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A STUDY OF BUYING PRACTICES OF SELECTED COLLEGE WOMEN ENROLLED
IN OKLAHOMA AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL COLLEGE

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A STUDY OF BUYING PRACTICES OF SELECTED COLLEGE WOMEN
ENROLLED IN OKLAHOMA AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL COLLEGE

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INTRODUCTION

To be functional college education, like all other education, must meet the needs of the young people it serves. To do this requires that the teacher know and understand the practices and concerns of the students in order to help them live a useful and satisfying life through an ability to solve the problems they meet daily. This idea has been well expressed by a group of leading educators:

The purpose of general education is to meet the needs of individuals in the basic aspects of living in such a way as to promote the fullest possible realization of personal potentialities and the most effective participation in a democratic society.¹

The basic aspects of living according to the authors previously quoted mean personal living, immediate personal-social relationships, social-civic relationships, and economic relationships. In the economic relationships, the young person has more responsibilities than ever before for the selection and purchase of goods and services because in the United States buying a living has largely replaced making a living, since technological developments have taken most of the production out of the home. Consequently the responsibility of the college is to help the individual to use his intelligence as a consumer now and in the future.

Two of the principal needs of young people are the ability to make wise selections and use of goods and services, and to assume responsibilities as a citizen in the solution of basic economic problems. In

¹Progressive Education Association, Science in General Education (New York, 1938), p. 23.

order to fit the young college woman for her place as a responsible consumer, the complexities of present day living seem to demand a definite need for studying the problems of consumption.

Shields and Wilson define consumer education in the following words:

- . . . that phase of education which trains individuals
- (1) In determining a well-balanced spending program.
 - (2) In getting the most value and the most satisfaction out of the time, effort, and expenditures that are made for economic services, shelter, clothing, food, and other goods.
 - (3) In working for an improved standard of living in a democratic society.²

From an analysis of the previous definition, one realizes that consumer education is broad in scope; it means more than buying, for it includes the consumer's responsibility in the community and his concern for the welfare of others as well as for himself. Before the individual can accomplish this, he must clarify his own values and goals in life for they determine how he uses his resources. This philosophy of consumer education is expressed clearly and emphatically in the most recent publication that explains how to incorporate consumer education in the total school program as shown in this quotation:

Skill in consuming is never enough: there must also be wisdom and character. Wisdom in consuming, as in all of life, depends on one's having clearly defined, high quality purposes and goals; character is strength to govern one's life accordingly. Therefore, the foundation of consumer education, in common with all education, is to help each student develop a sense of values, determine what he most wants out of life, set his goals and see them in proper proportion, then act according to his developed principles.³

²H. G. Shields and W. Harmon Wilson, Consumer Economic Problems (New York, 1945), p. iii.

³Consumer Education in Your School, Consumer Education Study (Washington, D. C., 1947), p. 23.

In summarizing the meaning of consumer education, the authorities seem to agree that in order for an individual to be a successful consumer, he must be intelligent in three major areas of living. These include choice making, the use of resources, and consumer citizenship.

In order to develop the most effective consumer education program, several educators suggest specific objectives. For example, Tonne presented these four main objectives or aims as basic for education for consumption:

- . . . (1) Wise buying
- (2) Training in money management
- (3) Choice making
- (4) Community consumership.⁴

Obviously a person's economic problems go far beyond simple buy-manship. To make the income cover all phases of living is a problem faced by college women. For some, the difference between completing their college course and having to drop out due to lack of funds may be determined by the division and use of the income and the planning ahead that is done by them and their families. Moreover, the college woman, like other individuals, is constantly being confronted with problems involving choice as to how to spend the time, money, energy, and other available resources. At the same time her own concepts of personal values determine the satisfaction she receives from her choices.

If the college woman as a consumer is to qualify as a good citizen, she must know how her buying affects her neighbors and how their buying affects her, as well as their joint influence on the national economy. Also, she should be aware of the controls which she and her neighbors,

⁴Hubert A. Tonne, Consumer Education in the Schools (New York, 1941), p. 93.

acting in cooperation with the government, place upon business and the functioning of the economic system. The college woman through her buying practices can be shown the importance of her place in the economic world.

From this discussion of consumer education, it is seen that buying is an important aspect of this area of education. "Women, who spend two-thirds of the consumer dollar,"⁵ become an important part of the consumer picture. By their spending they determine largely the financial condition of themselves and their families, affect the general economic situation of the country and decide to a large extent the kinds of goods and services on the market, their price, and the way they are sold. Clothing expenditures are an important item in all individual and family budgets since they comprise from "7 to 13 percent of all individual and family budgets."⁶ The buying of clothing, therefore, is a major problem. This is true especially today when the buying of clothing is complicated by the many new fabrics on the market and the new treatment of old fabrics. The average consumer and even the expert have difficulty in knowing how to get full value from the clothing dollar. The new developments in fabrics, such as new fibers, new treatment of old fibers, and blends of the new and old, make it almost impossible to predict the serviceability and the kind and amount of care required.

As the teacher of consumer education finds it difficult to assist

⁵Housework - The Biggest Work of All, Kiplinger Magazine, II (April, 1948), pp. 8-14.

⁶Helen G. Canoyer and Roland S. Vaile, Economics of Income and Consumption (New York, 1951), p. 134.

young consumers unless he knows their buying practices and concerns, he must make every effort possible to become acquainted with their buying habits. In order to make her teaching more effective, the writer undertook a study to learn some of the major practices and concerns related to the buying of clothing of the young college woman through this study.

