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Women’s motivations to sew clothing for themselves

by

Addie K. Martindale

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Apparel Merchandising and Design

Program of Study Committee:
Ellen McKinney, Major Professor
Eulanda Sanders
Fatma Baytar
SoJung Lee
Michelle Schaal

The student author and the program of study committee are solely responsible for the content of this dissertation. The Graduate College will ensure this dissertation is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
2017

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to understand why women are choosing to sew clothing for themselves as a leisure activity in the age of fast fashion. Resurgence in home sewing participation, specifically an increased interest in personal garment sewing, has prompted the need to explore these women’s perceived benefits and their consumer behavior as they operate outside of typical consumer culture. Due to the lack of current home sewing research, a grounded theory approach was used to reveal the reasons for this phenomenon through the experiences of the female sewers. An ethnically diverse sample of 15 female middle-class home sewers, ages 20–40 years from the United States and Canada, were recruited for interviews through Facebook sewing groups. In interviews, the participants were asked questions regarding their reasons for sewing clothing for themselves and the benefits that sewing provided them. Questions were also asked about feelings attached to sewing, the reactions of others, time spent sewing, and sewing-related consumption.

The content analysis of the interview data revealed three emergent themes: investment, control, and empowerment. All three emergent themes were interconnected within an overarching central theme of personal fulfilment. The research data revealed that these women’s decisions to sew clothing for themselves offered them personal fulfillment that was not experienced in other aspects of their lives, providing them with a sense of accomplishment, a creative outlet, and stress release. The theme of investment reflected how these women invested in their leisure decision to sew clothing through cognitive, monetary, and time aspects. Control was revealed by the increased power over their appearance that sewing their own clothing allowed them as a consumer and the higher level of self-expression they were able to attain. Empowerment was reflected as the positive impact that
sewing participation had on their confidence as well as their increased desire to sew that was impacted by the support and positive feedback of others.

To illustrate the interconnectedness and recurring process of the emergent themes around the central theme of personal fulfillment, a model for women’s motivations to sew clothing for themselves was developed. An additional sew or purchase decision model was developed to demonstrate the decision-making process the women used when choosing to sew or to purchase a desired garment. This model depicts the factors in the decision-making process as well as the increased consumption stages an individual goes through in the decision to sew and not purchase. Theoretical perspectives from prosumerism, craft consumer and do-it-yourself consumption, as well as uses and gratification theory were applied to better understand the motivations of these women. In addition, these women’s motivations to sew explored in comparison with third-wave feminist handcraft reclamation.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Until the 20th century, home sewing was an essential task for all but the very wealthy (Emery, 2014; Mitchell, 1959; York, 1961). Many social and economic changes have impacted the need for this skill, including the invention of the sewing machine, development of commercial patterns, and the availability of affordable ready-to-wear clothing. In the second half of the 20th century, home sewing participation shifted with the lowest level of participation in the 1980s as more women entered the work force and sewing classes declined in school programs (“Sewing Firms Try,” 1986). This decline was also influenced by the influx of inexpensive ready-to-wear clothing from Southeast Asia, which could be purchased for less than it could be made (Courtless, 1982).

In the last decade of the 20th century into the beginning of the 21st century, there has been resurgence in home sewing interest and participation (Haider, 2014). After 9/11, interest further grew in domestic crafts, including sewing, as individuals desired to be closer to home (Chansky, 2010). Interest in sewing garments and do-it-yourself (DIY) fashion grew with the economic downturn in 2008 and is predicted to continue increasing until 2019 (Haider, 2014; “Sewing, Needlework,” 2015).

These consumers interested in sewing garments and other fashion items tend to be interested in creating and customizing unique clothing and accessories for themselves (Haider, 2014). Currently, it is estimated that 20% of all U.S. households are participating in sewing (Haider, 2014). There are four different segments of sewing participation: fashion sewing, which includes garments and accessories; quilting; home décor; and craft sewing (Haider, 2014, 2015; Leonard, 2012; “Sewing, Needlework,” 2015). The motivations to participate in the different segments of home sewing may be different and therefore should be evaluated separately. The focus of this study was exclusively on women participating in
sewing garments for themselves to gain insight into the motivations of that specific sewing segment.

In the 21st century, no academic research has been conducted on the reasons women are choosing to sew clothing for themselves, despite substantial sewing industry growth. The most current research on reasons individuals sew was over 20 years ago (Christensen, 1995; Kean & Levin, 1989; Schofield-Tomschsin, 1994). The most recent academic research on home sewers focused on dissatisfaction with the fit of commercial home sewing patterns (LaBat, Salusso, & Rhee, 2007). This phenomenon is important to study again due to the resurgence of interest and participation in garment sewing along with the significant societal changes that have occurred since it was last explored. These women’s decisions operate outside of typical consumer culture for apparel consumption with purchasing decisions that are not explained by any existing consumer consumption models. Therefore, research is needed to understand their decisions to sew clothing for themselves including purchasing behaviors and use of their leisure time.

The findings from this study will advance the understanding about female consumers who are sewing clothing for themselves, providing insight into this consumer segment’s shopping patterns as well as their garment satisfaction and evaluation criteria. This work will expand existing women’s leisure literature by focusing specifically on the women participating and the benefits that this leisure choice provides them. It will also expand on the limited research on women’s handcraft leisure. Understanding the reasons behind these women’s leisure activity decisions and sewing practices will provide valuable insights for the home sewing industry, the fashion industry, and academia as to why this subset of female
consumers choose to make clothing instead of purchasing in an age of fast fashion where inexpensive ready-to-wear is readily available.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to understand why women with similar middle class incomes were choosing to sew clothing for themselves as a leisure activity. The findings from this study provide knowledge about the perceived benefits of sewing by these women as well as insights into sewing consumers’ purchasing behaviors including both spending patterns and time spent sewing. The feelings associated with these factors as well as the perceived reactions of others to their sewn garments also were explored.

**Researcher’s Perspective**

I am a 36-year-old female and long-time sewer. I have taught sewing-related classes, such as apparel construction, patternmaking, and pattern alterations, at the academic and private levels. I design and sell sewing patterns as well as write articles for sewing magazines and blogs. For the past 3 years, I have been committed to sewing 90% of my own clothing. My initial journey began with a challenge from my fashion design students and grew into a lifestyle choice. This process and my initial handmade wardrobe are documented on my personal website AddieK.com (AddieK, n.d.), and a personal essay detailing the process can be found in *Seamwork Magazine* (Martindale, 2015). As a researcher, home sewer, and sewing pattern designer, I have attempted to learn as much about the home sewing industry, the history of sewing, and reasons why people sew. I have observed that the home sewing industry is growing and is composed of many different consumer segments.
Delimitations/Limitations

The sample for this study was limited to 15 English-speaking female home sewers 20–40 years of age residing in the United States and Canada who sewed garments for themselves. Findings from the study are not generalizable to all home sewers.

I acknowledge that I attempted to put aside my bias during the analysis process, but the findings necessarily reflect my interpretation of the data.

Definitions

The following definitions have been included to clarify the use of terms in this research.

*Apparel:* clothing of all sorts worn on the body (Pickens, 1999).

*Benefit:* a gain a person receives from a product, service, or activity (Zimmerer & Scarborough, 2016).

*Creativity:* the ability to engage in productive thinking and problem solving to generate a novel idea (Guilford, 1965).

*Do-it-yourself (DIY):* work that is done by or is to be done by an amateur at home (Watson & Shove, 2008).

*Fit:* the relationship of clothing to a person’s body including visual and comfort evaluations (LaBat, 1987). There are different components to fit, including aesthetic fit and functional fit. Aesthetic fit relates to the way the clothing looks on the body and can influence emotional, symbolic, and sensory characteristics. Functional fit relates to how clothing performs to meet the required attributes of an activity such as a garment being comfortable to move in (Brown, & Rice, 2001; Eckman, Damhorst, & Kadolph, 1990).
Garment: “an article of apparel” (Pickens, 1999, p. 146).

Home sewing: any type of sewing that is completed in the home as an activity to create apparel, crafts, or home décor (Chan, 1975; Christensen, 1995).

Home sewing industry: the sewing-related segment of the overall craft industry including fashion sewing, quilting, and home décor sewing products, and which includes fabric, notions, equipment, and instructional materials such as patterns and books (Haider, 2014, 2015; Leonard, 2012; “Sewing, Needlework,” 2015).

Home sewing pattern: a “guide for cutting pieces of a garments sold by a company” (Pickens, 1999, p. 244).

Leisure: time that is not obligated to other work, social, or civic activities (Hawes, 1978).

Motivation: “an inner or social stimulus for an action” (Edwards, 1999, p. 19).

Prosumers: individuals who choose to make products and services that they consume (Kotler, 1986).

Ready-to-wear (RTW): clothing that carries a label and can be bought readymade (Callan, 1998).

Sewing: “to work with a needle and thread or with a sewing machine” (Pickens, 1999, p. 290).

Sewing pattern: “guide for cutting pieces of a garment” (Pickens, 1999, p. 244).
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

To set the context for this study, decision making, the consumer decision purchasing model, clothing self-presentation, garment fit and selection criteria, and women’s research on handcraft leisure were considered for their application to women sewing garments for themselves. A review of home sewers and the home sewing industry, along with the factors affecting both, from the last decade of the 19th century to the present are presented. Research on reasons to sew and sewing participation in the 20th century was examined as was the limited research on home sewers in the 21st century. The potential theoretical perspectives on reasons for home sewing today also were reviewed. The literature reviewed in this section is limited to research found to be conducted in North America and England and written in the English language.

Garment sewing functions as a way to present one’s self in a desired manner, similar to the clothing selection and purchase process. Clothing acts as one of the essential ways in which impressions are formed and serve as the basis for a person’s initial judgment (Kaiser, 1990). Clothing is embedded with social meanings including messages about gender, social roles, and group membership (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1995). Clothing is part of an ongoing process of self-presentation, in which a person aims to control the perceptions of others through clothing choice (Guy & Banim, 2000). In most cases, individuals are forced to choose their clothing from a fashion-industry-dictated selection that is already inscribed with meanings prior to wearing, such as with regard color, style, fabric, and brand name (Guy, Banim, & Green, 2001). When women sew garments for themselves, they have more control over clothing selection, which provides increased authority over the way in which their identity is presented.
The consumer decision to sew or purchase a garment has not been explored in published research. Decision-making is a problem solving cognitive process that one goes through when presented with more than one choice or alternative for a course of action (Resnik, 1987). A selection between the choices available is dependent on the number of options, the current state of the individual, and outcomes that each alternative will produce (Resnik, 1987). The final choice made is based on the current state of the individual and the potential outcomes of their choice. The ability to sew one’s clothing provides consumers with a unique decision-making option that can be considered when a new garment is needed or desired. While the individual only has two options, sewing or purchasing, they must consider their current state that potentially could include time, money and skill, along with the differences in the final product that will have result from their decision.

The process of selecting materials and sewing garments for personal use differs from ready-to-wear apparel consumption but has yet to be considered by academia. The most common consumption model includes the following steps: (a) need recognition, (b) search for information, (c) prepurchase evaluation of alternatives, (d) purchase, (e) consumption, (f) postconsumption evaluation, and (g) divestment (Engel et al., 1995). The steps in the consumer buying process closely mirror the steps taken in the garment sewing process. The first three steps of the garment sewing process focus on the need for, searching, and evaluation of garment supplies including sewing patterns, fabrics, and notions. At the consumption stage, the application of the model deviates, as there are two separate steps during which consumption occurs. The first is the consumption of purchased materials during the garment construction process. The second consumption stage occurs when the home sewer wears the garment. Postconsumption evaluation also varies from the typical
model, as the wearer of the garment critiques not only the garment but additionally evaluates his or her sewing skills used in the finished product. Divestment could also be quite different from the ready-made products considered in the model because it does not account for the time invested in making the garment. This could impact the home sewer’s willingness to discard a garment.

The majority of apparel consumption research has looked at purchasing decisions (Fadiga, Misra, & Ramirez, 2005) and postpurchase decisions (Chen-Yu & Kincade, 2001). This evaluation closely ties to the fit of the garments (Eckman et al., 1990). In addition to considering how sewing garments fits into the stages of the consumer purchase model, it is also important to consider that research has revealed that women struggle to find garments that fit properly. Research has also indicated that, in some classes, women have placed the blame for improper fit on their bodies instead of on the apparel items (Labat & Delong, 1990). Sewing their own clothing allows home sewers to alter sewing patterns, which results in garments that fit their body more adequately and therefore could result in increased garment satisfaction.

This research focused on women who made garments for themselves, which has not been considered in terms of garment evaluation criteria. Therefore, research on garment evaluation of ready-to-wear clothing was considered as a basis of understanding. Eckman et al. (1990) established that consumers use evaluation criteria when purchasing apparel. These criteria include aesthetics, usefulness, performance and quality, and extrinsic factors. Additional research identified clothing attributes consumers look for when selecting clothing to purchase (Abraham-Murali & Littrell, 1995). These attributes include physical appearance, physical performance, expressive characteristics, and extrinsic characteristics
Research by Shin (2013) found that themes related to clothing fit perceptions and evaluation were based on the physical fit, aesthetic fit, and functional fit of the garment. Additionally, consumer body size has been found to play a role in fit evaluation and satisfaction with clothing among petite, average, and tall height consumers (Kind & Hathcote, 2000; Shim & Bickle, 1993). Social context must also be acknowledged in relation to fit. As different garment fits may be perceived differently in varying social situations (Shin, 2013; Stone, 1995). Sewing garments at home is quite different from purchasing ready-to-wear, as the sewer has control of many aspects that ready-to-wear purchaseers do not. Home sewers can tailor the fit of clothing to their bodies through pattern alterations. They can control the functional aspects and clothing attributes through fabric and sewing pattern selection. Home sewers’ ability to create their desired garments may also allow them to present themselves in their desired manner in a variety of social situations. However, home sewers are limited to sewing patterns and fabrics available to purchase. Therefore, many of the criteria identified for ready-to-wear garments may be more relevant in the selection of materials and sewing pattern needed and not in the actual finished garment.

Academic research and popular press media have indicated that garment sewing is now a leisure activity (Blenkarn, 1986; Owens, 1997; Schofield-Tomschin, 1994; “Sewing, Needlework,” 2015). Despite this, no research has been conducted to evaluate why women are choosing sewing as their choice of leisure activity. Much of the research on women’s leisure has been studied as part of family leisure, which includes activities done with at least one member of a woman’s family (DeVault, 1991; Thompson, 1999; Walker, 1996). Handcraft-related leisure research has been significantly overlooked by academics. Research
that has been conducted on handcrafts has been conducted mainly on knitting (Stannard & Sanders, 2015; Winge & Stalp, 2013) and on quilting (Stalp, 2006; Stalp & Coniti, 2011) with two additional studies grouping knitting, crochet, embroidery, and quilting together (Johnson & Wilson, 2005; Schofield & Littrell, 2001). Stalp (2015) argued that women’s leisure, especially women’s sedentary leisure, has been undervalued because fabric-related items are taken for granted in people’s lives and therefore seen as less valuable to research. Women’s leisure research also needs to be studied in a manner in which the woman is regarded as the most important unit in the study (Stalp, 2015).

Research on women’s leisure has neglected sewing as a valuable avenue to study due to its noneconomic status (Stalp, 2015). Research that has been conducted on sewing, specifically quilting, has linked women’s choice in leisure to others in multitasking leisure using the leisure activity selected to make gifts for others (Johnson & Wilson 2005; Stalp, 2015). Research has also indicated that sewing leisure is undervalued by the family and friends of the participants (Stalp & Conti, 2011). This study was designed to look at home sewing and women’s leisure from a unique perspective by putting the women first and looking at leisure that benefits solely her.

**Home Sewers and the Home Sewing Industry**

Home sewers have a reciprocal relationship with the home sewing industry. The home sewing industry is a segment of the overall craft industry that provides products, such as fabric, notions, and instructional materials such as patterns, to home sewing consumers. This industry caters to fashion sewers, who sew garments and accessories, quilters, and craft sewers (Haider, 2014, 2015; Leonard, 2012; “Sewing, Needlework,” 2015). The availability of materials and equipment enables consumers to sew for themselves at home. Consumers’
interest in home sewing drives sales in the home sewing industry. Consumer interest in home sewing is impacted by the social and economic settings of the time. Prior to the end of the 20th century, home sewing was an essential task for all but the very wealthy (Emery, 2014; Mitchell, 1959; York, 1961). Home sewing practices were impacted by significant developments in the 19th century. The introduction of sewing publications and commercial sewing patterns allowed women without advanced pattern-making skills to make clothing that was more complex (Emery, 2014). The invention of the sewing machine greatly decreased the amount of time needed to construct a garment and improved the ability of the sewer to make more complicated garments (Emery, 2014).

At the turn of the 20th century, ready-to-wear clothing started to become available for women to purchase but was quite limited until 1920. This increased availability of ready-to-wear became a factor in the beginning of the decline in home sewing, as women of higher income levels now had the option to purchase ready-made clothing instead of making their own clothing (Gordon, 2009). However, the limited style selection and quality of the garments kept women sewing. Ready-to-wear clothing was too expensive for many women, and they continued to sew their own garments as well as garments for their families. Many women continued to sew until the end of the 1960s, due in part to convincing advertising and the high cost of ready-to-wear clothing (Emery, 2014). The home sewing industry maintained some growth in the 1970s and into the early 1980s, but as more women entered the full-time workforce and home economics classes declined in schools, participation in home sewing hit an all-time low in the mid-1980s (“Sewing Firms Try,” 1986). The largest contributor to reduced participation in home sewing of clothing was the influx of inexpensive clothing produced in Southeast Asia during the 1980s and 1990s. With the low wages paid
to offshore workers, by the 1980s it became more expensive to make clothing at home if time was included in the cost, which greatly reduced the motivation to sew (Courtless, 1982).

Not until the 1990s was there the beginning in the resurgence in home sewing, credited in part to the DIY movement (Haider, 2014). The 1992 Census of Retail Trade indicated that there was a 21% increase in home sewing product sales over the previous recorded period in 1987 (Owens, 1997). In 1997, the American Home Sewing and Craft Association reported that more than 30 million women in the United States were sewing and that 20% of American households were sewing (Haider, 2014). This increase in home sewing continued into the early to mid-2000s, as many sewing-related businesses reported increased revenue and expansion (Haider, 2014).

During the economic downturn that started in 2008 (“Sewing, Needlework,” 2015), a renewed interest in crafting and making items at home grew among consumers. These consumers began to show interest in making their own clothes and customizing clothing-related goods. This interest has been tied to higher levels of unemployment that resulted in more available time to make items due to reduced employment and the desire to save money (Haider, 2014).

