

PRACTICES AND OPINIONS OF A SELECT GROUP
OF HOMEMAKERS, WITH REGARD
TO HOME SEWING

By

MARJORIE OUIDA YORK

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Bachelor of Science

Oklahoma State University

Stillwater, Oklahoma

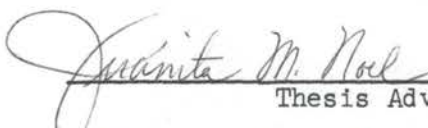
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Dean of the Graduate School

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem and the Purposes

Present trends in education today have minimized home economics courses in favor of courses in mathematics, sciences, and languages. This change in emphasis has been brought about by the needs developed in our country by the "cold war" years following World War II, and our race for space supremacy.

The problem undertaken was a study of the practices and opinions of homemakers with regard to home sewing. It seemed pertinent to investigate the practices and opinions of family members of today in order that home economics can better meet their needs in our rapidly changing society. The report, *Home Economics in Land-Grant Colleges and Universities*, stated:

. . . home economics is concerned with the home and family as they exist in society, its content and emphases must constantly take into consideration the effect of the existing culture and the social, economic, educational and technological developments which have an impact on the family and its members.¹

Because the effect of today's society on all areas of need in a family would be too broad a study for one person to undertake, one area

¹Home Economics Development Committee, Division of Home Economics of the American Association of Land-Grant Colleges and State Universities, Home Economics in Land-Grant Colleges and State Universities, A Statement of Objectives and Future Directives, November, 1959, p. 4.

of home economics was selected. The researcher chose the area of clothing construction. The purposes of this study were:

1. To investigate, to some degree, the home sewing which is being done,
2. To identify some of the reasons why sewing is done in the home,
3. To investigate the relationship between the degree of formal education in clothing construction and the number and kinds of articles constructed,
4. To identify some of the opinions of homemakers regarding the necessity of clothing construction in the educational program of a young woman, and
5. To suggest any significances for further development of a curriculum in home economics with regard to the area of clothing construction.

The Hypotheses of the Study

Two hypotheses were pertinent to the study. First, women of today are interested in home sewing. Second, they are sewing in their homes. It was believed that this study would support the need for continuance of courses in clothing construction as a part of higher education for a young woman.

The Limitation of the Study

The study was limited to two groups of homemakers who lived within the City of Stillwater, Oklahoma. Group one was selected by random sample from the Home Economics' Alumna files at Oklahoma State

University. Group two was selected by random sample from the Stillwater City Directory. Twenty names were selected for each group, making a total of forty homemakers who participated in this survey.

Significance of the Study

Many people think of home economics as an area of learning which involves only skill courses. Werden pointed out that because of this, home economics is being seriously questioned by many educators within and without the field.² A half a century ago when home economics was becoming an organized field of learning, the family produced much of its food, clothing, and shelter. Today the consumer finds that most of his needs can be fulfilled by the purchase of products which are available on the open market. Since the family unit is changing from a producing to a consuming unit, the value of courses which contribute to home production is being re-evaluated.

The importance of clothing construction in an educational program of today is one area of home economics which is being discussed. Many people feel that mass production of medium-priced garments has made home sewing unnecessary.³ Goodman took an opposite viewpoint on this issue by stating:

In this era of specialization and industrialization, virtually every article of clothing we wear can be purchased ready-made. But there is still one avenue open to the woman today to satisfy that

²Jane Werden, "The Place of Clothing Construction in the College Program," Journal of Home Economics, 52 (1960), p. 340.

³Ibid.

creative urge--"home sewing." A beautiful garment, well made from a pattern design suited to the individual, is a source of satisfaction to any woman or girl.⁴

Other authorities in the area of clothing agree with Goodman in that there is more to clothing construction than the skill involved. Lee expressed her belief as follows:

If you pass on to your students an awareness of the individuality and creativity that can be channeled through this medium (clothing construction), you can go far toward preserving the priceless boon of personal uniqueness that many feel is in danger of being lost in this changing world.⁵

Linn suggested that educators in the area of clothing can give students roots through clothing which will identify them with their social group, and wings through clothes that will fulfill their needs for expression of individuality.⁶

Werden stressed that skill cannot be ignored.⁷ It was her belief that the emphasis need not be on skills alone, but basic skills must be mastered before they can be used to advance knowledge and be creative.

Nystrom in his analysis of the value of the products of home sewing indicated that in 1929 the total volume of retail sales in all forms of apparel for men, women, and children did not exceed ten

⁴Bonnie V. Goodman, Tailoring for the Family (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1951), p. 1.

⁵Dorothy Lee, "The Individual in a Changing Society," Journal of Home Economics, 52 (1960), p. 81.

⁶"New Direction in Textiles and Clothing," Journal of Home Economics, 52 (1960), p. 672.

⁷Werden, p. 341.

A national study of home demonstration club members revealed that 78 per cent of the members said they sewed at home.¹²

An article from the Woman's Wear Daily stated that the current trend of piece goods dollar volume is up.¹³ The article indicated the trend was traceable to economy in unemployment areas; to ready-to-wear department's lack of stock depth; to long range cooperation between home economics departments, pattern companies, and fabric houses in building an army of home sewers; to a price-lifting with promotion of easy to care-wash and wear goods; and to retailer's courage in stocking and promoting high priced goods.

From this it appears that women have not given up one of the most feminine of the arts and crafts even with the plentiful supply of all the ready-to-wear clothes for which Americans take great pride. The changing attitude towards home sewing is well expressed in the following quotation from the American Fabrics magazine.

Once upon a time the woman who sewed was dowdy and dumpy. She belonged to the world of pots and pans rather than to the world of fashion, and was generally voted the woman most likely to be abandoned by her husband. Smart young matrons or career girls rarely reached for the needle unless a shoulder strap gave away. . . . Today home sewing is one of the most important of all fashion activities.¹⁴

Many women are beginning to realize that sewing is an easy and basic way for them to add to their femininity, whether they sew for themselves, their children, or their homes. It is an art where they

¹²Clothing the Family, Extension Circular 524, 1959, United States Department of Agriculture, p. 4.

