Rayon and its impact on the fashion industry at its introduction, 1910-1924

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Rayon and its impact on the fashion industry at its introduction, 1910-1924

by

Carmen N. Keist

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

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Major: Textiles and Clothing

Program of Study Committee:
Sara J. Kadolph, Co-Major Professor
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Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
2009

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ABSTRACT

Rayon was and continues to be an important fiber to the textile and fashion industry. Prior to rayon’s invention, only natural fibers such as cotton, silk, flax, and wool were available for clothing and home furnishings. Rayon, invented in 1846, began to be manufactured in the United States in 1911. Called artificial silk until 1924 when the name rayon was coined, rayon was a less expensive alternative to silk clothing and accessories.

This paper focused on the time period of 1910-1924. The start date 1910 was selected because rayon production in the United States started in 1911. The year 1924 was chosen as a stop date for this project because acetate was invented in 1924 making rayon no longer the only manufactured fiber. This topic was important to study because little to no research had been done to address how rayon was introduced to consumers and to assess its impact on the fashion world. Seven research questions guided the research. These questions were: What was the early history of rayon production and introduction to the public? What names did manufacturers use when selling rayon? What type of products featured rayon? How were the above products promoted to the public? What were the stated advantages of rayon during this time period? What were the stated disadvantages of rayon during this time period? Why was rayon perceived as inferior to silk? This study utilized a grounded theory and content analysis to analyze data collected from the retailers’ newspaper Women’s Wear, the woman’s fashion magazine Harper’s Bazar, and the woman’s home magazine Good Housekeeping.

Manufacturers and the industry used a variety of names to describe rayon which seemingly caused confusion for the consumer. The terms artificial silk, art silk, fiber (fibre) silk, fiber (fibre), chemical silk, manufactured silk, scientific silk, rayonner, and rayon silk
were all used to describe one type of fabric. The majority of products made of rayon were hosiery; along with sweaters, draperies and curtains, embroidery and trim, bed spreads, dresses, scarves, blouses, women’s suits, hats, and socks.

During the time period of 1910-1924, many advantages and disadvantages were apparent. The major advantage of rayon was its luster; the second major advantage was cost. Rayon was lower in cost than silk. Other advantages of rayon included its ability to cover and it wore well as dress trimmings and embroidery. In spite of these advantages, there were many disadvantages. Rayon was susceptible to heat and moisture, only one-eighth as strong as silk, and weaker when wet. Women who purchased rayon did not know how to properly care for the fiber. Rayon fibers were coarser than silk which produced a coarser weave, had poor elasticity, poor abrasion resistance, poor dye affinity, and lacked the necessary qualities to produce a twistable yarn.

Rayon was seen as inferior to silk for four main reasons. First, was the industry’s portrayal of the fiber rayon. Terms such as “real” and “true” silk made consumers think that silk was the optimal choice, but that they might have to settle for rayon, the imposter. Cost perceptions was the second major reason rayon that was seen as inferior. The majority of rayon products were priced less expensively than silk products. For many consumers, cheaper prices equaled lower quality. Third was confusion about the terminology used. A variety of terms were used to describe rayon: artificial silk, art silk, fiber (fibre) silk, fiber (fibre), chemical silk, scientific silk, rayonner, wood silk, and rayon silk. With this list of terms, consumers would not necessarily know what specific product they purchased or the correct fiber content. The fourth, and final reason, was poor information provided about rayon to the consumer.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“The rayon industry is a striking case of the triumph of synthetic chemistry combined with modern engineering skill.”¹ Clothing is a basic human need. Before the turn of the 20th century, the four natural fibers used to make clothing were cotton, linen, wool, and silk. With the introduction of rayon, a manufactured fiber, science revolutionized the fashion and apparel industry. The concept of a manufactured fiber was new to the 20th century and many people were not well informed of this modern invention.

Rayon was invented in 1846 when Christian Friedrich Schönbein “accidentally treated cellulose with a mixture of sulfuric and nitric acids and produced a cellulose derivative that he called guncotton.”² Rayon, originally called “artificial silk,” imitated the properties of silk while being easier to care for and less expensive.³

Though rayon was the first manufactured fiber, little research has been conducted on how rayon impacted the fashion world at its introduction. Secondary sources like fashion history books and journal articles discuss rayon’s use for clothing starting in the 1920s, though few mention its availability in the preceding years. This topic is important to study because little to no research has been done to describe the impact rayon had on the fashion world. Both primary and secondary sources describe rayon as inferior to silk, it is important to find out why these claims were made. This research begins to address those topics.

This thesis focused on the time period of 1910-1924, including the beginning of production of rayon in the United States in 1911 and “its first era of serious use” from 1918 to

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³ The term rayon will be used throughout this research except when discussing data found specifically using different terminology such as artificial silk, art silk, fiber silk, etc.
The year 1924 was chosen as a stop date for this research because acetate was invented in 1924 making rayon no longer the only manufactured fiber. The researcher was interested in this time period because it was before rayon production exceeded that of silk (in the 1920s) and wool (in the 1930s) and it was the only manufactured regenerated fiber available to consumers.

**Research Questions**

The goal of this research was to determine how rayon was marketed to consumers and retailers along with exploring how Americans experienced rayon during daily life between the years 1910-1924. Each research question was structured to address the previously stated goals. Answering these questions fills a gap in apparel industry history of the period 1910-1924. The questions guiding this research were:

1. What was the early history of rayon production and introduction to the public?
2. What names did manufacturers use when selling rayon?
3. What type of products featured rayon?
4. How were the above products promoted to the public?
5. What were the stated advantages of rayon during this time period?
6. What were the stated disadvantages of rayon during this time period?
7. For what reasons was rayon perceived by consumers as inferior to silk?

Chapter Two focused on the literature about rayon. Topics discussed included: rayon chemistry, production of rayon, rayon products, the ready-to-wear industry, and finally, fashion styles from the years 1910-1924. These categories help the reader understand why rayon was an important manufactured fiber during this time. Chapter Three focused on the research methods used for this study. A grounded theory method along with a content analysis was used. Chapter

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Four focused on the results and discussion. The three primary sources used for this study were *Women’s Wear, Good Housekeeping,* and *Harper’s Bazar.* Chapter Five provided the conclusion and summary.

**DEFINITIONS OF TERMS**

The following definitions derive from contemporary and older sources. The 1939 definitions of rayon, though not of the time period studied, were the most complete found. All definitions are in their original form taken directly from primary sources. This ensured language used during the time and to note slight differences between years.

**Art Silk (1967)**—“A name applied fairly broadly during the early part of the twentieth century and into the [1920s] to describe what is today known as rayon and acetate. It was an abbreviation of the term “artificial silk,” which was contracted by some to “art silk.” Quite often the period was dropped; in fact, sometimes even the word “art” was used. Feeling that this usage was deceptive, an industry committee working in conjunction with the National Retail Dry Goods Association was set up in 1925 and established the word ‘rayon.””

**Artificial Silk (1939)**—“See Rayon. The word Rayon has taken its place, since 1924. Now obsolete.”

**Artificial Silk (1967)**—“A term formerly used in this country and in England to describe what is now known as rayon and acetate. It was frequently shortened to “art silk.” It was abandoned in

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6 *Women’s Wear* did not become *Women’s Wear Daily* until 1927; *Harper’s Bazar* did not add the extra “a” to Bazaar until 1929. Therefore, I will use the original, contemparaneous to this study spelling: *Women’s Wear* and *Harper’s Bazar.*


1925 in the United States when the term “rayon” was agreed upon. According to the Federal Trade Commission, “artificial silk” is not a proper description of the product.”

**Cellulose (1939)**—“A carbohydrate of complex molecular structure, a constituent of plant cells and walls, used as a principal basic raw material of all existing commercially successful processes for making rayon.”

**Cellulose (2007)**—“is a polymer of glucose found in all plant fibers.”

**Cuprammonium Rayon (1939)**—“Filaments composed of a regenerated cellulose which has been coagulated or solidified from a solution of cellulose in ammoniacal copper oxide.”

**Cuprammonium Rayon (2007)**—“is a rayon produced in Europe by the cuprammonium process.”

**Fiber (fibre) Silk**—See “rayon.”

**Lisle (1967)**—“A hard spun, two-ply cotton yarn made of long staple, combed cotton. It generally is twisted wet to give a compact yarn with a minimum of protruding fibers. It often also is gassed and given a glazing treatment called polishing which further enhances the smooth effect. Principal use: men’s hosiery; other uses: knit gloves and underwear, principally men’s undershirts.”

**Lisle (2007)**—“is a high-quality jersey made of fine two-ply combed-cotton yarns.”

**Mercerize (1939)**—“Treatment of cotton yarn and goods with strong caustic soda and stretching so as to impart a silk-like luster. Increases strength and affinity to dyestuffs.”

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10 Mauersberger and Schwarz, 785.
11 Kadolph, 463.
12 Mauersberger and Schwarz, 787.
13 Kadolph, 466.
15 Kadolph, 475.
16 Mauersberger and Schwarz, 793.
**Mercerization** (2007)—“is a finish in which sodium hydroxide is used to increase cotton’s absorbency, luster, and strength.”17

**Nitrocellulose** (1939)—“The first method in historical order of making rayon, now abandoned, in which the product is a regenerated cellulose.”18


**Rayon** (1939)—“(1) The generic name, adopted about 1924, to mean the “Filaments made from various solutions of modified cellulose by pressing or drawing the cellulose solution through an orifice and solidifying it in the form of a filament, or filaments, by means of some precipitating or coagulating medium.” (2) Federal Trade Commission definition: “The generic term for manufactured textile fibers or yarn produced chemically from cellulose or with a cellulose base, and for threads, strands or fabric made there-from, regardless of whether such fiber or yarn be made under the viscose, acetate, cuprammonium, nitro cellulose or other process.” (3) (General) An artificial, man-made material, originating from wood pulp or cotton linters, and made into cloth (textiles).”20

**Rayon** (1967)—“A generic term for man-made fibers composed of regenerated cellulose derived from trees, cotton and woody plants. Originally known as “artificial silk,” “wood silk,” and “glos.” It is characterized by high absorbency, bright or dull luster, pleasant “feel” or “hand,” good draping qualities, ability to be dyed in brilliant colors and superior strength in high tenacity

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17 Kadolph, 476.
18 Mauersberger and Schwarz, 794.
20 Mauersberger and Schwarz, 796.
types. Uses: women’s apparel, linings, outerwear fabrics in blends, carpets, draperies, automobile tires, conveyor belts.”

**Rayon** (2007)—“is a manufactured fiber composed of regenerated cellulose in which substituents have replaced not more than 15 percent of the hydrogens of the hydroxyl groups.”

**Silk** (2007)—“is the fiber produced by several varieties of caterpillars, including *Bombyx mori*, *Antheraea mylitta*, and *Antheraea pernyi*.”

**Tub Silk** (1967)—“A term sometimes used for washable silk.” Wash silk—“Any of a number of silk fabrics that can be washed easily without damage, generally made with little or no weighting. In addition the dyes are fast to washing. When very popular in the early twentieth Century the fabrics often were yarn dyed. Used for dresses and blouses. Also called shirting silk, tub silk, washing silk.”

**Tub Silk** (2007)—also called washable silk. “1. Silk fabric that has been treated with a resin finish to prevent wrinkling and shrinkage during laundering. 2. A general term for silk fabrics without special finishes that can be washed easily, without damage, and which are colored with dyes that are fast to washing. Examples from the early 20th century often were yarn dyed. Synonyms: shirting silk, tub silk, wash silk, washing silk.”