A 2011 study by the Canadian Craft and Hobby Association (n.d.) indicated that 11% of Canadians were sewing. The Craft and Hobby Association of the United Kingdom reported that, in 2014, 3.5 million people in the United Kingdom were involved in making their own clothes (as cited in Lewis-Hammond, 2014). Over 400,000 of those had been sewing for less than a year (Lewis-Hammond, 2014). The rise in popularity and growth in home sewing participation has been attributed to popular television shows such as The British Sewing Bee and Project Runway as well as sewing blogs, social media, and DIY
fashion (Holson, 2012; Lewis-Hammond, 2014; Podsada, 2012). The Craft and Hobby Association reported that 20% of U.S. households were participating in sewing crafts (Haider, 2014). Within that, 20%, women were dominating 90% of the market. The largest consumer group, making up 37%, consisted of women age 45–64 years; women age 25–44 years comprised 25%, and women 24 years old and younger comprised 13% of the consumer market. Industry reports have indicated that there is growing interest in sewing-related crafts among the younger population. Analysis has found that these younger consumers have more interest in creating and customizing clothing and accessories for uniqueness (Haider, 2014).

A significant indication of the increased interest in sewing has been reflected in the sales and growth of key brick-and-mortar retailers of fabric as well as sewing and craft supplies (such as Jo-Ann’s, Michael’s, and Hobby Lobby), all of which have seen increases in their profits over the 6 years from 2008 to 2014 (“Sewing, Needlework,” 2015). In 2014, these retailers reported that fabric comprised 40% of the products sold at these stores (“Sewing, Needlework,” 2015). Another indicator has been the growth and success of online retailers (“Sewing, Needlework,” 2015). Consumers are drawn to these outlets for their convenience of at-home shopping (“Sewing, Needlework,” 2015). Analysts have projected this growth to continue until 2019 as disposable income and leisure time are projected to continue to increase gradually (Haider, 2014; “Sewing, Needlework,” 2015).

One of the most significant indicators in the growing interest in home sewing has been the participation in online platforms and the growth in availability of online classes and tutorials. Websites such as Craftsy.com offer over 150 sewing classes and add classes regularly (Craftsy, n.d.). Other online sites, such as PatternReview.com, have a community of over 400,000 sewers sharing their sewing projects, recommending patterns, and sharing
tips with each other (Pattern Review.com, n.d.). The popular garment-sewing platform BurdaStyle.com had a reported online community membership increase of 47% in 2012, and the site now has over 1 million users (BurdaStyle, n.d.). Popular sewing blogs have a reported number of page views exceeding 450,000 a month (Sewing Rabbit, n.d.). Facebook sewing groups, such as Sewing Inspiration and Tutorials, have over 45,000 members (Sewing Inspiration and Tutorials, n.d.). Pinterest and Instagram have also proved to be popular for individuals who sew (Holson, 2012). Popular sewing pinners have over 47,000 followers (Pinterest, n.d.). The popular social media hashtag #sewing currently has over 2 million posts on Instagram alone.

In-person sewing class demand and participation as well as increased sewing machine sales serve as additional indicators that sewing interest is growing (Holson, 2012). Sewing retreats, such as Camp Workroom Social, are selling out within days and have waiting lists of individuals wanting to attend (Mitnick, 2016). Sewing machines sales for home sewing machines reported a 1.5 million increase in sales from 2002 to 2012 (Holson, 2012).

**Previous Literature on Home Sewing**

There has been no academic research attention given to understanding why women in the 21st century sew. Of the research done in the 20th century, surveys have been the most common data collection method (Chan, 1975; Courtless, 1985; Dorhan, 1987; Ferguson, 1960; Kean & Levin, 1989; O’Brien & Campbell, 1927; Schofield-Tomschin, 1994; Sutton, 1967; York, 1961). These quantitative studies have been limited to economic, quality, fit, creativity, leisure, and psychological variables, and research designs used did not allow for the revelation of any additional reasons for sewing or provide any meaning that the women may have attached to their sewing participation. The limited qualitative research on home
sewing has focused on retrospective understandings of the impacts and meanings of women’s home sewing in the last decades of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries. Of the studies on home sewing, only four used theories to explain their results; these theories included the theory of patterned participation (Dorhan, 1987), Toffler’s thesis and prosumerism (Kean & Levin, 1989), feminist design theory (Buckley, 1999), and feminist theories on identity construction and material culture and identity (McLean, 2005).

Five reasons for participation in home sewing have been identified in the literature: economic (Chan, 1975; Ferguson, 1960; Kean & Levin, 1989; O’Brien & Campbell, 1927; York, 1961), better quality (Conklyn, 1961; Kean & Levin, 1989; Mitchell, 1959), improved fit (Ferguson, 1960; Kean & Levin, 1989; York, 1961), creativity (Chan, 1975; Christensen, 1995; Kean & Levin, 1989), and leisure and psychological reasons¹ (Courtless, 1985; Dorhan, 1987; Kean & Levin, 1989; Schofield-Tomschin, 1994; Sutton, 1967). A change over time in the relative importance of these reasons for home sewing participation can be seen, as researchers’ findings of reasons to sew gradually shifted away from economic reasons to creative, leisure, and psychological reasons. Details about previous quantitative and qualitative studies conducted on reasons for home sewing are provided in Appendix A. A review of the research studies on home sewing participation in the 20th century is detailed next.

The earliest research indicated that, through 1975, economics were the most important reason for sewing. The majority of this research focused on making connections between sewing practices, reasons for sewing, and the women’s status (economic,

¹Participation in activities is motivated by freedom of choice, sense of self-accomplishments, or self-esteem (Driver, 1992).
employment, marital, geographical location, number of children; Conklyn 1961; Ferguson, 1960; Mitchell 1959; O’Brien & Campbell, 1927; York, 1961). These studies looked to find connections between the surveyed women’s status and sewing.

O’Brien and Campbell (1927), in their U.S. Department of Agriculture report, focused on looking at sewing participation based on women’s locales (village rural, rural, or city) as well as on income and family size. They found that most participants were motivated by lower cost garments and that a larger percentage of women in rural areas sewed as compared with those in city locations. Mitchell (1959) focused on reasons for sewing, how much money women saved by sewing, and the income bracket of their sample and found that saving money was the primary reason in all income brackets. Conklyn (1961) and York (1961) both looked at groups of women to find out if they were participating in home sewing, their reasons for sewing, and the types of items they were sewing. The findings of both studies indicated economics to be the most important reason and also that single women were more likely to sew household items and married not-employed women were more likely to sew garments. A connection was also found between married not-employed women and sewing for leisure.

The findings of qualitative studies revealed many of the same economic factors for women sewing: that sewing was a way for women to possess items that they could not afford to purchase and provided a way for them to present themselves and their families in socially acceptable clothing (Buckley, 1999; Burman, 1999 Gordon, 2004, 2009; Hackney, 1999; McLean, 2005). Furthermore, the researchers in these studies looked closer at women’s sewing practices; they found that sewing was an opportunity for women to be creative and the findings revealed the role that sewing garments had on the identity construction of
women (McLean, 2005). Researchers looking at the period of time between 1900 and 1975 found that sewing was a productive activity in which women were encouraged to participate because of its useable outcome (McLean, 2005). As in the quantitative research findings, social, ethnic, and geographic location played a significant role in the reasons women sewed; however, despite these women’s backgrounds, all of their decisions were linked to ideas of women’s work, domesticity, and family (Gordon, 2004, 2009; Hackney, 1999). The findings from this previous research has revealed much about the economic and productive benefits of women sewing and indicated that home sewing plays a role in women’s identity construction. Although these studies provide insight into the reasons and meaning attached to sewing in 20th century, there have been significant societal changes. The current reasons for sewing clothing and the meanings attached to sewing need to be explored.

Research starting in the 1970s reflected a change in the characteristics of the sample as well as in reasons for sewing. Findings from research studies at that time indicated additional reasons for sewing, such as creativity, and the samples began to reflect the sewing practices of women employed outside of the home (Chan, 1975; Courtless, 1985). These changes in sewing participation were impacted by feminist movements and increases in women’s employment outside of the home. As the second wave of feminism emerged in the 1960s and grew significantly into the 1970s, women began to separate themselves from traditional feminine domestic roles, which included home sewing (Giles, 2004). Activities such as sewing were associated with dullness and conformity (Felski, 2000) and were seen as barriers standing in the way of women achieving education and equality (Arneil, 1999).

As these changes emerged, researchers still found saving money to be a key factor, but other reasons, such as better fit, fabric selection, and garment quality, grew increasingly
close to economics as reasons to sew. Research findings also indicated that sewing was shifting to a leisure choice and away from economic necessity (Courtless, 1985). Chan (1975) looked at employed women who sewed and determined that that their primary reasons were to save money but also found sewing as a creative outlet to be a significant reason. The findings from Courtless’s (1985) study of married and single employed women indicated that sewing was more of a hobby and did not indicate economics to be a factor in sewing. These research study findings provide interesting facts and a progression in the changing reasons for sewing but do not reveal why these changes happened or give any insights into why these women chose to sew. Blenkarn (1986) found that only 38% of her sample sewed exclusively for leisure and that the majority identified sewing as a leisure activity. Dorhan (1987) found accomplishment and enjoyment to be the primary reason why women participated in an adult education sewing class.

Findings from home sewing research continued to change as third-wave feminism emerged in the 1990s. Third-wave feminists aimed to broaden the idea of what it meant to be a feminist, which included reclaiming feminine handcrafts such as sewing (Rowe-Finkbeiner, 2004). As the third-wave feminists returned to craft, they considered it mainly a form of leisure, providing a creative outlet to express individuality, although it has been used by some third-wave feminists as a form of resistance to mass-produced consumer goods (Chansky, 2010). Third-wave feminists view their participation in domestic activities such as home sewing as their choice to sew and therefore believe that this choice can be changed at any time. Schofield-Tomschin (1994), while testing previous studies’ findings on reasons to sew, found that women sewed primarily for leisure. Christensen’s (1995) work confirmed this shift in women’s reasons to sew, indicating that creativity and gift making was the
primary sewing motivations among those in her sample. These two research studies indicated for the first time that leisure, psychophysiological, and creativity-related reasons have become more important than economics for individuals choosing to sew. Although these findings are significant in helping to understand the shifts in reasons to sew, these studies did not provide insight into why and did not allow for any additional reasons to be revealed.

Later research also began to look at sewing consumer market segments and consumer satisfaction with apparel sewing patterns (Kean & Levin, 1989; LaBat et al., 2007). Kean and Levin (1989), using Toffler’s thesis (Toffler, 1980) and prosumer (Kolter, 1986) research, analyzed the reasons individuals sewed along with the types of items they were sewing to find sewing consumer segments. This was the first home sewing research using theory to interpret reasons for sewing. LaBat et al. (2007) found that female sewers with a median age of 55 struggled to fit the commercial patterns to their body measurements and lacked the knowledge to alter patterns. Their findings revealed that improvements needed to be made to assist home sewers, and the researchers concluded that improvements could increase sewing participation (LaBat et al., 2007). The findings from these studies revealed further evidence of the need to understand the reasons women are sewing clothing and also showed ways to increase market growth through greater consumer satisfaction with product quality and selection.

**Potential Theoretical Perspectives on Home-Sewing Motivations of Today’s Consumer**

Given the unexplored area of this research and the lack of current literature, a theoretical perspective could not be chosen until the data were collected and the evaluation of the findings had begun (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). There has been little application of
theoretical frameworks to the study of home sewing and home sewing participation. Toffler’s thesis, which was applied by Kean and Levin (1989) in their study of home sewers, was identified to be most applicable to the present study’s purpose. The findings of Kean and Levin, along with the industry reports (Haider, 2014; “Sewing, Needlework,” 2015), indicate that the frameworks of Toffler’s thesis, prosumerism (Kolter, 1986; Ritzer, Dean, & Jurgenson, 2012), DIY (Watson & Shove, 2008), and craft consumer (Campbell, 2005) literature could be useful in understanding and providing insight into the motivations of female home sewers who sew garments for themselves. To understand the psychological motivations of women to sew, uses and gratification theory (UG) was identified, as it has been used to understand other handcraft motivations (Stannard & Sanders, 2015).

**The Rise of the Prosumer**

A prosumer is a consumer who is both the producer and the consumer of a product. According to Kolter (1986), individuals who sew their own clothing would be a considered prosumers. Prosumers have been described as people who want to be independent from mass production but do not produce all the goods that they consume. An individual may choose to be a prosumer in one specific area and purchase items that fulfill other needs. The idea of a prosumer is not altogether new. Examples of similar actions date back to the preindustrial consumer. At that time, people produced almost everything that they needed for survival and produced extra of the goods to be traded (Kotler, 1986). People produced goods for exchange and not for their consumption. As a result of the Industrial Revolution, most people shifted their work to outside of the home and purchased the items that they needed (Kotler, 1986). The idea of the prosumer combines the consumer who produces for exchange
with the producer who produces for consumption. The prosumer is focused on individualism and not mass-produced products.

One study of home sewers (Kean & Levin, 1989) utilized the theoretical framework of Toffler’s thesis (Toffler, 1980) and prosumerism (Kohler, 1986). The researchers identified consumer segments within their sample of 108 women which was representative of the average United States income and age related to their orientations to sewing (Kean & Levin, 1989). Home sewers in the study were classified into five groups: utilitarians, practicals, craft-oriented, upscales, and indifferents. The utilitarians, practicals, and indifferents were found to be more oriented toward the economic benefits of home sewing, whereas the upscales and craft-oriented individuals were much less concerned with saving money. The upscales were most interested in creating unique items that they had made themselves as opposed to purchasing ready-to-wear fashion. Individuals in all of the categories identified displayed some characteristics of a prosumer, but those in the practical, craft-oriented, and upscale categories embodied the prosumer theory. The sewers in these groups were actively involved in producing products to meet their specific requirements and desired to have control over all the aspects of their production (Kotler, 1986).

**Craft Consumption and Do-It-Yourself Consumption**

The qualities and desires of the prosumer are also exhibited in craft consumption (Campbell, 2005) and DIY consumption (Watson & Shove, 2008). Campbell (2005) defined craft consumption and distinguished it from other related consumption types such as personalization, customization, and ensemble. Campbell determined that for the consumption to be craft consumption it must include the designing, making, and use of the item. Craft consumers use a range of mass manufactured goods to make items unique to
themselves much like the prosumer described by Toffler (1980) and Kolter (1986). Craft consumers are interested in more than personalization or customization ideas; they want to have control over the process to create unique items. Watson and Shove (2008) explored the relationship between products, projects, and practices of DIY consumption. They found a link between amount consumed and competence level in DIY practice. Participation success leads to continued interest and participation in DIY, creating an unending evolutionary cycle of product purchasing (Watson & Shove, 2008). Watson and Shove (2008) noted that craft consumption is seen more, but not exclusively, at middle and upper income levels. This suggests that participation in craft consumer activities is a result of a need to escape from commodification, as proposed by Toffler’s thesis (Toffler, 1980). This also draws another connection with the actual rise of the prosumer, presented by Ritzer et al. (2012), as the majority of craft participants are professionals engaged in producing immaterial goods.

**Uses and Gratification Theory**

Uses and gratification theory had potential for providing a conceptual framework to learn the psychological motivations to sew for the women in this study. UG is used to explore how and why people use media as well as to find out what psychological needs are met by the media chosen (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). UG has been applied to many different types of activities other than media that were a source of leisure for the individuals, such as social media involvement (Shao, 2009; Whiting & Williams, 2013). It has also been applied to describe the interactions between individuals and mass media, such as advertising effectiveness (Ko, Cho, & Roberts, 2005) and online shopping preferences (Cho, 2007), and to understanding the motivation of young women to knit (Stannard & Sanders, 2015).
Within UG, five types of motivation have been identified for the usage of mass media. The categories include cognitive, affective, personal integrative, social integrative, and tension release (Katz et al., 1974). Individuals with cognitive motivations use media as a source for acquiring knowledge and information. Affective motivations refer to the emotional aspects individuals seek out in specific types of media. Personal integrative motivations are self-esteem-based motivations such as status, confidence, and credibility. Social integrative motivations encompass the need to socialize with family and friends to improve the bonds shared with them. Tension release refers to the use of media as a way to relieve stress and escape from reality (Katz et al., 1974).

Uses and gratification theory has the potential for gaining understanding of sewing motivations in the following ways. Cognitive motivation needs may be met by the process of learning how to sew and following sewing patterns to complete projects. Affective motivations may be met by the desire to be creative. Previous studies (Schofield-Tomschin, 1994) indicated creativity as a high ranking motivation for sewing. Personal integrative motivation may be met by fulfilling the need for accomplishment, as indicated by the high ranking motivations of accomplishment and self-confidence found by Schofield-Tomschin (1994). Social integrative motivations may be met by the increasing popularity of the online sewing communities (BurdaStyle, n.d.; Sewing Inspiration and Tutorials, n.d.) and the increased number of in-person sewing classes (Holson, 2012). Prior handcraft literature (Johnson & Wilson, 2005; Schofield-Tomschin & Littrell, 2001; Stannard & Sanders, 2015) has established the importance of community in handcraft participation and today’s sewers have more ways to access sewing communities. Tension release has been found to be a leading motivation of home sewers in academic, popular press, and industry research.
Sewers have indicated that sewing is a leisure activity used to relieve stress (Conklyn, 1981; Owens, 1997; Schofield-Tomschin, 1994).

No studies have focused exclusively on women sewing clothing for themselves. All studies have included all sewing done by the participant women including sewing clothes for others, sewing household items, and sewing crafts such as quilting. There is an undeniable need to investigate why women are sewing clothing for themselves today. Doing so may lead to an understanding of the role and impact of sewing for women today. To better understand this, in-depth qualitative methods need to be used. A qualitative approach provides the opportunity to understand the women’s experiences and provides a holistic view of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2003). This approach also allows the data to reveal a more accurate representation of the reality of women who sew clothing for themselves (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

**Research Questions**

Current research on reasons women are sewing clothing for themselves is lacking, as significant amount of time has passed since this was last researched. As indicated by industry consumer market research, there has been resurgence in home sewing interest in the past few years (Haider, 2014, 2015; “Sewing, Needlework,” 2015). Although recent research by Stannard and Sanders (2015) looked at the handcraft motivations of female knitters, there has been no academic research that has explored the phenomenon of women sewing garments for themselves.

This study was designed to identify current reasons female home sewers sew garments for themselves. This work employed qualitative methods to examine the interview
data of home sewers regarding their reasons for and experiences in sewing garments for themselves. This research aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. Why are women sewing garments for themselves?
2. How does these women’s investment in sewing affect their commitment to their sewing participation?
3. What types of control does the option to sew their own clothing provide these women?
4. How does being able to sew their own clothes empower these women?
CHAPTER 3. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Female home sewers who sew garments for themselves were interviewed about the reasons they sew clothing for themselves and the benefits that sewing their own clothing provided them. They were asked about feelings attached to sewing and the reactions of others to their garments. The home sewers were also asked about the amount of time that they spend sewing and about their sewing-related spending habits. A grounded theory approach was used to examine the transcribed interviews. This chapter includes an overview of the sample, data collection methods, data analysis approaches, and methods for validity and reliability used.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to test the interview questions and the proposed methods for coding the data. Three women 20-40 years of age were interviewed. The women were from the United States, Canada, and New Zealand. Participants were solicited through a Facebook post in the Capsule Wardrobe Sew Along Group, a popular group for women who sew garments for themselves. Individuals replied to the post that they were interested and then were sent a Facebook message where their e-mail address was given to the researcher. Then, an e-mail with the details of the study and the informed consent form was sent. Once the informed consent was sign and returned, a video interview was scheduled. The interviews ranged in length from 13 to 22 minutes. The interviews were then transcribed for coding.

