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Effect of a philanthropic clothing program on women-in-transition: Fashion Takes Action

Harriet Jean McLeod
Iowa State University

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Effect of a philanthropic clothing program on women-in-transition: Fashion Takes Action

by

Harriet Jean McLeod

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Major: Textiles and Clothing

Program of Study Committee:
Mary Lynn Damhorst (Major Professor)
Ann Marie Fiore
Nancy Miller
Paula Morrow
Michael Barone

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Major Professor
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For the Major Program
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents whose spirits continue to guide and support me. I am also dedicating this dissertation to my niece, Sydney, who brought me inspiration, energy, and love during the final stages of this project.
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ABSTRACT

This study provides insights about the effectiveness of a philanthropic program on the self-beliefs of women in transition. The clothing gift program study, known as Fashion Takes Action (FTA), was conducted in 10 U.S. cites by Sears, Roebuck Company in 2000. Sears requested the study of the program. Three main questions guided the research – how does a philanthropic clothing gift program affect the beneficiaries’ sense of self, what effect did the program have on the beneficiaries, and how did the program influence or fit with the women’s professional development. The triangulation achieved through using multiple methods and different sources allowed the researcher to corroborate evidence. Data were collected using pre- and post-test questionnaires, through in-depth interviews, and participant observations.

Fifty-one women participated in the FTA program in 2000. Four to five low-income women were invited to designated local Sears stores, paired with a fashion expert for wardrobe advice and given help in selecting work appropriate clothing and related items. The women received two clothing outfits, two pairs of shoes, two handbags, underwear, makeup and a mini make-over.

Repeated measures analysis of variance revealed that the pre- and post-test scores measuring the women’s satisfaction with their work wardrobe, knowledge about appropriate work attire, confidence in the functionality of their work attire, and satisfaction with their appearance were significantly different. Significant evidence was found that indicated that the women experienced an increase in their work-related self-confidence and self-efficacy. Findings from both scales were corroborated through in-depth interviews and participant observations. No significant evidence was found to signal that the women’s global self-beliefs of confidence and efficacy were enhanced during the FTA shopping event.

Qualitative data revealed that the gifts of clothing, the advice and support of the fashion expert, the celebratory environment, the presence of media, and the interpersonal dynamics created a synergistic effect that produced benefits beyond the clothing gifts. Mentoring literature, theories of the self (confidence, esteem, and efficacy), symbolic interaction theory, role theory, and a review of the Hawthorne Effect provided theoretical scaffoldings for the analysis.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

...America's Puritan heritage, as embodied in the work ethic, sustains a steadfast belief in the ability of individuals to control the circumstances of their lives. When life does not proceed according to plan, Americans tend to assume that the fault lies within. (Newman, K., 1988, p. 9)

Ervin and Stryker (2001) suggest that the basis for self-worth in Western society is success. Moreover, how we see ourselves through the eyes of others is partially based on how others perceive our effectiveness in life (Ervin & Stryker, 2001). Numerous studies provide empirical evidence that an impression of one's work-related competence can be based on appearance (Damhorst & Reed, 1986; Forsythe, Drake, & Hogan, 1985; Rafaeli & Pratt, 1993).

If Newman (1988) and Ervin and Stryker (2001) have correctly analyzed U.S. culture as one that values work, that work or success serves as the foundation for self-worth, and that the appraisals we receive from others are partially based on their perception of our effectiveness, then the question asked by Turner-Bowker (2001) becomes all the more salient for individuals who are unemployed or underemployed: "How can you pull yourself up by your bootstraps, if you don't have boots?" (p. 311).

Kelley and Turner (1970) contended there was limited research examining the relationship between clothing and low socioeconomic groups. The present study will add to this body of literature by examining a philanthropic program providing women in transition with work appropriate clothing. Women in transition are defined for this study as women from a wide array of circumstances – including displaced homemakers, welfare recipients, ex-convicts, and victims of spousal abuse – who share a common need to find employment that will provide them with a living wage. Some of these women have been out of the workforce for an extended period of time; others have never worked outside the home.

All the women must meet three challenges prior to securing employment. First, they need job training or education that will prepare them for the workplace. Numerous non-profit organizations and educational institutions are helping women get the necessary skills and education needed to secure jobs. Secondly, they need to build their self-esteem and gain the confidence essential to persuade
employers to hire them (Fiore & DeLong, 1990). Several of the job training programs for women in transition include sessions that address this need. A third challenge is the need to present an appearance that conforms to employers' expectations (Fiore & DeLong, 1990; Kanter, 1977; Kimle & Damhorst, 1997; Turner-Bowker, 2001).

The purpose of this study is to examine how a philanthropic program addresses challenges two and three above. Specifically, this study will examine a work clothing gift program and its effect on the beneficiaries' self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-efficacy.

Volunteer organizations provide an array of services to low-income women to enhance their appearance and sense of well-being as they prepare to enter or reenter the workplace. For example, at Hype & Humble, a nonprofit organization focused on empowering women and children in crisis, the women receive massages, facials, and makeovers given by a celebrity stylist and listen to motivational speakers ("Helping Hands," 2001). Other groups such as Bottomless Closet, Eve's Closet, and Dress for Success provide the women with "gently used" professional clothing (Johnson-Elie, 2001; Whitehead, 2001; Zanos, 2002). At the worldwide Dress for Success locations the women may also be offered personal shopper services or interview-skills classes ("Program Seeking Business," 2001).

Founders of these organizations believe that helping a woman feel better about herself, due to an internal or external source, is an important step towards self-sufficiency. Another commonality is that the beneficiaries of these organizations are referrals from other agencies. Oftentimes the women may be involved in a job training program or enrolled in an academic program at these referring agencies. Many of the clothing giveaway organizations were started after recognizing that some women, recently prepared for the work world, did not know what appropriate office attire was and/or did not have the money to purchase an appropriate wardrobe.

Typically the clothing giveaway organizations are run by volunteers who sort clothing, collaborate with the referral agency, and coordinate the clothing giveaway days. Professionals, either make-up artists or fashion experts, may volunteer their time to help with specific events (e.g., event
sponsored by Hype & Humble). But more often the volunteers present during the clothing giveaways are individuals who have “good eyes for color and style” ("Program Seeking," 2001, p.2).

A number of women who receive clothing from these organizations are former recipients of the federally funded public assistance program known as welfare. In 1996, the welfare program was revamped and the new program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), replaced it. TANF is now touted as a program that “requires work in exchange for time-limited assistance” ("Temporary Assistance," 2000, p. 1). Individuals receiving assistance through this program must work after two years of benefits, adhere to guidelines on the type of work they can engage in, and are ineligible for cash aid assistance after five years. The purposes of TANF are:

...to provide assistance to needy families so that children can be cared for in their own homes; to reduce dependency by promoting job preparation, work and marriage; to prevent out-of-wedlock pregnancies; and to encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families. ("Temporary Assistance", 2000, p. 1)

The TANF program is considered successful by some because the nation’s welfare rolls have been halved over the past years, but others note that the level of employment that most women get does not allow them to become economically self-sufficient ("Diploma Beats ‘I Do’," 2002). This issue of finding employment that provides a living wage is not an exclusive problem for women who are former recipients of welfare, but can affect all women and men in transition who do not have adequate education or training.

The Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR), a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, has conducted research on policy issues affecting women since 1987. Specifically IWPR examines poverty, income security, employment, earnings, work, family issues, health, safety, democracy and society programs as they relate to women. Director of Research at IWPR, Barbara Gault, asserted that low-level basic skills are one major factor that contributes to the poor job outcomes of welfare recipients. Of the women living in poverty, 40 percent do not have a high school diploma. Individuals living above the poverty line without a high school diploma make up 13.5 percent of the U.S. population. Only 9.0 percent of the women receiving welfare have completed four years of
postsecondary education or more as compared to 30 percent of the non-poor population in the U.S (Gault, 2002).

Lack of education may hamper these women from achieving self-sufficiency because jobs with the greatest growth potential require competency and advanced skills. Minimally, employers are expecting workers to have basic reading, writing, and math skills in service sector jobs (see Gault, 2002). Kathy Rodger, President of IWPR, argues that the cycle of poverty continues for many low-income former welfare recipients because they are "...shunted into unstable, low-paying jobs that do not sustain their families and hold little opportunity for advancement" (Negrey, Golin, Lee, Mead, & Gault, 2001, p. i).

Women who receive Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) benefits are reported as having high incidences of domestic violence from an intimate partner (Libbus, Sable, Huenke & Anger, 1999). Findings from interviews with low-income women who were victims of domestic violence indicated that "...domestic violence affects women’s educational and employment success by lowering their self-esteem and confidence, and by making them feel helpless and inadequate" (Libbus et al., 1999, p. 6). The women also reported feeling embarrassed by being in an abusive situation. Some of the women reported that they were hampered from attending school or going to work because their wardrobes and/or books were destroyed and their cars disabled. However, success at school and work were strong empowering experiences. Libbus et al. (1999) reported that the "women are aware of the need to change their life circumstances and some feel that they have the capabilities to do so if they are provided with appropriate tools" (p. 11).

R. Brown (2000) reported that, "Women are the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. prison population" (p. 1). The number of mothers (with children under 18) in state and federal prisons increased from 29,500 to 53,600 between 1991 and 1999 (Brown, 2000). Most incarcerated women have low incomes and face multiple challenges to self-sufficiency upon their release. Minimum work experience and low levels of education are obstacles to higher-paying jobs that include benefits. Most employers are wary of hiring ex-convicts and often connect a criminal background with negative behaviors (e.g., potential theft, physical endangerment, substance abuse). In some states, criminal
offenders are not permitted to work in child care, elder care, or health care occupations. Other barriers challenging low-income mothers with criminal records may include physical and mental health problems, frequently combined with substance abuse and a history of domestic violence (Brown, 2000).

The correctional system is severely critiqued for not providing adequate discharge planning for women prisoners that is supportive and discourages recidivism (Kaplan & Sasser, 1996). A specific criticism is that, "women inmates have not had the facilities, the educational and vocational programs, and industrial training opportunities that male inmates have had" (Kaplan & Sasser, 1996, p. 49). A nationwide profile of female offenders revealed that:

...only 15.9 percent of the women had completed four years of high school, ... 20 percent had been unemployed in the three years before they entered prison..., [and] women who had been employed had worked primarily in sales, clerical, and service jobs. (see Kaplan & Sasser, 1996, p. 46)

According to Smith and Dailard (as cited in Kaplan & Sasser, 1996) female ex-offenders need safe housing and employment to remain outside the criminal justice system. Low levels of education and minimum and/or narrow work experience may prevent the women from attaining these two goals. Furthermore, some public benefit programs (i.e., TANF, the Food Stamp program, Medicaid, housing assistance) are not available to individuals who have committed certain crimes (Brown, 2000).

A commonality of all the women described above is their low-income status and the challenge it presents them as they move towards self-sufficiency. Turner-Bowker (2001) asserted that "[a]tttractive apparel is a sign of privilege, yet it is a necessity for those expecting to enter and succeed in the workforce” (p. 314). However, low-income women may have little left from their earnings after satisfying other basic needs in their families to buy clothing for themselves that would be deemed appropriate for the workplace. Sears now sponsors a philanthropic program that attempts to address the clothing needs of women in transition as they move into the workforce or move up in the workplace.
The Fashion Takes Action (FTA) Program

With the support of Sears Roebuck and Co (corporate sponsor), the public relations firm that developed, coordinated, and conducted the FTA shopping event -- 2wo-One-2wo -- contacted a senior faculty member of the Textiles and Clothing Department at Iowa State University and asked her to study the FTA shopping program in its third year. Under the guidance of the faculty member, the graduate student researcher reviewed the relevant literature, developed the quantitative instruments and interview schedules, and collected and analyzed the data. The researcher was given permission by Sears and 2wo-One-2wo to use the data as the basis for the current dissertation.

Sears Roebuck & Co. conducts the Fashion Takes Action (FTA) program that gives women in transition work appropriate attire. Since 1998, Sears has partnered with a variety of organizations that work with low-income women to identify potential participants for the FTA program. As a leading retailer, and a recognized name in many U.S. households, Sears has the potential to impact many women's lives. According to Sears' publicity sites, they operated more than 860 department stores and 2,100 specialized retail locations.

In 2000 (year this study was conducted), Women Work! was the philanthropic partner for the FTA program. Women Work!, the National Network for Women's Employment, is a national non-profit organization "dedicated to empowering women from diverse backgrounds and assisting them to achieve economic self-sufficiency through job readiness, education, training and employment" ("Honoring Our Past," n.d., back cover). Women Work! is an outgrowth of the Displaced Homemakers Movement that began in the 1970s. Women Work!, also referred to as "the Network" in this study, provides local affiliates with training and technical assistance to prepare women to enter, reenter, or train for the workforce. Women Work! collects data about women in the workforce and disseminates information to local affiliates, policy makers, and business leaders. Through a collaborative effort the organization strives to create and strengthen policies and programs for women ("Honoring Our Past," n.d., back cover).

Sears' developed the FTA program to provide physical appearance products (e.g., clothing, shoes, make-up etc.) and a psychological boost that might help move women to the next step in their
employment activities. Women chosen for this program are in the latter stages of their academic program or in the final stages of their work training program; they are women who are ready to use and need this particular aid. The partnership with Women Work! provides a pool of women who have received preparation for a variety of employment opportunities.

The assumption underlying Sears' program is its belief that appropriate clothing may positively affect women's self-esteem and self-confidence. This belief does have some grounding in academic research, albeit not direct. Solomon and Douglas (1985) described clothing as a "tactical weapon" in job role performance that can help to establish credibility of the role player. They proposed that appropriate work dress can give a worker greater confidence in a new job or in employment interviews by symbolically compensating for lack of experience in a job field. Fiore and DeLong (1990) provided empirical evidence that general self-esteem, physical self-esteem, and appearance satisfaction can be affected by encouraging behavioral changes and utilizing cognitive therapy.

Researchers have found that human resource management personnel judge job interviewees as more competent, professional, and desirable for hiring when the candidates are dressed in professional, formal attire (Damhorst & Reed, 1986; Forsythe, Drake, & Cox, 1984; Rafaeli & Pratt, 1993). Therefore, appropriate clothing has the potential to affect the wearer's feeling of readiness, as well as the perceiver's assessment of the wearer's skill.

As stated previously, women with low incomes may lack the monetary resources to acquire appropriate work role and interview attire or may not have full knowledge of business dress codes due to limited experience in the business world. Sears believes that the FTA program will help circumvent the "Catch 22" situations that low-income women could experience – i.e., the lack of appropriate clothing serving as an impediment to getting a job. Beneficiaries of clothing drives or clothing closets stated that they did not feel confident during job search activities when they lacked appropriate work attire (Ervin, 1993; Turner-Bowker, 2001).

The number of locations where the FTA program was conducted expanded from one city in 1998 to five cities in 1999 and 10 cities in 2000. At each location, four or five participants were paired
one-on-one with a fashion expert who escorted them during the shopping experience to offer work wardrobe advice. Each woman received two complete work appropriate outfits, two pairs of shoes, and two handbags from the store’s current inventory. They also received a mini-makeover from Sears’ cosmetics personnel. The event took approximately four hours and consisted of five distinct phases:

1) mid-morning breakfast - time provided for rapport building. The women and their personal shoppers met and discussed the women’s color and style preferences and current wardrobe.

2) shopping⁠¹ - selection of two complete work appropriate outfits, two pairs of shoes, and two handbags by the beneficiaries with assistance from the personal shoppers.

3) make-over – mini make-up application and skin care consultation for the women with a Sears cosmetic associate.

4) group photos - professional photographers took posed photos of the women: by themselves in one of their selected outfits, as a group dressed in selected outfits, the women with their personal shoppers, and the women with other people involved in the event.

5) lunch – gathering of all the people participating in the event; this was an opportunity to talk about the day’s event, exchange contact information, have lunch, and receive gift bags containing various products.

The FTA program differs from other clothing gift programs because it allows the women to select from current season clothing offered to the general population, pairs the women with fashion experts with professional training as stylists or trend watchers, and conducts the shopping event in a celebratory manner.

Participants

There were nine groups of people involved in the FTA event. Figure 1.1 shows the various participants and the relationships among them. Two organizations, Sears Corporate and Women

¹ This term was most often used by FTA participants and organizers even though the women did not have to purchase the apparel items and other gifts they were given.
Figure 1.1. Fashion Takes Action Participants for 2000

Sears Corp. → PR Firm → Women Work!

Sears Local → Women Beneficiaries → Women Work! Affiliate

Media ↔ Fashion Expert ↔ Researcher

Not present at shopping = Present at shopping =
Work!, supplied the resources for the shopping event and the programs for accessing the women, respectively. These two organizations were usually not represented at the shopping event. The other seven groups were always in attendance at the shopping event. Two groups that performed behind the scenes included the public relations agency and the media. The remaining four groups were personnel from the local Sears stores where the shopping events took place, fashion experts, women beneficiaries, representative(s) from the local program where the women were enrolled or attended, and the researcher. A full description of the participating groups and their specific roles is included in Chapter Three.

**Research Approach**

This researcher employed a case study approach to examine the FTA program and its impact on the women who participated in the program. According to Yin (1994) this method of inquiry is appropriate to answer how or why questions, "when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (p. 1). The FTA program has been developed and implemented, with the help of a public relations firm, by Sears Roebuck and Co. The researcher was invited to observe the program and to provide an analysis of the effect of the program on the beneficiaries' self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy with respect to work related activities. The cities chosen for the event were identified by the public relations firm and selected Sears personnel, the fashion experts were lined up by the public relations firm, and the women chosen for the event were selected by local leaders of programs linked to Women Work!.

The researcher employed grounded theory techniques to understand whether the program affected the women's self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-efficacy and to assess the women's feelings about the program and meanings of the program to the participants/recipients. Methods included both quantitative instruments and qualitative observations (direct and participant) and interviews.

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2 The researcher was not present during shopping events held in New York City.
3 Media included invited radio and TV stations and newspapers, as well as a hired professional photographer.
Research Goals

The purpose of the present study was to examine how a philanthropic clothing gift program could affect the beneficiaries' self-esteem, self-confidence, and/or self-efficacy with respect to work-related activities. A second goal was to assess the effect that the program had on the women's sense of self and how it influenced or fit with their professional development. The assumption of the sponsor (Sears, Roebuck & Co.) was that having appropriate clothing for work-related activities (e.g., job interviews or attendance at work) would enhance the recipients' self-esteem. By bolstering self-esteem, Sears' belief was that women would have positive job interview experiences and that their job effectiveness would be improved if they had work appropriate clothing. Speaking for Sears about the program, Diane Paccione (personal communication, February 7, 2001), vice-president, general merchandise manager of ready-to-wear stated that:

We have the fashionable apparel and the resources to help women make the next step on their journey to success. It is a wonderful opportunity for us to impact our customers, their families and communities, because when a life is changed for the better, we all benefit [emphasis added].

Definitions

Appearance: Includes "...all aspects of the human body that have the potential to be observed by other human beings" (Damhorst, 1999a, p. 2).

Clothing closets: permanent locations where donated clothing is collected and distributed to low-income people.

Clothing drives: clothing collected during a limited time period for distribution to low-income or needy individuals.

Displaced homemakers: "...women who need to become self-supporting by reentering the job market or those looking for a career change due to divorce or the death or disability of their husbands" (Fiore & DeLong, 1990, p. 220).

Dress: A behavior that includes "...what people do to their bodies to maintain, manage, and alter [its] appearance" (Damhorst, 1999a, p. 2).
Fashion expert: Individuals working in the fashion industry or related news and entertainment organizations with expertise in selecting garments for specific customers and/or trained to watch trends in various sectors of society.

Participant: Any individual involved in the FTA program, (e.g., women in transition, Sears personnel, local program coordinators, etc.).

Self-efficacy: "...beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (Bandura, 1995, p. 2).

Self-esteem: "...a positive or negative attitude toward a particular object, namely, the self..." (Rosenberg, 1965, p. 30).

Self-confidence: "...denotes confidence in one's own cognitive processes and refers to the conviction that one is competent to think, to judge, and to know" (Battle, 1990, p. 23).

Women in Transition: Women from a variety of situations (e.g., displaced homemakers, ex-convicts, welfare recipients in back-to-work programs, and survivors of spousal abuse) who are currently in low-income jobs or have little to no income, but are engaged in educational or job training activities with the goal of achieving greater economic self-sufficiency.

Organization of the Dissertation

Literature that provides an understanding of how clothing deprivation relates to self-esteem will be reviewed. The literature reviewed will also include clothing and/or appearance research related to first impressions, job interview settings, workplace environments, appearance enhancing programs, mentoring, and background on women's work programs and welfare. Self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-confidence concepts will be defined. Also reviewed is how clothing deprivation relates to self-esteem and the role of social support and self-esteem. Other theories appropriate to the study are examined.

Two methodological approaches are used in this study. A case study method is employed to answer the questions how or why a program such as FTA affects self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-efficacy of women in transition. Grounded theory is used to analyze what effect the program had on the women and what they thought about the program and the meanings that the program had for
them. The combination of these approaches provides a more holistic understanding of the effect of and meanings of a clothing gift program for its beneficiaries. Multiple types of data were collected, multiple sites visited, and various participants were interviewed to understand how the program was developed, coordinated and conducted. Data from the participating women were in qualitative and quantitative forms that gave the researcher the opportunity to compare these two types of responses.

Chapter Four contains the results and discussion of the qualitative and quantitative findings from this research. The themes that emerged during analysis using grounded theory methods are discussed, as well as the quantitative findings.

Chapter Five contains a discussion of the triangulation of the qualitative and quantitative data, a model of identified categories, a discussion of how previous research helped interpret the identified categories, a discussion of Sears as a corporate sponsor, suggestions for the FTA program, limitations of the study, and future research suggestions.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-confidence literature is reviewed for the current study. Other relevant literature includes clothing deprivation, appearance in work-related settings (i.e., first impression, job interview, and workplace attire), clothing deprivation, mentoring, and appearance-enhancing programs to understand how these affect one's sense of self. The current research was conducted in the field, and as such has similarities to the Hawthorne studies. A review of literature about the Hawthorne Effect was conducted to gain insights about unforecastable occurrences in field research. Symbolic interaction and role concepts were employed to understand the process of negotiation that leads to shared meanings between or among individuals and the relationship of roles to the self.

Theories of the Self

There are a number of ways of theorizing the self. In the present study, the researcher has drawn from literature that examines self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-efficacy. There is not agreement among scholars that these components of the self are conceptually different. Self-esteem and self-efficacy are discussed individually, a discussion of the overlap among the concepts is provided, and how they pertain to the present study is examined.

Self-Esteem

The study of self-esteem began in the 1890's and has since generated a huge body of literature. William James, an early and major contributor to our understanding of self-esteem, expressed it in a mathematical statement: Self-esteem = Success/Pretensions (James as cited in Mruk, 1999). We experience self-esteem, a feeling or emotion, based on our behavior (success) which is evaluated against our pretensions or values, goals, and aspirations (James as cited in Mruk, 1999). In other words our feelings or emotions are affected by how successful or unsuccessful we are at achieving our goals, adhering to our values, or meeting our aspirations. Changes to self-esteem can be made by either altering the numerator (success) or the denominator (pretensions) (James as cited in Mruk, 1999). James' definition indicates that self-esteem has an affective
dimension, is competence-driven, and dynamic (Mruk, 1999). The affective component results because we like or dislike ourselves depending on our level of high or low self-esteem (Brown, 1993).

Morris Rosenberg began making contributions to the self-esteem literature during the 1960’s. According to Rosenberg (1979), self-esteem is a dimension of self-concept that is a "picture of the self" vs. the real self. Individuals are able to see this picture of the self because as human beings we can reflect about ourselves as both subjects and objects simultaneously. The self-concept is focused on the self as an object (Rosenberg, 1979). More specifically, Rosenberg (1979) stated that the self-concept is "...how the individual sees himself [or herself] ..., how he [or she] would like to see himself [or herself], ... and how he [or she] shows himself [or herself] to others" (p. 9).

Rosenberg (1979) stated that self-esteem is part of the motivational system of the self-concept and focuses on the "the wish to think well of oneself" (p. 53). According to Rosenberg (1979):

Self-esteem signifies a positive or negative orientation toward an object, [the self]... [But,]
...the person with high self-esteem has philotimo, not hubris; he [or she] does not necessarily consider himself [or herself] better than most others but neither does he [or she] consider himself [or herself] worse. (p. 54)

Contrastingly, individuals with low self-esteem feel inadequate, unworthy, deficient, and lack respect for themselves (Rosenberg, 1979).

A major contribution that Rosenberg made to the literature was including worthiness or personal dignity as an aspect of self-esteem (Mruk, 1999). The Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale is another important contribution from this scholar and is widely used to examine self-esteem empirically (Elliott, 2001).

Self-esteem is conceptualized as global or specific (Brown, 1993). J. D. Brown (1993) endorsed Rosenberg’s definition of global self-esteem as “a general positive or negative orientation toward the self” (p. 28). Specific self-esteem refers to an individual’s evaluation of a specific attribute, such as behavior in a social situation, and differs from global self-esteem in three ways (Brown, 1993). First, specific self-esteem is more narrowly focused and encompasses less than a global
sense of self-worth (Brown, 1993). Second, because it is focused on a more limited aspect of self, specific self-esteem is “more malleable and sensitive to variations in external circumstances” (Brown, 1993, p. 28) than global self-esteem. Lastly, specific self-esteem is a more cognitively-based judgment (perceptions of our abilities), whereas global self-esteem is affectively-based (Brown, 1993). The linkage exists between global self-esteem and specific self-esteem because individuals with positive feelings of self-worth tend to feel that they possess positive qualities (Brown, 1993). Brown (1993) hypothesized that global self-esteem was an antecedent of specific self-esteem.

Admitting a controversial position, Brown (1993) argued that judgmental or cognitive processes of self-evaluation do not form the foundation for global self-esteem, but rather that “feelings of affection toward the self” (p. 30) have primacy in the construction of global self-esteem. Prior to the development of one’s cognitive ability, the individual’s self-esteem begins to emerge (Brown, 1993). Brown proposed that perceived qualities or attributes do not underlie global self-esteem because it is relatively stable and

...self-esteem founded upon the belief that one is able or proficient in some circumscribed set of domains would be fragile and vulnerable to attack: In the event that something happened to undermine one’s performance in that domain, global feelings of self-worth would evaporate. (Brown, 1993, p. 32)

Brown (1993) posited that cognitive judgments “function to maintain feelings of self-worth ... [because] they provide the fuel that sustains the fire, rather than the spark that ignites the flame” (p. 35). Brown (1993) does not rule out the possibility that self-appraisals in a specific area, such as the positive evaluation of a huge weight loss, could potentially influence the development of self-worth. In this regard, self-evaluation changes would then serve to generate affective changes in the self.

One additional aspect of Brown’s (1993) framework on self-esteem is that individuals are capable of construing events in a manner that enhances vs. weakens positive self-esteem. Similarly, self-concept proponents state that individuals can select what appraisals they wish to attend to (Elliott, 2001; Rosenberg, 1965) or can “put the best ‘spin’ on facts that cannot be avoided” (Elliott, 2001, p. 15).
Brown's (1993) contention that self-esteem is emotionally-based departs from other theorists who posited that self-esteem is cognitively-based. Coopersmith (1967) is one theorist who proposed that cognitive processes underlie self-esteem. According to Coopersmith (1967), self-esteem is based on "a judgmental process in which the individual examines his performance, capacities, and attributes according to his [or her] personal standards and values, and arrives at a decision of his own worthiness" (p. 7). In other words, the possession of certain positive attributes and qualities is the basis for high self-esteem.

Another avenue of research focuses on identifying ways to restore self-esteem after an individual has experienced major challenges. Benjamin Gottlieb (as cited in Anderson & Hayes, 1996) identified three types of social support that could positively affect self-esteem: emotional support, cognitive guidance, and tangible support. Individuals who are coping with setbacks stemming from a job loss or of a financial or personal nature can be supported by others through their "concern, acceptance, and validation" (p. 142). Individuals may also help others by participating in problem solving sessions with them. In this way, concrete advice or information addressing the problem or situation can be identified or shared, thus "restoring self-confidence and esteem" (Gottlieb as cited in Anderson & Hayes, 1996, p. 142). Lastly, Gottlieb (as cited in Anderson & Hayes, 1996) proposed that material resources in various forms (e.g., babysitting, money, food) would demonstrate "genuine caring and esteem for the friend in need" (p. 143).

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy focuses on the individual's assessment of his or her ability to perform a specific task (Bandura, 1997), such as a woman presenting an appropriate appearance during an interview. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy stems from four sources – mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal.

Mastery experience provides the individual with "cognitive, behavioral, and self-regulatory tools for creating and executing appropriate courses of action to manage ever-changing life circumstances" (Bandura, 1995, p. 3). Successes acquired through sustained effort help the individual build a personal sense of efficacy. Failures encountered before efficacy is firmly
established can undermine it. However, resiliency developed through prolonged effort enables the individual to rebound from setbacks and emerge stronger. The "most effective way of creating a strong sense of efficacy is through mastery experiences" (Bandura, 1995, p. 3).

Vicarious experiences also contribute to one's sense of efficacy when the perceived other is similar to the observer. Successes achieved by others can influence an observer's judgment about his or her own ability to master the activity (Bandura, 1982). Efficacy can be lowered, however, if a performer judges that he or she has similar competence as the observed, expends great effort to complete a similar task, and fails. The most persuasive models are people perceived to be similar to the individual. Models teach strategies for coping with environmental demands and provide a "social standard" against which the individual can judge his or her ability (Bandura, 1982, 1995). An "undaunted attitude" of a role model can be more effective in efficacy building than the particular skills being modeled (Bandura, 1995).

Social persuasion can strengthen people's beliefs in their ability to succeed. People persuaded that they have the capabilities to accomplish their goal(s) may expend more energy to do so over a longer period of time (Bandura, 1995). In contrast, people convinced that they lack the ability to succeed at their task avoid challenging activities and do not develop the fortitude to overcome difficulties. People who effectively help others develop efficacy structure situations so individuals can be successful and steer them away from circumstances where they are prematurely challenged too often.

Physiological and emotional states affect the individual's assessment of his or her capabilities (Bandura, 1995). Fatigue, aches, and pains can dissuade an individual from attempting a task. Similarly, a negative mood may lower an individual's sense of self-efficacy. How an individual interprets and perceives his or her emotional and physical states is most important (Bandura, 1995). To illustrate, prior to a job interview, women in transition may perceive affective states they are experiencing as excitement (that could energize their performance) or anxiety (that could debilitate them during the interview).
In summary, self-efficacy theory posits that an individual’s sense of personal efficacy is strengthened most when the person is successful at accomplishing his or her goals. Observations of successful models similar to the individual can vicariously enhance the observer’s personal self-efficacy. Individuals persuaded that they have the capabilities to be successful may expend the effort and time needed to accomplish realistic goals. Perception and interpretation of emotional and physiological states also impact an individual’s assessment of his or her self-efficacy. Finally, “people fear and tend to avoid threatening situations they believe exceed their coping skills, whereas they get involved in activities and behave assuredly when they judge themselves capable of handling situations that would otherwise be intimidating” (Bandura, 1977, p. 194).

**Self-confidence vs. Self-efficacy vs. Self-esteem**

Self-confidence is not as clearly defined as self-esteem and self-efficacy. Self-efficacy has been described as a particular form of self-confidence (Rosenberg & Owens, 2001). Brockner (1988) speculated that self-confidence was identical to self-efficacy. Still another scholar noted the “near equivalence of self-confidence and high self-esteem in ordinary discourse” (Wright, 2001, p. 102). Rosenberg (1979) defined self-confidence as “…the anticipation of successfully mastering challenges or overcoming obstacles or, more generally, to the belief that one can make things happen in accord with inner wishes” (p. 31). Thus, self-confidence, from Rosenberg’s (1979) perspective focuses on enactive mastery and the sense that one is an active agent with internal control.

Rosenberg and Owens (2001) posited that self-esteem and self-confidence, although used interchangeably, are two distinct concepts that are empirically associated. Low levels of confidence will lead to reduced levels of success which in turn will result in damaged global self-esteem (Rosenberg & Owens, 2001).

Both Rosenberg (1979) and Bandura (1997) asserted that self-esteem and self-efficacy were two different concepts. They similarly defined self-esteem as related to self-worth and self-efficacy as focused on personal capability. However, Bandura (1997) strongly argued that self-esteem and self-efficacy were unrelated and that how one evaluates his or her capabilities has nothing to do with how the self is liked or disliked.
Relevance to the Present Study

Women who were the subject of this research were chosen to participate in the Fashion Takes Action program because they had experienced adverse situations that impacted their financial stability. For a number of reasons it could be assumed that these women would have a lower sense of self-worth, self-confidence, and self-efficacy. One reason was stated in the Introduction to this dissertation – U.S. society values work and work may underlie our sense of self-worth. Therefore, we could expect that individuals who are unemployed or underemployed may experience lower levels of self-worth because of their work situation. On the other hand, people who are engaged in activities that can potentially move them towards greater self-sufficiency may be adept at deflecting negative appraisals from others and by so doing preserve or bolster their positive sense of self.

Another social issue that can potentially alter one's positive sense of self is physical abuse. According to statistics compiled by New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence in 1992, approximately three to four million women were abused by men (husbands or partners) annually in the U.S. (Anderson & Hayes, 1996). Beyond the physical injuries that these women endured, Anderson and Hayes (1996) speculated that, “What cannot be seen are the psychological scars of shame, degradation, hopelessness, and lack of self-worth” (p. 145). If Anderson and Hayes' (1996) concerns are founded, the question may be asked – How can a clothing give-away program restore self-worth to women who have been physically abused? Gottlieb (as cited in Anderson & Hayes, 1996) proposed various social supports that could be utilized to address self-esteem issues. During the four-hour FTA shopping event it may be possible for the women to experience social support or situations where esteem could be enhanced.

Self-esteem and Clothing

One early study by Winakor, Canton, and Wolins (1980) looked at perceived fashion risk and self-esteem. They were unable to find a relationship between self-esteem and perceived fashion risk. However, the correlations among factors suggested that women who are confident in social situations seem to be satisfied with themselves. An additional insight the researchers provided was how self-esteem could be evaluated as it relates to risk in a job related clothing study. Drawing from earlier
work, Winakor et al. (1980) framed their study to assess a variety of risks that a consumer considers: economic, social, psychological, performance, physical, and temporal. Social and psychological risks are relevant to this study. Social risk is the possibility that an individual will receive disapproval from persons or groups. Apprehension that a product will be aesthetically unsatisfactory or cause humiliation is psychological risk (Winakor et al., 1980). The current study may find that women in transition evaluate the adequacy of their work wardrobe from a social and psychological risk perspective that may relate to their self-esteem.

Women in transition may perceive their current wardrobe as adequate for their everyday activities, but not appropriate for job interviews or the workplace. If they feel that they are experiencing clothing deprivation, will that have an affect on their self-esteem, self-confidence and self-efficacy as it relates to work attire?

Chowdhary (1991) provided empirical evidence about the effect of clothing gifts on the self-esteem of 30 institutionalized elderly females. Pre- and post-tests measured the effect of clothing gift treatments on self-esteem at two care facilities. At facility one, self-esteem was measured to assess the effect of being involved or not involved in selecting a clothing item. At the second facility, both subsections of respondents identified a clothing gift item they wanted, but only half of the respondents received the item they selected. Chowdhary (1991) hypothesized that involvement in identifying a clothing item wanted would help individuals feel in control, help them feel good about themselves and would be reflected in their self-esteem scores.

Symbolic Interaction Theory

Symbolic interaction theory provides a framework for understanding how the self interprets and responds to phenomena with which it interacts. Interpretation is aided by the use of symbols (abstract and tangible) employed by a society. Solomon (1983) defined a symbol as a "stimulus with a learned meaning and value" (p. 320). The meaning associated with a symbol is socially constructed, fluid, and contextually bound (Kaiser, 1997). Learning and negotiating the meaning of symbols is a life-long process that individuals begin at an early age.
The basic premise of symbolic interaction is that the self is defined through interactions with other people (Blumer, 1969). Cooley (1902) proposed that it is the imaginative processes that individuals engage in as they interact with others that results in the self. Kaiser (1997) conceptualized the self as "...an individual's consciousness of being and that being comprises a tangible dimension (body and appearance symbols), as well as a conceptual or perceptual dimension (how one defines and appraises the self)" (p. 95).

During interactions with others, individuals receive social feedback or reflected appraisals that are instrumental in defining the self (Kaiser, 1997). Reflected appraisals are how we "perceive ourselves reflected in the eyes of others, as in a looking glass, and so perceive ourselves as others see us" (Morris, 1977, p. 28). Reflected appraisals include both the self's imaginations of how others perceive and judge the self and the self-feelings that evolve from those imaginations (Kaiser, 1997). Defining the self is a continuous, life-long process (Mead, 1934).

