

HOME SEWING AND BUYING PRACTICES OF HOME ECONOMICS STUDENTS GRADUATING  
FROM SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL OR JUNIOR COLLEGE BETWEEN 1948-1964

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Criticism concerning the educational merit of subject matter taught in clothing and textile classes has been directed at so-called "frills and trimming" courses. Among the problems which have confronted teachers and leaders in home economics have been evaluation of subject matter and adjustments to changing needs. Just how essential was the repeating of learned practices to the dexterity of developing new skills? How important was the repetition of the principles involved to later use of the processes learned? What, if any, was the effect of training and the extent and kinds of sewing done in the home? These and many more queries need to be answered in defense of the classroom procedures.

The purpose of this study was to determine the application former students in clothing classes made of clothing principles. Clothing as considered in this study included construction methods and techniques, wardrobe planning and selection of fabrics.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Knowing how to sew and understanding the problems related to clothing construction can help woman fill her many roles. Whether this follows the urge of becoming a homemaker, pursuing a professional career or the desire toward sociality, woman's success depends on her being "fashionable." As stated by Sinclair (20) in his book, The Better Half, woman's "freedoms are not happenstance." Sinclair places, among the many rights which she has gained, the right to dress differently.

Hamilton (9) in her 1963 evaluation of the textile and clothing business curriculum at Ohio State University suggested four types of adjustments necessary to help woman meet the challenges confronting her. These included adjustment to citizenship, to personal and social problems, to home and family life, and to professionalism.

"Appearance makes your first impression," stated Sturm and Grieser (21). Bishop and Arch (1), stressing the importance of planning, stated, "Make a careful wardrobe plan and never, as you shop, depart from your plan by buying a tempting 'pretty' that you might never wear and choose things that go together." In 1955 American Fabrics in a "Home Sewing Report" (13) estimated that 52,000,000 women and girls sew in the home. Harris (10) reported that a study made by the Simplicity Pattern Company (5) gave a lower figure of 38,000,000 for 1953. However, this report also showed a 63 per cent increase in women engaged in sewing between 1940 and 1953. Although the reasons for sewing varied, the purpose for sewing and the types of sewing done were mostly personal.

According to Conklyn (4) women with home economics training reported the most sewing. Erwin and Kinchen (6) gave four reasons for sewing: 1) an outlet for creative ability, 2) a desire to have more clothes, 3) a feeling of accomplishment, and 4) the availability of patterns, fabrics, and sewing aids.

Mitchell (16) found that 96 per cent of the women in her study listed saving as their first reason for sewing. Burton (2) was concerned with the difference in cost of ready-made garments and those made at home. She found that 25.6 to 60 per cent was saved on the average garment made at home. However, 80.8 per cent of the women graduate students at Purdue University who purchased ready-made garments did so because of "lack of time, lack of skill, and lack of desire and confidence to sew." Lutz (15) reported that adults took clothing construction classes in order to save money.

Conklyn (4) attributed stimulated interest in home sewing to a rise in clothing prices. Furthermore, the skillful home sewer could make a garment of better material, fit, and finish at a cheaper cost than she could purchase a ready-made garment.

York (25) gave 'better fit' and dislike of altering ready-made garments among the major reasons for home sewing. In a study of home sewing practices of 100 women in Lubbock County, Texas, Mitchell (16) found "that 59 per cent of the women in her survey sewed because they could obtain better fitting garments." She also found that many women received keen satisfaction from constructing attractive and well-fitted garments for members of their families, "to obtain a better fit" as one of the reasons given by the 100 Texas women who regularly sewed. Tate (22) indicated that better fit was

the primary reason that American homemakers sew. The person who sews is better dressed because she can buy materials and make garments for less than they can be purchased ready-made, according to Goodman (8).

York (25) pointed out numerous controversial opinions concerning the need for knowledge about clothing and techniques of clothing construction. Many people feel that mass production of medium-priced garments has made home sewing unnecessary according to Werden (24). Goodman (8) took the opposite viewpoint: "In this era of specialization and industrialization, virtually every article of clothing we wear can be purchased ready-made, but does not satisfy the creative urge." However, York (25) commented that "a beautiful garment, well made from a pattern design suited to the individual, is a source of satisfaction to any woman or girl." Lee (14) pointed out that changing times have developed a need for creative activities. She further indicated that creative sewing is a good way to satisfy this need.

In further substantiating the creative aspects of making clothes, Collins (3) stated in Women's Wear Daily that the woman who sews can "express her own individuality, as well as that of her family, through the medium of clothing construction." He pointed out that the possibilities for a garment that expresses the wearer's individuality are "astronomical when one multiplies fabric times color times pattern."

According to the report of the textiles and clothing section of the American Home Economics Association (17) the importance of sewing was stressed as an outlet for one's desire to be different. Self-expression was alluded to as the renaissance of the individual and the view expressed that individual creativity is essential for national survival.

Lee (14) stressed the importance of the clothing teacher's role in passing on to students "an awareness of the individuality and creativity that can be channeled through this medium." Much could be done to preserve "the priceless boon of personal uniqueness that many feel is in danger of being lost in this changing world" according to Lee.

Although the exercise of individuality and creativity has proved to be a problem throughout the ages, in a period of intensified mass production all sorts of obstacles offer escape from self-expression, to be found in clothing construction. It was the opinion of Hoffman (12) that "the opportunity to express imaginative talents was unlimited for the women who sew." While she felt that finger skills were important, Hoffman placed learning to use color, line, and familiar materials in new ways at the peak for the woman who could design clothes and accessories.

Werden (23) speaking of clothing for the family, stressed skill as a means of securing quality. At the same time it was necessary to master basic skills before they could be used to advance knowledge.

"No longer," stated York (25), "do the smart young matrons or the career girls who make their own clothing expect to be considered 'dowdy'." Recognizing the value of quality in clothing, the modern woman who moves about in the community or on the job must be well dressed. She stressed the importance of long range cooperation between home economic departments, pattern companies, and fabric houses in building an army of home sewers. Changes in activities, availability of designer patterns and designer fabrics have made "home sewing one of the most important of all fashion activities" according to an article in American Fabrics (13).

