

REASONS FOR CHOOSING A HOME ECONOMICS CURRICULUM AS
INDICATED BY A GROUP OF COLLEGE FRESHMEN WOMEN

by

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INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

From the three higher institutions in the Middle West which introduced "domestic economy" or "household arts and science" in the 1870's, the number of institutions offering home economics has increased steadily. In 1950-51 approximately 495 institutions in the United States granted degrees in home economics, and 330 additional post-high-school institutions offered some courses but did not grant degrees in home economics (Coon, 1952).

Home economics was first introduced into colleges primarily to provide for women students a kind of education that would help them become better homemakers. Demands for professional preparation appeared later. A definite shortage of personnel trained in the home economics field has been a problem. With the growth of such a profession came the need for an effective recruitment program in order to interest an increased number of outstanding youth in entering home economics.

The quality of the graduates from the School of Home Economics at Kansas State College is predetermined to a considerable degree by the quality of the students the school receives. Therefore, it would be most appropriate if the staff, faculty, and alumni made it their objective to do everything possible to attract a high calibre of freshmen to this school. In instituting a strong recruiting program to interest outstanding young women and men in the School of Home Economics it would be most fitting to intensify activities in this regard.

The present study was an attempt to identify some of the factors that encouraged, influenced, and motivated freshmen women in choosing a college curriculum in home economics. It was believed that a systematic collection of data and interpretation of such data would make a positive contribution

to certain aspects of a recruiting program.

A few studies of a similar nature were obtainable and these were reviewed in their relationship to the present study.

Coon (1952) pointed out in "Trends in Home Economics Enrollment", that the trend is toward an increase in institutions offering home economics and an increase in non-major enrollment in degree-granting institutions. The author believed that preparation for teaching home economics in non-degree-granting institutions and for teaching home and family living to non-majors was a very important job which should have the attention of graduate departments in colleges and universities.

To date there has been an increase in the number of institutions granting both undergraduate and graduate degrees in home economics and an increase in the number of degrees granted. The decrease in the number of majors enrolling raised the question as to whether the number of degrees granted would continue to increase. Non-major students have increased more rapidly than major students and men students more rapidly than women students.

Wright and Corbin (1952) in their study, "Factors in Choice of Home Economics", attempted to determine the factors which influenced students to enroll in home economics departments of Nebraska colleges and universities and to analyze those factors as a basis for an effective recruitment program. The findings from the 192 questionnaires returned revealed that over 50 per cent of the students made their final decision to enroll in college during their senior year, 14 per cent during their junior year, and about 20 per cent after graduation from high school. Mothers ranked first in influencing students to enroll in home economics in college and homemaking teachers ranked second. Nearly 74 per cent of the students were influenced by their mothers, while approximately 33 per cent of the students were influenced by

the homemaking teacher. Twenty-four per cent of the students were influenced by their fathers. Mothers were particularly interested in the work as preparation for marriage, while fathers were interested in the economic security it afforded. The findings also revealed that 4-H Club influenced 22 per cent and Future Homemakers of America influenced nine out of 21 students who came from high schools which had a local chapter at the time this study was made. "Hospitality days" at colleges influenced 12 per cent of the students.

Nelson's (1953) study of "Factors Related to the Extent of Mortality Among Home Economics Students in Certain Colleges of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa During 1943-50", revealed that about half of the freshmen entering home economics in the colleges studied during the years 1943-48 dropped out before graduation. Information regarding reasons for enrolling in home economics was furnished by the replies on a questionnaire sent to 2,263 voluntary dropouts. About a third said they had taken home economics because they thought it would be practical; about a third gave as their reason, preparation for professional jobs in home economics; a sixth gave preparation for homemaking, and the others said that they had no real interest in the field but had been persuaded to enroll by their parents or that they could not get into the field of their first choice.

The Nelson study further revealed that unless they had studied home economics in the senior high school, few listed high school instruction as a factor causing them to enroll for that course in college. High school counselors and other teachers had influenced few of them to take home economics.

Schusky (1953) suggested that superintendents and principals can do a great deal to help increase home economics enrollments. One of these aims was to plan school curricula with home economics courses and still meet

college requirements.

Jorgensen (1954) in "A Home Economics Survey at the Junior College Level", surveyed the 195 women students in attendance at Santa Ana College, California to determine the need and interest for the establishment of a more definite program in training for family living. Approximately 90 per cent of the women students returned questionnaires. The results stated that an average of 1.8 years of training in the home economics field was taken per student prior to college. Of this, 62 per cent was taken in junior high schools and 38 per cent in senior high schools. When asked to indicate in what areas they did not feel that they had an adequate knowledge, the students' checking showed that an average of 42 per cent inadequacy existed. Inadequacy increased in direct proportion to the amount of training. It could be concluded that those who had more training were more aware of their lack.

The purpose of Hall's (1955) study, "Attitudes Toward Homemaking Education in the Secondary Schools of California", was to obtain basic information about the opinions held by various groups in the school and community as to the strengths and limitations of the homemaking programs. Some of the opinions expressed revealed that students were taking homemaking courses primarily because of their own interest and the influence of their parents, and although difficulties of scheduling were the most serious limitations, the advancement of homemaking education was being limited also by the lack of practicality in the courses now being offered.

Murphy and Bosard (1956) in their study, "Profile of 1955-56 Home Economics Freshmen", obtained data on age, home and family background, previous education, work experiences, and home economics interests for entering freshmen in the School of Home Economics at the University of Alabama. These data

from 137 students were tabulated and some of the information revealed that some home economics work had been taken in high school by 103 students. Of this group 79 had taken home economics for one or two years, while 24 students had taken home economics for three years or more. Nearly every freshman indicated that she had been active in clubs and other organizations in high school; about one-fourth had been members of 4-H Clubs or Future Homemakers of America and had held offices in these organizations. When asked to mention any teachers who had considerable influence on their lives, 28 students mentioned home economics teachers, which ranked third behind English teachers and elementary school teachers respectively.