PROCEDURE

On the basis of the belief that education should meet the needs of the students, this study was undertaken. Its major purpose was to obtain consumer buying information from college women in order to make the teaching of buymanship in clothing more functional in college classes. Minor purposes were:

- A. To determine some of their principal buying practices and problems relating to clothing.
- B. To determine opinions held, and help and information desired with regard to the purchase of clothing.

In order to make the study objective and to save time, the desired information was obtained through the use of a questionnaire. To determine the information that would be helpful to the teacher of consumer education, the following procedures were used:

- A. Drawing on personal experience in teaching consumer education to freshmen women in college.
- B. Talking with college students with regard to buying their clothing.
- C. Reviewing the current literature on consumer education, and local studies on buymanship of clothing.
- D. Consulting with college home economics faculty members.

Through this procedure the content of the questionnaire was selected and organized in three divisions:

- A. Personal factors
- B. General buying practices
- C. Buying problems and opinions of the college woman

Specifically, the items included in each division may be summarized as follows:

- A. Personal factors included the student's major in college, classification, home, marital status, approximate family annual income, approximate amount spent yearly for clothing, previous study of the buying of clothing, buying information used, buying tips, need felt for further study, approximate price paid for daytime dresses, suits, blouses, and skirts, and difficulties met in buying these garments, as well as with the selection of clothing in regard to serviceability.
- B. General buying practices included garments bought ready-made, or made at home, types of stores patronized, factors influencing choice of stores, adequacy of salespeople, effectiveness of bargains, buying procedures, and methods of paying for purchases.
- C. Specific buying problems included finding suitable sizes; features desired in buying garments and fabrics; adequacy, use, and understanding of available information; satisfaction derived from buying clothing; influences in buying; and use of buying plan.

After the questionnaire was compiled, it was checked for completeness and clarity by several college instructors, then it was revised and set up in its present form. A copy of the complete questionnaire, "Questionnaire on Buying" is given in the Appendix.

Since a cross section of students from all schools on the campus, as well as all class levels, was needed to give a true picture of the

buying practices and problems of college women, women who were living in one of the college dormitories on the campus of Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College were selected to give the needed information. This was obtained through the use of the questionnaire. With the cooperation of the resident counselor, the names of the four hundred women on the dormitory roster were numbered from one to four hundred. From this number thirty women were selected by the Random Selection Technique according to the direction given by Lindquist through the use of his "Table of Random Numbers".¹

The thirty numbers obtained by this method were used to select the students who had corresponding numbers on the dormitory roster.

With the aid of the counselors in the dormitory, the study was explained to the selected 30 women to see whether they were willing to participate. Everyone who was contacted was willing to cooperate. The questionnaire was given and explained to small groups at a time before each woman answered it individually. The findings from the 30 questionnaires were compiled, tabulated, and analyzed.

¹E. F. Lindquist, Statistical Analysis in Educational Research (New York, 1940), pp. 27, 262.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was made to determine the clothing buying practices of college women, such as, influences in buying, methods of obtaining garments, choice of stores, procedures and information used in buying; problems in selection of garments, features desired in garments and fabrics, opinions about salespeople and bargains, and need for study of clothing. It was carried out through giving a questionnaire to 30 college women selected from the 400 living in one of the dormitories at Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College by the use of the Random Selection Technique. This group was composed of 20 freshmen and 10 upper classmen.

All of the women were single. They came from the smaller towns of Oklahoma as well as Tulsa, and Oklahoma City. One each came from the neighboring states of Arkansas and New Mexico.

Table 1 shows that 17 or 56.6 percent were enrolled in the School

Table 1.--Classification of 30 Participating Students.

Year of College	Number in Different Schools				Percent of Total	
	Home Economics	Commerce	Education	Miscellaneous		
Freshmen	5	13	1	1	20	66.6
Sophomores	2	2	0	0	4	13.3
Juniors	0	1	1	2	4	13.3
Seniors	0	1	0	1	2	6.7
Total	7	17	2	4	30	
Percent of Total	23.3	56.6	6.6	13.3	100.0	99.9

of Commerce, almost two and one half times as many as the next highest number of seven or 23.3 percent in the School of Home Economics. This was followed by two or 6.6 percent in the School of Education; the remainder four or 13.3 percent were divided among Departments of Animal Husbandry, Art, Bacteriology and Health and Physical Education.

In order to teach consumer buying effectively, the instructor must have some understanding of the income of the students and of the amount of money now spent. A summary of the approximate annual family incomes, individual annual expenditures for all clothing and the approximate amount spent for some garments used most frequently by all women is shown in Table 2.

Table 2.--Classification of 30 College Women According to Approximate Annual Family Income and Individual Clothing Expenditures.

A. Approximate annual family income	Freshmen		Upper classmen		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
\$1,000 - \$1,999	0	0	0	0	0	0
2,000 - 2,999	0	0	1	10.0	1	3.3
3,000 - 3,999	2	10.0	1	10.0	3	15.0
4,000 - 4,999	2	10.0	2	20.0	4	13.3
Above 5,000	4	20.0	4	40.0	8	26.7
Amount unknown	12	60.0	2	20.0	14	46.7

Table 2.--Continued.