Each interview was first coded for in vivo, process, and initial coding. Analytic memos were taken for each interview. Analytic memos were also taken during the coding to find connections between the three interviews. The codes of each interview were compared and analyzed. The researcher identified a list of codes that appeared in all of the interviews.
Those codes were then analyzed to find categories. A coding guide was prepared using the categories and the data were coded again (Appendix B).

Code weaving (Saldaña, 2016) was used to visually connect codes into categories and then categories into themes to clarify what the data was communicating. The categories and subcategories revealed three overarching themes: empowerment through sewing, controlling clothing selection through sewing, and acting on clothing-related problems by learning to sew.

![Figure 1. Code weaving of pilot study emergent themes.](image)

The pilot study revealed the need for additional questions to be added to the interview script. The added questions related to how the women felt when wearing clothing they made and their feelings attached to spending on sewing. The pilot study also revealed questions for which the researcher needed to probe for more information and clarification. Additionally, the pilot study indicated the need for a short demographic survey of the participants.

To test the validity of the coding by the researcher an audit coder was used. An inter-rater reliability of 81.9% was found.
Sample Selection

A purposive sampling of 15 female home sewers 20–40 years of age who sew garments for themselves were interviewed. Saturation was met with these 15 interviews, and additional interviews were not needed (Francis et al., 2010). To allow for a more accurate comparison between time periods, the age range for the sample was based on the ages of participants in previous studies that had looked into home sewing motivations (Blenkarn, 1986; Chan, 1975; Dorhan, 1987; Mitchell, 1959); this age range also reflects the largest female age group in the United States (Howden & Meyer, 2011). Reports from the home sewing industry also have indicated that this age range is a growing and is a significant consumer segment (Haider, 2014; “Sewing, Needlework,” 2015).

Participants were recruited after approval of the study by the Institutional Review Board at Iowa State University (see Appendix C). Participants were from two English-speaking countries: United States and Canada. The participants were recruited through Facebook groups that focus on personal garment home sewing. Posts were made in three Facebook groups: Sew Curvy Fashionistas, Capsule Wardrobe Sew Along, and Sew Divas. These groups provided a diverse ethnic sample with similar middle class economic status to provide a more accurate understanding of the changes in why women sew. The details of these groups are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Facebook Group Sample Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Name</strong> (membership as of 12/1/2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information Provided on Facebook</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 1 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Members of diverse ethnic backgrounds</th>
<th>Both beginner and very experienced sewers</th>
<th>Showing off items that they made to each other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sew Curvy Fashionistas (3,904)</td>
<td>For all curvy and plus size ladies who embrace their curves and love to sew!</td>
<td>Plus-size women Sewing garments for themselves</td>
<td>Independent and commercial patterns</td>
<td>Advice on pattern selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capsule Wardrobe Sew Along (4,903)</td>
<td>A group to find ideas, answers, encouragement, and sew along updates.</td>
<td>Predominately Caucasian Women</td>
<td>Both beginner and very experienced sewers</td>
<td>Helping each other alter patterns for improved fit and give each other advice on sewing pattern selection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sew Divas (4,004)</td>
<td>For those who love to sew, create their own designs, beginner seamstresses, and fashionistas. To come together to ask questions, post creations, learn from one another and just have fun.</td>
<td>Members of diverse ethnic backgrounds. Mostly women but has a few male members Sewing current fashion trends</td>
<td>Both beginner and very experienced sewers Mainly commercial patterns and self-drafts patterns</td>
<td>Showing off the items that they have made to each other Advice on pattern selection and sharing of sewing tips and tutorials</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To insure a diverse population, interested women were asked to fill out a face sheet (see Appendix D), on which they indicated their identified ethnicity and age as well as other information relevant to the study. The face sheet, utilized as a screening instrument to insure a diverse ethnic mix among the participants, was completed by 236 potential participants. Individuals selected for the study were sent an e-mail inviting them to participate in an interview and providing details about the study (Appendix E). If the interested party agreed to participate in the study, an informed consent form (Appendix F) was sent for her to sign and an online video interview was scheduled.
Data Collection

Semistructured interviews were conducted using an interview guide (Appendix G). This allowed me to ask additional questions and for additional conversation to take place (McCracken, 1988). In addition, participants were asked about garments that they had made for themselves. The actual garments were not analyzed or coded but served to initiate conversations about the reason why the participants sewed these garments for themselves. The interview lengths ranged from thirty minutes to one hour and fifteen minutes. Interviews were scheduled eight hours apart to allow for transcription and analytic memos to be taken between interviews. All of the interviews were conducted over a continuous eight-day period. The interviews were conducted through online video conferencing using Zoom technology. This assisted in creating an open dialogue through face-to-face communication. The interviews were recorded, and only the audio file from the interview was transcribed for data analysis. Video interviews allowed me to see the garments as they were being discussed. The interviews were transcribed by a third-party transcription service that provides a client nondisclosure agreement, and the company was notified to delete the files once the transcriptions were received. The transcribed files are being kept on a password-protected computer. All participants were assigned a number to insure anonymity throughout the transcription and data analysis. A face sheet was used to collect basic demographic information as well as information on sewing-related spending and amount of time spent sewing (Appendix D).

Data Analysis

Two sources of data (face sheets and semi structured interviews) were analyzed to gain understanding the motivations of women to sew clothing for themselves. Both sources
provided valuable information about the participation of these women in sewing clothing for themselves and why they chose to sew. Only the interview data were analyzed for the emergent and central themes.

For this study, grounded theory was used as a guiding framework to explore the data collected from the transcribed interviews with female home sewers who sew clothing for themselves. Grounded theory involves the construction of theory through systematic data collection and analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Grounded theory typically begins with a set of data. The data are analyzed for repeated concepts, ideas, or elements through a coding process. After each interview, analytic memos were written and notes were made about the codes identified, noting any connection between those codes (Saldaña, 2016). As shown in Figure 2, the coding process for this study took place in three stages: first cycle coding, second cycle coding, and theory building (Saldaña, 2016). Each stage is explained next.

**Coding Cycle 1**

The first coding cycle comprised open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), during which each interview transcript was reviewed by the researcher and audit coder (dissertation advisor) independently for any significant and topic-related content. Each interview was coded by the researcher immediately after the interview took place and before proceeding to the next interview. The data were examined thoroughly; conceptualized; and then
Figure 2. Coding process.

categorized by actions, ideas, or events. Preliminary codes were created using a combination of methods including: *in vivo*, process, and initial coding (Saldaña, 2016). A code is a short phrase or word that “captures the datum’s content and essence” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 4). With the *in vivo* method, the interviewee’s actual words were used to create the code. Process coding identifies processes in which the interviewees were participating and uses wording that ends with “ing.” Initial coding was used to keep open all possibilities within the data, which is particularly important when conducting grounded theory studies like this one.

Analytic memo writing was used throughout the primary coding process to make connections between codes and to reflect and expound on the data (Saldaña, 2016). Analytic memos were taken after each interview to draw connections between the interview data and identified new concepts. Analytic memos are “a place to make notes about the participants, the phenomenon, and process under investigation” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 44). The interviews
were read multiple times to make sure the codes reflected what was being communicated in
the data.

**Coding Cycle 2**

When the first coding cycle was completed, the second cycle of coding commenced. After all interviews were read and coded by each coder, the coders’ analyses and findings were compared. This cycle involved three coding techniques. First, focused coding was used to identify the preliminary codes that appeared most often and those significant codes were used to develop categories (Saldaña, 2016). During this stage the researcher worked with the audit coder (major professor) to develop a final coding guide based on the preliminary codes found in cycle one (Appendix H). Our collaboration in developing the coding guide prevented researcher bias. To insure the both coders understood the meaning of each code, each code’s meaning was agreed on and examples of each code were established. To insure the accuracy of the coding guide, both coders coded one interview to test the application of the coding guide. After verification of the coding guide application, the coders finished coding the remaining 14 interviews.

Cycle 2 coding was completed using qualitative data analysis software (QDAS) NVivo 10 for Mac. QDAS software adds rigor to the coding process and can enhance qualitative research validity (Siccama & Penna, 2008). The coding guide was entered into the software, and case files for each interview were created for analysis and comparison. Both coders coded all 15 interviews using the agreed upon coding guide. Next, QDAS software was used to assist with the axial coding, searching the data to establish the connections among the categories identified in the focused stage. The QDAS software was used for code weaving (Saldaña, 2016), connecting the codes into categories and then
categories into the central themes. Finally, the data went through theoretical coding, also known as selective coding, wherein a core theme was selected on which focused analysis was based to find similarities and differences across groups or processes. Then other categories identified were integrated and related to the core theme (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

**Theory Building**

After the second coding cycle, a micro theory about why the women in this study chose to sew clothing for themselves was discovered. A theory states what and how and, in some cases, why a phenomenon occurs (Saldaña, 2016). This micro theory was derived from the findings of the second round of coding, by which the emerged categories were used to develop a core theme. This core served as the basis for theory development and explanation of the phenomenon. Trustworthiness at this stage was ensured by thoroughly explaining the analysis methods and reporting the results in diagrams and figures where possible (Kyngäs, Elo, Pölkki, Kääriäinen, & Kanste, 2011). Inter-rater reliability was calculated by NVivo 10 for Mac QDAS software for each assigned code and averaged to attain the overall code agreement between coders. Interrater reliability was 96.38, above the recommended threshold identified by both Saldaña (2013) and Creswell (2003).

**Motivation Model Development**

A model was developed to explain the central and emerging themes of the data. This model was created to depict the order in which the participants engaged in activities associated with each of the themes. The recurring upward spiral of the emergent themes illustrates how the women experienced the themes in a repeated order of participation all while simultaneously experiencing the central theme.
Comparisons and Conclusions

Findings from the current study were compared with that of previous sewing research and related literature. The differences that were found are noted in the discussion chapter. In addition, the identified potential theories from the literature review were applied to further understand the study findings.

Conclusions were drawn from the comparison of the results with that of previous literature. After the evaluation of the importance of the findings, the significance of the study was developed. In the final chapter, the impact of the study’s outcomes are explained, and individuals who could benefit from the findings are noted. In addition, the limitations of the study are explained along with recommendations for future research that is needed to further understand the phenomenon.
CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

The purpose of this research was to understand why women are sewing clothing for themselves by analyzing the interview data from 15 interviews with female home sewers 20–40 years of age. This chapter begins with a description of the sample, including basic demographic information and information regarding the participants’ sewing-related consumer behaviors. A discussion of the results from the qualitative data, including the emergent themes and subthemes, are presented to provide answers to the research questions posed for the study.

Description of the Sample

This section presents a description of the sample using the information collected on the face sheet for the 15 participants selected to participate in the study. Participant profile information provided on the face sheet included the basic demographic information of age and identified ethnicity. Information regarding sewing and shopping preferences, including sewing spending, shopping frequency, sewing patterns purchases, time spent sewing, items sewn, and additional individuals for who they sew, was also collected using the face sheet (Appendix D). Although income was not collected, the sample was interpreted to be within a middle class income range based on the women’s amount of leisure time, access to the Internet, and sewing related consumer behaviors.

Participants \((N = 15)\) ranged in age from 22 to 40 years with a mean age of 31 years (Table 2). Ethnically, the sample was diverse, as 26.7\% \((n = 4)\) of the participants self-identified as White Non-Hispanic, 26.7\% \((n = 4)\) as Hispanic/Latina, 20\% \((n = 3)\) as African American, 13.3\% \((n = 2)\) as Asian, 6.7\% \((n = 1)\) as Asian/White, and 6.7\% \((n = 1)\) as East Indian (Table 2). One third (33.3\%) of participants shopped for fabric once a week, 26.7\% once a month, 26.7\% twice a month, and 13.2\% three times a month. Almost half (46.7\%)
shopped for sewing patterns once a month, 26.7% twice a month, and 26.7% once a week. In terms of monthly spending for sewing fabric, 13.3% of participants spent $10–30, 40.0% spent $31–50, 20.0% spent $51–70, and (26.7%) spent more than $100 per month (Figure 3). For sewing patterns, 13.3% of the participants spent less than $10, 73.3% spent $10–30, 6.7% spent $31–50, and 6.7% spent $51–70 a month (Figure 4). For related sewing items, such as notions, 13.3% of participants spent less than $10 per month, 33.3% spent $10–30, 33.3% spent $31–50, and 13.3% spent $51–$70.

Table 2.

Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Identified Ethnicity</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>Hispanic/Latina</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>White Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>Hispanic/Latina</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>White Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 7</td>
<td>Hispanic/Latina</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 8</td>
<td>East Indian</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 9</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 10</td>
<td>Hispanic/Latina</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 11</td>
<td>White Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 12</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 13</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 14</td>
<td>White Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 15</td>
<td>Asian/White</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All participants shopped for fabric at small online businesses. For brick-and-mortar stores, 53.3% shopped at small stores and 93.3% shopped at a major chain store. All participants purchased sewing patterns online, 73.3% at independent sewing pattern designer websites and 73.3% also having shopped at small online businesses. For brick-and-mortar stores, 60% of participants shopped for patterns at major chain stores and 13% shopped at
small stores. With regard to the kinds of patterns purchased, 6.7% of participants reported having purchased 1–3 independent designer patterns, 20.0% purchased 4–6, 6.7% purchased 7–10, 13.3% purchased 11–14, and 53.3% purchased more than 15 (Figure 5). Furthermore, 40% of participants reported purchasing 1–3 commercial patterns, 6.7% purchased 4–6, 13.3% purchased 7–10, none purchased 11–14, and 40.0% purchased 15 or more (Figure 6). PDF print-at-home patterns were used by 66.7% of participants. Hard-copy patterns were used by 53.3% of the participants. PDF patterns printed at a copy shop were

![Bar Chart]

*Figure 5.* Responses to the question: How many independent designer patterns have you purchased?
Figure 6. Responses to the question: How many commercial patterns have you purchased?

used by 6.7% of the participants, and patterns from sewing magazines were used by 6.7% of participants.

All participants indicated that they sewed weekly. Only 6.7% of participants reported sewing 1–3 hours per week, 33.3% sewed 4–6 hours, 20.0% sewed 7–10 hours, and 40.0% sewed more than 10 hours per week. Equal numbers of participants reported that they sewed in the evenings (73.3%) and on the weekends (73.3%), and 60% sewed during the day on weekdays.

Every participant sewed tops for themselves. Additional garments sewn were pants (93.3%), dresses (86.7%), skirts (80%), pajamas (60%), coats (60%), underwear (53.3%), swimsuits (40%), hats (33.3%), and bras (26.7%). Nongarment items sewn by the participants included gifts (60%), handbags (46.7%), and quilts 946.7%). All of the participants sewed for themselves, but 80% \((n = 12)\) sewed for other individuals as well. These participants sewed for children (53.3%), family members not living with them (46.7%), significant others (46.7%), and friends (33.3%).
Interview Results

The interview results led to the identification of a central category or theme of personal fulfillment, which emerged from the interview data as the reason why these female home sewers chose to sew clothing for themselves. A proposed model for sewing motivation for female garment sewing was developed (see Figure 6) as was a sew or purchase decision model (see Figure 7). The interview data addressed the guiding research questions.

Central Category and Emergent Themes Overview

The central or “core” category (Saldaña, 2016) that provides an overarching explanation for why this sample of ethnically diverse women chose to sew clothing for themselves is personal fulfillment. This central category of personal fulfillment comprises three emergent themes: investment, control, and empowerment (Table 3). The theme of investment consists of three subthemes: cognitive, monetary, and time investment. The theme of control comprises control over appearance, control over clothing selection, and control over ready-to-wear consumption. The last theme of empowerment includes the subthemes of confidence, approval and support of others, sewing community, and desire to make more.

Personal Fulfillment

Sewing one’s own clothing provides personal fulfillment through investment, control, and empowerment. The most resonating factor that emerged from every woman in all aspects of their sewing, which included learning, shopping, planning, sewing, and wearing the garments, was the enjoyment it brought them and the positive impact it had on their lives. For these women, sewing was a source of happiness that was completely their own and was different from what they experienced elsewhere in their lives. Sewing one’s own clothing
Table 3

Central Category of Personal Fulfillment with Emergent Themes and Subthemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Fulfillment Themes</th>
<th>Investment</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Empowerment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme: cognitive investment</td>
<td>Learning to sew</td>
<td>Subtheme: control over appearance</td>
<td>Subtheme: Confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Growing up sewing</td>
<td>Amount of clothing sewn</td>
<td>Subtheme: Approval and support of sewing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Internet</td>
<td>Control of style</td>
<td>Subtheme: Sewing community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Classes</td>
<td>Control of quality</td>
<td>Subtheme: Desire to make more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sewing patterns</td>
<td>Control of fit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme: monetary investment</td>
<td>Sewing spending</td>
<td>Subtheme: control over clothing selection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fabric spending</td>
<td>Common sewing selection factors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sewing pattern spending</td>
<td>Wardrobe gaps</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sewing equipment spending</td>
<td>Garments for events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spending-related feeling</td>
<td>Inspiration for garment sewing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fabric stashes</td>
<td>Fashion trend observation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme: time investment</td>
<td>Amount of time spent sewing</td>
<td>Peers’ sewing selections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time of the week spent sewing</td>
<td>High-end designer looks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtheme: control over ready-to-wear consumption</td>
<td>Dissatisfaction with ready-to-wear</td>
<td>Time available and perceived difficulty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ready-to-wear purchase decisions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
promoted and provided these women with a more positive sense of well-being. Essential to this well-being was the creative outlet and escape they experienced with sewing as an activity for their personal benefit. The central theme of personal fulfillment provides the answer to research question 1: Why are women sewing garments for themselves?

When the women talked about their sewing they expressed that it provided them something that was not found in other areas of their lives. It provided an opportunity for them to make a tangible product of their own. As described by one woman:

At the end of it, I’ve got something. I can pick this up and say, “Look what I did.” It kind of gives me a feeling of I’m not sitting here wasting my time. These are tangible results of what I’ve been doing, which is something that I often don’t have.

(Participant 6)

However, it was more than the product that was important to them; it was the process of creating and making that provided joy. One woman shared how sewing provided this in her life: “I work full time as a scientist, so I feel like all day I’m having to be very analytical. When I get home it’s kind of fun to do something creative” (Participant 1). The ability to share the products of their creativity provided fulfillment as well, especially for those who did not work full time. As revealed by one woman, sharing or showing off her self-made clothing gave her a “lot of joy out of sharing it as an artist, just sharing something that I worked really hard on and I had a creative vision for” (Participant 11). Also revealed by a participant was how sewing revealed to her how creative she actually was, as she stated, “To be perfectly honest I am a creative person even though I didn’t initially think so” (Participant 7).
Central to all of these women’s sewing activities was the enjoyment and relaxation that it brought to their lives. Despite the amount of time spent sewing, each of the women expressed that they chose to sew because it made them happy. None of the women interviewed sewed due to necessity; it was strictly a choice they made based on the personal fulfillment it provided. The women talked about how sewing made them “feel good” (Participant 3) and made them “happy” (Participant 12). They shared their love of sewing with comments such as “I absolutely love it” (Participant 2). For most of the women, this adoration for sewing came out of the feelings experienced while sewing, as they revealed that sewing made them “feel calm” (Participant 5) and that it was “so therapeutic” (Participant 4). When these women were sewing they were not worried about anything else in their lives. One woman shared, “It’s the only time I am 100% engaged” (Participant 8), and another disclosed, “I can lose myself” (Participant 11). Getting lost in their sewing was a common experience, with one woman describing her sewing time as “like a vacation” (Participant 9) from her day-to-day life.

