Book Section:
Blaszczyk, R (2023) Sold on Softness: DuPont Synthetics and Sensory Experience. In: Blaszczyk, R and Suisman, D, (eds.) Capitalism and the Senses. University of Pennsylvania Press . ISBN 9781512824209

Chapter 11

Sold on Softness:

DuPont Synthetics and Sensory Experience

Regina Lee Blaszczyk

In September of 1945, the American chemical giant E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company published a new series of advertisements in *Women's Wear Daily*, the major national newspaper for fashion retailers, to promote its three textile fibers: rayon, acetate, and nylon. The DuPont Company was a large corporation headquartered in Wilmington, Delaware, with offices and plants around the United States. The firm was no stranger to national advertising, its ads familiar to *Women's Wear Daily* readers. DuPont had long spent hefty sums on print promotions in trade journals, popular magazines, and newspapers, using Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn (BBDO) of Madison Avenue as its advertising agency.

Let's look at one of DuPont's advertisements in *Women's Wear Daily* to see what it tells us about the chemical industry, consumer marketing, and sensory awareness at the end of World War II. The DuPont ad published on September 11, 1945, had the taglines, "I believe it's better" and "It's labeled Du Pont Rayon."[1] (fig. 11.1) The focal point of the ad is a sketch of an elegant young woman wearing a flirty little hat and clutching a bolt of fabric printed with a heart design. The imagined consumer holds the bolt up against her left cheek, while her chest, right shoulder, and upper arm are draped with loose yardage. With her head coquettishly tilted, the woman gazes at the audience with pursed lips and big bunny eyes. She has just found a lovely bolt of fabric while out shopping, and she conveys her pleasure with a highly personal gesture: a hug. Her body and the commodity become one, fused together in tribute to sensual pleasure.

<insert fig. 11.1 here>

The powerful visual image was accompanied by a short message that explained DuPont's philosophy on textile promotion. "There are two angles to keeping topside in fashion," the text explained. The term "angle" was contemporary sales jargon familiar to the retailers who read *Women's Wear Daily*; they were always angling for more customers. The first angle was "style," the hook, or "stopper," that caught the consumer's eye as she browsed around the store. The second angle was "quality confidence," the secret sauce that made the "style story stick and grow famous." Style was perceived by the eye, quality by the hand. In DuPont's view, it was sight and touch that mattered, the eyes and the hands that determined if the fabric would meet favor with the female consumer. The burden rested on fiber makers, fabric designers, fashion creators, and retailers to acknowledge this reality and to devise ways for managing what the consumer saw with her eyes and felt with her fingers.

Beyond Ruin Porn

Historians of American enterprise have studied the arts of persuasion developed by manufacturers, retailers, and advertising agencies to expand sales and enlarge the consumer culture. Advertising campaigns and industrial designs of the early to mid-twentieth century have been considered in depth, particularly as they relate to big-ticket consumer goods like automobiles and disposable consumer goods like processed foods.[2] With a few exceptions, however, historians of American business and consumer culture have not examined marketing practices for fabrics, fashion, and fashion accessories.[3]

Historically, this type of merchandise—cloth, ribbons, readymade apparel, millinery, and accessories—fell under the rubric of "textiles," a broad category of soft goods that included the fabric for ladies' dresses and men's suits; knitwear; upholstery; household linens; tire cords; and industrial filters. Today in popular culture, few people think twice about fabrics, and they often

associate fashion with extremes, high and low. At the top of the pyramid sit the custom-made couture gowns worn by celebrities at the annual Met Gala, and on the lower end is the fast fashion sold by global retailers like Zara. Haute couture outfits are objects of status display, with the very best designs given special treatment by art museums who preserve select items for future ogling. Fast fashion is worn for a few Instagram photos and discarded. Whether upmarket or downscale, no one knows who made the cloth, where, how, why, and when. In our global postmodern world, the fabric has no prestige. Its status has been usurped by the brand, the celebrity endorsement, and the identity statement.

When DuPont advertised rayon in 1945, the cultural and economic landscape was very different. For much of the twentieth century, female consumers knew something about fabrics, sewing, and clothing care, having gained this knowledge at home, in school, and in the stores. American ready-to-wear and make-do homemade fashions were the staple of every woman's wardrobe. The booming American clothing industry produced keepsake fashion that was worn from year to year. There was no fast fashion, no throwaway apparel. The American garment industry had grown substantially in the interwar years, in part by taking advantage of the new, inexpensive man-made textiles. The imaginary consumer depicted in the DuPont advertisement hugs her bolt of printed rayon fabric for good reason. From her school sewing classes, she had learned to value fabrics for their inherent qualities and to treasure the half-dozen outfits in her closet. She appreciated the bright colors, the eye-catching patterns, the soft touch, and the sensuous nature of a cloth that draped softly around the body. She knew the differences between velvet and satin, matelassé and crepe. To her, fashion wasn't something designed in faraway Paris—or produced somewhere in China and shipped to America on a box boat. The American

woman created her own style, her own sensual experience, by making some outfits on her family sewing machine and buying some ready-to-wear in the local shops. (fig. 11.2)

<insert fig. 11.2 here>

Few researchers outside fashion and costume studies know this story, and few historians understand its importance. Today, "textiles" is a dirty word in American historiography. The feminized nature of fashion, and the concomitant marginalization of fashion studies as an academic discipline, are in part responsible for this sorry state of affairs. Further, trade policies that fostered the global movement to offshore manufacturing have, inadvertently, played a role in shaping historical indifference. We now have two or three generations of historians who have never worked in a mill over their summer break, with many never ever having set foot in a factory. All around the United States, the industrial past is represented by crumbling manufacturing plants whose hulking, cavernous interiors are appreciated mainly by "ruin porn" afficionados. The end result is a blissful ignorance of industrial history as a lever to prying open broader trends, from race relations to cultural meaning. Many historians looking at our DuPont advertisement would think it frivolous, without understanding that DuPont was the Apple of midcentury America and that the fiber industry was its Silicon Valley.

The story of DuPont fibers opens the doors onto the hidden history of sensory research in twentieth-century American capitalism. This chapter focuses on the most important firm in one of the most important industries in the world's most important economy. Previous generations of historians examined DuPont as an innovator in three major areas: chemistry, engineering, and management.[4] Here we look at the fourth leg of the stool: marketing.

