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THE MANITOBA WOMEN'S INSTITUTE AND ITS ROLE IN  
HELPING RURAL MANITOBA WOMEN MEET THEIR  
PERCEIVED CLOTHING NEEDS  
1930 TO 1939

by  
Heather M. Meiklejohn

A thesis submitted to  
the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
University of Manitoba  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Clothing and Textiles

(c)Heather M. Meiklejohn

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## Abstract

The objectives of this study were to identify the perceived level of minimum clothing needs of Manitoba Women's Institute members between 1930 and 1939, to identify and evaluate initiatives of Manitoba Women's Institute groups to help women meet their perceived minimum clothing needs during the economic depression of the 1930's, and to identify and compare selected independent variables between Manitoba Women's Institute groups in relation to the members' perceived minimum clothing needs. To conduct the study, a census survey involving 50 members of the Manitoba Women's Institute was undertaken. A personal interview technique was used for data collection. The population was limited to members of Manitoba Women's Institute groups that operated between 1930 and 1939. Findings indicate that approximately 50% of the population studied felt their wardrobe was adequate to meet their perceived minimum clothing needs. It was also found that a variety of courses and programs were offered by Manitoba Women's Institute groups to help women meet their perceived minimum clothing needs during the 1930's. A positive evaluation of the programs was given by the majority of respondents. The results of this study further suggest the selected independent variables of geographic location defined by severity of drought, the position of an individual within her family unit, and employment status, were not related to a woman's perception of her personal clothing needs of the time period. However, a significant relationship was found between a woman's perception of her personal clothing needs and her perception of other women's personal clothing needs. One implication of these findings suggests that during the 1930's, a woman's perception of minimum clothing need was influenced by her perception of her peers' minimum clothing needs.

## DEDICATION

To  
Richard Doc Lavergne  
my life partner

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My fascination with history has been due in great part to the influence of four women, Alice Meiklejohn, Kay Paul, Ida Tindall, and Wyn Van Slyck, all of whom have contributed significantly to my appreciation of the past. It is these women who I thank for capturing my attention and inspiring this research project.

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

The focus of this study centered on the programs and courses that were offered by the Manitoba Women's Institute to help its members obtain clothing during the years of the depression, 1930-1939. Extreme shortages of commodities, including clothing, were experienced by many Canadians during that decade (Friesen, 1984; Westin, 1976). During the 1930's, fashion trends were in a state of transition, further compounding the existing problem of supply shortages (Collard, 1983). The role of women in society was also changing as they became more visible in the work force, thereby creating special clothing requirements that were not previously encountered (Collard, 1983; Westin, 1976). Whether Manitoba women were able to fulfill their clothing needs during the severe economic conditions of the decade of the 1930's was of particular interest.

The primary purpose of this study was to identify and evaluate the initiatives of Women's Institute groups to help women meet their perceived minimum clothing needs. As clothing requirements are fundamental to all Canadians, it is especially important to determine how people are able to meet this need during periods of extreme economic hardship. Literature indicates that institutions like the Canadian Red Cross and the United Church of Canada, as well as municipalities themselves, were extremely helpful during the 1930's in supplying needy families with articles of clothing (Horn, 1972). It is believed that the Women's Institute also provided a significant amount of assistance in this regard.

A compelling motive for the investigation of the initiatives used by the Women's Institute to help women fulfill their perceived clothing needs is due in part to the Women's Institute's main thrust. Because the Women's Institute was a group formed by women, for all women, it is speculated that their initiatives may have been more focused

towards women's particular needs than the initiatives conducted by other institutions.

The Women's Institute is an organization with a membership comprised mainly of rural women. The central purpose of the organization is to raise the standard of homemaking for their own and society's better development (Manitoba Women's Institute, 1980). From the time the Women's Institute was formed, its membership continually increased with its work expanding to include other aspects of every day life beyond the confines of one's home (Manitoba Women's Institute, 1980). For this reason, it was believed that the Women's Institute played a significant role in helping women meet their clothing needs during the economic depression of the 1930's.

To date, no Canadian literature has been found that documents the perceived clothing needs of rural prairie women during the economic depression of the 1930's, nor the interaction of the Manitoba Women's Institute in helping to fulfill these needs. It is believed that a study addressing this issue would be timely.

Given that the 1930's was a transitional decade characterized by economic hardship, changing roles of women and fashion trends, the objectives of this study were as follows:

1. To identify perceived minimum clothing needs of Manitoba Women's Institute members, between 1930 and 1939;
2. To identify and evaluate the initiatives of Manitoba Women's Institute groups to help women meet their perceived clothing needs;
3. To identify and compare selected independent variables, such as geographic location as defined by severity of drought, perception of other women's level of clothing inventories, the position of an individual within her family unit, and employment status, between Women's Institute groups, in relation to individual's perceived minimum clothing needs; and
4. To evaluate Women's Institute members' perception of the effectiveness of the

Manitoba Women's Institute's initiatives.

For the purpose of this study, minimum clothing need was defined as those articles of clothing that are perceived as being essential by an individual to carry on her normal daily activities. Due to the wide variety of daily activities that an individual may perform, as well as differing individual perceptions of need, it is recognized that minimum daily clothing needs may be vastly different from one individual to the next.

Chapter II provides a historical review of the Women's Institute, prevailing geographic and economic conditions of the 1930's as well as women's fashion trends of that decade. Details of the research methods used to conduct the study are outlined in Chapter III. Results from analyses of data collected is presented in Chapter IV; conclusions are given in Chapter V.

## Chapter II

### Historical Review

An investigation of the programs and courses offered by Manitoba Women's Institute groups to help rural women meet their perceived minimum clothing needs during the 1930's, and an evaluation of the effectiveness of the programs and courses can be identified, in part, through an examination of the historical background of the Women's Institute movement from its inception in 1897 to the present day. A description of the work carried out by the Manitoba Women's Institute during the 1930's is included. A survey of the geographic and economic conditions of the 1930's is provided to identify prevailing trends characteristic to this decade. A brief synopsis of women's prevailing fashions during the 1930's completes this chapter.

The extensive size of Canada accounts for its diversity of physical geographic features. The prairie provinces, which comprise a large portion of the country, share this diversity of features. While each region, and areas within each region, are characterized by certain features, occurrences such as the drought of the 1930's can have an extreme effect on the natural geography of the area, disturbing the settlement and agricultural patterns that may have been established.

As a result of these redistribution patterns it is probable that many rural communities would have evolved in isolated areas. To counteract this isolation, and possibly reduce its negative effects, groups such as the Women's Institute were formed (Speechly, 1934). Groups of this type became very popular, providing education and a source of companionship. Work carried out by Women's Institute groups has proven to be important and beneficial to many people, not only those from a particular community, but also to those from neighboring areas. For example, these organizations provided a medium through which extension workers from the University of Manitoba could carry

out educational and inspirational programs, and they also provided local organizations through which the members, on their own initiative and as need arose, rendered meritorious and unselfish service to their respective communities (Ellis, 1971). Included in the work of the Women's Institute were courses and programs related to sewing. Courses such as these may have been specifically focused toward helping women obtain clothing during the 1930's, when a need of this type was especially prevalent. The following section discusses the evolution of the Women's Institute, and outlines the work carried out by Manitoba Women's Institute members during the 1930's. Also included is a summary of the geographic and economic conditions experienced in Canada during the 1930's. A brief description of the prevailing fashion trends follows.

#### History Of The Women's Institute

The Women's Institute movement was first formed in Stoney Creek, Ontario under the direction of a rural farmwife, Adelaide Hoodless. Spurred by the death of her young son, Adelaide Hoodless launched a crusade to create a support group that would help women, through domestic science education, to improve their homes and their communities (Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Recreation, 1985).

Prior to the formation of the first Women's Institute, Adelaide Hoodless lectured to many groups concerning issues of home economics, sanitation, hygiene, and child care (MacDonald, 1986; Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Recreation, 1985). Through lectures of this type, her work came to the attention of one Farmer's Institute group. With their assistance, Adelaide Hoodless addressed a Farmer's Institute meeting in Stoney Creek, Ontario and the result was the formation of the Women's Department of the Farmer's Institute of South Wentworth. During the first formal meeting on February 25, 1897, the name was changed to the Women's Institute of Saltfleet County (MacDonald, 1986).

Like the Farmer's Institute, the Women's Institute became affiliated with the



Department of Agriculture and was entitled to the services of lecturers on various phases of homemaking. From its earliest beginnings, it was agreed that any woman might join the organization regardless of race, creed or politics (Speechly, 1934).

The central purpose of the Women's Institute was to raise the standard of homemaking for their own and society's better development (Manitoba Women's Institute, 1980). Members believed that a nation could not rise above the level of its homes and this creed became an article of faith for all Women's Institute groups (Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Recreation, 1985).

The importance that Adelaide Hoodless placed on homemaking and the institution of the family is best illustrated by her fight against obtaining votes for women and the growing trend to educate women for the workplace. In her opinion, this trend away from homemaking was completely wrong since almost all women would eventually have to care for a home and a family. As the family was the basis of all social institutions, it was believed that unless they were well cared for and morally upright, society would disintegrate. As for obtaining the right to vote, Adelaide Hoodless believed that if a woman had not succeeded in training her sons to vote so that they could guard their mother's best interests and the best interests of the nation, then she herself was not worthy to vote (MacDonald, 1986). It was with these convictions that she based the teachings of the Women's Institute.

News of the formation of the first Women's Institute group in Stoney Creek spread to neighboring areas and other similar groups were soon formed. The Ontario provincial government recognized the educational value of the Women's Institute and enthusiastically promoted the organization (Speechly, 1934).

Thirteen years after the initiation of the first group in Ontario, news of the organization reached Manitoba (Speechly, 1934). The first Manitoba Women's Institute group was formed in August, 1910, in Morris, with 37 members (Manitoba Culture,

Heritage and Recreation, 1985; Manitoba Women's Institute, 1980).

The first action of the Morris group was to send a resolution to Premier R. P. Roblin requesting provincial government co-operation and support for Manitoba Women's Institute groups. The Manitoba government willingly agreed and sent two lecturers from the Department of Agriculture to address meetings of women throughout the province and to organize Household Science Associations (Manitoba Women's Institute, 1980 & Speechly, 1934). In 17 of the 23 communities visited, local women opted to form associations, all of which were affiliated with the Department of Agriculture (Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Recreation 1985). By January of 1911, 17 groups had been formed in Manitoba and by 1919 the number had grown to 127 (Manitoba Women's Institute, 1980; Speechly, 1934). The local groups were called Home Economics Societies until 1919, when they were then individually referred to as Institutes (Norell, 1986).

During the annual convention in February of 1915, it was agreed to form an advisory board, including four Women's Institute members, to carry out the administration of the organization. Prior to this date, the administration of the Home Economics Societies was under the direction of the Managing Director of Agricultural Societies and College Extension (Ellis, 1971).

At a national convention held in Winnipeg in February 1919, a national organization was formed: The Federated Women's Institutes of Canada. All provinces adopted the new name of Women's Institute except Saskatchewan and Quebec who chose to retain their original titles of Homemakers and Cercle des Fermieres, respectively. The aim of the newly formed national group was to provide opportunities for rural women to meet and discuss their roles as homemakers and citizens (Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Recreation, 1985).

After experimenting for 16 years with district boundaries, the Manitoba groups

underwent a re-organization according to districts. A proposal was brought forth to divide the province into eight formal districts and in April of 1932, these boundaries came into effect (Manitoba Women's Institute, 1980). In 1941, the number of districts expanded to ten, and in 1975 a five-region system was adopted (Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Recreation, 1985). The five current regions are: Northwest, which includes the Swan River Valley and Roblin-Russell districts; Southwest, subdivided into Southwest A comprising the area north of the Trans-Canada highway and Southwest B, the area south of the Trans-Canada highway; Central, mainly the Red River District plus an area west of Lake Manitoba; Winnipeg/Interlake, all the territory between lakes Winnipeg and Manitoba, including the city of Winnipeg; and Eastern, communities east of the the Red River to the Manitoba-Ontario border and north to Great Falls (Manitoba Women's Institute, 1980). See Appendix A for current districts of the Manitoba Women's Institute. While the local groups had always been semi-autonomous, and these distinct boundaries made them even more so, they often came together under the umbrella of the provincial Women's Institute.

It was agreed that groups within a district would elect one president and this person would automatically become one of eight Advisory Board members. Two additional women, one appointed by the Minister of Agriculture and one by the head of the Home Economics Department at the University of Manitoba, would also be included on the Advisory Board (Ellis, 1971; Speechly, 1934). The role of the Advisory Board was to unite the local Women's Institutes and to coordinate their work throughout the province (Manitoba Women's Institute, 1980).

