

A SURVEY OF LIVING ROOM FURNITURE
IN EIGHTY INDIANA HOMES

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Vanis Jean Deeter

1957



This is to certify that the

thesis entitled

A Survey of Living Room Furniture

in Eighty Indiana Homes
presented by

Vanis Jean Deeter

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of the requirements for

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ABSTRACT
FOR
MASTER OF ARTS THESIS

A Survey of Living Room Furniture in
Eighty Indiana Homes

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this survey was to gain information for more effective teaching of home furnishings particularly to homemakers participating in the home demonstration program.

The survey included an inventory of the living room furniture found in eighty Indiana homes responses of the homemaker to her furniture and its use by her family. The homemaker in each case was a member of a home demonstration club and was selected at random from a group who qualified according to age and family specifications.

It was noted that there were differences in values placed upon furnishings by the eighty homemakers visited. There was a wide variety of taste and interest in home furnishings expressed by the individuals interviewed. To some, furniture was a very important item in family living. To others, the farm, community activities, family recreation, and education were of major importance with the house and its furnishings far down the list in importance.

Family incomes of those interviewed were above the state and national average for the year of 1956. It was found that families with higher incomes did not necessarily have the most expensive furniture in their living rooms.

Rural and town homes were so similar in family income, cost of furniture found in the rooms, and opinions expressed regarding furnishings, that no significant pattern of difference was revealed.

It was found that the amount of furniture in the living room had no relationship to the size of the family.

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A significant number of homemakers expressed satisfaction with their furniture and indicated they would buy about the same type of furniture if they could start their homes again.

Comfort and practicality rather than the appearance of seating pieces was of greater importance to the majority of the homemakers.

It was found that tables were chosen more often as decorative accessories than for their practical function.

This survey indicated that although the homemakers stressed the importance of comfort and good quality in furniture, their knowledge of selection possibilities was very limited.

The visits to these eighty homes convinced the interviewer of the need for emphasis in teaching through the extension program the fundamental principles of design, color and function basic to the selection of furnishings for the home.

A SURVEY OF LIVING ROOM FURNITURE IN
EIGHTY INDIANA HOMES

By
Vanis Jean Deeter

A THESIS

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I. INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE SURVEY

The purpose of this survey was to investigate living room furniture in selected Indiana homes and to determine the homemaker's response to her furniture and its use by her family. The group under study was selected from home demonstration club members in order that an improved program in home furnishings might be developed in the Indiana Extension Service. Information from this study of living room furniture and its adequacy for the family will constitute criteria for modification of the extension program in home furnishings. It would likewise provide information to young couples establishing their homes as well as to manufacturers and retailers of furniture. Both want and need information on consumer preferences and needs.

This sample survey of eighty Indiana homes was made from among home demonstration club members in two Indiana counties. The inventory was limited to items of furniture in the living room. Any dining room furniture, as in an adjoining portion, was excluded. Accessories such as lamps, magazine racks, curtains, draperies, floor coverings, art objects and built-in features in the room were not considered.

The inventory of the living room furniture included information as to how it was acquired, when it was acquired, its approximate cost or established value at the time of acquisition and specific information as to the homemaker's response to it. Information was requested as to the amount of furniture for the family's needs, how it was purchased, what style or period it was, whether the furniture was satisfactory, and what the next purchases would be. The use of the living room for family entertainment was also included in the questionnaire.¹

The homemaker was asked her opinion of living room furniture necessary to meet the needs of her family on three budget levels: limited, moderate, and unlimited.

Appreciation of the home and its value to happy family living is increasingly important in our society. The responsibility for creating beauty in the home, planning for its convenience, comfort and efficiency toward the best interest of family members is largely up to the homemaker. Realizing this and knowing that the role of the homemaker-consumer is not easy in today's competitive market, a guide in selection of furnishings based on actual experience of homemakers is a valuable tool.

¹See questionnaire in the appendix for further information.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Very few studies were found which contained pertinent information bearing on the subject under study. The significant material reported in the literature review reveals that people in the age group of late twenty through middle forty are more interested in furniture purchases than any other age group. They acquire furniture according to a purchase plan with installment credit regarded as an important method used for payment. Television viewing is an important factor to be considered in furniture selection making comfort and durability desirable qualities. Contemporary furniture was preferred for purchases to be made in the future but a mixture of styles is usually to be found in their homes.

One of the most important areas of the home is the living room. The importance of this room in family living is exemplified through the many activities that occur in this part of the house. In a survey made by McCall's Magazine in 1950, "What Women Want in Their Living Rooms"¹, diversity of living room activities in the American home are: reading, study, entertaining, listening to radio and records, watching television, sewing, ironing, games, dancing, hobbies, eating,

¹"What Women Want in Their Living Rooms", a McCall's Magazine Study, 1950.

and providing extra sleeping quarters.

The living room is frequently the favorite room for family members. In surveys from two Michigan Counties in 1952 and 1955, "Family Use of Farm Homes" and "How Homes are Used on Farms and in Small Cities"¹, a majority of the farm families interviewed indicated the living room as a favorite because it was associated with leisure and enjoyment. Problems relative to selection of furniture arise because of the varied activities and the great amount of time spent in this room by family members and guests.

Storage problems were revealed to include current magazines, newspapers, toys, other recreational material, books, writing materials, farm and home accounts.

Furniture in this room must meet many demands and therefore is as varied as in any room in the house. Included in the room are seating pieces (upholstered and wood), case goods (tables, chests, television sets, radios, pianos), which require wise consumer choices. These purchases are generally made with several years service in mind and take a sizeable part of the family budget. According to the study, "Quantity of Cost Budgets for Three Levels"², Ameri-

¹"Family Use of Farm Homes", Technical Bulletin 227, April 1952 and "How Homes are Used on Farms and in Small Cities", Technical Bulletin 254, December, 1955, by Alice C. Thorpe and Irma H. Gross, Michigan State College Department of Home Management.

²Heller Committee for Research in Social Economics, "Quantity of and Cost Budgets for Three Income Levels", University of California, 1950 page 50.

can families spend from three to five percent of the annual income for furniture and equipment. This percentage represents the cost of items added to the household annually, not the initial cost of furniture and equipment purchased to establish the home.

Furniture requirements change with varying ages of the family members and the family cycle. In the McCall's survey, "What Women Want in Their Living Rooms"¹, 34.4 percent of respondents were thirty-one to forty years of age, 32.4 percent from twenty-one to thirty, and 18.2 percent from the ages of forty-one to fifty. The homemakers' interest in furnishings in the age group of thirty to early forty made this a pertinent age group to consider for opinions based on experiences regarding living room furniture. In the Survey of Consumer Finances², young married people eighteen to forty-four years of age, particularly those with children, purchased more furniture at each income level than any other age group studied.

Children in the home cannot be overlooked if a true

¹ A McCall's Magazine Study, 1950, op. cit.

² Reprints of the Survey of Consumer Finances, Durable Goods, Federal Reserve Bulletin, June, 1954, May, 1955, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, Washington, D. C.

picture of furniture needs and problems are to be examined. According to the 1950 census, there were 1.17 children per family in the United States and in a 1955 release, there were 1.3 children. Families with at least two children can be considered average.

In a furniture inventory, "Consumer Use and Purchase of Furniture in Flint, Michigan"¹, taken from a representative sample of 419 Flint, Michigan, spending units² in 1951, items consisted of bedroom, living room and dining room furniture in use. The inventories were classified by the number of rooms in which the furniture was placed. Seven out of every ten spending units had at least one bedroom suite with double bed and chest or chests; dining table and chairs in living or dining room and also in the kitchen; a sofa and a lounge chair, usually matching; and one or more small tables in the living room. Twenty-eight percent of the furniture was from one to five years old, twenty-five percent from six to ten years old, twenty-seven from eleven to twenty years old, and the remaining pieces ranged from twenty-one to one

¹Consumer Use and Purchase of Furniture in Flint, Michigan, 1951, Calla Van Syckle, Michigan State College, East Lansing, Technical Bulletin 233.

²The spending unit was defined as "all persons living in the same dwelling and pooling their incomes to meet their major expenses". 1950 Survey of Consumer Finances, Federal Reserve Bulletin, July 1950. In most cases, it is the same as the "family".

hundred sixty years in age. The items over fifty years old represented only two percent of the total. Seventy-five percent of the furniture had been acquired new, usually by purchase. Sixteen percent has been bought second-hand and nine percent acquired as gifts or had been owned previous to marriage. In furniture with exposed wood, the most frequently reported wood finish was dark walnut, twenty-seven percent; dark mahogany, seventeen percent. Light-finished furniture was more frequently used in bedrooms than in living or dining rooms. Respondents reported 86 percent of the pieces included in the inventory had given satisfaction but 71 percent of the respondents owned one or several items that had been unsatisfactory. Approximately three-fourths of all of the purchases had been planned. Comfort and durability were regarded as important in the selection of sofas and easy chairs. Another value important to the purchaser was suitability of living room furniture to the setting and space available. According to the study findings, 93 percent of the purchases were made in Flint, with 77 percent of the purchases at regular prices. One-third were financed by installment credit with the middle income group using this type of credit more than the others. One out of four of the homemakers who had used this credit was uncertain or incorrect about the relative cost of this service.