¹³Woman's Wear Daily, October 17, 1960, Sec. 2, Col. 2, p. 1.

¹⁴American Fabrics, p. 79.

can be creative as a woman, more attractive as a woman, and also stretch the family budget.¹⁵

With the increased interest being shown in home sewing, college courses in clothing construction may come to acquire a renewed prestige along with courses in Russian language and engineering, and meet the special needs of American women. Werden has said,

In the light of current economic, sociological, and psychological trends we must give clothing construction its rightful place along with the other phases of textiles and clothing that are essential to a good academic program.¹⁶

Clothing construction, mathematics, science, and language each has its place in today's curricula; each serves a different purpose.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 81.

¹⁶Werden, p. 341.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Increased emphasis on sciences, mathematics, and languages is necessary in our world of today, but educators should not lose sight of the fact that scientists, mathematicians, and linguists will also be family members and home builders.

Werden has pointed out that the current emphasis on science and mathematics has caused some educators to question the value of home economics and that clothing construction is one aspect which is being most heavily criticized.¹

It is a known fact, mentioned by Tate and other educators in the field, that few people make all of their own clothes.² This view was supported in a study made by the United States Department of Agriculture.³ The study on family clothing revealed that the largest proportion of clothing acquired for the family was new ready-to-wear clothes. However, a large number of girls and wives added one or more

¹Jane Werden, "The Place of Clothing Construction in the College Program," Journal of Home Economics, 52 (1960), p. 340.

²Comfort Knox Tate, "Clothing Construction is Basic to Good Clothing Selection," What's New in Home Economics, March 1960, p. 28.

³Margaret L. Brew, Roxanne R. O'Leary, and Lucille C. Dean, "Family Clothing Inventories and Purchases. . . .With an Analysis to Show Factors Affecting Consumption." United States Department of Agriculture Bulletin No. 148 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1956), p. 5.

homemade articles to their wardrobe a year. Webb's study of the practices used by homemakers in acquiring clothes for their family indicated that 44 per cent of the women constructed garments.⁴

The fact that the modern woman need not sew for herself or her family unless she really wants to was expressed by Johnson who explained that clothing needs can be met most satisfactorily by a gigantic clothing industry.⁵ She discussed this further by saying,

Mass produced fashions at popular prices have earned American women the reputation of being the best dressed in the world. All types of clothing are available at prices within the reach of every clothing budget.⁶

With the availability of ready-made garments, why does the American homemaker of today sew? Tate said there are as many answers to this question as there are people.⁷ She has found that the answers generally can be classified into three categories which are: (1) better fit, (2) desire for individuality, and (3) personal satisfaction of being creative.

The American manufacturer is aware of the consumer's problem in buying ready made clothes to fit, and has made progress in their efforts to meet these difficulties. This is evidenced by the "half-size" dresses, the "tall girl" shops, and clothes for "5'4" and under."

⁴Essie Dickinson Webb, "Practices Used by One Hundred Homemakers in Acquiring Clothing for the Family," Ohio State University Abstracts of Masters' Theses, 82 (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1959), p. 222.

⁵May Johnson, Sewing the Easy Way (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1958), p. 10.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Tate, p. 28.

Nevertheless, the problem continues to exist and some purchasers still find it difficult to buy ready-made garments. The problem may be a simple alteration for some consumers, but for others it may be necessary to make their own clothes.

The consumer whose ready-made garment can be altered to fit must make a choice as to whether to pay for the alteration or to make the alteration at home. Danville stated that the least value for money spent is that paid out for alterations.⁸ She explains this by saying that when a woman pays for an alteration she is paying for double work. First, she pays to have the garment made, and second, she pays for the upkeep of an alteration workroom.

Mitchell found that "to obtain better fit" was one of the reasons why the women in her survey were sewing.⁹ She believed this was the result of the general dislike to alter "ready-made" clothing. She found that 59 per cent of the women in her survey sewed because they could obtain better fitting garments.

The second category of answers to the question of why women sew that was mentioned by Tate was the desire for individuality.¹⁰ The importance of the individual was recognized by Lee who stated that regardless of the world we live in, personal uniqueness, idiosyncrasy, and the identity of self is of worth and must be retained at all

⁸Bea Danville, Dress Well on a \$1 a Day (New York: Wilfred Funk, Inc., 1956), p. 213.

⁹Marjorie F. Mitchell, "A Study of Home Sewing Practices of a Group of One Hundred Women in Lubbock County," (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Texas Technological College, 1959), p. 17.

¹⁰Tate, p. 28.

cost.¹¹ The woman who sews can express her own individuality, as well as those of her family, through the medium of clothing construction. Collins pointed out that the possibilities for a garment that expresses the wearer's individuality are astronomical when one multiplies fabric times color times pattern.¹² Ketchan made reference to the desire for individuality in his article on color.¹³ He discussed the purchaser's difficulty in finding a variety of color in ready-made garments because of the manufacturers' tendency to provide only the most popular colors of the current season. The woman who sews finds the supply of color, fabric, and texture practically unlimited.

The significance of the individual was discussed by Petersen in the Textile and Clothing Section of the Annual American Home Economics Association Meeting in Denver.¹⁴ She referred to the "renaissance of the individual" and expressed the view that individual creativity is essential for national survival. She believes that in developing creativity the teacher can make a major contribution to the mental health and individualism.

Hoffman has stated that the woman who sews can have a number of interchangeable outfits of the best quality and materials, in the

¹¹Dorothy Lee, "The Individual in a Changing Society," Journal of Home Economics, 52 (1960), p. 81.

¹²Kenneth Collins, Woman's Wear Daily, March 14, 1961, p. 12.