**Model of Sewing Motivation for Female Garment Sewing**

The model of sewing motivation for female garment sewing (Figure 7) was created to visually depict the emergent themes that were found in the data. The motivations that these women had to sew clothing for themselves were interconnected and dependent on each other. All of the emergent themes of investment, control, and empowerment created a recurring spiral of activities that contributed to the overarching theme and reason for sewing participation of personal fulfillment. Each of the stages was equally important in its contribution to the achievement of personal fulfillment felt by the sewers. The women moved through this cycle with each garment they made for themselves.
As depicted in the model, the women began this reoccurring spiraling cycle with the investment stage. In this stage the sewers participate in activities that incorporate learning to sew or furthering sewing skills, investment of money in sewing-related supplies and equipment, and the use of their time to sew. Each of these investment components is connected to each other and takes place before the sewer moves to the next stage. For example, a woman might invest cognitive energy in learning to sew by watching YouTube videos, invest money in purchasing fabrics, notions, and a sewing machine, and invest her time in sewing herself a new garment. Once these investments had been made by the sewers they moved into the control stage.

In the control stage, the participants used their skills and investments to take control of their self-presentation through their ability to sew their own garments. The control stage represents the participants’ ability to create clothing that represents their identity more accurately. One woman shared, “I just love the idea of making clothing that, you know I choose the fabric, I choose the design, and make it fit.” (participant 7). It also provides them additional control over their garment selection process by allowing them to decide if they want to purchase a garment or sew a garment. Most of the women discussed the factors they considering in deciding to sew or purchase a garment which came down to time, selection, quality, price, and fit. After the control stage, the participants progress to the empowerment stage.

This stage represents the empowerment they achieved from their ability to sew and the feeling that developed from the control they have gained over their appearance. Empowerment felt by the sewers resulted in confidence in appearance and skills, validation and support of others, and a sense of belonging to community sewers. This empowerment
provided the women feeling similar to that shared by participant six, “It gives me a sense of accomplishment knowing I've got something that nobody else does.” At the end of this stage the cycle began again as the women started a new garment.

These three theme stages together make a reoccurring spiraling cycle that continuously repeated itself through these women’s ongoing investment in their sewing, increased control, and empowerment. Through each of these recurring stages, the women experienced the personal fulfillment that provided the reason for them to sew their own clothing.

![Figure 7. Model of sewing motivation for female garment sewing.](image-url)
**Investment**

The theme of investment that emerged from the data revealed that, in the sewing of their own clothing, the woman made significant investments, which included cognitive, monetary, and time investments (Table 4). These three components were found to be interconnected with each other, and all three of them were needed for success. The data revealed that as the investment escalated in each of these areas the women’s overall commitment to their sewing participation increased. The theme of investment addresses

Table 4.

*Subthemes of the Investment Theme*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive Investment</th>
<th>Monetary Investment</th>
<th>Time Investment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning to sew</td>
<td>Sewing spending</td>
<td>Amount of time spent sewing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing up sewing</td>
<td>Fabric spending</td>
<td>Time of the week spent sewing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Internet</td>
<td>Sewing pattern spending</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classes</td>
<td>Sewing equipment spending</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewing patterns</td>
<td>Spending-related feeling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fabric stashes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

research question 2: How does these women’s investment in sewing affect their commitment to their sewing participation?

**Cognitive Investment**

Sewing participation requires a specific skill set that has to be learned. This includes how to operate a sewing machine, cut out a sewing pattern, and read sewing instructions. A person desiring to sew must be willing to commit to this learning process. There are many ways in which the women in this study undertook the sewing learning process and were
continuing to learn. This subtheme of cognitive investment comprises the factor of learning to sew, which includes various sources of learning including growing up sewing, the Internet, sewing classes, and sewing patterns.

Factors for learning to sew. The factors for learning to sew varied across the sample but included needing a hobby, encouragement of others, social media, sewing blogs, growing up sewing, and the desire to make something. The women who discussed how they needed a hobby shared how learning to sew was used to prevent personal boredom. One woman expressed, “I think I was just bored and I kind of wanted a hobby” (Participant 13). In many cases, sewing was learned to fill spare or excess leisure time, as in the case of one woman who described, “When we moved to this country, I did not know how to sew but I was not allowed to work” (Participant 8). Encouragement of others was also noted as leading to learning, with one sewer stating, “My husband told me to get a hobby, so I bought a sewing machine” (Participant 5). For others it was the observation of others sewing on social media and blogs that prompted their interest, as evidenced by the comment, “One Sunday morning, I woke up, went onto Facebook, and I saw this article about this woman in my town who had this sewing blog, and she sewed” (Participant 9). The women also shared about how their desire to make something resulted in their sewing with comments such as “I wanted to try making a cute shirt” (Participant 3) and “I’d rather learn to sew it” (Participant 4).

Growing up sewing. Many of the women grew up exposed to sewing, with some learning to hand sew as a child, for example one women commenting, “I learned to sew garments. Gosh, I was hand-stitching garments for dolls when I was in fourth grade and took to adapting my own clothes as a teenager” (Participant 11). Despite many women describing family members who sewed, only a few women talked about learning to sew as a child. One
woman shared how her mother taught her to sew: “I was interested in watching her sew, so I learned how to sew from following my mom” (Participant 10). Another participant revealed how she learned to sew from her father, stating, “When I was at home, my dad would always help me out and teach me to do everything” (Participant 15). Several women recalled their grandmothers sewing and shared stories of their extended family’s influence on their learning to sew. One sewer commented, “My aunts, two of them, they sew. Maybe just seeing them do it, or maybe, I don’t know, it was just a natural thing I was just drawn to” (Participant 2).

Almost all of the women learned some sewing in a home economics class in grade school, but it did not have an impact on their interest in sewing. Many of the women made remarks such as “I didn’t really like it. It was really boring” (Participant 12) or “I took a Home Ec class, and we learned to sew a pillow, but I never really got into it” (Participant 5).

**The Internet.** For all of the women, the use of the Internet was essential to the process of learning to sew. Some of them even started their sewing with a Google search, as evidenced by the comment, “I would just kind of Google beginning sewing projects or . . . basically [a] beginning sewing project, that’s what I started with” (Participant 13). YouTube videos were frequently mentioned by the women as a preferred way to learn needed sewing skills. The importance of YouTube can be understood through the comment, “YouTube is my best friend when it comes to sewing” (Participant 9). The use of Pinterest was also discussed, but the sewers utilized it somewhat differently than YouTube, using it to find sewing patterns and instruction links. Sharing how she used Pinterest one woman said, “On Pinterest, they have these little pictures, and then right next to it is like a basic pattern kind of concept” (Participant 4). All of the women participated in Facebook sewing groups, which they used to find help solving sewing problems and to improve their skills. One participant
expressed how she used the groups as, “I like the Facebook groups because they’re there willing to help you with it if you have any issues” (Participant 15). The women especially liked that Facebook allowed them access to assistance from sewers all over the world, so there was always someone available to help. For example, on participant noted, “I know that in any of my sewing groups, someone’s up and sewing at all times. So you can post and have an answer in like 10 minutes” (Participant 14).

**Classes.** Some of the women also attended in-person sewing classes. The women who went to in-person classes used these classes as a catalyst to start their sewing by learning machine basics and simple projects. This experience was explained by one of the women as follows: “[I] went to one Jo-Ann’s class to make a pillow; learned how to start the machine” (Participant 8). Although most of the women used these classes to start learning how to sew, one participant continued to take in-person classes and was currently signed up for a jeans workshop.

**Sewing patterns.** Sewing pattern instructions were discussed by many women as the way that they learned to sew. The majority of the discussion focused on PDF print-at-home independent sewing patterns. One woman disclosed that she had never used a traditional commercial sewing pattern, revealing, “That’s how I taught myself, so I don’t know. I haven’t used any commercial patterns, yet” (Participant 12). Many participants pointed out the differences between PDF print-at-home independent sewing patterns and traditional paper sewing patterns. They explained how the PDF patterns helped them learn because the process included photos and less technical language. For example, one woman described:

I understand PDF patterns way more. I think paper patterns are incredibly confusing because the directions are so... There are no pictures. I like the pictures of PDF
patterns or the sew-along that you can find online that people have done with them.

Whereas the paper patterns you are strictly stuck with what is in that envelope, which to me is like Greek. I understand the sewing terminology, but when I look at those paper patterns, it just throws me for a loop. (Participant 14)

The women talked about community and the support that came with their independent designer PDF print-at-home pattern purchase and how they could contact the pattern designer if they desired. The satisfaction with designer availability can be captured in this quote: “Even if you need to change it, you still have the person who designed it and drafted it to help you versus, with a paper pattern, I don’t even know that’s possible” (Participant 15).

**Monetary Investment**

Sewing is a hobby that requires monetary investment. To participate, one must purchase equipment, including a sewing machine, and the supplies needed to make the desired project, which includes fabric, thread, patterns, and notions (thread, zippers, buttons, etc.). This study revealed a range of monetary spending habits, purchasing strategies, and spending-related emotions. Even with their differences, all of these women made a substantial monetary investment in their sewing participation, and all continued to invest in it on an ongoing basis. This subtheme section of monetary investment covers the topics of: sewing spending, fabric spending, sewing pattern spending, sewing equipment spending, spending-related feelings, and fabric stashes.

**Sewing spending.** In most cases, regular spending on sewing was not planned. Even those who had money budgeted monthly for sewing did not plan what they intended to purchase each month. Many women shared that items related to sewing, with the exception of equipment, were purchased without much consideration in advance. Several of the
women were not able to quantify their spending, with one woman stating, “I’m not really sure. I haven’t looked at it. I don’t want to. I spend a lot of money on fabric” (Participant 12). A recurring sentiment of the women was that participation in social media often prompted their purchases. When asked about her purchasing habits, one participant disclosed, “I have far too many fabric groups. I need to stop” (Participant 5). Sales on fabric and patterns often served as catalysts for the women to purchase. Some even acknowledged purchasing fabric and patterns when they did not have time to sew. One participant shared this about her sewing-related purchasing:

I can tell you that I’m really bad about spending money on sewing stuff when I don’t have time to sew as a form of compensation . . . just being perfectly honest. Like, I tend to buy patterns and fabric when I haven’t had time to sew. (Participant 6)

The findings revealed that the act of shopping for sewing-related items was just as important to sewing participation as was the actual sewing. Even in the case of the participant who strategically planned out her purchases, enjoyment was found in the planning and purchasing stage. Most of the women expressed confidence in their spending and detailed their purchasing strategies, with some regularly using coupons. There was also a sentiment expressed that they deserved to be able to purchase sewing-related items when they desired. One participant expressed that purchasing was her therapy, stating:

I see it as kind of therapy, so I don’t feel so much . . . I don’t feel so bad if . . . I really feel like I worked for this so . . . this makes me happy. So if I go out and spend $50 on fabric or something like that, I don’t feel bad about it. (Participant 7)

**Spending-related feelings.** Contradictory feelings about sewing spending did emerge from the comments of many of the women. Although confident that their spending was
valid, there was a level of guilt. In many cases the confidence and guilt were expressed within the same statement, as indicated in this example: “It’s awesome because I spend so much time doing it, but I’m just like, I’m not working right now. I should be saving that money” (Participant 4). The guilt expressed was most frequently associated with unused fabric. This feeling was evident, with one woman stating:

There’s a very short window between when I feel great about the spending because it has promise, it’s affordable, I didn’t go out of control to feeling like if I don’t use it within a certain timeframe, suddenly it becomes less a beacon of hope and creativity and excitement and more a symbol of guilt. (Participant 11)

**Fabric spending.** Fabric spending varied among the women. Some of the women had no specific preferences for purchasing fabric, as revealed by one woman who stated, “There’s no auditioning process for fabric; there’s no planning-a-garment process for fabric. There’s, if I think it’s pretty it’s . . . and if it’s not super see-through, and if it doesn’t need a lining, I will buy it” (Participant 8). A couple of the women shared the affinity for custom or specialty print knit fabrics and were drawn to the uniqueness of these prints. One participant shared her excitement over her recent custom fabric purchase, expressing, “Dr. Who Christmas is kind of impossible not to get. I don’t know. It’s stuff I can’t get anywhere else” (Participant 12).

The topic of environmental concerns and upcycling in spending also emerged from the interviews. This concern was clearly communicated by one woman, who imparted, “I’ve also been paying attention more to where the fabric’s made and also what it’s made from. I will buy fabrics that are made in the USA if I can and then also ones that are mostly natural fibers and organic cotton is what I try to buy most of the time now” (Participant 13). Others
discussed their upcycling of items into fabric for sewing, as in this example: “This coat, I made it from a vintage blanket” (Participant 2).

**Sewing pattern spending.** Spending on sewing patterns was not discussed as extensively, as the women indicated that they spent far less on patterns than on fabric. Although sewing patterns were purchased less frequently, the women invested a considerable amount of time in the selection of their patterns. Some women read many pattern reviews before they purchased. Others researched potential patterns on the Internet by analyzing the final sewn garments of their peers. One woman described her pattern selection process as follows: “Whenever I choose a pattern, I just click the search function in Facebook, and I just type in raglan or cardigan or whatever and see how many people like each pattern, and I go from there.” The recommendation of friends also influenced their pattern purchases. The women divulged that they chose PDF independent patterns to support small businesses. Most of the women expressed that they sought to purchase patterns with many garment options that could be easily altered into additional styles. The women bought patterns that they could use over and over again. For example, one woman noted:

> I’ve gotten my core patterns now that I like and most of those, if I want it to be styled just a little differently, I can usually figure out those alterations, so I’m not going to spend extra money on another pattern just because the hem’s a little different.

(Participant 4)

**Sewing equipment spending.** The purchase of new or additional sewing equipment was common as the women’s sewing interest grew and their skills improved. The women talked about purchasing sergers and coverstitch machines to use along with their sewing machines. Some shared how they had upgraded their first machines to more professional
models. This investment in more equipment as interest increased is captured well in one participant’s statement: “I’m now on my second machine. I have two sergers. It’s all encompassing” (Participant 9).

**Fabric stashes.** Beyond their purchasing practices, a common topic discussed was the women’s fabric stashes. The size or number of items in the stash in a sense symbolized the level of investment a woman had in her sewing practices. The sewing stashes consisted of fabrics purchased or collected by these women. Most of the women talked about purchasing fabric because they liked it but without having an intended project. This purchased fabric then became part of their sewing stash. For some, the collection of fabric was more integral to their sewing participation. Adding to the collection was somewhat of an addiction, as one woman exposed, “I’m almost obsessive compulsive about it” (Participant 9). When asked about her fabric, another woman divulged, “I’ve got tons and tons, but I really probably don’t need any more fabric, but I see pretty fabric, and I want to buy it” (Participant 1). The women spoke about purchasing fabric for their stashes during sales to have fabric available whenever they were ready to sew. One participant revealed:

Most of the time I just find fabric, like when certain of the online stores or locally, Jo-Ann’s or whatever, has a sale, I’ll pick up two yards of whatever fabric I like and just stick it to the side. I don’t normally go out or look specifically for a fabric.

(Participant 14)

Others talked about their fabric stash as a collection, declaring, “That’s me with fabric. I’ll just buy it, and I’ll put it away on my shelf” (Participant 8). The women also disclosed how some fabric they purchased never gets used. One woman compared her stash to purchasing ready-to-wear stating:
It’s weird because, in a way, it’s worse than clothing, because with clothing . . . you feel guilt easier. With this, you’re like, “Oh it’s a craft. I’m actually making something.” Which is good, it’s great to make things, so I don’t feel as bad (Participant 9).

**Time Investment**

The women invested a significant amount of their leisure time in their sewing. Finding the time to invest in their sewing was by far the biggest obstacle that the women faced with their sewing participation. The majority of women shared that they spent as much time as they could. Although some women in the study had more time available than did others, they all had to work their sewing into their complex schedules. Many of the women in the study worked to find time daily to sew, but all sewed weekly. This subtheme reflects how the women integrated sewing into their lives and includes the amount of time spent sewing and times of the week they were able to sew.

**Amount of time spent sewing.** The participants in the study had large differences in their sewing time per week. Available sewing time ranged from 1 hour to 40 hours a week. Many of the women sewed daily, including sewing in their daily routines. Participants shared how they integrated sewing into their day, commenting, “Usually every evening I’ll sew for about an hour” (Participant 1) and “I usually sew about 2 hours in the morning” (Participant 10).

**Times of the week spent sewing.** The majority of the women sewed during times when they had no other responsibilities. For some, this time was during the day—“every day when my daughter’s at school, I try to sew for at least three or four hours” (Participant 8). Others found time at nights and on weekends. The more time available in their schedule, the
more time they spent sewing. The women communicated that they sewed on the weekends because that was when they had support with normal daily responsibilities. For example, one woman stated, “On the weekends it’s different because my husband can take the kids out all day and I can just have that whole day to myself to do something” (Participant 5). The more committed the women were to their sewing, the more they sought to find time to sew. Even in cases when the women had little time to actually sew, they took time to engage in sewing social media such as Facebook groups.

**Investment Theme Summary**

The theme of investment revealed that these women were invested in sewing their own clothing through cognitive, monetary, and time commitments. These three interconnected subthemes are all needed, and the women’s sewing success provided these women a positive cognitively challenging activity in which to invest their time and money. As the level of investment increased for these women, so did the overall commitment to their continued sewing practices.

**Control**

The theme of control reflects the ways in which sewing their own clothing gave these women more power over their appearance. Sewing allowed them to present themselves in clothing they had made instead of clothing they purchased, and therefore, they had more control over their clothing choices. This theme comprised three subthemes: control over appearance, control over garment selection, and control over ready-to-wear consumption (Table 5). The development of a sew or purchase garment decision model for women who sew clothing for themselves is also discussed. The theme of control provides answers to research question 3: What types of control does the option to sew their own clothing provide these women?
Control over Appearance

The women in the study noted many ways in which sewing allowed them control over their appearance. The ability to sew offered these women more control over their appearance than their nonsewing peers had. The women in this study utilized this ability in different ways and to different extents. This subtheme of control over appearance reflects the amount of clothing that the women had sewn for themselves as well the amount of control these women had over their apparel style, quality, and fit.

Amount of clothing sewn. The amount of clothing sewn by the women in their wardrobes ranged from a few pieces for beginners to “everything except underwear and two pairs of jeans” (Participant 11) for more dedicated and experienced sewers. The majority of the women disclosed that they had made 50–75% of their active wardrobe. Most of the women communicated that they had intentions to sew more of their wardrobe with plans in place to expand to sewing additional garment types such as bra and coats. One participant
imparted, “I just threw out my whole wardrobe when I started sewing my own clothes to force myself to make my own clothes. Now I’ve got things that actually fit and look decent” (Participant 5).