While it is true that the initial goal of the Women's Institute was to educate women to become better homemakers, the work of the Women's Institute soon spread beyond the boundaries of the home. A composite list of all activities of Women's Institutes as a whole would be lengthy, but specific activities of any one Women's

Institute group, determined by necessity, needs, and limitations of the local community, can be identified; for example, relief work and the establishment and management of short courses including sewing (Ellis, 1971; Speechly, 1934).

The provincial Women's Institute, from the beginning, viewed its role chiefly as an initiating one. It was hoped that by initiating projects, such as the establishment of rest rooms, it would disseminate information that could enable other groups to follow its example. Its membership was expected to move on to new projects involving current needs and issues as soon as possible so as not to become static in its activities (Norell, 1986).

The Manitoba Women's Institute remained active throughout the first and second world wars, when their attentions and efforts turned to more critical international projects, rather than those leading to an improvement in their own personal lives. Care packages and news from home were sent to enlisted men overseas and members raised thousands of dollars for the Red Cross and for the Children's War Service Fund (Manitoba Culture, Recreation and Heritage, 1985).

In addition to their extensive patriotic service, the Manitoba Women's Institute became an invaluable source of education and support during the depression years of the 1930's. Educational programs including mental health care and thrift, became very popular, as did classes of dressmaking and millinery. Members collected relief bundles and searched out ways and means of stretching food and clothing, and found substitutes to replace those that the current conditions had made unavailable (Manitoba Women's Institute, 1980).

In 1932, the Manitoba provincial government announced that it would no longer be able to provide funding for the Women's Institute (Manitoba Culture, Recreation and Heritage, 1985). Despite this financial set-back, Women's Institute members were able to overcome the difficulty and continued to raise money to support each group as well as

their many causes.

Prior to the formation of the Women's Institute, there were very few, if any, organizations in which rural women could become involved (Speechly, 1934). Providing a source of support, education and companionship, the Women's Institute was able to fill this void. Figures provided by the Manitoba Women's Institute indicate that as of 1989, there were 87 Women's Institute groups functioning in Manitoba (G. Parker, personal communication, July 24, 1989). While their realm of activities still include community service and education for homemakers, activities of international importance have also been undertaken.

#### Geographic Overview

This section describes the natural geography of the prairie provinces, and in particular, the province of Manitoba. The term natural geography refers to the physical elements of the earth, independent of man. A description of the prevailing geographic trends of the 1930's is important to better understand the unique environmental characteristics experienced by the province of Manitoba, that were to set the 1930's apart from other decades. The province of Manitoba exhibited varying, definable boundaries according to severity of drought and, therefore, represented a good choice for the geographic parameters of the study.

The prairie provinces, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, account for approximately one-fifth of Canada's total area (Laycock, 1972). The interior plains region covers approximately one half of the prairie provinces (Robinson, 1982). The size of this region accounts for its wide diversity of landformations and geology.

The climate of the prairie provinces is the result of a number of factors such as latitude which contributes to cold winters and mild summers. Seasonal temperatures are further accentuated by the continental interior location of the area. Mountain barriers to

the west limit the flow of mild air and moisture from the Pacific Ocean and cause the cold air from the north to be channeled down into the area during the winter months. The same is true for warm air from the south during the summer months.

Comparison of average temperature and precipitation data collected from 1931 to 1960, indicate that the climate of the prairie provinces could be generally classified as sub-arctic in the north, humid continental-cool summer in the south, and highland climates in the southwest (Laycock, 1972). Temperature ranges tend to be lowest in the northeastern region, gradually increasing toward the southwest. Trends in temperature influence the frost-free period and the growing season, which in turn has a significant impact on settlement and agricultural patterns.

Laycock (1972) summarizes geographic regions of Manitoba as:

1. Grasslands occupy the warmer and drier portions of the prairie provinces and are made up of tall-grass prairie found west of the Red River, mixed-grass prairie which is transitional to the parkland, and short-grass prairie found in the driest areas of the region;
2. Parkland areas are a mixture of grasslands and woodlands. The warmer and drier margins are predominated by grassland while the more moist, cooler areas are predominantly treed;
3. The mixed forest zone contains both conifers and deciduous broadleaf species;
4. Coniferous forests are found in more humid areas that have temperatures necessary for support of tree growth;
5. The zone of tundra transition is found in northern Manitoba and northeastern Saskatchewan. This area is characterized by open parkland and stunted forest growth; and
6. The tundra zone, a narrow fringe near the shores of Hudson Bay, supports dwarfed birch and arctic willow in areas of poor drainage, and has a ground cover of

lichen, moss, grass, and sedge.

Ellis (1938) reports that soils associated with the grassland region are excellent for grain production. Soils associated with the parkland region, while not as fertile as the grassland zone due in part to the establishment of trees, can produce high average crop yields if soil texture is favorable. The mixed forest zone and the coniferous forest zone are more suitable for mixed farming, livestock production and forestry, rather than for grain production (Ellis, 1938). Areas of tundra transition and tundra are not suitable for agricultural use (Ellis, 1938).

The 1930's was not a decade characterized solely by poor economic conditions. It was also an era that coincided with the longest continuous interval of sub-normal and adverse geographic conditions ever experienced in the province of Manitoba (Ellis, 1971). These adverse conditions resulted from the interaction of both natural factors and factors outside of the control of the province. The result of this interaction of factors was extreme agricultural difficulties.

The most serious natural factor responsible for the agricultural difficulties during the 1930's was the years of drought which immediately followed the economic collapse of 1929. The mean precipitation levels during the period of April to October, collected for the 41 years prior to 1929, for the grassland region, was 13.56 inches. In comparison, for seven of the ten years commencing 1929, the mean precipitation, during the same months for the grassland region was 9.47 inches, 4.09 inches below the previous long-time average. The drastic effect of these early drought years is best illustrated by the reduction of annual provincial wheat crop yield. The mean yield of wheat in Manitoba Crop Reporting District No. 1 (Melita), for the 44 years for which records are available prior to 1929, was 16.48 bushels per acre. The mean yield of wheat for the ten years, 1929 to 1938, for the same area, was 8.04 bushels per acre (Ellis, 1971). The average of all crop yields in southwestern Manitoba, in 1934, was approximately one bushel per

acre, resulting in the lowest ever recorded values (Ellis, 1971).

During periods of extreme drought, such as those experienced by the province of Manitoba during the 1930's, certain characteristics of the physical environment change. Major landforms and the basic geology of the land remain intact with minor changes occurring in the size and flow of lakes and rivers. However, climate, levels of precipitation, vegetation, and soil, experienced much more drastic transitions.

The climate of the 1930's was characterized by extremely hot summers and very cold winters. Record-breaking temperatures were often attained during this decade. As temperature ranges reached extremes, the level of precipitation dramatically decreased. The first quarter of the decade experienced very low levels of rainfall during the summer months, as well as little snowfall during the winter (Ellis, 1971).

Temperature extremes and reduced precipitation affected established geographic regions. Regions characteristic to warmer, drier areas, such as the grasslands, expanded as the drought conditions were not suitable for the support of other geographic regions. The treed portion of the parkland area was reduced as the grassland portion became more predominant in response to the drier conditions. Growth within the coniferous forests became static as the humid conditions necessary for tree growth were not attained. The zones of tundra transition and tundra remained relatively stable as they are normally characterized by drought conditions. As the boundaries of the different geographic regions moved, the condition of the soils associated with each area changed. Soils that were once fertile and responded well to cultivation, became less so in response to the harsh conditions.

Because of these environmental changes, geographic locations defined by severity of drought can be identified within the province of Manitoba, that exhibit differences in levels of precipitation (see Appendix B). Geographic location defined by severity of drought can be categorized as:



1. High. Southwestern region and southern portion of the province comprised mainly of grassland. The Southwestern Plains, the Red River Valley and the Prairie-Aspen Grove areas make up most of this region. This region was characterized by severe to moderate levels of drought;

2. Moderate. Lower central region of the province comprised mainly of parkland and mixed forest. This region includes the area north of the grassland belt, between the western and eastern provincial borders, up to the boundary of tundra transition. The moderate region was characterized by moderate to low levels of drought;

3. Unaffected. Central and northern region of the province comprised of tundra transition and tundra. This geographic location was unaffected by the drought of the 1930's.

Environmental changes of this type had a significant impact upon the various agricultural industries in Manitoba during the depression years. Areas that had previously been considered adequate for field crop production were decreasing as the dryer conditions made farming of this type less productive. Despite the emergence of the grassland region into the parklands due to an increase in dryer conditions, suitability of the parkland soil was not adequate to properly support crop production (Ellis, 1938).

### Economic Background

The years of the depression are viewed as one of the most economically disastrous decades in the history of Canada. The depression which was first manifested in the United States, quickly spread to most parts of the industrialized western world including Canada (Phillips & Watson, 1984). Levels of economic output, employment and international trade fell at an unprecedented rate creating an atmosphere of political and social instability resulting in untold personal suffering for millions of people (Phillips & Watson, 1984).

A number of developments dating as far back as 1895 were to have an effect on the Canadian economy as it entered the 1930's (Safarian, 1959). While it is not within the realm of this study to examine these developments, it is important to recognize that these events worked together to weaken the Canadian economy making it especially susceptible to international economic fluctuations. The economic conditions in Canada had already begun a downswing in the spring of 1929, before the New York stock market crash in the fall of that year, the international repercussions that followed the crash only intensified the effect of Canada's declining economy (Horn, 1984).

Factors that were the most instrumental in contributing to the severity of the downswing of Canada's economy were the severity of the decline of the United States' economy, the decline in world trade, and the collapse of world finance. With a weakened economy, Canada could not withstand an international situation such as the one that these three factors created. Had the international economic situation been stronger, the downswing in Canada's economy might have only resulted in a recession (Friesen, 1984). However, the combination of external and domestic factors resulted in a major depression for the Canadian economy.

The end of 1932 saw wheat prices fall to the lowest level in the past 300 years of commercial trading (Mackintosh & Joerg, 1974). Toward the end of 1932 the decline in the Canadian economy had begun to slow down until it finally reached its lowest point during the first quarter of 1933 (Horn, 1984; Safarian, 1959). The second and third quarters of 1933 showed an increase in the economy, with stabilization occurring during the fourth quarter (Safarian, 1959). Because of a slow reversal, many wage earners remained on assistance throughout the early and mid thirties even though the economy had begun to improve.

It is believed that May 1, 1933 was the approximate turning point for the Canadian economy. At that point, 1.5 million Canadians were dependent on direct

government relief for survival. It has been estimated that as many as one third of the wage earners, as distinct from salary earners, were out of work on this date. This figure was retrieved from a confidential memorandum prepared for the Prime Minister's Office (Horn, 1984). By 1934, two million Canadians received public relief at any given time during that year. In 1935 the figure had dropped to 1.9 million and by 1938 it had decreased again to 1.1 million (Horn, 1984).

Contrary to the figures that illustrate extreme poverty, there were those few Canadians who had annual incomes of \$1,500 or more, which amounted to approximately one-fifth of Canadian families. During the worst few years of the depression, many were able to take advantage of the low prices resulting from the weakened economy. As the national income declined, wage and salary earners were able to get a growing share of it, while the share for small business owners and farmers declined. For those people who were able to keep their jobs and remain on fixed incomes, they were often better off in 1933 than they had been in 1929 due to the decline in the Consumer Price Index (Horn, 1984).

After the initial stabilization of the upswing in the last quarter of 1933, the Canadian economy began a slow incline. However, by the end of the decade economic recovery was still incomplete. Canada's economic situation paralleled that of the world, as international economic activity was also incomplete by 1937 after almost five years of recovery (Safarian, 1959).

Of all industries affected by the depression, no industry suffered more than that of agriculture. It is not surprising, therefore, that this industry also had the slowest rate of recovery. Safarian (1959) believes the reason most often sighted for the incomplete recovery in the area of agriculture is due to the instability of wheat income. Crop yield, acreage, and price of the product work together to create this unstable market.

A number of factors hindered the upswing in the economy of the Canadian

prairies resulting in an incomplete recovery during the latter part of the decade. The prevailing factor, the large investments made by prairie governments during the 1920's to upgrade the prairie region, resulted in a tremendous debt for these governments. The debt was further increased when it became necessary to make relief payments to recipients living in poverty-stricken areas. The large debt became an even greater problem during the upswing as higher cash incomes had to be used to pay for arrears of interest and taxes, repayment of the debt itself, or to cover operating costs without further increasing the debt, rather than funneling the monies back into the system to be used for reinvestment (Safarian, 1959).

The upswing in the Canadian economy remained slow and incomplete throughout the last years of the 1930's, increasing significantly only with the onset of World War II (Horn, 1984). Internal attempts by the central government aimed at increasing the rate of recovery were generally undertaken too late in the period of recovery to be effective. The rate of recovery was further hampered by the constitutional division of powers between federal and provincial governments that slowed the process of reform legislation (Safarian, 1959).