¹³Howard Ketchan, "Color, Its Powers of Persuasion," Harper's Bazaar, August 1960, p. 34.

¹⁴"New Direction in Textiles and Clothing," Journal of Home Economics, 52 (1960), p. 672.

newest color schemes, at a surprisingly low cost.¹⁵ She explained how it was possible for the woman who sews to have a wardrobe that would be distinctive and original, in the height of fashion, and still not be wearing exactly the same thing that everyone else was wearing. She emphasized this point by saying, "The chance of meeting one's self in a ready-made duplicate is the basis for many a standard joke, as well as occasional concern in high places."¹⁶

It was the opinion of Hoffman that the opportunity to express imaginative talents was unlimited for the women who sew.¹⁷ She believed that these talents were not in finger skills alone, although she felt this was important, but in color, line, new uses for familiar materials, designing clothes and accessories, making the home and surroundings more lovely, and most of all in pushing back the horizons of the homemaker's world.

Johnson expressed the opinion that the woman who is not concerned with individuality in her wearing apparel can be quite happy with the ready-made fashions and look smart in them if she chooses with an eye toward becomingness and suitability.¹⁹ She believes that the woman who feels absolute exclusiveness is of prime importance in her wardrobe must pay for this distinction, and that it is this woman who is most gratified by the material advantage of making her own clothes. She

¹⁵Peggy Hoffman, Sew Far, Sew Good! (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1958), p. 16.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 17.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Johnson, p. 10.

stated that home-sewn clothes can be produced at one-third the cost of ready-made ones.

Personal satisfaction of being creative was the third category mentioned by Tate in her discussion of why women sew.²⁰ Packard stated that the creative urge is so important that psychologists have listed this as one of the eight basic needs.²¹ This need for personal satisfaction of being creative is probably the answer to why women, when asked their reasons for sewing, usually said, "Because I like to." A survey by McCall's revealed that 85.3 per cent of the women gave this answer when asked, "Why do you sew?"²² Eighty-five per cent of the 89 selected women in Mock's study indicated they sewed because they liked to.²³ Mitchell found that 77.8 per cent of the women in her study sewed for enjoyment and that many of the women said they received keen satisfaction from constructing attractive and well-fitted garments for their family members.²⁴

Goodman discussed the need to be creative by saying,

The homemaker of today does not have so many opportunities to express her artistic creative ability in clothing her family as the

²⁰Tate, p. 28.

²¹Vance Packard, *The Hidden Persuaders* (New York: Pocket Books, Inc., Cardinal Edition, 1960), p. 65.

²²"The Woman Who Sews Today," McCall's Consumer Survey (Reprint from the Piece Goods Merchandiser, 14 (1960), p. 50.

²³Opal Vaughn Mock, "Practices in Home Clothing Construction as a Basis for Planning High School Clothing Courses," Ohio State University Abstracts of Masters' Theses, 72 (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1956), p. 118.

²⁴Mitchell, p. 16.

earlier homemaker did . . . but we have the same creative urge as our earlier ancestors, if permitted the freedom of expressing it.²⁵

Werden shared this opinion. She stated that automation in the home had decreased the homemaker's opportunity to be creative, and that this was one reason many homemakers were using sewing as a creative outlet.²⁶

Johnson also stressed the contribution that sewing has to give to one's need for creativity.²⁷ She emphasized that making clothes could be a wonderful hobby, and she compared the satisfaction to be obtained from sewing to that which is felt by an artist when he exhibits a masterpiece.

Although many people today are sewing for pleasure rather than economical reasons, home sewing can increase the clothing budget. Goodman said that it is a generally accepted fact that the scale of living can be raised by increasing the savings through home sewing and intelligent buying.²⁸ She pointed out that the economy which can be derived from sewing is evidenced by the increased volume of home sewing done during periods of depression when cash income is low and periods of inflation when prices are high in relation to wages and salary. The fact that we have been living in an inflationary era for several years may account for the results shown in Mitchell's study wherein 96 per

²⁵Bonnie V. Goodman, Tailoring for the Family (New York: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1951), p. 1.

²⁶Werden, p. 340.

²⁷Johnson, p. 9.

²⁸Goodman, p. 2.

cent of the women listed economy as their most important reason for sewing.²⁹

The economy to be derived from home sewing was often referred to as "stretching the clothing budget." Lewis, Bowers, and Kettunen stated, "It goes without saying that the mother who is needlewise can do much to stretch the family clothing budget. . . . In addition to making her own clothes, she can sew for her children."³⁰ Baldt expressed this same idea by saying, "Making one's own clothes and household accessories is not only a pleasant type of recreation, but it is an excellent way to stretch the budget."³¹ She also emphasized the fact that ". . . ready-made dresses, which in the long run will never be standardized, cost in terms of material and labor, and that as we look for individuality and 'one-of-a-kind' in dresses the labor cost rises."³²

Danville also expressed the theory that the value of the clothing dollar can be increased by knowing how to sew.³³ She pointed out that the money saved by making less expensive items can be applied on more costly items such as suits and coats. She discussed the saving that may be realized from salvaging out-of-date or misfit garments.

Schubert and Dalrymple found that while sewing was a task enjoyed by most of the homemakers in their survey, remodeling and mending were

²⁹Mitchell p. 16.

³⁰Dora S. Lewis, Mabel Goode Bowers, and Marietta Kettunen, Clothing Construction and Wardrobe Planning (New York: Macmillan Co., 1960) p. 237.

³¹Laura I. Baldt, Clothing for Women (New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1941) p. 69.

³²Ibid. p. 70.