Some of the conclusions from this study, in numerical order of significance, were: (1) Manufacturers and retailers have the major influence on the level of taste characterizing furnishings in the majority of homes, (2) Consumers' ideas about furniture are formed by the local market and periodicals, (3) Most consumers have limited knowledge as to availability and the variety of choices in furniture selection, and (4) The small home should be a major consideration for furniture designed for the mass market.

A study, "Practices Followed by Consumers in Buying 'Large Expenditure' Items of Clothing, Furniture and Equipment"¹, was made in Lansing, Michigan in 1949 to 1950. An interpretation and a list of the values wanted by the consumer are listed from this study in order of their significance. (1) Durability - "giving a long period of use before wearing out." (2) Easy or inexpensive upkeep - "not show soil easily", "clean easily", "resistant to stains", "doesn't mar". (3) Efficient, economical, or satisfactory performance - "comfortable", "storage space satisfactory", "easily adjustable", "won't tip", "dust proof", "most repellent". (4) Meets

¹Practices Followed by Consumers in Buying "Large Expenditure" Items of Clothing, Furniture and Equipment, by Calla Van Syckle, Michigan State College, East Lansing, Technical Bulletin 224, 1951.

personal preference for color, style and variety in possessions. (5) Suitability to situation in which it is to be used "to fit particular space", "to fit an architectural feature". Durability, appearance, and satisfactory performance were mentioned most often in regard to furniture selection.

Information from 1950 McCall's survey, "What Women Want in Their Living Rooms"¹, indicated consumer preferences and buying habits. The data detailed in this survey were obtained from entries to a contest conducted by McCall's. Redecoration of the "contest room" and cash awards were offered to the participants. The sample was drawn from the McCall's audience of more than 4,000,000 women. Of these, 155,000 requested entry blanks, and 20,000 of the entry blanks were completed and returned. Five thousand of these were selected at random to serve as the sample upon which this study was based. The entry blank was quite detailed, with an estimate of 30 hours required to complete the application form. Because of the nature of this survey, the primary characteristic of respondents was their self-selection. They volunteered information due to their interest in home furnishings as well as the incentives of the contest. The furniture preferences expressed probably reflect the style desired but not neces-

¹A McCall's Magazine Study, 1950, op. cit.

sarily the buying intentions of the respondents.

In this study, 35.5 percent of the women respondents were thirty years of age, and 69.9 percent were under forty years of age. All areas of the United States were represented. The number of children in the contest families was: 24.3 percent with one child, 28.6 percent with two children, 11.0 percent with three children, 4.1 percent with four children, and 2 percent with five children or more. The remaining families reported no children or did not answer this item.

Of the 20,000 families in this study, 79.2 percent owned their homes, 6.9 percent rented their homes, and 13.1 percent were apartment dwellers.

When respondents were asked to characterize styles of furniture to be used in the remodeled rooms, over 70 percent specified modern furniture, or a combination of modern and traditional. Studies of the entries reveal that when a combination of modern and traditional was planned, the latter was already owned and the new purchases would be modern.

Comfort was a factor selected in an overwhelming percentage when the respondents were asked to check terms descriptive of the room they were planning. Informality and in cleaning were next in frequency mentioned.

The specific items of furniture that respondents wanted in their remodeled living rooms in order of preference were:

Sofas	83.9%
Lamp Tables	78.6%
Large Upholstered Chair	74.6%
Coffee Table	73.3%
Other Tables	61.3%
Small Upholstered Chair	53.2%
Book Cases	50.1%
Desk	43.2%
Second Large Chair	43.2%
Open Arm Chair	40.8%
Television	39.3%
Dining Chairs	34.9%
Piano	34.3%
Second Small Upholstered Chair	33.9%
Radio-Television	21.2%
Love Seat	16.6%

Once each year Retailing Daily conducts a survey to determine retailers' opinions on furniture design and a general business outlook. The opinions of 129 furniture store owners and 64 department store representatives are reflected in the findings. Questionnaires came from 58 cities located in 28 states. A brief summary of the findings for October 17, 1955¹ are reported here.

¹Retailing Daily, the Home Furnishings Newspaper, A Fairchild Publication, 7 East 12th Street, New York 3, New York.

In the sale of upholstered furniture items, the contemporary style accounts for 54 percent of the selections, traditional styles 27 percent, provincial designs 13 percent, and no period - 6 percent. Many customers are reported solving the problem of limited space in homes by using dual sleep equipment in the living room.

Ownership of television was singled out by the retailers more often than any other factor as influencing the current and expected consumer buying patterns. Seating units are wearing out more rapidly because of television viewing. Style change is affected because living rooms are being used more for family and guest entertainment. Seating pieces sought by the customer also reflect the demands of television. Light scaled pieces that can be moved easily are wanted. Sixty-seven percent of the retailers interviewed commented upon increased interest in the occasional upholstered chair. Greater comfort consciousness is attributed to two factors: the long time people spend sitting for television viewing, and the fact that the husband now appears in the store as a shopper. Mr. Consumer is not so conscious of period or style requirements as his wife, but comfort is high on his list. In response to a question concerning the effect of television and hi-fidelity on upholstered furniture, retailers made the following comments:

- more seating and better seating is needed.
- sofas and chairs wear out more rapidly and are replaced sooner because the room is used for prolonged seating for television viewing.
- there is increased demand for scaled-down occasional chairs that can be moved easily.
- the trend is to accent pieces with comfort a necessary feature.
- sales indicate much higher-priced upholstered furniture.
- customers look for better style and better service in upholstery covering.
- sales are increased for swivel chairs, high back chairs, and plastic covers.

Customer preferences in 1955 for wood finishes on Modern furniture were: (1) blonde, (2) walnut, (3) pumice, (4) tan, and (5) fruitwood. Finish preferences on traditional furniture were: (1) mahogany, (2) fruitwood, (3) maple, (4) walnut, and (5) pumice.

Retailers indicated that consumers continue to request wider color selection and more durable weaves in upholstery fabrics that will take the rough wear to which they are subjected.

Retailers reported the 1955 trend was toward individual sales in upholstered pieces with sectional units in second

place and suites in third place. Forty percent of all stores reported an increase in sales of reclining chairs.

Retailers also indicated that consumers were making more stringent demands in respect to construction of the furniture purchased. Of the 193 retailers interviewed, 38 percent of them said construction is significant to most customers, 38 percent said it is important to only half of the customers, and 24 percent indicated construction was important to only a few.

The review of literature covering various aspects of the subject under study was quite limited. Numerous sources were checked for similar or related studies and the pertinent material found was included in this report.

Theses in Home Economics in related fields from colleges and universities in the United States were reviewed. Editors of leading home furnishings periodicals were contacted as well as the Grand Rapids Furniture Guild, Herman Miller, Inc., Retailing Daily, and the Redbook Magazine. Reprints of the survey of consumer Finances from the Federal Reserve Bulletins provided information as to national expenditures for furniture and equipment. Library facilities at Michigan State University and Purdue University were used.

III. METHODS AND PROCEDURE

Classification of the Sample

Selection of the Counties in Indiana

Hancock and Parke Counties in Indiana were selected for this survey because both were in proximity to Lafayette, minimizing expenditure of time and travel for the investigator in collecting the data. Both counties have an organized home demonstration program and county enrollment cards which provided desired information. Home Demonstration agents in these two counties were willing to cooperate in this survey.

It is recognized that the sample taken from these two counties is not representative of a region or the state as a whole insofar as the economic level is concerned.

Drawing the Sample

The qualifications of the eighty women to be interviewed in this survey were that they be experienced homemakers, members of a home demonstration club, within the ages of 30 and 45 years, married and have two or more children.

Hancock and Parke Counties have respectively 838 and 707 home demonstration club members. From 163 qualified members in Hancock County, forty were chosen at random and from 134 who qualified in Parke County, the remaining forty were drawn.

Initially it was thought that the selection of the

persons to be interviewed might be made during or after the leader training lessons in home furnishings. This did not prove feasible to be included with a full day of teaching. There was also a hesitancy on the part of the local leader to have the Home Furnishings Specialist come to her home following the lesson dealing with principles of home furnishings. It was also thought that the data would be more significant if the sample were random rather than on invitation by the homemaker to visit her home.

The Interview Procedure

The home interview procedure was decided as the most effective method to secure the desired information for this survey. It was important to the investigator to observe the furniture under discussion, as well as the homemaker, her attitude and philosophy expressed as the interview progressed.

After the counties were selected for the survey and permission obtained to proceed with the interviews, a schedule of visitation was planned with the county personnel. A letter of introduction was sent by the Home Agent to the homemakers to explain the purpose of the interview, to identify the interviewer, to indicate when the visit was likely to occur, and how long the interview would take. Thus, no direct appointments were made and the homemaker was free to cooperate if she wished to do so. This enabled the interviewer to see the room without advance preparation or change

on the part of the homemaker.

