and nontropic forms, “can shade or change into one another in response to changes [i.e., diachronic or synchronic] in context” (p. 129). Responsive to the changing social dynamics of post modern society, metaphor can reflect the immediate significance of an event and provide a path that involves participants in the social action.

Metaphor functions in coincidence with other tropic forms, including metonymy and synecdoche. Together they constitute an play of tropes that, through the juxtaposition and interrelationship of imagery, defines personal experience and involves individuals in social life. Metonymy indicates that the significance of an object is defined through a substitution based on its contiguity with other phenomena (i.e., objects, activities) with which it has a customary association (Eco, 1979, p. 280-1); this may include “substituting for the name of a
thing, the name of an attribute of it or of something closely related to it" (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989, vol. XVII, p. 696). For example, attributes of the body (i.e., hand, heart) are used to represent specific qualities of personhood (i.e., craftsmanship, affection). Body and personhood are distinctive concepts, yet they exist in customary proximity to each other. Closely related to metonymy, synecdoche indicates that the significance of an object is defined through substitution with other phenomena that share conceptual content (Eco, 1979, p. 280-1); this may include substituting "a more comprehensive term ... for a less comprehensive term or vice versa; as whole for part or part for whole, genus for species or species for genus ..." (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989, vol. IX, p. 478). For example, hearth is substituted for home, implying through more specific imagery (i.e., glowing hearth) the warmth of family, those who reside in the home and gather around the hearth. Turner (1991) characterized how synecdoche may contribute to the play of trope; synecdoche represents "a specific relationship between metaphor and metonymy, as when a part of a whole (a metonymic relation) also replicates the form of the whole (a metaphoric relation)" (p. 148). The significance of the above example is contingent on the broader metaphoric imagery, which relates the making of the warm quilt, also found within the home, to women's contribution to the comfort and unity of family life.

Metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche are interconnected in substantiating ideological thought. Turner (1991) noted that

both tropes and cultural structures are constructed through a "play of tropes," a dialectical process in which meaningful wholes are simultaneously integrated as parts of larger wholes and differentiated into new patterns of relationships among their own parts. Not only is meaning constructed in such a process through the interplay of distinct tropes, but the same symbolic elements ... figure in different tropic capacities at different levels of the structure of the same ritual, myth, or other type of meaning construct. (p. 150)

Identifying the interplay of metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche in quillmaking literature offers the opportunity of deconstructing quill tradition and isolating persistent mythic themes.

The Play of Tropes In Quilt Sentiment

The analysis draws from the texts of nineteen quilt books, published between 1915 and 1980.¹ The literature was initially reviewed in 1985-6 with the purpose of identifying the role of tradition in characterizing twentieth century quilt revivals (Cerny, 1986). I examined how twentieth century literature drew upon the art and experiences of historic quilters to define contemporary values and practices. As orientations toward the purpose of quillmaking in women's lives changed, a romanticism about the evocative power of quilts and quillmaking appeared to be defined, integrated, and perpetuated (see also, Gunn, 1993).

A more recent interpretation of these passages, presented in this paper, suggests that tropes may be influential in relating the values embedded in quilt tradition to the social experiences of contemporary quilters. The play of tropes draws upon an immediate experience of the quilt (i.e., the perception of a quilt's warmth and the bodily sensations accompanying quillmaking) to mark the emotional intensity of social connectedness and personal empowerment. Initially I located occurrences of tropes in the texts, recognizing that a metaphor, metonym, or synecdoche would not be limited to a single word but would encompass a phrase or longer passage of text. It was necessary to cite enough of the passage to understand how the imagery was used to structure meaning. Secondly, I sorted the tropic passages according to dominant themes (i.e., warmth/social connectedness and body/personal empowerment) and then organized them according to sensory, personal, and sociocultural domains of expression. At this stage of the textual analysis I was concerned with identifying persistent cultural themes that unified the body of literature and then with understanding how tropic imagery might be used in relating the themes to the reader. These domains were defined from careful and repeated readings of the passages.