**Viscose Rayon** (1939)—“The third method (historically) of producing rayon filaments by which about 83% of the world’s rayon was produced in 1938. The product by this method is regenerated cellulose, which has been coagulated or solidified from a solution of cellulose xanthate.”

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22 Kadolph, 482.
23 Kadolph, 484.
26 Mauersberger and Schwarz, 801.
**Viscose Rayon** (2007)—“is the most common type of rayon.”

**Wood Silk** (1967)—“A name formerly applied to products now known as rayon; term is considered unacceptable at present. The term was derived from the fact the raw material was wood cellulose.”

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27 Kadolph, 489.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Rayon Chemistry

In today’s language, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) defines rayon as a “manufactured fiber composed of regenerated cellulose, as well as manufactured fibers composed of regenerated cellulose in which substituents have replaced not more than 15 percent of the hydrogens of the hydroxyl groups.”

The earliest definition of rayon that could be found by the researcher was published in 1927. That reference defined rayon as “the generic name of filaments made from various solutions of modified cellulose by pressing or drawing the cellulose solution through an orifice, and solidifying it in the form of a filament, or filaments, by means of some precipitating medium.” In 1939, the FTC defined rayon as “the generic term for manufactured textile fibers or yarn produced chemically from cellulose or with a cellulose base, and for threads, strands or fabric made there-from, regardless of whether such fiber or yarn be made under the viscose, acetate, cuprammonium, nitro cellulose or other process.”

Rayon was the first regenerated manufactured fiber. A regenerated fiber is not produced by nature in its fiber form such is the case with cotton, flax, wool, and silk, but derives from materials found in nature. The raw materials, either cellulosic or protein, need to be processed in order to create the fiber. Manufactured regenerated fibers along with synthetic fibers (which are synthesized from small simple molecules) are unique in the fact that they may be modified during processing. While manufactured fibers are not as easily modified in shape as synthetic melt-spun fibers, size modifications are relatively simple and inexpensive to produce.

29 Kadolph, 104.
31 Mauersberger and Schwarz, 796.
32 Kadolph, 20.
Manufacturers are able to produce manufactured regenerated and synthetic fibers to mimic some natural fiber characteristics and properties with the ease of controlling the process.\(^{33}\)

Rayon was considered a substitute for silk and was often called “artificial silk,” “fiber silk,” “chemical silk,” “manufactured silk,” or “wood silk,” among others.\(^{34}\) These terms can be misleading because the chemical composition is much different than that of silk, which is a natural protein fiber composed of amino acids.\(^{35}\) The first manufactured rayon fibers were appealing to individuals who could not afford more expensive silk fibers, but rayon was viewed as an “inferior silk substitute.”\(^{36}\) Rayon did not wash well and was too lustrous. Early artificial silk fibers had a metallic luster and were coarser than silk.\(^{37}\)

Negative views of rayon at its introduction appeared in secondary sources like Jesse Markham’s book *Competition in the Rayon Industry* and positive views appeared in articles published in *The Journal of Home Economics*. According to Markham, in an analysis of competition in the rayon industry, “Prior to World War I rayon was, at best, regarded as an inferior substitute for silk; by the outbreak of World War II rayon had practically displaced silk in the production of many style fabrics and had made serious inroads in a number of cotton fabric markets.”\(^{38}\) As published in the *Journal of Home Economics*, there were many positive qualities associated with rayon. In 1917, Irene Bjorklund, described it as “possessing a luster

\(^{33}\) Kadolph, 86-87.


\(^{35}\) Silk is a natural protein fiber and contains the protein fibroin while rayon is 100% cellulose and is more similar to cotton. The term “artificial silk” was used to refer to the feel or hand of the fabric produced.


\(^{38}\) Markham, 4. Many improvements to rayon were made between World War I and World War II. These improvements included production of a finer and smoother yarn, improved production techniques, new types of rayon such as high-tenacity rayon and high-wet-modulus rayon, and producing rayon as a staple fiber and crepe yarn. Markham; Kadolph.
exceeding that of true silk, together with the ability to take dyes easily and beautifully and the all important qualification of cheapness, manufactured silk has only to prove its durability and adaptability.”

Consumers understood that rayon would not be as superior as silk, but the economic value of the product would increase its desirability.

Author Jacqueline Field (2001) linked World War I dye shortages to the rise of rayon production in the United States in her article “Dyes, Chemistry, and Clothing: The Influence of World War I on Fabrics, Fashions and Silk.” Before the start of World War I, the United States received the majority of dyes and chemical supplies from German imports. Because the United States was “neutral” until America’s involvement in 1917, the United States did not anticipate war time shortages. But on March 1, 1915, the English blocked all German ports making it impossible for America to obtain dyes and chemical supplies. The United States scrambled to create their own dye industry, but the effects were still felt. Wartime dress manufacturers used smaller amounts of dyes that resulted in striped fabrics or diluted dyes and creating pastel colors instead of bold colored garments previously seen.

Field hypothesized four reasons that the rise in the U.S. production of manufactured fibers was an indirect outcome of World War I. First, prior to 1914, America was not concerned with manufacturing textile products because of abundant availability from Europe. Second, with the outbreak of war, the United States realized that they were not competing in a modern industry because they had a large body of chemists that they were not utilizing properly. Third, if dyes were prevented from the Atlantic side of the ocean then raw silk might be cut off from the Pacific. And fourth, “in pre-war years banks and financiers could not imagine anything

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39 Bjorklund, 377.
substituting for silk and thus had no interest in investing in artificial silk.” 41 Because of these reasons, rayon production increased dramatically and explains the lack of rayon products prior to the late 1910s.

**Naming the Fiber Rayon**

Formerly called “glos” by trade organizations and the silk industry, the name “rayon” was coined in 1924 and was most commonly used in Great Britain and the United States in 1924. 42 The name change was proposed because manufactures of real silk faced competition and consumers and retailers found the term confusing. 43 The National Retail Dry Goods Association appointed a committee to create a more appropriate term and Kenneth Lord of Galey and Lord “proposed ‘RAYON.’ The committee endorsed the name change almost unanimously “because it was simple, easy to remember and euphonious.” 44 One author explained that the term was created because it “Convey[ed] the meaning of the radiance of bright sunshine, tempered with the soft glimmer of rippling waters in moonlight.” 45

There was much discussion in *The New York Times* during 1924 over the name change. On May 1st, a statement in the “Business World” section announced the “Executive Committee of the Silk Association of America” would hold a meeting to accept or reject the proposed name of rayon to replace artificial silk. A letter from S. A. Salvage of the Viscose Company asked that the silk association accept the name because the “Special Committee of the National Retail Dry

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41 Field, 86.
42 Kauffman, 887.
Goods Association” already had, although final action would not be taken until May 21 of the same year.46

On May 4th, Directors of the National Knitted Outerwear Association refused the adoption of the name rayon. They stated that, “‘the continued use of the words ‘artificial silk’ as permitted by the Federal Trade Commission, be approved and recommended to all manufacturers and dealers in artificial silk products and that a copy of this resolution be forwarded by the secretary to all parties and organizations interested in the matter.’”47 However, on June 11, 1924, as reported in The New York Times, the Board of Managers of the Silk Association of America along with the National Retail Dry Goods Association accepted the name “rayon” and “it is expected that following the action announced yesterday immediate steps will be taken to carry out a campaign to familiarize consumers with the term.”48 After this decision, a “cable” was sent to the Silk Association of Great Britain and Ireland by the Silk Association of America asking them to preserve the name “rayon” for artificial silk and the Silk Association of Great Britain and Ireland accepted the name.49

Rayon Processing and Production

During the 19th century there were many attempts to create rayon. Three major types of rayon include: nitrocellulose rayon, cuprammonium rayon, and viscose rayon. Nitrocellulose was first produced in France by Count Hilaire de Chardonnet in 1889.50 Some processes were more successful than others. The first type of rayon marketed was called “Chardonnet silk” and

50 Kadolph, 102.
first manufactured by the Chardonnet Silk Company in Besancon, France.\textsuperscript{51} The process in which this first rayon was produced was dangerous and difficult to create because the manufactured rayon became highly explosive.\textsuperscript{52} This rayon production technique was discontinued in 1949 because it was explosive and flammable.\textsuperscript{53}

Cuprammonium rayon is no longer produced in the United States because of the damaging environmental factors such as water and air pollution, but is still produced in other parts of the world.\textsuperscript{54} Viscose rayon “accounts for most of the world’s total rayon production” and “the raw material may be cotton linters or soft wood pulp from northern spruce, western hemlock, eucalyptus, or southern slash pine.”\textsuperscript{55}

**Production of Rayon**

In 1911, viscose rayon was first produced in the United States although large quantities of rayon were not heavily produced until 1918.\textsuperscript{56} According to Markham, “From 1911 to 1920 all rayon produced in the United States was 150-denier viscose yarn.”\textsuperscript{57} The production and consumption of rayon increased steadily during the twentieth century. United States consumption exceeded two million pounds in 1911 with more than 1,800,000 pounds imported from Europe.\textsuperscript{58} Within two years, rayon production increased to 6.5 million pounds with

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\textsuperscript{52} Kadolph, 102.

\textsuperscript{53} Kadolph; Kauffman, 889.

\textsuperscript{54} Kadolph, 106.

\textsuperscript{55} Kauffman, 891.

\textsuperscript{56} Kadolph, 102; Field, 86.

\textsuperscript{57} Markham, 1. Denier refers to a yarn’s weight in grams of 9,000 meters; the lower the number, the finer yarn. Today, sheer hosiery usually has a yarn denier size of 20. A yarn denier size of 150 would be used in outerwear and draperies; Kadolph. Rayon products during this time period were fairly coarse.

\textsuperscript{58} Mauersberger & Schwarz, 9.
2,450,000 pounds imported with a price approximately $3.00 per pound.\textsuperscript{59} By 1938, “U. S. rayon consumption was 300 million pounds and exceeded wool consumption for the first time.”\textsuperscript{60}

From 1910 to 1924, three major companies produced rayon in the United States: Viscose Corporation, DuPont Nemours and Company, and Tubize Artificial Silk of America.\textsuperscript{61} The first American viscose plant, The American Viscose Company\textsuperscript{62} was established in 1910 and was located in Marcus Hook, Pennsylvania. They produced a 150 denier filament yarn that sold for $1.85 per pound. In 1911, The American Viscose Company produced 362,544 pounds.\textsuperscript{63}

**Nitrocellulose Rayon**

In 1846, Christian Friedrich Schönbein “accidently treated cellulose with a mixture of sulfuric and nitric acids and produced a cellulose derivative that he called guncotton” which was the “first practical progress toward producing a synthetic fiber.”\textsuperscript{64} This first cellulose derivative was proposed as an explosive rather than as a fiber. In 1855, the first English patent for producing rayon was awarded to Swiss born chemist George Audemars. He accomplished this by extruding strands from an ethanol-ether solution of cellulose nitrate.\textsuperscript{65} It was not until Count Hilaire de Chardonnet obtained his first French patent in November of 1884 for his work with the nitrocellulose method of rayon production that the first practical form of the fiber was seen.\textsuperscript{66}

**Cuprammonium Rayon**

According to *Rayon and Synthetic Yarns* which was published by the Brooklyn Museum in 1936, cuprammonium rayon fibers are “filaments composed of regenerated cellulose which

\textsuperscript{59} Mauersberger & Schwarz, 10.
\textsuperscript{60} Kauffman, 887.
\textsuperscript{61} Field, 86.
\textsuperscript{62} Changed in 1915 to The Viscose Company
\textsuperscript{63} Mauersberger & Schwarz, 9.
\textsuperscript{64} Kauffman, 888.
\textsuperscript{65} Kauffman, 889.
\textsuperscript{66} Mauersberger & Schwarz, page number.
has been coagulated or solidified from a solution of cellulose in ammoniacal copper oxide.”  