The second premise of symbolic interaction is that there is a coordination of interactions among individuals that creates shared understanding of the symbols that helps create a society (Blumer, 1969). Coordination involves being able to anticipate behavior and negotiate meanings during interactions. Mead (1934) described this process as "taking the role of the other" or role-taking, whereby individuals can interpret behaviors of others (e.g., statements, facial expressions, gestures) as though they were in the others' place. This is a fluid process through which "shared meanings and common understandings and expectations are learned and reinforced ... [which results in] actors continually fit[ting] their lines of action to others' actions" (Morris, 1977, p. 29-30).

The symbolic interaction process can further be understood through the concepts of program and review (Stone, 1965). Programs are responses the individual or wearer makes about him or herself, such as the presentation of appearance in a social situation. These responses "represent the intended meaning about the self or the relevant identity that the wearer is trying to convey" (Kaiser, 1997, p. 151). According to Stone (1965), "By appearing, the person announces his [or her] identity, shows his [or her] value, expresses his [or her] mood, or proposes his [or her] attitude" (p. 230). Reviews are interpretations or responses made by others about the wearer or target of gaze (Kaiser,
A review may be in the form of a verbal compliment (direct comment) or a gesture (nonverbal). Social feedback is "evaluated in relation to the particular others supplying it" (Kaiser, 1997, p. 167). Individuals do not attend to all the feedback they receive from others but rather to individuals whose opinions and attitudes are considered important, namely significant others (Kaiser, 1997). Significant others change throughout one's life.

In sum, symbolic interaction theory suggests that human behavior is a continual interplay of interactions and interpretations among individuals. The self is defined through these interactions, cultural symbols help the actors interpret interactions, and the self is able to fit his or her line of action with others as he or she makes sense of situations by role-taking. Additionally, individuals are active vs. passive agents during this interaction process and will attend to selected reviews from others.

As related to the current study, newly hired individuals may identify co-workers or employers as significant others. In this instance, the new-hire's appearance may be adjusted after receiving a negative review from significant others in the workplace. Women in transition may be required to interpret and negotiate the meaning of different appearance symbols as they enter or reenter the workforce, as dress codes in workplaces are oftentimes tacitly understood rather than explicitly defined. In addition, women's business dress codes change over time and across workplaces (Kimle & Damhorst, 1997), requiring continual learning and reinterpretation accomplished through symbolic interaction.

Role Theory

Role theory is part of the larger theory of symbolic interaction. Role theory is "... a science concerned with the study of behaviors that are characteristic of persons within contexts and with various processes that presumably produce, explain, or are affected by those behaviors" (Biddle, 1979, p. 4). Roles are defined as: "... behaviors characteristic of one or more persons in a context" (Biddle, 1979, p. 58). This implies that roles are observable, characteristic actions performed by a person in a specific context (Biddle, 1979). Roles are expectations for behavior on the part of others – groups, society - that individuals learn through the process of symbolic interaction (Biddle, 1979).
Biddle (1979) stated that roles have a number of properties. Typically roles are associated with social positions. These associations come about partially as a result of shared expectations for individuals occupying that role to behave in a specific way. The actor learns what behavior is expected in that role and is given encouragement for that behavior by others in order to have success in the role (Biddle, 1979).

A second property is that most roles are contextually bound which means that our behavior can change relative to the setting (Biddle, 1979). As an example, individuals preparing for a job interview may attend to their appearance more than someone planning a trip to the grocery store. Roles also have functional qualities, such as identifying individuals with specific authority or responsibility (e.g., medical doctor) (Biddle, 1979).

A final property of roles is their utility in the socialization and adjustment process of individuals (Biddle, 1979). Beginning in infancy, individuals learn appropriate behavior (as deemed by their society) specific to their gender, social class, ethnic group, and other social positions they may occupy in life (Biddle, 1979). The socialization process includes both role playing and role taking. Role playing involves mimicking the behavior of others (Biddle, 1979). Role taking is "internalizing expectations that are enunciated for him or her by others" (Biddle, 1979, p. 7). Furthermore, role taking suggests that the individual is able to see him or herself from the point of view of another, as well as from his or her own perspective (Mead, 1934). Thus, individuals through a process of observation, contemplation, and negotiation identify the behavior expected of specific identifies and positions. By so doing, individuals situate themselves "within the realm of social relations" (Kaiser, 1997, p. 188).

Role playing and role taking are not exclusive to infants or young children; individuals engage in these activities throughout their lives. Adults may engage in role playing or role taking while pursuing employment changes. Biddle (1979) noted that in role change situations, a neophyte's adoption of the expected role could be externally enforced through socialization or internally induced by the individual. For example, new employees may be required to wear specific clothing at work (external) or new-hires may choose to adopt a style that closely resembles the attire of an employee
admired by the new-hire (internal). In both instances above, the neophyte’s performance in the expected role is supported by the use of symbols or props (i.e., clothing).

Solomon (1983) proposed that products or material symbols “can play an a priori role as stimuli that are antecedent to behavior” (p. 322). And that the individual’s role is evaluated against the appropriateness and quality of the symbols associated with the role. However, as the learning process progresses, the action becomes less reliant upon external role validation to perform adequately (Solomon, 1983, p. 323). Solomon (1983) posited that the individual’s self-confidence and quality of interactions with others would be dependent on the reflection from others that the “proper constellation of products” (p. 323) helped generate. As in the case of new-hires, they may sense that appropriate clothing or a recognizable symbol in the form of appropriate clothing helps them look the part or perform in a manner expected of them at work (p. 323).

Self-completion theorists also proposed that individuals might use symbolic props (clothing) in their enactment of a role to compensate for lack of knowledge and accomplishment (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982). Findings from empirical tests of the theory are not consistent, however. For example, skilled male college soccer players were less likely than players with the least ability and skill to wear the latest styles of soccer clothing (Fiore, 1986). Contrastingly, Casselman-Dickson and Damhorst (1993) found that female bicyclists identified as high involvement riders were more concerned with displaying their level of competence through dress than were lower involvement cyclists (Casselman-Dickson & Damhorst, 1993).

Solomon and Douglas (1985) speculated that women who are the least confident in their work role ability will be more concerned with their clothing than will women who are successful and well-established. In a survey of subscribers to a national magazine targeted at female executives, the relationship of women’s role experience (length of time on job) and role confidence with the instrumental or tactical use of clothing to help them perform in their work roles was examined (Solomon & Douglas, 1987). Findings indicated that role experience and confidence were more strongly associated with instrumental use of clothing than hypothesized (Solomon & Douglas, 1987).
Women in transition, who may be new to workplace settings, could initially rely on symbolic props to help them feel and signal confidence and competence to others. Solomon (1983) speculated that,

... the a priori effect of product symbolism upon behavior may be robust in situations where the individual has yet to satisfactorily internalize script requirements. A reliance on environmental cues may be amplified by the state of evaluation apprehension that often accompanies the need to enact appropriate behaviors in novel situations. Moreover, the possibility of failure to match behavior to situational requirements may have aversive consequences for the actor (e.g., incompetence, frustration, or embarrassment). (p. 326)

**Mattering**

Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) stated that the concept of significant others has a direct reciprocal — mattering. We consider people significant to us and we contemplate if we matter to others. Mattering suggests that "one is an object of [others] attention, ... that one is important to [others]" (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981, p. 163), and that others depend on the individual.

Attention is the most fundamental aspect of mattering — an individual feels that he or she is noticed by others or commands the interest of another (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981). Importance suggests that an individual feels that others care about what he or she wants, thinks, and does (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981). Rosenberg & McCullough (1981) stressed that mattering "is independent of approval" (p. 164). They explained in their study of adolescents that parental disapproval did not signal the absence of mattering, but rather may suggest the presence of it. More specific to the current study, a critical review of an individual's wardrobe or style preference by a fashion expert may be a sign of mattering vs. disapproval. The third dimension of mattering — dependence — suggests that our behavior is influenced by the reliance that others have on us (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981).

Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) contended that "mattering represents a compelling social obligation and a powerful source of integration: we are bonded to society not only by virtue of our dependence on others but by their dependence on us" (p. 165). Moreover, "different people matter to
us for different reasons” (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981). Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) found significant evidence that adolescents’ global self-worth was positively related to feeling that they mattered to their parents. Sponsors and/or coordinators of clothing gift programs who demonstrate to beneficiaries that they matter may help enhance those individuals’ sense of self.

**First Impression**

Burns and Lennon (1993) defined first impression as “the initial judgments made about another person based upon observable characteristics and behaviors as well as inferences made about the person’s personality, behavior, and characteristics” (p. 9). These impressions can be formed as quickly as 30 seconds (Hayes, 1996) and are used by the perceivers to answer the question: “Who is this person?” (Bassett, 1979, p. 285). Johnson, Schofield, and Yurchisin (2002) found that individuals used appearance and dress cues to form impressions of others and believed that others formed impressions of them in the same manner.

Workman (1984 – 1985) stated that appropriateness of an individual’s appearance is based on the situation. Adolescent boys poorly dressed (e.g., messy, unpressed, and/or raggy) received closer scrutiny and more negative comments about their clothing (Littrell & Berger, 1985-1986). A well-groomed requester for charitable contributions was significantly more effective than a poorly groomed individual (Levine, Bluni & Hochman, 1998). Littrell and Berger (1985-1986) posited that behavior at variance with social norms may be of more import in forming a detailed first impression. Behavior or physical characteristics different from the expected norm seem to command more attention.

Other studies have investigated “the role of clothing in extended inferences” (Workman & Johnson, 1989). Appropriately dressed (e.g., collared white shirt, dark slacks and shoes) taxi drivers not only generated positive inferences about the driver’s personality characteristics and abilities, but also affected positive assumptions about the associated city. Similarly, Rafaeli and Pratt (1993) proposed that outsiders’ images of an organization can be shaped by the employees’ dress.

The above research indicates that impressions are quickly formed about an individual within a contextual framework and that we are aware this happens. Context helps perceivers make
judgments about appropriateness or inappropriateness of dress. Inappropriate appearance will command more attention and could influence perceptions of an individual's credibility. Impressions of individuals can also extend to inferences about that person's place of employment. A positive first impression during a job interview is paramount because it can influence an interviewer's judgment about the applicant's credibility and may suggest to the interviewer how well the applicant will represent the organization.

Dress for the Job Interview

Forsythe, Drake, and Hogan (1985) stated that "clothing ... is an important medium through which personal characteristics may be communicated" (p. 269). In an interview setting, dress is more salient in assessing who a person is than in social situations in which the wearer is known (Hamid, 1968).

Style of dress influences impressions made about an individual. Forsythe et al. (1985) found that a too severely styled garment (dark colored suit with masculine tailored lines) was not as favorably rated as a lighter colored, somewhat softer lined outfit for a female managerial applicant. Later, Damhorst and Fiore (1999) found that the range of acceptable job interview colors and styles of dress for women was far greater than had been suggested by the "dress for success" mavens in the early 1980's. Female and male interviewers differed somewhat in their evaluation of acceptable interview garment styles for women. Women interviewers incorporated a wider range of colors and a few tailored dresses in their choices of appropriate interview attire. Male interviewers assessed darker colors and suits more favorably.

An interview provides: 1) an opportunity for the prospective employer to assess an applicant's fit in the organization; 2) a chance for the interviewer to judge an applicant's characteristics (e.g., honesty, conscientiousness); 3) an opportunity for the applicant to gather information about the organization; and 4) a setting where job-relevant behavior which cannot psychometrically be assessed can be evaluated (Di Milia & Smith, 1997). Both verbal and nonverbal cues about the applicant's potential fit in the organization are made during an interview. Turner-Bowker (2001) found that low-income women who had received clothing gifts felt that being appropriately dressed signaled
their credibility and capabilities during the job interview process. Women in transition who have current knowledge about what is appropriate attire for a job interview may also feel more confident in an interview setting.

**Workplace Attire**

Numerous studies have examined the importance of appropriate clothing in the workplace. The more recent studies investigated how women, new to the executive or managerial area, are utilizing and conceptualizing the role of clothing in their workplaces. "Responsible," "competent," "knowledgeable," "professional," "honest," "reliable," "intelligent," "trustworthy," "hardworking," and "efficient" were occupational traits that college students perceived could be enhanced if they were dressed appropriately vs. inappropriately at work (Kwon, 1994a). When asked if being inappropriately dressed could alter the perception of an individual relative to the above occupational traits, a significant difference was found between the women's overall mean scores and the men's. Women did not believe that they would be perceived as well as the men did when dressed inappropriately, relative to the above occupational traits. Kwon (1994a) posited that women "may put more emphasis on appropriateness of dress in the workplace than [do] males" (p. 36).

However, Kwon (1994a) found that men had a greater understanding of the tactical utility of clothing to enhance occupational traits. Using the men's self-perceptions of their own attributes on occupational traits, ANOVA revealed that the men believed they could enhance eight of the ten occupational traits by dressing properly; the exceptions were "professional" and "efficient". There were no significant findings for the women in the parallel analyses. Kwon's (1994a) interpretation of the findings suggested that women have a general awareness of the manipulative potential of appearance, but that men seem to understand how clothing can be used strategically for self presentation.

Appropriateness of dress for women is not a matter of just knowing whether the business dress code is formal vs. informal. Rather, as Kimle and Damhorst (1997) found during their interviews of female professionals, women balanced several dimensions of appropriateness in their
work attire (i.e., conservatism vs. fashion; conformity vs. creativity; masculinity vs. femininity/sexuality).

Studies focused on women in management report that business dress choices for these women are not so clear cut and well-defined as they are for their male counterparts (Kimle & Damhorst, 1997; Johnson, Crutsinger & Workman, 1994; Ogle & Damhorst, 1999). Current research shows that women's professional appearance must include an appropriate amount of masculine and feminine cues; however, there is not a definitive formula for the correct combination of gender cues that must be displayed. Women interviewed by Kimle and Damhorst (1997) believed that for career advancement conformity was a professional priority. For some of the women conformity meant being "seen as similar to men" (Kimle & Damhorst, 1997, p. 17) but not completely similar. Findings also suggested that women perceived a need to strike a balance between conservatism vs. fashion (Kimle & Damhorst, 1997). Depending on the workplace setting, this meant that the wearer's attire was neither out-of-date nor too fashion forward (Kimle & Damhorst, 1997).

What also seems crucial for women to understand about their appearance is that there are clear distinctions between nonmanagerial and managerial appearance styles of grooming (Cash, 1985; Rafaeli et al., 1997). These distinctions can influence a variety of impressions about the individual's ambition, assertiveness, confidence, financially responsibility, intelligence, and managerial potential. Women who were groomed in the nonmanagerial style were more likely to be identified as secretaries, receptionists, or office workers (Cash, 1985; Rafaeli et al., 1997).

Thus, gender is a characteristic that makes women immediately distinguishable in executive ranks from the numerical majority – white males. Because of this difference, women may feel the need to attend more to their appearance so that they communicate conformity to the company's values and goals. However, business women have moved from the dress strategy of mimicking male business "uniforms" in the 1970s and early 1980s (Solomon & Douglas, 1985) to a more varied and self-defined image in the 1990s (Kimle & Damhorst, 1997). It is not clear if this strategy is serving career women well – moving them up through the ranks – or if it contributes to their containment below the glass ceiling (Damhorst & Fiore, 1999; Wolf, 1991) due to the emphasis on difference from
male leadership. However, women tend to see their involvement in appearance as a strategy of agency and proactivity (Kimle & Damhorst, 1997). Also women feel they have the license and need to be more varied in their dress because to look too masculine is perceived as threatening (Kimle & Damhorst, 1997).

Other studies have found that ethnicity significantly affects the perceptions that individuals have about clothing's role in the workplace. Rucker, Anderson, and Kangas (1999) found that Hispanic respondents rated clothing as more important with respect to personal advancement. McLeod (1999) found that African American male executives believed a traditional style of dress was a more appropriate style of dress for them than casual dress as a way of avoiding negative perceptions by others.

Since the 1990s, many companies adopted the practice of wearing casual dress in the workplace. In the 1990s, casual clothing was worn full time in one-third of all U.S. companies (Farrell-Beck et al., 1996) and in nine out of 10 companies at some level ("Dressing in America," 1995; Farrell-Beck et al., 1996). There is evidence that this trend has reached its threshold and that companies are returning to more traditional styles of business attire in the workplace (Alexander, 2002; Lloyd & Gellers, 2002; Maclean, 2002; Sanger, 2002).

The current state of flux in the workplace with respect to casual dress vs. traditional dress, as well as the evolution of specific workplace dress codes for women could present women in transition with a daunting task as they attempt to identify what is appropriate for their workplace. Rabolt and Drake (1985) found that women less secure in their careers consulted magazines and books, work associates, and retail sources for information on career dressing. Retail sources generally feature fashion or up-dated looks (Rabolt & Drake, 1985) which may not be appropriate for the workplace. A review of popular press advice about business dress revealed a great variety of advice given (Ogle & Damhorst, 1999). Given that there does not seem to be a clear consensus in the media about appropriate work attire or clear direction in retail sources, it should be expected that women in transition might be confused about what is appropriate work attire. Fashion experts could provide women in the FTA program with advice about the basic building blocks for a well-coordinated work
wardrobe, thereby helping to assuage possible uncertainty the women may have about what is appropriate work attire. This type of advice may help women in transition; Rafaeli, Dutton, Harquail, and Mackie-Lewis (1997) concluded that appropriate "...dressed provided a type of emotional wrapping that members [in a workplace] saw as facilitating self-confidence" (p. 30).

Clothing Deprivation

Clothing deprivation has been defined as “clothing dissatisfaction” (Francis & Liu, 1990, p. 1191), discontentment with one's clothing relative to peers, or feeling that one does not have an adequate amount of clothing to be satisfied (Kness, 1983). Feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction are contextually dependent (Glazer & Creedon as cited in Francis & Liu, 1990). For example, women in transition may not experience clothing deprivation during their daily routine, but could develop that feeling if they sense that their work wardrobes are not comparable to others in work-related situations.

It has been found that clothing deprivation has an association with self-esteem and self-confidence. In her work with older persons, Bader (1983) found that some residents of care facilities would forego social events if they were ashamed of their appearance or lacked appropriate clothing. Bader (1983) argued that "clothing and appearance are very important in maintaining a positive self-image and in achieving the recognition and acceptance of others" (p. 206). In a study of older men, Simpson and Littrell (1984) found that the men wanted clothing similar to their friends. The men were concerned that their clothing not be a source of embarrassment to their friends. Simpson and Littrell (1984) hypothesized that the role of clothing in "fostering self-esteem and in enhancing social encounters [continues] throughout the life cycle" (p. 178). Significant correlations between clothing satisfaction and self-esteem were found in a study of Anglo-American, Mexican-American, and Afro-American adolescents (Kness, 1983). Adolescents identified as having high or low self-esteem expressed clothing satisfaction or dissatisfaction, respectively (Kness, 1983).

Kelley and Turner (1970) conducted research on clothing deprivation as it related to satisfaction among lower social class first-graders. The first-graders in an urban school that was eligible for poverty funds expressed very few self-deprivation comments regarding their clothing.
Kelley and Turner hypothesized that the children may have felt adequately attired relative to the other children in their class who were mostly in the lower social class category. Interestingly, even though the children did not self-identify themselves as having clothing deprivation, they could identify other children in their class that they believed experienced clothing deprivation.

Lowe and Dunsing (1981) found that homemakers from non-disadvantaged families reported that social-psychological variables, such as “satisfaction with material well-being and ... perception of rank in the family's annual clothing expenditures” (p. 370), were more salient to their feelings of clothing satisfaction than was income. Further interpretations of the data suggest that the respondents' socioeconomic levels may have influenced their responses. Lowe and Dunsing (1981) noted that the larger the percentage of the family's annual clothing budget the homemakers assessed as allocated to them, the more satisfied they were with their clothing. This finding suggests that low income women, who are subjects of the current study, may be inclined to feelings of clothing deprivation if little or none of the family income is allocated to their clothing needs.

Clothing deprivation has been found to have an influence on an individual's level of social participation and perception of social competence. Francis (1992) found that high school students from economically depressed families reported significantly lower instances of social participation and lower perceptions of social competence than did students from nondepressed areas. Francis (1992) suggested that apathy relative to socializing may be one response to clothing deprivation. Turner-Bowker (2001) in her study of low-income women and their experience with a clothing give-away program found that lack of clothing and the fear of being ridiculed were reasons poor women gave for not pursuing work opportunities (Turner-Bowker, 2001).

When individuals are not able to meet dress standards they may avoid social, educational, or even work-related settings as a way of preserving their positive sense of self. Avoiding work-related activities does not move low-income women closer to their goal of self-sufficiency. If the lack of appropriate clothing deters them from pursuing this goal, then clothing give-away programs such as FTA may be beneficial to women in transition.
Appearance Workshops

Women in transitory stages have gained more confidence by participating in appearance enhancing programs. An example is the Look Good ... Feel Better program for cancer patients sponsored by the Cosmetic, Toiletry, and Fragrance Association Foundation; the American Cancer Society; and the National Cosmetology Association. One woman who attended the program reported that she and the other four women bonded during their two-hour session experimenting with makeup, wigs, hats, turbans, and scarves (Tyndall, 2000). Moreover, one woman felt that she helped herself and realized an enhanced sense of confidence despite the change in her looks when she assisted another participant in the program (Tyndall, 2000).

Fiore (1988) conducted a three-week image consulting program to "test the assumption that an image consulting program has an effect on feeling" (p. 2). Fiore's sample was drawn from two non-profit women's career assessment and placement organizations. The participants were in various stages of employment and with a variety of "...distressing situations such as divorce, spousal abuse, or legal problems" (Fiore, 1988, p. 57).

The women learned about wardrobe management, nonverbal communication, and design concepts (Fiore, 1988). Participants practiced behavior important to the job interview setting (i.e., giving firm handshakes). Body cathexis issues were addressed by having the women assess their body shapes using a somatograph grid (see Fiore for a complete discussion). Using design concepts, the women were provided with information on how they could create visual effects with their dress that closely approximated cultural ideals (Fiore, 1988). The women also were encouraged to engage in self-reflection activities using a self enhancement diary.

Paired t-tests indicated significant differences between the women's scores on a general self-esteem measure prior to and immediately after the program (Fiore, 1988). Fiore (1988) noted that the "experimental design of the study ... [could have generated an] 'experimental effect' or factors other than the program" (p. 84) may have contributed to the elevated self-esteem scores on the post-test. Fiore (1988) found further support for increased self-esteem from entries in the self enhancement diaries indicating that the participants gained knowledge about how to apply the
program's content to their individual situation. Significant differences were found in the women's physical self-esteem, or attitude towards their appearance, prior to and after the program using a physical self esteem scale (Fiore, 1988). The significant differences between the participants' appearance satisfaction pre- and post-program scores were noted as further evidence that the program had a positive effect on the women's physical self-esteem (Fiore, 1988).

Fiore's (1988) findings suggest that global self-esteem and attitudes about one's appearance or physical self-esteem may be positively affected by programs that include cognitive therapy, specific image consulting lessons, and encouragement to make behavioral changes. The actual gift of clothing given to the participants in the FTA program, as well as the advice from the accompanying fashion expert, may affect the recipient's sense of self.

McFarquhar and Lowis (2000) found that women more significantly than men reported higher ratings of self-esteem after having their hair dressed professionally. Another form of appearance enhancement is color analysis. Abramov's (1985) review of these programs resulted in a wary evaluation of their merit. One point touted by the programs that Abramov did not dispute was the potential positive effect such programs could have on the individual's self-esteem, self-confidence and self-fulfilling prophecies. Abramov doubted if the color analysis programs actually provided any new knowledge for users or attended to the uniqueness of each individual. But he acknowledged that the increased attention the women focused on their appearance could result in higher self-confidence. Convincing clients that they are presenting their "best faces" may be the greatest contribution that color analysts make to their clients since the "belief in success is an important part of actually succeeding" (Abramov, 1985, p. 221).

Ptacek and Terry (1996) reported that 46% of the women who attended a class with an image consultant agreed or strongly agreed that they felt better about themselves afterwards. Abramov's (1985) speculation that increased attention by experts could influence self-confidence may explain this finding.

The above studies and anecdotal reports from women indicate that improvements in appearance can have an impact on women's self-esteem and self-confidence. Furthermore,
participating in a workshop with women from similar background or circumstances provides social support and seems to encourage the women to attend not just to their appearance, but to themselves in general. Additionally, advice and attention doled out by the fashion experts may provide beneficiaries of the Fashion Takes Action shopping program with an enhanced sense of confidence and esteem.

**Clothing Gift Programs**

Recognizing that women in transition may have clothing needs when they start the job search process, a number of grass-roots groups have been organizing clothing drives or clothing closets. The “Bottomless Closet” in Chicago is an example of a clothing closet project. Women who come to the Bottomless Closet are welfare recipients referred by one of 25 agencies (Ervin, 1993). The women receive one complete outfit for their job interview and a second outfit after they have found employment (Ervin, 1993).

One of the board members for the Bottomless Closet, a former beneficiary of the organization, remembers not feeling confident when she started her job search activities because she lacked the appropriate work attire (Ervin, 1993). An inadequate work wardrobe made her feel inadequate, and that feeling of inadequacy was manifested in her behavior during job interviews. "By the time I entered I already downgraded myself by ten points. I entered round-shouldered and head down" (Ervin, p. 13). After receiving the outfit from the Bottomless Closet, the woman felt that her appearance and demeanor were improved.

Dress for Success is a rapidly growing nationwide organization that provides low-income women with work appropriate attire. Nancy Levicki, the executive director of Dress for Success in Houston, remarked about the women her organization serves:

Many of our clients arrive nervous and unsure of themselves. They know how to fill out a job application, greet an interviewer and present a resume, but there’s no appropriate clothing in their closets. The transformation in their self-esteem is obvious immediately, once they are modeling a well-made, well-fitting outfit. (Dean, 2000, p. 1)
These grass-roots organizations believe that developing an appropriate professional image would give women in transition to work roles a boost in self-confidence and self-esteem. This study will move towards providing empirical evidence to support that belief.

Turner-Bowker (2001) found that low-income women who were beneficiaries of a state supported clothing gift program perceived that a "certain" appearance was important for job searches. Appearance was described as an influencer, a necessity, as functional, and a mark of competence. Some women indicated "that they would not have been able to begin working without the donated clothing" (Turner-Bowker, 2001, p. 318) they received as gifts. The gift clothing items provided the women with the "right" clothes for the job.

Not all women who visit clothing gift programs find appropriate work attire. A recurring challenge these programs face is stocking clothing in a variety of styles and sizes for the women beneficiaries (Turner-Bowker, 2001). Clothing in size 14 and up and shoes in size 9 and larger are often listed as "most-needed" items in popular press articles that describe clothing gift programs (Whitehead, 2001; Zanos, 2002). In a later interview, Nancy Levicki, reported that many of her large size clients often have not had a professional suit prior to visiting her organization (Griffin, 2001). Levicki stated that some of the women are so overwhelmed when they find a suit that fits, that they "burst into tears" (Griffin, 2001). Equally challenging for some women is finding a suit in a size small enough to fit them properly at clothing gift programs.

A few organizations have been created to help men in transition. One such organization, Career Gear in New York, provides low-income men with hair-cuts, grooming tips, business clothing, a pair of shoes, and a watch (Prud'homme, 1999). The men remarked that the gift clothing items they received affected their sense of confidence and self-esteem (Prud'homme, 1999).

**Mentoring**

Lee and Nolan (1998) defined mentors as "influential people who significantly help others reach their major life goals" (p. 4). According to Bond (1999), "at the most elementary level, mentoring involves people engaged in an interactive process in order to provide the mentee with greater insight into the formal and informal aspects of the organization in which they operate" (p. 1).
The FTA program structure is conducive to mentoring since the beneficiaries are paired with fashion experts and a number of Sears' employees assist the shopping pairs. These individuals have knowledge about work appropriate clothing and could provide guidance and support for the women beneficiaries in the program. A review of literature that examines mentorship is therefore appropriate to the current study. Research that specifically examines how mentoring relationships relate to women is relevant to the current study, as all of the beneficiaries of the FTA program are women. Finally, a review of alternative models of mentoring is provided, and their relevance to the FTA program and its participants is examined.

**Mentoring Functions**

In the professional setting, mentoring is a relationship that has two distinct functions – career and psychosocial (Kram, 1985). Kram (1985) posited that career functions are dependent on structural relationships; psychosocial functions are more dependent on the "quality of the interpersonal relationship" (p. 32). To some degree, both career and psychosocial functions are active in mentoring relationships (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). However, the psychosocial functions are the most relevant to the current study because of the scope of the FTA program.

**Career functions.** Career functions include sponsorship, coaching, exposure and visibility, protection, and challenging work assignments (Kram, 1985). These functions focus on helping the mentee learn the organizational ropes and move up the organizational hierarchy. Sponsorship or the direct intervention by a mentor can open doors or help advance a mentee's career. Coaching includes helping new employees improve their performances by assisting them in navigating the organization's culture or assisting them in interpreting vague norms. The mentor may create opportunities that showcase a mentee's ability, thus providing exposure or visibility for the mentee. Protection is provided by mentors when they absorb blame for mistakes that the mentee makes that are out of his or her control. And finally, the mentor helps to expand the mentee's skills by providing challenging assignments.

Career functions aid the mentee in moving up the organization's hierarchy (Kram, 1985). Kram further stated that "career functions are possible because of the senior person's experience,
organizational rank, and influence in the organizational context" (p. 23). These functions are beyond the scope of the current research and will only be discussed here.

**Psychosocial functions.** Psychosocial functions "affect each individual on a personal level by building self-worth both inside and outside the organization" (Kram, 1985, p. 23). Role modeling, acceptance and confirmation, counseling and friendship are identified as psychosocial activities. These functions enhance the mentor's sense of "competence, identity, and effectiveness in a professional role" (Kram, 1985, p. 23). Whereas career functions "affect the individual's relationship to the organization, ... psychosocial functions affect the individual's relationship with self and with significant others both within and outside the organization" (Kram, 1985, p. 32).

Role modeling is the demonstration by the mentor, either consciously or unconsciously, of appropriate behaviors, attitudes and/or skills (Kram, 1985). The mentee identifies with the mentor because of established respect and admiration. This identification leads the mentee to either emulate specific aspects of the mentor or to reject undesirable ones. Kram (1985) stated that "role modeling succeeds because of the emotional attachment that is formed" (p. 34) within the mentoring relationship. The mentee benefits from this identification with the mentor by discovering "valued parts of self" (Kram, p. 34).

A mentor who provides acceptance-and-confirmation encourages the mentee to experiment with new behaviors (Kram, 1985). The mentee is thus encouraged to become a risk-taker because of the basic trust that he or she has built with the mentor. This risk-taking may take the form of debate or disagreement within the mentoring relationship, rather than mere conformity which would suggest that the mentee is attempting to please the mentor.

Within an environment of trust and rapport, a mentor is able to provide counseling (Kram, 1985). The mentee may discuss professional and/or personal issues with the mentor in this setting. In this environment the mentee shares concerns and speaks about anxieties or fears. The mentor helps find solutions and provides a sounding board for the mentee. According to Kram (1985),...

...[p]ersonal concerns in the early stage of a career fall into three major areas: how an individual can develop competence and potential while also feeling productive and satisfied in
a newly chosen career; how an individual can relate to peers and superiors without compromising personal values and individuality; and how he or she can incorporate growing responsibilities and commitments at work with other areas of life. These developmental tasks involve clarifying one’s relationship with self, with the organization, and with other spheres of life. The counseling function is important in accomplishing these tasks. (p. 36)

The mentor may become a confidant as a result of this counseling. The sense of comfort that the mentee realizes from this relationship helps the mentee address situations that might interfere with effectiveness and self-worth (Kram, 1985).

Kram describes the friendship function as interactions between mentors and mentees that are marked by mutual caring and intimacy and may extend beyond the work environment (1985). The mentoring relationship may evolve to one that is marked by feelings of mutuality between the mentor and mentee, thus leading the mentee to feel more “like a peer” (Kram, 1985).

In summary, psychosocial functions assist the mentee on a more personal level and contribute to an individual’s sense of personal and professional self-worth (Kram, 1985). These functions provide the mentee with a safe and supportive environment that allows for self-examination and feedback, foster a sense of mutuality between the mentor and mentee, and “enhance an individual’s sense of competence, identity, and effectiveness in a professional role” (Kram, 1985, p. 32).

Types of Mentoring Relationships

Mentoring relationships can be described by the manner in which they are formed. Mentors and mentees may be mutually attracted to each other and agree to form a mentoring relationship or they may be paired through an organizational process. The former, known as informal mentoring, has been the most common method used in professional settings, whereas formal mentoring programs have increased since the 1980s (Noe, 1988).

Informal mentoring. The traditional mentoring model has been described as “masculine-biased” or “hierarchical” (Paludi, Meyers, Kindermann, Speicher, & Haring-Hidore, 1990). In a professional setting, these relationships were historically between a young male (mentee) and an
older male (mentor) (Noe, 1988; Paludi et al., 1990). Mentors selected mentees who would mirror them, thus providing a sense of generativity (see Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Ragins and Cotton further explained that a senior or experienced employee may perceive an individual (future mentee) as a rising star or a diamond in the rough. And mentees looked for individuals who could help them advance professionally and be role models. These traditional mentoring relationships were marked by mutual attraction, developed spontaneously, and were created without organizational intervention or assistance (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). These relationships were evidence of the willingness of the mentor to help the protégé and the openness of the mentor to accept assistance and advice from the mentor (Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1992).

**Formal mentoring.** The increase in formal mentoring programs has been noted by a number of scholars (see Blake-Beard, 2001). One reason given for this increase is the need to address "the inequalities that women face in organizations" (Blake-Beard, 2001, p. 332) with respect to advancement in the organization.

Rather than occurring spontaneously, the organization manages and sanctions formal mentoring programs (Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1992). Mentees and mentors in formal mentoring relationships may not share the same level of comfort that informal dyads do (Blake-Beard, 2001). The location and frequency of mentoring sessions may be predetermined, and goal-setting may occur during initial stages of the relationship (Blake-Beard, 2001). Informal mentoring may be more organic in structure, and goals may evolve to meet needs as they arise (Blake-Beard, 2001). Formal mentoring relationships may be shorter in duration than informal ones (Chao et al., 1992; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Blake-Beard, 2001).

**Informal vs. formal mentoring.** Studies that compare the benefits of informal vs. formal mentoring programs generate conflicting findings. Mentees in informal mentoring relationships reported receiving more career development support and higher salaries than did mentees in formal programs (Chao et al., 1992). However, there was no significant difference between informally mentored and formally mentored individual with respect to psychosocial support received. In another study by Fagenson-Eland, Marks, and Amendola (as cited in Ragins & Cotton, 1999), informal
mentors were reported to provide more psychosocial benefits to mentees. There was no significant difference in mentors providing career functions and role modeling for informal vs. formal mentees. Mentees in informal mentoring relationships in Ragins and Cotton’s (1999) study reported receiving career and psychosocial support to a significantly greater extent than those mentees who were in formal relationships. However, when examining formal vs. informal mentoring by gender, Ragins and Cotton found that formal mentoring was more beneficial for men than it was for women. Ragins and Cotton (1999) concluded that “although formal mentoring relationships are less effective than informal relationships, they may be even less effective for female protégés” (p. 547).

Blake-Beard (2001) concluded after reviewing studies that compare formal and informal mentoring relationships that “we still have very little empirical research that informs our understanding of the effectiveness of formal mentoring in comparison to informal mentoring relationships” (p. 332). Research that compares the experiences of individuals who have been mentored vs. nonmentored does provide less conflicting findings. The following section reviews that literature.

**Mentored vs. Nonmentored**

Empirical data indicate that individuals who were mentored fared better than nonmentored individuals in a number of categories, such as promotions, higher incomes, reduced turnover intentions, and greater career satisfaction and easier socialization (see Blake-Beard, 2001; see also Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Chao (1997) concluded from a 5-year longitudinal study comparing the experiences of mentored and nonmentored individuals that “the effects of mentoring on outcomes like income and organizational socialization endure over a long term” (p. 24). The positive effects of mentoring resulted in significant differences even during the last year of study, regardless of whether the individuals were currently being mentored or if they were former mentees.

Studies revealed that women with mentors report greater job satisfaction and greater self-confidence than women who are not mentored (see Noe, 1988). In a survey of 269 women administrators of Cooperative Extension service, Lee and Nolan (1998) reported 92.6% of the respondents “felt that mentoring was important for women to assist them in developing their careers and that some initiatives should be provided to this end” (p. 11). As women enter the workforce in
greater numbers, the opportunities and experiences they have relative to mentoring are important to examine. The following section discusses literature relevant to the current study.

