

A STUDY
OF
FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE NON-ELECTION
OF
HOME ECONOMICS

A Thesis

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in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
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by

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ABSTRACT

The problem of this study was to determine why students in selected secondary schools of the province of Saskatchewan, Canada, had not included home economics in their program of studies.

A review of literature identified a number of possible reasons affecting student decisions not to elect home economics. These reasons were categorized into seven factors and three questions.

The sixty-six students in the sample who provided the data for this study were drawn from students not electing home economics in the nine schools offering this class in Hudson Bay, Sturgis and Tisdale School Units in the province of Saskatchewan. The students were asked to complete a questionnaire designed by the writer for the study. Approximately ninety-three percent of the questionnaires were returned. The data were subjected to statistical analyses which involved calculating the mean value, One-Way Analysis of Variance and Newman-Keul's Procedure. A questionnaire completed by the teachers provided the information regarding the equipment, program and staff which is referred to in the discussion parts of the thesis.

As an influence on students' decisions not to elect home economics, the factors analyzed in this study ranked as follows:

1. Factor 7: Subject Requirements for Post-Secondary Courses
2. Factor 2: The Home Economics Program
3. Factor 3: The Home Economics Teacher
4. Factor 6: Preference for Other Classes

5. Factor 4: Tangible Products of the Class
6. Factor 1: The Equipment in the Home Economics Room
7. Factor 5: Timetabling of Home Economics

Older students in this study indicated they did not elect home economics in their program because they did not need the class for what they planned to do after high school. Students planning to attend university or vocational school were more greatly influenced by subject requirements for post-secondary courses than were students who planned to marry, get a job, had other plans or were undecided about their future. In this study the decision to include or not to include home economics in the student's program of studies was made by the student without consulting others. If advice was sought the student was neither encouraged nor discouraged from electing the class.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

INTRODUCTION

Increased scientific and technological knowledge has had a great influence on man. It has increased the length of his life. Development of labour-saving devices and materials have enabled the homemaker to decrease the amount of time spent at housekeeping and food preparation.¹ As one means of using this extra time, married women have been entering the labour force. The dual role of homemaker-worker has been accepted by an ever increasing number of women. In 1961, married women composed 47.3% of the female Canadian labour force, in 1971 56.7%². As we move from an agrarian to a technological society, the family must become more mobile as it follows "the job". In order to obtain and maintain employment the members of the family must constantly increase their educational level. The changing attitude towards the traditional role of the sexes has enabled the males to become more involved in the family. "He is often unashamed to be seen pushing a baby carriage or hanging out a baby's laundry which

¹P. Nickel and J. M. Dorsey, Management in Living (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1967), p. 132.

²Women's Bureau, Women in the Labour Force - 1971 Facts and Figures (Ottawa: Canada Department of Labour), p. 21.

he himself has done."¹ "Caught in the turbulent flow of change, called upon to make significant, rapidfire life decisions, he (man) feels not simply intellectual bewilderment, but disorientation at the level of personal values."²

Satenig St. Marie, reporting on the International Federation of Home Economics, Finland Congress, defined home economics as "the art and science of relating families to progress."³

Fanny Bird stated that "Home Economics is the study of the human and natural forces affecting home and families and the utilization of this knowledge for the benefit of mankind."⁴ Toffler's book Future Shock attempts to demonstrate how life is becoming more complex. "Copability" becomes a challenge for man and the family as change becomes more rapid and life styles more diverse.⁵ Married or single, all of mankind is intimately acquainted with the family and his deepest emotions are linked to it."⁶ Studying home economics can help familiarize the individual with the forces challenging the progress of the family. Home economics

¹Henry A. Bowman, Marriage for Moderns (6th ed.; Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1970), p. 37.

²Alvin Toffler, Future Shock (New York: Bantam Book, 1970), p. 363.

³Satenig St. Marie, "Report on the International Federation of Home Economics, Finland Congress," American Journal of Home Economics, LXV (September, 1973), 29.