A second type of rayon, cuprammonium was based on the discovery by Swiss chemist Eduard Schweizer. Cuprammonium rayon is “more silk like than any of the other celluloses” but is more expensive than viscose rayon to produce. Cuprammonium rayon is no longer produced in the United States because of its damaging environmental factors.

**Viscose Rayon**

According to *Rayon and Synthetic Yarns*, viscose rayon fibers are “filaments composed of a regenerated cellulose which has been coagulated or solidified from a solution of cellulose xanthate.” Viscose rayon production accounted for the majority of the all rayon productions and is the most inexpensive rayon to produce.

Viscose rayon was developed by Charles F. Cross and E. J. Bevan in Great Britain who obtained patents for it in 1892. According to Markham, the author of *Competition in the Rayon Industry*, it was used in the manufacture of “incandescent lamps, linen and curtain fabrics, door handles, valve wheels, cellulose film, and artificial leather.” The Viscose Company was founded in 1910 and for over twenty years was the largest producer of rayon in the world. During the 1910s, viscose rayon was the least expensive type of rayon to produce and “practically the only kind manufactured in the United States.”

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68 Kauffman, 889.
70 Kadolph, 106.
71 Brooklyn Museum, 72.
72 Kauffman, 891. Needles, 44.
73 Markham, 8.
74 Later changing its name to the American Viscose Corporation in 1937. Markham, 9.
75 Bjorklund, 381.
Products

At first adapted only for trimmings, braids, and other items where brittleness, lack of tensile strength, and poor dyeing qualities were of little consequence, it came to be utilized in a great variety of commodities: cloths of every description from the sheerest fabric to heavy upholstery; hosiery, underwear, sweaters, and other knitted fabrics; laces, ribbons, lamp-shades, slippers, and a host of minor articles.\(^{76}\)

In 1917, the *Journal of Home Economics* projected that rayon would be manufactured into hosiery, skirts, hat braids, dress trimmings, knit goods novelties, sweaters, neckties, mufflers, caps, upholstery, viscose plush, and embroidery thread. Rayon stockings were durable enough for their intended use and less expensive to replace than silk. True silk sweaters cost more than most people could afford, but by using rayon, a larger percentage of the population could afford them. Embroidered garments and accessories that contained large areas of “silk” embroidery utilized rayon; though rayon could not be used for fine detail because of pliability issues.\(^{77}\)

During the 1920s when production of rayon sky rocketed, almost 75% of rayon was used in cotton mixes, hosiery, and underwear. Hosiery and underwear accounted for more than 50% of rayon production so “thanks to rayon it was inexpensive to dress, from the skin out, in attractive, silky clothing.”\(^{78}\) These end uses were appropriate as rayon is a highly versatile fiber prized for its comfort, softness, and absorption capabilities.\(^{79}\) Common advertisements included in the 1923 Sears & Roebuck Catalog featured two pairs of children’s socks made from rayon;  

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\(^{76}\) Taussig and White, 595.  
\(^{77}\) Bjorklund, 377-378.  
\(^{78}\) Field, 86.  
\(^{79}\) Kadolph, 104-105.
one pair was black knit of a “fine quality artificial silk plated yarn” while the other pair featured white cotton socks with colored artificial stripes. The stripes came in sky blue, pink, brown, and lavender.\textsuperscript{80} In August 1924, the \textit{New York Times} reported that the sweater season was coming to an end along with a demand for white rayon garments and darker rayon garments in the West.\textsuperscript{81} By 1929, one-third of all rayon production was for underwear.\textsuperscript{82}

\textit{Life in the 1910s and 1920s}

In order to appreciate the price difference between rayon and silk, it is important to understand the cost of living during the 1910s and 1920s. The average household income during the 1910s was $750; $1,236 was the average in the 1920s.\textsuperscript{83} Woodrow Wilson was in office from 1913 and 1921, almost the entire length of this study; a gallon of gas cost 25 cents ($5.01 in 2006 dollars); a gallon of milk cost 36 cents ($7.22 in 2006 dollars); and the average price of a new home cost $3,200 ($64,158 in 2006 dollars).\textsuperscript{84} Rayon sold in 1923 for $2.80 a pound while silk sold for $8.65 a pound.\textsuperscript{85} Prior to the onset of World War I, clothing consumed on average, one-eighth of an average family’s income. After World War I, partly due to inflation, clothing costs consumed one-sixth of an average family’s income.\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{81}“Sweaters of Artificial Silk.” \textit{The New York Times}, 16 Aug. 1924, sec. 16.
\textsuperscript{82}Taussig and White, 595.
**Ready-to-Wear Industry**

In a study of the beginnings of the clothing industry in the United States, Zakim stated, “If the clothing industry had an actual birth, it was in the emporiums and warehouses that appeared in New York and other American seaboard entrepots after the end of war and the reopening of European trade in 1815.”  

Between 1815 and the turn of the nineteenth century, primarily men’s ready-to-wear clothing could be purchased. Women’s ready-to-wear clothing would not be available until the eve of the twentieth century. By the 1890s, Americans could purchase ready-to-wear clothing from mail order catalogs and in specialty shops and department stores.

After the U.S. Civil War, production of garment manufacturing advanced because of inventions like the sewing machine in 1846 and the long cutting knife in 1870 which cut multiple fabrics at one time. These inventions increased production of garments exponentially. Other machines that helped to increase production in the ready-to-wear business include the snap-fastening machine, felling machine, pinking machine, and the buttonholing machine. Before ready-to-wear clothing was available, women would sew clothing for themselves and their family while middle and upper class women could hire a dressmaker to make their clothing at home. According to Parsons, “A skilled dressmaker offered not only a well-made garment that fit properly, but also convenience and status.”

Before the turn of the century, women were able to purchase ready-made staple goods, but were unable to purchase complete outfits. In the 1860s, women were able to purchase a few

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88 Farrell-Beck and Parsons, 2.
limited clothing items such as cloaks, crinolines, corsets, and bonnets. Underclothes and “wrappers” were soon able to be purchased and were followed by suits, dresses, and walking costumes. By the turn of the century, almost every article of female clothing was available for purchase and was “growing rapidly in the women’s dress and shirt-waist industries.”

The ready-to-wear industry advanced tremendously at the turn of the century through the 1920s because of unskilled cheap labor and an increase in communication. Between 1910 and 1920, it was customary for women to purchase ready-to-wear clothing. The adoption of the shirtwaist along with women entering the workforce helped propel the ready-to-wear industry to the forefront. Women no longer had time to make clothing and needed an alternative. During this time, the majority of manufacturing of garments took place in New York City. The Census of Manufactures reported an “average of 83,800 workers employed in the production of women’s clothing in the United States in 1899. By 1924 this had increased to 168,900, a gain of 102 per cent.” In addition to manufacturing products, New York struggled to create “fashionable” products that would compete with Paris. Readymade clothing items were available for purchase in department stores around the country. Consumption of disposable goods increased and garments were a less valuable resource. The prices of garments lowered and were available in every price point so lower, middle, and upper class Americans could purchase any type of garment.

In addition to the availability of ready-to-wear clothing, women’s roles expanded to include increased access to education, employment outside the home, and leisure activities such

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91 Tortora and Eubank, 325.
92 Tortora and Eubank, 326; Parsons, 33.
94 Drake and Glasser, 8-9.
as sports as well as increased urbanization, and new approaches to advertising. This along with the perception of home sewn garments as inferior, allowed for the acceptance of ready-to-wear clothing. Women had problems with custom made clothing and home sewn garments because of the time spent making and waiting for them, their cost, and styling issues. With fashion styles changing rapidly, manufactured garments were able to change to the new styles easier. Though the quality of ready-to-wear clothing could be worse than homemade clothing, “the desire to keep up with rapidly changing styles led to a philosophy that quality was less important than being up-to-date.”

Factors that affected the acceptance of ready-to-wear clothing during this period included shifting roles for women, new employment patterns for women and men, increased urbanization, and new approaches to advertising. Coinciding with the ready-to-wear industry was the rise of American designers which propelled woman’s consumption of fashion.

During the 1910s, because of or in spite of the ready-to-wear industry, clothing was seen as disposable and not expected to last more than a couple of seasons. The ready-to-wear industry made clothing cheap and available to a vast number of people. Because of this shift from handmade to readily available, rayon provided women with products that would last for a season or two at inexpensive prices. These low prices allowed women to change with the seasons without worry about durability. With rapidly changing fashions, women were more inclined to purchase cheaper clothing and more of it opposed to higher quality products at higher prices. Rayon was the perfect fiber to achieve this purpose. Rayon hosiery was less expensive than silk.

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97 Parsons, 35.
98 Parsons, 39.
The lower price came with the expectation that the hosiery would not last as long, but could meet changing style and fashion demands.100

The August 1917 *Journal of Home Economics* gave the example of the demand for cheap silk stockings. Women wanted silk stockings at inexpensive prices. By making silk stockings cheaper, the quality suffered and the hosiery because more transparent. Silk stockings could not become sheer enough to make the price low enough and a substitute was needed. Rayon stockings sold for 50 cents, half the price or more for silk stockings.101

**Fashions of the Time**

During the time period from 1910-1924, ready-to-wear fashion was widespread and easily available due to technologies available. With the use of newspapers and magazines, women were able to see the latest fashions more quickly than in years past.102

**Fashion for Women: 1910-1914**

During this period, known as the Age of Opulence, women who could afford it usually changed their clothing at least four times a day. They had different clothing for each time of the day: morning, early afternoon, tea time, and evening. Morning and early afternoon wear consisted of skirts, jackets, and coats and were worn for socializing along with wrappers when at home. Tea gowns were worn during tea time and were discontinued during the First World War. Tea gowns gave women a break from tight fitting corsets and restrictive clothing. These gowns were “long, flowing and sometimes voluminous, giving the body room to relax.”103

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100 Bjorklund.
101 Bjorklund, 377.
waists were popular for evening wear in strong and assertive colors and made from fabrics such as tulle, chiffon, and crepe de chine.\textsuperscript{104}

Tailored jackets and skirts became popular during the 1910s. More women were working and needed more sensible clothing. The jacket of this ensemble was cut loose and comfortable and the skirt was raised to ankle length so that it did not drag on the ground. This provided women with more mobility and freedom of movement, though some adapted the latest fashion fad, the hobble skirt. The hobble skirt, endorsed by Paul Poiret, constricted movement of the knees and ankles.\textsuperscript{105} In 1912, tunics were popular with empire waist and skirts that were “draped closely round the figure in subtle folds.”\textsuperscript{106} Collars changed from the high boned ones of the 1900s to round necklines and the appearance of Peter Pan collars. Hats were in vogue. Picture hats were large and decorated with ostrich plumes, flowers, and other decorative items. Some hats reached as wide as three feet across and were secured by large hat pins.\textsuperscript{107}

With the help of Paul Poiret, the corset became less fashionable. Poiret prescribed a more “natural” form using a brassiere to form the body as opposed to the tight restrictions of corsets. Opposed to the exaggerated “S” curve of the early 1900s, a more natural and straight silhouette was ideal. The corset did not vanish from fashion; it simply changed shape. The new style of corset sat lower on the body and looked more like a girdle. It helped to slim the hips while creating a more “natural” waistline. Though this new corset no longer emphasized the bust and hips while cinching the waist, it was not more comfortable nor less restricting. This new


\textsuperscript{105} Ewing; Mendes and de la Haye, 40.