**Women and Mentoring**

McKeen and Burke (1989) suggested that "for women, the mentoring process may be even more critical for success than it is for men" (p. 33). They reviewed studies that found a greater percentage of successful executive women reported having mentoring help than did men in the studies. Women who were unsuccessful identified lack of help (mentoring) as one critical deficit. Mentors, McKeen and Burke noted, help mentees acclimatize to organizational culture and learn organizational "ropes". However, the number of mentoring opportunities has not been as prevalent for women as they have been for males in professional settings (Noe, 1988).

The paucity of mentoring opportunities for women can be partially explained by the timing of women entering the workforce. Paludi et al. (1990) posited that an older woman transitioning from housekeeper to college student or worker may have "fewer prospects of finding a mentor to invest in her and her career" (p. 84). Paludi et al. (1990) speculated that these women may seem out-of-sync and less dedicated as compared to young males or females who begin careers after the traditional educational path (i.e., high school, college and possibly graduate school). However, Hooper and Traupmann (as cited in Paludi et al., 1990) argued that "women over age 50 are the most serious students, motivated by career-related goals" (p. 83).

Another explanation given is that mentees assigned to formal mentoring programs may be seen as at-risk employees who need remedial help (Ragins, 1997), thus creating an air of inferiority around the mentoring relationship. In addition, problems may arise from the lack of female mentors and the reluctance of male mentors and/or female mentees to form cross-gender mentoring relationships because of the potential problems that could develop related to sexual rumors and innuendoes (Noe, 1988; Blake-Beard, 2001).

"Mentoring schemes create openings for people to explore their current situation and continually develop it" (Bond, 1999, p. 44). The opportunities for conventional mentoring may not be
available for women in transition; however, there has been a number of alternatives to conventional mentoring models proposed. The next section discusses those models.

**Alternative Mentoring Models**

Kram (1985) stated that "the popular press has done a disservice by implying that the key to career success is finding a mentor. This is an oversimplification of a complex web of work relationships that could be made available to individuals in organizational settings" (p. 4). She argued that:

> Mentor relationships have both great potential and significant limitations. ...[M]entor relationships are relatively unavailable to most individuals in organizations; individuals' capacities to mentor and organizations' lack of encouragement for the activity prevent this kind of developmental relationship from being widely accessible. It is essential, therefore, to consider alternatives to this kind of relationship. (p.133)

In addition to hierarchical mentoring, peer relationships offer individuals necessary developmental functions, because they are a source of support and provide psychosocial functions (Kram & Isabella, 1985). And, peer relationships offer a degree of mutuality that enables members of the interacting dyad to experience roles as the giver as well as the receiver of career or psychosocial functions. The experience of mutuality appears to be critical in helping individuals during their careers to develop a continuing sense of responsibility, competence, and identity as experts. Peer relationships offer similar functions as do conventional mentoring; however, greater mutuality and reciprocity tend to be present in peer relationships (Kram & Isabella, 1985).

Kram's (1986) relationship constellation model expands the concept of alternative sources of development support. Kram (1986) argued that relationships with others (e.g., subordinates, peers, family member(s), outside work friends, senior manager(s), bosses), could provide functions performed by a mentor. Moreover, "the character of a relationship constellation is not static and, indeed, evolves as individuals' needs and organizational circumstances change" (Kram, 1986, p. 173).
In summary, mentoring has been shown to be a valuable function that can positively affect an individual’s sense of competence and self-worth. The FTA program, albeit short in duration, is composed of individuals who are successful in their careers (e.g., fashion experts, Sears personnel) and individuals who are beginning or restarting their career or work experience (i.e., women in transition). The presence of these diverse groups suggests that hierarchical mentoring could occur within the shopping pairs and among the teams. Four to five women are chosen to participate at each shopping event (with the exception of the New York event), allowing for the interaction of the women beneficiaries with their peers. The women participating in the FTA program are chosen because they have received training or attended workshops focused on enhancing their positive sense of self (e.g., self-confidence, esteem, and efficacy). The four-hour shopping event may provide a forum for women recipients of the FTA program to engage in peer mentoring with other women beneficiaries as they share common struggles and achievements.

Hawthorne Effect

Adair (1984) referred to the collection of experiments known as the Hawthorne studies as a “social science classic”. He stated that: “Their major impact has been in industry, specifically in the impetus they provided for consideration of psychological and social factors within the workplace” (p. 334). Much has been written and debated about the Hawthorne studies and the associated Hawthorne Effect (see Roethlisberger, Dickson & Wright, 1946; Adair, 1984; Brannigan & Zwerman, 2001; Carey, 1967; Diaper, 1990 to name just a few.) The purpose of the present review is to provide a general overview of the Hawthorne studies, lists various definitions of the Hawthorne Effect, provide a summary of researchers’ opinions about the cause of the effect, and suggest ways that the Hawthorne Effect may be applicable to the current study that shares its identity as a field research.

Overview of Hawthorne Studies

The Hawthorne Plant of the Western Electric Company in Cicero, Illinois, was the site for a series of studies that examined a number of factors and their relationship to worker productivity. The various tests and more formal experiments were conducted between 1924 and 1932. The earliest tests starting in 1924 until 1927 were “designed to determine whether increases in artificial lighting on
the factory floor could reduce accidents and eyestrain and thus increase productivity" (Brannigan & Zwerman, 2001, p. 56). From 1927 to 1932 experiments were conducted to assess the effect of work efficiency when work schedules and wages were manipulated.

Brannigan and Zwerman (2001) referred to the Hawthorne Effect as a methodological artifact that emerged from some of the experiments conducted as part of the Hawthorne studies. According to Gottfredson (1996), the illumination tests and the Relay Assembly Test (one of the first formal experiments) are the studies usually associated with the Hawthorne Effect. A brief summary of these two seminal tests is given to provide a context for the discussion of the Hawthorne Effect.

**Illumination tests and relay assembly test.** Roethlisberger et al. (1946) reported that the illumination studies were preliminary tests that employed a variety of methodologies. The studies examined pairings of test and control groups or single groups, daylight and/or artificial light, and increased, decreased, or maintained levels of illumination. Very low levels of illumination did not affect productivity; workers who had illumination levels as low as moonlight were still able to maintain efficiency. The experimenters concluded that they had not found evidence of a relationship between illumination and efficiency, as the expected changes in productivity did not occur when the illumination levels were changed (Roethlisberger et al., 1946).

One experiment was conducted to see if previous results were "psychologically" generated rather than "real." This experiment included an electrician who both changed and pretended to change the amount of light in a workplace setting. Each time the electrician manipulated the light bulbs, the workers were asked how they liked the change. The workers consistently gave expected answers. After the electrician had been increasing the light, but in subsequent visits only switched one bulb for another with no change in illumination, the workers thought the light was being increased and continued to report that they liked the brighter light. Again, the study failed to provide conclusive evidence about the relationships between illumination and efficiency because the workers’ "production . . .[levels] did not materially change at any stage of the experiment" (Roethlisberger et al., 1946, p. 17).
The investigators learned from the illumination studies that "[w]here human beings are concerned one cannot change one condition without inadvertently changing others", alluding to the many variables that were present during the test (Mayo, 1933, p. 54). Also, the investigators noted that "an employee's response to an experimental change could not be ascribed solely to a simple physiological reaction" (Roethlisberger et al., 1946, p. 21). This awareness prompted them to set up the next series of experiments to monitor worker behavior in a more "careful and systematic" manner and to capitalize on their new insights about tests involving human behavior (Roethlisberger et al., 1946).

In the first experiment, known as the Relay Assembly Test (April, 1927 – June, 1929), the investigators explored the "optimal cycle of rest and work periods" (Adair, 1984, p. 336). The investigators selected five young women and isolated them in a room away from the regular workforce to control the test environment. The specific independent variables manipulated in the study were variations of rest periods by length and time of day, work week length, work day length, and whether the company supplied lunch and/or beverages.

The five workers were also treated differently than the general workforce to increase their willingness to participate, to mitigate their negative feelings about being isolated, and to reduce the amount of influence from their former department. Workers were given special privileges, normal supervision was removed, they were given considerable interest and attention, and a different method for determining their wages was adopted (Adair, 1984). At the end of the study, investigators were perplexed by the "... general upward trend in output independent of any particular change in rest pauses or shorter working hours" (Roethlisberger et al., 1946, p. 86).

**Explanation of the Hawthorne Effect**

A number of hypotheses have been offered to explain what caused the Hawthorne Effect — the unanticipated increase in productivity despite the manipulation of variables that were expected to reduce efficiency. Five early hypotheses offered were: the improvement in the physical environment, "relief from cumulative fatigue", the reduction of monotony, increased wages, and the changes in supervision style (Roethlisberger et al., 1946). The special attention directed at the subjects
have also been suggested as explanations for the Hawthorne Effect. These later explanations capture the most popular reason for the Hawthorne Effect – "when people realize that their behavior is being examined, they change how they act" (Brannigan & Zwerman, 2001, p. 56). Following along with that, Adair (1984) suggested that what has been labeled the Hawthorne Effect may be better explained by symbolic interaction theory. Specifically, he stated that "most persons in any clearly identified situation define the context for their behavior and respond accordingly" (p. 343). What may be extended from Adair's (1984) brief comment is that the workers took on the role of the other (Mead, 1934) to interpret the good intentions of the researchers, and they responded in kind with greater productivity.

Parsons (1974, 1992) asserted that the Hawthorne Effect was an inadvertent product of operant conditioning because the Relay Assembly Test incorporated a mechanism to provide subjects with feedback on their productivity, which was tied to a financial reward. Expanding on Parson's theory, Gottfredson (1996) added that the Hawthorne Effect was also possible because of "the removal of organizational obstacles" (p. 46) that allowed the workers to set efficiency goals for themselves.

Carey (1967), a critic of the Hawthorne studies, acknowledged that "free and friendly supervision" may have played a role in increasing output by 5 percent in the Relay Assembly Test. But that the experiment's early period was also marked by "the introduction of a preferred incentive system" (p. 414). Carey pointed out that the greatest increase in output occurred after the change in supervision from friendly to stern, the removal of two uncooperative workers, and the replacement of them with "people of rather special personality and motivation" (p. 412). Overall, citing major errors in the scientific method, Carey deemed the Relay Assembly Test to be "worthless scientifically."

Bramel and Friend (1981) arguing from within a Marxist framework, contended that the Hawthorne studies were evidence of a:

... group of rather wary workers engaged in a continuing skirmish with management and determined not to be taken advantage of. Rather than become a part of the company 'team,'
they became a team of their own, rather coolly looking out for their own economic interest in an adversary relationship with management, regardless of how much they may have personally liked certain members of the research team. (p. 874)

Bramel and Friend's (1981) read of the Hawthorne Studies is that workers were not responding to the friendly or permissive supervision, but rather were engaging in "collective resistance to exploitation" (p. 876) and that outputs increased when conditions perceived as favorable were introduced or reinstated.

Relevance to the Present Study

The Hawthorne studies demonstrated that "... individual work behavior is rarely a pure consequence of simple cause and effect relationships but rather is determined by a complex set of factors" (Sonnenfeld, 1982, p. 1398). Sommer (1968) recounted a conversation where a researcher was asked, "How are you guarding against a Hawthorne effect?" (p. 592). The question was a concern about interpreting findings as a result of the independent variable(s) vs. extraneous variable(s). Sommer (1968), a proponent of the Hawthorne Effect, suggested that "...Hawthorne Effects, rather than being some extraneous disruptive influence in psychological research, are an important and ever-present factor in any field situation" (p. 593). Furthermore, Sommer (1968) suggested that the Hawthorne Effect illuminates how social problems are impacted by multiple factors and that a prudent approach to their understanding would be to look at them as part of an ecosystem. In other words, the gifts of clothing and other related items may affect the recipients' confidence, efficacy, and esteem. However, during the shopping event the tangible gifts may be combined with extraneous variables, such as focused attention the women received and/or the interpersonal dynamics generated to create a synergistic relationship that influences the women's responses to the program.

The Hawthorne studies serve as an example of an intricate interaction of independent and extraneous variables in a field study. The various perspectives that scholars have provided about the Hawthorne Effect alert the researcher to the continuous need to pivot the lens of interpretation because human behavior is a complex process of reacting to and resisting multiple variables.
Questions that this researcher considered throughout the study ranged from – "Do the clothing gift items provide the women with tangible tools that can affect their sense of positive self in workplace situations?", to "Is the FTA program a clever marketing strategy that exploits women in transition under the guise of assisting them towards greater self-sufficiency?"

**Guiding Questions**

The clothing gift program under study was examined to see how it affected the recipients, who were low-income women in transition to a more self-sufficient life. From the sponsor's perspective, the purpose of the clothing gift program was to provide tangible support (clothing, shoes, make-up, etc.) and an emotional boost to the women. Previous research and existing theory helped the researcher, in part, to formulate the following initial research questions:

1) Do women in transition sense clothing deprivation when they begin or plan to begin work-related activities? If so, how does a sense of clothing deprivation affect the women relative to work-related activities?

2) Can a clothing gift program address the beneficiaries' feeling of clothing deprivation?

3) How do women in transition assess the role of clothing in work-related activities?

4) How knowledgeable are women in transition about what is considered appropriate dress for work related activities?

5) How did the women's personal preferences for clothing colors or styles relate to work dress norms?

6) How consistent is the advice fashion experts give to recipients of clothing gift programs?

7) How receptive are the women in transition to wardrobe advice given by fashion experts?

8) What effect does participation in a clothing gift program with others similarly situated have on individuals?

9) Is a four-hour clothing gift program conducive to mentoring?

10) How do women in transition describe their levels of confidence, esteem, and efficacy as related to work activities?
11) What effect does focused attention in a clothing gift program have on women in transition?

12) Could a type of Hawthorne Effect contribute to the women's responses to the clothing gift program?

13) Can a four-hour clothing program provide a setting where women in transition enhance their confidence, esteem, or efficacy relative to work?

14) What are the effects of participation in a clothing gift program, such as FTA?

15) Does the clothing gift itself affect the women? If so, how?
CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

The current study examined the clothing gift program – Fashion Takes Action (FTA) – sponsored by Sears Roebuck Co. Following Yin's (1994) recommendation, a case study approach was taken and multiple types of data were collected to investigate the effect of the program on the recipients' confidence, efficacy, and esteem relative to work-related activities. In 2000, the FTA program was conducted at ten different Sears stores in the U.S. In addition to the women recipients, a variety of individuals in supporting roles participated in the FTA shopping events.

Data from the women beneficiaries, the focus of this study, included questionnaires, participant observations, and in-depth interviews. An inductive, grounded theory approach was used to interpret the data in an effort to understand how the FTA shopping event affected the women recipients. Evidence was gathered from the other participants, such as documents, archival records, and interviews to gain an understanding of the FTA program's history and current structure, what types of educational and training programs the women attended prior to the FTA event, and how the FTA program was perceived and evaluated by the other participants.

Research Approach

A multi-faceted and longitudinal (over a short term) investigation of the women in the FTA program provided insight into how or why (Yin, 1994) the program could affect women's self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-efficacy. Additionally, a close examination of the women's comments revealed whether the program affected the women and, if so, what affect the program had on the beneficiaries' self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-efficacy.

Using Creswell's (1998) approach this researcher provided a description of the FTA program, analyzed themes that were identified during data collection, made interpretations of the data, and, in accordance with Lincoln and Guba (1985), reported "lessons learned" from the program. These activities comprised a case study approach or the "equivalent of [using] a spotlight or microscope" (Hakim, 2000) on the FTA program.

Creswell (1998) stated that a study of how "individuals interact, take actions, or engage in a process in response to a phenomenon" (p. 56) is one focus of a grounded theory approach. The
ultimate goal of grounded theory is to generate or move towards a model, theory, or deeper understanding that emerges from the data. The present study takes that approach by examining if the FTA program affected the women's self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-efficacy as they relate to work activities. Through a process of continuous interpretation of the data, the researcher moved towards theory that explained the informants' realities (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The researcher blended two traditions—case study and grounded theory. The approach of using multiple methods and different sources, known as triangulation, allows the researcher to corroborate evidence (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study examines the informants' comments and numerical responses. Qualitative researchers do not privilege one methodology or practice over others and, therefore, make use of narratives, statistics, and numbers in their research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Various methods and types of data provide the researcher with significant insights and knowledge and are a source of triangulation that "adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry" (Flick as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 4).

**Case Study**

As stated earlier, a case study approach is appropriate when the researcher is asking how or why questions about a phenomenon (Yin, 1994). In the current study, the researcher endeavored to understand how or why a clothing gift program could affect women's self-esteem, self-confidence, or self-efficacy about work related activities. Secondly, when a researcher exercises little control over the events under study, then a case study is a useful approach (Yin, 1994). The FTA program was developed, organized, coordinated, and conducted without any input from the researcher. However, organizers of the program allowed the researcher access to the "real-time" event and gave her permission to contact all the participants. The specific data collection activities that the researcher engaged in are discussed below. One more criterion that Yin stated should be satisfied in a case study approach is that the subject of the study be set in a "real-life context." The researcher observed and interacted with the program's participants as the program was being coordinated and conducted. Continuous contact was maintained with the public relations firm that coordinated the FTA program. The contact person at the PR firm supplied the researcher with all the pertinent information about
dates, locations, local program coordinator information, and number of women scheduled to shop and provided pre- and post-publicity information about the program.

The FTA program also met the most strenuous rationale that Stake (2000) proposed should be satisfied in a case study: "the object of study is a specific, unique, bounded system" (p. 456). The FTA program was a specific program focused on assisting women in transition towards greater economic self-sufficiency. Its approach was unique from other clothing giveaway programs and had clear boundaries for when and where it was held.

Stake (2000) identified three types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. Intrinsic case studies are undertaken because the phenomenon "itself is of interest" (p. 436). The purpose of an intrinsic case study is "not to come to understand some abstract construct or generic phenomenon....The purpose is not theory building....[The] study is undertaken because of an intrinsic interest" (Stake, 2000, p. 437). The FTA program is intrinsically interesting, but the present study does aim to use and possibly generate theory and, therefore, is best described by Stake’s category of instrumental case study. Instrumental case studies examine a case to "provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization...The case is of secondary interest, it plays a supportive role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else" (Stake, 2000, p. 437). The current study is undertaken to understand how a philanthropic clothing gift program could affect women’s self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-efficacy. As mentioned in the Introduction, many organizations engage in efforts to assist women in transition. Findings from this study contribute to the understanding of how a gift of clothing, other activities, and various interactions can enhance sense of self of women in transition. The third type of case study is a collective case study which is a collection of multiple instrumental case studies. This third type is not applicable to the current study because the FTA program is considered a single unit of analysis, but a unit with multiple, somewhat repetitive sessions as its structure.

Another way of understanding case studies is provided by Hakim (2000). She proposed that case studies range from descriptive to selective to the most rigorous level of experimental isolation. Descriptive case studies, at a minimum, provide a richly detailed ‘portrait’ of a particular social
phenomenon. More focus on particular aspects or issues is possible after an accumulation of data about a topic have been gathered, thus a selective case study moves toward refining knowledge. "At the most rigorous level, case studies are designed to achieve experimental isolation of selected social factors or processes within a real-life context, so as to provide a strong test of prevailing explanations and ideas" (Hakim, 2000, p. 60). The current study did not have experimental control, but took advantage of pre- and post-session measurements and engagement over time. Therefore, the current study moves beyond merely describing the context and observed patterns, to providing empirical data that can be used to "substantiate or refine causal processes thought to underlie observed patterns and correlations" (Hakim, 2000, p. 60).

Yin (1994) delineated three types of case studies – exploratory, descriptive or explanatory. Exploratory case studies provide answers to "what, how many, or how much" questions about a phenomenon that can help the researcher develop relevant hypotheses and propositions for future inquiry. "How or why" research questions addressed in a case study lead to a more explanatory understanding by exploring the operational linkages within the phenomenon (Yin, 1994). The present study is exploratory in that it examined the structure of a clothing gift program – FTA — and its linkages to or impacts on the recipients. The current research also sought to gain a deeper understanding of how the FTA program could affect the beneficiaries' self-esteem, self-confidence, and/or self-efficacy with respect to work-related activities. Thus, the present study illustrates Yin's (1994) caveat that the boundaries between the different types of case studies are not "always clear and sharp" (p. 4).

Yin (1993) contended that explanatory theories are suitable "for designing and doing causal case studies" (p. 18) and "can facilitate theory testing" (p. 20). Deductive theory testing is not required, however. The current research follows the practices of qualitative scholars who use an inductive approach to interpreting data. This inductive, qualitative approach is defined by Denzin and Lincoln (1998):

Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural
settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials—case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts—that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals’ lives. (p. 3)

According to Yin (1994) data collection in a case study is marked by its lack of routinization. In a naturalistic setting the actions and interactions of the individuals under study are fluid and subject to inconsistencies. To accommodate this lack of routinization, Yin (1994) suggested that a case study researcher have the following basic skills: “be able to ask good questions; be a good listener; be adaptive and flexible; have a firm grasp of the issues being studied; be unbiased by preconceived notions” (p. 56). When needed, the researcher made adjustments to the data collection method and took advantage of serendipitous events that provided unforeseen insights. The pre- and post-questionnaires were routinely administered and constant in content, but their timing of administration and completion contexts were not uniform. Even the quasi-experimental data collection was not controllable.

Grounded Theory

Glaser and Strauss (1967) introduced an inductive approach to theory building known as grounded theory. The purpose of grounded theory is “to generate or discover a theory” (Creswell, 1998, p. 56) through a systematic method of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. According to Glaser (1992) there are four criteria for evaluating grounded theory: fit, work, relevance, and modifiability. In order for the grounded theory to work it must be a useful conceptual rendering and ordering of the data that explain the studied phenomena or that fit the data. A close examination of what the benefiting women had to say about the event and their interactions with other participants was conducted using a grounded theory approach. The researcher examined existing theories to help in designing research questions and measures and to see whether existing theories aided understanding of data. Fully formalized theory is usually not the end-point of grounded theory work;
however, grounded theory is an inductive approach that facilitates finding new patterns in data (Creswell, 1998).

Case Study and Grounded Theory

The current study is an examination of a program and of the effect that program had on the benefiting women. The case study approach allowed the researcher to situate the FTA program within its real-life context. A comprehensive study was made of the FTA program to understand its structure and how the multiple participants interacted with each other. The researcher did a close examination of the women beneficiaries to investigate if the program had the anticipated effect. These two approaches allowed the researcher to understand why or how the program could be effective and if the program was effective in addressing the women beneficiaries' sense of self.

Participants

As indicated in the Introduction, several groups of people participated in the FTA event (Figure 1.1). The umbrella organizations were Sears Corporate and Women Work! They supplied the resources (financial, personnel, and physical space) for the shopping events and the network of women beneficiaries, respectively. These two organizations were usually not represented at the shopping event. The other seven groups were always in attendance at the shopping events. One exception was the researcher who was not present during the shopping events conducted in Chicago and in New York. Two groups that performed behind the scenes included the public relations agency and the media. Media included invited radio and TV stations and newspapers, as well as a hired professional photographer. The remaining four groups were personnel from the local Sears stores where the shopping events took place, fashion experts, women beneficiaries, and a representative from the local program where the women were enrolled or attended. Using a case study approach allowed the researcher to examine how each of the groups contributed to the overall FTA experience.

Sears Corporate

The FTA program was in its third year in 2000 when data was collected. A Senior Communication Manager and the Vice-President of General Merchandise Management had been instrumental in developing the program. Sears Corporate encourages its employees to participate in
community projects through its Good Life Alliance program. Starting in 2000, Sears Corporate pledged that its employees, their families, and friends would perform 1,000,000 hours of volunteer work over a three year period. The FTA program was one opportunity that employees had for earning their volunteer hours.

Corporate Sears supported the FTA program financially and with human resources. The gift items that the women received during the shopping event were paid for through the Corporate Office. In conjunction with the FTA event, the local Sears stores sponsored a seven- to 10-day used clothing drive. Items received during that time period were given to the local affiliate of Women Work! that participated in the shopping event. Sears also contributed $100,000 during 2000 to be shared between Women Work! and its local affiliates. Additionally, Sears Corporate supplied the local Sears store with details about the program and appropriate signage for the shopping event and the clothing drive.

Women Work!

This national non-profit organization was the philanthropic partner for Sears, Roebuck and Company for 2000. They have a network of local affiliates that work with women in transition to provide them with morale support and education and/or job training so that they can achieve economic self-sufficiency. The local affiliates are located at community colleges, vocational schools, or social services agencies.

Women Work!'s local affiliates are subdivided into 10 regions that cover the U.S, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. In 2000 there were approximately 18 active state presidents. There are approximately 1,300 programs nationwide that benefit from the organization's training and technical assistance and knowledge of policy issues at the state and national level. Using this wide expanse of affiliates and services, Women Work! provided Sears Corporate with an established network of women in transition who were involved in job preparedness programs.

2wo-One-2wo

2wo-One-2wo is a public relations agency hired by Sears Corporate to develop, coordinate and conduct the Fashion Takes Action (FTA) program. Sears Corporate, with input from the PR firm,
decided where the FTA events would be held in 2000. Ten sites were selected, with Chicago as the
kick-off city. After this decision was made, the public relations firms began contacting and
coordinating the other participating groups. Women Work! was called to get the name and contact
information for the local affiliate in the cities where the shopping was scheduled. Then the PR firm
contacted the program coordinator of the local affiliate with details about the program and asked for
names and mini-bios of the women. The PR firm hired a professional photographer to capture candid
and posed shots of the women during the shopping event. And the local media were notified and
invited to cover the event through a press release. Fashion experts were contacted by the agency
and invited to participate. They were provided with details about the shopping event and given a
copy of the women’s mini-bios to given them some background on the women they would be
assisting.

Location of the local store, start time, and designated door entry were communicated to the
participants by the PR firm. During the event, the public relations firm had authorization to correct
any unforeseen problems (within reason) and to make changes to the program as needed to ensure
that the women had a positive experience. Also the PR firm consulted with the store manager or on
rare occasions, if a Sears Corporate representative was present, that person gave permission for
other types of gifts that were not part of the original plan.

Sears Local

The local Sears store management team was apprised of the FTA event by Sears Corporate.
Through a series of conference calls, the public relations firm and the local Sears store coordinated
where the initial meeting place for the FTA participants would be, identified fashion experts, ordered
or supplied breakfast and lunch, arranged for the clothing drive, and identified appropriate and
interested sales associates to help with the shopping.

The initial meeting place for the participants was usually in a meeting or training room in an
area of the store not normally visited by customers. At one store, mannequins outfitted in work
appropriate attire were placed in the meeting room. The room was generally configured to allow for
interactions among all the participants.
Several Sears employees were in attendance during the initial breakfast meeting -- the store manager, two or three department managers, and two or three sales associates. Typically the departments represented would be women’s RTW, shoes and cosmetics. The program coordinator and one or two staff would be present. Four or five women and an equal number of fashion experts were invited to participate and meet during the breakfast. A representative or two from the public relations firm and the hired photographer were always in attendance. Approximately 16 – 23 people would meet each other during phase one of the FTA shopping event. The Los Angeles shopping event however differed from other cities in this respect because there were more than 50 people present in the room when the women first arrived. The presence of so many people was not lost on the women. As will be discussed in the Findings, the women were significantly impressed with the number of people that attended to them, not only in Los Angeles, but in all of the other cities.

**Fashion Experts**

Individuals who worked as fashion editors/writers, personal shoppers, celebrity stylists, costume designer, TV show host, radio personalities, as well as one professional cheerleader and one professional athlete, volunteered to accompany the women and help them select work appropriate attire during the FTA 2000 shopping events. Of the 50 fashion experts who assisted the women during the 2000 FTA program, five were males. The fashion experts were paired one-on-one with the women, except in one shopping location a last-minute cancellation by one volunteer was addressed by having one expert assist two women. The public relations firm used a variety of methods to contact these individuals. Since the program was in its third year, previous fashion experts either contacted Sears or were asked to participate again. The public relations firm called individuals that they knew worked in the fashion industry or were tangentially related to the industry. The public relations firm was also given names of other individuals that might agree to participate.

**Media**

In each city a professional photographer was hired by the public relations firm to capture candid and posed shots of the participants. Most often the photographer focused on the women and
the fashion expert. The public relations firm prepared a press release about the FTA event that invited local newspapers and radio and TV stations to cover the event.

Photographs from the event were sent to the women via their local organization, and 2wo-One-2wo maintained copies for publicity purposes. Depending on the local media's schedule, TV crews or newspaper writers responded to the press release. If the public relations firm was aware that a certain station would cover the event, they would ask the more outgoing women if they would agree to an interview. In Los Angeles, the public relations firm engaged a professional production company to film the shopping event and make promotional material for the FTA event.

Women Work! Affiliate Program Coordinator

The PR firm contacted the local affiliates of Women Work! to advise them that their agency or organization was chosen to participate in the FTA event in that shopping market. Affiliate program coordinators in each market area where the women were enrolled selected four or five women to participate based on need, readiness to enter the workplace, and issues of safety.1 Program coordinators involved in the spring shopping events reported to the researcher that they used a flexible or loosely structured method for selecting the women. During the fall shopping events, some Women Work! affiliate program coordinators advised the researcher that a number of women in their programs were asked to write a short personal statement about why they should be chosen to participate in the Sears event. A team or the affiliate program coordinator evaluated these statements and made the final decision.

The program coordinator explained the details of the shopping event to the women and asked them to prepare short bios about themselves. This information was shared with the fashion experts prior to the shopping event to familiarize them with the women they would be assisting. The affiliate program coordinator and another member of the staff accompanied the women to the shopping event for support.

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1 Some women who were victims of abuse were concerned about participating in the event because of the media coverage.
Women Beneficiaries

The women selected by the Women Work! affiliate program coordinators to participate in the FTA event are the major focus of this research. They were identified by the program coordinator as women ready for the job market or women who needed a psychological boost while participating in job training. Program coordinators asked the women if they wanted to participate in the FTA event, explained that it would be a very public event, and informed them that Sears wanted them to write short bios about themselves. Some women who were confirmed to participate in the shopping event withdrew beforehand because of other obligations or discomfort about the media attention.

A total of 51 women participated in the FTA program in 2000. Thirty-six women shopped in the cities visited by the researcher for the FTA event, and all but three participated at some level in the research. In New York City, the women shopped at various times during the year. The New York shopping events were not attended by the researcher, but six of the ten women who experienced the FTA program there agreed to participate at some level in the research. Five women participated in the shopping event in Chicago – the kick-off city. The researcher could not collect any data from those women due to timing of permission for the project. A total of 39 women or 76% of the women who experienced the FTA event in 2000 participated in some aspect of this study. A comprehensive profile of the participating women is provided in Chapter Four.

Site Locations

The 2000 FTA program was conducted in 10 cities in the U.S – Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Atlanta, Miami, District of Columbia, and New York (See Table 3.1). Observations and data collection were conducted at 8 of the 10 shopping sites. The two shopping sites not visited by the researcher were Chicago and New York.

Sites Observed by Researcher

There were two ways that the FTA shopping was conducted. In all markets, except for New York and Los Angeles, four to five women were invited to a local Sears store to shop for work appropriate clothing while accompanied by a fashion expert. These shopping sessions took place in the spring and the fall of 2000. The kickoff event began in Chicago on April 18th, and another city was
visited approximately every two weeks until mid-June. This method of shopping resumed September 26\textsuperscript{th} and continued until November 14\textsuperscript{th}, again occurring approximately every two weeks. There were two differences in the shopping in Los Angeles. The first is that a total of seven women participated, and the second is that the women were recruited through two different agencies.

Table 3.1. Fashion Takes Action Schedule – 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Number of Women</th>
<th>Number In Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chicago\textsuperscript{a}</td>
<td>April 18</td>
<td>Shopping (kick-off)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dallas</td>
<td>May 2</td>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>May 16</td>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>June 20</td>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York\textsuperscript{b}</td>
<td>September 20</td>
<td>Gala party</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pittsburgh</td>
<td>September 26</td>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>October 10</td>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlanta</td>
<td>October 24</td>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami</td>
<td>November 1</td>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District of Columbia</td>
<td>November 14</td>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>51</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{a} Researcher did not attend the kick-off shopping event, but her advisor attended to pre-arrange funding of the study.

\textsuperscript{b} Shopping occurred at various times during the year. The researcher did not attend any shopping in this city, but did attend the party and talked to New York participants there.

Sites Not Observed by Researcher

The second shopping method occurred in the New York market where one or two women at a time were invited to shop accompanied by a personal fashion expert. Because the shopping took place in Queens, NY, the women were picked-up in a hired car and driven to the Sears store and back. A representative of the public relations firm, the program coordinator and sometimes the
fashion expert rode with the women to the Sears store for the shopping. Shopping occurred in the
New York location more irregularly than in the other cities. The public relations representative that
traveled to the New York store was also responsible for traveling to and coordinating the shopping in
the other eight cities.

At a party to celebrate and publicize the FTA event in New York, the researcher did meet
three of the women and the Women Work! affiliate program coordinator who had participated in the
shopping in that city. From the affiliate program coordinator the researcher received a list of women
that had shopped in New York and their contact information. Six of the 10 women that shopped in
New York agreed to participate in some aspect of the research.

Data Collected

A researcher following a case study procedure must cater to the interviewees’ schedules and
availability, conduct interviews in an open-ended manner, and gain permission to observe the study’s
site(s) (Yin, 1994). In the present study, the researcher was granted permission to contact
participants before, during, and after the FTA program. Yin (1994) proposed that a researcher collect
six sources of evidence during a case study — “documents, archival records, interviews, direct
observation, participant-observation, and physical artifacts” (p. 78) — that could include both
qualitative and quantitative data. Following Yin’s advice, the researcher collected evidence from all
six types of sources and administered questionnaires to the participating women to document the
case under study. Grounded theory data is typically qualitative, but may include analysis of
observations and documents (Creswell, 1998). Table 3.2 is a matrix of the sources of evidence
collected for this study.

The following types of documents were collected: publicity material prepared for mass
distribution about the current FTA program, press releases announcing the individual shopping
events, mini-bio’s prepared by the benefiting women, printed material describing the social service
program the benefiting women attended, and, where available, newspaper coverage of events.
Newspaper stories and publicity material from previous years and information gleaned from
knowledgeable informants about past shopping events constituted archival records. Interviews were
conducted with individuals involved at all levels of the 2000 FTA program. The researcher attended eight of the 10 FTA shopping events scheduled for 2000 for data collection that included pre- and post-test questionnaires, interviewing, direct observation, and participant-observation. Physical artifacts included copies of professional photographs taken at the shopping event, newspaper stories reporting the event, and reports of the event in the Women Work! newsletter.

Table 3.2. Data Collection Matrix: Types of Evidence by Source

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Source</th>
<th>Documents Records</th>
<th>Archival Records</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Direct Observations</th>
<th>Participant Observations</th>
<th>Physical Artifacts</th>
<th>Questionnaires</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sears Corporate</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women Work!</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sears Local</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2wo-One-2wo</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Coord.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Printed Material

The printed material reviewed for the study was obtained from the PR firm, the local program coordinators, and representatives of Women Work!. This material was collected at the shopping sites, during a visit to the national headquarters of Women Work!, or as part of continuous contact with the public relations firm. Historical printed material supplied the researcher with an understanding of how the program had been publicized and who had participated. Information about the current programs implemented at the local program coordinator level and at the national level was shared with the researcher. This information helped the researcher understand the types of issues that the two organizations addressed when they interacted with the women and helped the researcher gain a broader understanding of the women's needs (both socially and psychologically).
Questionnaires

Quantitative data was collected using a pre-test and post-test instrument (Appendices C and D, respectively). The data collection from the women beneficiaries was begun on May 2, 2002 and continued until November 14th. Prior to the shopping events, the researcher contacted the Women Work! affiliate program coordinators by phone to explain the study and to ask their help in administering the pre-test to the women beneficiaries. Sufficient copies of the consent form (Appendix F) and the pre-test were mailed to the program coordinator with a letter repeating details of the study. The researcher asked the coordinator to explain to the women that their participation in the study was entirely voluntary and that their answers would be anonymous. If a woman agreed to participate, the coordinator would ask her to read and sign the consent form, complete the questionnaire, and put the two items in the enveloped provided. The researcher asked the coordinator to bring the pre-test envelopes to the shopping event.

The pre-test was completed prior to arriving at the Sears store for the FTA event. Exceptions to this procedure occurred when the women were selected as last minute substitutes, where a new group was invited to participate without the researcher’s knowledge, or in New York where the researcher did not observe the shopping. In the first two instances, the researcher asked the women to complete the questionnaire at the store prior to shopping. No pre-test was administered to the women shopping in the New York market.

