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**The Relation Between the Economic  
Status of the Oklahoma Farm Family  
and the Farm Woman's Standards  
of Management With Respect  
to Clothing**

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## THE PROBLEM STATED AND THE PLAN OF PROCEDURE

The following is a report of an investigation made in five selected districts of Oklahoma for the purpose of finding the relation between the economic status of the family and the standards of management of the farm home makers with special reference to clothing its several members. The schedule used for the collection of data was presented to the farm home makers by trained field workers. No claim is made to originality in that part of the schedule used for determining the practices of women in clothing their families. A large part of it was the same as that used by the Bureau of Home Economics as a basis for Present Trends in Home Sewing by O'Brien and Campbell (1), which in turn it seems, originated with the extension committee of the textile section of the American Home Economics Association under the chairmanship of Tucker in 1923 and 1924.

An effort has been made in the presentation of the results to give the facts in a somewhat informal, popular way, so that it may capture the attention of many who may not be skilled in reading statistical data in the form of tabulated material.

Economic status in this study will be expressed, not in terms of income, but in terms of other indications of economic well-being—those things which money buys, makes possible to acquire, viz., land owned, tenure, acreage operated, housing, provision for modern equipment and labor saving devices in the home, furnishings and provisions for leisure.

The practices of the farm women in their efforts to provide the clothing for their families will be examined in an attempt to find out whether there are any evidences of uniformity in their activities which will suggest "standards" of management, and to discover whether there are any practices from which they seem reluctant to depart, even though the economic status has improved.

Light will be thrown on the farm woman's activities by those factors which have contributed to her education, particularly those manifest by her social contacts, viz., activities in the church, participation in the work of the Home Demonstration clubs, opportunities for making trips away from home and for making visits of which she has taken advantage, access to the use of cars as a means of temporarily getting away from the house environment and of seeing and mixing with people other than those comprising her family unit, and the possibilities at hand of making vicarious contacts with the outside world through periodical reading matter.

This is presented by no means to imply that all factors influencing her practices of standards (if her practices justify the use of the term) or that all terms of economic status are considered, but it is offered to set forth some facts and relationships which may obtain and have not been presented hitherto.

In other words, it is the wish to present a picture of the farm woman in these selected localities of Oklahoma as she appears in her local setting while she is busy in the activities of clothing her family; to see what contributions she makes to the economic status and to discover what are her standards.

### Areas and Selection of Families Studied

Approximately one hundred schedules were taken in each of five counties in the state, viz., Garfield, Kiowa, Tillman, Jackson, and Carter. There was no special purpose for using the county as a unit other than that of giving the location a convenient name.

Garfield county, which comprises an area northwest of Central Oklahoma, is part of what was the old Cherokee Strip which was opened to white settlement in 1893. The topography is rolling prairie. The chief agricultural

interest is wheat production. Agriculture shares with oil production in its interest to the population in parts of the county. The latter interest colors, to a certain extent, the activities of the women of those localities. The farm women studied from that locality were largely natives of Kansas, Missouri, Illinois and Iowa.

Kiowa, Tillman and Jackson Counties are contiguous. They are located in the southwestern part of the state. One's view in some parts of these counties is limited only by one's strength of vision; rolling prairie predominates. The Washita Mountains break the general smoothness of the contour; the farmsteads in the neighborhood of the mountains have a barren and rather austere aspect. Rainfall is less here than in Garfield County. (2) These counties are given over largely to cotton production, although, especially in Kiowa County, there is some diversification of crops. This section was opened to white settlement some ten years later than that of which Garfield County is a part. The makeup of these sections on the basis of the nativity of the farm women interviewed was fairly homogenous. The women of Kiowa County were largely from Texas, Missouri, and Arkansas; of Tillman County, from Texas, Alabama and Arkansas; and of Jackson County, from Texas, Alabama and Tennessee. These three county groups so nearly alike in topography, climate, agricultural interests, and sectional social heritage, were studied for the purpose of determining the validity of the smaller samples by comparison with the larger sample.

The Carter County group brings the influences of Texas and Arkansas nativity. The area was part of the old Chickasaw nation, and although white people were allowed to settle there, it was the red man's country until the time of statehood in 1907. It is located in the south central part of the state, being separated by only one county from Texas. The county is quite broken. Cotton is the agricultural staple. Fruit raising and gardening are practiced in that area more than in the other areas. Much land is given over to oil production and oil activities. Many people are living on the land, isolated as farm folk, but not living from the land. In this study, schedules from farm women only were taken. The Garfield County group and the Carter County group have convenient access to the towns of Enid and Ardmore with populations of 16,576 and 14,181 (3) respectively. The Kiowa, Tillman and Jackson County groups have for their county seats, Hobart, Frederick, and Altus, towns of 2936, 3822, and 4522 (3) respectively.

Families within the group were selected in accordance with the principle of random sampling.

## INDICATIONS OF ECONOMIC WELL BEING

### Land Tenure and Acreage Operated

Of the five hundred thirty-six families who designated the tenure under which their farms were operated, two hundred sixty-seven families were owners, two hundred forty-seven rented their land, and twenty-two families were living on the land by virtue of the fact that the heads of the families were working by the day or month for the farm operator.