\textsuperscript{106} Ewing, 69.

\textsuperscript{107} Ewing; Mendes and de la Haye, 36.
The corset prevented women from sitting comfortably for it went down to almost a woman’s knees.\textsuperscript{108}

\textit{Fashions for Women: 1914-1918}

These years represent the time that the world was at war, though the United States did not enter World War I until 1917. “Radical developments were most evident in women’s dress and had a particular impact on daytime and workplace clothing” along with an impact in manufacturing, fabrics, and design.\textsuperscript{109} The silhouette during the war became wider with skirts growing shorter. The waistline of dresses sat at the natural waistline or slightly above it with full skirts. In 1916, skirts were six inches off the ground and in 1917 skirts were eight inches or more off the ground. Tailored suits were popular and styled with distinctive military influence.\textsuperscript{110}

Influenced by the War, Jumpers and knitted cardigans became popular along with pullovers. The silhouette of evening wear was close to the style of day dresses. Skirts were full with many layers of ruffles with beading and embroidery. Women entered the war effort by working in factories while the men fought in Europe. Women wore womanalls which were coveralls with gathered pant legs. Women also wore uniforms with above the ankle length skirts with “no-nonsense” jackets when serving in the army motor corps.\textsuperscript{111}

\textit{Fashions for Women: 1918-1924}

The years immediately following World War I were “really a transitional period from the wartime styles to the styles of the 1920s.”\textsuperscript{112} Dresses had narrow hems with wide waistlines which produced a barrel shape silhouette. In 1919, skirts were narrower and hemlines were

\textsuperscript{108} Ewing.
\textsuperscript{109} Mendes and de la Haye, 48.
\textsuperscript{110} Mendes and de la Haye; Tortora and Eubank, 370.
\textsuperscript{111} Farrell-Beck and Parsons, 45.
\textsuperscript{112} Tortora and Eubank, 371.
ankle length. Women wore tailored suits with matching skirts and jackets and flattened silhouettes with the bosoms deemphasized. Post war designers included Jean Patou, Chanel, Edward Molyneux, Vionnet, and Lanvin.\(^{113}\)

The silhouette of the early 1920s became very different from the silhouette of the 1910s. The silhouette of the 1920s was tubular and flat and was viewed as “boyish” as opposed to the desirable curves of the 1910s. The 1920s fashions included raised skirt lengths and a lowering of the waistline. At the beginning of the 1920s, skirts were still ankle length, but as the middle of the decade approached, skirts were fourteen to sixteen inches off of the ground.\(^{114}\)

Women usually wore one piece, sleeveless dresses with a “V”, round, cowl, or bateau neckline. Skirts were cut on the bias and often had scalloped or handkerchief style hems. Evening wear was cut in the same length as day time dress, but was usually heavily beaded. Fashionable fabrics for evening dresses were velvets, satins, and chiffons. In 1919, Jeanne Lanvin introduced a bouffant skirt, reminiscent of the crinoline period known as the robe de style. Women strayed away from the corset and were adopting the brassiere as a form of support.\(^{115}\) “Bandeau styles and full brassieres confined the breasts more or less forcefully between 1919 and late 1924, when the first signs of rebellion appeared in the form of contoured brassieres with separate cups.”\(^{116}\)

\(^{113}\) Farrell-Beck and Parsons; Tortora and Eubank, 371.
\(^{114}\) Tortora and Eubank.
\(^{115}\) Tortora and Eubank.
\(^{116}\) Farrell-Beck and Parsons, 71.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS

A two step process was used for data analysis. First, a “grounded theory” approach was used to find emerging themes from the data collected. Secondly, a content analysis was used.

Three publications were analyzed for content starting from January 1910 through December 1924. The fashion-industry trade journal Women’s Wear along with the women’s magazines Good Housekeeping and Harper’s Bazar were analyzed for rayon advertisements and articles that mentioned rayon. The term “artificial silk” was used to describe rayon until the year 1924 when the term “rayon” was adopted. The terms “artificial silk” and “rayon” were used as search terms when conducting the research.

Women’s Wear was founded on July 13, 1910 by Edmund Fairchild. Later, in 1927, the title changed to Women’s Wear Daily. Women’s Wear was a trade-press newspaper that provided industry-related news to apparel manufacturers and retailers. Good Housekeeping started in 1885 as a journal about the home. Promoted for the middle class, it sold for $2.50 annually which was higher in price than the other leading women’s magazines. Its contents included topics on household tips, dressmaking and fashion, home decorating, cooking, columns for reader’s questions, poetry, fiction, and puzzles. Clark W. Bryan, the journal’s editor, encouraged women to write to Good Housekeeping with questions and contributions of fiction, poetry, and household advice. These contributions from readers “showed good business judgment, enticing subscribers with the promise that they too could participate in the creation of this magazine.” By contributing, women could earn money and these contributions helped

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117 Kadolph, 102.
120 Zuckerman, 11.
bridge the gap between women and magazines.\textsuperscript{121} By 1912, \textit{Good Housekeeping} had a circulation of 300,000 copies.\textsuperscript{122}

\textit{Harper’s Bazar}, founded in 1867 by the Harper brothers, discussed culture, fashion, and high society. Published for the upper-middle and upper class, \textit{Harper’s Bazar} originally included home and family focused articles, but narrowed its focus to fashion around the turn of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{123} The Hearst Corporation purchased \textit{Harper’s} in 1911 for $10,000; Hearst changed the format by making illustrations more prominent in the layout rather than text heavy.\textsuperscript{124}

The researcher explored each publication for advertisements that included rayon as a “featured product.” These advertisements were analyzed for the content including: what products were offered, the price of the products, terminology used to describe rayon, and description of products. Along with the advertisements, each publication was analyzed for additional articles or excerpts that addressed the topic of rayon and/or included topics such as advice about care, use, or design of products using rayon.

\textbf{Grounded Theory}

Glaser and Strauss’s grounded theory approach was used to analyze the data. Grounded theory operates opposite of traditional theory; through grounded theory one discovers theory from data rather than starting with theory and compiling data to fit that theory. It is “the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research” and is a “way of arriving at theory suited to its supposed uses.”\textsuperscript{125} The theories that evolve should provide clear

\textsuperscript{121} Bryan would pay women for their contributions; Zuckerman, 11.
\textsuperscript{122} Zuckerman, 29.
\textsuperscript{123} Zuckerman, 19.
\textsuperscript{124} Braithwaite, 38.
categories and hypotheses. According to Glaser and Strauss, “generating a theory from data means that most hypotheses and concepts not only come from the data, but are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research.”

A comparative analysis is a general method used to generate theory and can be used for studies of any size. Substantive and formal theories are generated from comparative analysis and are both grounded in data. Substantive and formal theories control the data collection process. Substantive theory is developed for a substantive or empirical area of sociological inquiry and formal theory is formed for a formal or conceptual area. When applying grounded theory, one should form substantive theory first then formal theory from that. By doing this, substantive theory “gives an initial direction in developing relevant categories and properties and in choosing possible modes of integration.”

In the theoretical sampling stage, the researcher “collects, codes, and analyzes [the] data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop [the] theory as it emerges.” Decisions of data collection are based on a general perspective, subject, or problem area and are not based on preconceived theoretical framework.

Through data collection, conceptual categories emerge and hypotheses generated. Hypotheses are generated through the relation of the conceptual categories. A concept may be “generated from one fact, which then becomes merely one of a universe of many possible diverse indicators for, and data on, the concept.” Generalizing theory from the data requires that data

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126 Glaser and Strauss, 3.
127 Glaser and Strauss, 6.
128 Glaser and Strauss, 21.
129 Glaser and Strauss, 33.
130 Glaser and Strauss, 79.
131 Glaser and Strauss, 45.
132 Glaser and Strauss, 45.
133 Glaser and Strauss, 23.
collection, coding, and analysis is done simultaneously.\textsuperscript{134} When choosing data for collection, one chooses data that “will help generate, to the fullest extent, as many properties of the categories as possible and that will help relate categories to each other and to their properties.”\textsuperscript{135} In this case, Women’s Wear, Good Housekeeping, and Harper’s Bazar were used to help generate categories.

\textit{Content Analysis}

A content analysis was employed with the data collected during this study. According to Jo Paoletti, a content analysis is a “technique developed in the social sciences for converting verbal and nonverbal communications into quantitative data.”\textsuperscript{136} Content analysis is a relatively new research method for costume historians, though it has been employed for longer periods of time in other fields. Content analyses usually use data that are collected from newspapers, magazines, or other print materials that can provide enough information to yield an in-depth study. Content analyses have been used by experienced researchers like Laurel Wilson, Sharron Lennon, and Jennifer Paff Ogle along with novice researchers new to the textiles and clothing field.\textsuperscript{137}

Content analyses are useful when the sources are numerous, when the researcher wants to study the implicit meaning of communication, and when the documentary evidence is a principal source. The following steps that are common to all content analyses was taken from Jo Paoletti’s article, \textit{Content analysis: Its Application to the Study of the History of Costume}:

1) articulation of precisely-stated objectives or hypotheses, 2) creation of an instrument or questionnaire designed to measure relevant variables or sort

\textsuperscript{134} Glaser and Strauss, 43.

\textsuperscript{135} Glaser and Strauss, 49.


\textsuperscript{137} Laurel Wilson used content analysis when studying cowboys, Sharron Lennon when discussing diet advertisements, and Jennifer Paff Ogle when researching feminist perspectives on dress and the body.
them into predetermined categories, 3) unbiased sampling of sources and communication units, 4) systematic recording or measuring of variable using the instrument, and finally 5) analysis of the data using appropriate statistical procedures.

A content analysis is useful because it “provides a systematic, disciplined methodology in situations where objectivity might be difficult to maintain due to the number or the nature of sources.” Before conducting a content analysis, important decisions need to be made to ensure that the content analysis will yield the appropriate data. These decisions include choosing appropriate sources, choosing the proper unit of analysis, identifying and adapting a research design, provide instrument categories, and finally, choose a level of quantification. Each decision will be discussed in detail below.

The first important decision that needs to be made when conducting a content analysis is choosing appropriate sources. The sources need to be able to “provide the necessary information.” One should be able to access circulation and readership information for each source. This information will help in providing the study with generalizing the data collected to the readership in question.

The second important decision that needs to be made when conducting a content analysis is choosing the proper unit of analysis. Unit of analysis is the “portion of the source material selected for scrutiny” and can be found in verbal or nonverbal data. Examples of verbal clues would be data such as words, sentences, and paragraphs. Nonverbal clues include pictures, photographs, or cartoons. It is to a researcher’s advantage to use both verbal and nonverbal

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138 Paoletti, 14.
139 Paoletti, 14-17.
140 Paoletti, 15.
141 Paoletti, 15.
This particular research study used verbal and nonverbal data because articles (verbal) along with advertisements (both verbal and nonverbal) were analyzed for content.

The third important decision that needs to be made when conducting a content analysis is identifying and adapting a research design. Whether the information gathered is implicit or explicit, the instrument used should be developed and tested carefully. “A preliminary test by readers other than the researcher is essential for detecting bias and ambiguity in the instrument.”