The post-test questionnaire was given to the women immediately after the shopping by the researcher. Some women completed the post-test at the Sears store before they departed; others returned it in a self-addressed envelope provided by the researcher. If the post-test questionnaire was not received within 10 days after the shopping event, the researcher sent a reminder post-card requesting that the women complete the questionnaire and return it (Appendix G). Also on the post-card was a statement notifying the women that the researcher would be calling to schedule a phone interview. A full discussion of the instruments and the method of analysis are included in the section entitled “Quantitative Instrument.”
Interviews

Interviews were conducted with different participants during the shopping event or afterwards. The level of activity during the four-hour, action-packed shopping event did not permit the researcher an opportunity to do more than short interviews with the participating women beneficiaries. In-depth interviews were conducted via telephone with the women approximately three weeks after the shopping event. The in-depth telephone interviews comprised the bulk of the findings in this study. An extensive discussion of the method of analysis used to interpret these interviews is included later in this chapter under the subheading “Qualitative Analysis.” The remaining interviews from other participants at the event or associated with the event provided context for the FTA program and were not subjected to intensive coding and analysis. This latter data was a part of secondary data that enhanced understanding of the process under study.

During the shopping event, longer interviews were possible with the Women Work! affiliate program coordinators that accompanied the women because they were usually not involved in selecting the clothing. The fashion experts were deeply involved in the shopping event, but while the women beneficiaries were trying on different outfits or having their make-over, there was time for short interviews with them. Local Sears store personnel were interviewed during the shopping event when their schedule permitted or immediately afterwards. Representatives from 2wo-One-2wo (PR firm) were interviewed during the shopping event when time permitted, and a formal telephone interview was conducted with two of the main coordinators of the program.

Telephone interviews with other participants occurred before and after the shopping event. These participants included Women Work! affiliate program coordinators, Sears Corporate personnel involved with the FTA program, Women Work!’s Executive Director, and the participating women. Copies of each interview protocol are included in the Appendices. Questions posed to the Women Work! affiliate program coordinator focused on learning about the local training programs, how the women were selected to participate in FTA, and how the coordinator assessed the FTA event (see Appendix H). Questions asked of the Sears Corporate personnel were for the purpose of finding out why the FTA program was developed, how it was supported, how it was evaluated, and future plans.
for FTA (see Appendix I). The Executive Director of Women Work! was interviewed to learn about the mission of the organization, how the organization supports its local affiliates, and how the organization evaluates the FTA program (see Appendix J). Interviews with the personnel at 2wo-One-2wo were conducted to understand how the FTA program was organized, what the agency's role was in the FTA program, and how FTA evolved from its initial structure (see Appendix K).

Observations

Observations for the FTA program were made at the local Sears stores that hosted the events. These observations were participant observations in that the researcher participated in the shopping event (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993). Participant observation is a type of data collection employed by ethnographers that allows the researcher to have a close and sustained interaction with the phenomenon under study. At this level of examination, the researcher can observe "learned patterns of behavior, customs, and ways of life" (Creswell, 1998, p. 58). For the present study, the researcher was able to observe how work-related information was disseminated from the fashion expert to the women beneficiaries of FTA, how relationships were formed between and among the shopping pairs, and in what types of activities individuals were involved in the FTA events.

At each store, a specific door was designated for FTA participants to enter the building. The researcher arrived at the store approximately 15 minutes prior to the start of the shopping event, which coincided with the store's opening. During this time, the researcher met various local Sears store personnel who were involved in the FTA program. The researcher was able to observe how the meeting room was configured and furnished relative to the FTA event. Some store personnel conducted a mini tour prior to the start of the shopping, time permitting, to familiarize the PR representative with the store's layout; when this occurred, the researcher accompanied these individuals.

---

1 The researcher was an overt participant observer because her role, along with everyone else's, was explained at the beginning of the FTA event.
During the shopping, the researcher purposively moved among the various shopping pairs to observe how the team members were interacting and to "eavesdrop" on their conversations. After the first wave of clothing selection, the women would go to designated dressing rooms and begin trying on outfits. A small anteroom was sometimes connected to the individual dressing rooms and the researcher positioned herself there to observe the various outfits and the reactions of the women and other participants at the event. When requested, the researcher offered her opinion about various outfits selected and assisted in locating alternate items, thus becoming a participant-observer.

As the women progressed through their shopping from selecting clothing items to shoes, handbags, and finally their make-overs, the researcher would reposition herself to observe those different facets of the program.

It took approximately four hours for the participants to move from breakfast, shopping, makeovers, and photo shots to lunch. The shopping extended beyond the four hours when a shopping team experienced trouble finding suitable work-related clothing, were delayed arriving at the store because of weather, or had trouble locating the store. The stores were situated in suburban malls or in nearby smaller cities.

Another strategy used for data collection was visits to offices. The researcher visited one Women Work! affiliate program coordinator office and the national headquarters of Women Work!.

The visit to the program coordinator's office provided the researcher with visual knowledge of the type of environments that the women interacted in during their various training programs. During the visit to Women Work!, the researcher learned how that organization gathers and disseminates information to its local affiliates.

Quantitative Instruments

Quantitative data was collected at two stages with pre-test Questionnaire #1 and post-test Questionnaire #2 (Appendices C and D, respectively). The pre-test Questionnaire #1 and the post-test Questionnaire #2 contained the same items, except where noted. Participants completed the 52-
item pre-test prior to the shopping session. The 57-item post-test questionnaire was completed after
the in-store shopping session.

The questionnaires were developed by incorporating items from published scales that
measured clothing confidence (Oh, 1999), self-confidence (Bell, 1967; Garant, Charest, Alain, &
Thomassin, 1995), self-efficacy (Sherer et al., 1982; Stumpf, Brief, & Hartman, 1987), and self-
esteeam (Rosenberg, 1965). Items were modified from the original scales when needed to conform to
the present study's purposes.

Description of Measures

Four measures were developed to assess participants' confidence, knowledge, and sense of
adequacy of their work wardrobe; work-related confidence and efficacy; general confidence and
efficacy; and self-esteem. A fifth scale was generated to evaluate the FTA program.

Clothing satisfaction and confidence measure. The Clothing Satisfaction and Confidence
Measure (Table 3.3) was developed for pre- and post-FTA comparisons of the participants'
satisfaction with their work wardrobe, assessment of their knowledge about appropriate attire for
work, and perceptions about the functionality of their wardrobe in work-related situations. The
measure was a combination of items from a scale by Oh (1999), Bell (1967), and five items added by
the researcher. A five-point Likert scale ("1" = strongly agree, "3" = neutral, "5" = strongly disagree).
Low scores on the items indicated more positive feelings about the self. Negative statements about
the self were reverse coded to maintain this scoring scheme (Churchill, 1995).

The one item adopted from Oh's (1999) Clothing Satisfaction scale measured satisfaction
with work attire: "I am satisfied with my current work wardrobe." The item was reworded on
Questionnaire #2 to assess the participants' satisfaction with the FTA clothing—"I am satisfied with
my new wardrobe for work."

One item taken from the Generalized Self-Confidence scale (Bell, 1967) was added to
measure the participants' sense of comfort if they were to wear clothing they deemed inappropriate
for work-related activities: "It would be extremely uncomfortable to go to a job interview wearing
inappropriate clothes." A second item was developed by substituting the word "work" for "job
interview." Bell’s original item was used to measure generalized self-confidence and disagreement with his statement was considered an indication of high self-confidence. Wording for the current scale was modified and agreement with the statement was considered high self-confidence.

### Table 3.3. Clothing Satisfaction and Confidence Measure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with my current work wardrobe.</td>
<td>* Item from Oh (1999).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident that I have appropriate clothing for work.</td>
<td>* Item developed by researcher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I look competent in my current work clothing.</td>
<td>* Item adapted from Bell (1967); modified by researcher to focus on work related situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am sure of success in work situations with the clothing I already have.</td>
<td>* Item reworded to capture effect of FTA program on post-test.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident that I know what is appropriate work clothing for work.</td>
<td>* Item included to capture effect of FTA program on post-test only.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It would be extremely uncomfortable to go to a job interview wearing inappropriate clothes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It would be extremely uncomfortable to go to work wearing inappropriate clothes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel really good about how I look.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that I look good in my new wardrobe.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note.  
- alpha = .74 on pre-test; alpha = .51 on post-test.  
- Item from Oh (1999).  
- Item developed by researcher.  
- Item adapted from Bell (1967); modified by researcher to focus on work related situation.  
- Item reworded to capture effect of FTA program on post-test.  
- Item included to capture effect of FTA program on post-test only.

The researcher added five items to measure satisfaction with the work wardrobe, knowledge about appropriate work attire, functionality of work attire, and satisfaction with appearance. "I am confident that I have appropriate clothing for work" measured the participants' assessment of whether they had an appropriate work wardrobe. Whether the women perceived that they knew what was appropriate dress for the workplace was measured by, "I am confident that I know what is appropriate clothing for work." Two items measuring the participants' sense of functionality of clothing in the workplace were: "I feel that I look competent in my current work clothing", and "I am sure of success in work situations with the clothing I already have." These two items were reworded on the post-test to measure the women's sense of work competency relative to the FTA clothing. For example the
second item read: "I am sure of success in work situations with my new clothing I now have." The final item added by the researcher assessed the women's sense of overall satisfaction with their appearance – "I feel really good about how I look." Cronbach's alpha determined that the Clothing Satisfaction and Confidence measure for the pre-test was internally consistent (α = .84 for the pre-test). Reliability for the similar post-test measured was α = .73.

The work-related self-confidence and self-efficacy measure. The Work-Related Self-Confidence and Self-Efficacy Measure (Table 3.4) includes items developed for pre- and post-FTA comparisons of the women's self-confidence and self-efficacy relative to work activities. The measure combined items from a scale by Stumpf et al. (1987), Bell (1967), Garant et al. (1995), and one item developed by the researcher. Items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ("1" = strongly agree, "3" = neutral, "5" = strongly disagree). Low scores on the items indicated more positive feelings about the self. Negative statements about the self were reverse coded to maintain the scoring scheme (Churchill, 1995).

Two items were used from the Stumpf et al. (1997) scale ("I am confident of my interviewing abilities", "I know I will present myself well in interviews"), and two parallel items were added with the word "work" interchanged for "interviewing." These items measured the participants' sense of efficacy during interviewing or in the workplace.

Three items from Bell's (1967) Generalized Self-Confidence scale were modified to assess confidence about activities in work situations vs. in social settings. The three items were expanded to six to include assessment of job interviewing and workplace behavior: "I fear that my actions in job interviews [substitute work] will cause others to have a low opinion of me," "In job interviews [substitute work situations] I feel that what I have to say will be inferior," and "I feel capable of handling myself in job interviews [substitute at work]."

The Garant et al. (1995) Self-Confidence scale provided three items that were reworded to assess confidence in work-related situations. A total of six items were incorporated in the scale that measured interviewing confidence and workplace confidence - "I am afraid of making mistakes when I am asked unexpected questions during job interviews [substitute at work]." "When an interview is
over, I will doubt that I've done well," "At the end of a work day, I have doubts that I've done well," and "I am confident of performing well when I go to job interviews [substitute work]."

Table 3.4. Work-Related Self-Confidence and Self-Efficacy Measure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am confident of my interviewing abilities.</td>
<td>° Item from Garant et al. (1995).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident of my work abilities.</td>
<td>° Item from Garant et al. (1995).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I fear that my actions in job interviews will cause others to have a low opinion of me. (R)</td>
<td>° Item from Garant et al. (1995).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I fear that my actions at work will cause others to have a low opinion of me. (R)</td>
<td>° Item from Garant et al. (1995).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In job interviews I feel that what I have to say will be inferior. (R)</td>
<td>° Item from Garant et al. (1995).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In work situations I feel that what I have to say will be inferior. (R)</td>
<td>° Item from Garant et al. (1995).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know I will present myself well in interviews.</td>
<td>° Item from Garant et al. (1995).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know I will present myself well at work.</td>
<td>° Item from Garant et al. (1995).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel capable of handling myself at work.</td>
<td>° Item from Garant et al. (1995).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel capable of handling myself in job interviews.</td>
<td>° Item from Garant et al. (1995).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am afraid of making mistakes when I am asked unexpected questions during job interviews. (R)</td>
<td>° Item from Garant et al. (1995).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am afraid of making mistakes when I am asked unexpected questions at work. (R)</td>
<td>° Item from Garant et al. (1995).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that going to job interviews is a difficult problem for me. (R)</td>
<td>° Item from Garant et al. (1995).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When an interview is over, I will doubt that I've done well.</td>
<td>° Item from Garant et al. (1995).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the end of a work day, I have doubts that I've done well.</td>
<td>° Item from Garant et al. (1995).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident of performing well when I go to job interviews.</td>
<td>° Item from Garant et al. (1995).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident of performing well when I go to work.</td>
<td>° Item from Garant et al. (1995).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. \( \alpha = .94 \) on the pre-test; \( \alpha = .95 \) on the post-test.

R = reverse coding.

a Item from Stumpf, Brief, & Hartmann (1987).
b Item from Bell (1967).
c Item from Garant et al. (1995).
d Item developed by researcher.

To assess participants' sense of efficacy about going to an interview one item was added by the researcher – "I feel that going to job interviews is a difficult problem for me." Cronbach's \( \alpha \) for
The general self-confidence and self-efficacy measure. The General Self-Confidence and Self-Efficacy Measure (Table 3.5) was developed to compare the participants' pre- and post-test scores related to general self-confidence and self-efficacy. Items from scales that measured self-confidence (Bell, 1967; Garant et al., 1995) and self-efficacy (Sherer et al., 1982) were combined. A five-point Likert scale ("1" = strongly agree, "3" = neutral, "5" = strongly disagree). Low scores on the items indicated more positive feelings about the self. Negative statements about the self were reverse coded to maintain this scoring scheme (Churchill, 1995).

Four items from Garant et al. (1995) Self-Confidence scale were used verbatim to measure general self-confidence vs. work-related confidence in Table 3.5: "I can do anything I want to do because I have confidence in myself," "I lack confidence when I am in a new and unknown situation," "I have sometimes given up on doing something because I thought I didn't have the ability to succeed," and "I feel I can make a good impression when I have to."

Ten items from a Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Sherer et al. (1982) were included verbatim. These items measured the participants' sense of efficacy or mastery expectations for new activities: "If something looks too complicated, I will not even bother to try it", and "I avoid trying to learn new things when they look too difficult for me." Eight items measured the participants' sense of whether that they had the capacity to complete tasks.

The one item used from Bell's (1967) Self-Confidence scale was: "I don't make a very favorable first impression on people." This item measured participants' assessment of their confidence in making positive first impressions. Reliability for the General Self-Confidence and Self-Efficacy Measure on the pre-test was .89; alpha was .88 for the post-test.
Table 3.5. General Self-Confidence and Self-Efficacy Measure

I can do anything I want to do because I have confidence in myself.\(^a\)

When unexpected problems occur, I don't handle them well. (R) \(^b\)

If something looks too complicated, I will not even bother to try it. (R) \(^b\)

I feel insecure about my ability to do things. (R) \(^b\)

Failure just makes me try harder.\(^b\)

I avoid trying to learn new things when they look too difficult for me. (R) \(^b\)

I do not seem capable of dealing with most problems that come up in life. (R) \(^b\)

I give up easily. (R) \(^b\)

If I can't do a job the first time, I keep trying until I can.\(^b\)

I lack confidence when I am in a new and unknown situation. (R) \(^a\)

When I set important goals for myself, I rarely achieve them. (R) \(^b\)

I don't make a very favorable first impression on people. (R) \(^c\)

I give up on things before completing them. (R) \(^b\)

I have sometimes given up on doing something because I thought I didn't have the ability to succeed. (R) \(^a\)

I feel I can make a good impression when I have to.\(^a\)

Note. \(alpha = .89\) on pre-test; \(alpha = .88\) on post-test.

R = Reverse coding.

\(^a\) Item from Garant, Charest, Alain, & Thomassin (1995).

\(^b\) Item from Sherer, et al. (1982).

\(^c\) Item from Bell (1967).

The self-esteem measure. The Self-Esteem Measure (Table 3.6) was developed using the Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem scale and two items from Oh (1999) that measured self-esteem; a total of twelve items were included in this measure. A five-point Likert scale was employed (1 = almost always, 2 = usually, 3 = sometimes, 4 = seldom, 5 = almost never) to force a response (Churchill, 1995). Low scores on the items indicated more positive feelings about the self. Negative statements about the self were reverse coded to maintain this scoring scheme (Churchill, 1995).
Rosenberg's (1965) Self-Esteem scale was used in its entirety. Rosenberg's four-point response scale was expanded to five-points and labels were adopted from Oh (1999): "1" = almost always, "2" = usually, "3" = sometimes, "4" = seldom, and "5" = almost never. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale (1965) is a well-established measure of how an individual feels about him or herself. Bearden and Rose (as cited in Bruner & Hensel, 1996) reported a Cronbach's alpha of .80 for this scale.

Two additional items were added from Oh's (1999) Present Feelings and Attitudes scale — "I need to improve my feelings of self-worth about being a woman," and "I feel like I am an attractive person." Reliability for the Self-Esteem Measure on the pre-test was .90, and for the post-test alpha was .89.

### Table 3.6. Self-Esteem Measure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At times I think I am no good at all.</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I have a number of good qualities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am able to do things as well as most other people.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I do not have much to be proud of.</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I certainly feel useless at times.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on a equal plane with others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wish I could have more respect for myself.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I take a positive attitude toward myself.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need to improve my feelings of self-worth about being a woman.</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I am an attractive person.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. alpha = .90 on pre-test; alpha = .89 on post-test.  
R = reverse coding.  
^a Item from Rosenberg (1965).  
^b Item from Oh (1999).
The program evaluation measure. The items making up the Program Evaluation Measure (Table 3.7) were developed to assess the FTA program in general — "Fashion Takes Action has really helped me," and "I know I will be more confident in work situations after taking part in Fashion Takes Action." Two other items measured the women's assessment of the gifts relative to their benefit and the women's style preferences: "The clothing from Fashion Takes Action will help in work situations," and "I like the clothing and make-up I received at Fashion Takes Action." Reliability for the four item scale was very low, at .54; therefore, only single item analyses were conducted.

Table 3.7. Program Evaluation Measure

<p>| |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fashion Takes Action has really helped me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The clothing from Fashion Takes Action will help in work situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know I will be more confident in work situations after taking part in Fashion Takes Action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like the clothing and make-up I received at Fashion Takes Action.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questionnaire Format

Churchill (1995) stated that the physical characteristics of a questionnaire can affect response accuracy, ease of completion, and cooperation by the respondents. The questionnaire items were organized into five sections on the pre-test and six sections on the post-test to encourage the participants to complete a rather lengthy instrument. The items were grouped by statements related to work wardrobe or appearance, confidence and efficacy related to work activities, general confidence and efficacy, and self-esteem. The fifth section on the pre-test questionnaire solicited demographic and person descriptor information. Instead of demographics, section five and six on the post-test evaluated the FTA program quantitatively and qualitatively.

Shading was applied to every other item on the questionnaires to make them easier to complete. Information on the cover sheets included a descriptive title for the study ("Suiting Up For the Workplace"), the researcher's affiliation, and the sponsor's name to add credibility to the study (Churchill, 1995).
Statistical Analyses Methods

The quantitative data was entered into SPSS version 11.0 program for analysis. Summated items were created from the four measures of clothing satisfaction and confidence, work-related self-confidence and general self-confidence and self-efficacy, and self-esteem. The summated means were divided by the number of items to aid in interpretation and for reporting purposes.

Campbell and Stanley (1966) warned against the threat to internal validity of a study and the effect on subsequent tests when an instrument is administered multiple times. Therefore, repeated measures analysis of variance was conducted to test the differences among responses on Questionnaire #1 and #2. Repeated measures analysis accounts for the variance due to filling out the same questionnaire twice. Cronbach’s alpha was used to establish internal reliability of the measures. Items combined in a measure were examined to ensure that they had acceptable levels of reliability of .70 or higher.

Qualitative Instruments

The qualitative data from the women beneficiaries was collected on questionnaire #2, through interviews, and by direct and participant observations. Questions on questionnaire #2 asked the women to report what they liked most about the FTA session, how the session could be improved, and what two ideas they got from the sessions that were most useful to them.

As a “human instrument”, the researcher collected data through direct and participant observations, during the short interviews at the shopping event, and from in-depth interviews conducted by phone (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). The researcher made sketches of the meeting rooms and store layout to help recreate the physical context during analysis. Detailed field notes were compiled after each shopping event by the researcher (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). These notes included the researcher’s impression of the initial meetings between the women beneficiaries and the fashion experts, the number of people present during the initial meeting, summaries of conversations “overheard” between and among the participants, write-ups of interactions that the researcher found significant, overall impressions of the shopping events, and the researcher’s reflections.
Interviews comprised the majority of the qualitative data. A number of women were briefly interviewed during the program sessions. The researcher realized at the first shopping event that it was not possible to interview the women there for more than five to seven minutes. Questions posed by the researcher during these in-store interviews with the women beneficiaries were focused on their assessment of the quality and assortment of inventory at Sears, comfort and enjoyment shopping with the fashion experts, or questions that followed-up on overheard conversations between the shopping pairs or among other participants.

The majority of interviews with the women were conducted via telephone. At the end of the shopping event, the researcher asked the women if they would agree to a telephone interview that would be conducted approximately three weeks later. All of the women who completed the pre-test questionnaire agreed to let the researcher call and conduct the telephone interviews, except for two women who did not have telephone service. The women gave the researcher their phone numbers and addresses and told her the best time to call for the interview.

Approximately three weeks after the event, the researcher called the women to schedule an appointment for the in-depth telephone interview. All calls were tape-recorded via a speaker phone and recorder and were transcribed by the researcher verbatim. Women were asked to talk in open-ended manner about their impressions of the FTA program, if the gift clothing had been worn, why they were chosen to participate in the FTA event, their feelings about the experience and what it meant to them in work-related situations. A copy of the interview protocol is included in Appendix L.

Qualitative Analysis

The researcher used a paper and pencil method to analyze the data. That is, coding was made in the margins or colored highlighters were used to mark similarly significant and emerging themes. Geertz (1973) stated that “sorting out the structures of signification” (p.9) within qualitative data should be the researcher’s goal. The ultimate goal of the researcher is to transport the raw data through the use of interpretation and theoretical frameworks into higher-order abstractions that can contribute to theory. To that end, the researcher did an initial read of early transcripts and the data captured on the questionnaires. This initial read of the data helped the researcher inductively begin
building theoretical concepts. These concepts were given a name that described them conceptually, forming categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Strauss and Corbin (1998) defined concepts as: “the building blocks of theory” and categories as “concepts that stand for phenomena” (p. 101).

The naming of concepts and assigning sections of data to these categories was an ever-evolving strategy, called “open coding.” A coding guide was developed to capture the early categories and used to refine them as the researcher continuously compared raw data to categories and vice versa (see Appendix M).

After the transcripts were subjected to open coding, the researcher began comparing across categories to find interrelationships. This process of relating categories and continuing to develop them is the purpose of axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Different perspectives, such as a review of established theories and conversations with the researcher’s major advisor, were employed to aid in moving the categories toward a meaningful integration during axial coding.

Another tool used by the researcher is a theoretical model or visual presentation of the interrelationship of these coding categories (Creswell, 1998). The model “is an organizing device that facilitates a continuing, explicit dialogue between multiple sources of data and assumptions” (Soulliere, Britt, & Maines, 2001). A model depicting the interrelationships found in the FTA shopping event is discussed and presented in Chapter 5 (Figure 5.1).

**Trustworthiness**

Scientific research is evaluated by assessing the trustworthiness of a study. Within qualitative methodology trustworthiness is achieved by establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Quantitative data is evaluated against the criteria of validity (internal and external), reliability, and objectivity.

Credibility is the adequate reconstruction of the phenomenon under study. Prolonged engagement, persistent observations, triangulation, and peer debriefings are activities a researcher employs to attain credibility. Credibility was achieved for this study through visits to multiple shopping sites, close observations of participant interactions at the shopping sites, analysis of data from multiple sources, and constant consultation by the researcher with her faculty advisor.
The qualitative researcher addresses transferability or the application of the findings to other settings by providing a "thick description" of the phenomenon under study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A thick description provides details, context, and a sorting out of the "multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another" (Geertz, 1973, p. 10). By providing this thick description, the onus for determining if the time and context are sufficiently similar and can be applied to new research is placed on subsequent researchers vs. the original researcher.

In the present study, the researcher provided a detailed account of the shopping events, thoroughly analyzed data from the women beneficiaries, and provided additional data from other participants that inform the reader about the FTA program and the women recipients in particular. Thus, this researcher has provided "the data base that makes transferability judgments possible on the part of potential appliers" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316).

Lincoln & Guba (1985) noted that credibility establishes dependability, just as validity establishes reliability of quantitative data. The interpretations made about the data, along with the coding guide, are subjective responses to the data, guided by theory and the researcher’s standpoint (Collins, 1986, 1990). Therefore, trustworthiness and dependability of the researcher's work can be enhanced by a second coder. The second coder for this project, an experienced qualitative researcher not connected to this project, was given five randomly selected transcripts to read along with the coding guide and checked for agreement in code assignment with the researcher. The interrater reliability score was computed using a formula in which the numerator is derived by multiplying the number of coders by the number of agreements, then dividing this product by the total number of judgments made by the coders (Holsti, 1969). The reliability score was 95%.

Disagreements between the coder and researcher were reviewed and negotiated; some themes were combined per suggestion from the coder. One additional theme – Mattering – was identified and developed after the coder's review. With respect to confirmability, it is the researcher's responsibility to provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the data can be confirmed or that the findings are "grounded in the data" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 323).
The Researcher

Denzin and Lincoln (1998) stated that qualitative research involves an "... interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 3). The present field study was conducted within that paradigm, thus adhering to the natural setting model. The researcher, however, does not arrive at the site as a tabula rasa, but instead "speaks from within a distinct interpretive community" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 23). Feminist thought (see Denzin & Lincoln, 1998) and Collins' (1986) theory of the "outsider within" informed this researcher and were employed throughout the study as reflexive tools.

The interpretations made by the researcher are guided by theory (grounded and/or previously established), but are filtered through the researcher's experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998) and standpoint (Collins, 1986, 1990). Thus the qualitative researcher acknowledges the valued-laden nature of the inquiry undertaken. Drawing from an anthropologic paradigm, the qualitative researcher attempts to understand the phenomenon under study from an emic ( insider) perspective, and by so doing, creates a "holistic cultural portrait of the social group that incorporates both the views of the actors in the group ... and the researcher's interpretation of views about human social life in a social science perspective" (Creswell, 1998, p. 60). One of the great challenges that a qualitative researcher must face is answering the question reiterated in the preface to a qualitative handbook — "How do I break through the inevitable biases, prejudices, and stereotypical perspectives that I bring with me to the analytic situation?" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. x). Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggested that a researcher make use of "analytic tools," such as questioning, analysis of a word, phrase, or sentence, and further analysis through comparisons to "increase sensitivity [and] ... recognize 'bias'" (p. 87). Aligning herself with qualitative/feminist paradigms, the researcher entered the project by "set[ting] aside, as much as possible, theoretical ideas or notions so that the analytic, substantive theory ...[could] emerge" (Creswell, 1998, p. 58).

The researcher is an African-American, middle-age woman, trained in various research methods. Both inductive/interpretive and deductive/positivistic approaches to understanding human
behavior have been employed by the researcher in research projects as a graduate student. The researcher's academic preparation includes coursework in multiple disciplines – anthropology, business, education, philosophy, psychology, sociology, and textiles and clothing. Additionally, the researcher has worked in a variety of professional settings, primarily service-oriented. This multiplicity of experiences, academically and professionally, provided the researcher with broad perspectives to draw from during data collection and analysis. However, the researcher readily acknowledges that complete objectivity in any research project is a goal, not a reality.

To address the inherent subjectivity in any research project, feminist thought recommends that a researcher practice positioning or situating an argument (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Positioning can be accomplished by the researcher pronouncing a positioned identity. Through positioning the researcher acknowledges the incompleteness of the work and invites "critical response to its partiality" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 401).

Patricia Hill Collins' (1986) theory of the outsider within provides a qualitative researcher another perspective to consider. Collins describes the outsider within position as the marginalization Black women experience and the subsequent vantage point they have in the broader society. Collins (1986) argued that the outsider within status "has provided a special standpoint on self, family, and society for Afro-American women" (p. 514). One outcome of this standpoint is the generation of a self-definition by Black women that challenges the "externally-defined, stereotypical images of Afro-American womanhood" (Collins, 1986, p. 516). Reflecting on this outsider within perspective reminded this researcher how small seemingly innocuous actions can telegraph messages of non-acceptance or disapproval. For example, the researcher paid close attention during the FTA event to the physical contacts made and not made between the women and the fashion experts and among the women and other participants for signals that the women beneficiaries were valued guests vs. societal burdens.

Black women are not the only group in U.S. society that is marginalized and can benefit from their outsider within perspective (Collins, 1986). Women in transition, depending on their marital or economic status have been negatively stereotyped and receive little attention in research studies. As
these women move towards greater economic self-sufficiency, utilization of this outsider within perspective can alert them to individuals who genuinely support them and provide them with the encouragement to accept that help.

Stratham and Rhoades (2001) explained that:

... through stereotyping we project our own feelings onto a category of individuals, institutions, or ideas. Gradually these projected feelings become naturalized to the extent that incredible suppositions become transformed into rigidly defined and commonly embraced 'truths'. (p. 265)

This field research was conducted using qualitative methodology to provide a forum for the voices of women who are often overlooked in the research literature and have been subjected to stereotypical images. In so doing, the researcher hoped to understand how a clothing gift program could provide support for women in transition materially, socially, and psychologically.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The following are findings from the case study of a philanthropic program developed to provide women in transition with work appropriate clothing. The data include in-depth interviews from all participants involved in the FTA shopping event (i.e., women beneficiaries, fashion experts, Women Work! affiliate program coordinators, Sears personnel, Women Work! Executive Director), researcher's observations of shopping events, and quantitative data collected on pre- and post-FTA questionnaires. Analysis of the data was done using a grounded theory method. Mentoring literature, theories of the self (confidence, esteem, and efficacy), symbolic interaction, role theory, and a review of the Hawthorne Effect provided theoretical scaffoldings for the analysis.

The first section of this chapter describes the women beneficiaries -- who participated in the study, how they participated, and their demographics. Results from the quantitative data collected on pre- and post-test instruments are presented in the second section. The third section is a discussion of the interpretive findings of the data.

Women Beneficiaries

Level of Participation

The kick-off city for the 2000 shopping was Chicago. The major advisor for this dissertation observed the event to get a sense of how data could be collected and how a proposal for funding could be crafted. A total of 51 women were beneficiaries of the 2000 FTA program. Forty-six women shopped in the nine cities where the researcher collected data. Of those 46 women, 39 of them agreed to participate in the research at some level. Although the researcher did not observe the shopping events in New York, she was given permission and contact information for the ten women who participated in the New York FTA shopping event at various times during 2000. The researcher was able to contact six of the ten women in the New York area who all agreed to participate in the study at some level. Two women in another city refused to complete the pre-test questionnaire; one woman advised the researcher that she was feeling ill and a second woman gave no further explanation other than that she did not want to participate. One other woman who was a last-minute substitute did not complete the pre-test questionnaire prior to the shopping event. She arrived late at
the shopping event and the researcher did not ask her to complete the questionnaire as it would have
decreased her shopping time. The research reported in this study represents data collected from 39
women or 76% of the 51 beneficiaries of the FTA 2000 program.

The in-depth phone interviews were the basis of the qualitative data. The quantitative data
were gathered using pre- and post-test instruments. There were several combinations of data
collected from the individual women. Variations included completion of the pre-test only; pre-test and
post-test only; pre-test and interview only; pre-test, post-test and interview; modified post-test and
interview; and interview only. One woman in New York returned a completed modified post-test
questionnaire, but not her consent form; therefore, her data were not used. Table 4.1 outlines the
women's level of participation in the study.

Table 4.1. Level of Participation in Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Beneficiaries</th>
<th>% of Participation*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire 1 (pre-test)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaires 1 &amp; 2 (pre and post-tests)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaires 1, 2 &amp; interview</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire 1 &amp; interview</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire 2 (modified) &amp; interview</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Total does not equal 100% because of rounding.

Not all women who participated in the study completed the interviews and the questionnaires.
A total of 26 in-depth phone interviews were conducted, and 26 paired pre- and post-test
questionnaires were collected that were usable for statistical analysis. Of the 30 women who
completed the post-test questionnaire — either the original or the modified version completed by New
York participants — 28 of them responded to the open-ended questions which provided other
qualitative data. The various combinations of data collected are evidence of the lack of routinization that Yin (1994) warned is characteristic of case studies.

**Demographics**

Women supplied demographic information about themselves on the pre-test questionnaire and the modified post-test questionnaire. One of the 39 participating women did not complete the demographic information on Questionnaire #1 and one woman was interviewed only. The information reported in Table 4.2 reflects a demographic profile of the other 37 women.

The women beneficiaries of the FTA program varied on a number of demographic characteristics. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 57, with an average age of 35. Most of the women (75%) had some post-secondary experience that ranged from “some college” to one woman with a 4-year degree. Of the other nine women (25%) who had not attended post-secondary school, the majority had high school diplomas. The women were ethnically diverse, with the greatest percentage being African American and European American (84%). Most of the women were currently single (92%); only three women were married.

Except for one woman, all participants had children with the majority (65%) having one or two children. One woman responded that she had 5 children and 3 grandchildren to the “number of children” query; the researcher is not aware if she had care of the grandchildren. The women were raising a total of 86 children.

**Table 4.2. Demographics of Fashion Takes Action 2000 Beneficiaries**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (years)</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 - 19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 - 29</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 39</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 - 45</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48 - 57</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Average age = 35
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some high school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed high school</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vo/tech</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College degree (4 yrs.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European American</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latina American</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never married</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced or separated</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 children</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 child</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 children</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 children</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 children</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 children*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 children</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Women were asked to check all applicable categories. Two women checked multiple ethnic categories; one checked African Amer. and European Amer. and the second checked African Amer. and Native Amer.

*Total number of children = 86; one woman did not respond to this question.

*One woman reported five children and three grandchildren to the number of children inquiry.

All but four of the women were single parents at the time of the study.
Description of Tangible Articles

The FTA program provided the women beneficiaries with clothing and related items that could be used for work-related activities. It is not unusual for women who flee abusive situations to leave with just the clothing they are wearing or to have personal belongings destroyed by their partners (Libbus, Sable, Huneke, & Anger, 1999). Several of the women beneficiaries of the FTA 2000 program had these experiences. And as indicated in Table 4.2, the majority of women were mothers and spent a major proportion of their income providing for their children. Taking care of housing obligations left very little or no money for their clothing or related expenditures.

Clothing

To understand the magnitude of the women's need for work appropriate attire and why they perceived the clothing and related gifts as a benefit of the FTA program, it is helpful to understand what items they owned prior to the shopping event, as well as the types of clothing the women received as participants in the FTA program. The researcher asked the women to describe what they had in their wardrobes for work-related activities prior to the FTA program.

Alice, age 36, said her pre-FTA wardrobe consisted of a "lot of jeans.... I have a lot of jeans and sweatshirts. Clothes you would wear to the laundromat, let's put it that way." When asked what she would have worn for a job interview prior to FTA, she replied: "Probably [I] would have went [sic] to the Goodwill and tried to find something there."

Joyce, age 19, said that she borrowed her sister's suit to wear to a recent job interview. Dorothy, age 34, also borrowed the attire she wore to her most recent job interview. She stated that she "was dressed professionally, but it was my Mom's suit."

Hannah, age 40, described her wardrobe as a collection of second-hand clothing or gift items: "I was kind of like mixing and matching, and getting clothes from a thrift store and what people gave me, and what I got from the church."

Lois, age 39, knew what was considered appropriate attire for the workplace. She, however, was a full-time student and had been out of the workforce for a while. She was asked if she had
something she felt was appropriate to wear to a job interview prior to participating in the FTA program.

Being a full-time single parent with two kids and [being] a college student, I have no wardrobe (laugh) other than what I wear to school and to church on Sunday. So I go from one extreme to the other. Because I haven’t been in the workforce now for a year and a half....It was blue jeans, slacks, t-shirts, and sweaters for school and then, of course you know, your Sunday [attire]. But a lot of times that is not appropriate for a job interview. So, no, I didn’t have anything I would have felt really comfortable in.

The women's wardrobes, prior to the FTA event, consisted of casual, second-hand, borrowed, or gift items that they cobbled together for job interviews or daily work.

Clothing that the women received during the shopping event were basic items for building or supplement their work wardrobe. Naomi, age 42, a beneficiary from the spring shopping received two suits at the FTA shopping event. One suit had a lime green short-sleeve jacket with navy piping on the lapels and faux-pocket flaps; the skirt was navy. The second suit she received was navy. Naomi, told the researcher she had worn the former suit, but was saving the latter for a special occasion explaining that, “I feel like it is going to give me a lot of luck.” Naomi mixed and matched different pieces with the lime green and navy suit.