³³Danville p. 199.

listed as problem areas.³⁴ If these are problems for the homemaker, few of them will take advantage of the economy to be derived from these means. This was evident in the United States Department of Agriculture's survey on family clothing in which they found a very small percentage of the families clothes were acquired by remodeling.³⁵

Several studies related to clothing construction have been done. Ledbetter studied the practices and opinions of married home economics graduates from Oregon State College in order to evaluate the present methods of teaching clothing construction.³⁶ She was interested in simplifying home sewing and believed that by evaluating present teaching methods she would be able to remedy weaknesses and unsatisfactory conditions which might exist. Her study indicated that homemakers were constructing a variety of garments. The 215 homemakers questioned by Ledbetter generally preferred sewing for themselves. House dresses and street dresses were the most numerous garments constructed. Children's garments were next in popularity. In the area of textiles and household furnishings, curtains were made by 81 per cent and draperies by 66 per cent.

Mitchell's study was made by interviewing 100 women who expressed a willingness to participate in the survey by filling out a card presented to them at a time they were purchasing fabrics.³⁷

³⁴Genevieve W. Schubert and Julia I. Dalrymple, "Problems and Needs of Young Homemakers: Implications for High School Home Economics," Journal of Home Economics, 51 (1959), p. 355.

³⁵Brew, O'Leary, Dean, p. 5.

³⁶Nellie Marie Ledbetter, "Home Sewing Practices of Married Graduates," (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Oregon State College, 1950), p. 87.

³⁷Mitchell, p. 15.

Ninety-three of these women did some home sewing. The remaining seven did not sew, but hired a professional dressmaker to construct the garments from the material purchased. Twenty-three of the women who sewed had other family members interested in home sewing.

Frazier's study was concerned with the home practices of graduates in home economics from the University of Utah.³⁸ The purpose was to study the relationship between university training and home sewing. Her study was to determine, to some extent, the courses in clothing construction at the University of Utah which were filling the needs of its graduates.

Nicholson's study dealt with discovering and meeting the needs of high school students in clothing construction.³⁹ Her study, "Discovering and Meeting Needs in Clothing Construction," approached the problem from the viewpoint of helping students to recognize their needs. This study was limited to students in Homemaking II and III.

From the review of literature and other studies in the field, it appeared that women are still sewing for themselves and their families. While the economic need to sew might not be so great as it was 50 years ago when home economics was becoming established in the field of academic learning, the need for well fitting garments, the desire to express one's individuality, and to be creative have kept home sewing a necessary part of most homes today.

³⁸Manette Egbert Frazier, "Home Sewing Practices of Graduates in Home Economics from the University of Utah," (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Oregon State College, 1955), p. 87.

³⁹Willa Dean Nicholson, "Discovering and Meeting Needs in Clothing Construction," (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Oklahoma State University, 1953).

CHAPTER III

METHOD OF PROCEDURE

The present study was limited to two groups of homemakers living within the City of Stillwater. The selection of participants for the two groups was made as follows:

Group I - by random sample from the Oklahoma State University Home Economics Alumna file. The procedure was to (1) list all the home economics alumnae living in Stillwater, (2) cut the list so that each name was on a single slip of paper, (3) place the names in a box, and (4) draw names from the box until 20 names were drawn.

Group II - by random sample from the Stillwater City Directory. The procedure was to (1) divide the city into almost four equal areas by means of two state highways which intersect approximately in the middle of the city, (2) choose a centrally located street in each area, and (3) select every fifth name on the street until five names in each area were chosen.

A second list of names was compiled to take care of any emergencies such as the person who was selected but refused to cooperate in the study, could not be located, or was not a woman.

The homemaker's willingness to participate in the study was established by a telephone call, and an appointment for a personal interview was made. This meeting was arranged at the convenience of the homemaker in order that a better rapport could be established.

Following a brief introduction, the purpose of the survey was discussed and the questionnaire presented. All suggestions for obtaining the needed data were mentioned. Questions from the participants were answered as clearly as possible. The interviewer maintained an unbiased attitude at all times so as not to influence the respondent. In many instances, respondents made comments which seemed to merit notation. These comments were written on the back of the questionnaire after the interviewer returned to her car.

Appreciation for participating in the survey was expressed by the interviewer. Participants who did little or no sewing appeared somewhat apologetic. However, the interviewer assured the participants that their willingness to participate in the survey was sincerely appreciated.

The questionnaire was designed to be as simple as possible and still be effective in collecting the data needed. Therefore, the questions were stated so that the homemaker could check the answer she chose from a series of possible answers. A brief supplementary questionnaire was attached to the main questionnaire for use by the alumna group. This supplement included a number of open-end questions pertaining to the college education received by the respondents. Examples of the questionnaire and the supplement are shown in the Appendix, pages 48 and 51.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The major purpose of this study was to investigate the practices and opinions of a select group of homemakers with regard to home sewing. The study was based on the response of 40 homemakers living within the City of Stillwater. Half of the homemakers were home economics graduates from Oklahoma State University. The remaining homemakers were selected from four different areas of Stillwater. Tabulations for each group were kept separate in order to investigate the relationship of formal education in clothing construction and the number and kinds of articles constructed.

The ages of the participants ranged from 20 to 69. Forty per cent of the homemakers in the alumna group were in the 40 to 49 age group, and 30 per cent were in the 30 to 39 age bracket. Almost three-fourths of the women in this group were between 30 to 49 years of age. In group two, the largest classification was the 20 to 29 age group. Slightly more than one-third of the homemakers were in this group. Three-fourths of the women in the nonalumna group were between the ages of 20 to 49.

The 20 homemakers in the alumna group constructed a total of 419 items during the past year. This was an average of 20.95 items each. The largest amount of sewing for this group was done by the homemakers in the 40 to 49 age bracket. The homemakers in the nonalumna group

constructed a total of 329 items or an average of 16.45 items each. The largest amount of sewing for this group was done by homemakers in the 20 to 29 age bracket. From the data collected, it appeared that the homemakers in the alumna group had completed an average of 4.5 more items than the homemakers in the nonalumna group. These figures are shown in Table I.

