

A STUDY OF HOME DEMONSTRATION AGENTS' TRAINING,
EXPERIENCE, PRACTICES, AND NEEDS AS RELATED
TO THE CLOTHING PHASE OF THE EXTENSION
SERVICE PROGRAM IN OKLAHOMA

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The author was concerned with the methods which the extension service clothing specialist would employ to plan and execute effectively the state clothing program. The clothing specialist must take an active part in on-the-job training of county extension workers in clothing and textiles. This study, therefore, was planned to collect information concerning the knowledge, practices, perception of needs, and problems of home demonstration agents.

The major responsibility of the extension service specialist lies in the area of maintaining a high level of achievement and upgrading the professional competency of the county extension workers. These county extension workers should have available the most current and accurate information possible. This information must be attractively packaged lest the home demonstration agents lose the interest of those people they are in a position to help. Women may now get excellent information from many directions, therefore, the extension clothing specialist and the home demonstration agents must employ every effective method if the program is to be as worthwhile in the future as it has been in the past.

The extension program began with the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, which provided the basis for cooperation of county, state, and the

Federal government to conduct a program of adult and youth education in agriculture and home economics under the direction of the state agricultural college. This program, the Cooperative Extension Service of the United States, is nation-wide, tax-supported and has as one of its purposes to assist in distributing useful and practical information. (1)

The content of extension teaching is dependent chiefly upon the research of the state experiment stations and research agencies of the Department of Agriculture. When the Smith-Lever Act was passed, 54 percent of the people in the United States were living in rural areas with 35 percent of these people actively engaged in farming. Today, the rural population is 36 percent, with only 13 percent of this number being actively engaged in farming. (2) Now the rural non-farm families outnumber the rural farm families. The interweaving of the ways of life of urban and rural people has inspired the extension service to review its program and its audience.

The clothing specialist must meet the challenge of rapid suburbanization by being aware of the changes taking place, keeping informed on latest research, and seeking new methods of reaching more people. The clothing specialists must continually adjust their teaching methods and programs to serve the needs of their county home demonstration agents. County home demonstration agents serve as field agents and their task is to carry out the purposes of the Smith-Lever Act as it relates to home economics. As of January 1, 1960, the 4,034 county home demonstration agents in the United States were being served by 74 clothing specialists. (3) Oklahoma's two clothing specialists are serving the 124 women extension agents in this state.

At the present time all states require a bachelor's degree and training in home economics for women employed as county home demonstration agents. The background education and experience of each agent varies; therefore, in order to prepare a state clothing program that will meet the needs of each county, it is well for the clothing specialist to analyze the training of each county home demonstration agent under her jurisdiction.

The importance and need of special training for extension workers was pointed out in 1920 in an address given by D. J. Crosby at the annual program of the Association of Land-Grant Colleges. He stressed the importance of the professional training of extension workers serving the role of teachers as follows:

The extension worker, whether a county agent, a state or district leader, or a specialist, needs (a) more than anything else a good, broad educational foundation; (b) technical training in the vocation of the people with whom he is to deal in agriculture; (c) professional training in education, with emphasis in his particular field. (4)

In this thesis the writer is using the word training to indicate activities which are aimed at improving the ability of the home demonstration agents to do their work. This definition includes acquiring information, developing abilities, and fostering the attitudes which will result in greater professional competence in the extension worker.

In a paper presented at a Land-Grant College Association Conference in 1948, Cannon C. Hearne stated:

From the many definitions of the word "train" given by Webster, I am using this one which most nearly applies to our situation. "To teach so as to be fitted, qualified, and proficient." This tends to rule out conferences and other activities which deal with immediate operational plans and activities which have an implied objective - - to teach an extension worker so that he will be fitted, qualified, proficient to do his extension job. This has a wider meaning than the training received in operational activities. (5)

Changes taking place in American life are so stupendous that they almost baffle the imagination. Today we live and work in an age of science and technology. Ferguson (6) explains that extension service can meet its teaching responsibility provided that the extension worker: 1) keeps up with the latest applicable research findings; 2) uses the team approach; 3) taps the thinking and the leadership of the people; and 4) does not let up on professional improvement.

One of the objectives of the national home demonstration program is to assist families - youth and adults - to be appropriately and attractively clothed at moderate cost and to be better informed consumers. Information on clothing construction, alteration and fitting, wardrobe planning, care and upkeep, consumer education, textiles, and grooming are included in the clothing and textiles program.

Homemakers are spending approximately 90 percent of the family income. Since about the same percentage of the income was spent for clothing and clothing services as was spent for housing in 1950, the importance of the clothing program should be recognized. (7) Plans for clothing the family are complicated by disparate purposes served by clothing and the consequent confusion in standards. The writer is of the opinion that at lower levels of income the protective functions of clothing determine its purposes, but with increase in income the decorative function rules. The significance of clothing habits lies in the fact that attitudes toward clothing involve not only consideration of health and beauty but are also influential in the formation of personality and character. Clothing assumes importance as an expression of individuality.

A 1959 report (8) of the Cooperative Extension Service of the

United States Department of Agriculture and the State Land-Grant Colleges and Universities revealed that a record of eleven million families were assisted by extension service. An additional ten million, mostly homemakers, were assisted in the selection and use of agricultural products. The planning of an effective clothing program is essential since extension service is in a position to influence the buying habits of such a great number of homemakers.

Statement of the Problem

The author believed that the planning of an effective clothing program by the clothing specialist was dependent upon the specialist having some knowledge of the needs, problems, practices, and the background of the county extension workers. This study was concerned with investigating:

- 1) Some of the opinions which the home demonstration agents expressed in regard to the adequacy of their preparation for instruction in the clothing and textiles program at the time of the study.
- 2) Some of the areas where home demonstration agents said they needed assistance or further instruction for an effective clothing program.
- 3) Some of the attitudes and beliefs the home demonstration agents expressed toward the entire clothing program.
- 4) Some facts regarding the educational and employment background of home demonstration agents.
- 5) Some facts concerning the county clothing program as it was being conducted at the time of the study.