⁴F. M. Bird, "A Definition of Home Economics for the 70's," American Journal of Home Economics, LXII (June, 1970), 414.

⁵Alvin Toffler, Future Shock (New York: Bantam Book, 1970).

⁶H. M. Hughes (ed.) Life in Families (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1970), p. 1.

should be of interest and benefit to all students.

Army found, in her five-year study, that 83% of the girls in grade nine elected Home Economics, and there were "very much smaller percentages in the advanced class."¹ In Saskatchewan, the Department of Education reported that enrollment for grade nine Home Economics was 6,719 students in 1970-71, 6,866 in 1971-72, 8,012 in 1972-73. Grade ten enrollment was 4,574 in 1970, 4,650 in 1971-72, 4,750 in 1972-73. Combined enrollment in Home Economics in grades eleven and twelve was 2,806 in 1971-72, and 3,339 in 1972-73². "We seem to lose the students at the grade ten level.... There have never been so many well trained Home Economics teachers or such well equipped departments in the history of Saskatchewan schools, yet, the students are not enrolling when they leave Junior High School."³

"Girls are fed up with taking Home Ec. for four years", a Star Phoenix news story quotes Mr. Grasley, recently appointed

¹C. B. Army, The Effectiveness of the High School Program in Home Economics. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1952), p. 42.

²Based on personal correspondence between Mr. Nakoneckny, Chief, Student Evaluation and Registrar, Department of Education and the writer. In grade eleven and twelve the Department of Education does not keep statistics for each of the home economics half-classes but rather groups the enrollment.

³Based on personal correspondence between Mrs. V. Sylvester, Editor, Vista, and the writer.

Saskatoon High School Superintendent.¹

In recent years, pressure groups have been lobbying the Saskatchewan Department of Education for courses such as Consumer Education and Family Life Education. The Saskatchewan Department of Education Home Economics Curriculum Committee, has recently prepared a slide-tape presentation, "Education for Living", for viewing by superintendents, principals, guidance personnel and parents. As more people become aware of what home economics offers, the Curriculum Committee hopes that male and female enrollments will increase.²

¹Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, September 4, 1973, p. 3, Cols. 4-5.

²Based on personal correspondence between Wanda Young, Chairman, Saskatchewan Department of Education Division III and IV Home Economics Curriculum Committee, and the writer.

STATEMENT OF THE
PROBLEM

The problem of this study was to determine why students did not include home economics in their secondary school program. This study focused on determining which of the following seven factors, frequently mentioned in the related literature, students ranked as most important in making their decision not to elect home economics.

FACTOR 1: The Equipment in the Home Economics Room

FACTOR 2: The Home Economics Program

FACTOR 3. The Home Economics Teacher

FACTOR 4: The Tangible Products of the Class

FACTOR 5: The Timetabling of Home Economics

FACTOR 6: Student Preference for Other Classes

FACTOR 7: Subject Requirements for Post-Secondary
School Courses

In addition the following three questions regarding student non-election of home economics were considered:

QUESTION 1: Do students at various ages differ in their reasons for non-election of home economics?

QUESTION 2: Do the vocational plans influence a student's reasons for non-election of home economics?

QUESTION 3: How do parents, school friends, adult friends, home economics teachers, guidance counsellors, teachers, neighbors, relatives, principals and vice-principals influence a student's decision regarding home economics in a

program of study?

IMPORTANCE OF THE PROBLEM

Much of the research on student enrollment has been concerned with why students do elect home economics. Studies of the population of which students are enrolled in home economics reveal complimentary reaction to home economics. As an alternate approach, this study will attempt to determine why students are not enrolled in the class by surveying students who have not elected home economics. Identification of the reasons for student non-election will give interested groups such as the Saskatchewan Home Economics Teachers' Association a basis for an analytical consideration of the situation. Problems may be solved, and misconceptions corrected.

Previous research of this nature was conducted in the United States in the late nineteen fifties and early nineteen sixties. The present study will give a contemporary look at student non-election of home economics.

