

“WE WORE NOTHIN’ TIGHT, NEVER ANYTHING TIGHT”:  
WOMEN’S EXPERIENCES WITH MATERNITY CLOTHING 1935-1974

by

CHARITY SUZANNE CALVIN

(Under the Direction of Patricia Hunt-Hurst)

ABSTRACT

This research explored women’s experiences with maternity clothing between 1935 and 1974. The study found that women’s maternity clothing choices were dependent primarily on what styles were in fashion during the pregnancy, the availability of maternity clothing, and personal preference. Women’s perception of their maternity clothing was dependent on the level of control they had over their maternity clothing, the number of options available, how they perceived their body, how well their clothing fit social requirements, the function and fit of clothing, whether or not the clothing matched their personal style, and the level of support from their social circle. Women acquired their maternity clothing through a combination of sewing, borrowing, purchase, or “making do” with non-maternity pieces. Factors considered in planning and wearing maternity clothing were the activities in which women participated during pregnancy, which were impacted by the social view of pregnancy.

INDEX WORDS: Women’s dress, Maternity clothing, Twentieth century, Fashion,  
Pregnancy, Dress history

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES .....	vii
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
Statement of Purpose .....	2
Objectives .....	2
2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE .....	3
Maternity Clothing in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries.....	3
Maternity Clothing in the Twentieth Century.....	5
Designing Maternity Clothing .....	7
Depiction and Perception of the Pregnant Figure .....	9
3 METHODS AND PROCEDURES.....	12
4 DISCUSSION .....	17
What Women Wore .....	17
Perception of Maternity Clothing and the Pregnant Figure .....	54
How Women Acquired Their Maternity Clothing.....	86
Factors Considered in Planning and Wearing a Maternity Wardrobe .....	100
5 CONCLUSIONS.....	123
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	139

APPENDICES .....	142
A DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF INTERVIEWEES .....	143
B PHOTOGRAPHS PROVIDED BY INTERVIEWEES .....	144

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1: “Mother Hubbard” Wrapper, 1890s .....	5
Figure 2: Simplicity 3153 Sewing Pattern, 1939 .....	18
Figure 3: Laura Carter in Two-Piece Dress, 1959/1960 .....	20
Figure 4: Laura Carter in One-Piece Dress, 1969 .....	20
Figure 5: Simplicity 3191 Sewing Pattern, 1950 .....	28
Figure 6: Vogue 7838 Sewing Pattern for Maternity Pajamas, 1952 .....	31
Figure 7: McCall’s 9382 Sewing Pattern, 1953 .....	37
Figure 8: Simplicity 4193 Sewing Pattern, 1952 .....	38
Figure 9: McCall’s 4900 Sewing Pattern, 1959 .....	40
Figure 10: McCall’s 4638 Sewing Pattern, 1958 .....	41
Figure 11: McCall’s 4499 Sewing Pattern, 1958 .....	42
Figure 12: Carolyn Midgett, Christmas 1967 .....	52
Figure 13: Carolyn Midgett, July 1968 .....	56
Figure 14: Jean Gibson and Pregnant Coworkers, 1972 .....	73
Figure 15: Marie Smith at a Baby Shower, 1952 .....	75
Figure 16: Laura Carter Seated, 1959 or 1960 .....	144
Figure 17: Laura Carter Walking, 1959 or 1960 .....	145
Figure 18: Laura Carter at a Family Reunion Between 1959 and 1962 .....	146
Figure 19: Ruth Williams at the Beach, 1960 .....	147

Figure 20: Carolyn Midgett, 1965 .....	148
Figure 21: Laura Carter, December 1969 .....	149

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Many assumptions and suppositions exist about women's opinions of maternity clothes. The pregnant mother has been portrayed as a medical patient, as a consumer subject to the whims of the fashion industry, and even as a victim of a male-dominated society.<sup>1</sup> The majority of research on the history of maternity clothing has focused primarily on magazines, newspaper articles, and medical texts.<sup>2</sup> Surveys have been conducted at various times investigating the clothing of pregnancy, but the authors allowed only quantitative answers and therefore could only speculate about the "why."<sup>3</sup> No one has asked the women themselves what they thought of the clothes worn during their pregnancies.

Throughout the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century, most clothing was made at home or sewn by a dressmaker. After 1920, however, the sale of ready-to-wear clothing outpaced the sale of fabric for the first time.<sup>4</sup> According to Jane Farrell-Beck and Jean Parsons, "mass fashion had arrived."<sup>5</sup> With the increased popularity of ready-to-wear, options for the maternity wardrobe expanded. At the same time, modernism entered the scene with the dramatic style changes that appeared in the 1920s. Modernism, according to Kurt W. Beck, was characterized by an increased emphasis on individuality and a decreased reliance on tradition throughout the early to mid twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> At the end of the 1960s, postmodernism overtook modernism in fashion; as Farrell-Beck and Parsons describe, "fashion fragmented into a plurality of fashions" and an anything-goes mentality took root.<sup>7</sup>

Modern fashion – this period between the introduction of mass fashion in the 1920s and the fragmenting of fashion into postmodernism at the end of the 1960s – is of particular interest

in the history of maternity wear. Although the rules had loosened from nineteenth century cultural expectations, there was still a “right” way and a “wrong” way to dress. This is illustrated particularly well by the history of maternity fashion. Books and magazines throughout the first half of the twentieth century made definite recommendations for what should and should not be worn during pregnancy, and the women interviewed for this project frequently discussed their own maternity dress choices in terms of what “everyone else” was doing and what was expected socially.

#### Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of what individual and social factors influenced a woman’s selection and use of clothing during pregnancy in the modern era (1920-1969), and what changes, if any, took place from decade to decade.

#### Objectives

1. To discover what women wore during pregnancy.
2. To understand how women perceived their maternity clothes and the pregnant figure.
3. To understand how women acquired their maternity clothing.
4. To understand what factors were considered when planning and wearing a maternity wardrobe.

## Chapter 2

### Review of Literature

The concept of the ideal figure, exemplified by a variety of fashion silhouettes, has shifted dramatically throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The female body, in conformity to the preferred shape of the moment, has been modified by corsets, girdles, brassieres, padding, petticoats, and even modern shapewear, to achieve the ideal silhouette. One silhouette, however, has remained impervious to attempts to change its shape: the pregnant body.

According to Elizabeth Moomaw, most expectant mothers require maternity clothing in the fourth month of pregnancy.<sup>8</sup> The distinctive shape and rapid changes of pregnancy have, since the fitted clothing of the nineteenth century, presented an unusual design problem. Before the advent of stretch fabrics, options for maternity wear were limited by technical issues. Not only was maternity wear affected by the lack of technological advancement, but also by women who, during pregnancy, wanted to wear clothes that resembled as closely as possible the popular styles of their time.

#### Maternity Clothing in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, women were pregnant frequently, and according to Linda Baumgarten, typically adapted their usual clothing to accommodate pregnancy.<sup>9</sup> Clothing modification was simplified in the late 1700s and early 1800s by the use of laces and drawstrings.<sup>10</sup> Women of this period did not, as popular opinion asserts, seclude themselves during pregnancy; primary sources indicate that they maintained their usual activity schedule throughout pregnancy, often until the day the baby was born.<sup>11</sup> Very few examples



remain of maternity garments from this period, since garments were frequently remade or altered after pregnancy.<sup>12</sup>

Changes in clothing shape in the nineteenth century created a necessity for specialized maternity garments, beginning with corsets.<sup>13</sup> The fitted waistlines of the late nineteenth century required modification quite early in pregnancy.<sup>14</sup> Glenna Jo Christen observes that the wide side seams and slightly-raised waistlines of the 1860s were conducive to alteration for maternity wear in the earlier stages of pregnancy, as the wearer could let out the sides and further raise the waistline with relative ease.<sup>15</sup> When the pregnancy advanced to a point where alteration was no longer possible, many women used wrappers or dressing gowns at home, dresses with drawstring waists, or sacques with skirts.<sup>16</sup> Zuzanna Shonfield reports that maternity clothing of the 1860s and 1870s was simple and understated, usually in poplin, cashmere, and “washing prints,” and it became increasingly elaborate during the 1880s and 1890s, using more sumptuous fabrics.<sup>17</sup>

Jane Funderburk, investigating the clothing of pregnant women in Nebraska using photographs dating between 1886 and 1892, states that trousseaux of the period typically included dresses designed to be easily let out or worn unbelted for maternity use. According to Funderburk, the most common maternity dress for frontier women was a “Mother Hubbard” wrapper, a loose-fitting garment with pleated or gathered front that fell from a shoulder yoke (see Figure 1). This garment was typically worn unbelted during pregnancy, and belted when the wearer was not pregnant.<sup>18</sup> Funderburk also found one photograph of a woman in a “sack top” and skirt similar to those described by Christen.<sup>19</sup>



Figure 1: A “Mother Hubbard” wrapper, 1890s, from the author’s personal collection

### Maternity Clothing in the Twentieth Century

Rebecca Bailey, in her doctoral dissertation on maternity clothing, states that maternity clothes first appeared in 1911.<sup>20</sup> However, my research into primary sources revealed that maternity clothing did exist prior to 1911. Maternity clothing clearly identified as such made an

appearance in the early 1890s, initially appearing as sewing suggestions in ladies' magazines, including *The Ladies Home Journal* and *Harper's Bazaar*. Although Lane Bryant is generally credited with the invention of maternity clothing in 1903, ladies' fashion magazines had been giving detailed sewing directions for maternity clothing for over ten years prior to the advent of Lane Bryant maternity wear.<sup>21</sup> Lane Bryant was among the first to specialize in maternity wear, but was certainly not the first to produce it, as evidenced by newspaper advertisements of the period. Some modern authors contend that maternity clothing was "shocking," "unmentionable," and not allowed to be advertised until 1911.<sup>22</sup> At least one department store, however, was publicly advertising ready-to-wear maternity skirts in the *New York Times* by 1900, alongside ordinary skirts, suits, and other articles of clothing.<sup>23</sup> Lane Bryant started her line in 1903, and she was rapidly followed by other retailers.

Groseclose stated that maternity party dresses appeared after World War I, that maternity sportswear was not available until just before World War II, and that maternity slacks and swimsuits were first produced in the early 1940s.<sup>24</sup> Regarding the availability of other specific articles of clothing, Bailey states, "Maternity swimsuits, slacks, and shorts appeared during the 1930s and 1940s. Shorts were the last on the market possibly because they couldn't be covered up like a swimsuit could. Swimsuits came with coats and were neither intended to go into the water, nor to be uncovered."<sup>25</sup> For her 1947 thesis, Moomaw surveyed 25 women and determined what clothing they had in their maternity wardrobes; she found that two owned slacks, one had a play suit, and none of the participants had a bathing suit.<sup>26</sup>

Bailey attributed availability of maternity clothing to societal expectations about what activities were acceptable for a pregnant woman, stating that "the lack of [maternity] clothing for many activities has been an efficient regulator of the level of participation in society."<sup>27</sup> It seems

more likely, however, that availability of clothing was dictated by what women were likely to purchase. Moomaw, in 1947, observed that “the stores make such a point of having a complete line of [maternity] sportswear,” but believed, based on her survey results, that sportswear was in very low demand.<sup>28</sup> Moomaw also states that only one of her 25 survey participants owned a maternity nightgown; she believes that this was indicative that women attempted to use non-maternity items whenever possible to reduce costs.<sup>29</sup> In 1958, Groseclose listed the garments included in the average maternity wardrobe, comprising only sixteen garments, all of them very basic. She estimated that the cost of the wardrobe was \$81 – adjusted for inflation to 2014 dollars, the cost of this wardrobe would be over \$655.<sup>30</sup> Earlier maternity clothing was even more expensive; the cheapest maternity dress offered by Sears in 1919, for example, was \$12.98; adjusted for inflation to 2014 prices, the dress was \$175.50. The most expensive Sears dress in 1919 was \$32.50 (\$439.44 in 2014 dollars).<sup>31</sup> Even if one considers that some maternity clothing may have been borrowed or received as a gift, the high cost of maternity clothing may have discouraged purchases of optional garments such as swimsuits and coats, thereby limiting what a woman could purchase. The Depression significantly impacted sales of maternity clothing, further supporting the idea that purchases of maternity clothing were price-sensitive.<sup>32</sup> In addition to limiting the size of maternity wardrobes, cost may also be a contributing factor to the popular notion of maternity clothes always lagging behind current trends, since women typically wear the same maternity clothes through any subsequent pregnancies, and, according to one 1947 study, often lend or give the clothing to friends once it is no longer needed.<sup>33</sup>

### Designing Maternity Clothing

Until the introduction of stretch fabrics, maternity wear was very difficult to design, and it typically required frequent alterations throughout pregnancy. One designer observed in 1947

that “to design maternity clothing one must be something of an engineer.”<sup>34</sup> To make matters worse, the pregnant body is so different in shape from the non-pregnant body that almost everything one knows about flattering dress is rendered useless, as pregnancy, for most women, requires an entirely different set of fashion rules to be even somewhat flattering.<sup>35</sup>

Maternity clothing required very different construction techniques from ordinary clothing to allow for the continuous expansion required during pregnancy. According to Moomaw, the average pregnancy involves a waistline expansion of eight to ten inches, with greater expansion below the waist.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, the fashion imperative from the mid-1800s until the late 1950s typically involved fitted garments, so any woman wishing to be fashionably dressed could not simply don a loose-fitting smock for all daily activities. Until the trapeze dress became popular in the 1960s, most maternity dresses needed to be adjustable rather than simply loose-fitting, if they were to conform to women’s fashions of the time.

Although conformity to current fashions was ideal in maternity clothing, some popular silhouettes were difficult to translate successfully into maternity wear. The slender silhouette of the 1930s, for instance, could not be slim on a pregnant silhouette until the 1938 invention of the cutout skirt by Elsie Frankfurt, which enabled the design of close-fitting skirts. From 1938 until the latter part of the 1960s, these cutout skirts were paired with loose-fitting tops that covered the U-shaped cutout.<sup>37</sup> Dior’s New Look, with its tiny waistline and huge skirt, was tricky to achieve with the large abdomen of pregnancy and appeared infrequently in maternity clothing.<sup>38</sup> Instead, the slim-fitting skirt with a cut-out dominated the maternity clothing of the 1950s. This was an alternate silhouette that remained popular concurrently with the full skirts of the New Look, and Elsie Frankfurt’s cutout innovation made it a viable choice for maternity wear.

The mid-1950s introduced the unfitted silhouette, with the sack dress and trapeze dress. While the general population took some time to accept these styles, eventually they were widely adopted for maternity wear.<sup>39</sup> In fact, Susan B. Wilson notes that the popularity of the tent dress in the 1960s caused a decline in the purchase of maternity clothing, as women were able to purchase non-maternity garments for use during pregnancy instead, a phenomenon also noted by Kay Goldman in her history of Page Boy Maternity Clothing.<sup>40</sup>

According to Cheryl K. Lemus, the design of maternity clothing was also impacted by medical recommendations.<sup>41</sup> Barbara Connelly Groseclose outlined the typical medical requirements: (1) Clothing should hang from the shoulders to minimize pressure on the waistline, (2) round garters should be avoided because of possible circulation problems, (3) low-heeled shoes should be worn, since high heels can “accentuate the sway-back posture” and may cause falls, and (4) clothing should be lightweight.<sup>42</sup> These recommendations appeared frequently in books and articles discussing maternity wear.

### Depiction and Perception of the Pregnant Figure

Until the 1970s, maternity clothing was typically depicted on non-pregnant figures in magazines, advertisements, and sewing patterns. A number of different reasons have been proposed for this practice. Rebecca Bailey believed that this lack of portrayal of the pregnant figure was due to shame or embarrassment about pregnancy.<sup>43</sup> Cheryl K. Lemus concluded that retailers wanted to emphasize that their maternity clothing provided a good camouflage for the pregnant figure, a goal best achieved by portraying the clothing on non-pregnant figures.<sup>44</sup> Kay Goldman, however, argued that the owners of Page Boy Maternity (and, presumably, other maternity wear manufacturers) “were not trying to hide or disguise the fact that women were pregnant. They simply wanted to dress pregnant women in the most appropriate way

possible.”<sup>45</sup> Goldman added that historians should not interpret mid-twentieth century maternity wear from a twenty-first century perspective.<sup>46</sup> Another possibility is that the sewing pattern illustrators used the same standard figure that they used for all their other pattern illustration; the same figure was drawn regardless of whether the pattern was designed for a teenager (junior patterns), a middle-aged woman (half-size patterns), a pregnant woman, or a plus size woman.

Perception of the pregnant figure is a significant component of women’s attitudes towards maternity clothing. Susan Kaiser defines appearance perception as “the process of observing and making evaluations” based on a person’s appearance.<sup>47</sup> “Appearance perceptions,” she states, “are influenced not only by the images that are perceived and evaluated, but also by the characteristics of the perceivers themselves.”<sup>48</sup> There are several factors to consider in appearance perception: the woman’s perception of herself, the way she wants others to perceive her, and the way others actually perceive her.<sup>49</sup>

There is evidence to suggest that women’s self-expression in clothing may be limited during pregnancy, affecting appearance perception. Jennifer Paff Ogle, Keila E. Tyner, and Sherry Schofield-Tomschin, in their interviews with pregnant women, found that thriftiness frequently limits women’s self-expression through clothing during pregnancy. Since maternity clothing is typically worn for a relatively short time, women prefer not to spend a lot of money on it, often limiting their wardrobes and/or relying on hand-me-downs that are often not styles or colors that would ordinarily have been preferred.<sup>50</sup> They also found that flattering maternity clothing relieved some of women’s concerns about their body shape.<sup>51</sup>

No research has been found comparing perceptions of the pregnant figure in the particular decades being investigated in this study; however, Paula Nicolson, Rebekah Fox, and Kristin Heffernan, conducting multi-generational interviews on pregnant embodiment, observed

that the “display” of pregnancy appears to have shifted by decade, with women pregnant in the 1970s being more accepting of their pregnant appearance and less concerned with controlling their bodies than women pregnant in the 1980s and the 2000s.<sup>52</sup> This may be because the tightly-fitting maternity clothes of today make women more conscious of their figures.

Sally Johnson, Anne Burrows, and Iain Williamson, also interviewing pregnant women, found that cultural traditions and perceptions affected women’s satisfaction with their bodies during pregnancy. They also state that women tend to become less satisfied with their bodies as their pregnancies progress.<sup>53</sup> Also using interviews, Sarah Earle observed that women who viewed pregnancy as a “special experience” were excited about changes to their bodies.<sup>54</sup> She also states that women are typically “very pragmatic” about their bodies during pregnancy, viewing the pregnant body as temporary.<sup>55</sup>



## **Chapter 3**

### **Methods and Procedures**

This study was an historical research project that used grounded theory methodology to analyze data obtained from interviews. Historical research is defined as “an effort to reconstruct or interpret historical events through the gathering and interpretation of relevant historical documents and/or oral histories.”<sup>56</sup> It heavily relies on the use of primary data (firsthand accounts of the topic under investigation), considered the most reliable. Primary data includes photographs, magazines or newspapers, historic objects (i.e., clothing from the period being studied), and interviews or oral histories.<sup>57</sup>

Although this study utilized all of these types of primary data, interviews were the main source of information. Information acquired from the interviews was compared to findings from other primary sources, including sewing patterns, photographs, magazines, and some extant garments, to determine whether or not the women’s personal accounts of their experiences with maternity clothing agreed with the information presented in other sources (for example, whether or not the women followed guidelines given in magazines when selecting their maternity clothing). Sewing patterns from the period were heavily used in this research because they provided a good visual record of the maternity styles that were readily available to women who sewed their own maternity clothing.

Secondary sources are also utilized in historical research to provide background information on the topic of study. Secondary sources are defined as “documents written or objects created by others that relate to a specific research question or area of research interest.”<sup>58</sup>

Secondary sources consulted for this study included textbooks on historic dress, unpublished Master's theses on maternity clothing, and journal articles.

Because none of the historical research on maternity clothing conducted thus far included the viewpoints of individual women, it was determined that interviews would provide a viewpoint of maternity clothing that has hitherto remained unexplored. Interview participants were recruited through personal contacts, using a snowball sampling method. Twenty-six women were interviewed. Each participant was over the age of 60, lived in the Southeastern United States, and experienced at least one pregnancy between 1920 and 1974. The data was collected using semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The interview participants' real names were used in this study, except for two who opted for pseudonyms instead.

Data analysis was conducted using the process outlined by Kathy Charmaz in *Constructing Grounded Theory*. This process involves collecting interview data, coding the data to locate themes and concepts, and writing memos to clarify meaning in the data. As the data are coded, gaps in the research may become evident; at this point, the researcher will conduct further interviews until theoretical saturation is achieved; that is, until no new insights are discovered in the categories being analyzed. In the process, a theory should emerge that offers an explanation of the topic of study.<sup>59</sup> In this study, it was determined that theoretical saturation was achieved during the first round of interviews, so no further interviews were conducted.

#### Interview Guide

The following interview guide was used:

- Demographic info
  - Year born
  - Year(s) pregnant

5. Questions for Objective #1 -- To discover what women wore during pregnancy
  - Tell me about the clothes you wore while you were pregnant.
  - Describe your pregnancy wardrobe (styles, colors, types of garments).
  - What interesting stories do you have that are related to the pregnancy?
6. Objective #2 -- To understand how women perceived their maternity clothes and the pregnant figure
  - Please describe how you thought of yourself (the way you looked, felt, etc.) during pregnancy.
  - How do you think others perceived you during pregnancy?
  - How fashionable were your clothes during pregnancy?
  - What was your level of interest in fashion before, during, and after pregnancy?
7. Objective #3 -- To understand how women acquired their maternity clothing
  - How were your clothes obtained (borrowed, sewn, or bought) and what factored into that decision?
  - Tell me about a time you had to “make do” with other garments instead of using maternity clothes.
- Questions for Objective #4 – To understand what factors were considered when planning and wearing a maternity wardrobe
  - What might have been socially unacceptable during pregnancy (clothing, activities)?
  - Please describe the selection of maternity clothes available at the time.
  - Can you tell me about any clothes that you remodeled for use after pregnancy?

### Limitations

The sample for this study was limited to women found through the researcher's social circle. Because this is a study of maternity clothing in the modern era, the time period was originally limited to 1920 through 1969. However, no women were located who were pregnant prior to 1935. The women interviewed had pregnancies ranging from 1935 to 1979. The data used in this study included the pregnancies through 1974. The region was limited to women living in the Southeastern United States.

### Definition of Terms

Bubble top – a loose-fitting top gathered at the bottom with a drawstring, elastic, or a band, forming a rounded shape.

Cut-out skirt – a skirt with a U-shaped section removed from the upper front, allowing for expansion during pregnancy.

Kangaroo pouch – a skirt feature designed for pregnancy, featuring a full, gathered panel over the abdomen to allow room for expansion.<sup>60</sup>

Maternity clothing – “garments designed to be suitable for the pregnant woman.”<sup>61</sup>

Modernism – the philosophy that cultural changes are generally improvements on the past. In fashion, this led to new styles being generally regarded as superior to old styles.

One-piece dress – a garment with a joined skirt and bodice

Peau de soie – “firm, soft durable silk in twill weave with dull, satin-like finish. Made in both single and double face, showing fine cross ribs on one side or both. Used for trimmings, dresses, coats, facings for dress coats.”<sup>62</sup>

Postmodernism – in fashion, eclecticism and diversity accompanied by questioning or discarding conventional clothing rules.<sup>63</sup>

Tent dress – “maternity garment with narrow shoulders or sleeveless, flaring to a very wide skirt at hem. Worn with or without belt.”<sup>64</sup> Also known as a trapeze dress.

Two-piece dress – a matched top and skirt, sometimes of the same fabric and sometimes of different fabrics.

## Chapter 4

### Discussion

The information presented in this chapter is the result of analysis of the data collected in the interview process, supported by additional research on maternity clothing in fashion magazines and sewing patterns. The following objectives are addressed:

1. To discover what women wore during pregnancy.
2. To understand how women perceived their maternity clothes and the pregnant figure.
3. To understand how women acquired their maternity clothing.
4. To understand what factors were considered when planning and wearing a maternity wardrobe.

### What Women Wore

#### *One-Piece Dresses Versus Two-Piece Dresses*

One trend noted in the interviews was the popularity of one-piece dresses versus two-piece dresses. Two of the interviewees, Kate Embry and Armina Summers, were pregnant in the 1930s. Kate, whose son was born in 1935, says that all of her dresses were one-piece. Armina, pregnant in 1940 and 1943, wore both one-piece and two-piece. “They was usually long,” she explains, “just like a dress or somethin’. Some of ‘em we had a skirt with, and a short smock, but . . . they were both ways.” A survey of available sewing patterns and *Vogue* magazine indicates that one-piece dresses were the primary fashionable style of the thirties; two-piece dresses

appeared in *Vogue* around 1938, interspersed with one-piece outfits.<sup>65</sup> The earliest sewing pattern located for a two-piece dress was Simplicity 3153, which debuted in 1939 (Figure 2).

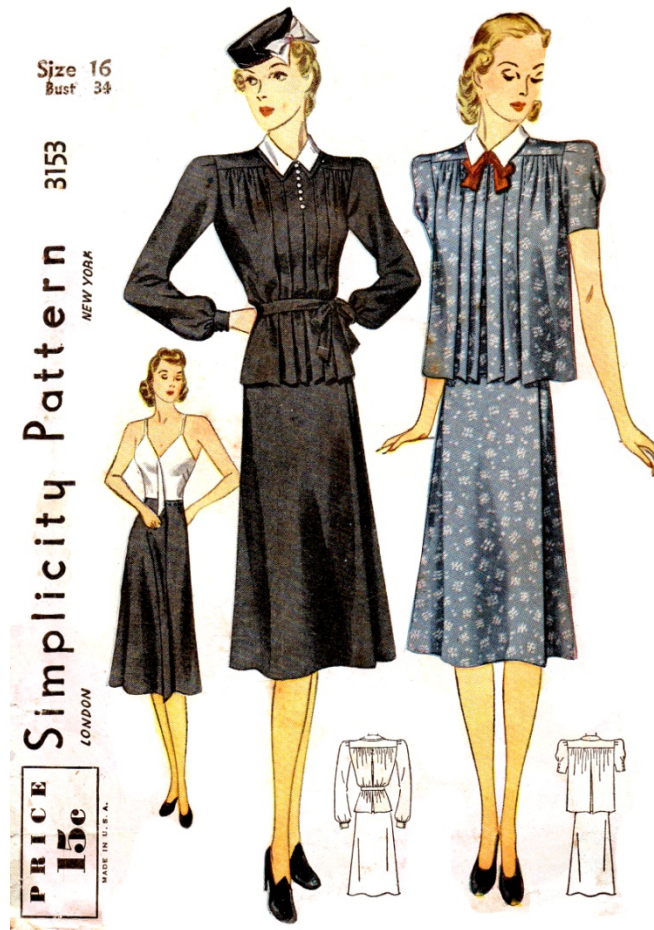


Figure 2: Simplicity 3153 sewing pattern, 1939

Although some two-piece dresses were used in the forties, one-piece predominated. Of the eight women interviewed who were pregnant in the forties, only one did not mention wearing a one-piece dress; she was pregnant in 1950. Three of the women had two-piece dresses; however, all three were pregnant in multiple decades, and it is unclear whether or not they wore the two-piece dresses in the forties or just in later decades. Two-piece dresses may have been viewed as more casual than one-piece; Juanita Burks, pregnant between 1949 and

1956, says that she preferred smocks (two-piece), “but some of 'em that wore dresses, well, they just didn't think that I was dressed up enough, [and] I needed to have a dress.”

