

SEWING HABITS OF WOMEN FOR CHILDREN
UNDER THE AGE OF TWELVE

By

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Bachelor of Science

Oklahoma State University

Stillwater, Oklahoma

1975

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate College
of the Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
December, 1976



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Grovalynn F. Sisler, thesis adviser, for her guidance and assistance throughout this study. Appreciation is also expressed to the other committee members, Dr. Lavonne Matern and Dr. Nick Stinnett, for their assistance in the preparation of the thesis.

Thanks also to the three retail establishments for allowing me to distribute questionnaires to their customers.

Finally, I would like to thank my husband, Benny, and my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Sam Cecil, for their encouragement during the completion of this study.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Clothing the children is one of a family's main concerns, and it can be a frustrating and costly endeavor. A child frequently outgrows his clothing before it wears out. The infant almost triples his weight, and his body length increases more than one-third by the time he is a year old (Jaffe, 1971, p. 7). A child's growth continues until approximately age 13 for girls and 15 for boys (Wilson, Fisher, and Fuqua, 1965, p. 92). In addition to quickly outgrowing clothing, children may soon wear out new clothes. Because of these reasons, there is a continuing need to replenish a child's wardrobe, and a woman may have to spend more money on her child's wardrobe than she feels is warranted.

Home sewing may partially alleviate the high cost of clothing the child. According to Johnson (1961, p. 3) three children can be dressed on the clothing budget of one if the mother sews. Sewing for children can also be a creative outlet for some women. Johnson stated:

The fun of choosing fabrics, colors, and styles to suit each individual child is doubly gratifying: it gives her an outlet for her own good taste, and does so at a price she can well afford (p. 5).

Sweeney and Thompson (1965) conducted a study on the sewing habits of women for their preschool aged children. They noted that little research had been reported prior to that time in the area of children's clothing and less in the home production of clothing for the preschool

child. In their study, Sweeney and Thompson found that 60% of the mothers questioned sewed for their children. An implication of the study was that mothers of preschool children would benefit from a program of study centering around the selection and construction of children's clothes. Since they only dealt with preschool aged children, it is possible that the mothers of older children would also be interested in classes of this type.

The purpose of this study was to identify some of the sewing habits and purchasing preferences of women for children's clothing, and to determine whether or not the women would be interested in classes in the construction of children's clothing.

Objectives

To accomplish the purpose of the study the following objectives were established:

1. To identify selected characteristics of the participants.
2. To identify the age and sex of children for which the participants sew.
3. To determine the type and amount of sewing the participants do for children, including mending, alteration, remodeling, and garment construction.
4. To identify garments the participants construct for children, garments they would like to construct but for which they do not feel qualified, and garments they prefer to buy ready made.
5. To identify reasons the participants do or do not sew for children and reasons they purchase certain garments ready made.

6. To determine whether or not the participants desire classes in the construction of children's clothing and from what source they would want the classes offered.

Limitations

Participants in the study were limited to women shopping in one of three stores selling fabrics in Stillwater, Oklahoma between the dates of July 19 and September 10, 1976. Only women who sewed or purchased clothing for children from infancy through 12 years of age were eligible to participate.

Procedure

A questionnaire was designed to examine selected characteristics of the participants, to identify some of the sewing habits and purchasing preferences of these women for children, and to determine whether or not these women would be interested in classes in the construction of children's clothing. The questionnaires were distributed by the researcher in retail stores selling fabrics as the participants shopped. Simple numerical computations and percentages were used in the interpretation of the data.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature includes home sewing, educating the home sewer, research related to home sewing, clothing the child, and sewing for children.

Home Sewing

All clothing was made in the home or by professional dressmakers until the latter half of the nineteenth century (Jaffe, 1972, p. 31). At this time clothing manufacturers were established and this caused the decline in the home sewing industry during the 1920's and 1930's (Wright, 1964, p. 19). After World War II women once more began to sew, and although growth in the industry was continual, it was gradual. A poor selection of fabrics and patterns and the availability of reasonably priced ready-to-wear contributed to this slow growth (Johnson, 1960, p. 752). However, in the late 1960's this trend reversed itself, and the home sewing boom began and has continued until the present.

Fabric sales have doubled since the middle 1960's. During 1972 the sales estimate for the sewing industry was from \$3.5 to \$4 billion. Fifteen percent of this amount was derived from sewing machine sales, 25% of the amount was from the sale of patterns and notions, and 65% of the total was realized from the sale of fabrics. During 1972 approximately 45 million women bought 310 million patterns and about 1.4

billion yards of fabric (Pacey, 1973, p. 7). About one-third of all women's garments are now sewn in the home (Fabrics for home sewing, 1972, p. 32).

An article in American Fabrics (Home sewing, symptom of the seventies, 1970, p. 74) cited home sewing as "the symptom of the Seventies." According to Gold (1973, p. 4), "teenagers sew, fashion-conscious women sew, children sew, and men are beginning to sew." Many people, even the affluent, are sewing for fun, fashion, economy, or a combination of those reasons. Today's home sewers are fashion-conscious. They do not want last year's fabrics and styles. As Gold (1973, p. 4) stated, "they want what's new, smart, and fresh."

Robbins (1973, p. 71) stated:

Years ago, the typical home sewer was a middle-aged mother who sewed simple outfits out of economic necessity or used her sewing machine merely as a repair center. Today's home sewer does not fit this image.

