

CROSS-DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH
BETWEEN TEXTILES AND CLOTHING AND
FAMILY SOCIAL SCIENCE: A CASE STUDY EXAMPLE

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The frequent use of dress and textiles as a bond between generational members of a family (through pre- or apprenticeship process) or as a point of dissension (often resulting in debates focused upon appropriate dress) makes collaborative research between textiles and clothing and family social science a promising venture. Arguments focused upon dress can reveal substantive issues underlying gender and family relationships. The purpose of this paper is to illustrate the use of debates focused upon appropriate dress to understand attitudes toward gender role change in families adapting to dramatic cultural change.

Fieldwork for this study was conducted between November of 1987 and November of 1990 among Hmong immigrants living in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota. The research focused upon traditional dress worn by Hmong American women as a part of the annual public celebration of New Year. A variety of fieldwork techniques were employed, gradually moving from informal interactions with Hmong families to more focused strategies for gathering data including detailed fieldnotes, photographic documentation, participant observation, in-depth interviews with teenagers and life histories with elders. Two textiles and clothing professionals and one family social science professional took part in the research project.

Interviews conducted using textiles and clothing as a point of discussion confirmed the value of using textiles and dress as a means of soliciting information from subjects related to conflicts within families in the midst of cultural change. Heated debates surrounding the wearing of new style Hmong American hats by young women revealed tension focused upon changing female gender roles. Using DeLong's visual framework (1987), it was found that males and elders tended to associate the visually closed and determinate old style turban with older style gender roles and the open and indeterminate new style hat with emerging Hmong American female gender roles.

As a result, within the public New Year celebration women's dress and its aesthetic evaluation by others became a dialogue focused on appropriate gender roles for women in the United States. Authenticity was also debated, as negative reviews of the new style hats tended to focus upon their American origins.

DeLong, M. F. (1987). The way we look: A framework for visual analysis of dress. Ames: Iowa State University Press.

CLOTHING, ETHNICITY, AND
ATTRIBUTIONS CONCERNING
DATE RAPE

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This study investigated the effects of clothing, ethnicity, and sex of subject on attributions concerning a victim of date rape. Subjects in the study were 411 undergraduates. The design was a 2 X 4 X 2 between subjects factorial with two types of clothing (revealing, nonrevealing), four ethnicities (white, black, hispanic, asian), and sex of subject. Revealing clothing included a short black knit dress with a scoop neckline, hose, and heels. Nonrevealing clothing included a long sleeve blouse and coordinating skirt, hose, and flats. Subjects were instructed to assume that they were serving as a juror in a date rape trial. Subjects read a description of a date rape and were supplied with a photograph of the "victim" and asked to make attributions concerning her receptivity to sexual intercourse, her responsibility for the rape, whether she led the perpetrator on, and whether she could have done something to prevent the rape. Subjects also indicated their age, sex, and confidence in their responses. Subjects indicated they were confident in their responses. Subjects rated the victim who was black and wore revealing clothing as more receptive to sexual intercourse than the victim who was black and wore nonrevealing clothing. Males rated the victim as more receptive to sex and as likely to have led the perpetrator on than did females.