In her study of home sewing practices, Conklyn (4) reported an

emphasis on the desire to obtain quality as one reason that women do home sewing. Hillman (11) in an earlier study found "lack of ability to make attractive garments" as the reason that 56 per cent of the 106 young Ohio homemakers did not sew. Goertzen's (7) study of practices in clothing selection stressed the importance of knowledge learned in clothing construction classes for wise buying. She stated that the consumer with adequate knowledge of fabrics and their care will be better able to determine the quality desired and consequently derive greater satisfaction. In speaking of quality it was learned that factors contributing to the urge to sew creatively, influenced 93 of the 100 women in Mitchell's (16) investigation who did some home sewing. The remaining seven did not sew but hired a professional dressmaker to construct garments from material purchased. Twenty-three of the women who sewed had other family members interested in home sewing York (25) concluded from her studies that:

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

Reynolds and Scott (18) conducted a study designed to find out what a woman needs to know about textiles and clothing. Questionnaires were sent to college students, business women, and homemakers. One of the questions asked was, "If you had an opportunity to take a course in textiles and clothing, what would you like to get from the course?" They reported that both the college women and the homemakers expressed a strong desire for clothing construction.

The family background did not influence how girls ranked clothing on

becomingness, price, comfort, ease of care, beauty, "like friends wear," or durability, according to Ryan (19). She stated that college students valued the importance of clothing in giving "a feeling of self-confidence and security which conforming and attractive clothing give him." Actions and enjoyment of social events were affected by the girls feeling that they were properly dressed "wondering what people thought," and wanted "to sit in the corner"; it was reported that the high school girls in this study often refused invitations to social events because they did not have appropriate clothing.

## CHAPTER III

### PROCEDURE

This study was limited to girls who had graduated from Iola High School and Iola Junior College (now Allen County Community Junior College) from 1948 to 1964 and who had taken from one to three years of clothing in high school and/or one or two courses in college. The sample consisted of 400 high school and 55 college students.

The questionnaire was designed to determine the use made of clothing construction in home sewing projects to determine the application made of the principles of construction in clothing selection, and to determine the factors that influenced construction and selection. Questions were formulated to ascertain how clothing construction skills and principles of clothing selection studied in high school and college classes carry over into daily practices of adults. Questions were formulated to determine the influence of the status of the family on the amount and kinds of clothing constructed by persons trained in these skills and practices.

A draft of the questionnaire was administered to the junior college clothing class of 1965, a group not participating in the study, and to ten women, four having previous training in clothing construction, and six with no formal instruction. The pre-testing was conducted to test the clarity of the questions. A copy of the revised questionnaire is included in the Appendix B, pages 42-50.

Questionnaires with letters explaining the purpose of the study were mailed to the 400 high school and the 55 college graduates. Eight high school letters were unclaimed, but none of the college letters were unclaimed. A second mailing was not sent.

The returned questionnaires were sorted into three groups from the high school clothing students and three from the junior college. The period of study covered 17 years, beginning with the clothing construction students graduating in 1948 and ending with the 1964 graduates. The data were divided into the following groups 1948-1953, 1954-1959, and 1960-1964 to tabulate, compare and analyze the information.

Tabulations of the information given in the questionnaires were classified and recorded for the three group divisions. The information was used to study and compare the high school and junior college graduates with each other, and the groups within each school. To differentiate between the high school and junior college graduates, the high school clothing students were referred to as high school graduates and the junior college clothing students as college women.

For brevity and clarity the following symbols were used when referring to the three divisions according to years of graduation:

- 1) The symbol used to designate a group of graduates was G.
- 2) Year groups were designated by
  - a) 1948 - 1953 -- I
  - b) 1954 - 1959 -- II
  - c) 1960 - 1964 -- III
- 3) High school graduates were designated by A.
- 4) Junior College graduates were designated by B.

Example: G I-A and G I-B

Year groups were designated to determine the application high school and junior college graduates made of clothing instruction. This infor-

mation was divided into three areas: the family structure, clothing construction, and clothing selection. Clothing construction was analyzed by the numbers and types of garments made, the persons sewed for and the number of garments made for each, and the number of graduates involved in each area. Clothing selection was analyzed by problems of buying fabrics and ready-to-wear. The factors involved in constructing and buying clothing were related to the family unit.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

The findings were based on the response of 210 or 53 per cent of the 400 high school graduates and 40 or 73 per cent of the 55 college women who completed and returned questionnaires. The information obtained was used to determine the application former students made of clothing principles.

#### Family Structure

The marital status, full or part time employment, place of residence, family size, occupation and educational level of graduate and husband, and reasons for sewing or buying ready-to-wear were studied in relation to the amount of clothing construction. Of the 210 high school graduates participating in this study 171 or 81.4 per cent were married, 31 or 14.2 per cent were single, eight or 3.8 per cent were divorced and none widowed. Of the 40 college women 29 or 72.5 per cent were married, nine or 21.5 per cent were single, one or 2.5 per cent were divorced and one widowed.

Of the ninety-nine high school graduates reporting employment outside the home, 70 were employed full time, 29 part time, and 111 none. Twenty-four of the college women worked outside the home; 16 worked full time, eight part time while 16 did not work. This meant that approximately 47 per cent of the high school graduates and 60 per cent of the college women worked outside the home. (Table I).