The fifties heralded a shift in the ratio, with two-piece dresses overtaking one-piece in popularity. “In '53 I started work at the welfare department. And both the boys was born after that [in 1953 and 1959]. Then I wore two-pieces all the time then,” recalls Bessie Miller.

“Everything was two-piece,” says Shirley Embry, who was pregnant in 1957, 1959, and 1960. “I don't remember even seein' a one-piece dress.” Many of the interviewees, however, wore both one-piece and two-piece. Peggy Jackson, who had a fairly extensive maternity wardrobe, describes both one-piece and two-piece dresses. Betty Hutcheson observes that, between her first pregnancy in 1958 and her last in 1964, that one-piece dresses became more common than they were initially, but says that two-piece dresses were what was “mostly” available.

In the early sixties, two-piece was the dress of choice for the majority of the interviewees. “I think I may have had some one-piece,” says Ruth Williams, who was pregnant in 1959, 1960, and 1962, “but we wore basically a straight skirt [with a cutout, with] big, loose tops.” Laura Carter, whose children were born between 1960 and 1970, wore two-piece dresses in the earlier pregnancies, shifting to one-piece for the later ones (Figure 3, Figure 4).





Figure 3: Laura Carter during her 1959/1960 pregnancy, wearing a two-piece dress



Figure 4: Laura Carter, probably Fall 1969, wearing a one-piece dress

By the mid to late sixties, however, the pendulum had swung back the other way; one-piece dresses came back into fashionable as well as maternity style, to the eventual exclusion of two-piece dresses altogether. Carolyn Midgett, whose older daughter was born in 1965, says that most of her dresses were one-piece, and that she didn't have any two-piece dresses made, but does mention having some pants and skirts. Carolyn Bradford says, "With the first pregnancy [1964-1965], it was mostly two pieces, a top and skirt. With the second one [1967-1968], I started getting some one-piece dresses, which I liked much better." Suzanne Sansom, who was pregnant in 1968 and 1970, says, "I didn't have any of the short tops or anything like they wore in the fifties. . . . Just the one-piece dresses, except for . . . one pantsuit."

### *Wardrobe Size*

There was a general trend towards increasing wardrobe sizes throughout the decades. Kate Embry remembers having three or four cotton dresses in 1935, plus one silk dress for church and special occasions. Several of the women pregnant in the forties viewed their maternity clothing as a utilitarian necessity rather than a fashion statement, which meant that they could get by with smaller wardrobes. Armina Summers, pregnant in 1940 and 1943, viewed her small wardrobe matter-of-factly: "Course, you didn't have -- only have a couple, and that -- you wore those all the time." She did, however, have a "good" dress for church. This was fairly common in that era; Louella Pyle says that she "prob'ly didn't have over a couple," explaining that she "didn't need many." Some wardrobes were slightly larger, but still what might be considered small today. Edith Herbert, pregnant in 1945 and 1947, had "probably five or six. Three for home, maybe, and two for church." Juanita Burks kept hers to a minimum, at least for the first pregnancy, with two everyday dresses that she could alternate washing and wearing, plus one for "dress-up"; however, she did sew additional clothing during her subsequent pregnancies.

At least one interviewee believed that maternity clothes all looked the same, so a large wardrobe would have been pointless. Marie Smith observed, “You didn’t really have over two or three outfits because they were all pretty much alike anyway, so you didn’t need a bunch.” Economy was a major factor as well. Marie added that “there wadn’t enough money to have lots of clothes. . . . And since you . . . only have to wear them prob’ly four or five months, you just didn’t have that many.”

Wardrobe size typically increased for later pregnancies, as many of the women purchased additional outfits to add to their previous wardrobe. “The first time, I had two dresses. . . . The next time I added two [for a total of four],” says Dollie Wolford, pregnant in 1944 and 1947. “I got up every mornin’ and washed a dress! [laughs] To have a clean dress for the next day.” Dollie wore the same dresses at home and to church – “they had to serve all purposes,” she says.

The size of a wardrobe was sometimes dependent on whether or not a woman worked outside the home. “The first two -- well, I stayed home, so I didn’t have to have a lot of maternity clothes,” explains Gracie Reed. “And then I didn’t work durin’ pregnancy that much, to have to have a lot.” But the small wardrobe wore at her nerves somewhat. “You just -- had to wear the same old thing. You didn’t have a lot. I mean, you mighta had three or four outfits. And -- nine months, you get tired of wearin’ ‘em.”

Location also may have impacted the size of a wardrobe; interviewees living in rural areas typically reported having smaller wardrobes. “Oh, I had a couple for wearin’ out,” says Wilma Abbott, pregnant in 1946 and 1955. “And these other things [loose-fitting housedresses], I just used ‘em just around the house. And neighbors and somethin’ like that. I lived out in the country.” When asked about her wardrobe for her 1951 and 1956 pregnancies, Betty Mitchell

says, “Why, it wadn’t no more than three.” Ann Todd had five or six in 1950 and 1958.

Borrowing and sharing was a tactic that some women used to extend their wardrobes. “I had many, many smocks,” says Kathleen Smoliga. “Because we all shared. And you really stacked more than you used -- used your favorite ones.” Most of the women interviewed were newly married and on restricted budgets. “I worked then, but we didn’t have a lot of money. So. With him bein’ in service, and so I only had five tops,” says Rayma Reese. “You didn’t need to have that many. I wore one each day, and then I had one for Sunday, and to go to church.” More extensive wardrobes were often the result of help from parents. Peggy Jackson’s mother worked in the fabric department at Cain-Sloan, a department store in Nashville, and enjoyed sewing. “She saw a pretty fabric, she was buying it and making it up and sending it.” Peggy had a very extensive wardrobe. “Oh gosh. . . . I must have had at least fifteen, sixteen outfits.”

The size of wardrobes seems to have been higher in the 1960s and 1970s, but was always smaller than the interviewee’s non-maternity wardrobe. “I didn’t have a lot, I mean, really,” says Carolyn Midgett, “when you think about, compared to what your normal wardrobe is, you don’t really -- but I had, I would say, maybe a dozen different things that we would alternate and everything.” Carolyn Bradford estimates that she had fifteen to twenty outfits for her last pregnancy (1979).

### *Changes in Wardrobe Between Pregnancies*

Several factors played a role in changes in wardrobe between pregnancies. Spacing of children was the most significant; other changes were caused by differences in season or climate, changes in fashion, desire for more clothing variety, or increases in income.

Typically, women whose children were spaced closer together (about three years or less) reused the same clothing for subsequent pregnancies. If there was more significant gap between children (generally four or more years, but sometimes as little as three), they had usually gotten rid of the previous clothes and bought new ones instead. Most people whose children were born three or fewer years apart reused the same clothing. “I saved 'em, of course, and wore 'em the second time,” says Margaret Williams. For some people, however, three years’ time was enough space between pregnancies to require an entirely new wardrobe. “I had different ones for the second,” says Armina Summers, explaining that she had already remade her clothes from her first pregnancy. “Oh yes. 'Cause that was three years' difference. Mm-hm.” For others, expectations of when they might have additional children affected their wardrobes, even if the pregnancies were not that far apart. Weecy Patterson says that she had given away the clothing from her first pregnancy and made new ones for the second, three years later, adding, “I didn't know I was gon' get pregnant that quick. [laughs]”

Temperature changes, whether caused by a difference in seasons or by a difference in location, also caused changes in wardrobes between pregnancies. Ruth Williams lived in California for her first two pregnancies, and then moved back to Tennessee for her third. “When I came back to Tennessee, it was, like, in the fall, so . . . I may have made a long-sleeved top. . . . Because I didn't need it out there, but I probably would have needed it here,” she explains. Otherwise, she says, there was no difference in her wardrobe. Differences in seasons also impacted maternity wardrobes. Shirley Embry had her first child in September, but the last two were in the winter, so she said that she had to buy heavier clothes.

Major stylistic changes could also be the impetus for having an entirely different wardrobe between pregnancies. Laura Carter had her first two children in 1960 and 1962, and

the third and fourth in 1968 and 1970. There was little to no change in her wardrobe between her first two pregnancies, and she utilized the same clothing with a few additions – “[I made] a new top or two, and [wore] the same skirts a lot,” she says – but there was a significant style shift in maternity clothing between the early sixties and the late sixties, with a change from two-piece dresses to one-piece. “It had totally changed, from the first [two] to the second [two],” she says. The change was significant enough that Laura made an entirely new wardrobe for the last two pregnancies. For others pregnant over a significant time span, however, shifts in fashion were of less consequence. Linda Ledford, who had six children (five pregnancies) between 1957 and 1968, was asked if she saw any style changes between her first and last pregnancies. “No, not really,” she says. “Maybe I was oblivious to it. And just was gonna wear what I had. You know. But it was -- all within, I guess, eleven years?” One difference between Laura and Linda was that Laura had a six-year gap between her two middle children; Linda, however, was pregnant more frequently during that period. It may be that Laura noticed the fashion changes more because of the gap between her pregnancies, whereas Linda just continued wearing what she had. Another possibility is that the one-piece dresses took a little longer to catch on in the small town where Linda lived; she says, “Two-pieces dresses were all I really remember at that time. It wasn't long after that I remember seeing people in one-piece.”

New clothing was sometimes acquired for second pregnancies because the previous clothing had gotten tiresome. In these cases, the new clothing was an addition to the wardrobe rather than a replacement. Carolyn Midgett added new clothes to her wardrobe for her second pregnancy, while still keeping all the clothing from the first: “By the end [of the pregnancy], you're kinda gettin' tired of 'em. . . . I did get some new ones for Jennette. Because that was three years' difference, so. . . I had some new ones. And that was fun.”

Changes in income were another factor in whether or not a wardrobe changed between pregnancies. “Probably with each pregnancy they were more fashionable . . . the first one, we were poor college students,” explains Carolyn Bradford. “And after Terry graduated and got a job, I had a little more money to spend. So I would look -- not in the most expensive stores, but I would look for something that I thought would look better on me.”

### *Items Included in Wardrobes*

Maternity wardrobes were often limited, not necessarily by what was available, but by how little women thought they needed. Since the clothing was only going to be worn for a few months, they reasoned, it was pointless to get anything that was not a necessity. Most wardrobes consisted of several everyday dresses (either one-piece or two-piece) and one or more nicer dresses worn for church and other special occasions. Dollie Wolford and Betty Mitchell wore the same dresses to church that they wore at home (“‘Cause [mine] were all dressy-lookin’,” Betty explained), but most women had very distinct delineations in their wardrobes. “Oh no, I never wore to church what I wore at home,” says Carolyn Bradford, summing up the attitude of the majority of the interviewees. Kathleen Smoliga agrees: “That’s another thing we did, my generation. We had church clothes. And we had home clothes.”

Several women had very casual clothes for home use. Wilma Abbott says that she wore dusters or muu-muus at home; Edith Williams also mentioned a muu-muu. Pregnant with twins, Weecy Patterson wore a housecoat-type garment anytime she was at home, and only wore two-piece outfits when she was going out.

Special maternity undergarments were generally considered a luxury. Maternity slips were available in catalogs and in sewing patterns, usually in a wraparound style, but few of the

interviewees wore them. “I wore the same slips. Or, you know, get a bigger one, but I didn't have any maternity,” explains Juanita Burks. “I didn't have much maternity clothing, except the outer things. Not like today, where you have -- somethin' special for everything!” Ann Todd said that she always wore a slip or petticoat with her dresses, but continued wearing her regular slips during pregnancy. “Well, it might not fit, but I wore it!” she said, laughing. “Cause I didn't buy any special slips, I know that.” Maternity panties may not have been readily available prior to the 1960s; there were no maternity panties in the Fall/Winter 1949/1950 Montgomery Ward catalog, and the only sewing pattern found that included maternity panties was a 1949 Simplicity pattern, #2694. Betty Mitchell wore her regular underwear. “I do remember my panties had to be down low and all. . . . You didn't have special slips or panties. You just had to get a bigger size.”

Some women did purchase maternity undergarments. “I know I bought maternity underwear -- we could buy that then [1965]. And I had a slip -- course we wore a slip under just about everything,” says Carolyn Midgett. She adds, “I think it was kind of unusual to have the underwear.” Kathleen Smoliga had a half slip with a cutout for maternity wear. Suzanne Sansom recalls having maternity pantyhose. She had to wear them for work, so she had two or three pairs that she purchased at Castner Knott.

Maternity undergarments, like other “optional” maternity garments, also depended on what kind of budget was available for maternity clothing. “I'm sure I had some things that were for pregnancy,” says Laura Carter. “But, like I say, at the time, those first two, we were very limited on money. So, by the second two, he was into a job, and we were more -- more stable. But I have never been one to go out and just buy extras just for that short time. So you just stretched everything out, and then after the pregnancy was over, you just got rid of it!” Some



women just skipped slips altogether to avoid the issue of having to buy one for temporary use.

“Whenever we wore the maternity clothes, you didn't usually wear a slip under it. You [just] had your bra and panties,” says Armina Summers.

None of the women interviewed bought a coat specifically for maternity use, although maternity coats and coat sewing patterns were available. Maternity coats were probably avoided because of their relatively high cost. Coat styles varied greatly throughout the period studied, ranging from narrow coats in the thirties and the first part of the forties, shifting to roomy swing coats in the late 1940s throughout the 1950s, and unfitted styles in the 1960s. When narrower coats were in style, pregnant women wore them unbuttoned. “Just wore your coat and all,” Betty Mitchell remembers. “And course, you couldn't button it [laughing] after a certain length of time.” Swing coats were a boon for pregnant women. Ann Todd remembers a gold boucle coat that she wore during pregnancy: “Your coats were usually full anyway, my coats were. I remember one, I had a gold coat. Gold-colored material. And I remember wearin' it. And it was like a three-quarter coat. It wasn't a long coat, but it would go over your -- it was full.” Kathleen Smoliga says that she only bought swing coats, because she thought they were more flattering for her body shape. This worked very well for her during pregnancy. “I don't know what the ladies did who had a more trim figure when they were -- when they were not expecting. They may have had to buy swing coats specially for that time,” she says. “I don't recall knowing about that, but with me, I had them already. I was all set! I was all set!”

Swimsuits were not a popular item for maternity wear. They were available, pictured in *Harper's Bazaar* as early as 1934, but only one of the women interviewed owned a maternity swimsuit.<sup>66</sup> It is unclear from fashion illustrations how maternity swimsuits were constructed, but 1930s and 1940s designs appear to have used a wraparound construction. Maternity

swimsuits in the 1950s and 1960s were probably elasticized. Simplicity introduced a sewing pattern, Simplicity 3191, for “shorts, halter, and beach coat” in 1950, which was designed for woven fabric and featured shorts with an adjustable panel that buttoned in the front (Figure 5).



Figure 5: Simplicity 3191 sewing pattern, 1950

In Middle Tennessee and surrounding areas, where most of the women lived, pools were not common. “First time I ever had a swimsuit, that was when we got married,” says Betty Hutcheson. On a trip to the beach while she was pregnant, she wore jeans instead. Betty Mitchell seemed surprised at being asked about a maternity swimsuit. “Oh, no,” she says. “We didn’t have a swimmin’ pool or anything. It was just a creek. And then in Fayetteville, they didn’t even have a city pool.” Other women did not wear swimsuits during pregnancy for social

reasons. “Ohhhhhh, you didn't go out in a swimsuit then! Never,” exclaims Carolyn Bradford. Gracie Reed concurred, stating decisively, “No! No, you didn't go swimming when you were pregnant. [chuckles]” The interviewees did not give a reason for this. Swimsuits were not really viewed as a necessity anyway: “Goodness no, we wore old cutoff pants swimming in the creek,” Gracie says. “We lived on the creek. . . . I was married several years 'fore I owned a bathin' suit. We'd cut us off a pair of some of the boys' pants or something.” Carolyn Midgett just didn't want one – “I never have liked the water that much,” she explains. Things did not seem to change in later decades either; when asked if she had a swimsuit during her pregnancies in 1972 and 1974, Jean Gibson just shook her head vehemently. “No. I would just go and sit and watch,” she said, laughing. Marie Smith was the only interviewee who owned a swimsuit, but it was used only in private settings. “This friend of mine – we were real close friends – had a closed-in back yard, and so we got out there and lay in the sun. And, you know, sprinkled ourselves with the hose, and things like that. But see, we did it where it was real private, so. I had a bathing suit. And it was, you know, one of those that stretched real big. But no one saw me in it except her. So.”

For nightgowns, most women made do with roomy styles or larger sizes. “I had to get larger ones after I was past midterm. At first I remember getting Terry's largest shirt, just wearing that. But -- it was mostly just large, large gowns,” says Carolyn Bradford. “I don't think they even made maternity sleepwear. Or if they did, I never had any. I just got larger gowns.” Sleepwear throughout this period was typically loose-fitting, so maternity nightgowns were less necessary. The only instance of maternity sleepwear located was a 1952 Vogue sewing pattern featuring a top virtually identical to maternity daywear, paired with expandable pants (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Vogue 7838 sewing pattern, 1952

A few women had hats specifically to match their maternity clothes, but only for very special occasions. Carolyn Midgett recalls a green hat to match a dress that she wore to a friend's wedding. Peggy Jackson, discussing her blue brocade dress, says, "And then there was a little hat that went with it. It was just, you know, one of those little bands with, like, little flowers and a little swiff of a veil on top of it. And that was -- I wore that to R.H.'s graduation."

The other women who wore hats said that they used hats that they already had, typically in neutral colors.

Pants were a topic that was frequently brought up by the interview participants. The interviewees pregnant in the 1930s and 1940s, and some even into the 1950s, did not wear pants, although maternity slacks were pictured in *Vogue* as early as 1941.<sup>67</sup> Ann Todd, pregnant between 1950 and 1958, observes, “We didn't wear pants for a long, long time. I'd say -- how many years after that, but nobody wore pants at that time.” For some, it seems to have been a matter of indifference; Bessie Miller, pregnant between 1943 and 1959, says, “I can't remember wearin' pants much, but we could've worn 'em at any time. With a loose top, we could have, but I just don't remember if I did or not, really.” Louella Pyle, whose daughter was born in 1946, believes that wearing pants was simply not something that fit into women's ideas about good dressing at the time. “It was just -- just so different then, the way people dressed and everything, you know? Even -- never thought of wearing pants, or anything like that, and I still don't wear 'em.” Wilma Abbott used almost identical phrasing: “Oh no, it was no pants. We never thought about wearin' pants.”

Many women simply did not want to wear pants because they believed that pants were not in style, for maternity or for women's fashion. “I was thinkin' about that this mornin',” said Gracie Reed, when asked about pants. “I said, now pants was not in fashion for women when I was growin' up. In fact, I never had owned a pair of pants. Even went to high school, wore dresses. All the time through high school, and -- and I can't remember just what year we started beginnin' to wear pants. But I cain't remember havin' a -- anything in maternity pants. I was thinkin' that this mornin', I said, ‘Well, women just didn't wear pants back then!’” Gracie views pants as casual wear and seemed to disapprove of women wearing pants to church. “I don't even

-- if somebody come in [to church] with pants on, years ago, I guess they'd've sent 'em home. 'Cause women didn't dress like that." Ruth Williams, pregnant between 1959 and 1962, said that she did not wear pants because they were "not in vogue." Shirley Embry, pregnant around the same time as Ruth, agrees that pants were not fashionable. Betty Hutcheson, pregnant between 1957 and 1964, was the first person who definitely remembered wearing pants during pregnancy; she wore blue jeans to the beach, and she says she usually wore pants during the week. Peggy Jackson had at least one pair of Capri pants that she wore with a sailor-style top.

Even after pants became acceptable for women's wear, some women who wore pants ordinarily did not wear them during pregnancy. Kathleen Smoliga, pregnant in 1960 and 1961, remembers, "I [did not have] a pair of pants for pregnancy. I did wear them around the house and out to shop, after I was slender again. But I don't recall having them for being pregnant. Just those A-line skirts, is what I wore." Weecy Patterson says that "pregnant women didn't wear pants or culottes back then [1956-1959]." Rayma Reese describes pants as a "no-no" during her pregnancies between 1954 and 1959.

Laura Carter seemed unsure as to whether or not she wore pants in her first two pregnancies (1959-1962), but was confident that she did in the last two (1967-1970). "Yeah, I'm sure I had pants because . . . we had pants with other clothing besides maternity. So I'm sure we had some, and they were the ones that prob'ly had either the cutout, or the elastic knit, I guess you would say. [indistinct] But yes, the second [two pregnancies], pants were more prevalent then. People were wearin' more pants. Not to church. But, for everyday." When I asked what kind of places she might have worn pants, she said, "Fish fries. Picnics. Gatherin' outside the home, outdoors," adding that she also wore them around the house because they were comfortable.

In some cases, dress codes affected whether or not a woman wore pants. Ruth Williams, after observing that pants were not in fashion, adds, “See, this [1959 pregnancy] wasn't long after I was outta Lipscomb [a Christian university in Nashville], and you weren't -- girls were not allowed to wear pants on campus, so I'm sure I didn't have any maternity pants.” Although she was no longer in college and the dress code was no longer directly affecting her, it shaped her perception of pants. Dress codes more directly affected Carolyn Midgett, who taught at an elementary school in the small town where she lived. “We couldn't wear pants, when I first taught [while pregnant] with Jennifer. I had a pair of maternity pants [chuckles], but I didn't really wear them to teach, I wore them more just, out, you know, at home, and whatnot.” And pants were definitely not worn to church; Carolyn says that, at church, “we wore nooooo pants.”

Even in the late sixties, pants were not considered appropriate for work. Suzanne Sansom says that during her first pregnancy, in 1968, “I never wore pants, because that wasn't in and we weren't allowed to wear that to work either.” By 1971, the rules seem to have relaxed somewhat. She recalls, “I did have some -- like, some of the bell-bottomed pants, and I guess I did wear some to work, but not -- not a lot, 'cause we just were frowned upon for doing that.” She specifically remembers a green tweed pantsuit that she borrowed from a friend during her 1971 pregnancy. “I . . . wore it to some Christmas parties and things, so I felt really dressed up, you know, because I had -- but that was the only pants of anything I had.” Carolyn Bradford says that during her first two pregnancies, in 1965 and 1968, “it was mostly skirts. . . . At that time, people just did not wear slacks and pants and jeans all the time. By the time my third one came along [in 1972], yes, I wore pants.” Jean Gibson, pregnant between 1972 and 1974, had some pantsuits, and she wore pants around the house as well.

*Maternity Clothing Design*

Styles in maternity clothing varied widely over the decades, corresponding to fluctuations in fashionable style. The most common type of dress construction throughout the thirties was a wraparound dress, determined by an examination of period sewing patterns and confirmed by the interview data. Two-piece dresses, as previously discussed, appeared in the late thirties and, in the forties, were used concurrently with wraparound dresses, drawstring dresses, and dresses adjusted by snap fasteners. The skirts of the two-piece dresses of this period occasionally used a cutout, but more often fastened with snaps or a panel of fabric that covered the abdomen and adjusted with snaps, ties, or buttons.

In the late forties and early fifties, a few dress patterns were produced that featured sundresses in the style of the New Look, with a waistline that either featured pleats with snaps, or elastic hidden under a tie. These seem to have been less common, and were quickly replaced with slim-fitting skirts (most often with a cutout, but also with adjustable panels) worn with loose-fitting tops. In surviving sewing patterns of the fifties, these two-piece dresses almost completely replaced one-piece dresses, but one-piece dresses made a small comeback in the late fifties, continuing into the sixties alongside the two-piece dresses. In the late sixties, the cutout in skirts began to be replaced with stretch panels, and A-line one-piece dresses became more popular.

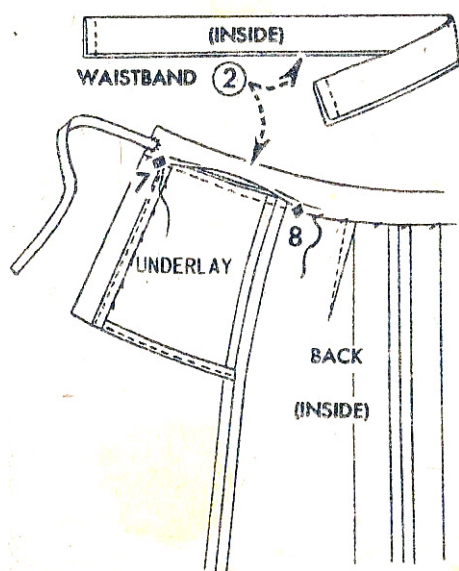
Kate Embry had a Sunday dress in 1935 that was wraparound construction and tied in the back. Armina Summers, pregnant in 1940 and 1943, describes a collared dress that buttoned down the front, sort of a loose-fitting shirtwaist type, for her one-piece dresses, and she also wore one two-piece for each pregnancy. Bessie Miller, pregnant between 1943 and 1959,



describes wraparound dresses for everyday wear, probably for her first pregnancy. “Mama made me some everyday dresses to wear that -- I just called 'em wraparound dresses. I don't know what they would be called, but they just wrapped around. Tied on the side and then they let out bigger as you grew.” She also wore some two-piece dresses. “Then for Sunday, I can remember some Sunday dresses would have that would be maybe a skirt with elastic at the top of it, and then a loose top that hangs down low enough that it covers your stomach.” She emphasizes that all her clothing was loose-fitting, saying, “Now we wanted to wear loose clothes. We didn't want anything that was tight.” Nothing she wore was sleeveless, and nothing had a low neckline. “You just didn't have half your body exposed,” she explains.