The fourth important decision that needs to be made when conducting a content analysis is providing instrument categories. The research instrument should be developed without any prior knowledge of the data though a preliminary study can be conducted first to “determine the precise nature of the content available.” A preexisting instrument should be used by the novice researcher who is not an expert in developing an instrument.

The fifth and final important decision that needs to be made when conducting a content analysis is to choose a level of quantification. A researcher can use simple descriptive data or statistically analyzable data to interpret the data collected. Content analysis is almost always categorical so using contingency analysis is the most appropriate test.

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142 Paoletti, 16.
143 Paoletti, 16.
144 Paoletti, 16.
145 Paoletti, 16.
146 Paoletti, 16.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

After collecting data from Women’s Wear, Good Housekeeping, and Harper’s Bazar, the information was analyzed for content. Only two and a half years of Women’s Wear were able to be collected and analyzed; these years were the last half of 1910 and through 1912. All years and each month of Good Housekeeping and Harper’s Bazar were examined and analyzed. The content in Women’s Wear was business focused and discussed industries that developed in the United States for rayon production along with discussions on manufacturing processes, trade embargoes, and competition. Both Good Housekeeping and Harper’s Bazar included fashion related content and featured articles that mentioned production processes, but mostly contained advertisements of hosiery, clothing, and home furnishing products.

Researching for rayon products proved to be difficult because of the confusion of the term artificial silk and “real” silk. Companies used terminology such as artificial silk, art silk, and fiber (fibre) silk when talking about rayon. Not only was different terminology used for rayon, but there was an abundant amount of terminology used when discussing “real” silk. Products that featured real silk used terms such as silk, pure silk, all silk, tub silk, radium silk, and others. During this time period, consumers must have been confused about what products they were purchasing, especially since rayon was the first new fiber to be introduced in centuries and the first fiber produced in a manufacturing facility. Although included in definitions for artificial silk and rayon from earlier decades, the term “wood silk” was not found in any of the primary sources examined for this research.

Prior to the 1950s, textile products did not have to have labels denoting fiber content. Manufacturers could mislabel products or use substitute materials without penalty. In 1958,

\[147\] Only the first two and a half years of Women’s Wear were able to be analyzed because of time constraints and a library miscommunication.
Congress passed legislations that required manufacturers to label products with correct and accurate fiber identification called the Textile Fiber Products Identification Act (TFPIA). Now, products are required to have percentage of fiber type listed in order of predominance, name of manufacturer or company RN number, trademark name of fiber if available, and country of origin permanently affixed in garments.\textsuperscript{148}

\textit{Content Analysis}

In the next section, I will discuss the names manufacturers used to describe rayon and the types of products available and promoted to the public through advertisements, articles, and fashion editorials.

Table 1 is a compilation of all mentions of artificial silk from January 1910 to December 1924. Included in the chart is any mention of art silk, artificial silk, fiber (fibre) silk, and rayon. This chart includes products from Heatherbloom petticoats, Orinoka drapery fabrics, Kapock fabrics, two articles from \textit{Good Housekeeping} that mentioned artificial silk, and \textit{Women’s Wear} articles counted once each. Overall, 225 listings for artificial silk and related terms were found for the time period of interest in the three primary sources.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Year & \textit{Women’s Wear} & \textit{Harper’s Bazar} & \textit{Good Housekeeping} & Total \\
\hline
1910 & 3 & 0 & 0 & 3 \\
\hline
1911 & 14 & 0 & 1 & 15 \\
\hline
1912 & 40 & 0 & 1 & 41 \\
\hline
1913 & N/A & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
\hline
1914 & N/A & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Mentions of artificial silk and related terms in primary sources, 1910-1924}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{148} Kadolph.
**TABLE 1.** (continued)

<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
<td>1923</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>57</strong></td>
<td><strong>59</strong></td>
<td><strong>109</strong></td>
<td><strong>225</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mentions in *Good Housekeeping* were almost doubled those for *Harper’s Bazar*. One reason for this drastic difference in numbers could be that during this time, rayon was advertised as a cheap alternative to silk. Women who would purchase or need to purchase lower priced garments would be more likely to read *Good Housekeeping* which was promoted to middle class as opposed to *Harper’s Bazar* which was promoted to the upper middle to upper class. Mentions of rayon were not routine until 1916 which is consistent with previous secondary literature.\(^{149}\) The year 1922 had the most mentions of rayon except for 1912 which included data from *Women’s Wear*.

Table 2 is a compilation of the terminology that manufacturers used when describing rayon.\(^{150}\) This table includes data found in *Good Housekeeping* and *Harper’s Bazar*. Companies

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\(^{149}\) Field, Markham.

\(^{150}\) See Appendix B on page 86 for a listing of all mentions of rayon found in *Good Housekeeping* and *Harper’s Bazar* and includes information on terminology used, where used, what type of form, what type of product, company, and date and year.
such as Heatherbloom Petticoats, Kapock Fabrics, and Orinoka Draperies were not included in the total since they did not specifically state that their products were made of rayon.

**TABLE 2. COMPILATION OF TERMINOLOGY USED TO DESCRIBE RAYON IN GOOD HOUSEKEEPING AND HARPER’S BAZAR, 1910-1924**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terminology</th>
<th>Totals</th>
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<td>Art Silk</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artificial Silk</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiber (Fibre)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiber (fibre) silk</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rayon Silk</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rayonner</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific Silk</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silk twisted with Fiber (Fibre)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>71</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Heatherbloom Taffeta Petticoats*\(^{151}\) | 18     
Kapock Sunfast Fabrics*                     | 61     
Orinoka Draperies*                          | 13     
**Total**                                  | **163**

The terminology to describe products manufactured of rayon was quite confusing during this time period. The term artificial silk was used most frequently which was consistent with previous literature. Fiber (fibre) silk/fiber (fibre) was the most confusing terminology because these words did not describe the fiber content whatsoever.

There was little consistency in terminology used by companies in advertisements. The term art silk was used only in Good Housekeeping in 1917, 1918, 1922, and 1924 in both fashion

\(^{151}\) *These products did not specifically use the terms listed above, but suggest that they are artificial silk due to descriptive terms implying low cost, high luster, or other characteristic more related to rayon that true silk.
editorials and advertisements. The term artificial silk was used in both *Good Housekeeping* in 1917, 1923, and 1924 and *Harper’s Bazar* in 1922 in both advertisements and fashion editorials. The term fiber (fibre) was used in both *Good Housekeeping* (1921 and 1923) and *Harper’s Bazar* (1917 and 1921). Fiber (fibre) silk was used in *Good Housekeeping* in 1922, 1923, and 1924; *Harper’s Bazar* in 1915, 1916, 1917, and 1922. Rayon silk was mentioned in *Good Housekeeping* in 1922, two years before the name rayon was adopted in 1924. Rayonner was mentioned in *Good Housekeeping* in a fashion editorial in 1920. The term scientific silk was used in advertisements for Hose of Luxite in 1916 only in *Harper’s Bazar*. The term silk twisted with fibre was used only in *Good Housekeeping* in advertisements for Burson Fashioned Hose in 1918 and 1919. Some terminology such as “scientific silk” and “silk twisted with fibre” only appeared in specific company advertisements and was assumed to be company terminology only and not used across product categories or by consumers.

Table 3 summarized the different products made of artificial silk, regardless of the term used (fiber silk, rayon, etc). Table 3 only counts products in *Good Housekeeping* and *Harper’s Bazar* since mentions of rayon occurred only in articles in *Women’s Wear*. Heatherbloom Petticoats, Kapock Fabrics, and Orinoka Draperies were not included in the total since they did not specifically state that their products were made of rayon.

### Table 3. Summary of Products Made of Rayon in *Good Housekeeping* and *Harper’s Bazar*, 1910-1924

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Products</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Draperies/Curtains</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed Spread</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweater</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socks</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosiery</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All product categories include a variety of companies that manufactured rayon products. No single company produced rayon products which meant that rayon was slowly moving into the market from a variety of sources. No one company was a sole manufacturer and had a monopoly. The highest total for rayon products is hosiery (31 products) which is not surprising since previous literature stated that rayon was used primarily for hosiery. Second highest was sweaters which was unanticipated because of lack of secondary literature discussing sweater manufacture. The rest of rayon products were widespread across a variety of product categories such as blouses, dresses, and curtains.

*Fashion Section*

This particular section will discuss the garments that were made of rayon and featured in fashion editorials rather than in advertisements. Products featured included sweaters,

\[^{152}^*\text{These products did not specifically use the terms listed above, but suggest that they are artificial silk due to descriptive terms implying low cost, high luster, or other characteristic more related to rayon that true silk.}\]
embroidery and trim on dresses, a hat, scarves, dresses, blouses, and women’s suits. Both *Good Housekeeping* and *Harper’s Bazar* introduced new fashions for the upcoming season in fashion editorial sections. Similar to the findings of Jacqueline Field’s article *Dyes, Chemistry, and Clothing: The Influence of World War I on Fabrics, Fashions and Silk* published in *Dress*, garments of artificial silk or fiber silk were not showcased until the early 1920s. In fact, the first mention of artificial silk was not until the October 1920 issue of *Good Housekeeping*. This particular fashion editorial highlighted a fabric by the name of “rayonner” (Figure 1). The author speculates that this fabric was made of rayon or blended with a natural fiber. It was speculated that rayonner was rayon because of the similarity of names and no other fiber type was listed. In many other descriptions of garments, both magazines usually provided fiber type whether it was cotton, silk, linen, or wool. The only factor that makes the author question if the item was rayon was the price. Both garments featured on the page were suits with very similar styling and silhouette. The only differences were in line details, belts, and the presence or absence of pockets. One of the suits included a snug collar of rayonner, and not “cheap fur,” which raised the price to $97.50 while the other suit sold for $49. Compared to other garments during this time period, these prices do seem to be expensive for a relatively inexpensive fiber.

1922 Fashions

Four fashion editorials were found in *Good Housekeeping* during the year 1922; not including advertisements. In the March issue, a sweater, belt, and dress trimmings of fiber silk were presented as one of the season’s latest fashions. The sweater was a mixture of mohair and

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153 According to the *Rayon and Staple Fiber Handbook* by Herbert R. Mauersberger, rayonne (minus the “r”) is the French name for rayon, 796.
154 October 1920, *Good Housekeeping*, 41.
fiber silk. It included long sleeves, a wrap-around belt, and came in a variety of colors. It sold for $12.75. The second garment was not entirely of rayon, but had a belt and dress trimmings of “artificial silk”. The fiber content of the dress was alpaca mesh and sold for $35. The belt wrapped around the waist and tied on the side with long ties. The black “artificial silk” dress trimmings were wrapped around the short sleeves and skirt near the hips in concentric circles.