The place of residence and the family size revealed only negligible differences between high school and college graduates. There were 387 children in 135 families of the high school graduates with children and

TABLE I  
 MARITAL STATUS AND EMPLOYMENT OF PARTICIPANTS  
 NUMBER OF GRADUATES IN EACH GROUP

	G I-A	G II-A	G III-A	Total A	G I-B	G II-B	G III-B	Total B
Single	5	5	21	31	1	2	6	9
Married	47	80	44	171	10	8	11	29
Widowed	--	--	--	---	--	1	--	1
Divorced	4	1	3	8	--	1	--	1
Work outside the home								
Full time	14	25	31	70	4	5	7	16
Part time	7	11	11	29	2	1	5	8
None	31	53	27	111	6	5	5	16

TABLE II

NUMBER OF FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN, NUMBER OF CHILDREN,  
 AND AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN PER FAMILY OF HIGH  
 SCHOOL AND JUNIOR COLLEGE PARTICIPANTS

	No. of Families	No. of Children	Avg. No. Children Per Family
G I-A	47	157	3.4
G II-A	65	184	2.8
G III-A	23	46	2
Total A	135	387	2.9
G I-B	11	35	3.2
G II-B	8	17	2.1
G III-B	6	8	1.3
Total B	25	60	2.4

60 children in 25 families of the college women with children. The average number of children in the families of the high school graduates was 2.9 and of the college women 2.4. G I-A reported an average of 3.4, G II-A reported an average of 2.8, and G III-A reported an average of two children per family. G I-B reported an average of 3.2, G II-B reported an average of 2.1, and G III-B reported an average of 1.3 children per family. (Table II).

Forty-two of the graduates listed their occupation as professional or managerial. Of these 28 were high school graduates and 14 were college women. Thirty-one high school graduates and five college women rated themselves as clerical or saleswomen. Twenty-three high school graduates and two college women placed their occupation in the category of skilled while 14 high school graduates and four college women rated their occupations as unskilled.

The husbands of 85 graduates held professional or managerial positions. Of these 70 were husbands of the high school graduates and 15 were husbands of the college women. Husbands of 15 of the high school graduates and husbands of two college women held clerical or sales positions. Forty-eight husbands of the high school graduates and eight husbands of the college women were placed in the skilled labor category. Twenty-four husbands of the high school graduates and two husbands of the college women were rated unskilled. Husbands of 14 high school graduates and husbands of two college women gave agriculture as their occupation.

The occupational level of the graduates and their husbands suggested that the amount of training influenced the type of position held. Of the college women 35 per cent held professional or managerial positions, while

only 13 per cent of the high school graduates held such jobs. Fifty-two per cent of the husbands of the college women were professionals or managers while 41 per cent of the high school graduates' husbands rated these classifications. (Table III).

TABLE III

OCCUPATIONS OF PARTICIPANTS AND HUSBANDS ACCORDING TO  
NUMBER IN GRADUATING GROUPS

	A								B							
	G I-A		G II-A		G III-A		Total		G I-B		G II-B		G III-B		Total	
	W <sup>1</sup>	H <sup>2</sup>	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	H	W	H
Homemakers	31	--	75	--	32	--	138	--	6	--	5	--	4	--	15	--
P or M <sup>3</sup>	3	24	14	30	11	16	28	70	2	5	3	5	9	5	14	15
C or S <sup>4</sup>	8	4	9	7	14	4	31	15	3	2	--	--	2	--	5	2
Skilled	5	14	6	19	12	15	23	48	--	4	2	--	--	4	2	8
Unskilled	2	3	4	13	8	8	14	24	1	--	1	1	2	1	4	2
Agric.	--	2	--	10	--	2	--	14	--	--	--	2	--	--	--	2

1. W - Wives
2. H - Husbands
3. P or M - Professional or Managerial
4. C or S - Clerical or Sales

The status of the family, though not rigidly controlled by the level of education of the husband and wife, did show noticeable characteristics usually associated with educational levels. This was reflected in the varying levels of education of the husbands of the high school graduates and the college women. The educational level of the men who were married to the high school graduates included 11 below twelfth grade level, 66 with high school diplomas, 27 completed junior college, 35 with three or four years in college, 18 with masters' or doctors' degrees, and 14 with technical or professional training. The educational level of the men who were married to the junior college graduates included one below twelfth grade level, six with high school diplomas, three completed junior college, 11 with three or four years college, eight with masters' or doctors' degrees.

Formal education ended with the twelfth grade for 137 of the 210 high school graduates; 39 completed junior college, 30 completed three or four years college, four completed their masters' degrees, and 31 took technical or professional training. Formal education ended for 18 of the 40 junior college women; 17 went on to four year colleges; three completed their masters' degrees and three took technical or professional training. (Table IV).

#### Garment Construction

The women who continued to study clothing construction in junior college and beyond reported a higher percentage (88) of sewing for themselves and their families than did the high school graduates (75 per cent). None of the college women reported doing all of the clothing construction for their families, while five per cent of the high school graduates did.

Both the high school and junior college graduates reported saving money as the main reason for sewing. Other reasons given for sewing,

TABLE IV  
 NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS AND HUSBANDS  
 BY EDUCATIONAL LEVELS

	High School		College		Total	
	Graduates	Husbands	Women	Husbands	Women	Husbands
Less than 12th grade	---	11	---	1	---	12
High School	137	66	---	6	137	72
Junior College	39	27	18	3	57	30
3 or 4 Years College	30	35	17	11	47	46
Master's or Doctorates	4	18	3	8	7	26
Technical or Professional Training	31*	14	2	--	2	14

\* Because of the manner in which the high school graduates checked their educational level, technical or professional training could not be calculated as part of their formal education; these are included in the 137.

in order of importance, included better fit, better workmanship, wider choice of design, wider choice of fabric, better choice of color, and enjoyment and creative expression from sewing.

Of the 210 high school respondents, 170 (81 per cent) reported some type of clothing construction for themselves and other members of the family, while 10 reported doing all of the family sewing, and 30 reported none. Of the forty college women 35 (87 per cent) reported sewing for the family, and five none. None of the college women reported doing all of the family sewing, but five per cent of the high school graduates did. Fourteen per cent of the high school graduates reported no sewing and 12.5 per cent of the college women reported no sewing.

