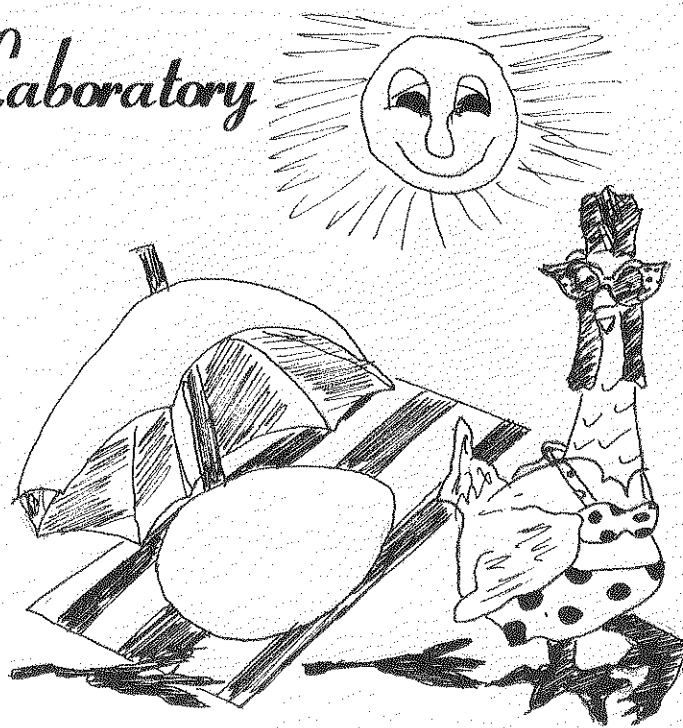
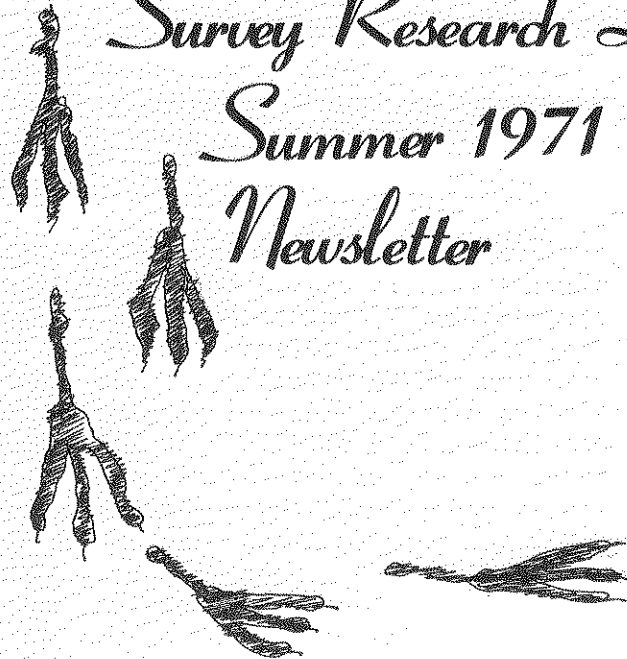


Survey Research Laboratory

Summer 1971

Newsletter



Some Results From Consumer

Decision Panel

Interviewer Profile of Mary Grider

consisting primarily of economically disadvantaged black students; and (3) Bloom Township High School in Chicago Heights which is composed of white students of lower and middle class economic backgrounds.

Apparently, the kids had a great time, and the graduate students now feel ready to take over SRL.

CURRENT PROJECTS

Study 082, Sociology Practicum. This study was a survey of children and youth and their attitudes toward government. The study was planned, with SRL's help, by a class of graduate students in sociology at the University of Illinois in Urbana who are interested in finding out how young people develop attitudes toward local government, historical and contemporary political figures and how the role of social agencies such as the family influence the development of these views.