**Control of style.** The majority of the women expressed how sewing gave them control over their clothing style. One woman explained one of her motivations to sew as: “I like to sew for myself too because I know my taste” (Participant 3). Many others commented about how sewing allowed them to choose colors and fabric that they liked. The thrill of this option was revealed by one woman who said it made her “so happy because it’s in the print that I want. It’s the fabric that I want” (Participant 8). They also indicated that sewing their own clothing allowed their personality to be reflected more in their appearance. This is illustrated well in this comment by one participant: “I instantly feel happier when I’m wearing things that I know that I made specifically for my personality” (Participant 10).

A few women talked about how sewing allowed them to have types of garment that they would not be able to afford otherwise. They had an affinity for high-end designer looks but not the budget to purchase them. Sewing provided them with the means to have designer-inspired garments on their budgets.

Accommodating a unique sense of style through sewing also emerged. One woman shared how sewing clothing helped to combine personal style and affordability:

Just because of my style, I like big, flared things or sometimes shiny stuff or things that are a little bit out there. I may not find it in my price budget, so it’s better for me to go and make it myself (Participant 2).

**Control of quality.** Improved clothing quality was another aspect the women sought to control. Many believed that their garments were of better quality than they could
purchase, as explained by one participant: “Definitely anything that I actually wear on my body is typically a better put together garment” (Participant 9). Another woman shared her need for control of the fabric and construction quality of her wedding dress, stating, “It’s because I’m a snob. I didn’t want to go and pay several hundred dollars for a polyester piece of garbage. I wanted control of the process” (Participant 6).

**Control of fit.** Improved fit of garments was a significant factor in giving women a reason to sew for themselves, because they gained control over how well their garments fit and could insure that it flattered their bodies. One woman shared this commentary on sewing to fit her body:

I have a pretty unique figure, as far as the store goes, so it’s hard to find things that are going to fit me the way I want to because I have to fit from a smaller torso to a larger bottom half. It helps because I don’t have to worry about tailoring things to me; I can just make things fit me how I want to. (Participant 10)

Many of the women had never experienced having ready-to-wear garments that fit their bodies and rejoiced in “being able to fit something exactly to your size” (Participant 13).

All of the women except one altered sewing patterns for fit. Common alterations shared were bust adjustments, blending of pattern sizes, back rise alterations, and shortening the length of patterns. The women gave detailed descriptions of the alterations that they made to have a pattern fit their body. For example, one woman gave an account of her needed pant pattern adjustments:

Like with bottoms . . . I grade the waist to what my current measurement is; then I will grade the hips usually, if it involves knit fabric, to a size smaller, because my hip size is all in the back and the butt. Then my legs are skinnier going past mid-thigh, so
then I end up grading that also to basically the same as my waist. I’ll end up grading it back to the waist size so that it fits me and that almost always works, but there are some that maybe the rise isn’t tall enough or they make it more for [a] rectangular figure, so then I have to start all over because I need to add to the hips and a rise and things like that. (Participant 5)

**Control over Clothing Selection**

The ability to sew one’s own clothing provides an opportunity to carefully plan garments instead of purchasing clothing from a pre-existing selection. The women had almost unlimited possibilities for the style of garments that they could make for themselves as well as control over the fit and fabrics. Most of the women considered the length of time that the garment would be worn and the usefulness of the garment in their wardrobe in their decision-making process. Discussion of this subtheme includes the common factors mentioned for selection of a garment to sew, including wardrobe gaps and garments for events, and inspiration for garment sewing, which includes observations of fashion trends, peers’ sewing selections, and high-end designer looks. The factors of time available for sewing and perceived difficulty are also explored.

**Common sewing selection factors**

*Wardrobe gaps.* Many women talked about how they sewed what they perceived as they needed in their wardrobes. Changes in seasons or weather were often prompted this. One woman discussed her recent sewing decisions, saying, “I needed some new fall kind of things to wear” (Participant 1). Another woman talked about that she needed to sew “a coat because it’s actually cold in Texas now” (Participant 5), because the weather had shifted. Others talked about how they had identified a lack of certain items in their wardrobes that
were not weather dependent. While sharing the reasons for her recent garment sewing, one woman disclosed, “What determines that is when I realize I have two pairs of jeans and I need more clothes” (Participant 15). Many women talked about how, when making these needed additions to their wardrobe, they made sure that what they sewed fit their lifestyle. For example, one participant noted, “I look for my lifestyle, what’s comfortable—what I’ll actually wear” (Participant 9).

**Garments for events.** Decisions by these women to sew a garment were occasionally based on an event that they were going to attend. The occasions discussed included events such as church, weddings, parties, anniversaries, and other special events. One woman talked about a dress she recently finished and the event she was planning to wear it to, stating, “It’s amazing. I’m wearing it to see Santa tomorrow with my son” (Participant 12).

**Inspiration for garment sewing**

**Fashion trend observation.** For many of the women, the most frequent inspiration for making a garment came from their observations of popular fashion trends and sewing peers’ garments. The women used several sources to acquire fashion trend information, and social media played a key role. The women discussed how they looked at a “boutique on Facebook” (Participant 14) or how they would “browse for pictures online, like on Pinterest or Instagram” (Participant 5). Other women visited retail stores, one woman sharing, “A lot of times I’ll go shopping at the store and look around and see what is in style right now” (Participant 3). Another woman noted how she was inspired by those living around her: “I live blocks away from VCU, and they’ve got a huge fashion program. I’m surrounded by people who are fashionable, and I get a lot of inspiration there” (Participant 11).
**Peers’ sewing selections.** The sewing selections of their peers had an impact on many of the women’s garment sewing selections. This influence took place through individual interactions and through social media. Peer influence came from receiving recommendations and observing positive experiences. As one woman was discussing a garment she had made previously, she disclosed, “I have a friend who sews as well, and she said she really liked it, so I went with it” (Participant 12). The sharing on social media of photos of what others were sewing also influenced these women’s selections of what to sew. A garment became more interesting for the women to sew the more they saw their peers successfully sewing the garment. One woman shared, “I’ll see a lot of versions of a pattern sewn up on Instagram” (Participant 11) as a factor in her selection of a garment to sew.

**High-end designer looks.** The desire to have high-end apparel items that were beyond their budget was a factor for a few women’s garment-sewing decisions. One woman explained her garment-sewing decisions as, “I have the champagne taste with a beer budget” (Participant 10). Other women discussed how they looked at high-end designer looks in fashion magazines, such as *Vogue*, and that they were inspired enough by the looks to “attempt to make it for myself” (Participant 9). The details of this garment-sewing selection process were captured well in one woman’s detailed account of how she created a designer-inspired garment:

For example, I saw a style of a coat that was like $1,600, and I cannot afford that. I saw a pattern that was similar to that coat, and I decided to make my own. My friend, who sold vintage, had this really great blanket. I decided to cut it up and make this. It’s got a little hood on the back of that. Of course, I made a few modifications. I just
have a little hook, like a little button, instead of doing button holes or a zipper. Almost like a cloak coat if you want to say that. That’s my favorite piece. (Participant 2)

**Time availability and perceived difficulty.** Important components for most of the women’s garment-sewing decisions were the issues of time requirements and perceived difficulty. Many of the women had limited time each week during which they could sew. Thus, they looked for garments that could be completed within a certain time frame. Many liked to be able to complete a garment in one sewing session and looked for patterns to accommodate that. For this reason, many of the women frequently sewed tops. One woman described her reason for sewing tops as “they’re quick and easy and they can have a lot of bang for their buck” (Participant 3). Another woman described her desire for quickly sewn garments as “the whole point of sewing is for it to be fun and for it to be over. I don’t like it to drag on for days and days, because then we all know that it’s not gonna get done” (Participant 8). Others focused more on the difficulty of the garment to construct. Although some wanted a challenge in their sewing, others had techniques they did not know or did not enjoy. They chose to sew garments that avoided those techniques. In most cases, the women indicated that they chose garments to sew that incorporated both their need for to complete it in the time available and its perceived difficulty. Participant 9 explained an experience that helped her realize the importance of this for her:

I open the envelope and it’s 22 pieces. That’s not going to happen; certainly not this year. That’s just because—I won’t even say about skill—it’s just that I don’t have the patience to cut out 22 pieces and then to read the instructions and put together. That’s so exhaustive.
Control over Ready-to-Wear Consumption

Although the option was available to these women, none of them exclusively sewed all of their clothing. Sewing provided them with control to make a decision of when to participate in the consumption of ready-to-wear. This ability resulted in a different mentality regarding ready-made clothing consumption. The women in this study had considerably different ready-to-wear consumption practices than does the typical apparel consumer. They developed a set of guidelines or general rules for themselves regarding their ready-to-wear purchasing, resulting in the decision whether to purchase materials or supplies to sew an item or to purchase a ready-made item. Several of the women were committed to reducing or eliminating their ready-to-wear consumption. Discussion of this subtheme looks at the participants’ dissatisfaction with ready-to-wear garments and their ready-to-wear purchasing decisions.

Dissatisfaction with ready-to-wear. The women’s dissatisfaction with ready-to-wear fit proportions was a key reason for their continued garment sewing. The women expressed an overwhelming dissatisfaction with the fit of ready-to-wear clothing on their individual bodies. They revealed how ready-to-wear was not made for their bodies and how they “have a hard time finding stuff that’s just going to fit off the rack” (Participant 6). Many shared details about their fit issues, discussing their “petite” frame (Participants 1, 11, and 13), having “no butt” (Participant 5), or having a “smaller torso to a larger bottom half” (Participant 10). They described specific fit issues that they recognized when wearing ready-to-wear, for example, “puckering in the crotch area” (Participant 15). The women unanimously indicated that making their own clothing provided them with a better fit than did ready-to-wear.
**Ready-to-wear purchase decisions.** Although the women purchased substantially less ready-to-wear than before they started sewing, they all still purchased some ready-made items. The most frequently mentioned items that the women still consistently bought were bras and pants. Several women had guidelines or circumstances as to what they would purchase versus what they would sew. Some women shared how they would still purchase items with complicated constructions like “pants that have a ridiculous amount of pleats” (Participant 2). Other women discussed purchasing things that were cheaper ready-made than to sew. Many of the women indicated that they chose to purchase ready-to-wear items that would take a long time to construct, as disclose by participant 5: “Bras; I have couple of bra patterns. I just don’t have time to actually do it.” Another woman shared, “When I’m in a pickle, I will buy coats and jackets and jeans, because those are very time consuming” (Participant 10). The women noted that clothing that they did purchase ready-to-wear fit “close enough” (Participant 11). The specialness of a garment was also a consideration as was the number of times a garment would be worn. As explained by one woman, “I tend to buy things that aren’t that special to me, for example, like sweat pants, pajama pants, t-shirts” (Participant 5). Another woman shared how she chose to make items that she would wear for a longer period of time, stating, “My wardrobe that I make for myself is made with the intent that I want it to last a lot longer.” (Participant 10).

**Sew or Purchase Garment Decision Model**

Sewing provided the women in the study control or power to make a decision of when to participate in the consumption of ready-to-wear. This ability resulted in a different mentality regarding ready-made clothing consumption. The women developed a set of guidelines or general rules dependent on their current state for ready-to-wear purchases. These findings were used to develop the sew or purchase decision model (Figure 8). This
model was based on the consumer decision consumption model of Engel et al. (1995). The model illustrates the different stages that an individual goes through based on their decision to sew or purchase a garment. In the first stage of the 6 model, the sewer recognizes the need for a new garment. Next in the second stage, the sewers search for information that is available regarding the needed garment. In the third stage, the garment alternatives evaluation takes place and the sewer considers their current state in regard to time available, skills needed, cost of the garment, and availability of ready-made garments. The fourth stage examines these states more closely by considering specific evaluation criteria that is different between the decision to sew and the decision to purchase. This stage details the important sew-or-purchase factors disclosed by the women. The women talked about specific factors they had for garments purchases such as “I buy items that cannot be seen” (participant 11) or that “won’t be worn many times” (participant 10). If the woman chooses to sew the garment the fifth stage is comprised of two parts. The first part of the stage consists of the selection of sewing pattern and fabric and notions needed for the garment. The second part consists of the activities associated with the construction of the garment including pattern alteration, making muslins, and constructing the final garment. If the woman chooses to purchase the garment the fifth stage results in the purchases of a ready-to-wear garment. After the desired garment is attained through either sewing or purchasing the individual moves to the sixth stage, which is consumption and the garment is worn by the individual. After consumption has taken place in the seventh stage the individual who either sewed or purchased their garment will evaluate their new garment based on their experience wearing it. Lastly the eighth stage reflects the differing outcomes experiences shared by the women, when an individual chooses to sew versus purchase.
Control Theme Summary

The theme of control represents how these women chose to use their sewing skills to take control of their appearance and clothing consumption practices. Sewing provided them control over how their appearance was presented to others through sewing of garments that were tailored to their individual personality and sense of style. It provided them control over garment selection options such as the fit and quality. Sewing also provided them control over their ready-to-wear consumption, placing them in control of the process by having the option to sew or purchase their garments.
Figure 8. Sew or purchase garment decision model.
Empowerment

The theme of empowerment reflects the ways in which these women were enabled through their sewing participation. Sewing provided empowerment through increased confidence in skills, which integrates a sense of pride for their accomplishments and increased self-esteem and resulted in a strengthened desire to make garments. The empowerment theme is additionally tied to their experiences of social approval for their sewing participation and sewn garments as well as the support of their family, friends, and sewing community. This theme comprises four subthemes: confidence, approval and support of sewing, sewing community, and increased desire to make (Table 6). The theme of empowerment provides the answer to research question number four: How does being able to sewn their own clothes empower these women?

Table 6
Subthemes of the Empowerment Theme

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<th>Empowerment Subthemes</th>
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<td>Confidence</td>
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Confidence

An increase in confidence was a significant aspect of sewing participation that emerged from the interview data. The women excitedly discussed how great they felt when they wore clothing they had made and the positive impact of their sewing skills on their personal confidence. The discussion of this subtheme includes an examination of the effects that sewing their own clothing had on increasing these women’s confidence.
All the women interviewed perceived a positive change in their appearance through improved clothing fit and control of style. They described the confidence in their appearance that being able to have clothing that highlighted their bodies provided. They discussed experiencing increased comfort that included both physical comfort in the clothing and psychological comfort with their appearance. Some women were more restrained in their descriptions of how sewing their own clothing increased their confidence, simply making comments such as “I guess more comfortable, more confident in them” (Participant 1). However, other women made it very clear what impact their sewing had on how they viewed their appearance, saying things such as “a lot more attractive” (Participant 10). They described the clothing that they made as “more flattering” (Participant 13) on their body than ready-to-wear garments were. One woman shared extensively about the dramatic impact she felt sewing her own clothing had regarding her appearance:

I feel like when people look at me I don’t look crazy anymore. I look good enough to look at. I’m not self-conscious anymore. I think when I post my pictures online for people to look at my clothes and I see the response . . . I used to think when people were staring at me, they were just staring at me because I looked bad. I’m so awkward. Now I have a lot more confidence in my clothes. (Participant 5)

The accomplishment felt by these women as they learned new skills provided a sense of pride not found in other components of their life. All the women expressed excitement and pride over the skills they had developed. The data revealed that, as much as they enjoyed how great the clothes felt on their bodies, the execution of their skills provided them with an equivalent amount of confidence and increased their self-esteem. Many of the women expressed how they were initially nervous that someone would be able to tell that
their garments were homemade, but then were elated when they were complimented. One woman shared how she felt the first time she wore an item she made: “I [had] a mix of ‘I hope people can’t tell that I made this’ and . . . it feels good when people are like, ‘Oh, that’s so cute, where’d you get it?’ and you’re like, ‘Oh, I made it’” (Participant 14). Another woman, when asked how she felt about the clothes she made, shared how impressed she was with her accomplishments. She emphasized her pride in her skills by stating that she was “impressed that it looks like something you could buy in a store or even better because it fits perfectly. Yeah, I guess impressed and that I have the skill to be able to make something” (Participant 13). Several of the women spoke of the significant pride they had in the construction process, insuring that all garment details were executed to their fullest extent. One woman imparted this when talking about a recently made shirt:

I’m proud of the meticulous construction where every seam is top stitched and the underside of every seam, every raw edge is finished. I joke that I like the inside of my garments to look as pretty as the outside. (Participant 11)

**Approval and Support of Sewing**

The approval and support that these women received from individuals in their daily lives greatly impacted their sewing participation. This validation and encouragement was provided by family, friends, coworkers, and even strangers. The discussion of this subtheme includes an exploration of the impact that this support and approval had on these women.

Several of the women began sewing through the encouragement and support of their families. Although not all the women experienced this, several of the women’s spouses
insured that they got to have their sewing time each week. This time was typically provided at night and on the weekends. One woman disclosed:

Sunday is the one day when my husband cooks without fail—every single Sunday—so I don’t have to worry about cooking. We go to church, we come home, and he starts football and cooking, and I start sewing and no one bothers me. (Participant 9)

In some cases, this support extended beyond sewing time, as one participant shared how her husband helped her to make a body measurement chart (Participant 5). The resounding sentiment that was expressed about their spousal support was a mutual understanding of the importance of the women’s sewing time. One woman revealed, “My husband knows that . . . he watches the kid while I do this thing, and it makes me happy” (Participant 13).

The majority of the women discussed compliments people gave them about their clothing. The positive responses they received were an important part of the sewing experience for many of the women. This approval positively impacted both their self-esteem and their desire to sew. When discussing this approval, many women made remarks similar to the following: “I love it! Especially when I’m somewhere random and somebody is like, ‘Oh, I love your shirt’” (Participant 3). The women revealed that they were quick to acknowledge that they had made the garment when complimented. In some cases, women mentioned how people often inquired about where they had purchased what they were wearing. One woman described her encounter when receiving a compliment: “Somebody says, ‘Oh, that’s so cool. Where did you get it?’ I’m like, I made it” (Participant 6). The women shared that when they disclosed that they had made the garment, people were surprised and impressed. The repeated compliments that the women received were
empowering experiences and something that the women looked forward to when wearing clothing that they made.

Several of the women disclosed that people with whom they interacted on a regular basis grew to expect them to have made the clothes they are wearing. While discussing how people responded to her garment sewing, one woman said, “They love it, but it’s come to the point where people are like, ‘That’s so cute. Did you make it?’ They kind of expect that I’ve made it” (Participant 2). The women who experienced this felt very validated in their sewing when people were more surprised that they did not sew the clothing being worn than when they did.

**Sewing Community**

A sense of community among sewing participants was a theme expressed by all of the women interviewed. Each participant had a slightly different experience but the communities of all the women in the study, whether experienced in-person or online, positively influenced their sewing, which empowered them to be successful in their sewing and beyond. The discussion of this subtheme includes an exploration of the types of communities and the impact they had on the women.