According to Table V, data showed that 75 per cent or more of the participants sewed for themselves. G I and II-A, G I and II-B showed the next greatest amount of sewing for their daughters with a range of 69 to 36 per cent. G III-A and B showed a decrease in sewing for their daughters. The percentages of sewing for their sons were approximately the same for high school graduates and college women in each of the groups. For husbands the amount was approximately the same in G I-A and B. The percentage of sewing done for husbands was approximately the same in G II and III-B, twice that of G II and III-A. The amount of sewing done for others was varied. In the 1948-1953 and 1954-1959 groups where more children were reported more time was necessarily spent sewing for the children. (Table V).

TABLE V

PERCENTAGE OF PARTICIPANTS SEWING FOR THEMSELVES, FAMILY MEMBERS AND  
OTHERS BY EACH GROUP IN HIGH SCHOOL AND JUNIOR COLLEGE

Persons for whom sewing was done	G I-A %	G II-A %	G III-A %	G I-B %	G II-B %	G III-B %
Themselves	80	77	90	75	90	88
Husbands	23	17	21	25	36	35
Daughters	69	50	21	58	36	18
Sons	33	31	16	33	27	18
Others	22	14	13	8	46	23

Dresses were the articles of clothing most frequently made by both high school and college graduates during 1966. The 151 high school graduates, made a total of 1626 dresses; 31 college women made a total of 245 dresses. The greatest number of dresses was made by G I-A, 774 by 42 persons; 10 in G I-B made 87, according to Table VI. One high school graduate reported making 150 dresses; one college woman made 20. Fifty-seven G II-A reported making 559 dresses, an average of 10; seven in G II-B reported 63, an average of nine. The total number of dresses made by 52 in G III-A was 293; 14 in G III-B made 95.

Blouses ranked second in the number of garments made. A total of 734 blouses was made by 109 high school graduates; 116 blouses by 23 college women. Thirty-one in G I-A reported 293 blouses; seven in G I-B made 41 blouses. Forty in G II-A made a total of 245 blouses; five in G II-B made a total of 25 blouses. A total of 196 blouses was made by 38 women in G III-A; eleven in G III-B reported a total of 50 blouses made.

Shorts ranked third in number of garments made by high school graduates, but dropped to fifth place in the number made by the college women. Ninety three high school graduates reported making 531 pairs of shorts while the college women reported only 47 by 16 participants. Twenty-five women in G I-A reported a total of 177 shorts; two in G I-B reported a total of 16. The highest total made by any group was 264 pairs by 43 in G II-A; the smallest number for college women was reported by G II-B; six reported 12 pairs. The smallest number of shorts for high school graduates was reported by G III-A; twenty-five reported making 90 pairs; G III-B reported making the most pairs; eight reported making 19.

Skirts ranked fourth in the number of garments made by the high school graduates, but third by the college women. One hundred-thirteen high school

TABLE VI

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS AND NUMBER OF GARMENTS MADE DURING 1966 BY EACH GROUP  
IN HIGH SCHOOL AND JUNIOR COLLEGE

		Number of garments made by number of participants																			
Number of women sewing		Dresses: NP*	Blouses: NG*	Shorts: NP	Skirts: NG	S G**: NP	Shirts: NG	Slacks: NP	Suits: NG	U C**: NP	Coats: NG										
42	G I-A	42	774	31	293	25	177	30	142	18	107	14	86	16	68	13	27	6	20	10	15
67	G II-A	57	559	40	245	43	264	42	157	33	169	25	113	30	98	21	37	5	27	18	25
61	G III-A	52	293	38	196	25	90	41	136	22	67	20	62	16	43	21	35	1	10	7	9
10	G I-B	10	87	7	41	2	16	7	41	5	28	2	7	3	10	4	10	0	0	2	6
10	G II-B	7	53	5	25	6	12	6	22	2	7	5	15	5	10	2	6	1	1	4	5
15	G III-B	14	95	11	50	8	19	12	45	7	31	6	18	4	14	7	13	1	10	5	7

\*NP - Number of Participants      \*\* S G - Sleeping Garments

NG - Number of Garments      U C - Underclothing

graduates reported making 435 skirts; 25 college women reported 108 skirts made. G I-A reported that 30 made 142 skirts; seven in G I-B made 41 skirts. The largest number of skirts reported was by G II-A with 42 reporting a total of 157 garments; G II-B reported the lowest total with six making 22 skirts. G III-A reported the least skirts made with 41 making a total of 136 skirts; G III-B reported the most skirts made with 12 making a total of 45 skirts.

Sleeping garments ranked fifth in the number of garments made by the high school graduates and fourth by the college women with 73 reporting 343 and 14 reporting 66, respectively. G I-A reported 18 making a total of 107 sleeping garments; G I-B reported five making a total of 28 garments. G II-A reported 33 making a total of 169 sleeping garments; G II-B reported two making a total of seven garments; one made four, one made three. G III-A reported 22 making a total of 67 sleeping garments; G III-B reported seven making a total of 31 garments.

Shirts ranked sixth in the number of garments made by both the high school and college graduates. Fifty-nine high school graduates reported making 261 shirts; 13 college women reported 40. G I-A reported 14 making a total of 86 shirts; G I-B reported two making seven shirts; one made four and one made three. G II-A reported 25 making 113 shirts; G II-B reported five making 15 shirts. G III-A reported 20 making 62 shirts; G III-B reported six making 18 shirts.

Slacks ranked seventh in the number of pairs made by both the high school and college graduates. Sixty-two high school graduates reported making 209 pairs of slacks; 12 college women reported 34 pairs. G I-A reported 16 making 68 pairs of slacks; G I-B reported three making 10 pairs. G II-A reported 30 making 98 pairs; G II-B reported five making 10 pairs.

G III-A reported 16 making 43 pairs; G III-B reported four making 14 pairs.

Suits ranked eighth in the total number of garments made by both the high school and college graduates. Ninety-nine suits were reported made by 55 high school graduates; 29 by 13 college women. G I-A reported 13 making 27 suits; G I-B reported four making 10 suits. G II-A reported 21 making 37 suits; G II-B reported two making a total of six suits. G III-A reported 21 making 35 suits; G III-B reported seven making 13 suits.