Garrett (1958) in her study, "Attitudes of Senior High Girls Toward Home Economics", pointed out that home economics was elected by 47.16 per cent of the girls in selected senior high schools of Washington, D. C. She concluded that the election or non-election of home economics was largely a matter of personal interest. Questionnaires returned from 1,207 girls showed the following results. To the question, "Who encouraged you to take home economics?", parents were mentioned as the influential factor in 25 per cent of the cases where girls enrolled in home economics classes; the administration accounted for another 25 per cent of the electees; 20 per cent of the girls were influenced by friends; and the remaining 30 per cent who elected home economics did so because of personal interest. Nineteen per cent of the girls did not elect home economics because they preferred other subjects; 17 per cent said their schedule was too full; no interest was given by 11.5 per cent; and 10 per cent said they had learned at home. The other 45 per cent gave a varied number of reasons of smaller proportions. Most girls did not plan to take home economics work in college. Twenty-four per cent indicated that they planned to take some courses in this area; 76 per cent did not anticipate taking any more home economics.

The two following studies were related to the methodology of the study.

Lazarsfeld and Barton (1951) in discussing qualitative measurement stated that it was usually not possible to arrive at a satisfactory classification system simply by grouping items which seemed similar in content. Rather it was necessary to build up a concrete picture or model of the whole situation to which the reports referred, and then locate the particular report within this "structural scheme". This involved an interacting process. First it would be necessary to visualize the concrete processes and activities implied by the responses, through introspection and an imaginative qualitative analysis of the data, to get a preliminary scheme. Then one tried to apply this scheme systematically to the data, returned to the structural scheme for refinement, reapplied the revised scheme to the data and so on. The authors also stated that any classification can be made exhaustive by including an "other" category. This met the purely logical requirement, but it defeated the purpose of the classification which was to distinguish elements which behaved differently in terms of the problem under study.

Mauldin and Marks (1950) believed that the vast majority of respondents attempted to give correct answers or at least did not deliberately give inaccurate answers, but some errors resulted from a failure to recall a past event or series of events. A great many problems of response errors in surveys may be subsumed under the two general headings, problems of communication and problems of recall. They further pointed out that the literal interpretation of a statement or question was less important than the particular meaning attached to the statement or question by the respondent and investigator. In evaluating a question it was more important to ask, "How will the respondent interpret this?" than to ask, "What does this question mean?"

The objectives of the present study were: (1) to find reasons expressed

by freshmen women for choosing a home economics curriculum, (2) to find reasons expressed by freshmen women for not choosing a home economics curriculum, and (3) to find the time when the decision to enter the school enrolled in was made.

PROCEDURE

Preliminary Data

The preliminary data leading to the study were obtained by personnel on the dean's staff in the School of Home Economics. To learn why students chose to enroll in home economics, a short questionnaire (Appendix) was submitted to all students attending home economics classes on May 15, 1958. The two unstructured items used were, (a) I chose to take home economics in college because _____, and (b) Some of my friends (or I) did not choose home economics because _____. Students majoring in a home economics curriculum were requested to answer both questions while students not majoring in home economics were requested to answer only the second question. Three hundred and seventy-eight questionnaires were returned.

Before the free responses on the 378 questionnaires were tabulated by the investigator, it was decided to construct a model of the whole situation to which the responses referred (as suggested by Lazarsfeld and Barton). To classify these reasons for certain kinds of action, all possible responses were visualized and a preliminary model (Appendix) of categories was devised. The purpose of the model was to organize the many items into a small number of classes that were mutually exclusive and as exhaustive as possible. The categories were applied to the data and the responses were tabulated. Corrections and refinements were then made on the original model to include some reasons overlooked.

Construction of Check List

Tabulation of these preliminary unstructured data served as a basis for constructing a check list (Appendix) to be administered to the freshmen women entering Kansas State College in the fall of 1958. The check list was composed of three parts. The first part was a face sheet of background information to be filled out by all freshmen women. The second part was a two-page check list for students enrolled in the School of Home Economics, while the third part was intended for students enrolled in a school other than the School of Home Economics.

Freshmen women enrolled in the School of Home Economics were asked to double-check their chief reason and to single-check a second choice, if they had one, concerning (1) vocational reasons for choosing a home economics curriculum, (2) persons who may have influenced them in their choice, (3) personal experiences that may have encouraged them in their selection, and (4) reasons relating to subject matter in home economics. They also were asked to indicate when they made the decision to enter the School of Home Economics.

For those students enrolled in a school other than the School of Home Economics the format of the instrument was changed to include the inquiry, "Did you, in the process of choosing your curriculum, consider the desirability of entering home economics?" If the answer to this question was yes, the student was asked to state the reasons for deciding against entering home economics. It was believed that possibly the majority of girls who did not go into home economics may have made a positive decision to enter their school. They did not necessarily start with a rejection of home economics. For these students an elaborate array of reasons for not entering home

economics might have been merely a fascinating verification of their decisions. The question asked was left unstructured for these reasons. These students also were asked to indicate when they made the decision to enter the school in which they were enrolled.

Pre-test of Check List

Three freshmen women enrolled in the 1958 summer school at Kansas State College cooperated in pre-testing the check list. Their assistance was used to clear up any misunderstanding in the wording of the directions and the questions. They also were timed to enable the investigator to better judge how much time to request for the administration of the check list in the fall.

Administration of Check List

The associate dean of students and the directors of Northwest and Southeast Halls cooperated in scheduling a meeting time for the investigator to administer the check lists to the freshmen women living in the two residence halls. An after-dinner meeting in the lounge was arranged on two different evenings to accommodate each of the groups. The check list and a pencil were given to each girl as she entered the lounge. The following was part of the explanation given to the girls before they started to work.