Sarah, age 22, shopped in the fall. Her fashion expert helped her select the following:

I got a black leather pants and a black leather jacket. [Q. What else did you get?] I got a red leather jacket and a black leather skirt. I got a camel colored sleeveless kind of half-turtle neck sweater. And I got a gray three-quarter of an arm turtleneck sweater.

Sarah’s fashion expert chose items that could be mixed and matched.

Underwear

As indicated in Chapter 3, the FTA 2000 shopping event was conducted in two-parts. The spring schedule extended from April to June, and the fall shopping occurred during September through November. It was evident during the spring shopping that some of the women did not have functioning underwear. Occasionally, some women who shopped in the spring received
undergarments. The public relations firm asked the women to complete an assessment form after the FTA experience. One woman expressly stated that she appreciated the underwear she received during the shopping. Starting in September, all the women received undergarments as part of their clothing gifts. It is not clear if recommendations received from the researcher or the comments on the women’s evaluations collected by the public relations firm prompted this change, but it was plausible that proper underwear could enhance the fit of the outerwear that the women were receiving.

One of the women to receive undergarments during the spring shopping was Violet, age 37. She stated that the gift of underwear was especially appreciated. “Plus, I needed bras. That was really great (laughs). [They] saved my life.”

While waiting for the women to try on different garments during the fall shopping, a few of the experts and the researcher were talking together. One expert praised Sears for including undergarments and for having a designated bra specialist in the department. The expert pointed out that many women don’t wear the correct size bra because they have never been measured, or have worn the same bra for years without any adjustments for weight loss/gain or child births. A second expert in the small group mentioned that the woman she was helping arrived at the shopping event wearing three layers of t-shirts and claimed that bras were uncomfortable. The woman was measured and fitted with a bra. Afterwards she exclaimed “Oh my gosh, I can wear this [bra] all day long. It is so comfortable.”

Farrell-Beck and Gau (2002) noted the debate that various groups of women have had about the necessity of wearing bras. The current researcher did not overhear any fashion expert suggesting or advising the women beneficiaries that they should not wear a bra. Nor was there any discussion between the researcher and the women recipients about not wearing a bra. The researcher is aware of only the one woman in the study who did not regularly wear a bra pre-FTA because it was uncomfortable. The question may be asked if the other women in the current study were wearing bras that were uncomfortable prior to the FTA event and if they did so out of convention.

Per industry experts, approximately 75% - 80% women wear the wrong size bra (Pemberton-Sikes, 2003).
Proper Footwear

The women were given tips about which styles of shoes were comfortable and appropriate for the workplace environment. Hannah, age 40, was directed to shoes that she would not have chosen. She described the selection she finally made as "the best shoes I've ever had" because they were comfortable. Barbara, age 40, initially selected "evening shoes". Her expert explained the difference between footwear for the day versus the evening. Marie, age 22, recounted her shoe shopping experience:

I never wore heels and with this dress she picked out some heels. And I said, "I can't wear those. I'll break my neck (laughs)". I tried them and I love 'em. It was really neat. I got to get something new, try something new, and it was fun.

These three women illustrate the lack of knowledge that some women may have about brands of shoes that are comfortable, styles of shoes appropriate for professional environments and the amount of experience that some women may have with "traditional" female attire (e.g., high heels).

Other Gifts

Sears Corporate financed the FTA program gifts of clothing, shoes, handbags, and make-up. Additional parting gifts were given to the women beneficiaries and they were funded by the local Sears store where the women shopped. Some of the stores presented the women with a much needed item – a wristwatch. More than one woman enthusiastically commented on receiving a watch. Kelly, age 40, stated, "And I said they just don't know how bad I needed a watch (laughs)."

Two women received new eyeglasses. Lois, age 39, was shocked that Sears included the eyeglasses, as well as the other gifts in the day's event. She explained that "I got a brand new pair and my glasses are bifocals. So my glasses don't come real cheap. I got the eye exam and the frames and the glasses." The second woman was scheduled to return to the store at a later date to have her eyes examined and to select new frames. By the time of the phone interview, however, she had not been able to contact the appropriate person at Sears to have an exam scheduled.

The women also received gifts of make-up and a mini make-over during the FTA event. Sears' make-up consultants applied the make-up and gave the women tips on how to care for their
facial skin. At the end of the FTA shopping program, the women had acquired clothing, shoes, purses, and undergarments to begin or supplement a work-related wardrobe. Additionally the women were Sears' guests for breakfast and lunch, and in some instances, received watches, eyeglasses, and additional beauty products.

The tangible items mentioned above and the advice that the women received provided them with basic wardrobe items and knowledge about work appropriate appearances. These were direct benefits of the FTA program. Additional indirect benefits of the program will be discussed in a later section of this chapter.

Quantitative Findings

The next section reports findings from the pre- and post-test questionnaires. A significance level at $\alpha = .05$ was used for all statistical tests. Findings from the repeated measures ANOVA that assessed the effects of the FTA program on the women beneficiaries is reported in Table 4.3. Program evaluation scores of the FTA shopping event are reported in Table 4.4.

Effect of FTA Program on Women Beneficiaries

Participants' satisfaction with their work wardrobe, assessment of their knowledge about appropriate attire for work, perceptions about the functionality of their wardrobe in work-related situations, and overall satisfaction with their appearance prior to and after the FTA program were compared using the Clothing Satisfaction and Confidence (CLOTSAT 1 and 2) score in repeated measures analysis (Table 4.3). These scores were significantly different, indicating that the women were more satisfied with their work wardrobe, their knowledge of work-related attire and their appearance after the FTA shopping program, $(F(1,25) = 103.325, p = .001, N = 26)$. The partial eta squared scored of .805 suggests that the majority of variance was explained by the differences between the reported means for this summed item.

The women's self-confidence and self-efficacy relative to work activities before and after the FTA program was measured with Work-Related Self-Confidence and Self-Efficacy (WRKCONF1 and 2) summated items. A significant difference was found, indicating that the women felt more confident about work-related activities after participating in FTA, $(F(1,25) = 5.211, p = .031, N = 26)$. The
partial eta squared of .17 indicates that a substantial degree of variance was not explained by the differences in the reported means.

Table 4.3. Repeated Measures ANOVA of Pre-test vs. Post-test Using Summed Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summed Items</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>$F_{(df)}$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>eta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pre-test</td>
<td>post-test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLOTSAT1 vs. CLOTSAT2</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>103.325 (1, 25)</td>
<td>.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRKCONF1 vs. WRKCONF2</td>
<td>2.106</td>
<td>1.846</td>
<td>5.211 (1, 25)</td>
<td>.031*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENCONF1 vs. GENCONF2</td>
<td>1.782</td>
<td>1.682</td>
<td>.556 (1, 25)</td>
<td>.463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SESTEEM 1 vs. SESTEEM 2</td>
<td>1.971</td>
<td>1.826</td>
<td>1.899 (1, 25)</td>
<td>.180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. 1 = Strongly agree; 5 = Strongly Disagree for mean scores.
*aN = 26
*p ≤ .05.

General Self-Confidence and Self-Efficacy (GENCONF1 and 2) are measures of the women's scores for global self-confidence and self-efficacy pre- and post-FTA, respectively. Self-Esteem (SESTEEM 1 and 2) are summated items measuring the women's general self-esteem on the pre- and post-tests. The findings do not provide evidence that the women's general confidence, efficacy, and esteem were affected immediately by their participation in the FTA shopping program. These findings are consistent with J. D. Brown (1993) who posited that global self-esteem and confidence are not easily changed, but specific self-esteem and confidence are more malleable. A fuller discussion of the quantitative data is provided in Chapter 5.

FTA Program Evaluation

Evaluations of the FTA program were collected using the post-test questionnaire and the modified questionnaire distributed to the New York women beneficiaries. Table 4.4 contains findings from the 4-item measure that include means scores, frequencies, and standard deviations. Thirty-one women completed the FTA program evaluation on the post-test questionnaire.
Table 4.4. Program Evaluation Measure\textsuperscript{a}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Frequency\textsuperscript{b}</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion Takes Action has really helped me.</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The clothing from Fashion Takes Action will help in work situations.</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know I will be more confident in work situations after taking part in Fashion Takes Action.</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like the clothing and make-up I received at Fashion Takes Action.</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{a} N = 31  
\textsuperscript{b} 1 = strongly agree; 2 = agree; 3 = neutral. No participant disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statements (responses 4 and 5, respectively).

Responses to the "Fashion Takes Action has really helped me" item indicate that the majority (94%) of the women agreed with this statement. The two neutral responses could be from women who did not find clothing that matched their personal style preference or size. Women who are beneficiaries of a clothing program may not be inclined to critique gift items and may have exercised their option to neither agree nor disagree with this item. The women unanimously agreed that the clothing they received from the FTA program would help them in their work-related activities. Most of the women (94%) felt that their participation in the FTA program had enhanced their self-confidence in work-related situations. The neutral responses may suggest that the women were not working yet, thus this question did not apply to them. Another interpretation may be that the women who responded in this manner felt that the FTA program did not influence any change to their sense of work confidence. All of the women, except one, agreed with the statement: "I like the clothing and make-up I received at Fashion Takes Action." The women's involvement in the shopping vs. having items selected for them or choosing from a used clothing inventory may have contributed to the majority of women strongly agreeing with this item.
Interpretive Findings

Findings from the current research contain "many lessons learned" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). During analysis, multiple categories were revealed that indicated that the women received indirect benefits, as well as the tangible gifts mentioned earlier, by participating in the FTA shopping event. The continuous comparison and refinement of these categories yielded 11 themes or categories of indirect benefits that explain the effects of the FTA program under study (Glaser, 1992).

The 11 themes that capture the indirect benefits the women received as participants in the FTA program are: Mastery Experience, Mitigation of Clothing Deprivation, Role Embracement, Social Acceptance, Matterizing, Friendship/Camaraderie, Acceptance & Confirmation, Role Modeling, Emotional Arousal, and Gratefulness. It was evident during analysis, that these benefits are not mutually exclusive, but are interrelated, even inextricably entwined at times. Although the findings are discussed as separate themes to flesh out theoretical nuances, they cannot be cleanly divided.

Mastery Experience

Not all clothing closets or gift clothing programs have knowledgeable people available to help the women beneficiaries as they select clothing items. Fashion experts accompanied the women during the shopping phase of the FTA event to give them advice about work attire and help them select work appropriate clothing items. Through this interaction, the women had the opportunity to acquire wardrobe building and make-up application skills. Thus, the FTA program provided the women with a mastery experience (Bandura, 1997) relative to a work-appropriate appearance. Bandura (1997) asserted that "enactive mastery experiences are the most influential source of efficacy information because they provide the most authentic evidence of whether one can muster whatever it takes to succeed" (p. 80). Comments received from the women beneficiaries during in-depth interviews suggest that the FTA shopping experience provided them with clear indications of their capability relative to work wardrobe building. For some of the women, this feeling of "can do" transcended its application to clothing selection and coordination, and gave the women a feeling of efficacy in other work-relative activities.
Because I am a person that sacrifices a whole lot; I do without. Now I didn't know how to shop almost. I was like “Hannah\(^2\) (fashion expert), I've not been shopping in I don't know when. I might not know how to shop for clothes.” (Kelly, age 40)

Kelly, a beneficiary of the FTA program, expressed a reality that many of the women revealed during the in-depth interviews. “Shopping” for some of the women was a trip to a local clothing closet or some other second-hand store, when possible. As indicated in Table 4.2 the majority of women were mothers and spent a major proportion of their income providing for their children and taking care of housing obligations. So the task for many fashion experts was to provide the women with advice that ranged from how to: 1) build a basic work wardrobe that was flexible, 2) coordinate styles and colors complementary to the individual, 3) use clothing as camouflage for body shapes that the women perceived as less than ideal, 4) select appropriate accessories, 5) choose comfortable shoes, and 6) care for clothing. The women also received a make-over and advice on how to care for their facial skin from the Sears make-up consultants.

**Wardrobe building.** Knowing how to dress is a fundamental mentifact (ideal, value, knowledge) that individuals in a culture learn (Spradley, 1972). In order to be successful, women in transition must learn what is appropriate and expected attire for the workplace and adhere to the cultural standards of that environment (Kanter, 1977). Conversations with the women that participated in the FTA event revealed that many of the women did not feel they were skilled at shopping and did not regularly engage in appearance related activities. Nor were they all aware of what was currently acceptable attire for the workplace. For example, Theresa, age 55, was asked if she was confident putting together an outfit. She replied:

No. No. I don't have visibility [coordinating ability] if you want to call it that. Unless I see an outfit completely put together [I cannot coordinate it] and that is the way I have to buy when I get enough money to buy. I have to buy a whole complete outfit the way that they have it displayed in the store.

\(^2\) The names of fashion experts and women beneficiaries have been changed to insure anonymity.
Despite the emphasis in our society for women to attend to their appearance (Bordo, 1993; Tseëlon, 1995), these women's comments suggest that building a flexible wardrobe is not a skill learned by all women. Some of the women did seem fairly confident during shopping, but still appreciated the advice.

The mentoring literature suggests that individuals can be guided by others towards the attainment of goals (Bond, 1999; Kram, 1985; Lee & Nolan, 1998). The fashion experts were individuals with various levels of expertise in the fashion business. One-on-one, the fashion experts guided the women through the maze of current inventory in the Sears store, offered advice about appropriate and complementary colors and styles for the women, and provided the women with psycho-social support.

The interactions between the women beneficiaries and the fashion experts suggest that some of the women demonstrated internal locus of control (events under their control) and external locus of control (actions under the control of others) during the shopping events (Bandura, 1997). It was evident that some of the women relied heavily on their experts for suggestions and help coordinating outfits. When asked to describe the strategy that she and her expert employed during the shopping event, Sarah, age 22, replied:

I gave him complete power. I mean, if I wanted to be out there, I know that I would have. Of course, if he brought something back that I didn't like, I would like [say]: "No! (laughs) that is not it. I don't feel comfortable." But I gave him, I said "I trust you." Because everything he was picking out was my style. It was not like we were totally off. Everything that he thought would look good, I thought would look good. So I basically knew I could trust him in that sense. "Whatever you bring back will be fine" [she said to him].

The women began their shopping in "teams" (woman and fashion expert) by walking through various departments identified by the store managers as potential sites for work attire. As Sarah's comments indicated, some of the women remained in the dressing room after the initial selection of garments and allowed their expert, with the help of the Sears' personnel, to choose different items. Theresa,
however, was more engaged in the selection process. When asked why it was important for her to have an active role in selecting the clothing during the FTA event, she replied:

Because I am, again, I'm nervous about wearing some kind of clothes. I don't like bright colors. Because I'm big, and I feel like that draws attention to me. I don't like glittery, glossy things, and I don't like real little frilly things. And I was afraid of what they would bring back there to put on me.... I like my little drab colors, yes (laughs). [I like] something very inconspicuous that you can just walk through a crowd and not be noticed.

Prior to the FTA event, neither Sarah nor Theresa felt skilled at selecting items from a department's many offerings to create a complete outfit. They both had relied on the merchandising effort by either the original designer or the store's personnel to locate a complete outfit which would result in a purchase on their part.

Theresa, an older woman, felt strongly that she needed to be involved in the selection process in order to maintain her "specific look." She acknowledged during the interview that she was unfamiliar with her shopper's name or reputation as a fashion expert. Another read on Theresa's comment has been suggested by Chowdhary (1991), who hypothesized that involvement in selecting clothing gift items could help individuals feel in control and may positively affect their self-esteem.

Sarah, age 22, a younger woman who expressed that she had wanted to try different looks but felt compelled because of financial reasons to continue with a more conservative wardrobe, was quite content and delighted to have her shopper select items for her approval. Sarah's shopper was involved in activities that marked him as a fashion expert in her mind. Sarah's confidence and willingness to let her shopper be the primary selector could be a result of his established reputation, on which she later commented to the researcher. Bandura (1991) stated that,

Those who have a firm sense of identity and are strongly oriented toward fulfilling their personal standards display a high level of self-directedness. Those who are not much committed to personal standards adopt a pragmatic orientation, tailoring their behavior to fit whatever the situation seems to call for. They become adept at reading social cues,
remembering those that have predictive value and varying their self-presentation accordingly.

(p. 253)

Theresa's reluctance to let her shopper be in complete control and Sarah's willingness to let her shopper select items for her speaks to the varied levels of comfort, confidence, and locus of control that these women had.

The women were advised to build their basic wardrobe by incorporating flexibility, or choosing items that could be mixed and matched with other items they had or would purchase in the future. Theresa, age 55, said her shopper told her:

... if I took the one basic piece then I could build on it. So we took the gray pants suit, and actually the red blouse worked wonderful with it, the other, it was a print blouse, it worked great with it, and she said you could take the pants and just put a plain white shirt [with it] or either add a vest with some gray in it. So she was the one that came up with the idea [of] the basic black pants and then the gray outfit that I could just keep adding to it and work around it.

The fashion experts (both male and female) helped the women select basic pieces for a work wardrobe that consisted of color and styles commonly used to mark professional attire. A number of women were advised to build their basic wardrobe using neutral colors, navy and black, but to add high affect colors or prints as accent pieces (tops, etc.). What these women were given was a way to become less dependent on the retail store for clothing ideas. They were given basic guidelines that they could refer to in the future when they shopped at various retail locations. In four hours time, the fashion experts shared lessons with the women on how to build a basic work wardrobe. When asked if she had gotten enough tips from her fashion expert to put together an outfit by herself, Theresa replied: "I'm still not that confident. I think I could do better than what I was doing." For Theresa, mastery of a skill (wardrobe coordination) may be related to confidence building. An enactive mastery experience, such as learning how to build and coordinate a work wardrobe, could result in an enhanced sense of efficacy, according to Bandura (1997).
The experts also talked with the women about positioning themselves for future jobs. Cassandra Hayes (1996), in her article about career management strategies, advised her readers to strive to project an image that reflects their current work position and also a future position they aspire to. Similarly, Anastasia, approximately 36, was advised to dress "up" to the job she wanted in the future.

What she said was, when you shop, you don't shop for the job that you have, but you shop for the job that you actually [want next]... You come out of one mode and you start dressing up on the job that you have and that gives you the incentive to step out of that place where you are and go look for something better.

The fashion expert's advice to Anastasia is consistent with research findings that different styles of dress are associated with different levels in an organization (Cash, 1985, Rafaeli et al., 1997). Anastasia could signal through her program (Stone, 1965) or appearance her interest in a different job by dressing in the manner of one who occupies that work position or role. However, Kaiser (1997) noted that "it may be inadvisable to 'outshine' one's supervisor to the extent that a lack of deference to his or her authority is expressed" (p. 368). Advice given to women in transition about dressing up to the next job may also need to include a caution about outshining those in authority.

**Clothing as camouflage.** The women received tips on how to use clothing as a mask or camouflage. Evelyn, age 48, learned from her fashion expert that the "old way of wearing white under white, or black under white" to hide undergarments was passé.³ Evelyn explained to the researcher that her shopper "hipped [her] to wearing the light beige under white so that [underwear] doesn't show." Other advice that was given focused on how to camouflage a less than desirable body area (i.e., waistline) with a top. Anastasia, approximately, age 36, was told by her shopper that "instead of tucking in your shirt when you dress, if you would wear the blouse on the outside, that would take away from the appearance of too much tummy." Dissatisfaction with the waistline or abdomen areas is a commonly held feeling. In a survey of 4,000 individuals, 71% of the women and 63% of the men expressed dissatisfaction with their abdomen areas (Garner, 1999). The camouflage

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³ Wearing black underwear under white clothing has been a common strategy used by African American women.
advice helped the women to feel that they were successfully concealing body parts or clothing items they did not want exposed or accentuated.

**Color coordination.** How to coordinate colors for some women was a mystery that the fashion experts helped them to unravel. Sensing timidity, the fashion experts offered both encouragement and suggestions for how to incorporate more color into the wardrobe. Belinda, age 35, reported that her shopper told her "... don't be afraid to play with colors and mixing and matching." Hannah, age 40, assessed her color coordination skill this way:

'Cause I'm not really good with mixing different colors. 'Cause the gray suit, I would have never thought to put a red blouse with it or the maroon blouse with it. So she [fashion expert] helped me out because basically I know white and black and how to mix brown together, but the other colors kind of throw me.

Dorothy, age 34, described her wardrobe as consisting of mostly dark colors – black or blue – which was typical of how many of the women described their wardrobes. During the shopping event, Dorothy expressed an interest in getting other colors,

Yeah, I wanted something with some color because I knew that I had so much black. That is why I was asking maybe I could get a red suit or maybe a green or whatever... But I wound up getting black again, but that was fine.

Dorothy's fashion expert talked with her about building versatility into her wardrobe. Together they selected primary clothing pieces in black and one black and white accessory item. Dorothy's fashion expert steered her away from the high affect colors; this advice differs from the advice other women received about incorporating more color in their wardrobes. This can partially be explained by the time of year that the women were shopping. Belinda participated in a shopping event in the spring and Dorothy participated in the fall – a season associated less with bright or pastel colors. However, it was evident as the researcher observed several shopping events that the advice given by the fashion experts varied not just by season, but also by geography. The variety of fashion advice that the women received during the FTA shopping event is consistent with the diversity of advice provided in the popular press (Ogle & Damhorst, 1999).
Anastasia, approximately 36, explained that her color choice was functional: “I was more into dark colors 'cause I figure dark colors make you look small.” Theresa, age 55, also used dark colors to camouflage her size. She explained: [I like] something very inconspicuous that you can just walk through a crowd and not be noticed. Both of these women were aware that certain colors can create spatial illusions where objects seem to be larger or smaller relative to other objects, and used that knowledge to develop their wardrobes. A closer analysis of Theresa’s comment though, seems to suggest that her color choice was not only to visually reduce her body to a more socially acceptable size, but to actually become less visible or “inconspicuous.” Feminists have examined the space that women occupy in Western society (Kunkel, 1999; Kilboume, 2000). One of the indictments that Kilboume (2000), social commentator, makes about our society and as portrayed by the media is that we expect women to take up less space in relation to space occupied by men in our society because diminutive pose is considered more feminine and less powerful.

This reading is certainly debatable given that dark colored attire has been associated with sophistication, past fashion trends, the de rigueur color of professional urbanites, or executive power (Green, 2001; Gardner, 1999; Molloy, 1977). An individual using color for those functional purposes would not necessarily want to “be inconspicuous” or not noticed, however.

**Make-up application.** The women’s experience with make-up prior to the FTA shopping event ranged from novice to professionally trained cosmetologists. During the in-depth interviews, the women were asked if they: 1) were regular make-up wearers, 2) liked the make-over, and 3) were using the products they received at the FTA program.

Most of the women reported that they did not wear make-up on a regular basis or wore very little. A few women reported that they had not worn make-up previously because they did not know how to apply it. Darden and Worden (1994) noted that most packages of cosmetic products provide little instruction for use. Furthermore, Darden and Worden (1994) concluded from their long-term study of the consumption of cosmetics that “women learn about cosmetics from other women ..., through advertisements and magazine articles, from demonstrators, and from their own empirical 'playing with makeup’” (p. 277).
Crystal, age 22, one of the younger participants, explained what her experience with make-up had been prior to the FTA event and described the reactions she received after her make-over: 

I mean 'cause I never knew anything about make-up, and she (make-up consultant) showed me how everything worked, and she made me look real nice.... After it was done, so many people just complimented me that day, all day. Everyone just loved how the make-up was done. I was just 'Wow', myself.

Crystal and other women who reported that co-workers, family members, and friends complimented them on their cosmetically enhanced appearance enjoyed the attention and the favorable comments they received. Some of the novice make-up wearers continued wearing the make-up after the FTA shopping event. Attention from others may have motivated the women to continue wearing make-up, as has been speculated as a reason for increased productivity in the Hawthorne studies (Adair, 1984; Brannigan & Zwerman, 2001; Stagner, 1982). Furthermore, Stone (1965) stated that programs and reviews that coincide can serve as validation of the self and encourage continuation with the rewarded program.

Rosenberg (1979) explained that significant others whose favorable opinions we value can help shape the self-concept, of which self-esteem is a part of (Rosenberg, 1979) and do make a difference to the individual. Theresa, age 55, was another woman who had not worn make-up prior to the FTA shopping event. She received favorable comments from her husband and her supervisor that encouraged her to continue the daily application of make-up. Perhaps more importantly, by applying lotions, toner, and make-up in the evening and morning, Theresa began engaging in an activity that she found lacking in her life prior to FTA – pampering. I asked Theresa, if she planned to continue pampering herself beyond the FTA shopping event. She replied:

Yes, I will when I get a place to have time. Now I am doing more than I ever did because I do use the face toner now, every morning religiously, and I use the lotion and the cream every night religiously. So yes, I would say that I definitely pamper myself more than I ever did in 43 years of marriage (laughs).
Theresa's family financial situation was similar to that of displaced homemakers – women who enter or reenter the workforce because of a need to be economically self-sufficient. Displaced homemakers who participated in a longitudinal appearance enhancing program had significantly higher measures of perceived level of control and improved self-confidence at the end of the program (Fiore & Delong, 1990). Fiore and Delong (1990) speculated that the client's willingness to continue to engage in the appearance enhancing activities after the program suggested that the participants perceived an improvement in their feelings of self-worth.

Some women believed that applying make-up incorrectly could send the wrong message, so they had worn very little or none at all. Theresa, age 55, was one of those women. She stated that, I had no idea about make-up. And see if I tried to put make-up on before, I would look like a streetwalker. But they showed me how to do it and still remain like a lady.

Theresa's fear of being perceived in a negative manner was echoed by other women. This fear may not be groundless since researchers have found that the wearing of cosmetics influences impressions of the female wearer's morality (Hamid, 1968; Johnson & Lewis, 1988; Workman & Johnson, 1991).

A few of the women were regular wearers of make-up. Two women trained in cosmetology were comfortable wearing make-up daily. "Well I must be honest. I am a master cosmetologist, so I am familiar with make-up.... In fact, I won't go anywhere without it. I won't go outside without it" (Rose, age 37). Dorothy, age 34, arrived at the FTA event in full make-up.

[Q: Did they do your make-over for you?] No, I just basically did my own make-up since I had already made my face up .... Yeah, I got some stuff from them. It was a lot of stuff that I could use, too. At first I didn't think I was going to use it 'cause I wear my own.

But it was some nice stuff in there.

Rose also gave an assessment of the products that were used for her make-over.

And I don't want to give the wrong impression, but I like certain cosmetics. I mean it was ok. I like a different type [of make-up]. The lady seemed nervous who was applying it. I don't know if she was new, or I don't know.
These two women reported a preference for make-up that they normally wear. It is not unusual for women to demonstrate loyalty to beauty products that help them meet appearance-enhancing goals.

Some women stated that they did not wear make-up before or after the FTA program because they had good skin or the application of make-up took too much time. A few of the women incorporated make-up as part of their daily grooming after the FTA experience citing the benefits of it relative to aging. For example, Barbara, age 40, heard on TV that, “If you are 40 or over, you should always wear lipstick.”

Not all women were happy with their make-overs or make-up gifts. Two women stated that the make-up was too dark for their complexions. Francois, age 26, was one woman not pleased with her make-over. In reply to the researcher’s question, “Do you generally wear make-up?” Francois said:

No ma’am, I don’t generally wear as much as I had on [after the make-over]. [Q: But you do wear some?] I wear a little. Lipstick and maybe a little eyeliner…. I’m basically wearing some of all of it, but not as much as they had put on me…. It made my face feel heavy.

The mini make-over and gifts of make-up and skin care products were included in the FTA program to help the women complete their work appearance. For some of the women, make-up was used to enhance their appearance. They enjoyed experimenting with it and appreciated the compliments they received from fellow employees or supervisors about it. Other women who had been timid about wearing make-up benefited from learning how they could apply it so that it was not overdone. They then felt more confident to wear it as an enhancing tool and not as a siren announcing their sexuality. Still other women felt that make-up was less important and wore it sparingly or not at all citing reasons as varied as time-constraint to feeling that their natural state was adequate for a public appearance.

**Contextual appropriateness.** Some of the clothing items the women received during the FTA program varied notably from dress worn by other employees in their respective workplaces. Two women explained how their dress was more formal or more fashionable than that of other employees. Patricia, age 40, started interviewing for jobs immediately after the FTA event and found a job.
[Q: Have you had a chance to wear any of the outfits that you got that day at Sears?)
Ma'am, I got me a job. At ABC Heating and Air Conditioning.... I got me a job, and I don't have to wear that kind of stuff [FTA clothing] because they all wear jeans and stuff. But I wear it. I wear all the clothes that I got from Sears and other clothes that I already had.
She explained that the dress code for her workplace was casual. The items that she received during the FTA event were more “dressy” than what other employees were wearing.
[Q: How do you feel because you are more dressed up than the other people?)
Overdressed. Yeah. I feel overdressed, but I still feel good. Because I know that I look nice. And it doesn't bother me that I am overdressed, it really doesn't. It bothers me that they keep, you know, telling me that I'm overdressed. But that really doesn't bother me anymore either.
Patricia’s comment revealed a tension between herself and her co-workers because of the difference they perceived between her dress and theirs. Patricia’s statement is an example of how the meaning of a symbol (dress) is contextually bound (Kaiser, 1997). Dress codes in business settings are often tacitly understood, and the correct reading of a dress code implies that an employee is in tune with the business culture. Kimle and Damhorst (1997) found that women who dressed more fashion-forward than others in a business setting could be perceived as seeking attention or highlighting their social and economic level and Rafaeli and Pratt (1993) proposed that differences in dress may highlight a hierarchical structure in an organization. Patricia may have been unwittingly communicating to her co-workers or customers that she perceived her job role as more important than others. Women in transition who are presented with clothing gifts that are at odds with the attire worn by other employees may need to understand this dynamic. Armed with this awareness, the women may be able to successfully negotiate the meanings of their clothing.
Casual dress was adopted in part or at least once a month by more than 70% of major U.S. corporations by 1995 (Longo, 1995). Although there are some businesses returning to more traditional work attire in business settings (Lloyd & Gellers, 2002; Maclean, 2002; Sanger, 2002); it is doubtful that all companies will return to the state of formality that marked attire worn in the workplace
prior to the 1990's. Therefore, women in transition need to continue to understand not only what is generally appropriate attire for the workplace, but what is expected for specific businesses and work roles so that they fit their behavior (or dress) in line with others in the workplace (Kaiser, 1997).

Some women did not wear their FTA clothing to work because it could be soiled, they did not meet the public, or they were required to wear a uniform. During the shopping event, the fashion experts and the women beneficiaries discussed the women's current or potential work situations to identify what would be appropriate attire for them. However, many of the women are in transition from training or academic program to work or from low-paying jobs to more economically satisfying employment. And the goal of Women Work! and of the local programs that the women participate in is for the women to find employment that leads to greater self-sufficiency, be that a traditional or nontraditional job. Nontraditional jobs or interim jobs that the women find may not require the more formal or traditional clothing typical of office settings. This state of 'flux' does make it difficult to select clothing that would be appropriate for every employment situation.

**Mitigation of Clothing Deprivation**

During the interviews, the women talked about how they felt in their pre-FTA work wardrobe. Women who were employed made comparisons between their work attire and that of co-workers' or the clothing of other individuals they observed during their commute to and from work. The quality and quantity of their clothing lead some of the women to express feelings of dissatisfaction with their work wardrobe or a sense of clothing deprivation (Francis, 1990).

Clothing deprivation (Francis, 1990) may be sensed if one perceives his or her attire as deficient in quality or condition as compared to peers. Two women explained how the condition of their clothing was problematic for them prior to the FTA shopping event. Crystal, age 22, was asked to explain how the FTA program and gift of clothing affected her:

> It is really nice that they are doing it. It is a great help. And it just like makes your
> confidence go through the roof. It is just such a confidence builder. You feel so proud. [Q: What do you feel proud about?]
> Just, I guess, looking good will automatically bring anybody's confidence level up, and it helped you with that part. It brings you, you can walk in
there proud. You have on an outfit that is not … raggedy, it is [not] old. If your outfit is not the way you want it to be, you are thinking about that. Or let’s say, if you had a messed up shirt on and you couldn’t get the stain out, you are worried if that stain is showing, [or worried] if the person that you are interviewing with or that you are talking to can see the stain. You have those distractions on your mind. When you have fresh, nice wardrobe or nice clothes, things like that can just be avoided and put out of the way.

Crystal’s comments about how a soiled appearance might be perceived are supported by research. Just as being properly dressed or well-groomed can signal work efficacy (Damhorst & Reed, 1986; Forsythe, Drake, & Hogan, 1985; Rafaeli & Pratt, 1993), a spoiled appearance may be interpreted as a stigma symbol (Goffman, 1963). Damhorst (1999) posited that the interpretation of clothing meanings can be influenced by numerous characteristics of the wearer or wearer’s clothing; “the condition of fabrics such as stains or tears could degrade the impression given by a job applicant” (Damhorst, 1999, p. 84). Belinda, age 35, had a similar perspective about clothing and comfort in work situations:

It is definitely beneficial. I think a lot of times going on interviews you know you are already nervous about going on job interviews. Even as a temp worker when you are going into an office. It is like I can go into three different offices in a week and that feeling in your stomach is like you don’t know what to expect, you don’t know how the people are going to be. And you know just like if you look presentable, it just gives you a little more confidence.

Belinda continued describing how she felt going to work in her pre-FTA attire even though the items were “clean and pressed.” She observed people on the subway or in workplaces and did not feel that her appearance or “program” (Stone, 1965) was comparable to others. However, her sense of inferiority was mitigated with the clothing she received from FTA because “when you are able to kind of fit in then you feel a little more confident.”

Both Crystal and Belinda believed that the condition of clothing carries meaning for the wearer and the perceiver. Their comments demonstrate the looking glass self concept (Cooley,
1902), whereby the self attempts to imagine how others perceive him or her and how self-feelings evolve as a result of those imagined perceptions. The women's comments indicate that they believed that clothing could be used to visually elevate them from what they perceived as a lower socio-economic status and give them a sense of “sameness” vis-à-vis other employees. This similarity would allow them to feel comfortable, confident, and/or competent as they engaged in work-related activities. They also believed that similarity in appearance would mean that others would perceive them to be confident and competent. Differences in appearances, relative to other employees, were perceived as positive if the differences marked them as more fashionable or more formal in their dress than others. But differences that marked them as inferior or lower class were something to avoid.

Individuals may also sense clothing deprivation in terms of the quantity of clothing they possess (Kness, 1983). A few women did not think that they had a sufficient supply of clothing for work-related activities. Belinda, age 35, told the researcher that learning how to mix and match meant that she could coordinate her wardrobe items so that “nobody will probably recognize that you are wearing it [same apparel item] so much.”

Similarly, Patricia, age 40, explained that the gifts of clothing she had received from another source and the FTA clothing produced an ample work wardrobe:

And with the stuff I got from Sears [that] made 10 outfits…. And so I don't look like I'm wearing the same thing on Mondays and on Tuesdays.... Cuz [sic] just 'cause I'm poor, I don't need to look like I'm poor.

Joyce, age 19, was pleased with the clothing she received during the shopping event and proud of the skill she acquired learning how to successfully mix and match the items:

It is my favorite stuff. I wear it all the time. Like I told you, I mix and match that stuff for days. The first week [of work] that's all I wore was those outfits. Honestly the first week I wore that same dress and that same pant outfit for three days.4 "God, how can you afford so many clothes?" [Question from co-worker] And I'm like, humph, I can just shop (laughs).

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4 Respondent is referring to a piece of clothing that could be worn as a dress or tunic.
What is significant about all three women's (Belinda, Patricia and Joyce) comments is the notion that a negative tension can be created, for some women in the U.S., when it is apparent to others that their clothing is worn multiple times within a specified time period (e.g., within a work week). However, if the garment pieces can be coordinated so that it appears that they are different items, then the source of embarrassment dissolves, and the ability to fool others becomes a point of pride.

Having a large wardrobe is a U.S. cultural preference – not as common outside North America. Kent State Museum's curator asserted that U.S. wardrobes are composed of "disposal clothes" vs. European wardrobes that are "better planned so that things coordinate" (Theiss, 2001, p. 3E). The comments from Belinda, Patricia, and Joyce suggest that there is a tacit understanding in the U.S. of how often it is expected that a particular item of clothing or ensemble would be worn. Wearing a clothing item more often than expected by others might send unfavorable signals about the wearer, such as lower economic status. Thus, Belinda’s, Patricia’s, and Joyce’s comments further highlight the connection between clothing deprivation and numerical relativity (Francis, 1990; Kness, 1983).

**Role Embracement**

Hannah, age 40, noticed a difference in herself when she wore the clothing she received from Sears, "... when I have the suits on, I'm no nonsense. I'm down to business... Yeah, 'cause when you have jeans on you are kinda like laid-back, you know." Goffman's (1959) theory of dramaturgy is helpful to understand Hannah's comment. Hannah's comment suggests that the performance of her role at work is directly affected by her attire. Goffman (1959) noted that different identities would be assumed as changes to clothing or other appearance items were made.