B. Approximate Individual annual clothing expenditure	Freshmen		Upper classmen		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
\$200	0	0	1	10.0	1	1.33
250	1	5.0	0	0	1	1.33
300 - \$400	1	5.0	1	10.0	2	6.7
Amount unknown	18	90.0	8	80.0	26	86.6
<hr/>						
C. Approximate price paid						
<hr/>						
<u>Daytime dresses</u>						
\$ 5 - \$15	12	60.0	4	40.0	16	53.3
16 - 25	3	15.0	5	50.0	8	26.7
25 - 35	3	15.0			3	15.0
<u>Suits</u>						
\$15 - \$29	4	20.0	1	10.0	5	16.6
30 - 49	8	40.0	2	20.0	10	33.3
50 - 74	7	35.0	6	60.0	13	43.3
75 - 100	1	5.0	1	10.0	2	6.7
<u>Blouses</u>						
\$ 2 - \$ 4	5	25.0	3	30.0	8	26.7
5 - 8	10	50.0	5	50.0	15	50.0
9 - 11	2	10.0	2	20.0	4	13.3
<u>Skirts</u>						
\$ 4 - \$ 7	5	25.0	3	30.0	8	26.7
8 - 11	7	35.0	5	50.0	12	40.0
12 - 14			1	10.0	1	3.3
15 - 20	4	20.0			4	13.3

For the teacher of consumer education, it is also important that of the total group, 46.7 percent did not know the approximate annual family income, nor did 86.6 percent know the approximate amount that they spent yearly for clothing. Fewer freshmen than upper classmen knew these amounts, for 60 percent of the freshmen and 20 percent of the upper classmen did not know the annual family income; 90 percent of the freshmen and 80 percent of the upper classmen did not know even their own approximate yearly clothing expenditures. For the 16 students who knew the amount of their family income, the income ranged from \$2000 to above \$5000. The largest number, 26.7 percent had an income above \$5000, as can be seen in Table 2, Section A, page 10. None listed the income as less than \$2000 per year.

The two freshmen who listed their clothing expenditures, spent \$250 and \$300 to \$400 a year; whereas, the two upper classmen stated they spent \$200 and \$300 to \$400 yearly (Table 2, Section B, page 11).

All students listed the amounts of money spent for individual garments, such as, dresses, suits, blouses, and skirts. Most of them gave wide ranges in price for each garment. For example, one sophomore stated she spent from \$30 to \$70 for suits; others gave similar variations. Because of this wide range of prices for one garment, it was difficult to determine even approximate prices paid for individual garments by these students.

The daytime dresses (meaning those worn for dress up occasions) varied in price from approximately five dollars to \$35, with over one half of the freshmen paying within the range of five to \$15 and one half of the upper classmen paying \$16 to \$25.

The price paid for suits ranged from \$15 to \$100 with 40 percent

of the freshmen paying \$30 to \$49 and 60 percent of upper classmen paying \$50 to \$74.

For blouses the price ranged from two to \$11. Fifty percent of both freshmen and upper classmen paid five to eight dollars.

Skirts ranged from four to \$20 with 35 percent of the freshmen and 50 percent of the upper classmen paying eight to \$11. As for dresses and skirts, the freshmen paid the highest price range for each garment, as shown in Table 2, Section C, page 11. One freshman, with an annual family income of \$4000 to \$4999, paid from \$25 to \$100 for suits; and one upper classmen, with annual family income above \$5000, paid from \$60 to \$85 for suits. These were the two highest prices listed. One freshman and an upper classman failed to report any price for daytime dresses and skirts; whereas, a few other students stated that they either made these garments or had them made, hence, gave no price.

Table 3.—Number of Students Who Had Studied the Buying of Clothing.

Previous Study	Freshmen		Upper classmen		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
High School	9	45.0	7	70.0	16	53.3
College	4	20.0	4	40.0	8	26.7
4-H	2	10.0	2	20.0	4	13.3
No previous study	8	40.0	2	20.0	10	33.2

Table 3 indicates a few of the women had had training in the buying of clothing in high school, college, and/or 4-H club work.

Forty-five percent of the freshmen and 70 percent of upper classmen had studied this in high school; 20 percent of the freshmen and 40 percent of the upper classmen had previous study in college, and 10 percent of the freshmen and 20 percent of upper classmen studied this in 4-H Clubs. Of the total number, 40 percent of the freshmen and 20 percent of the upper classmen reported no study of the buying of clothing. Nevertheless, 10 freshmen or 50 percent and eight upper classmen or 80 percent expressed a need for the study of buying clothing.

On the basis of the data in Table 4, Home Economics training or lack of it did not appear to influence the students to buy ready-made dresses in preference to those made by themselves or vice versa. Buying practices related to clothing are summarized in this table. The majority of these college women, 16 or 80 percent of the freshmen and six or 60 percent of the upper classmen had assistance from their mothers in buying their clothing. A variety of other sources of help was used by from one to three students each.

In Section B of Table 4, page 16, influences that affect the buying of clothing are listed. Previous experience and price appear to have the strongest influence on both freshmen and upper classmen; whereas, store displays, brand names, newspapers, and magazines also greatly influenced both groups. The radio had the least influence.