Underclothing ranked ninth in the number of garments made by the high school and tenth by the college graduates. Twelve high school graduates reported making 57 under garments; two college women made 11. G I-A reported six making 20 under garments; G I-B reported no underclothing made. G II-A reported five making 27 under garments; G II-B reported one making one undergarment. G III-A and G III-B each reported one making 10 under garments.

Coats ranked tenth in the number of garments by the high school graduates, but ninth by the college. Thirty-five high school graduates reported making a total of 49 coats; 11 college women reported making 18. G I-A reported 10 making 15 coats; G I-B reported two making six coats. G II-A reported 18 making 25 coats; G II-B reported four making five coats. G III-A reported seven making nine coats; G III-B reported five making seven coats. (Table VI).

In the miscellaneous types of sewing, 77 high school graduates reported making 141 articles, and 10 college women reported 14 items. Aprons were reported made by 25, formals by 17, costumes by 13, miscellany of household sewing by 42, and table linens by 27. Additional items appearing

several times included robes, dusters, beach wear, wedding dresses, doll wardrobes, vests, and baby blankets.

#### Problems in Clothing Construction and Selection

The questionnaire was constructed to determine the use of the principles of clothing construction and selection. Each area pursued the application of principles of clothing selection in buying ready-made clothing, the problems involved in actually making the garment, and in the overlapping or interrelated elements of the two processes.

Knowledge concerning fabric selection pertaining to the fiber content, care, ease of handling, and suitability to purpose and design applied both to selecting material to make a garment and to selecting a ready-made garment. In response to the question of the kind of information looked for or asked for when buying fabrics and when buying ready-made garments, both high school graduates and college women showed their chief interest in washing and cleaning instructions. Wrinkle resistance and ease of care appeared next in order of concern with color fastness third in fabric for the high school graduates. The college women ranked fiber content third in fabrics and fifth in ready-to-wear, while this element dropped to sixth place in importance in fabric selection and seventh in ready-to-wear for the high school graduates. Price, shrinkage, name of manufacturers, quality, width and color, in the order named, were listed among the concerns by both groups in buying of fabrics to be made into garments and in buying ready-made clothing. Answers supplied by the participants about ready-made garments only, pertained to seam and hem finish, fit and size, texture or hand, and design suitable for the individual and occasion. (Table VII).

TABLE VII

INFORMATION NECESSARY TO CONSIDER WHEN BUYING FABRICS AND WHEN BUYING  
READY-TO-WEAR AS LISTED BY NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

	: <u>Fabric</u> :		: <u>Garment</u> :	
	: High	: Junior	: High	: Junior
	: School	: college	: School	: college
Care instructions	130	32	104	29
Color	9	5	7	3
Color fastness	62	10	43	6
Cut on grain			1	1
Ease of care	101	16	110	11
Fashionable or stylish			21	2
Fiber content	24	12	29	8
Name of manufacturer and fabric	44	6	12	7
Need for lining		1		
Price	53	8	44	
Quality	21	7		
Shrinkage	58	10	45	4
Size and fit			23	0
Style becoming				8
Suitable design for individual and occasion			7	4
Texture or hand			9	9
Unusual design			5	0
What I like			1	0
Width	18	7		
Workmanship -- seams, hems, finish			68	9

In an attempt to get a more direct reaction to the principles of clothing selection, the participants were asked to rank in order of importance items considered in selecting a summer church-type dress. Color was ranked first and price second by both the high school and college graduates. The high school graduates ranked current design as third, the college women ease of care which was ranked fourth by the high school; the college women ranked texture fourth. Washing was ranked fifth by both groups. The high school graduates ranked texture as sixth, the college women current design. Both the high school and college graduates ranked fashionable colors seventh, new fibers eighth, and dry cleaning ninth. Others listed were right for the individual, simple design, and purpose. These answers showed the participants following specific application of the theories and the clothing selection and instruction practices applied in clothing courses studied in school. (Table VIII).

Problems of fitting, whether applied to the pattern selected to make the garment or to the garment purchased ready-made, involved the same general areas of alteration. The most frequent alterations checked for ready-made garments were skirt length, side seams, waist line, and sleeve length, in the order named. Other areas requiring alterations checked by high school graduates were width across the shoulder, and upper arm, and the waist size. The ranking as to frequency of occurrence of alterations followed the order named for the high school graduates but varied considerably with the college women who ranked alteration of waist size as occurring the most frequently and alteration of skirt length next. Other alterations checked by the college women but given the same frequency, were width across the bust and shoulders, and the waist length.

TABLE VIII

ITEMS IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE IN SELECTING A SUMMER  
CHURCH-TYPE DRESS AS INDICATED BY PARTICIPANTS

List	High School	College
Color	1	1
Price	2	2
Current Design	3	6
Easy Care	4	3
Washing	5	5
Texture	6	4
Fashion Colors	7	7
New Fibers	8	8
Dry Cleaning	9	9

The areas presenting fitting or altering problems most frequently checked by the high school graduates and college women when sewing for themselves were across the bust, the shoulders and the upper arm, and the sleeve length. When sewing for daughters and others the high school graduates reported the least frequent altering across the bust, the shoulders, the hips, and the sleeves and waist lengths.

Commercial patterns presented problems in alteration and influenced the amount of sewing done by 118 high school graduates and 23 college women. Sixty-one high school graduates indicated they did not do more sewing because of the problems in fitting commercial patterns. Twenty-three college women answered that they usually could find commercial patterns; nine indicated that they would sew more if they could find commercial patterns. The answers to this question varied for the high school graduates; 129 answered that they usually could find commercial patterns for themselves and 111 for others; 42 answered no for themselves and 34 for others; 33 answered yes for themselves and 16 for others; 14 answered no for themselves and eight for others. In problems of fitting the commercial patterns, skirt length and waist size ranked first in frequency of occurrence for the high school graduates. Hip width was listed by 54 high school graduates and 10 college women; skirt length was named by 48 high school graduates and nine college women; waist size was listed by 41 high school graduates and five college women, and bust width was listed by 28 high school graduates and three college women. Other areas listed as presenting problems in the fit of the commercial pattern were the shoulders and upper arm and the blouse and sleeve length; one added across the skirt at the small of the back. (Table IX).