This class of laborers made up only 4.1 per cent of the entire number of families interviewed. In Garfield County no laborers were interviewed. This group will be included with those who rented their farms and will be classed as tenants. The percentage of those families living on owner operated farms as found by this investigation is given in the following table along with the figures for the state as a whole and the separate counties which are derived from data given in the "U. S. Census of Agriculture—Oklahoma 1925" p. 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, and 17, the year before this study was made.

From the accompanying table, if farm ownership is taken as a criterion of economic status, the families interviewed were on a slightly higher economic level than the average for both the county groups and the state as a whole.

**TABLE I**  
**Farms Owner Operated in Oklahoma as a Whole in Sections Studied**

	Percentage given by U. S. Census (4)		Percentages as found by this investigation
The state as a whole	41.4	All	49.8
Garfield Co. as a whole	55.9	Garfield Co. group	63.6
Kiowa Co. as a whole	37.5	Kiowa Co. group	44.2
Tillman Co. as a whole	39.9	Tillman Co. group	53.9
Jackson Co. as a whole	34.4	Jackson Co. group	40.7
Carter Co. as a whole	37.3	Carter Co. group	47.7

The acreage operated as reported by all families was not felt to be wholly reliable. From consideration of only those schedules which seemed reasonably accurate—two hundred thirty-six in number—the average acreage was 163.5 acres. The figures given by the "Census of Agriculture—Oklahoma 1925" show the average size farm in Oklahoma in 1925 to be 156.5 acres. (5). This arithmetic average of this study is slightly biased by four farms consisting of over eight hundred acres. By taking account of these farms, the average so nearly coincides with that of the state that we have reason to consider the relatively small sample fairly representative.

The farms varied in size from ten acres to eight hundred forty acres. Forty and two-tenths per cent of these families were operating one hundred sixty acres. Practically the same percentage of the families were operating less than one hundred acres and the remaining number, about twenty per cent, were operating more than one hundred sixty acres. Putting these figures in terms somewhat more readily understood, it may be said that considering five families, two were operating one hundred sixty acres, two, less than that number, and one, more than that acreage. The farm owners were operating on the average 183.7 acres, while the tenants were utilizing 139.1 acres. The farm owners obviously were operating a greater acreage than the tenants.

#### Farm Houses

The average size of the houses on these farms was 4.6 rooms. This arithmetic average presents the picture quite well since more families lived in houses of four rooms than in those of any other size, and furthermore, from a frequency table the median is found in the "four room" class. Thirty-six per cent of the families lived in houses of four rooms. A little more than sixty per cent of the families lived in houses from three to five rooms in size; fourteen per cent lived in houses of six rooms. About as many families lived in houses of two rooms as in those of seven and eight rooms taken together. Only ten of the five hundred forty-one families lived in houses of nine rooms and three of the whole number lived in houses of ten rooms. Not all of the rooms in some of these larger houses were furnished.

The size of the houses tells little of housing space unless other factors are known. The larger houses as a rule were occupied by the fewer people. The homes with ten rooms allowed on the average three rooms for each person, while on the other hand, an average of 2.4 persons were apportioned to one room in the houses of two rooms. An average of 1.3 persons per room was found in the house of four rooms which is called the average-sized house, and an average of 1.06 persons to the room when the whole group interviewed was considered. Extreme cases of crowding were found occasionally; a man, wife and eight children were found in two rooms and a loft. A house of three rooms offered a home to fifteen people.

By classifying on basis of land tenure there was found a shifting from the average. The land owners were living in houses, the average size of which was five rooms, while the tenants on the average were living in homes of four rooms. The farm owners' families were allowed 1.1 rooms per person while the tenant families accommodated themselves to .8 rooms per

person. Or telling the story in another way, .9 persons, members of owner families and 1.3 persons of tenant families were apportioned to a room. The houses of five rooms, the average sized house for the owners' families, allowed 1.1 rooms for each member of the family, while the average sized house offering a home to a tenant's family required greater crowding, since only .8 of a room was available per person.

The repair in which homes were kept can be evaluated only in rather inexact terms. The rating made took into consideration leaking roofs, rickety steps and porches, broken window panes, sagging and torn screens, poor or hanging wall paper and plastering, state of foundations, and condition of paint.

The repair in which many of the houses were kept was deplorable. Only about three per cent of those visited could be said to be in excellent repair. Slightly under one-third could pass as "fair." Nearly one-fourth were listed as "poor," while over five per cent were classed as "very poor."

From table II it is evident that the homes of the owners were kept in a much better state of repair than those of the tenants.

**TABLE II**  
**State of Repair of Farm Homes Classified on Basis of Tenure**

Condition of Repair	Owners 249 homes	Tenants 249 homes
Excellent	4.8%	0.8%
Good	42.6%	21.3%
Fair	36.9%	37.0%
Poor	12.4%	33.7%
Very Poor	3.2%	7.0%

Twenty-five and six-tenths per cent of the houses were unpainted—that is, they never had been painted—while fifteen per cent in addition had very poor paint. In other words, two houses out of five were either unpainted or badly in need of paint. The ratio for this same condition of paint for owners' houses was two out of seven; for tenants' houses, over one out of two.

Nearly eight per cent of the houses had no screens while many more had screens that were not serving with maximum efficiency. In one of the county groups all of the houses were screened, but in one of the other groups, 22.1 per cent of the houses had no screens. Thirteen per cent of the tenant families were living in unscreened houses as compared with 2.9 per cent of these home owners.