The typical home sewer is young, 23 to 25 years of age. More than 90% of the 45 million sewers in the United States are less than 45 years old (Robbins, 1973, p. 69). Home sewing is more popular with women in the middle and upper income levels than in lower levels. In 1971 families with annual incomes exceeding \$10,000 represented 49% of the total population, but they purchased 58% of the yardage sold and spent 64% of the total dollar amount spent in the home sewing industry (Robbins, 1973, p. 70). The average number of garments made during a year by the average home sewer is 13, but one out of four women makes 20 or more garments a year (Home sewing fabrics unlimited, 1969-70, p. 31).

Today's home sewer is very quality conscious. Sandy Harris, vice president of Weil and Schoenfeld Fabrics, noted "the woman who sews,

knows" (Home sewing fabrics unlimited, 1969-70, p. 32). He considered the home sewer the most knowledgeable of consumers about fibers, fabric performance, and brand identity.

Teenagers constitute the fastest growing age group in the home sewing population (Home sewing fabrics unlimited, 1969-70, p. 31). Four out of five girls sew, having learned at an average age of 12 (Baltera, 1975, p. 52). In 1974 teenage sewers purchased an average of 24 yards of fabric for a total of 279,240,000 yards or 23% of the retail fabric market (Baltera, 1975, p. 52). According to Robbins (1973, p. 74), 38% of the female sewers are under the age of 20.

Modern sophisticated sewing machines and the simplicity of patterns and pattern directions contribute to the popularity of home sewing (Robbins, 1973, p. 71). Women have more leisure time now because of labor-saving devices; therefore, they have more time to make clothes and more time to wear them (Home sewing fabrics unlimited), 1969-70, p. 31).

Economy is a prime reason for home sewing. Both inflated prices of consumer goods, including clothing, and the economic recession of the past few years have helped the home sewing industry. George Schmidt, president of the North American Division of Consumer Products at the Singer Corporation, stated, "When the economy is good, so is home sewing. When the economy is bad, home sewing is great (A \$3-billion boom in home sewing, 1970, p. 56).

During the 1960's, sewing for economy was not a major concern because inexpensive ready-to-wear was readily available (Johnson, 1960, p. 752). However, the price of ready made clothing has greatly increased, and a woman could possibly save 60% to 70% of her clothing

dollar by making her own clothing. A researcher for McCall's Pattern Company indicated that the home sewer may pay as much or more annually for clothes as the ready-to-wear buyer, but she will have double the wardrobe for the same amount of money (Baltera, 1975, p. 52).

Self-expression and the desire to create are also reasons given for home sewing. There has been an increasing trend against mechanism and toward individual creativity in this country. Home sewing can be a creative outlet (From alterations to zippers, 1969-70, p. 38).

Educating the Home Sewer

Education is an important factor in home sewing (Fessler, 1971, p. 11). Industry is involved in educating the consumer. Coats and Clark, a notions company, has distributed sewing information annually to 40,000 school teachers, extension workers, and 4-H leaders (From alterations to zippers, 1969-70, p. 38). Celanese, a fabric producer, has installed a service called "Operator 25" whereby a home sewer can call the company with any sewing problem. DuPont has formed a retail fabric merchandising group which concentrates solely on the home sewing industry (Pacey, 1973, p. 3). Companies in the home sewing industry have more educational programs staffed by home economists than any other business or industry (Fessler, 1971, p. 12).

Many women receive their sewing education at home from a friend or relative, from sewing books, and in classrooms set up by retail stores (Fessler, 1971, p. 11). However, instruction through the public school system represents 58.5% of all sewing instruction to women. Over seven million consumers are taught to sew through the school system every year (Robbins, 1973, p. 72).

Research Related to Home Sewing

During the past 15 years, research concerning home sewing has concentrated to a great extent on the sewing practices of homemakers and their reasons for sewing. Conklyn (1961) studied the sewing practices of 353 homemakers, both married and unmarried, employed and unemployed, and from varying social and occupational groups. Seventy-five percent of both the married and unmarried women reported having done some type of sewing during the preceding year. For the women in this study, there appeared to be some relation between employment status and the amount of sewing done. Unemployed women did significantly more sewing than women who were employed. Reasons given most frequently for sewing were economy, enjoyment, and aesthetic expression.

York (1961) also examined sewing practices of homemakers. In addition, she investigated their opinions regarding the necessity of including clothing construction in the educational program of young women. Her sample consisted of 20 graduates of home economics at Oklahoma State University and 20 non-graduates. Of the women sampled, 70% were interested in sewing. In the alumnae group, household items were sewn more than articles of clothing for any family member. The non-alumnae group sewed more for themselves. Ninety-five percent of the women believed that clothing construction was a necessary part of a young woman's educational program.

The purpose of a study by McElderry (1964) was to ascertain whether differences in sewing practices existed between women who had taken a sewing course in college and those who had not. Women who had clothing construction courses in college sewed more than women who did not take college courses. They also spent more time sewing and they

constructed more difficult items than did the other group of women. New and/or more difficult-to-handle fabrics and advanced techniques of sewing were more frequently used by the women with college instruction. Both groups listed saving money as the main reason for sewing.

Henderson (1964) studied the problems encountered in the construction and purchase of clothing. She found that as the age of the homemaker increased, the number of articles constructed decreased. Henderson also found that the women constructed more garments for women and children than for other family members. Thirty-one percent of the women desired a course in advanced tailoring, 29.6% in better buying, and 20.1% in the construction of children's clothing.

Sutton (1967) studied the home sewing habits of married women living in a small town. From a total of 1088 garments made by the women during the preceding year, women's garments represented 52% of the total, children's garments 46%, and men's garments only two percent. Sutton found that women without children sometimes made children's garments, and that many women with children did not sew for their children. Most of the women who sewed started sewing in their teens.