Surprisingly, a “rayon silk” blouse was found in the May issue of *Good Housekeeping*. This blouse had a V neck, a Lanvin lattice collar, long sleeves, and hand embroidered Chinese monograms and sold for $12.75 (Figure 2).¹⁵⁵ In June 1922, *Good Housekeeping* again showcased a sweater made of “fiber silk”. This tuxedo style sweater by “Schmidt Knit” had a windowpane design and braided sash and sold for $10.50 (Figure 3).¹⁵⁶

1923 Fashions

Nine fashion editorials were found in *Good Housekeeping* during the year 1923; not including advertisements. The February issue illustrated a sweater mixed of wool and “fiber silk,” had what appeared to be a sailor collar, a two tone color scheme, and sold for $6.75 (Figure 4). In the April issue, a “blouse sweater” featuring a scoop neck with long sleeves and contrasting trimming of “fiber silk” sold for $11.75 (Figure 5). On the opposite page of the same issue of *Good Housekeeping*, another sweater combined mohair and “fiber silk” and sold for $8.90. The sweater was described as “sportsmanlike” with a windowpane checkered front, long sleeves, and a button front (Figure 6).¹⁵⁷

A sports suit dress in the July issue featured a mixture of “fiber silk” and wool. It included long sleeves, a pointed peter pan collar, calf length skirt, and sold for $44.00 (Figure 7).

¹⁵⁵ The researcher found this surprising because the name rayon was not adopted until 1924; May 1922, *Good Housekeeping*, 58.
¹⁵⁶ June 1922, *Good Housekeeping*, 56.
¹⁵⁷ April 1923, *Good Housekeeping*, 60, 61.
In the same issue of *Good Housekeeping*, a “fiber silk” scarf was also advertised. It was 72 inches long with colored stripes and sold for $3.95 (Figure 8). On the same page as the scarf, *Good Housekeeping* featured an “overblouse” of “fiber” to be worn in place of a sweater. This overblouse featured long sleeves, a scoop neck, and also sold for $3.95 (Figure 8).\(^{158}\)

In the August issue, a dress made entirely of “fiber silk” had short cuffed sleeves, a sash at the waist, calf-length skirt, blousy top, and sold for $14.50. Similar styles in pure silk sold from $25.00 to $35.00.\(^{159}\) The October issue featured two garments that utilized “artificial silk” for embroidery. The first garment was a “semi-made frock of Canton crepe with pattern and design stamped on material and artificial silk for embroidering.” The second garment was a frock of Poiret twill semi-made with “artificial silk” for embroidery. The rayon dresses were less expensive than similar silk garments of the time; the first sold for $12.50 and the latter sold for $10 (Figure 9).\(^{160}\)

“Artificial silk” or “fiber silk” did not appear in the fashion section of either *Good Housekeeping* or *Harper’s Bazar* for the remainder of 1923. Two fabrics did appear though, that the researcher speculated to be rayon. The first, appearing in November’s *Good Housekeeping*, was a soft-pile fabric called lustrosa. It was speculated to be rayon because the beginning of the word “lustrosa” is similar to luster which is one of rayon’s characteristics and because the information does not specify fiber content like many other product descriptions usually include.\(^{161}\) The other, lingette, was advertised as a “new silky material.” Again, no other fiber information was provided and the information described it as “silky,” but not called silk.\(^{162}\)

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\(^{158}\) July 1923, *Good Housekeeping*, 58, 62.

\(^{159}\) August 1923, *Good Housekeeping*, 60.

\(^{160}\) October 1923, *Good Housekeeping*, 58.

\(^{161}\) November 1923, *Good Housekeeping*, 48.

\(^{162}\) December 1923, *Good Housekeeping*, 53.
Three fashion editorials were found in *Good Housekeeping* during the year 1924; not including advertisements. The February issue of *Good Housekeeping* featured a knitted sports dress in a two-toned mixture of wool and “fibre silk.” The dress featured a gingham-like pattern on the bottom of the skirt and on the top of the shoulders. This dress had short sleeves, belted waist, calf length skirt, and sold for $49.50. The July issue of *Good Housekeeping* included two garments of “artificial silk”; one sweater and one scarf. The sweater was a two-toned checked pattern with wide collar, long sleeves, and sold for $9.50. It could be worn as illustrated in the issue, as a Tuxedo sweater or with the collar buttoned all the way up to the neck. The scarf was striped with fringe ends and came in a variety of colors. It sold for $3.95 (Figure 10).

**Advertisements**

The majority of data found in *Good Housekeeping* and *Harper’s Bazar* were advertisements. The businesses that advertised rayon included a couple of core companies such as Kapock Drapery Fabrics, Burson Fashioned Hose, and Heatherbloom Petticoats. Data found in *Women’s Wear* was not included in this section because no advertisements were found.

**Clothing**

Clothing (other than accessories such as hosiery) that were 100% or contained rayon were scarce throughout *Good Housekeeping* and *Harper’s Bazar* during this time period. James McCutcheon & Co. sold sweaters and hats in July 1922 and advertised their products as “fibre silk” rather than rayon. Their “Tuxedo Sweater” featured smooth front panels, pockets, and a tasseled belt in a “fibre silk” crinkle weave.

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163 February 1924, *Good Housekeeping*, 56.
164 July 1924, *Good Housekeeping*, 64.
165 No advertisements were found in *Women’s Wear Daily*. 
Hosiery

Consistent with previous literature, hosiery was the primary product category made of rayon. Companies used different terminology such as art silk, artificial silk, fiber (fibre), fiber (fibre) silk, scientific silk, and silk twisted with fibre. Companies that had hosiery made of rayon during this time period were Arrowhead Hosiery, Burson Fashioned Hose, Corticelli Silk Hosiery, Holeproof Hosiery, Hose of Luxite, Onyx Hosiery, and True Shape Hosiery.

Out of the numerous advertisements feature in *Good Housekeeping* (no advertisements of Arrowhead Hosiery were found in *Harper’s Bazar*) only two advertisements featured “artificial silk” (Figure 11). An August 1923 *Good Housekeeping* advertisement featured hosiery in a “pure silk and artificial silk” mix. A December 1923 *Good Housekeeping* advertisement featured “Minnehaha” stocking of pure silk plated over “fibre”. One of Arrowhead Hosiery’s unique characteristics was its ability to cling to a woman’s ankle to create a more feminine leg silhouette.

The Burson Knitting Company advertised fashioned hose of “art silk” as early as 1917 in *Good Housekeeping* along with hose made from cotton, lisle, and mercerized. Starting in the October 1918 issue of *Good Housekeeping*, Burson’s stopped advertising hose made of “art silk” and changed the term to “silk twisted with fibre.” This term was used for rayon stockings until the October 1920 issue of *Good Housekeeping* when Burson’s did not specify any fiber content until the May 1921 issue of *Good Housekeeping* when stockings were only offered in cotton, lisle, mercerized, and silk. Burson’s stopped advertising in *Good Housekeeping* and *Harper’s Bazar* in December 1921. The September 1920 issue of *Good Housekeeping* was the last advertisement that had either “art silk” or “silk twisted with fibre.”

166 Arrowhead Hosiery, August 1923, *Good Housekeeping*, 90.
167 Arrowhead Hosiery, December 1923, *Good Housekeeping*, 187
Burson Knitting Company ran nine advertisements that mentioned “art silk” from March 1917 to July 1918 (Figure 12). The advertisements that mentioned “silk twisted with fibre” were found from October 1918 to September 1920. All advertisements appeared in *Good Housekeeping*. Burson hosiery had no seams and knit-in foot shape. These characteristics supposedly produced a slim appearing ankle and widened calf, made them comfortable, and snug fitting. These hose were also dependable because of reinforced areas and economical because they were inexpensive, a characteristic of rayon.\(^{168}\)

Out of several advertisements found in *Harper’s Bazar* from Corticelli Silk Hosiery, only one mentioned “artificial silk.” The specific advertisement, in the July 1922 issue of *Harper’s Bazar*, featured Corticelli silk hosiery and briefly mentioned that their mills in Florence, Massachusetts also manufactured dress silks, spool and crochet silks, yarns, and Sunglo Artificial Silk (Figure 13). It is unclear whether the particular product is hosiery or fabric by the yard.\(^{169}\) Other advertisements by this company never mentioned “artificial silk” again although other advertisements mentioned all the other products that their mills produced.

The Holeproof Hosiery Company advertised “artificial silk” stockings in two advertisements in *Good Housekeeping* in the 1917 October and December issues (Figure 14). These advertisements, which appeared during the single year of the United States involvement in World War I, stressed the importance of patriotism and thriftiness. After 1917, advertisements did not mention “artificial silk”, but offered products in silk or pure silk, lusterized lisle, and silk faced. Silk faced could possibly be rayon faced with silk, but not enough information was provided to determine whether this assumption was accurate. Holeproof Hosiery produced inexpensive women’s hosiery with prices beginning at $0.40. The company also guaranteed that


their stockings “were quality.” The Hose of Luxite company sold hosiery made of “Gold-Ray, the new scientific silk,” pure Japanese silk, lusterized lisle and cotton without added metallic salts used for weighting (Figure 15). “Onyx” Hosiery advertised light weight sport hose in “fibre” along with other fiber contents such as lisle, silk, wool, and mixed fabrics. The same advertisement was featured in June 1921 in both Good Housekeeping and Harper’s Bazar (Figure 16). After these two advertisements, there were no other mentions of “artificial silk” or “silk fiber.” These socks were for summer wear and came in sport color combinations.

True Shape Hosiery sold hosiery of rayon, but called it “fibre silk.” These stockings sold for 85 cents whereas the pure silk stockings sold for $1.15 to $1.75. A total of three advertisements were found; all featured in Good Housekeeping during 1918 (October, November, and December) (Figure 17). True Shape Hosiery advertisements stressed that their hosiery products were inexpensive and had proper fit, styling details of the time, and a patented cross-stitch feature that would prevent runs in stockings. During war time, True Shape Hosiery predicted that Christmas gifts from loved ones would be essentials and stressed their hosiery would provide consumers with quality products.

Petticoats

Advertised in both Harper’s Bazar and Good Housekeeping, Heatherbloom Taffeta Petticoats never stated that their petticoats were rayon, but stated that their petticoats “look and

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170 Holeproof Hosiery, October 1917, Good Housekeeping, 135. Holeproof Hosiery, December 1917, Good Housekeeping, 118.
173 True Shape Hosiery, October 1918, Good Housekeeping, 83. True Shape Hosiery, November 1918, Good Housekeeping, 82. True Shape Hosiery, December 1918, Good Housekeeping, 88.
feel like silk” and had “3 times the wear of silk at 1/3 the cost.”\textsuperscript{174} Durability and economy were stressed throughout the Heatherbloom advertisements. These advertisements highlighted their products, “lustrous beauty and shimmery silken tone effects.”\textsuperscript{175} The Heatherbloom Taffeta Petticoats company stated that their product had “all of silk’s virtues—none of its faults.”\textsuperscript{176} Women could also purchase Heatherbloom Taffeta by the yard as lining material for $0.35 a yard.

Heatherbloom utilized celebrities to endorse their products; these celebrities included Lady Duff Gordon, Ethel Barrymore, and Carrie Reynolds. One particularly interesting advertisement in the December 1915 issue of \textit{Harper’s Bazar} featured Ethel Barrymore (Figure 18). During the 1910s, the play called “Our Mrs. McChesney” written by Edna Ferber and starring Barrymore credited Heatherbloom Petticoats (and presumably a rayon product) as making the play possible.\textsuperscript{177}

In several of their advertisements, fashion designer Lucile (Lady Duff Gordon) endorsed their petticoats and was quoted to say that “[she] find[s] the Heatherbloom Taffeta a most desirable fabric for petticoats. Its beauty and adaptability are a high compliment to the skill of American weavers.” But throughout all the research conducted, no articles or advertisements featured Lucile products and Heatherbloom products.\textsuperscript{178}

\textit{Socks}

Randolph Cuties Sox for Tots only advertised “art silk” socks once throughout the advertisements found in \textit{Good Housekeeping} from 1922 and 1924 (Figure 19). No advertisements for Randolph Cuties Sox for Tots were found in \textit{Harper’s Bazar} during this time.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{174} Heatherbloom Taffeta Petticoats, September 1916, \textit{Good Housekeeping}, 104.\\
\textsuperscript{175} Heatherbloom Taffeta Petticoats, August 1915, \textit{Harper’s Bazar}, 57.\\
\textsuperscript{176} Heatherbloom Taffeta Petticoats, October 1916, \textit{Good Housekeeping}, 104.\\
\textsuperscript{177} Heatherbloom Taffeta Petticoats, December 1915, \textit{Harper’s Bazar}, 147.\\
\end{flushleft}
Randolph’s advertised fiber content as “three qualities—Cotton, Mercerized and Art Silk—all moderately priced.”