Dollie Wolford, between 1944 and 1947, says that she wore “shift dresses,” which she later described as “shirtwaist dresses.” She does not recall whether or not they had buttons down the front. “Seemed like they did have little eyelet ruffles or trim,” she says, and she thinks they were short-sleeved since she wore them both winter and summer. Edith Herbert was pregnant between 1945 and 1947. Most of her dresses, she says, were just loose, like muu-muus, gathered from a yoke with no adjustment for expansion. Her dressier dresses, she says, adjusted with a drawstring waist (“a belt type cord in it, to pull it up. And it would expand as you expanded”). She did not wear any wraparound dresses. Wilma Abbott's dresses in 1946 and 1955 followed a couple of different styles. At home, she wore very loose-fitting garments. She says that some buttoned down the front, and “some of 'em was muu-muus. You just pull 'em over -- you know how they were worn, don't you? -- you just pull 'em over. I had muu-muus.” Gracie Reed remembers having a dress in the forties that expanded with a “string.” Several sewing patterns of that decade depicted dresses with drawstring waists; this is probably what she is referring to. Juanita Burks, between 1947 and 1956, wore mostly two-piece smocks, a top and a skirt. She

says that the skirts had an expandable panel; this would not have been an elasticized panel as was used later, but was probably a drop-front type of panel that tied, snapped, or buttoned in place, as shown in Figure 7. Her favorite dress, which she had made herself, was a smock and skirt. The top featured a Peter Pan collar.



Beginning at the inner end, make buttonhole stitches around slash.

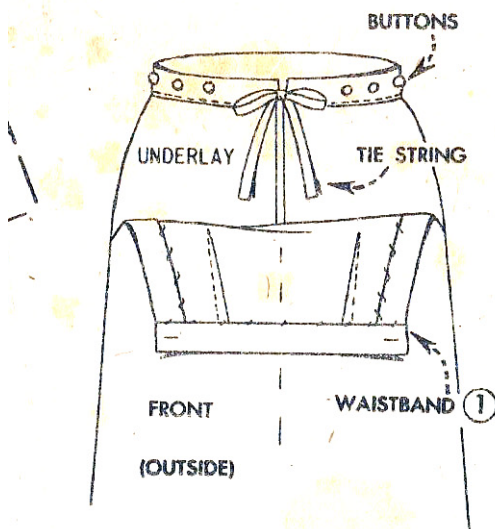
For bar-tack, take 2 or 3 stitches on top of each other at inner end of buttonhole. Work blanket stitches over the threads, taking 2 blanket stitches through the material and underneath the threads at center of tack.



Sew buttons on waistband section (2) at circles.

For tie-strings, cut 2 lengths of 1/2" twill tape each 20" long.

Turn under 1/2" at end of one tie-string and sew securely to position at end of waistband section (2). Sew other tie-string to opposite end.



#### WAISTBAND ADJUSTMENT

Fasten together ends of waistband section (2) with tie-strings.

Slip buttonholes on waistband section (1) over the buttons on section (2) to fit your waistline size.

#### HEM AT LOWER EDGE

Try on skirt. Adjust length; then turn up hem and baste close to turned edge.

Finish hem same as the Overblouse hem.

Re-press pleat.

Figure 7: McCall's 9382 sewing pattern, 1953, detail from guide sheet

Ann Todd, pregnant in 1950 and in 1958, wore sundresses with loose-fitting jackets when she went out “to church, and to town, and times like that.” She said they had elasticized waists, and they probably were something similar to the pattern shown in Figure 8. She did not wear any two-piece dresses.



Figure 8: Simplicity 4193 sewing pattern, 1952

Marie Smith, pregnant between 1950 and 1958, wore two-piece dresses that all followed the same basic design. “They were just skirts with, with that knit stomach,” she remembers. “And – and jackets, that – most of them buttoned, you know, down the front. And that’s all you had; you just didn’t have a variety of clothes.” Rayma Reese, whose children were born in 1954 and 1959, describes her tops in detail. Most had collars, she said, and some buttoned down the front. Some had tucks that came down from the shoulder to add fullness, whereas others featured a pleat on each side of the bust to add fullness. She wore cutout skirts hemmed to her upper to mid calf. One skirt, which she thinks she wore during her first pregnancy, had a stretch panel.

Shirley Embry, pregnant between 1957 and 1960, wore two-piece outfits with cutout skirts.

Linda Ledford, who was pregnant between 1957 and 1968, describes her favorite Sunday dress. It was a two-piece black dress with the top “buttoned down a little ways, placket, and had a white collar and white cuffs.” Weecy Patterson described her favorite two-piece dress from her 1956 pregnancy. It featured a V-neck with a collar, no buttons, and was sleeveless. “It was neat-looking,” she says.

Margaret Williams, in 1958 and 1961, and Kathleen Smoliga, in 1960 and 1961, both wore cutout skirts and full tops. “[The tops] were gathered from the shoulder or the breast -- above the breast, and, you know, flared out,” Kathleen recalls. Kathleen’s favorite top featured a Peter Pan collar and buttoned down the front, with gathers above the bust. Peggy Jackson, pregnant in 1959 and 1962, had a large number of dress styles and was able to identify with certainty some of the sewing patterns used for her dresses. One was a chemise dress with a pleat that opened down the front in a long row of buttons (Figure 9).



Figure 9: McCall's 4900 sewing pattern, 1959

Another was “a black suit that was really neat. . . . It was a wool suit, and it had a Peter Pan . . . type collar at the top. Three-quarter-length sleeves with cuffs, and it had a bubble top. Which, it came in, and it opened down, you know, opened down the front like a regular wool suit, but then it had a drawstring in it. So when you got in, you pulled the little ribbon, and it came -- it was a

drawstring around, below the baby. And it had the pencil slim skirt to wear with it. And it also had another top that I could wear with it that had a satin, black satin square-necked yoke. And it was done -- the yoke was done in black satin. And the sleeves, the body of the top were real soft black knit. And again, it had the bubble shape to it" (Figure 10).



Figure 10: McCall's 4638 sewing pattern, 1958

She also had a two-piece sailor suit (Figure 11), a brocade dress with a V neck, and a dress with a cowl-type collar that tied. "And there were a lot of tops that were like, polished cotton, and



flowered, and they came down with, with a yoke, and had like a band across here, and then flared out from below the bustline,” she adds.



Figure 11: McCall's 4499 sewing pattern, 1958

Betty Hutcheson was pregnant between 1957 and 1964. She wore a lot of two-piece dresses, but she also remembers making a couple of one-piece dresses. They had a yoke across the top, with fullness below, and “a small sleeve.” Laura Carter wore sleeveless two-piece dresses, some with a contrasting skirt and some with a matching skirt, in her earlier pregnancies

(1959-1962). In her later pregnancies (1967-1970), she wore shift dresses. She has photographs of one worn as a jumper with a collared blouse underneath; the other is a short-sleeved dress with a mandarin collar. She says that her pants and skirts had an elastic panel rather than a cutout. Suzanne Sansom also wore one-piece shift dresses during her pregnancies in 1968 and 1970. “Basically, I wore dresses that were just loose, hung from the shoulder,” she explains. “Maybe had a few tucks in the front. They weren't fitted anywhere.” She says that they were mostly short sleeves with a jewel neckline. Jean Gibson discusses one-piece dresses as well, adding that her mother also made her a few tops by shortening the longer dress pattern.

### *Fabrics and Prints Used in Maternity Clothing*

A variety of fabrics were used for maternity clothing; according to the interviews, the most popular type for almost all decades was cotton with a printed design. According to Armina Summers, pregnant in 1940 and 1943, “They were just made outta cotton material. Just any kind of print that you wanted. . . . Well, I had some plaid ones. Some fine checked ones. But they'd be mingled colors.” Gracie Reed, pregnant between 1945 and 1966, agreed: “Mostly just common prints, is what we wore. Maybe a stripe or a solid, and maybe the top would be solid, and the skirt'd be solid and top would be floral, or somethin'. . . . And whatever print, you know, I had -- some was floral, and I even remember havin' stripes. And also solid. So. . . . I'm thinkin' this solid one I had was solid navy blue. And you know, what you used to call broadcloth. It was just a cotton material.” Some people, though, wore more solids than prints. According to Betty Mitchell, pregnant in 1951 and 1956, her dresses were all solid colors. “Cause people didn't wear too much, uh, prints. When you was pregnant.” Whether a solid or a print was used probably depended a great deal on personal preference. “I didn't go for solids,” explains Carolyn Bradford. “I liked designs, flowers.”



Cotton was used in a variety of different forms. Rayma Reese mentioned having a blue chambray top that she wore with a navy blue skirt. Carolyn Midgett had some seersucker outfits. Peggy Jackson had cotton twill. Kathleen Smoliga was the only person to mention corduroy; she and her friends commonly wore corduroy maternity clothing, to church as well as for every day. This may have been geographically influenced, as Kathleen was living in the Ozarks at the time.

Fabric type often determined how “dressy” a dress was. “The material has a lot to do with [how casual or how dressy an outfit is]. More so than the style, it was the material,” explains Laura Carter. “You take the cotton with the plaids and all that, is more casual. And, but then if you get the materials that are -- have more of a silky feel to them, they would be dressier.” This principle held true regardless of decade. Kate Embry, in 1935, had a silk dress for church, which she describes as “like kind of a modern print. Just – squared,” a geometric print. For everyday use, she had cotton dresses. Juanita Burks describes two dresses she made for her last pregnancy in 1956: Juanita: “With the last one, I made [a Sunday dress] out of -- I call it a brocade type fabric. It was red and black, you know, printed stuff. And I thought it was very elegant.” Early in the same pregnancy, she had a green floral voile. “It was a green flower'dy figured all over dress,” she says. About her everyday garb, she says, “The others were just cotton smocks that I made,” which were printed fabrics.

The time of year was another thing that impacted what fabric types were used, according to Bessie Miller. “It depended on what time of the year it was,” she explains. “Course I had one in [child] January and one in April, one in September, and -- so it was -- dependin' on the time of year as to what fabric it was made. Just kinda whatever you had in other clothes.” Edith Herbert said a similar thing, “Fabric that was suitable to the season,” but didn’t elaborate any further on what she meant.

The family's income level determined fabric choices a lot of the time. Sometimes the fabric selection for maternity clothing was determined by what would hold up long enough to get through the pregnancy. Betty Hutcheson says, "Alton was just a little ol' airman, and we'd get paid ever' two weeks, so, you know. And, we what, we get three yards [of fabric] for a dollar back then? And, course, you know, you wash it a few times, and it's faded. But that's, you know, that's the way it was back then. I couldn't afford the expensive fabric, but you know, these would last me a -- a while." Edith Herbert attributes her fabric choices to what was available in 1945 and 1947 when her boys were born. "Well, all we had then was cotton. . . . We didn't have polyester," she says. "We didn't have the combination of cotton-polyester, and -- and all the others. . . . Prints, I would say. Prints more than solids. But, uh, quiet prints."

Peggy Jackson, since her mother worked in the fabric department of Cain-Sloan, listed a wider variety of fabrics than anyone else interviewed. She described a wool suit, worn with either a wool top or with a satin top; a heavy green-and-white twill sailor suit; a blue brocade outfit; and a pink brocade top with peau de soie collar and skirt. She had others, as well; she described these as some of the more unusual pieces that she had. "There were a lot of tops," she says, "that were like, polished cotton, and flowered, and they came down with, with a yoke, and had like a band across here, and then flared out from below the bustline. And those -- I liked those, because they were really cool [in temperature]." There were a few other fabric types mentioned by others. Shirley Embry had a wool suit; Linda Ledford had a black linen dress for church.

The interviewees pregnant in the late 1960s indicate there was a dramatic shift into polyester double knit, for maternity clothing as well as regular clothing. Suzanne Sansom, pregnant in 1968 and 1970, says,

I may have had some print dresses that were cotton, [but mostly] just the solids and the double knits. . . . The polyester double knit. Yeah. It was hot. And it never wore out. That stuff will be here for a thousand years. It will! . . . That's -- those things will never wear out. They just didn't wear out or disintegrate or whatever. . . . Was easy to sew on, and . . . it was pretty stable. I wouldn't wanna go back to it, I don't think, but at that time it was in fashion, so I liked it.

Apparently the polyester double knit was memorable. It was the thing that apparently stands out the most to Jean Gibson; when asked to tell me about her maternity clothes, the first thing she said was, “Just double knit.”

### *Color in Maternity Clothing*

The interviewees described a wide variety of color in their maternity clothing. Colors for everyday maternity clothing were sometimes difficult to pinpoint, but many women were able to describe the colors of their Sunday dresses in detail. Color was dependent on a wide range of factors. Some toned down their colors for pregnancy while others just wore whatever they wanted to; for some, color was dependent on the season; and others depended on neutrals to stretch a limited budget into a perceived larger number of outfits. One thing is certain, however; no one was completely indifferent to color.

Many women wore whatever colors they liked. Kate Embry describes her 1935 silk dress as a light green print with white, in a geometric pattern, but had no recollection of the colors of her cotton dresses. Armina Summers describes her clothing of 1940 and 1943 as being multicolored in different prints, “usually not real bright, but medium, I'd say.” Bessie Miller, pregnant in the 1940s and the 1950s, did not recall any particular colors, but said that they were the same colors she would have worn in her ordinary clothing.

Women who sewed their own clothing typically exerted more control over the colors used. Wilma Abbott, whose children were born in 1946 and 1955, also did not remember specific colors, but agreed with Bessie that she would have just made her maternity clothing in colors that she liked. “Well, I liked browns. And I always wore somethin' in pink. I never wore much red,” she said, laughing. “So. So it was mostly any color I would've liked.” Gracie Reed, on the other hand, loved red. “Well, I always wore a lotta red, so, prob'ly my prints had a little red in 'em,” she says, chuckling. She had other colors as well. “But the thing that I'm thinkin' about -- course, you cain't remember everything -- but I'm thinkin' this solid one I had was solid navy blue.” The colors in Gracie's maternity wardrobe did not vary substantially from her other clothing. “It was about the same [as your regular clothing], 'cause you'd just go to a cloth shop and you like this print, and this material, you'd get that,” she explains. Jean Gibson, pregnant in 1972 and 1974, chose her colors according to “just what the fabric store had to offer. My favorite [dress] . . . was a pretty green and gold, and then it had a cream-colored background.”

Colors may have been livelier in nicer dresses than everyday dresses. Juanita Burks describes a bold red and black brocade Sunday dress for her 1956 pregnancy, as well as a green “flower'dy” print dress that was also for dressier occasions. She was slightly less certain about her other dresses, but says, “I'm sure there were some blues and -- and striped type -- stripes. But other than some blue, I don't remember any. Course it had a little deep red, you know, wine-ish red color. In with the stripe.” Margaret Williams, pregnant in 1958 and 1961, says, “One of the [outfits] that Lillian made was blue. The top and the skirt. And I wore it every other Sunday. And the other one was like a plum color skirt, and a multicolor top.” Margaret does not remember a lot about the construction details of these dresses, but the colors were very memorable for her. “I just remember the color. It was really pretty. Or I thought it was!” she

says, laughing. Peggy Jackson describes a wide color range in her maternity wardrobe, including a mint green Sunday outfit, a black suit, a green and white sailor suit that could be worn with a green skirt or green Capri pants, a pink brocade outfit with a pink peau de soie skirt, and a blue brocade outfit. She also had two dresses that were made from the same sewing pattern in different colors; one was burnt orange and one was navy.

Neutral colors were the preference of some women, not because they were pregnant, but because that was their default. Betty Hutcheson says that she wore subdued colors most of the time, and this held true for her maternity clothing as well as her regular wardrobe. “I used to wear a lot of tans and grays and blacks. . . . I don't think I wore bright colors when I was pregnant. . . . I like, like a dark brown and a beige together, you know,” Betty says, “And then I wore blacks and grays together. And that's more or less what I had, except [a] little melon-colored dress. More or less what I wore when I was pregnant.”

Some women seemed slightly ambivalent about whether or not pregnancy had an impact on their color choices. “I've always loved all colors,” says Edith. “Loved blue. I might've even had white, I don't know, in -- in the summertime. . . . I would say all colors. And, and fabric at that time, you went and selected at the fabric store what you thought was pretty.” This seems to imply that she wore whatever colors she wanted. She did say later, however, that “loud” colors should be avoided. “Just -- it was something you didn't want to attract people to you,” she explains. “It was okay that you were pregnant -- and you wore, you still wanted to go out and to go places and all, but you were -- modest about what you wore and what you had on and how you looked.” I asked her if she wore colors similar to what she would have worn ordinarily. “Most likely, most likely,” she said. A possible explanation for this seeming contradiction is that

Edith may not have thought that loud colors were attractive at any time, so maintaining a socially-acceptable color palette during pregnancy required no changes on her part.

A few women actually did modify their usual color palettes for their maternity wardrobes. Marie Smith, pregnant between 1950 and 1958, said outright that she kept her colors low-key, attributing it to a carryover from the previous generation's attitudes about pregnancy. "Well, they weren't really – they – most of them weren't bright colors; they were pretty kinda dull, and mostly solid colors. I don't remember having anything that wadn't a solid color." When asked why, Marie replied, "I don't know whether that was just a -- thing with – you just didn't – it was, I mean, you tried not to look pregnant. I mean, it was a – you didn't discuss pregnancy in a mixed group . . . because the era before me, it was VERY hush-hush. . . . And so, it was just a thing that, that was just the custom." Kathleen Smoliga also wore more subdued colors, during her pregnancies in 1960 and 1961. "I remember darker colors, like browns, with paisley flowers, paisley design maybe, maybe just plain navy," she says. "Just mostly darker, nothing -- nothing to draw great attention to ourselves." However, Kathleen is careful to emphasize that this was not out of a desire to hide: "You know, we didn't -- we were not embarrassed to be pregnant, at that time, that era."

Linda Ledford was one of my more fashion-conscious interviewees; she describes herself as having a high level of interest in fashion, and she kept up with current styles by reading magazines. She consciously eliminated red from her wardrobe during pregnancy.

Charity: What types of colors did you tend to like to wear?

Linda: Uh, blues, uh, not navy, uh, other shades of blues, and I liked red, but I don't remember. I guess I remember thinking that red wasn't good for maternity thing, and I had some prints, some cotton prints.

C: Why did you decide that red wasn't good for it?

L: I just thought it made you -- stand out. [laughs]

C: You were trying to avoid that a little more?

L: Yeah. Yeah. [laughs]

Some women's modifications of their wardrobe colors may have been less intentional. I asked Carolyn Midgett, pregnant in 1965 and 1968, what colors she typically liked to wear. "Normally, I choose colors like fuchsia. My favorite color is blue. I don't remember bright colors being in my maternity wardrobe," she says. When asked what the reason was, she replied, "I don't know. I hadn't thought of that. But it could be that -- the ones who made it were of the old school of thinking, 'Hide! Don't have anything flashy!' I don't know. That's interesting," she concludes, laughing. Unlike many of the other interviewees, most of Carolyn's clothing was either purchased or made by a seamstress; since she did not sew it herself, her color choices were more limited than those who sewed for themselves.

For some, wearing more muted maternity clothing continued at least through the 1960s. "I don't remember any of my maternity dresses being bright colors; I think they were more muted and the solids," says Suzanne Sansom, who was pregnant in 1968 and 1970.

"But other clothes I had, I do rememb- 'cause I kinda liked bright colors. I can remember having an orange pantsuit, and then like the colorblock dress was the bright shocking pinks."

Charity: So why did you go more muted on the maternity clothes?

Suzanne: I'm assuming that was also a mental thing, or maybe they were always shown that way, in the solid colors. Rather than, obviously, I guess you didn't want big flowers or big prints.

C: And what's a reason for that?

S: Prob'ly still to camouflage you more, I think. I don't know any other reason there would've been, but I don't remember ever seeing any that were -- bright colors, or.

Louella Pyle, whose daughter was born in 1946, outlined difficulties that she had obtaining certain things following World War II, and availability was a key factor in determining what colors she wore. “I liked, I’ve always liked more like pastels. But back then you didn’t have much choice, you just wore what you had,” she explains.

Colors were also seasonally influenced. Edith Herbert mentioned that she might have worn white maternity clothing in the summer, implying that she would not have done this in the winter. Kathleen Smoliga, who earlier related her darker clothing to social views about pregnancy, also explains her maternity color choices seasonally. “At that time, and the circles I moved in, in the winter, that we used those basic colors more,” she explains. This principle was not limited to maternity clothing; it applied to regular clothing as well. “It was a custom then to use more darker clothes in the winter; now we use all kinds of bright clothing all winter,” Kathleen says. “But then, we usually used the darker clothes in the winter; you know, we’d say, ‘Well, it’s time to put away my summer clothes,’ and the more colorful ones in the summer. They were cooler, and flowers were blooming, so we wore blooms on our clothing. But in the winter, I just remember the more subdued, darker colors.” Peggy Jackson describes her green-and-white sailor outfit as being “very much a summer type thing.” And, of course, some women chose certain colors for holidays. Carolyn Midgett had a Christmas outfit that she liked. “One of them that I had for Jeannette [1968] was a green -- and it was a one-piece [that] had red buttons, so I could wear that at Christmas, and felt really good. Kind of a Christmas green, and then . . . I wore a red long-sleeved sweater” (Figure 12).





Figure 12: Carolyn Midgett and family, Christmas 1967

The interviewees used neutral colors served to stretch limited wardrobes, since neutrals coordinate well with other colors. When two-piece outfits were popular, several women mentioned wearing neutral skirts – mostly black, brown, and navy – with different tops. Since

most had limited wardrobes, having just a few neutral skirts that could be worn with a variety of tops was a frequently-used strategy. “It was basically A-line skirts, usually black, sometimes brown or navy, but usually black, with the tummy cutout,” explains Kathleen Smoliga. Shirley Embry listed the exact same three colors as what she had in skirts, as did Rayma Reese: “I think I had three . . . a navy and a brown and a black skirt. And then I had tops that went with them.” As in ordinary women’s wear, suits were most often described in neutral colors (beige, black, or brown).

Simultaneously, many women made an effort to include tops in a variety of colors to keep their wardrobe from looking too limited. “[I had] white, and I had red [tops] -- just any, all variety of colors. I just tried to mix them up so that -- I know they were the same outfit, but different blouses made it feel different. And I think we wore a lot of bows then. Blouses with maybe bigger sleeves and then you tie the bow in the front, and that kinda looked different,” says Carolyn Midgett.

The limited wardrobes of pregnancy may have also led to some relaxing of the rules about color that were usually observed. Kathleen says that combinations such as black and navy or black and brown were acceptable in maternity wear, but not in other clothing. “I recall wearing those basic black skirts -- everybody did. I think even with the brown top,” says Kathleen. “But usually, at that time . . . we would not wear black and brown together. Nor black and navy.”

Some women utilized neutrals to create striking ensembles. Linda Ledford describes her favorite outfit, a simple black linen two-piece dress, long-sleeved, with a white collar and cuffs. Every time she wore the outfit, she accessorized with pearls and a black-and-white hat. Rayma

Reese had a white smock top that she wore with a black skirt in the summertime, accessorized with a red flower and red shoes.

## Perception of Maternity Clothing and the Pregnant Figure

### *Functions of Maternity Clothing*

Several different functions of maternity clothing were identified through the interview process. Comfort in maternity clothing was identified as one of the most important functions by several of the interviewees. Related to comfort, expansion of maternity clothing was a necessity for a garment to be wearable for the entire duration of the pregnancy. Maternity clothing was also used as a sartorial announcement of pregnancy.

Comfort in maternity clothing was paramount for many of the women. Kathleen Smoliga says about her maternity clothes, “They were comfortable. Very comfortable. You know, you had the tie you could loosen at the tummy, and you had this thing that would balloon out, so you were just as comfortable as you could be. And I was all for that. [laughs] I think we all were all for comfort.” Comfort was also a key factor for women who expressed dissatisfaction with their maternity clothing. “I didn't like the cutout,” explains Carolyn Bradford.

The cutout was so -- large -- and like I said, I -- well, I had what you call a petite frame. Small bones. The cutout was always too large, even though I pulled the strings up as tight as I could. And it was uncomfortable. And I was always afraid that my top, the wind would catch it and it would blow up and everybody would see that I didn't really fill out that big hole! [laughs] . . . That's why the stretch material -- even if your top blew up some, you know, it's okay! And it was much more comfortable.

Bessie Miller said that she preferred her two-piece dresses to the one-piece dresses; when asked why, she said, “I guess more comfortable. Course it was always the material that would just be loose and flowin' and didn't stick to ya, and I guess it was more comfortable.”

Comfort increased in importance as the pregnancy progressed. For Peggy Jackson, who was (and still is) very style-conscious, comfort became the most important function of her clothing. “There at the end [of the pregnancy] when it was getting very warm, and I was getting very large [laughing] I wore anything that was cool [laughing] and comfy and big. [Laughs.]” Weecy Patterson described wearing a housecoat type of garment throughout the majority of her 1956 pregnancy with twins. For her everyday wear, fashion took a backseat to comfort. “And I just went to seven months with my twins. And it was very, very uncomfortable; so therefore, I wore a -- a straight housedress most of the time. You know, unless I went out. So. I didn't have any choices to -- and they sure weren't pretty [laughs].”

Another important function of maternity clothing was its expansion capabilities. Laura Carter, who wore two-piece dresses in her earlier pregnancies and shifted to one-piece in her later pregnancies as fashion changed, described differences between the expansion allowance of the two styles. “Well, in the beginning, you don't really [need a lot of room] – [but later] they get tight. Yeah. But the ones that are two-piece, you know, flowin' top, you're gonna have room in the beginning. But these [indicating the one-piece dresses] were gonna get tight, the one-piece.” A garment that did not provide adequate expansion had to be discarded after a certain point. Carolyn Midgett had that problem with some maternity jumpers, as shown in Figure 13.



Figure 13: Carolyn Midgett and her family, July 1968

“The black and the brown little . . . jumper[s], I couldn't wear them toward the end,” she explains. “Because they did not expand. They were just smaller. But they were the only ones that I remember that I couldn't. But the rest of them were just flowing, and expanded.”

Some expansion methods worked better than others. Peggy Jackson relates a memorable story about the failure of a garment.

P: I had one that was a mint green cotton, almost a batiste, very lightweight. Bob was born in August, so it was getting pretty warm. And I had that one on one Sunday at church; had little buttons down the front. Matching skirt. And the skirt was one of the ones that had the snaps? It had the strap that came around to tie here, and then the front



came up and snapped. And you would have a series of snaps that you got bigger and you need to come -- out. Well, we're standing up singing that Sunday, and I sneezed real hard. All the snaps -- which weren't many of them attached at that point -- pop loose, and so did the cord, and [laughs]. We're standing up, and I go [makes popping noise]. [Both laugh.] R.H. said, "What's wrong?" and at that point I was overdue with the baby. I said, "My -- skirt -- just -- came -- loose." [Both laugh.] "Completely!" [Both laugh.]