Since this is the first study of this type in Saskatchewan, reasons given for non-election of home economics by Saskatchewan students can be compared with those given by students in studies conducted elsewhere.

Administrators of the schools, wishing to have each class and student function at its optimum, should be interested in this study. They can encourage and assist home economics teachers to overcome the hurdles discouraging student election of this class.

School Boards have spent money establishing and maintaining home economics facilities. Home economics facilities which yield low student usage are a poor Board and community investment.

One of the objectives of education is to educate people for life. Since home economics is very concerned with people and life, all people involved in and concerned with education will be interested in a study of this type.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. Course of Study - the list of aims, objectives, concepts and learning experiences as outlined by the Department of Education, Province of Saskatchewan.
2. Curriculum - the personalized interpretation and adaptation that a teacher and students make to the course of study.
3. Program of Study - the classes in which a student enrolls to meet the requirements of graduation.
4. Secondary School Student - a student who is enrolled in grade nine, ten, eleven or twelve.
5. Tangible Products of the Class - marks and products the student has made as part of the class.

DELIMITATIONS

The problem was confined to three rural school units in northeast Saskatchewan - Hudson Bay, Sturgis and Tisdale. These three units had nine schools which offer home economics to students in grade nine to twelve. The population was a stratified (male and female) random sample selected from students in each school not enrolled in Home Economics in 1973-74. For every twenty-five

students enrolled in the participating schools, one student not electing Home Economics was randomly selected by the researcher to answer the questionnaire. Ten percent of the respondents were male. This sampling technique yielded a population of 66 students.

LIMITATIONS

1. Opinions can be analyzed only so far as the participating students reveal them.
2. Opinions for non-election can be analyzed only to the extent that they are identified in the questionnaire.

ASSUMPTIONS

1. Students answered as honestly as possible.
2. Students are aware of their reason for not electing Home Economics.
3. It is important for all students to take Home Economics.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature indicates that students have a variety of reasons for not electing Home Economics.

Harmon, in a study of factors influencing the election of Homemaking Education by senior girls in nine Virginia High Schools, found that girls chose not to elect Home Economics because they felt other classes were more interesting. Many girls held the belief that Home Economics could not be used as an entrance class for college. The third most common belief held student not electing home economics was that Home Economics could be learned at home. Harmon's study showed that teachers and guidance personnel had very little influence on the students in the non-choice of this class. When the students were asked to give suggestions for improving Home Economics, the most frequent recommendation was for more up-to-date equipment. The students felt longer class periods with more opportunity to work with the teacher would be beneficial to Home Economics. They also expressed a desire for more practical projects. As a result of her discussions with administrators, Harmon concluded that graduation requirements and scheduling did not influence students in their election or non-election of Home Economics. Of greater importance, was the policy of establishing a program of study load at four classes per semester.¹

¹V. E. M. Harmon, "Factors Influencing the Election of Homemaking Education in Certain High Schools of Virginia" (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, 1957); pp. 20-21.

Reeves' study refutes Harmon's findings on scheduling. In her study in three secondary Virginia schools, Reeves found that the main reason given by students for Home Economics non-election was scheduling problems. Guidance counsellors in this study, too, felt that scheduling was the most important reason for non-election. Interest in other classes curtailed enrollment. The fact that no friends were taking the class discouraged some students from enrolling. Some students were advised by parents and counsellors not to take the course. Liking of teachers in various subjects drew students to other classes. Feeling that there is no need to prepare for marriage and family life restrained some students from enrolling in the class. Not having a clear idea of the nature of the class caused some students to pass over home economics when selecting classes for a program of studies. Some students felt that home-making can be learned at home. As a reason for non-election, some students alleged that the class was too hard, and others that the class was too easy. In analyzing guidance counsellors' responses to why students did not elect home economics, Reeves found that in addition to scheduling problems, students often had an interest in other areas. Controversy with the home economics teacher was frequently cited. Some students felt that they could learn all that they needed to know at home. Guidance counsellors were of the opinion that students tend to elect classes which will assist them in finding employment. Because students do not see employment opportunities associated with a home economics class, they tend to elect classes in areas such as business. This study found that the percentage of students

enrolled in home economics varied with the size of the school. The larger schools which offered a greater variety in the number of electives had a lower percentage of students electing home economics than did smaller schools with fewer electives.¹