CHAPTER II

PREVIOUS STUDIES RELATED TO TRAINING OF EXTENSION PERSONNEL

The content of the extension program was generally based on the Smith-Lever Act and its amendments. On July 1, 1954, the amended Smith-Lever Act became effective and a number of laws relating to extension work passed by Congress during the period 1928 to 1949 were repealed. The amended Smith-Lever Act placed new responsibility upon extension specialists and county agricultural and home demonstration agents. The extension projects dealing with public affairs contemplated under the amended Smith-Lever Act were to be directed toward better understanding and strengthening of the economy.

One of the continuing goals of the extension service is to aid agriculture by informing consumers about the agricultural products of the state and the effect of these products on the economy of the state and the nation. An example of how our economy is affected by cotton produced in Oklahoma is the demand by consumers for cotton for clothing and other uses which influence the price, quality, and quantity of cotton.

Home demonstration agents should have available for the club women of their counties current information concerning world trade and the effect of agricultural products used in the clothing industry, ie., jute, linen, wool, cotton, etc., on the economy of nations.

Loomis and Beegle discussed the role the extension workers play in bringing about a better understanding of the three fields named above in their work with farm people:

Adult education in general and in the three fields in particular will be made more effective if those who are responsible for it have appropriate organization skills and educational methods. All leaders involved in adult education in rural America need professional training and experience in rural life, the social sciences, and adult education. Such training should be of professional level and coupled with in-service training. Relatively few leaders are sufficiently trained in these fields. (9)

Some of the earliest studies made in agricultural extension work were conducted from 1922 to 1929 under the supervision of Meredith C. Wilson and Clarence E. Smith. These studies related to the training of local extension leaders, the effectiveness of agricultural extension work in improving farm practices, and the measurement of effectiveness of extension methods of teaching. (10)

In a study of professional preparation of county extension workers, Shinn and Merrill in 1927 stated:

Extension workers, though not so officially designated, are essentially teachers, and their importance as educators is recognized. Successful extension workers teach the theory and practice of agriculture and home economics, and need to understand how to conduct demonstrations successfully. They must have a broad knowledge of rural people, and be able to inspire them to follow their teachings. The fact that extension work is a voluntary movement on the part of rural people appears to make it even more important that extension leaders be both technically and professionally trained for their work. (11)

The results of an extensive survey relating to the preparation and training of extension workers was published in 1938 by Wilson and Crile. (12) This was a factual survey and included tables to show such items as tenure of office by county extension agents, college training and degrees, subjects taken in undergraduate and advanced study courses in college, subjects found most helpful in extension

work, informal experiences of the agents that had contributed to their ability to do extension work, and courses suggested for three to six weeks summer schools. One-third or more of the college preparation of the women agents on both the undergraduate and the graduate levels was concerned with home economics. Courses in technical home economics headed the list of courses found most helpful in conducting extension work and also appeared at the top of the list of courses, which in the judgment of the county workers, were of greatest importance from the standpoint of additional work desired. Courses dealing with technical home economics headed the list suggested by the women agents for special three to six weeks extension summer schools.

Adequate professional training and experience for both men and women county extension agents was stressed by Knaus and Hearne in 1943:

Almost universally a county extension agent is required to be a graduate of a recognized college of agriculture, to have a creditable scholastic record, and the characteristics of leadership. Many agents now have training above the bachelors degree. A high percentage of those selected who have not had adequate training have been less successful agents. Farm people want their county extension agents to have a combination of professional training and practical experience. Therefore, successful experience is another standard qualification. Experience after graduation from college as a farmer or homemaker, or teacher of agriculture or home economics is the most desirable. (13)

A study by Mount (14) in 1945 concerning the training of personnel for extension work in agriculture found that agents interested in a graduate program wanted to study adult education, psychology, and educational principles applied to extension work; the application of methods and materials used in influencing human behavior, such as discussion and conference leadership, agricultural news writing, visual aids, public relations, rural sociology and community organization; technical agriculture related to the area where the agent works and

courses which aid in the integration of a total farming program; and research as applied to the effectiveness of techniques and methods used in extension teaching. The most commonly used methods of presentation used in the clothing program were lecture and demonstration, although these were not necessarily always the most effective methods.

A study to investigate the training needs of county agents with a view toward planning training programs for county agricultural extension workers was made by Matthews in 1950. He pointed out the implications of the study for the in-service training of county agents as follows:

The training provided through supervision and other informal operational activities should be integrated with both formal and apprenticeship pre-service training so that all types contribute to the same objectives. Special coordinating and integrating techniques are needed in personnel procurement, training, and supervision to meet the needs expressed in the criteria. (15)

A study of the training, experience, and background of extension workers in Mississippi by Moseley in 1953 revealed that extension service personnel were aware of the need and were willing to give the time for educational improvement. Those reared in rural areas felt that this was of more value to them than their work experience as home economists in areas other than extension service. (16)

In 1956 Adams (17) prepared a dissertation for a doctor's degree at Oklahoma State University in which he discussed the results of a study he had made concerning the performance of specified extension tasks by county agricultural agents in Oklahoma in relation to their professional training and experience. His study revealed that there is a positive association between the amount of formal training the county agricultural agents have received and the facility with which they report having performed specified extension tasks in the field.

He learned also that agents who have had little or no formal training in specific subject matter areas report that they have greater difficulty in performing tasks that are related to the specified subject matter areas. Adams concluded that county extension workers who reported classroom teaching experience rated this experience second only to their experience in farming as a helpful experience in performing extension tasks and responsibilities in the county.