Home Furnishing Products

Fabric by the Yard

Though Kapock Sunfast Fabric never specifically stated that it was rayon, the advertisement alluded to the fact. The researcher believes that this particular product was rayon because it stated that it was “not a worm silk,” but “an industrial achievement” (Figure 20). It cost less per yard than “ordinary fadable silks” and were silky and soft in texture. Kapock Fabrics came in a variety of colors and patterns, were easily washable, and supposedly colorfast to sun and water. The company that manufactured Kapock Fabrics suggested draperies and curtains as the perfect use for their products because of these characteristics. Kapock advertised numerous times in both Good Housekeeping and Harper’s Bazar and had the majority of advertisements for any company with 61 ads.

Curtains

The Scranton Lace Company sold “Lustre-Lace Curtains” in “artificial silk.” They advertised curtains in two advertisements in Good Housekeeping in 1924 (Figure 21). Lustre-Lace Curtains were woven, transparent, and colorfast to both laundering and sunlight.

Orinoka Guaranteed Sunfast Draperies and Upholsteries never specifically advertised that their drapery and upholstery fabrics were rayon, but alluded to the fact by stating that their fabrics have the look of silk, but at inexpensive prices (Figure 22). Advertisements with these statements were found in both Harper’s Bazar and Good Housekeeping from as early as 1915 to 1922.

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179. Randolph Cuties Sox for Tots, May 1922, Good Housekeeping, 151.
March 1924. Orinoka curtains were colorfast to sunlight and laundering and came in an array of colors, weaves, and textures.183

**Bed Spreads**

Stevens Spreads offered lustrous bed spreads in white satin, “art silk,” and crinkle cotton though they did not start advertising “art silk” until March of 1924 in *Good Housekeeping* and then changed “art silk” to “artificial silk” in the May 1924 issue of the magazine (Figure 23). Stevens Spreads offered matching draperies to their crinkle bed spreads at economic prices.184

**Book**

Some advertisements for Belding Bros. & Co. publicized “pure” silk fabrics and stressed the importance of purchasing real silk opposed to “adulterated silks.” Other advertisements from this company promoted “Syltex—a fast dye artificial silk—that is especially adapted to dress embroidery.”185 Out of the numerous advertisements that the Belding Bros. Company ran in *Harper’s Bazar* and *Good Housekeeping*, only one advertisement displayed the Syltex “artificial silk.”

The advertisement in which Syltex appeared did not feature bolts of pure silk to purchase, but their “Belding’s Book of Silk Embroidery, Knitting and Crochet.” This book, which sold for 15 cents in 1922, inspired women with unusual design patterns to create accessories such as hats, bags, and scarves along with sweaters and cross stitch patterns. Along with Syltex, Belding’s advised women to use their new process embroidery silks and Belding’s crochet silks (Figure 24).186

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DISCUSSION

The data found from *Women’s Wear* was included in the discussion section because no advertisements were found that could be included in the content analysis section except for terminology. *Women’s Wear* currently is, and was during the 1910s, directed towards fashion retailers.

All sources during this time period gave a variety of stated advantages and disadvantages of using rayon in products. Two major advantages of rayon over natural silk were cost and luster. Rayon was cheaper than silk and much more lustrous. Other stated advantages of rayon during this time period described it as a “very good material,” it wore well as dress trimmings and passementerie, its ability to cover, and that it was difficult to tell that the material in question was rayon.187

Stated disadvantages of rayon during this period included written consumers’ perceptions of rayon: its susceptibility to heat and moisture, its weakness when wet, and its overall weakness compared to silk (only one-eighth as strong as silk). One major disadvantage of rayon during this time was that no care information was provided and many women would try to iron it as they would iron cotton. The moisture and hot iron needed to press cotton would immediately ruin the garment with no means of repair. Rayon fibers were manufactured coarser than silk fibers during this time, which could have been a disadvantage or an advantage depending on the need of the product. Coarser fabrics have less drape and stiffer hand, but have good abrasion resistance and wrinkle less. Other disadvantages included poor elasticity, poor dye affinity, poor abrasion resistance, and the lack of the necessary qualities to produce a twistable yarn thus

limiting rayon to knit goods, embroidery, and coarser weaves. Yet another disadvantage was that rayon yarns had slubs and knots and produced a lot of waste.188

Rayon was presented as inferior to silk because of the industries’ portrayal of rayon, cost of products made of rayon, confusion among terminology, and lack of information provided about rayon to the consumer. The fashion industry along with the silk industry painted rayon in a negative light at the beginning of the twentieth century. The terms “real” or “pure” silk were used repeatedly to differentiate between silk and rayon. This led consumers to think that silk was the right or real choice and rayon was the wrong choice. Publications during this period sometimes implied that the purpose of rayon was to replace silk. Though rayon had similar characteristics to silk, it was not supposed to replace silk entirely but provide consumers with a substitute product or another fabric selection at a lower price. Women’s Wear authors wrote phrases such as “the real thing and its understudy” and suggested that rayon “will require considerable application and perfection to eventually replace the genuine with the artificial product.”189

In an article about rayon written with the consumer in mind from Good Housekeeping, “artificial silk” is included as part of a larger article titled “The Selection of Silks.” Not only did this article not mention the difference between “artificial silk” and silk, but implied that “artificial silk” was an imposter by claiming “how is [the customer] going to learn how to pick out the true from the false?”190 Manufacturers did not think that rayon was or ever would be a threat to the silk industry; manufacturers had “little fear that artificial silk will become a serious competitor of the exquisite products made entirely from the regal fiber given us by the

industrious silkworm.” And yet, at the same time, journal authors did nothing to help consumers learn about and understand the differences between real silk and rayon.

A research study conducted by *The Journal of Home Economics* in 1920 found numerous fabrics mislabeled about fiber content. Consumers were getting fabrics of different fiber contents than what they thought they were getting. Problems like this would cause consumers to be apprehensive about fiber content labels and be unsure just how rayon products would perform because of the mislabel. Another fabric labeled “artificial silk” turned out to be a mixture of cotton and silk along with a fabric labeled as “union silk and linen” was in fact “more than half cotton, with the remainder artificial silk.”

Several different authors from *The Journal of Home Economics* mentioned tests consumers could perform to differentiate between rayon and silk. Consumers could feel the difference; rayon had a stiffer and harsher hand. Home burning tests was another option for distinguishing; silk would burn easily with a smell like burning hair whereas burning rayon would burn rapidly, like cotton. If home chemists did not want to burn their rayon products, they could use Millon’s reagent, a solution of mercury in nitric acid, and apply to light colored fabrics. The solution would turn rayon red and not change the cellulose derivatives.

In October 1912, *Women’s Wear* reported “no definite standard has ever been laid down as to what genuine silk really is.” Without regulation, as described above, fabrics were incorrectly labeled. If a consumer purchased an “artificial silk” fabric and that fabric performed poorly, then the consumer would be hesitant to purchase any more rayon fabric whether or not this fabric was actually rayon.

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193 Rath, 428. Bjorklund, 381.
Rayon was perceived as inferior to silk because of cost perceptions. The majority of rayon products were priced lower than silk garments. One striking difference between price of an “artificial silk” and a silk button up sweater was shown in a Bonwit Teller advertisement from Harper’s Bazar from February 1917 (Figure 25). The ad featured five sweaters of similar styling; two almost identical though of different fibers. Both sweaters had a sailor style collar, five front button closure, long sleeves with cuffs, two patch pockets on front hips, and long sash with tassels around the waist. One sweater, the “Vallemont,” was pure silk; came in green, Copenhagen blue, rose, corn, purple, or white, and cost the consumer $22.50. The other sweater, the “Cedarleigh,” was “fibre silk,” came in more colors than the pure silk version (pink, rose, corn, turquoise, cherry, Copenhagen blue, white, peacock, purple, green, navy, and black), but only cost the consumer $11.50; approximately half the price as the pure silk sweater. Most consumers’ perceived lower cost as lower quality and would most likely perceive the rayon sweater as lower quality than the silk sweater.

Rayon was perceived as inferior to silk because of confusing terminology. Rayon was called many different names during this period that were bewildering to consumers. Art silk, artificial silk, fiber silk, manufactured silk, chemical silk, scientific silk, rayonner, wood silk, or even rayon silk were all used during this time period with the misnomer title of silk attached. With this variety of terms, consumers would not necessarily know what the actual fiber was.

Rayon was perceived as inferior to silk because of poor information provided about rayon to the consumer. The article from the May 1911 issue of Good Housekeeping, “The Selection of Silks,” did not differentiate between “artificial” silk and “real” silk. The article mentioned that “artificial silk” is made from cellulose, but continues to call artificial silk “silk.” It is likely that

196 Bjorklund.
housewives reading this article might assume that “artificial silk” was another type of silk rather than a different fiber altogether.\textsuperscript{197}
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Rayon was and continues to be an important fiber to the textile and fashion industry. Prior to rayon’s invention, only natural fibers such as cotton, silk, flax, and wool were available for clothing and home furnishings. Rayon, invented in 1846, was manufactured in the United States beginning in 1911. Called artificial silk until 1924 when the name rayon was coined, rayon was a less expensive alternative to silk clothing and accessories.

This paper focused on the time period of 1910-1924. The start date 1910 was selected because rayon production in the United States started in 1911. The year 1924 was chosen as a stop date for this project because acetate was invented in 1924 making rayon no longer the only manufactured fiber. This topic was important to study because little to no research had been done to address how rayon was introduced to consumers and to assess its impact on the fashion world. Seven research questions guided the research. These questions were:

1. What was the early history of rayon production and introduction to the public?
2. What names did manufacturers use when selling rayon?
3. What type of products featured rayon?
4. How were the above products promoted to the public?
5. What were the stated advantages of rayon during this time period?
6. What were the stated disadvantages of rayon during this time period?
7. Why was rayon perceived as inferior to silk?

This study utilized a grounded theory and content analysis to analyze data collected from the retailers’ newspaper Women’s Wear, the woman’s fashion magazine Harper’s Bazar, and the woman’s home magazine Good Housekeeping.
Manufacturers and the industry used a variety of names to describe rayon which confused the consumer. The terms artificial silk, art silk, fiber (fibre) silk, fiber (fibre), chemical silk, manufactured silk, scientific silk, rayonner, and rayon silk were all used to describe one type of fabric. Products made of rayon were varied and included clothing, accessories, and home furnishing products. The majority of products made of rayon were hosiery; which was no surprise because of previous literature. Other products included sweaters, draperies and curtains, embroidery and trim, bed spreads, dresses, scarves, blouses, women’s suits, hats, and socks. These products were promoted to the consumer through advertisements and articles featured in Harper’s Bazar and Good Housekeeping along with mentioned in articles in Women’s Wear.