In order to examine the problem from different perspectives, the class interviewed students and teachers at several schools in Illinois with a variety of economic and racial compositions. A small sample of parents was also interviewed. The schools studied were: (1) Harvard St. George, a private racially mixed grammar school in Chicago; (2) two high schools and two junior highs in the East St. Louis area with populations

Study 098, Illini Union Facilities. Sometimes considered the hub of student activity, or the womb of the University, the Union on the Urbana campus is both a recreational center and restaurant. Among other things, the Union offers such facilities as a snack bar, cafeteria and dining room, a paperback bookstore, a small art gallery, ticket center, study lounges, and a bowling alley and billiard-pool room. To assess how satisfied the academic community is with Union services, a sample of 250 students and 250 faculty and staff were contacted by telephone to determine their opinions and evaluations of existing services, to see how often these services are used, and what services need to be added in the future. (And of all things, this editor was part of the sample and had a great time being a respondent!)

Study 100, Family Size Survey. "If the government were to give a monthly payment of \$50---that is, \$600 per year

(continued)

for each child after the second until that child is 18 years old, do you think the average family in your neighborhood would have more children than they now have?" This is an example of one of the questions asked in this survey of people's attitudes toward government payments based on family size. Essentially, this study examines the effects of economic incentives on family planning.



Government payment seems to be one possibility of controlling the population explosion. To see how people react to this type of plan the study contacted 220 married people with children and married people without children who were over 42 years of age to see if they approved or disapproved of this method of population control.

Study 103, Market Segmentation. One of the most unique studies conducted by SRL and certainly one that involved the active participation of many SRL employees in Urbana is the survey of the goods and services people use and the value they place on them. The unique aspect of this study, which was conducted in Arkansas, was that the pretest interviews were administered by Field Supervisors, the Head of the Field Section, Matt Hauck, a typist and the payroll clerk. Everyone was enthusiastic - and a little nervous - about assuming the role of an interviewer and tried their best to complete interviews and critically evaluate the questionnaire. The study is now in the field and is being conducted and supervised by the sponsor who is in Little Rock.

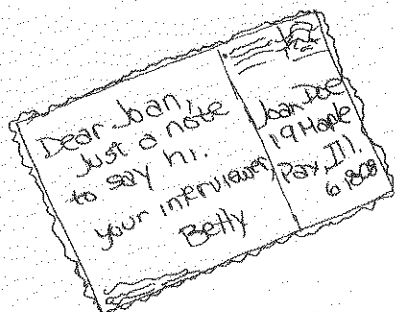
Not As Easy As You Think

Sometimes it seems that telephone interviewers have it easier than other interviewers simply because they don't have to deal with people person to person. As with any job, however, telephone interviewing has its share of problems. For one thing, it's difficult to tell over the phone whether or not the respondent really understands the questions - you can't see puzzled looks over the phone, at least not yet. John Jacobs, a student at Parkland College in Champaign, mentioned problems with older people who tend to wander off the subject. (Of course you don't have to be old to do that, as we all know.) Pam Cunningham, a student wife, said she felt that many of her respondents for the *Sociology Practicum* (the questionnaire prepared by graduate students) didn't understand the terminology used.

Sensitive or controversial topics are sometimes difficult to handle over the phone or person to person. Some telephone interviewers rush through these questions, some are apologetic, others sympathetic. Pam Cunningham tries to be very polite and assures people that all questions are held in strictest confidence. She also assures them that she knows how they feel, while at the same time, uses a less dramatic, serious tone to help them relax.

With difficult interviews most interviewers try to be patient. Pam Cunningham answers the questions respondents have and tries to make the respondent feel that his answers are important. Donna Preves agrees that patience is the best tactic, particularly when it comes to income questions.

Unusual responses or requests are typical to receive while doing telephone interviews. One woman was so pleased to be called that she asked the interviewer to keep in touch by sending picture postcards every chance the interviewer got! When John Jacobs, while working on the *Family*



Size Survey, asked a 29 year old man when he planned to have children, the response was, "Whenever I get around to it." And John had a funny feeling the guy meant it!

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INTERVIEWER PROFILE

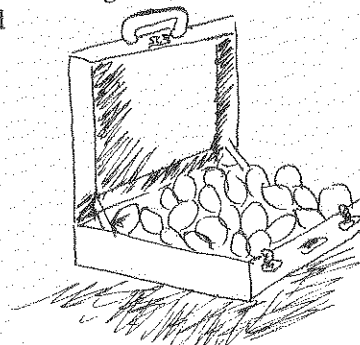
Mary Grider - One of Our Best

Although she describes herself as a self-conscious person, Mrs. Mary Grider, who lives in East St. Louis, does not appear unsure of herself. She has had numerous experiences, many of which she feels have helped her develop the composure necessary for interviewing.