The literature which was related to preparation of the county and home demonstration agents and their planning and conducting of the county extension program revealed that the agents felt a need for training and courses in psychology, public relations, rural sociology, and other methods and materials used in influencing human behavior and instruction in technical agriculture and homemaking related to the geographical areas where the agents work. Shinn and Merrill (11) emphasized the importance of technical home economics training for extension agents, along with Kraus and Hearne. (13) Adams' (17) study pointed up the necessity for formal training in specific subject matter areas in which the agent is working. The writer, however, found relatively few research studies which related directly to the training of county home demonstration agents for their responsibilities in the area of clothing.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

The needs of county extension workers in the clothing and textiles area of the extension service program can be met more effectively when those in a position to guide their training are aware of the training and other background experiences, practices, needs, and opinions of these agents. It was the purpose of this study to investigate certain of these areas in order to have pertinent information available for the clothing specialists and others who assist in planning the training of the county workers in the clothing and textiles phase of the extension program. Home demonstration agents seemed by the writer, therefore, to be the best sources of information. A questionnaire for the collection of these data was developed. The use of a questionnaire for this purpose was supported by Good and Scates as follows:

A questionnaire is a form prepared . . . to secure the responses to certain questions; as a general rule these questions are factual, intended to obtain information about conditions or practices of which the respondent is presumed to have knowledge. (18)

Various kinds of questions were developed to gain information on the five aspects of the research problem as it was stated in Chapter I, (supra, p. 5-6): (The questionnaire appears in the appendix.)

- 1) To elicit the agents' opinion in regard to the adequacy of their preparation for clothing and textiles instruction, a check list was employed for rating academic preparation as superior, good, or

insufficient on construction techniques, pattern alteration and fitting, buying, wardrobe planning, textile and fabric selection, current textile legislation, care and upkeep of clothing, and posture and grooming. Other questions concerning adequacy of preparation were the number of years and the type of previous employment.

- 2) To determine some of the areas where home demonstration agents said they needed assistance or further instruction for an effective county clothing program, open-end questions were included whereby the agents indicated the areas of the clothing and textiles program in which they felt need for help from the state clothing specialist and listed the more important needs of the people in their counties in relation to the clothing and textiles program.
- 3) To become aware of some of the attitudes and beliefs of home demonstration agents toward the entire clothing and textiles program, free response questions gave the agents opportunity to explain their methods of presentation other than lecture and/or demonstration in buying, clothing construction, care and upkeep of clothing, and grooming. Essay type questions which allowed the agents to elaborate on their recognized personal need for clothing instruction were included along with questions whereby they indicated whether or not they felt that their present county clothing program was as good as other parts of the total home economics program.
- 4) To gain information concerning the county clothing program as it was being conducted by the home demonstration agents at the time

of the study, questions were included concerning the number of adult and 4-H Clubs with which the agents met or were responsible for clothing and textiles instruction, whether or not leader training was used in the clothing program, the number of weeks devoted to the clothing program during the past year, resources used in planning the county clothing program, areas of the clothing program from which the greatest number of requests for information were received, methods of presenting information, and from what sources information for clothing instruction was received.

- 5) To investigate the home demonstration agents' educational and employment background, the agents were given questions concerning the number of years in their present position, number of years and type of employment outside the home, degrees held and dates received, colleges attended, major and minor subjects, plus a check list of all college courses taken in the area of clothing and textiles.

The questionnaire was reviewed by Dr. Luther H. Brannon, Director of Extension, and Miss Esther Martin, Acting State Home Demonstration Agent, in order to have the benefit of the judgment of competent extension authorities who were familiar with Oklahoma Extension Service. Revisions were made in accordance with the suggestions made by these members of the state extension staff. Some of the questions were modified for the purpose of clarity.

After the questionnaire had been revised and approved, it was administered to five former county home demonstration agents who were employed at the central office of the Oklahoma Extension Service. A number of suggestions made by the former county home demonstration

agents were incorporated into the final draft of the questionnaire as a result of this pretest.

In order to get equal representation from each county, the population to be studied included the white county home demonstration agents who were employed by the Oklahoma Extension Service in the 77 counties of the state on April 1, 1960. Those who had less than one year of experience as an extension agent in an Oklahoma county on that date were eliminated because the questionnaire was designed to include information concerning the county clothing program for the previous year. Six of the home demonstration agents had been employed less than one year; therefore, questionnaires were sent to home demonstration agents in 71 counties.

An introductory letter and a stamped return envelope were mailed with the questionnaire. (Appendix I) Sixty-two questionnaires were returned, giving an 87.3 percent return. Of the 62 returned questionnaires, three were incomplete, therefore, final analysis was based on answers returned by 59 respondents.

In order to preserve anonymity of the respondents, each questionnaire was given a number. As the questionnaires came in at different times over a period of three weeks, they were summarized when they were received. Tabulation was done by hand. An initial list table of the responses for each questionnaire were put on a single line of a large summary sheet in order to get an overview of the results by showing what the range was.

Methods used for the analysis of the findings of this study were simple summations, frequency distribution, percentages, and averages. Examples of simple summations were the figures indicating the number of

home demonstration agents who had been employed as home economics teachers, the number who had completed masters degrees and the number who had majored in clothing, textiles and merchandising. Averages were used when indicating the number of years employed in their present position, the number of years they had served as assistant home demonstration agent, and the number of clothing courses taken in college. An example of frequency distribution was the figure indicating the number of home demonstration agents who had been employed as teachers and who used the leader-training program. Percentages were used to indicate the number of home demonstration agents who felt that their training in the clothing area was superior, good, or insufficient, and the number of agents who needed further instruction in the clothing area. The procedure of the study was that of a descriptive survey and the findings which follow must be read with the limitations of the procedure in mind.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to investigate home demonstration agents' knowledge, practices, needs and problems as related to the clothing and textiles phase of the home demonstration program in Oklahoma.

This study was based on the responses of 59 Oklahoma home demonstration agents. The state of Oklahoma is divided into five districts and the county extension personnel are under the direct supervision of district agents. The returns from the five districts were tabulated separately but since the findings of each district were quite representative, the investigator made final analysis on the total state figures rather than on individual district figures.

Questionnaires were tabulated from 59 counties, 76.6 percent of the total number of Oklahoma counties. The other 23.4 percent were not used because of incomplete answers on the questionnaires or the term of duty did not meet the one year requirement for eligibility. Six counties were ineligible because the tenure of their home demonstration agents was less than one year. Three of the returned questionnaires were incomplete, thus, final analysis was based on returns from 59 home demonstration agents.

Opinions expressed by home demonstration agents regarding adequacy of their preparation for instruction in clothing and textiles. The results of these findings are found on Table I.