The School of Home Economics is sponsoring this check list to find the reasons that influenced your choice of curriculums and when you made that choice.

The check list is made up of four pages, one white, two yellow, and one green. The white sheet is to be filled out by all of you. The two yellow sheets are to be checked only by those of you enrolled in the School of Home Economics. The green sheet is to be answered by those of you not enrolled in the School of Home Economics, but in some other school such as the School of Arts and Science.

Read all of the directions carefully before you answer any of the questions . . .

Approximately one-half hour was spent in the administration of the check list, including distribution, introduction and explanation, time for answering, and the collection of the completed check lists and pencils.

Three hundred and twenty-seven check lists were returned out of an approximate 380. (The exact number of freshmen in each residence hall was not available.) The remainder of the women had either signed out for dinner or for various reasons did not attend the meetings. Because 30 women failed to follow directions their check lists could not be used in the final tabulation. The 297 check lists remaining were used in the final tabulation and in this study these constituted the sample described.

DATA AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of the Group

The group was composed of 95 home economics students, 200 arts and science students, and two students enrolled in engineering and architecture. All were women.

When classified according to place of residence for most of the school years before entering college (Table 1), 46.2 per cent of the students had lived in towns of less than 2500 people or on a farm.

An additional 53.1 per cent of the total group had lived in urban residencies, towns or cities with populations of 2500 or more. Two students did not clearly indicate their place of residence and they accounted for 1.3 per cent of the group.

The arts and science students who had considered home economics before enrolling were predominantly a rural group with 61.1 per cent of these students indicating that they lived in towns with less than 2500 people or on a farm (Table 2).

Table 1. The place of residence of 297 college freshmen women for most of their school years before entering college.

Place of residence	: Students		: Arts & science		: Arts & science		: Total	
	: No. :	: Per cent :	: students who considered home economics :	: No. :	: Per cent :	: students who did not consider home economics :	: No. :	: Per cent :
On a farm	35	36.8	19	35.2	32	21.6	86	29.0
In a town with less than 2500 people, but not on a farm	11	11.6	14	25.9	26	17.6	51	17.2
In a town with 2500 to 25,000 people	20	21.1	10	18.5	37	25.0	67	22.5
In a city with a population of 25,000 to 100,000	10	10.5	3	5.6	12	8.1	25	8.4
In a city with a population of over 100,000	19	20.0	8	14.8	39	26.4	66	22.2
Blank					2	1.3	2	0.7
Total	95	100.0	54	100.0	148	100.0	297	100.0

Table 2. The place of residence of 297 college freshmen women classified as rural or urban.

Place of residence	: Students		: Arts & science : students who : considered		: Arts & science : students who : did not consider		: home economics : home economics		: Total	
	: No. :	: Per cent :	: No. :	: Per cent :	: No. :	: Per cent :	: No. :	: Per cent :	: No. :	: Per cent :
Rural (less than 2500 people)	46	48.4	33	61.1	58	39.2	137	46.2		
Urban (more than 2500 people)	49	51.6	21	38.9	88	59.5	158	53.1		
Blank					2	1.3	2	0.7		
Total	95	100.0	54	100.0	148	100.0	297	100.0		

Table 3. The number of semesters of home economics taken in junior and senior high school by 297 freshmen women.

Number of semesters	: Students		: Arts & science : students who : considered		: Arts & science : students who : did not consider		: home economics : home economics		: Total	
	: No. :	: Per cent :	: No. :	: Per cent :	: No. :	: Per cent :	: No. :	: Per cent :	: No. :	: Per cent :
Between one and four semesters	40	42.1	24	44.4	76	51.4	140	47.1		
Five semesters or more	48	50.5	22	40.8	44	29.7	114	38.4		
No semesters	7	7.4	8	14.8	28	18.9	43	14.5		
Total	95	100.0	54	100.0	148	100.0	297	100.0		

As shown in Table 3, 47.1 per cent of the students had between one and four semesters of home economics in junior and senior high school. An additional 38.4 per cent of the group indicated that they had five semesters or more of home economics in school, before college. Forty-three students showed that they had had no home economics in junior or senior high school, and these students represented 14.5 per cent of the total group.

The mean number of semesters per students was 4.3 semesters. While the home economics enrollees averaged 5.2 semesters of home economics training before college, the arts and science students who did not consider the desirability of entering home economics, reported that they had only 3.7 semesters of home economics before college. The arts and science students who did consider entering home economics averaged 4.3 semesters per student. These findings compare with Jorgensen's (1954) group which had an average of 1.8 years or more than three semesters per student of home economics training prior to college.

Table 4 shows that 36.1 per cent of the group indicated that they had carried out homemaking projects as an active member of 4-H, while 32.4 per cent of the students had checked none of the youth organizations listed or had reported others. About 68 per cent of the group belonged to one or more youth organizations. The same was indicated in Murphy and Bosard's (1956) study.

In the body of the check list, 19 out of 95 home economics students reported that pleasant homemaking experiences in youth organizations had been the most important personal experience in encouraging them to select a home economics curriculum. Eighteen of these students had checked that they had carried out homemaking projects as a member of 4-H, representing 94.7 per cent of the students who had checked this experience as their first

Table 4. The number and per cent of students indicating that they had carried out homemaking projects as active members in some youth organizations.

Youth organization	: Students		: Arts & science		: Arts & science		: Arts & science	
	: No.	: Per cent	: No.	: Per cent	: students who	: students who	: students who	: students who
	: No.	: Per cent	: No.	: Per cent	: considered	: did not consider	: did not consider	: did not consider
	: No.	: Per cent	: No.	: Per cent	: home economics	: home economics	: home economics	: home economics
	: No.	: Per cent	: No.	: Per cent	: No.	: Per cent	: No.	: Per cent
							Total	
4-H	44	46.3	24	44.4	39	26.4	107	36.1
Future Homemakers of America	29	30.5	13	24.1	18	12.2	60	20.2
Girl Scouts	23	24.2	14	25.9	49	33.1	86	29.0
None checked	23	24.2	15	27.8	58	39.2	96	32.4

choice. An additional 36.8 per cent of these students checked Future Homemakers of America Clubs, while Girl Scouts was checked by one student (Table 5).