A platt map of the county aided in finding locations of the homes to be visited. It was found in the pretest of the questionnaire that the interviews would vary in length from one half to one and a half hours. Due to the professional committments of the interviewer, the visits were planned for December, 1956, and January, 1957, with a total of eighteen days necessary to complete the eighty visits. Because of the cooperation of the Home Agent, it was possible to average five interviews per day. Inasmuch as there was extremely cold weather and snowy roads, the interviewer found very few homemakers away from home, thereby minimizing the number of second calls.

Only ten people of the original eighty in the sample were not interviewed, so the next random numbers were selected. Reasons for not completing interviews at these homes were due to illness, moves out of the county permanently or for the winter, major remodeling of the home involved, or a discrepancy in information received concerning age and number of children of the interviewee.

The Survey Questionnaire

The survey questionnaire¹ was prepared, pre-tested

¹A copy of the questionnaire may be found in the appendix.

and administered by the interviewer. It consisted of four parts and provided information: (1) Family classifications, information concerning the family, location of home, approximate income, school and home demonstration club experience of the homemaker; (2) Inventory of living room furniture, to include each item of furniture listed as to its acquisition, approximate cost or estimated value; (3) Homemaker's opinion of her living room furniture, what items she would consider essential on a limited, moderate, and unlimited budget; and (4) General information about the living room, the furniture and its use.

Pre-testing of the questionnaire was arranged through the Home Demonstration agent in Livingston County, Michigan and was conducted in five homes. Several changes in the form of the questionnaire resulted from these interviews. The final pre-testing and mimeographing of the questionnaire was done in Indiana.

IV. REPORT OF THE FINDINGS

Description of the Sample

A knowledge of the characteristics of the women and the counties involved in this survey is pertinent to the interpretation of the data.

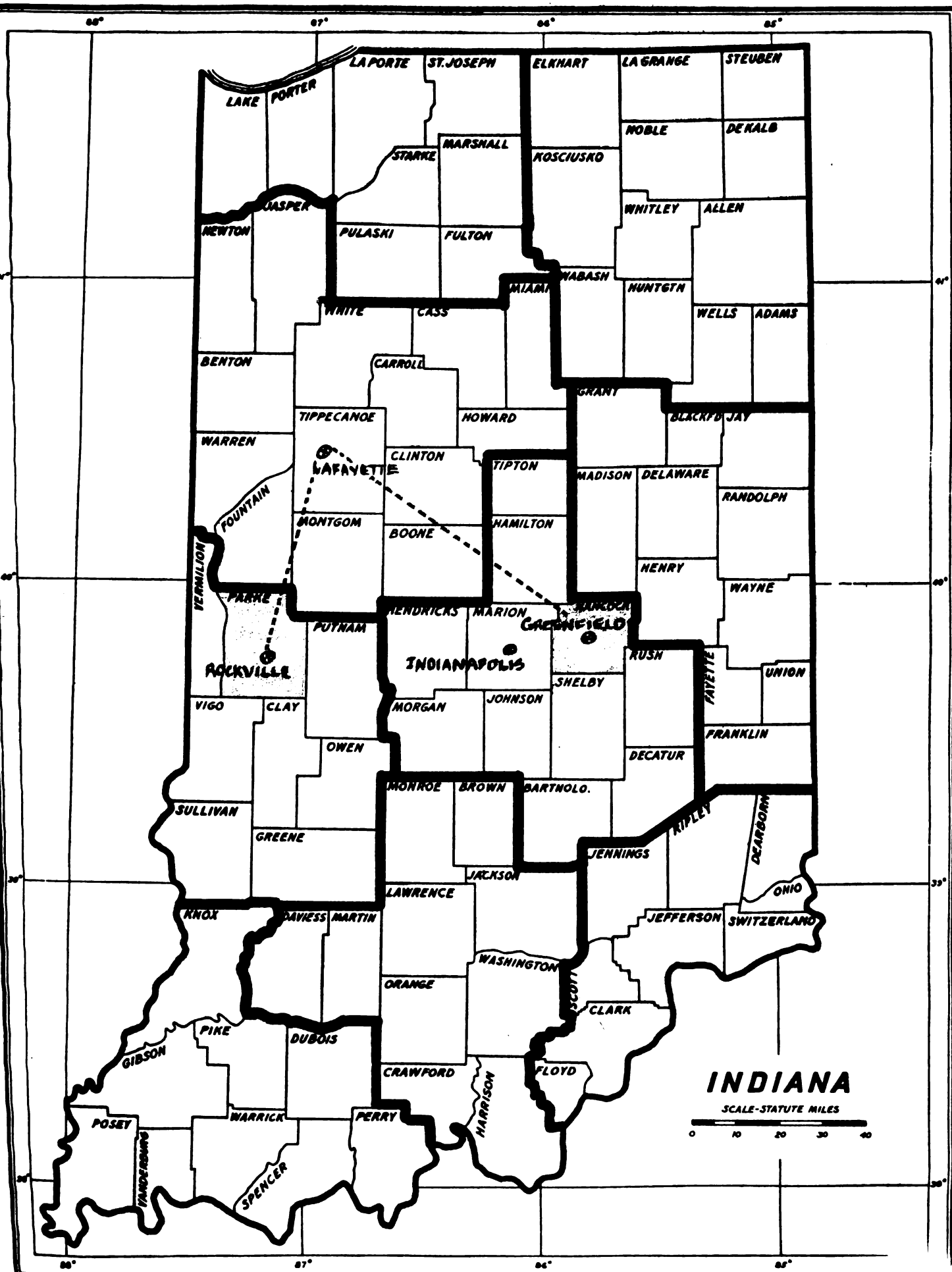
The Counties¹

Hancock County is in central Indiana equi-distant from Indianapolis, Anderson, Shelbyville, New Castle and Rushville. The county seat is Greenfield, with a population of 15,000, and is located twenty miles east of Indianapolis on National Road 40. New suburban developments in homes and business are occurring around each of the towns in the county. Although the county is predominately rural, the number of people employed by industries in the nearby cities is high.

Swine is the major livestock enterprise in the county. followed by beef, dairy, poultry and sheep.

Fort Harrison Army Center, Western Electric and the Chrysler Plants along with new shopping centers to the east of Indianapolis has resulted in an increase in the number of people moving to Hancock County. Indianapolis is the main

¹The two counties and their location in respect to Lafayette are shown on the map of Indiana which is included in this chapter.



shopping area for residents of Hancock County.

Parke County is located in the south central part of Indiana, along the Wabash River. The entire county is rural. The county seat, Rockville, with a population of 2,500 is the largest town. Many residents of the farm area work in Terre Haute or Indianapolis because farms have become larger and mechanized. Therefore, they employ fewer people than they did formerly. Only small industries such as Kraft Cheese plant, Hybrid Seed Corn Plant, limestone quarries, and some small coal mines provide in-county employment.

Indianapolis and Terre Haute provide the shopping area for furnishings outside of the smaller towns.

The Families

As indicated in the procedure, the homemakers included in the survey were between 30 and 45 years of age and have two or more children. An analysis of the eighty interview schedules as summarized in Table I show the composition of the families. Sixty percent of the families have two children and approximately one-fourth have three children.

Table I		
Number of Children Per Family		
CHILDREN	FAMILIES	PERCENT
2	48	60
3	19	24
4	6	7.5
5	6	7.5
6	0	0
7	1	1
TOTAL	80	100

Table II which follows shows the age and sex of the children. Approximately one half were of elementary school age, approximately one-fourth were pre-school age, and slightly more than one-fourth were teen age. In the eighty families there were the same number of boys as girls but there were divergents in age between the two sexes.

Table II

Age and Sex of the Children

	Boys		Girls		Both	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Pre-school	21	20	23	22	44	21
Elementary	48	45	42	39	90	42
Teen Age	30	28	33	31	63	29
Other ¹	8	7	9	8	17	8
TOTAL	107	100%	107	100%	214	100%

Although the age range of the homemakers was between 30 and 45 years of age, the years of marriage ranged from two to thirty-one years as shown in Table III. There were four second marriages among the homemakers interviewed. The average number of years as homemakers was 16.35 years. A comparable percentage had been homemakers between 10 and 14 years and 21 to 30 years. The greatest number, 41 percent, had been established in their homes between 15 and 20 years. This factor was important to this survey in regard to the age and replacement of furniture found in the homes.

¹ Children who were married or beyond teen age were classified as "other".

Table III

Number of years Homes Were Established

<u>Number of homemakers</u>	<u>Years</u>	<u>Percent</u>
8	2-9	10
18	10-14	23
33	15-20	41
21	21-31	26

The requirement that the homemaker belong to a Home Demonstration Club revealed that the average membership in the extension program was 7.76 years. Table IV¹ shows that half of those interviewed had been club members from four to nine years. Almost 20 percent were new members in the program with one to three years membership.

Table IV

Home Demonstration Club Experience

<u>Number of homemakers</u>	<u>Years</u>	<u>Percent</u>
15	1-3	19
27	4-6	34
13	7-9	16
13	10-12	16
2	13-15	2
6	16-18	8
4	19-23	5

Table V shows that sixty-four percent of the women interviewed had attended high school and 22 percent had attended college.