Critical perspective of the correspondence of this imagery with contemporary quillmaking comes from the study of a Minnesota quilt guild during the mid 1980s (Cerny 1992a & 1992b; Cerny, Eicher, & DeLong, 1993), subsequent involvement in the Rhode Island quilt documen-
tation project in the 1990s (Welters, Cerny, Ordonez, & Kaye, 1994), and research on contemporary quilt guilds (Langellier, 1991 & 1993; Williams, 1992) and historic needlework (Parker, 1986). The ideological stance that quilts and quiltmaking empower women's identity within the family and community is replicated by meanings quilters make and quilt owners attach to their quilts.

**Experiential Domains of Quiltmaking**

The textual analysis illustrates how the play of trope communicates the ideological/mythological thought of quilt tradition. Moving from sensory to personal and community contexts, sentiments involve the women in a structuring of reality that connects individual priorities with values of the larger social world and provide her with a comprehension of her connectedness in social life.

The experience of quilt tradition can be understood on an immediate sensory level. Kinesthetic sensations occur as the quilter cuts the fabric, assembles the quilt top, and quilts the fabric layers. The physiological sensation of warmth may come from use of the quilt as a bedcover or garment.

Second, quilt tradition can be understood on a personal level, in part stimulated by the sensory experience of making or using a quilt. The completion of a quilt can lead to a sense of pride in one's accomplishment. Simultaneously, the comfort of a quilt's warmth, transformed, can be experienced as psychological comfort: of well-being with one's self and of security in one's circumstances (e.g., family). The sensory experience (i.e., of making or using) suggests a contiguity of domains (i.e., of quilt and person) that facilitates the transfer of meaning.

Finally, quilt tradition can be experienced on a social level as a person integrated within a community, albeit as quilter or woman. The quiltmaker's appreciation of her quilt may be structured by her experiences within a quilt guild and/or through her knowledge of quiltmaking history. The individual woman sees herself as quilter, one of many who in a nation of great diversity, shares common experiences and values. Quiltmaking and hence quilt appreciation can lead to the experience of communitas, a sense of oneness among members of an otherwise diverse community. Victor Turner (1969) referred to communitas as that moment

in and out of secular social structure, which reveals, however fleetingly, some recognition (in symbol if not always in language) of a generalized social bond that has ceased to be and has simultaneously yet to be fragmented into a multiplicity of structural ties. (p. 96)

Together these experiences, whether they be immediate or drawn from memory, have the effect of reflecting the wholeness of one's being. This coming together of the person as part of a community and a tradition, first as a quilter and then as a woman and citizen of the United States, is parallel to the piecing together of fabric pieces that constitute the completed quilt. In both cases, it is the woman who is worthy recognition.

As we see, two distinctive yet interconnected, patterns of tropic play are evidenced in the quilt literature. The first pattern is grounded in the experience of the warm quilt. Warmth becomes a metaphor that elaborates on personal relationships and social connectedness. In the discourse of quilt tradition evidenced in the literature, successive permutations of warmth juxtapose differing levels of experience to facilitate an integration of the reader's experiences within the broader context of a women's history in America. The second pattern is grounded in the activity of quiltmaking. In this case, metonymic markers that reflect the physical and psychological body, juxtapose the action of assembling the quilt with the symbolic implications of quiltmaking. As the quilt becomes coincidental with the quilter, qualities of femininity are highlighted. Although metaphor stands out in the first pattern and metonym in the second, each evidences the influence of synecdoche in unifying and strengthening the impact of communicating the significance of quilts and quiltmaking to the contemporary quilter.

**The Comfort of a Warm Quilt.** Warmth describes a person's perception of the quilt in two ways: On the one hand, warmth is concrete and familiar—a bedcover that protects against the cold. On the other hand, warmth is a more abstract concept—the affection between individuals that defines their relatedness. In social life, physical and emotional warmth may be
experienced simultaneously. Ickis (1949) evoked such experience in the following memory: "the cold frosty mornings on the farm at Grandmother's when the gay homemade quilt on her four-poster felt cozy and warm" (p. 253). The experience of the quilt and its warmth enhances understanding about more abstract qualities of psychological and social life. In the phrase "cozy and warm," there is a physical comfort concomitant with a psychological comfort, the well being of a self secure in family and home (i.e., "cozy"). Finley (1929) broadened the symbolic implications of the quilt beyond the family context by commenting that quilts are the "most popular form of feminine hospitality" (p. 33).