Table 5. Participation in youth organizations as reported by 32 home economics students.

Organization	: First choice		: Second choice	
	: Number	: Per cent	: Number	: Per cent
4-H	18	94.7	10	77.0
Future Homemakers of America	7	36.8	9	69.2
Girl Scouts	1	5.3	1	7.7
Total number of students checking	19		13	

Thirteen home economics freshmen indicated that pleasant homemaking experiences in youth organizations had been the second most important personal experience that encouraged them to select home economics. Of these, 77 per cent mentioned homemaking experiences in 4-H; 69.2 per cent checked Future Homemakers of America; and one student selected Girl Scouts.

In summary the group studied could be described as slightly more urban than rural in background, with 85.5 per cent of the students indicating that they had had home economics training in school before college. The group had a mean of 4.3 semesters per student of home economics training prior to college. More than two-thirds of the group had carried out homemaking projects as active members in 4-H, Future Homemakers of America and Girl Scouts.

Tabulation of Data

The format of the check list served as a basis for dividing the sample

into two groups. Ninety-five freshmen women enrolled in the School of Home Economics made up the first group, while 200 freshmen women enrolled in the School of Arts and Science and two women enrolled in the School of Engineering and Architecture composed the second group. (Hereafter the second group will be referred to as the arts and science group.) A breakdown of the second group was made on the basis of the student's answer to the question, "Did you, in the process of choosing your curriculum, consider the desirability of entering home economics?" Fifty-four of the 202 students indicated that they had considered home economics and gave their reasons for deciding against entering this field. The second subgroup was composed of the other 148 students who, in the process of choosing their curriculums, did not consider the desirability of entering home economics.

The check list with five sections was filled in by the home economics students. The directions were that the student read through all the reasons given in a particular section and select the reason that influenced her most and put a double check in the blank provided to the left of that reason. If the student had a second choice, she was directed to put a single check in the blank provided to the left of that reason.

It was believed that each student would be able to indicate the reason that influenced her more than any of the others given. Therefore, when a student checked only one reason within a section it was assumed in tabulating that this was her chief reason regardless of whether it was a double or single check. Not every student indicated a first choice as it had been assumed they would, and in two of the five sections there were less than 95 first choices checked.

The data were interpreted by means of percentages. The total number of those responding with a first choice in a particular section represented 100

per cent. The second choices also were converted to percentages, with the total number of students who had selected a first choice within that particular section, serving as the basis for the conversion. The second choices could then be interpreted in light of the first choices.

Interpretation of Data

Section A of the check list was concerned with some vocational reasons for choosing a home economics curriculum in college. As shown in Table 6 the combination of homemaking and a career outside the home received the highest percentage of first choice checks. Preparation for being a homemaker ranked second, and together these two reasons constituted 61 per cent of the total checking. An additional 44.2 per cent of the students checked these two reasons as their second choice.

The three remaining reasons which emphasized the career and professional aspects of home economics received a total of 39 per cent of the first choice checks, with an additional 40 per cent of the students selecting these reasons for their second choice.

When asked to indicate those persons who might have influenced them in their choice of home economics, only 86 students gave a first choice and 55 students selected a second choice (Table 7). The nine students who made no choices in this section might have felt that the decision to enter home economics was a result of their own independent thinking and action.

As shown in Table 7, parents received the highest percentage of first choices. Students checking parents as the most influential persons in their choice of home economics might have felt that no one parent was the most influential but that the combined influence, the parental influence dominated. While Mother ranked second with 29.1 per cent of the total first choices,

Table 6. The number and per cent of students indicating a first choice and a second choice of some vocational reasons for choosing a home economics curriculum in college.

Reason	: <u>First choice</u> :		: <u>Second choice</u>	
	Number	:Per cent :	Number	:Per cent
	: checking:	checking :	: checking:	checking:
Combination of homemaking and career	35	36.8	13	13.7
Preparation for being a homemaker	23	24.2	29	30.5
Career opportunities in home economics	17	18.0	16	16.8
Preparation for a career outside home	12	12.6	13	13.7
Provision for economic security	8	8.4	9	9.5
Total	95	100.0	80	—

Table 7. The number and per cent of students indicating a first choice and a second choice concerning persons who had influenced them in their choice of a home economics curriculum.

Persons	: <u>First choice</u> :		: <u>Second choice</u>	
	Number	:Percent :	Number	:Per cent
	: checking:	checking :	: checking:	checking:
Parents	29	33.8	10	11.6
Mother	25	29.1	7	8.1
Home economics teacher and other teachers	16	18.6	19	22.1
Home Economics Agent	5	5.8	4	4.6
Other member of family	4	4.7	3	3.5
Other adults in field of home economics	3	3.5	1	1.2
Other adults not in field of home economics	2	2.3	3	3.5
Father	2	2.3	2	2.3
Friends of own age	0	0.0	6	7.0
Total	86	100.0	55	—

Father ranked eighth among nine places with 2.3 per cent. Hall (1955) and Garrett (1958) in their studies, pointed out parental influence as a factor in choosing home economics.

Section C of the check list directed the students to indicate the most important personal experience, from a given list of experiences, that had encouraged them in their choice of home economics.

In Table 8, forty students checked as their first choice a liking for those activities included in homemaking such as sewing and cooking. This experience received more first choices than any other reason on the entire check list and represented 43.9 per cent of the total number of first choices in this particular section.

Also important in encouraging students to enroll in home economics was enjoyment of homemaking experiences in youth organizations such as 4-H Club, Future Homemakers of America, and Girl Scouts, pleasant classroom experiences in home economics in junior and senior high school, and pleasant home experiences.