C: What did you do?

P: Well, I managed to wiggle around and get the thing refastened under it, but [laughing while talking] Jim Neely was sitting behind us and said, "What happened?" [Both laugh.] "You don't wanna know." [Both laugh for a long time.] But that was one time that the maternity clothes were not quite big enough! [Laughs.]

One somewhat surprising function of maternity clothing was its use as a sartorial announcement of pregnancy. Since pregnancy was usually only discussed among family and closer female friends, maternity clothing was utilized as a subtle way to announce the pregnancy. "Maybe your very closest friend, you would tell soon. And of course your family," says Kathleen Smoliga. "But -- usually we just -- when we wore a smock. Was when, like, the whole [church] congregation -- "Oh!" you know, they would look at you, but they wouldn't say too much, you know, but then, later, after service, they'd come up, [whispering] "Oh, we didn't know you were expecting!" Some people were very excited to start wearing maternity clothing, maybe even before it was needed, just so everyone would know. "You wanted to wear that [maternity] dress and you -- that meant you were pregnant," explains Carolyn Midgett. "So, I mean, even if you weren't showing very much, some people wore 'em right away. And so -- but it was just complete [sic] different -- the two piece style and all, or the one-piece shift. . . . [Ordinarily] I wanted to have a waist. But then as soon as you got pregnant, you just hopped right into that little -- [laughs] and you were proud!"

For some, it was a problem that maternity clothing functioned as a pregnancy announcement. Betty Mitchell was very self-conscious about hers. "I know I kinda dreaded

goin' into those maternity clothes. 'Cause everybody would know it was you that was pregnant. [Laughs.]” Other interviewees avoided maternity clothing as long as possible to keep their jobs. Margaret Williams wore gathered skirts as long as she could to disguise her 1958 pregnancy, but was fired by her employer when she started wearing maternity clothing. “He figured it out. I don't think I had told him,” she says. “I think -- course, I had, uh, gathered skirts, just. And so I finally got so big I couldn't wear them anymore, and so something was gonna have to happen. [laughs] Um. But he told me one day, he said, [quietly] ‘You can't work here anymore because you're pregnant.’” Reasons for a negative view of women working during pregnancy may have included concern that pregnancy did not look professional or portrayed a poor image of the company, or concern for the safety of the woman and/or the baby. Rules about pregnancy in the workplace persisted throughout the entire period studied and are further discussed in another section of this paper.

### *Factors Influencing Perception of Maternity Clothing*

During the interview process, a couple of questions were asked to ascertain the interviewees' level of fashion consciousness and how that related to their maternity clothing. I thought that fashion sense probably impacted on the wearer's perception of maternity clothing. Instead of the most fashion-conscious being the happiest or least happy with their clothing, the people who seemed happiest with their maternity clothing were those who had the most *control* over their clothing choices. In some cases, these were the people who were very interested in fashion; others only had a mild interest.

Betty Hutcheson had little interest in fashion at the time of her pregnancies. “[I was] not really [into fashion] . . . just simple things.” Her fashion choices at the time were limited by her

budget. “Like I said, we were from a family of eight, we couldn't afford very much. And, even after -- Alton was just a little ol' airman, and we'd get paid ever' two weeks, so, you know.”

Even buying fabric was a strain on the budget; the grade of fabric that Betty thought was affordable at the time was poor quality and faded quickly. “I couldn't afford the expensive fabric, but you know, these would last me a -- a while,” she says. She didn't feel very good about her appearance during pregnancy. “I felt so sloppy. All the time,” she explains. “I was just -- and -- but, you know, people say you're pretty, you're glowin', and all that, but I sure didn't feel it.” At the time of her pregnancies, Betty typically wore neutral colors, simple clothing. She began branching out into brighter colors a few years later, and the change dramatically improved the way she felt about her appearance. “So you know, that really made a difference in the way I felt,” she says. “And I didn't realize that. So from then on, I wore, you know, bright colors. And I like it.”

Carolyn Bradford expressed frustration with her maternity clothing due to her lack of sewing knowledge at the time. “If I had known how to change them, I would have made the maternity top not as big, at first, so that it could expand and grow with you. But I had no knowledge of how to do that,” she says. Much of it was borrowed, and she did not think it fit her sense of style. “Like, it would have a bow on the side, whereas I thought, ‘That's not in proportion; that's not me.’ [laughs] Or a large button over to the side, and I thought, ‘*Why* do they do it over to the side? It's just -- [laughs].” At the time, however, Carolyn says that she “hardly could sew on a button.” And since finances were tight in her first pregnancies, she did not have the option to go out and buy what she wanted. The lack of control over her wardrobe led to a lot of frustration.



Some women had no interest in fashion, but were still happy with their maternity clothing. Armina Summers, when asked about her level of interest in fashion, says, laughing, “Well, I didn't think anything much about it.” But her lack of interest in fashion had no negative effect on her perception of her clothing; Armina says that she liked her maternity clothing. This can probably be attributed to Armina’s control over her fashion choices; she sewed her own clothing. Although money was tight, she had some options in her fabric selection: “Just any kind of print that you wanted,” she says.

Betty Mitchell seemed neutral in her reaction to her maternity clothing. When asked if she liked them, she replied, “I guess I did. I really didn't think nothin' about it. But I waited as long as possible 'fore I ever wore 'em.” Betty says that she was “selected as the best-dressed girl in Lincoln County High School” and that her mother was a fashion role model for her. “She wanted me to be the best-dressed girl ever,” Betty says. Finances did not seem to be a problem for Betty’s family; neither she nor her mother sewed, and she did not mention any economic limitations to what she purchased. “I didn’t sew at all,” she says, “and my mother didn’t either. All my clothes was bought clothes.” Betty purchased her maternity clothing at a local department store in Fayetteville, Tennessee. She recalls there being a good selection of maternity clothes, but she didn’t purchase that many.

Dollie Wolford, who only had two maternity dresses for her 1944 pregnancy, was interested in fashion insofar as it related to dressmaking: “Well, since I sew, I've always been interested in -- in sewing and patterns and -- and material, and all that goes with it.” Even with only two dresses, Dollie liked her wardrobe. When asked what she thought of her maternity dresses, she replies, laughing, “Well, I reckon I was pleased with 'em, or I would've done somethin' about it!”

Juanita Burks was somewhat adventurous in her maternity clothing, wearing clothing that she thought might have been viewed as less fashionable in her social circle, but she was happy with her clothing and particularly proud of her Sunday dress, a two-piece maternity dress with a red and black brocade top and a black skirt. “I thought it was very elegant,” she says. Juanita didn’t have a lot of money to spend on clothing, but she was a good seamstress and kept up with current styles by reading the newspaper. “We were so poor that, you know [chuckles] I couldn’t get out and buy somethin’ fancy. Course, but I thought what I made was as nice as somethin’ I could buy,” she says. “I could see pictures in the paper of things that I liked, and I’d find me a pattern, you know, and make it.” When asked about how fashionable her clothing was, she says, “Oh, I never really thought about that. I know some of the women thought -- I was really out of style ‘cause I didn’t wear [one-piece] dresses. Seemed like one woman loaned me her dress.” But her friends’ perception did not negatively affect the way Juanita viewed her clothing. “I always thought I -- I looked fairly well, you know,” she explains. “I didn’t like bein’ so big, but [chuckles]. But that -- no, I always felt like I was dressed, dressed up, especially with your hose and your hat and your gloves, and -- so I felt like I was dressed as well as anybody, I guess.” Although Juanita did not have the money to go out and buy whatever she wanted, she maintained control of her style through dressmaking, which had a huge impact on her perception of her maternity clothing. This level of control gave her confidence in her clothing choices even though her friends were wearing different styles. And her red brocade top? “Nobody else had one like it,” she says proudly.

Peggy Jackson was the person interviewed who seems to have been the most enthusiastic about her maternity wardrobe. As already discussed, Peggy had a very large selection of high-quality maternity clothes sewn by her mother. “Mother made me a fantastic wardrobe,” she says.

“I enjoyed my maternity clothes.” This gave her a lot of options for maternity clothing, which was probably key to her enjoyment of her wardrobe.

Style had a significant impact on women’s perception of maternity clothing; the interview participants wanted to dress attractively during pregnancy. Carolyn Midgett, whose college degree was in home economics, had a particular interest in fashion that carried over to her maternity clothing. “I wanted all my maternity clothes to look nice, and specially since I was teaching, I didn't want to -- to go out in anything that wadn't appropriate,” she explains. “You would have never worn somethin' -- that was different, that would buck the system, I mean. You know, you wanted to be -- in style, and accepted and everything.” Rayma Reese agrees: “You want to be like other people. You know. [laughs] Yeah, and I think it -- to me, it was important to -- to look nice. In maternity clothes as well as anything else you wear.”

Style was important in keeping up morale during pregnancy. “Well, you always wanna look good,” says Weecy Patterson. “Cause I think, you know, even seein' a pregnant lady, you know, that's important. And I tried to look good. Maintain my -- appearance. And I think that's important in your whole outlook. If you don't care how you look, you know, that -- to me it just brought you down.”

Style was most important in dressy clothing; this may be why many of the interviewees were able to give better descriptions of their Sunday dresses than they were of their house dresses. At-home wear was primarily based on comfort rather than attractiveness. Weecy Patterson gives a detailed description of her blue dress that she wore when she went out, but dismisses the house dresses, saying, “The rest of 'em was for comfort, you know, somethin' -- slouchy.”

Style in maternity clothing was sometimes relative; many women were not particularly fond of their maternity clothing, but they still did the best they could. “It was just a matter of [what] you could wear that looked nice, that didn’t show your pregnancy much,” says Marie Smith. Style was not, however, usually the primary function of maternity clothing. When asked about her interest in fashion during her pregnancies, Margaret Williams replies, laughing, “Something to cover my body. Pretty much.”

Another important factor in the perception of maternity clothing was comparison with friends. Most of the interviewees mentioned wanting to look like their friends, in both their regular clothing and their maternity clothing; if their friends were all wearing similar maternity clothes, they seemed to be much happier about their maternity clothing. As long as they felt they were keeping up with everyone else, they had a higher level of satisfaction with their clothing. “You know how teenagers all like to be like one another?” asks Kathleen Smoliga. “Well, I think we pregnant ladies did. We all -- we all kinda -- we shared and dressed the same way. And we were happy that way. I recall being happy that way.” Rayma Reese expressed a similar thought. “You want to be like other people. You know,” says Rayma Reese. “To me, it was important to -- to look nice. In maternity clothes as well as anything else you wear.” Shirley Embry says, “I wasn't embarrassed; I wore what everyone else wore when they were pregnant. . . . I liked to dress the way all my friends were dressing.” The word “we” was used frequently by the interviewees regarding what they wore; this may be indicative of the modern mindset in which fashion was more collective and less individualized as it is in today’s postmodern fashion world. Although many were feeling uncomfortable with the drastic changes in their body shape imposed by pregnancy, the women interviewed found security in the fact that all their friends were

wearing the same things. “Everybody just wore that type of maternity clothes,” says Marie Smith. “That was just the thing.”

Ann Todd, pregnant in 1950 and 1958, explains, “Whatever other people were wearin' at that time, I liked to look like they did and not look different.” This attitude was very prevalent among the women I interviewed. She adds, “I always liked fashion. But I wasn't always able to have the latest fashions.” Although Ann couldn't necessarily get the latest and greatest thing every time, she was satisfied as long as she kept up with her friends. She liked her maternity clothing fairly well. “The ones I had [were] well-made, and I liked to wear 'em, because I had to wear somethin', I guess. And then you didn't go -- I don't think I ever heard of anybody buying any maternity clothes at the store.” Ann probably felt more confident in her clothing decisions when they were similar to those of other people – since no one in her social circle bought maternity clothing, she was fine with having hers made by her mother.

Carolyn Midgett had a high level of interest in fashion and kept up to date with the latest trends. “Since I was a home economics major, I was very into fashion,” she explains. “And I would look at magazines, and I would look at catalogs.” About her maternity clothes, she says, “Oh, I think they were in style. . . . I mean, this is what everybody was wearing. You would have never worn somethin' -- that was different, that would buck the system, I mean. You know, you wanted to be -- in style, and accepted and everything, so yeah.”

Edith Herbert, like many of the interviewees, looked to her friends to determine what was in vogue. Edith explains that, since they did not have television, “I guess we were more influenced then by people that we saw, and course we had magazines.” Since she didn't actually subscribe to any magazines herself, she mostly got fashion ideas from friends and family. “It was so-and-so looks nice in that, and -- and she's wearing that, maybe that would be.”

The desire to fit in was universal across all the decades examined. “I don't remember ever looking at someone else and thinking, ‘Well, that looks really better than what I have,’ or ‘looks good’ or whatever,” says Suzanne Sansom of her 1968 and 1970 maternity clothes. “I think I prob'ly was as in with the fashion. . . . I don't think anybody had things different from what I had.”

Some women viewed their maternity clothing more as an expression of style, while others deemed it a functional necessity. For some people, the idea that it was just supposed to be functional may have reduced their concern about how their clothing looked. Ruth Williams sums up this idea succinctly: “To me, it was just a matter-of-fact thing -- I had to have 'em, so, I got 'em.” Shirley Embry agrees. “We just didn't worry about being fashionable; we were pregnant, and that was it,” Shirley says. “It was just a fact of life, you had to wear those -- prob'ly didn't like 'em too well. [Chuckles.]” Bessie Miller also took a very practical view of her clothing. “We didn't have the frills that some people would've had, but -- but I always had ample clothes to wear for whatever occasion it needed to be, but. We didn't put a lotta emphasis on the looks of clothes, I guess.” Bessie had no particular favorite among her maternity clothes – “[You] just wore whatever you had,” she said, chuckling.

Others viewed maternity clothing as a functional necessity, and they did not particularly enjoy it. “I didn't like 'em,” says Betty Hutcheson. “But, you know, you had to wear them. Or go naked, and that wadn't no option!” she added, laughing. Weecy Patterson primarily wore house dresses because they were the most comfortable thing she could find. Although they were comfortable, she didn't really like them. “I wore a -- a straight housedress most of the time. You know, unless I went out. So. I didn't have any choices to -- and they sure weren't pretty,” she said, laughing. “I wish they'da had some of the styles they have today.”

Peggy Jackson, although still practical in her maternity clothing, had more fun with it as a fashion statement than did any of the other interviewees. The fact that her maternity wardrobe was just as stylish as the rest of her clothes seems to have had a positive impact on her perception of it. Her descriptions read like a fashion magazine; she described them while she sketched them for me – “This was blue brocade. And then there was a little hat that went with it. It was just, you know, one of those little bands with, like, little flowers and a little swiff of a veil,” and “The top . . . was covered in flowers, like embroidered little flowers of pink and gray, and then . . . it was scoop neck, and it had the turned-back collar, and that was in the pink peau de soie, and pink peau de soie skirt,” and “Then I had a black suit that was really neat. . . . Three-quarter-length sleeves with cuffs, and it had a bubble top. . . . And it had the pencil slim skirt to wear with it. And it also had another top that I could wear with it that had a satin, black satin square-necked yoke. . . . They were very dressy, gave you a very classic type look.”

A conspicuous thing lacking from the discussion of fashion and maternity clothing was the influence of fashion magazines, although the fashion magazines typically ran articles on maternity fashion at least once a year. In fact, the majority of the interviewees did not subscribe to any magazines. “I doubt very seriously if I took any magazines, ‘cause as I say, money was scarce, and so you – you didn’t have a lot of extras like that,” explains Marie Smith. Instead, they received their fashion information from the pattern catalogs in the stores. Linda Ledford was the only interviewee who remembers subscribing to any magazines. At the time, she subscribed to *Ladies’ Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping*. But she says, “You know, I don’t remember seeing maternity clothes in those.” Linda thinks that she may have gotten ideas from the newspaper, as did Juanita Burks, but the pattern catalogs at the store were her primary source of fashion information. This was typical. Besides their friends and family, the primary fashion

influence on the majority of the interviewees, particularly for their maternity clothing, was commercial sewing patterns. Dollie Wolford, as previously discussed, attributed all her fashion interest to her love of sewing. It was little surprise that when I asked where she got ideas for what to sew, she replied, “In the pattern book.” Laura Carter agreed: “Well, if you were making your own clothing, patterns that were out . . . influenced you.”

Some people’s perception of their maternity clothing was influenced by their excitement about the pregnancy. This was particularly true of first-time mothers. “I had watched and observed other people as I was growing up, and . . . I thought, ‘Oh, one of these days, I’m gonna get to wear one of those!’” says Carolyn Bradford. “So I brought out the two-piece maternity clothes probably way before I even needed them, and was just tickled to be able to wear them.” Linda Ledford describes a similar experience. “With the first one, probably, [I started wearing maternity clothing] pretty early. Because I was so excited about being pregnant.” Ruth Williams, when asked how she felt about her maternity clothing, replies, “Yeah, I think I was proud of it. [Laughs.] I was proud of the fact that [laughs].”

A woman’s perception of her body during pregnancy often impacted the way she viewed her clothing. If a woman was not happy with her appearance prior to pregnancy, her view of her pregnant self was more negatively affected than it might have been otherwise. Betty Hutcheson said that she did not think that any of her clothes made her feel better than others. “[I] always thought I was ugly. Growin’ up, you know,” she explains. Pregnancy made things worse. “I felt so sloppy. All the time. I was just -- and -- but, you know, people say you’re pretty, you’re glowin’, and all that, but I sure didn’t feel it. I just [chuckles] -- I just -- I just -- my self-esteem was not good at all back then.” Dresses that she might have otherwise liked did not help much. Describing one dress, she concludes, “And I thought I was dressed up, but I felt awful.”



In many cases, women felt better about their appearance early in the pregnancy, but this feeling deteriorated as the pregnancy progressed. For most women, the end of a pregnancy was a very difficult time for their self image. Laura Carter says that the last month was particularly challenging for her. “I felt good, [but] I just felt fat there that last month,” she explains. She and her husband related that, one day late in her pregnancy, she looked in the mirror, stomped her foot, and exclaimed, “I look like a fat cat!”

Many women reported liking their clothing better initially, but disliking it more by the end. At the beginning of the pregnancy, explains Carolyn Midgett, “you're just like, ‘Oh, I'm gettin' big, I'm gettin' big!’ And then all of a sudden, you know, you just want to put it on. And really, a lot of things started gettin' tight and all, and so that was -- that was fun.” But the novelty wore off and led to increasing dislike of maternity clothing as the pregnancy progressed. “You're wearing those same things over and over and over for -- six months or somethin', or seven months, and so, you kinda -- by the end, you're kinda gettin' tired of 'em,” explains Carolyn Midgett. Carolyn Bradford agrees. “When you get to the end of your pregnancy, you're really tired of those maternity clothes, and -- you just don't want to buy anymore, you want to think, ‘Oh, one of these days I'm going to be slim again! And I can get regular clothes!’ So it -- it changes from at the beginning, expecting and wanting and ‘can't wait to wear them!’ to ‘I'm sick of this!’” For some women, increasing dislike of their maternity clothing was due to weight gain. Juanita Burks attributes her dislike of her clothing to her dislike of her pregnant figure. “Well, I guess I just didn't like my body shape by that that time,” she explained, chuckling. “I was all outta shape, I was.”

Pregnancy-related weight gain was a concern for most of the women interviewed. Rayma Reese says, “I was always, you know, careful to not gain a lot of weight. And so I guess

I didn't want to be a big blob. [Both laugh.] And my -- my husband told me that I looked like a keg . . . on a toothpick.” Betty Mitchell seemed quite worried about her weight gain. When asked what she thought of the way she looked in her maternity clothes, she said, “Well, I didn't wanna get fat. 'Cause I wadn't used to that, 'cause I wore a nine. . . . And after I had a baby, then I jumped up to eleven, and just kept goin' up.”

Some of the concern over weight gain was probably because of medical recommendations. Betty Mitchell was told that she could only gain 25 pounds. “[My doctor] said, ‘Now, I'm gonna tell you, you can gain 25 pounds.’ . . . Course, I was already pregnant and all first time I went, and I was cravin' chocolate pie. . . . And I said, ‘I'm just about to die for a piece of chocolate pie.’ He said, ‘If I told you that you could have a piece of pie, you'd eat the whole thing,’” Betty recalls, laughing. Margaret Williams also remembers being under a lot of pressure to maintain a certain weight during pregnancy. “I just remembered -- I was telling the people that I walk with about this -- and I only gained about eighteen pounds, because they scared me to death if I gained over twenty pounds. I thought they were gonna kill me or I was gon' die or somethin', if I gained over twenty pounds. I gained eighteen. But still, I was so big I couldn't get out of the chair. Somebody had to pull me out. [laughing] I was so big! Or thought I was.”

Proportion was a particular concern for the more petite interviewees. “Wearing the two-piece -- at times, I felt -- ugly,” says Carolyn Bradford. “Because being short, and having a large bump in front, and then wearing the two-piece, it just looked out of proportion when I saw myself in pictures.” Jean Gibson felt the same way. “I was okay till about month eight,” she explains. “And you just feel like you're big, and you're ugly, and [laughs]. . . . Because I'm short, I didn't have anywhere for it to go except straight out! You know, you've seen some people that

can be eight months, and they look like maybe they're six. I tweren't [sic] like that. Mine was all forward, and I -- I guess I didn't, I didn't think I looked very pretty toward the end."

As far as their appearance was concerned, other women seemed slightly less bothered by the weight gain. "I felt pretty good most of the time, except on the end I just got so big, I felt like I was just so big I -- but then I didn't feel bad about myself," explains Margaret Williams. In some cases, women who were very slender before pregnancy even welcomed the weight gain that came with pregnancy. "I think I felt pretty good," says Ruth Williams, "and probably looked pretty good, put on a little weight," she added, laughing. For some slender women, however, the weight gain was such a large change that it caused some mental discomfort. Before pregnancy, Suzanne Sansom was about 95 pounds. "I was a skinny, scrawny kid," she says. "I thought I was big and gawky-lookin' [during pregnancy]. . . . Which I really wasn't, but I thought I was. My mind, I thought I was. . . . I think I only weighed, like, 115 when Mike was born, so, basically I was thin, but I didn't think I was." Other women did not necessarily have a problem with the changes in their appearance, but were somewhat surprised by it at times. Carolyn Midgett relates,

One day I was at the grocery store, and I was just rolling along, and I . . . saw this -- image in the mirra. And I thought, "Oh my, that person is a large person." And then I realized it was me, and I was looking at myself from the side, 'cause, you know, I'd always been really thin, and everything, and then when I had Jennifer, back then they didn't have you worry about how much you gained. I think I gained about twenty-somethin' pounds. And I was starvin' all the time. And she weighed eight pounds fifteen-and-a-half ounces. So she was a good-sized baby. So it -- but that just shocked me that that was me!

For some women, it was a point of pride not to have gained a lot of weight. "I was married at sixteen and had two daughters time I was nineteen," says Gracie Reed. "And at that time, I didn't weigh a hundred pounds. When I first, you know, got pregnant. And didn't gain

over fifteen pounds. So I could pretty well wear my own clothes for a long time. . . . But, like I say, I didn't weigh -- when we married, I weighed 99 pound. At sixteen. [Smiles.] Hm. Then by the time I had my two babies, I was nineteen and I still -- I didn't gain over fifteen pounds with either one of 'em."

In some cases, perception of maternity clothing was impacted by changes in weight gain from a functional standpoint rather than because of appearance; the clothing was inadequate to handle the pregnancy. This was not a problem for most of the interviewees, but a few had trouble with it. According to Kathleen Smoliga, "[The cutout] gave you all the room you could possibly need." However, Linda Ledford and Weecy Patterson, both pregnant with twins, had difficulties with their cutout skirts. "It was very uncomfortable. Well, for me. Course I had -- was carryin' two. But, uh. You would, sometimes you would have to kinda wear 'em down on your hips to get fitted in," says Weecy, laughing. Laura Carter says that her two-piece dresses fit just fine throughout pregnancy, but the one-piece shift dresses tended to get tight, since they had no expansion room. Carolyn Midgett also reports that she was not able to wear two of her jumpers toward the end of the pregnancy, also because of the lack of expansion options. As previously discussed, Peggy Jackson had some clothing difficulties at the end of one of her pregnancies when the snaps on her skirt gave way during church. "That was one time that the maternity clothes were not quite big enough!" she says.

Carolyn Bradford had the opposite problem from Linda Ledford and Weecy Patterson; she was very petite and thought that the cutout was much too large. "I didn't like the cutout. The cutout was so -- large -- and like I said, I -- well, I had what you call a petite frame. Small bones," Carolyn explains. "The cutout was always too large, even though I pulled the strings up as tight as I could. And it was uncomfortable. And I was always afraid that my top, the wind

would catch it and it would blow up and everybody would see that I didn't really fill out that big hole! [Laughs.]”

### *Photographs During Pregnancy*

One topic that I had not anticipated discussing in interviews was the idea of taking (or, in most cases, not taking) photographs during pregnancy. I asked several of the interviewees if they had any photographs that they would be willing to let me use for the study, but the majority of the interviewees did not have any photographs taken while pregnant. In only one case did an interviewee have her picture made specifically because she was pregnant; Jean Gibson, pregnant in 1972 and 1974, had a picture made with two other pregnant secretaries at the air force base where she worked (Figure 14). “It was a running joke at work that there was something in the water and maybe folks shouldn't be drinking it,” she says. In previous decades, none of the women interviewed had their pictures taken *because* they were pregnant; in the few photographs that they had, they just happened to be pregnant when a picture was taken. Jean’s photograph represented a change in thought about photographs during pregnancy.



Figure 14: Jean Gibson (far right) and two of her coworkers, 1972

For a few of the interviewees, having a photograph taken during pregnancy was taboo. “You asked me about some pictures. And we never made pictures of anybody pregnant. That was just unheard of,” says Ann Todd, who was pregnant in 1950 and 1958. However, Ann also attributed the lack of photographs to practical reasons; she lived in a rural area where film developing was difficult, so snapshots were not taken often. “And we didn't make pictures anyway much, then, in those days. Because you had to go buy the film, and you had to have 'em developed, and -- you didn't live in town, that'd be something extra you had to do. You didn't always have that money, either, in those days.” Bessie Miller, pregnant between 1943 and 1959,

did not give a reason for not having her picture made, but the use of “we” in her language may be a tip that photographs of pregnant women were uncommon because of social norms. “I don't have any pictures when I was pregnant. We just didn't -- we didn't make pictures then when we were pregnant,” says Bessie, laughing. When asked why, she replies, “I don't know. I don't know. But we didn't, we just didn't.”