During the time period of 1910-1924, many advantages and disadvantages were apparent. The major advantage of rayon was its luster; the second major advantage was cost. Rayon was lower in cost than silk. Other advantages of rayon included its ability to cover and it wore well as dress trimmings and embroidery. In spite of these advantages, there were many disadvantages. Rayon was susceptible to heat and moisture, only one-eighth as strong as silk, and weaker when wet. Women who purchased rayon did not know how to properly care for the fiber. This lack of knowledge resulted in ruined fabrics because the hot irons normally used for cotton would singe and burn rayon beyond repair. Rayon fibers were coarser than silk which produced a coarser weave, had poor elasticity, poor abrasion resistance, poor dye affinity, and lacked the necessary qualities to produce a twistable yarn. This last disadvantage caused knots and slubs in the yarns and produced a lot of waste yarn and fabric.

Rayon was seen as inferior to silk for four main reasons. First, the industry’s portrayal of rayon products was negative. Because of rayon, manufacturers and industry professionals started dubbing rayon as artificial silk and silk as “real” or “true” silk. These terms made consumers
think that silk was the optimal choice, but that they might have to settle for artificial silk, the imposter. Cost perceptions was the second major reason rayon was seen as inferior. The majority of rayon products were priced cheaper than silk products. For many consumers, inexpensive products equaled lower quality. Third was confusion about the terminology used. A variety of terms were used to describe rayon: artificial silk, art silk, fiber (fibre) silk, fiber (fibre), chemical silk, manufactured silk, scientific silk, rayonner, wood silk, and rayon silk. With this list of terms, consumers would not necessarily know what specific product they purchased or the correct fiber content. The fourth, and final reason, was poor information provided about rayon to the consumer. Articles written about silks included information about rayon, but did not differentiate between the two fibers.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was using only two sources for data analysis since Women’s Wear was only available for two and a half years. This only gave a partial business view of artificial silk and two magazine points of view; one magazine catered to the middle class and one catered to the upper middle to upper class. Another limitation was that this study only looked at literature promoted to middle and upper-middle class white women.

Future Research

This study can be expanded in many directions. More sources should be explored to achieve a more rounded view of rayon during this period. Archives of companies that were instrumental to the creation of rayon were not examined. These papers would provide a company’s perspective on the creation and promotion of the fiber. A chemists’ perspective would enhance the science aspect and explore a different angle along with patent research. Patents were found using Google Patents, but were not utilized. Another important study would
be the discussion of rayon from a retailer’s perspective, particularly given the National Retail Dry Good Association’s impact on naming rayon. The name change from artificial silk to rayon needs to be further studied; only a small number of articles from *The New York Times* were analyzed. If possible, interviewing people who lived during this time period to study whether or not they remember the time before manufactured and synthetic fibers would prove to be an interesting angle. Interviewing people would also apply to fibers like acetate and nylon.

Since women’s wear was only analyzed, looking at men’s and children’s wear would also provide a more rounded view of rayon during this period along with reviewing store inventories, and technical or industrial products to give a business point to rayon.
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_____ “United Ribbon Company Sustained in Customs Ruling Relative to the Classification for Duty of Certain Imported Artificial Silk Yarn in the Form of Singles.” Women’s Wear, 20 July 1912, 4.

____. “Would Like to Establish Artificial Silk Factory.” Women’s Wear, 5 Apr. 1911, 5.
Figure 1. Fashion editorial of women’s suits made from “rayonner.” *Good Housekeeping*, October 1920.
Figure 2. Fashion editorial of rayon silk blouse. This was the first and only mention of rayon. *Good Housekeeping*, May 1922.
PARIS first taught us how charming knitted sport clothes could be, so that now they are not merely a vogue, but an established fashion. They may be wool, silk, or cotton; but there is something in their soft, subtle lines that is particularly pleasing to the American woman.

Each season sweaters find new ways to be interesting, and this is achieved by unusual weaves or smart color combinations. For summer wear, very light weaves are largely featured. Both the tuxedo and the slip-over models sketched here depend solely on the block stitch design for their embellishment. The knitted silk dress—or rather the scarled sweater with the matching skirt, for they can be bought separately—favors a combination of color, while the bathing suits are woven in solid color with embroidered designs or contrasting bindings.

Of pure Organza thread, in a wide variety of color combinations, a three-piece costume consisting of sweater with separate skirt and waist costs about $27, or each may be bought separately.

NEVER have shoes and stockings shown such a delightful diversity of styles, and the most encouraging feature is the disappearance of the too high heel and too narrow toe. Flat heels and rounded toes, especially in the fashionable strap and Oxford models, are extremely good lines and are delightfully youthful. The shoes that carry the known trademark are designed under the supervision of an expert orthopedist to fit the foot correctly, while at the same time the fashion tendencies are carefully watched and new models constantly added.

Stockings, too, have become more insistent in color and design. Drop-stitch patterns and colors are very much favored, as are very sheer silks for evening and silken designs for sport wear. Beige and gray tones predominate for day wear and are worn largely with black and tan strap or open shoes.

Embroidered polka-dots and contrasting-colored piping emphasize the most lines of this knitted clothing, even the buttons on the shoulders. Colors to match, brown, off or navy, and cost about $10.75.

Figure 3. Tuxedo sweater made of fiber silk with sash picture on top right. Good Housekeeping, June 1922.
Figure 4. Sweater made of wool and fiber pictured on top middle model. Good Housekeeping, February 1923.
IN THE NEW YORK SHOPS

SINCE this is to be a season of color, we find a brilliant bit of embroidery, or pattern, introduced into most frocks or hats. Sports costumes, too, which follow the mode almost as much as other clothes, find many different ways to show this use of color. Perhaps the simplest way to add variety to a sports costume is to knot a variegated handkerchief about the neck of the dress, and with it wear a hat which is also handkerchief-trimmed, as shown on the opposite page. There are many other ways to use these exotic handkerchiefs, and always they bring that vivid color to the costume which is so essential this season.

Frocks for afternoon wear, if not made of contrasting materials or patterned silks, find color, or contrast, in embroidered blouses or beribboned bands. The two frocks on the opposite page show this contrast. Instead of the embroidered blouse to be worn with the plaited skirt, one of silk in a bright pattern would be equally good, and quite in the mode. The simple, twill

Straw hat trimmed with gay flounce, $8.50. Lace beret, $1.05

To be worn a sudden change, or the most critical eye, the young woman above, is well-equipped. The umbrella, with carved wood handle, fits the man, short stick. It is covered with satin-bordered silk and has amber tips and ferrule, $5. The ear-rings are cornelian in color, with sterling silver chain, $3.50. For the fresh with a bamboo neck-line is the hand-made organdy collar, $1.75. The Custom stripe bag, steel-ribbon, silk-lined, and with cord stringing, is $2.75

Figure 5. Sweater made of fiber silk pictured top right. Good Housekeeping, April 1923.
Figure 6. “Sportsmanlike” sweater picture top right of fiber and mohair. *Good Housekeeping*, April 1923.
Figure 7. Sports suit pictured on right of fiber silk. *Good Housekeeping*, July 1923.
Figure 8. Fiber silk scarf pictured top center. Fiber overblouse pictured on model on left side. *Good Housekeeping*, July 1923.
Figure 9. Artificial silk for embroidery treatments pictured on both garments top right. *Good Housekeeping*, October 1923.
Figure 10. Fiber silk sweater and striped scarf pictured top left. Good Housekeeping, July 1924.
Figure 11. Arrowhead Hosiery advertisement. Artificial silk mixed hosiery is featured. *Good Housekeeping*, August 1923.
Every woman should know the difference between the hosiery that is Knit to Shape—

BURSON

FASHIONED HOSE

—and hosiery that is stretched to shape or tailored with seams.

The next time you buy stockings ask your dealer to show you a pair of "Burson."

Pull one over your hand—test the firmness of the knitting; feel how smooth it is on the inside; see how the shape is really KNIT-IN without a seam anywhere; examine the back of the leg and see how rows of knitting gradually drop out to narrow the ankle; how the leg and foot are shaped to fit without binding or without wrinkles.

Such a test will convince you that these special features give real comfort along with a trim, snug fit—and that Burson Hose are a realization of what you have often wished for.

Made in Cotton, Lisle, Mercerized and Art Silk.

Sold in the leading retail stores. Write for free illustrated booklet.

Burson Knitting Company
710 Glen Street
Rockford Illinois

Figure 12. Burson Fashioned Hose advertisement. Women could purchase their hosiery in cotton, lisle, mercerized and art silk. *Good Housekeeping*, October 1917.
Figure 13. Corticelli Silk Hosiery sold hosiery using Sunglo Artificial Silk yarns. Harper’s Bazar, July 1922.

Introducing Corticelli Silk Hosiery

There is no silk so smooth, so lustrous and so strong as Corticelli Silk. Its use for fine silk hosiery now affords you the opportunity to buy really dependable silk stockings.

Corticelli Silk Stockings are made exactly as a woman would design them—luxurious in appearance, perfectly fashioned and so evenly knit that there is never a hint of that distressing “streaky” look. You will find Corticelli Silk Stockings at the discriminating shops, they are quality hosiery. Look for the little gold Kitten Head stamped on the toe.

Figure 14. Holeproof Hosiery advertisement featuring hosiery in pure silk, lisle, artificial silk, and cotton. *Good Housekeeping*, October 1917.
Figure 15. Hose of Luxite sold hosiery made of “Gold-Ray” labeled as the new scientific silk. *Harper’s Bazar*, March 1916.
Figure 16. Onyx Hosiery advertisement for light weight sport hose. *Good Housekeeping*, June 1921.
Figure 17. True Shape Hosiery advertisement for “fibre silk” hose that sold for $0.85 compared to pure silk hosiery with prices that started at $1.15 to $1.75. *Good Housekeeping*, November 1918.
Figure 18. Heatherbloom Petticoats did not specifically state rayon products, but used phrases like “1/3 the cost of silk” and “feels like silk.” Harper’s Bazar, December 1915.
Figure 19. Randolph Cuties sold socks for children in cotton, mercerized, and “art silk”. *Good Housekeeping*, May 1922.
Figure 20. Kapock Sunfast Fabrics sold fabric by the yard. They never specifically state that their product was rayon, but stated that their fabric was “not a worm silk.” *Harper’s Bazar*, November 1918.
Figure 21. Scranton Lustre-Lace sold curtains of artificial silk. *Good Housekeeping*, February 1924.
Figure 22. Orinoka sold curtains that looked like silk, but for inexpensive prices. *Harper’s Bazar*, November 1916.
Figure 23. Stevens Spreads sold bed spreads in satin, crochet, artificial silk, and cotton. *Good Housekeeping*, May 1924.
Figure 24. Beldings Bros. & Co. advertisement. This advertisement is for a book that the company sold for artificial silk embroidery. *Harper’s Bazar*, March 1922.
Figure 25. Bonwit Teller advertisement which shows similar styling between sweaters “Vallemont” and “Cedarleigh;” note the “Vallemont” sweater is pure silk and sold for $22.50 while the “Cedarleigh” sweater is fibre silk and sold for $11.50. Harper’s Bazar, 1917.
# APPENDIX B: CHART OF ALL ADVERTISEMENTS FROM *HARPER’S BAZAR* AND *GOOD HOUSEKEEPING*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terminology Used</th>
<th>Where Used</th>
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<th>What Type of Product</th>
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**Fiber (fibre) silk**

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