My analysis is built around two case studies. The first, longer example is drawn from DuPont's role in the man-made fiber industry between 1920 and 1945, an understudied era in the

company's textile history. DuPont was the second largest rayon producer in America, and in this capacity, the firm assumed a leadership role in sensory research as related to textiles. In the interwar years, practitioners in marketing, a new business specialty, envisioned the typical American woman as white, married, and middle-class, adopting the shorthand term "Mrs. Consumer" to describe this imagined person.[5] DuPont's interest in female sensory experience was driven by the imperative to improve the performance of cellulose fibers and expand rayon sales among the textile mills serving the burgeoning ladies' ready-to-wear industry. The second, supporting example turns to DuPont from 1945 to 1970, when the firm was the dominant player in the American synthetic fibers industry and when ready-to-wear was a mature business. In this period, DuPont dominated the market for "test-tube" fibers—fibers synthetized in the laboratory from materials in the mineral kingdom—through technological innovation augmented by extensive market research and aggressive promotions. Postwar marketers moved away from the monolithic concept of "Mrs. Consumer" and tried to develop a more nuanced understanding of American shoppers.[6] In keeping with this shift, DuPont expanded its market research efforts and explored men's sensory experiences with textiles. Together, the two case studies consider how DuPont embraced sensory market analysis, first as a pioneer in the study of textiles and the senses and then as a major customer for the services of motivational research consultants.

The Aesthetics of Rayon

During the interwar years, the major player in DuPont rayon marketing was Alexis Sommaripa (1900-1945), a textile expert who found his way to the chemical company via Harvard University. Born in Odessa, Russia (now Odesa, Ukraine), Sommaripa, the son of a judge, was educated at the Imperial Law School, a prestigious boy's academy in St. Petersburg that prepared the elite for government service. He fled his homeland in 1918 as the Russian Civil War (1918-

20) created turmoil, using his foreign language skills to support himself as a translator in Europe before immigrating from England to the United States in 1920. In Boston, he attended the Graduate School of Business Administration at Harvard (now the Harvard Business School, or HBS), receiving his MBA in 1922. He then spent a year studying cotton production at the Lowell Textile School, one of many now-forgotten vocational institutes that trained people for skilled jobs in American industry. In tandem with the cotton industry's flight from New England, Sommaripa moved to the South for a position at the Indian Head Mills in Cordova, Alabama, a subsidiary of the Nashua Manufacturing Company of Nashua, New Hampshire.[7] Within a year, he was back at the HBS, helping his former professor, Melvin T. Copeland, a marketing pioneer, with a study of cotton prices. In the fall of 1925, one of the deans recommended him for a job at a DuPont subsidiary in Buffalo, New York. The young Russian joined the Bureau of Business Research, the statistics office of the DuPont Rayon Company, in November of 1925.[8]

In this era, the discipline of marketing and the practice of market research were in their infancies. Before World War I, the Curtis Publishing Company in Philadelphia undertook some of the world's first consumer surveys to better understand who subscribed to its mass-circulation magazines, notably the *Saturday Evening Post* and the *Ladies' Home Journal*. After the war, advertising agencies like J. Walter Thompson (JWT) on Madison Avenue in New York developed more sophisticated methods for putting the consumer under the microscope, expressly focusing on white, middle-class women. JWT's approach combined quantitative door-to-door surveys on the purchasing patterns of female consumers with the psychological analysis of their product choices. When Sommaripa arrived at DuPont, marketers were only just finding their way with the mythical Mrs. Consumer and sensory experience was not on their radar screens.[9]

Over the course of DuPont career, Sommaripa laid the foundation for the firm's interdisciplinary approach to textile marketing, bringing together the insights of laboratory science, engineering practice, empirical observations, fabric design, and psychological research on the senses.[10] The sensory marketing pioneer died prematurely on the Western Front in March of 1945, while serving as a noncombatant civilian with the United States Army. He was celebrated in death at DuPont as the mastermind of fabric development in the American rayon business.[11] He earned this accolade for his work at the Bureau of Business Research in the 1920s and, more importantly, for his directorship of the Fabric Development Service in the 1930s. Operating out of DuPont's sales offices in midtown Manhattan, the Fabric Development Service connected the firm's rayon plants to the apparel supply chain—to converters, weavers, knitters, garment makers, and retailers—as a means for gathering trend data that could be used to create better textiles. Sommaripa and his staff developed close business relationships with designers, engineers, and salesmen from the weaving mills, gathering feedback that would be used both by DuPont laboratory scientists to improve rayon fibers and by DuPont designers to create "idea fabrics" to be shared with customers in the textile industry. The senses and sensory experience figured into these activities.

DuPont started producing man-made fibers back in 1920, when it opened the Buffalo plant to make viscose rayon from wood pulp. This venture was part of a DuPont plan to shift away from explosives and gunpowder to a broader range of products that included plastics, paints, and dyes. The man-made fiber industry traced its roots to late-nineteenth century Europe, where chemists first created cellulose filaments to compete with silk, the world's most luxurious material for textiles. Europe was the locus of the artificial silk industry until 1910, when the British textile giant, Courtaulds, established a factory to make viscose in Marcus Hook,

Pennsylvania, just north of DuPont headquarters in Wilmington. Starting in the 1920s, numerous American and European firms established fiber factories in the United States. Between 1924 and 1926, a collective effort in rebranding, led by American dry-goods merchants, resulted in the adoption of the generic term "rayon" as a synonym for all types of artificial silk.[12]

In his job at the Bureau of Business Research, Sommaripa served as the principal investigator for a series of research projects that connected the DuPont Rayon Company to the National Retail Dry Goods Association (NRDGA), the major trade group for American textile retailers. In the mid 1920s, there were no national department-store chains comparable to Macys today and no global apparel brands like H&M. Fashion chains like Lerner Shops, predecessor to New York & Company, and Lane Bryant, specialists in maternity wear and stout sizes, were just gaining a toehold nationally. Most of the stores that sold textile products were one-of-a-kind family-operated dry-goods emporiums, mainly stocking fabrics for professional dressmakers and home seamstresses along with smaller selections of millinery, knitwear, and apparel. The NRDGA market surveys gathered quantitative data from hundreds of stores around the country to learn about women's preferences for various types of textiles, including knitted lingerie and dress fabrics. These projects benefitted from Sommaripa's expertise in statistical analysis and textile engineering, while exposing him to the mysteries of sensual experience and consumer motivation.

The NRDGA surveys provided DuPont with insight into how the senses figured into women's choices as consumers. Writing in 1938, Sommaripa recalled some of challenges faced by rayon makers in the mid to late 1920s. The original viscose rayon, known as continuous filament yarn, was smooth and shiny. It was mainly used in knitted goods like imitation silk stockings and, to a much lesser extent, in the woven textiles used in ready-to-wear. Some rayon

advertisements for woven rayon fabrics boasted about the "shimmering sheen" of the material, but the glossiness proved to be a liability. The NRDGA surveys discovered that female shoppers "thought woven rayon fabrics were coarse in appearance, harsh to the touch, stiff in drape and excessively shiny." The gloss looked cheap, and the glassy stiffness of the fabrics sounded "raspy."[13] Sommaripa's market research suggested that rayon textiles offended the senses of sight, touch, and hearing.