TABLE I
 OPINIONS EXPRESSED BY HOME DEMONSTRATION AGENTS
 REGARDING ACADEMIC PREPARATION
 FOR INSTRUCTION IN CLOTHING
 AND TEXTILES*

Areas of Academic Preparation	Agents' Opinion					
	Superior		Good		Insufficient	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Construction techniques	13	22.0	41	69.5	5	8.5
Pattern alteration and fitting	3	5.1	40	67.8	16	27.1
Buying	5	8.5	36	61.0	18	30.5
Wardrobe planning	3	5.1	43	72.9	13	21.0
Textile and fabric selection	4	6.8	43	72.9	12	20.3
Current textile legislation	0	0.0	21	35.6	38	64.4
Care and upkeep of clothing	6	10.2	48	81.4	5	8.5
Posture and grooming	7	11.9	48	81.4	4	6.8

*The 59 agents checked more than one area of instruction.

The home demonstration agents rated their preparation good in a majority of the areas of clothing and textiles. More home demonstration agents rated their preparation superior than rated their preparation insufficient. There was a tendency for the respondents to rate their academic preparation insufficient in current textile legislation. In only three areas of instruction were there as many as 90 percent of the sample who felt that they had superior to good preparation. These areas were construction techniques, care and upkeep of clothing and posture and grooming.

Opinions expressed by home demonstration agents regarding need for instruction from clothing specialists, and opinions expressed by home

demonstration agents regarding needs of club women in the county clothing program. Tables II and III reveal some of the areas where home demonstration agents said they needed assistance or further instruction for an effective county clothing program.

TABLE II
AREAS IN WHICH NEED WAS EXPRESSED BY HOME
DEMONSTRATION AGENTS FOR INSTRUCTION
FROM CLOTHING SPECIALISTS

Areas of Instruction	Home Demonstration Agents	
	No.	%
Construction	31	52.5
Textiles	19	32.2
Fitting and alteration	19	32.2
Buying	16	27.1
Other areas	12	20.3

In analyzing Table II, less than one-third of the home demonstration agents indicated needs in areas other than clothing construction. Some of the other needs mentioned by the respondents were for help with seam finishes, tailoring, linings, accessories, sewing equipment, stain removal, and attachments for sewing machines. Emphasis was placed on the need for individual help from the clothing specialists in areas of textiles and fitting and alteration.

Data presented in Tables II and III indicate that the most commonly mentioned need was in the area of clothing construction, although only eight percent had indicated that their preparation was insufficient in this area. Table III indicates that almost 60 percent of

the club women needed further help in clothing construction and almost 50 percent needed help in consumer education. Almost one-fourth of the agents mentioned that their club women needed assistance in wardrobe planning, seam finishes, accessories, speed techniques, inner facings, inner linings, and selection of foundation garments. In Table III the agents were indicating the needs of the women of their entire county.

TABLE III
HOME DEMONSTRATION AGENTS' OPINIONS REGARDING
NEEDS FOR INSTRUCTION OF CLUB WOMEN
IN COUNTY CLOTHING PROGRAM

Areas of Instruction	Home Demonstration Agents	
	No.	%
Construction	35	59.3
Consumer education	28	47.5
Other areas	16	27.1
Fitting and alteration	15	25.4
Textiles	14	23.7

There may seem to be a discrepancy in Tables II and III between the number of home demonstration agents and the number of responses because some of the respondents gave more than one answer. An example of this is shown in Table III where 59 agents gave 108 answers. Each percentage is a separate unit, or it represents the number of times each response was given by the group.

Attitudes and beliefs home demonstration agents express toward the entire clothing program. It was felt by this writer that the attitude

of home demonstration agents toward the clothing program was determined to some degree by their background and preparation for the program.

Those agents whose interests and study had been in the clothing area prior to their employment as home demonstration agents may have been more inclined to place emphasis on this phase of the program. They may also have been more aware of methods of presentation of the clothing program.

Twenty-two percent of the respondents indicated that clothing was their major course of study as an undergraduate. One hundred percent of those who had majored in clothing in college did their own personal clothing construction. Of the 59 respondents, 50, or 84.8 percent indicated that they did their own clothing construction. One-third of the respondents who indicated that the clothing program in their county was better than other phases of their total home economics program also indicated that clothing was their major course of study. Sixty-nine percent of the agents who were clothing majors had been employed as teachers with an average tenure of four years and two months.

Data for Table IV were taken from a free response question in which the areas of buying, clothing construction, care and upkeep, and grooming were listed. The respondents listed methods of presentation used by them in each of the areas. Visual aids and printed matter were used in all four areas listed for instruction. Dress reviews were used in the buying, grooming and construction areas but they were used by a much smaller number of agents. Other methods of presenting clothing information in the buying area were exhibits and role playing. Two other methods of instruction employed in the clothing construction area were judging contests and exhibits. Guest demonstrators and tours were

listed as two other methods of presenting information in the grooming area. No one method of presenting clothing information was listed by more than one-third of the home demonstration agents. The methods listed in Table IV are all those mentioned except lecture and/or demonstration.

TABLE IV
METHODS USED BY HOME DEMONSTRATION AGENTS
FOR PRESENTING CLOTHING INFORMATION

Methods Used in Various Areas of Instruction	Home Demonstration Agents No.	%
Buying:		
Field trips	12	20.3
Visual aids	11	18.6
Printed matter	7	11.9
Dress reviews	2	3.4
Other	6	10.2
Clothing construction:		
Workshops	19	32.2
Visual aids	12	20.3
Printed matter	6	10.2
Dress reviews	3	5.1
Other	5	8.5
Care and Upkeep:		
Printed matter	7	11.9
Visual aids	6	10.2
Other	4	6.8
Grooming:		
Visual aids	12	20.3
Printed matter	5	8.5
Dress reviews	4	6.8
Other	4	6.8

Facts regarding educational and employment background of home demonstration agents. Table V contains tenure information about the home demonstration agents as of April 1, 1960. It is shown that 16, or 27.1 percent of the respondents had been employed as home demonstration agents between five and ten years. Sixteen of the respondents had been employed less than five years as home demonstration agents. Fifty-four percent of the respondents reporting had been employed ten or more years as home demonstration agents. The average tenure of the respondents in their present position was eight and one-half years. The average number of years those reporting had been employed as home demonstration agents was ten and one-half years. The range in years of service was from one to 32.