The entire sample of women interviewed participated in the online sewing community to some extent. For many, these groups served as their primary source of community and support related to sewing. Several women, in disclosing how they did not personally know anyone who sewed, made comments such as “I don’t know people personally who do sew” (Participant 7), whereas others discussed how their in-person friends had no interest in sewing, with one woman sharing, “I’m pretty young; my friends don’t have any interest in sewing” (Participant 14). The women communicated that these groups
provided them with an opportunity to interact with like-minded people that their everyday life did not provide. For example, one woman noted, “I’ve been able to meet a lot of people who share the same passion for sewing and creating as I do” (Participant 10). Although for some these groups were just about sewing-related support, for many the women in these groups had become very close friends, providing support far beyond sewing. One woman explained:

   I think some of the best friendships I have are through the sewing community. So many questions get answered. I get to answer so many questions. I feel useful. As a stay-at-home mom, I go crazy with no adult interaction. (Participant 8)

Not as many women participated in an in-person sewing community. Many of the women who did participate in an in-person community met others in the community through larger Facebook groups. The Facebook group helped them identify others in their area who were sewing. One woman shared this about finding sewing friends through Facebook groups: “We’ve lived in Chattanooga for 5 years, and several of the friends I’ve made since moving do sew. I did meet them through the sewing community on Facebook” (Participant 15). A few of the women even started their own local sewing groups on Facebook to plan in-person events such as sew-ins, fabric shopping, and nonrelated sewing social events. One woman said about her in-person community, “There’s a couple of us that we get together like once a month for lunch, and then some of us will get together on the weekend, and we’ll sew together” (Participant 1). Two of the women interviewed were much more focused on interacting with their in-person sewing community than online. One of the women spoke about her in-person sewing friends sewing endeavors, which included a trip to a large sewing conference (Participant 13). Another woman shared how she interacted with her sewing
friends, stating, “I have a lot of friends that sew so we’re kind of like our own little community, where we call and text and send pictures” (Participant 2). A longing for the comradery of an in-person sewing community was expressed by one woman, who said, “I would love to just sit around and for the day just be with adults and sew and talk. That would be awesome, but not yet” (Participant 5).

**Desire to Make More**

The validation of others for sewing as well as the support of their sewing community had a positive influence on the women’s desire to make more. This desire to make more included increasing their sewing skills to try more complex garments. One woman revealed future sewing plans that included being “able to sew coats and undergarments” (Participant 13). For some, the empowerment found through sewing increased their desire to make beyond sewing. The women had experienced growth in their independence and felt more self-sufficient. For example, one woman stated, “It’s just like basic survival skills type of things. That’s why I do it and I keep pushing myself to learn new skills, so I don’t have to rely on other people” (Participant 5). But the most profound effect that success in sewing had on a participant was captured in this quote:

> I think it inspires me to be more independent and self-sufficient. The thing that I love about sewing is that it inspires me to sort of go out and do my own thing and not have that fear of experimenting. Sewing is definitely—I’m a very shy person, and it has definitely pushed me out of my boundaries, my shyness, and I try to present myself a little bit more. I kind of dream bigger. I’m like, if I can make my own clothes, I can make my own shoes. I can build my own house; you know? It’s kind of like that.

( Participant 4)
Empowerment Theme Summary

The theme of empowerment illuminated the enabling impact that sewing their own clothing has had on these women. Sewing provided empowerment through increased confidence in skills, which integrates a sense of pride for their accomplishments and increased self-esteem and resulted in a strengthened desire to make. This empowerment was additionally tied to the social approval for their sewing participation and sewn garments as well as the support of their family, friends, and sewing community.
CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to understand why this group of women with similar middle class incomes was choosing to sew clothing for themselves. The findings of the study provide knowledge about the perceived benefits that sewing provides these ethnically diverse women, feelings associated with their sewing, as well as the motivations associated with their continued sewing practices. In addition, the findings provide insights into their consumer behaviors including their spending patterns and time spent sewing.

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings in light of the literature review presented in chapter 2. In the literature review, clothing as self-presentation (Guy & Banim, 2000; Kaiser, 1990; Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1995), decision making (Resnik, 1987) and the consumer decision purchasing model (Engel et al., 1995), garment evaluation criteria, and women’s research on handcraft leisure were considered for their application to women sewing garments for themselves. The connections among these theoretical perspectives and the supported provided by the findings as well as a few contradictions are discussed.

In the literature review, home sewers and the home sewing industry, along with the factors affecting both, from the last decade of the 19th century to the present were reviewed and presented. The existing research on reasons to sew and sewing participation in the 20th century was examined. The current research findings bring up to date the knowledge about home sewers, the home sewing industry, as well as current reasons for home sewing participation and the impact of the Internet on both. The coding process revealed three main themes: investment, control, and empowerment. A central theme of personal fulfillment was established as the main reason for the participants’ decision to sew clothing for themselves. The potential theoretical perspectives on reasons for home sewing today that were reviewed in chapter 2 were applied to the findings.
Clothing as Self-Presentation

Clothing is fundamental to the act of self-presentation, which aims to control the perceptions that others have of an individual (Guy & Banim, 2000). The women in this study noted many ways in which sewing allowed them control over their appearance. Participants had more control over others’ impressions of their appearance through their ability to construct clothing they believed represented their desired identity. This allowed them to have more authority over the way they were perceived and judged initially by others based on their clothing (Kaiser, 1990). Sewing afforded them assurance that their clothing reflected the social meanings that they wanted to communicate (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1995). These women were not restricted to fashion-industry-decreed selections that depict pre-existing meanings associated with brand, style, fabric, and color (Guy, Banim, & Green, 2001). The garments they sewed were carefully selected and made to reflect their personality and sense of style with the focus of many women on the desire to have the unique clothing items. These behaviors are comparable to the upscale sewing consumer segment, identified by Kean and Levin (1989), whose interest was in creating unique high quality clothing items as opposed to purchasing them. Previous qualitative researchers who looked at women’s sewing in the last decades of the 19th and first half of the 20th century indicated that sewing was used by women as a means of control over self-presentation (Buckley, 1999; Burman, 1999; Gordon, 2004, 2009; Hackney, 1999; McLean, 2005). Yet those women’s sewing practices were undertaken out of economic need to insure their appearance was presented in a socially acceptable manner when they didn’t have the option of buying their garments (Buckley, 1999; Burman, 1999; Gordon, 2004, 2009; Hackney, 1999; McLean, 2005).
Today’s home sewers choose to sew their own clothing so they can present themselves in clothing that reflects their personality and clothing preferences.

**Decision-making and Apparel Consumption Decisions**

None of the women in the sample exclusively sewed all of their clothing. Their ability to sew their own clothing provided them with an alternate decision to ready-to-wear consumption. This ability resulted in a different consumer mentality regarding ready-made clothing consumption. The women developed a tacit set of guidelines or general rules for themselves regarding their ready-to-wear purchasing. These rules were developed to consider their current state and the potential outcomes (Resnik, 1987). This guided their decisions of when to purchase materials or supplies to sew an item versus when to purchase a ready-made item. Previous researchers have not looked at women having the choice to sew or purchase a garment but, rather, have looked only at factors resulting in women’s garment sewing (Chan, 1975; Ferguson, 1960; Kean & Levin, 1989; O’Brien & Campbell, 1927; York, 1961). This concept of choice began to emerge in the exploration of sewing consumer segments by Kean and Levin (1989), who revealed that approximately half of the women they surveyed chose to sew based on leisure and a desire for uniqueness; however, the decision of whether to sew or purchase clothing was not further explored.

This sewing consumer behavior can be explained in the sew or purchase consumption model (Figure 9) developed as part of this study. This model was developed using a common consumer decision consumption model as a basis (Engel et al., 1995) and was amended to incorporate the decision-making process (Resnik, 1987) factors and outcomes that result from the two alternatives of sewing or purchasing. The most common consumer decision consumption model includes the following steps: (a) need recognition, (b) search for
information, (c) pre-purchase evaluation of alternatives, (d) purchase, (e) consumption, (f) post-consumption evaluation, and (g) divestment (Engel et al., 1995). The model shown in Figure 8 begins in the first and second stage same as the common consumer decision consumption model (Engel et al., 1995) with need recognition and the search for information. The third stage deviates to include garment alternative evaluation criteria stage. This new model includes four factors that are considered in the decision by those who both sew and purchase clothing, including: time, skills, cost, and product availability. The fourth stage looks further into the consumer decision-making reasoning looking at specific factors associated with whether to sew or purchase the garment. This includes the importance of garment fit, style preference, uniqueness desired, skills of the sewer, time available, desired product life, and price of the ready-to-wear garment. These factors influence the consumer’s choice to sew or purchase. If the consumer chooses to purchase the fifth through seventh stages will occur as depicted in the traditional consumer decision consumption model with the stages of purchase (stage 5), consumption (stage 6), and evaluation (stage 7). However, if the consumer chooses to sew, the new model introduces additional stages to the consumer consumption process. The purchase stage five is comprised of two parts sewing supplies purchase and garment construction. Part one sewing supplies purchase includes the purchase of materials including fabric, notions, and pattern. Part two garment construction includes the processes that includes pattern alterations and garment fit testing though muslins and construction of the final garment. Once the garment is constructed stage six consumption two takes place when the garment is worn. Next, as in the traditional model, stage seven post-consumption evaluation occurs. In the last stage of the new sew or purchase decision model there is a final deviation from the original model (Engel et al., 1995), which looks at
divestment as its last stage. In the new model stage eight considers the outcomes that are generated from both the sew and the purchase garment decisions. One of those outcomes considered is divestment, but the new model goes further by evaluating the differences in the individual’s investment that is experienced when a garment is made instead of bought. It also considers increased satisfaction factors and psychological benefits that occur when sewing versus purchasing.

Figure 9. Sew or purchase garment decision model compared with Engel et al.’s (1995) consumption model.
Garment Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation of a garment sewn by the person who will wear it has not been considered in published research. The established garment evaluation literature for ready-to-wear indicates clothing evaluative criteria that include: aesthetics, usefulness, performance and quality, expressiveness, and extrinsic factors (Abraham-Murali & Littrell, 1995; Eckman et al., 1990). These same types of factors were found to be considered by the women in the study when they selected which garments to sew. Aesthetic factors, or the physical appearance of the garment (Abraham-Murali & Littrell, 1995; Eckman et al., 1990), were contemplated during the process of choosing the sewing pattern, fabric, and pattern alterations to achieve the preferred aesthetic style. Usefulness criteria (Abraham-Murali & Littrell, 1995; Eckman et al., 1990) were applied when the women decided what garments they needed in their wardrobe, reflecting on the versatility of the item, how it fit in the existing wardrobe, and insuring that it was appropriate for their lifestyles. Performance criteria (Abraham-Murali & Littrell, 1995; Eckman et al., 1990) and quality (Eckman et al., 1990) were a concern for the women. Physical fit was one of the most frequently discussed reasons for continued personal sewing. The women were also able to choose fabric with the properties and quality that they desired. Expressive factors (Abraham-Murali & Littrell, 1995) were achieved as the women made garment design selections based on their preferred level of self-expression. Extrinsic criteria (Abraham-Murali & Littrell, 1995; Eckman et al., 1990) for sewing one’s own clothing were limited to controlling the price of the finished garment, as brand and competition were not relevant. The key problem in attempting to apply the evaluation criteria from existing literature to garments sewn by these women was
that the ready-to-wear finished garment criteria were incorporated into the garment planning process and not evaluated after the garment was completed.

Previous ready-to-wear research indicated that consumers are dissatisfied with the fit of the clothing that is available on the market (Kind & Hathcote, 2000; Shim & Bickle, 1993; Shin, 2013). The women in this study shared that dissatisfaction with ready-to-wear fit was one of the most important aspects contributing to their continued sewing of their own clothing. As existing literature indicated (Kind & Hathcote, 2000; Shim & Bickle, 1993), these women found dissatisfaction with ready-to-wear not accommodating their various body sizes and shapes. To achieve their desired clothing fit, these women altered their sewing patterns, in some cases extensively, executing a high level of skill. This younger aged sample (median=31) contradicts the research findings of Labat et al.’s (2007) older sample (median = 55), who found that sewers did not have the skills to properly alter patterns to fit their bodies. The current study did reveal some of the same dissatisfactions with commercial sewing patterns as discussed by LaBat et al. The findings here reflected that the women were using commercial pattern less often and that they preferred the format alternatives of independent designer PDF print-at-home patterns. Some of the women who used commercial patterns expressed dislike for the instructions and terminology used but did not indicate that they were unable to alter them to fit their bodies.

**Sewing and Women’s Leisure**

In this study, I explored women’s leisure from a new perspective. Women were considered foremost in the research by looking at a leisure activity that specifically benefitted the woman herself and not others. By conducting a study that insured that the woman was the most important part of the research, I have contributed to the recognized need to
understand women’s leisure more thoroughly (Stalp, 2015). Much of previous women’s leisure research has been focused on activities that include one or more members of the woman’s family (DeVault, 1991; Thompson, 1999; Walker, 1996). Even handcraft-related research, which has focused mainly on quilting (Stalp, 2006; Stalp & Conti, 2011) and knitting (Stannard & Sanders, 2015; Winge & Stalp, 2013), has not explored handcraft participation in a way that the product of the leisure time benefits only the woman who is practicing the craft. The previous handcraft research has linked women’s leisure choices to multitasking, so although participating in an activity of enjoyment, the woman may be producing a product that is intended as a gift for someone else (Johnson & Wilson, 2005; Stalp, 2015). The current study focused on sewing participation that was engaged in exclusively for the benefit of the sewers themselves, revealing the fulfillment that sewing provided these women on a personal level. Despite previous research findings that sewing activities were undervalued by the families of those who were engaged in sewing (Stalp & Conti, 2011), this study’s findings revealed that these women experienced support for their sewing participation as well as validation for the clothing that they made.

**Historic Sewing Motivations: Continuity and Change**

There was an evolution in the reason why women chose to sew over the 20th century, an evolution that was impacted by many economic, technological, societal, and other factors. The established reasons for why women sewed underwent a shift from economics and need (Chan, 1975; Ferguson, 1960; Kean & Levin, 1989; O’Brien & Campbell, 1927; York, 1961) to a choice of how to spend leisure time (Christensen, 1995; Schofield-Tomschin, 1994). Although researchers in more recent studies (Christensen, 1995; Schofield-Tomschin, 1994) found leisure to be the primary factor in sewing participation, there was a level of economics
or saving of money related to their motivations for sewing. This study’s findings did not find reveal that any of the women chose to pursue sewing as a leisure activity to save money. Rather, several indicated that they overspent on their sewing supplies.

The findings of this study validate previous findings that sewing provides a source of enjoyment and relaxation (Christensen, 1995; Conklyn, 1961; Ferguson, 1960; Kean & Levin, 1989; Mitchell, 1959; Sutton, 1967; York, 1961). They also confirm Schofield-Tomschin’s (1994) findings that these psychological factors are principal reasons given for sewing. Connections were also established between this study’s findings and those of previous studies that sewing served as a source of creativity (Chan, 1975; Christensen, 1995; Courtless, 1985; Dorhan, 1987; Gordon, 2004; Kean & Levin, 1989; McLean, 2005; Schofield-Tomschin, 1994). The findings here confirm the more recent research findings (Christensen, 1995; Schofield-Tomschin, 1994) that creativity or sewing as a creative outlet is integral to a women’s motivations in choosing sewing as her leisure activity.

**Today’s Home Sewers and Home Sewing Industry: Participation Motivations**

The resurgence in home sewing has been credited to the economic downturn that started in 2008 (“Sewing, Needlework;” 2015), but for this sample of women, economics was not much of a factor in their decision to sew clothing. Although some women noted that sewing allowed them to make unique high quality designer-inspired looks that would not be affordable if they purchased something similar readymade, economic reasons were not the cause they indicated for their participation. Another conflicting finding was that industry reports indicated that sewers younger than 24 years were the consumers most interested in creating unique and customized clothing (Haider, 2014), yet the women in this study older than 24 were equally as interested. The industry’s reported shopping practices of home
sewers were confirmed, as the findings of this study showed that the women used a combination of online and brick-and-mortar purchasing outlets with a tendency to shop online due to the ease, convenience, and access to selection (“Sewing, Needlework,” 2015).

As indicated in popular press media, the home sewing resurgence has been greatly affected by the use of the Internet (Holson, 2012; Lewis-Hammond, 2014; Podsada, 2012). The use of Internet platforms proved to be an integral component of the sewing practices of the women in this study. Many of the women shared that they were inspired to start sewing after seeing an article or posting via social media and sewing blogs. Various Internet platforms were utilized to not only to provide sewing education to these women but also increase the availability of a community of sewers that many would not have been able to have otherwise. Online shopping also provided these women with access to sewing supplies they would not have otherwise had due to their location. All of the women frequently engaged in sewing-related content through Facebook sewing groups. As previously indicated, other popular social media, such as Instagram and Pinterest (Holson, 2012), were frequently used by the women in the study to make decisions of what to sew and to show off items they had sewn.

**Theoretical Perspectives**

Previous researchers on home sewing used theories, including Toffler’s thesis and prosumerism (Kean & Levin, 1989), to explain their results. How the findings from this study relate to these theoretical perspectives is discussed next. Third-wave feminist perspectives on reclamation craft participation was applied to the study’s findings. Theories relating to the rise of the prosumer and craft and DIY consumption were applied to gain understanding of the consumption and spending behaviors of the sewers in this study. UG
theory was applied to explain the psychological motivations associated with these women’s decisions to choose sewing as their leisure activity choice.

**Third-Wave Feminism**

The sentiments expressed by the women of this study echoed that of third-wave feminists who reclaimed fiber-related handcraft as a leisure activity (Chansky, 2010; Rowe-Finkbeiner, 2004; Stalp, 2015). The decision these women made to use their leisure time to sew was a deliberately made choice (Chansky, 2010) with no economic or societal pressures evident, as in previous generations (Buckley, 1999; Burman, 1999; Gordon, 2004, 2009; Hackney, 1999; McLean, 2005). Although none of the women in the study identified themselves as feminists, they held views similar to third-wave feminists as they used their sewing as a creative outlet and an opportunity to express their individuality. Also, as with some third-wave feminists, the women in the study used sewing as a way to reduce their dependence on mass-produced ready-to-wear clothing (Chansky, 2010).

**Sewing Consumer Segments**

Kean and Levin (1989) looked at sewing consumers, categorizing them according to their reasons for sewing and types of sewing preferred. Home sewers in that study were classified into five groups: utilitarians, practicals, craft-oriented, upscales, and indifferents. The utilitarians, practicals, and indifferents were found to be more oriented toward the economic benefits of home sewing, whereas the upscales and craft-oriented individuals were much less concerned with saving money. The upscales were most interested in creating unique items themselves as opposed to purchasing ready-to-wear fashion. Kean and Levin’s sample included women from varied economic backgrounds and the study included all types of sewing; therefore, only two of their identified sewing segments were comparable to the
current study’s sample as economics played a role in the other groups’ sewing participation. Similar to the current study, the individuals in the sewing segments identified as the upscales and craft-oriented chose to sew for leisure and noneconomic reasons. The findings associated with the upscale segment were most relatable to that of the existing sample due to those sewers’ use of leisure time to sewing clothing to create unique items instead of purchasing ready-to-wear fashion (Kean & Levin, 1989).

