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# 2? 4? 6? 8?

## UNT professor's study finds sizes vary widely in women's clothing

By Dawn Cobb  
Business Editor

Women's clothing sizes don't quite measure up to reality, according to a University of North Texas study. But some local women say the size disparity suits them.

A team of three UNT students measured 505 pairs of women's pants at 15 Denton, Grapevine and Dallas stores to study what many women claim they have known for years: A size by any other brand is not the same.

"I've heard that for years and years," said Ellen Painter, who shares many clothing woes with co-workers at Denton Community Hospital. "I have conversations with women here where they talk about that — that there's so much difference in sizes," she said.

"We kind of joke about it," she said. "None of us look like we came out of *Glamour* magazine. That's just absurd to think that [one size fits all]."

The study revealed as much as 13 inches difference between two same-sized pants from different brands, said Tammy Kinley, assistant professor of merchandising at UNT. Waist sizes varied as much as 8.5 inches in size 4 pants and up to 13.21 inches in size 6 crotch seams. The study also showed up to 8.41 inches difference in a size 14 inseam.

Inseams were shorter in pants from discount stores, while pants with larger waists in smaller sizes were often more expensive. Creating larger clothes in smaller sizes is called vanity sizing, Dr. Kinley said.

And, the more people pay, the smaller the size.

"We feel good about getting into that low size number," she said. "Our culture is very weight-conscious even as our culture is getting bigger."

Julie Glover of Denton said she recently enjoyed buying a few clothes sized 1 and 2 from Gracefully Worn, a local resale shop.



Photo illustration by Barron Ludlum/DRC

Dr. Tammy Kinley of the University of North Texas holds two pairs of pants that are both a size 6. The white pants are by Ralph Lauren and cost \$139; the navy pants are by Chic and cost \$29.99. Dr. Kinley's research shows sizes are likely to run larger in more expensive brands of women's clothing.

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# Sizes

Normally a size 8, she just couldn't pass up the smaller size, she said.

"We've all bought something we didn't really like because it was a size we'd never worn before," Ms. Glover said.

While shopping for khaki pants at a local store recently, Mayor Euline Brock said she tried on several different brands before finding just the right fit.

"I did find quite a bit of difference in the brands," she said. "I certainly didn't buy the brand that fit me in a larger size."

While the study confirmed a well-known belief among shoppers, Dr. Kinley said she hoped the findings would help manufacturers create standard clothing sizes to fit age, body style and ethnic differences.

"The more attention we bring to it, the more likely we'll see a priority to consistency," she said. "A size 6 teenager is not the same as a size 6 woman."

An unexpected result could be to lessen the time women spend shopping.

"You have to try on everything," said Nelia Thorp, who handles a variety of clothing at Habitat for

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*"The tags come in and say it's a large and my little finger wouldn't fit into it. You know very well it's not a real size."*

— Nelia Thorp of Ruth's Room thrift store

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Humanity's Ruth's Room, a Denton thrift shop. "You can start out by picking a medium, but it could be everything from a small to an extra large," she said.

In Ms. Thorp's opinion, clothing sizes basically come in two styles.

"There's the size we all grew up with and then there's what I call the anorexic size," she said. "The tags come in and say it's a large and my little finger wouldn't fit into it. You know very well it's not a real size."

Because of these disparities, Ms. Glover said, women's love of shopping could possibly be a myth.

"Women don't really like to shop, we just have to. If you don't try it on, it might not fit."

Dr. Kinley agrees: "Are people shopping until they drop because they love it or are people shopping until they drop because they have to?"

Some manufacturers already are gearing clothing lines to body types, local retailers say, but at

least one owner believes expanding clothing sizes to fit all body types would make the clothing lines too extensive for smaller shops.

"You'd have to have a huge inventory," said Karen Wilson, owner of Courthouse Collection on Denton's downtown Square.

Smaller clothing sizes also could be larger because of the growing size of the people wearing them, some say.

"There's been a change. Everyone [in the '60s and '70s] had to be Twiggy," Ms. Thorp said, adding that her once size-11 figure is now a size 16.

"I think, by and large, our public is becoming heavier again so that the sizes aren't fitting like they used to," she said. "We're just rebelling against dieting so religiously. Let's just be bigger people, what the heck?"

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