Section C of the same table indicates that 30 percent of the freshmen made some of their daytime dresses, while 35 percent seldom or never made them; only 10 percent made some of their suits, while 50 percent seldom made them. Half of the freshmen made some of their blouses and made their skirts usually or sometimes. The upper classmen

Table 4.—Buying Practices Related to Clothing of 30 College Women.

A. Sources of help	Freshmen		Upper classmen		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Mother	16	80.0	6	60.0	22	73.3
Magazines and Advertisements	4	20.0	3	30.0	7	23.3
Movies and Television	2	10.0			2	6.7
Relatives and Friends	5	25.0	5	50.0	10	33.3
Home Economics Teacher	1	5.0			1	3.3
Labels and Brands	2	10.0			2	6.7
Store personnel	2	10.0	1	10.0	3	15.0

Table 4.--Continued.

B. Influences in buying	Freshmen						Upper classmen						Total	
	Usually		Sometimes		Seldom		Usually		Sometimes		Seldom			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Radio			2	10.0	18	90.0			3	30.0	6	60.0	29	96.7
Magazines	7	35.0	11	55.0	2	10.0	2	20.0	7	70.0	1	10.0	30	100.0
Newspapers	3	15.0	14	70.0	3	15.0	3	30.0	6	60.0	1	10.0	30	100.0
Store displays	8	40.0	8	40.0	4	25.0	4	40.0	6	60.0			30	100.0
Brand names	5	25.0	9	45.0	6	30.0	4	40.0	5	50.0	1	10.0	30	100.0
Price	12	60.0	6	30.0	2	10.0	5	50.0	5	50.0			30	100.0
Previous experience	15	75.0	5	25.0			9	90.0	1	10.0			30	100.0
Mother	1	5.0	1	5.0			2	20.0					4	13.3
Relatives and others	2	10.0					1	10.0					3	15.0
Current styles	1	5.0					1	10.0					2	6.7
Buy now for future work							1	10.0					1	3.3
Versatility	1	5.0											1	3.3
Appearance	1	5.0											1	3.3

Table 4.--Continued.

C. Methods of obtaining garments	Freshmen						Upper classmen						Total	
	Usually		Sometimes		Seldom		Usually		Sometimes		Seldom			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<u>Daytime Dresses</u>														
Made themselves	2	10.0	4	20.0	7	35.0			2	20.0	4	40.0	19	63.3
Buy readymade	5	25.0	10	50.0	1	5.0	9	90.0	1	10.0			26	86.6
Had them made	8	40.0	4	20.0	5	25.0	1	10.0	6	60.0			24	80.0
<u>Suits</u>														
Made themselves	1	5.0	1	5.0	10	50.0			1	10.0	5	50.0	18	60.0
Buy readymade	14	70.0	5	25.0			9	90.0	1	10.0			29	96.7
Had them made	1	5.0	5	25.0	6	30.0			1	10.0	5	50.0	18	60.0
<u>Blouses</u>														
Made themselves	5	25.0	5	25.0	3	15.0	1	10.0	3	30.0	2	20.0	19	63.3
Buy readymade	6	30.0	10	50.0	2	10.0	9	90.0					27	90.0
Had them made	6	30.0	5	25.0	4	20.0	1	10.0	4	40.0	1	10.0	21	70.0
<u>Skirts</u>														
Made themselves	3	15.0	5	25.0	5	25.0	2	20.0	2	20.0	2	20.0	19	63.6
Buy readymade	7	35.0	7	35.0	2	10.0	5	50.0	4	40.0			25	83.3
Had them made	7	35.0	6	30.0	4	20.0	3	30.0	3	30.0	1	10.0	24	80.0

D. Stores patronized														
Department	15	75.0	4	20.0			4	40.0	4	40.0			27	90.0
Women's shop	8	40.0	7	35.0	3	15.0	7	70.0	2	20.0			27	90.0
Mail order			2	10.0	11	55.0					5	50.0	18	60.0

Table 4.--Continued.

E. Factors influencing choice of stores	Freshmen						Upper classmen						Total	
	Usually		Sometimes		Seldom		Usually		Sometimes		Seldom			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Adequacy of salespeople	7	35.0	8	40.0	3	15.0	4	40.0	5	50.0			25	83.3
Convenience to home	2	10.0	10	50.0	5	25.0	4	40.0	3	30.0			24	80.0
Availability of delivery service	1	5.0	2	10.0	14	70.0	1	10.0					18	60.0
Availability of charge accounts	5	25.0	7	35.0	6	30.0	3	30.0	2	20.0	2	20.0	25	83.3
Range of prices	14	70.0	4	20.0	1	5.0	4	40.0	3	30.0			26	86.6
Variety of selection	18	90.0					9	90.0	1	10.0			28	93.3
Quality of clothing	2	10.0					1	10.0					3	15.0
Previous contact							1	10.0					1	3.3
Brands and styles	1	5.0					1	10.0					2	6.7

Table 4.--Continued.