When asked why a curriculum in home economics had appealed to them, 36.8 per cent of the students replied that their interests were in a particular area of home economics. As shown in Table 9, this reason received the highest number and per cent of first choices.

The reason, abilities were best suited for this field, ranked second with 18.9 per cent of the total number of first choices. Another important reason was the desire to learn something that would be practical and useful. Seventeen students checked this reason as their first choice while 16 additional students checked it as their second choice.

The question as to when the decision to enter the school now enrolled in was made, was asked of all freshmen women answering the check list. The

Table 8. The number and per cent of students indicating a first choice and a second choice concerning a given list of personal experiences that might have encouraged them in their choice of home economics.

Reason	: <u>First choice</u> :		: <u>Second choice</u>	
	: Number	:Per cent	: Number	:Per cent
	: checking:	checking :	: checking:	checking :
Liking for those activities included in homemaking	40	43.9	20	22.0
Pleasant homemaking experiences in youth organization	19	20.9	13	14.3
Enjoyment of home economics in school	12	13.2	19	20.9
Pleasant home experiences	12	13.2	8	8.8
Work experiences in field of home economics	4	4.4	3	3.3
Attendance at Hospitality Day at Kansas State College	4	4.4	2	2.2
Total	91	100.0	65	—

Table 9. The number and per cent of students indicating a first choice and a second choice of some given reasons why a curriculum in home economics might have appealed to them.

Reason	: <u>First choice</u> :		: <u>Second choice</u>	
	: Number	:Per cent	: Number	:Per cent
	: checking:	checking :	: checking:	checking :
Interest in particular area of home economics	35	36.8	2	2.1
Abilities best suited for this field	18	18.9	5	5.3
Desire to learn something practical and useful	17	17.9	16	16.8
Desire to gain knowledge and skill in home economics	9	9.5	7	7.4
Desire to help others through learnings	6	6.3	5	5.3
Home economics gives well-rounded education	5	5.3	16	16.8
The School of Home Economics at KSC has a good reputation	3	3.2	16	16.8
Home economics is interesting and challenging	2	2.1	6	6.3
Total	95	100.0	73	—

senior year in high school was the most frequent time indicated by the three groups of students with 41.7 per cent of the total number of students checking this time (Table 10). Wright and Corbin (1952) reported similar findings in this regard.

For the students enrolled in home economics the time before the tenth grade ranked second and this trend to select earlier than the senior year in high school was also noted in the group of arts and science students who did not consider entering home economics. The times, before the tenth grade and during the tenth and eleventh grades, tied for second place with 22.3 per cent each of the total number of students in the latter group selecting these times.

The trend toward an earlier decision did not hold true for the arts and science students who, in the process of choosing their curriculums, had considered the desirability of entering home economics. For this group the time, just before entering college, ranked a close second and the trend was toward later decision-making. Perhaps the decision was not an easy one to make as they were considering at least two schools.

Fifty-four arts and science freshmen indicated that they had, in the process of choosing their curriculums, considered the desirability of home economics and gave their reasons for deciding against entering this field. Each student gave at least one reason for her decision.

A total of 81 reasons was given and these reasons were grouped in eight categories as shown in Table 11. A negative attitude toward home economics and a positive interest in present curriculum were the two main reasons given for deciding against entering home economics. These two reasons constituted 50.6 per cent of the total number of reasons given.

Twenty-three reasons indicated a dislike for home economics or for some

Table 10. The time when the decision to enter the school now enrolled in was made by 297 freshmen women.

Time when decision was made	Students enrolled in		Arts & science : students who considered		Arts & science : students who did not consider		Total	
	No. : Per cent	No. : Per cent	No. : Per cent	No. : Per cent	No. : Per cent	No. : Per cent	No. : Per cent	No. : Per cent
Before the tenth grade	26	27.4	2	3.7	33	22.3	61	20.5
During the tenth or eleventh grade	19	20.0	7	13.0	33	22.3	59	19.9
During the senior year in high school	37	39.0	24	44.5	63	42.5	124	41.7
Just before entering college	12	12.6	20	37.0	19	12.9	51	17.2
Blank	1	1.0	1	1.8	0	0.0	2	0.7
Total	95		54		148		297	

Table 11. The frequency of reasons given by 54 arts and science freshmen for not enrolling in home economics after considering its desirability.

Reason	: Number	: Per cent
Dislike for home economics	23	28.4
Positive interest in present curriculum	18	22.2
No background, undecided about curriculum	10	12.4
Better career opportunities in present curriculum	9	11.1
Personal experiences influenced toward present curriculum	5	6.2
Better suited for present curriculum	4	4.9
Planning to or now taking home economics courses	7	8.6
In general curriculum, still considering home economics	5	6.2
Total	81	100.0

courses or parts of home economics. Of these, four reasons were specifically concerned with chemistry. For example:

Because of the chemistry course, mainly. I had a hard time with chemistry in high school and was afraid that I could not pass it in college.

I don't like chemistry.

Other statements such as the following were also included:

I thought it would be interesting but I didn't want to take some of the required subjects.

I like the clothing part of home economics very much, but I don't care to take the foods line.

I do not like all the courses in home economics well enough to teach it.

One reason was directly associated with an unpleasant experience in home economics in high school.

I found the home economics courses in high school very boring and not practical. Each girl did such a small part of the food preparation (for instance) that she got absolutely no idea of the whole. We had

to go through a lot of motions (cooking, sewing, etc.) without the vaguest notion of why we did it or even how each motion was related to the whole project. I can truthfully say that I gained absolutely nothing from minoring in home economics in high school. The whole thing was a farce. I decided, therefore, to go into a curriculum where I would learn something.

Of the 23 reasons, five showed strong feelings against home economics.