#### Home Equipment

Only six homes of five hundred twenty, slightly over one per cent of all the homes, were equipped with a central heating system. The absence of central heating systems is not an indication of special hardship in this state as it might be in many sections of the country, for the climate is quite mild and homes can be heated by means of stoves with no special difficulty. Consequently, such conveniences are looked upon as indications of a rather enviable economic status. Four owners' homes and two homes of tenants were so provided.

Five per cent of five hundred four homes were equipped with electric lights either by a private lighting system or by connections with a "high line." Nearly five per cent, in addition, used natural gas for light. Sixteen per cent used gasoline or acetylene, while the remaining number, seventy-four per cent of the group—eighty-three per cent of the tenants, and sixty-five per cent of the farm owners—depended upon kerosene only as a source of light.

Of five hundred twenty-six homes where the question of the water supply and equipment for the use of it was answered, eight and two tenths per cent had water in the house. The Garfield County group made a showing of almost nineteen per cent with such convenience, while the record of the Carter County group showed less than two per cent of the homes equipped with water

in the house. In the Garfield County group, only, were any homes of tenants so equipped. There, 11.8 per cent of the tenant group had water in the house. Here a number of the tenants visited were renting the farm from the father of the husband or wife. The length of time since the settlement of the country was becoming evident. Fifteen per cent of the owners' homes as against less than five per cent of the tenants', provided water in the house.

Only four per cent of the four hundred ninety-four homes from which reports were received were equipped with indoor toilets. No tenant homes were so furnished. Thirty-nine homes or seven per cent of the whole group made any permanent provision for bathing. Two of these provided only for shower baths and two of the homes were equipped with tubs to which the water had to be carried. Two families indicated that a wash house was provided. Only two tenant homes were furnished with any permanent equipment for bathing.

Six per cent of the houses had equipment for sweeping other than a broom. One and five-tenths per cent were equipped with electric vacuum cleaners. Only four tenants' families had any suggestion of labor saving devices for sweeping; and only one family had electrical equipment. Separators, which may be classed as farm equipment probably more properly than household equipment, were found in 37.7 per cent of five hundred thirty-six houses. Slightly less than 26.9 per cent of the tenants as against 48.5 per cent of the owners' families were provided with separators. Only about forty per cent had made provision for the more improved type of churn. Tenants show a lower per cent than owner families. There may be some doubt whether this piece of equipment is an indication of improved economic status or a higher standard of management. However, the poorest families were making use of makeshifts and the most primitive equipment for churning. Less than two per cent of the families owned fireless cookers. Only one tenant possessed one. Fifteen per cent of the families used some kind of improved iron. Twenty-two per cent of the owners' homes and nine per cent of the tenants' were equipped with other than sad irons. Four per cent of all the families were using electric irons, four owners' families and one tenant's being so equipped. Washing machines were owned by approximately twenty-five per cent of the families, with owners' families standing to tenants' than tenants', the ratio in favor of the owners being two to one.

Sixty per cent of the four hundred seventy-eight families reporting had telephones in their homes. Here again, owners' families were more fortunate than tenants, the ratio in favor of the owners being two to one.

Less than forty per cent of the houses used ice for refrigeration. Here again the owners' families exceeded the tenants' in a ratio approximately eight to five. Two ice producing refrigerators were reported from five hundred five families. The families possessing them were farm owners.

### House Furnishings

The furnishings, like the conditions of repair, are difficult to evaluate in any exact terms. Descriptive terms were used and effort, in as much as possible, was made to keep the same standards for the terms throughout the investigation. "Adequate" was defined as just enough to perform the physical processes of eating, sleeping, and resting without hardship. "Comfortable" was a term indicating that physical needs were provided with more equipment than was absolutely necessary. The furnishings were in reasonable repair and there was some provision for the pleasurable passing of leisure time. "Very comfortable" implied a greater provision than that indicated by the term "comfortable" and in addition, some attention was given to the aesthetic. On the other hand "poor" furnishings were described as "enough but of poor grade and in poor repair with little or no indication of taste or comfort;" while "very poor" furnishings hardly provided for the necessities but not for the decencies of life.

Approximately thirty-eight per cent of the families had "adequate" fur-

nishings. Twenty-eight per cent of the homes were furnished "comfortably," while fifteen per cent were listed as "very comfortable." Sixteen per cent were classed as having "poor" furnishings; three per cent, as "very poor."

As indicated by Table III the homes of the farm owners, on the whole, were furnished much more comfortably than are those of the tenants.

**Table III**

**House Furnishings of Farms of Owners and Tenants on Basis of Adequacy and Comfort.** (Figures adjusted on basis of one hundred in each group.)

Farm Homes		
House Furnishings	Owners 100 families	Tenants 100 families
Very Comfortable	24	4
Comfortable	36	19
Adequate	32	47
Poor	8	24
Very Poor	--	6

#### Provisions for Leisure

Sixty per cent of the families—seventy-five per cent of the owners and forty-three per cent of the tenants—had one or more musical instruments. Pianos were found in slightly over nineteen per cent of the homes, organs in thirteen per cent, radios in over twelve per cent, and phonographs in twenty-eight per cent of the homes. When the data are placed on a comparable basis, it is found that when thirty pianos were owned by land owners' families, seven were owned by tenants' families; organs were equally distributed between owners' and tenants' families; eighteen radios were (4) owned by landowners when six were possessed by tenants' families; when thirty-four phonographs were distributed into the homes of owners' families, nineteen were found in homes of tenants. Two musical instruments were found in fifteen per cent of all the houses. When twenty-one homes of landowners possessed more than one musical instrument, eight homes of tenants were so provided. Ten families possessed more than two musical instruments, and following the general trend, the families of landowners possessed larger numbers of instruments requiring for their provision, the relatively greater outlay of money.