F. Those having a buying plan	Freshmen						Upper classmen						Total	
	Usually		Sometimes		Seldom		Usually		Sometimes		Seldom			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	5	25.0	4	20.0	4	20.0	2	20.0	5	50.0	3	30.0	23	76.7

G. Methods of buying														
In person	17	85.0	1	5.0			10	100.0					28	93.3
By telephone			3	15.0	15	75.0					8	80.0	26	86.6
Through mail:														
Mail order catalog			1	5.0	13	65.0	1	10.0	1	10.0	7	70.0	23	76.7
From an advertisement			3	15.0	8	40.0			1	10.0	6	60.0	18	60.0
Someone buys for them			6	30.0	9	45.0			3	30.0	6	60.0	24	80.0

H. Methods for paying purchases														
By cash	9	45.0	7	35.0	1	5.0	9	90.0			1	10.0	27	90.0
Through charge accounts	10	50.0	3	15.0	2	10.0	2	20.0	4	40.0	2	20.0	23	76.7
By lay-a-way plan	1	5.0	5	25.0	9	45.0			6	60.0	2	20.0	23	76.7
By budget plan			1	5.0	12	60.0			1	10.0	6	60.0	20	66.7

Table 4.--Continued.

I. Use of available information	Freshmen						Upper classmen						Total	
	Usually		Sometimes		Seldom		Usually		Sometimes		Seldom			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Labels	15	75.0	2	10.0	3	15.0	8	80.0	1	10.0	1	10.0	30	100.0
Salesperson	3	15.0	10	50.0	4	20.0	4	40.0	5	50.0	1	10.0	27	90.0
Advertisements	8	40.0	7	35.0	4	20.0	6	60.0	4	40.0			29	96.7
Mother							1	10.0					1	3.3
Other people	1	5.0					2	20.0					3	15.0

J. Reading of labels	10	50.0	8	40.0	2	10.0	7	70.0	2	20.0	1	10.0	30	100.0

K. Understanding of labels	12	60.0	7	35.0	1	5.0	7	70.0	2	20.0	1	10.0	30	100.0

L. Use of brands	6	30.0	10	50.0	4	20.0	3	30.0	6	60.0	1	10.0	30	100.0

M. Adequacy of available information	6	30.0	5	25.0	8	40.0	5	50.0	3	30.0	2	20.0	29	96.7

did much less sewing, only 20 percent sometimes made their daytime dresses, 40 percent seldom did. Suits were made by only 10 percent, but 40 percent made blouses and the same number skirts. Of the group who sewed only 10 percent checked that they usually made their blouses and 20 percent made the same statement for skirts. Of the garments which were not bought ready-made, over half or 60 percent of the freshmen and 70 percent of the upper classmen had them made, with the exception of suits which they made themselves. Many of the students stated that their mothers usually made some or all of the garments which were not bought ready-made. A majority of both groups bought daytime dresses, suits, blouses, and skirts ready-made. Seventy-five percent of the freshmen bought daytime dresses, 95 percent bought suits, 85 percent bought blouses and 70 percent bought skirts ready-made. Of the upper classmen, 10 percent bought their suits at least some of the time, 90 percent bought blouses and the same number skirts on the same basis.

Ninety percent of the women patronized department stores, but 75 percent of the freshmen and 90 percent of the upper classmen patronized women's shops. Women in both groups seldom bought clothes from mail order stores. The opportunity to select from a wide variety of clothing was the outstanding factor influencing their choice of stores. This was true for 93.3 percent of both the freshmen and the upper classmen. The range of prices ranked next, as it was given by 86.6 percent of both groups. The third factor, adequacy of salespeople, was checked by 75 percent of freshmen and 90 percent of upper classmen; only 15 percent of freshmen and none of the upper classmen considered this factor. Availability of charge accounts and location

to their homes was given by 60 percent of freshmen students. Fifty percent of the upper classmen checked availability of charge accounts as the reason that usually or sometimes influenced their choice of a store and 70 percent indicated that convenience to their homes was a major factor for selecting a store. Few in both groups checked that the quality of clothing, previous contacts or brands and styles influenced their choice of stores. Of the 30 students who checked the questionnaire, nine of the 20 freshmen and seven of the 10 upper classmen had some kind of buying plan, although some of them stated their plans were rather indefinite.

In describing their buymanship procedures 93.3 percent of both groups preferred buying in person; 15 percent of the freshmen sometimes bought clothing by telephone, while 75 percent seldom shopped that way. Eighty percent of the upper classmen seldom shopped by this method. A few of both groups used the mail order catalog and advertising occasionally. The majority, 65 percent of the freshmen and 70 percent of the upper classmen seldom used the mail order catalog. Forty percent of the freshmen and 60 percent of the upper classmen used advertisements. Only 30 percent of the women stated that someone else sometimes bought their clothing for them, but 45 percent of the freshmen and 60 percent of the upper classmen seldom had anyone else buy for them. Table 4, Section H, page 19, shows that a majority of both groups, 80 percent of freshmen and 90 percent of upper classmen, usually paid for their purchases by cash. Sixty-five percent of the freshmen and 60 percent of the upper classmen paid for purchases largely through charge accounts. Lay-a-way plans were used by 30 percent of the freshmen and 60 percent of the upper classmen occasionally, with

45 and 25 percent of freshmen and upper classmen respectively seldom using this plan. Very few of these women used the budget plan. Only five percent of the freshmen and 10 percent of the upper classmen used this plan while 60 percent of both seldom used it.