Both Ickis' and Finley's statements must be read in light of other commentary. Not only do quilts represent the home as a pleasant and comfortable retreat to family and visitors, but both quiltmaking and home fall within the domestic responsibilities of women. Webster (1928) noted that "the comfort of the family depended upon the thrift, energy, and thoughtfulness of the woman" (p. 69). Chief among these domestic responsibilities is providing a social context that unifies the efforts and objectives of family members and preserves solidarity. Quiltmaking not only provides good practice in developing skills necessary in managing a household, but provides an opportunity for the woman to involve the cooperation of family members. Ickis (1949) noted:

The quilting craft, which is so deeply rooted in the home, offers a binder to hold its conflicting interests together. Father and the boys will find pleasure in making the quilting frame and its supporting stands, and in keeping them in topnotch condition. The girls can easily join in making the quilt blocks and will enjoy stories about the pieces and patterns (p. 67).

Women who meet their responsibilities gain the affection of family members. Both accomplishments reinforce self concept. Webster (1928) noted that "the selection of design, the care in piecing, the patience in quilting; all make for feminine contentment and domestic happiness" (p. xvi). The association of woman with the quilt and then with home highlights the implications of society's expectation that women are primarily responsible for enhancing the connectedness of individuals within a family.

Quiltmaking might occupy many hours of piecing and stitching but it broke the monotonous routine of daily life and allowed the woman to reflect on the joys of her life. Peto (1939) emphasized the centrality of women's duty to the family, but acknowledged some reward for the individual creativity:

quilts were born of urgent necessity, to fulfill a basic need ... added to the utilitarian purpose of the quilt was the desperate need women felt to keep their hands busy during so called leisure hours, for feminine minds and hearts were occupied with stem and sorrowful things ... Still, their patchwork contrived to be gay. (p. xiv)

More recently, Bacon (1975) found a balance between familial duty and personal needs:

A strange blending of the twin goals of practicality and artistry, it served two purposes: the very physical necessity of keeping warm in rudely constructed, mud-daubed houses, and equally important, the creating of a quilt met a psychological need--serving as an outlet for the pioneer woman's artistic and aesthetic longings. (p. 26)

In providing for the comfort of the family, the quiltmaker also gains a comfort from personal hardships through her expression. In part, quiltmaking was seen as therapy through which a woman could work out psychological conflicts. Radka Donnell, in forward to Chase and Dobier (1978), pointed out that "quilts, as fabric arts, speak of warmth, closeness, contact, and union among persons ..." (p. 7) and in a subsequent paragraph defined the tropic nature of the quilt, "by its closeness to a person's body the quilt can become an icon of personal feeling and hope" (p. 7). The quilt metaphorically stands for the woman and embodies her life experiences. The quilt has evolved as a vehicle by which the quiltmaker can give voice to her unique experiences.

From the experience of warmth, an individual is comfortable and comforted; s/he gains a sense of well-being from the security one gains from a family. This same security is transferred to the country as a whole through the imagery
of warmth. Quilts are about American history; McKim (1962) described this history in terms of quilt patterns "kindled" by the creativity of women:

And the story of their wanderings, their few possessions, their accumulations, the friendships formed, their abiding faith and the home established, is the story of the patchwork quilts. Study the names of patterns and again you will know they were so christened by young ladies of imagination, sometimes devout, sometimes droll but always kindled by that divine spark of originality. Listen to this for a less-than-500-word history, all quilt names stitched in bed coverlets, which are more comforting, if not more enduring, than words graven in stone. (p. 3)

As the authors manipulated the reader's sentimental attachment toward the quiltmaker, they likewise revealed images of empowered women. Finley (1929), in her characterization of a key moment in quiltmaker/women's history, noted the importance of the past and focused on a women's history:

Eighteen-eighty is an important date in the progress of American womankind; for it was only after 1880 that woman's economic and political status really began to change. Freed in the end from psychological as well as material restraints, women closed the gate at the end of many a road. Her journey of more than two and a half centuries along the trail of her patchwork was finished. The story of her heart, as written in this particular work of her hands, was done. (p. 198)

Quilt histories principally talked about women in generalities. The lives of individual quiltmakers were largely unrecorded. What remained of their lives were their quilts. Quilt historians, such as Ickis (1949), pointed out how these extant quilts can stimulate memories of ancestors and unify family over time. "Quilts were the family records of good days and bad--pictures of the past for younger generations to cherish...They made real stories to tell around the glowing hearth on winter evenings" (p. 266-267). For Webster (1928), quiltmakers could be just as crucial to the connectedness of a family as they could be to a nation: "be a source of much satisfaction to all patriotic Americans who believe that the true source of our nation's strength lies in keeping the family hearth flame bright" (p. xvi). Quiltmakers, as guardians of home and social life, have worked in partnership with men to establish "civilization" in rural America.

Hand, Heart, Mind, Voice. Central to understanding the experience of quiltmaking is the metonymic use of parts of the body to stand for the whole body and, by virtue of its contiguity to self, to stand for the person. Through the use of metonymic references to the body, the authors linked the history of quilts to individual quilters. At the foundation of this dialectic are the act of quiltmaking and the activity of the quilter's hands. Hall (Hall & Kretsinger, 1936), in speaking to contemporary quilters, pointed out the psychological and social implications of handwork:

Quiltmaking is the ideal prescription for high-tension nerves. It is soothing and there is no exercise can equal that of really creating something with the hands. And later the product of these hands may be handed down as a treasured heirloom. (p. 46)

Newman (1974) placed this labor in the context of quilt history:

Working with fabric is a flexible, fluent, exciting experience, leading to endless invention made possible by the plethora of fabrics, threads, and inventive stitches that have multiplied over time. It is no wonder that new expressions are still emerging from the stitches of so many hands. (preface)

But contiguous to the labor of quiltmaking is the expression of a quilter's emotion and ideas. Robertson (1948) summarized this creative process. "They cut bits of cotton cloth into shapes of familiar objects or into shapes which somehow best expressed their thoughts and feelings for the moment" (p. 39). The quilt is valued for "its universal use and intimate connection with our lives" (Webster, 1928, p. xv). Ickis (1949) provided a intimate picture of one woman's experience:

My whole life is in that quilt. ... All my joys and all my sorrows are stitched into those little pieces. ... And John too. He was
stitched into that quilt and all the thirty years we were married. Sometimes I loved him and sometimes I sat there hating him as I pieced the patches together. So they are all in that quilt, my hopes and fears, my joys and sorrows, my loves and hates. I tremble sometimes when I remember what that quilt know about me. (p. 270)

As we saw in the discussion on the metaphor permutations of warm, the quilt represents the woman. However in this case, the reader observes the woman actively involved not only in making the quilt but in formulating the expression.

References to hands and hearts, albeit implied through descriptions of quiltmaking, are elaborated in characterizing the implications of extant quilts. Finley (1929) was explicit in her use of the metonym. "Her journey of more than two and a half centuries along the trail of her patchwork was finished. The story of her heart, as written in this particular work of her hands, was done" (p. 195). Later authors, more subtle in expressing this contiguity more specifically between the quiltmaker (rather than more generally as woman) and social history, relied on the readers' understanding of the lexicon of quilt tradition. Ickis (1949) noted that "life histories are tightly stitched within the gay covers--tales of individuals and communities filled with failure and triumphs" (p. 253). Newman (1974) noted: "Stitch by stitch, the story of humanity describing the fabric of everyday life has been sewn into countless examples of quilting, patchwork, and applique" (p. 1). Each life history is like the fabric scrap that comprises the completed quilt. Just as the pieces are stitched together to form the quilt so too do individual lives interrelate to constitute the social life of a family, community, or nation.