Besides affecting her, Hannah believed that her attire (pre-FTA vs. post-FTA) evoked different reactions from people in her workplace.

To me in the atmosphere were I was working, ...all the people and the department heads and the people that had positions dressed professional and that is where I'm trying to go. And I knew as long as I stayed in jeans and t-shirts that I wasn't going to be taken seriously. So by me changing my attire, it seems like people have changed the way they think about me
and react to me... 'Cause it gives me confidence to speak up where I would be quiet normally because you don't want people focusing on you because of how you look.

Hannah's comments suggest that she was perceived as more credible and competent in her work role when she wore her new outfits from Sears because the clothing sent her employer and co-workers favorable external cues about her (Solomon & Douglas, 1985). Furthermore, she felt that she was appropriately dressed and did not have to avoid drawing attention to herself because of her appearance; thus, she also was positively cued about her role by wearing the FTA clothing (Solomon & Douglas, 1985). According to Mead (1934), meaning is established when a symbol (e.g., dress) generates the same response in the sender and the receiver. By wearing clothing received during the FTA shopping event, Hannah signaled to her employer, co-worker, and self that she was a bona fide employer with the requisite skills and competence to successfully perform her job. The positive review she received helped her to learn her job role and embrace it as part of self. Reflected appraisals facilitate taking on a role and carrying it off (Solomon, 1983).

Other women who were employed told the researcher similar stories about feeling more confident at work wearing their FTA attire. Co-workers and supervisors also noted a difference in the women's deportment and made favorable remarks to the women about that. These findings parallel previous research that showed a significant difference in individuals' self-perceptions of occupational attributes when presented with properly dressed vs. not properly dressed scenarios (Kwon, 1994b).

Furthermore, these findings suggest that an individual's embracement of a role can be enhanced by donning attire deemed as appropriate for that role. Previous research does not provide consistent evidence that clothing impacts one's behavior (see Kaiser, 1997); however, as suggested by Kaiser (1997) new roles or new situations may raise an individual's self-awareness and the "impact of clothes on one's behavior may be more evident" (p. 195).

Social Acceptance

Theresa, age 55, explained that the clothing helped her achieve a more socially acceptable appearance and how that appearance affected her sense of self-satisfaction.
I feel better about myself [after FTA]. When you are a large woman, you won't know anything about that because you are not large. But when you are a large woman, you automatically feel like everything is wrong when you walk in a room. And that people feel that they've got to move over against the far wall for you to come by, you know. At least I feel that way. So the better I can dress, the better I feel. Because you can be fat, as long as you are classy fat you are ok. If you are poor fat, you've got a problem and everybody is going to put you down. And I've experienced both sides of it. [Q: So with the new make-up, the new look, you feel better?] Yes. I feel like I have a little bit of class or pizzazz or whatever you want to call it that makes me feel like that maybe I'm as good as the next person even though I'm still fat.

As Rudd and Lennon (2001) found, impressions formed about individuals based on their body types are social and cultural manifestations. Theresa's comment indicated that her body image, or mental picture she had of her body (Fisher as cited in Rudd & Lennon, 2001), was strongly tied to her sense of self which is defined during interactions with others (Blumer, 1969). Currently, the ideal body type with the attending positive traits is a youthful and slim silhouette. When individuals "move over against the far wall" for her to pass, Theresa does not interpret that behavior as a sign of deference, but rather as an indication that she needs more space than is normally required for an "ideal body."

Theresa's comment also suggests that an individual is confronted by even greater challenges to their positive sense of self when multiple stigmas (e.g., fat and poor) are assigned to them. Theresa's comments illustrate the process of self-definition that occurs as a result of social feedback or reflected appraisals (Morris, 1977).

Organizations that provide women in transition with used work appropriate attire report that they are constantly in need of clothing donations in sizes 16 and up (Davant, 2001; Griffin, 2001; Turner-Bowker, 2001; Whitehead, 2001). To avoid having women arrive at the Sears store and not be able to find appropriate work clothing in their sizes, organizers of the FTA program asked the women to complete a form that requested their clothing size. The public relations firm sent that
information to the host store so that an ample supply of clothing in the various sizes would be available for the shopping event (B. Haas, personal communication, September 29, 2000).

The researcher was aware of two women who had difficulty locating clothing in their sizes. Nancy, age 26, did not find anything in her size 28 that was appropriate for work at the host store. The Sears associates placed several phone calls to nearby stores in an attempt to locate items for Nancy. She was told that items would be sent to her. The researcher was unable to contact Nancy for an in-depth interview and is not aware if she received items from Sears.

Violet, age 37, was the second woman who experienced a lengthy search for clothing in her size 3X during the FTA program. Violet was asked to talk about the FTA program and self-esteem:

[Q. Do you think participating in the Sears program helped at all with self-esteem?]

Yeah, well now I don't know about the dressing room thing (big laugh). Trying on a thousand outfits and having three fit is not good for the self-esteem (big laugh). You want me to be honest. And I was kind of a little self-conscious, especially when you have some of the other skinny little girls in there.

Violet further commented that other women, thinner than her, were having similar problems finding outfits that fit. As our body image is tied to affective responses we have of that picture, in a society that values and celebrates thinness, large-size women who cannot find clothing that fits them may experience lowered self-esteem if they attribute the scarcity as their fault due to non-normative and undesirable body size (Rudd & Lennon, 2001).

Mattering

Equally important to an individual's positive sense of self is that he or she matters to others (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981). The women beneficiaries stated that a benefit of the FTA shopping event was that they perceived they mattered. The women’s comments regarding mattering are explained under the categories of guest preparation, focused attention, importance, and dependence.

Guests preparation. Aware that women arriving at their stores might be uncomfortable, the Sears personnel prepared festive and welcoming atmospheres. At one store, the meeting room
tables were decorated with fresh flowers. At another store, the women were met at the door by a double receiving line. Rooms were configured in different ways, depending on the size of the room and the existing furniture. As an example, one room had multiple small round tables and another was arranged in a typical classroom style with an aisle in the middle. Most often the rooms were set up in a hollow square shape. The hollow square shape facilitated interactions among all the participants.

The women were invited to partake of the breakfast items provided. They were joined at breakfast by the fashion experts and several Sears personnel who assisted in the shopping. During this period of rapport building, the program was explained, introductions made, sometimes hugs exchanged, and an initial bond was created between the women and the experts. During the lunch period, some of the women commented on the guest preparations. Some commented positively about the meals they were served. Others spoke about the type of reception they received when they arrived at the store.

Focused attention. More than one woman was surprised at the number of people involved in the FTA program. Marie, age 22, expressed the reaction many of the women had as they met all of the FTA participants, "When everyone started coming in, I thought 'Oh my goodness, surely they are not all here for us few girls.'"

All but one of the women in the study had children; consequently, sprinkled throughout the women's interviews were comments about their roles as mothers. In fact, many of the women remarked that they enjoyed the FTA experience because they received focused attention vs. having to attend to others (children or other family members). During one interview, the researcher probed to understand to what Patricia, age 40, attributed her post-FTA improved sense of confidence. Patricia's answer captures the essence of how many of the women reacted to the attention they received during the shopping event:

[Q. Do you see clothing or the cosmetics directly tied to how you feel about yourself?] No, I think a lot of it had to do with some of the pampering I felt and the direct attention to me. I didn't have to share anybody's attention to me. I had my own personal person that more or less guided me by my hand to shopping.
Theresa, age 55, was not comfortable initially with the amount of focused attention she received; in fact it was too intense for her and made her feel anxious. As explained earlier, gifts of underwear were added during the second-half of the 2000 FTA program. Theresa and her fashion expert made their first stop at the lingerie department so that Theresa could be fitted for two bras. Theresa was asked to stay in the dressing room while the fashion expert and other sales associates searched for bras for her. Theresa explained how that attention affected her:

I don't know what happened that first few minutes. I guess I got real nervous because I was in that dressing room and I had about five people crowded in there with me and I just got really uptight and real nervous. I was about at the point of tears for a few minutes. [Q. Who else was in the dressing room with you?] A couple of the sales people were running back and forth and finding undergarments to see if they would fit. And I was just kind of nervous about that, and I realized that they wanted me to try everything on, but it is kind of hard to get undressed in front of somebody you don't even know and try something on. And XXX (fashion expert) was trying to help me, and she was wanting [sic] to fasten and unfasten the bra for me, and I was just getting real nervous. [R. And they probably didn't realize…]

They didn't think a thing about it.

The Women Work! affiliate program coordinator who accompanied Theresa to the shopping event made a routine check on Theresa and learned of her discomfort. Shortly afterwards, Theresa emerged from the dressing room and joined in the search for underwear with her fashion expert and the Sears personnel.

For some shoppers, having someone select items and bring them into the dressing room is seen as a valued service. This method circumvents the need to continuously dress and undress when one enters or exits the dressing room to try-on or select alternative items. The intent of Theresa's shopper and the Sears sales associates to provide this service, although well-intended, was not received well by Theresa.

One plausible interpretation of Theresa's experience is that she felt that her personal space was violated (Hall, 1959) because the focused attention was too much and occurred too early in the
Theresa did not feel comfortable having strangers helping her fasten and unfasten her underwear — a very intimate item worn directly next to the body. Also, Theresa wanted to be involved in the selection of clothing or underwear because she was concerned that her personal style would be at odds with items selected by others. Focused attention is welcomed when the individual receiving it is comfortable with it; otherwise it may be disconcerting or anxiety causing, such as when the pampered person is made to feel controlled or submissive.

Theresa became more comfortable as the shopping continued. Theresa's description of what the day meant to her also included evidence of her growing comfort:

Besides feeling like a queen for the day, and I've never had as much attention paid to me I don't think in my whole life as I did that day. And it just, you feel real bubbly inside, and when you come out of there with those new clothes and the new make-up and everything, you really feel pretty. I actually felt pretty that day when we were making those pictures. That is why I really got into it with the flipping the jacket out [playful gesture made when her picture was being taken]. I was really into (laughs). I actually felt pretty that day when we were making those pictures. That is why I really got into it with the flipping the jacket out. I was really into (laughs).

Theresa's later comments indicated that personal attention can make the individual feel good, as has been contended about the Hawthorne studies (Brannigan & Zwerman, 2001; Stagner, 1982).

Importance. The women were assigned their own personal shopper and that dyad, along with the other dyads, was further assisted by one or two Sears sales associates. Additionally the women were the focus of attention of everyone else involved in the FTA program — the media, the local affiliate of Women Work!, the researcher, and the public relations coordinator. During the breakfast/get-acquainted session, the women were told that they could select from any of the inventory in the store and that they would have dressing rooms designated for their use only.

The exchange between Sarah, age 22, and her fashion expert summarizes the goals that the FTA organizers hope to achieve during the shopping event. Sarah recounted to the researcher that when she told her fashion expert not to worry about finding yet another outfit for her after multiple
trips between the dressing room and the sales floor, he replied: "Nope, it is all about you girl. It is all
about you girl, today. So you take your time, and we are going to do whatever."

The researcher asked one of the Women Work! affiliate program coordinators who
accompanied the women to the shopping event if she thought the FTA program improved the
women's self-esteem. The coordinator replied, "They [women] felt better and all the attention. I think
all the people made them feel that they were important" (S. Hunter, personal communication, October
24, 2000). The focused attention, the special arrangements made for dressing rooms, and the
addition of a personal shopper conveyed to the women that they were important.

Dependence. Many of the women identified the absence of someone (children or other
family members) depending on them as a benefit, at least for the short time while they were taking
part in the FTA program. Participating in the FTA shopping event was a chance for them to put aside
daily challenges and enjoy the focused attention they received. The interpersonal dynamics that
evolved during the shopping event created a feeling of camaraderie among the participants.
Moreover, the women beneficiaries felt that they were active agents in helping to create that feeling of
camaraderie. Consequently, a different type of dependence emerged during the shopping event and
that dependence served as a "source of social integration" (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981, p. 165).
In the next section entitled Friendship/Camaraderie, the camaraderie that was a manifestation of that
dependence is discussed.

Friendship/Camaraderie

All of the fashion experts were volunteers and had readily agreed to participate in the FTA
shopping event. Some of the fashion experts had previously participated in the FTA program, others
were new to it. The public relations firm contacted individuals with fashion-related expertise or with
celebrity status and asked them to participate in the FTA shopping events. The majority of fashion
expert knew each other or at least knew of each other professionally. Very few of the women
beneficiaries at the individual shopping events knew each other prior to the FTA program, and the
majority did not know the fashion experts who shopped with them. In 2000, a few of the fashion
experts were "celebrities" from TV, one was a professional sports player, and another was a member
of a well-known professional cheerleading squad. Therefore, the shopping events began with varying degrees of the participants as acquaintances or strangers to each other.

In a mentoring relationship, friendship is described as mutual liking and understanding, and includes enjoyable informal exchanges (Kram, 1986). The four-hour shopping event provided little time for the women beneficiaries to develop with other participants what might be truly labeled a friendship. However, many of the women expressed a genuine regard for the fashion experts and for some of the other participants at the shopping event. A few of the women sent thank-you cards to the fashion experts to express appreciation for their advice and help. Some of the women told the researcher that they would be communicating with their fashion experts when they had access to a computer, found the fashion expert's misplaced business card, or carved out time in their schedule to do so. Dorothy, age 34, had received additional wardrobe building tips from her fashion expert after the FTA program and was planning to e-mail the fashion expert to ask for more clothing advice.

Only Hannah, age 40, reported a sustained relationship with her fashion expert. Hannah's fashion expert had written her multiple letters and interviewed her on the radio during the approximately three week period between the shopping event and the in-depth interview with the researcher. Hannah stated that she and her fashion expert "connected not just because we were shopping … [but, also because] we connected as people." Hannah's description of her relationship with her fashion expert is consistent with Kram's (1985) definition of friendship within a mentoring relationship, namely that she (Hannah) perceived that a sense of mutual caring between her and her fashion expert existed and that she sensed they were peers.

Octavia, age 44, was another woman who felt that she and her fashion expert established a meaningful relationship during the shopping event. Octavia explained that she was "leery" of how she would be treated during the shopping event because she knew it was a "welfare-to-work" activity. However, Octavia's fashion expert immediately reassured her and helped her to feel comfortable during the event. The researcher overheard Octavia's fashion expert saying the word "attitude" to her. When asked the significance of that word between them, Octavia replied:
I think she recognized that when I walked in that I am working on my pride, and so I think she seen [sic] it immediately. And so she definitely, she definitely was, she worked on the area that needed the work immediately, and from that moment on it was great.... And I appreciated it immediately, so we were able to enjoy our time together.

The fashion expert explained that she and Octavia developed a code between them, and the fashion expert would say the word attitude whenever she noticed that Octavia was not standing erect. During the brief 4-hour session, Octavia and her fashion expert discussed issues related to Octavia’s self-feelings, devised a strategy for enhancing Octavia’s sense of self, formed a comfortable working relationship, and interacted with each other as peers. These types of activities are similar to how Kram (1985) conceptualized that a friendship could evolve during mentoring relationships.

Many of the women remarked that a sense of camaraderie or “good will and lighthearted rapport” (Webster’s II, 1984, p. 221) was created among the participants during the shopping event. Octavia stated that she enjoyed the FTA event because of “…the friendship...[and] that everybody just sort of went with the flow and mingled. And I believe that it took everybody to have a good time, and everybody did. I like it ‘cause nobody was left out.” Similarly, Rose, age 37, felt that a benefit of the program was the combined effort and participation of everyone during the shopping event:

Just to feel good about yourself and to project that with confidence and even to take it a step further - women bonding. Because at times you can feel that this is a man’s world, and just having all the women together and shopping with similar interests, and maybe coming similar backgrounds, just being together to better themselves.

The physical proximity of the women in the dressing room, the celebratory environment created by the FTA organizers, and the presence of other women similarly situated generated a sense of collectiveness. In the anteroom outside the individual dressing rooms, the women joined in the critique process that took place as women modeled different outfits or engaged in the playful mugging for the professional photographer hired by the public relations firm or the TV cameras that

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5 The PR firm coordinating the FTA event hired a professional photographer to take candid and posed photos of the women for publicity used by the PR firm, Women Work!, and Women Work! local affiliates. Copies of the photos were also sent to the local affiliates for distribution to the women.
sometimes were present. In this way, the women beneficiaries moved from feeling that they were merely recipients of the FTA program to perceiving themselves as active collaborators in the shopping event. Hannah, age 40, described this feeling best: "I like it a lot because you know it was like, you know, a bunch of sisters together. Because everybody wanted you to look your best."

The interpersonal dynamics that evolved during the shopping event deemphasized the hierarchy of the fashion expert as the mentor and the women beneficiaries as the mentees. Many of the women beneficiaries began to see the various participants as peers and themselves as providing social support for others. The women beneficiaries began complimenting each other and giving each other encouragement. By engaging in these peer mentoring activities, the women beneficiaries provided social support for others and also realized an enhanced sense of self as predicted by Kram and Isabella (1985).

Acceptance & Confirmation

Acceptance and confirmation involves "providing ongoing support, respect, and admiration, which strengthens self-confidence and self-image" (Kram, 1986, p. 162). The women beneficiaries reported that during the shopping event they felt that they received support and respect and were admired because of the efforts they expended to overcome many of their challenges. To understand how this was possible during a 4-hour event, an explanation of why these women were selected is provided.

The women beneficiaries were enrollees in programs conducted by Women Work! affiliate program coordinators. Some of the programs were housed in resource centers dedicated to helping low-income women; others were located in community colleges. These programs included various types of workshops, training sessions and the usual college courses. For example, at one location the women could enroll in computer training classes or learn how to "work for advancement" or "overcome barriers to employment" in workshops. One program coordinator explained to the researcher that before some of the women could avail themselves of these training programs or workshops, more critical needs had to be met (i.e., housing, child care, retrieving positive self-esteem after years of abuse). Therefore, many of the initial interactions that the women beneficiaries had
with the Women Work! affiliate program coordinators were on a one-on-one basis as the program coordinator helped the women address their basic needs. Every woman beneficiary interviewed by the researcher reported that she received tremendous support from her Women Work! affiliate program coordinator.

Various methods of selecting the women to participate in the FTA program were used by different Women Work! affiliate program coordinators. The women were selected for one or more of the following reasons: they were at the end of their training or educational program, had persuasively communicated in a 200-word essay why they should be chosen, were identified as needing a boost to their self-esteem by the program coordinator, or in some instances, were last-minute replacements. When the women arrived at the Sears store to participate in the FTA shopping event, they had already begun their journey towards self-sufficiency because of their involvement in the various programs offered by the Women Work! affiliate program coordinators. The following excerpts from the in-depth interviews are evidence of the further support, respect, and admiration that the women received during the FTA shopping event.

Support. Some of the women were encouraged to know that they were not alone in their journey towards greater self-sufficiency. Francois, age 26, one of the more reserved participants was asked by the researcher to comment on the program’s objective of enhancing women’s self-confidence. Francois explained how the program didn’t necessarily affect her sense of self, but did provide her with an understanding that her struggles were not unique.

[Q. Sears wants to know if this program helps women with their self-confidence. Can you talk about that?] Well let’s see. I don’t know how to elaborate on that because I wasn’t lacking in my confidence areas, but it gave me an opportunity to have fun, to broaden my wardrobe and to broaden my friends. Because now I have friends throughout (respondent may have been alluding to individuals from different backgrounds and in different geographical locations). Whereas I didn’t know them before, and you never know who is going through a similar situation that you are going through until you meet them. [Q. How does meeting other people in similar situations help you?] Meeting them helps me in a way to know that I’m not alone.
You know in situations when I was going through certain things I thought I was the only one to experience it, and I now know that I am not. Knowing that others have dealt with similar situations (e.g., social services) for many of the women was reassuring.

One of the Women Work! affiliate program coordinators was pleased to see the women asking for assistance during the shopping event. The program coordinator explained that asking for help was considered “part of building your self-esteem.” The researcher asked the program coordinator why the women didn’t routinely ask for assistance. She replied:

[They don’t ask] for several reasons. One reason is the response they have always gotten from people. They have always been talked down to as women who have gone from the welfare rolls back to work, and people have never listened to them, and today everybody was listening to them and what their needs are, and so that is one thing. And the other thing is the idea of “I might not get the answer I want to hear so I just don’t ask or I’d rather not ask” [a typical response a woman would give to the program coordinator]... We try to encourage them to talk with people; [we tell them that] you have to communicate. You have to find out what you need to find out so you can get done what you need to get done.

The program coordinator was pleased that the women were “outgoing, mingling, and talking to everybody” during the shopping event. The women may have sensed — from their initial impressions of the Sears store, the cordial welcome they were accorded, and the interactions that they had with their fashion experts and other participants — that they were in a supportive environment during the FTA shopping event.

Admiration. According to Briana Haas, 2wo-One-2wo public relations associate, the women prepared short bios that were given to the fashion experts prior to the shopping so that the fashion experts could “kind of get a little bit of information on their partners” (personal communication, September 29, 2000). During the shopping event, the women and the fashion experts usually shared more details about their personal lives with each other. The fashion experts were sometimes surprised to learn just how much the women had endured.
For example, Lois', age 39, recount of an exchange with her fashion expert was similar to other women’s experiences:

[Q. How did you get along with your fashion expert? Did she give you good advice?] Great. Great. Very outgoing, offered a lot of good suggestions. You know, I didn't feel like she was just saying that looks good on you to get through with it... Oh, she made comments about what I had on and how it looked and everything. And she found out again that I was single with two kids. She was like, 'I don't know how you do it.' I'm like, you do what you've got to do.

The women also talked about future plans with the fashion experts. Violet, age 37, was enrolled in a health-related program at a community college. She described to the researcher what she enjoyed about the FTA program:

It was nice to know that people focus on us and cared about us going on to the future. And it was nice to talk to these people that worked with so many people that you know. I liked having a person tell me that they admired me for what I was doing. 'Cause usually when you look at everybody else and you admire what they are doing 'cause their careers are solid or they are younger and they make better choices or whatever you know.

According to social comparison theory, individuals have a basic need to evaluate themselves and that evaluation may be made by comparing themselves to others (Festinger, 1954). The comparison to others could result in a feeling of failure or inadequacy if the other is someone who is perceived to be superior (Festinger, 1954). Lois and Violet were privy to the social comparison that their fashion experts made with them. Knowing that they were targets of social comparison by their fashion experts who they deemed successful was a positive experience for Lois and Violet.

One woman, Iris, age 29, had a very different experience with her fashion expert than did Lois and Violet. She expressed, very strongly, that her fashion expert treated her in what she perceived was a negative manner. When the researcher asked her to elaborate, Iris said:

Um. I thought she was ok. I mean she was nice and everything, but there is one thing I've to say about her, ... the feeling that I got from her was that she was um, kind of like talking down
to me a little bit. And maybe, you know, not realizing it. And everybody you know sort of has their thoughts and it was kind of like, for example, she talked to me differently than she would talk to you (researcher) or say XXX (the Women Work! affiliate program coordinator). She would talk to them like they were on her level or something, but when she talked to me she would kind of talk to me like in baby talk. "Oh, would you like those panties, or is that ok?" (Respondent changes her voice to a tone often used with children.) It just kind of made me uncomfortable that she didn't talk to me like a normal.

At great length, Iris explained to the researcher that she felt that her fashion expert treated her as if she was inferior because she was "on social services."

Instead of admiration, Iris sensed that she was stigmatized. Spickler (1984) noted that social service recipients may receive ill-treatment when they apply for aid. The fashion experts who participated in the program did so as volunteers. A few of the experts were unfamiliar with the program prior to being contacted by the public relations firm; most were well versed in doing charitable work and lending their name and expertise to other charitable causes. The majority of the women's experiences with the fashion experts were positive. However, being insensitive to some of the women's feelings did cause some women to feel uncomfortable. These moments of discomfort did not prevent the women from giving the program an overall positive evaluation. Iris in her conversation with the researcher did not condemn the fashion expert, but made allowances for her:

She meant well, but she just didn't realize that that was what it was doing. She picked out some nice outfits for me. I didn't say nothing [sic] to her.... I wanted to be treated like an equal or, you know, like one of the girls, not like I'm a charity case.

While waiting for Freda, age 35, to change her clothing, the researcher talked with her fashion expert. The fashion expert recounted some of the conversation that she had with Freda:

She is having a very personally difficult time and not only a terminally ill father, but just regaining her whole life, and she is use to being able to take care of herself and not needing to depend on an organization like this (FTA program). But the fact that it exists, and she does need it, and it is not a demeaning organization. They reach out, and like you know, we
all are going to need help sometime… She is feeling that she is a very proud woman, she is a smart woman and she is going to be just fine. It is amazing. I keep sitting there and thinking I'd be a mess, but she is heading straight through. Bless her.

For women who have suffered a fall from grace because of a slide down the economic ladder (Newman, 1988), or who have suffered the degradation of being homeless, or the physical and emotional pains of being abused, to know that they are admired may encourage them to continue pursuing a self-sufficient life. The admiring expert also redefines the individual's life change as an amazing accomplishment, thus helping to boost the individual's sense of self. Bandura (1997) posited that verbal persuasion is an additional means of enhancing an individual's sense of efficacy and can be effective if the individual can realistically master the task(s).

Respect. Kram (1985) argued that the acceptance-and-confirmation function of a mentoring relationship encouraged risk-taking by the junior member and allowed for disagreement between the members. Acceptance-and-confirmation means that the dyad “tolerates differences and thus allows self-differentiation” (Kram, 1985, p. 35) and by so doing, the parties express their respect for each other. In the FTA program, the women beneficiaries were paired with individuals who were rather sophisticated in their knowledge and approach to constructing a work wardrobe. The shopping pairs did not agree on all choices and the women were comfortable vocalizing their disagreement.

Rose, age 37, was one woman who discussed with the researcher the differences she and her fashion expert had with respect to clothing:

I enjoyed it. We had different tastes. I felt like she was trying to put me in other, I don't know, 'cause she was petite and small and I'm a larger woman. And I felt like she was trying to put me in something that she would wear. But I enjoyed the experience with her. She was really nice.

The fashion expert that Belinda, age 35, shopped with was well known to her. However, when they were negotiating what items she should select, Belinda preferred a more modest item:

He said I could wear it to work. But I would think with the split, I would feel a little uncomfortable because I am more on the conservative side. I really, I wanted to take the
blue suit also. But he was like Belinda, you really, you could wear that to work with the sweater, there is a way to do it, but um personally I wouldn't.

These two experiences by Rose and Belinda were illustrative of other instances where the fashion experts' suggestions did not match with the women's preferences or comfort levels. In these instances the fashion experts deferred or respected the women's wishes. Fiore and DeLong (1990) noted the importance of making the client’s ideals of attractiveness and fashionability central to the development of a product for the client. Similarly, the fashion experts in the current study recognized the need to defer or respect the women's clothing or style preferences.

**Role Modeling**

Role modeling involves the demonstration of attitudes, values, and behavior of another person (Kram, 1985). Role modeling involves both conscious and unconscious activities that provide an individual with examples or advice about specific tasks (Bandura, 1997). The FTA program provided a setting whereby women in transition could seek advice from fashion experts, as well as other participants, and observe how these individuals interacted in professional settings, thereby learning a variety of interpersonal skills.

There were three ways that the women felt that the fashion experts and other participants were role models for them — attitudinal identification, skill recognition, and similarity recognition. For example, Lois, age 39, was impressed with the "take charge" attitude that her shopper conveyed: "The confidence the helpers (fashion experts) brought with them. They walked into a situation where everyone (sic) was total strangers and took charge." According to Bandura (1997), an "undaunted attitude" of a role model can be more effective in efficacy building than the particular skills being modeled.

Secondly, the women were impressed with the fashion experts' skills. One example of that is captured in the response by Dorothy, age 34, who was asked by the researcher if she thought other women would benefit from the FTA program. She replied:

Oh yeah, most definitely. Yeah, people can always benefit, and then it is educating people too because having people like XXX (fashion expert) in there that is educating you and letting
you know what you should wear.... We were able to be with people like XXX (fashion expert) and all the other different people that were there to give you advice and kind of walk you through it. Because everybody don't know what is appropriate. I mean you assume that people do know, but they don't.

Dorothy's description of her fashion expert's behavior closely resembles the coaching function in a mentoring relationship (Kram, 1985). According to Kram (1985), "The information and advice gained through coaching is essential to career advancement; those who have several coaches at various career stages are most fortunate" (p. 29). Women in transition may benefit from the immediate advice they receive from fashion experts, but could also establish a long-term relationship with participants from the FTA program. Women lack all the mentoring opportunities available to their male counterparts (Noe, 1988; Ragins, 1997; Blake-Beard, 2001); therefore, programs that provided a forum whereby women in transition can meet potential mentors is advantageous.

Lastly, the women learned that they and other FTA participants had similar backgrounds and experiences. The greater the similarity between the model and the individual, the more persuasive the model's successes will be viewed (Bandura, 1997). The individual can then envision him or herself in that model's role by taking that perspective, or engaging in role-taking (Mead, 1934). For example, Marie, age 22, received encouragement, counseling and potential networking tips from her fashion expert.

Actually, because I shopped with XXX (fashion expert) it also helped me because she has a friend in Big Town, USA [a large city] that has a salon, and when she talked to me about her and the way that they started out, it also gives more confidence and self-esteem that I can go out and have and do the same things that these other girls have done that once were in my shoes. So that helped a lot as well.

Marie's fashion expert was interviewed during the shopping event and revealed more of the similarity between her and Marie:

I grew up in a very small town in a double-wide trailer in the middle of Kansas. I know where they are coming from. I have had people tell me that it couldn't be done or I couldn't
overcome the odds. I've been in their shoes. So I also know the feeling of powerfulness that it gives a person when somebody says, "I believe in you and I want you to succeed."

Role models teach strategies or provide vicarious experiences for coping with environmental demands and provide a "social standard" against which the individual can judge his or her ability (Bandura, 1997).

Role models at the FTA shopping event were not limited to the fashion experts, but included a constellation of individuals who provided the women with advice, encouragement and examples of behavior they could emulate on their journey towards self-sufficiency. Kram (1986) posited that co-workers, family members, or peers could be effective in the role of mentors or role models. During the in-depth interviews, the women recipients said their experiences with physical abuse, single parenthood, or mental illness could provide encouragement to other women who were under the misconception that they were alone in their struggles.

More than one woman told the researcher that she was willing to share her personal story as a way of helping other women. Rose's, age 37, statement on the post-test questionnaire, "Remember that you could be role model for someone else," illustrates that some of the women beneficiaries identified themselves as models for others.

**Emotional Arousal**

An individual's emotional or physiological state is a factor that can affect one's perceived sense of efficacy (Bandura, 1997). People who have an elevated sense of efficacy are more likely to perceive their state of affective arousal as a performance energizer, whereas those with self-doubts view their state of arousal as debilitating (Bandura, 1997). The women recipients commented on the emotional effect the gift of clothing and the FTA shopping experience had on them.

**Work-specific boost.** The researcher explained to the women that Sears expected that the program would increase women's self-confidence and asked the women to comment on that. Joyce, age 19, responded: "I'm kind of confident about stuff anyway. I really don't lack very much there, but, yes, as far as the clothes go, yes, I felt like that was a big help." As the conversation continued, the researcher learned that Joyce started working shortly after the FTA event. Not remembering Joyce
talking about an upcoming interview during the shopping event, the researcher probed further to find out how the interviewing process went for Joyce.

[Q: Had you planned on looking for a job?] No, not yet, I wasn't planning on it already.... Maybe that, the inspiration, I guess.... I was excited. I was so excited to do it. Yes, I was ready. I mean, I went out that week and started looking.... I mean, I was excited about it. I wanted to see what I could do with my education. I wanted to see how far it would take me. And especially when they know that you are continuing to get your degree, they really want you. [Q: If you hadn't gone to FTA would you have looked for a job so soon?] I guess I wouldn't have been excited. Because when you have all that you are confident, you know.

You are determined that it didn't matter where you apply [because] you are going to get it. Joyce's comments suggest that the shopping event spurred her to begin her job hunting process. She felt academically prepared, and, with the new clothing, she felt adequately equipped to present a work appropriate appearance. Joyce's confidence during her job interview seems to be a combination of academic preparation, acquisition of work appropriate clothing, and the emotional boost she received during the FTA shopping. These added together boosted her self-efficacy toward job preparedness.

J. Miller, Executive Director of Women Work!, stated that "it is detrimental . . . to promote the notion that if you are dressed right you can get a job" (personal communication, May 17, 2000). Instead, the philosophy espoused by Women Work! is that preparation for job searches should be thoughtful, include skill building activities, and address appearance issues (i.e., appropriate dress and hygiene).

Rose, age 37, believed that her experience at FTA was directly responsible for her recent job promotion.

[Q: Do you think your new clothing had anything to do with your recent promotion?] Absolutely. I've always had that professional attitude, but I really didn't see myself as a supervisor, so I'm in a different light now and I carry myself that way.... Well, I think just having the fashion consultants and the clothes themselves. When you look good, you feel
good, and because I know I look professional with those clothes on, I tend to carry myself that way. And I hold my head up, and I even speak in a more authoritative voice as well as giving good customer service and being a team player.

Solomon and Douglas (1985) speculated that clothing that projected a professional image may enhance a woman's sense of work-related self-confidence. Both Joyce and Rose perceived that their new attire was read in the workplace as a cue that they were competent.

**General boost.** Dorothy, age 34, who felt that her self-esteem was generally high, explained how clothing could be used to enhance her positive sense of self.

Well, I basically just already feel really good about myself. I feel that I have high self-esteem. I just really, truly love myself. But I really don't have a lot of self-esteem issues. But I feel like even if you have the highest self-esteem from day to day, you know what I mean, it can be lowered depending on your situation, your circumstances, things like that.... And I think generally I have a high self-esteem, and so on those days where my self-esteem is not so great, when I dress better, I feel better.

Other women commented that mood was an influencing factor in the selection of their daily clothing. Mood, a temporal (or situational) factor has been found to be "the most dominant endogenous factor that influences one's daily selection of clothes" (Kwon, 1987, p. 26).

Sarah, age 22, left the FTA event feeling energized. She described her pre-FTA state of mind and her immediate feelings afterwards as:

But I've been in such a slump with the way that I have carried myself and the way that I have dressed. The fact that sometimes I say: "Yeah, I can conquer the world," but then the next day I say: "This is reality, and this is it." But when I left there [FTA program] I just figured, "I'm going to do this; I'm going to do whatever I have to do, but I'm gonna [sic]." It just gave me my self-confidence back because I met different types of people.

The FTA program provided a boost to Marie, age 22, beyond work related activities to her life in general. Marie, age 22, said, "Anytime I get down or anytime I get a little depressed about things, I
still remember that day and it helps." Marie's reference to "depression" was understood by the researcher to describe the occasional feeling of the "blues."

Sarah, age 22, and Marie, age 22, viewed the FTA experience as both a remembrance of an enjoyable past experience and a mechanism for focusing on future goals. The clothing items received during the shopping event may also serve to conjure up memories of that day. Clothing as a tangible object has both symbolic power and functional utility (Solomon, 1983). Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1985) stated that,

...things per se do not serve any transcending purpose; they do not help a person to change or to grow. What they do is lend their semblance to the preconscious, which projects meanings into them to neutralize part of the repressed energy of the psyche. (p. 23)

The clothing items that the women received during the FTA experience may help them recall the emotional arousal experienced during the FTA shopping event and provide them with needed emotional stimulation as they continued their self-sufficiency journey.

Hannah, age 40, also spoke about "depression" when she answered the question, "Well, did you enjoy yourself at Sears?" posed by the researcher:

Yeah, I did. I really did. I mean 'cause that brightened me up a whole lot because I had been depressed [Researcher acknowledges that Hannah said she had been depressed, but doesn't realize she means clinical depression]. So that brightened my spirits up a lot. [Q: What in particular helped to brighten you up?] Um, just knowing that I wasn't the only female that really just didn't know how to match her clothes up or to accessorize it and still look feminine and professional at the same time.

Hannah's comment suggests that she was "brightened" by the awareness that coordinating a wardrobe is not an inherent skill that individuals acquire or master automatically. They learn it.

Hannah reported an additional benefit of the FTA program for her. The researcher asked Hannah to comment on the goal that Sears had of helping women feel more confident and to have an enhanced sense of self-esteem after participating in the FTA program.
[Q: Do you think they are on target with that idea?] Yes I do. Because, I mean, you didn’t really get to know us by our bio’s, and I think that I can speak for myself, a victim of domestic violence, I am a single parent, not by my choice, and my self-esteem was very low. And that shopping trip opened my eyes to the fact that I was depressed. And it also, by me looking better, it made me want to feel better inside. So it helped me to go get help to deal with my depression.

Littrell (1999) has found success using clothing during brief counseling sessions to help clients focus on strategies to bring about therapeutic changes. Hannah, age 40, was able to use the FTA experience to look critically at herself and recognize that she could improve her mental health.