Marie Smith did not want her picture taken either, attributing it both to concern about her appearance and to social attitudes about pregnancy. “I went home when I was pregnant with the first one [1950], there toward the end, and my sister-in-law – I was sooo – I was a little bit aggravated. My sister-in-law insisted on having a family picture made. You know, and there I was pregnant, and I was not very happy about having my picture made, but – [chuckles].” When asked why, she replies, “Well, I just didn't wanna look pregnant in the picture,” adding, “But I just didn't want my picture made when I was pregnant. I don't know why. Except I was young and it just – I kinda thought she did it on purpose. [Laughs.] You know how that is.” Reflecting further, Marie attributed some of her hesitation to societal attitudes about pregnancy. “But that all went back to the fact that you did not – you just didn't – you just didn't, I mean, it just wadn't the thing to show that you were pregnant, you know. . . . It was coming out of that era when you just – it was very hush-hush.” Marie was able to provide one photograph, a picture taken at a baby shower for her second child in 1952 (Figure 15).





Figure 15: Marie Smith (second row, center) at a baby shower in 1952

Rayma Reese, whose children were born in 1954 and 1959, attributes her lack of photographs to concern for appearance and to their not having a camera at the time. “Seems like we did have one made of me when we were maybe having a picnic out at [my sister’s] house? And I -- but I don’t have a copy of it. But I didn’t have it made a lot, you know. You really didn’t look too good. . . . And we really did not have a camera. I think our first camera was bought after we had Danny, and we took pictures of him, you know.”



Some women attributed the lack of photographs to simple oversight. "I wish I had a picture or two, but I don't think I even had a picture made durin' that time. . . . Just -- wadn't somethin' I thought about," says Juanita Burks. Louella Pyle's husband was a professional studio photographer, but she never had her picture made during her pregnancy either. "Well, we just, we just -- I just didn't think about it," says Louella. "I -- didn't care about having it made, so."

Other women were quite deliberate about not having their picture taken because of concern for their appearance, not for social reasons. "There are no pictures in existence of me when I'm pregnant," says Margaret Williams, pregnant in 1958 and 1961. "I did not want a picture [both laugh]. 'Cause, I mean, I was little [before pregnancy]. And I didn't want a picture of me -- EVER. And Suzanne [Sansom] said she didn't either. . . . I just felt so big and looked so big, I didn't want pictures in existence ever, of me lookin' big." Suzanne agreed, saying, "Mainly I think that's why I didn't want pictures made, 'cause I thought, 'I am so big and gawky.'" Even those who had photographs usually did not have very many. "We tried to shy from the camera instead of being in front of the camera, I think," says Carolyn Midgett. It is unclear whether this was Carolyn's attitude in general, or just during pregnancy. Jean Gibson attributes her lack of photographs to the fact that she was usually the one behind the camera. "I was disappointed that I didn't find any more [pictures], but I guess we just -- see, I was usually the one takin' the pictures. And so, I guess we're just lucky to have these few." Laura Carter had her photograph taken the most; her husband enjoyed photography. "Oh, it didn't bother me," she says. "I mean, it's a special time for you, and you shouldn't be. So. And the clothing helps, the style that you have, helps that you not, well."

## *Modesty*

A recurring theme in the interviews was the concept of modesty. This was a fairly complex topic with several different facets. Although the interviewees were not asked any questions about today's clothing, it came up in several of the interviews; the interviewees' thoughts on today's styles offer some interesting insights into their perception of their own maternity clothing.

The first, and possibly most obvious, facet of modesty in maternity clothing is the social view of pregnancy. This was most prevalent among the 1940s and 1950s pregnancies. "You just didn't wanna wear anything that exposed your figure much then," says Bessie Miller, whose pregnancies were all between 1943 and 1959. "Cause you just didn't, uh, just didn't wanna show your pregnancy. I don't know -- and you just didn't really talk about it like people do now." In the majority of cases, this had nothing to do with hiding the fact that you were pregnant; it was, rather, about camouflaging the shape. Bessie struggled to explain it. "Yeah, just hide the shape somehow. I don't know why, but it was just -- there was just, like, more privacy to it then somehow. You just didn't -- course everybody knew you was pregnant, and all that, but -- it was still -- I don't know, we just didn't." Edith Herbert, pregnant between 1945 and 1947, agreed, saying, "It was something you didn't -- people knew it, but you didn't advertise it, and now they're advertising it with these straight clothes, and tight -- tight clothes." She added, "I wasn't trying to hide that I was pregnant. I was married two years before Robert was born, so that means at least a year and a half. It wasn't anything that I was ashamed of, in fact I was happy to -- to be having a baby." Pregnant between 1950 and 1958, Marie Smith says that customs were changing to pregnancy becoming a somewhat more open topic than it had been in previous generations, but that it was still something that wasn't discussed openly, and it was therefore not

displayed openly. “I guess it was hiding the shape, because it was just a thing that, that people didn’t want to, I guess, just show. I mean, they just didn’t wanna show, um, a big stomach. . . . I mean, customs [were] changing just a little . . . but, as I say, only women discussed it among themselves. It wasn’t open like it is now.” The interviewees made it quite clear, however, that the “concealment” of pregnancy did not mean actually hiding that you were pregnant. “Course everybody knew you was pregnant, and all that,” Bessie Miller says. Edith Herbert agrees. “People knew it, but you didn’t advertise it, and now they’re advertising it with these straight clothes, and tight -- tight clothes.”

The interviews indicate that modesty in clothing was a priority in any type of clothing, regardless of whether or not one was pregnant. “In those days, we were just careful about how we looked, and we didn’t want to show ourselves off. But we wanted to look as nice, and work on ourselves, and do as well -- appear as well as we could,” explains Ann Todd. Bessie Miller adds, “We didn’t wear sleeveless dresses; we had sleeves. And we didn’t have low necklines. [pause] You -- you just didn’t have half your body exposed.”

“Back when I was expecting, you wanted to be covered up,” says Jean Gibson. When asked why, she seemed surprised that I would even ask. “Well, you were trying to be modest. It -- it just stems from the old-timers, I’m sure. Because that was just, you just didn’t show off your body like now.” It makes logical sense, then, that pregnancy might require even more modesty, as the burgeoning abdomen drew attention to itself – it could be argued that the pregnant figure shows itself off. Loose clothing, therefore, was an attempt to ameliorate the problem of too much attention being drawn to the abdomen. “They never believed in showin’ yourself any way whenever they were pregnant. They wore loose clothing,” says Armina Summers. Another possible reason for the emphasis on modest maternity clothing might have been the relationship

of pregnancy and sex; Betty Mitchell mentioned having some embarrassment about discussing her pregnancy with her father, attributing her embarrassment to the idea that pregnancy was related to having sex.

A concern of several of the women was that of being conspicuous. There were two aspects to this attitude. The first is that these women simply did not want to draw a lot of attention to themselves. “I just wanted to look as normal as possible, I guess,” says Louella Pyle. “It was just a feeling you had that you wanted to -- [pause] not be so noticeable, be more modest about it. It was just -- just so different then, the way people dressed and everything, you know?” she concludes. Edith Herbert had similar views. “It was something you didn't want to attract people to you,” says Edith. “It was okay that you were pregnant -- and you wore, you still wanted to go out and to go places and all, but you were -- modest about what you wore and what you had on and how you looked.” Anything not seen every day was minimized. Jean Gibson was careful to make sure that her belly button did not show. “Now, this [dress] didn't show [the belly button] because it's got the little -- the little tie there, but there was one that was kind of thin, just a little bit, even though it was gathered,” Jean says. This was a concern for her. “I can remember putting a Bandaid over my belly button, 'cause I didn't want it showin'. And now, you see belly buttons and it's okay, [quietly] for some people.” Ann Todd sums up the interviewees’ typical view of today’s maternity clothing. “They want to show what they have,” she says, chuckling.

The second aspect of conspicuousness was an element of judgment if clothing were immodest. “I mean, there was nothing to be ashamed of [about the pregnancy], 'cause I was married. So [shrugs] socially, it was acceptable, the type of clothing we wore,” says Ruth Williams. “I think there would have been -- I think if I had worn shorts and a top out in my yard,

there would've been [purses lips and shakes head] mmm-mmm-mmm-mmm. Finger-pointing, but, yeah. So. But I think that's still true of a lot of things today. You know, you don't do things because of the appearance."

Linda Ledford believes that more modest styles of maternity clothing are more flattering. "I don't like the way I see a lot of young pregnant women dressing. With the tight tops on, and tight pants, and -- and it's not that -- I don't know what it is. Because they're covered. But I just think it's not very flattering?" She continues, "I mean, as far as I was concerned, we didn't conceal it. [pause] No. Not at all. And it's not that it's something to be ashamed of. That's not what I'm saying at all. It's just not very flattering." Carolyn Midgett agrees: "See, I do not think that the bumps look good," she says. "I mean, it just seems like you would wanna be more modest than that. But the tighter your top is now, it seems like that's the better. And I just -- I can't quite get used to that. I mean, it's -- since everybody's doin' it, I guess nobody else wants to wear anything -- I mean, we wore such flowing things, you -- we were trying to hide it more. And now, you're not."

Looser maternity clothing was also sometimes attributed to health reasons. "I've always thought that if you wore something just skin-tight, it might not be good for you," says Carolyn Midgett. "You know, like tight blue jeans are not good for ya. And it just seems to me like you would be -- it'd be better to have somethin' a little more flowing." In an era before Spandex, loose-fitting clothing was also a practical necessity. Edith Herbert expressed wonder that the women of today could even think of wearing such tight clothing during pregnancy. "I b'lieve almost every week they're going to need to buy new ones," she exclaimed, laughing. "In order to get in it."

Fashion played a role in modesty as well. “I just – I wore clothes that were in fashion at the time. Shirtwaist dresses were in fashion, and that sort of thing; so, it was just a matter of [what] you could wear that looked nice, that didn’t show your pregnancy much,” explains Marie Smith. “You didn’t want your stomach looking real big. Like they do now.”

Many of the women interviewed were quite clear on the fact that they would have no desire to wear the tighter-fitting clothing of today. Ann Todd observes, “I think it’s so immodest the way they dress with these tight T-shirts and stickin’ out there, showin’ their stomachs and -- I just don’t like that. I don’t think it’s very modest.” She would have none of it. “I like modesty,” she concludes. Jean Gibson, a generation later, agrees. “Back then, like I said, our dresses were nice and big and hid everything. And you just didn’t feel like you were exposing everything, because you were covered up. But I would -- I would have a hard time bein’ pregnant now’days,” Jean says, laughing. “I would prob’ly be wearin’ that [one of her loose-fitting dresses], and they’d be looking at me awfully funny!”

#### *Shoes: Fashion Sometimes Trumps Practicality*

A topic discussed in several of the interviews was that of shoes during pregnancy. Some women made no changes at all; they did not typically wear high heels and there was no reason to change. Others who wore heels ordinarily eliminated them from their pregnancy wardrobe. “I remember wearing flat shoes . . . more comfortable, and safer, we felt like,” says Kathleen Smoliga. “Usually we were in flats during those five months that we wore the maternity clothing. Sometimes your feet, your legs swell. And you’re also looking for safety all the time -- we were very safety-conscious.” Rayma Reese also reduced her heel height. “I didn’t wanna fall and cause some problems, you know,” she says. In some cases, women had to buy larger shoes

because of swelling in their feet. “I had so much fluid, I think, that I -- I had to go from a size 7 shoe to a size 9,” says Rayma. Of particular interest, however, were women who continued to wear their heels while pregnant, sometimes even against their doctors’ orders.

“The doctor warned me not to wear heels,” says Carolyn Bradford. “Especially when you start getting larger, that they could throw off your balance and make you fall. I didn't listen. I wore heels until I did get so -- I felt so clumsy myself -- and afraid that I would fall. So, I didn't listen to his advice until -- I don't -- probably seven or eight months, and then I -- I stopped wearing the heels.” Carolyn did not wear anything over three inches, but “heels then,” she says, “were the thin spikes and pointed toes.” She adds, “I didn’t really ever like them.” In the case of Carolyn’s heels, the fashion imperative trumped her doctor’s orders and even her own preferences. Advised not to wear heels that she “didn’t really ever like” anyway, she continued wearing them for fashion reasons. “I wore them anyway, because being vain and in fashion and being only twenty, I wanted to definitely be in style.”<sup>68</sup>

Juanita Burks continued wearing her same shoes, with a two- to three-inch heel. “I was able to wear them,” she says. Margaret Williams wore heels throughout her pregnancy, due to the height difference between her and her husband. “I always wore heels, especially after I married, because Frank was a foot taller than me, so yeah, I wore heels the whole time,” Margaret recalls. “I didn't change shoes at all. I wore what I had.” She thinks her heels were typically about four inches.

Many of the women wore heels for special occasions. Carolyn Midgett says that she continued to wear heels for special occasions, particularly for a wedding that she attended during pregnancy. Linda Ledford wore flats for everyday and approximately three-inch heels for church

on Sundays. Peggy Jackson also continued to wear her heels, until foot swelling prevented it. Since pumps were the footwear of choice for dressy occasions, they were worn for funerals as well. Peggy relates a story about wearing pumps during pregnancy:

When I was carrying Bob . . . we were at the cemetery in Columbia, at Rose Hill Cemetery. And I had on the black wool suit, and I had on black suede pumps, which were about . . . two-and-a-half-inch, something like that. . . . R.H. was on the far side of the grave, and I was on the side with a couple of his other cousins. And I stepped back, and -- and stepped into a hole, and sorta lost my balance. [Laughs] And his two cousins really flipped out [laughing]. And I said, "I'm okaaaaay, I just lost my balance!" And they're all going, [in a deep voice] "Are you okay? You going to be okay?" Sat me up like a little toy soldier or something. [Both laugh.] I'm going, "Yessss, I'm okay, I'm okay!" And R.H. said he was watching from over there, and he said their eyes got about like thiiiiiiiis -- [laughs]. But that was, you know, just one of the hazards of being around a cemetery, and prob'ly should've known better than to wear heels there, but [shrugs].

Wilma Abbott also wore heels when she went out, and continued the practice throughout her pregnancy. "Oh yeah. I always -- looked the best I could," she says.

#### *What Happened to Clothing Afterwards*

An interesting indicator of how women perceived their maternity clothing was what happened to their maternity clothing after pregnancy. The majority of the interviewees gave their clothing away if they did not plan to have any more children. This was particularly true of women who had clothing given to them. For many, like Kathleen Smoliga, sharing was what everyone did with their maternity clothes. This was particularly prevalent in small towns. "We shared them, mm-hm," she says. "I had a problem and knew that I would not be having other children, so I didn't need to keep any of mine even though they were given to me forever. I passed 'em on to other people." Carolyn Midgett recalls, "I gave [Linda Clark] all my maternity things, and that's how we would do, you know, pass around." If they did not know anyone who needed them immediately, some women donated their clothing somewhere general. "[The clothes] had served their purpose, and somebody else could have them," says Linda Ledford.



“And I don't -- I don't remember Goodwill at that time. I may have taken them to the church building for a giveaway or something. But. They were gone. And I was glad.”

A few women had little or no recollection of what they had done with their maternity clothes – but they do remember that they were just so tired of wearing them that they wanted to get rid of them immediately. Asked what she had done with her maternity clothing, Kate Embry replied, laughing, “You know, I don't know. But I didn't wear 'em! [laughs] Nobody wants to wear 'em afterward!” Gracie Reed glad to be rid of hers. “Well, I don't remember wearin' 'em afterwards, 'cause like I say, I hated 'em,” says Gracie Reed, echoing the sentiment of several of the interviewees. “I was ready to get rid of 'em.” This exact phrase – “I was ready to get rid of them” – was used by several of the interviewees. In some cases, the maternity clothing was worn out and thrown away.

Feelings about maternity clothes sometimes spilled over into decisions about regular clothing after pregnancy. Gracie Reed had one baby in 1965 and the next in 1966, and she wanted nothing more to do with her maternity clothes – or anything that even remotely resembled them. “When [Jill] was born [in 1966], I was ready to go shoppin'. And I went shoppin', and just -- saleslady brought me out, and at that time, the shift was popular, and she brought me out a -- a shift dress. I said [decisively], "I don't want that, I have been wearin' 'em two years." [Laughs.] I don't remember what I bought that day, but I didn't buy a shift.”

Practically, of course, most women kept their maternity clothing until they knew they would no longer need it. “I put all my maternity clothes away until I was sure there would not be any more babies,” says Carolyn Bradford. There was the occasional miscalculation – Weecy

Patterson gave hers away prematurely, and had to make new maternity clothes for her second pregnancy. “I didn't know I was gon' get pregnant that quick,” she says, laughing.

Some women, however, kept their clothing for a long time. Reasons for this varied. Peggy Jackson, as previously mentioned, really liked her maternity wardrobe, so she kept it for a long time. “Even when Trisha [Peggy's daughter] got pregnant [in the early 1990s], she got a couple of the things I had kept,” Peggy says. “She had to go to [a] Country Music Association deal, and she was -- she suddenly realized she was pregnant and didn't have anything fancy to wear, so I think she wore the blue brocade one. . . . But I loaned them to several people, and gradually, I think I just got rid of them as they were old and sorta worn out -- took 'em to church, that sort of thing.” Juanita Burks kept only one maternity garment: her very favorite maternity dress, the red brocade that she had sewn. She thought it was still hanging in her attic, but was unable to locate it at the time of the interview. The story of Betty Mitchell's clothes came out in bits and pieces throughout the interview. “We always wanted a little girl so bad,” she says. “I had two boys. And then I had to have a hysterectomy.” For Betty, the maternity clothing may have been symbolic of her desire to have a little girl; she kept her maternity clothes for some time even after having the hysterectomy. “I kept those, some of those dresses a long, long time and I finally -- there was no need in that, 'cause I -- I'd already had a hysterectomy and I knew I wouldn't get pregnant no more. Just got rid of 'em,” she says. She regretted it later. “I kept mine for no tellin' how long. Now I finally got rid of 'em. But I wished I hadn't now. 'Cause I've still got my children's baby clothes.”

Remaking maternity clothing into something new was only done by one interviewee. The majority of the women interviewed had no desire to reuse their maternity clothing after pregnancy, even if it was possible. “I was kinda tired of them at that point,” explains Carolyn

Midgett. “But there were some that could have been [used afterwards], you know, I’m sure those shift dresses could have been, if you’d worn a belt.” Other women did not remake their clothing because they had no knowledge of sewing. “I never did sew clothes,” says Louella Pyle. Others who sewed preferred to avoid the extra level of difficulty associated with remodeling a garment. “I’m not into having to redesign something that I’d have to take it apart, and recut it, or whatever. I’d rather start from scratch than have to --” says Suzanne Sansom. Armina Summers, pregnant in 1940 and 1943, was the only interviewee who remade her clothing. “Well, you just cut ‘em down and sewed ‘em up, and make you a top that would go with a skirt, or somethin’ like that. . . . You’d cut down the plain ones so you could dart ‘em in to fit and have a skirt to go with ‘em or somethin’. Have you a different outfit.” Armina did not use any patterns for this: “No, just kinda change it yourself to fit yourself. Mm-hm.” Thrift was a very high priority to her, and she did not want to waste perfectly good material. “You saved everything you could, every penny,” she explains. “And we were -- and I never wanted to go in debt for things, I wanted to pay as we went, so.”

### How Women Acquired Their Maternity Clothing

How women acquired their maternity clothing depended on several factors: Where they lived, their income level, and whether or not they sewed. Women in small towns were the most likely to borrow maternity clothing from others, although they sewed frequently as well. Women living in rural areas sewed most of their maternity clothing. Women in urban areas or close to larger cities were more likely than the other groups to purchase at least some of their clothing, since ready-to-wear was more readily available. Generally, only women with a higher income level (or assisted by parents with a higher income level) purchased ready-to-wear garments.

Those who indicated that finances were tight most often sewed their own clothing. If a woman knew how to sew, she typically sewed some or all of her maternity clothing.

### *Sewing Maternity Clothing*

Sewing was the most popular method of acquiring maternity clothing among the women interviewed. “I don't think I ever heard of anybody buying any maternity clothes at the store,” says Ann Todd. The women who sewed their own maternity clothing gave several different reasons for doing so. The most prevalent reason was economy; at the time, sewing your own clothing was considerably cheaper than buying ready-to-wear. “My husband was just getting out of college, and we didn't have much money, so [chuckles] – and material was cheaper, then. Course, now, it's more expensive to make one than it is to buy them,” Marie Smith observes. Juanita Burks also used sewing as a way to stretch her family's income further. “Well, we were - - we were so poor that, you know [chuckles] I couldn't get out and buy somethin' fancy,” she explains. Since she was a good seamstress, this was not a handicap as it otherwise might have been. “I thought what I made was as nice as somethin' I could buy,” she adds. Gracie Reed was very straightforward about her reasons for having hers sewn. “You couldn't afford to buy,” Gracie says. “You just didn't have the money to buy ready-made clothes.” This was particularly true for rural families. “Most of us didn't have a lot of money to go buy somethin' expensive either, in those days,” Ann Todd explains. “And we just -- had to make nearly everything we had.” For a lot of women, sewing was an economy measure that they enjoyed. “[I sewed] because we didn't have money, and -- and you just got by as cheap as you could!” says Armina Summers, adding that “oh yes,” she enjoyed sewing.

Sewing as an economy measure tended to run in families. Weecy Patterson started sewing at a young age, seeing both her grandmothers sew. “I can remember gettin' in their scraps, and -- and gettin' out under a tree with a quilt and makin' doll clothes,” she says. As a result of her grandmothers’ influence, Weecy majored in home economics in college and sewed her own clothing. Edith Herbert was influenced by her mother: “I guess from the time I was a teenager, you just -- it's so different from the way things have been for the last 20, 30 years. Where people were so affluent in the last three or four decades. That everything had to be perfect. And most -- now Mother, Mother sewed for all three of us. Three girls, and she sewed for all three of us and she did the best she could. I could remember her makin' coats for all three of us, spring coats. But -- and you always did the best you could, but it wasn't like, like it's been in the last several decades, where you had so many choices, and had money to buy 'em.”

Suzanne Sansom admits, “If I had the money I prob'ly would've bought things ready-made. But I grew up with it being an economic reason, and so that kinda stuck -- that mantra stuck in my head, that's what you had to do.” Some people started sewing for economical reasons, and then just kept doing it because they enjoyed it. “See, she was a Depression kid,” Jean Gibson says of her mother, Dollie Wolford. “So I guess she did it for -- save money, but then she just kept it up.”

Another reason for sewing was closely related to economy – you could get better quality clothing through sewing than what you might afford in a store. “Things were -- a little more tight financially, and, uh, but I always wanted to [pause] look as good as I could. With the amount of -- finances that I had, and time that I had to make things,” says Linda Ledford. For her, sewing was the way to do that – she got a better value for her money. Peggy Jackson’s situation was similar. “We were in college with no money,” she says. “And then when we got

out, we were just getting started . . . when R.H. came here, engineers' pay was like, less than \$6000 a year. And so you -- you just really had to watch every penny. And so that, the economy was basically the reason.” Because her mother sewed most of her clothes, Peggy was able to have a very high quality wardrobe that would otherwise have been financially out of reach. “Mother made me a fantastic wardrobe,” she says. Bessie Miller says that her mother’s sewing was better quality than anything readymade. “She made really a better grade of clothes than you could get to go to the store and buy a dress at that time. Hers were better-made,” Bessie explains.

For women in rural areas and small towns, the availability of clothing was a factor in their decision to sew their own maternity clothes. “You couldn't buy them,” says Ann Todd. “You couldn't buy dresses then like we do now. There were very few -- even any kind of dresses, you didn't have many of them.” She continues, “We had most of our clothes homemade. Because there were lots of fabric stores in those days, and we -- we didn't go out and buy a dress like we do today. They didn't have ready-made clothes like they do today. And for a long, long time, all my dresses were homemade or someone made them that I knew that was a seamstress.”

Some women chose to sew because they enjoyed it. “I had always made my clothes, I mean, ever since I took home ec. three years in high school, and so I thought I was a pretty good seamstress, and so that's the reason I made all my clothes,” explains Juanita Burks. “I didn't have any ready-to-wear things. Now most of these women that wore maternity dresses bought them. But not me. I made everything! [laughs]” This was a point of pride for her. Dollie Wolford also says that she sewed because she enjoyed it. “I just liked to sew, I guess. Enjoyed sewin'.” Dollie made all her own maternity clothes, as well as most of the maternity clothing that her daughter, Jean Gibson, wore a generation later.

Another reason given for sewing is that it enabled better control over fashion decisions. “With sewing, you can make your own style of clothin’. You can add a little bit of this, and little bit of that,” Laura Carter explains. Rayma Reese agrees: “Even now, you know, sometimes I make things. Because things are not available that I like. You know.” Wilma Abbott says that she enjoyed sewing because “you get to pick the material.” Sewing gave Laura, Rayma, and Wilma more control over what they wore. Fit was also a big issue for several of the interviewees. “You could kind of fit yourself. In your sewing. Fit it the way you want it to be,” Laura says. Fit was also a factor for Jean Gibson, who was short waisted. “Back when I was growin’ up, they didn’t have petites that would help with that,” she says. “So [Mother] had to take mine up an inch.” Having clothing that was unique was another perk of sewing. Juanita Burks says of one of her dresses, “It was -- different. Nobody else had one like it.”

Not everyone who had their clothing sewn did it themselves. Women whose mothers excelled at sewing typically relied on them to make their maternity clothes. Jean Gibson did not sew her own clothing, because her mother enjoyed doing it, and this applied to her maternity clothing as well. “Mother’s just always made my clothes, so that’s why,” Jean says. “I’ve never had a bought dress.” Bessie Miller says that her mother was an expert dressmaker. “My mother was a good seamstress and she made -- made those clothes. . . . She sewed beautifully.” Some women knew how to sew, but they relied on their mothers because their jobs left them without enough time to sew their maternity clothing. “I could sew at that time, but I didn’t keep it up, ‘cause I went to work, you know, and it was easier. Mama stayed home and kept the kids; it was easier for her to sew than it was me,” Gracie Reed recalls.

Margaret Williams’ mother-in-law, Lillian, made her two Sunday maternity dresses as a gift. Finances were very tight for Margaret, who had lost her job when her employer discovered

she was pregnant. Her husband Frank was still in school at the time. “If it hadn'ta been for her, I wouldn't have had anything to wear to church,” Margaret says. “Because I didn't have anything and she made me those two. . . . I loved her.” Lillian also made some maternity clothes for her daughter, Suzanne Sansom; she was a good seamstress and made stylish clothing. “They were pretty much in style. Lillian was . . . pretty good on that,” Margaret says.