TABLE V
YEARS RESPONDENTS WERE EMPLOYED AS
HOME DEMONSTRATION AGENTS

Years Employed	Number of Home Demonstration Agents						
	1	3	5	7	9	11	. . . 16
1 through 4							X
5 through 9							X
10 through 14				X			
15 through 19					X		
20 through 24			X				
25 through 29		X					
30 and over	X						

As shown in Table VI, 42.4 percent of the agents had been assistant home demonstration agents. Eleven months was the average length

of time the respondents had served as assistant home demonstration agents. Thirty-six respondents or 61 percent had taught home economics. The average number of years served in this capacity was three years and three months. Fifteen or 25.4 percent of the home agents were employed as home economists in some position related to home economics prior to their present position. One year and two months was the average length of time the respondents reported having been employed outside the home as a home economist in an area other than extension service or teaching.

TABLE VI

RESPONDENTS' WORK EXPERIENCE: TYPE OF POSITION
AND AVERAGE AND RANGE IN YEARS
EMPLOYED IN EACH

Types of Positions Held	Home Demonstration Agents		Average No. of Yrs. Employed	Range in No. of Yrs. Employed
	No.	%		
Home demonstration agent	59	100.0	10 yrs., 6 mo.	1 - 32 yrs.
Ass't. home demon- stration agent	25	42.5	11 mo.	3 mo.-7½ yrs.
Home economics teacher	36	61.0	3 yrs., 3 mo.	4 mo.-19 yrs.
Home economist in areas other than extension and teaching	15	25.4	1 yr., 2 mo.	6 mo.-10 yrs.

Fifty-eight, or 98.4 percent of the home demonstration agents had a bachelors degree. These were granted between 1920 and 1960. Forty-six, or 79.3 percent of the home demonstration agents who graduated from college had taken graduate work. Twenty-five, or 42.4 percent of the agents had earned graduate degrees at the masters level. The range in years for earning this degree was 1932 to 1960. Only one respondent reported having no degree although some undergraduate work had been

completed by this individual. Of those holding a master's degree, 19 people or 76.0 percent received them since 1955. Seven, or 24.0 percent of the 25 masters degrees were granted with a major in rural adult education. Some agents were working on a graduate degree program while others had completed a few courses to meet special needs. Still others had attended extension summer schools where they took a special three weeks course in extension education.

In the last six years extension workers have received added encouragement and opportunity to attend special training activities and regular graduate institutions. At present, extension workers in Oklahoma are allowed to attend certain approved training courses while receiving full salary and their subsistence is paid for three weeks during any study leave period.

TABLE VII
DATES OF DEGREES GRANTED TO RESPONDENTS

Dates	Home Demonstration Agents			
	Bachelor's Degree		Master's Degree	
	No.	%	No.	%
1920 - '24	2	3.5		
1925 - '29	5	8.6		
1930 - '34	12	20.7	1	1.7
1935 - '39	12	20.7		
1940 - '44	6	10.4	1	1.7
1945 - '49	7	12.0		
1950 - '54	10	17.2	4	6.9
1955 - '60	4	6.9	19	32.8
Totals	58	100.0	25	43.1

All percentage figures are based on the number of home demonstration agents having bachelor's degrees.

Twenty-four, or 40.7 percent of the respondents took their bachelor's degrees between 1930 and 1939. Eleven of this number have earned degrees at the master's level. Of the 13 respondents who took their bachelor's degree between 1940 and 1949, 12, or 92.3 percent had taken graduate courses and nine of this number had completed the work for their master's degrees. Fourteen home demonstration agents were granted bachelor's degrees after 1950. Ten, or 71.4 percent of this number had taken graduate courses and four had earned master's degrees. Only one agent had received a master's degree before 1940.

TABLE VIII
COLLEGES ATTENDED BY RESPONDENTS

Colleges	Home Demonstration Agents	
	No.	%
Oklahoma State University	55	93.2
Other state supported colleges in Oklahoma	33	55.9
Oklahoma University	13	21.0
Private and denominational colleges in Oklahoma	10	16.9
Out of state colleges and universities	10	16.9

Data presented in this table show that 55, or 93.2 percent of the agents attended Oklahoma State University. Thirty-three of the respondents had attended other state colleges of Oklahoma. Twenty-one percent of the agents had taken undergraduate work at Oklahoma University. None of the agents indicated that they had taken a master's degree from that institution although some graduate courses were taken there. Other in-state colleges attended by the respondents were Oklahoma College for Women, Phillips University, Oklahoma Baptist University,

Cameron Junior College, Murray Junior College, and Oklahoma City University. Out-of-state colleges and universities attended by the agents were Iowa State College, University of Arkansas, University of Colorado, Colorado State College, Western Kentucky State College, John Brown University in Arkansas, Kansas State University, Mt. San Antonio College in California, and George Peabody College in Tennessee.

TABLE IX
MAJOR COURSES STUDIED IN COLLEGE BY RESPONDENTS

Courses	Home Demonstration Agents	
	No.	%
Home economics education	41	69.5
Clothing and textiles	8	13.5
Household arts*	5	8.5
Foods and nutrition	3	5.1
Family relations and child development	2	3.4
Totals	59	100.0

*Prior to the school year 1955-'56, both the Clothing, Textiles, and Merchandising Department and the Housing and Interior Design Department were in the Household Arts Department.

As shown in Table IX, 69.5 percent of the agents indicated that their major course of study was home economics education, while 13.5 percent checked clothing and textiles as their major course. Household arts majors made up 8.5 percent of the agents and 5.1 percent of the respondents were foods and nutrition majors. The area which showed the least number of majors was family relations and child development with 3.4 percent. Seven of the agents indicated that their major course of study when taking a master's degree was rural adult education.

Minor courses covered a wide number of subjects with 12 different

courses being indicated. The course mentioned most frequently was social science by 13 of the respondents. Elementary education, clothing and textiles, and English were each indicated by six respondents as their minor subject. Foods and nutrition, and commerce were the subjects indicated by each of four agents as their minor. Other courses indicated as minors were mathematics, health and physical education, history, home economics education, art, and speech.

