

There Is Personality Development in Clothing the Adolescent

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The parent and the adolescent may be equally unaware of how crucial is selection of clothing for the young person. The parent is aware only that the adolescent is making unseemly demands for independence, and the young person feels that being denied the right of selection is a reflection of his maturity.

Dominating Desire

The dominating desire of young people is to establish themselves as a part of a social group their own age. Clothing is a very vibrant means of establishing identity, and a very articulate means of communication. Those feelings of insecurity and inferiority that result from wearing clothing different from the "crowd" assume far greater importance to the adolescent than to the adult who has had time to develop a sense of values to cover such circumstances.

Everybody's Doing It

Children want to be "like the gang" in their activities and clothing from the time of their earliest contact with others. "But everybody is doing it!" is not a new phrase to a teen-ager's family. Even little tots are sensitive if their clothes are too different from their comrades. There is a stage when children want to be exactly like others their age. If Mary has a blue skirt, then friend Sally must have a duplicate. If Joe has a shirt with a space ship on it, then George and John and Bill won't go to school without one.

By adolescence, most young people have outgrown the desire for identical garments, and have reached the stage of wanting very similar garments but with just a touch of originality. Most adult women know that the desire to dress as individuals, irrespective of fashion trends and dictates, is a long-term development.

A source of some conflicts is a difference of opinion as to how mature the young person is. Some parents don't acknowledge the degree of responsibility that the young person claims. Since all aspects of development point toward an



Photograph by U. of A. Associated Students

Being allowed some freedom in choosing clothing, both from the standpoint of quality and of style will help the young person develop sound judgments that will be useful in later life.

Photograph posed by Mrs. Helena Murphy, Tucson, Arizona, (left) and Miss Mary Monroe, Lansing, Michigan, (right)

earlier maturity of people now than formerly, perhaps mothers need to guard against insisting on clothing that is too juvenile for their daughters even though they themselves wore that style at the same age. On the other hand, daughters need to guard against demanding an outlay of clothing that is not consistent with her needs nor the family income.

Develop Their Judgments

From the standpoint of development of a young person's judgments, it is important that he or she be allowed increasing privileges in the selection of his clothing. The wife and mother usually is responsible for spending or portioning out the clothing budget as well as a large share of the total income. Since many young people marry early today, girls may face this responsibility sooner than formerly. It will be impossible for them to learn from books all the facts necessary for wise spending, nor from wearing clothing that someone else has selected. In this case, experience is a very good teacher. Some mistakes may be made, but who among adults can claim to never having made one.

Teach Selection Early

Children can be taught selection from an early age. The very young child may be allowed a choice between a pink or a blue dress for any occasion after the mother has made the initial distinction between play and party clothes. Later, the child may help in the selection at the store, beginning the understanding of the requirements of a garment for a specific need and establishing the realization that what is selected must be lived with. No actual money need be in the child's hands until later when the less expensive items, such as socks, scarves, or mittens will involve less cash outlay, but can teach the value of a dollar. A small beginning, but an early one, seems the important principle.

Clothing and Social Poise

Clothing aids a great deal in establishing social poise and emotional poise. If a well-adjusted, attractive, personable young person is the goal of both parents and educators, then the contribution that the right clothing can make toward that goal ought not to be overlooked by anyone concerned.