Oklahoma Experiment Station Bulletin 176, p. 13, states that for every dollar spent for periodical reading, \$.57 was spent by owner families and approximately \$.43 by tenant families.

Car ownership by farm families can not be allocated to provisions for the spending of leisure time alone since the isolation of the farmstead requires some means of transportation for the purpose of transacting the business of the farm. However, the car is a source of recreation to the farm folk. We are especially concerned here with the car as an indication of economic well-being. One frequently hears the statement made that all farm folk have cars. An examination of the data gathered in this investigation shows that slightly under one-fifth of the entire number of families interviewed did not own cars. When checking the number in relation to land tenure, it has been found that one farm owner out of eight was without a car, while one tenant family out of four did not enjoy the use of a car.

It used to be said that the farm woman was tied to her home, that monotony was characteristic of her life. Two-thirds of the farm women interviewed had taken at least one trip away from home or had made an extended visit within two years previous to the interview. But here again the wives of the farm owners were more fortunate than their tenant sisters in breaking the monotony of the home activities. Approximately three out of seven wives of tenants had not enjoyed this recreation, whereas only three out of ten wives

of the farm owners had been denied the change from home duties.

Summarizing, then, there are a number of comforts and satisfactions—goods so-called—that money will buy which may be considered as indicative of economic status, and there is an unvarying relationship in direction, if not in absolute degree, between the possession of these goods and the ownership of land. The owner families are by far the more fortunate in the possession of these goods listed, to such a degree, that, roughly speaking, one may consider the ownership of land a symbol of economic status.

## THE FARM WOMAN'S CONTRIBUTION IN RESPECT TO THE CLOTHING OF HER FAMILY

The homemaker is usually thought of as a dispenser of comforts to her family. It is true that many of her duties are bound up in family ties of affection but her work also includes many performances that could be delegated to persons hired for the purpose. Then she becomes a producer in the same sense as her husband whose work is a source of the family income. Her role as a producer is evident particularly when considering the family's clothing. The ready made clothing which can be bought in great variety as to article and style especially furnishes a measuring rod for the value of the home-makers activities.

How does the farm woman in Oklahoma by her practices in buying clothing, by her skill in constructing wearing apparel and by her ability in planning for the clothing needs of her family contribute to the family income? And from these practices can one see any suggestions of standards of management? Does the wife of the farm owner pursue a course which is different from that of the tenant's wife?

### Buying Practices

First of all, where does she do her buying? Does she buy the articles of clothing in the little country store? Does she go to the larger towns—probably the county seat—or does she extend her market to the mail order houses in the larger cities? Does she give any reasons for her choice of market? Do transportation facilities have anything to do with her choice of market place? Incidentally, who does the buying—does she, her children, or her husband? Does she choose a particular store—one that caters especially to rural trade? What does she think of the chain store as compared with the stores locally managed?

Distance has always been a factor with which to reckon in rural communities. However, since the advent of the automobile, it has been contracted to such a degree that a shopping trip which took five hours at the swiftest pace of the "best horse or horses on the place" can now be accomplished in less than an hour. Furthermore, roads that at one time permitted only travel on horseback at certain periods of the year, thereby usually limiting the shopping to the man of the family, now accommodate the automobile which may carry the entire family. The little time required makes it possible for the housewife to leave home to do her shopping. In fact, as indicated by this study, 47 per cent of the group of women from families owning cars can drive them. In Oklahoma even the worst roads are rarely impassable, or even very poor, for more than a few days at a time during the year. Even so, the man is still a factor as a clothing purchaser, as gathered from informal conversations of the field workers with many of the farm women. Particularly, the women of those families which made purchases requiring the least discrimination, infrequently went to the shopping center. Daughters, especially those who went to school in town, were found assuming shopping responsibilities.

The distance to the shopping center for ready-made goods, which was the same for the most part for dry goods, was an average of 11.2 miles for the whole group. Thirty-eight per cent lived between five and ten miles from the shopping center, and thirty per cent between ten and fifteen miles. Twenty-six per cent lived at a distance of fifteen miles or more from the town where



clothing was bought. These figures are slightly high, since for reasons other than those evident in the clothing study, effort was made to secure families in the sample that were sufficiently far away from towns to represent "open country."

Twenty per cent of the families relied upon the village stores for their clothing. The village store offered first aid to twenty per cent of the farm families, particularly for work shirts, overalls, work gloves, gingham and domestics. This group went to the county seat usually for their better clothing. Sixty per cent listed the county seat as their shopping center. Thirty-six per cent had ready access to centers larger than ten thousand inhabitants. Of the one hundred and nine families who used the small village practically exclusively for buying their clothing, fifty-eight per cent were tenants and forty-two per cent belonged to the owner class.