Prevailing economic characteristics of the Canadian economy during the 1930's, included a severe downswing during the early years, a slow and unstable incline during the second and third quarters of the decade, and an incomplete recovery by the end of the decade (Mackintosh & Joerge, 1974; Safarian, 1959). While it is true that external factors had a detrimental effect on Canada's economy, the combination of internal factors further compounded the problem. The nature of Canada's downswing and the degree of recovery was determined to a great extent by the structure of its economic development prior to the 1930's (Friesen, 1984). For this reason, no one factor can be isolated as the cause for the economic fluctuations.

The depression of the 1930's not only resulted in a decade of extreme economic

hardship for many Canadians, but it will also be remembered as the decade that brought psychological and physical deprivation. Loss of jobs and the initiation of relief programs meant a loss of status and self-respect (Friesen, 1984). Those Canadians who survived the depression emerged a stronger, if not a more cautious group with a low appetite for risk taking and perhaps a greater propensity to save.

Despite the conditions created by the poor geographic and economic environment, it is interesting to observe women's continued interest in fashion trends. The following section provides a synopsis of Canadian women's fashions during the 1930's.

#### Canadian Women's Fashions, 1930 to 1939

The 1930's brought about a period of great change for many people. Following a decade known as the roaring twenties, the thirties saw changes not only in financial practices, but also in the roles played by men and women. The impending economic depression of the early 1930's forced many men to drop out of the work force, while in turn forcing many women into it. The independent mood created in the 1920's was carried into the following decade and many women in North America were actively involved in work, in either a paid or voluntary capacity (Westin, 1976). The clothes they required were a reflection of this new lifestyle. Dress became more uniform in appearance and less varied across the country (Collard, 1983). Increased involvement in sports and leisure activities further increased the need for fashion change.

The New York Stock Market crash of 1929 affected virtually all aspects of finance. Due to a lack of financial capital many women were finding that they were no longer able to afford the extravagant cost of custom-made, designer clothing. Rather than lose their clients, an increasing number of designers turned their efforts toward creating toiles and ready-made clothing. Toiles were patterns cut in linen and supplied

with full directions for construction that could be purchased by either stores or private individuals (Laver, 1977). Regardless of where and how the toile was purchased, the end result was a designer garment without designer prices.

The effect of the economic depression and the resulting shift in garment production helped to bring the clothes of the different classes together. Heavy unemployment and increasing taxation curbed the tendency toward extravagant dressing. For these reasons, fashion was moving away from the couture level to something that was less expensive. While the world's smart set still wore garments originating from the great Parisian couture houses, less affluent women were demanding lines of good quality, ready-to-wear garments. To meet this demand, Paris designers created ready-to-wear lines known as wholesale couture (Ewing, 1974). Designers took their season's line and adapted it to the every-day needs and lives of middle class women. The lines were then sold to ready-to-wear firms (Collard, 1983). This trend in quality clothing production remained popular throughout the 1930's.

It should not be assumed that while purchasing was moving away from Parisian couture, all Canadian women followed this trend. Many establishment Canadians required elaborate formal clothing for important social functions. For events of this type, many women imported gowns from Paris, London and New York (Collard, 1983). Ready-to-wear firms such as Holt Renfrew, Simpson's and Eaton's provided a special service that catered to wealthy women's desires to wear individually designed clothing that originated outside of the country (Collard, 1983).

It should also not be assumed that the remaining group of women, those who were not fortunate enough to purchase designer or ready-made clothing, were able to purchase clothing of any kind. Women living in isolated areas of the prairies were suddenly faced with the realization that no income would be forthcoming due in most part to the poor economic situation and severe drought conditions. Families who had

struggled to maintain an adequate existence found their situation even more severe (Westin, 1976). Clothing themselves and their families was just one more problem to add to the list that was quickly growing.

Another trend that developed during the 1930's was the extensive use of mail-order catalogues by people living in rural communities. Rural Canadians relied on catalogue shopping for much of their clothing, household furnishing, and linen needs (Collard, 1983). Eaton's catalogue, for example, quickly became known as the homesteader's bible, linking thousands of customers from isolated areas and exposing them to a new kind of merchandising technique (Hartley, 1969). Eaton's catalogues from 1930 to 1939 included day wear, evening wear, leisure/sportswear, undergarments, outerwear, and accessories, which were available to consumers wherever the catalogue was available.

By 1930, the boyish look of the previous decade was fading with a gradual increase in femininity taking its place. Soft rounded shoulders, a slightly rounded bust, and a hint of a curved waist with unexaggerated hips over gradually outward flowing skirts was considered to be the fashionable silhouette. Generally speaking, dresses worn during the day were slim and straight with the emphasis placed on making the wearer's figure appear more slender. Fashions worn by popular actresses such as Greta Garbo and Joan Crawford helped to reinforce this fashion trend. Collard (1983) suggests that in the 1930's, women's fashions were probably influenced more by the fashions worn by film stars than by any other source.

The illusion of height was desired. Tall women were especially envied and considered the ideal. To create the look of height, skirts were lengthened with the trend being toward calf or ankle length (Collard, 1983). Instead of attaching the skirt to the bodice with a straight, horizontal line, slanted or diagonal seam lines were often used. This further emphasized the desired illusion of height.

Short boleros and little capes were very popular for day wear, replacing the long ensemble coat of the previous decade. Semi-fitted and bloused jackets, both with flared peplums, were also fashionable day wear.

By the end of the decade, day wear reflected the impending war. Skirts had become shorter and were worn at a more practical length (Collard, 1983). Less detailing and a narrowed silhouette became the norm as wartime restrictions prohibited the use of unnecessary material.

The general fashion trends for evening wear reflected those of day wear. The feminine look was popular and it was achieved much in the same manner that it was created for day wear.

During the thirties the focal point of an evening dress was on the back. Backs were bared to the waist and seemed to be designed more to be viewed from the rear than from the front. Another rear interest was to accentuate the buttocks. Floor length skirts were worn for evening wear and a flowing chiffon train was often attached at the back to create length. An asymmetric look was also very popular (Collard, 1983). As with day wear, the use of boleros and coatees became very popular, however, both were longer when worn as evening garments.

Toward the end of the decade designers attempted to shift evening fashions to an even more feminine look. Women who wore off-the-rack garments did not have time to decide if they liked the new fashion trend as the styles did not have time to filter down to that level. Whether or not this shift in fashion would have been accepted by women at this time is unanswerable as the threat of World War II squelched designers' attempts by forcing people to focus their energies elsewhere.

With increasing emancipation, many women were beginning to take a more active part in physical sports and required clothing that was suitable for this type of activity. To meet this clothing need, a totally new type of clothing emerged called leisure



and sportswear. By the middle of the decade it was common to see women in short sport dresses with divided skirts that came to just above the knee (Collard, 1983). Bathing suits were the garments that experienced the greatest degree of change in the area of sportswear. While bathing costumes of the 1920's had been modest, bathing costumes of the 1930's were the opposite. While there was still much prudery regarding this type of clothing worn in public, young Canadian women avidly adopted the style. By 1935 two-piece suits had become fashionable. Women were discouraged from appearing on public beaches in these scandalous fashions and many municipalities passed by-laws forbidding their use. Women could be fined if caught sunbathing in such garments (Collard, 1983). This new style of bathing suit was due in large part to the increasing fashion of sunbathing.

Pyjamas became another fashionable style of leisure wear and were worn for almost every kind of leisure activity. While there were several different types of pyjamas, each one with a specific use, the most popular style during this decade was the beach pyjama. Pyjamas of this type appeared in nearly every resort area in Canada (Collard, 1983).

In the 1930's corset manufacturers began to pay more attention to the many different sizes of women's bodies, producing more varied sizes of undergarments (Ewing, 1978). With the increased appeal of sunbathing and sports, women not only wanted, but also required, a change in the foundation garments they had previously worn (Collard, 1983).

By 1930 rayon was used extensively for undergarments. Marketed under the name of artificial silk, rayon gained instant appeal among women. It enabled those with lesser means to purchase underwear which closely resembled silk, which was a great deal more costly.

As well as the revolutionary developments in man-made fabrics, elastic

manufacture also experienced amazing changes. Two-way webbed weave elastic girdles and panties, introduced in the early thirties, provided two-way stretch. With this new kind of elastic, the rigid form of corsetry, previously used, was no longer needed. In 1930, moderate to light boning could still be found in some undergarments, but with the increased use of elastic, this practice was quickly disappearing. Figures were allowed to become more shapely and softer.

The zip fastener first appeared in corsetry in 1931 (Ewing, 1978). In its early form the zip was heavy and very taped and required the use of metal locks to keep it from flying open. It wasn't until the 1950's that the zip reached a more sophisticated level.

During the early years of the decade, fine, lightweight wool and bouclé, lower calf length coats were very fashionable. Princess lines provided a form-fitting appearance and flat bands of shaved fur were used as trimmings. Raglan or set-in sleeve styles were the most common, with design details kept to a minimum. Flannelette and chamois interlinings were common in winter coats produced for the Canadian market (Collard, 1983). There was little change in the basic silhouette of outer garments by the end of the decade. In general, the cut remained quite narrow with slight flaring incorporated at the hemline. Similar to the trend in day wear, coats became shorter and a military influence could be seen in many of the garments.

As during the twenties, hats were very popular during the thirties. Hats remained small and were worn toward the back of the head to reveal the forehead. A simple version of the cloche was the largest type of hat worn during this decade, with most other hats being much smaller. Berets gained popularity for leisure and sportswear. A variation of the men's felt trilby hat was often worn during the day with a single feather for decoration.

Shoes for day wear were usually black calf pumps or oxfords with side lacings

(Collard, 1983). Styles of shoes worn for formal affairs were more varied (Collard, 1983).

Natural fibres dominated throughout the thirties although there was an increased use of rayon and elastic. Textile manufacturers began to blend rayon with natural fibres with the aim of creating fabrics that were more resistant to creasing. In 1933, crease resistant materials became available to the general public (Collard, 1983). Linen-like fabrics and printed cottons were popular for day wear as were plain and printed silk and wool crepes, marocains, mousselines, failles, bouclés, alpacas, angoras, and open-weave laces. All wool, knitted jersey was used for cardigan suits (Collard, 1983). Velvet, satin, organdie, tulle, cire, georgette, lace, and ninon were popular fabrics for evening garments (Collard, 1983).

To quote a fashion report from 1931, "if one single word was used to describe . . . fashions it would be diversity" (Collard, 1983). Not only styles, but also colors and the use of fabrics varied greatly. This section has described the prevailing clothing fashions worn by Canadian women during the 1930's and illustrates the distinct change in style of clothing from the previous decade. The popularity of the fashion trends of the 1930's implies that women were willing and attempting to follow the prevailing trends. The available literature however, places the emphasis on fashions worn by women who had financial means adequate to purchase designer wear, or at the very least, ready-made garments (Black & Garland, 1975; Ewing, 1974). Documentation concerning garments worn by women living in rural communities and isolated areas has unfortunately been neglected. Many global changes occurred during this decade that had not previously taken place and these changes were reflected in women's fashions (Selbie, 1977). Although the economic conditions of the thirties often made buying fashionable clothes difficult, women of all ages expressed their desire to forget everyday problems by dressing up whenever the opportunity arose (Collard, 1983). Existing artifacts in

Canadian museums suggest that this was, in fact, the case. However, the emphasis tends to concentrate on the more fashionable garments while ignoring rural, daily fashions.

## Chapter III

### Research Methods

This chapter includes a description of the research methodology followed for this study. A discussion of the purpose and objectives, assumptions and limitations of the study, definition of terms, hypotheses, and methodology is provided.

#### Purpose And Objectives

The general purpose of this study was to identify and evaluate initiatives of Women's Institute groups to help women meet their perceived minimum clothing needs during the economic depression of the 1930's. The research was limited to Manitoba Women's Institute groups that operated between 1930 and 1939.

The specific objectives of this research were:

1. To identify perceived minimum clothing needs of Manitoba Women's Institute members between 1930 and 1939.
2. To identify and evaluate the initiatives of the Manitoba Women's Institute to help its members meet their perceived minimum clothing needs.
3. To identify and compare selected independent variables, such as geographic location as defined by severity of drought, the position of an individual within her family unit, and employment status, between Manitoba Women's Institute groups in relation to the members' perceived minimum clothing needs.
4. To evaluate Women's Institute members' perception of the effectiveness of the Manitoba Women's Institute's initiatives.

#### Assumptions Of The Study

Prior to the outset of this study, the following assumptions had been made:

1. The use of participant recall is an accurate form of data collection.
2. An individual's perceived need is a determinant of that individual's behavior.
3. Severity of drought is a determinant of individuals' general need.

#### Limitations Of The Study

The study was limited to the investigation of rural women's perceived clothing needs and did not include investigation of the perceived clothing needs of men or children. The study was further limited to the examination of one institution, the Manitoba Women's Institute. Only those initiatives conducted by the Women's Institute group itself were considered. Other activities organized between individual Women's Institute members outside of the realm of the Women's Institute were excluded from the study.