Most of the college women used available information when buying clothing. Ninety percent of the upper classmen received, read, and understood information from labels and salespeople, and also bought by brand names. Ten percent of the upper classmen seldom used information from labels and salespeople or read the labels or understood them. Labels were usually used by 75 percent of the freshmen and 80 percent of the upper classmen. Advertisements ranked second as the most widely used source of information. Forty percent of the freshmen generally used advertisements, 35 percent used them sometimes, but 20 percent seldom used them. All upper classmen used advertisements, 60 percent usually did and 40 percent did sometimes. Advice from salespeople was used less frequently, usually 15 percent of the freshmen and 40 percent of the upper classmen got information from this source. No freshmen checked getting information for buying clothing from their mothers, though 80 percent had checked that their mothers helped them in buying their clothing. A similar discrepancy was shown by the upper classmen, only 10 percent of whom checked their mothers as a source of information when 60 percent of them had previously checked that their mothers helped them buy as shown in Table 4, Section A, page 15. Few other people were consulted.

Opinions expressed by the college women about problems of buying clothing are summarized in Table 5, page 24.

Table 5.--Opinions Expressed About Problems of Buying Clothing.

A. Garments causing buying difficulties	Freshmen						Upper classmen						Total	
	Usually		Sometimes		Seldom		Usually		Sometimes		Seldom			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Daytime dresses	6	30.0	2	10.0			4	40.0	1	10.0			13	43.3
Suits	8	40.0	2	10.0			3	30.0	2	20.0			15	50.0
Blouses			1	5.0							1	10.0	2	6.7
Skirts	2	10.0	3	15.0			4	40.0			1	10.0	10	33.3

B. Difficulties encountered in buying clothing														

Fume-fading			5	25.0	5	25.0	1	10.0	1	10.0	5	50.0	17	56.7
Belts and buckles not cleanable	1	5.0	7	35.0	6	30.0	2	20.0	4	40.0	3	30.0	23	76.7
Too big at waist	1	5.0											1	3.3
Too small at hips	1	5.0											1	3.3
Hems coming out							1	10.0					1	3.3
Buttons coming off	1	5.0					1	10.0					2	6.7
Threads fading			1	5.0									1	3.3
Seams ripping			1	5.0									1	3.3
Color fastness			1	5.0									1	3.3

Table 5.--Continued.

C. Features desired in buying clothing	Freshmen						Upper classmen						Total	
	Usually No.	%	Sometimes No.	%	Seldom No.	%	Usually No.	%	Sometimes No.	%	Seldom No.	%	No.	%
Quality of workmanship	15	75.0	1	5.0			9	90.0	1	10.0			26	86.6
Style	18	90.0					9	90.0	1	10.0			28	93.3
Color	16	80.0	2	10.0			10	100.0					28	93.3
Fit	17	85.0	1	5.0			10	100.0					28	93.3
Comfort	15	75.0	3	15.0			8	80.0	1	10.0			27	90.0
Durability	11	55.0	7	35.0			9	90.0	1	10.0			28	93.3
Care required	8	40.0	7	35.0	1	5.0	7	70.0	1	10.0	1	10.0	25	83.3
Cleaning and/or laundering	9	45.0	6	30.0	1	5.0	8	80.0	1	10.0			25	83.3
Trimming	7	35.0	7	35.0	1	5.0	1	10.0	6	60.0	2	20.0	24	80.0
Width of hem and seams	2	10.0											2	6.7
Go with accessories on hand					1	5.0							1	3.3
Type of material	1	5.0											1	3.3

Table 5.--Continued.

D. Features in fabric selection	Freshmen						Upper classmen						Total	
	Usually		Sometimes		Seldom		Usually		Sometimes		Seldom			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Crease resistant	10	50.0	7	35.0	1	5.0	8	80.0	2	20.0			28	93.3
Fully shrunk	17	85.0	3	15.0			8	80.0	1	10.0	1	10.0	30	100.0
Non-stretching	17	85.0	1	5.0	1	5.0	6	60.0	3	30.0			28	93.3
Color fastness to:														
Washing	17	85.0	2	10.0			8	80.0	1	10.0			28	93.3
Gas fumes	3	15.0	7	35.0	7	35.0	3	30.0	3	30.0	3	30.0	26	86.6
Sunlight	10	50.0	5	25.0	2	10.0	4	40.0	4	40.0	1	10.0	26	86.6
Perspiration	9	45.0	7	35.0	2	10.0	5	50.0	4	40.0			27	90.0
Color	2	10.0											2	6.7
Time and ease of caring							1	10.0					1	3.3
Print of material	1	5.0											1	3.3
Season							1	10.0					1	3.3

E. Adequacy of salespeople														
Adequately prepared	2	10.0	7	35.0	2	10.0	2	20.0	4	40.0			17	56.7
Answer questions intelligently	10	50.0	7	35.0	1	5.0	4	40.0	5	50.0			27	90.0
Courteous	12	60.0	6	30.0			6	60.0	4	40.0			28	93.3
Show interest	9	45.0	3	15.0	1	5.0	5	50.0	4	40.0			22	73.3

Table 5.--Continued.