Five hundred fourteen women reported on the subject of buying clothing from mail order houses. Of this number, sixty-four and five-tenths per cent, or approximately two-thirds of the group, patronized mail order houses. Twenty-nine per cent of those who bought by mail order qualified the statement by saying they "occasionally bought," or they "seldom ordered," so there remained only about forty-six per cent who made a great practice of ordering by mail. Of course, "seldom," "occasionally," or even "always" are rather inexact terms. They give nothing as to amount bought. They suggest only trends in practice.

Although one shall see later that women give many reasons for buying from mail order houses in preference to purchasing from the home merchants, the reaction of the women of owners' families and those of tenants' did not differ very greatly. The owners' families patronized the mail order houses slightly more than those of tenants. This fact may be explained by the practice of using credit which can be obtained more conveniently, possibly, from the local merchant by the tenant with less money at his command. The practically negligible difference, however, may be explained by the size of the sample.

It may seem rather naive to offer reasons for courses of action as given by individuals as statistical data. The results here are given for what they are worth. In the interview the women were asked in a conversational way why they bought from mail order houses. The answers were given spontaneously and not prompted by the field worker. The replies, however, fell into rather few categories. Five per cent of the women who bought from mail order houses indicated that these houses presented greater variety of goods than did the stores of local merchants. Thirty-nine per cent said that convenience was a factor in their choice of the mail order house, while fifty-six per cent declared that price was the outstanding reason for their preference.

This last statement may seem included in one previously mentioned, that of ability to procure greater variety of goods. It is not to be interpreted as implying that the women thought they could always procure goods of the same quality at the mail order houses for a lower price than at the local stores, but that they could secure goods for less money. Discrimination in quality of goods was not always evident in their conversations. That which seemed uppermost was the smaller outlay of money.

Isolated but very illuminating were some of the other statements of reasons given in regard to buying from mail order houses. A number of women, nearly two per cent of those patronizing mail order houses, spoke of the lure of pictures in the catalogs. An occasional one, however, said she was not able to judge quality from descriptions in the catalogues, and further, that frequent changes of names of materials was confusing to her when ordering. An appreciable number spoke of liking to buy from mail order houses for the reason that they were not over-persuaded by sales people to buy what they did not want. This statement was rather significant in that it added data towards proving the statement that women, and especially rural women, are timid in holding to their own wishes in the face of possible criticism of their standards.

The reasons were listed in the same order and approximately by the same percentages by women of the two economic classes.

The women, generally speaking, were satisfied with their purchases by mail. More than half of them reported that they were seldom disappointed with their purchases, while over a third were enthusiastic in their statements that they were never disappointed. About one woman out of eight indicated that frequently her purchases by mail were unsatisfactory to her. There was practically no difference in the statements regarding satisfaction in purchases as listed by the wives of owners and of tenants.

Among those frequently disappointed with mail order purchases and those who did not patronize mail order houses were those who volunteered the "one could do as well in one's home town if one would watch for sales," or "one could do as well in home stores." Two per cent of their statements showed a loyalty to the home merchant. Several spoke of a certain store in their county seat catering to rural trade which they considered equal in buying opportunities to the mail order houses. A number said that they had at one time considered buying by mail advantageous, but since certain well known chain stores had been established in their shopping centers, they had abandoned their patronage of mail order houses.

Sixty-seven per cent of those patronizing mail order houses bought yard goods, sixty-three per cent bought ready made clothing, while fifty per cent bought shoes. A smaller group occasionally purchased other articles. Hats were referred to by a few women.

Table IV lists the garments made for women and girls over fourteen years of age, and for children, with the percentages of the five hundred thirty-seven women in Oklahoma who reported on the garments made in the home, and also the figures given by Ruth O'Brien and Maude Campbell in "Present Trends in Home Sewing" from the data gathered by the Bureau of Home Economics for rural and village women and for city women.

The comparison of the results is quite interesting to a student of clothing. The farm women in Oklahoma seemed to make more clothing for children than did the farm women and village women concerned in the Bureau's study; with the exception of coats and hats. They seemed even more hesitant in attacking the construction of coats and hats for women and girls above fourteen years of age. House dresses, wash dresses, slips and night gowns were made by so nearly the same percentages of the two groups that the difference is hardly one to consider. Aprons were made by slightly smaller proportion in Oklahoma than in those localities studied by the Bureau. It is interesting to note that a number of women especially volunteered that the ready made aprons were relatively so cheap that it hardly paid to make them.

The difference in the percentages in respect to home made underwear may be explained to a certain extent by fashion in the form of garments. The most marked differences are in the percentages of silk and wool dresses made at home. The reasons for these differences may be worth looking into. The mild climate may account for some of the difference. Economic status may further account for it.

Twenty-three and five tenths per cent of the Oklahoma women said that they occasionally made their silk dresses which may be interpreted that they made some of them and bought some. However, it may mean very well (although effort was made to get clear cut statements) that they occasionally made them and only occasionally possessed them.

Twenty-five per cent said they occasionally made wool dresses. If those who indicated that they occasionally made silk and wool dresses were added to the number who always made them the percentage would practically coincide with the Bureau's figures.

The farm women as shown by the Oklahoma study and that of the Bureau of Home Economics, do more home sewing than the city women, or at least make more different kinds of garments. It may not be assuming too much to say that it would seem that the rural women are offering their services in clothing construction as a contribution to the economic status of the farm

illies more than the city women. The percentages of wives of owners and tenants who made these garments are remarkably coincident.