Mrs. Grider feels she first developed composure while teaching art to youngsters in scouting. Children were so much fun to work with that she decided to become a juvenile officer for boys and girls from the ages of birth to 17. Because she had not had any previous training or formal education in this field, she went back to school, along with every other police officer in the area and studied at the Police Training Institute at the University of Illinois. Not only was the course work new, but she was the only woman in an auditorium of 100 men.

While she felt comfortable doing police work, Mrs. Grider never thought she could do interviewing, particularly after her first job with the University of Missouri. Her first morning of work, she explained, was fruitless. Discouraged, she was ready to quit. But her supervisor's pep talk encouraged her to return to the Field, and this time she came back with three completed interviews. The next day she completed ten, and it has been like that ever since.

The most amusing interviewing experience she remembers happened while she was working on a survey to see if people knew the differences in the sizes of eggs. (She discovered that most people, including farmers, don't know an extra large from a medium, and don't bother to check what they pick up at the store.) Each interviewer was given a briefcase full of three dozen hard boiled eggs marked according to weight. The study was supposed to be completed in three weeks, but due to technical difficulties familiar to us all, the study continued in the Field for another six weeks. As the weather got hotter, Mrs. Grider couldn't help but notice a strange odor emanating from her briefcase. Room and underarm deoderant didn't seem to help. And then one day the eggs began exploding. Surprisingly, respondents didn't seem to notice the smells, but then Mrs. Grider only opened her briefcase for a few seconds at a time - they could barely recognize the objects in the briefcase, let alone the smell.



As do most interviewers, Mrs. Grider learns a lot from her work. Did you know that in political surveys corner houses are to be avoided because they usually bias the sample? In general, a corner house is inhabited by Republicans who are usually better off than their neighbors, have nice homes and keep up their property better than the rest of the people on the block.

Another observation she made while working for SRL on the *Rural Participation Study* was that farmers tend to marry wives one and two years older than themselves, while men living in town tend to marry women three to four years younger. She also noticed that farmers usually share farm equipment and help each other whether or not they're friends. Illinois farmers are generally most cooperative when they discover that an interviewer is from the University, because farmers receive a lot of help from the Department of Agriculture about planting and crops.

Interviewing has become more than just a job for Mrs. Grider. She has several pen-pals as a consequence of her interviews and has received four serious proposals of marriage in the last two years. Her advice to single women looking for husbands is to become an interviewer. The advantage, she explains, to meeting a man this way is that you meet him in his own home and can tell fairly quickly what he is really like.

Like everyone else who works hard, Mrs. Grider plays hard. And her hobbies take on an aspect of her work in that she enjoys observing both people and nature. She visits the St. Louis Art Museum regularly and says that the best time to visit the animals in the zoo is in the winter when they become practically tame. An amateur artist, she paints and draws. And nearly every night she reads science fiction. She has written and published an article about her son's deer hunting experiences in *Reader's Digest*. She also likes activity as well as thoughtfulness, and treats her five grandchildren to tobogganing trips at the park, ice skating and mini bike rides.

For a number of SRL surveys, Mrs. Grider has assumed supervisory responsibilities

where she has to do more traveling and coordinate the work of between 8 and 15 interviewers. As expected from previous work with her, field problems were spotted early and corrected quickly. She has been able to develop an esprit de corps among her interviewers and all studies were completed within the quality, quantity and cost expectations.

Her only regret as a supervisor is that she cannot spend as much time interviewing, which she so dearly loves. In all respects she is a top notch interviewer and supervisor -- no ifs, ands, or buts about it.

#

What Has Happened To You?

I need to begin with some apologies. I sent a brief questionnaire to a random sample of SRL interviewers to collect some information about interviewer experiences, but I forgot to include a space for names on the batch that went out first. So if I mention in the following article something you experienced personally and don't identify your name with the experience, you'll know the reason why.

Most interviewers feel that the presence of other family members usually doesn't interfere with the interview. However, both Jean Bates and Marcella Clarke have had experiences with married couples where the spouse who isn't being interviewed interrupts with his or her opinions. Mrs. Clarke handles this type of situation by saying, "For this particular study I need your wife's (or husband's) opinions. After I have finished, I will be glad to listen to yours." That's called diplomacy plus!