TABLE IX

## NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS AND PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED WHEN ALTERING COMMERCIAL PATTERNS

	G I-A	G II-A	G III-A	Total A	G I-B	G II-B	G III-B	Total B									
	Self:Others	Self:Others	Self:Others	Self:Others	Self:Others	Self:Others	Self:Others	Self:Others									
Can find pattern to fit self and others																	
Yes	36	27	47	49	46	35	129	111	11	7	10	1	12	8	33	16	
No	5	5	18	21	19	8	42	34	1	3	8	1	5	4	14	8	
Problems encountered																	
Blouse length	6	5	11	5	6	2	23	12	-	1	-	2	2	-	2	3	
Skirt length	10	5	20	10	18	5	48	20	4	3	1	1	4	2	9	6	
Sleeve length	5	4	5	5	6	1	16	10	1	1	-	3	3	3	4	7	
Hip width	10	5	28	9	16	1	54	15	2	-	4	4	4	2	10	6	
Waist width	8	6	16	12	17	2	41	20	1	1	2	1	2	1	5	3	
Bust width	8	4	9	5	11	5	28	14	-	-	1	1	2	1	3	2	
Shoulder width	4	-	9	8	6	7	19	15	-	2	1	1	2	3	3	6	
Upper arm	3	-	4	2	1	-	8	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	

Fifty-four high school graduates and eight college women reported altering ready-made garments often, 128 high school and 25 college sometimes, 19 high school, and five college never. Actual practices in clothing alteration of ready-to-wear by the high school graduates included 183 hems, 62 waists, 25 busts and 19 shoulder lines, 78 side seams, and 27 sleeve lengths; college women 32 hems, eight waists, four busts, seven shoulder lines, 18 side seams, and five sleeve lengths. (Table X).

TABLE X

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS AND PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED  
WHEN ALTERING READY-TO-WEAR GARMENTS

	G 1-A:	G II-A :	G III-A :	Total :	G I-B:	G II-B:	G III-B:	Total
	:	:	:	A :	:	:	:	B
Often	22	13	19	54	2	3	3	8
Sometimes	23	62	43	128	7	5	13	25
Never	4	10	5	19	1	3	1	5
Change line								
Waist	20	26	16	62	2	4	2	8
Hem	53	72	58	183	11	6	15	32
Neck	2	4	3	9	1	1	1	3
Shoulder	5	12	2	19	-	3	4	7
Sleeve	1	5	3	9	-	1	-	1
Bust	3	12	10	25	1	2	1	4
Change								
Sleeve length	7	12	8	27	1	3	1	5
Side seams	20	37	21	78	4	6	8	18

The questions about planning their wardrobes revealed that 90 or

43 per cent of the high school graduates planned carefully and 115 or 55 per cent did some planning. Fourteen or 35 per cent of the college women reported careful planning, 26 or 65 per cent some. All of the college women reported planning of their wardrobes, and 205 or 98 per cent of the high school graduates planned their wardrobes. Using color as the basic element for planning the wardrobe, the high school graduates and college women named the following guides: 71 high school graduates and eight college women chose colors that go well together; 64 and eight selected becoming colors, 25 and five basic color, and 24 and two colors they liked. Elements added by the participants were coordinates, practical styles worn anywhere, anytime, service, and comfort.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine the application former students in clothing classes made of clothing principles. The amount of sewing done, the type of garments made and the persons sewed for were studied to determine the use made of the skills practiced in clothing classes.

The type and quantity of sewing done by the college women provided evidence that women with extended training made greater use of construction skills. The woman who sews can express her creative urge. She can save time and money by constructing well made, well fitting garments from fabrics suitable for the individual, the pattern design, and the occasion.

The reason given most frequently for sewing was to save money. In view of this and the fact that approximately half of the high school graduates and college women worked and more than half sewed for their families, the need for economy seemed evident. However, women who worked outside the home bought clothing ready-made to save time. Dresses and less complicated types of clothing made up the bulk of the home sewing.

Both the high school and college graduates reported that they did the most sewing for themselves and their daughters. The two groups varied widely in the amount of sewing done for themselves and their daughters. However, the averages were in approximately the same percentage ranges. Although the sewing done for sons and husbands was noticeably less, it presented a noteworthy picture in the overall study of the use made of

clothing construction. The percentages of sewing done for their sons by both the high school and college graduates were in approximately the same ranges. The lowest percentages of sewing done for their husbands by the college women paralleled the highest by the high school graduates. The differences, however, seemed to indicate that the college women sewed more for their sons and husbands, while the high school graduates surpassed in amount of sewing for themselves and their daughters.

Chief concerns in buying clothing ready-made or buying fabrics by the yard were in washing and cleaning instructions, wrinkle resistance and ease of care, and fiber content. The college women ranked fiber content higher than the high school graduates, indicating that the knowledge gained through study of textiles at the college level increased their interest in information designed to aid the consumer. Color and price were named as the two leading considerations in selecting a summer church-type dress.

Most frequent areas where garments presented altering or fitting problems in ready-made garments were in lengths of skirt and waist, and in widths of hip and waist. In home sewing the problems occurred the most frequently in widths across the bust, shoulders, and upper arm and in sleeve lengths.

Difficulty in finding commercial patterns that fit influenced the amount of sewing done by both high school and college graduates. Approximately half of the women reported little or no problem in finding commercial patterns, but had difficulty in altering them to fit.

The amount of clothing instruction was found to be associated with the amount of home sewing done, and the extent to which the knowledge was used by high school and college graduates in selecting and planning their own and their families' wardrobes. Most of the high school and all of the

college graduates reported careful planning or some planning of their wardrobes. The relationship between the knowledge of the principles and the practice of the skills in clothing construction was found to agree with other studies.