TABLE I

RESPONSES MADE BY A SELECT GROUP OF HOMEMAKERS AS TO NUMBER
OF ITEMS CONSTRUCTED: BREAKDOWN BY AGE BRACKET

Age of Homemakers	Number of Homemakers	Per Cent of Homemakers	Items Per Group	Average Per Person
Group I - Alumna Group:				
20-29	1	5	31	31.0
30-39	6	30	111	18.5
40-49	8	40	169	21.13
50-59	3	15	73	24.3
60-69	2	10	35	17.5
Total	20	100	419	20.95*
Group II - Nonalumna Group:				
20-29	7	35	154	22.0
30-39	4	20	23	5.75
40-49	4	20	88	22.0
50-59	2	10	52	26.0
60-69	3	15	12	4.0
Total	20	100	329	16.45*

*Figure represents the average number of garments made by the 20 homemakers and is not a total for the column.

Costume construction for special events such as Halloween and dance recitals seemed to be important in the sewing done by the homemakers. The mothers in the alumna group constructed more costumes than those in the nonalumna group. In the alumna group, 4.1 per cent of the items constructed were for costumes as compared to 1.8 per cent constructed by the nonalumna group. This may have been due to the fact that the homemakers in the alumna group had more children over six years of age. The children in the nonalumna group were largely pre-school age.

The distribution of the children of the homemakers by age and sex is shown in Table III (see page 24). A comparison of this table and Table II (see page 22) reveals the amount of construction that was done in relation to the children. The alumna group had two children in the pre-school age bracket as compared to 17 children in the nonalumna group. The percentage of construction by categories indicated that 3.1 per cent of all the items constructed were for children in this age group while the nonalumna group constructed 5 per cent of their sewing for this age group. In the 6 to 12 age bracket, the alumna group had sixteen children, nine of whom were girls. The nonalumna group had six children, three of whom were girls. The alumna group constructed 15.2 per cent of their sewing for girls in the 6 to 12 age bracket. This was the third highest category for this group. The nonalumna group constructed 12.7 per cent of their sewing for girls in the 6 to 12 age bracket. This was the fourth highest category for the nonalumna group. There were 11 teen-age children in the alumna group as compared to five teen-agers in the nonalumna group. Both of these groups had four teen-age girls. In the alumna group, the amount of sewing for girls at the

the similarity of their clothes. The alumna group with seven teen-age boys constructed less than one per cent of their sewing for this category. Three per cent of the sewing in the nonalumna group was done for men, and there was one teen-age boy in this group.

The educational experiences of the participants with regards to clothing construction is shown in Table IV below.

TABLE IV
RESPONSES OF A SELECT GROUP OF HOMEMAKERS REGARDING
THE EXTENT OF EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE
IN CLOTHING CONSTRUCTION

Group I - Alumna Group			Group II - Nonalumna Group		
Educational Experience	No. of Home-makers	Per Cent Home-makers	Educational Experience	No. of Home-makers	Per Cent Home-makers
Grade school	-	-	Grade school	2	10
Junior high	9	45	Junior high	4	20
Senior high	12	60	Senior high	14	70
College or university	20	100	College or university	4	20
4-H	3	15	4-H	3	15
Adult classes	1	5	Adult classes	2	10
Commercial	2	10	Commercial	1	5
Home	-	-	Home	3	15

The two groups were rather closely related as to educational experience in clothing construction prior to college. None of the alumna group had received any formal education in clothing construction in grade school, 45 per cent had this experience at the junior high level and 60 per cent had this experience at the high school level. In the

nonalumna group, two had received training in clothing construction in grade school, 20 per cent received this experience in junior high and 70 per cent received it in high school. Since one semester of clothing construction is required for all home economics graduates, the alumna group indicated that all of the participants had received some clothing construction course work in college. Fifteen per cent of the participants in both groups had enrolled in adult education classes or commercial courses.

The homemakers were asked to indicate the extent of their home sewing during the past year in the areas of mending, alteration, remodeling, and new garments constructed by checking the answers "none," "some," and a "great deal." Thirty per cent of the homemakers in the alumna group indicated that they had not constructed any new garments, 60 per cent some new garments, and ten per cent indicated that they had done a great deal of new construction. The same number of homemakers in the nonalumna group indicated they had not constructed new garments, 35 per cent indicated that they had made some new garments, and 35 per cent indicated that they had made a great many. Both groups were similar in their response to the amount of mending done. Sixty per cent of the homemakers in Group I checked that they had done some mending as compared to 45 per cent of the homemakers in the nonalumna group. Only one person in the nonalumna group indicated that she had not done any mending. Fifty per cent of the homemakers in the nonalumna group and 40 per cent of the homemakers in the alumna group indicated they had done a great deal of mending. It was interesting to note that 75 per cent of the alumna group did some alterations as compared to 45 per cent of the nonalumna group. Remodeling seemed to be a

Five of the 12 homemakers who were not employed outside the home indicated that they were constructing a great many new garments, three said they had constructed some, and four had not constructed any. Two of the seven full-time employed homemakers indicated that they had constructed many new garments, three said they had constructed some, and two had not constructed any. The one homemaker who was employed part time had done some new garment construction.