Technicians at the DuPont Rayon Company's plant in Buffalo looked to alleviate some of these aesthetic liabilities, starting with the yarns used in knitwear. The roughness of rayon textiles was rooted in the nature of the material itself. To improve the consumer's sensual experience, it was necessary to modify the fiber. One major problem was the diameter, or denier, of the rayon filament, which was extruded from a machine. This material was three times thicker than cotton fiber and many times wider than silk filament. When these thick rayon filaments were spun together, the result was a yarn that was coarse to the hand. In turn, any knitwear made from these yarns was scraggy to the touch. DuPont chemists and engineers in Buffalo adjusted the manufacturing processes to extrude narrower filaments and to spin finer yarns which, when knitted into garments, would have a smooth hand. The new yarn, DuPont Super-Extra, resulted in knitwear with, in Sommaripa's words, considerable "softness and strength."[14]

The knitted lingerie industry was the major customer for rayon in the 1920s, and the introduction of finer yarns allowed DuPont to wrest market share away from its major competitor, The Viscose Company, the Courtaulds subsidiary at Marcus Hook. Writing in *DuPont Magazine*, a monthly publication for stockholders, Sommaripa noted the rising popularity of knitted rayon lingerie, which in 1926 accounted for thirty-six percent of all ladies' underwear sales, surpassing silk and cotton merchandise. Among "the advantages of rayon,"

Sommaripa wrote, “one of the most important to women . . . is softness.” DuPont Super-Extra rayon yarn was used by major knitwear manufacturers such as Munsingwear, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to produce the sensuous, soft form-fitting onesies that were popular under the loose-fitting frocks of the 1920s.[15]

DuPont Super-Extra rayon yarn was ideal for knitted lingerie, where a tad of sheen introduced a bit of naughty glamour to the ladies’ boudoir. But shininess was a liability in the woven fabrics used to sew up women’s dresses. In 1926, one trade journal contrasted the “richness of sheen and bloom” of real silk to the “harsh brilliance” of rayon, equating silk “to a well-dressed woman, and rayon to an over-dressed woman.”[16] In response, DuPont scientists in Buffalo puzzled over how to reduce the “ray” in the rayon. The trick was not to eliminate the gloss—some luster was required if rayon fabrics were to resemble silk—but to control the reflection of light, and hence, the sheen. This was achieved in filament production by incorporating into the spinning solution pigments or oils that deflected the light. Bit by bit, the effort to “de-luster” rayon fibers by manipulating optics achieved some degree of success. By the mid 1930s, DuPont had the ability to fine-tune the degree of luster in the fiber, producing a range of gloss from bright to dull.[17]

Another aesthetic challenge with woven rayon textiles, revealed by Sommaripa’s research for the NRDGA, was the stiffness of the fabric and the harsh noise that was generated when a consumer rubbed the material. These characteristics were not an issue in the pioneer days of viscose, when the main applications were braids, trimmings, and upholstery. But the weaving mills that made broadcloth for the burgeoning ladies’ readymade clothing industry needed yarns with the subtle sheen, warmth, fuzziness, and softness of wool. One way to create fabrics that were dull, soft, and lightweight was to weave rayon yarns together with silk or cotton yarns.

These blended, or mixed, fabrics looked refined and were pleasant to the hand and ear. By 1927, major textile companies like Pacific Mills, which operated mammoth factories in Lawrence, Massachusetts, were weaving blended rayon fabrics for sale to dress manufacturers.[18]

These improvements in rayon technology—narrowing the denier, delustering, and blending materials—were steps in the right direction, but more assertive action was required if rayon was to gain a toehold in the booming ready-to-wear market. Ultimately, DuPont promoted a new type of yarn, "spun rayon," as a means for increasing its presence in the New York apparel industry. While continuous filament yarns were silky, smooth, and suited to knitted underwear, spun rayon yarns were intentionally engineered to be lumpy and bumpy in emulation of the wool and cotton used to weave cloth for ladies' dresses. Spun rayon yarns were produced in two stages. First, the DuPont rayon plant took extruded viscose filaments and chopped these long strands into short lengths, creating a material called "cut staple" or "rayon staple fiber." Second, DuPont sold the cut staple to the textile trade, where spinning specialists or vertically integrated mills turned it into yarn using the standard equipment for cotton and wool. These spun rayon yarns had the many of the characteristics of the natural fibers.

Spun rayon presented endless design possibilities and attracted the attention of the apparel industry. Textiles woven from the new yarns had little luster, no rustling, and a good hand. Between 1931 and 1934, most spun rayon yarns were used to weave the crepe dress fabrics relished by the garment cutters in New York's Seventh Avenue Garment District, the apparel manufacturing center of the United States. These developments occurred during the darkest days of the Great Depression, and the rollout was slow. But as the economic situation improved, so too did consumers' ability to update their wardrobes. By 1936, Sommaripa had his satisfaction, noting the rising popularity of spun rayon in suiting fabrics and in wool-rayon blends for

women's dresses, among other applications that required the cloth to fall, or drape, softly and elegantly across the body.[19]

The Important Basis of Touch

The Great Depression was a challenging moment for American business on several fronts. Between 1934 and 1936, the DuPont Company was subjected to intense public scrutiny for its role as a munitions manufacturer during World War I. The firm countered a brutal journalistic exposé and a harsh Congressional investigation on this matter with a major public-relations campaign. As part of this effort to rehabilitate DuPont's reputation, in 1935 the BBDO advertising agency introduced the now-famous advertising slogan, "Better Things for Better Living . . . through Chemistry."[20]

In 1930, Alexis Sommaripa assumed the directorship of DuPont's Fabric Development Service in New York. This section of the sales department mainly worked to connect DuPont to the textile marketplace. One of the unit's principal jobs was to design woven fabrics that showcased the versatility of DuPont's artificial fibers. Along these lines, Sommaripa and his staff routinely collaborated with mills to weave "idea fabrics" that were shared with DuPont textile customers. Because the DuPont manufacturing plants were constantly improving on the raw materials, the samples showed weavers how to use the latest viscose or acetate yarns to create stylish fabric designs suited to the moment. In 1937, *Women's Wear Daily* announced that a selection of wool-like dress fabrics, styled by Sommaripa, was on display for customers to study at the DuPont offices in the Empire State Building. The collection showed how DuPont yarns could be woven together with natural fibers to create blended fabrics that had distinctive attributes in performance, appearance, and touch.[21]

With his insatiable curiosity, Sommaripa began looking for novel ways to decipher consumer taste to aid his efforts in textile design. The DuPont offices in the Empire State Building sat in squarely in the New York Textile District, a bustling commercial neighborhood thick with wholesale showrooms that sold cloth to trade customers. The nation's largest cluster of ready-to-wear manufacturers were just a few blocks west, in the garment center on Seventh Avenue. Dozens of upscale retail stores lined Fifth Avenue from Thirty-Fourth Street up to Central Park, while mid-market retailers huddled around Herald Square. The DuPont staff was frequently on the streets sizing up how people dressed, in the shops looking at the latest styles, and in the textile showrooms studying fabrics. Much could be learned from first-hand observation, but Sommaripa yearned for scientific precision. In this context, he turned to a promising new psychological approach that sought to crack open the puzzle of human behavior for commercial gain. Motivational research, with its objective to pry open the consumer mind, seemed to hold the key to sensory perception.