Table V
Education of the Homemakers

<u>Number of homemakers</u>	<u>School</u>	<u>Percent</u>
3	Grade School	4
51	High School	64
18	College	22
0	Graduate School	0
8	Business or Voca- tional	10

Although sixty-six percent of the families lived on the farm, only 48 percent of the husbands were either full or part-time farmers. Both counties were located near cities that offered job opportunities to supplement farm incomes. This factor might explain why more of the husbands were not farmers in these two predominately rural counties. Three-fourths of the families owned their homes and the other 25 percent lived in rented homes.

Table VI
Occupations of the 80 Husbands

<u>Number</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Percent</u>
30	Farmer	38
8	Part-time Farmer	10
8	Professional or Technical	10
6	Clerical and Sales	7
28	Laborer	35

Forty-one percent of the families had an annual gross income of \$4,500 to \$6,500 and the median for all families was in this income bracket as shown in Table VII. This is

higher than the median gross income for United States families in the year 1956 which was \$3,000¹. The median gross income for Indiana families in 1956 was \$3,200. The interviewer recognizes that the annual gross incomes could vary from those reported because of the reluctance or lack of knowledge on the part of the homemaker to give the information.

Table VII
Annual Gross Income of the Families²

Number of Families	Income	Percent
0	Up to \$1,500	0
1	1,500 - 2,500	1
7	2,500 - 3,500	9
12	3,500 - 4,500	15
32	4,500 - 6,500	41
10	6,500 - 8,500	14
5	8,500 - 10,000	6
10	over \$10,000	14

Only five percent of the eighty homemakers had full time jobs in addition to homemaking while 11 percent reported part-time employment outside the home. The national

¹These calculations are from the 1954 Statistical Abstract of the United States, page 312. The 1950 United States median family income was \$2,619 and for 1956 it was \$3,000. The 1950 Indiana median gross income was \$2,827 and for 1956 it was \$3,200.

²Three did not know the family income.

figure of 60 percent working wives in 1955 is much higher than the combined 16 percent full and part-time employment found in this group.

There was no significant rate of increase in family income shown in the families with working wives. There were twenty homemakers reporting jobs away from home, fourteen in part-time employment and six on a full time basis. Of the twenty-five families with an annual income of over \$6,500, six of the wives had full or part-time employment. Over half of the working wives were from the families in the \$4,500 to \$6,500 income bracket.

A comparison of annual family incomes of the farm families with the town families revealed no significant difference.

Some bias in the findings could be expected because the women in the sample were home demonstration club members. The attitudes and opinions expressed by the subjects could be somewhat different concerning the home and its furnishings than a census-type random sample.

Inasmuch as the homemakers knew the Home Demonstration Agent by name or face and were familiar with both county and state extension programs, their willingness to cooperate as a participant in this survey was not unexpected.

THE FURNITURE INVENTORY

There was a total of 852 items of furniture found in the eighty living rooms, giving an average of 10.65 items in each living room. The total cost or estimated value of all the furniture was \$62,301 which made the average cost of furniture per room \$779.00.

The furniture included seating pieces, tables, chests, pianos, radio and/or phonographs, television sets, bookcases (if not built-in) and some miscellaneous items¹. The furniture was acquired by several methods as shown in Table VIII.

Table VIII

How the Furniture Was Acquired

Number of items	How Acquired	Percent
567	Purchased new	67
25	Heirloom	3
89	Second hand	10
127	Gift	15
29	Made in the home	3
15	Custom made and other ²	2
852	TOTALS	100%

¹There were thirteen heating stoves, one tea cart and one music cabinet included in the inventory. The last two items are included under tables and chests.

²Some furniture was in the home on a loan basis, borrowed temporarily or acquired as "a trade" for another item.

Table IX lists the items of furniture, how they were acquired and their cost.

The upholstered furniture, including sofas, lounge chairs and occasional chairs, was more frequently purchased new than other furniture in the inventory. All eighty homes had a sofa or a sofa-bed and 84 percent of the sofas were purchased new. Sixteen percent were purchased second hand or were acquired as a gift. Eight families had both a sofa and a sofa-bed in the living room. Seven of the new sofas were sectional. This was of interest because many homemakers commented that they would like the old sofas to be replaced with a sectional type. Some favorable comments were made by sectional owners. One problem was that of keeping the sections together when they were to be used as a regular sofa.

TABLE IX

Summarized Inventory of Living Room Furniture¹

Item	Acquisition						Cost ²
	New	Heirloom	Second Hand	Gift	Made in Home	Other	
Sofa	68	.	6	1			\$11,976
Sofa-Bed	14					1	1,641
Lounge Chair	70		14	6		1	6,016
Occasional Chair	53	1	4	18			2,392
Rocker ³	36	4	6	12		1	2,451
Child's Rocker	7	5		6		1	168
Straight Chair	34	1	3	11		2	446
Ottoman	26	1	7	9			359
Tables (End)	66	1	4	24	8	1	1,390
Occasional	38	7	5	17	5	3	1,627
Coffee	19		5	5	4		626
Drop Leaf	5	1		4			695
Chest	5	1	3	1	1	1	510
Desk	16		1	4	2	2	943
Piano	3	3	17	3		2	5,731
Sewing Machine	2		2	1			673
Radio and/or Phonograph	13		2	3			2,466
Bookcase	12		3	2	9		619
Television	67		7				19,647
Stove	13						1,925
	567	25	89	127	29	15	
TOTAL ITEMS							852
TOTAL COST							\$62,301

¹No furniture was acquired as a purchased antique or custom made so these categories were omitted from the table.

²Cost represents actual cost of item or estimated value at the time of its acquisition.

³Twenty-nine of these were platform or tilt-back rockers.

The sofas that were purchased new ranged in age from one to twenty years. The numbers of sofas in various age groups were:

33 Sofas	1-5 years of age
19 Sofas	6-10 years of age
9 Sofas	11-15 years of age
6 Sofas	16-20 years of age

Every home but one in the eighty visited had one television set and four homes had a second set. Ninety percent of all the television sets were purchased new with twenty different brands represented. Only one color set was seen. The second sets were reported to be in the den, kitchen, bedroom or in an archway between two rooms.

The cost of the television set represented approximately one-third of the total cost of furniture for the living room. Since the average cost of furniture for one room was \$779, approximately \$250 would comprise the cost of television. This would leave slightly over \$500 for other furniture to complete the room.

With very few exceptions, television was considered a necessary item for family entertainment, especially for young people just starting their families. Comments by the women indicated that two sets in their household would be desirable. The problem of scheduling programs to suit all family members was mentioned and was a determining factor for opinions on owning two sets. Many homemakers said that television had

created problems of furniture arrangement in their living rooms, and indicated that they wanted the set in another room. A family or recreation room was preferred, where furniture and floor coverings could be chosen to take the necessary wear and tear that television viewing creates. Half of the families reported eating in the living room in order to watch favorite programs. Homemakers reported noticing more rapid signs of wear on furniture and floor coverings than before the advent of television in their homes. Twenty-six homemakers reported "no eating allowed" in the living room. Although many homemakers expressed a desire for a recreation room other than the living room, only 10 reported such a room.

Even though 64 percent of the women said they paid cash for furniture purchases, several mentioned that their first installment credit purchase was the television set.

The high rate of television sets in the homes visited could be due to the good television reception around Indianapolis. Other areas of the state perhaps would not follow the high percentage of sets found in these two counties. The one family without a set preferred it that way, indicating that the family had many other interests to occupy its time.

Of the twenty-eight pianos counted in the inventory 60 percent had been purchased second hand. The feeling was that this item of furniture was valuable for family entertainment and that if it was to be purchased new the cost would be

prohibitive for many. Homemakers seemed willing to sacrifice beauty and good room arrangement for the convenience of having this piece of furniture for the family members.

Two hundred and one tables were found in the homes, including a wide variety of styles and qualities. End tables, coffee tables, and occasional tables of many kinds were observed. Sixty-three percent of the tables were purchased new. Compared to upholstered pieces, tables were more frequently acquired as gifts or purchased second hand. Twenty-four percent of all tables were acquired as gifts. There were only ten drop leaf tables in use in the living rooms. Some were reserved only for dining use, the others were used as an end table, for a lamp, magazines or accessories. Only 16 percent of the tables inventoried were coffee tables. The usefulness of this table was controversial with those interviewed. Some homemakers "wouldn't give it floor space" and others "couldn't get along without it". Four women had someone in the family make their coffee table and were quite proud of the results. It would seem by the attitude expressed that the coffee table was a prestige item or a table necessary to "complete" the living room. The need or intended use of the table was not necessarily considered.

Thirteen heating stoves were occupying floor space in the living rooms of the families visited, indicating the lack of a central heating system in at least 16 percent of the

eighty homes. Over half of the stoves were found in homes with annual incomes of \$3,500 to \$6,500. Some additional stoves were visible in other rooms beyond the living room but these were not included in the inventory.