#### Definition Of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following operational definitions were used:

**MINIMUM CLOTHING NEED:** those articles of clothing that were perceived as being essential by an individual to conduct their normal daily activities.

**RELIEF or WELFARE PROGRAMS:** projects designed to give assistance, in terms of monetary or material goods, to individuals and/or families who are considered to be destitute.

**RURAL MANITOBA WOMEN:** women living in an agricultural or country district whose permanent residence is outside of the defined boundary of a town or city.

**THRIFT PROGRAMS:** classes and/or information sessions, oriented toward supplying information/advice concerning ways of being more economical and/or frugal.

## Methodology

This study was composed of a compilation of historical sources, including archival and library material, and interviews with women who had been members of the Manitoba Women's Institute during the 1930's and who presently are members of the Manitoba Women's Institute. The research process is described below.

**Population.** The population consisted of women who were members of the Manitoba Women's Institute at any time between 1930 and 1939, and who are presently still members of the Manitoba Women's Institute. It was not possible to make contact with women who had been members of the Manitoba Women's Institute during the 1930's and who had subsequently terminated their membership at any time after 1939, since original membership lists were incomplete and in some instances non-existent. However an attempt was made to contact these women at the 1988 annual convention of the Manitoba Women's Institute. A letter was circulated to convention attendees requesting that anyone knowing the name and whereabouts of any of these women, contact the researcher. Upon examination of the names that were collected, it was found that they were unsuitable for the study because they did not fit the criteria of the population; specifically, they were not members of the Manitoba Women's Institute at any time between 1930 and 1939.

The initial population frame therefore, consisted of 72 women, whose names were obtained from the Winnipeg office of the Manitoba Women's Institute. These 72 women were known to have been members of the Manitoba Women's Institute at some time during the 1930's because they had been presented with commemorative plaques in the spring of 1987, honoring 50, or more consecutive years of membership. Women's Institute secretaries of the groups that the women belonged to were contacted by telephone to obtain the members' telephone numbers and addresses. The 72 members

represented 30 Women's Institute groups of a possible 141, which was the yearly average number of Manitoba Women's Institute groups for the years 1930 to 1939. The average number of provincial members for each of those years was approximately 3,500. See Appendix C for the number of active Manitoba Women's Institute groups operating between 1930 and 1939.

Since the 1987 recognition of 50 years of membership, two members had died. In addition, nine members had been hospitalized and were not able to participate in the study. Six members were not contacted because their whereabouts could not be traced; one member had moved to another province. Therefore, the final population consisted of 54 Manitoba Women's Institute members.

It was recognized that the individuals in the population would probably express a positive opinion toward the Women's Institute due mainly to their long affiliation with the organization. Therefore, it was acknowledged that a certain amount of bias was present in the study and that the respondents may not be representative of the total population of current Manitoba Women's Institute members.

**Research design.** The research design chosen for this study was a census survey using personal interviews. This form of data collection was chosen because it was possible to contact members of the Women's Institute to obtain first-hand recollections. Personal interviews helped to eliminate many of the problems encountered with either a telephone survey or a mail questionnaire procedure. Research suggests that personal interviews result in less missing data being obtained, a higher rate of response than with other forms of data collection, and a higher rate of respondent preference for the mode (Harvey, 1988). Research has further shown personal interviews to be an accurate and reliable method of data collection (Downs, Smeyak, & Martin, 1980).



Instrument development. To create the questions that were asked during the personal interviews, a review was made of existing minutes of Manitoba Women's Institute meetings that were held between January 1930 and December 1939. A review of the Institute News, published between 1930 and 1939, was also conducted. This Manitoba Women's Institute newsletter was published approximately four times a year. All programs and courses relating to clothing mentioned in the above two sources were included in the questionnaire. A review of the literature concerning the Women's Institute of Canada from its inception up to the 1980's, was conducted, and all related programs and courses not previously found in the above sources were added to the questionnaire.

The specific format of the questionnaire was arranged to facilitate data recording. The questions were ordered so that one question would lead into the next; questions related to one topic were grouped together.

Field test. A field test involving five women who were members of the Manitoba Women's Institute during the 1950's was conducted to determine if any changes to either the questionnaire or the style of interview were needed. The format and questions of the field test were identical to that planned for the data collection, but the specific dates mentioned were changed from the 1930's to the 1950's. The same style of interview technique was also maintained. The data collected was coded and entered into the computer for initial data analyses to determine if the type of analyses performed was appropriate.

After completion of the field test, the following changes were made to the interview instrument to facilitate coding. A separate number was given to each course to facilitate data entry and a column asking whether or not the respondent took the course, was eliminated and incorporated into the rating the respondent gave the course. An

additional code, titled 'total', was added to facilitate data analyses. Dates of marriage and births of children were eliminated as the information obtained was not necessary to answer the stated objectives. See Appendix D for the final form of the interview instrument.

Data collection. Before personal interviews were carried out, the 54 women in the population frame were contacted by telephone, during which time the researcher described the study and explained what would be required of the member if she chose to become a participant of the study. Most members agreed to participate, although a few asked for time to consider the request. A letter was then sent to each of the women giving particulars of the study, as well as a list of topics that would be covered during the personal interview (see Appendix E). After receiving the letter, the women were contacted by telephone a second time, to ensure that they still wanted to be part of the sample, and to arrange a convenient time for a personal interview. Three members decided not to take part in the study, and it was discovered that one of the members had not actually joined the Women's Institute until 1942. Therefore, the study included 50 women. Additional leads to possible participants were pursued. No additional individuals were deemed eligible as respondents.

The interviews took place during the first three weeks of February, 1989. An unstructured interview technique was used to collect the data. Except for one circumstance, all interviews took place in the participant's residence. Most interviews involved the participant and the researcher; however, four interviews did involve a third person, who was instrumental in helping the researcher communicate with the participant. The interviews ranged between 20 minutes and two hours in length.

The researcher asked the participant questions, in the same order and as they were worded in the questionnaire. However, if the question was unclear to the participant it

was re-worded. All answers to the questions were recorded in writing, on the interview instrument, by the researcher. A copy of the questionnaire was provided for those participants who were particularly hard of hearing. In circumstances such as those, the researcher still recorded all answers. An attempt was made to use a tape recorder during the first three interviews but it tended to make the participants very uncomfortable and was not used for the remaining interviews.

As each interview was completed, the data collection sheets were coded. All data collection sheets were kept confidential; a numeric code was used to identify the participant rather than the use of their name. Once all interviews were completed, a thank you letter was sent to each of the participants. Data collected from the interviews were entered into the computer for analyses after all interviews were completed.

Data analyses. The independent and dependent variables were grouped together and were analyzed under the headings: demographic variables, membership variables, course and program variables, evaluation of the Manitoba Women's Institute's initiatives, and minimum clothing need variables. Descriptive statistics were used for all individual variables.

Four null hypotheses were developed to address the objectives of the study. The four null hypotheses formulated were:

1. There will be no significant difference in the respondents' perception of their minimum clothing needs according to geographic location. Statistical analysis:

Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney Test. See Appendix F for a description of the Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test.

2. There will be no significant relationship between an individual's perception of her clothing need and (a) geographic location as defined by severity of drought, (b) her perception of other women's level of clothing inventories, (c) the position of an individual

within her family unit, and (d)employment status. Statistical analysis: Kendall's tau B.

3. There will be no significant relationship between the range of the Manitoba Women's Institute programs, in terms of number, and (a)geographic location as defined by severity of drought, and (b)the average of individuals' perceived clothing needs according to geographic location. Statistical analysis: Kendall's tau B.

4. There will be no significant relationship between an individual's evaluation of Women's Institute programs and her level of perceived personal clothing need. Statistical analysis: Kendall's tau B.

For all hypotheses, a significance level of 0.05 was used. A SAS computer program was used for analyses of the data (Helwig, 1985).

## Chapter IV

### Results

The results obtained from analyses of the data collected are presented in this chapter. Individual independent and dependent variables were grouped together and are discussed under the following headings: demographic variables, membership variables, course and program variables, evaluation of the Manitoba Women's Institute's initiatives, and minimum clothing need variables. The hypotheses are addressed separately.

#### Demographic Variables

Demographic variables provided data about place of residence, position of an individual within her family unit, and employment status.

The distribution of respondents' place of residence, according to severity of drought, was as follows: 41 respondents, or 82% of the population lived in a high drought area, while 9 respondents, or 18% lived in a moderate drought area. None of the respondents lived within the unaffected drought area. The respondents whose residences were in a rural area accounted for 70% (n=35) of the population, while the remaining 30% (n=15) of the respondents lived in a small town.

All respondents indicated that they were living with at least one other person during the 1930's. Of the respondents, a total of 36 (72%) felt that their position within their family unit had no effect on their clothing needs. Of the 14 (28%) respondents who indicated that their position within the family unit did have an effect on their clothing needs, the unanimous reason given was that clothing needs of the children and/or husband always came first. Respondents believed that because their children and/or husband had to go out in public, either to school or to work, their clothing needs took precedence over their own. If the respondent did not have any suitable clothing to wear

for a particular event, she would stay home.

Thirty of the respondents indicated that they were not employed outside of the home, nor did they take work into their home, at any time between 1930 and 1939. Of the 20 (40%) respondents who were employed or who did take work into their homes during the 1930's, 14 (28%) replied that they did not require any special type of clothing. Of the six (12%) respondents who did require special clothing for their type of employment, one of the following reasons was given:

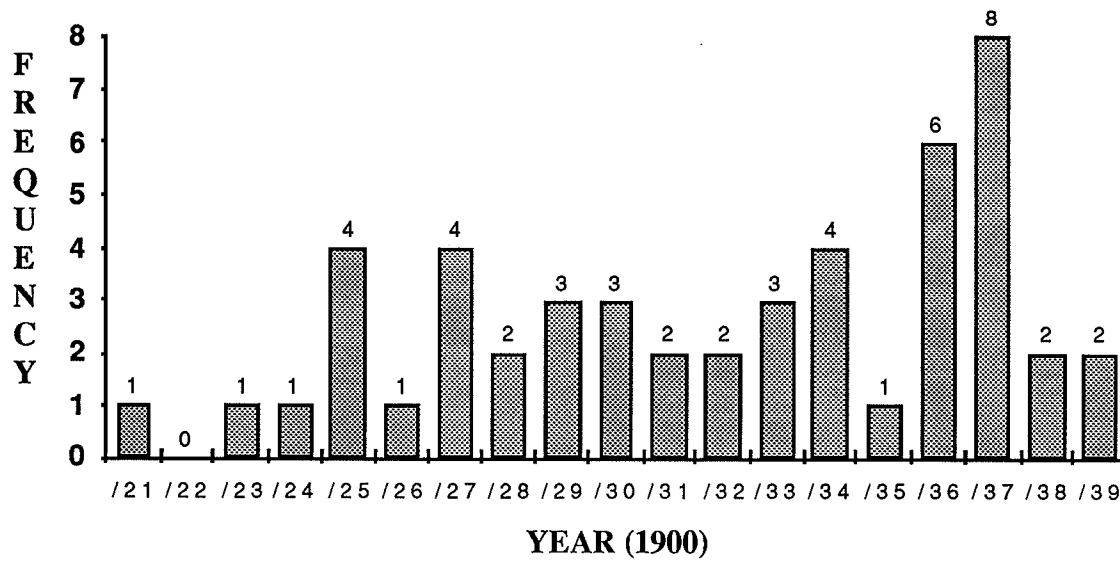
1. Specialized clothing was required to carry out the job. For example, one woman required protective garments because she kept bees; or
2. The respondent's job involved contact with the public and she felt it was important to maintain a particular image; this involved dressing 'well'.