Lidolph (1969) investigated the sewing practices of a selected group of women. She determined that there was no association between the amount of sewing done by the homemaker and her age and her children's ages. This is not in agreement with Henderson (1964) who found that the older the homemaker, the less sewing she did. In the Lidolph study, homemakers employed outside the home did more sewing than those who were full-time homemakers. This is in direct opposition to the findings of Conklyn (1961).

The main purpose of a study by Crowder (1972) was to gain an understanding of consumer behavior in a large metropolitan area as related to the purchasing and sewing habits of married women who sewed at home. Women in the middle socio-economic groups and between the ages of 30 and 39 appeared to do the largest amount of sewing. The two primary reasons for sewing were economy and enjoyment. The participants' main reasons for shopping in a particular store were quality of merchandise and convenience of location.

Stanforth (1974) examined socio-economic factors, sewing experiences, and creativity levels of women who had taken a sewing class at a local fabric store. Two-thirds of the participants were in the middle-middle social class, and all of the participants in all of the social classes had done some sewing at home. Half of the women indicated that they did a great deal of sewing. The most frequently checked reason for sewing was economy (81%). This is in agreement with Conklyn (1961), McElderry (1964), and Crowder (1972) who found that saving money was a main reason for sewing. Self-expression was the second most popular reason for sewing with the women in Stanforth's study. Creativity scores in this study were not significantly higher for those women who indicated that they sewed to express self than for those who did not. Only about one-half of the women indicated a reason for not sewing more and lack of time was the most frequently checked reason.

Clothing the Child

Clothing must meet different physical and emotional needs at different stages in a child's development. While the infant is only concerned with comfort, the preschooler has very definite ideas about

his clothing (Jaffe, 1972, p. 26).

Comfort and freedom of movement are of prime importance in clothing for the infant. The clothing should also be light-weight, soft, warm and washable. The design of the garment is of no importance to the infant as long as the design contributes to comfort. Styling features are solely for the purchaser of the garment (Jaffe, 1972, pp. 27-28). Clothing the toddler is similar to clothing the infant. The physical properties of comfort and freedom of movement are still more important to the child than the design of the garment (Jaffe, 1972, p. 28).

To the preschooler, however, the appearance of clothing is important. Preschool children (aged three to six) like bright colors, soft interesting textures, basic comfort, clothing which is easy to get in and out of, and that which is similar to what the other children are wearing. Preschoolers enjoy new clothes for the admiration and attention they bring (Jaffe, 1972, p. 29).

During middle childhood, clothing is very important. Rejection or disapproval by peers can have an adverse effect on the self-concept of the child lasting often into adolescence and adulthood. It becomes very important to conform in appearance to other children at this age. Girls are especially concerned about their clothing. Jaffe (1972, p. 31) reported that girls desire to dress as adults to feel sophisticated, feminine, and attractive.

Tanous (1954, p. 14) stated that there are three important aspects of clothing for children of all ages:

1. Practicality. Clothing should fit the occasion and not be confining to the child.
2. Beauty. The clothing should be appealing to the eye.

3. Fit. Clothing should not be purchased in an extra-large size to accommodate growth.

Sewing Children's Clothing

Before the advent of the ready-to-wear industry, all children's garments were made in the home. According to Jaffe (1972, p. 31):

Until the latter half of the nineteenth century all garments were either made in the home or by professional dressmakers who created fashions to order for the individual customer.

If the mother was not a talented seamstress, the child's garments were either poorly made or relatively expensive in order to incorporate the dressmaker's fee. In 1890, the first manufacture of popularly priced children's clothing was begun. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the children's wear industry was thriving (Jaffe, 1972, p. 31).

Some women buy all of their children's clothing ready made and have no desire to sew. However, many women enjoy sewing for children. In a study made by Crowder (1972) the participants sewed for 161 or 67% of the 240 children that they listed on the questionnaires.

McElderry (1964) showed that women sewed first for themselves and second for their children. Sweeney and Thompson (1965, p. 660) found that 60% of the women they questioned did sew for their children. The reason given most frequently by the mothers for making children's clothing was enjoyment. There appeared to be no economic pressure on the women to sew for their children.

Tanous (1954, p. 30) stated that children like to wear clothing made especially for them and feel pride in clothing made by their mothers. Children like to be dressed as individuals, and through sewing women can create original garments for children.

Summary

Women from widely varying social and economic backgrounds are interested in home sewing. To save money and to provide for aesthetic expression seem to be the main reasons why women sew. A home sewer is usually well educated and is knowledgeable about fibers, fabric performance, and brand identity.

Studies related to home sewing conducted in the past 15 years showed that women do sew for children. Women enjoy sewing for children, and children enjoy wearing clothing made especially for them. Women may feel that sewing will alleviate some of the high costs of clothing children.

CHAPTER III

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

The purpose of this study was to identify some of the sewing habits and purchasing preferences of women for children's clothing, and to determine whether or not the women would be interested in classes in the construction of children's clothing.

Sample

Originally, the sample was to be composed of 200 women selected at random from the Stillwater, Oklahoma telephone book. Names of Stillwater residents were randomly drawn from the telephone book; then the people were contacted by telephone and asked to participate in the study. From approximately 75 numbers called, only four women were located who were eligible to participate in the study. The majority of the numbers called had been disconnected. This was attributed to the high number of university students listed in the Stillwater directory who had moved out of town at the end of the semester.

Because of this low response, a new method of sampling was devised. The researcher went to three retail stores several times during the period of July 19 to September 10, 1976. Two of the stores were small fabric stores, one selling relatively expensive merchandise, the other selling moderately priced merchandise. The third store was a discount chain store with a fabric department. These three stores were

selected because of the different income groups they served. Questionnaires were distributed to the women who came to the stores who agreed to participate. Seventy questionnaires were distributed and 67 were useable. Sixty-seven percent of the questionnaires were handed out at the fabric store selling relatively expensive merchandise, 21% at the discount chain store, and 12% at the fabric store selling moderately priced merchandise.