The growth of American consumer society and the concentration of corporate power in Manhattan had spawned a new type of business expert, the specialist in applied psychology. Some Madison Avenue advertising agencies had these social scientists on their payrolls, as did JWT who had elevated the behavioral expert John B. Watson to the executive suite. Some psychologists and sociologists worked as business consultants, advising corporate clients on problems for a fee. Back in 1921, the psychologist James McKeen Cattell, the founder of *Scientific American* magazine, set up a consultancy to bring social-science insights to the wider world. His firm, the Psychological Corporation, was run by a small New York staff who hired academic psychologists to work on projects for the clients, from private individuals to industrial

companies. The nonprofit's services included consumer surveys, personnel analysis, and advice on sales and public relations.[22]

Sometime in the mid 1930s, the Fabric Development Service asked the Psychological Corporation to undertake a major study on touch and textiles.[23] The objective was to determine how sensory experience shaped women's preferences for different types of fabrics. The sense of touch was one mechanism by which consumers experienced aesthetic pleasure and formed their ideas on what constituted beautiful, desirable products. Since the mid 1920s, major American companies had harnessed "beauty" as a "new business tool" for stimulating desire and increasing sales.[24] The General Motors Corporation (GM) brandished beauty by offering polychrome paint jobs, unique body designs, and colorful upholstery fabrics as it wrested the automobile market away from the Ford Motor Company.[25] During the depression, some durable-goods manufacturers, including GM, invested in body streamlining as a strategy for stimulating consumption, but there appears to have been no systematic, scientific analysis of the relationships among aesthetics, style goods, and the senses—until DuPont tried to determine what made textiles pleasing to the consumer.

As DuPont learned in the 1920s, the fashion business was highly dependent on consumers' experiences with three of the five senses: sight, touch, and sound. Veteran textile salesmen and old-time garment cutters frequently referred to the "hand," or the feel, of the fabric. But no one knew how the act of touching a soft, luxurious fabric translated into pleasure in the brain or how the sensuality of a silky cloth influenced the consumer's decision to buy the dress. In Sommaripa's view, the time had come for DuPont to demystify the sense of touch and to determine how tactile pleasure influenced aesthetic tastes. Solving this riddle was no matter of idle curiosity. A deeper knowledge of sensory experience was essential to improving DuPont

fibers and, in turn, to augmenting the reputation of the DuPont textile brand within the fashion system.

The DuPont project on the sense of touch, undertake by the Psychological Corporation under Sommaripa's auspices, engaged with a new scientific field called "hedonic psychophysics," a later iteration of which was discussed by Ana María Ulloa in Chapter 5. Paul F. Lazarsfeld, a Viennese émigré who directed a social-science institute at the University of Newark (now part of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey), was a principal investigator along with Rowena Ripin of the Psychological Corporation. Using a controlled laboratory setting, the research team gathered verbal evidence about sensations associated with the touching of textiles from female consumers who were blindfolded, given fabric samples, and asked to describe their tactile experiences as they handled different types of cloth. The test eliminated the "visual stimuli of color, weave and drape" and focused solely on the consumer's response to texture. In April of 1937, the *Journal of Applied Psychology* published the results. [26]

As the corporate advisor, Sommaripa explained the rationale: "There is no question that among the buying motives for textiles, the pleasantness to the touch plays a very important role. No man or woman, probably, would buy a garment without first putting a hand on it. Yet, notwithstanding the magnitude of the textile business or the importance of touch, there is practically no concrete information on the subject."[27] The blindfolded tests found that velvet was the consumer's favorite cloth due to its soft hand, while the least favorite fabric was taffeta, which was stiff and felt rough against the skin.[28] "Particularly interesting," Sommaripa told the Delaware members of the American Chemical Society, a professional association, in 1938, "has been a careful study conducted in cooperation with a psychological corporation among 100

selected consumers, which indicated that there was a definite agreement as to preference of the fabrics on the important basis of touch."[29]

Sommaripa used the tactile study as a clarion call, advocating for greater exploration of the senses by rayon makers. In his speech to the Delaware chapter of the American Chemical Society, he made an impassioned plea for scientists to acknowledge that a deeper understanding of consumer psychology and tactile aesthetics was the key to rayon's future. In his view, the scientific analysis of consumers' sensory experiences could be put to practical use. The research findings could be used to improve the fibers, design more appealing fabrics, and generate trend forecasts that predicted a textile's likely reception in retail stores.[30] Style forecasting was a relatively new field, mainly practiced by color experts in the automobile, appliance, and fashion industries.[31] Perhaps inspired by this work, Sommaripa came to envision sensory knowledge as essential to the Fabric Development Service. The better DuPont designers understood consumer psychology, the better "idea fabrics" they could produce for DuPont customers. Using inspiration fabrics informed by sensory research, textile mills could weave better cloth and Seventh Avenue could make better fashions.[32] Here we see DuPont's leading marketer of the interwar period giving his take on "Better Things for Better Living . . . through Chemistry."

The Psychological Corporation's study of the sense of touch testified to DuPont's growing interest in the scientific analysis of textile markets, an effort that originated with the NRDGA surveys. In contrast to those statistical reports, the sensory study by the Psychological Corporation was truly touchy-feely, dealing with personal impressions of how the fabric felt to the hands. From the late 1920s onward, popular culture exerted ever more sway over the attitudes and expectations of American consumers. Store displays, magazine advertisements, school sewing classes, and Hollywood films played no small role in teaching the female

consumer to appreciate fabrics that were colorful, washable, sensuous, and soft. By the late 1930s, DuPont and other rayon makers were providing the textile mills and garment cutters with something more than raw materials—cellulose fibers were the building blocks for the democratization of women's fashion. Incremental technological innovations by the fiber plants helped to reduce rayon prices, encouraging textile mills to specify man-made materials over natural fibers. But to focus on falling prices alone would miss the point. "Rayon fabrics," Sommaripa told the National Association of Cotton Manufacturers in October of 1937, "have awakened the masses to the joy of a smooth, new touch."[33]

By the time World War II broke out in Europe on September 1, 1939, the textile and fashion industries thought favorably of man-made fibers. Rayon was the preferred fabric for stylish ladies' dresses, whether the frocks were sewn at home, ordered from a Montgomery Ward catalog, or purchased from a J. C. Penney store on Main Street. Rayon's popularity increased during the war, replacing cotton and wool in everyday apparel. Hollywood films put rayon in the public eye, with an endless stream of starlets dressed in man-made fashions. The *Rayon Textile Monthly* estimated that 1.5 billion yards of rayon or rayon-blend fabrics were bleached, dyed, or printed in 1944.[34] The War Production Board controlled the amount of fabric available to the civilian economy, but with a full Allied victory looming in mid 1945, the federal agency predicted greater consumer availability in short order.[35] The *Women's Wear Daily* advertisement of September 11, 1945, pointed to a bright, sensual future. Rayon dresses were remarkable for their affordability—and for their drape, sensuality, and softness. It was not just low prices, but low prices and the promise of sensory pleasure that sold rayon fabrics and fashion—and contributed to their widespread acceptance.