#### Membership Variables

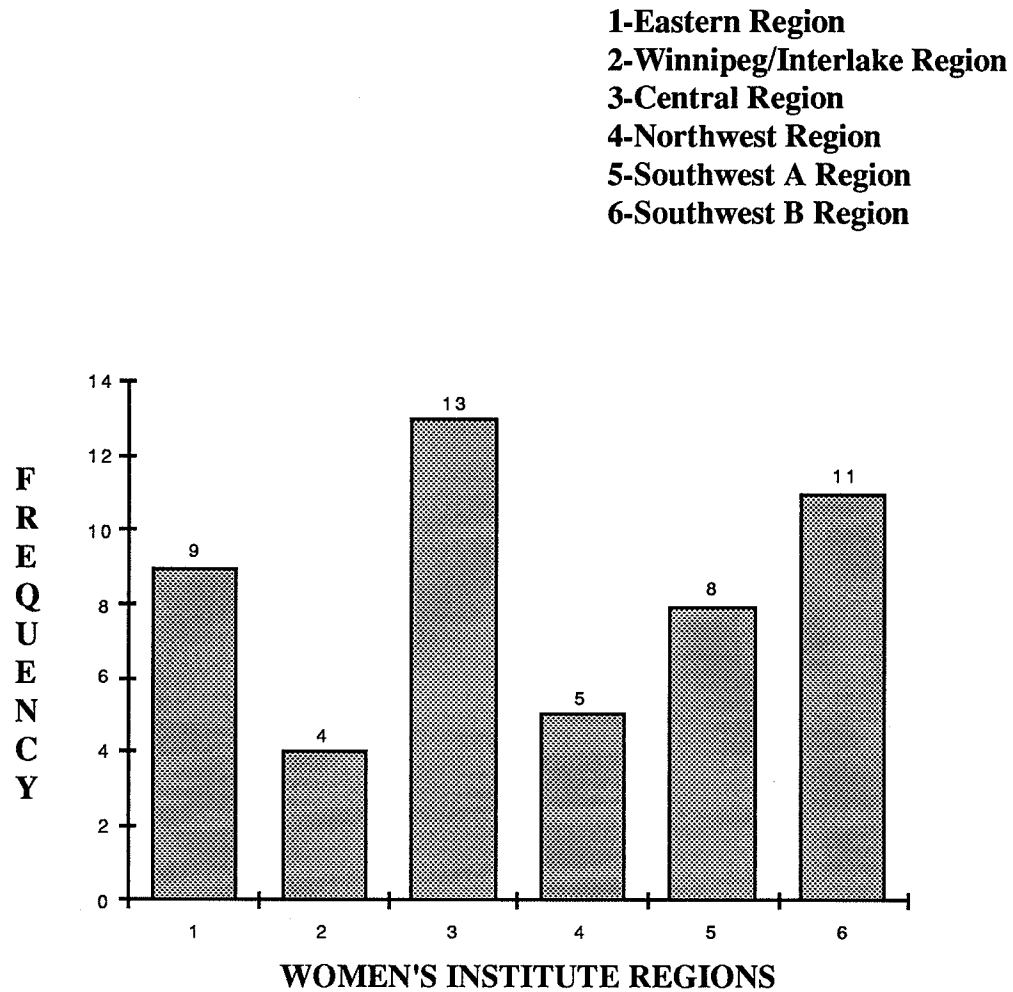
Three independent variables provided data concerning Manitoba Women's Institute membership information. The first variable identified the year the participant became a member of the Manitoba Women's Institute. As shown in Figure 1, years of joining ranged from 1921 to 1939; no participants joined in 1922.

The second membership variable identified which group of the Manitoba Women's Institute the respondent joined, as well as the Manitoba Women's Institute region in which that particular group was located. If the participant was a member of several different Women's Institute groups, the group that she first joined was the group that was recorded on the interview instrument. A total of 30 different Manitoba Women's Institute groups and all six of the Manitoba Women's Institute regions were represented. Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of the participants according to regions of the Manitoba Women's Institute.

Figure 1. Years of joining and number of Manitoba Women's Institute members who joined within each year, N=50.



**Figure 2.** Frequency distribution of the study population by Manitoba Women's Institute region, N=50.



As Figure 2 illustrates, the greatest number of respondents,  $n=13$ , were from the Central region, accounting for 26% of the sample. The Winnipeg/Interlake region had the least number of respondents,  $n=4$ , and accounted for 8% of the sample. The remaining 33 respondents were distributed between the remaining Manitoba Women's



Institute regions as follows: five respondents were from the Northwest region; eight respondents were from the Southwest A region; nine respondents were from the Eastern region; eleven respondents were from the Southwest B region.

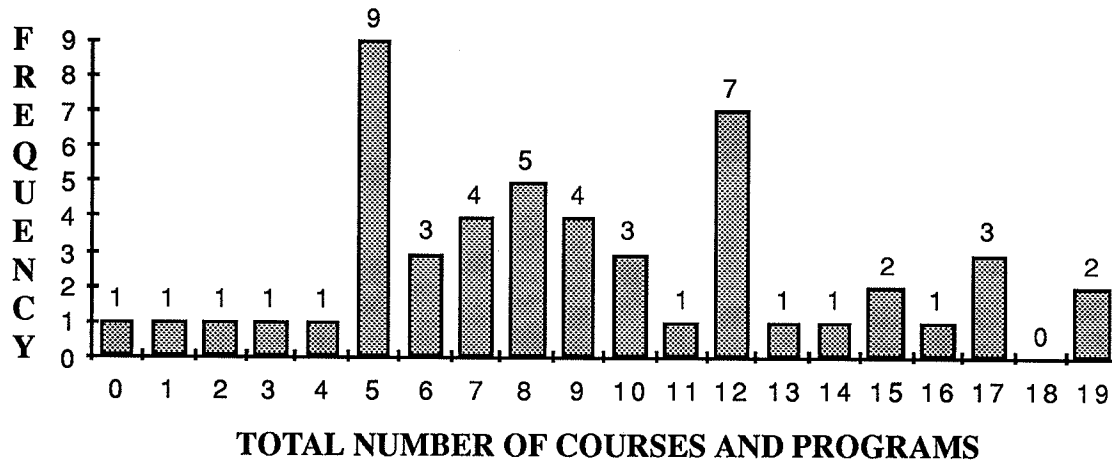
As outlined in Chapter II, geographic location may be defined by severity of drought. The high drought location encompassed the Southwest A, Southwest B, Central, and Eastern regions of the Manitoba Women's Institute. The moderate drought location encompassed the Northwest and Winnipeg/Interlake regions of the Manitoba Women's Institute. The unaffected drought location did not include any Manitoba Women's Institute regions because no Women's Institute group was present within the defined area.

The third variable identified whether or not the respondent's membership was continuous from the date she joined until 1939. Of the 50 participants, 45 of the women, or 90% of the population, responded yes to the question; the remaining 10% (n=5) responded no. Reasons cited as to why memberships were not continuous were that membership fees were 25 cents per year or the birth of a child.

#### Course And Program Variables

Course and program variables identified the type of programs and/or courses that were available through the Manitoba Women's Institute to help women obtain clothing for themselves and their families. While each question involving course and program variables was asked individually, a total number of courses and programs was calculated by adding the number of questions to which the respondent answered affirmatively. The total number of courses and programs possible was 24. While the respondent could offer an infinite number of 'other' courses, the response was counted as one. Respondents' totals ranged from 0 to 19, as shown in Figure 3. Table 1 illustrates the total number of courses and programs by Manitoba Women's Institute regions.

**Figure 3.** Frequency distribution of the total number of Manitoba Women's Institute courses and programs available during the 1930's, as recalled by respondents.



The programs variable identified projects that were arranged or sponsored by the Manitoba Women's Institute that were specifically directed to supplying clothing for men, women or children. Of the 50 participants, 38% (n=19) responded that their group had no such program. The remaining 62% (n=31) of the respondents indicated that the group they belonged to did have some type of program. In the majority of cases, the program involved a sewing course that was offered through the Extension Service of the School of Home Economics at the University of Manitoba, to members of the Manitoba Women's Institute. Respondents indicated that the skills they obtained through the sewing courses could be applied in numerous ways to a variety of situations. For example, once the member was taught how to sew, she could make clothes not only for herself, but for other members within her household. Through the sewing courses

Table 1

Total average number of courses and programs available through the Manitoba Women's Institute during the 1930's by Manitoba Women's Institute region

Total Average Number of Courses and Programs	Region					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	n(%)					
0	1(2)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
1	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	1(2)	0(0)	0(0)
2	0(0)	0(0)	1(2)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
3	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	1(2)	0(0)
4	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	1(2)	0(0)	0(0)
5	0(0)	1(2)	5(10)	1(2)	0(0)	2(4)
6	1(2)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	2(4)	0(0)
7	0(0)	1(2)	1(2)	0(0)	2(4)	0(0)
8	0(0)	0(0)	1(2)	0(0)	1(2)	3(6)
9	0(0)	1(2)	0(0)	1(2)	1(2)	1(2)
10	2(4)	0(0)	1(2)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
11	0(0)	0(0)	1(2)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
12	2(4)	0(0)	1(2)	0(0)	0(0)	4(8)
13	1(2)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
14	1(2)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
15	0(0)	0(0)	1(2)	0(0)	1(2)	0(0)
16	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	1(2)
17	1(2)	1(2)	0(0)	1(2)	0(0)	0(0)
18	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
19	0(0)	0(0)	1(2)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Total	9(18)	4(8)	13(26)	5(10)	8(16)	11(22)

women were also taught how to repair, remodel and make-over existing garments.

Resourcefulness was always stressed by the leaders of the courses. Two participants responded that their Women's Institute group made knit articles for needy men. Toward the end of the decade they continued to knit garments, in anticipation of the impending

war, for men who would be going overseas. Two other participants indicated that their group made baby layettes and sent them to hospitals for new mothers. Another participant remembered her group collected used clothing and distributed the items to immigrants who came to Manitoba and whose clothes were not suitable for the climate.

The course variable identified the type of courses that were offered to members by Women's Institute groups. A choice of ten different courses were listed with an additional choice of an 'other' course that was not specifically named. The average number of courses offered by each Women's Institute group was five. The sewing course was cited by 84% (n=42) of the respondents, making it the course most often remembered by the respondents as having been offered by the Manitoba Women's Institute. Weaving was cited by 14% (n=7) of the population, making it the course least often remembered as being offered by Manitoba Women's Institute groups. The types of courses offered by respondents under the category of 'other' included tatting, Madeira needlework, rug making, tanning skins and leather tooling, spinning and care of wool, bobbin lace, and embroidery.

A rating of very useful, somewhat useful, or not useful was assigned to each course taken by the respondent. The respondents who rated all of the courses they took as being very useful accounted for 32% (n=16) of the population; 6.55% (n=3.275) rated the courses as being somewhat useful; 1.45% (n=0.725) rated the courses as being not useful. The remaining 60% (n=30) responded that although the course was offered by their Women's Institute group, they did not take it.

Given that the sewing course was cited by the majority of the respondents as being the course most often remembered as having been offered, it is not surprising that most of the women within this majority individually rated the course as being very useful. Positive responses given by the women concerning the sewing course, as well as sewing sample scrapbooks kept by many of the members, indicate that the sewing course

was not only the most popular course available, but also one of the most valuable courses.

The respondents who indicated that the Women's Institute group they belonged to worked with other groups to help women obtain clothing accounted for 42% (n=21) of the population. Church groups and the Red Cross were cited as the groups with which the Manitoba Women's Institute groups worked most often. A small number of the respondents indicated that they also worked with local 4-H groups. In general, the work involved collection of used clothing and distribution of that clothing to needy people.

Of the 50 women, 18 respondents (36%) indicated that the Women's Institute group of which they were a member, had a form of relief or welfare program. In all circumstances the programs were very informal. When a Women's Institute group became aware that a family or an individual was destitute, the group would collect whatever articles they could, from their own households, as well as from the community. Articles that were collected included food stuffs, household items, and clothing. Occasionally money would be collected and given, either directly to the family or individual, or to another organization such as the Red Cross, to purchase necessary articles.

Twenty-eight respondents indicated that their Women's Institute group provided a type of thrift program to inform members of ways of obtaining clothing for themselves and/or their families. In all instances, the thrift program involved informal gatherings of members who would share and exchange ideas and information concerning ways to remake and make-over existing articles of clothing. Often this information was repeated or reinforced through the sewing courses, mentioned previously.

Twenty-three respondents indicated that their Women's Institute group arranged clothing drives where articles of clothing were collected and then later distributed to needy people. Twelve of those respondents whose groups did have clothing drives

reported having drives solely for local distribution; three respondents reported having drives solely for national distribution; eight respondents reported having drives for local and national distribution.

Three of the respondents indicated that their Women's Institute group received articles of clothing from outside of Manitoba. One Women's Institute group received the clothing from other Women's Institute groups in southern Ontario. The second respondent indicated that her group received bundles of clothing from the United States, while the third respondent remembered that her group received clothing sent from England. In all three instances the respondents could not remember the specific name of the place, or pin point the exact location from where the bundles of clothing originated.

Forty-four (88%) of the respondents indicated that their Women's Institute group did not sponsor sales of used clothing. The six (12%) respondents whose groups did sponsor sales of used clothing, did so because they were not in an area that was very hard hit by the poor economic conditions of the 1930's. They believed that there was not a great number of destitute people within their local area who needed to be given clothing, therefore, the sales were used as a means of raising monies for various other projects.

To summarize, responses obtained from the participants regarding courses and programs, indicate that Manitoba Women's Institute groups offered a wide and varied range of courses and programs to help women obtain clothing for themselves and their families. While each Women's Institute group did not offer the same number or type of courses and programs, respondents indicated that their Women's Institute group would respond to local needs as they arose.