The response to question eight in which the homemakers were asked to indicate their reasons for sewing is shown in Table VII. The

TABLE VII
RESPONSES OF A SELECT GROUP OF HOMEMAKERS INDICATING
REASONS FOR HOME SEWING

Group I - Alumna Group			Group II - Nonalumna Group		
Reasons for	Homemakers		Reasons for	Homemakers	
Home Sewing	No.	Per Cent	Home Sewing	No.	Per Cent
More economical	16	80	More economical	16	80
Better fit	11	55	Pleasure	13	65
Pleasure	10	50	Better fit	8	40
Better quality	9	45	More originality	7	35
More originality	8	40	Better quality	7	35
Texture selection	5	25	Texture selection	6	30
Color selection	3	15	Color selection	5	25
Better styling	1	5	Better styling	4	20
No answer	-	-	No answer	2	10
Total*	63	315	Total	68	340

*More than one answer checked.

greatest number of checks indicated that economy was the main reason why the homemakers in both groups were sewing. Eighty per cent of the homemakers in both groups checked this answer. In the alumna group the second reason for sewing was better fit and the third reason was for pleasure. The nonalumna group reversed these reasons. They listed pleasure as their second reason for sewing and better fit as their third reason. The data indicated that 65 per cent of the nonalumna group and 50 per cent of the alumna group sewed for pleasure. Fifty-five per cent of the alumna group sewed to obtain better fit as compared to 40 per cent of the nonalumna group. Sewing for originality was listed in fifth place by the alumna group by 40 per cent of the homemakers. In the nonalumna group, 35 per cent of the homemakers checked "more originality" as a reason for sewing. Better styling was checked by only one homemaker in the alumna group. Four homemakers in the nonalumna group gave better styling as a reason for sewing.

It appeared from the response to question nine that most women hesitated to pay to have ready-made dresses altered. One person in the alumna group and two in the nonalumna group wrote in the word "never." Sixty per cent of the homemakers in the alumna group and 70 per cent of the women in the nonalumna group indicated that they seldom made use of the store alterations if charges were made for this service. Twenty per cent of the homemakers in the alumna group indicated they sometimes used this service. Half as many or ten per cent of the nonalumna group indicated that they sometimes used this service. Fifteen per cent of the alumnae stated that they almost always used this service, and 10 per cent of the women of the nonalumna group almost always had the store alter their garments. These figures appear in Table VIII.

TABLE IX
RESPONSES OF A SELECT GROUP OF HOMEMAKERS REGARDING
PROBLEM AREAS IN CLOTHING CONSTRUCTION

Group I - Alumna Group			Group II - Nonalumna Group		
Problem Areas	Homemakers		Problem Areas	Homemakers	
	No.	Per Cent		No.	Per Cent
Tailoring	13	65	Remodeling	8	40
Fitting	8	40	Fitting	6	30
Alterations	6	30	Tailoring	4	20
Remodeling	4	20	Alterations	1	5
Time management	1	5	Time management	1	5
No answer	1	5	No answer	1	5

lack of continuity in their answers because in response to the question of where this experience should occur, they indicated that this experience should take place at the junior high level. This indicated that they did have an opinion on this subject although they did not check this item on the questionnaire. These figures are shown in Table X on the following page.

The opinions of the homemakers regarding the educational program of a young woman are listed in Table XI. Most homemakers indicated that they believed this training should be given at the junior high level. Seventy-five per cent of the participants of the alumna group and 85 per cent of the nonalumna group checked junior high. Seventy per cent of the homemakers in the alumna group checked senior high school, and 55 per cent of the nonalumna group were in favor of clothing construction education at the high school level. Sixty per

A breakdown of the amount of sewing in relation to the number of courses taken by the alumna group is shown below in Table XII.

TABLE XII
HOME SEWING IN RELATION TO THE NUMBER OF COURSES
IN CLOTHING CONSTRUCTION AS INDICATED BY THE
HOMEMAKERS IN THE ALUMNA GROUP

Number of Courses	Number of Homemakers	Per Cent of Homemakers	No. of Items Constructed	Average No. Constructed
None	-	-	-	-
One	1	5	44	44
Two	8	40	121	15.13
Three	8	40	155	14.14
Four	2	10	64	32
More	1	5	35	35
Total	20	100	419	20.95* (21)

*Figure represents the average number of garments made by the 20 homemakers and is not a total for the column.

The number of clothing courses taken by these homemakers varied from one to more than four. Eighty per cent of the homemakers had two to three years of clothing construction. The average number of items constructed by the alumnae having had two years of clothing construction at the college level was 15. For the homemakers having had three years of clothing construction, the average was 14. The participant with one clothing course had constructed 44 items in the past year, while the homemaker with more than four years of course work constructed 35 items.

The homemaker with one year of clothing construction at the college level had four children whose ages ranged from six to eighteen years. This fact might account for the amount of sewing being done by

this homemaker. The alumna with more than four years of training in clothing construction was a retired home economics teacher in the 60 to 69 age bracket. She told the researcher that in the past she had sewed a great deal, but that her sewing now consisted of sleepwear for herself and her husband, curtains for rental property they owned, and costumes for an organization to which she belonged.

The amount of home sewing in relation to the alumnae majors revealed that the household science majors, of which there were three, constructed more items on an average than any of the other majors. This was interesting to note since it is a rather widely accepted belief that the household science majors do not show much interest in the aesthetic aspects of the clothing construction area of home economics. However, two of the household science majors had had two courses in clothing construction which indicated that they were interested enough in sewing to elect a course above the one course required. These figures appear in Table XIII on the following page.

In response to the question regarding the alumnae's desire for additional course work in clothing construction, ten indicated they would like additional courses, nine checked "none," and one person did not answer. Of the ten who stated they were interested in more course work at the college level, five listed tailoring, four listed household sewing, and two listed flat pattern designing. Draping, advance construction, plain sewing, and remodeling were each listed once. The terms used to describe the desired courses were those of the homemakers. The term "household sewing" was interpreted by those using it to mean a course that would teach how to make draperies, curtains,

TABLE XIII

RESPONSES OF THE HOMEMAKERS IN THE ALUMNA GROUP SHOWING
RELATIONSHIP OF HOME SEWING TO HOME ECONOMICS MAJOR

Major	Number of Homemakers	Per Cent of Homemakers	No. of Items	Average No. of Items
Home Economics Education	8	40	179	22.4
Family Relations Child Development	4	20	16	4.0
Household Arts	3	15	38	12.7
Household Science	3	15	121	40.3
Clothing, Textiles, and Merchandizing	1	5	31	31.0
General Home Economics	1	5	34	34.0
Total	20	100	419	21.0

slipcovers, and to do upholstering. A list of these courses and the percentage of requests is shown on the following page.