Sample statements were:

Because I do not believe that home economics is taught well enough here or at hardly any school to justify the time spent on it. The teachers are often the old ones who just stay because after so long they don't have to prepare very much. Some courses are too general and cover things a junior high school student probably knows. I know I am not the only one who feels this way. I know several (four) girls who left the School of Home Economics because they felt the same way.

I have considered it a waste of time in a way. It seems like home economics is something that could be learned in 4-H and high school and at home. In high school it is a place to have fun, and while this is not true in college, particularly, I think I could be spending my time more wisely in other curriculums.

I also feel girls that take home economics, take it only as an excuse to attend college.

As shown in Table 11, 22.2 per cent of the total number of reasons indicated a positive interest in present curriculum. These are samples of some of the statements:

I thought that I was better suited and more interested in my present curriculum.

I decided to go into elementary education because I like to be around small children and enjoy teaching them.

I decided that I was simply more interested in technical journalism, and that no home economics career came as nearly to being what I want as technical journalism. I prefer the subjects I study in arts and science to those of home economics.

Some of these students decided against entering home economics because they had no background for this field, while others just did not know what to take. For example:

Because I had no background in home economics. I wasn't sure just what I wanted anyway. I thought it would be too hard without any background in the subject.

There wasn't any special field in home economics that I especially wanted to major in.

Because I hadn't had any previous experience in this field.

Other students felt there were better career opportunities in their present curriculum. Sample statements were:

I was offered a scholarship in chemistry at Kansas State, so I took the opportunity. I considered teaching home economics but teachers do not receive a salary comparable to others, considering the amount of time and money spent on an education.

I felt I could get a better and more desirable job in entering Arts and Science.

I felt I wanted to major in business education because I could have the opportunity of a teaching career along with part time secretarial work if and when desired.

Some students felt that they were better suited for their present curriculum.

I decided that I would be better suited to teach English than home economics.

I decided I was better suited for a business course because I don't sew very well. Really, it was a hard choice to make between a home economics and a business course.

For others, personal experiences were influential in directing them toward their present curriculum. They indicated this by statements similar to the following:

After taking journalism and working on the school paper and year-book, I became more interested in journalism so decided to enter that field.

I considered home economics and nursing but after working as a lab assistant this summer I decided I would like medical technology better.

I chose to enter the field of business after holding an office job for two summers. I decided I would enjoy that type of work more than home economics.

Two of the categories in Table 11 included positive remarks about home economics. These 12 students were planning to take or were then taking home economics courses, while others were in general curriculums still considering

home economics. These are samples of their statements:

I haven't exactly decided against home economics because I think I'd like to be a home economics agent. This year I am taking a general course which can be transferable.

I was very uncertain as to which part of home economics I would like. When I talked with a counselor, he told me I was eligible for the arts and science honors program, and that a general course might be better until I knew more about what I would like to major in. The courses in arts and science sounded more interesting to me, although home economics would be useful. I am glad I took the counselor's advice. Home economics just didn't seem to click with me. There is still a possibility that I will regain my interest in home economics, however.

However, I consider home economics as my second base.

I am planning to take some home economics courses as electives.

Limitations of the Study

In undertaking this study the author was mindful of certain limitations.

The size of the sample was limited as it was drawn only from the freshmen women entering Kansas State College in the fall of 1958 who lived in either of the two freshmen residence halls, Northwest Hall or Southeast Hall.

The type of meeting arranged to administer the check list to the freshmen women was of necessity a large group meeting. The smallest group the author met with at one time was composed of 142 students. Although an explanation and directions were given to the students before they answered the check list, it was difficult to determine whether every student understood the directions and gave thoughtful and accurate responses.

SUMMARY OF DATA

Summary of Conclusions

From the findings the following was concluded for the population studied.

1. The largest number of students indicated that a liking for those activities included in homemaking was their most important reason for choosing a home economics curriculum.

2. The six most frequently chosen reasons for selecting a home economics curriculum were, in order by total number of first choices: (1) liking for those activities included in homemaking, (2) desire to combine homemaking and a career outside the home, (3) definite interest in a particular area of home economics, (4) parental influence, (5) mother's influence, and (6) desire to prepare for being a homemaker.

3. The five most frequently chosen reasons for selecting a home economics curriculum, in order by total number of first and second choices were: (1) a liking for those activities included in homemaking, (2) a desire to prepare for being a homemaker, (3) a desire to combine homemaking and a career outside the home, (4) parental influence and (5) interest in a particular area of home economics.

4. The senior year in high school was the predominant time when most of these freshmen indicated that they chose their curriculums in college. Home economics students and arts and science students who did not consider entering home economics also tended to choose earlier than the senior year. The arts and science students who considered home economics showed the opposite trend, choosing during the senior year or just before entering college.

5. For the 54 students who considered the desirability of home economics before enrolling in another curriculum, the most frequent reasons given for not choosing home economics were: a dislike for home economics or for some courses or parts of home economics, and a positive interest in present arts and science curriculum. The results from the open-end questions seemed to show a lack of information and knowledge about home economics and its

opportunities at the college level.

6. The group was not predominantly rural or urban since slightly more than half of the students were classified as urban. The arts and science students who considered but did not choose home economics, were predominantly rural in background.

7. The arts and science students who did not consider entering home economics had fewer semester hours of home economics training before college per student than the total group, and about one-fifth of these had had no home economics training prior to college. More than a third of this group of arts and science students had not been members of youth organizations such as 4-H, Future Homemakers of America, or Girl Scouts.

Implications of Study

Implications of the results of the present study were as follows:

1. For curriculum planning, the combination of professional preparation with preparation for homemaking was more important than either considered separately.
2. Recruitment should have begun at least as early as the ninth grade.
3. High school girls in general needed more information on the purposes and content of curriculums in home economics.
4. Parents needed a better understanding of the opportunities in home economics so they could better guide youth in the choice of curriculums.