The Instrument

The instrument used in the study was a questionnaire designed to identify selected characteristics of the participants and their sewing habits and purchasing preferences for children's clothing, and to determine whether or not the women would be interested in classes in the construction of children's clothing. The questionnaire was developed by the researcher based on questionnaires used in studies by York (1961), Conklyn (1961), Crowder (1972), and Stanforth (1974).

Categories covered in the questionnaire were:

1. Personal characteristics of the participants, the ages and sex of the children for whom they sewed, and the amount of sewing they did for the children.
2. Frequency with which the women constructed, mended, altered, and remodeled garments for children.
3. Items of children's clothing the women had made, those they would like to have made, and those they preferred to buy.
4. When, where, and from whom the women would want to take classes for sewing children's clothing.

Questions were worded so respondents could check their answers whenever possible. This reduced the time required by respondents for answering the questions and it aided in the analysis of data.

Procedure

The questionnaires were distributed by the researcher in the retail stores selling fabrics as the participants shopped. The women either completed the questionnaire in the store or completed it at home and then returned it by mail in a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Only women who sewed or purchased ready made clothing for children from infancy through 12 years of age were asked to complete the questionnaire.

A total of 70 questionnaires were distributed. Of the 70, three were not used because two were incomplete, and one was completed by a woman who listed only children above the age of 12.

Analysis of Data

The responses from the 67 useable questionnaires were compiled and analyzed. Simple numerical computations and percentages were used in the interpretation of the data.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to identify sewing habits and purchasing preferences of women for children's clothing and to determine whether or not the women would be interested in classes in the construction of children's clothing. The study was conducted through the use of a questionnaire distributed to women while they shopped in one

of three local retail stores selling fabrics. A total of 67 women participated in the study. The data were analyzed using simple numerical computations and percentages.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The purpose of the study was to identify sewing habits and purchasing preferences of women for children's clothing and to determine whether or not the women would be interested in sewing classes in the construction of children's clothing. The sample consisted of 67 women shopping in one of three retail stores selling fabrics in Stillwater, Oklahoma between the dates of July 19 and September 10, 1976. The findings of this study are grouped according to (1) selected characteristics of the participants, (2) sewing habits and purchasing preferences for children's clothing, and (3) desire for sewing classes in children's clothing. Numerical tabulations and percentages were used in the interpretation of the data.

Selected Characteristics

The characteristics considered in the study were age, education, annual income, employment status, and enrollment status at Oklahoma State University. As shown in Table I, two-thirds of the participants were between the ages of 25 and 34. The largest single category was the 30 to 34 age group with 39% of the total. Nineteen percent of the women were between the ages of 35 and 39.

TABLE I
DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS BY AGE
(N = 67)

Age	Number	Percent
Under 20	1	1
20 to 24	3	4
25 to 29	19	28
30 to 34	26	39
35 to 39	13	19
40 to 44	4	6
45 to 49	0	0
50 to 54	0	0
55 and over	1	1

The women in the study represented a high level of education. With the exception of one woman, all of the participants had completed high school, and only 15% had not attended college (Table II). Twenty-eight percent had graduated from college, and 27% had done graduate work.

Slightly more than one-half of the participants were unemployed (Table III). Of the 29 women (43%) who were employed, 22 were employed full time and seven were employed part time.

TABLE II
 DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL
 (N = 67)

Highest Educational Level Obtained	Number	Percent
Less than high school	0	0
Some high school	1	2
High school graduate	9	13
Some college	20	30
College graduate	19	28
Graduate work	18	27

TABLE III
 EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF PARTICIPANTS
 (N = 67)

Employment Status	Number	Percent
Not employed outside the home	38	57
Employed 30 hours or less	7	10
Employed more than 30 hours	22	33

The questionnaire included seven income ranges from which the participants chose the one representing their annual family income. More than one-half of the participants had annual family incomes that fell between \$10,000 and \$19,999 (Table IV). Twelve percent of the women indicated their family income range as \$25,000 to \$29,999, and less than 10% of the women indicated any other income range.

TABLE IV
ANNUAL FAMILY INCOME OF PARTICIPANTS
(N = 67)

Annual Family Income	Number	Percent
Under \$6000	6	9
\$6000 to \$9,999	5	7
\$10,000 to \$14,999	15	22
\$15,000 to \$19,999	21	31
\$20,000 to \$24,999	5	7
\$25,000 to \$29,999	8	12
\$30,000 and over	5	7
No answer	2	3

The majority of the participants (88%) were not enrolled in any capacity at Oklahoma State University (Table V). Four women were part time students and three were full time students.

TABLE V
ENROLLMENT STATUS AT OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
(N = 67)

Enrollment Status of Participants	Number	Percent
Not enrolled	59	88
Part time student	4	6
Full time student	3	5
No answer	1	1

Sewing Habits and Purchasing Preferences

The participants were asked to indicate the frequency with which they constructed, mended, altered, and remodeled garments for children. Almost two-thirds of the participants often constructed children's garments, and one-third sometimes constructed children's garments (Table VI). Only four of the women never did garment construction for children.

Ninety-three percent of the participants mended garments for children either often or sometimes (Table VII). Only one woman never did any mending. Four women did not respond to the question.