Men's shirts were made more frequently at home than any other article of men's clothing. Seventeen and two-tenths per cent of the women (18% of the owners' wives and 16% of the tenants) always made shirts for their men folks, while seven and five-tenths of the women made them occasionally. Practically seventy-five per cent of the men and boys over fourteen years of age bought their shirts ready made. Only two of the five hundred thirty-seven women made any attempts at coat making and four women occasionally made trousers. Eight per cent of the women made pajamas for the husbands and sons over fourteen. Eighteen per cent made summer underwear. Three women had made men's bath robes.

**TABLE IV**  
**Proportion of Farm Women in Selected Localities in Oklahoma Usually Making Certain Garments for Women and Girls Over Fourteen Years of Age and for Children, Compared with the Proportion of Rural Women and City Women as Found by the Bureau of Home Economics.**

Garments	Women (in percentages)		
	Okla. Study	Bureau of H. E. Study (6)	
	Rural (537)	Rural and Village (1095)	City over 5,000 (718)
<b>Garments for Women and Girls under 14 years of age</b>			
House dresses	87.4	87.1	73.9
Summer wash dresses	84.5	86.3	79.0
Silk dresses	37.7	61.5	62.4
Wool dresses	43.7	63.6	54.3
Skirts	21.3	48.2	39.7
Blouses	18.2	45.3	36.9
Aprons	84.5	88.9	72.9
Coats	8.8	27.3	21.5
Hats	9.0	33.6	29.9
Slips	79.1	81.2	73.4
Petticoats	41.5	64.7	52.5
Chemises (Teddies)	64.5	46.8	43.2
Bloomers	65.6	70.3	51.1
Night gowns	87.9	86.3	74.2
<b>Garments for Children</b>			
Cotton dresses	70.9	40.0	27.9
Wool dresses	54.3	33.2	20.1
Cotton suits	39.4	20.4	13.5
Wool suits	31.1	14.9	8.6
Shirts and blouses	51.4	22.2	11.1
Coats	29.3	27.5	18.4
Hats	15.6	17.2	12.3
Sleeping garments	88.9	45.6	31.2
Drawers or bloomers	72.3	41.0	27.4
Petticoats	53.0	36.3	25.8
Slips	72.2	36.4	25.4
Rompers	64.3	—	—

Four hundred fifty-six women who did sewing to any appreciable extent give their reasons for sewing for their families. Some gave several reasons. Twenty-nine per cent (35% of the owners' wives and 22% of those of tenants) chose to do home sewing because they could secure designs suited to their individual needs more easily. Two per cent said they liked to sew. Eighty-nine

per cent (84% of the wives of owners and 92% of the wives of tenants) unhesitatingly gave "lower cost" as their outstanding reason for sewing. Other reasons were bound up in the idea of "lower cost" as "securing of better materials" given by seventy per cent (72% of owners' wives, 68% of tenants' wives) "better workmanship" and "greater durability" by thirty-one per cent (listed in equal percentages by the two classes.) Summarizing, the reduction of cost was the matter of most moment to the women.

Very few women—only thirteen per cent—reported that a dressmaker was ever hired and those few usually qualified their statements by saying they "occasionally" hired clothing made or that they sometimes hired a dressmaker to make "a few good dresses." This small group of those who hired dressmaker was made up of about two wives of farm owners to one wife of a tenant. Only about four per cent said they ever hired seamstresses to come to their house to sew by the day. Very probably some of the dressmakers mentioned above may be included in this list. Here again, the wives of owners had had a little more experience with hired seamstresses than those of tenants.

No advantage was taken of the tailor for the construction of women's clothing. Only seven families had had any experience with tailor-made clothing. Four men and three boys only had ever employed a tailor.

As indicated in Table IV these women made a practice of constructing a high per cent of their families' clothing. Many others made these garments occasionally. So taking into consideration the fact that some of these articles probably were not in the families' wardrobe, it would seem that with the notable exception of hats, coats, and men's clothing, the women had relatively little experience in buying ready made clothing. Three hundred sixty-three women of whom 55% were wives of owners and 45% were those of tenants, gave reasons for purchasing the ready made clothing that they did buy. Although nine per cent of the whole number of women interviewed did not own a sewing machine, less than two per cent gave that lack as a reason for buying ready made clothing.

Forty-seven per cent reported that they bought ready made clothing to save time and energy. Five per cent said "ready made clothing was as cheap or cheaper than that made at home." However, generally speaking, the standard of the last group of people was not particularly high. Their clothing was characterized by bungalow aprons, overalls and work shirts. But with regard to their standards of clothing refinements, economy or less cost seemed to be the important consideration. Forty-four per cent said they bought certain articles because of "inability to make them;" forty-two per cent gave as a reason that they could buy ready made clothing with more style and of more attractive design than they could achieve, which statement is closely akin to the former. Technical difficulties seemed to stand in their way.

Self analysis as to technical difficulties cannot be given too much weight. The statements made were probably true, but many other women may have had the same difficulties, but were unable to recognize their limitations. But it does seem worth while noting that many women were studying themselves in their eagerness to be able with their skill to make a contribution to their family income.