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APPENDIX

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONNAIRE

School of Home Economics

May 15, 1958

Check classification: Freshman___ Sophomore___ Junior___ Senior___

Check School in which enrolled: Home Economics___ Arts & Science___

Number of semesters at KSC___ Number of semesters at other colleges___

Names of other colleges attended_____

* * * * *

We are interested in learning why students choose to take Home Economics.

Please give your reasons -- those which you may consider trivial as well as those which you consider important.

Students in Home Economics answer statements number 1 and 2. Students not majoring in Home Economics answer statement number 2, only.

1. I chose to take Home Economics in college because: (you need not use complete sentences)

2. Some of my friends (or I) did not choose Home Economics because:

MODEL (ORIGINAL FORM BEFORE CATEGORIZATION OF DATA)

I. I chose to take Home Economics in college because:

A. For future opportunities.

1. to prepare for professional work
2. to prepare for homemaking
3. to provide for economic security
4. to open new fields of research
5. to combine profession and homemaking

B. Influenced by individuals.

1. family
 - a. father
 - b. mother
 - c. brother /s
 - d. sister /s
2. relatives
 - a. female relative
 - b. male relative
3. school personnel
 - a. home economics teacher
 - b. teachers in other fields
 - c. guidance counselor
 - d. administrative personnel (principal, etc.)
4. persons in the field of home economics
 - a. county extension workers
 - b. K-State faculty members
 - c. K-State students
 - d. K-State graduates
 - e. other adults in the field of home economics
5. friends of own age
6. other adults not in the field of home economics

C. Intellectual appeal of home economics.

1. reputation of Kansas State College
2. reputation of School of Home Economics
3. field of interest
4. challenging and stimulating
5. wanted to work with adults, children, youth
6. to gain more knowledge and skill
7. wanted to learn something useful and constructive, practical
8. scholarship received in home economics
9. believed had aptitude for

D. Personal experiences.

1. enjoyed home economics in school
2. enjoyed home economics in youth organizations (4-H, Scouts, Campfire Girls, Future Homemakers of America)
3. pleasurable home experience

MODEL

E. Negative approach.

1. nothing else to take or do
2. no other field interested me more

II. Some of my friends (or I) did not choose Home Economics because:

A. Lack of intellectual appeal.

1. not interested in this field
2. "anyone can learn to cook and sew without going to college"
3. too much science and laboratories
4. classes boring and dull
5. not learning anything new
6. courses repetitious
7. not worthwhile, waste of time
8. poor physical facilities
9. too easy
10. too hard

B. Influenced by individuals.

1. friends of own age were not taking home economics
2. disliked home economics teacher /s in school
3. disliked other adults in the field of home economics
4. discouraged from taking home economics by individuals (see list for I.)

C. Personal experiences.

1. no experiences in home economics
2. did not enjoy home economics in school
3. do not like to sew or cook as a result of unpleasant experiences
4. did not enjoy homemaking experiences in youth organizations (4-H, Scouts, Campfire Girls, Future Homemakers of America.)
5. unpleasant home experience

D. Lack of future opportunities.

1. few opportunities open in home economics
2. people in this field not in demand
3. not aware of opportunities in this field
4. few classroom opportunities to become acquainted with boys

- 2 -

How many semesters of home economics did you take in junior high school? _____

How many semesters of home economics did you take in senior high school? _____

Have you carried out any homemaking projects as an active member in the following organizations? If yes, please check.

- _____ 1. ~~4~~-H
- _____ 2. Future Homemakers of America
- _____ 3. Girl Scouts
- _____ 4. Others, (name organization) _____

Do you have a scholarship in Home Economics _____ (yes, no)

I

If you are enrolled in the School of Home Economics, please answer the following questions as they apply to you.

Directions: We are interested in learning why students choose to take a Home Economics curriculum. This check list is divided into five sections, A B C D and E. Be sure to read carefully the directions for each section before answering the questions in that section.

- A. Here are some vocational reasons why you may have chosen a Home Economics curriculum in college. Read through all the reasons given. Select the reason that influenced you most and put a double check (✓✓) in the blank provided to the left of that reason. If you have a second choice, put a single check (✓) in the blank provided to the left of that reason.

- ____ 1. There are many career opportunities in the field of Home Economics.
- ____ 2. I want to combine homemaking and a career outside the home.
- ____ 3. I want to prepare myself for a particular career outside the home.
- ____ 4. I want to prepare myself for being a homemaker.
- ____ 5. I feel that a career in Home Economics will provide economic security.

- B. Below is a list of persons who may have influenced you in your choice of Home Economics. Read through the whole list. Select the person or persons who influenced you most and put a double check (✓✓) in the blank provided to the left of that person. If you have a second choice put a single check (✓) in the blank provided to the left of that person.

- ____ 6. My mother
- ____ 7. My father
- ____ 8. My parents
- ____ 9. Any other member of my family. Who? _____
(relationship to you)
- ____ 10. My Home Economics teacher or teachers in junior and senior high school.
- ____ 11. A Home Economics Agent (HDA).
- ____ 12. Other adults in the field of Home Economics. Who? _____
(position)
- ____ 13. Other adults not in the field of Home Economics. Who? _____
(position)
- ____ 14. Friends of my own age.

- C. Here are some personal experiences that may have encouraged you in your choice of Home Economics. Read through all the experiences given. Select the one that has been most important to you and put a double check (✓✓) in the blank provided to the left of that experience. If you have a second choice, put a single check (✓) in the blank provided to the left of that experience.

- ___ 15. I enjoyed Home Economics in junior and senior high school.
- ___ 16. I had pleasant homemaking experiences in youth organizations such as 4-H, Future Homemakers of America, Girl Scouts, etc.
- ___ 17. I have had work experience in the field of Home Economics.
- ___ 18. I like to do those things included in homemaking, such as cooking, sewing, etc.
- ___ 19. I have had pleasant home experiences.
- ___ 20. I attended Hospitality Day at K. S. C.