The history of quilts is a story about women. Yet in accomplishing this task, the authors drew upon the inherent nature of the quilt. Just as the completed quilt is comprised of many fragments of fabric; so too is history comprised of individual stories. The fragments once composed within the quilt contribute to the overall beauty of the whole; so too does each woman contribute to the viability of contemporary American social life. The pragmatic and artistic choices that mark the process of making a quilt become opportunities for the quiltmaker to speak out about her experiences as a woman. These choices account for the unique design and expression of the quilt. For example, Webster (1928) noted:

A distinct individuality is worked into every quilt by its maker, which in most instances makes it worthy of a name. The many days spent in creating even a simple quilt give the maker ample time in which to ponder over a name for the design, so that the one selected generally reflects some peculiarity in her personality. (p. 115)

Quilt names tell about the "inner and outer life" of generations of American women (Finley, 1929, p. 8). Choices about the design and name of a quilt are parallel to the use of words in speech; the quilt itself is the medium of expression, not unlike that of the voice. Ickis (1949) used this trope:

Some seem to speak in soft voices and reveal decorous manners, while others are bold in design depicting the rigors of pioneer days, of war between the states, or...are the special ones for weddings, winter and summer use, expressions of friendships and many others ... (p. 207)

More recently, Gutcheon (Gutcheon & Gutcheon, 1976) questioned the extent to which the contemporary quiltmaker could assume women's contribution to this dialogue:

I came to feel that American quilts are not just a series of artifacts but an important part of the history of American women. That their beauty, their ingenuity, and also the vast amount of repetition, the great number of cautious variations on familiar themes, in some important way constitutes a record of what life has been like for American women. Not the least important is the fact that while the quilts contain a great deal of testimony, almost all of it is mute. American women have long had hearts and minds, but only a very few have had voices. (p. 6-7)

The Orlofskys (1974) noted that women "have created works of great evocative power as part of an endless struggle for expression" (p. 73). Perhaps the contemporary quiltmaker sees herself as part of this struggle, albeit as the history of women or the history of the United States.
The quilt historians drew upon the evocative power of the quilt to envelop the quiltmaker in a cultural and historical tradition. Likewise, their attention to the features of the quilt points to the individuality possible in quiltmaking and, more importantly to a recognition of personal contributions to American history. Hechtlinger (1974) noted:

> While the immediate charm of a quilt comes from its color, its design, and its fabric, that appeal is augmented by its history, which may be personal in its association but which also may recollect important aspects of our national history. (p. 287)

A quilter gains not just the moment—"the pleasure of doing" or "the joy of possession" (Webster, 1928, p. 149), but with reflection upon the past—"remind[ing] us of the simple pleasures of our grandmothers" (p. 136) and a look to the future—"the reward of her work ... can be passed on even to future generations, for a well-made quilt is a lasting treasure" (p. 149).

**Referential Nature of Quiltmaking**

These early books on quilts and quiltmaking do not take the conventional orientation in documenting a history of quilts. Rather, the extant quilt must stand in place of specific people and events as evidence of a past. Collectively in their discussion about the significance of the quilt and the value of quiltmaking, the authors capture an ideology upon which quilt tradition is founded and perpetuated. The play of tropes juxtaposes the historic tradition with contemporary practice in such a way as to empower quiltmaker as women in society. The modern quiltmaker faces a different world from that of her predecessor. Yet, quiltmaking can still serve as an outlet for her coping with life's adversities and celebrating its joys. Through their discourse, the quilt authors suggest to the contemporary quiltmaker that the complex feelings and ideas she has about herself can be worked out through her quiltmaking, just as past quiltmakers. Furthermore, in the process of, and as a consequence, of her quiltmaking the woman can mark the totality of her self—her individuality, her familial ties (both generational and immediate), her community affiliations, and her identity as a woman.

