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Ways to M.S. Differ

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Questionnaires to 50 states, gas chromatography analyses, and "a game" are some of the information-gathering techniques which young women are using to conduct various home economics research projects at Iowa State University. The women are graduate students who are each working toward the degree of Master of Science.

Research Program Changes

There have been many changes in the home economics research program since 1886, when the first Master of Science degrees in Domestic Economy were granted.

In 1925, R. E. Buchanan, dean of Graduate College, said, "There are those among us who rather forcibly express the opinion that to couple 'home economics' and 'research' is to join terms essentially contradictory and antithetic, that such a combination of words has no real meaning."

Today, research is a major aspect of home economics. Two reasons for the importance of research at the graduate level were cited by Helen LeBaron, dean of the College of Home Economics. Research information contributed by the students is valuable in developing the subject matter area. It is useful, too, to professional home economists and to families.

Investigate Family and Home

Graduate students in eight home economics departments base their theses on research geared to the family and the home. Results of the studies are often presented at professional meetings or in journals. The students' theses are also on loan at the Iowa State University Library.

"Research experience is valuable to graduate students who plan to enter teaching or business. It teaches the student how to define a problem, how to search the literature for information related to it, how to outline and carry out a procedure, and how to evaluate the results. This is the technique one must have for success in any job in home economics," said Dean Le Baron.

The graduate students echoed this idea. Mary Marchino, H. Mgt. 6, said that the work that she is doing has helped her develop an appreciation for research that has been done in the past. Miss Marchino defined Graduate College as an "opportunity to really find out your own potential by taking stock of your abilities."

Huda Jamal, C. D. 6, explained, "Graduate College requires maturity and a willingness for independent work. Classes become more student-centered than professor-guided."

Assistantships Aid Graduate Study

Capable students desiring to do research in Graduate College are aided by the awarding of graduate assistantships. These range in value from $1700 to $2200 for a nine-month period with a few available on a twelve months' basis. Assistantship recipients may enroll for 11 credits per quarter. They are required to work on a research program or teach 22 hours per week in addition to their courses.

Margaret McKinney, F.N. 6, is one graduate student who has a research assistantship. Her research is one part of a project concerned with the energy needs of women. She is investigating the content of fat and fatty acids in the diets of adult women.

Miss McKinney is employing the gas chromatography method where fat is extracted from food by dissolving the fat in ether. She is working in conjunction with the Agricultural and Home Economics Experiment Station. Home economics research was incorporated with the station on an organized basis in 1944.

Twenty Ames women are participating in this study, which will be continued next year. These women have kept records of their diets, have weighed foods eaten, and have sent proportionate samples to the laboratory. The results, which presently indicate that women may not consume as much fat as other members of the population, may be distributed throughout the state in bulletins.

Test Tubes Are Only Part

Research is not confined to subjects related to test tubes and chemicals. For Huda Jamal, research to determine the degree of sex-role identification in pre-school children meant playing a "game" with 52 nursery school children in the Iowa State University Child Development Laboratory.

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Graduate Students—

The game consisted of 36 cards that pictured toys, objects, and characters that were easily associated with masculinity and femininity. The children were asked to make choices and then to name a neuter child who was referred to by Miss Jamal as “It.” One enthusiastic little girl readily asserted her femininity by exclaiming, “Let’s call it Sweetie Pie!”

Miss Jamal, a former instructor in the American University of Cairo, Egypt, said that she has found in her reading research a tendency for the female in our society to be less willing to accept her role. She seems to be constantly aspiring to become more masculine.

Lack of knowledge concerning garment fiber content was a finding of Kathleen Muscetti, T.C. 6, in her research project concerning homemakers’ interpretations of washing instructions on labels of winter skirts.

Miss Muscetti gathered her information by distributing 40 questionnaires and interviewing 34 Ames women. At one time, she said, she startled a young unmarried man by knocking at his apartment door and inquiring, “Is there a lady in the house?”

Mary Beeler, I.Mgt. 6, collected information for her study of qualifications for individuals who manage school lunch programs by sending 575 questionnaires to American School Food Service Association members in all 50 states.

Her project will be completed by this summer, and in August the results will be presented at the American School Food Service Association’s Convention. It is hoped that the information will serve as a guide to educators and as an aid to employers who work with school lunch managers at the city, county, or state level.

Anne Coveney, H. Eq. 6, has gathered data concerning the performance characteristics of temperature control surface units and burners on ranges under varying conditions of voltage and gas pressure. She has also tested the effects of various materials of cooking utensils on the performance of the units and burners.

According to Miss Coveney, the conductivity of the metal pan is an important factor in cooking performance. Copper-clad and aluminum-clad stainless steel pans and aluminum pans produced the best results in tests using saucepans with a liquid.

Mary Marchino, H. Mgt. 6, is attempting to discover the characteristics of new houses built by Iowa farm families and the traits of the builders of these homes. She is also trying to see if families reflect knowledge of managerial elements in building these homes.

Miss Marchino is basing her research on interviews with a random sampling of 150 farm families who built houses after 1957. The interviews, which were conducted by a graduate student in rural sociology, will provide data for other theses. It is likely that the information gained from this project may be made available to the public in articles written for professional magazines in popular circulation, said Miss Marchino.

Sewing Potential of Students

Carol Hatch, H. Ed. 6, has information which she hopes will prove the value of a series of two tests and a questionnaire in predicting the sewing potential of home economics students at the junior high and high school level. A dexterity questionnaire, pre-tests, and spatial visualization tests have been given to approximately 518 junior high and senior high girls in various Iowa student-teaching centers.

This is a continuation of a previous project. Should the tests prove valuable, said Miss Hatch, they may be made available to Iowa home economics teachers to aid in predicting which students will be most successful in sewing classes.

These seven young women are representative of the home economics students who are enrolled in the Graduate College. In conducting their research, these students share similar objectives. Though specific research subjects may differ widely, the problems encountered and the rewards upon completion of the project are similar.

Through their graduate research work, the women are serving the entire home economics field in a manner which is exemplified by the following statement: “Home economics will grow in strength as a discipline in our educational system only to the degree to which it extends its frontiers of knowledge through organized and systematic research explaining the nature and the needs of the home, the family, and the family members.”