It is recommended that questions with blanks for supplying information be stated with the term given and the blank following. Judging from the fill-ins completing such statements the participant was unsure and often supplied the word for blank one preceding the term for answer two.

Open-end questions need to be carefully stated in order to categorize the answers. The subjective questions proved unreliable as the subject being tested first interpreted the meaning of the question, then the researcher interpreted the answer. Such subjectivity broadened the scope of the answers making it difficult to categorize the answers into any form of standardization.

This study was too extensive to record the more personal findings pertaining to the family and the individual. It seems that a more limited sampling of the survey would permit the researcher to study the data given from a more personal point of view. Interesting and challenging aspects suggested were the relation of women working to women sewing, the relation of the number of children to the amount of sewing, the relation of the amount of sewing to the occupational level, and the relation of the amount of sewing to the educational level.

The span of time included in the survey was too extensive. Such a survey should be made at five to ten year intervals so that the results of the surveys could be more adequately compared and more meaningfully interpreted. Though the answers were to include only the sewing done

in a year, the respondents found it difficult to confine their responses this rigidly. A similar survey in other communities with a comparable high school and junior college homemaking department would prove interesting and should prove valuable to teachers and curriculum directors.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## LITERATURE CITED

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APPENDIX A

LETTER

Dear

You, as one of my former students, can assist me in a study of fabric selection and garment construction.

The following questionnaire will be used as a part of a clothing and textiles problem that I am doing at Kansas State University, at Manhattan. The information will be kept confidential. No names will be used in the study.

Please answer each question; if you are not sure, answer as well as you can. Return the questionnaire within a week in the enclosed, self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Evelyn Hackney  
Home Economics Teacher  
Iola Sr. High and  
Jr. College

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Circle each grade or year in school when you had some clothing construction:

7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.

2. Circle the number of years you have participated in clothing units

A. In 4-H Club:

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

B. In Home Demonstration units:

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

3. List the schools and colleges which you have attended since leaving Iola High School. If you have taken other clothing construction courses state the number taken in each school.

School	Year Attended	Date of Graduation	Diploma or degree received	Clothing Construction Courses
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

#### CONCERNING YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

4. You are \_\_\_single, \_\_\_,married, \_\_\_widow, \_\_\_divorced.
5. You work outside the home \_\_\_full time, \_\_\_part time, or \_\_\_none.
6. Your occupation is \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Describe the work you do if your occupation is other than home-making \_\_\_\_\_.
8. If married, your husband's occupation is \_\_\_\_\_.

9. Describe the work he does \_\_\_\_\_

10. Give date of the last year of schooling completed by you and your husband.

<u>You</u>	<u>Your Husband</u>
___ Grade school (8th or below)	___
___ 9th Grade High School	___
___ 10th Grade High School	___
___ 11th Grade High School	___
___ 12th Grade High School	___
___ 13th Freshman in College	___
___ 14th Sophomore in College	___
___ 15th Junior in College	___
___ 16th Senior in College	___
___ 17th Master's	___
___ 18th Doctor's	___
___ List others (business college, beauty school, nursing, etc.)	___
___ _____	___
___ _____	___

11. Check the type of community in which your home is located.

\_\_\_ farm, \_\_\_ rural (non-farm), \_\_\_ town under 2500, \_\_\_ city over 2500, \_\_\_ city over 25,000.

12. State the number of boys and girls you have in your family and give their ages.

<u>Boys</u>	<u>Ages</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>Ages</u>
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

13. You make all \_\_\_\_\_, some \_\_\_\_\_, or none \_\_\_\_\_ of your own or your family's clothing.
14. If you do any home sewing please complete the following:

<u>Make outer clothing for:</u>	<u>Amount of Clothing made</u>			<u>Approximate percentage of clothing made for persons of different age groups</u>				
	<u>All</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>0-5</u>	<u>6-10</u>	<u>11-15</u>	<u>16-20</u>	<u>21 or over</u>

Self

Daughter (s)

Son(s)

Husband

Others list

15. Listed below are types of garments often made in the home. Check the approximate number you have made in the last year.

<u>Number in last year</u>	<u>Kind</u>	<u>Number in last year</u>	<u>Kind</u>	<u>Number in last year</u>	<u>Kind</u>
_____	Dresses	_____	Slacks	_____	Underclothing
_____	Bouses	_____	Shorts	_____	Night Clothes
_____	Suits	_____	Skirts	_____	Other (list)
_____	Coats	_____	Shirts		

16. Circle the appropriate answers.

- A. You sew more or less than you did five years ago.
- B. You sew more or less than you did ten years ago.
- C. You make all, some, or none of your own or your family's clothing rather than buy ready-made clothing.

17. If you make any of your clothing, it is because you can:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make it fit better               | <input type="checkbox"/> Have wider choice of fabric           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Save money                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Have greater choice of garment design |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have better choice of color      | <input type="checkbox"/> Others (list)                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do better quality of workmanship |  |

18. You have a dressmaker make outer clothing for you and your family

always,  Often,  sometime,  never.

19. If you have a dressmaker make all or some clothing instead of

buying ready-made or making your outer garments, it is because you:

- Lack time to make them yourself.
- Have better choice of color than you can find in ready-to-wear.
- Have greater choice of garment design than you can find in ready-to-wear.
- Dressmaker constructed clothes are cheaper than ready-mades of similar quality.
- Get better fit than ready-made.
- Other reasons (list).

20. You buy ready-made clothing for your family  all of the time,

some of the time,  none of the time.

21. You buy ready-made clothing because it:

\_\_\_ Takes less time than making or having it made.

\_\_\_ Gives greater choice of design.

\_\_\_ Is easier to see how the garments will look.

\_\_\_ Gives wider choice of fabrics.

\_\_\_ Is easier to get better fit.

\_\_\_ Has good care instructions.

\_\_\_ Is cheaper than making or having it made.

\_\_\_ Others (list).