TABLE X
LAST CLOTHING COURSE TAKEN BY
HOME DEMONSTRATION AGENTS

Course	Home Demonstration Agents	
	No.	%
Flat pattern design	16	30.2
Tailoring	11	20.8
New trends in construction	7	13.2
Family clothing	3	5.7
Advanced construction	3	5.7
Advanced Textiles	1	1.9
Millinery	1	1.9
Visual aids in clothing	1	1.9
Costume design	1	1.9
Other*	9	16.8
Totals	53	100.0

*Course names were not given. The respondents gave only the date of the last clothing course taken.

The findings of Table X were based on the courses indicated by 53 respondents. This table shows that 16, or 30.2 percent of the agents' last clothing course was flat pattern design. Tailoring was indicated

by 20.8 percent of the respondents as their last clothing course. Seven of the respondents' last clothing course was new trends in clothing. Advanced construction and family clothing were each checked by three agents as their last clothing courses. Advanced textiles, costume design, millinery, and visual aids in clothing were each indicated by one respondent as their last clothing course.

TABLE XI
DATES OF LAST CLOTHING COURSES TAKEN BY
HOME DEMONSTRATION AGENTS

Years	Home Demonstration Agents No.	%
1930 - '35	6	11.3
1936 - '40	2	3.8
1941 - '45	2	3.8
1946 - '50	5	9.4
1951 - '55	7	13.2
1956 - '60	31	58.5
Totals	53	100.0

Table XI shows that 11.3 percent of the 53 respondents have taken no clothing courses since 1935. Fifteen, or 28.3 percent of the agents have taken no clothing courses since 1950. More than one-half, or 58.5 percent of the agents have taken their last clothing course since 1955.

Table XII gives information taken from a free response question in which the agents listed the sources of information used by them in their clothing program. Both commercial companies and printed matter were indicated by 40 agents each as sources of information. The agents indicated their help from commercial companies came from research lab-

oratories, pattern companies, Wool Bureau, Cotton Council, sewing machine companies, button manufacturers, thread and zipper companies, and fabric companies. The main types of printed matter used by the agents were magazines, newspapers, texts, and United States Department of Agriculture bulletins. Twelve, or 20.3 percent of the respondents indicated that local personnel supplied information for their clothing program. They listed local store clerks, buyers, style shows, and personnel from equipment companies in this category. Other sources of information listed by 8.5 percent were television and radio, college instructors, other extension agents, home economists, and short courses.

TABLE XII
SOURCES OF INFORMATION USED BY
HOME DEMONSTRATION AGENTS
FOR CLOTHING PROGRAM

Sources	Home Demonstration Agents	
	No.	%
Commercial companies	40	67.8
Printed matter	40	67.8
Local personnel	12	20.3
Other	5	8.5

Data presented in Table XIII indicates that the most commonly mentioned clothing course taken by the respondents was basic clothing construction. This was indicated by 95.6 percent of the agents. Advanced construction and basic textiles were each indicated by 76.3 percent while 59.3 percent of the agents listed tailoring as one of their courses taken. Costume design was indicated by 55.9 percent of the respondents and flat pattern design was indicated by 49.2 percent.

Fifteen of the respondents checked that they had taken the advanced textiles course. Speed techniques, clothing renovation, family clothing, and economics of clothing were each indicated by 18.6 percent of the agents. Ten agents reported that they had taken a draping course while nine checked millinery. Other clothing courses indicated by the agents were visual aids in clothing, readings in textiles, decorative fabrics, custom dressmaking, childrens' clothing, and advanced costume design.

TABLE XIII
COLLEGE CLOTHING COURSES TAKEN BY
HOME DEMONSTRATION AGENTS

Courses	Home Demonstration Agents	
	No.	%
Basic construction	57	96.6
Advanced construction	45	76.3
Basic textiles	45	76.3
Tailoring	35	59.3
Costume design	33	55.9
Flat pattern design	29	49.2
Advanced textiles	15	25.4
Speed techniques	11	18.6
Clothing renovation	11	18.6
Family clothing	11	18.6
Economics of clothing	11	18.6
Draping	10	16.9
Millinery	9	15.3
Others	8	13.6

Facts concerning the county clothing program as it was being conducted at the time of the study. The average number of home demonstration clubs per county was 21 with a range of seven to 65 clubs. The average number of 4-H Clubs per county under the supervision of the home demonstration agents was 18. These range from zero to 46 clubs. In some counties the 4-H Clubs are supervised wholly by the assistant home demonstration agent. The total number of other clubs or groups with which the agents meet or are responsible for clothing and textiles instruction was 46.

Thirty-three of the agents indicated that they had a long-range clothing program. Of this number, 60.6 percent had been home economics teachers. Thirteen of these 33 agents had been employed as home demonstration agents for 15 or more years, and 12 of this number had master's degrees. Thirteen, or 39.3 percent of the agents having a long-range clothing program rated their clothing program better than other parts of the total home economics extension program in their county. Only 19.2 percent of those having no long-range clothing program rated their clothing program better than other parts of their total home economics program.

Fifty-six, or 94.9 percent of the respondents indicated that they used leader training in their adult clothing program. The agents indicated that leader training was used in the 4-H Club clothing program by 37, or 62.7 percent.

The respondents indicated that the average period of time devoted to the clothing program during the past year was ten weeks with a range of three to 34 weeks. It is difficult to determine the exact length of time devoted to the clothing program in each county as every home demon-

stration club has an individual program and not all clubs give the same length of time to each phase of the work.

TABLE XIV
RESOURCES USED BY HOME DEMONSTRATION AGENTS
IN PLANNING COUNTY CLOTHING PROGRAM

Resources	Home Demonstration Agents	
	No.	%
Printed matter	33	55.9
State extension specialists	32	54.2
Local resources	28	47.7
Commercial companies	22	37.3
Other	6	10.2

Table XIV gives information on resources used by the home demonstration agents in planning the county clothing program. It is shown that printed matter is used by more respondents than any other resource. This was indicated by 33, or 55.9 percent of the agents. More than one-half of the agents indicated that they received help from the state extension specialists in planning their county clothing program. Almost one-half of the respondents reported that they received help from local resources. Commercial companies were listed by 22 of the respondents as a source of help in planning their program. Other resources listed were short courses, surveys, exhibits, fairs, films, and loan material from fabric companies.