All five of these women had positive affective experiences from the FTA shopping event. Their comments capture how many of the other women described the emotional arousal or change to their affective state after experiencing the FTA event. For some women it was a window that allowed them to see a more positive life for themselves. Emotional arousal helps to make “congruent information more salient, learnable, and memorable [and] …mood-biased recollection can similarly affect people’s judgments of their personal efficacy” (Bandura, 1997, p. 111).

Recognition and Reward

One of the goals of the current research was uncovering how the FTA program could affect the recipients’ self-beliefs. As discussed earlier, the women beneficiaries were chosen by Women Work! affiliate program coordinators to participate in the FTA shopping event for a variety of reasons. Asking the women why they were chosen provided insights into their sense of self. Attribution theory which provides an understanding of how individuals may attribute outcomes to internal forces or external forces as a way of making sense of their lives (Kaiser, 1997) was useful in interpreting the women’s comments.

Twenty-two of the women beneficiaries were asked why they were selected for the FTA shopping event. Ten of the women initially responded, “I don’t know.” However, only one woman truly did not have an idea why she was chosen; the other women began offering reasons as they thought about the question. Twelve of the 22 women gave immediate answers to the question. The answers
given by the women can be organized into six broad categories: good grades, job readiness, continuous contact with program coordinator or continued involvement in program, good deportment, convincing essay, and last minute substitute. Some of women offered multiple reasons as they pondered the question why they were chosen. For example, one woman received a letter notifying her that she was chosen to participate in the FTA shopping event because of her academic skills and the way that she conducted herself.

**Good grades.** A few of the women believed that their academic performance was why they were chosen to participate in the FTA program, but this answer was not initially given to the researcher. For example, when Lois, age 39, responded she said: "I don't know... I was in the office one day and [the program coordinator asked me] 'Would you like to [participate in the FTA program]?' And I said, 'Well sure.'" Later in the interview, Lois stated that the FTA program made her feel "pretty pampered, pretty special." The researcher asked her, "Was that something that you think you needed?" Lois replied:

I think XXX (WW affiliate program coordinator) picked all of us based on our grades. I think that maybe that is not the only thing, criteria she used to base it on, but I think that was a big part of it... I know it made me think, "Well the hard work is paying off." .... We all had kids, you know. And I know how hard it is to go to school and make good grades and put the time in that is required to get those grades and still take care of a house and a family and let your kids do a few things.

A close reading of Lois' comment reveals multiple insights. One, Lois initially was uncertain why she was selected. She began by explaining that her selection was almost serendipitous; that it occurred by chance. Later, she seemed to suggest that she had earned the opportunity to participate because of her academics. Lois' comments suggests that she attributed her invitation to participate in the FTA program to factors outside of her control (external attribution) and she then moved to speculate that she may have been the agent responsible for her selection (internal attribution) (Heider, 1958).
Another interesting reading of Lois’ comment is how she framed her answer. She was asked specifically why she was chosen, but offered an answer as to why all the women were selected. Several of the women used this method of answering questions. Lois, as well as other women, may not have been comfortable talking about themselves. Lois did tell the researcher that she had difficulty writing the short bio that was given to the fashion experts prior to the shopping event. She explained that, “Now, I could write about anybody else and say all kinds of good things about them…. But it is hard to sit down and write something about yourself.”

Kelly, age 40, was another woman who had trouble at first supplying an answer as to why she was chosen:

I always wondered that. “Why did they choose me?” I don’t know if it is my attitude or some people see things in me that I don’t see. They have more confidence in me than I have in my ownself (laughs). I don’t know if it is just the way that I carry myself lately. [I have] started school, and I made the Dean’s list one six week and [got a] 4.0 [GPA].

Both Lois and Kelly earned good grades in their academic programs. They were also approximately the same age, 39 and 40 respectively. Lois’ and Kelly’s academic performances are not surprising as research has shown that middle age women are serious students (Traupmann as cited in Paludi et al., 1990). However, Lois and Kelly may be reluctant to talk about their grades and to see them as noteworthy because they have been socialized to discount or not talk about their achievements. Women are more likely to make external attributions than are men, and individuals who have experienced a lot of failure or hardship might be likely to assign external attributions [need citation].

**Job readiness.** Some women who participated in the FTA shopping event were recently employed or near the end of their educational or training programs. Without hesitation, Dorothy, age 34, said she believed the program coordinator thought she was “a good candidate” for the FTA program because of her recent employment at the community college she was attending.

Dana, age 48, was another woman who offered an immediate answer to the question of why she was selected to participate in the FTA program. She gave this explanation to the researcher:
Well, I was in her [program coordinator] workshop, and I completed the course. And we had a good rapport .... You know I liked them [other staff] when I met them. They helped me out, they gave me a lot of pointers that I may have forgotten, and they helped me fine-tune a few things that I needed to know to do. And so we got along very well. I completed her course, and so I guess I must have made an impression on her and on all of them.

Both Dorothy and Dana perceived a plausible connection between their efforts towards self-sufficiency (internal attribution) and their invitation to participate in the FTA shopping event.

Continuous contact with program coordinator or continued involvement in program. Other women cited their long-term involvement in programs or continued contact with the program coordinator as reasonable explanations for why they were selected.

Belinda, age 25, was one woman who maintained contact with the program coordinator. Her answer to the why were you chosen question required some self-reflection:

Oh you're putting me there (asking a difficult question)(laughs). She is a very lovely person, XXX (program coordinator). And I'm wondering too why she selected me.... I went to the program there at the Women's Center. I completed it. I completed the internship. I basically kind of kept in touch. We basically kept in touch. You know when people are looking out for you and they have you in their best interest, you should drop them a line every now and then.

And she has always kept in touch with me. We have always been in touch.

Belinda believed continued contact with the program coordinator was a salient factor in her being selected; however, her answer also suggests agency on her part -- "you should drop them a line every now and then."

Good deportment. The FTA shopping event was a public event highlighting Sears' philanthropic activities and was an opportunity to make the public aware of the local programs where the women received job training or educational preparedness. In some markets, the local media committed to covering the shopping event; therefore, a few of the women were asked if they would be interviewed for TV programs, newspaper articles, or radio shows. Joyce, age 19, explained why she was selected:
I don't know why she asked me to go. I think because they said something about they wanted outgoing people who would represent the school good or that won't be afraid to be interviewed and this and that and stuff like that. And she knew my personality. She knows me pretty well. I think she just figured, "I'll get Joyce" (laughs) ..... Yes, that is why she picked us. She picked students that were about to finish. Yes, she picked ones that needed it.

Joyce assumes her selection was somewhat influenced by her outgoing personality and willingness to be interviewed during the shopping event. Similar to Lois, she prefers using a third person reference, rather than discussing herself as subject. She does not however, assign academic prowess or work competency as reasons for selection.

**Convincing essay.** During the fall shopping, the researcher learned that a number of program coordinators were selecting women for the FTA shopping event based on essays the women had written that described their current situations. Theresa, age 55, was selected because of her 200-word essay that described how she felt "coming through the program, the system." Theresa was surprised when she learned that she was chosen, but extremely happy.

Francois, age 26, was selected using the same method. After writing the essay that would have given details about her life, she told the researcher that she was chosen to participate in the FTA program because, "Just basically I got lucky." Furthermore, Francois did not completely believe that she would be participating in the program even after receiving notification from the program coordinator. Francois stated that her philosophy is: "I am one of the type people that you don't believe it until it happens. That's why I said I didn't know what to expect. I was trying to keep my options open." Francois' answer suggests that she has been disappointed in the past at charitable events and has developed a mechanism for protecting herself against disappointment in the future.

**Last minute substitute.** Not all the women originally chosen to participate in the shopping event did so. A few women notified the program coordinator a few days before the event, the night prior, or the morning of the shopping event that they would not attend. To avoid losing what they considered a valuable opportunity, the program coordinators very quickly identified and invited
someone else to participate in the FTA program. Sarah, age 22, was one of the women chosen as a substitute. She gave this explanation of why she was selected:

I don't know. I just think before it happened, I was feeling a bit down, and I go sometimes on these mood swings, and I find myself not happy with anything. I find myself too fat or too skinny, or I need just a boost, or I'm bored with the same routine.... She [program coordinator] told me that someone had canceled on her and that she didn't understand why, but someone had canceled on her and that she would like me to participate with the Fashion Takes Action. I thought it was a joke. But that is how I got selected, I guess - someone else dropping out and I got pushed in. But I'm really happy that happened (laughs).

Sarah's comments indicated that she was delighted to be selected as a substitute for the FTA program. Her comment also suggests that she may have been chosen by the program coordinator because the shopping event could possibly provide her with a psychological boost.

**Program coordinators' selection methods.** The researcher also asked the program coordinators to explain what criteria were used to select the women for the FTA shopping event. The program coordinators did select the women because of good grades, job readiness, continuous contact with program coordinator or continued involvement in program, good deportment, convincing essay, and the need to find a last minute substitute. However, the program coordinator also explained other reasons they employed for selecting the women.

As discussed earlier, the program coordinators were keenly aware that the women in transition who attended the various programs or workshops had myriad needs. Some of the needs were physical or functional (shelter, clothing, childcare, transportation, employment); other needs were psychological (low self-beliefs). The FTA program was seen by the program coordinators as an event where multiple needs could be addressed. A program coordinator shared how they approached the task of helping the women identify skills they possessed, becoming more confident in public settings, and gaining a greater sense of efficacy:
[Q. Would you tell me a little bit more about your self-esteem class. What sort of things do you do in there?] At the beginning we do a little assessment to see where they are. A lot of the class is around people realizing that they have to take time for themselves, giving themselves credit for things, taking a look at those transferable skills. "I haven't done anything for 20 years" (woman speaking to program coordinator). "Unless you've sat in a room, you've done something for 20 years" (program coordinator's reply to woman). So we go over the things that they have done in the past 20 years, like organizing a family, keeping the family budget, you know what I mean. Lots of skills they don't realize they have and we just attempt to bring those out. We don't really do anything for them; we help them do for themselves.

One program coordinator explained that the women were "in the process of becoming." The FTA program was both a way to recognize the women for the hard work they had expended on their journey to self-sufficiency and to reward them for continuing on that path.

**Gratefulness**

I just really enjoyed it. *I don't really know just how to say in words how thankful, and, you know, I felt like just going and hugging everybody. It was a really nice experience. I'll probably never forget it, you know. I know that sounds kind of "Wow, I can't believe it was that big of a deal," but it really was.* (Joyce, age 19)

The above comments were made with Joyce during the phone interview with her. Joyce was describing what the FTA shopping event meant to her. Several of the beneficiaries of the program had trouble putting into words what the FTA meant to them. What they were able to communicate during the shopping event and interviews was their sincere appreciation, joy, and honor at being chosen to participate. Their positive attitudes were apparent through their voices (e.g., intonation, inflection, and tone), body language, and smiles.

Interestingly, many of the women had only partial information about the type of event they would be participating in prior to arriving at the Sears store for FTA. Dorothy, age 34, was asked to
explain what she knew about the FTA shopping event prior to arriving at the store and her comments
capture what many of the women thought:

Well, they [affiliate Women Work! program coordinators] just told us that we were going to
come and we were going to shop, you know, participate in a XXX [organization name]
activity, where we were going to shop for clothing for work. And so I thought that we were
basically just going to shop, try on the clothes, and I thought they were probably going to take
pictures for us in our work clothing and stuff like that. But I didn’t know that we were going to
keep the clothing. So when I found that out, that was like the icing on the cake. That was
nice. [Q. So did you find out that morning?] Well, I actually found out while we were shopping.
[Q. So even when you went to go shopping out on the floor, you still didn’t realize that] No, I
just assumed that we were going to take clothes, and try them on, and you know just kind of
know what we should be wearing to work. But they were going to give them to us for work!
[R. That was a nice surprise.] Yeah, it was, ‘cause I asked XXX [the fashion expert], “We get
to keep the clothing?” What made me realize [that] and ask the question [about it] was when
we got to the lingerie and they let us pick out hum, hum, you know lingerie and stuff, and I’m
thinking, “Nobody is going to see our lingerie, why would they want us to try lingerie?” And
then I said, “Oh ok” [remark to self], and I asked, and she [fashion expert] said that we would
be able to keep two outfits that we tried on.

A second common response to the researcher’s question to the women about what did they
know about the FTA shopping event prior to arriving at the store highlighted the relationship that the
women had with the local Women Work! affiliate program coordinator: “Well XXX [fashion expert] had
told me that she wanted me to come and represent XYZ organization and usually [when] XXX asked
me to do things, it is usually ok with me” (Iris, age 29).

As discussed earlier, the women were grateful for the clothing, handbags, shoes, underwear,
and makeup they received during the FTA shopping event. However, many of the women did not
participate in the FTA shopping event because they were aware they would be receiving those gifts.
They arrived at the Sears store expecting: 1) to receive information about building a work wardrobe,
2) to get interviewing tips, 3) to have a make-over, 4) to purchase clothing after a fashion show, 5) to select and receive clothing gift item(s), but not aware that a fashion expert would help them, and 6) to participate in some type of activity sanctioned by their program coordinator.

The gratefulness that many of the women felt after participating in the FTA shopping event was multifaceted. Different aspects of the program had varying degrees of affect on the different women. Some women expressed gratitude for simple acts of kindness that they were shown during the shopping event. Three weeks after the shopping event, Lois, age 39, still remembered the brief interaction she had with one of the fashion experts at the FTA shopping event:

I was walking out to the parking lot to put my clothes in the van and she [fashion expert] was in her little Jaguar, and she stopped, rolled the window down, and she spoke to me.

As discussed at length, many of the women were grateful for the advice on how to build a work wardrobe or how to apply make-up. Others were grateful for the recognition they received as women transitioning towards a better life. Still others were grateful for the respect they were shown during the shopping event. Some were grateful for the new perspectives they gained about themselves. As an example, Evelyn, age 48, wrote that two things most useful from the FTA session for her were: "Walk tall and straight; show confidence in myself even if I might not feel like that at the time; always feel good about myself." All of the women seemed to agree that the FTA shopping program was a multidimensional event that could be considered, "A mind, body and soul treat" (Iris, age 29).
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This study provides insights about the effectiveness of a philanthropic program on the self-beliefs of women in transition. The majority of studies that have examined the relationship among issues related to women's self-esteem, self-confidence, self-efficacy and clothing or appearance enhancing programs do not focus on low-income women. As low-income women enter the workforce to find jobs that will lead to self-sufficiency, it is important to understand how clothing give-away programs could help them on this journey.

The following is a discussion of the insights gleaned from the combination of the quantitative and qualitative data relative to the research questions – how does a philanthropic clothing gift program affect the beneficiaries' sense of self, what effect did the program have on the beneficiaries, and how did it influence or fit with their professional development. A number of insights were revealed using grounded theory analysis and triangulation of data. Following that section is a discussion of how previous theories helped in interpreting the findings. The latter sections of the chapter include a discussion of the limitations of this study, researcher thoughts about Sears as the corporate sponsor, suggestions for the FTA program, and future research suggestions.

Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Multiple methods of data collection, or triangulation, can provide corroboration of evidence. In the current study, both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered and provide triangulation. Results from the four quantitative measures were compared against qualitative data and revealed corroboration and conflict.

There were significant differences between the pre- and post-test scores measuring the women's satisfaction with their work wardrobe, knowledge about appropriate work attire, confidence in the functionality of their work attire, and satisfaction with their appearance using the Clothing Satisfaction and Confidence scales. The differences indicated that these attitudes and self-feelings had become more positive. These findings were strongly supported by the qualitative data. Mastery Experience, Clothing Deprivation, and Social Acceptance categories provided evidence that the women who participated in the FTA program had acquired knowledge and items of clothing that
elevated their level of satisfaction with their work wardrobe. Kelly's (age 40) statement is representative of how the women assessed the advice disseminated by the fashion experts and the gifts of clothing they received: "The advice was just as important as the clothing." That one hundred percent of the women agreed that, "The clothing from Fashion Takes Action will help in work situations," was confirmation that the clothing gifts were needed and appreciated by the women.

Similarly, there were significant differences in the women's pre- and post-FTA scores for the Work-Related Self-Confidence and Self-Efficacy measures which suggested that the women experienced an increase in their work-related self-confidence and self-efficacy. The categories of Mastery Experience, Role Modeling and Role Embracement provided qualitative evidence that the women's work-related self-beliefs were enhanced during the shopping event. Furthermore, this finding suggests that specific (work-related) confidence, esteem and efficacy can be affected by a 4-hour clothing gift program.

The quantitative data did not reveal significant differences for the pre- and post-test scores of global confidence and efficacy as measured by the General Self-Confidence and Self-Efficacy scales. Likewise, there was no evidence of significant differences between the measures of global self-esteem using the Self-Esteem scales. The lack of significant differences in the measures of confidence, efficacy and esteem is consistent with the literature that posited that these global concepts are relatively stable (Bandura, 1997; Brown, 1993; Rosenberg, 1979). However, Fiore (1988) did find significant differences in the general self-esteem scores of women who participated in a 3-week, rather than four-hour, appearance enhancing program.

An observation worth noting was the women's relatively low pre-test scores (indicating more positive feelings about self) for General Self-Confidence \( M = 1.782 \) and Self-Esteem \( M = 1.971 \) on a 1 – 5 scale. With such strong, initial self-beliefs scores, it is hard to detect if the FTA program significantly affected the women's confidence, esteem and efficacy. The majority of women stated during interviews that their general confidence and self-esteem were not affected by participation in the FTA program, and this seems to be corroborated by the quantitative data. The women seem to make a distinction between specific self-beliefs and general beliefs. As an example, some of the
women stated during interviews that they had individual days when they "felt down", but those were isolated incidents and were not reflective of their general sense of self. Some women did report that their general self-feelings where enhanced by their participation in the FTA event.

Qualitative Findings

The FTA shopping program was successful at providing the women beneficiaries with clothing that they considered work appropriate and advice that increased their competence related to wardrobe building. However, the FTA program included much more than clothing and advice. Similar to the Hawthorne studies (Roethlisberger et al., 1946), organizers of the FTA shopping event introduced multiple variables into a unique environment where unexpected effects were realized.

As indicated in Figure 1.1, various groups gave support and participated in the FTA shopping event. Figure 5.1 illustrates the local support that Sears Roebuck and Company committed to the FTA program. In the center box of the model the various items that were given to the women and other benefits introduced by Sears as part of the FTA shopping program are listed. As part of the clothing gift program, the women received from Sears' current inventory two work appropriate outfits, two handbags, two pairs of shoes, underwear (starting in Fall, 2000), and make-up. As indicated in FTA publicity material and communicated to the researcher by the FTA program coordinators, the shopping event also included the pairing of each woman beneficiary with a fashion expert who provided wardrobe building advice and involved the women in the selection process. The women were given copies of the candid and posed photographs captured by the professional photographer at the shopping event.

Other benefits not included in FTA publicity material, included the meals (breakfast and lunch), the celebratory environment prepared for the shopping event, and the additional parting gifts given the women by the local Sears management. Two additional features also noted by the women were the national reputation of the sponsor – Sears Roebuck and Company – and the interpersonal

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1 Additional cost of the FTA program included salaries/wages at the local Sears store, salaries/wages of individuals involved in coordinating FTA activities at the Corporate headquarters, salaries and expenses for 2wo-One-2wo, a $100,000 contribution to Women Work!, and funding for the current research.
dynamics generated among the FTA participants. Each of the benefits or features acted in tandem to form the FTA shopping event. Together these components created a synergistic effect that spawned the multiple benefits identified by the women. Using a grounded theory approach, the women's comments about their experience at the FTA shopping event were interpreted and summarized in 11 categories (Figure 5.1).

As stated in Chapter 4, the benefits of the FTA shopping event were not mutually exclusive, but intricately intertwined. They formed a "multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another" (Geertz, 1973, p. 10). The lacing together of categories highlighted that the holistic effect of the FTA shopping event is greater than the sum of the individual benefits identified by the women.

Figure 5.1 is a visual representation of the relationships between the benefits/features of the FTA shopping event and the effects of the program as reported by the women and summarized in the 11 categories. The innermost circles of categories - Recognition/Reward, Acceptance & Confirmation, Friendship/Camaraderie, and Role Modeling - were benefits identified by the women that had immediate, but seemingly more short-term effects. Seven long-term benefits identified by the women were Mastery Experience, Mitigation of Clothing Deprivation, Role Embracement, Social Acceptance, Mattering, Emotional Arousal, and Gratefulness. Previous theories were useful in interpreting the data and constructing the categories.

**Mitigation of Clothing Deprivation and Social Acceptance**

Symbolic interaction theory provides an understanding that individuals are defined through interactions with others (Blumer, 1969). In various ways, the women eluded to this self-defining process. For example, in the discussion of Mitigation of Clothing Deprivation and Social Acceptance, it was clear that the women held reflected appraisals of how the condition of clothing or certain body sizes would be perceived by others. The clothing gifts received at the FTA provided the women with new clothing that conveyed a positive appearance and served to enhance the women's sense of clothing satisfaction and positive self definitions. Women expressed that clothing that masked their socio-economic status or camouflaged their weight made them feel better about themselves. Thus,
Figure 5.1. Benefits of FTA Programs - 2000

Immediate benefits = Long-term benefits =
evidence was found that through a symbolic interaction process, the women became aware of negative appearance messages which resulted in negative self-feelings due to negative reflected appraisals.

**Acceptance & Confirmation and Mattering**

During interviews, the women remarked that they were given words of encouragement, support, and were shown respect and admiration during the FTA shopping. Mentoring relationships are identified as providing these types of functions (Kram, 1985). According to Kram (1985), individuals who receive this type of support — acceptance & confirmation — develop a basic level of trust in the mentoring relationship and are therefore more likely to try new behaviors when encouraged to do so by the mentor. It was evident from the women's comments that they had established a solid relationship, based on trust, with the Women Work! affiliate program coordinator prior to coming to the FTA shopping event. Many of the women were shy or timid when first arriving at the Sears store, but in a relatively short time they seemed to be comfortable with the fashion experts and others who assisted them in selecting clothing. The positive social feedback that the women received from all of the FTA participants was noted by the women.

In recounting their experience at FTA, the women remarked positively about the special facilities and amenities provided for them, that they were the guest of a national retailer, that they received focused attention, and that they were made to feel that they were important. What Sears accomplished by providing these various items in their role as the program's sponsor was to demonstrate to the women that they mattered. This sense of mattering enhanced their shopping experience and positively affected their self-feelings. According to Rosenberg and McCutcheon (1981), individuals who feel that they matter will have a high self-esteem.

**Role Embracement**

Role theory provides a more focused understanding of how individuals regard the behavior of individuals in certain contexts. The process of symbolic interaction helps individuals learn what the expected behaviors are for individuals in certain roles and contexts (Biddle, 1979). A few of the women who participated in the FTA program were newly hired at the time of the shopping event
found jobs shortly afterwards. In interviews with these women, they described transformations they experienced when they began wearing their FTA clothing. The transformations included reactions from others that seemed to suggest that they were perceived as more credible and competent. Equally surprising to some women was that they felt more confident at work in the FTA clothing. What seemed to have occurred as the women changed their appearance with the FTA clothing was a re-negotiation of the women's identities as perceived by others. Their role appropriate appearance moved closer to the expectations for dress that the women's employers or co-workers had for someone in the women's work roles.

Role Modeling

During interviews with the women, they remarked about the positive attitudes that other participants demonstrated and the skill that the fashion experts evidently possessed. These aspects have been described in the mentoring literature and in self-efficacy theory as characteristics of a role model.

During the FTA program, the women beneficiaries had the opportunity to interact with individuals from various backgrounds. They learned that other women who were beneficiaries of the program, Sears sales associates, and some fashion experts had been similarly situated as they currently were. Knowing that others were struggling with similar experiences was affirming to the women. Also, knowing that others shared similarities lead the women to feel that they were participating in the FTA program with peers, or as Hannah, age 40, explained, she felt that the experience was "like, you know, a bunch of sisters together." During the four-hour program, the women had the opportunity to receive and give support. Kram and Isabella (1985) argued strongly that peer relationships are an alternative to the traditional mentoring model and could be effective in providing individuals with development assistance. The willingness of the women to share their stories of survival with other women and to be affirmed knowing that they were not unique in various situations is an example of how peers can provide psychosocial support to each other.
Mastery Experience

One of the hallmarks of the FTA program was the pairing of the beneficiaries with fashion experts who accompany the women, provided advice, and helped them select appropriate work attire. Bandura (1997) asserted that "...enactve mastery experiences [vs. verbal instructions] are the most influential source of efficacy information because they provide the most authentic evidence of whether one can muster whatever it takes to succeed" (p. 80). Involvement in shopping was one way the women learned what was appropriate attire for the workplace and what clothing items enhanced their individual body type, skin coloring, and personality. Performance successes usually enhance an individual's belief in his or her personal efficacy, and small successes may convince individuals that they can be successful accomplishing larger tasks (Bandura, 1997). The success that the women realized during the FTA shopping event relative to wardrobe building may persuade them that they can be successful at other work-related activities (e.g., job interviews).

During the shopping event, the women received heavy doses of advice to experiment—to try new colors or styles of clothing and to try-on items. The women were challenged to think and behave in a different way. The fashion experts' advice to experiment is consistent with the encouragement that Women Work! gives women in transition about considering a wide range of occupations that will provide them with income they need to be self-sufficient (J. Miller, personal communication, May 17, 2000).

Emotional Arousal and Gratefulness

During interviews, many of the women described a variety of emotions they experienced prior to, during, and after the FTA shopping event. The emotions ranged from varying levels of apprehension and curiosity prior to the event, to feeling overwhelmed or nervous at the beginning of the event, to excitement and gratefulness at the end of the event. A number of efforts were made to help the women feel comfortable when they arrived at the local Sears stores. The fashion experts gave the women hugs, consulted with them about their personal style and color preferences, and shared stories about their personal challenges with the women. Sears prepared a celebratory atmosphere that started with the breakfast meeting and extended to the farewell luncheon for the
women. Designated Sears personnel assisted the women, dressing rooms were reserved for the women's exclusive use, and the women were the focus of media attention. All of these activities and physical store modifications conveyed to the women that they were valued guests and encouraged the women to feel comfortable during the shopping event.

The women described their shopping experience as “enjoyable,” “fun,” and “exciting.” Evelyn, age 48, described her FTA shopping experience as, “It was just relaxing, comfortable and everybody treated us well.” Some of the women traveled to the FTA shopping event together. On their journey home, many of the women said that there was lots of laughing, showing of different items to each other, and recalling different aspects of the shopping event with each other. Marie, age 22, said that “It was just loud. Everybody [talking] all at once and all excited” in the van she traveled in back home. During the in-depth interviews with the researcher approximately three weeks after the shopping events, the women were enthusiastic about their shopping experience. Many of the women had modeled the FTA clothing for family and/or friends and told them about the day’s events.

Bandura (1997) stated that, “Mood-biased recollection can ... affect people’s judgments of their personal efficacy” (p. 111). Many of the women explained that they looked at the FTA clothing or actively recalled their FTA experience when they needed a psychological boost: “Anytime I get down or anytime I get a little depressed about things, I still remember that day and it helps” (Marie, age 22). Bandura (1997) explained that, “...a positive mood activates thoughts of past accomplishments” (p. 111). Thus, the FTA experience was used by the women as an emotional retrieval cue to remind them that they had been admired and rewarded for their accomplishments, that they mattered, that they were mentors for others, and that they owned clothing that would mark them as credible and competent employees.

**Sears as Corporate Sponsor**

During data collection, analysis, and conversations with others, the researcher contemplated if the FTA program was an example of altruism or exploitation. One of the questions posed to Sears Corporate personnel was why did they create and conduct the FTA shopping program. Diane Piacconi, (personal communication, February 7, 2001), vice-president and general merchandise
manager of ready-to-wear explained that Sears focused on women in transition for this philanthropic activity because,

Well, we felt that it really tied very well into the transformation that Sears has gone through in our apparel. We went through our own transformation, and Sears is always very involved in giving back to the community. Very philanthropic in a lot of different organizations, and we just felt that this tied into fashion — what a better way for us to give back to the community, as well as help get the message out that we have transformed, that we are fashion right, and that we offer quality merchandise.

The critique may be made that if Sears is truly altruistic, then they would not have the FTA shopping event be part of a media event where they could potentially gain goodwill benefits. A few of the Women Work! affiliate program coordinators commented to the researcher that the presence of the media seemed exploitive of the women. Some women may have been deterred from participating in FTA for that reason.

The researcher observed how women interacted with the media personnel during the shopping event. The professional photographers hired by 2wo-One-2wo arrived at the beginning of the shopping event and remained until the end. During the four-hour period, many of the photographers established a rapport with the women. They took candid shots and would occasionally ask the women to hold certain poses. Sometimes the women would ask the photographers not to take their picture. For example, a few women asked a photographer not to take their pictures in outfits they tried on, but rejected because they were deemed unflattering. Some women, concerned about their weight, playfully reminded the photographer not to take shots of certain areas of their body:

Well I was picking on the photographer and I was just having fun....He wasn't ready for me. He kept taking pictures [and I said,] "Hey dude, above the waist." He said, "I'm trying to take pictures of your feet." I said, "I don't think so. I think you've had enough." He was laughing. (Violet, age 37)
During the phone interviews, many of the women talked with the researcher about the publicity generated at the particular shopping event. The women commented favorably about the newspaper stories they read about FTA, the TV news coverage they saw of the shopping event, and the radio broadcasts about FTA they heard before and after the shopping event. One woman directed the researcher to her organization's web site where photos of the FTA event were posted, and several women who had not received photos from the Women Work! affiliate prior to the in-depth interview asked the researcher if she knew how they could get copies. Women who were aware that a newspaper story about the event was published, but had not gotten the newspaper, asked the researcher if she knew how to get a copy of the past newspaper.

The comments from the women suggest that they enjoyed the media coverage because it gave them somewhat of a celebrity status with family and friends. However, some of the women did not share their experience or talk freely about the FTA shopping event with co-workers or neighbors. This may suggest that the women were comfortable having their stories in mass publications where some anonymity would be maintained, but would not discuss events that revealed their socio-economic status with individuals outside their friendship or familial support circles. Coordinators of the program may want to take care to frame the program not as a give-away for low-income women, but one for women who are making great strides in reaching a goal of self-sufficiency.

The comments received from the women who participated in this study did not indicate that they were adversely affected by the media coverage of the FTA shopping event. It is plausible that some of the women were uncomfortable with the public exposure of them as low-income women participating in a clothing gift program, but none of the women shared that feeling with the researcher. After answering the researcher's question about her opinion of Sears as the FTA sponsor, Rose, age 37, asked, "Do you think everything was ok for Sears as well?" She explained that her question was posed because, "When you have an event like that, you have expectations as well, [as] the [sponsoring] company. And I [was] just wondering if it went off as they had expected it to." Rose's comment may offer some insights about the women's thoughts on the media presence – they may have felt that it was quid pro quo for participating in the FTA shopping event. Namely, Sears had
the opportunity to publicize their philanthropic activities and the women got clothing and other related gifts.

A number of the women, without provocation from the researcher, said that in the future, they would participate in a similar event like FTA, if given the opportunity. The researcher is not aware of how many women refused to participate because of the media presence. The media presence seemed to be a positive feature of the program for the women who participated.

**Suggestions for the FTA Program**

The FTA shopping program that was studied for this dissertation was in its third year. The program’s coordinators, 2wo-One-2wo, along with Sears corporate personnel developed the program from a one-city shopping event to ten-cities. During the first year of the event, the fashion experts were given a profile of the women beneficiaries and the fashion expert selected items for the women. In the second year, the women beneficiaries were invited to join the fashion experts at the Sears store and participate in the selection process. The program coordinators realized that the one-on-one interactions that the women had with the fashion expert were valuable and incorporated that dimension in the second and third year of the program. During the year that this shopping program was under study, the program coordinators also decided to include gifts of underwear.

The FTA program had a positive impact on the women for a variety of reasons that have been discussed in this dissertation. However, Sears has an opportunity to do more or consider ways to gently shape the program. The following are suggestions for the FTA program that may help to provide an even greater impact on the women recipients.

One possibility for Sears is to develop an educational event to which they can invite a larger group of women from career development programs to learn about wardrobe building and about clothing and make-up selection to enhance body type and skin coloring. The FTA session increased the women's knowledge about wardrobe building, color coordination and make-up application. Moreover, the session shattered the women's perceptions that they were unique in their lack of knowledge about those activities. Future sessions could be structured to provide women with more practice coordinating work attire. Additional care should be taken to provide the women with a
consistent message about what is work appropriate clothing. In the sessions studied, the array of experts, some with limited expertise in work images, could have added to confusion on the part of some of the beneficiaries as to what is appropriate work attire. The inconsistencies in advice given were apparent in the data.

Incorporating interview practice in the FTA session would further distinguish it from other programs that donate clothing to women in transition. Many of the women would benefit from understanding how to confidently enter a room, sit properly, and actively participate in an interview. Individuals who regularly interview could be asked to participate in order to provide the women with relevant interviewing tips and information. Human resource personnel from representative businesses where the women might be employed could be asked to participate by providing insights about their companies' dress norms.

Coordinators of the program may want to ensure that larger size clothing is available for women invited to participate in the FTA program. As discussed earlier, it is not known if women who wear larger size clothing develop negative self-feelings when they are unable to find clothing in their size at clothing closets or when participating in clothing gift programs.

The overwhelming suggestion that the women beneficiaries gave for improving the program was to include more women in the FTA shopping event. Adjustments to the current FTA session could include treating the women to lunch and possibly small gifts and coupons, in lieu of a shopping trip and free clothing as a way of maintaining the specialness of the event. Given that many of the women were not aware that they would receive gifts of clothing at the event and noted many other benefits of the program, it would seem plausible that the suggestion to adjust the program would still provide a positive experience for the women as they continue their transition to self-sufficiency.

Limitations

The limitations of this research can broadly be categorized as relating to the research method, participant sample, and the researcher. A case study approach was employed to examine a particular clothing gift program and its effects on the recipients. The program under study does not represent the majority of clothing gift programs because of its unique approach. Applications of the
findings to other programs may be appropriate if the time and context are similar (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Questionnaires were utilized to capture quantitative data from the women beneficiaries; qualitative data included interviews and observations. In completing the questionnaires (pre- or post-test), the women may have given quick responses to the statements with little self-reflection or been confused or overwhelmed by the lengthy questionnaires.

A Hawthorne Effect or social desirability effect may have influenced how the women responded to the statements on the pre-test and post-test questionnaires. The women may have felt pressure to report that the program enhanced their feelings of self in order for the program to continue for others.

It is also noted that the General Self-Confidence and Self-Efficacy Measure (Table 3.5) included a number of negatively-worded statements. Scores on that table may be reactions to the negativity of the statements vs. responses that reflect the women's feelings about the specific situation as prompted by the item.

Post-test questionnaires were completed by some women immediately after the shopping events; others completed the instrument away from the Sears store and mailed it back to the researcher within approximately three weeks. The women's responses on the post-test may have been influenced by the time span to completion. Later responders could forget feelings about the event or have time to reflect more deeply on it.

There were a number of factors that prevented some women from initially participating in the study or fully participating. Not all women beneficiaries in the study were English speakers or used English as their first language. The quantitative instruments and qualitative protocol were in English and the researcher only spoke English. For that reason, some women did not participate in the study at all or fully. Two women did not have telephone service in their homes; therefore, they could not be contacted by the researcher for an interview. With respect to the interviews, beneficiaries of clothing gift programs may not give critical responses to questions posed by a researcher.
The women who participated in the FTA program during 2000 were selected for a variety of reasons – job readiness, need for a psychological boost, last-minute substitute, etc. The selection criteria used by the Women Work! program coordinators suggest that women were not representative of all women who attended or participated in the various programs they offer. Therefore, the findings from this study cannot be generalized to the population of women who are participants in various educational or training programs aimed at helping them gain greater self-sufficiency.

Similarly, the findings from this study represent only the responses of women beneficiaries who agreed to complete the questionnaires and be interviewed by the researcher. Incomplete responses or refusals to participate in the study further reduced the amount of useable data and raises caution about generalizing the findings to a wider population.

The initial self-esteem scores were high for many of the women. As stated in Chapter 4, many of the women had gone through a lot of positive life changes prior to the FTA shopping experience; therefore, it is difficult to detect if the FTA program affected their global self-esteem when the pre-test scores are so high. The women who participated in the FTA program may not be representative of the complete range of individuals who attend educational or training programs conducted by the Women Work! affiliates, but instead may be more successful or positive than the majority of women who might avail themselves of clothing gift programs. Consequently, the findings from this study may not be generalizable to all women in transition.