#### Evaluation Of Manitoba Women's Institute Initiatives

The opinion variable identified the respondent's personal opinion of the usefulness of the Manitoba Women's Institute's initiatives to help women obtain clothing

during the depression. One of three of the following responses was possible: very useful, somewhat useful, not useful. The distribution of responses was as follows: 44% (n=22) rated the Manitoba Women's Institute's initiatives as very useful; 32% (n=16) rated the initiatives as somewhat useful; 24% (n=12) rated the initiatives as not useful. The distribution of responses by Manitoba Women's Institute region is illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2

Distribution of respondents' opinions of the usefulness of the Manitoba Women's Institute's initiatives during the 1930's by Manitoba Women's Institute region

Rating	Region					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Useful	7(14)	1(2)	3(6)	2(4)	3(6)	6(12)
Somewhat Useful	0(0)	3(6)	6(12)	1(2)	2(4)	4(8)
Not Useful	2(4)	0(0)	4(8)	2(4)	3(6)	1(2)
Total n(%)	9(18)	4(8)	13(26)	5(10)	8(16)	11(22)

The reasons given by those respondents who rated the usefulness of the Manitoba Women's Institute's initiatives as very useful, or somewhat useful, were: a) the Women's Institute was always very aware of any needs within the community and would always

try to help out in whatever way they could; and b)the Women's Institute always accomplished whatever the members set out to do.

Those respondents who rated the usefulness of the Manitoba Women's Institute's initiatives as not useful gave the following reasons for their opinion: a)there was not much of a need within the Women's Institute group's local area and therefore the Women's Institute group focussed their attentions on projects other than helping women obtain clothing; and b)the Women's Institute group was not formed until the last third of the decade, or later, and the members were not able to organize their activities to help fulfill any clothing needs.

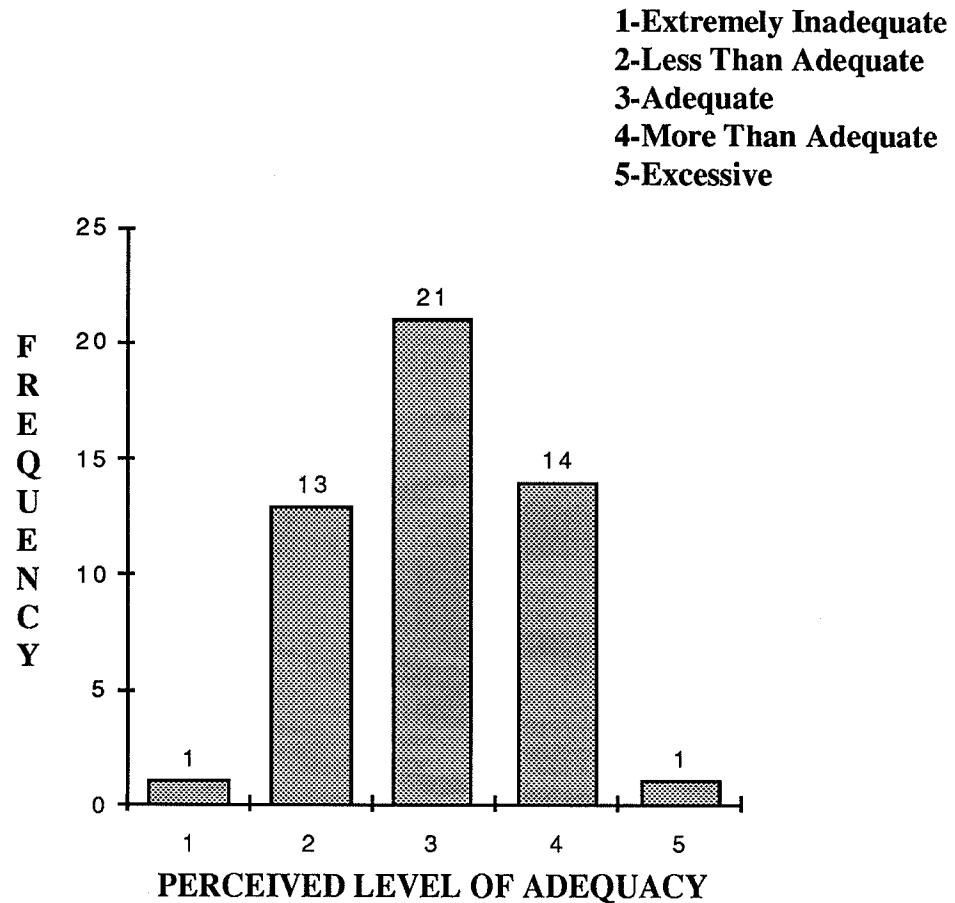
#### Minimum Clothing Need Variables

A wardrobe variable was used to identify the respondent's perception of the adequacy of her wardrobe according to her individual needs. A five point Likert type scale was used, where a low rating of 1 was extremely inadequate while a high rating of 5 was excessive. The distribution of responses is shown in Figure 4.

The greatest number of respondents, 42% (n=21), indicated that their wardrobe was adequate to meet their individual needs. The remaining respondents were approximately evenly distributed with 26% (n=13) responding that their wardrobe was less than adequate, and 28% (n=14) responding that their wardrobe was more than adequate, to meet their individual needs. One respondent, each, indicated that either her wardrobe was extremely inadequate or that her wardrobe was excessive. The above results suggest that a woman's perception of her minimum personal clothing need may be altered to conform to her actual clothing inventory.

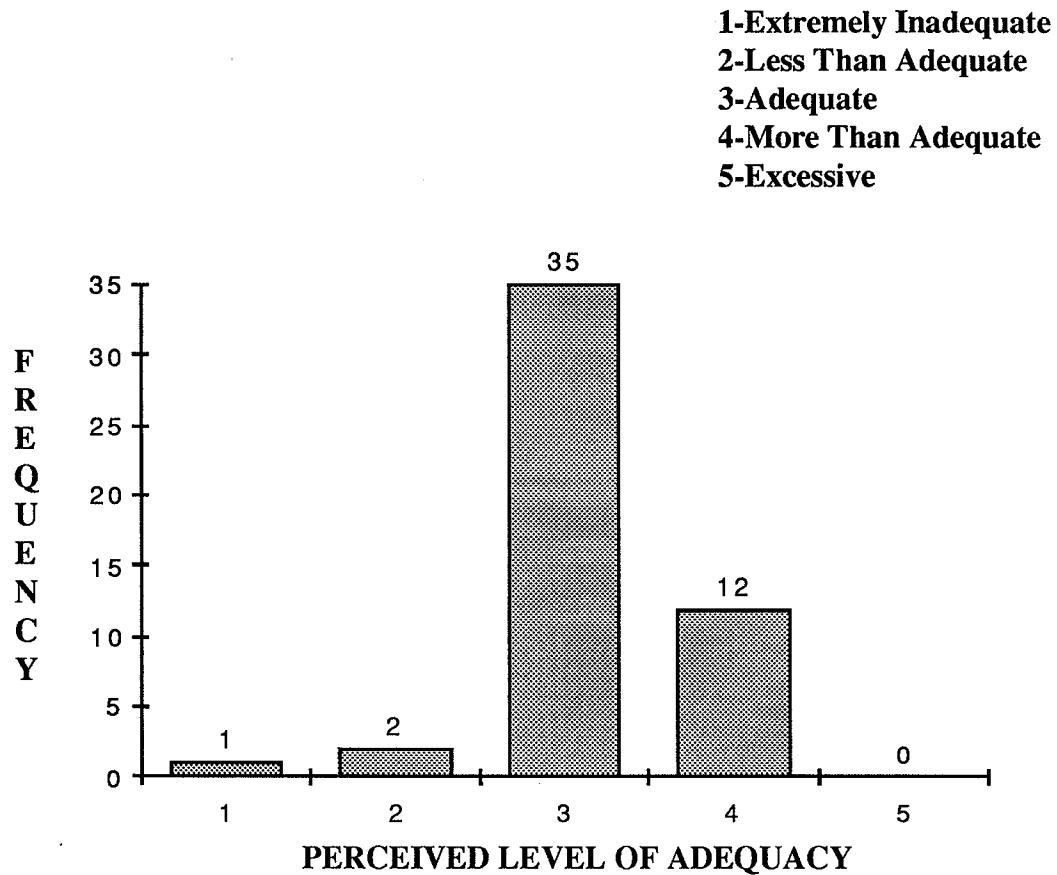


**Figure 4.** Distribution of respondent's perception of the adequacy of her wardrobe according to her individual needs during the 1930's, N=50.



A second wardrobe variable identified the respondent's perception of the adequacy of other women's wardrobes in comparison to one's own wardrobe. The same five point scale was used. Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of responses.

**Figure 5.** Distribution of respondent's perception of the adequacy of other women's wardrobes during the 1930's, N=50.



The majority of respondents, 70% (n=35), indicated that they perceived other women's wardrobes to be adequate to meet other women's needs. Two women responded that they perceived other women's wardrobes to be less than adequate, while one woman perceived others' wardrobes to be extremely inadequate to meet their individual needs. The remaining 12 (24%) respondents indicated that they perceived other women's wardrobes to be more than adequate. No one perceived other women's wardrobes to be excessive to meet minimum clothing needs. These results suggest that, in terms of

clothing inventories, the respondents perceived other women around them to be more like themselves than unlike themselves.

#### Hypothesis 1

A Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test was calculated to determine whether there were significant differences between women in their perception of their minimum clothing needs according to geographic location as defined by severity of drought. Using a 0.05 level of significance, calculation of the Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test resulted in a value of 157.500, with a corresponding probability of  $p=0.055$ . Thus, no significant difference was found between women in their perception of their minimum clothing needs according to geographic location, and the null hypothesis was accepted.

This result suggests that a woman's perception of her minimum clothing need was not affected by the severity of drought experienced within her geographic area. One reason for obtaining such a result is possibly because one lowers her level of minimum clothing need during periods of economic crisis. It should be noted that one of the assumptions made prior to the outset of this study was that severity of drought would be a determinant of individuals' general need, including the need for clothing.

#### Hypothesis 2

To determine whether there was a relationship between an individual's perception of her clothing need and (a) geographic location as defined by severity of drought, (b) her perception of other women's level of clothing inventories, (c) the position of an individual within her family unit, and (d) employment status, correlation tests of Kendall's tau B were calculated. As Table 3 indicates, no significant relationship was found between an individual's perception of her clothing need and severity of drought as determined by geographic location,  $p=0.053$ , therefore, the null hypothesis two (a) was

accepted.

Table 3

Kendall's Tau B Correlation Coefficients For Selected Independent Variables. N=50

	Perception Of Her Clothing Need	Geographic Location	Perception Of Other's Clothing Inventories	Family Position	Employment Status
	(Correlation Coefficient/Probability)				
Perception Of Her Clothing Need	1.000 0.000				
Geographic Location	-0.257 0.053	1.000 0.000			
Perception Of Other's Clothing Inventories	0.311 0.016*	-0.052 0.705	1.000 0.000		
Family Position	-0.228 0.087	0.055 0.696	-0.046 0.736	1.000 0.000	
Employment Status	-0.183 0.168	-0.170 0.234	-0.199 0.152	-0.054 0.702	1.000 0.000

p<0.05

A significant relationship was found between an individual's perception of her clothing need and her perception of other women's level of clothing inventories,  $p=0.016$ . Therefore the null hypothesis two (b) was rejected. This result suggests that a woman's

perception of other women's wardrobes may be influenced by her perception of her own clothing needs.

No significant relationship was found between an individual's perception of her clothing need, and the position of that individual within her family unit ( $p=0.087$ ), or an individual's employment status ( $p=0.168$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis two, parts (c) and (d), were accepted.

These results indicate that selected independent variables such as severity of drought, the position of an individual within her family unit, or employment status, were not related to an individual's perception of her minimum clothing needs. However, a significant relationship was found between an individual's perception of her minimum clothing needs and her perception of other women's clothing inventories. The implication of this result suggests that a woman's perception of minimum clothing need is related, to a greater extent, by her perception of her peers' minimum clothing needs, rather than by the other selected independent variables.

### Hypothesis 3

To determine whether there was a relationship between the range of the Manitoba Women's Institute programs, in terms of number, and (a) geographic location as defined by severity of drought, and (b) the average of individuals' perceived clothing needs according to geographic location, correlation tests of Kendall's tau B were calculated. As Table 4 indicates, Kendall's tau calculated for each of the above variables revealed no significant relationship between the range of the Manitoba Women's Institute programs, in terms of number, and (a) geographic location as defined by severity of drought ( $p=0.446$ ), and (b) the average of individuals' perceived clothing needs according to geographic location ( $p=0.467$ ). Therefore, the null hypothesis three, parts (a) and (b) was accepted.

