When the Shopping Gets Tough: Gender, Ethnicity and the Acquisition of Apparel

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Changes in social roles and composition of groups occupying those positions have made selecting the appropriate clothing for self-presentation an increasingly difficult task. This is especially true for career apparel as women and ethnic minorities move in increasing numbers into positions that have been dominated by white males, and traditional corporate dress codes are being challenged and changed. Apparel retailing has also been changing in an attempt to respond to new consumer needs.

The following three abstracts look at the acquisition of apparel from the point of view of both relatively new role incumbents and relatively new forms of retailing. The work by Stanforth and Lennon examines television shopping, and factors associated with reluctance versus willingness to use this channel of distribution as a source of apparel. Rucker, Arthur, Kangas and Lee explore career apparel problems and preferences from the perspective of Hispanic consumers, and highlight some of the gender issues that arise in connection with acquiring suitable clothing for work. McLeod and Darnhorst focus on African-American male executive dress, again finding gender issues to be more problematic than ethnicity in acquiring appropriate apparel for work situations.