Sixty-eight percent of the 296 chairs were purchased new as compared to nine percent purchased second hand. Eighteen percent were received as gifts. Of the 296 chairs 91 were lounge type chairs, 76 were occasional chairs and 78 were rockers. (Nineteen of the rockers were for children) There were 51 straight chairs.

Almost every homemaker felt it necessary to have at least one comfortable chair in the living room for the man of the house. A very popular type of "comfortable" chair was the platform or tilt-back rocker. Over half of the rockers were of this type. Many of these rockers had plastic covers. One point in favor of this chair, repeated many times, was that the back was high enough to be a head rest. Only seven of the lounge chairs were of the "heart-saver" or "contour" type, but several homemakers indicated they would like one of them for their living room in the future.

The fifty-one straight chairs represented desk chairs or dining chairs pulled into the living room for extra seating space.

Nineteen children's rockers were found in the living

rooms visited. This item of furniture often traveled from one room to another, depending on the play location of the small children in the home. These chairs were frequently acquired as family heirlooms or gifts.

The cost of all furniture in the living rooms of the individual respondents ranged from \$362 per room to \$2,190 per room. The average cost for furniture in a room, based on the entire group of eighty was \$779 and the median cost was \$727. Table X shows the cost range according to the number of living rooms which cost in round numbers from \$300 to \$2,100.

TABLE X

Cost Range of Living Room Furniture¹

<u>Cost of Furniture</u>	<u>Number of Living Rooms</u>
\$ 300	4
400	5
500	13
600	14
700	13
800	11
900	8
1,000	4
1,100	1
1,200	2
1,300	2
1,400	1
1,500	1
2,100	1

¹Total furniture cost for each family's room is listed in round numbers. The number of rooms in each hundred dollar category is listed also.

There was no significant relationship between family income and the cost of their furniture in the living room. For instance, the lowest cost for one room of furniture from the eighty living rooms was \$362. The income of this family was from \$6,500 to \$8,500. At the other end of the scale, one of the higher cost rooms, \$1,415, was in the \$2,500 to \$3,500 income bracket. No significant pattern was observed in the comparison of total cost of furniture in a room to the family income¹.

There was also no relationship found between the number of years the home had been established and the total cost of furniture per room.

No related comparison was found with regard to the number of family members and the number of furniture items in each living room. The amount of furniture in each room ranged from six as the least in any room to fifteen as the greatest number found. An average of 10.6 pieces of furniture was found in the eighty living rooms with the median number of ten different items for each room. Family size ranged from four to nine members. It would appear from these findings that larger families do not necessarily have more furniture in the living room.

¹The table for more detail in this comparison is in the appendix.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE LIVING ROOM,
THE FURNITURE, AND ITS USE

The homemakers were asked their opinion as to the adequacy of their living room furniture. They were asked also if they had a plan for new purchases and if so from what source they secured their ideas for furniture selection. Information about how the family used their living room was requested also.

Over half of the homemakers said they had all the furniture they needed and nearly one-fourth indicated they had all they wanted. Only 2.5 percent felt they had too much furniture. The remaining 26 percent felt more furniture was needed for family or guest use. Furniture items needed are discussed in this chapter.

TABLE XI

Opinions As to Amount of Furniture in Use

Number of Homemakers	Opinion	Percent
14	All I want	17.5
43	All I need	54.0
2	Have too much	2.5
21	Other ¹	26.0
<u>80</u>		<u>100.0</u>

¹This number includes those people who wanted more furniture for their own family use or needed some special items for entertaining guests.

Sixty percent of the homemakers reported that their furniture was purchased as it was needed. Thirty percent planned their purchases in advance and only one percent indicated that their furniture purchases were made "on impulse". A combination of "planned" and "as needed" purchasing was shown by nine percent of those interviewed.

TABLE XII

Purchase Plan For Furniture		
Number of Homemakers	Plan	Percent
48	1. Purchases as Needed	60
24	2. Planned in Advance	30
1	3. On Impulse	1
7	4. Combination of 1 & 2	9
<u>80</u>		<u>100</u>

Payment for furniture was made with cash at the time of purchase by 64 percent of the families. Installment credit accounted for 30 percent of the payment plans. Several homemakers indicated that the television set was the first or only item of furniture to be purchased other than by cash. Six percent reported furniture purchases by charge account or lay-away. Thirty homemakers reported a combination of purchase payment plans. (Twenty-two used cash and installment credit, four used cash and charge account and four used all three methods.

Half of the people using installment credit or a combination of credit and cash for furniture payment were in the

\$4,500 to \$6,500 income group. Sixty-one percent of those living on the farm paid for their furniture purchases with cash. Thirty-four percent of those living in town paid cash for their furniture. The higher percentages of cash payments for farm families might be due to the nature of their incomes.

TABLE XIII

Furniture Payment Plans

<u>Number of Homemakers</u>	<u>Payment Made by</u>	<u>Percent</u>
70	Cash	64
33	Installment Credit	30
7	Charge Account, Lay-away	6
30	Combination of the Three Plans ¹	27

Magazines and advertisements were the source of ideas for furniture selection by 73% of the women interviewed. Shopping in stores and looking at store windows was the next highest source mentioned. The Home Demonstration Club was third on the list. Several mentioned that magazines featured furnishings and ideas "too far out of their reach". They felt magazine suggestions were often beyond their financial means and sometimes "too extreme" in design.

1

Thirty homemakers reported combinations of three payment plans, therefore percentages are not additive.

TABLE XIV

Homemakers' Sources of Ideas for Furniture

Number of Homemakers	Source	Percent ¹
58	Magazines	73
25	Shopping in stores	31
24	Home Demonstration Club	30
9	Relatives and other Homes	11
8	Own Ideas - Make them up	10
	Suit myself	
3	Model Homes	3.5
8	Other ²	

Response to the question, "What style or period is your furniture?" was often amusing. Thirty-three answered that they just didn't know but thirteen of these guessed at the style. Out of the sixty women who identified their furniture as to period, approximately one-third said that it was modern in style. Nearly one-half of them said their furniture was a mixture. Other comments recorded for this group were: "nothing in particular", "early depression", "a real hob-bob", or "just furniture". Only seven women or 11 percent indicated that their furniture was traditional, including reproductions of antiques, Provincial, Duncan Phyfe and

¹Several respondents reported more than one source, therefore, the percentages are not additive.

²Other included Extension Bulletins, Catalogues, Books, television, Purdue classes, own file and one said she "just didn't know".

Early American. The comment that furniture was purchased for the family's use and comfort rather than for period or style was a frequent remark.

According to the observation of the interviewer, no one room visited included all furniture representative of one period. Approximately two-thirds of the rooms contained a predominate mixture of traditional furniture. The remaining rooms had furniture of a contemporary nature.

Eighty-six percent of the homemakers said they were pleased with the style of their furniture. Approximately half indicated they had no desire to change their furniture.

Reasons listed by the 43 women who would like to change all or parts of their living room furniture were:

- . . . would like a color or style change.
- . . . ready for new!
- . . . plans include building or remodeling, then all or part of the furniture would be replaced.
- . . . would like to buy better quality furniture and exactly the style preferred.
- . . . present furniture is wearing out--springs and cushions are worn -- need replacement.
- . . . anyone would like a change.
- . . . would like to change when funds are available.

Ninety-five percent of those interviewed reported that they were pleased with the wood, color and finish of their

furniture. The largest percentage of wood was dark and approximately 13 percent of the homes contained a mixture of dark and light furniture woods. Only 7 percent of the rooms had predominately light furniture wood.

Some of the reasons given for the preference of dark wood were:

- . . . dark tones which will blend with the color of the wood work.
- . . . warmth of dark wood preferred.
- . . . dark wood will stay in style longer than light.
- . . . started with dark wood and not practical to change.
- . . . just like dark wood and it's not too modern.

Reasons for those having and preferring light furniture wood:

- . . . easy to care for
- . . . scratches, dust, finger marks and mars show less on light wood.

The ten women who had a mixture of wood colors in their living room furniture indicated they liked the blend of dark and light. The dark-tones added warmth and the light woods were easy to care for. Occasionally the husband preferred one wood and the wife another -- hence, a blend of wood tones in the room.

The living room storage problems for those 30 percent reporting such problems were in order of frequency mentioned:

1. books
2. magazines
3. toys
4. cards and games
5. sheet music and records
6. trophies (4-H)

One woman said a larger house would solve part of her storage problems and three indicated plans for built-in living room storage.

Seventy percent of the homemakers said their living room storage was adequate. Books were frequently kept in the rooms of various family members, as were toys and occasionally games and recreation equipment.

The living room was used for family entertainment in 96 percent of the homes. Twenty-three percent of the women interviewed said their family had a recreation or family room besides the living room. Several commented that such a room would be very desirable and plans were being made for such a room in the future.

Fifty-four women said that their living rooms were used for food service. Favorite television programs were responsible for most of the eating in the living room. Approximately half of the women reported serving food in the living room for this reason. Occasional serving for guests, overflow from the dining room, children's parties and club groups

accounted for the other reasons for living room food service.

Forty-nine homemakers reported 53 special items of furniture that had proved more satisfactory to their families than other items. Chairs were mentioned more frequently than any other piece of furniture as being highly satisfactory¹.