Other women had clothing made by a dressmaker. Carolyn Midgett purchased some of her clothing and ordered some from a catalog, but her mother also had several dresses made by Mrs. Eagan, a dressmaker in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. “You just didn't run out and buy [a maternity dress], have a whim and run out and buy one, I mean,” Carolyn says. “And so I really appreciated her having those made for me, 'cause that -- they came in really handy.”

#### *Sewing Patterns Used in Maternity Clothing*

All the major pattern companies produced maternity patterns throughout every decade included in this study. Some of the women had preferences for specific pattern companies; Simplicity seemed to be a popular choice for many of the women interviewed. Many women thought they were easier to make. “[Simplicity patterns] were easier, seem like, than -- than -- well, now McCalls weren't too bad, either,” recalls Betty Hutcheson. Rayma Reese preferred Butterick. “I always liked the Butterick patterns. . . . I think they were much more simple. Simple to follow,” she says. Pattern selection was also limited by what was available. “I think that, that all I probably had access to was Simplicity,” says Marie Smith. Betty Hutcheson preferred Simplicity because she thought it offered the best fit for her body shape. “I don't think the McCalls fit me as well as the Simplicity,” Betty says.



Others bought whatever brand had a style they liked. “They had McCall's, and Butterick, and -- and Simplicity. Mm-hm. I would say probably did all three,” says Edith Herbert. “I think you went through the [pattern] books. . . . And decide[d] which one, which one you liked.”

Peggy Jackson's mother used a variety of patterns. “I think for the, the dress, and the suit, the black wool suit, she did Vogue patterns, and the others would have been McCall's or Simplicity,” Peggy says. Peggy positively identified some of the patterns used for her maternity dresses; they were McCall's patterns. Juanita Burks started by looking for ideas in the newspaper, and then looked for something similar in the pattern catalogs. “I could see pictures in the paper of things that I liked, and I'd find me a pattern, you know, and make it,” says Juanita Burks. Juanita says that both McCall's and Simplicity were available in the small town where she lived, but Simplicity was what she used the most. She used the same pattern for all of her maternity smocks, changing the fabric to make it look different each time. This saved money and time; money was saved by purchasing only one pattern, and sewing the same pattern a second time is always faster. Linda Ledford also used the same patterns multiple times for her maternity clothes. “There wasn't a lot of variety in styles -- in maternity clothes -- then,” she says.

Pattern cost was sometimes a factor in selection. Jean Gibson recalls that her mother liked Vogue patterns the best. “She said they'd have a hundred pieces, but then when you got through you still had a simple dress,” Jean recalls. “She liked Vogue. But now, Vogue, you know, were, for back then, they were expensive compared to Simplicity.” Linda Ledford liked Vogue as well, but frequently used other patterns because they were cheaper. “Probably [used] Simplicity. [Also] used McCall's, and if I could find a Vogue pattern, when they were havin' a sale, I'd buy one of those. [laughs] Because they were a lot more expensive than the others.”

Some women thought that Vogue was worth the higher price. “Vogue is very good,” says Wilma Abbott. “They're a little high, but that's -- I'd rather have.”

Sometimes, women combined or modified patterns to get the look they wanted. Gracie Reed's mother was one of these. “She wasn't one of those that could -- cut out somethin' without a pattern. You know, some people can do that. But she would get one old pattern and she'd put this with it and that with it, change it,” Gracie says. Patterns could also be modified for extra functionality. Jean Gibson recalls her mother, Dollie Wolford, allowing extra hidden elastic in some of Jean's maternity clothes that could be let out as necessary. This was not in the original pattern – “I would guess that's just a Mother thing,” Jean says. Dollie also used a dress pattern to make some maternity tops for Jean, modifying it for use as a shirt pattern. Some women, like Bessie Miller's mother, preferred not to use patterns at all, making their own instead. “She would just see a picture in the paper and make her own patterns,” Bessie says. Bessie says that her mother even did this for her maternity dresses. This took a much higher level of skill than the average dressmaker possessed.

Fabric and patterns were available in a variety of places during the period studied. Even small towns, where ready-to-wear clothing selection was limited, had one or more places to purchase fabric and patterns. Gracie Reed and Ann Todd, who both lived near Woodbury, Tennessee, recall shopping at Roach's Department Store and others. “We had stores, lots of fabric stores, and here, there was a fabric store called Roach's Department Store,” Ann says. Vida Roach, the owner, carried fabrics and women's clothing. “She had beautiful materials. She was good -- you know, she selected nice materials.” Sewing supplies were much more readily available in small towns at that time than they are today. “I guess most of 'em [the stores] you could, um, buy material, thread, buttons. Now, I dunno if you can even buy that in Woodbury,”

Gracie Reed remarks. Most of the interviewees bought their fabric at department stores or dry goods stores. “I don't know if we even had fabric stores. . . . They would have [fabric] just in old dry goods stores. Where you buy everything,” says Weecy Patterson. Dollie Wolford shopped for her maternity dress fabric at H. J. Thompson’s in Shelbyville, Tennessee, a store that sold menswear and fabric. Edith Herbert bought her fabric and patterns in department stores in downtown Nashville, mentioning Cain-Sloan and Castner Knott, as did Peggy Jackson. Linda Ledford shopped at TG&Y, nationwide dime store chain that carried fabric and patterns. The ready availability of fabric and patterns made sewing easy. “We used to have a lot of fabric stores. Maybe there was two or three here in town,” says Wilma Abbott. “But now Hancock's left, and I just quit sewin' at all.”

### *Borrowing Maternity Clothing*

Sharing and borrowing maternity clothing among family and friends was a widespread practice. This was particularly common in small towns. “[The ladies at church] shared round and round,” Kathleen Smoliga recalls. “We would either pass the clothing back to the person, if they were -- thought they would be expecting another child, or they had a sister, maybe, who would need them.” Kathleen’s friends supplied her with such an excellent wardrobe that she did not need to buy or make anything. “I don't recall making smocks, I think because I had no need to; I had stacks and stacks that my friends brought over and said, ‘Here,’ you know,” she says.

Borrowing was a great help to young expectant mothers with limited incomes. “With my first pregnancy, it was all hand-me-down, because we were in college at Auburn, and we did not have a lot of money,” says Carolyn Bradford, whose sister-in-law sent her some maternity clothing. Laura Carter had a similar experience. She and her husband were also in college at the

time of her first pregnancy, so money was tight. “I prob'ly had one outfit of my own and then borrowed some,” Laura says. “‘Cause everybody wants you to wear their clothes [chuckles] when you're pregnant. ‘You can wear this.’”

Borrowing was also very helpful when a larger wardrobe was needed for professional reasons. “I called Don's cousin in Nashville, 'cause she was that much older, that she already had had maternity things, and she sent me some, she sent me her crib, and then I called a friend of Mother's that I had -- Mother had taught with, and she sent me a lot of maternity things,” says Carolyn Midgett. “Because I felt like I needed more, since I was teaching, and had to go out every day, than I did, you know, if I'd just been stayin' at home, I guess, so.” Carolyn enjoyed lending and borrowing maternity clothes – “That was always fun, then you didn't know what you were gonna get, really,” she said, laughing. The loose fit of maternity clothing made borrowing easier, as the sizes were less specific. “They were too long, you hemmed 'em, and then as far as the size and all it didn't make that much difference,” says Edith Herbert.

Borrowing allowed women to have additional styles that they might not otherwise have bought or made. Suzanne Sansom recalls, “[A friend] had a pantsuit that was green tweed, and I borried [borrowed] it from her. The top was like a vest, but it hung low, and you wore a blouse under it. And I borried it and wore it to some Christmas parties and things, so I felt really dressed up, you know, because I had -- but that was the only pants of anything I had.”

There were some problems with borrowed clothing, however. “They were faded, because they were hand-me-downs,” Carolyn Bradford recalls. Although Carolyn was very appreciative of the clothing, some of the styles were not to her taste. “I probably would have picked out something different. [pause] I don't -- it just looked -- what she gave me was --

[sighs]. Like, it would have a bow on the side, whereas I thought, 'That's not in proportion; that's not me.' [laughs] Or a large button over to the side, and I thought, 'Why do they do it over to the side?' It's just -- [laughs].” Juanita Burks recalls that she did not like one-piece dresses, and some of her friends apparently thought that she should get with the popular fashion. “I know some of the women thought -- I was really out of style 'cause I didn't wear dresses. . . . One woman loaned me her dress.” Juanita wore the dress some, but went back to her smocks exclusively after she reached a certain point in the pregnancy.

### *Buying Maternity Clothing*

Some maternity clothing was bought ready-made, although this was by far the least common practice among the women interviewed. In several cases, parents purchased maternity clothing for their daughters. “Mom bought me a couple dresses while we were visiting there, and it seemed like I bought one more. I had three or four cotton dresses I wore,” Kate Embry recalls. The visit happened to coincide with Kate’s regular clothing getting too tight. “When we got there, I was still wearing my clothes, but Mama says, ‘I think you'd better get you some things to wear,’ and that's when we went downtown, and she bought me two real pretty cotton dresses. So that was June. From then on, I wore -- bigger things.”

Some women sewed their clothing for everyday wear, but bought their dressy clothes. “I sewed the things I wore around the house, but. I bought the ones that I wore out,” says Wilma Abbott. She lived in a small community outside Tullahoma, Tennessee, and did her shopping in Tullahoma at Wilson’s, a local department store.

Working women tended to purchase their maternity clothing more than did homemakers. The reason for this was probably twofold: Working women had an increased income and could

better afford to purchase clothes, and they also had less time to sew. "I was just workin' all the time then at the Welfare Department and had mostly dressy clothes," says Bessie Miller about her 1956 and 1959 pregnancies. She purchased clothing in Murfreesboro, the nearest city to the small town where she lived. Although Shirley Embry knew how to sew, she bought all of her maternity clothing at L. S. Ayres in Indianapolis. "I worked, and I don't think I had time to -- to sew. . . . I don't think I made anything," Shirley says.

When income increased, women who had previously borrowed or sewn maternity clothing switched to buying readymade instead. "With the second one, by that time my husband had graduated from Auburn and we were living in Melbourne, Florida. And I was able to buy some cute -- two-piece again -- maternity wear," Carolyn Bradford recalls. As time went on and her husband's income increased, she was able to purchase more maternity clothing for subsequent pregnancies. "I guess I had more with the last one," she says. "Because we were able to buy more."

Women who did not sew, often purchased their maternity clothing. Louella Pyle bought hers. "I never did sew clothes," she says. She had a difficult time obtaining things immediately following World War II, when her pregnancy occurred. "During World War II, everything was hard to find," she recalls. "Everything came back gradually." She did not have many maternity clothes, but says that she did not need many. Betty Mitchell also purchased all of her maternity clothing. "My mother, she didn't sew. And I didn't, I didn't care anything about it," Betty explains. "All my clothes was bought clothes." Betty bought her maternity clothing at Wright's Department Store in Fayetteville, Tennessee. "They had the best of clothes in Lincoln County," she said, and a fairly good selection of maternity dresses for the time. Like Louella Pyle, Betty noted that "they didn't have much to pick from. Especially in 1947, that was just after World

War II.” The selection, however, was adequate. “But you didn't get too many and all, because you really didn't need that many.”

Carolyn Midgett was the only interviewee who mentioned purchasing maternity clothing from catalogs. “They were not that easy to find at the stores,” she says. “I went to Goldstein's [department store] in Murfreesboro, and I bought several, and then I ordered some from the catalogs.” Shopping for maternity clothing was a lot of fun for Carolyn. Since the selection was very limited in the small town where she lived, she went with her mother and a friend on a shopping expedition to Murfreesboro, Tennessee, about 45 minutes away.

Well, I remember, um, going over to Murfreesboro. And Mother went. B'lieve I rode over with Jane Crouch -- she was a member here then, at Bel-Aire [church of Christ], and it was kind of, kind of a to-do! [Excitedly] I mean, shoppin' for maternity things! And it was very exciting. And then everybody had to give their opinion, and did it look good or not, and whatnot, but, yeah, it was just -- it was a fun time, a fun thing. I mean, everything about it was, I thought, was great. . . . I mean, I just was excited, the whole time. It was -- it was a good feelin'. It was so special, you know, like you had this glow or somethin'. And course you're gettin' bigger, but -- [both laugh]

### *Making Do with Non-Maternity Clothing*

The women interviewed frequently made do with non-maternity clothing during pregnancy. This was a tactic often used early in pregnancy, or for more expensive items such as winter coats, or for clothing that did not show, such as undergarments or clothing worn around the house.

None of the interviewees bought a winter coat specifically for pregnancy. “I just used my own coats, whatever. It was an awful cold winter, I know that,” remembers Kate Embry, recalling her 1935 pregnancy. That was the only item that she remembers not having in a

maternity version. “By the time I needed [maternity clothes], that was it. I didn't try to squeeze into anything.” Shirley Embry, Kate’s daughter-in-law, did the same thing during her pregnancies in the late 1950s. She wore her regular coat during pregnancy, describing it as “kinda boxy.” It wasn’t perfect, but it worked well enough. “I could wear it -- enough to get out,” she says.

Gracie Reed continued wearing all the same undergarments throughout pregnancy. “I didn't even have to get bigger ones,” she says. This may have been easier to do when the weight gain was slight – Gracie weighed 99 pounds at the beginning of her first pregnancy and only gained 15 pounds. Laura Carter also recalls wearing the same undergarments throughout her pregnancy. “At the time, those first two [pregnancies], we were very limited on money. So, by the second two, he was into a job, and we were more -- more stable. But I have never been one to go out and just buy extras just for that short time. So you just stretched everything out, and then after the pregnancy was over, you just got rid of it!” she says, laughing.

Making do with non-maternity garments was frequently done when money was tight. Some women wore their husband’s shirts around the house. “At home a lotta times I'd just wear a shirt or something, you know,” says Rayma Reese. “Wear my husband's shirt.” Betty Hutcheson did the same thing. During her first pregnancy, she was very sick and did not gain weight. “With my first pregnancy, I did not wear any -- ANY maternity clothes at all. I didn't -- I was sick all the time. And I weighed 116 when I got pregnant, and I weighed 117 when I had her.” She wore jeans and one of her husband’s shirts instead of maternity clothes. “I wore my jeans as long as I could, and sometimes I would wear them, and then just one of Alton's shirts.” Alton apparently was not thrilled with this. “He always told everybody -- still does, as a matter of fact -- that I stretched his shirts,” Betty says. “But I didn’t.” Margaret Williams wore her



husband's clothes around the house as well. He was in school, and finances were tight. "At home, I wore my blue jeans unzipped. And one of Frank's shirts. Now that was the attire at home," says Margaret.

The clever use of non-maternity clothing could also be a wardrobe extending tactic. Carolyn Midgett combined non-maternity blouses with maternity jumpers during her pregnancies in 1965 and 1968; the blouses were loose-fitting, and she was able to wear them unbuttoned under her jumpers. This was an economical way to expand her wardrobe: "I know they were the same outfit," she explains, "but different blouses made it feel different."

Suzanne Sansom, pregnant in 1968 and 1970, wore bell-bottom pants, unbuttoned, with longer blouses to disguise that they did not fit. She also had a couple of loose-fitting princess dresses that she was able to wear early in her pregnancies.

#### Factors Considered in Planning and Wearing a Maternity Wardrobe

A large number of factors influenced the planning and wearing a maternity wardrobe. The activities engaged in played a large role: Church and other special events, social activities and running errands around town, work, and housework were all things that may have required changes in clothing. Social attitudes and norms were another heavy influence. The social view of pregnancy, changing medical ideas, the attitudes of family and friends, and the dictates of employers all played a role in what women wore.

#### *Activities*

The primary activity discussed by the interviewees was church. Particularly for women living in rural areas of the South, church was one of the few social activities that were available.

Their church clothes were what the interviewees remembered the best – this is probably indicative of the level of thought and effort put into dressing for church during pregnancy. Kate Embry remembers her green silk church dress in vivid detail; her memory of the others is considerably more hazy.

Almost everyone had different dresses from church; wearing the same dress for church and home was simply not done in most cases. “Oh no, I never wore to church what I wore at home,” Carolyn Bradford exclaims. Even Armina Summers, with a very tiny wardrobe, had a church dress. “Yep, always had a good one to go to church in. That's like that,” she says.

“I had two dresses that were like sundresses, but they had jackets that came around. And you were not so exposed. And one of my dresses was brown, and had a yella jacket, and seemed like I had some flowers -- artificial flowers -- that I wore at my neckline. And then I had a lavender dress with a white jacket, and then I had a one-piece dress that was navy. And it was very much like -- material you could wash, and wear, like today. And it was navy with white trimmin' around the neck. And it had elastic in the waist,” says Ann Todd. “I don't remember what I wore at home. But I wore those when I went out somewhere -- to church, and to town, and times like that. One -- the navy one -- I remember wearin' to a wedding. And I thought I was dressed up in it,” she adds, smiling.

Even if the dresses for church were not very different from what was worn at home, most women still had designated church dresses. Gracie Reed says that she had “one or two that I used for wearin' to church and didn't wear 'em at home, but they wadn' nothin' fancy.”

The materials used typically made the difference in what was considered dressy. “I had some that were little bit dressier, like material was a little bit dressier. I guess just the lace

around it, on the sleeves, or something, would make it little bit more -- and they usually had collars,” says Carolyn Midgett. Laura Carter agrees: “The material has a lot to do with it. More so than the style, it was the material. You take the cotton with the plaids and all that, is more casual. And, but then if you get the materials that are -- have more of a silky feel to them, they would be -- and course you dress it up according to your accessories.”

Accessories were an important part of dressy maternity ensembles. “Then with the last [pregnancy], I made [a smock] out of -- I call it a brocade type fabric. It was red and black, you know, printed stuff. And I thought it was very elegant. And I always wore a hat, you know, when you went out to somethin'. Like that would be my dress-up outfit,” recalls Juanita Burks. “I always wore a hat, always had my gloves. My dress shoes. When we went to church. That's only place we went, back in those days.” Accessories were the norm up through the mid 1960s. Peggy Jackson recalls, “At that time you were still in the -- you wore heels, and gloves, and hats, and all, to church. And so there'd be like, in the cold weather, the black wool or these dresses when you could, or the brocade and the pink peau de soie.”

Rayma Reese used accessories to make a simple black-and-white ensemble into a fashion statement. “For church, I had a white -- it was just a white smock, you know,” she says. “And I had a big red flower that I wore right here. [laughs] And I had red shoes that I wore with it, you know. . . . I wore a black skirt, red shoes, and then I had that red flower.”

Several of the women had special events to attend during pregnancy, and they had outfits that they used specially for these events. Carolyn Bradford recalls the dress that she wore for her husband's college graduation:

I remember that I had -- I thought it was so pretty -- it was a deep teal-colored, one-piece maternity dress, stopped at the knees. I'm thinking it had -- right under the bust, some

little tiny pleats, maybe a little tiny bow -- not a huge bow on the side! -- it may have had a little Peter Pan collar. But I felt so beautiful in it because -- it was Terry's graduation dress -- it was made of crepe. And I thought it was the most beautiful maternity dress I'd had throughout any of the pregnancies. It was a special day.

Carolyn's crepe dress was worn for church as well as the graduation; most women tried to get as much use as they could out of any special-occasion maternity dresses. Peggy Jackson also remembers the dress that she wore to her husband's college graduation. It was "blue brocade. And then there was a little hat that went with it. It was just, you know, one of those little bands with, like, little flowers and a little swiff of a veil on top of it. And . . . I wore that to R.H.'s graduation."

For errands and "going out," many women wore their nicer maternity dresses -- in many cases, their church clothes. Wilma Abbott says that she wore her nicer dresses "to church mostly. In the car, shoppin' . . . I guess just when I went out to town to shop or at church. Funerals or somethin' like that." Weecy Patterson had a blue dress that she wore whenever she went out. "I wore it 'bout everywhere I went, 'cause it was pretty," she says, laughing. "I had some [others], but I don't remember 'em. But that was my favorite. It was my -- if we went out, or traveled, or -- doctor's appointment, that was it. The rest of 'em was for comfort, you know, somethin' -- slouchy. [laughs] And cool."

Clothing for sports and exercise was largely unnecessary. "I never was the athletic type," says Ann Todd. "And at that time we didn't hear so much about bein' active, because we were active with the things we had to do." Others were restricted in their exercise during pregnancy. "I tried to be careful about what we did as far as exercise," says Bessie Miller. "There was one of my pregnancies that I started spotting at about three or four months, and I had to go to bed there for a while." Kathleen Smoliga enjoyed roller skating, but did none of it during pregnancy. "I

was a roller skater. But I wouldn't have gone roller skating being pregnant, you know. Because you may fall and hurt -- so you were careful not to do things that would hurt the baby," she explains. Carolyn Bradford was also told initially to keep exercise to a minimum, but this advice changed over time. "In the first pregnancy [1965], and probably the second, we were told, 'Do not do a lot of exercise,'" she recalls. "You know, 'you're fragile.' Which, I did not really pay a lot of attention to that -- I continued doing what I had always done, which was nothing really strenuous. And then with the third pregnancy [1972], we were told, 'Walk. Walk as much as you can, do whatever you want.'" Betty Mitchell was a golfer. "Used to play golf all the time. But not while I was pregnant," she says. Betty Hutcheson was the only interviewee who mentioned playing sports during pregnancy. "I played basketball when I was not sick," she says.

Maternity clothing for work required changes from what would have otherwise been worn. "I was workin' for the Welfare Department at that time, and I just wore reg'lar dressy dresses then more than -- wadn't much concerned with the everyday dresses then, 'cause I worked right on up till [the baby arrived]," explains Bessie Miller. Rayma Reese worked for the first six months of one of her pregnancies. "I dressed up more for work. Mm-hm. At home a lotta times I'd just wear a shirt or something."

Many women who worked during pregnancy tried to avoid clothing that was overtly maternity. It seems that maternity clothing was viewed as being less professional. "I was working when I first got pregnant with Bob, at the Planning Commission in Knoxville," says Peggy Jackson. "And those dresses [pattern shown in Figure 9] were really nice to wear to work, you know, because it still had the slender -- didn't have all the stuff. And a coupla things that I bought on sale, which weren't maternity clothes, actually, were like a middy top and a skirt, and

it came down low, and I put elastic pieces that I could pin in the waist. And so that was -- they had, you know, looked good for an office type thing.”

In some cases, women were simply not allowed to wear maternity clothes to work. This made improvisation imperative. “I was working at the time I was pregnant, the first time [1968],” Suzanne Sansom says. “And this was interesting because -- you could not wear maternity clothes and work there.” This was a written policy for the company. “I just remember that, you know, you could not wear maternity clothes and stay there, so. Made you wanna hide it a lot!”

Clothing worn at home varied a lot, ranging from nicer dresses to housecoats. Generally, it seems, the interviewees just wore whatever they had. Those with larger wardrobes had casual maternity outfits for wearing at home; the women on very limited budgets sometimes made do with non-maternity clothing. If dresses were worn, the fabrics were typically less dressy for home wear. Kate Embry wore cotton maternity dresses that her mother had purchased for her. Styles often did not vary much, except for the fabrics. “We had church clothes. And we had home clothes. So I recall at home I did wear just the little darker, tiny flowers, smocks,” Kathleen Smoliga says. “But always smocks. I always remember smocks. They were so popular at that time.” In later decades, some of the interviewees wore pants. “Usually I wore pants and a top during the week,” says Betty Hutcheson. Jean Gibson also wore pants at home. “Here at the house, I’d just wear pants. Yeah, and a little top.” Many of the women did not remember what they wore at home. This is probably because less thought was put into home wear than dressy clothing, so it was less memorable. A few women, particularly in the earlier decades, wore the same dresses at home and for dressier occasions; since Dollie Wolford only had two dresses, “they had to serve all purposes.” For home wear, comfort was usually more

important than style. “I just went to seven months with my twins. And it was very, very uncomfortable; so therefore, I wore a -- a straight housedress most of the time. You know, unless I went out,” says Weecy Patterson. Very unstructured garments were frequently worn at home. “They were just loose-fitting,” says Wilma Abbott. “And as I showed you, this is the sorta thing I wore. It's kinda like a duster. You make it a little bigger, and it's full, and that's about all you need at home. . . . And some of 'em was muu-muus. You just pull 'em over -- you know how they were worn, don't you? -- you just pull 'em over. I had muu-muus.”

### *Social Factors Impacting Maternity Clothing*

The social influences on pregnancy and maternity clothing varied widely. For many women, pregnancy was had minimal social impact and required little or no modification to their everyday lives. Others lost their jobs because of pregnancy. Some women were able to discuss it freely; others say that it was all very “hush-hush.” Beginning the study, I had expected that there would be a trend of more freedom and openness about pregnancy as the decades progressed; however, this was not always the case. Although people began to talk about pregnancy more freely in later decades, there seem to have been few changes in other areas. Instead, social attitudes about pregnancy and maternity clothing varied depending on where you lived, what kind of job you held, how you were raised, and – in many cases – your own thoughts about your pregnancy.

For women in some rural areas, where larger families were common, it seems that pregnancy was not a big deal. “They never give it much thought, because they were -- big families all around, you know,” says Armina Summers, pregnant between 1940 and 1943. “A lot of children, and -- and nobody ever give it much thought and didn't say too much about it.”

Armina did not wait to tell her friends and family that she was expecting. “Oh, they knew it from the beginning. [laughs] You were real happy about it.” Armina did not modify her schedule at all – she seemed surprised when I asked if she went to church through her entire pregnancy.

Linda Ledford, pregnant between 1957 and 1968, told her family and friends “just as soon as I found out. And [pause] it was, uh, it was exciting. And Bob and I had wanted a large family. . . . I guess we told everybody just as soon as we found out. I know we told our parents. And when my dad told somebody at work that we were gonna have another baby, this was probably maybe the fifth time I was pregnant, I don't know. The man asked my dad if we were Catholic. Made him so mad,” Linda recalls, laughing.

Many women waited a little while to tell their extended family about their pregnancy. “No, then you didn't jump right in and tell. No, people were little more sneaky with it,” Kate Embry says of her 1935 pregnancy. “So I prob'ly didn't say much until maybe after the second time you miss.” Kate describes herself as “never too shy” about her pregnancy. She had no problem going out and doing all the things that she normally would have done; in fact, she wanted to go out to a dance just days before her son was born.