F. Bargain effectiveness	Freshmen						Upper classmen						Total	
	Usually		Sometimes		Seldom		Usually		Sometimes		Seldom			
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sales	4	20.0	9	45.0	4	20.0	2	20.0	6	60.0	2	20.0	27	90.0
Reduced prices	6	30.0	8	40.0	4	20.0	2	20.0	7	70.0	1	10.0	28	93.3

G. Problems in sizes														
Length of sleeve	2	10.0	3	15.0	9	45.0	3	30.0	2	20.0	3	30.0	22	73.3
Length of waist	6	30.0	6	30.0	2	10.0	3	30.0	3	30.0	3	30.0	23	76.7
Size of bust	4	20.0	5	25.0	7	35.0	2	20.0	1	10.0	4	40.0	23	76.7
Length of skirt	2	10.0	3	15.0	1	5.0					1	10.0	7	23.3
Size of waist	2	10.0					1	10.0	1	10.0			4	13.3
Size of hips	2	10.0	1	5.0					1	10.0			4	13.3

H. Satisfaction with clothing purchases	19	95.0	1	5.0			8	80.0	1	10.0	1	10.0	30	100.0

I. Sense of security in buying clothing	16	80.0	3	15.0	1	5.0	8	80.0	1	10.0	1	10.0	30	100.0

Data for difficulties encountered in buying clothing and the garments which caused these difficulties are shown in Sections A and B, Table 5, page 24. Suits which presented buying problems to 50 percent of both groups, and daytime dresses which caused problems for 43.3 percent seemed to give the most trouble. In contrast, skirts and blouses appeared to cause the least difficulty for only 33.3 percent checked skirts and 6.7 percent blouses as causing problems in buying.

Belts and buckles, which are not cleanable, were listed by 76.7 percent and fume-fading by 56.7 percent as causing difficulties most often encountered in buying clothing. Other factors checked by a few individuals were sizes that do not fit, seams that rip, thread that fades, and buttons that come off.

It is helpful for the teacher of consumer buying to know what features college women desire in their clothing. All of the upper classmen checked color and fit as important, 90 percent checked quality of workmanship, style and durability and 80 percent comfort and cleaning and/or laundering; 70 percent care required, but only 10 percent checked trimming and none checked width of seams and hems, harmony with accessories on hand or the type of material. To 90 percent of the freshmen style was important; to 85 percent, fit; to 80 percent, color; to 75 percent, workmanship and comfort; and to 55 percent, durability, while less than half checked any of the other features.

More than 85 percent of the college women considered fully shrunk and non-stretching important features in selection of fabric for clothing. The same was true of upper classmen with regard to crease resistant although this was checked by only 50 percent of the freshmen.

At the same time three women checked these features as seldom being desired. Their opinions varied with regard to color-fastness to different elements. Apparently both groups considered color fastness to washing most important, color fastness to perspiration next, and to sunlight, third. Fifty percent of the freshmen and 60 percent of the upper classmen considered color fastness to gas fumes desirable at least sometimes. Only five women added other features.

Courtesy and the ability to answer questions intelligently were considered important qualifications of salespeople by 93.3 percent and 90.0 percent respectively. Other qualities listed in Table 5, Section E, page 26 were adequate preparation and interest in the customer.

Both freshmen and upper classmen felt that they got good bargains at least sometimes from reduced prices (93.3 percent) and from sales (90.0 percent).

Problems in sizes gave some difficulty with length of sleeve and waist, and size of bust, being checked by more women than length of skirt, size of waist and of hips.

The majority of the women, all of the 20 freshmen and nine of the 10 upper classmen were satisfied with their clothing purchases. Nineteen of the 20 freshmen and nine of the 10 upper classmen felt secure in buying clothing as disclosed in Table 5, Sections H and I.

Although most of the items in the questionnaire were checked, few women added suggestions of their own. It is impossible to know whether they considered all of the items which they checked important if the questionnaire had not included them. Two freshmen left out one page on the questionnaire, possible an oversight; however, freshmen

as a rule, filled out the questionnaire more completely than did the upper classmen.

A discrepancy was shown, in that although only three of the women checked quality of clothing handled, as an important factor in choice of selection of stores, as shown in Table 4, Section E, page 18, 26 checked it as a feature in selection of clothing in Table 5, Section C, page 25.

Another discrepancy was shown in Table 4, Section J, page 20, by the fact that only 50 percent of the freshmen read labels, but in Section I of the same Table, 75 percent checked that they usually used the information from labels. This seems to indicate that there is a need for reading information more carefully, interpreting what is read, following directions given, and thinking consistently.

Some of the suggested buying tips by both groups may be summarized and grouped under these seven points:

1. Select more expensive, well-made clothing, as it lasts longer. For example, one good dress is better than many cheaper ones. (This was given by more women than any of the others).
2. Be sure of fit and becomingness as to height, color, and personality.
3. Buy by label or brand.
4. Watch for sales.
5. Don't "overstep" family budget or girl's allowance.
6. Consider advice of personal friends who are familiar with student's style of clothing and needs.
7. Use parts of two or more patterns to make one dress.

SUMMARY

Buying is an important aspect of consumer education. Therefore, this study was undertaken for the purpose of discovering the practices, problems, and attitudes in buying clothing of college women to be used for making the teaching of this aspect of buymanship more functional. This study was carried out through the use of a questionnaire that was given to 30 college women selected by the Random Selection Technique from the 400 women living in one of the dormitories at Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College.

Many of the findings should be helpful as guides for planning this area of consumer education. Although statisticians may not consider percentages significant unless they represent 50 percent or more of the group studied, teachers, who are concerned with the development of each individual, may find even smaller figures meaningful.