- D. Here are some reasons why a curriculum in Home Economics may have appealed to you. Read through all the reasons. Select the reason that best describes your beliefs and put a double check (✓✓) in the blank provided to the left of that reason. If you have a second choice, put a single check (✓) in the blank provided to the left of that reason.

- ___ 21. I believe that my abilities are best suited for this field.
- ___ 22. My interests are in a particular area of Home Economics. What area? _____.
- ___ 23. The School of Home Economics at K.S.C. has a good reputation.
- ___ 24. I want to learn something that will be practical and useful.
- ___ 25. I want to gain more knowledge and skill in the field of Home Economics.
- ___ 26. Home Economics is interesting and challenging to me.
- ___ 27. I want to help other persons through my Home Economics learnings.
- ___ 28. Home Economics gives you a well-rounded education.

- E. When did you make the decision to enter the School of Home Economics? Read through the following answers and select the answer that best applies to your decision. Put a single check (✓) in the blank provided to the left of that answer.

- ___ 29. Before the 10th grade.
- ___ 30. During the 10th or 11th grade.
- ___ 31. During your senior year in high school.
- ___ 32. Just before you entered college.

II

If you are enrolled in a School other than the School of Home Economics, please answer the following questions as they apply to you.

1. Did you, in the process of choosing your curriculum, consider the desirability of entering Home Economics? Check one.

_____ Yes

_____ No

2. If your answer to the above question is Yes, give the reasons you decided against entering Home Economics?

3. When did you make the decision to enter the School you are enrolled in? Check one.

_____ A. before the 10th grade

_____ B. during the 10th and 11th grade

_____ C. during your senior year in high school

_____ D. just before you entered college

REASONS FOR CHOOSING A HOME ECONOMICS CURRICULUM AS
INDICATED BY A GROUP OF COLLEGE FRESHMEN WOMEN

by

JANET LOUISE BISHOP BAXTER

B. S., Carnegie Institute of Technology, 1956

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Family and Child Development

KANSAS STATE COLLEGE
OF AGRICULTURE AND APPLIED SCIENCE

1959

Home economics was first introduced into colleges primarily to provide for women students a kind of education that would help them become better homemakers. Demands for professional preparation appeared later. With the growth of this field came the need for an effective recruitment program in order to interest an increased number of outstanding youth in entering the area of home economics.

The present study was an attempt to identify some of the factors that encouraged, influenced, and motivated freshmen women in choosing a college curriculum in home economics. It was believed that a systematic collection of data and interpretation of such data would make a positive contribution to certain aspects of a recruitment program. The objectives of the present study were: (1) to find reasons expressed by freshmen women for choosing a home economics curriculum, (2) to find reasons expressed by freshmen women for not choosing a home economics curriculum, and (3) to find the time when the decision to enter the school enrolled in was made.

The preliminary data leading to the study were obtained by personnel on the dean's staff in the School of Home Economics. To learn why students chose to enroll in home economics, a short questionnaire was submitted to all students attending home economics classes on May 15, 1958. The free responses on the 378 questionnaires were tabulated by the investigator. Tabulation of these preliminary unstructured data served as a basis for constructing a check list to be administered to the freshmen women entering Kansas State College in the fall of 1958.

The check list consisted of a face sheet of background information, a two-page check list for students enrolled in the School of Home Economics, and a third page for students enrolled in a school other than the School of Home Economics. Freshmen women enrolled in the School of Home Economics

were asked to double-check their chief reason and to single-check a second choice, if they had one, concerning (1) vocational reasons for choosing a home economics curriculum, (2) persons who may have influenced them in their choice, (3) personal experiences that may have encouraged them in their selection, and (4) reasons relating to subject matter in home economics. They also were asked to indicate when they made the decision to enter the School of Home Economics.

For those students enrolled in a school other than the School of Home Economics the format of the instrument was changed to include the inquiry, "Did you, in the process of choosing your curriculum, consider the desirability of entering home economics?" If the answer to this question was yes, the student was asked to state the reasons for deciding against entering home economics. These students also were asked to indicate when they made the decision to enter the school they were enrolled in.

After the check list was pre-tested, it was administered to the freshmen women living in Northwest and Southeast Halls early in the fall of 1958. The sample described was composed of 297 students who returned completed check lists. The format of the check list served as a basis for dividing the sample into two groups. Ninety-five freshmen women enrolled in the School of Home Economics made up the first group, while 200 freshmen women enrolled in the School of Arts and Science and two women enrolled in the School of Engineering and Architecture composed the second group.

The group studied was slightly more urban than rural in background, with 85.5 per cent of the students indicating that they had had home economics training in school before entering college. The group had a mean of 4.3 semesters per student of home economics training prior to college. More than two-thirds of the group had carried out homemaking projects as active

members in 4-H, Future Homemakers of America, and Girl Scouts.

The data from the check lists indicated that the six most frequently chosen reasons for selecting a home economics curriculum were, in order by total number of first choice checks: (1) a liking for those activities included in homemaking, (2) a desire to combine homemaking and a career (3) interest in a particular area of home economics (4) parental influence (5) mother's influence and (6) a desire to prepare for being a homemaker.

For the 54 students who considered the desirability of home economics before enrolling in another curriculum, the most frequent reasons given for not choosing home economics were: a dislike for home economics or for some courses or parts of home economics, and a positive interest in present arts and science curriculum. The responses from the open-end questions seemed to show a lack of information and knowledge about home economics and its opportunities at the college level.

The senior year in high school was the predominant time when most of these freshmen indicated that they chose their curriculums in college. However, 20.5 per cent said they decided as early as the ninth grade. Forty-seven and four tenths per cent of the home economics students and 44.6 per cent of the arts and science students who did not consider entering home economics chose earlier than the senior year. The arts and science students who considered home economics showed the opposite trend, with 37.0 per cent choosing just before entering college.