Spouses aren't the only people who interrupt. Everyone, including Jean Bates, has had to contend with children who

needed to be rescued from bee stings or tree climbing. One interviewer, after completing an interview, started to walk out of the apartment only to discover that she was leaving with the respondent's wallet in her pocket. She was not embarrassed until it came out that the respondent's little girl had slipped it there when she was not looking. The little girl thought this was a real fun game. Mrs. Clark has had to conduct interviews with the constant attention of the respondent's favorite cats and dogs. She reports that while the respondent thought this was cute, she had other words for it. . . .



If it isn't children and pets, it's something else. And something else is an intoxicated respondent. Wanita Lucas was fortunate to have the respondent's wife present when she interviewed an inebriated respondent because she persuaded him to finish the interview. Jean Bates has had the fortune of encountering respondents who have had just enough drink to make them happy. Although she wonders about the accuracy of some of the answers, the interviews were a lot of fun.

A description of the perfect respondent is in every interviewer's mind. And surprisingly enough, most interviewers agree as to the type of respondent they like most. The best interviews seem to be with respondents who like to talk, as Jean Bates would say. Wanita Lucas prefers respondents who enjoy giving their opinion and who are interested in the survey. Marcella Clarke has no preference as to age or sex; instead, she enjoys respondents who don't stray from the subject and who are relaxed. William Moffett prefers respondents who are completely candid, but feels he is open to interviewing anyone.

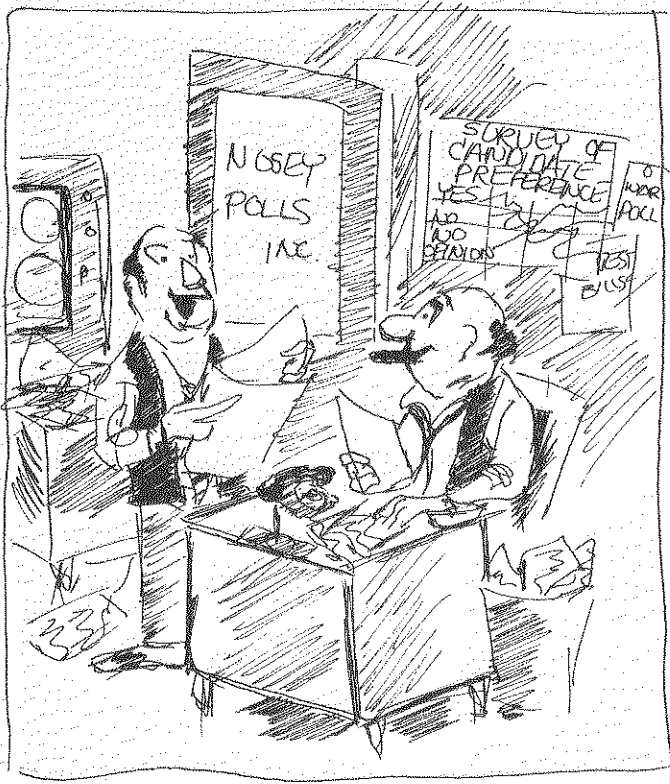
Kay Natta shares his optimism because she finds all people interesting and says, "If you like people, they respond." Her preference, however, is down-to-earth, warm people. Frances Williams' idea of a perfect respondent is one who is pleasant, receptive, friendly and educated. She feels uncomfortable with people living alone and with men - "they seem to be skeptical of being questioned."

It's interesting to share interviewer experiences and opinions. And I want to thank all of you who have received and returned questionnaires from SRL in Urbana asking you about your experiences in the Field. Perhaps some of you can sympathize with many of these situations; if not, let us know what has happened to you.

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Looking for Solutions

As an interviewer you have undoubtedly been faced with problems (maintaining time schedules, locating respondents, obtaining respondent cooperation, controlling dogs and children, obtaining accurate and complete answers, etc.) We at SRL would like for you to share your problems and solutions with us and the other interviewers. Please write to the editor of the SRL Newsletter.



"The usual pattern of 'Yes,' 'No' and 'Don't know' is being disrupted by a great many 'Don't cares' lately!"