The discourse of quilt literature elaborates a play of tropes by which quiltmakers can interpret perceptions of social life within a common mythic structure that juxtaposes quiltmaking and domestic domains of experience. In its reconstruction of quilt tradition, quilt literature situates the history of quilts within a history of quiltmakers. In turn, these women—wives, mothers, grandmothers have been crucial players in American history. In this juxtaposition of domains, intricately described through the play of tropes, the contemporary quiltmaker/woman can readily place herself, via her own quiltmaking, within a woman's history and consequently in an American history. A crucial feature in this re-creation is the literature's characterization of social life. The coincidence that in the latter twentieth century women are faced with challenges and conflicts similar to women of the past involves them in the discourse.

The ideology embedded in the quilt books, likewise, structures aesthetic appreciation. As the quiltmaker is integrated into the subculture, she appropriates understanding of quilt culture. Culturally defined meanings influence personal reactions. Yet the consistency of these sentiments among a group of quiltmakers can be evidenced, for example, in women's remarks about quilts in the show-and-tell of guild meetings and in written comments by quilt owners and makers on exhibited quilts (Cerny, 1988; Cerny, Eicher, & DeLong, 1993). The quilts are to be appreciated not only for the design features, but for the circumstance of their making—for their power in speaking about women's lives.

**Importance of Cultural Analysis to Aesthetic Theory**

The multiplicity of late twentieth century social life requires understanding the cultural forces that shape subcultural society. Likewise a cultural orientation to aesthetics necessitates thorough knowledge of the traditions that mediate the thought and actions of a people. In each case ethnography provides the methods for documenting social events and for interpreting their relevance from the perspective of the participant. The persistent ideological/mythological themes of a culture are apparent in its traditions, but traditions change over time. Equating ideological/mythological thought as cultural bricolage allows the researcher to address the creative forces that allow culture to accommodate the ambiguities of social life precipitated by change.
When focusing on the significance of an aesthetic object, scholars must reference their conclusions through careful analysis of the meanings that circumscribe its making and appreciation. Such meanings, although not always explicit and straightforward, are integral to a person's knowledge and appreciation of the object. Attention to the play of tropes in the oral and written traditions of a people provides one means of linking individual experiences to unifying cultural values. In this study I described how the play of tropes relates the warmth of a quilt and the act of quiltmaking to values of social connectedness and female empowerment. The mythic tradition of quiltmaking, evidenced in part by the popular literature, evokes images of female struggle and accomplishment, which in turn may be personalized through the varied expressions of contemporary quiltmakers. In this instance I suggest that meanings, articulated in the creation of the quilt form, are mediated by an correspondence between quilt tradition (including patterns and techniques) and personal experience.

By questioning the basis for the sentiments that quiltmakers have for their work, I suggest that the internal processes occurring during an aesthetic response involve a dynamic interplay of psychological and cultural factors. Cultural mythology/ideology when manifest as tradition in written discourse of quiltmaking, utilizes tropic imagery to relate collective values to the individual. These meanings can be conceptualized as sentiment. The quiltmaker's appropriation of this sentiment is contingent on the nature of her experiences both within the subculture and broader reaches of social life. This paper has addressed the presence of tropic imagery in quilt literature. Studies of contemporary quilt guilds evince a communication of quilt sentiment in group activities. Further research, which draws upon intensive interviews and life histories of quiltmakers, is needed to detail the impact of individual sentiments in the aesthetic appreciation of a quilt.

Endnotes
1. Four additional books, published prior to 1980, were examined and found not to contain passages in which tropes were used to characterize historic quiltmaking traditions. Their elimination from this analysis does not preclude the presence of metaphor, metonymy, or synecdoche in the texts. While these twenty-three books are not exhaustive of all publications prior to all publications prior to 1980, they do represent the more widely recognized works (Finley, 1929; Holstein, 1973; Ickis, 1949; McKim, 1962; Orlofsky and Orlofsky, 1974; Peto, 1939; Webster, 1929). The books range in focus from the how-to books, with information on technique, design approaches, patchwork and quilting patterns, contemporary use, and/or historic overviews, to historic surveys.
2. Webster was originally published in 1915 by Doubleday, Page and Company in New York.
3. McKim was originally published in 1931 by McKim Studios in Independence, MO.

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