The Complicated Science of Marketing

In the postwar years, DuPont came to dominate the synthetic fiber business due to its first-mover advantages in nylon, which included a strong patent position.[36] Nylon became the company's most profitable product, and seeking to repeat this success, DuPont invested heavily in synthetic fiber development. The firm obtained the United States rights for Terylene from the British patent holders, marketing this polyester fiber under the tradename Dacron. The company also pressed ahead with the scientific research that generated Orlon acrylic, a washable, moth-proof synthetic wool, and Lycra spandex, the ultimate stretch fiber. Back in 1936, DuPont dissolved all of its subsidiaries for tax purposes, and in the process, created an internal department to oversee the rayon business. In the postwar years, this unit became the Textile Fibers Department. The name change pointed to the declining relevance of cellulose fibers in the test-tube era. In a 1949 talk to a textile group, Andrew E. Buchanan Jr., a fiber manager, spoke of DuPont's unwavering commitment to science, exemplified by the belief that "a man ought to be able to make a better fiber by design than a sheep produces inadvertently."[37]

But science alone could not guarantee success in the competitive postwar business environment. The economic and social context of the synthetics age was dramatically different from that of the rayon era. Postwar Americans enjoyed a rising standard of living that was not experienced elsewhere in the world. With this affluence came a greater awareness of individuality in everything from politics to personal style. Stereotypes of cookie-cutter suburbs aside, postwar America was the incubator of multiculturalism and diversity. Businesses cast aside the monolithic concept of Mrs. Consumer and acknowledged that postwar society was divided into many different market segments: teenagers with spending money, African Americans who read *Ebony*, men who loved muscle cars, and others. Marketers became more

adept at dissecting consumption patterns with due credence to variables such as age, climate, ethnicity, gender, locale, race, and social class.

The job of managing the DuPont textile business became ever more complex. The Textile Fibers Department built on some of the practices initiated by Sommaripa and the Fabric Development Service in the interwar years. Insights from consumer surveys were combined with feedback from textile mills, apparel manufacturers, and retailers to improve fiber performance, to design "idea fabrics," and to plan advertising campaigns. The marketing research function was greatly expanded, and massive amounts of data on consumer were accumulated. Consumer surveys were undertaken by several different entities: an internal corporate marketing unit, the Textile Fibers Department, advertising agencies and media experts, and motivational research consultants. In 1959 alone, the DuPont market research division produced nearly seventy reports analyzing the attitudes of retailers and consumers on a range of textiles, from suits to carpets.[38] In 1962, one textile fibers manager, Arthur M. Saunders, described DuPont's approach. Put succinctly, the company had transformed the "relatively simple 'art' of selling fabric" into the "complicated 'science' of marketing."[39]

The Peacock Revolution

In any given year, internal reports by DuPont were supplemented with external surveys from consultants such as Ernest Dichter, who we met in Chapter 4 by Lisa Jacobson. One of the pioneers of applied business psychology, Dichter ran the Institute for Motivational Research (IMR), a New York consulting firm that catered to many types of business clients, from automakers to toy manufacturers. In the postwar years, Dichter's consultancy did studies for DuPont on topics such as nylon sheets, men's socks, and ladies' girdles. Having worked at his uncle's department store as a young man in Vienna, Dichter understood that clothing was a

highly personal item that evoked emotions, memories, and sensory responses. Consumers often shared intimate details about their wardrobes in face-to-face meetings. In one such interview, a woman explained why she treasured an old article of clothing: "I can still conjure up the way this dress felt on my body. I loved to touch it and also the smell of it. It had a peculiar smell all its own. It was the first tailored suit I ever had. . . . It was nothing glamorous. I felt at home in it. It belonged to me in a deeper sense of the word."[40] Dichter applied what he learned from interviews to fashion projects, including advertising campaigns. To be compelling, an apparel advertisement had to capitalize on sensory pleasure, helping the reader to "'feel' the fabric, 'smell' the newness, etc."[41] Dichter brought an awareness of the deeply personal, sensuous nature of textiles to his work for DuPont.

One of the best-known IMR projects for DuPont, undertaken between 1965 and 1967, focused on "the peacock revolution," an emerging American menswear phenomenon in which the youth market cast aside traditional dowdy outfits and embraced colorful, expressive, sensual clothing.[42] The initial findings, publicized in a speech by Dichter at a DuPont-sponsored menswear symposium in Scottsdale, Arizona, in February of 1966, uncovered a growing taste for flashy fashion among young men and the role of sensory pleasure in their consumer choices. A longer, follow-up report, submitted to DuPont in December of 1966, explored the history of men's changing tastes, offered design suggestions for garments, and speculated on America's future role in global fashion. Finally, Dichter summarized the major characteristics of the peacock revolution in a second talk dating from January of 1967. The first speech, with its emphasis on the senses, is the focus of this analysis. To probe the inner workings of male youth culture, the IMR collected and analyzed data from interviews with clothing salesmen, observations in retail stores, and focus groups with consumers.[43]

The postwar menswear industry struggled with lethargic sales, a reality that stood in stark contrast to the expansive, energetic, and ever-changing women's ready-to-wear trade.[44] To modernize their lines, men's clothing manufacturers collaborated with textile mills on technical novelties such as "durable press" garments, the "no iron shirt," and the "drip dry" suit—but sales remained stagnant. With their eyes fixed on retail stores, DuPont marketing experts learned about a trend bubbling up among younger consumers. Throughout the West, young men ages seventeen to twenty-five were rejecting traditional styles in favor of fashions that expressed "their own individuality." Growing up in an affluent, media-saturated culture, American teenagers and young adults wanted to look like the celebrities on TV variety shows such as ABC's *Shindig!* and NBC's *Hullabaloo* or like "a rebel, 'swinger,' hot-rodder, surfer, beatnik, etc."[45] Some young men yearned to dress in the manner of movie heroes like James Bond, the stars of TV shows such as *I Spy* or *The Man from U.N.C.L.E*, or the fashion models in *Esquire* and *Playboy*.[46] These flashy preferences befuddled the conservative menswear trade, whose standard stock included British tweeds and grey flannel suits. DuPont marketers, looking to sell more synthetic fibers, intervened by hiring Dichter and the IMR "to unravel the secret of today's youth, . . . sociologically, psychologically and culturally."[47]

The IMR research on American peacocks was not the first study of postwar youth culture. A few years earlier in the United Kingdom, the sociologist Mark Abrams surveyed the buying habits of British youngsters ages fifteen to thirty-four and published statistics about their hefty expenditures on fashion merchandise like men's shirts and ladies' lingerie.[48] The IMR studies differed from Abrams's work by foregrounding the senses, a major determinant in consumer choice. Decades earlier, DuPont and the Psychological Corporation had braved the territory of touch and textiles, but that effort paled next to the peacock studies and their focus on

sensual pleasure among male consumers. The IMR's contention that men's shopping decisions were influenced by social class, ethnicity, and bodily experience is central to our story of synthetics and the senses.