TABLE VI
 FREQUENCY WITH WHICH PARTICIPANTS CONSTRUCTED
 GARMENTS FOR CHILDREN
 (N = 67)

Frequency	Number	Percent
Often	41	61
Sometimes	22	33
Never	4	6

TABLE VII
 FREQUENCY WITH WHICH PARTICIPANTS MENDED
 GARMENTS FOR CHILDREN
 (N = 67)

Frequency	Number	Percent
Often	30	45
Sometimes	32	48
Never	1	1
No answer	4	6

One-half of the participants sometimes altered garments for children (Table VIII). Sixteen percent altered garments often, while another 16% never altered garments. Twelve women did not answer the question.

TABLE VIII
 FREQUENCY WITH WHICH PARTICIPANTS ALTERED
 GARMENTS FOR CHILDREN
 (N = 67)

Frequency	Number	Percent
Often	11	16
Sometimes	33	50
Never	11	16
No answer	12	18

Thirty percent of the participants sometimes remodeled children's garments, but only three women did this often (Table IX). Thirty-one percent never did any remodeling. One person wrote that she "seldom" did remodeling. One-fourth of the women did not respond.

TABLE IX
 FREQUENCY WITH WHICH PARTICIPANTS REMODELED
 GARMENTS FOR CHILDREN
 (N = 67)

Frequency	Number	Percent
Often	3	4
Sometimes	20	30
Never	26	39
Other	1	2
No answer	17	25

The 67 participants sewed for a total of 116 children (Table X). Sixty-five of the children were girls and 51 were boys. The ages of the children ranged from infancy through 12 years. Both boys and girls were widely distributed throughout the age range. However, the women indicated that they sewed for more boys and girls aged three through nine and age 12 than for any other ages.

TABLE X
 AGES AND SEX OF THE CHILDREN FOR WHOM
 THE PARTICIPANTS SEW
 (N = 116)*

	Boys		Girls		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Infant	3	3	2	2	5	5
1 year old	0	0	5	4	5	4
2 years old	2	2	4	3	6	5
3 years old	6	5	7	6	13	11
4 years old	7	6	4	3	11	9
5 years old	4	3	8	7	12	10
6 years old	3	3	8	7	11	10
7 years old	5	4	7	6	12	10
8 years old	5	4	8	7	13	11
9 years old	7	6	3	3	10	9
10 years old	1	1	0	0	1	1
11 years old	3	3	3	3	6	6
12 years old	5	4	6	5	11	9
Total	51	44	65	56	116	100

*The 67 women indicated that they sewed for 116 children.

Of the 49 women who indicated the proportion of a girl's wardrobe that they made, 53% sewed more than half of the child's wardrobe (Table XI). Twenty-seven percent made some, but less than half, and 16% made approximately half. Only two women did not sew for girls.

TABLE XI
PROPORTION OF GIRL'S CLOTHING MADE BY PARTICIPANTS
(N = 49)*

Proportion of Clothing	Number	Percent
None	2	4
Some, but less than half	13	27
Approximately half	8	16
More than half	26	53

*Forty-nine women indicated the proportion of girl's clothing that they made.

Forty-four women indicated the proportion of a boy's wardrobe that they made. Of the 44, one-half made some, but less than half of a boy's wardrobe (Table XII). One-fourth made approximately half. Only four women made more than half of a boy's wardrobe. Seven of the women did no sewing for boys.

TABLE XII
 PROPORTION OF BOY'S CLOTHING MADE BY PARTICIPANTS
 (N = 44)*

Proportion of Clothing	Number	Percent
None	7	16
Some, but less than half	22	50
Approximately half	11	25
More than half	4	9

*Forty-four women indicated the proportion of boy's clothing that they made.

The participants were asked whether they had made baby clothes, if they would like to make baby clothes, or if they preferred to purchase baby clothes. Only 37 of the 67 participants answered this question, therefore, percentages were based on this number. Slightly more than two-thirds of the women had made baby clothes, and slightly more than one-fourth preferred to buy baby clothes (Table XIII). Only two women would have liked to make baby clothes.

TABLE XIII

RESPONSE TO WHETHER PARTICIPANTS HAVE MADE,
WOULD LIKE TO HAVE MADE, OR PREFERRED
TO BUY BABY CLOTHES
(N = 37)*

	Have Made		Would Like To Make		Prefer To Buy	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Baby clothes	25	68	2	5	10	27

*Thirty-seven women indicated whether they have made, would like to have made, or preferred to buy baby clothes.

The 49 participants who indicated the amount of sewing they did for girls then indicated which garments they had made, those they would like to have made, and those garments they preferred to buy (Table XIV). More than three-fourths of the women had made dresses, slacks, shorts, and jumpers. Skirts, blouses, T-shirts, jumpsuits, sleepwear, and robes were made by at least one-half of the participants. Items that approximately half of the women preferred to buy were panties, slips, and coats. Of the items the women would like to have made, jumpsuits and robes were checked by 22%, and skirts, coats, panties, and slips were checked by more than 15%. During this time, jumpsuits were a fashion item and this may account for the relatively high percentage of women who wanted to make them. The participants listed four other items that they had made for girls. These items were costumes, hats, jeans, and toys.

TABLE XIV

GIRL'S CLOTHING ITEMS THAT THE PARTICIPANTS
 HAVE MADE, WOULD LIKE TO MAKE
 OR PREFER TO BUY
 (N = 49)*

Item	Have Made		Would Like To Make		Prefer to Buy	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Dresses	44	90	4	12	4	12
Skirts	34	69	8	16	3	6
Blouses	36	73	2	4	9	18
T-shirts	34	69	5	10	8	16
Slacks	43	88	3	6	2	4
Jumpers	37	76	6	12	2	4
Coats	16	33	9	18	23	47
Jumpsuits	27	55	11	22	5	10
Shorts	41	84	3	6	2	4
Swimwear	23	47	5	10	17	35
Panties	7	14	9	18	32	65
Slips	6	12	8	16	25	51
Sleepwear	29	59	7	14	10	20
Robes	29	59	11	22	5	10
Other	4	8	0	0	0	0

*Forty-nine women indicated the proportion of girl's clothing that they made. Participants were allowed to check as many columns as applied.