"Fitting" headed the list as the greatest difficulty recognized by thirty-nine per cent of the four hundred thirty-seven women reporting. "Finishing" that which so outstandingly brands a garment as a poor or attractive article was listed next by thirty-four per cent of the women. "Recognition of good value" came next, being noted by twenty-seven per cent of the women. "Choosing becoming and suitable materials," "choosing the design of materials," and "choosing satisfactory patterns" listed by twenty-six per cent, twenty-five per cent and twenty-three per cent of the women, respectively, indicated that the ability to visualize the person in the finished garment was a recognized difficulty of considerable importance. "Using patterns" worried sixteen per cent and "altering patterns" was a source of difficulty for nineteen per cent of the women.

Some of the women went into greater detail and mentioned specific difficulties, such as "handling the materials," "children's clothing," "collars and neck lines," "sleeves," "pockets," "management of machine," and "buttonholes."

It would seem from the analysis the women make of their limitations in home sewing that their difficulties fall into four general categories, viz., (a) physical handicaps, such as poor health, the need for time and energy necessary for clothing construction for other occupations which cannot be delegated so easily; (b) matters involving artistic judgements, as choosing becoming and suitable materials, choosing design of materials, desire for better style and design, choosing satisfactory patterns; (c) factors concerned with value and cost, such as the recognition of good value; (d) technical difficulties, as fitting, finishing, use of patterns, altering patterns, and specific difficulties such as setting of sleeves, collars and necklines, and the like. Even the statement of those who said they disliked to sew probably would fit into this last class.

As to recognition of difficulties, it seems that there was very little difference between wives of farm owners and those of tenants. If any difference in percentages could be recognized as significant, it might seem that the wives of owners noted difficulties in acquiring good style while those of tenants listed those dealing with technique of construction. It may be that the wives of tenants are younger women and have not become accustomed to garment construction. However, it seems that a speculation upon this matter is hardly justified by the data.

It would seem that these women analyzed their cases very well, especially when one adds to this some other factors such as their equipment for sewing.

Nine per cent of the women did not own a sewing machine. Here the women of tenant families were more handicapped than those of farm owner families. Where seven tenants were without sewing machines, two farm owner families did not possess them. Only about nine per cent owned dress forms which would enable them to fit their own figures. The dress forms which the Home Demonstration Agents had been instrumental in showing the women how to make were sources of much satisfaction to them. Relatively few women made use of attachments to the sewing machine. The hemmer and the gatherer were used by far more frequently than any other attachments. The other attachments were used so infrequently as to be almost negligible. However, with the possible exception of the binder, at that time fashion did not require to any great extent the use of the other attachments.

Twenty-seven per cent of the women did not use commercial patterns at all. Twenty-nine per cent said they used one standard pattern from which they made the desired changes. It is probably more correct to say that many of the women who said they "cut by guess" had reference to changes they made from standard patterns. Those who employed commercial patterns, for the most part, used those which were handled by the stores in the shopping centers which they patronized, although there were a number who sent for patterns illustrated in the newspapers and farm papers. A small number indicated that they ordered their patterns from mail order houses.

Nine per cent of the women reporting made the statement that the low price of the respective make of pattern was the reason for their preference. Thirty-seven per cent gave as the reason for their choice of pattern that the accompanying directions were simple and easy to follow. Eleven per cent said they were more experienced in using that particular pattern, while twenty-two per cent thought the kind they used fit better. The tenant home makers bought commercial patterns less frequently than those of farm owner families as in their analysis of difficulties in home sewing, price and technical limitations concerned them most.

When the women were questioned as to mending they usually threw up their hands and said they mended everything. Some question may be raised as to the quality of some of the mending in evidence, but the women as a whole, regardless of the economic status, seemed to regard mending of clothing as a virtue not to be lightly thrown aside.

Sixty per cent of the women reported that all cleaning and pressing was done in the home; thirty per cent, that part was done at home. The cleaning and pressing of men's clothing was taken out of the home to a much greater extent than that of women's clothing.

The tenant families attended to the cleaning and pressing at home slightly more than did the families of farm owners.

Seventy-five per cent of the group with children, seventy per cent of the owners and eighty per cent of the tenants, made over clothing for children. The tenant families with children averaged over three children to the family while the owner families with children averaged less than three children to the family. This would suggest that the tenant families had more clothing to pass from child to child. The practice of making over women's clothing for themselves was carried on by seventy-three per cent of the women. There was relatively little difference in the practices of the wives of owners and tenants in this respect, the ratio being seventy-two to sixty-seven. This ratio may not have anything to do with their standard of management. Other factors enter in, for example, the quality of material used by those of smaller incomes may not have justified the remodelling.

An effort was made to find out whether the habits of women in regard to making and buying articles of clothing were changing. The question was asked, "Do you make more or less clothing now than you did five years ago?" It seemed difficult to transmit the real meaning of the question for the women seemed generally to hold to the idea that change in the size of the family would influence the answer. Thirty-nine per cent replied that they made more at home, forty-one per cent that they made less, and twenty per cent reported that they made about the same amount. The figures are given for what they are worth. To one who visualizes the group rather vividly, it would seem when keeping the size of the family constant, that their habits in this respect have not changed a great deal.

### **Planning Ahead, Cost Accounting and Budgeting**

Again self-analysis was brought into account which must not be taken as telling an entirely accurate story. Forty-four per cent of the women said they did not plan ahead for clothing their families. Probably they did not put it down on paper, the articles probably did not take very definite form in the imagination of the women, but they very likely planned more than they thought they did. Some accounted for the fact by saying that they did not have much to spend; others, that farm people never knew how much they would have to spend. But over thirty per cent said that they usually planned the clothing for a season ahead. About eleven per cent planned a year in the future. Others reported that they planned for a short time, but did not indicate the length of time for which they did their planning. The record for the wives of owners differed from that of the tenants' wives very slightly.