Bauhof demonstrated in her study that scheduling problems, competition with other electives and graduation requirements were major factors influencing non-election of home economics. The effectiveness of the program as viewed by the student was considered when selecting a program. Senior high school girls and administrators in the study indicated that adequate facilities were important in the student's decision for selection of home economics. Most of the girls felt that they were responsible for their decision not to elect Home Economics. In addition to guidance counsellors, girls consulted with parents, students and relatives before making their decision not to elect home economics.²

Young's study revealed a student concern over employment opportunities. Since forty-seven percent of the students in her study babysat, she felt that students would benefit from more emphasis on child care and development. Some information on garden and lawn care might be added to the curriculum at the

¹M. W. Reeves, "Some Factors That Influence the Election of Homemaking in Secondary Schools in Montgomery County, Virginia" (unpublished Master's thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, 1964), pp. 47-51.

²V. R. Bauhof, "Factors Determining Non-election of High School Home Economics based on the Judgement of the High School Senior Girls and Administrator" (unpublished Master's thesis, Texas Women's University, 1959), pp. 78-84.

expense of clothing construction. She found that the attractiveness of the department had little or no effect on student enrollment. It should be noted that the Young study involved students enrolled in home economics. Other factors may have been much stronger in attracting students to the class and students may have tended to overlook the poor facilities.¹

Howe indicated in What's New in Home Economics that up-to-date equipment was necessary to help attract students to Home Economics.²

Guidance counsellors' perceptions of home economics have been studied. Becnel found that even though counsellors felt that students make independent decisions, attitudes and beliefs of the counsellor cannot help but be reflected in student decisions. Some counsellors indicated that with time pressure, class size and requirements, it is much easier to tell the student than to counsel him.³

Johnson studied Secondary School counsellors' beliefs about Home Economics. At least seventy-five percent of the nine hundred and forty-one Oregon and Colorado population in her study believed home economics classes to be interesting and challenging.

¹J. S. Young, "Factors Influencing Secondary School Girls to Elect Homemaking and Home Economics Education" (unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1964), pp. 30-68.

²Eleanor How, "Why Girls Do Take Home Economics", What's New in Home Economics, XVIII, (February, 1954), 53.

³M. Becnel, "Guidance Counsellors' Perception of Home Economics as a Field of Study in the High School" (unpublished Master's Thesis, Louisiana State University, 1965), pp. 60-73.

A Home Economics degree, they presumed, offered one a chance for an interesting career. Johnson's Oregon-Colorado group of guidance counsellors were not as familiar with the correlation between home economics and other classes as they were with career opportunities.¹

Even though counsellors have such a favorable attitude towards home economics, they still, according to Sulek and Barelman, are not aware of the opportunities in this field of study. This pair of writers found in a Nebraska survey that guidance counsellors made only incidental use of home economics recruiting material.²

To assist the guidance counsellor in acquainting students with opportunities in Home Economics, Meeks suggests that every course offered should include a unit of work indicating the career possibilities associated with that course.³

Christopherson makes reference to a study by Elizabeth May, Dean of Home Economics, University of Connecticut, who found that not enough information was given to the guidance counsellors

¹N. L. Johnson, "Secondary School Counsellors' Beliefs Concerning Home Economics" (unpublished Master's Thesis, Oregon State University, 1963), pp. 125-30.

²H. Sulek and M. Barelman, "Do Guidance Teachers Present Home Economics Career Information?" American Journal of Home Economics, LVIII, (November, 1966), 746-747.