The 44 participants who indicated the amount of sewing they did for boys then indicated which garments they had made, those they would like to have made, and those garments they preferred to buy (Table XV). Eighty-four percent of the women had made T-shirts. Shirts and shorts were made by two-thirds of the women, and slacks and robes were made by approximately half. Eighty-nine percent of the women preferred to purchase boy's underwear. Suits, coats, and swimwear were purchased by more than half of the participants, while one-fourth or less of the women had made these garments. These same items, suits, coats, and swimwear, were checked most often as the garments the participants would have liked to make but for which they did not feel qualified. The women listed hats and leisure jackets as other items they had made for boys.

The women were asked why they sewed the items that they indicated for boys and girls. Ninety percent of the women sewed for children in order to save money (Table XVI). This is in agreement with Stanforth (1974) and McElderry (1964) who also found that economy was the main reason for sewing among participants in their studies. Pleasure was the second most popular reason for sewing (73%). Conklyn (1961) and Crowder (1972) also found that pleasure (or enjoyment) was a main reason for sewing. Fifty-seven percent of the women sewed to achieve a better quality garment. Forty to 45% of the women sewed to be creative, to achieve a better fitting garment, or as a relaxing hobby. Six of the women gave other reasons for sewing. Two participants wrote that they sewed to please their children. One participant wanted to sew for her own child like her mother did for her. One woman wrote that she had a wider variety of fabrics to choose from. One

TABLE XV
 BOY'S CLOTHING ITEMS THAT THE PARTICIPANTS
 HAVE MADE, WOULD LIKE TO MAKE
 OR PREFER TO BUY
 (N = 44)*

Item	Have Made		Would Like To Make		Prefer to Buy	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Slacks	23	52	2	5	21	48
Shirts	29	66	4	9	10	23
T-shirts	37	84	3	7	8	18
Suits	11	25	6	14	23	52
Coats	8	18	5	11	27	61
Shorts	29	66	1	2	13	30
Swimwear	11	25	6	14	24	55
Jumpsuits	14	32	4	9	14	32
Sleepwear	20	45	3	7	17	39
Robes	22	50	4	9	14	32
Underwear	3	7	1	2	39	89
Other	2	5	0	0	0	0

*Forty-four women indicated the proportion of boy's clothing that they made. Participants were allowed to check as many columns as applied.

participant sewed children's clothing for gifts, and another sewed for children because it was part of her job.

TABLE XVI
REASONS FOR SEWING CERTAIN GARMENTS
AS REPORTED BY PARTICIPANTS
(N = 67)*

Reasons for Sewing	Number	Percent
To save money	60	90
Pleasure	49	73
Better quality	38	57
Opportunity to be creative	30	45
Better fit	29	43
A relaxing hobby	27	40
Other	6	9

* Participants could check as many reasons as applied.

The women were asked to indicate reasons they did not sew the items they would like to sew. Lack of time was checked by 46% of the women as a reason for not sewing certain garments (Table XVII). Stanforth (1974) reported that a lack of time was the main reason that the women in her study did not sew more. A lack of confidence and displeasure with end results were both checked by 18% of the

participants. Five of the women did not know how to sew. Four women checked that the child was hard to fit. Three women checked that suitable fabric was not available, and two did not have access to a sewing machine. Sixteen percent of the women listed other reasons for not sewing certain garments. Several of the women were not interested in sewing. One woman did not have space available to set up a sewing machine for any length of time. Another woman indicated that for the time and money, it was easier for her to buy garments.

TABLE XVII

REASONS FOR NOT SEWING CERTAIN GARMENTS
AS REPORTED BY PARTICIPANTS
(N = 67)*

Reasons for Not Sewing	Number	Percent
Lack of time	31	46
Lack of confidence	12	18
Not pleased with end results	12	18
Do not know how to sew	5	7
The child is hard to fit	4	6
Suitable fabric not available	3	4
No access to a sewing machine	2	3
Other	11	16

* Participants could check as many reasons as applied.

The women were asked why they purchased certain garments that they indicated they preferred to buy. More than half of the women checked the availability of ready made clothing as their reason for not sewing these garments (Table XVIII). Almost one-third of the participants liked the look of ready made clothes, or thought that they were as cheap or cheaper to buy. Twelve of the women desired fabric not readily available, and three did not know how to sew. Sixteen women listed other reasons for purchasing garments. Of these 16 women, 12 listed a lack of time as the reason. Two wrote that the child preferred ready made clothes. Two other women wrote that they did not enjoy sewing these particular garments.

TABLE XVIII
REASONS FOR BUYING CERTAIN GARMENTS
AS REPORTED BY PARTICIPANTS
(N = 67)*

Reasons for Buying	Number	Percent
Availability of ready made clothing	38	57
Like the look of ready made clothing	21	31
Belief that it is as cheap or cheaper to buy ready made clothes	20	30
Desire fabric not readily available	12	18
Do not know how to sew	3	4
Other	16	24

* Participants could check as many reasons as applied.

Sewing Classes for Children's Clothing

When asked whether or not they would want to take a class in sewing children's clothing, the women were almost evenly divided (Table XIX). Fifty-four percent checked yes, while 46% checked no. The women who checked yes were then asked from whom they would want to take the class, when they would want to take it, and how long they would want the class to last. On these three questions, the women were allowed to check as many answers as applied.