Table 4

Kendall's Tau B Correlation Coefficients For Selected Variables, N=50

	Number Of Programs	Geographic Location	Perception Of Her Clothing Needs
	(Correlation Coefficient/Probability)		
Number of Programs	1.000 0.000		
Geographic Location	-0.092 0.446	1.000 0.000	
Perception of Her Clothing Needs	0.082 0.467	-0.257 0.053	1.000 0.000

p<0.05

These results suggest that the number of programs offered by Manitoba Women's Institute groups was not related to the severity of drought experienced by the local area, or to the perceived clothing needs of the people within that area. Therefore, it is suggested that other unknown independent variables determined the number of programs offered by Women's Institute groups.

#### Hypothesis 4

To determine whether there was a relationship between an individual's evaluation of Women's Institute programs and her level of perceived personal clothing need a correlation test of Kendall's tau B was calculated. A test of Kendall's tau resulted in a probability of  $p=0.666$  thus indicating there was no significant relationship between the above two variables. Therefore, the null hypothesis four was accepted.

These results suggest that a woman's perception of her personal clothing needs did not have an effect on her perception of the value of Women's Institute programs. This implies that members of the Manitoba Women's Institute did not necessarily evaluate the group's programs based on their own individual needs.

### Summary

The results of this study indicate that the Manitoba Women's Institute played an important role in the lives of its members during the 1930's as evidenced by the positive responses given by the participants and the number of courses and programs provided by the Women's Institute to its members. The results obtained were in agreement with literature which identified the type and variety of programs and courses conducted by the Manitoba Women's Institute (Manitoba Women's Institute, 1980 & Speechly, 1934). While it is true that not all programs and courses were offered to all Women's Institute groups, a variety of programs and courses could be found across the province of Manitoba.

The distribution of participants was unevenly distributed with 82% (n=41) having lived in an area defined as being severely affected by drought, and 18% (n=9) having lived in an area that was moderately affected by drought. All six of the current Manitoba Women's Institute regions were represented by the population. Participants' years of joining the Manitoba Women's Institute ranged from 1921 to 1939. Memberships tended to be continuous from the time the respondent first joined the Manitoba Women's Institute up until the time of the study. Participants whose membership was not continuous, was due to outside factors and not because they were dissatisfied with the work or benefits obtained from being a member of the Women's Institute.

As was expected, the majority of respondents, 76% (n=38), evaluated the programs and courses of the Manitoba Women's Institute as being very useful or

somewhat useful. This response was expected due to the members' long affiliation with the organization. It is interesting to note that the sewing course was the course most often remembered by the women as having been offered during the 1930's. Of the members who took the sewing course, the majority rated the course as very useful. Those members who felt the work of the Manitoba Women's Institute to help women obtain clothing during the 1930's was not useful, provided reasons that reflected the state of their Women's Institute group rather than the quality of work conducted by the Women's Institute as a whole.

No significant difference was found between women in their perception of their minimum clothing needs according to geographic location as defined by severity of drought. Thus, severity of drought did not appear to have an impact on the respondent's perception of her minimum clothing needs. It was also found that there was no significant relationship between an individual's perception of her clothing need and geographic location as defined by severity of drought. In other words, irregardless of how severely affected an area was by drought, a woman's perception of her minimum clothing need was not altered.

It was discovered, however, that there was a significant relationship between an individual's perception of her clothing needs and her perception of other women's level of clothing inventories. Results indicated a positive relationship, meaning for example, that if an individual's perception of her clothing need was low, her perception of other women's level of clothing inventories tended to also be low. Selected independent variables such as the position of an individual within her family unit, as well as an individual's employment status, were not significantly related to an individual's perception of her clothing need.

No significant relationship was found between the range of the Manitoba Women's Institute programs, in terms of the number offered, and geographic location as



defined by severity of drought. There was also no relationship between the range of programs offered and the average of perceived clothing needs according to geographic location, suggesting that programs offered by a Women's Institute group were not related to the severity of drought experienced by the local area, or by women's perception of clothing need within that area. Results further indicated that there was no significant relationship between an individual's perception of the usefulness of Women's Institute's programs and her level of personal clothing need.

## Chapter V

### Conclusions

#### Summary

This study identified and evaluated the way by which the Manitoba Women's Institute helped its members meet their perceived minimum clothing needs during the economic depression of the 1930's. Selected independent variables such as geographic location as defined by severity of drought, the position of an individual within her family unit, and employment status, were analyzed to determine the effect on a woman's perception of her minimum clothing needs during the 1930's. The number of programs offered by a Manitoba Women's Institute group was analyzed in relation to a) geographic location, and b) the average of individuals' perceived clothing needs according to geographic location. A comparison of a woman's perceived minimum clothing needs and her perception of her peers' minimum clothing needs was also made.

The Women's Institute was chosen as the focus of the study because of its known history of involvement in community work and as rural educators within the home (Manitoba Women's Institute, 1980; Norell, 1986 & Speechly, 1934). Members of the Manitoba Women's Institute were chosen as the population because they could supply the researcher with first-hand recollections of the work of the Women's Institute. Prior to the outset of the study it was speculated that the work of the Women's Institute was especially valuable during the economic depression of the 1930's. The years from 1930 to 1939 were chosen as parameters of the study because of the economic climate characterized by the decade. Financial restraint, high unemployment, a shortage of necessary daily commodities were common occurrences across much of Canada (Friesen, 1984; Patton, 1973; Safarian, 1959 & Westin, 1976). The 1930's was also a transitional period for women's fashions. New types of fashions were becoming popular,

for example sportswear and practical workwear. Marketing approaches for women's clothing were also in a state of transition as haute couture was no longer affordable to many people and catalogue sales became increasingly popular (Selbie, 1977 & Hartley, 1969). It was hoped that a study of this type would prove useful to historians interested in various aspects of clothing and related topics, scholars of women's studies, and Women's Institute groups, to strengthen historical knowledge and understanding.

To conduct the study, a census survey of Manitoba Women's Institute members was carried out. Those women who had been members of the Manitoba Women's Institute at any time during the 1930's were asked to participate in data collection involving personal interviews. The final population included 50 members of the Manitoba Women's Institute. The various dependent and independent variables were analyzed using descriptive statistics and were grouped together by demographics, membership, courses and programs, evaluation of Manitoba Women's Institute initiatives, and minimum clothing need.

Demographic variables provided data about place of residence according to severity of drought, position of an individual within her family unit, and employment status. The population was unevenly distributed by place of residence with 82% of the respondents living in an area highly affected by drought and 18% living in an area moderately affected by drought. All participants lived with at least one other person between 1930 and 1939. According to 72% of the respondents, their position within their family unit had no effect on their clothing needs. The remaining 28% of the population believed that their position within the family unit did have an effect on their clothing needs. Twenty of the respondents indicated that they maintained some form of employment during the 1930's; the remaining population was not employed. Of the 20 employed respondents, six required some form of special clothing for their type of employment.

The years the participants joined the Manitoba Women's Institute ranged from 1921 to 1939; no participants joined in 1922. A total of 30 different Manitoba Women's Institute groups and all six of the Manitoba Women's Institute regions were represented by the population. Membership with the Women's Institute was continuous from the year of joining until the time of the study for all but five of the participants. Their reasons for discontinuous membership were due to factors other than dissatisfaction with the Women's Institute.

Data collected indicated that a variety of courses and programs relating to clothing was offered by Women's Institute groups across the province of Manitoba. The average number of courses offered by each Women's Institute group was five. The sewing course was the course most often remembered by the participants; 84% of the population remembered the course being offered. Of the members who took the sewing course, the majority individually rated the course as being very useful. Programs related to helping women obtain clothing included relief and welfare programs, thrift programs, clothing drives and sales, and cooperative work with other groups such as the Red Cross.

Respondents' personal opinion of the usefulness of the Manitoba Women's Institute's initiatives to help women meet their perceived minimum clothing needs during the depression were distributed with 44% of the population rating the initiatives as very useful, 32% rating the initiatives as somewhat useful, and 24% rating the initiatives as not useful. Those members who felt the work of the Manitoba Women's Institute to help women meet their perceived clothing needs during the 1930's was not useful, provided reasons that reflected the state of their Women's Institute group rather than the quality of work conducted by the Women's Institute as a whole. It is not clear however, whether the positive evaluation of the initiatives given by the majority of the population was due to the Women's Institute's effective work, or to the subjective perception of its members toward the programs in which they were involved.

The greatest number of respondents, 42%, indicated that their wardrobe needs were adequate to meet their individual needs. The remaining respondents were approximately evenly distributed with 26% responding that their wardrobe was less than adequate, and 28% responding that their wardrobe was more than adequate, to meet their individual needs. One respondent, each, indicated that either her wardrobe was extremely inadequate or that her wardrobe was excessive. The majority of respondents, n=35, perceived other women's wardrobes to be adequate to meet other women's needs. Two women perceived other women's wardrobes to be less than adequate, while one women perceived other's wardrobes to be extremely inadequate to meet their individual needs. The remaining 12 respondents perceived other women's wardrobes to be more than adequate. No one perceived other women's wardrobes to be excessive to meet minimum clothing needs.

Four null hypotheses formulated to address the objectives of the study were:

1. There will be no significant difference in the respondents' perception of their minimum clothing needs according to geographic location.
2. There will be no significant relationship between an individual's perception of her clothing need and (a)geographic location as defined by severity of drought, (b)her perception of other women's level of clothing inventories, (c)the position of an individual within her family unit, and (d)employment status.
3. There will be no significant relationship between the range of the Manitoba Women's Institute's programs, in terms of number, and (a)geographic location as defined by severity of drought, and (b)the average of individuals' perceived clothing needs according to geographic location.
4. There will be no significant relationship between an individual's evaluation of Women's Institute programs and her level of perceived personal clothing need.

The results obtained from analyses of the hypotheses suggest that severity of

drought had no impact on a woman's perception of her personal clothing needs. Nor was a woman's perception of her clothing need affected by either her position within her family unit or her employment status. However, a significant relationship was found between a woman's perception of her personal clothing needs and her perception of other women's clothing inventories. This finding implies that a peer group has more of an impact on influencing the perception of one's own personal clothing needs than other non-personal independent variables studied such as severity of drought or employment status. The number of programs and variety of programs offered by a Manitoba Women's Institute group did not appear to be related to the severity of drought experienced within that group's geographic location, nor by the average of individuals' perceived clothing needs within that geographic location. It is suggested that one reason for this finding may be due to members' desires to forget their daily problems, such as a shortage of adequate clothing, and to divert their attention to more pleasant interests. No significant relationship was found between an individual's evaluation of Women's Institute programs and her level of perceived personal clothing need.

To summarize, the data collected revealed that close to half of the Manitoba Women's Institute members in the 1930's felt their wardrobe was adequate to meet their perceived minimum clothing needs. The remainder of the population was approximately evenly distributed with 25% believing their wardrobe was less than adequate, and 25% indicating their wardrobe was more than adequate, to meet their perceived minimum clothing needs. It was also found that a variety of courses and programs were offered by Manitoba Women's Institute groups to help women meet their perceived clothing needs during the economic depression of the 1930's. The majority of the population studied provided a positive rating as to the effectiveness of these courses and programs. Data further revealed that selected independent variables such as geographic location defined by severity of drought, the position of an individual within her family unit, and

employment status, did not have a significant impact on one's perception of her clothing need. It is interesting to note that while the above selected independent variables were not related to an individual's perception of her minimum clothing need, an individual's perception of other women's clothing inventories was related to an individual's perception of her minimum clothing need. This finding suggests that a woman's perception of minimum clothing need is affected, to a greater extent, by her perception of her peers' minimum clothing needs, rather than by other selected independent variables.

#### Implications and Recommendations

The results of this study indicate that the Manitoba Women's Institute was a beneficial organization providing aid and education to its members during the economic depression of the 1930's. The global implication of these findings suggest that the Women's Institute was a credible institution, sensitive to current needs of the population and able to adapt its mandate to address and to help meet such needs. The initial focus of the Women's Institute was betterment of the home and family, and remained so during the 1930's. It is speculated that because the Women's Institute has remained a strong and supportive organization it has also maintained its initial focus on the family to the present day.

When discussing the implications of this study, it should be remembered that this study was limited to one organization, the Manitoba Women's Institute, and the perceived clothing needs of women. Further research involving other organizations, as well as men and children, should be conducted before any wide sweeping generalizations concerning the findings can be made. Further investigation involving geographic areas that were more severely affected by the drought of the 1930's than the southern area of the province of Manitoba, is also suggested.

Recommendations concerning further areas of study include an investigation into

the range of programs conducted by the Red Cross and church groups, such as the United Church of Canada, to help people obtain clothing during the 1930's. Literature indicates that both of the above groups played a role in fulfilling this need. It may be significant to compare the range of those programs with the programs conducted by the Manitoba Women's Institute to determine the effectiveness of the programs and the extent to which the separate groups may have interacted. Information of this type may provide a useful reference if the groups encountered another situation where they may have to work together.