TABLE XV

Satisfactory Items of Furniture

Number of Homemakers	Satisfactory Item	Reasons
14	Lounge chair (including 5 contour type)	Comfortable leather cover, husband's favorite, everyone enjoys this chair.
12	Platform rocker	Husband's favorite, leather - easy to care for.
1	Twin occasional chairs	Comfortable.
1	Swivel chair	Convenient.
7	Television set	Whole family enjoys it.
5	Occasional table	Pride in refinished heirlooms.
6	Sofa	Comfortable for relax- ing, like style.
3	Sofa-bed	Provides extra sleep space.
2	Piano	Family enjoys it.
1	Footstool	
1	Desk	Beautiful, serves purpose.

¹See Table XV

Items of furniture that were less than satisfactory for forty-seven homemakers revealed dissatisfaction because of style, poor construction, unpleasing color, or lack of comfort. Sofas and occasional chairs were the most frequent items mentioned¹.

TABLE XVI

Unsatisfactory Furniture Items		
Number of Homemakers	Unsatisfactory Item	Reasons
15	Sofa	Uncomfortable, springs worn too rapidly, war furniture, cover poor, prefer 2-cushion sofa.
4	Sectional	Unhandy to sit on. Sections won't stay together.
3	Sofa-bed	Springs give out; does not sit or sleep well.
11	Occasional chair	Seat too high, plastic cover split, back not high enough.
7	Lounge chair	War-time; poor quality; not comfortable.
2	T V Chairs	No good, too expensive.
2	Platform rocker	Plastic split; buttons came loose from back.
1	Contour chair	Not comfortable; poor design.
3	Occasional tables	Prefer another style.
1	Piano	Prefer smaller one.
1	Television	Prefer light wood.

¹See table XVI

Plans to purchase one or more items of furniture were revealed by sixty-two of the eighty homemakers. Various pieces of furniture to have in place of or in addition to what was not owned included:

- 16 Occasional chairs
- 12 Lounge chairs
- 2 Contour chairs
- 2 Rockers
- 9 Sofas (3 sectionals wanted)
- 4 Sofa-beds
- 9 Living room suites
- 21 Coffee tables
- 1 Drop leaf table
- 2 Desks
- 2 Bookshelves
- 1 Television
- 1 Record player
- 1 Room divider
- 1 Piano

The reasons most frequently mentioned for not having these items in the living rooms was because of insufficient funds. Twenty-nine women reported this as the chief reason. Others said they hadn't been added because they:

. . . plan to build or remodel or move

- . . . will wait until children get older
- . . . follow an order of purchase plan
- . . . find old is still good
- . . . plan for husband to make item
of furniture
- . . . have a lack of space in room now
- . . . can't find what is wanted

LIVING ROOM FURNITURE SUGGESTED FOR THREE BUDGET LEVELS

In response to the question "What would you have in your living room if your could start over?" the homemakers expressed a wide variety of opinions. They were asked to consider their family, how they lived, the furniture they had used during their years of marriage and if any changes would be made in light of their experience. Their suggestions and comments are related in this chapter.

The homemaker was asked to consider the furniture with which she started her home and then suggest what she felt basic for a living room on a limited budget, what additional items or changes she would make if the money for furniture was unlimited. No effort was made by the interviewer to establish what amount of money constituted a limited, moderate or unlimited budget realizing this amount would vary with every individual.

Although the eighty women expressed different ideas about the amount and quality of the furniture they would have, many similarities were observed. A total of the number of furniture items each woman suggested at each budget level made it possible to establish an average figure representative of all women interviewed.

Table number XVII shows the total of all furniture items mentioned at each budget level, and the average number of pieces for a room at each level. The basic five items sug-

gested for a limited budget, an additional three items for a moderate budget and one additional item for the unlimited budget makes a total of nine pieces.

Recreational equipment was added to the list depending largely upon the interest of the individual families.

A television set was to be included in the living room by all but one homemaker. Fifty-seven percent added this item at the moderate budget level, thirty-three percent said it should be in the home on a limited budget and the remaining ten percent felt its purchase could wait until the budget was unlimited. Most of those interviewed felt television was good if not essential for family entertainment.

There were twenty-one women who wanted a desk in the living room with over half of them adding this item on a moderate budget. Only six homemakers suggested that a storage chest would be of value in the room.

There would be twenty-nine pianos appearing in the living rooms and all but five of them would be added at the unlimited cost level. The five women considered it possible to have a piano at a lower budget level provided it was purchased second hand.

Bookcases were desired by twenty-eight women and approximately half suggested that built-in units including space for books, radio, phonograph, television and other storage was preferred if cost need not be considered.

The four opinions most frequently expressed by fifty-five of the eighty homemakers concerning the purchase qualities of furniture at various cost levels were:

34 percent said, Buy good quality furniture at any income level.

Have fewer items in the room in order to buy better quality. Add furniture as the family can afford it.

25 percent said, Consider comfort an important item in furniture selection. As more money becomes available for furniture purchases, change to a more desirable style. (sectional, corner table, etc.)

18 percent said, Add accessories, carpeting, draperies on the unlimited budget -- not more furniture.

6 percent said, Buy less expensive furniture until the children grow up, then replace worn out items with better furniture.

Other opinions expressed by the women as important in furniture selection were:

. . . buy furniture with simple lines -- so it will be easy to slip cover.

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18 percent said, Add accessories, carpeting, draperies on the unlimited budget -- not more furniture.

6 percent said, Buy less expensive furniture until the children grow up, then replace worn out items with better furniture.

Other opinions expressed by the women as important in furniture selection were:

. . . buy furniture with simple lines -- so it will be easy to slip cover.

- . . . upholstered items with wood arms and loose cushions are good choices.
- . . . a comfortable chair for the man of the house is important at any budget level.
- . . . consider the way the family lives as to expenditure for furniture.
- . . . buy second hand furniture and remake it if the budget is limited.
- . . . pay more for upholstered pieces -- do with fewer tables.

Some general suggestions about the living room and its use made by the homemakers were:

- . . . the room should be "easy-to-keep".
- . . . add family room when possible to take some wear and tear from the living room.
- . . . add water, bathroom and household equipment before good living room furniture -- that can come later.
- . . . young couples just establishing a home with little money could live in a furnished apartment, then gradually buy furniture of "standard styles".

The interviewer is aware of the various interpretations of how much each room described in this chapter might cost. On the basis of the actual cost of the furniture inventoried

in the living rooms visited in Indiana¹ a possible cost level could be:

- \$300 - \$ 499 Living room furniture cost for a limited budget.
- 500 - 899 Living room furniture cost for a moderate budget.
- 900 - 2,200 Living room furniture cost for an unlimited budget.

These catagories would include only the cost of furniture items since carpeting, draperies and accessories were not a part of the inventory covered by this survey. These items represent the furniture requirements for a living room as expressed by eighty Indiana homemakers. The inventory of furniture in the homes of these people revealed an average of ten pieces in each living room. The difference can be explained by the respondents varied opinions as to additional furniture items to be included with an unlimited budget since most of the homemakers included several items to be "built-in".

There were twenty-five different items of furniture mentioned to be included in a living room at the three budget levels as shown in Table XVII. Of these twenty-five items, twenty were mentioned a total of 363 times on the limited budget level. The five items most frequently mentioned were

¹See Table X

assumed to be the basic pieces of furniture needed in a living room if financial resources were limited. The limited budget room would include: one sofa, one lounge chair, one occasional chair, one end table and one occasional table. Figure 2 is an interpretation of this furniture in a living room shown with a minimum of accessories. The accessories include one table lamp, a rug instead of carpeting and presumably inexpensive drapery fabric. The potted plant and the sofa pillow complete the accessories for this room.

The homemakers suggested twenty-two different items of furniture as possible additions to the room on a moderate budget. The average number of pieces to add at this budget level was three¹. Of the twenty-two items most frequently mentioned an occasional chair, a coffee table and a television set were selected to be in the room of moderate cost. Figure 3 pictures the addition of these three items of furniture plus several different accessories. Some homemakers mentioned that carpeting could be included at this budget level but most of them thought this expenditure should be made at the unlimited level. Additional accessories in the moderate room include a floor lamp, coffee table accessories and a wall book case.

¹See XVII

TABLE XVII

Number of Times Furniture Items Were Mentioned at Each

Budget Level

Item	Items at Limited Budget	Additional Items at Moderate	Additional Items at Unlimited
Sofa	60 *	1	7
Sofa-bed	19	1	1
Love seat		1	1
Lounge chair 1	55 *	7	7
Lounge chair 2	7	11	7
Occasional chair 1	40 *	22 *	6
Occasional chair 2	9	6	9
Rocker	13	8	6
Straight chair	5	6	2
Childs' chair		1	1
Ottoman		2	4
Tables -			
Drop Leaf	4		1
Coffee	1	29 *	11
End 1	39 *	19	7
End 2	30 *	18	3
Occasional	29 *	15	18
Desk	4	13	4
Chest	2	3	1
Piano	2	3	24 *
Sewing machine	2	1	
Radio-Phonograph	7	4	6 *
Bookcase	9	8	11 *
Television	26	44 *	8 *
Organ		1	2 *
Hi-Fidelity			4 *
Sub total ¹	363	225	151
		Grand total	739

¹ From the sub totals of each budget level the average number of furniture items was found. (The sub total divided by 80) Limited budget 4.55 or 5 items; moderate budget, 2.85 or 3 additional items; unlimited budget, .85 or one additional item. These nine items of furniture are presented visually in figures 2, 3 and 4.