Table XV gives information taken from a free response question in which the agents listed the areas of the clothing program where information was most frequently requested. Many of the agents indicated more than one area of request.

TABLE XV

AREAS FROM WHICH HOME DEMONSTRATION AGENTS
HAVE GREATEST NUMBER OF REQUESTS
FOR CLOTHING INFORMATION

Area of Request	Home Demonstration Agents No.	%
Construction	51	86.5
Fitting and alteration	14	23.7
Selection of pattern and fabric	11	18.6
Tailoring	10	16.9
New fabrics	8	13.6
Buying	7	11.9
Care and upkeep of fabrics and garments	6	10.2
Other	6	10.2
Seam finishes	5	8.5

Fifty-one agents indicated that clothing construction was an area from which requests were received. The table shows that requests for information in the area of fitting and alteration were indicated by 23.7 percent and in the area of tailoring by 16.9 percent of the respondents. Eighteen and six-tenths percent of the agents indicated that selection of pattern and fabric was an area of request. Requests in the areas of buying, care and upkeep, new fabrics, and seam finishes were indicated by less than 15 percent of the respondents. Other areas of request were accessories, inner linings, care of sewing machine, and use of attachments.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary and Conclusions

The primary purpose of this study was to secure some information concerning the knowledge, practices, needs and problems of home demonstration agents in relation to their county clothing program. In order to accomplish this purpose, the writer investigated:

- 1) Some of the opinions which the home demonstration agents expressed in regard to the adequacy of their preparation for instruction in the clothing and textiles program at the time of the study.
- 2) Some of the areas where home demonstration agents said they needed assistance or further instruction for an effective clothing program.
- 3) Some of the attitudes and beliefs the home demonstration agents expressed toward the entire clothing program.
- 4) Some facts regarding the educational and employment background of home demonstration agents.
- 5) Some facts concerning the county clothing program as it was being conducted at the time of the study.

The study was limited to the white county home demonstration agents currently employed by the Oklahoma Extension Service who had served a minimum of one year in an Oklahoma county on April 1, 1960. In order to avoid unequal representation, the home demonstration agents

who were employed to work exclusively with Indian and Negro adult and 4-H Clubs were not included in this study.

The plan for this study required the preparation of a questionnaire whereby the agents could indicate their formal training, their work experience, and their opinions of their adequacy of preparation for instruction. The tentative questionnaire was reviewed by five former Oklahoma home demonstration agents who made suggestions for the improvement and clarification of questions in the instrument. After receiving approval of the director of extension, a letter of explanation and the questionnaire were mailed to 71 home demonstration agents who had completed at least one year in the field as an employee of Oklahoma Extension Service. Sixty-two questionnaires were returned by the agents.

Data, including expressed opinions, from those questionnaires were compiled and an analysis was made. No less than 60 percent of the home demonstration agents rated themselves good in all subjects regarding academic preparation for instruction in clothing and textiles, except in the area of current textile legislation. In contrast to this, more than one-half of the agents indicated insufficient knowledge of current textile legislation. Other areas in which about 20 percent of the home demonstration agents expressed the opinion that their academic preparation was insufficient were pattern alteration and fitting, buying, wardrobe planning, and textile and fabric selection.

Although the above figures indicate that a majority of the home demonstration agents rated their preparation good in clothing construction, more than one-half of the respondents indicated a need for instruction from the clothing specialists in clothing construction.

Almost one-third of the agents indicated need for help in the areas of buying, textiles, and fitting and alteration. These agents also indicated that they felt that the needs of the club women of the county were consistent with their own needs; ie., more than one-half of the club women needed instruction in buying, textiles, and fitting and alteration.

Visual aids and printed matter were named in the areas of buying, clothing construction, care and upkeep and grooming as methods used by the agents for presenting clothing information. Commercial companies and printed matter supplied information for clothing instruction to more than one-half of the respondents.

Flat pattern design was the course indicated by about one-third of the agents as their last clothing course taken. Almost 60 percent of the agents indicated that they had taken one or more clothing courses since 1955. The average number of clothing courses taken by the home demonstration agents was six, with a range of one to 12. The clothing courses listed by 50 percent of the agents were basic and advanced clothing construction, tailoring, basic textiles, and costume design.

The agents reported that the average number of home demonstration clubs per county was 21, with a range of seven to 65. They indicated that the average number of 4-H Clubs per county was 18, with a range of zero to 46.

Thirty-three of the home demonstration agents reported having a long-range clothing program. Leader training for the adult clothing program was reported by 94.9 percent of the respondents. Sixty-two and seven-tenths percent of the home demonstration agents reported

using leader training in the 4-H Club clothing program. The agents indicated that the average number of weeks devoted to the clothing program was ten, with a range of three to 34 weeks.

The average tenure of the respondents in their present position was eight and one-half years. The average number of years those reporting had been employed as home demonstration agents was ten and one-half years. The range in years of service was one to 32. Eleven months was the average length of time the respondents had served as assistant home demonstration agents. More than one-half of the agents had taught home economics. One-fourth of the agents had been employed as home economists in some position related to home economics prior to their present position.

Ninety-eight and three-tenths percent of the respondents had bachelor's degrees and 42.3 percent had master's degrees. Only one respondent reported having no college degree.

Home economics education was the major course of study of 69.5 percent of the respondents. Seven of those having master's degrees reported that their major course of study was rural adult education.

Oklahoma's Land-Grant college, Oklahoma State University, supplied a majority of the personnel for home demonstration work in Oklahoma, and more than three-fourths of those responding reported having taken courses beyond the bachelor's degree at that institution.

