



### THE INFLUENCE OF VALUES

Your decisions and attitudes about clothing are strongly affected by your values. Your values also determine how you interpret and react to the appearance and values of other people.

Values are fundamental beliefs and attitudes about the worth or importance of things and include or direct our specific attitudes and interests. We reflect our individuality by the values we hold, the attitudes we express, and the interests that intrigue us.

We learn values from many sources, including the larger societies in which we live, our families, friends, schools, books, television, and movies. Value patterns vary among societies, between generations, from one group to another, and from one person to another.

Initially, the individual's chief source of values is the family. Children learn very quickly to recognize those qualities that are given a high value and those that have none, behavior that brings reward or punishment, and actions that are admired or disapproved. As the child's world expands, so does its exposure to other value patterns. Each person will eventually be characterized by the combination of specific experiences that order and form his or her values.

Researchers have established that our general life values will also direct our clothing values, attitudes, and interests. Your values may be fairly consistent. You may be totally flamboyant with your money, lifestyle, and your clothing decisions. Or, you may be moderate in spending your money, like on splashy clothing, and be conservative about life in general. Many will find that, because of their life experiences, they have contradictions rather than consistencies in their clothing decisions.

Problems can arise when competing values point to different courses of action. Consider the person who wants to attract admiring glances and attention from the opposite sex by wearing a particular type of outfit. But the cost of the outfit is really above his/her budget, its use would be limited, and his/her parents would "have a fit." In such situations, most individuals are eventually able to rank his/her values so that one factor takes precedence over the others and the conflict is resolved.

Value conflicts over dress and personal appearance are often the center of disagreement between children and parents or other adults. However, it is erroneous to assume that everyone in any given age group has the same pattern of values. Many factors influence the development of attitudes and the order of values. Even members of the same family are likely to have different value orientations and conditioning.



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New values continually emerge. Small-group value changes become broader changes, particularly in a technical, free society such as ours. Some examples include:

- The change in economic values reflected by the method many people now use to pay for things—namely charge accounts.
- The clothing demanded by active sports that has changed the value of how much body exposure is acceptable.
- The increased availability of material "things" and our changed attitudes toward serviceability, durability, and the importance of quality.

If a person recognizes and accepts the priorities of his/her values and the fact that compromise and change may be needed at different times, clothing choices are not only simplified but also likely to bring greater satisfaction.

The activities that follow can help you think through which values are or are not important to you in your clothing choices. As you learn to define and understand your values, it becomes easier to make decisions about clothing and personal appearance. And, as a result, you will be happier with your clothing choices.



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<b>GENERAL VALUE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION OF VALUE</b>	<b>RELATIONSHIP TO CLOTHING</b>
Aesthetic	Design, fit, beauty, harmony, and individualism important; mass production a threat; expressiveness/creativity important.	Clothing must be attractive, well-designed; fit must be perfect, texture and colors pleasing; likes individuality; hates uniformity
Economic	Usefulness/practicality important; accumulates wealth; luxury often confused with beauty.	Looks for comfortable, easy to maintain and use clothing; examines items carefully to get true dollar value for purchase; comparative shopper; abhors waste.
Political	Looks for power, leadership; dominates people; enhances self; wants admiration and and esteem; vain.	Dresses to impress others and to show he/she is better than others; would wear status clothing, fraternity buttons, school rings.
Social	Concerned for welfare of others; kind; unselfish; needs to be accepted and approved of by others.	Dresses appropriately; dresses like those in his/her group; wishes to feel confident in order to make others comfortable; would try not to dress better than others.
Spiritual	Mystical, relates self to entire universe as a complete and orderly system; sees the divine in every event.	Simplicity is the ideal; no definite texture, no elegance; modesty; uniforms acceptable.
Theoretical	Discovery or truth, facts, and information; judgments about beauty and utility are not important.	Honest use of materials; wears only "real" rather than "fake" materials; would look for fiber content and care label; comfort of clothing important.

Source: Cooperative Extension Service, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, College of Agriculture.