The IMR identified the menswear upheaval of the sixties as "undeniably a lower class revolution" that originated with British blue-collar workers who sloughed off stuffy old bowler hats and tweed jackets for the slinky Mod styles of Carnaby Street.[49] The fad for colorful, form-fitting hipster gear then spread to other Western nations including Sweden, Holland, France, and the United States.[50] By December of 1966, flamboyant menswear was synonymous with the internationalization of Mod fashion, but there was more to the sartorial rebellion than the emulation of British style. "The Peacock Revolution is a revolution against the stereotyped clothing of the past," explained the IMR. "Each Peacock wishes to demonstrate his individuality, his creativeness, his ability to be different from other Peacocks."[51]

Back in 1958, Dichter had commented on the rising tide of American individualism, so the observations about the male penchant self-expression were illuminating but not groundbreaking.[52] The novelty lies in the peacock's fashion choices being driven by sensory experience. The pursuit of sensual pleasure hallmarked the teenaged Baby Boomer, who saw himself as "an Adonis, a possessor of a young and beautiful body" who wore "clothes so as to show off that young body." Dressing in sensual attire was a means to cultural empowerment. "Not only is he an exhibitionist when he wears tight fitting clothes, but he is creating the illusion that he, the wearer, is the master—the clothing yields to him." Sensual clothing provided the wearer with confidence, providing a shield against external threats, both physically and mentally. "To the young man tight-fitting or tailored to the body contoured clothing gives him a feeling of

security—he can feel his body and this feeling gives him the security of knowing that his body, his very self is intact."[53]

The level of sensual indulgence was determined by the consumer's ethnicity and social class. The working-class man was the most adventurous adult male, the epitome of the fan-tailing peacock. In Dichter's estimation, the average blue-collar American man was "of either Italian or Latin descent, representing groups who tend to be more concerned with personal appearance and to spend proportionally more on it, whether married or single." A decade later in 1977, this sensual being was personified by the fictional Brooklyn disco dancer Tony Manero, played by John Travolta, the Italian-American actor, in the Hollywood film *Saturday Night Fever*. "This type is a very sensual being who likes to feel smooth, sleek fabrics," noted Dichter. "In his phantasies he sees himself exerting power over others, a reverse of his present situation."[54] With faith in the transformative power of clothing, blue-collar peacocks loved to try out new materials and styles. In contrast, white-collar men, whether high-school or college graduates, were stodgy and resistant to change. They preferred clothing that allowed them to blend in.[55]

Age was another factor that determined the degree of sensory indulgence. Younger males, whether they were high-school students or working adults under age thirty, "are more physically sensual than are we," noted Dichter, and "their sense of smell, touch, vision, hearing and taste are much more acute for their bodies are younger and fresher." [56] They had not yet learned to control their emotional responses and were thereby more open to self-expression. Regardless of social class, high-school boys yearned for a fashionable future filled with "stretch suits; open-toed shoes; clothes baring part of the body; iridescent colors in all types of attire; matching ties, socks and shirt sets in patterns; plunging shirts; fur lined shoes; tactically pleasing

buttons." According to Dichter, the reason for this open-mindedness was that "the younger boy is much less inhibited sensually. He particularly enjoys tactual experiences. As we grow older we are taught, and quickly learn, that sophisticated people keep their hands to themselves, not so the young man. He is more likely to encourage you to feel his new sweater than to look at it."[57]

The IMR's research revealed that four of the senses—sight, smell, sound, and touch—loomed large in the young peacock's shopping experience. In the stores, the most important attractions were the displays, the packaging, and the clothes. Bright colors and novel textures intrigued the teen shopper who loved a "great variety of materials," including "velvet, fur, silk, hard fabrics, bumpy fabrics, fluffy fabrics, buttery textures and particularly fabrics with a different sensation on each side."[58] Smelling the merchandise was one of his favorite shopping indulgences. As a youngster browsed through jackets, trousers, sweaters, and ties on display in the store, he was "unconsciously exploring the odors, turning and twisting fabrics, breathing in deeply, wrinkling his nose in disgust or smiling slightly with pleasure."[59] As he tried on apparel in the dressing room, a youth listened to the sounds made by the taffeta in the jacket pockets, the trouser waistband, and the hat lining. For high-school boys, shopping for clothes was "an exciting tactual orgy—a new adventure."[60]

The projects on the peacock revolution provided DuPont marketers with a map of men's habits and tastes. The research highlighted the importance of sensuality and the concomitant trend "towards Apparel-Hedonism, the buying of clothes because it is fun to do so and not because one has to" among male Baby Boomers.[61] The research also showed that older American peacocks were far more pragmatic. One buyer in a men's clothing store noted, "Comfort has been great these last years. We have knitwear and stretch fabrics but still men want more comfort." A thirty-something teacher from Los Angeles envisioned a future with

closets chock-full of relaxed apparel: "Clothing will be more like a second skin. Fabrics will be soft and I won't even be aware of wearing anything." [62]

The fashion concepts of "action clothes," "activity apparel," and "the ready-to-go look" reflected the ambitions of the sixties, the faster pace of life as embodied in automation, airplanes, and the Space Race.[63] "New fabrics, new designs and new styles will be necessary," noted the IMR, "as the restrictions on casual and work clothes breaks down and all clothing becomes action-oriented."[64] The movement toward soft, stretchable styles coincided with DuPont's commercialization of Lycra spandex and the fiber's growing acceptance as a reliable technology for endowing apparel with elasticity. Peacocks were fully aware of the relationship between fibers and ease of movement, as articulated by one consumer in his thirties: "The only thing I could think of that would give me more freedom would be a stretch material. . . . They have something like that now."[65]

Building on Dichter's peacock revolution studies, in 1967 DuPont sponsored a national menswear contest for student designers built around the question: "*What will the teen and early twenties group be wearing in 1970?*" Recognizing that half of the American population was under twenty-five years old, DuPont wanted to know more about these Boomer consumers. The DuPont advertising department received more than 500 entries, "a vision of apparel for the young that was sketched by the young." The contest confirmed the peacock studies, with many submissions suggesting that "the young man's wardrobe in the next decade will 'swing' with a lean, youthful sophistication."[66] Design students, male and female alike, submitted ideas for astronaut-inspired jumpsuits to be worn at formal events and Carnaby-style sports jackets for the office. There were a proliferation of turtleneck sweaters and a paucity of neckties. Olivia Lam, a student at the Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science (now Jefferson University), won the

$250 first prize in the slacks category. (fig. 11.3) She created a "slim, youthful silhouette" by combining a pair of boldly striped, tight-fitting, Lycra-belted flared slacks with a thick turtleneck and slip-on shoes.[67] The casual look and the playful mood captured the zeitgeist. Here was the Baby Boomer peacock, ready to tackle the seventies in stylish, informal, comfortable clothes made from DuPont fibers.