Sixty-seven and seven-tenths of the home demonstration agents have changed their fields of work one or more times before working with extension service. The average time as home demonstration agent was more than three times that served in other areas. Sixty-one percent of the respondents had been home economics teachers prior to their employment with extension service.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings in this study, the writer recommends:

- 1) That the supervisors and clothing specialists of the Oklahoma Extension Service give careful consideration to the expressed needs of the county home demonstration agents with a view to providing training in the areas in which the agents have expressed a need for additional training to help them in the performance of their duties in the field. The areas in which one-third or more of the agents expressed a desire for additional training and information were clothing construction, textiles, and fitting and alteration.
- 2) Some plan should be considered for having all agents return to college at regular intervals to improve their professional training. The state extension service personnel could advise agents regarding a proposed program for continued study.
- 3) Supervisory personnel could formulate a plan to maintain a reasonably uniform status of training among home demonstration agents. The extension service could develop a plan for training of undergraduate students who aspire to become home demonstration agents.
- 4) The objectives of the college courses in clothing and textiles for undergraduate students and the courses for experienced personnel could be re-examined with a view to making them more nearly meet the needs of the extension program. From the opinions expressed by the home demonstration agents regarding areas where they felt need for further instruction, buying, textiles, and fitting and alteration need more emphasis.
- 5) This study could be used as the source of suggestions regarding

further research for the purpose of exploring more completely some of the areas where the results were not conclusive as in the areas of in-service training needs of employed personnel. The courses available for advanced study may not be the courses the agents feel are most worthwhile and the required course of study for undergraduates may not be meeting needs of the extension workers. An effective clothing program depends on the awareness of the needs in this area by the home demonstration agents. The outlook should be broadened and new learnings should be incorporated into the clothing program.

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APPENDIX

179 North Hall
Stillwater, Oklahoma
April 12, 1960

As a part of my graduate work in the Department of Clothing, Textiles and Merchandising in the College of Home Economics, Oklahoma State University, I am developing a questionnaire which will help the clothing specialist to determine the areas in the field of clothing where home demonstration agents feel they are best and least prepared to give instruction.

Dr. Luther Brannon, State Director of Extension Service, and Miss Esther Martin, Acting State Home Demonstration Agent, have read the questionnaire and have given me permission to ask you to co-operate by filling in the enclosed, relatively brief questions.

Since this is a project for a thesis, it will be very important for you to give an answer to each question.

I should like to ask you to fill in the blanks and return the forms in the self-addressed stamped envelope by April 30.

Your questionnaire will be treated as confidential material, and your responses will remain anonymous. In order to make this report really helpful to the Home Demonstration program, straightforward answers to all the questions will be appreciated.

I should like to thank you in advance for your help.

Very truly yours,

Juanita Nofflet

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HOME DEMONSTRATION AGENTS
ON EXTENSION SERVICE CLOTHING PROGRAM

Schedule No. _____
April, 1960 _____

1. Extension District. _____
2. Number of years in present position. _____
3. Number of years I have been employed outside the home as:
 - 1) Home agent only. _____
 - 2) Assistant home agent only. _____
 - 3) Home economics teacher. _____
 - 4) Home economist in an area other than extension or teaching. _____
(Specify position) _____

4. Number of clubs with which you meet or are responsible for clothing and textiles instruction:
 - 1) Home demonstration clubs. _____
 - 2) 4-H Clubs. _____
 - 3) Other clubs or groups. _____
5. Do you have a long-range clothing program? Yes. _____ No. _____
6. Do you use leader-training in the clothing program?
 - 1) Adult clubs? Yes. _____ No. _____
 - 2) 4-H Clubs? Yes. _____ No. _____
7. During the past year, approximately how many weeks did you devote to the entire clothing program? _____
8. List the resources you use in planning the county clothing program: _____

9. In which areas of the clothing program do you have the greatest number of requests for information? _____

10. If you have found any method of presentation other than lecture and/or demonstration effective for instruction in the following, please indicate:

In buying _____

In clothing construction _____

In care and upkeep of clothing _____

In grooming _____

11. At the present time how do you rate your academic preparation for instruction in the following areas?

	Superior	Good	Insufficient
1) Construction techniques?	_____	_____	_____
2) Pattern alteration & fitting?	_____	_____	_____
3) Buying?	_____	_____	_____
4) Wardrobe planning?	_____	_____	_____
5) Textile and fabric selection?	_____	_____	_____
6) Current textile legislation?	_____	_____	_____
7) Care and upkeep of clothing?	_____	_____	_____
8) Posture and grooming?	_____	_____	_____

12. List academic degrees held and dates received:

13. List colleges which you have attended:

14. Major subjects:

Minors:

15. List name and date of last clothing course(s) taken:

16. In which areas, (if any) of the clothing program do you feel a need for instructional help from your state clothing specialists?

17. From what sources other than Extension Service do you receive additional clothing information?

18. Do you do any of your personal clothing construction, excluding alteration and mending? _____

19. Check college clothing courses taken:

- 1) Basic clothing construction.
- 2) Advanced clothing construction.
- 3) Speed techniques (Bishop Method).
- 4) Tailoring.
- 5) Draping.
- 6) Flat pattern design.
- 7) Clothing renovation.
- 8) Basic textiles.
- 9) Advanced textiles.
- 10) Family clothing.
- 11) Economics of clothing or textiles.
- 12) Costume design.
- 13) Millinery.
- 14) Other courses. (please list) _____

20. What do you think are the more important needs of the people of your county in relation to the clothing program?

21. How well do you think your program is meeting these clothing needs?

Better than other parts of the total home economics extension program.

About as well as other parts of the program.

Not as well as other parts of the program.

Comment:

VITA

Juanita Louise Hoefflet

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: A STUDY OF HOME DEMONSTRATION AGENTS' TRAINING, EXPERIENCE, PRACTICES, AND NEEDS AS RELATED TO THE CLOTHING PHASE OF THE EXTENSION SERVICE PROGRAM IN OKLAHOMA

Major Field: Clothing, Textiles, and Merchandising

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born near Vinita, Oklahoma, October 9, 1926, the daughter of Joseph and Mimmie Hoefflet.

Education: Graduated from Holy Family High School, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1945; Attended Northeastern State College, Tahlequah, Oklahoma; received the Bachelor of Science degree from Oklahoma State University, with a major in Household Arts in January, 1949; Central Washington College, Ellensburg, Washington, summers of 1949 and 1950; Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, summer of 1953; Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa, summer of 1957; Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, summer of 1955; and completed requirements for the Master of Science degree in August, 1960, at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma.

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