³Anna R. Meeks, "The Teacher's Role in Guidance," American Journal of Home Economics, LI, (April, 1959), 243-246.

regarding the true nature of Home Economics.¹

Gately also implies that the Home Economics profession needs to constantly and carefully communicate and assess its program.

She states:

The Home Economics program must be carefully planned and continually revised if it is to meet present day needs and demands of students. Home Economics cannot be fully understood if communication with other educators failed to interpret the program accurately.²

¹V. A. Christopherson, "Problems in Home Economics," Journal of Higher Education, XXXVIII, (April, 1957), 210.

²Olive P. Gately, "Watch It: Your Public Relations are Showing," Forecast, LXVIII, (March, 1962) 13.

SUMMARY

From these studies, it would appear that there is no one specific factor contributing to the non-election of Home Economics by students. The numerous reasons for student non-election of Home Economics as cited by students, counsellors and administrators in the various studies reviewed could be categorized as follows:

1. Equipment of the Home Economics room
Bauhof, Howe and Harmon found that adequate, up-to-date equipment was necessary to attract students. Young found that the attractiveness of the department had little influence.
2. The Home Economics Program
Reeves, Harmon, Young, Bauhof found aspects of the curriculum contributing to student non-enrollment.
3. The Home Economics Teacher
Reeves found evidence of teacher-student controversy contributing to non-enrollment.
4. Tangible Products of the Class
Reeves found that some students felt the class was too hard while others felt it was too easy.
5. The Timetable
Reeves and Bauhof found support for this factor as contributing greatly to non-election of Home Economics. Harmon's study led her to believe otherwise.
6. Preference for other classes
Harmon and Reeves found strong support for this factor as contributing to student non-election of Home Economics.
7. Requirements for Post-secondary School Courses
Harmon found that girls believed that Home Economics could not be used for credit for college entrance.

8. Parents, Counsellors, Teachers, Friends
Reeves and Bauhof found that students do not make decisions about enrollment by themselves, but often consult with some of the above people.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD OF PROCEDURE

A survey was used to identify factors contributing to the non-election of home economics. The items investigated in the writer-designed "Student's Questionnaire" were selected as an outgrowth of the literature. The "Student's Questionnaire" was prepared in three sections. The questions in Part I were designed to reveal information about the respondent and who assisted him in class selection. The student was asked to check the response which most correctly answered the question. Part II of the study dealt with reasons why the student did not elect home economics. The student was asked to rate each item on a five-point scale indicating the degree to which the item influenced him in his decision not to elect home economics. Part III gave the student an opportunity to explain on what basis the questionnaire was answered if the respondent had never enrolled in a home economics class. The questionnaire is in Appendix D, page 64.

In the first visit to each of the schools, the writer selected the population which would participate in the questionnaire. At this time, a copy of the master timetable was obtained and a visit was made to the home economics facilities of the school. In addition, the teacher was interviewed.

Since an analysis of the student responses and a comparison with related research had to be made relative to the conditions in the schools included in this study, a brief

description of the facilities provided for home economics, the qualifications of the teachers of home economics and the timetabling procedures is included in Appendix F, page 71.

Arrangements were made for the students to answer the questionnaire at a future visit. The questionnaires were administered during the second visit to each school.

The following remarks were made to each student prior to his answering the questionnaire:

"I am studying why students do not elect home economics. To do this, I have prepared a questionnaire. Some students from schools offering home economics have been asked to help me by answering the questionnaire. You are one of those students. The questionnaire is in three parts. Instructions are at the top of each part. Please answer all the questions. If you have any questions I shall be pleased to answer them for you."