<insert fig. 11.3 here>

With the help of the psychological experts like Ernest Dichter, DuPont figured out the fast-paced consumer culture of postwar America. Over the course of the postwar era, DuPont gradually discontinued the manufacture of viscose and acetate yarns to focus on profitable, high-performance textile materials.[68] Strong global sales of Lycra spandex, the stretch fiber, showed that it was possible to make money by capitalizing on the senses.[69] In 1974, Gomer H. Ward, a veteran marketing specialist, provided one menswear trade conference with a précis of DuPont's position on synthetics and the senses. "Technology," he argued, "remains the ultimate answer to the continuing demand for new fabrics with acceptable aesthetics, easy care and high-performance quality."[70] Alexis Sommaripa, the father of fabric development in the man-made fibers industry, would have agreed.

Consumers and Comfort

Between the 1920s and the 1960s DuPont became the world's leading fiber manufacturer and marketer, known globally for its innovative products and lavish promotions. In this transformation, the firm looked to develop an "angle" that linked style and quality, the eye and the hand. That effort focused on bridging the gap between fiber science and sensory perception, on determining how to apply the firm's arcane knowledge of materials to the burgeoning consumer culture.

In the interwar years, Alexis Sommaripa set the stage for sensory research at DuPont, responding to the conservative nature and harried procedures of the American textile industry. In 1939, S. J. Kennedy of the Pacific Mills described the frequent rush to introduce new designs and the disappointing sales that resulted. "In our industry we see every year fabric ideas launched on the market before finding out if the fabric is soundly enough constructed to meet consumer requirements," Kennedy wrote. "Successful industries do not leave the testing to the consumer, or assume that because a fabric 'will sell' they are justified in releasing it prematurely."[71] By establishing a bridge between scientific research, textile aesthetics, and sensory analysis, Sommaripa helped DuPont to build a strong customer-service orientation to the American textile industry and laid the groundwork for the sophisticated marketing research that emerged after World War II.

The acts of seeing, touching, smelling, and hearing—the senses had long guided consumers as they shopped for textiles and apparel. Sensory input helped the home seamstress to select yard goods for her new bedroom curtains, the fashion shopper to determine if a crepe dress matched the color of her favorite Easter handbag. In the postwar era, it became culturally acceptable for a newly identified market segment, the American peacock, to enjoy the sensual pleasures of textiles. Influences such as the British music and fashion invasions, lifestyle magazines, and outdoor leisure activities like golfing and sportscar driving encouraged men to think creatively about their appearance. To get a grip, DuPont expanded its commitment to market surveys, technical service, consumer psychology, and motivational research. The American peacock embraced clothes that permitted easy movement and thereby foregrounded the idea of comfort. As comfort became one of the most desirable attributes in textile merchandise, DuPont continued to interact with layers of customers—with weaving mills,

converters, knitwear makers, garment cutters, and apparel retailers—always on the lookout for more and better information. The ultimate goal was to determine how sensory experience could be further demystified and exploited to sell more fibers.

---

[1] E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company, advertisement, "I believe it's better," *Women's Wear Daily* [hereafter cited as *WWD*]**,** Sept. 11, 1945. Image produced by ProQuest LLC as part of ProQuest® Women's Wear Daily Archive. www.proquest.com

[2] Classic works include Jeffrey L. Meikle, *Twentieth Century Limited: Industrial Design in America, 1925-1939*, 2d ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), and Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

[3] See, for example, Regina Lee Blaszczyk and Véronique Pouillard, eds., *European Fashion: The Creation of a Global Industry* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

[4] Alfred D. Chandler Jr., *Strategy and Structure: Chapters in the History of the Industrial Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1962), chap. 2, and David A. Hounshell and John K. Smith Jr., *Science and Corporate Strategy: DuPont R&D, 1902-1980* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

[5] Regina Lee Blaszczyk, *American Consumer Society, 1865-2005: From Hearth to HDTV* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2009).

[6] Ibid.

[7] Amory M. Sommaripa, *Diary of a Mad Russian: A Tribute to Alexis Sommaripa, 1900-1946* (New York: iUniverse, 2005), 1-12; Nashua Manufacturing Company, *Annual Report for the Fiscal Year ending October 31, 1924*, [4].

[8] Melissa Murphy, Baker Library Special Collections, Harvard Business School, email to author, May 13, 2019.

[9] Blaszczyk, *American Consumer Society*.

[10] Unless otherwise noted, my discussion of DuPont is based on Regina Lee Blaszczyk, *The Synthetics Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2023).

[11] Charles H. Rutledge, DuPont Company, to Curtis R. Troeger, *New York Times,* Nov. 12, 1965, box 7, accession 1193-ADD: Charles H. Rutledge Collection, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE [hereafter cited as HML].

[12] "How Did Rayon Get Its Name?" *Rayon Textile Monthly* [hereafter cited as *RTM*] 26 (Jan. 1945): 56; A. G. Scroggie, "Why the Word 'Rayon' Should Not Be Adopted as a Generic Term for All Man-Made Fibers," *RTM* 26 (Jan. 1945): 57-58.

[13] Alexis Sommaripa, "Milestones of Rayon Technology," *RTM* 19 (July 1938), 37-39, 44 (37, quotations).

[14] Alexis Sommaripa, "Beauty . . . Softness . . . Economy," *DuPont Magazine* [hereafter cited as *DM*] 21 (June 1927), 7 ("softness").

[15] Ibid. ("advantages").

[16] "Canadian Viewpoint on Rayon," *Rayon* 3 (Sept. 15, 1926), 20-27, 34 (22, quotations).

[17] A. Stuart Hunter, "Measuring the Luster of Rayon Yarns," *RTM* 17 (Sept. 1936), 111-12.

[18] "Rayon Dresses in the Summertime," *Rayon Journal and Cellulose Fibers* 2 (Sept. 1927), 23-24, 42-43.

[19] Alexis Sommaripa, "Progress in Spun Rayon Fabrics Here and Abroad," *RTM* 17 (Sept. 1936), 34-35, 37.

[20] William L. Bird Jr., *"Better Living": Advertising, Media and the New Vocabulary of Business Leadership, 1935-1955* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1999).

[21] "DuPont Reproduces Sheer Dress Wools in Spun Rayon," *WWD,* May 10, 1937.

[22] Psychological Corporation, "A Word of Explanation about the Psychological Corporation," ca. 1943, in box 4, accession 1662: Papers of Lammot du Pont, HML.