Since this study shows that 46.7 percent of the 30 college women did not know the approximate annual income of their families and that 90 percent of the freshmen and 80 percent of the upper classmen did not know their approximate annual clothing expenditures, it would seem that study in personal finances is needed. Surely women in college should be aware of the share of the family income they use, as well as of the family financial situation if they are to assume responsibility for managing their money after they come to college. Without knowing the amount of money spent for clothing, future planning is very difficult. Perhaps that is the reason that most students were uncertain about a plan for their clothing. Moreover, in a number of cases the amount spent for clothing, as well as for individual garments, seemed

high in relation to the total family income.

At the same time it is encouraging to teachers that these young women appear to know their needs, as over 50 percent of both freshmen and upper classmen expressed a desire for the study of buying clothing. Perhaps the fact that only 45 percent of the freshmen and 53 percent of the upper classmen had previously studied the buying of clothing shows a need for this in the curriculum for college freshmen. Apparently most of these freshmen women bought little of their own clothing before coming to college, as 80 percent of them said they received help from their mothers in buying their clothing. Even 60 percent of the upper classmen checked that they received help from their mothers. With all the new developments in clothing, it may be difficult for the mothers to keep informed enough to assist their daughters in making successful selections.

Only one of these women stated that she received help in buying clothing and fabrics from a home economics teacher, but none mentioned the home demonstration agent. Although a few checked magazines, none listed books nor bulletins as buying aids.

Even though 73.3 percent checked their mothers as a source of help in buying clothing, more than checked any other source; only 13.3 percent listed their mothers as an influence in buying their clothing.

The home economics training did not appear to influence the student to either buy or to make their dresses. Since freshmen made quite a few of their own clothes, it would seem that they need help in the selection of fabrics, as well as in the buying of ready-made suits and daytime dresses.

Both groups patronized the same type stores, the department and women's shops. They gave as their reasons for the selection of these stores, the variety of selection, range of price, adequacy of salespeople, availability of charge accounts, and convenience to home.

One hundred percent of the women made use of information on buying clothing from labels, at least sometimes, but only 76.6 percent stated that they usually used labels. It is not known how this can be accomplished when only 56.6 percent of these same women checked that they usually read labels.

Both the freshmen and upper classmen seemed to desire similar features in buying clothing, as style, color, fit, durability, comfort, quality of workmanship, care required and cleaning and laundering qualities in that order. Also both considered about the same qualities in fabric selection, such as fully shrunk, non stretching, color fastness to washing, crease resistant, and color fastness to perspiration.

In their opinions as to the adequacy of salespeople, 93.3 percent listed being courteous and 90.0 percent listed answering questions intelligently as being most important.

Problems in selection of size for proper fit of garments were almost identical for the two groups. Length of waist, size of bust, and length of sleeve were checked most frequently.

Both groups were satisfied with their clothing purchases and felt secure in buying clothing. If this is true, why had they stated earlier that they felt the need for the study of buying clothing?

In the tips for buying clothing, several of them emphasized the value of buying higher priced garments in order to get good quality,

apparently considering price and quality synonymous. Although there is a definite relationship between price and quality, price is not the only guide for selecting serviceable clothing.

The findings indicate that many of these women did follow desirable buying practices, such as shopping in person, paying by cash, and using labels. At the same time several of the practices, problems and opinions indicated some need for assistance in buying clothing as well as for money management. Functional courses in consumer education could probably meet this need. Although the findings of this study present information that might be an aid in planning and teaching consumer buying, particularly of the garments included in the study, other information would be helpful. For example, an understanding of the reasons for following certain practices and for holding certain opinions is really needed in evaluating their competency as consumer buyers. Effective teaching for the buying of clothing would require additional information about other articles of clothing and related consumer goods and services. Moreover, practical problems may be needed to determine the actual understanding of consumer buying information and of the ability to judge products in relation to their quality, price, and suitability for the individual college woman, in order for the teacher to know how effectively they can apply the features they listed as important. Besides, the questionnaire gave no indication of whether they followed the factors they checked as being important in the buying of clothing.

In addition provision must be made for individual differences in satisfactions desired as well as in knowledge and ability. For this

purpose personal counseling would be helpful. As a number of contradictions of opinions and practices appear in the findings, it is important that the teacher of consumer education, like all other teachers, assist students in developing habits of constructive, logical thinking.

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A P P E N D I X

QUESTIONNAIRE ON BUYING

I am making a study of buying problems of college women in order to make the teaching of the buying of clothing more practical and would appreciate your opinion and help. Would you please fill in these blanks? You need not sign your name.

I. Personal Information:

A. Major _____ B. Home Town _____

C. Classification: Fresh. _____ Soph. _____ Jr. _____ Sr. _____

D. Marital status: Married _____ Single _____

E. Approximate annual income of your family:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. \$1000 - \$1999 _____ | 4. \$4000 - \$4999 _____ |
| 2. \$2000 - \$2999 _____ | 5. Above \$5000 _____ |
| 3. \$3000 - \$3999 _____ | 6. Amount unknown _____ |

F. 1. Approximate amount spent for your clothing annually \$ _____
2. Amount unknown _____

G. Have you studied the buying of clothing in:

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| 1. High School _____ | 3. 4 H _____ |
| 2. College _____ | 4. Others _____ |

H. Where do you get help for buying your clothing? _____

I. Do you have a good tip that you would like to give? _____

J. Do you feel the need for studying the buying of clothing? _____

K. What approximate price do you pay for

- | |
|--------------------------|
| 1. Daytime dresses _____ |
| 2. Suits _____ |
| 3. Blouses _____ |
| 4. Skirts _____ |