At the FTA shopping sites, many participants were present. The women beneficiaries did not make clear distinctions about the roles of the various participants. As an example, the researcher was sometimes perceived as a Sears' employee or an active participant in the shopping event vs. as an objective observer. The women's responses may have been shaped by their misunderstanding of the researcher's role. Similarly, the researcher's interpretations of the data were subjective responses based on her standpoint (Collins, 1986, 1990) and guided by theory; therefore, the interpretations can be challenged by others.
Future Research

Findings from the current study indicate that overall the women beneficiaries were positively affected by their participation in the FTA shopping event, at least in the short-term. However, there is some evidence that there were some long term effects. One woman was interviewed approximately four months after participating in the FTA program about her shopping experience and was still extremely enthusiastic about her experience.

Examinations of programs that combine clothing gifts with job readiness workshops (e.g., interviewing skills, resume writing, etc.) also may provide more insights into how to enhance the esteem, confidence and efficacy of women in transition. Studies of other clothing give-away programs are also important to gain a broader understand of the effectiveness and impact of these types of programs.

The majority of clothing gift programs target women, but men in transition may benefit from programs similar to FTA. An examination of clothing gift programs for men may reveal that men have similar or different needs as they enter or reenter the workforce.

Many organizations currently exist that can provide individuals in transition with work appropriate clothing. However, individuals who could benefit from these organizations may not be aware they exist. An examination of how these clothing gift organizations advertise their services could help address that communication gap. Women who wear large-size clothing may not locate appropriate attire at clothing gift programs. What effect does that have on their self-esteem?

What barriers, if any, are in place that may prevent women in transition from visiting clothing gift programs? How can these barriers be reduced?

Summary

The findings indicate that the FTA program had a dramatic effect on the women. Analysis of the questionnaire data indicated that participation in the program significantly increased the women's confidence that they knew what was appropriate clothing for work and improved their feelings of self-effectiveness in work and interview situations. The women reported increased ratings of their own attractiveness and a highly positive overall evaluation of Fashion Takes Action. The women indicated
that they felt more confident to engage in work situations, that the clothing they received would help
them in work situations, that they liked the clothing and make-up, and that overall the FTA program
had really helped them.

As women in transition move from the context of home or school environment to the
workplace, what is considered appropriate clothing also shifts. Clothing that does not match dress
code expectations can negatively affect the wearer's sense of personal worth or self-esteem (Rafaeli
et al., 1997). Anecdotal evidence suggests that low-income women who receive work appropriate gift
clothing items experience an increase in self-confidence and self-esteem (Hunt, 1999; Lawrence,
2001). Turner-Bowker (2001) found that a lack of appropriate clothing deterred some women in a
state job training program from pursuing work opportunities. Solomon (1983) suggested that one's
role can be enhanced by the use of symbolic props. The gifts of clothing that the women in transition
received from the FTA program, at a minimum, provided them with items that were theirs and were
current styles appropriate for the workplace and basic pieces that can be built upon to create a work
wardrobe.
xxx, (Title)
XXXX (name of organization)

Dear XXX,

In the package that I mailed you are 5 envelopes for each of the women that will be participating in the Fashion Takes Action (FTA) program. Inside each envelope is a Consent Form asking them to participate in the research that I am conducting for Sears. Please ask the women to read the form and sign it if they agree to participate in the study. They are under no obligation to participate in the research. If they choose not to, it will not have any effect on their participation in the FTA program.

If they are willing to participate in the study, then ask them to complete the questionnaire that is in the envelope. Some of the questions may seem repetitive, but they are slightly different. They can use either pen or pencil to complete the questionnaire.

Ask the women to put the questionnaire and the Consent Form back in their individual envelope when they are finish and seal it. I need their name on the outside of the envelope, but not on the questionnaire. Would you bring the envelopes with you to the session on Date (XXX)?

I am looking forward to meeting you and the women. It is a wonderful program that Sears is sponsoring!

Thank you for your help,

Harriet McLeod
DATE, 2000

Hello (New York participant in the FTA shopping event),

I received your name and address from XXX (Women Work! affiliate program coordinator) at (name of organization). I am following up on the Fashion Takes Action shopping event you participated in at Sears. Sears has asked me to do some research and find out what effect the program has had on you and what you think about the program.

Would you take a few minutes to fill out the enclosed questionnaire? There is also a separate sheet that asks you some general questions about the shopping event.

You are under no obligation to fill out the questionnaire or the questions on the separate sheet. If you decided to participate in this research, please sign the enclosed consent form.

All of your answers and comments will be confidential. I am the only person that will see them and I will not include your name in any of the reports that I am preparing.

I have enclosed a stamped envelope for you to mail back to me the:
• questionnaire
• questions on the separate sheet
• consent form

I will be in New York for the Fashion Takes Action event on September 20th. I look forward to meeting you then.

Sincerely,

Harriet McLeod
SUITING UP FOR THE WORKPLACE
Questionnaire - #1

Prepared by
Iowa State University
Textiles and Clothing Department
Ames, Iowa

for
Sears Fashion Takes Action
Please read each statement and decide how strongly you agree or disagree with the statements. If you strongly agree with the statement, circle one. If you somewhat agree with the statement, circle two. If you strongly disagree with the statement, circle five. If you somewhat agree with a statement, circle two.

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<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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### WORK WARDROBE

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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<td>I am satisfied with my current wardrobe for work.</td>
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<td>I am confident that I have appropriate clothing for work.</td>
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<td>I feel that I look competent in my current work clothing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am sure of success in work situations with the clothing I already have.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am confident that I know what is appropriate clothing for work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It would be extremely uncomfortable to go to a job interview wearing inappropriate clothes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It would be extremely uncomfortable to go to work wearing inappropriate clothes.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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I need to improve my feelings of self-worth about being a woman.

I feel like I am an attractive person.

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PERSONAL INFORMATION

Age: ______ years

Marital Status: ______ married
________ never married
________ divorced
________ separated
________ widowed

Ethnic Identity: (please check all categories that apply to you)
________ White or European American
________ Black or African American
________ Asian American
________ Hispanic or Latina American
________ Native American
________ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
________ Other (please specify) ________________________

Number of Children: ______

Education: (please check all categories that apply to you)
________ grade school
________ some high school
________ high school diploma or GED
________ technical/vocational school
________ some college
________ associate's degree (community college)
________ college degree (4-year)
________ some graduate work
________ graduate degree(s)

Thank you for taking part in the study!
SUITING UP FOR THE WORKPLACE
Questionnaire - #2

Prepared by
Iowa State University
Textiles and Clothing Department
Ames, Iowa

for
Sears Fashion Takes Action
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**WORK WARDROBE**

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<tr>
<td>I like the clothing and make-up I received at Fashion Takes Action.</td>
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What did you like most about the Fashion Takes Action session? __________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________

How could this session be improved? __________________________________________
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______________________________________________________________________________________________
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What two ideas did you get from this session that are most useful to you? __________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________________________
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<td>I feel capable of handling myself at work.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I fear that my actions at work will cause others to have a low opinion of me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When an interview is over, I will doubt that I've done well.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the end of a work day, I have doubts that I've done well.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident of performing well when I go to job interviews.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident of performing well when I go to work.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Strongly Agree | Neutral | Strongly Disagree
--- | --- | ---
I feel that going to job interviews is a difficult problem for me. | 1 2 3 4 5
I am afraid of making mistakes when I am asked unexpected questions during job interviews. | 1 2 3 4 5

### SELF-CONFIDENCE

| Strongly Agree | Neutral | Strongly Disagree |
--- | --- | ---
When unexpected problems occur, I don't handle them well. | 1 2 3 4 5
I feel insecure about my ability to do things. | 1 2 3 4 5
Failure just makes me try harder. | 1 2 3 4 5
I avoid trying to learn new things when they look too difficult for me. | 1 2 3 4 5
I do not seem capable of dealing with most problems that come up in life. | 1 2 3 4 5
I give up easily. | 1 2 3 4 5
I feel I can make a good impression when I have to. | 1 2 3 4 5
I give up on things before completing them. | 1 2 3 4 5
If I can't do a job the first time, I keep trying until I can. | 1 2 3 4 5
When I set important goals for myself, I rarely achieve them. | 1 2 3 4 5
If something looks too complicated, I will not even bother to try it. | 1 2 3 4 5
I don't make a very favorable first impression on people. | 1 2 3 4 5
I have sometimes given up on doing something because I thought I didn't have the ability to succeed. | 1 2 3 4 5
I lack confidence when I am in a new and unknown situation. | 1 2 3 4 5
I can do anything I want to do because I have confidence in myself. | 1 2 3 4 5

### FEELINGS ABOUT SELF

| Almost Always | Usually | Sometimes | Seldom | Almost Never |
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself. | 1 2 3 4 5
At times I think I am no good at all. | 1 2 3 4 5
I feel that I have a number of good qualities. | 1 2 3 4 5
I am able to do things as well as most other people. | 1 2 3 4 5
I feel I do not have much to be proud of. | 1 2 3 4 5
I certainly feel useless at times. | 1 2 3 4 5
I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on a equal plane with others. | 1 2 3 4 5
I wish I could have more respect for myself. | 1 2 3 4 5
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure. | 1 2 3 4 5
I take a positive attitude toward myself.  
I need to improve my feelings of self-worth about being a woman.  
I feel like I am an attractive person.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Usually</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I take a positive attitude toward myself.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need to improve my feelings of self-worth about being a woman.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I am an attractive person.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PROGRAM EVALUATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fashion Takes Action has really helped me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The clothing from Fashion Takes Action will help in work situations.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know I will be more confident in work situations after taking part in Fashion Takes Action.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like the clothing and make-up I received at Fashion Takes Action.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Age: _____ years

Marital Status: _____ married
_____ never married
_____ divorced
_____ separated
_____ widowed

Ethnic Identity: (please check all categories that apply to you)
_____ White or European American
_____ Black or African American
_____ Asian American
_____ Hispanic or Latina American
_____ Native American
_____ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
_____ Other (please specify) __________________________

Number of Children: _____

Education: (please check all categories that apply to you)
_____ grade school
_____ some high school
_____ high school diploma or GED
_____ technical/vocational school
_____ some college
_____ associate’s degree (community college)
_____ college degree (4-year)
_____ some graduate work
_____ graduate degree(s)

Thank you for taking part in this study!
Please give me your thoughts about the shopping event.

What did you like most about the Fashion Takes Action session?

How could this session be improved?

What two ideas did you get from this session that are most useful to you?

Thank you for taking part in this study!

*Additional questions inserted into modified post-test questionnaire for women beneficiaries in New York.*
CONSENT FORM*

You are invited to participate in a study examining the effectiveness of the Fashion Takes Action program. I have been asked by Sears to talk with the women participating in this program to see how effective it is. This is one of the 10 cities where Sears will be conducting the program this year.

If you decide to participate in this study, I will ask you to fill out two questionnaires — one before your shopping session and one after. The questions ask how self-confident you are feeling about job interviewing and work, how you are feeling about yourself right now, your thoughts about your work wardrobe, and your expectations for the Fashion Takes Action program.

I would like to talk one-on-one with you sometime during your shopping trip. Our conversation will last about 15 minutes and will be tape-recorded if you give me permission to record. I will be around during the shopping trip to observe what you select and hear what advice you are given about your work wardrobe.

Also, I will ask permission to call you in three weeks to talk about your wardrobe. Participation in the follow-up phone call is not required for participation in the interview and questionnaires. If we conduct a phone interview, I then will ask you if you are willing to fill out a final questionnaire that I will mail to you.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Only I, the interviewer, could possibly know what you have answered. Tapes from the interview will be transcribed by a professional transcriber. However, neither your name nor any other personal identifiers will be included on the tape, in the transcription, or on the questionnaires. The tapes will be destroyed by January 31, 2001.

Your decision to participate in this study will not have any effect on your participation in the Fashion Takes Action program. Also, your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your present or future relations with Iowa State University. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time.

If you have any questions, please ask me. If you have any additional questions later, I will be happy to answer them. You may reach me (Harriet McLeod) at (515) 294-8519, Iowa State University, Textiles and Clothing Department, 1052 LeBaron Hall, Ames, Iowa 50011-1120. The faculty person supervising this study is Dr. Mary Lynn Damhorst. She can be reached at the same address or phoned at (515) 294-9919.

You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice after signing this form should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

Signature ___________________________ Date ___________________________

* Consent form mailed to Women Work! affiliate program coordinator prior to FTA shopping event.
CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a study examining the effectiveness of the Fashion Takes Action program. I have been asked by Sears to talk with the women participating in this program to see how effective it is. This is one of the 10 cities where Sears will be conducting the program this year.

If you decide to participate in this study, please fill out the enclosed questionnaire and separate sheet with additional questions. Questions on the questionnaire ask how self-confident you are feeling about job interviewing and work, how you are feeling about yourself, and your thoughts about your work wardrobe. The questions on the separate sheet ask you to comment on your experience with the Fashion Takes Action program.

I would like to telephone and talk with you about your new wardrobe. The phone call will last approximately 30 minutes. You may choose to fill out the questionnaire and not talk with me by telephone.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Only I, the interviewer, could possibly know what you have answered. Tapes from the interview will be transcribed by me. The tapes will be destroyed by January 31, 2001.

You are not required to take part in this study because you participated in the Fashion Takes Action program. Also, your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your present or future relations with Iowa State University. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time.

If you have any questions, please ask me. If you have any additional questions later, I will be happy to answer them. You may reach me (Harriet McLeod) at (515) 294-8519, Iowa State University, Textiles and Clothing Department, 1052 LeBaron Hall, Ames, Iowa 50011-1120. The faculty person supervising this study is Dr. Mary Lynn Damhorst. She can be reached at the same address or phoned at (515) 294-9919.

You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice after signing this form should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

__________________________  ________________
Signature                  Date

* Form mailed to FTA beneficiaries in New York City.
APPENDIX G: 2ND REQUEST POST CARD
Dear,

It was a pleasure meeting you during your "shopping spree" at Sears. Thank you for filling out that first questionnaire I gave you. If you haven't already, please complete the second questionnaire and mail it back to me.

I will be calling you the week of XXX to chat with you about the Sears shopping experience. Your answers and comments are important to my research.

Thank you for your help.
Harriet McLeod
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR WOMEN WORK! AFFILIATE
(LOCAL PROGRAM COORDINATOR)

Q: What types of programs do you provide at your organization?
Q: How is your organization funded?
Q: How do you select the women for the FTA program?
Q: What are the concerns that the women have about participating in the FTA program?
Q: What do you know about the FTA program?
Q: What are your expectations for the FTA program?
APPENDIX I: TELEPHONE SCHEDULE FOR SEARS CORPORATE
Questions for Sears Corporate – Diane Paccioni (Vice-President of GMM) RTW

Why did the FTA program start?

When did it start?

What resources have you committed to it?

What were the initial goals for the program?

What are the long-term goals of the program? (civic & corporate)

Who has been involved in the organization/execution of the program?

Method for evaluating the program?

Feedback from the program?

Is there an ideal or long-term structure for the program?

Are there any related programs being sponsored?
APPENDIX J: TELEPHONE SCHEDULE FOR WOMEN WORK!
Interview with Jill Miller (Executive Director of Women Work!)

Would you explain to me what you do at Women Work!

How is Women Work! structured? Are there other governing boards other than the National Board?

California doesn't have a Women Work! president?

Where does your funding come from?

What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces?

Do the local organizations received any specific mandates from Women Work! about programming or training?

Can you tell me about the size or your membership?

What exactly are "one-stop" career centers? Are they part of your local organizations programs? How many are there? How successful are they?

Could you tell me about the "Work Your Image" program or article from your Network News?

What is TANF? - listed as a critical issue on your web page

What percentage of the women who seek help through Women Work are seeking help through Women Work because of divorce, welfare-to-work, or other?

Do you work with the Women's Bureau? If so, in what way?

Would you explain to me about the divorce filing fees and how you are able to use them as a funding source for the displace homemaker program in Kansas?

What sort of support do you receive from companies?

Were you associated with Sears prior to the project? What do you think of Sears for doing this project?

Were you involved in the selection of the cities for the Fashion Takes Action (FTA) program? If so, what criteria did you use?

Were there any instructions that you gave to the local organization in terms of who should/could be selected to participate in the FTA program?

Do you know if there has been an increase in private corporation donating time or money to program that are non-profit or program that have experienced government budget cuts?

I understand you had to review the proposed project and approve it. What were some of the things you considered during the review stage. Why did you approve the project? What did you see would be the benefit of the project?

How will the Sears Fashion Takes Action program be discussed or disseminated to your membership?

Are there any consistent activities, programs, training across the local Women Work! organizations?

What do you see is/are the biggest challenges that women have when they are re-entering the workplace after divorce, welfare?
Interview with Jill Miller (continued)

Sears, via 2wo One 2wo, has indicated that low self-esteem may be an issue for women returning to the workforce after welfare, divorce. In your work at Women Work! have you found low self-esteem to be an issue?

If low self-esteem an issue, how has it been addressed at the local organizations thus far?

Do you have a sense of what the women (participants) think about the importance of dress?

How have dress related issues/training been handled in the past at the local organizations?

What are your personal thoughts about dress in the workplace?

How would you rate dress in importance with respect to preparation for a job interview?

How would you rate dress in importance with respect to the workplace?

What sort of programs/training do you provide for girls?

Are there any components of women's work that you have not addressed through your programs yet that you want to focus on?

When is your National Conference? Where?
APPENDIX K: TELEPHONE SCHEDULE FOR 2wo-One-2wo
Phone Interview with 2wo-One-2wo Public Relations Associate – Briana Haas (FTA Coord)

Q: For the record, would you tell me what your involvement was in organizing the FTA program?
Q: Who developed the FTA program?
Q: Did you have any involvement in connecting Women Work! with the FTA program?
Q: What do you think about the FTA program?
Q: Have you had any direct contact with the women after the event?
Q: When you contact the fashion editors what sort of response do you get from them?
Q: Have you had a chance to talk with any of the editors after the event?
Q: Since you have had a chance to work with it for two years, do you see any changes that you would want to make in the program or improvements?
Q: Who helps you organize the program?
Q: What is the greatest challenge for you in terms of working with this project?
Q: What is the greatest benefit that you have working with this project?
Q: Is there anything that I haven’t asked you about the program that is crucial for me to be aware of?
Q: Who is responsible for picking the sites where the shopping will take place?
Q: Are you the one who contacts the Women Work! affiliate program coordinator?
Q: When you call them, what sort of things do you tell them about the program to get them ready for it?
Q: Do you make any suggestions to the program coordinator about whom they should select?
Q: What about in terms of distributing information about the event, who is involved in doing that after the shopping event?
Q: What are you doing during the shopping event?
Q: When unusual situations come up, do you have to call and get permission or direction on how to handle it/them?
Q: What autonomy has Sears given you?
Q: Do you talk with Sears on a regular basis about the program, supply them with information about how it is going?
Q: About how long does it take you to get an event in place?
Q: What do you do with the women’s bios?
Q: How do you identify who would be a potential shopping expert?
Q: Are there any aspects of the program that you would like to see done?
Q: The phases of the event, could you talk to me about what you hope to happen during them?
APPENDIX L: TELEPHONE SCHEDULE FOR WOMEN BENEFICIARIES
PHONE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR WOMEN BENEFICIARIES OF FTA

Hello _______.

This is Harriet McLeod from Iowa State University. I met you at the Fashion Takes Action event at the Sears store in _________. How are you? I'm calling to chat with you about the event. Sears has asked me to find out how effective the Fashion Takes Action program is. Would this be a good time for us to talk for about 30 minutes or so? If not, can you give me a day and time when I could call you back.

May I tape record our conversation so that I don't have to take so many notes and can talk more easily with you? I want to remind you that everything we talk about is strictly confidential. All of the information I am collecting will not have your name associated with it, unless you give me permission to use your name.

I'm still excited about the shopping that you did that day! I loved the ______ outfit on you. Have you had a chance to wear it yet? Did you wear it to a job interview or to work? What other outfit did you get that day? Have you worn it?

Tell me about how you are involved at ________ (specific organization women are affiliated with for the FTA event).

Are you preparing to go to a job interview or are you working?

Women with job interviews

How long has it been since you were employed outside the home?
What type of job will you be applying for?
Do you have job interviews scheduled?
How have your interviews been going?
How many have you had?
Tell me about them (it).
What preparation have you made for the job interview?
How confident are you with your preparation for the job interview?
What were you planning to wear to your job interview if you didn't participate in the Fashion Takes Action program?
What do you think is appropriate for you to wear to the job interview?
Has your new wardrobe been appropriate for the job interviews you have had so far?
How important do you think your clothing is/was during your job interview(s)?
Do you think your new wardrobe from Sears is/will make you feel more confident during the job interview?
Why do you think that is/will happen(s)?
Once you get a job, how will the clothing help you?
PHONE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR WOMEN BENEFICIARIES OF FTA (continued)

Women with jobs

How has the job been going?
What type of work are you doing?
How long have you been working at this job?
How has the new wardrobe been working for you?
Has your new wardrobe been appropriate for your job so far?
How important do you think your clothing is at your job?
Describe some of the other outfits you wear to work?
Do you feel that you can build on the outfits you received from Fashion Takes Action?
Has your new wardrobe from Sears made you feel confident on the job?
Why do you think that happened?
Has your new wardrobe done anything to help on the job?

All Women
(questions about fashion expert)

I'm curious about your experience with ________ (fashion expert).
How did you enjoy shopping with her (fashion expert)?
What sort of advice did she give you about building a work wardrobe?
Did you find what she was tell you to be different from what you thought was appropriate? If so, how?
Was she able to help you in any other way, besides giving you wardrobe advice? If so, how?
Did you feel comfortable shopping with her?
How was she able/not able to help you feel comfortable with her?
Have you been in contact with her since the Fashion Takes Action event?

(questions about self)

Do you know how you were chosen to participate in the Fashion Takes Action event?
What were you imagining would happen that day when you were on your way to Sears for the Fashion Takes Action event?
How were you feeling? nervous, excited, apprehensive, embarrassed
Did you ever feel that you did not want to participate in the Fashion Takes Action program? Why?
What do you think of the Fashion Takes Action program now?
PHONE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR WOMEN BENEFICIARIES OF FTA (continued)

How did you feel filling out the bio's?

Some women felt awkward admitting they were poor or in need of help. Was this your feeling in any way?

Did you find the Sears personnel helpful during the Fashion Takes Action event?

Do you think you would shop at Sears in the future?

Do you think Sears should continue the program?

What do you think of Sears for doing this program?

Are there any changes you could recommend for the program?

What did you enjoy most about the program?

How did the program benefit you?
APPENDIX M: CODING GUIDE
CODING GUIDE

1. **Mastery Experience**
   Sense that self has acquired a skill (cognitive or aesthetic), has gained competence in an area, or has improved on an ability. Sense that self actively involved in learning process. References to changes in self resulting from acquired skill (increased confidence, self-worth, efficacy).
   1. Wardrobe building
      References to skills or knowledge (newly acquired or formerly held) relative to clothing selection, coordination, or work wardrobe building. Assessment of wardrobe building skills.
      1. Wardrobe building skills
         Coordination of color and style, mixing and matching items, proper sizing, camouflage strategies, experimentation, coordination of accessories with clothing.
   2. Make-up
      References to make-up (cosmetics for the face); skills or knowledge (newly acquired or formerly held) relative to make-up or cosmetics for the face. Assessment of make-up application skills.
      1. Knowledge
         How to apply; references to explanation of types of products; information about which products complement self (by color or category).
      2. Impression
         Psychological feeling generated by wearing make-up; sense of how others perceive self or an individual wearing make-up; why make-up worn or not worn.
      3. Evaluation
         Assessment of quality of product or compatibility with self (skin color) or coverage (light, natural, heavy); assessment of make-up application; assessment of individual applying make-up; assessment of make-up application experience.
      4. Usage
         When worn, where worn, assessment of skill applying make-up; time spent applying make-up; what products received or owned.
   3. Contextual appropriateness
      Sense that one knows which styles (clothing, make-up amount and style) appropriate to the workplace. References to trendiness or fashion.

2. **Clothing Deprivation**
   Feelings related to satisfaction with one's wardrobe. Issues of self-esteem related to satisfaction with clothing.
   1. Evaluation
      Assessment of match with generalized others' appearance. Assessment of quality, quantity, appropriateness, fit, match with other garment item(s), condition of garment, comfort of garment, fashionability of garment. Assessment of how well item matches personal style or addresses wardrobe need. References to personal clothing style, and preferences; concerns about seasonality.
   2. Source
      Where and/or how clothing obtained; amount and type of clothing received as gift; amount and type of clothing purchased.
   3. Contextual Issues
      Where specific clothing worn (includes modeling in home and wearing out in public); what clothing not worn and why; appropriateness to setting.
2. Clothing Deprivation (continued)

4. Extra Gifts
   References to items received that were not part of the original package of gifts; where received, who was gift giver, type of items(s). Evaluation of extra gifts; usefulness of item(s), valuation of item(s), other assessments of the item(s).

3. Role Embracement
   Feeling that one is competent in role. Feelings related to comfort in role (physical and psychological).
   1. Appearance
      References to appearance as communication tool in workplace settings.
      1. Appearance as internal and external cues of role performance. Awareness and use of appearance to convey information or effect impression about the wearer to others. References to compliance with dress norms, competence, socio-economic status, future employment goals, sameness of appearance to others, confidence, self-esteem.
   2. Work Experience
      References to employment; job training, academic preparation for future employment.
      1. Previous work experience
         Type, length of employment, duties, compensation, work schedule; past training (not limited to a specific job); educational background; presence of co-worker(s) or supervisors; dress code or dress norms. Assessment of past employment, job training, or participation in work related programs.
      2. Current employment
         Type, length of employment, duties, compensation, work schedule; present academic program; current job training program; presence of co-worker(s) or supervisors; dress code or dress norms. Assessment of current employment, job training, or participation in work related programs.
      3. Future employment
         Type, training needed, reason for choice, geographical location; scheduled job interviews; dress norms.

4. Social Acceptance
   Sense that one "fits in" with others (peers, co-workers, etc.). Feeling that one meets a social standard.
   1. Comparison
      Assessment of self or an individual (physical, social, cognitive, psychological). Includes perceptions about others' perceptions of the self (i.e., imagined perceptions of others). sense that self is similar/dissimilar to others in appearance;
      1. Physical traits
         Assessment of physical traits (age, weight).
      2. Societal status
         Assessment of socio-economic status, family and/or marital status. Assessment of past or current employment as it relates to socio-economic status. References to socio-economic status, family and or marital status. References to job training or academic program currently enrolled in or previously enrolled in as they relate to socio-economic status.
      3. Cognitive ability
         Assessment of cognitive abilities (not limited to academic or job training abilities); academic grades; academic success, skills related to work situations.
5. **Mattering**
   Sense that self is focus of attention, is important, and that others depend on self. Evaluation of treatment received from others.
   1. **Attention**
      Sense that self is subject of focused attention. References to pampering; sharing attention with others. Feelings about focused attention.
   2. **Important**
      Feeling that presence is anticipated and/or prepared for. Assessment of amount of preparation made by others for self. Sense that desires or needs met or would be met. References to professional consultation, type of treatment by others, limitations (time, facilities, inventory).
   3. **Others depend on self**
      Sense that self vital agent during interaction(s).

6. **Friendship/Camaraderie**
   Sense of mutual liking and understanding; sense of bonding with others. Continued contact with others beyond program of a substantial nature. Sense that group working towards same goal; feeling that self is part of a group effort. Sense that others share similar experience or have similar needs.

7. **Acceptance and Confirmation**
   Feeling that one is admired, given support, and shown respect. Sense that one is in a supportive environment. Feeling of confidence in others. Sense that other is concerned about self; that other is performing in the best interest of self; that other gives self honest feedback, trust.
   1. **Comfortableness**
      Sense of being either physically or psychologically at ease (low, medium, high). Perception that effort (minimum, medium, maximum) made by others to ensure or enhance comfort of self. References to personality traits or behaviors conducive to positive interaction. References to feeling intimidated; unpleasant treatment; anxiety during interaction(s) or prior to interaction(s) with others (low, medium, high).
   2. **Self Disclosure**
      Degree to which personal vs. general information about self, in a written or oral form, is shared with others (e.g., family life, financial status, participation in charitable or social service programs). References to degree of comfort talking or writing about self. Talk about participation in charitable program between or among other participants.

8. **Role Modeling**
   Sense that behavior of others can be used as model for self; that other is an expert or knowledgeable; that self is a model for others or source of inspiration for others. Sense that self similar to role model. References made to motivations or motivators for work, future, or life in general.

9. **Emotional Arousal**
   Sense that experience(s) affective in nature; emotional. Feeling that experience transcends self to different time, place, mood. Sense of enhanced efficacy due to affective experience.
   1. **Affective**
      Mood altering or enhancing experience. References to experience as entertaining or enjoyable.
   2. **Conjuration**
      References to experience or object used to recall event, place, or person; used to relive experience with others; talisman. References to collecting objects as mementos (including photos, newspaper stories, TV coverage of event).
10. Recognition and Reward
Sense that past experience(s) or effort(s) noteworthy. Sense that tangibles or intangibles given to self as acknowledgement for past or current effort(s). Sense that tangibles or intangible given as incentive for future efforts(s).
   1. Awareness
      References to why chosen for program (including, but not limited to academics, deportment, job readiness, relationship with others).

11. Gratefulness
Feelings of appreciation, gratitude, thankfulness for gifts or treatment by others. References to ability to articulate feelings; descriptions of gifts or treatment by others. References to event occurring out of the ordinary; references to participation in programs or attendance at event that is not part of normal schedule.
   1. Evaluation of program
      Overall evaluation of organization, structure, and magnitude of clothing gift program. Sense that personal preferences considered. References to treatment received as customer vs. participants in charitable program. Assessment of employees as representatives of retailer.
   2. Evaluation of sponsor
      References to program sponsor as patron; program sponsor and community involvement. Likelihood to shop there in future.
   3. Evaluation of gifts
      Assessment of merchandise quality, pricing structure, types or categories of merchandise, range of sizes and styles. Knowledge about merchandise offered at store.
   4. Needs
      References to how gifts or personal treatment addressed needs; suggestions for changes to program (e.g., no changes, hairstyling, more women, job interview workshop). References to constraints (e.g., family obligations, impediments to success, societal power structure, public transportation, time needed to build work wardrobe, financial limitations).
   5. Outcomes
      References to changes in self resulting from program (increased confidence, inspiration, personal development, feeling important).

12. Miscellaneous
Issues other than those characterized by major categories 1 – 11.
APPENDIX N: HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL
Information for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects
Iowa State University
(Please type and use the attached instructions for completing this form)

1. Title of Project: Women in Transition: Suting Up For Self-Esteem and Self-Confidence in Job Interviews

2. I agree to provide the proper surveillance of this project to insure that the rights and welfare of the human subjects are protected. I will report any adverse reactions to the committee. Additions to or changes in research procedures after the project has been approved will be submitted to the committee for review. I agree to request renewal of approval for any project continuing more than one year.

Mary Lynn Damhorst
Typed name of principal investigator
4/10/00
Date

Textiles and Clothing
Department
1052 LeBaron Hall
Campus address

(515) 294-9919
Phone number to report results

4/10/00
Date

Graduate student researcher
Relationship to principal investigator

4. Principal investigator(s) (check all that apply)
X Faculty
Staff
Graduate student
Undergraduate student

5. Project (check all that apply)
X Research
X Thesis or dissertation
Class project
Independent Study (490, 590, Honors project)

6. Number of subjects (complete all that apply)
# adults, non-students: 51 appx.
# minors under 14:
# ISU students:
other (explain):
# minors 14 - 17:

7. Brief description of proposed research involving human subjects: (See instructions, item 7. Use an additional page if needed)

In the study we will measure the impact of the Sear's Fashion Takes Action program on the clients in the program. The Sear's Fashion Takes Action program helps low income women in transition acquire clothing and cosmetics to help them put together appropriate professional images for the job interview and job performance situation. Using a pretest/posttest approach, we will ask each client to complete a 10-15 minute questionnaire soon after arriving at the Fashion Takes Action session. Clients will be given written assurance that all responses are completely confidential. Only the graduate student researcher collecting data will be able to match people with responses. The researcher will also ask to interview each client at the sessions to collect information about background experiences and expectations for the Fashion Takes Action program. The interviews will be tape recorded. The researcher will act as a participant observer and follow the client through the FTA process, when possible. At the end of the session, the client will be asked to fill out a second questionnaire that repeats key items from the pretest questionnaire. The researcher will ask 15 to 25 clients if they are willing to be called in about three weeks for a follow-up interview after they have had at least one job interview. During those interviews, the researcher will ask about how interviews are going and attitudes about the Fashion Takes Action wardrobe. Clients will be asked if they are willing to fill out another questionnaire (will send through the mail) to see if their responses have changed over time.

http://www.grad-college.iastate.edu/forms/HumanSubjects.doc GC 999
(Please do not send research, thesis, or dissertation proposals.)

8. Informed Consent:  
   x Signed informed consent will be obtained. (Attach a copy of your form.)
   □ Modified informed consent will be obtained. (See instructions, item 8.)
   □ Not applicable to this project.

9. Confidentiality of Data: Describe below the methods you will use to ensure the confidentiality of data obtained. (See instructions, item 9.)

Only the researcher (graduate student) will be able to match the informants' names with their responses. No identifying labels will be used on the questionnaires, interview protocols, or tape recordings. A transcriber will be hired, but will not be supplied with names of the informants. The tapes will be erased by January 31, 2001.

10. What risks or discomfort will be part of the study? Will subjects in the research be placed at risk or incur discomfort? Describe any risks to the subjects and precautions that will be taken to minimize them. (The concept of risk goes beyond physical risk and includes risks to subjects' dignity and self-respect as well as psychological or emotional risk. See instructions, item 10.)

None

11. CHECK ALL of the following that apply to your research:

   □ A. Medical clearance necessary before subjects can participate
   □ B. Administration of substances (foods, drugs, etc.) to subjects
   □ C. Physical exercise or conditioning for subjects
   □ D. Samples (blood, tissue, etc.) from subjects
   □ E. Administration of infectious agents or recombinant DNA
   □ F. Deception of subjects
   □ G. Subjects under 14 years of age and/or □ Subjects 14 - 17 years of age
   □ H. Subjects in institutions (nursing homes, prisons, etc.)

   X I. Research must be approved by another institution or agency (Attach letters of approval)

If you checked any of the items in 11, please complete the following in the space below (include any attachments):

   Items A–E Describe the procedures and note the proposed safety precautions.

   Items D–E The principal investigator should send a copy of this form to Environmental Health and Safety, 118 Agronomy Lab for review.

   Item F Describe how subjects will be deceived; justify the deception; indicate the debriefing procedure, including the timing and information to be presented to subjects.

   Item G For subjects under the age of 14, indicate how informed consent will be obtained from parents or legally authorized representatives as well as from subjects.

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Items H–I  Specify the agency or institution that must approve the project. If subjects in any outside agency or institution are involved, approval must be obtained prior to beginning the research, and the letter of approval should be filed.

X We are currently in consultation with Sears to receive approval and funding.
Checklist for Attachments and Time Schedule

The following are attached (please check):

12. ☑ Letter or written statement to subjects indicating clearly:
   a) the purpose of the research
   b) the use of any identifier codes (names, #s), how they will be used, and when they will be removed (see item 17)
   c) an estimate of time needed for participation in the research
   d) if applicable, the location of the research activity
   e) how you will ensure confidentiality
   f) in a longitudinal study, when and how you will contact subjects later
   g) that participation is voluntary; nonparticipation will not affect evaluations of the subject

13. ☑ Signed consent form (if applicable)

14. ☑ Letter of approval for research from cooperating organizations or institutions (if applicable)

15. ☑ Data-gathering instruments

16. Anticipated dates for contact with subjects:

   First contact: 4/18/2000
   Last contact: 1/10/2001

17. If applicable: anticipated date that identifiers will be removed from completed survey instruments and/or audio or visual tapes will be erased:

   1/31/2001

18. Signature of Departmental Executive Officer

   Date: 4/10/00
   Department or Administrative Unit: Textiles and Clothing

19. Decision of the University Human Subjects Review Committee:

   ☑ Project approved
   ☐ Project not approved
   ☐ No action required

   Name of Human Subjects in Research Committee Chair
   Patricia M. Keith

   Date: 1/25/00
   Signature of Committee Chair: [Signature]
REFERENCES


currents (pp. 10-28). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.


ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I am indebted to the many individuals who participated in FTA at various levels and agreed to share their thoughts about the program with me. These individuals include personnel from Sears Corporate and local Sears stores, employees at Women Work | Executive office, and Women Work | local program coordinator affiliates. Various fashion experts and media personnel involved in the FTA program also shared insights about the project with me. Gratitude is deeply extended to the women in transition, beneficiaries of the FTA program, who shared thoughts about their experience and time with me.

I am deeply grateful to my committee members for their expertise during this project. Feedback from each member challenged me to think more critically and theoretically about the project. Thank you Drs. Fiore, Miller, Morrow, and Barone for your academic guidance and especially for your morale support.

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