[23] How Sommaripa connected with the Psychological Corporation is unknown, but DuPont's advertising department kept the consultants on retainer as part of an effort to "apply more research methods to our promotion problems." See William A. Hart, Advertising Department, DuPont Company, to Executive Committee, April 18, 1938, and Hart to Lammot du Pont, Aug. 18, 1939 ("apply"), both in box 4, accession 1662: Papers of Lammot du Pont, HML.

[24] Earnest Elmo Calkins, "Beauty, the New Business Tool," *The Atlantic* (Aug. 1927), at www.theatlantic.com (accessed May 10, 2022).

[25] Regina Lee Blaszczyk, *The Color Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2012), chap. 5.

[26] Rowena Ripin and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, "The Tactile-Kinaesthetic Perception of Fabrics with Emphasis on Their Relative Pleasantness," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 21 (April 1937): 198-224 (198, "hedonistic"); Ferdinand C. Wheeler et al., "Progress in Marketing Research," *Journal of Marketing* 2 (Oct. 1937): 155 ("visual").

[27] Ripin and Lazarsfeld, "Tactile-Kinaesthetic," 223 ("no question").

[28] "Feel of Fabric Key to Success," *News Journal* (Wilmington, DE), Feb. 17, 1938.

[29] "Fabric Styles Set by Consumer," *Wilmington Morning News* (DE), Feb. 17, 1938 ("Particularly").

[30] "Feel of Fabric Key to Success."

[31] Blaszczyk, *Color Revolution*.

[32] "Fabric Styles Set by Consumers."

[33] "Future of Spun Rayon Yarns Held Up to Spinner, Weavers," *WWD*, Oct. 7, 1937 ("Rayon").

[34] "Interesting Statistics of Finished Rayon Goods," *RTM* 26 (Jan. 1945): 58.

[35] Francis A. Adams, "More Rayons for Civilians," *RTM* 26 (July 1945): 49.

[36] Unless otherwise notes, this section draws on Regina Lee Blaszczyk, "Styling Synthetics: DuPont's Marketing of Fabrics and Fashions in Postwar America," *Business History Review* 80 (autumn 2006): 485-528.

[37] Andrew E. Buchanan Jr., "Textile Progress from Fundamental Research," paper presented at the Twentieth Annual Meeting of the Textile Research Institute, New York, Dec. 2, 1949, 5, box 81, acc. 1771: Records of the Textile Fibers Department, E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company, HML [hereafter cited as TF-HML].

[38] These reports are found in TF-HML.

[39] Arthur M. Saunders Jr., "Selling Becomes Marketing Under the Impact of the Man-Made Fibers," *American Fabrics* 57 (summer 1962), 88 ("relatively").

[40] "'Chuse Thy Cloaths by Thine Own Eyes, Not Another's," 4-5 (quotations), undated typescript, Ernest Dichter papers, collection of Hedy Dichter, Peekskill, New York [hereafter cited as ED]. I used Ernest Dichter's office files in 2006 when they were in the private hands of his widow. Subsequently, in 2007, the family donated the papers to HML, which processed the collection as acc. 2407: Ernest Dichter Papers.

[41] Ernest Dichter, typescript on advertising and fashion, undated, 4 (quotations), ED.

[42] Regina Lee Blaszczyk, "Ernest Dichter and the Peacock Revolution: Motivation Research, the Menswear Market and the DuPont Company," in *Ernest Dichter and Motivation Research: New*

Perspectives on the Making of Post-War Consumer Culture, ed. Stefan Schwarzkopf and Rainer Gries (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 126-39.

[43] Ernest Dichter, "The Peacock Revolution: The Psychology of the Young Men's Market," speech delivered in Scottsdale, AZ, Feb. 18, 1966; Institute for Motivational Research [hereafter cited as IMR], "Down with the Barriers: The Continuation of the Peacock Revolution," Dec. 1966; Ernest Dichter, "Down with the Barriers: The Peacock Revolution Continues," Jan. 26, 1967, all in ED.

[44] Blaszczyk, "Ernest Dichter and the Peacock Revolution," 133-34.

[45] Dichter, "Peacock Revolution," 2 ("durable press"), 4 ("individuality," "rebel").

[46] Ibid., 37.

[47] Ibid., 5 ("unravel").

[48] Regina Lee Blaszczyk, "What Do Baby Boomers Want? How the Swinging Sixties Became the Trending Seventies," in *The Fashion Forecasters: A Hidden History of Color and Trend Prediction*, ed. Regina Lee Blaszczyk and Ben Wubs (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 112-13.

[49] IMR, "Down with the Barriers," 19 ("undeniably").

[50] Ibid., 17.

[51] Ibid., 130 ("Peacock Revolution").

[52] Blaszczyk, *American Consumer Society,* 186.

[53] Dichter, "Peacock Revolution," 11 ("Adonis"; "clothes"; "Not only"), 11-12 ("To the young man").

[54] Ibid., 15 ("Italian"; "This type").

[55] Ibid., 16-18.

[56] Ibid., 25 (“physically sensual”).

[57] Ibid., 19 (“stretch suits”; “younger boy”).

[58] Ibid., 20 (“great variety”; “velvet”).

[59] Ibid., 26 (“unconsciously”).

[60] Ibid., 20 (“tactile orgy”), 26-27.

[61] Ibid., 58 (“Apparel-Hedonism”).

[62] IMR, “Down with the Barriers,” 121 (“Comfort”; “second skin”).

[63] Dichter, “Peacock Revolution,” 33 (“action”; “ready-to-go”); IMR, “Down with the Barriers,” 81 (“activity apparel”).

[64] IMR, “Down with the Barriers,” 81 (“New fabrics”).

[65] Ibid., 86 (“only thing”).

[66] “Sartorial Styles for the Seventies,” *DM* 61 (Sept.-Oct. 1967), 10-13 (10, “*What”* and “young”; 11, “vision”).

[67] Ibid., 12 ($250); DuPont Product Information Service, “Du Pont First Place Award for Slacks,” 1967 (“slim”), 1984259_010313_143, in folder 22, box 27, accession 1984.259: DuPont Textile Fibers Product Information Photographs, Audiovisual Collections and Digital Initiatives Department, HML.

[68] Donald F. Holmes, “History of Textile Fibers Department,” rev. ed. (1982), 48-51, box 81, TF-HML.

[69] DuPont Company, Textile Fibers Department Annual Report, Dec. 1981, 10, in box 2: accession 2091: DuPont Company Executive Committee Records, HML.

[70] Polly Rayner, “New Male Look Casual, Yet Dressy,” *Morning Call* (Allentown, PA), June 24, 1974 (“Technology”).

[71] J. S. Kennedy, "A Solution to Customer Complaints Through Consumer Research," *RTM* 20 (Feb. 1939), 33-35 (33, "In our industry").