22. When buying summer church type dresses you look for: (Rank in the order of importance to you as 1, 2, 3, etc.)

\_\_\_ Color

\_\_\_ Easier care features

\_\_\_ Current designs

\_\_\_ Price

\_\_\_ Dry cleaning

\_\_\_ Texture

\_\_\_ Fashionable colors

\_\_\_ New fibers

\_\_\_ Washing

\_\_\_ Others; list.

23. You plan your wardrobe \_\_\_ to some extent, \_\_\_ carefully.

24. If answer is carefully, around which of the following do you plan your wardrobe:

\_\_\_ Basic color

\_\_\_ Colors that are becoming

\_\_\_ Fashionable colors

\_\_\_ Colors that go well together

\_\_\_ Colors that you like

\_\_\_ Others; list.

25. You usually can find commercial patterns that fit you. \_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_ no.

26. If not, in which of the areas do patterns need to be altered:

\_\_\_ Through bust

\_\_\_ Sleeve length

\_\_\_ Waist line size

\_\_\_ Blouse length

\_\_\_ Upper arm width

\_\_\_ Across back of shoulders

\_\_\_ Skirt length

\_\_\_ Hip line width

\_\_\_ Others; list.

27. The member of my family for whom I sew most is my \_\_\_ daughter, \_\_\_ son, \_\_\_ husband, \_\_\_ other, list.

28. You usually can find commercial patterns that fit the member of your family for whom you sew most. \_\_\_ yes, \_\_\_ no.

29. If not, in which of the areas do patterns need to be altered:

- \_\_\_ Through bust or chest      \_\_\_ Blouse length      \_\_\_ Upper arm width
- \_\_\_ Across back of shoulders      \_\_\_ Skirt length      \_\_\_ Hip line width
- \_\_\_ Waist line size      \_\_\_ Sleeve length      \_\_\_ Others; list.

30. Questions 25 and 28 influence your making your own or your family's garments. \_\_\_ yes, \_\_\_ no.

31. When buying goods or fabrics you look for or ask for information, about: Please list. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

32. When you buy ready-made garments you look for or ask for information about: Please list. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

33. Check the answer that best tells how ready-made garments usually fit you in each of these areas.

Good	Fair	Poor		Good	Fair	Poor	
___	___	___	Through bust	___	___	___	Waist length
___	___	___	Sleeve length	___	___	___	Skirt length
___	___	___	Waist line size	___	___	___	Upper arm width
___	___	___	Across back of shoulders	___	___	___	Hip line width
___	___	___	Others; list.				

34. Check the answer that best tells how ready-made garments fit a female member of your family for whom you may buy the most clothes. State approximate age \_\_\_\_\_. (If there is no girl or woman for whom you purchase clothes, go on to the next question.)

Good	Fair	Poor		Good	Fair	Poor	
_____	_____	_____	Through bust	_____	_____	_____	Waist length
_____	_____	_____	Sleeve length	_____	_____	_____	Skirt length
_____	_____	_____	Waist line size	_____	_____	_____	Upper arm width
_____	_____	_____	Across back of shoulders	_____	_____	_____	Hip line width
				_____	_____	_____	Others; list.

35. You often \_\_\_\_\_, sometimes \_\_\_\_\_, or never \_\_\_\_\_, alter ready-mades?
36. Check the type of changes you make when you alter clothes for you or other women or girls:
- |                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| _____ Change waist line    | _____ Change shoulder line |
| _____ Change hem line      | _____ Change sleeve line   |
| _____ Change sleeve length | _____ Change bust line     |
| _____ Change neck line     | _____ Others; list.        |
| _____ Change side seams    |                            |
37. I often \_\_\_\_\_, seldom \_\_\_\_\_, never \_\_\_\_\_, save money by making dresses or other outer garments for myself.
38. I often \_\_\_\_\_, seldom \_\_\_\_\_, never \_\_\_\_\_, save money by making outer garments for my husband.
39. I often \_\_\_\_\_, seldom \_\_\_\_\_, never \_\_\_\_\_, save money by making dresses or other outer garments for my daughter or daughters.
40. I often \_\_\_\_\_, seldom \_\_\_\_\_, never \_\_\_\_\_, save money by making outer garments for my boys.

41. <u>Types of Clothes You Prefer to Make</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Seldom</u>	<u>Never</u>
Latest fad	_____	_____	_____
High Style	_____	_____	_____
Unusual design	_____	_____	_____
New fibers	_____	_____	_____
New fabrics	_____	_____	_____
Staple (such as work or everyday clothes)	_____	_____	_____
Others, list	_____	_____	_____

42. I prefer to buy the more difficult garments ready-made and to make the less difficult ones. \_\_\_yes, \_\_\_no.

APPENDIX C

ABSTRACT

HOME SEWING AND BUYING PRACTICES OF HOME ECONOMICS STUDENTS GRADUATING  
FROM SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL OR JUNIOR COLLEGE BETWEEN 1948-1964

by

EVELYN JANE HACKNEY

B.S., Kansas State College, 1935

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Clothing, Textiles and Interior Design

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

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The number of clothing courses necessary to develop sufficient skills to carry over into construction of garments and clothing selection is a major concern of students, homemaking teachers, and curriculum directors of high school and college.

This study sought (1) to determine the value of principles taught in clothing classes, (2) to determine the use made of sewing skills, and (3) to provide a basis for recommending courses in clothing.

The place of residence of family and the number of children appeared to have little effect on the number of high school and college graduates who sewed. However, those living in small communities and having larger families reported a higher percentage of family sewing. Though more college women reported working, the garments made per person exceeded the number made by the high school graduates. These findings point toward the importance of a continued program in clothing construction.

From the number who reported careful to some planning of the wardrobe it could be assumed that knowledge pertaining to color, design, fabrics, and fiber content supplied guides in buying ready-made garments. Only five high school and one college graduate reported no wardrobe planning.

An understanding of principles in fitting of garments appeared to be helpful in the application of the processes in altering and fitting commercial patterns and ready-to-wear garments.