The purpose of the last question on the supplement for the alumna group was to find out what the homemakers' beginning courses in construction covered and where this training was taken. All but two of the alumnae received their basic college clothing construction at Oklahoma State University. It was interesting to note that the types of garments constructed by alumnae in the 50 to 59 age bracket were generally bathrobes, lingerie, and negligees. The younger alumnae either made tailored dresses or blouses and skirts. In discussing this with a member of the Clothing, Textile and Merchandising staff, it was noted that earlier clothing courses placed more emphasis on the art of hand sewing than is done in classes today.

TABLE XIV
RESPONSES OF THE HOMEMAKERS IN THE ALUMNA GROUP
SHOWING ADDITIONAL COURSES DESIRED
IN CLOTHING CONSTRUCTION

Courses	Per Cent
Tailoring	50
Household sewing	40
Flat pattern designing	20
Draping	10
Advance costume designing	10
Remodeling	10
Plain sewing	10

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was concerned with the practices and opinions of 40 homemakers living within the City of Stillwater, Oklahoma. Twenty of the women were selected by random sample from the home economics alumna file at Oklahoma State University and 20 were selected by random sample from four different areas within the city.

The purposes of this study were:

1. To investigate, to some degree, the home sewing which is being done,
2. To identify some of the reasons why sewing is done in the home,
3. To investigate the relationship between the degree of formal education in clothing construction and the number and kinds of articles constructed,
4. To identify some of the opinions of homemakers regarding the necessity of clothing construction in the educational program of a young woman, and
5. To suggest any significances for further development of a curriculum in home economics with regard to the area of clothing construction.

The data collected in this survey indicated that 70 per cent of the homemakers participating in this survey were interested in sewing.

Forty-seven and five-tenths per cent, or approximately half of the participants, had done some sewing during the past year, and 22.5 per cent indicated that they had done a great deal of sewing. Altogether they had completed 748 items which is an average of approximately 18 items each. Only 30 per cent of the women had not done any sewing in the past year.

Several of the women who had not done any sewing in the past year were anxious to assure the researcher that they had done much sewing in the past. One homemaker of the alumna group who had taught home economics now has arthritis and cannot hold a needle. Another homemaker from the nonalumna group who had not done any sewing was employed full time. This homemaker had bought a new sewing machine and was looking forward to having time to sew during her three months vacation. One homemaker with five children said she usually sewed a great deal because it was the only way she could afford to dress her children. This identified homemaker indicated that her activities as a wife of a minister and pregnancy during the past year had kept her from making as many garments as she would have liked to have made. A widow who had not constructed any new garments, but had remodeled a dress and a suit, spoke of the satisfaction she received when an old garment was remodeled to be wearable.

The second purpose of this study was to identify some of the reasons for sewing. In order to do this, the homemakers were asked to check one or more of a series of answers which would indicate their reasons for sewing. These reasons were checked by the homemakers as follows:

More economical	80.0%
Pleasure	57.5%
Better fit	47.5%
Better quality	40.0%
More originality	37.5%
Better selection of texture	27.5%
Better selection of color	20.0%
Better styling	12.5%
No answer	5.0%

The sample for this survey is only indicative of the City of Stillwater. The results are a reflection of the city which is a rather conservative community without any large industries to support it. The university is probably the town's largest industry; therefore, the homemakers are probably more economy minded than homemakers in other communities. This may account for the fact that 80 per cent of the participants checked "economy" as their reason for sewing. A larger survey such as McCall's indicated that 85.3 per cent of the 3,450 women sewed for pleasure.¹ The results of the researcher's study were similar to a study by Mitchell who found that 96 per cent of the women in her survey sewed for economical reasons.²

Fifty-seven and five-tenths per cent of the women indicated they sewed for pleasure, and 47.5 per cent sewed because they could obtain garments with better fit. The fact that only 12.5 per cent of the women sewed because they believed they could obtain clothes with better style should be a challenge to every clothing construction teacher to

¹"The Woman Who Sews Today," McCall's Consumer Survey (Reprint from the Piece Goods Merchandiser, 14, 1960, p. 50).

²Marjorie F. Mitchell, "A Study of Home Sewing Practices of a Group of One Hundred Women in Lubbock County," (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Texas Technological College, 1959), p. 16.

help students create garments that are not only economical and well-fitted but stylish in the terms of the latest fashion.

The third purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between the degree of formal education in clothing construction and the number and kinds of garments. In order to do this, the sampling for the survey was divided into an alumna group and a nonalumna group. The home economics graduates in the College of Home Economics at Oklahoma State University are required to have one semester of clothing construction at the college level. Thus, all of the alumna group had clothing construction in college. Four of the 20 nonalumna group had taken clothing construction in college. The alumna group had constructed 419 items as compared to 329 items constructed by the nonalumna group.

A study of the amount of construction by categories revealed that 37.7 per cent of the items constructed by the alumna group was for the home. The nonalumna group constructed 22.7 per cent of their sewing on household items. Most of the sewing in this category was for draperies and curtains. Two homemakers in the alumna group had made slip covers for seven articles of furniture. Three alumnae had made six bed spreads and two nonalumnae each had made a bed spread.

Approximately a fourth of the items constructed during the past year had been for the homemakers themselves. The nonalumna group constructed 29.4 items for themselves, and 23.2 of the constructed items in the alumna group were made for themselves. The most numerous types of garments constructed were street and casual-wear dresses, skirts, blouses, and sleepwear. The fact that 35 per cent of the nonalumnae housewives were from 20 to 29 years of age and 40 per cent of the alumna group were from 40 to 49 years of age may have influenced the

results of this particular question. The children of the younger homemakers were mostly pre-school age. They had 17 children under six years old and five of these were under one year of age. Thus, these homemakers were probably more confined to the home. The type of clothes needed were more easily made than dressier garments which would have been necessary if the women had been less restricted.