I remember, about two days before Don was born [chuckling] was a plant party -- where he worked? -- they have a yearly, you know, little party, dinner and dancin' and stuff -- and I wanted to go. And Earl said no, we wouldn't go. So he came home from work that evening. The evening of the affair. And he walked over and patted me. And I turned around and I threw potatoes. [Both laugh.] I was peelin' potaydas [potatoes] -- I never will forget that -- I turned around and threw potaydas, 'cause that was the night of the party and we weren't gonna go. And I think that very night, I started havin' pains. [Still laughing] And we waited until the next day and Don was born. But I remember that so well, throwin' that potayda at him. 'Cause I was just -- I felt we shoulda gone to the party. I told 'im he was ashamed of me and everything else. [laughs]



Wilma Abbott says that she told her family about her pregnancies as soon as she found out. “And everybody else found out soon enough,” she adds, laughing. Different people had different views about how soon it was acceptable to talk about the pregnancy. Margaret Williams recalls the sequence of events of her 1958 pregnancy.

I remember telling Frank I thought I was [pregnant]. So I went to the doctor -- soon. And he confirmed. I probably -- he couldn't tell for sure, but he probably thought I was. Things were different then; you didn't have the pregnancy tests, you did- you know. So. But the doctor didn't have to tell me I was pregnant; I knew. And course he knew first, and -- I remember tellin' Lillian [Margaret's mother-in-law], I said, "Well, don't tell anybody yet." She told everybody in Davidson County. That she was gonna be a grandmother. I told my mother, and [more quietly] she didn't like the idea. She didn't -- she was "too young to be a grandmother." She was forty-two, she was too young -- to be a grandmother. She just didn't like the idea at all.

Even though pregnancy was generally not discussed freely in earlier decades, even the children still knew what was going on. Bessie Miller relates a humorous story from her own childhood that illustrates the way pregnancy was handled around children.

I remember one time I was comin' home from school and -- I had a -- an aunt that lived the next house out the road from us. We lived out in the country. And she was goin' to have a baby . . . I was ten years old [since Bessie was born in 1918, this story would have occurred in 1928], and I knew that she was gonna have a baby. But it was not discussed at home, and I got home from school one day. My mother and Aunt Lola, oh they were scramblin' around, had some stuff laid out on the bed, and they was gettin' it rolled up and wadded up in a wad, and come [to] find out, it was flannel material that they were makin' clothes for the baby. And they didn't want me to see it. They was gettin' it rolled up and hid from me. And I was ten years old. And wadn't long then till Aunt Lola had her baby, but. [laughs]

Bessie says that the situation was much the same for her first two pregnancies in 1943 and 1946. By the time of her last two pregnancies, however, in 1956 and 1959, “you made it more public.”

Carolyn Bradford noticed major differences in the social view of pregnancy between her first pregnancy in 1965 and her last in 1979. “I guess with the first, it was more like, my mother thought, ‘Oh, you're pregnant. Stay home, don't let anyone see you.’ And course, I did not do

that with the first, but I guess -- I concealed it more than with the last two. Especially with the last one. With the last one, it was, 'Go out! And show! And -- and HEY, I'm pregnant! Look, everybody! See what I'm wearing?'" Carolyn did not directly discuss this with her mother, because she didn't want to hurt her mother's feelings. "She never actually said anything. It was just -- her actions, and suggestions. I just assumed by the way she -- perceived things." Some people kept pregnancy quiet because they thought it was fun, and that it would make it easier for the other children. Carolyn Bradford recalls,

With the additional pregnancies, my husband and I liked to keep it a secret between the two of us for as long as we could, so I would not wear maternity clothes until I actually really had to. We just thought that it was fun, to keep the secret between just us, until we told the family. . . . Especially with my third pregnancy, I had two little girls, who I knew would not understand if I was two months pregnant saying, "You're gonna have a little brother or sister," because they would think, "Oh, tonight. Go to Wal-Mart and get another baby." So we would wait as long as possible to tell them. So the waiting would not be so hard for them.

Carolyn and her husband typically started telling friends and family at about the fourth or fifth month, when the pregnancy became noticeable.

Almost all the interviewees were very definite about the fact that pregnancy was never viewed as something of which to be ashamed, or something to hide; it just was not discussed openly. Bessie Miller explains that "there was just, like, more privacy to it then somehow. You just didn't -- course everybody knew you was pregnant, and all that, but -- it was still -- I don't know, we just didn't." Bessie did not modify her activities except for medical reasons (due to some spotting, she had to be careful about exercise): "Of course I always went to church, right on up to the last, and -- wherever I needed to go. But, uh, we were just not as -- public about it as are now." Ruth Williams says that pregnancy was only hidden in "extenuating

circumstances.” She adds, “It was socially acceptable. I mean, to be out in public in maternity clothes.”

In Kathleen Smoliga’s social group in 1960, she says they were like girls “playing dolly.” Pregnancy was exciting, and they all discussed it among themselves.

And in that group, we were a support group for each other. You know, I was kinda proud I was gettin' a baby too. And it was fun, you know, 'cause we had the showers together, and we'd go over to see the new baby, you know. It was fun. I remember it being a lot of fun. And I was young. We had babies young. I was 21 and 22 when they were born. So you know, it was like, you still kinda have a little of that kid in you, you know. This is fun, you know. And it was so much fun getting things ready. I remember laying the little garments out, and puttin' this piece and that one together, you know, and thinkin' how the baby was gonna look. I think we were kinda like older girls playing dolly. [both laugh] There with that first one.

Kathleen says, however, that pregnancy was not discussed in mixed company. “You wouldn't be among mixed company and be talking a lot about your pregnancy. The ladies together, chatter-chatter-chatter. But not if the -- if you got together with couples, you know, it was okay, we could go and we could enjoy ourselves, but we didn't say a lot about it,” she says. “We -- we wouldn't bring it to the forefront. We'd mention it, [but] at that time, we still tended to, men eat at this table and ladies this one, so over at our table, we would chatter.” The thinking at the time, says Kathleen, was that you did not publicly make “a big flair about being pregnant -- except among your girlfriends. ‘Oh boy!’, you know, you could talk about it -- but if you were in mixed company, not a word. Isn't that strange?”

Gracie Reed says that there is a significant difference in perception of pregnancy between her childhood and the present day. “It’s went from one extreme to the other,” she says. When she was young, it was, as Bessie Miller related, hardly discussed; now, Gracie implies that maybe it is discussed a little too much. Gracie was pregnant in three different decades (her first

child was born in 1945 and her last in 1966), and she says that discussion of pregnancy increased in that time span. "People had began to talk more about it, and, you know, and not mind sayin', 'I got to get me another dress,' and that sort of thing, you know.'" For her earlier pregnancies, though, she says that "you were timid about it." When asked if that had any effect on her clothing choices, she replies, "Well, it had an effect on when we put them on. You'd wait just, you know, longer about puttin' 'em on. Now, people can't hardly wait till they get in their maternity -- in fact, some people wear 'em when they don't really need 'em."

Carolyn Bradford, pregnant between 1965 and 1979, encountered some of the opposite extreme that Gracie was talking about. In a time when she was feeling a little self-conscious about her body shape, unwelcome comments from other people did not help matters at all. "I always had a lot of comments that [in squeaky voice], 'Oh, you're so tiny, are you sure you're pregnant?' [in normal voice] Which made me feel like kicking them. The other one was [mockingly], 'Oh, you're carrying so very low.' [chuckles] 'You look like you're -- holding a basketball.'"

For Edith Herbert, people's reticence about pregnancy made her feel self-conscious about going out and doing things in the last weeks of her pregnancy in 1945.

Not embarrassed, but very conscious of it. [pause] Shy, I would say. [pause] And as you got larger, very, very conscientious. And I think I've already said that maybe the last six weeks you -- were hesitant about getting out. It wasn't something that you flaunted -- you, you have to go through this to have the baby -- but it's not somethin' that "look at me! Look at me, here I am!" at all. You, you covered up. And I don't know whether that was because of -- children didn't know as much as they know now -- and so aware of pregnancies, which I guess that's okay. I -- I don't know that I would tell one the first three or four months that they were having a new brother or sister. But you, you were kind of private with it.

Edith explains that she was not embarrassed about her pregnancy, but that pregnancy was just a more private matter at that time. "I wasn't trying to hide that I was pregnant. I was married two

years before Robert was born, so that means at least a year and a half. It wasn't anything that I was ashamed of, in fact I was happy to -- to be having a baby. [pause] It was just somethin' that, it was more private then than it is now."

Weecy Patterson thinks that pregnant women's activities were somewhat restricted by social expectations when she was pregnant in 1956. "I never did have any problem, but I think people thought -- pregnant people shouldn't have fun! You know. To laugh and -- go out to eat, and shop, and you know, like -- now, it's part of a -- yeah. I don't ever remember people doin' that." Weecy was pregnant with twins, and her activities were somewhat restricted because of the difficulty of the pregnancy. "All summer, I was almost as -- in bed rest. 'Cause my legs -- I started swelling a lot? And all that summer, I had to go to [Jim's parents' house], and I had to go to the doctor every week."

On the other hand, Peggy Jackson, pregnant just three years after Weecy, recalls no social restrictions. She attended a lot of school functions during pregnancy. Peggy had started the engineering program at the University of Tennessee, but decided not to finish. "R.H. was an officer in the Association of Collegiate Engineers, and he was Tau Beta Phi, Engineering Honor Society member, and like I said, the people -- the kids, the guys he was with knew me, so a lot of the things that maybe some of the wives didn't really get invited to, I got to go. And so that was different -- we -- I can't think of anything that we didn't really do." The only time she skipped an event was when she thought it might not be safe. "Bout the only thing we didn't do was we didn't go to the last of the football games the year I was expecting Bob," Peggy says, "because it was -- you know, in the stadium, the steps going up and down, and I had took a couple tumbles when I was expecting him, but we just didn't like the steps of the stadium, going up and down." Peggy was all right with the other steps on campus, but her friends worried about it.

I went up and down the steps at UT. R.H.'s class that graduated was the class I started with. . . . So when I was expecting, the ones that were seniors in all his classes were the ones I started with. I studied engineering, so all of them knew me. [Laughing] And so R.H. said, "Five minutes after you step on campus, I know it, 'cause everybody's going, 'R.H., R.H! Peggy's here! And you need to keep her off of the steps, keep her off of the steps!'" At UT, it's real hilly, and there's steps all over the place, particularly towards the back part of the hill where the engineering classes are. . . . Felix Rees kept telling R.H., he said, "She's going to take a tumble down those steps." . . . But most of the things, you know, there were very few things we didn't do.

Betty Mitchell was very self-conscious about her 1951 pregnancy. "I know I kinda dreaded goin' into those maternity clothes. 'Cause everybody would know it was you that was pregnant. [laughs] They didn't know for a long time." Betty says that discussing pregnancy was taboo. "You didn't -- you didn't talk about it. Just like it was -- terrible, or whatever," she says, laughing. She did not tell her friends that she was expecting, and waited a long time to tell her parents. "I remember my daddy made a comment and all when I finally told Mother and Daddy that I was pregnant. 'Cause we were married four years. And all. He said, 'Now, bein' pregnant is nothin' to be ashamed of.' Well, I was embarrassed to death." I asked why she was embarrassed. "Well, I dunno, just the thoughts of -- havin' sex, I guess. I don't know. [Both laugh.] We didn't discuss anything like that in my time."

Some women continued about their ordinary activities, but felt some judgment about it from acquaintances. Dollie Wolford says, "I went to New Herman, a small country church. And -- I felt good and just went on to church. And I reckon people just went into seclusion, I don't know," Dollie speculates, laughing. "But -- people would look at me like, some of 'em like, 'You ought to be at home.' [Laughs.]" This was not a problem for most of the interviewees; Ann Todd says, "I . . . think [people] thought it was all right, whatever I did. I don't remember anybody saying anything different. They seemed to be nice about everything. Friendly."

Peggy Jackson says that generally she did whatever she wished without censure, but remembers one incident from her first pregnancy, in 1958, which she took in stride.

We were sitting in church one Sunday, and my brother-in-law was sitting next to me -- R.H. was on one side, and Harold [her brother-in-law] was on the other -- and there were a couple of old ladies. . . . And the, the ladies were whispering to each other, loudly enough that Harold heard 'em. I sorta got tickled; he got mad. Because they were saying [whispers], "Well, in my day, when I looked like that, I stayed at home!" [Laughs] And Harold's [whispers, indistinct]. [Both laugh.] And I'm, "Just take it easy." And he said, he said, "What's with them? What's with them?" And I said, "That's just the way they think." And they kep' on, off and on all during church services about, you know, [in snippety voice] "can't see why anybody would wanna come out when they were looking like that." I'm going, "Forget it!", you know? [Both laugh.] But that was, I guess that was about the only time I really heard anybody criticize. Me being out and being very heavily pregnant.

Louella Pyle thinks that the reticence about pregnancy was a carryover from earlier generations. "Years ago, people just stayed home I understand, you know. 'Course, I wouldn't do THAT. But I -- I just wanted to look as normal as possible, I guess. . . . It was just a feeling you had that you wanted to -- [pause] not be so noticeable, be more modest about it." She clarifies, "I wasn't embarrassed or anything, but I didn't wanna go out and just show off, you know. [chuckles] But I wasn't embarrassed about it. But I had rather not been so -- conspicuous, you know." But Louella did not modify her activities because of her pregnancy. "Oh, I just did what I always did. I felt wonderful," she says.

Although pregnancy was not a very open conversation topic, it was discussed under certain circumstances. Gossip was common in small towns. Wilma Abbott recalls the neighbors' opinion of her 1955 pregnancy. "Well, when I was thirty -- two, I guess I was 32 when I was pregnant -- some of the neighbors thought I was havin' one late! When, like, now, they'll have 'em up to 40, won't they? But I really wanted a daughter, so I -- workin' on that, so. That's the reason. I was proud to get pregnant." Juanita Burks, who has four children, was asked

how she thought people perceived her during pregnancy. “I don't know,” Juanita replies, “except I'm sure they said, ‘[gasp] She's expectin' again!’” Juanita recalls a comment made in church during her fourth pregnancy. “And I remembered some girl sitting in the back of -- behind me in church, saying, ‘[Gasp] She's pregnant!’ [Both laugh.] So I was long about four months along then. Yeah. You know, that was the fourth one; that was gettin' to be a houseful, I guess they thought,” Juanita concludes, chuckling. Margaret Williams recalls, “In the town where I lived, the older ladies, when somebody got married, they marked the calendar down. To see how long it was before the first baby came. That's the truth. So it was nineteen months after I married till I had my first baby.”

Ann Todd says that personal conversation about pregnancy was all right; public conversation was frowned upon. “I think it would've been [socially unacceptable] if we'd gone out in public and talked about it. We didn't talk about bein' pregnant in public; we might've talked to each other, and friends talk, but as far as getting out in public and talking about it, and discussin' everything like they do today, we didn't do that.” When asked if she had told her friends that she was pregnant, or if they just figured it out, Ann replies, laughing, “Well, I think it was both. I don't remember, but I'm sure I told some of my friends that I was pregnant, and I know one friend that -- that I went to the wedding, her wedding, and I was pregnant the first time. And she remembers that, and we talked about it the other day. She remembered seeing me there, and the dress I wore. [clears throat] I'm sure we discussed it with other, and friends.”

According to Marie Smith, pregnancy was not “discussed openly, you know, in, like, mixed company. I just don't think that that was something you did.” Rayma Reese says that there was a lot of excitement over pregnancy, but that it was not flaunted. “I think everyone was -- excited about it. And we would always laugh about the fact that -- spring, you know, you



wouldn't know anyone was really expectin', but near spring, everybody started showing up in maternity clothes. And, well, we were happy about the babies, but still it wasn't something you flaunted. You know. Okay? We were -- everybody was happy about it, and we had [baby] showers.”

A few societal restrictions were imposed on expectant mothers. Carolyn Midgett recalls that her pregnancy prevented her being a bridesmaid in her best friend's wedding in 1965. She was very upset about it.

My very best friend -- she was my maid of honor when I got married, and -- so she . . . called me from Texas. . . . And she said that she wanted me to be in her wedding, and she said, "But it'll be in June." Well, I didn't have Jennifer till the Fourth of July, so I was humongous. And so, I knew I couldn't be in it, and it was just -- it hurt me so much, because I -- but you did just not walk down the aisle when you were that big. It just was not done. It would just not have been socially acceptable. And I wouldn't have wanted to have ruined her wedding, to waddle down the aisle, you know? And so -- oh, and I -- I had a very special dress for that; Mother had that made too. And it was light green linen. And it was short sleeves, and I had a little hat that I wore, 'cause we all wore hats. . . . So I, I wore that dress, and I went back and helped her get dressed, and did all the things, you know, that I could do, because -- she's still my friend [today]. . . . So anyway, I did all that, and then I did go in kind of late and sat down with my parents and with Don and the rest of the family and all, but -- then the processional started. . . . But I've always kinda felt bad that she was in mine, but I didn't get to be in hers. It was -- but, course, she was excited for me about having -- having Jennifer, so it wasn't that -- but we were just disappointed that we couldn't do that together, you know.

Carolyn did not want to risk censure by being in the wedding. “I would have never been in that wedding and done somethin' of that sort, but nowadays you could, and it prob'ly would've been fine, but at that time . . . that was so frowned upon. And I didn't want to be frowned upon if I had been in Nancy's wedding.”

Suzanne Sansom was in a wedding during her 1968 pregnancy. “But you couldn't tell I was pregnant, 'cause that was earlier and was kind of an empire gown,” she says. “I was in my

cousin's wedding in March before Mike was born in June, and I remembered, I really wanted to be, you know, kinda suckin' it in. And the dresses, I think she chose basically so I could be in the wedding, but I wasn't really big. I didn't get really big till maybe the last coupla months, I didn't get real big."

Women's ideas about pregnancy were often influenced by parents. Wilma Abbott recalls that her mother gave her several guidelines about things that should not be done during pregnancy, and Wilma followed her mother's advice without question. "Oh, my mother told me not to take a picture. You asked me if I had any pictures -- not to take pictures. Your eyes would look different," Wilma says, laughing. "That's what she told me.

Charity: Your eyes would look different?

Wilma: In the picture.

C: Huh. I haven't heard that.

[Both laugh]

W: Well, and not to go to the funeral and look at the dead people.

C: Really?

W: That's what she said. And that's what my mother told me.

C: Did you go to any funerals?

W: I just didn't go close.

C: Was there anything else your mother told you?

W: Oh, not to go to the dentist! And that's when I lost my teeth! She just -- advised me not to go to the dentist!

C: Oh, do you know the reason for that?

W: I don't know!

Wilma's doctor advised her to go to the dentist, as she was having problems with her teeth, but Wilma followed her mother's advice instead and avoided the dentist until after her baby was born. "When I was thirty, I had to get dentures," she says. Wilma seems to have regretted following her mother's advice; later in the interview, she says, "I'd advise people to take the things that the doctors prescribe."

Medical advice about what pregnant women should and shouldn't do became more relaxed as time went on. "You just didn't do no strenuous activity. Now some women had to, 'cause they worked in the field and that sorta thing. But you didn't go around liftin', and you didn't do this, and you didn't do that, because you were pregnant," Gracie Reed recalls. "But it sure has changed -- now they work up till the day they go to the hospital. Which, there's nothin' wrong with it if you feel like it."

Travel was sometimes restricted by doctors. Edith Herbert, who was living with her husband in New Mexico when she got pregnant in 1945, went home to Nashville to stay with her family during the pregnancy. She missed her husband and wanted to go back. "I wanted to go back to New Mexico to be with my husband. And [Dr. Casey] said, 'Do you want to do that, or do you want your baby?'" Edith stayed put until the baby was born. Kathleen Smoliga recalls that she was not allowed to go home for Christmas while she was pregnant in 1960. She stayed behind and sent her husband on without her.

When my first child was coming, I was six months pregnant, and we lived fourteen hours away from family for Christmas. Back in another state. And my doctor said I must not travel that far. "Yeah, let's not travel that far." So we had a hard time saying, you know, my husband, will he go, and. I finally said, "Well, go on," you know, I -- we were still at an age where we would see what Santa left, you know. Go home, see everybody, bring Santa home. And at his work, he was manager of a plant, and people there, some of the people there, had me over to their house. We had a lovely day, with the whole cooking

and everything. So. I remember that happening when I was -- when I was -- six months pregnant with my first child.

Women who worked outside the home usually the most affected by other people's attitudes towards pregnancy. For women who worked in a family business, it was not a problem. During part of her pregnancy, Louella Pyle worked in the photography studio that she and her husband Paul owned, but doesn't remember how long. It was not a big deal for her. "I just helped out at the studio, like a receptionist, you know." Juanita and her husband owned a grocery store where she worked afternoons while she was pregnant. In some workplaces, pregnancy was not discussed directly even though everyone knew about it. Marie Smith recalls that her pregnancy was public knowledge when she worked for the Extension Service in 1950.

I know on the first one, since I was still working, you began to wear . . . something that had some pleats so it kinda, you know. . . . I worked for the Extension Service, in Oklahoma . . . for the landscape specialist, and they just knew I was pregnant, but they didn't, you know, nothing was said. But I know they wanted me to get something off a ladder, or something or other, and I know it was -- they thought that I wouldn't do it, you know, but I did. 'Cause I was trying not to -- for them not to know I was pregnant.

Marie did not work the last three months of her pregnancy; she did not mention whether this was voluntary or whether she was required to.

Some women did not seem to mind the limitations of pregnant women in the workplace. Ann Todd was a teacher in Woodbury, Tennessee when she was pregnant in 1950 and 1958. When asked if she taught during her pregnancies, she says, "No, you didn't do that in those days. If you knew -- when you began to show that you were pregnant, you could not teach at that time." She seemed to view this in a matter-of-fact way. "They didn't think it was the thing to do for a pregnant woman to be up in front of a school class. And so you didn't teach -- the school board made that rule, that you didn't teach while you were showin'. And now today, course, they

teach up until the time for the baby to come. But it's like everything else, times have changed.”

Ann does not think that recent changes are an improvement. “[Now] we look at things in a different way, some people do. I still -- I still don't care for that. I think we'd be better off just to -- there's a lotta things I don't like today. [Both laugh.] I don't think children should be exposed to so many things like that.” For Carolyn Midgett, who also taught elementary school, things were totally different during her pregnancy in 1965.

She was born in July, and I taught that whole year, to the end of the -- through May, or whatever, June, whenever you get out. . . . I had a child assigned to take a chair -- a folding chair -- whenever we went outside to play, that was their responsibility, because I couldn't stand up, of course, out that long. And that was just the best thing -- because . . . they wanted to be the one to take the chair. It was like, kind of like an honor that they -- and I didn't know all that was gonna happen when I just -- it was 'cause I needed a chair - - but then it was like they were so happy and excited for me. . . . That year I taught fifth grade. And so they were big enough to know, you know, and understand and everything. And so they were excited for me, and after she was born, several came to see me, and see the baby and all, and so that was kind of a surprise to me that they got so excited over it.

Apparently, a large number of workplaces had rules about pregnancy, throughout the entire time period of the study. The norm, according to Rayma Reese, was that pregnant women were required to quit at six months. “That was more or less a law,” she says. In 1954, during her first pregnancy, Rayma worked at Champaign Cap and Gown Company; during her 1959 pregnancy, she was employed by Altamill Corporation in Tullahoma, Tennessee. The six-month rule applied both places. Other workplaces were more strict. Shirley Embry’s workplace required expectant mothers to quit at three months. “Yeah, rules were funny. I mean, compared to now,” Shirley says. “No one ever said anything to me about what I wore. Like I said, they had the policy that you were supposed to quit at three months. But I didn't know it to begin with.” Despite company policy, Shirley was allowed to work past the three-month mark. “Don was in college, and I didn't wanna quit. So I kinda hid it prob'ly another month, and then they didn't say

anything. I stayed about five months.” Shirley was a secretary for General Motors, in a department that manufactured turbo props for airplanes. “They were phasing out our group,” she says. “I think that's why they let me stay longer.” But eventually, Shirley had to quit. “They took my chair away from me at my desk,” she recalls, laughing. “They were phasin' out our group, and they were cleaning out the offices, and they took my chair away from me and I decided it was time to quit. But they put me on maternity leave -- I could've gone back after Christmas, but I didn't want to.”

Suzanne Sansom worked for an insurance company in Nashville, Tennessee, that banned maternity clothing in the dress code. By so doing, they essentially required that a woman quit her job at about four months. “I worked at National Life, and I worked in the legal department, which was a little bit separate from the rest of the company, but it was an old Southern company, and that ruined their image,” Suzanne recalls. “Anyway, we didn't think anything about, 'cause you knew, you just couldn't wear maternity clothes and work there. So, nobody ever fussed about it, that's the way it was. But I got to stay longer because I was in a private office in the back of the company, with a private boss, so I did get to stay longer, and I did wear maternity clothes, so. But anybody, like in the office pools and things they had, they could not stay there. . . . If you wore maternity clothes, you could not stay there, so.” Since Suzanne was in a less visible role, the rules were bent for her. “I actually stayed until May . . . and then Mike was born in June. So I stayed long time. But nobody could see me, so it was okay. 'Cause they did portray themselves as an old Southern company that had, you know, high Southern morals.” This was not an unusual practice. “That was a pretty normal thing. Prob'ly if you were in a smaller office, without so many, but -- since it was a large company and they have a lot of office pools, where just girls would just be typing and it be a whole room full of 'em. They were the

ones that really could not stay there. You could come back, later, but you could not stay there when pregnant.”

When Jean Gibson was pregnant in 1972, she worked as a secretary. She did not mention any company policies on maternity, but says, “Most of us did not work until the baby was born. We would quit like a month or six weeks before. . . . I think that's just -- that was just kind of the norm. And you thought, well, okay, that's what we do.” Jean and her coworkers did not have to hide their pregnancies – three of them had their picture taken at work when they were all pregnant.

Smaller business had no written policies about working during pregnancy. It was a severe blow to Margaret Williams to discover unexpectedly that her employer did not want a pregnant woman working in his furniture store in Martin, Tennessee. It was 1958. “He couldn't have anybody in his establishment that was pregnant,” Margaret says. At the time, her husband Frank was in school, and Margaret was the sole breadwinner for the family. “I was very upset. But, I mean, what could you do?” She was fired without warning. “He figured it out. I don't think I had told him. . . . But he told me one day, he said, [quietly] ‘You can't work here anymore because you're pregnant.’” Margaret was forced to quit that same day.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of what individual and social factors influenced a woman's selection and use of clothing during pregnancy in the modern era (1920-1969) and what changes, if any, took place from decade to decade. Because the earliest pregnancy located was in 1935, the 1920 date was revised to 1935. I also discovered that, among the women interviewed, the view of pregnancy changed not at all or very little between 1969 and 1974, so I extended the end date of the study accordingly. The objectives were as follows:

1. To discover what women wore during pregnancy.
2. To understand how women perceived their maternity clothes and the pregnant figure.
3. To understand how women acquired their maternity clothing.
4. To understand what factors were considered when planning and wearing a maternity wardrobe.