Reprinted from the States-Item, New Orleans.

SOME RESULTS

Consumer Decision Panel Study, Wave V

The Consumer Decision Panel, an ongoing longitudinal study, surveys 240 young married couples living in Decatur and Peoria, Illinois two times yearly. The focus of the study is on purchase

decisions and expenditures, and the focus of this brief summary report is on the types of things couples think about before buying a new durable good and the new durable goods that might be purchased in the future.

What's Important?

Before buying a new couch, sofa, or coffee table, what do young married couples think about? Do they count their pennies or take out a loan? Do they worry that the yellow living room couch won't match their red chairs? Do they purchase a brown sofa because Coke would spot the beige one?

Surprisingly enough, couples don't worry about what the couch looks like nearly as much as they do about how well it will wear. Over four-fifths of all couples consider durability very important. In fact, couples don't consider anything else as much as they do durability of a particular brand, and thirty percent more wives than husbands consider durability extremely important.

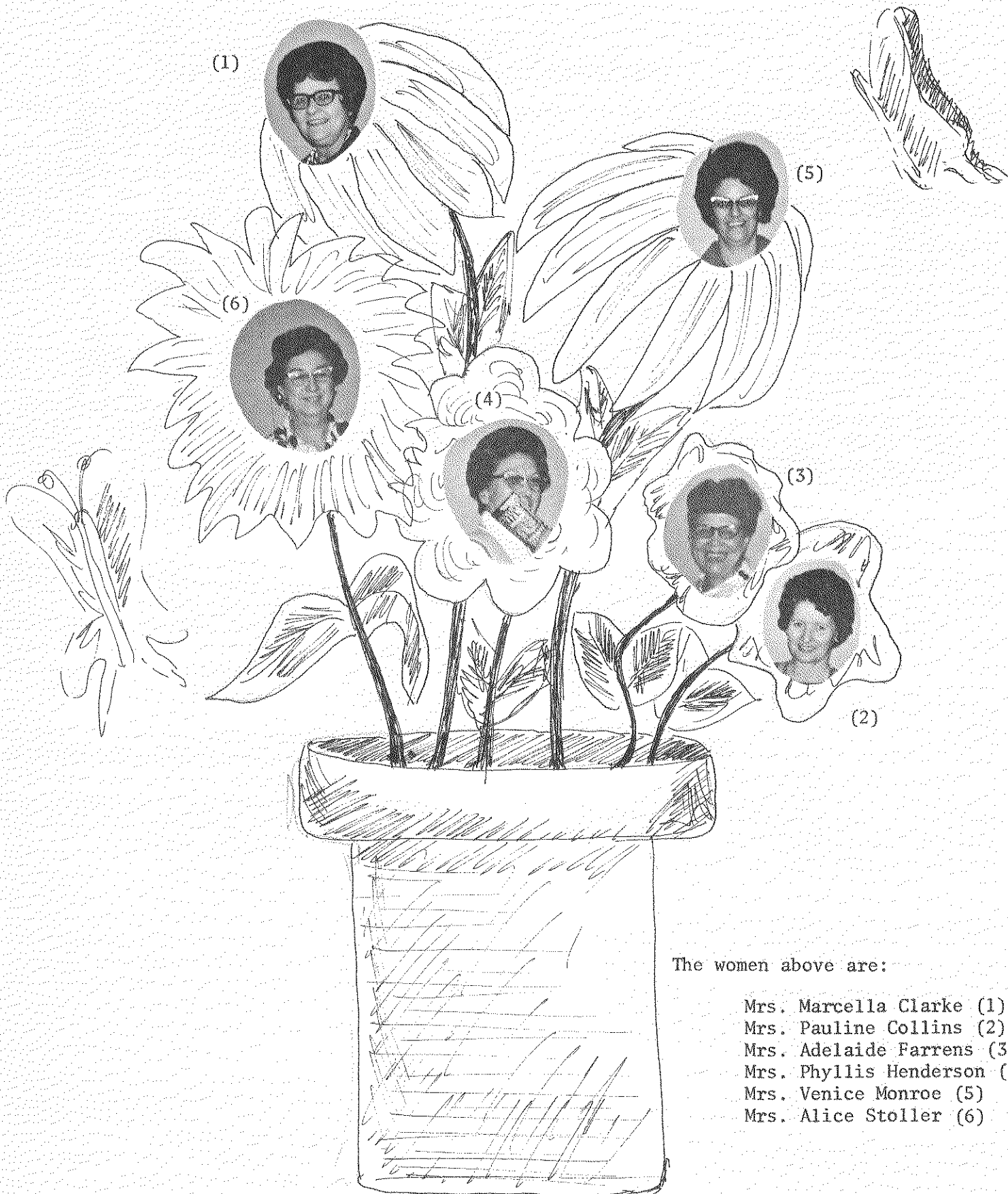
Husbands and wives also don't worry about how many compliments they receive on their new furniture. Nearly one-fifth of the wives consider acceptance by others very or extremely unimportant, and a little over one-tenth of their husbands feel the same way. Three-fifths of the couples feel neither one way or the other about what the gal next door thinks about their new chartreuse sofa.