* Items starred represent the furniture to be included in the room for each cost level. Most homemakers preferred the items in the unlimited column as built-in features whenever possible. Either an end table or an occasional table could be included as the second table in the limited budget room.

A wide variety of furniture items were suggested to be added in the unlimited budget category. Entertainment equipment was most frequently mentioned, however, with homemakers often specifying that it be "built-in". The "built-in" feature often included the record player, hi-fidelity equipment, television and book shelves. The piano was mentioned twenty-four times as an addition for the unlimited budget and two persons suggested they would include an organ. The homemakers also indicated that if money was no problem in furniture selection, better quality selections would be made and accessories would be added. They also pointed out that the size of the room and the tastes and activities of the family would greatly influence the amount and kind of furniture. Most women were of the opinion that a room reaches maximum capacity as far as the number of furniture items was concerned. The remark to keep a room uncluttered and not too crowded was heard many times. Figure 4 shows the additional furniture and accessories as they might be seen in a room on an unlimited budget as suggested by those interviewed.

All homemakers thought a sofa and a lounge chair to be essential in a living room because they felt seating comfort was important in this room and that these two pieces need not be a matching set. Seventy-five percent reported a sofa should be included in the room on a limited budget. Twenty-five percent suggested that a sofa-bed would be a good investment to

provide for extra sleeping space and that this piece of furniture could be managed on a limited budget.

Over half of the women considered an occasional chair necessary in addition to the one lounge chair. Other chairs were suggested such as rockers, straight chairs and chairs for children but they were not mentioned in sufficient numbers to be included in the average room.

End tables and occasional tables were included on the basic furniture list by over three-fourths of the women.

Seventeen women specified the tables should contain storage space such as shelves and drawers.

V DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Visits to the eighty homes in two Indiana counties emphasized the fact to the interviewer that little is known about the influences that determine the choice of furnishings for the home. It is a certainty that the choice of furniture for a home is subject to many variables and it is therefore difficult to establish an "average" amount or kind of furniture for a given room such as the living room. Some of the influences on the selection of home furnishings brought to the foreground with this survey were:

1. The goals of the individual family.
2. The family's plan to achieve these goals.
3. The standard of values that the family has accepted in their plan to meet these goals.
4. The wide variety of taste and interest in furnishings from one person to another.

A study of this scope does not provide sufficient information to form a basis as to the extent of satisfactions the homemakers derive from the furnishings of their living rooms.

It was learned from this survey that family income, the size of the family and the number of years the home had been established has little to do with the expenditure for or selection of furniture for those families visited. There

was no appreciable difference in the furniture costs and preferences of furniture for the people living in town compared with those of the people living in the country.

The modesty with which the living rooms were furnished and the obvious satisfactions exhibited by the homemakers with their rooms was of great interest to the interviewer. Eighty percent were "pleased" with the style of their furniture and most of them said without hesitancy that what they had was a mixture of styles. Approximately half of the homemakers indicated no desire to change their furniture. Some reasons implied or spoken include comments indicating that they really were satisfied with the design, color and function of their furniture, or that they didn't want to admit to poor selection of furniture, or that they felt they had to be satisfied because of the financial impossibility for a change, or that furnishings were not of major interest to them personally.

Comfort for the family members played an important part in the selection of upholstered furniture as expressed by the homemakers. Upholstered furniture was more frequently purchased new than was case goods. A comfortable chair for the man of the house was a major consideration for many homemakers. The design or the proportion of the chair for the room would be sacrificed for comfort. The "contour" chair, tilt back or platform rocker were considered by many as the ultimate in

comfort.

The furniture items observed in the living rooms as well as the furniture suggested by the homemakers to be in the three rooms of different budget levels, revealed a limited knowledge of the possibilities in furniture selection. A cliché or standardized type of furniture for the living room seemed evident. For example, the coffee table was considered by many homemakers as an important item to be added to a living room, and yet the general attitude seemed to be that this piece of furniture was not always used or needed but that a well furnished living room should have one. Although storage was mentioned as a problem for several living rooms, very few people mentioned the value of drawers and shelves in tables or the possible use of a chest of drawers in the living room to be used for additional storage. Tables were often purchased second hand or acquired as gifts. Frequently, they were purchased to "finish out the room" or to make the room look better or to hold a table lamp.

Good quality in furniture was another factor that was important to those interviewed but it was evident that homemakers needed help in distinguishing good quality. One brand was mentioned often by the homemakers as "the best quality" in furniture at any cost level. This fact reveals the tremendous force of advertising as an influence on the taste and preferences of the consumer. It is the opinion of the

interviewer that there are other brands in the same price range which give more value for the dollar spent. The majority of people felt good quality in furniture was so important that the number of items in a room should be sacrificed before quality. The policy to buy "good but less" was prevalent.

This study indicates to the interviewer that the efforts of the home demonstration agent and the furnishing specialists are needed by the homemaker to help her appreciate good design, to recognize good construction in furniture and to know market possibilities in furnishings for the home. The fact that sixty percent of the furniture purchases were made "as needed" rather than by a plan indicates that the homemaker would benefit by training in her furniture selection.

A small percentage of the women considered it best to delay more expensive furniture purchases until the small children in the family were old enough to appreciate their surroundings. There was no suggestion by the homemakers as to when this age of appreciation would begin.

Because of the many activities that take place in the living room and the resulting wear on furnishings, many women said they would like a recreation or family room. Most of the homes did not have the space available for this "extra" room. This emphasizes the need for more careful selection of furniture for the existing living room.

Most homemakers agreed that a room reaches maximum capacity as far as amount of furniture is concerned. As money becomes more plentiful they suggested it be used for accessories and better quality in furniture. Nine or ten items of furniture were the average number found in the eighty living rooms and also the number that was suggested for the rooms if the homemaker could start her home again. Findings indicate that most of the eighty homemakers would select the same pieces of furniture again but they might make some changes in design, color, style or construction of these pieces.

The impact of television on family living was found to be very great. Ninety-nine percent of the homes in the survey had at least one television set. The consensus of those interviewed was that television was an important if not a necessary item in their home for reasons of family entertainment. Television viewing was mentioned as a factor contributing to more rapid wearing out of furniture in the living room. Many considered another room besides the living room as best for the television set, but the majority had no other room available. The cost of television made up one-third of the total cost of furniture in the living rooms in the survey. Families that paid cash for furniture up to the advent of television said the television set was the first item they had purchased on installment credit. Due to the prevalence of television in the homes it seems that this media would be

an excellent one for additional education in the area of home furnishings. The visual possibilities for furniture selection are innumerable, and this neglected area in consumer market information would have great value and appeal to the homemakers.

Magazines were most frequently mentioned as the source of ideas for furniture but most of the homemakers felt that what they saw there was often financially impossible for them. They also felt the ideas shown were too "extreme" for their homes or not practical for their families. These facts indicate a need for help in interpreting what they see in magazine articles. This interpretation could come through extension teaching.

Although the findings from this survey are not world shaking or completely new, the value to the author in visiting the homes and talking with the people with whom she works has given new insight and incentive to her extension teaching program. The experience has also established further respect for the homemaker and her responsibility as a key person in the life of the family.

.VI SUMMARY

The purpose of this survey was to gain information for more effective teaching of home furnishings particularly to homemakers participating in the home demonstration program. There are an increasing number of young homemakers in the Indiana program who want and need information concerning the selection of furnishings for their homes. It was the theory of the interviewer that a good place to search for such information would be with experienced homemakers in their own homes.

The survey included an inventory of the living room furniture found in eighty Indiana home, the homemaker's response to her furniture and its use by her family. The homemaker in each case was a member of a home demonstration club and was selected at random from a group who qualified according to age and family specifications. The cooperation of the Home Demonstration Agents in the two counties involved made it possible for the interviewer to go into the homes and talk with the homemakers personally.

Among the women visited it was noted that there were differences in values placed upon furnishings by the homemaker. However, their set of values was the greatest single influence in their selections and appreciation for their living room furnishings. Very closely associated with their

values were the goals of the family and the plans to achieve these goals. There was a wide variety of taste and interest in home furnishings expressed by the individuals interviewed. To some, furniture was a very important item in family living. To others, the farm, community activities, family recreation and education received major emphasis with the house far down the list in importance.

Family incomes of those interviewed were above the state and national average for the year of 1956. It was found that families with higher incomes did not necessarily have the most expensive furniture in their living rooms.

Rural and town homes were so similar in family income, cost of furniture found in the rooms, and opinions expressed regarding furnishings, that no significant pattern of difference was revealed.