TABLE XIX

RESPONSE OF PARTICIPANTS TO WHETHER THEY WOULD
TAKE A COURSE IN SEWING CHILDREN'S CLOTHING
(N = 67)

Response	Number	Percent
Yes	36	54
No	31	46

Eighty-three percent of the 36 women who indicated that they would take a class preferred to take it from a fabric store (Table XX). One-fourth indicated that they would take a class from a county home economist. Seven of the women would take a university class for credit, while only four would take a university class for non-credit. Four of

the women would take an adult education class offered through the high school. Of the three women who checked "other", two did not care from whom they took the class. The other woman wanted to take the class from a "specialist."

TABLE XX
SPONSOR PREFERRED FOR CLASS AS
REPORTED BY PARTICIPANTS
(N = 36)*

Sponsor Preferred	Number	Percent
Class offered by a fabric store	30	83
Class offered by a county home economist	9	25
University class for credit	7	19
University class for non-credit	4	11
Adult education class offered through the high school	4	11
Other	3	8

* Thirty-six participants indicated that they would take class. They were allowed to check as many responses as applied.

When asked when the participants would want to take the class, 50% checked evenings during a regular spring or fall school term (Table XXI). Only one-fourth wanted it during the daytime in the spring or

fall. One-third checked evenings during the summer, but less than one-fourth checked daytime during the summer. None checked the weekend, either in the summer or in the spring or fall.

TABLE XXI

TIME PREFERRED FOR CLASS AS
REPORTED BY PARTICIPANTS
(N = 36)*

Time Preferred	Number	Percent
Evening, regular spring or fall term	18	50
Evening, summer	11	31
Daytime, regular spring or fall term	9	25
Daytime, summer	7	19
Weekends, summer	0	0
Weekends, regular spring or fall term	0	0
Other	0	0

* Thirty-six of the participants indicated that they would take a class. They were allowed to check as many responses as applied.

Concerning the desired length of the class, 56% checked a short course spread over a period of one month. More than one-third checked a condensed short course lasting several days to two weeks. Only four

of the women would take a course lasting a full college semester. Four women had additional suggestions. One suggested one or two classes a month. Another wanted one or two full day classes. The other two simply wanted short courses (Table XXII).

TABLE XXII
LENGTH OF CLASS AS PREFERRED BY PARTICIPANTS
(N = 36)*

Length of Class	Number	Percent
Short course spread over a period of one month	20	56
Condensed short course lasting several days to two weeks	14	39
Regular full semester course	4	11
Other	4	11

*Thirty-six participants indicated that they would take a class. They were allowed to check as many responses as applied.

Fifteen of the participants made comments regarding classes for sewing children's clothing. Several of the women mentioned that they had trouble fitting patterns correctly and would want a class to deal with this problem. Some of the women were interested in learning new

sewing techniques that would help them produce a professional-looking garment. Four of the women expressed an interest in taking a class, but said that they did not have the time at the present.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Clothing the children can be a financial problem for a family. Sewing for children may be a solution to this problem. The purpose of this study was to determine sewing habits and purchasing preferences of women for children's clothing, and to determine whether or not the women would be interested in classes in the construction of children's clothing. The sample consisted of 67 women shopping in one of three stores selling fabrics in Stillwater, Oklahoma between July 19 and September 10, 1976. Each participant completed a questionnaire developed by the researcher.

The majority of the women who participated in this study were between the ages of 25 and 39. The participants were well-educated as 85% had attended college. More than half of the women had annual family incomes of between \$10,000 and \$19,999. Fifty-seven percent of the women were not employed outside the home. Of the 43% who were, 33% were employed full time and 10% were employed part time. Only 11% of the women were enrolled at Oklahoma State University at the time of the study.

The participants sewed for a total of 116 children from infancy through 12 years of age. Sixty-five of the children were girls and 51 were boys. The women indicated that they sewed for more boys and girls aged three through nine and age 12 than for other ages. The

participants did garment construction and mending more frequently than any other type of sewing for children. Ninety-four percent of the women constructed children's garments, and 93% did mending. Altering children's garments was done by 66% of the women, while only 34% ever remodeled garments for children.

Of the 49 women who indicated the proportion of girl's clothing that they made, 69% sewed approximately half or more of the child's wardrobe. Of the 44 women who indicated the proportion of boy's clothing that they made, 50% sewed some, but less than half, and seven women did no sewing for boys.

The participants checked a list of clothing items for boys, girls, and infants indicating whether they had made, would like to have made, or preferred to buy these items. Sixty-eight percent of the women had made baby clothes, and 27% indicated that they preferred to buy baby clothes. Of the 49 women who made or purchased clothes for girls, more than 50% of them had made 10 of the 14 girl's garments listed. The four items made by less than half of the women were coats, swimwear, panties, and slippers. Robes, jumpsuits, panties and coats were checked by 16% to 20% of the women as those items that they would like to make. Of the 44 participants who indicated that they made or purchased clothes for boys, more than 50% had made slacks, shirts, T-shirts, shorts, and robes. More than half of the women preferred to buy suits, coats, and swimwear, and 89% preferred to buy underwear.

The two major reasons for sewing indicated by the participants were to save money (90%) and for pleasure (73%). Lack of time was the most frequently indicated reason that the women did not sew certain garments (46%). Fifty-seven percent of the women indicated that the

availability of ready made clothing was their main reason for purchasing certain garments.

Fifty-four percent of the women wanted to take a class in sewing children's clothing. Eighty-three percent of these women preferred to take the class from a fabric store. Evenings during the spring or fall (50%) or during the summer (31%) were the most popular times indicated for desiring the class. Fifty-six percent of the women preferred a short course spread over a period of one month.