One hundred forty women, almost one-fourth of the group, said that they had estimated carefully the relative cost of ready-made garments and the same garments made at home. Garments were listed. Nearly all articles of wearing apparel were included in the list, although more women had studied the relative cost of dresses, especially silk dresses, than any other garment. Coats had come in for most consideration next to dresses. It would seem that the garments requiring the greatest technical skill had been scrutinized as to cost to see if by any chance the women could relinquish a task probably irksome or unsatisfactory as to results without encroaching too far into the family income. Exactly twice as many wives of farm owners as tenants' wives had ventured to consider the possibilities of securing the two types of garments.

Only eight per cent of the women had at any time kept records of clothing expenditures for the family. Some of the women acknowledged that they had kept them only approximately. Others said that the clothing expenditures had not been kept separate from the other family and farm records which would suggest that the expenditure had been kept much like the stub in a

heck book. They had not born fruit as a result of study and appraisal. Records were kept in the proportion of five owner families to three tenant families. The whole number was too small for any generalizations.

### Training for Her Work

With this analysis of the "job" which these farm women are doing, what is her training for such work? A large group of people are making livings, and enviable ones at that, doing only one little part implied in the construction of clothing—to say nothing of that which the farm woman does, that of planning for the several members of the family of different ages and sexes, and more than all, planning under the handicap of making ends meet with very inelastic income. The enormity of the possibilities do not overwhelm her. She moves forward in a path much like the one which her mother made before her. However, unlike her mother, who probably lived in a community which had been settled for more than one generation, these women brought their sectional heritages of management to a virgin territory where they have come in contact with others bringing their contributions from thirty-five states of the Union and six foreign countries. She brings her intelligence fostered by a training in the public schools for an average of seven and one-half school years. She contributes to her home management an experience of an average of eighteen and a half years before marriage. Forty-seven women, about nine per cent, had formal school training in sewing, or household accounting, however adequate it may have been.

Only approximately twenty-three per cent of the women are receiving any inspiration from their daughters who probably are having greater advantages of Home Economics training in schools than their mothers had. (7)

As stated above, approximately eighty-three per cent of the families own cars and only about forty-seven per cent of those home makers are not handicapped by inability to drive the cars when they wish to go some place with their kind where ideas may be exchanged and their own visions enlarged.

Only fifty-two per cent of the women from whom replies were received attended church even occasionally; (5) slightly over half attended Sunday school; twenty-four per cent attended women's church societies where social contacts offer inspiration and informal training as well as spiritual blessings. (8)

Approximately forty-three per cent of the families took, at the time of the interview, one or more papers and magazines primarily devoted to home making. Only thirteen per cent of the families took no periodical reading matter giving help to the home maker in her activities. (9)

Such is the training which the women bring to the work of clothing the family—a work which in some circles of society requires retinues of highly skilled people to perform.

### CONCLUSIONS

The data show the farm women attempting to clothe their families according with the social standards they have set for themselves with the least expenditure of money. As a whole they make the effort to buy the most durable materials for the available money; to procure garments with workmanship, that will stand wear and strain; they patronize the stores which seem to offer goods for the least expenditure. They are alert to their limitations in recognizing value; they employ the least expensive equipment; they contribute their labor to reduce cost.

It would seem that women recognize the clothing of their families as their particular field and they must do it in a way that costs the least where "cost" measured in dollars and cents. As economic pressure is lightened, at least for time, they do not reduce their labor very materially. Even those who had withdrawn their contribution of labor had done so at least in part because

of physical handicaps or limitations in constructive ability to meet the artistic standards they desired.

So with the traditions and training that have been transmitted to them by their mothers before them, with what little help they may have received as girls at school, what they may have gleaned from lectures and demonstrations by educational agencies, from magazines and papers, from their neighbors and friends they meet at church, ladies' aid societies and in social visits they go to the task of embroidering with their own hands the mantle of traditional practice that has fallen upon them.

If the income has increased sufficiently that economic pressure does not bear too heavily, or if other channels for activities seem to promise greater returns to the family welfare, the women very warily begin to investigate. They may find the lure sufficiently great to pull them from the accustomed moorings, but usually only if the expenditure seems to be justified.

Obviously her standard of management with reference to clothing the family was such that it would increase the economic well-being or in negative terms would not reduce the cash receipts.

The data showed that there was very little difference between the behavior of those who possess more and those who possess less. The question arises—may not the range of income of the families interviewed have been too narrow to show differences in standards of management. There is some indication as gathered by observation that this may be true. Even though evidences of economic well-being relatively greater with some families than with others were found, there were few families indeed who would not have felt a year of agricultural depression very keenly and under those circumstances would have had to reduce their standards of living.

#### CITATIONS

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- (3) Fourteenth Census of the United States Compendium, Oklahoma.
- (4) Data derived from United States Census of Agriculture 1925, Oklahoma: pp. 8, 9, 11, 12, 13 and 17.
- (5) United States Census of Agriculture, Oklahoma, p. 8.
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- (7) Fernandes, G., "Educational Factors Influencing the Activities of Farm Home-Makers," Bulletin 182, Oklahoma Experiment Station, pp. 5-13.
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