The Rise of the Prosumer

The women in this study are representative of prosumer behavior proposed by Toffler (1980), as they produced and consumed some portion of the clothing they wore (Kolter, 1986). The level to which the prosumer mentality was exhibited varied within the sample with the majority of the women producing 50–70% of their clothing, but with outliers found at both ends of the extreme, as one woman made less than 10% of her clothing and another woman made all but just a few garments. The women in the study had become quite invested in creating clothing options for themselves outside of available mass-consumer clothing selections. Their focus was on making individualized clothing to meet their specific personal needs, which is indicative of the prosumer behavior that Kolter (1986) presented. This behavioral characteristic was also similar to the findings of Kean and Levin (1989), who discovered that sewers in their practical, craft-oriented, and upscale sewing consumer categories had prosumer tendencies based on their sewing actions. However, based on their intentions to replace ready-to-wear and to expand the production of their own garments when they chose to sew, the women in this study were found to embody the prosumer logic to a greater degree than did participants in the previous study.
The Craft Consumer and Do-It- Yourself Consumption

The study participants exhibited craft consumers’ traits described by Campbell (2005); these traits including taking what they made beyond just personalizing or customizing items. By participating in sewing, these women sought to control the whole process of their garment creation (Campbell, 2005). Although many started with sewing patterns designed by others, all but one altered their patterns, taking control of the design process by altering the patterns for both aesthetics and physical fit. The women also carefully selected the fabrics and notions based on what they envisioned the garment should look like. As with previous craft consumer research, investment and level of participation (Watson & Shove, 2008) were connected for the women in this study. As the women’s investment increased, so did their competence, which led to an increase in investment and sewing. This confirmed previous craft consumption findings that successful participation leads to more craft-related consumption, producing an endless cycle of purchasing (Watson & Shove, 2008). Previous research has revealed that craft consumption takes place more frequently among those in middle and upper income levels, which was confirmed by the findings of this study, which revealed a lack of economic need among sample participants. Sewing was implemented in the lives of these women as a way to reduce their participation in clothing mass consumerism and as source of creativity when their jobs and lifestyles produced only immaterial goods (Ritzer et al., 2012).

Uses and Gratification Theory

The motivations of these women to sew and the benefits derived from their sewing were interconnected. The motivations and benefits occurred in a series of recurring stages that kept the women engaged in their sewing practices. Within this recurring process of
sewing engagement were psychological motivations that can be explained through the application of UG theory. Two of this study’s key emerging themes—investment and empowerment—as well as the overarching theme of personal fulfilment were found to be supported by the uses and gratification categories presented by Katz et al. (1974). The findings of the study were applied to the uses and gratification categories of cognitive motivation, personal integrative, social integrative, affective motivation, and tension release, as reported next.

**Cognitive motivation.** Cognitive motivations were identified when individuals used media as a source for acquiring knowledge and information. Sewing-related cognitive need fulfilment was met through several components of learning and skill improvement. It began with the desire to learn to sew, which resulted in the initial process of learning. To start the process, some women opted for in-person sewing classes, but most of the women used Internet learning resources. For example, one woman’s response to how she learned to sew was “just Google and YouTube and Facebook” (Participant 5). Sewing skill improvement requires a commitment to continued learning, which these women exhibited in the discussion of their practice. They continually worked to increase the level of difficulty of garments sewn or worked to improve the quality of their techniques. For many, learning to alter sewing patterns to fit their bodies was a focus of learning. Many of the women continually worked to improve their skills in order to attain perfect body fit in all the patterns that they sewed.

**Personal integrative motivation.** Personal integrative motivations are self-esteem-based motivations such as status, confidence, and credibility (Katz et al., 1974). The participants met their personal integrative needs through the sense of accomplishment they
felt in how their clothing looked on their body and the positive feedback they received from others regarding both their appearance and skills. This positive response from friends, family, and strangers increased their desire to sew more of their own clothing. Although not all of the women talked about showing off the garments they made, many found this component of their sewing participation quite rewarding. This positive validation of their sewing fulfilled their personal integrative motivation.

**Social integrative motivation.** Social integrative motivations encompass the need to socialize with family and friends to improve the bonds shared with them (Katz et al., 1974). Garment sewing can be viewed as an independent single-person leisure activity due to the inability to easily transport the equipment needed. Despite that, for the women in this study, it was a social experience. All of the women engaged in a sewing community that was integral to their sewing participation. Although community involvement was similar to findings in previous handcraft research (Johnson & Wilson, 2005; Schofield-Tomschin & Littrell, 2001; Stannard & Sanders, 2015) the way in which the women accessed their communities was different with the majority of community involvement taking place online versus the previous in-person communities. For this group, online sewing communities were a common source of social interaction. The online sewing communities, specifically Facebook sewing groups, provided both sewing support and comradery. This instant Internet-based connection to others provided access at any time of the day to individuals with the same interest. The personal interaction with others and sharing of their sewing interests kept the women engaged in their own sewing practices and were essential to the overall benefits provide by sewing their own clothing.
**Affective motivations.** Affective motivations refer to the emotional aspects individuals seek out in specific types of media (Katz et al., 1974). The affective motivations of the women in this study came from their desire to make something and their need for a creative outlet in everyday life. One woman shared the importance of her daily sewing after a day at work, which was “very analytical”; she stated, “When I get home it’s kind of fun to do something creative” (Participant 1). Each of the women used sewing as a way to fill a need for creativity. One woman even disclosed how sewing showed her that she was creative: “To be perfectly honest I am a creative person even though I didn’t initially think so” (Participant 7). Sewing provided these women with an opportunity to use their creativity to make something tangible when the majority of their time was spent completing tasks with intangible results.

**Tension release.** Tension release refers to the use of media as a way to relieve stress and escape from reality (Katz et al., 1974). Sewing provided the women in the study with a source of tension or stress relief. This concurs with the findings of previous research and popular press articles (Blenkarn, 1986; Owens, 1997; Schofield-Tomschin, 1994; “Sewing, Needlework,” 2015). Sewing provided the women in this study with the opportunity to forget about reality and immerse themselves in activity as an escape from the stresses of their day. One woman described her sewing time as a “vacation” from her everyday life (Participant 9). The experience of sewing was described as “therapeutic” (Participant 4) and “relaxing” (Participant 2), with another woman sharing, “It’s very meditative for me” (Participant 3). Many women spoke about how when they were sewing they could forget about everything else, and one woman shared that she liked sewing “because the sewing itself is what’s the stress relief for me, zoning out and sewing” (Participant 12).
Summary

This chapter discussed similarities and differences between the findings of previous research presented in the literature review and findings from this research. An understanding of the application of the previously applied theory of Toffler’s thesis and prosumerism (Kean & Levin, 1989) was reviewed, and an exploration of the relevance of third-wave feminist perspectives on craft reclamation was also included. The potential theories proposed for this study—craft and DIY consumption and UG theory—were also related to the findings.
CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

The home sewing market is a growing consumer market (Haider, 2014). Despite this industry information, sewing has been neglected by researchers for over 20 years. The purpose of this study was to understand why women are choosing to sew clothing for themselves at a time when ready-to-wear clothing is inexpensive and readily available. In this chapter, a summary of the findings along with the significance and implications of the study are presented. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the future research needed for this topic.

Summary of the Study

The motivations of and perceived benefits for women who sew clothing for themselves were the focus of this study. The analyzed data were gathered from 15 in-depth semi structured interviews with women between the ages of 20 and 40 years who sewed clothing for themselves. The interviews centered on the reasons why the women sewed clothing for themselves and the benefits that sewing their own clothing provided them. Questions were asked about feelings attached to sewing, the reactions of others to their garments, as well as their time spent sewing and sewing-related consumption. The qualitative interview data were analyzed using a grounded theory approach. As the data were coded, three emergent themes were revealed: investment, control, and empowerment. The emergent themes were interconnected under one overarching central theme of personal fulfilment. A model for women’s motivations to sew clothing for themselves and a sew or purchase decision model were developed from the findings (Figure 7). To better understand the motivations of these women, this research applied three theories: the rise of the prosumer, the craft consumer and DIY consumption, and uses and gratification theory.
The central theme of personal fulfillment encompassed the women’s universal expression that sewing clothing for themselves provided them with a feeling of accomplishment and a creative outlet that they did not experience in other aspects of their lives. Sewing provided them enjoyment through a leisure activity that was their own. It served as an escape and tension release from their day-to-day lives.

The theme of investment reflected the many ways in which these women invested in their decision to sew clothing in their leisure time. It comprised their investment in learning how to sew and the ongoing process to improve their sewing knowledge and skills. The investment of money in their sewing was an integral part of their participation and furthering their skills. As their monetary investment increased, so did their commitment to sewing. Time investment was required to participate, and the women in this study dedicated time for their sewing every week.

The theme of control represents the power that the women received from sewing their own clothing. Their sewing provided them control over their appearance, as they were able to providing themselves with clothing that reflected their true self, which in turn, provided them with a higher level of self-expression. Sewing also afforded them the options to sew or purchase the clothing that they needed or wanted, giving them more power as consumers than their nonsewing peers had. This decision opportunity resulted in guidelines that the home sewers used to decide whether to sew or purchase a garment. A sew or purchase model was developed to illustrate their decision process (Figure 7).

The theme of empowerment highlights the support and sense of accomplishment that the women derived from their sewing participation. They expressed that sewing clothing for themselves increased their confidence in all areas of their lives. The positive feedback from
and support of family, friends, and strangers provided them with a sense of pride that increased their desire to not only sew more but also to make more items for themselves. Sewing also offered these women a community of like-minded individuals that supported them with their sewing and also provided them meaningful friendships.

The theories of the rise of the prosumer (Kean & Levin, 1989; Kolter, 1986; Toffler, 1980), the craft consumer and DIY consumption (Campbell, 2005; Ritzer et al., 2012; Watson & Shove, 2008), and UG (Katz et al., 1974) were compared to the study’s findings to understand the motivations and behaviors of the women in this study. The women were found to embody the mentality of a prosumer in their producer and consumer behaviors as well as in their resistance to mass-produced ready-to-wear clothing. The craft consumer and DIY consumption application revealed that these women’s desires to sew were far more than just customizing and personalizing clothing; these women sought to control the entire garment design process, going to extensive lengths to achieve the perfect garment fit and to create garments that reflected their personalities and needs. UG exposed the psychological motivations that the women had for sewing their own clothing. The women’s psychological motivations for sewing clothing for themselves fulfilled all the uses and gratification categories defined by Katz et al. (1974) of cognitive, personal integrative, social integrative, and affective motivations as well as tension release.

Significance

This study is significant because extant home sewing research is limited and over 20 years old. Since the previous research was conducted, there have been significant societal and technological changes that have impacted what motivates women to sew. This research is the first study on home sewing to have a focus specifically on women only sewing clothing
for themselves. Previous research involved exploring all types of sewing in which women were participating. The ethnically diverse sample of female participants used in this study provides a more inclusive and clear understanding of the reasons women sew, which distinguishes this study from previous studies, which used homogenous samples in home sewing and handcraft research. The findings of this research provide insights into a growing consumer market that operates outside of typical consumer culture by its focus on women who choose to sew their own clothing while clothing is currently cheap to purchase and readily available. This study provides a starting point for further exploration into other craft-related consumer decision behaviors by providing a sewing consumer decision model (Figure 7). By concentrating on women’s leisure participation with the women participants’ experience as the central focus of the study, this research also expands the existing women’s leisure research by providing a new perspective on women’s leisure choice.

**Implications**

The implications of this research provide validation of the benefits that women derive from choosing to sew their own clothing as a form of leisure. This research provides evidence that the individuals and motivations of those who participate in home sewing are shifting, and it provides insights into their consumer behavior. The qualitative grounded theory approach allowed the women’s experience to be revealed in a way that previous quantitative research had not, exposing new motivations for this unique consumer segment. This study fills gaps in both home sewing and handcraft leisure research. It provides a current look into home sewing motivation while also providing new handcraft leisure research that places the woman participant as the focus of the research.
The findings of this research will be of interest to those involved in the home sewing industry, academia, and the apparel industry. The spending habits and pattern, project, and instructional preferences provide insight into what consumers are most interested in spending money on. This valuable information provides an understanding of the preferences and habits of women who sew clothing for themselves. Fabric was revealed to be where the women spent most of their money and a desire for more specialized novelty fabric was found. This insight exposes potential home sewing industry fabric gaps and new potential for fabric companies. Internet based instructional material and social media engagement were preferred by the participants indicating that home sewing businesses need to focus on their social media presence and expand their availability of online instructional materials. As for academics in apparel related fields, this research uncovers the potential that home sewing industry has for apparel design and fashion merchandising professionals. Academic programs should integrate projects and courses into their curriculum that will prepare students for these areas and create awareness of the entrepreneurial opportunities in the home sewing industry.

The findings also offer apparel industry professionals a unique perspective on ready-to-wear consumer dissatisfaction. The findings of this study provide insight into the factors that are most distressing to female consumers of ready-to-wear, especially in areas of garment fit and specialty garment sizing.

**Future Research**

This study has provided updated information on female home sewers. There is a need to continue this research because very limited current research is available. Future research should be conducted in a variety of areas. This study was limited to English-speaking women living in the United States and Canada, and the qualitative data collected are specific
to this sample and cannot be generalized to all female home sewers. To further understand
the reasons why more women are sewing clothing for themselves, research involving a larger
population of women from a larger geographic area is needed. Future research is also needed
to understand if sewing motivations and benefits derived from sewing change when women
sew other types of projects or for other individuals.

Using a grounded theory approach, this study was focused on discovering the reasons
why women sewed clothing for themselves—reasons that emerged from in-depth interviews
limited to 15 participants. To understand if these reasons are applicable to all female home
sewers, a quantitative research study of a larger sample of the home-sewing population
should be conducted using a survey instrument developed from the findings of the current
study. This future research will provide a broader understanding of the resurgence of interest
in women to sew their own clothing and will confirm the changes in motivations found in
this study.

The current study investigated only the sewing practices of female home sewers. The
resurgence in home sewing has included not only women but also men. Very little published
home sewing research has included male home sewers in their sample, so there is a need to
explore men’s motivations as well. This study should be adapted and conducted with an
ethnically diverse, middle-class, sample of men 20–40 years of age.

The women in this study were recruited from Facebook sewing groups. The role of
Facebook sewing groups and other social media were vital to these women’s sewing
participation. Most of the sewers discussed the role of Internet websites, such as YouTube,
and using Google search when learning to sewing. The role of the Internet in the growing
interest in home sewing should be further researched. As a contrast, the current sample did
not include any women who were not engaged in sewing through the Internet. Therefore, more research should be conducted to see if women who do not engage in Internet sewing-related practices motivations have different characteristics.

This study has contributed to expanding the research on craft consumers, but future research is required to fully understand this consumer segment. The consumption behaviors of these consumers can be better understood. In addition, future research is needed to test the study’s developed sew or purchase decision model (Figure 7) with regard to its applicability to other handcraft types, such as knitting and crocheting, with which clothing can be made. There is also research needed to understand the decision-making process for products other than clothing that a craft consumer can choose to sew or purchase.

This research revealed interesting perspectives regarding women’s leisure choices by putting the woman at the center of the research in a leisure choice that benefitted solely her. There is a need for more female-centered research in handcraft leisure as well as other non-handcraft-related leisure areas.
REFERENCES


### APPENDIX A. PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON REASONS FOR SEWING

**Table A1**

*Previous Quantitative Research on Reasons for Sewing*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Reasons for sewing (in rank order)</th>
<th>Data collection and analysis</th>
<th>Theory used to interpret</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell, 1959</td>
<td>To find out how many women are doing home sewing, learn the reasons behind their sewing, and find out how much money the women saved by sewing.</td>
<td>100 women in Lubbock TX. Women found at stores with fabric departments. Majority 30–40 years old.</td>
<td>1. Economics 2. Enjoyment 3. Improved fit 4. Originality 5. Better quality</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>York, 1961</td>
<td>To study the practices and opinions of homemakers regarding sewing.</td>
<td>40 female homemakers in Stillwater OK. Half of sample was Oklahoma State Univ. alumni; 75% of sample was 20–49 years old.</td>
<td>1. Economics 2. Leisure 3. Better fit 4. Better quality</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conklyn, 1961</td>
<td>To find out amounts and kinds of sewing women are doing and reasons for sewing.</td>
<td>282 women from the Seneca Co., OH Extension list; no ages of sample provided.</td>
<td>1. Economic 2. Aesthetic 3. Leisure 4. Fabric</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sutton, 1967</td>
<td>To study the interest in home sewing when ready to wear was so abundant.</td>
<td>57 women who attended church in Bolivar, MO, all but four 20–35 years of age.</td>
<td>1. Economics 2. Leisure</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>Research Objective</td>
<td>Sample Description</td>
<td>Findings/Methods</td>
<td>Theory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chan, 1975</td>
<td>To investigate the motivations for home sewing related to amount of sewing, perceived depersonalization of the job, creativity, &amp; selected demographics.</td>
<td>50 employed women who worked at least 30 hours outside of home, the majority under 35 and married.</td>
<td>1. Economics 2. Creativity Motivations were linked to age and number of children the women had.</td>
<td>Survey  Quantitative analysis Correlations and significance of hypotheses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtless, 1985</td>
<td>To find out how much employed women were sewing.</td>
<td>378 employed women Diary of Wisconsin and Illinois employed women.</td>
<td>Married women more likely to sew as a creative outlet. Single women more likely to sew for economics.</td>
<td>Survey  Basic quantitative percentages and totals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kean &amp; Levin (1989)</td>
<td>To look for the orientations of why people sew at home and to identify consumer cluster groups.</td>
<td>105 female home sewers recruited from fabric stores (no ages of sample)</td>
<td>Found economics play a significant role in the choice to participate in home sewing. Identified groups with different reasons for sewing: utilitarians (economic), practicals (economic), craft-oriented (craft making), upscales (fashion), and indifferents (economic).</td>
<td>Survey  Quantitative analysis Correlations  Toffler’s thesis and prosumerism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schofield-Tomschin, 1994</td>
<td>To explore five common reasons for home sewing found in previous literature.</td>
<td>444 women on Sew News mailing list, majority 35–46 years of age.</td>
<td>1. Psycho-physiological and leisure 2. Creativity 3. Economic 4. Quality 5. Fit</td>
<td>Survey  Basic quantitative percentages and totals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christensen (1995)</td>
<td>To identify to what extent women were sewing, types of sewing, reasons they sew.</td>
<td>117 women identified in independent sewing stores in Wyoming.</td>
<td>1. Creativity 2. Sewing gifts for friends.</td>
<td>Survey  Basic quantitative percentages and totals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A2