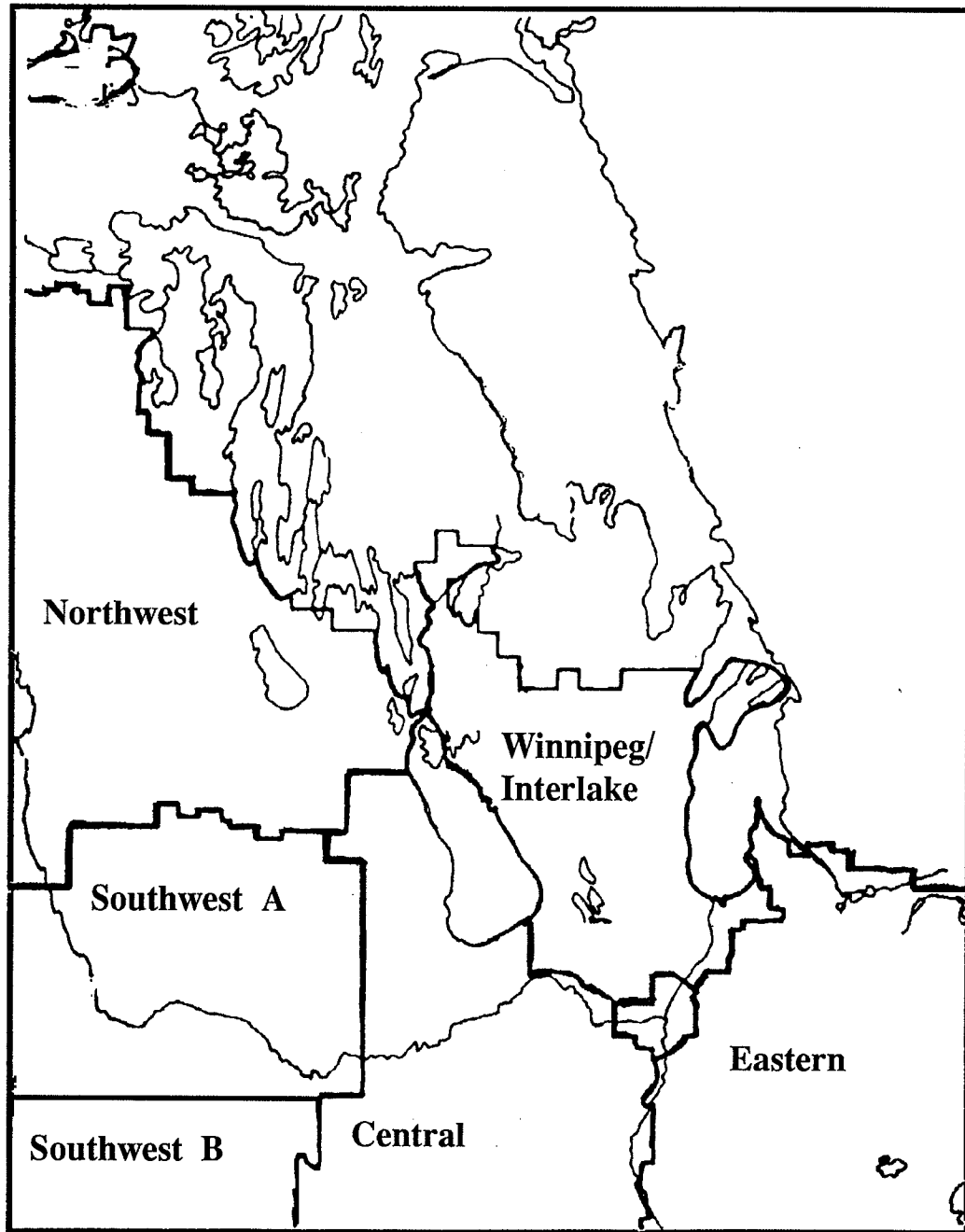
The literature search in the area of 1930's clothing revealed little information concerning this topic. It is also suggested that further research be made into the area of rural people's clothing during the 1930's.



APPENDICES

Appendix A

Current Districts Of The Manitoba Women's Institute



(Manitoba Women's Institute, 1980, p. 126)

## Appendix B

Geographic Locations Defined By Severity Of Drought

**HIGH DROUGHT LOCATION:** a geographic location characterised by a more than 200 mm difference between mean precipitation levels for the 10 years, 1930-1939, and normal mean precipitation levels for the years 1951-1980.

**MODERATE DROUGHT LOCATION:** a geographic location characterised by a range difference of 40-200 mm between mean precipitation levels for the 10 years, 1930-1939, and normal mean precipitation levels for the years 1951-1980.

**UNAFFECTED DROUGHT LOCATION:** a geographic location characterised by a less than 40 mm difference between mean precipitation levels for the 10 years, 1930-1939, and normal mean precipitation levels for the years 1951-1980.

The following Manitoba climate stations were used to represent Manitoba Women's Institute regions by level of mean precipitation.

Manitoba Women's Institute Region	Manitoba Climate Station	Mean Precipitation 1930-1939 (mm)	Normal Precipitation 1951-1980 (mm)	Precipitation Difference (mm)
Northwest	Dauphin	263.97	432.50	168.53
Wpg/Interlake	Winnipeg	484.10	525.44	41.34
Southwest A	Birtle	207.70	509.80	302.10
Southwest B	Deloraine	minimal	490.20	490.20
Central	Portage	minimal	456.30	456.30
Eastern	Pinawa	292.64	576.70	284.06

Decision to use a particular climate station was determined by the availability of precipitation data for the 1930's (Environment Canada, 1981).

## Appendix C

Number Of Active Manitoba Women's Institute Groups, 1930-1939

Fiscal Year	Number of Women's Institutes	Number of Members
1930-1931	129	3,500
1931-1932	131	3,474
1932-1933	132	3,298
1933-1934	134	3,413
1934-1935	135	3,371
1935-1936	142	3,442
1936-1937	145	3,702
1937-1938	148	3,733
1938-1939	154	4,000
1939-1940	158	3,545

(Ellis, 1971, p. 357)

Appendix D  
Interview Instrument

DATA COLLECTION SHEET

Identification number. \_\_\_\_\_ 1-2

1. What year did you first join the Women's Institute? \_\_\_\_\_ 3-4

2. Which Institute group did you join? \_\_\_\_\_ 5

3. Was your membership continuous from the time you joined until 1939? 6

yes \_\_\_\_\_

no \_\_\_\_\_

If no, why? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Were any programs sponsored or arranged by the Women's Institute that were specifically geared towards supplying clothing for: 7

men \_\_\_\_\_

women \_\_\_\_\_

children \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the program(s). \_\_\_\_\_

5. Do you remember which, if any, of the following courses were offered by the Women's Institute:

Rate how useful they think each course was (very useful=3/somewhat useful=2/not useful=1/didn't take course=0).

- |                            |       |       |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|
| 1 pattern alteration _____ | _____ | 8,9   |
| 2 sewing _____             | _____ | 10,11 |
| 3 tailoring _____          | _____ | 12,13 |
| 4 smocking _____           | _____ | 14,15 |
| 5 millinery _____          | _____ | 16,17 |
| 6 quilting _____           | _____ | 18,19 |
| 7 weaving _____            | _____ | 20,21 |
| 8 knitting _____           | _____ | 22,23 |
| 9 crochet _____            | _____ | 24,25 |
| 10 fabric dyeing _____     | _____ | 26,27 |
| 11 other (describe) _____  | _____ | 28,29 |

6. Did the Women's Institute work with any other group(s) to help women obtain clothing: for themselves yes \_\_\_\_\_  
no \_\_\_\_\_

30

for their family yes \_\_\_\_\_  
no \_\_\_\_\_

If yes to either of the above, describe the work. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Was any type of relief or welfare program arranged by the Women's Institute to help supply clothing to:  
women yes \_\_\_\_\_  
no \_\_\_\_\_

31

their family yes \_\_\_\_\_  
no \_\_\_\_\_

If yes to either of the above, describe the work. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. Did the Women's Institute provide any type of thrift programs to inform women of ways of obtaining clothing for:  
themselves yes \_\_\_\_\_  
no \_\_\_\_\_

32

their family yes \_\_\_\_\_  
no \_\_\_\_\_

If yes to either of the above, describe the form of counseling.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. Did the Women's Institute arrange clothing drives wherein articles of clothing could be collected and then later distributed to needy people for:

33

local distribution yes \_\_\_\_\_  
no \_\_\_\_\_

national/international distribution yes \_\_\_\_\_  
no \_\_\_\_\_

10. Did the Women's Institute distribute articles of clothing in Manitoba that were obtained from other Institute groups outside of the province? 34

yes \_\_\_\_\_  
no \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, from which groups? \_\_\_\_\_

11. Did the Women's Institute sponsor sales of used clothing? 35

yes \_\_\_\_\_  
no \_\_\_\_\_

12. In your opinion, how useful do you think the Women's Institute was in helping women obtain clothing during the depression? 36

very useful \_\_\_\_\_  
somewhat useful \_\_\_\_\_  
not useful \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

13. How would you rate the adequacy of your wardrobe in terms of your individual needs during the 1930's? 37

excessive	more than	adequate	less than	extremely
	adequate		adequate	inadequate
5	4	3	2	1

14. How would you rate the adequacy of your wardrobe compared to others around you during the 1930's? 38

excessive	more than	adequate	less than	extremely
	adequate		adequate	inadequate
5	4	3	2	1

15. During times of poor economic conditions, an individual's wardrobe inventory often changes. Aside from fashion revisions, do you think your wardrobe needs decreased at all from the 1920's to the 1930's? 39

yes \_\_\_\_\_  
no \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, why? \_\_\_\_\_



16. Type of residence(s) 1930 to 1939: rural \_\_\_\_\_ 40  
small town \_\_\_\_\_  
large town \_\_\_\_\_

17. Name of place of residence. \_\_\_\_\_ 1

18. During the 1930's were you living with: 2-3  
husband \_\_\_\_\_  
son(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
daughter(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
other \_\_\_\_\_

19. Did your position in your family effect your clothing needs? 4  
yes \_\_\_\_\_  
no \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

20. Were you employed outside of your home, or did you take work into your home, at any time between 1930 and 1939? 5  
yes \_\_\_\_\_  
no \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, when: 1930-1932 \_\_\_\_\_ 6  
1933-1937 \_\_\_\_\_  
1938-1939 \_\_\_\_\_

21. Did you require any special clothing for your type of employment? 7  
yes \_\_\_\_\_  
no \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, explain. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to have your name included in the list of acknowledgements as a recognition of your contribution to this study? 8  
yes \_\_\_\_\_  
no \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E

Letter Sent To Participants Before Personal Interview

Dear

Thank you for agreeing to be a participant in my study. As I mentioned during our telephone conversation, the title of my study is: The Manitoba Women's Institute and its role in helping rural women meet their clothing requirements, 1930 to 1939. As part of my graduate study research, I hope to be able to identify what, if any, educational and cooperative programs and/or sharing and relief actions may have been conducted by Women's Institute groups to help women in rural communities obtain clothing. The work is limited to Manitoba Women's Institute groups operating between 1930 and 1939.

A list of names of possible participants, of which your's was one, was given to me by Gwen Parker, Executive Director of the Manitoba Women's Institute. Mrs. Parker is fully aware of my study and upon completion of my work, a copy of my thesis will be available to Women's Institute members through her office in Winnipeg.

The interview that you have agreed to take part in is very informal and will take approximately 30 minutes of your time. All questions I have compiled for the interview have been approved by the Ethics Review Board at the University of Manitoba and are in no way offensive or embarrassing. All information gathered during the interview will be kept confidential and will be seen only by myself and three university professors who make up my advisory committee.

To help you prepare for our upcoming interview, I am sending you a list of topics that will be covered:

- the year you joined the Manitoba Women's Institute.
- clothing and craft courses offered by the Manitoba Women's Institute between 1930 and 1939.

-any programs dealing with clothing that were arranged by the Manitoba Women's Institute during the 1930's.

-where you were living between 1930 and 1939.

-if you were employed during the 1930's, and if you were, did you require any special type of clothing for your job.

I look forward to our interview and thank you once again for agreeing to take part in my study. Your cooperation in helping me with my thesis is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Heather Meiklejohn  
Graduate Student  
University of Manitoba

## Appendix F

Description Of The Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney Test

The Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney Test is a nonparametric test used for two independent samples and is specifically designed for very non-normal populations. The objective of the test is to detect whether the two underlying populations are centered differently (Wonnacott & Wonnacott, 1982).

Assumptions of the Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test include:

1. Both samples are random samples from their respective populations;
2. In addition to independence within each sample, there is mutual independence between two samples;
3. The measurement scale is at least ordinal; and
4. If there is a difference between population distribution functions, that difference is a difference in the location of the distribution (Conover, 1971).

The test statistic used is:

$$t = \sum_{i=1}^n R(X)_i$$

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