Conclusions

The following conclusions can be drawn from this study:

1. Women do construct and mend garments for children under the age of 12.
2. Women do more sewing for girls than for boys, and they prefer to purchase more clothing items for boys than for girls.
3. Women sew clothing for children mainly to save money and/or for pleasure.
4. Lack of time is an important reason for women not sewing more for children.
5. Sewing classes for children's clothing should be given at a fabric store during the evenings in the spring or fall, and they should be short courses lasting approximately one month.

Since the sample in this study was very small, results should not be generalized to larger groups. More investigation should be done to determine whether sewing classes for children's clothing would be feasible.

Recommendations

Recommendations for further study include the following:

1. Conduct a similar study with a larger sample of women who are responsible for clothing children but who may or may not sew. The sample might be selected through the school system in order to get a representative sample of women with children in this age range. Investigate the participants' preferences regarding a sewing class in children's clothing and determine whether they would enroll in such a class. Preferred content and format for the class could also be determined.
2. Investigate attitudes of children at various ages toward their clothing. Determine their preferences toward style, color, and decoration of their clothing, and determine the source of these preferences, such as parents, peers, television, or some other source. Determine whether children prefer clothes made for them or ready made garments and why.
3. Conduct a longitudinal study to determine changing attitudes of women and/or children toward home sewn clothes over a decade. Relate these changes to social and economic conditions within the society.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE

You are requested to assist in a research project to obtain knowledge about sewing and purchasing practices of women for children's clothing. In order to assure anonymity of your responses, do not put your name on this questionnaire.

1. What is your approximate age?

<input type="checkbox"/> under 20 years	<input type="checkbox"/> 40 to 44 years
<input type="checkbox"/> 20 to 24 years	<input type="checkbox"/> 45 to 49 years
<input type="checkbox"/> 25 to 29 years	<input type="checkbox"/> 50 to 54 years
<input type="checkbox"/> 30 to 34 years	<input type="checkbox"/> 55 and over
<input type="checkbox"/> 35 to 39 years	

2. Years of education completed:

less than high school
 some high school
 high school graduate
 some college
 college graduate
 graduate work

3. Yearly family income:

<input type="checkbox"/> under \$6000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$20,000 to \$24,999
<input type="checkbox"/> \$6000 to \$9,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25,000 to \$29,999
<input type="checkbox"/> \$10,000 to \$14,999	<input type="checkbox"/> \$30,000 and over
<input type="checkbox"/> \$15,000 to \$19,999	

4. Do you have a job outside the home? yes no

5. If you are employed, how many hours per week do you work outside the home?

30 hours or less per week
 more than 30 hours per week

6. Are you currently a student at Oklahoma State University?

yes; a full-time student
 yes; a part-time student
 no

7. Check the appropriate column for the ages and sex of the children for whom you sew.

	Boys	Girls
Infant		
1 year		
2 years		
3 years		
4 years		
5 years		
6 years		
7 years		
8 years		
9 years		
10 years		
11 years		
12 years		

8. Indicate how often you do the following types of sewing for children.

Often	Sometimes	Never	
_____	_____	_____	Constructing garments
_____	_____	_____	Mending garments
_____	_____	_____	Altering garments
_____	_____	_____	Remodeling garments

9. Approximately how much of a child's wardrobe do you make?

Boys	Girls	
_____	_____	None at all
_____	_____	Some, but less than half of their clothing
_____	_____	Approximately half of their clothing
_____	_____	More than half of their clothing

10. On the chart below, check the items you (A) have made for the children you sew for, (B) those items you would like to make but do not feel qualified to do so, and (C) those items you prefer to buy ready made.

Item	A Have Made	B Would Like To Make	C Prefer To Buy
Baby Clothes			
GIRLS:			
Dresses			
Skirts			
Blouses			
T-Shirts			
Slacks			
Jumpers			
Coats			
Jumpsuits			
Shorts			
Swimwear			
Panties			
Slips			
Sleepwear			
Robes			
Other; Please List			
BOYS:			
Slacks			
Shirts			
T-Shirts			
Suits			
Coats			
Shorts			
Swimwear			
Jumpsuits			
Sleepwear			
Robes			
Underwear			
Other; Please List			

11. My reason(s) for having sewn the children's clothing checked in column A in question 10 are: (Check as many as apply)

Pleasure
 To save money
 Opportunity to be creative
 Better fit
 Better quality
 A relaxing hobby
 Other, list: _____

12. My reason(s) for Not sewing the garments checked in column B in question 10 are: (Check as many as apply)

Lack of confidence
 Am not pleased with the end results
 Lack of time
 Do not know how to sew
 Suitable fabric not available
 No access to a sewing machine
 The child is hard to fit
 Other, list: _____

13. I buy the garments checked in column C in question 10 because: (Check as many as apply)

I desire fabric which is not readily available
 Availability of ready made clothing
 I believe it is as cheap or cheaper to buy ready made clothes
 I do not know how to sew
 I like the look of ready made clothing
 Other, list: _____

14. Would you take a course for sewing children's clothing?

Yes, continue on to question 15

No, go on to question 18

15. Through which of the following would you prefer to take a sewing class for children's clothes?

University class for credit
 University class for non-credit
 Class offered by a fabric store
 Class offered by a County Home Economist
 Adult education class offered through the high school
 Other (describe): _____

16. When would you prefer the class be offered?

	<u>Summer</u>	<u>Regular Spring or Fall Term</u>
Daytime	_____	_____
Evening	_____	_____
Weekends	_____	_____
Other	_____	

17. How long would you want the class to last?

_____ A condensed short course lasting from several days
to two weeks

_____ A short course spread over a period of one month

_____ A regular full semester course

_____ Other, please describe: _____

18. Please add any other comments regarding classes in sewing for children.

VITA

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