Family size had no effect upon the amount of furniture found in the living room. The amount of furniture was more frequently determined by the size of the room, family finances, and the ideas of the homemaker as to the proper items for this room.

The homemakers expressed satisfaction with their furniture and indicated they would buy about the same type of furniture if they could start their homes again. Their ideas of living room furniture were largely limited to the "Standard items" such as, an upholstered sofa and chair, two end

tables, a coffee table and an occasional chair.

Comfort and practicality of seating pieces was of greater importance to the homemaker than appearance.

Tables were chosen as decorative accessories more than for their practical function.

The survey pointed out to the interviewer that although the homemakers stressed the importance of comfort and good quality in furniture, her knowledge of selection possibilities was very limited. Through home demonstration teaching, magazine features, television and other sources, the homemaker has become intensely interested and aware of home furnishings but she needs guidance and help in selection and purchasing.

The visits to these homes emphasized the great need for teaching fundamental principles of design, color and function basic to the selection of furnishings for the home.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

There are many aspects for investigation of what people prefer, select and buy for their homes that have not been explored. Additional studies would prove beneficial to those interested in teaching home furnishings as well as to homemakers. Such studies might include:

1. Cost and preferences of furniture in rooms other than the living room.
2. Cost and preferences of accessories, carpeting, draperies in the living room.
3. A comparison of the purchase cost and potential length of service in furniture items. This would involve the reasons for replacing furniture. A study of upholstered furniture would be of value because this survey reveals that upholstered items are those most frequently purchased new. This survey also indicates many homemakers were dissatisfied with the construction of upholstered furniture as well as the poor wearing qualities of cover fabrics.
4. The relationship of expenditure for furniture to other expenditures namely equipment, clothing, food, educational opportunities and recreation might well be given further study.

5. More information would be valuable which indicates the homemakers preferences in design and color in furnishings. This information would help improve course content needed for more effective extension teaching.
6. It would also be of interest to do a similar survey as this one reported with non-home demonstration club members. A metropolitan group survey as compared to a rural group survey might be of value. In the opinion of the author the differences in knowledge and taste in furnishings between these groups would not be as great as might be expected.

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APPENDIX

TABLE XIX

Cost of Furniture Per Room, Income of the Family and Number of
Years of Marriage

Furniture Cost Per Room	Number of Families in Income Groups	Years Married and Average for Group
\$362 to 388	Up to \$2,500 - 0 \$2,500 to 4,500 - 2 4,500 to 8,500 - 2 8,500 to 10,000 and over - 0	5 to 20 years Average - 12.5 years
411 to 495	Up to \$2,500 - 2 \$2,500 to 4,500 - 0 4,500 to 8,500 - 2 8,500 to 10,000 and over - 1	13 to 31 years Average - 18.75 years
500 to 586	Up to \$2,500 - 0 \$2,500 to 4,500 - 2 4,500 to 8,500 - 9 8,500 to 10,000 and over - 2	7 to 22 years Average 14.9 years
605 to 699	Up to \$2,500 - 0 \$2,500 to 4,500 - 8 4,500 to 8,500 - 3 8,500 to 10,000 and over - 3	9 to 22 years Average 15.3 years
702 to 797	Up to 2,500 - 0 \$2,500 to 4,500 - 4 4,500 to 8,500 - 4 8,500 to 10,000 and over - 3 Don't know - 2	15 to 27 years Average 19.9 years
801 to 899	Up to \$2,500 - 0 \$2,500 to 4,500 - 9 4,500 to 8,500 - 1 8,500 to 10,000 and over - 0 Don't know - 1	8 to 26 years Average 16.1 years
902 to 984	Up to \$2,500 - 0 \$2,500 to 4,500 - 2 4,500 to 8,500 - 4 8,500 to 10,000 and over - 2	2 to 23 years Average 13.5 years
1,000 to 2,190	Up to \$2,500 - 0 \$2,500 to 4,500 - 2 4,500 to 8,500 - 7 8,500 to 10,000 and over - 1	8 to 23 years Average 17.2 years

Date _____

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

I. Family Classification

1. _____
Code no.

2. (a) City or town _____ (b) Farm _____ (c) Acres _____ (d) Own _____ (e) Rent _____

3. (a) Number in family _____ (b) Members in Home (check age and numbers):
no.

Pre-school
Elementary
Teenage
Other _____

BOY	GIRL

4. Husband's Occupation _____

5. Homemaker's (if outside of home) _____

6. Home established for how many years _____

7. Approximate family income (before income taxes):

a. _____ up to \$1500 a year	d. _____ \$3500-4500	g. _____ \$8500-10,000
b. _____ \$1500-2500	e. _____ \$4500-6500	h. _____ over \$10,000
c. _____ \$2500-3500	f. _____ \$6500-8500	

8. Homemakers school experience:

a. _____ Grade school	d. _____ Graduate School
b. _____ High school	e. _____ Business or Vocational
c. _____ College	f. _____ Other: _____

9. How many years has homemaker been a home demonstration club member: _____ Years;
_____ Other.

II. Inventory of Living Room Furniture

	How was item acquir. *a-h (below)	Approx. cost or estimated value		Check year of marriage when item was acquired																		Was item to be for mor than one use
		c	e.v.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16- 20	21- 25	over 25	
SEATING PIECES																						
Sofa																						
Sofa-bed																						
Love seat																						
Chairs																						
Lounge																						
Lounge																						
Occasional																						
Occasional																						
Rocker																						
Straight																						
Ottoman																						
Other																						
BASE GOODS																						
Tables																						
Drop Leaf																						
Coffee table																						
Library																						
Nest of tables																						
End table																						
Desk																						
Chest																						
Piano																						
Sewing Machine (Cab)																						
Radio-Phone (Console)																						
Bookcase																						
Television																						

*How acquired? a-purchased new, b-purchased antique, c-heirloom, d-second hand,
e-gift, f-made in home, g-custom made, h-other

R-Replacement

H-High

II. Inventory of Living Room Furniture

	How was item acquir. *a-h (below)	Approx. cost or estimated value		Check year of marriage when item was acquired																		Was item to be for mor than one use	
		value																					
		c	e.v.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16-20	21-25	over 25		
SEATING PIECES																							
Sofa																							
Sofa-bed																							
Love seat																							
Chairs																							
Lounge																							
Lounge																							
Occasional																							
Occasional																							
Rocker																							
Straight																							
Ottoman																							
Other																							
BASE GOODS																							
Tables																							
Drop Leaf																							
Coffee table																							
Library																							
Nest of tables																							
End table																							
Desk																							
Chest																							
Piano																							
Sewing Machine (Cab)																							
Radio-Phono(Console)																							
Bookcase																							
Television																							

*How acquired? a-purchased new, b-purchased antique, c-heirloom, d-second hand, e-gift, f-made in home, g-custom made, h-other

R-Replacement

H-High

II. Homemaker's Opinion of Basic Living Room Furniture

ITEM	Considering the furniture with which you started your home, what ---			COMMENTS
	do you consider basic or essential on a LIMITED BUDGET	additional items on a MODERATE BUDGET	additional items on an UNLIMITED BUDGET	
<u>EATING PIECES</u>				
Sofa				
Sofa-bed				
Love seat				
Chairs				
Lounge				
Lounge				
<u>Occasional</u>				
<u>Occasional</u>				
Rocker				
Straight				
Ottoman				
Other				
<u>BASE GOODS</u>				
Tables				
Drop Leaf				
Coffee table				
Library				
Nest of tables				
End table				
Desk				
Chest				
Piano				
Sewing Machine (Cab)				
Radio-Phono (Console)				
Bookcase				
Television				

IV. General Information about The Living Room, The Furniture and Use

1. a. Is the amount of living room furniture you have satisfactory for your family's needs? All I want____; All I need____; Have too much____; Other____
b. Was it purchased as needed____, planned in advance____, on impulse____?
c. Furniture purchases are made by cash____, charge account, layaway____, installment credit____, other____.
2. a. What style or period is your furniture?____
Don't know____. M. O. Contemporary____ Early American____
1930's (Borax)____ Colonial____
Mission____ Federal____
Victorian____ European____
b. Are you pleased with the style? Yes____ No____ Comment____ Nondescript____
c. Would you like to change? Yes____ No____ Why?____
d. Are you pleased with the wood and/or finish? Yes____ No____
If pleased, why?____
If not, why?____
3. a. Does your furniture provide adequate storage for your living room needs? Yes____ No____
b. If not, what is needed?____
4. a. Is any item of your furniture more satisfactory than any other? Yes____ No____.
What____ Comment____
b. Is there any item less satisfactory than any others? Yes____ No____ What?____
Comment____
c. Is there a special item of furniture you would like to have in place of or in addition to what you now have? Yes____ No____ What?____
Why hasn't it been added?____
5. a. If you have television, is it in the living room? Yes____ No____ Where?____
b. Do you have two sets? Yes____ No____ If yes, where is second set?____
6. a. Is your living room used for family entertainment? Yes____ No____
b. Do you have a recreation or family room? Yes____ No____
7. Do you ever eat in the living room? Yes____ No____
Comments on types of service____
8. Where do you get most of your ideas about furniture?____

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