The conclusion made from a review of the tables in Chapter IV was that in this study there was no great difference in the amount of sewing for the college student than that done by students whose formal education in clothing construction ended at the high school level. The alumna group constructed on the average of 21 garments each while the nonalumna group constructed an average of 16 items. This indicated that there was a slight increase of an average of five articles for each alumna over the homemakers in the nonalumna group.

It is the researcher's belief, based on the interest shown by the homemakers in this study, that clothing construction should continue as a part of the educational program of a young woman. Ninety-five per cent of the women participating in this survey believed that clothing construction was a necessary part of a young woman's educational program. Fifty per cent believed that this training should be included as part of the young woman's college program. However, some of the women who checked this qualified it by writing in the statement "if needed for professional training."

While it is a generally accepted fact that modern homemakers will not construct all of the clothes that they wear, it was interesting to note that these modern homemakers were spending from "some" to a "great deal" of time mending and altering clothes, and that 50 per cent of the

alumnae homemakers indicated a desire for more training in clothing construction at the college level. Those who checked that they would like to have additional course work indicated that they wanted advance courses in clothing construction. Fifty per cent of them listed tailoring, and 40 per cent requested "household sewing" and 20 per cent requested draping. Advance costume designing and remodeling were other courses that were listed. One person indicated a desire for a course in "plain" sewing.

The two hypotheses of this study were sustained. These hypotheses were first, that women of today are interested in home sewing, and second, they are sewing in their homes. This was based on the fact that 95 per cent of the women in this survey believed that clothing construction is a necessary part of the educational program of a young woman, and that 70 per cent of the women were sewing in their homes today.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study could be used as a basis for further research in which a larger sampling could be made in several cities selected by population brackets similar to those used by United States government surveys. The survey could be state-wide or include several states.

A survey concerning homemakers' desires for classes in clothing construction, and the type of courses desired should reveal interesting implications for future curriculum planning.

A survey limited to graduates in the department of clothing, textiles, and merchandising regarding application of courses in clothing

construction to their present occupation would make an interesting study which would have implications for future curriculum changes.

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ARGUMENT

1893A

A P P E N D I X

STRATHMORE PARCHMENT

1893/1894 F.H.C. 111A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to investigate the practices and opinions of homemakers with regard to home sewing.

1. Indicate your age group by checking one of the following:

☐ Under 20
☐ 20 - 29
☐ 30 - 39
☐ 40 - 49
☐ 50 - 59
☐ 60 - 69
☐ 70 and over

2. Indicate if you are employed outside the home.

☐ No.
☐ Yes, full time.
☐ Yes, part time.

3. Give the number of members in your family. _____

4. List the age and sex of your children.

5. List the age and sex of your grandchildren.

6. Indicate the extent of your clothing construction education by checking one or more of the following:

<input type="checkbox"/> Grade school	<input type="checkbox"/> 4-H
<input type="checkbox"/> Junior high school	<input type="checkbox"/> Adult classes
<input type="checkbox"/> Senior high school	<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> College or university	

Others _____

7. Indicate the extent of your home sewing during the past year.

Mending	<input type="checkbox"/> none	<input type="checkbox"/> some	<input type="checkbox"/> great deal
Alterations	<input type="checkbox"/> none	<input type="checkbox"/> some	<input type="checkbox"/> great deal
Remodeling	<input type="checkbox"/> none	<input type="checkbox"/> some	<input type="checkbox"/> great deal
New garments constructed	<input type="checkbox"/> none	<input type="checkbox"/> some	<input type="checkbox"/> great deal

8. Check one or more of the following which indicates your reason or reasons for home sewing:

<input type="checkbox"/> Better fit	<input type="checkbox"/> Better styling
<input type="checkbox"/> More economical	<input type="checkbox"/> More originality
<input type="checkbox"/> Pleasure	<input type="checkbox"/> Wider selection of color
<input type="checkbox"/> Better quality	<input type="checkbox"/> Wider selection of texture

9. Check one of the following which best describes your use of store alterations on ready-made garments when there is a charge for this service:

☐ Seldom
☐ Sometimes
☐ Almost always

10. Indicate the problem areas in clothing construction which give you trouble by checking one or more of the following:

☐ Fitting
☐ Alterations
☐ Remodeling
☐ Tailoring

Others _____

11. Indicate your opinion regarding clothing construction experiences in the educational program of a young woman.

☐ Unnecessary
☐ Necessary
☐ No opinion

12. Check one or more of the educational levels at which you think this experience in clothing construction should occur.

☐ Grade school
☐ Junior high school
☐ Senior high school
☐ College or university

SUPPLEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HOME ECONOMICS GRADUATES

1. Indicate the number of clothing construction courses you had in college.

_____ none
_____ one
_____ two
_____ three
_____ four
_____ more
2. State your major. _____
3. Indicate your desire for additional course work in clothing construction at the college level. _____ none _____ some
4. If answer to question 3 was "some," describe the type of course or courses you want.
5. In the space below, describe the garment or garments you constructed in your beginning clothing construction course in college.
Was this work taken at Oklahoma State University? ____ no ____ yes

VITA

Marjorie Ouida York

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: PRACTICES AND OPINIONS OF A SELECT GROUP OF HOMEMAKERS WITH
REGARD TO HOME SEWING

Major Field: Clothing, Textiles, and Merchandising

Biographical and Other Items:

Personal Data: Born December 31, 1918, Tulsa, Oklahoma, the
daughter of Nelson B. and Blanche V. York.

Education: Attended River View Grade School, Horace Mann Junior
High School, and graduated from Tulsa Central High School.
Undergraduate study: Oklahoma State University, 1938-1942.
Graduate study: Oklahoma State University, 1960-1961.

Professional Experience: Graduate Assistant in the Department of
Clothing, Textiles, and Merchandising, College of Home
Economics, Oklahoma State University from February, 1960 to
May, 1961.