To achieve these objectives, I interviewed 26 women who were pregnant between 1935 and 1974 and analyzed the interviews using grounded theory methodology. Prior to the interviews, I researched sewing patterns; magazines including *Vogue*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, and *Harper's Bazaar*; photographs; and extant garments. These primary sources supplemented the information from secondary sources and provided rich data for the interviews. Sewing patterns were the most relevant supplement to the interview data. Since most of the interview participants sewed their own clothing, their primary source of fashion influence (besides friends and acquaintances) was the sewing pattern companies. The majority



of the interviewees did not subscribe to any magazines; Linda Ledford, pregnant in the late 1950s and the 1960s, did subscribe to some ladies' magazines but does not recall ever seeing anything about maternity clothing. The magazines typically portrayed as necessities what the interviewees saw as optional and/or unimportant (maternity underwear, for example).<sup>69</sup>

Although some of the magazines, particularly *Good Housekeeping*, sometimes discussed sewing maternity clothing, and *Vogue* mentioned the occasional maternity sewing pattern, most of the magazine articles focused primarily on ready-to-wear maternity clothing. The discrepancy between what was recommended by the magazines and what was actually bought and worn by the interview participants is probably due to the fact that most of the interviewees were in a lower income bracket than the target reader of the fashion magazines. The fashion magazines portrayed the ideal for those with a larger discretionary income. However, at the times when the interviewees were expecting their children, most of them were young married women whose husbands were in school or just starting their careers. They were less concerned with achieving the ideal and more concerned with what was enough to look presentable during pregnancy.

Some additional limitations were discovered during the course of the study. One was the age of the interviewees; only two women pregnant in the 1930s were interviewed, which limited the data for that decade (one was pregnant in 1935, and the other in 1940). The location of the interviewees was another limitation; the majority of the interviewees lived in rural areas or small towns; therefore, urban women were not well represented. The interviewees' memories also limited the study. The interviewees did not remember everything about their maternity clothing; for example, although the women were frequently able to discuss their special-occasion maternity clothing in detail, some had difficulty remembering what they wore at home on an everyday basis. Another limitation was a perceived reluctance among most of the women to

discuss body image in the interviews. Questions intended to gain information about body image were frequently redirected into how the women felt physically during their pregnancies.

### What Women Wore

What women wore during pregnancy between 1935 and 1974 depended on three factors: Current styles at the time of the pregnancy, availability of maternity clothing, and personal preferences. Current styles dictated what was available in stores, what patterns were available, and what a woman's friends were wearing. Availability of maternity clothing was also a significant determining factor in what was worn. If ready-to-wear maternity clothing was not easily available or there was a poor selection, then many of the women interviewed opted to sew instead. If they were unable to sew, they were more likely to borrow or purchase clothing. Another factor in availability was the income level and/or amount of money allotted to spend on clothing. If a woman could not afford readymade maternity garments, then that clothing was unavailable to her and she would seek other alternatives. Personal preferences also played a role in what women wore. As illustrated by Juanita Burks' story, women tended to avoid styles that they did not like, if other options were available to them. Elizabeth Moomaw found that women in 1947 had very few optional items such as swimsuits. Only two of her 25 interviewees owned slacks, and none had a swimsuit.<sup>70</sup> This was consistent with my findings; none of my 1940s interviewees owned pants or a swimsuit.

### Perception of Maternity Clothing and the Pregnant Figure

The perception of maternity clothing is a very complex topic dependent on a large number of factors. The primary factors influencing perception, however, can be broken down as follows:

<b>Leads to positive perception of maternity clothing</b>	<b>Leads to negative perception of maternity clothing</b>
Control over fashion decisions	Lack of control over fashion decisions
Multiple available options	Few available options
Positive perception of body	Negative perception of body
Clothing fits social requirements	Clothing does not fit social requirements
Clothing functions well and fits	Clothing does not function well and has a poor fit
Clothing fits personal aesthetic	Clothing does not fit personal aesthetic
Support from friends	Lack of support from friends

The interview data indicates that the level of control women had over their fashion decisions was a major factor in the perception of both their maternity clothing and their pregnant figures. If, for instance, they were able to select fabric and sew whatever kind of dress they wanted, they were more likely to have a positive perception of their maternity clothing than women who were forced to rely on hand-me-downs and had no say in what they wore. Similarly, the women who had many options available were more likely to have a positive perception than the women with few or no options; limited options meant, for instance, having to make do with non-maternity garments that were ill-suited to pregnancy. Options were frequently limited by budget. This finding corresponds with Ogle, Tyner, and Schofield-Tomschin's findings that thriftiness limits women's self-expression during pregnancy and affects their appearance perception.<sup>71</sup> Although Ogle, et al, were conducting interview research with women pregnant in the 2010s, their findings on women's self-image during pregnancy seem to be applicable to earlier decades as well.

For the interviewees, their pre-pregnancy body image also impacted how they felt about their maternity clothing and their bodies during pregnancy. If they had a positive body image, they were more likely to feel better about the way they looked, whereas a negative body image

was made worse by pregnancy. Perception was also influenced by how well women's maternity wardrobes fit their social requirements. If they had clothing appropriate for all the various events they were likely to attend, they felt better about it. If, on the other hand, their wardrobes consisted primarily of casual wear and they had to attend formal events, this would contribute to dissatisfaction.

For the women interviewed, clothing was also perceived more positively when it fit and functioned well; when clothing was inadequate for expansion needs, as Weecy Patterson's was during her pregnancy with twins, maternity clothing caused a greater level of dissatisfaction with both the body and the clothing. I also learned from the interviewees that how well her maternity clothing fit a woman's personal aesthetic was another factor in her perception. The women were more likely to be happy with their clothing and bodies if the clothing was similar to what they would ordinarily wear, in fabric, color, style, and design detail. If, however, the clothing was a color that they did not like or had bows when they did not normally wear bows, this would not fit their personal aesthetic and would cause a negative perception both of the clothing and the body. Again, these findings support Ogle, Tyner, and Schofield-Tomschin's findings that borrowed garments "often [leave] participants feeling rather disheartened."<sup>72</sup>

Finally, support from friends and family was also a factor in perception. Support from friends and family was multifaceted; it included help in obtaining clothes (as when Margaret Williams' mother-in-law sewed maternity dresses, or when Carolyn Midgett's mother went shopping with her), support of the pregnancy (women who were excited about the pregnancy and whose friends and families were excited about it were more likely to be happy with their clothing and their pregnant bodies), and whether or not the woman had friends who were experiencing pregnancy around the same time (as did Kathleen Smoliga, who had a network of friends at

church who were also pregnant). Greater support from friends and family contributed to greater satisfaction with the maternity wardrobe.

### How Women Acquired Their Maternity Clothing

All the women interviewed acquired their maternity clothing through some combination of sewing, borrowing, purchasing, or making do with non-maternity garments. Which method(s) were used depended on a woman's income and/or the amount she wanted to spend on maternity clothing, her skill level in sewing, the comparative availability of sewing patterns versus ready-to-wear clothing, and the comparative value of money versus time.

If income and/or budget were limited, then a woman would usually sew or borrow her clothing. Sewing was often seen as a good economic tactic, and women used it to obtain a better quality garment than what they might be able to afford in the stores. Borrowing was another cost-saving measure. A few women borrowed their entire maternity wardrobes, but more often, borrowing was combined with other methods of acquiring maternity clothing. If borrowed clothing was limited or unavailable, making do with non-maternity garments was cheaper than sewing. If very limited in her budget, a pregnant woman would have a higher incidence of trying to make do with non-maternity clothing. The tighter the budget, the more often a woman tried to make do. This is consistent with Moomaw's findings from her 1947 survey, in which she stated that women used non-maternity garments whenever possible to reduce costs.<sup>73</sup> Skill level in sewing was another factor impacting how a woman acquired her maternity clothing. Based on my findings, women with little or no sewing experience would not be able to sew their own garments; they would instead purchase, borrow, or have someone else make them for her.

Women who were highly skilled in sewing, on the other hand, would typically make their own garments if they had time to do so.

The comparative availability of ready-to-wear compared to the availability of patterns was another influencing factor on how maternity clothing was acquired. If ready-to-wear were not readily available, as was the case for women in rural areas or some small towns, then sewing or borrowing was much more likely than purchasing readymade. Conversely, if sewing patterns were less available than ready-to-wear, as is the case for many women today, this would increase the likelihood that the women would purchase their clothing instead of sewing it.

The comparative value of money versus time was the final major factor influencing how maternity clothing was acquired. If women were working outside the home and did not have time to sew their clothing, they were more likely to purchase it; in that case, time had a higher scarcity than money. If women worked as homemakers, however, then they were more likely to have more time to sew and less money to purchase ready-to-wear, so they would be more likely to sew their clothing than to purchase it.

Susan Wilson and Kay Goldman both noted that there was a decline in maternity clothing sales during the 1960s due to the popularity of the tent dress; however, none of the women interviewed mentioned wearing tent dresses.<sup>74</sup> I do have one 1960s trapeze dress in my personal collection, however, that appears to have been modified for maternity use. The skirt is longer in the front than in the back, a modification that was often necessary to maintain an even hem length during pregnancy.

### Factors Considered in Planning and Wearing a Maternity Wardrobe

The factors most of the women interviewed considered in planning and wearing a maternity wardrobe were the activities in which they were likely to engage during pregnancy (i.e., work, housework, church, social activities). The social view of pregnancy played a large role in what activities a woman would be likely to participate during pregnancy; for example, exercise was often restricted, and working was typically limited to the earlier months of the pregnancy. These activities impacted what types of clothing were and were not acquired. Cheryl K. Lemus stated that medical recommendations influenced the design of maternity clothing.<sup>75</sup> However, my findings indicate that medical recommendations were more likely to influence the activities that determined what articles of clothing were worn, rather than how those articles of clothing were designed. Medical advice probably did play a role in maternity clothing design, but the interviewees did not mention it. They said that their doctors gave them no advice relating to their clothing, and Carolyn Midgett was the only interviewee who mentioned anything about clothing relating to health.

The majority of the women interviewed, regardless of decade, were very clear that they were not ashamed or embarrassed to be pregnant. Although women, as previously discussed, sometimes concealed pregnancy for professional reasons, this was not the norm. Once pregnancy was evident, most of the interviewees made no attempt to keep it secret. In fact, maternity clothing sometimes was used by the women I interviewed to announce pregnancy even before it was apparent. These findings contradict Rebecca Bailey's assertion that pregnancy was shameful and her statement that, for the first half of the twentieth century, "great pains [were] taken to prevent immodest disclosure of the pregnancy."<sup>76</sup>

## Implications

This study gave hitherto unexplored insight into what women wore during pregnancy between 1935 and 1974 from women themselves (as opposed to what was recommended by fashion publications of the period) and how clothing changed over time, how women perceived their maternity clothing, how they acquired their maternity clothing, and what factors were considered in planning and wearing a maternity wardrobe. Since women's experiences with maternity clothing were heavily affected by societal views of pregnancy, this study offers a particularly good insight into the modern view of fashion. It also has implications about women's choices for their non-maternity clothing, particularly how women in rural areas of the Southeastern United States interacted with fashion. It also provides information on why women sewed their own clothing. In some cases, this was because of economy; for others, it gave them more control over their fashion choices. Other women sewed because ready-to-wear options were limited, or because they enjoyed sewing. Many women sewed for a combination of these reasons.

This study may also give current expectant mothers a better understanding of older women's attitudes about today's maternity clothing. Since modesty was so important to the interviewees, and they are accustomed to seeing loose-fitting maternity clothing, the tight maternity clothes of today are often judged harshly by older women. This study gives insight into the reasons for that.

## Recommendations for Further Research

This study focused only on women who were currently living in the Southeastern United States, particularly Tennessee. The study could be expanded by interviewing women in other



areas of the country to determine whether geographic region had an impact on women's decisions about maternity clothing. Another area that could be further explored would be a more specific focus on how location (urban, rural, or small town, for instance) influenced women's maternity clothing choices. Finally, conducting similar interviews with women pregnant between the late 1970s and today could be a good area for further research, to determine areas of similarity and difference between the view of maternity clothing 1935 to 1974 and 1975 to the present.

## Notes

1 . Cheryl K. Lemus states that pregnant women became “the complete embodiment of the modern medical and consumer pregnancy.” Cheryl K. Lemus, *“The Maternity Racket”: Medicine, Consumerism, and the Modern American Pregnancy, 1876-1960* (PhD diss., Northern Illinois University, 2011), 16. Rebecca Lou Bailey consistently portrays pregnant women as victims, stating, for instance, that the availability of different types of maternity clothing was “an efficient regulator of the level of participation in society.” Rebecca Lou Bailey, *Fashions in Pregnancy: An Analysis of Selected Cultural Influences, 1850-1980*, 1981 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1985), 3.

2. Lemus states that she relied on medical journals, advice manuals, and magazine articles for her dissertation. Lemus, *“The Maternity Racket,”* 25, 162. An examination of Bailey’s sources indicates that she relied heavily on magazines for her research. Bailey, *Fashions in Pregnancy*. No historical research on maternity clothing has been found that incorporated interview data.

3. Barbara Connelly Groseclose and Elizabeth E. Moomaw both conducted survey research about maternity clothing for their master’s theses. Moomaw included a section of “additional suggestions and opinions” that were given by her survey participants, but the information is very basic, consisting of notations such as “Likes arms covered,” and “Thinks short jackets do not look well.” Elizabeth E. Moomaw, “A Survey of Sources of Information and Compilation of Suggestions for a Maternity Wardrobe.” Electronic Thesis or Dissertation. Ohio State University, 1947, accessed November 17, 2013, <https://etd.ohiolink.edu/>, 54. Groseclose included similar information consisting of complaints about maternity garments and patterns, but, like Moomaw, did not include in-depth information. Barbara Connelly Groseclose, *Clothing for Pregnant Women* (Master’s thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, 1958), 85-86.

4. Sarah A. Gordon, *“Make It Yourself”: Home Sewing, Gender, and Culture, 1890-1930* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 3.

5. Jane Farrell-Beck and Jean Parsons, *20<sup>th</sup>-Century Dress in the United States* (New York: Fairchild Publications, 2007), 79.

6. Kurt W. Back, “Modernism and Fashion: A Social Psychological Interpretation,” in *Fashion Theory: A Reader*, ed. Malcolm Barnard (New York: Routledge, 2007), 402.

7. Farrell-Beck and Parsons, *20<sup>th</sup> Century Dress*, 209.

8. Moomaw, “A Survey of Sources of Information and Compilation of Suggestions for a Maternity Wardrobe,” 20.

9. Linda Baumgarten, “Dressing for Pregnancy: A Maternity Gown of 1780-1795,” *Dress* 23 (1996): 19.

10. Baumgarten, "Dressing for Pregnancy," 19-21.
11. Baumgarten, "Dressing for Pregnancy," 17; Harriet Waterhouse, "A Fashionable Confinement: Whaleboned Stays and the Pregnant Woman," *Costume* 41 (2007), 53, doi:10.1179/174963007X182336.
12. Baumgarten, "Dressing for Pregnancy," 21; Zuzanna Shonfield, "The Expectant Victorian: Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century Maternity Clothes," *Costume* 6 (1972): 38; Jane A. Funderburk, "How Fashionable were Women Settlers in Custer County, Nebraska?: Maternity Wear on the Nebraska Frontier, 1886-1892," *Nebraska History* 81, no. 2 (2000): 56.
13. Waterhouse, "A Fashionable Confinement," 63.
14. Shonfield, "The Expectant Victorian," 37.
15. Glenna Jo Christen, "The Curiosity Shop: In the Family Way? Clothing while you're waiting for the 'blessed event,'" *Citizens Companion*, April 1, 1999: 12. Accessed December 6, 2013, <http://lwpolive.citizenscompanion.com/Repository/ml.asp?Locale=english-adl-skin-custom&Mode=GIF&Ref=VENDLzE5OTkvMDQvMDEjQXIwMTIwMA==>.
16. Christen, "In the Family Way," 13-15.
17. Shonfield, "The Expectant Victorian," 37.
18. Funderburk, "Maternity Wear on the Nebraska Frontier," 62-64.
19. Funderburk, "Maternity Wear on the Nebraska Frontier," 62.
20. Bailey, *Fashions in Pregnancy*, 234-235.
21. Rebecca Bailey and others state that Lane Bryant invented maternity wear; however, The Ladies' Home Journal featured columns on maternity clothing by 1892. Bailey, *Fashions in Pregnancy*, 248; "Maternity Gowns," *The Ladies' Home Journal* (1889-1907) IX (11 1892): 26, accessed October 29, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/137174532?accountid=14537>.
22. John William Ferry, *A History of the Department Store* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), 94; Bailey, *Fashions in Pregnancy*, 260. Ferry believes that maternity clothing was viewed as "shocking," and Bailey, that it was "unmentionable." Both sources state that it was not advertised until 1911.
23. "Display Ad 9 -- No Title," *New York Times* (1857-1922), Sep 30, 1900, accessed October 29, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/96038952?accountid=14537>.
24. Groseclose, *Clothing for Pregnant Women*, 12.

25. Bailey, *Fashions in Pregnancy*, 308.
26. Moomaw, "A Survey of Sources of Information and Compilation of Suggestions for a Maternity Wardrobe," 52.
27. Bailey, *Fashions in Pregnancy*, 3.
28. Moomaw, "A Survey of Sources of Information and Compilation of Suggestions for a Maternity Wardrobe," 59.
29. Moomaw, "A Survey of Sources of Information and Compilation of Suggestions for a Maternity Wardrobe," 61.
30. Groseclose, *Clothing for Pregnant Women*, 68-73.
31. Blum, Stella, ed., *Everyday Fashions of the Twenties As Pictured in Sears and Other Catalogs* (New York: Dover, 1981), 7.
32. Goldman, *Dressing Modern Maternity*, 21, mentions that the Depression impacted sales of maternity clothing.
33. Moomaw, "A Survey of Sources of Information and Compilation of Suggestions for a Maternity Wardrobe," 42.
34. Moomaw, "A Survey of Sources of Information and Compilation of Suggestions for a Maternity Wardrobe," 35.
35. Ogle, Tyner, and Schofield-Tomschin observe that maternity clothes do "not interface . . . in the same, predictable ways as the clothing . . . worn previously." Jennifer Paff Ogle, Keila E. Tyner, and Sherry Schofield-Tomschin, "The Role of Maternity Dress Consumption in Shaping the Self and Identity During the Liminal Transition of Pregnancy," *Journal of Consumer Culture* 13 (2013): 129, accessed November 6, 2013, doi: 10.1177/1469540513480161.
36. Moomaw, "A Survey of Sources of Information and Compilation of Suggestions for a Maternity Wardrobe," 37.
37. Kay Goldman, *Dressing Modern Maternity: The Frankfurt Sisters of Dallas and the Page Boy Label* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2013), 3.
38. For an example of the New Look translated into maternity clothing, see "One Month to Maternity," *Look* 19 (1955): 97-98.
39. Phyllis G. Tortora and Keith Eubank discuss the introduction and eventual acceptance of the unfitted silhouette; Susan M. Wilson and others state that the tent dress was a popular maternity garment in the 1960s. Phyllis G. Tortora and Keith Eubank, *Survey of Historic*

*Costume: A History of Western Dress*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Fairchild Books, 2010), 518; Susan M. Wilson, *Attitudes Toward Maternity Wear* (Master's thesis, Colorado State University, 1968), 27.

40. Wilson, *Attitudes Toward Maternity Wear*, 27; Goldman, *Dressing Modern Maternity*, 92.

41. Lemus, "The Maternity Racket", 161-167.

42. Groseclose, *Clothing for Pregnant Women*, 16-17.

43. Bailey, *Fashions in Pregnancy*, 235.

44. Lemus, "The Maternity Racket," 186.

45. Goldman, *Dressing Modern Maternity*, 131.

46. Goldman, *Dressing Modern Maternity*, 132.

47. Susan Kaiser, *The Social Psychology of Clothing: Symbolic Appearances in Context*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Fairchild, 1997), 7.

48. Kaiser, *Social Psychology of Clothing*, 271.

49. Kaiser states that "the self is not only observed but is also an observer." Kaiser, *Social Psychology of Clothing*, 272.

50. Ogle, Tyner, and Schofield-Tomschin, "The Role of Maternity Dress Consumption," 125-126.

51. Ogle, Tyner, and Schofield-Tomschin, "The Role of Maternity Dress Consumption," 135.

52. Paula Nicolson, Rebekah Fox, and Kristin Heffernan, "Constructions of Pregnant and Postnatal Embodiment Across Three Generations: Mothers', Daughters', and Others' Experiences of the Transition to Motherhood," *Journal of Health Psychology* 2010 15: 582-583, accessed January 24, 2014, doi:10.1177/1359105309355341.

53. Sally Johnson, Anne Burrows, and Iain Williamson, "'Does My Bump Look Big in This?' The Meaning of Bodily Changes for First-Time Mothers-to-Be," *Journal of Health Psychology* 2004 9: 365-366, accessed October 4, 2014, doi: 10.1177/1359105304042346.

54. Sarah Earle, "'Bumps and Boobs': Fatness and Women's Experiences of Pregnancy," *Women's Studies International Forum* 26, no. 3 (2009): 247.

55. Sarah Earle, "Bumps and Boobs," 247-248.
56. Paul D. Leedy and Jeanne Ellis Ormond, *Practical Research Planning and Design*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2013), 100.
57. Judy Zaccagnini Flynn and Irene M. Foster, *Research Methods for the Fashion Industry* (New York: Fairchild Books, 2009), 187.
58. Yuniya Kawamura, *Doing Research in Fashion and Dress: An Introduction to Qualitative Methods* (New York: Berg, 2011), 105.
59. Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2006), 10-12.
60. "Kangaroo pouch" skirt is pictured in Moomaw, "A Survey of Sources of Information and Compilation of Suggestions for a Maternity Wardrobe."
61. "Maternity, n.," *OED Online*, September 2013, Oxford University Press, accessed November 17, 2013, <http://www.oed.com.proxygsu-uga1.galileo.usg.edu/view/Entry/114953>.
62. Mary Brooks Picken, *The Fashion Dictionary: Fabric, Sewing and Dress as Expressed in Language of Fashion* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1957), 246.
63. Nele Bernheim, "Modernism in fashion," *Grove Art Online, Oxford Art Online* (New York: Oxford University Press), accessed March 12, 2014, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/subscriber/article/grove/art/T2082717>.
64. Picken, *The Fashion Dictionary*, 104.
65. The earliest 1930s image found in *Vogue* that definitely shows a separate skirt and top was in 1938. Elizabeth Hawes, "Features: I Am Going to have a Baby," *Vogue* 91, no. 12 (Jun 15, 1938): 72, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/904285103?accountid=164776>.
66. A swimsuit is pictured in the July 1934 issue of *Harper's Bazaar*. "A Blessed Event Is Expected," *Harper's Bazaar*, July 1934: 74.
67. "Deceiving the Public," *Vogue* 98, no. 2 (Jul 15, 1941): 79-80, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/879219849?accountid=164776>.
68. Carolyn Bradford, Facebook message to author, March 11, 2015.
69. For example, one 1936 *Vogue* article stressed the importance of maternity undergarments; however, most of the women interviewed saw maternity undergarments as an

optional item. "Fashion: 'She's Going to have a Baby,'" *Vogue* 87, no. 9 (May 01, 1936): 126, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/879207476?accountid=164776>.

70. Moomaw, "A Survey of Sources of Information and Compilation of Suggestions for a Maternity Wardrobe," 52.

71. Ogle, Tyner, and Schofield-Tomschin, "The Role of Maternity Dress Consumption," 125-126.

72. Ogle, Tyner, and Schofield-Tomschin, "The Role of Maternity Dress Consumption," 126.

73. Moomaw, "A Survey of Sources of Information and Compilation of Suggestions for a Maternity Wardrobe," 61.

74. Wilson, *Attitudes Toward Maternity Wear*, 27; Goldman, *Dressing Modern Maternity*, 92.

75. Lemus, "*The Maternity Racket*", 161-167.

76. Bailey, *Fashions in Pregnancy*, 39, 235.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

## DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF INTERVIEWEES

<b>Name</b>	<b>Year of Birth</b>	<b>First Pregnancy</b>	<b>Last Pregnancy</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Children</b>
Armina Summers	1920	1940	1943	Rural	2
Ann Todd	1927	1950	1958	Rural	2
Bessie Miller	1918	1943	1959	Rural	4
Betty Hutcheson	1939	1957	1964	Rural	3
Betty Mitchell	1924	1951	1956	Small Town	2
Carolyn Bradford	1944	1965	1979	Urban	4
Carolyn Midgett	1942	1965	1968	Small Town	2
Dollie Wolford	1921	1944	1947	Rural	2
Edith Herbert	1922	1945	1947	Rural	2
Gracie Reed	1928	1945	1966	Rural	5
Jean Gibson	1944	1972	1974	Small Town	2
Juanita Burks	1924	1947	1956	Small Town	4
Katherine Embry	1914	1935	1935	Unknown	1
Kathleen Smoliga	1939	1960	1961	Small Town	2
Laura Carter	1937	1959	1970	Urban	4
Linda Ledford	1937	1957	1968	Small Town	6
Louella Pyle	1917	1945	1946	Small Town	1
Margaret Williams	1938	1958	1961	Small Town	2
Marie Smith	1927	1950	1958	Unknown	3
Peggy Jackson	1937	1959	1962	Small Town	2
Rayma Reese	1932	1954	1959	Small Town	2
Ruth Williams	1938	1959	1962	Rural	3
Shirley Embry	1936	1957	1960	Urban	3
Suzanne Sansom	1944	1968	1970	Urban	2
Weecy Patterson	1936	1956	1959	Rural	3
Wilma Abbott	1922	1946	1955	Rural	2

## APPENDIX B

## PHOTOGRAPHS PROVIDED BY INTERVIEWEES



Figure 16: Laura Carter during her 1959/1960 pregnancy



Figure 17: Laura Carter during her 1959/1960 pregnancy





Figure 18: Laura Carter at a family reunion during her first or second pregnancy  
(either 1959/1960 or 1961/1962)



Figure 19: Ruth Williams at the beach, October 1960





Figure 20: Carolyn Midgett during her first pregnancy, 1965



Figure 21: Laura Carter, December 1969