What Else Is Important?

Next to the durability of a living room suite, couples pay most attention to the product's warranty or guarantee. And thirty-seven percent more wives than husbands read the guarantee before buying a new chair.

Service to the product is also considered important. Seventeen percent more wives than husbands consider service very relevant. This isn't surprising when you consider that wives are usually home when something falls apart and in many instances are responsible for getting repairs made, even if it is

(continued)



The women above are:

- Mrs. Marcella Clarke (1)
- Mrs. Pauline Collins (2)
- Mrs. Adelaide Farrens (3)
- Mrs. Phyllis Henderson (4)
- Mrs. Venice Monroe (5)
- Mrs. Alice Stoller (6)

Consumer Panel Interviewers

These smiling women are all interviewers who have worked and are working on the *Consumer Decision Panel Study*, a study of consumer decisions and expenditures. This group all lives in the Peoria area and complete about 160 interviews several times yearly. Their counterpart group in Decatur (the other town where newly married young couples are interviewed) completes over 60 interviews. Hopefully in the next issue their faces will be smiling from this page.

only making sure that their hubbies are going to fix the broken merchandise.

Wives Feel More Strongly

In general, wives feel more strongly than their husbands about the things they think about before buying living room furniture. As noted previously, 30 percent more wives than husbands consider durability extremely relevant, while 37 percent more feel that a product's warranty is extremely relevant. In addition, 22 percent more wives than husbands consider their present income very relevant while 27 percent more consider individual needs very important factors to think about before buying living room furniture.

Wives Think For Themselves

Husbands seem to be more dependent than their wives upon what their friends and neighbors say about a particular brand. Couples as a whole pay less attention to what their neighbors say than to their friends. One-fourth of the husbands and over one-third of the wives don't feel one way or the other about their neighbors' recommendations on furniture, whereas less than one-fourth of the husbands and a little over one-fourth of the wives feel neutrally about their friends' opinions. And 21 percent more wives than husbands pay little attention to their friends' latest tips on furniture.

Couples Will Purchase A New Car In The Future

Husband's aren't the only ones who dream about new cars. One-fourth of all wives and nearly one-third of all husbands think that in the next two years they will buy a new car before anything else.

Oddly enough, couples don't feel that a car's design, color or appearance is terribly important. Nearly three-fifths of the wives but a little less than half of the husbands did not consider visibility important. At the other extreme, only four percent of the couples considered visibility extremely important.

Cars Receive Top Priority

Couples pamper themselves when buying a

car, even more so than for living room furniture. A couple's liking of a particular brand -- Chevy, Buick, Ford -- is considered to be more important than the brand of their living room furniture. Surprisingly, wives don't consider their homes more important than their cars. In fact, wives are more particular about a car than they are about living room furniture.

What's in the Future?

Although husbands give second priority to living and bedroom furniture and then to white goods such as stoves, washing machines and dryers, they still think about cars more than anything else (more than their wives?).

There are some durable goods couples are definitely not interested in. It appears that nearly everyone either has a black and white television or doesn't want one, because four-fifths of the couples said there was little possibility of purchasing one in the next couple of years.

Two other items also low on the list of priorities are waste disposals and dishwashers. It seems these items are still considered luxuries to many couples, so garbage cans and dishpan hands will continue to be familiar sights.

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