To give insight into the factors and questions posed by the problem of this study, the questionnaire items were categorized as follows:

- FACTOR 1: The equipment in the Home Economics Room
(Student Questionnaire items numbered 16, 21,
and 35 were designed to reveal student opinion on this
factor)
- FACTOR 2: The Home Economics Program
(Student Questionnaire items numbered 18, 23, 32)
- FACTOR 3: The Home Economics Teacher
(Student Questionnaire items numbered 17, 24, 26)
- FACTOR 4: The Tangible Products of the Class
(Student Questionnaire items numbered 22, 33, 36)

- FACTOR 5: The Timetabling of Home Economics
(Student Questionnaire items numbered 20, 28, 34)
- FACTOR 6: Preference for Other Classes
(Student Questionnaire items numbered 19, 25, 30)
- FACTOR 7: Subject Requirements of Post-Secondary Courses
(Student Questionnaire items numbered 27, 29, 31)
- QUESTION 1: Do students at various ages differ in their reasons for non-election of Home Economics?
(Student Questionnaire items numbered 1, 16 to 36)
- QUESTION 2: Do the vocational plans influence a student's reasons for non-election of Home Economics?
(Student Questionnaire items numbered 5, 16 to 36)
- QUESTION 3: How do parents, school friends, adult friends, Home Economics teachers, guidance counsellors, neighbors, relatives, principals and vice-principals influence a student's decision regarding Home Economics in a program of study?
(Student Questionnaire item numbers 6 to 15)

Data obtained from Part 11 were designed to give information pertaining to Factors 1 to 7 of this study. In this Part, the respondent was asked to rate the effect the factor specified in the questionnaire item had on his decision not to elect home economics. The student responded as follows:

1. - G - Greatly Affected Me - The item mentioned greatly affected your decision not to elect Home Economics.
2. - S - Somewhat Affected Me - The item mentioned somewhat affected your decision not to elect Home Economics.
3. - V - Very Little Affect on Me - The item mentioned played very little importance in your decision not to elect Home Economics.
4. - N - No Influence on Me - You were aware of the item when making your decision, but you feel that the item did not affect your decision.
5. - W - Was Not Involved - The item mentioned was in no way present to influence your decision.

Part I was designed to reveal information about the respondent and who assisted him in class selection. The respondent was asked to place a check mark in the blank beside the response which most correctly answered the question for him. Data obtained from Part I were correlated with data from Part II to give information pertaining to Questions 1 to 3 of this study.

Part III was to be answered by students who had never been enrolled in a home economics class. The respondent was asked to explain how he obtained the information by which he answered the questionnaire.

The information from the questionnaires of the sixty-six respondents was transferred to computer punch cards by the staff at the University of Saskatchewan Computation Center. The analyst who assisted the researcher on the study was Leslie Volk.

The analysis of these data was carried out with the aid of a computer using the following procedures and programs:

1. The frequency distribution of responses to questionnaire items 21 to 36 was obtained.
2. The mean value for each item was determined by assigning a value of 1-5 in ascending order to each response (G S V N W), summing and dividing by the number of respondents.
3. The mean value for each factor was determined by summing the mean values of each of the three questionnaire items pertaining to that factor.
4. One-way analysis of variance was utilized to determine if differences existed among the means in the responses according to
 - (a) each of the seven factors of the problem
 - (b) age of the respondents
 - (c) age and each of the seven factors
 - (d) vocational plans of respondents
 - (e) vocational plans and each of the seven factors
5. If a significant difference was found to exist among the means, the Newman-Keuls Procedure was used to determine where the difference existed.

A discussion of the statistical inferences follows for each factor and question. An attempt is made in the discussion section to interpret the opinions of the respondents in light of their educational atmosphere and to compare the results of this study

with the results of similar studies described in the related research.

SUMMARY OF THE PROCEDURE

1. The writer constructed the questionnaire on the basis of the related literature.
2. The schools involved in the study were visited so the population of the study could be selected and the educational setting could be described.
3. The questionnaire was administered.
4. The data were processed by the computer.
5. Analysis of the data was done by using
 - One-Way Variance for Dependent Variables
 - Newman-Keuls Range Test of Differences Between Group Means.
6. Interpretation and discussion of the data followed.
7. Results of this study were compared with other studies.
8. Conclusions were made regarding the problem of the study.
9. Recommendations and suggestion for further study were made.