*Previous Qualitative Research on Home Sewing*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Title</th>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gordon, 2004 “Boundless possibilities”: Home sewing and the meanings of women’s domestic work in the United States.</td>
<td>1890–1930</td>
<td>Various popular press publications (magazines, newspaper, advertisements, etc.), government publications, and previous writings on the topic.</td>
<td>Sewing could be used to enhance a woman’s economic position in a household, provided a creative outlet, could bring beauty to the lives of poor women, provided an opportunity to present self &amp; family in a respectable manner, and was a way to save money.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gordon, 2009 “Make it yourself”: Home sewing, gender, and culture 1890–1930.</td>
<td>1890–1930</td>
<td>Various popular press publications (magazines, newspaper, advertisements, etc.) government publications, and previous writings on the topic.</td>
<td>Women in different social classes had different reasons to sew but they all were linked to ideas of women’s work, domesticity, and family. Decisions to sew were based on a combination of time, energy, expense, and skills.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hackney, 1999 Making modern women, stitch by stitch: Dressmaking and woman’s magazines in Britain 1919–39.</td>
<td>1919–1939</td>
<td>Magazine publications and interviews</td>
<td>Sewing skills could give younger women independence in their clothing selection. Home sewing filled a ready-to-wear market gap for teenage girls. Sewing allowed women to present the appearance they wanted and could not afford. It allowed them to have quality items and reasonable prices.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckley, 1999 On the margins: Theorizing the history and significance of making and designing clothes at home.</td>
<td>1910–1960</td>
<td>Two women who sewed in in Britain. Data collected through notebook of one women, relative memories, author’s memories, and photographs.</td>
<td>Home dressmaking was a way to create visual and material representations of feminine identities.</td>
<td>Feminist design theory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX B. PILOT STUDY CATEGORIES AND CODES

*Pilot Study Categories and Codes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Dissatisfaction with RTW</td>
<td>1.1 RTW does not fit body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.2 Desires garments not available in ready-to-wear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.3 Do not feel comfortable in ready-to-wear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Acting on Dissatisfaction-Learning to Sew</td>
<td>2.1 Started sewing small-non garment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2 Developing new skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.3 Challenging self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.4 Online support and influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.5 Joining or belonging to group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.7 Quick and easy sewing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.8 Spending on sewing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.9 Time spent sewing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Finding Control Over Clothing Selection</td>
<td>3.1 Sewing to fit her body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.2 Sewing items that are functional to her lifestyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.3 Sewing preferred styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.4 Can sew better quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.5 Can control fabric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.6 Control over how her clothes are made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Self Expression through Sewing</td>
<td>4.1 Sewing clothing to fit personality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.2 Sewing unique items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Approval/Support of Others (Sewing Validation)</td>
<td>5.1 Receives compliments and positive feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.2 Gets noticed/ shows off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.3 Inspires others to learn to sew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.4 People surprised by skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sewing Empowers me and Builds Confidence</td>
<td>6.1 Confidence booster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.2 Making clothing is empowering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.3 Not dependent on ready-to-wear any more</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Institutional Review Board
Office for Responsible Research
Vice President for Research
1438 Pearson Hall
Ames, Iowa 50011-2417
515-294-3906
FAX 515-294-4207

Date: 2/12/2016

To: Addie Martindale
2901 Prentice Avenue

From: Office for Responsible Research

Title: Motivations of Female Home Sewers to Sew Clothing For Themselves

IRB ID: 15-605

Study Review Date: 2/12/2016

The project referenced above has been declared exempt from the requirements of the human subject protections regulations as described in 45 CFR 46.101(b) because it meets the following federal requirements for exemption:

- (2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey or interview procedures with adults or observation of public behavior where
  - Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; or
  - Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could not reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to their financial standing, employability, or reputation.

The determination of exemption means that:

- You do not need to submit an application for annual continuing review.
- You must carry out the research as described in the IRB application. Review by IRB staff is required prior to implementing modifications that may change the exempt status of the research. In general, review is required for any modifications to the research procedures (e.g., method of data collection, nature or scope of information to be collected, changes in confidentiality measures, etc.), modifications that result in the inclusion of participants from vulnerable populations, and/or any change that may increase the risk or discomfort to participants. Changes to key personnel must also be approved. The purpose of review is to determine if the project still meets the federal criteria for exemption.
- Non-exempt research is subject to many regulatory requirements that must be addressed prior to implementation of the study. Conducting non-exempt research without IRB review and approval may constitute non-compliance with federal regulations and/or academic misconduct according to ISU policy.

Detailed information about requirements for submission of modifications can be found on the Exempt Study Modification Form. A Personnel Change Form may be submitted when the only modification involves changes in study staff. If it is determined that exemption is no longer warranted, then an Application for Approval of Research Involving Humans Form will need to be submitted and approved before proceeding with data collection.

Please note that you must submit all research involving human participants for review. Only the IRB or designees may make the determination of exemption, even if you conduct a study in the future that is exactly like this study.

Please be aware that approval from other entities may also be needed. For example, access to data from private records (e.g., student, medical, or employment records, etc.) that are protected by FERPA, HIPAA, or other confidentiality policies requires permission from the holders of those records. Similarly, for research conducted in institutions other than ISU (e.g., schools, other colleges or universities, medical facilities, companies, etc.), investigators must obtain permission from the institution(s) as required by their policies. An IRB determination of exemption in no way implies or guarantees that permission from these other entities will be granted.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions or concerns at 515-294-4566 or IRB@iastate.edu.
APPENDIX D. FACE SHEET

1. Age:

2. Ethnicity:
   - White Non-Hispanic
   - Hispanic/Latino
   - African American
   - Asian
   - American Indian
   - Other: ______________________

3. How often do you shop for fabric?
   - Once a week
   - Once a month
   - Twice a month
   - Three times a month

4. How often do you shop for sewing patterns?
   - Once a week
   - Once a month
   - Twice a month
   - Three times a month

5. How much do you spend on fabric a month?
   - Less than $10
   - $10-$30
   - $31-$50
   - $51-$70
   - $71-$90
   - Over $100

6. How much do you spend on sewing patterns a month?
   - Less than $10
   - $10-$30
   - $31-$50
   - $51-$70
   - $71-$90
   - Over $100
7. Where do you shop for fabric? (Circle all that apply)
   - Small Business Online
   - Small Businesses Physical Store Locations
   - Major Fabric Store Chains
   - Major Fabric Store Chains Online

8. Where do you shop for sewing patterns? (Circle all that apply)
   - Small Business Online
   - Small Businesses Physical Store Locations
   - Independent Sewing Pattern Designer Websites
   - Major Fabric Store Chains

9. How many independent designer patterns have you purchased?
   - 1-3
   - 4-6
   - 7-10
   - 11-14
   - more than 15

10. How many commercial patterns have you purchased?
    - 1-3
    - 4-6
    - 7-10
    - 11-14
    - more than 15

11. Which types or sewing patterns do you use? (Circle all that apply)
    - PDF Patterns Printed at Home
    - PDF Patterns Printed at a Copy Shop
    - Hard Copy Patterns
    - All formats of Sewing Patterns

12. How much do you spend on other sewing-related items such as notions a month?
    - Less than $10
    - $10-$30
    - $31-$50
    - $51-$70
    - $71-$90
    - Over $100

13. How often do you sew?
    - Once a week
    - twice a week
    - more than twice a week
    - One a month
    - twice a month
    - three times a month

14. How many hours a week do you sew?
    - 1-3
    - 4-6
    - 7-10
    - more than 10 hours a week

15. When do you sew?
    - Evenings
    - Weekends
    - During the day on week days
16. What do you sew? (Circle all that apply)
   Pants
   Skirts
   Shirts
   Dresses
   Underwear
   Bras
   Swimsuits
   Coats
   Pajamas
   Hats
   Handbags
   Home décor
   Quilts
   Gifts

17. Who do you sew for? (Circle all that apply)
   Yourself
   Friends
   Significant other
   Children
   Family members not living with you
Hello Participant,

Thank you for taking my initial survey for my dissertation research on why women sew. I would love to do a follow-up video conference interview with you. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes. In the interview, I will ask you questions about why you started sewing and why you choose to sew clothing for yourself. I will also ask you to show me three items of clothing that you have sewn yourself. Please reply and let me know if you are interested and times that you are available.

Thanks,

Addie Martindale
Addiem@iastate.edu
APPENDIX F. PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: Motivations of Female Home Sewers to Sew Clothing for Themselves

Investigators: Addie Martindale; Dr. Ellen McKinney

This form describes a research project. It has information to help you decide whether or not you wish to participate. Research studies include only people who choose to take part—your participation is completely voluntary. Please discuss any questions you have about the study or about this form with the project staff before deciding to participate.

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to learn about the motivations for women to sew clothing for themselves to wear. To identify changes in motivation from previous time periods and identify possible improvement home sewing industry improvements.

You are being invited to participate in this study because you are a female home sewer between the ages of 20 and 35, who actively sews clothing for yourself.

You should not participate if you are under the age of 20 or over the age of 35 and do not identify as, a woman.

Description of Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in an online video interview. Your participation will last for 1 online video interview session. The interview will be recorded. The interview will last 45 minutes to 1 hour in time. You will be asked questions about your home sewing activities. Questions you will be asked will be about why you sew for yourself, about 3 items that you have sewn for yourself, and about the time and money you spend sewing for yourself.
Risks or Discomforts

While participating in this study you may experience the following risks or discomforts: There are no known risks or discomforts involved in this study.

Benefits

If you decide to participate in this study, there will be no direct benefit to you. It is hoped that the information gained in this study will benefit society by providing insights into the motivations and benefits of today’s home sewers and provide information that will improve the home sewing industry.

Participant Rights

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part in the study or to stop participating at any time, for any reason, without penalty or negative consequences. You can skip any questions that you do not wish to answer. If you have any questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact the IRB Administrator, (515) 294-4566, IRB@iastate.edu, or Director, (515) 294-3115, Office for Responsible Research, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011. Confidentiality

Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by applicable laws and regulations and will not be made publicly available. However, federal government regulatory agencies, auditing departments of Iowa State University, and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves human subject research studies) may inspect and/or copy study records for quality assurance and data analysis. These records may contain private information.

To ensure confidentiality to the extent permitted by law, the following measures will be taken: All recordings and transcriptions will be stored on a password protected computer.
All printed transcript will be store in a locked filing cabinet. To insure confidentiality participant names will be changed for coding and analyzing of the data. Names will also remain changed in all dissemination for the research.

Questions

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study. For further information about the study, contact Addie Martindale at addiem@iastate.edu or Dr. Ellen McKinney at emckinne@iastate.edu.

Consent and Authorization Provisions

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given the time to read the document, and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. Please print a copy of the informed consent for their own files.

Participant’s Name (printed) __________________________________________

Participant’s Signature ___________________________ Date _____________
APPENDIX G. INTERVIEW GUIDE

Can you tell me about how you learned to sew and why you chose to start sewing?

How much of your wardrobe would you say you have made for yourself?

How much ready-to-wear clothing do you buy?

Frequency/what types of garments/preferences

Tell me and show me 3 garments that you have sewn for yourself.

How do you feel when you wear garments that you have made?

Do you ever alter sewing patterns or make your own patterns?

What are people’s reaction when you wear the clothing that you have made?

Are you involved in any sewing communities, in person or online? Tell me about that experience.

How does sewing make you feel?

How much time do you spend sewing?

When do you sew?

How much money do you spend on sewing-related items: sewing patterns, fabric, notions, and equipment?

How do you feel about this spending?

How do you feel when you don’t have money to spend on sewing?

You have told me so much about your sewing do you have anything else you would like to tell me about sewing for yourself?
## APPENDIX H. FINAL CODING GUIDE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Learning to sew (UG cognitive)                                       | 1.1. Home Ec  
|                                                                         | 1.1.1. Negative experience  
|                                                                         | 1.1.1.1. Boring/uninteresting  
|                                                                         | 1.2. Family members  
|                                                                         | 1.2.1. Mother  
|                                                                         | 1.2.2. Grandmother  
|                                                                         | 1.2.3. Father  
|                                                                         | 1.3. Friends  
|                                                                         | 1.4. In person sewing classes  
|                                                                         | 1.5. Internet  
|                                                                         | 1.5.1. Facebook groups  
|                                                                         | 1.5.2. Pinterest  
|                                                                         | 1.5.3. YouTube  
|                                                                         | 1.5.4. Online classes  
|                                                                         | 1.5.5. Blogs  
|                                                                         | 1.5.6. Online Sewing Forums  
| 2. Cause/factors leading to learning to sew (leisure) (prosumer)        | 2.1. Needed a hobby  
|                                                                         | 2.2. Encouragement of others(others suggested getting a hobby)  
|                                                                         | 2.3. Social media/blogs  
|                                                                         | 2.4. Desire to make something  
| 3. Sewing is my creative outlet (3rd wave) (UG affective motivation)    |                                                                                                                                 |
| 4. Sewing gives me confidence (3rd wave) (UG affective motivation)      | 4.1. Confidence in appearance  
|                                                                         | 4.2. Confidence in abilities  
| 5. Sewing is part of my identity                                         |                                                                                                                                 |
| 6. Sewing provides control over appearance/self presentation (3rd wave)  |                                                                                                                                 |
| 7. Sewing is my time (leisure)                                           |                                                                                                                                 |
| 8. Sewing for Self Expression (3rd wave) (UG affective motivation)       |                                                                                                                                 |
| 9. Amount of wardrobe sewn by self                                       |                                                                                                                                 |
| 10. Sewing is empowering (3rd wave) (UG personal integrative) | 10.1. Pride (feeling achievement)  
| | 10.2. Accomplishment  
| 11. Sewing for attention/showing off (UG social integrative) | 11.1. In-person  
| | 11.2. Instagram  
| | 11.3. Facebook groups  
| 12. Sewing is therapy/relaxing (UG tension and stress release) |  
| 13. Feelings when sewing (UG) | 13.1. Happy  
| | 13.2. Stress relief (UG tension release)  
| | 13.3. Zone out (flow)  
| | 13.4. Frustration  
| | 13.5. Challenged (UG cognitive motivation)  
| | 13.6. Creative (UG affective motivation)- feeling creative while sewing only  
| 14. Sewing for improved Fit (Identity/self presentation) | 14.1. Aesthetic fit  
| | 14.2. Functional fit  
| | 14.3. Physical fit  
| 15. Sewing for style preference (identity/self presentation), includes silhouette/garment style and fabric print |  
| 16. Preferred pattern type | 16.1. PDF print at home  
| | 16.2. Commercial paper pattern  
| 17. Factors determining garment to be sewn (sewing consumer decisions) (identity/self presentation) | 17.1. Fabric  
| | 17.2. Wardrobe planning/system  
| | 17.3. Garments is needed in wardrobe  
| | 17.4. Garment is for an event  
| | 17.5. Pattern testing  
| | 17.6. Desire for a unique garment  
| | 17.7. Just wants to sew  
| | 17.8. Fashion Trends/RTW (includes in person, Pinterest, in stores, fashion magazines)  
| | 17.9. High-end designer fashion that cannot afford  
| | 17.10. Sewing peers’ influence (example-I saw everyone sewing the Cheyenne so I decided I should try it.)  
| | 17.11. Perceived difficulty  
| | 17.12. Time required to complete garment  
| 18. Factors determining garment to be sewn (sewing consumer decisions) (identity/self presentation) |  
|
| 18. Pattern reviews | 18.1. Yes  
| 18.2. No |
| 19. Sewing pattern alteration (UG cognitive) | 19.1. Alterations for body fit (adjusting hips or waist)  
| 19.2. Alterations for style preference (hacks, adjusting neckline, etc.)  
| 19.3. Muslin Process |
| 20. Sewing spending (craft consumption/ DIY) (prosumer) (sewing consumer decisions) | 20.1. Fabric  
| 20.1.1. Custom fabrics  
| 20.1.2. Ecofriendly fabrics  
| 20.1.3. Upcycling |
| 20.2. Patterns  
| 20.2.1. PDF  
| 20.2.2. Commercial  
| 20.2.3. Uses same patterns over and over |
| 20.3. Spending feeling  
| 20.3.1. Guilt  
| 20.3.2. remorse  
| 20.3.3. Trying to do better-need/desire to improve spending amount  
| 20.3.4. Confidence  
| 20.3.5. Therapy  
| 20.3.6. Spousal conflict |
| 20.4. Money spent sewing |
| 20.5. Type of spending  
| 20.5.1. Overspending  
| 20.5.2. Thrifting for fabric and upcycling  
| 20.5.3. Budgeting  
| 20.5.3.1. Overall spending  
| 20.5.3.2. Individual garment spending |
| 20.5.4. Impulse  
| 20.5.5. Frugal  
| 20.5.5.1. Sales/coupons |
| 21.2. Stash guilt  
| 21.3. Sewing from stash  
| 21.4. Destashing/giving away unused fabric |
| 22. Time spent sewing (craft consumption/DIY) (prosumer) (sewing consumer decisions) | 22.1. Amount of time spent sewing  
22.2. When they sew (time and days) |
|---|---|
| 23. Participation in sewing communities (UG social integrative) | 23.1. In-person  
23.2. Online |
| 24. Approval/ Validation of garments worn (UG social integrative) | 24.1. Compliments/positive feedback  
24.2. People are surprised |
| 25. Approval/support of others for participation in sewing as hobby | 25.1. Spouse bought machine  
25.2. Support while I sew  
25.3. Support while I sew |
| 26. Family gets in way of sewing |  |
| 27. Sewing for others (leisure research)-not for money sewing for family and gifts |  |
| 28. Project/garment completion | 28.1. Unfinished sewing projects  
28.2. Must finish projects  
28.3. Discard garments that do look good  
28.4. Adjust/alters garments until they have desired fit or look |
| 29. Dissatisfaction with RTW (sewing consumer decisions) | 29.1. Construction quality related issues  
29.2. Items desired are not available/are uncommon  
29.3. Style preference related issues  
29.3.1. Silhouette  
29.3.2. Color  
29.3.3. Fabric  
29.4. Fit related issues with RTW  
29.4.1. RTW at fault (RTW does not fit my body)  
29.4.2. Self at fault (My body does not fit RTW)  
29.5. Dissatisfaction with RTW production(3rd wave)  
29.5.1. Anti-fast fashion  
29.5.2. Worker treatment  
29.5.3. Environmental concern |
| 30. RTW buying habits/decision to buy RTW (sewing consumer decisions) | 30.1. Buys complicated items (example: lots of pleats)  
30.2. Buys when time is not available to sew  
30.3. Buys items that take a long time to sew  
30.4. Buys items that sewer does not have skills to sew  
30.5. Buys items that will only be worn once or very few times  
30.6. Buys items that others will not see  
30.7. Buys if cheaper to buy than sewing  
30.8. Buys if cheaper to buy than sewing  
30.9. Buys items that are not special |
| 31. Changes/shift in who is sewing-observed changes in ages and type of person sewing |  |
| 32. Successful projects lead to more projects (craft consumption) |  |
| 33. Sewing provides a tangible product (craft consumption) | 33.1. Useful hobby |
| 34. Successful sewing leads to other forms of making |  |
| 35. Professional amateur mentality (prosumer/craft consumption) | 35.1. Teaching others to sew (UG social integrative)  
35.2. Drafting patterns for self (UG cognitive)  
35.3. Helping others with sewing (UG social integrative)  
35.4. Reputation for making what I wear |