



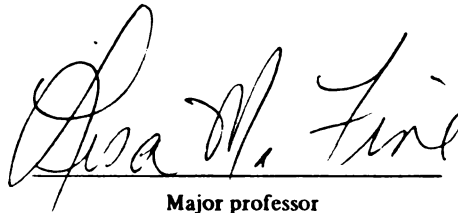
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**OBSTACLES AND OPPORTUNITIES:
HOME ECONOMICS AT MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
IN THE POSTWAR ERA**

By

Susan Stein-Roggenbuck

A THESIS

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

**OBSTACLES AND OPPORTUNITIES:
HOME ECONOMICS AT MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
IN THE POSTWAR ERA**

By

Susan Stein-Roggenbuck

This thesis examines the home economics program at Michigan State University during the postwar period to consider the role the feminized profession played in providing professional opportunities for women. As members of a feminized profession, home economists grappled with numerous contradictions between their professional and personal/family responsibilities. The solution offered by home economics educators (and many other education professionals) was the life course education idea for women: prepare women for the different stages of their lives, including marriage, motherhood, and a return to the professional labor force. An analysis of a 1968 alumni study shows that women used this life course idea, however, to demand increased opportunities for continued education. It also points to more continuities in ideology between the decades of the 1950s and the 1960s than the current historiography suggests.

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CHAPTER 1

The Limits and Opportunities of Home Economics

Cooking, cleaning, sewing, child care, and food production have been primarily the tasks of women throughout history. The scope of these tasks and the value placed on them has changed, but seldom has their allocation to women varied extensively; advocates of eradicating a gender division of labor within the home and society were usually a minority, and domestic work and child care largely remained the domain of women. Even though widespread efforts to challenge the allocation of domestic tasks to women were rare, numerous groups strove either to ease women's burden from those tasks or to elevate the value placed on them. Professional home economists, or "domestic scientists," sought to enhance the value of domestic tasks and to use the knowledge of science to improve the home and the lives of its occupants. They also hoped to create new professional opportunities for women in the sciences at a time when few paths were open to female scientists.

Although the development of home economics resulted in professional opportunities for women, home economists were seldom at the forefront of efforts to challenge existing gender roles and the expectations connected to those roles.¹ One historian argues that home economics was based upon beliefs about women's traditional "natural" role, and that the home economists' concern with professional legitimation limited their ability to see the significance of gender issues in the evolution of home economics. The profession's obsession

¹Sue Zschoche, "Seduced and Abandoned by Objectivity: the Home Economist and the Woman Question, 1890-1920." Presented at the American Education Research Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL, 1992. Copy of paper courtesy of Mary Julia Grant, Michigan State University.

with "science" and "rationality" prevented it from addressing women's roles in either the home or the larger world.² Home economists often failed to address gender, as Sue Zschoche argues:

All the myriad issues of gender - the place of women, the power differentials between men and women, the stubborn endurance of a sexual division of labor - were not issues but "facts," mere components of the "nature" of the social universe at any given moment.³

Such a statement cannot be applied to the entire profession. Home economists were a diverse group, and some certainly considered women's roles in a more critical way than their colleagues. But many more did not. Zschoche's work focuses on the earlier decades of home economics, but the neglect of gender issues continues into the postwar period. Despite the professional opportunities opened to women in home economics, the profession's failure to challenge the existing sexual division of labor resulted in channeling women into what many believed was a "natural, feminine" field. As a feminized profession, home economics increasingly came under attack in the academic world during the postwar era. Home economists found themselves defending the profession's very existence, and the inclusion of its disciplines (foods and nutrition, child development, textiles and clothing, and home management) under the auspices of home economics. The profession eventually was criticized because it was dominated by women, particularly unmarried women.

Ironically, home economists never claimed their field to be only for women and encouraged men to join their profession, but despite their efforts to recruit men, women continued to dominate home economics. Few men majored in home economics and almost none pursued graduate study until the 1960s. Efforts to make the profession attractive to men were increasingly hampered by the postwar backlash in women's opportunities,

²Ibid., 12. Also, see Regina G. Kunzel, Fallen Women, Problem Girls: Unmarried Mothers and the Professionalization of Social Work, 1890-1945 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993) 170.

³Ibid., 15.

an emphasis on women's more "traditional" roles, and a renewed association between home economics and those female roles. The "feminized" stigma would prompt major changes in the field, including a name change or reorganization for some programs, a shift from female control to male control, and even the elimination of home economics from some universities.⁴ Yet throughout this period, home economists never questioned the devaluing of their profession simply because it was dominated by women. They seemed to concede that men were needed to legitimize the profession, and accepted the criticisms about the inability of unmarried female "professionals" to understand the family, the cornerstone of home economics.

Home economics educators bemoaned the lack of women interested in pursuing higher education, but did not directly address why women did not. The responsibilities of marriage and children often stalled the professional aspirations of many women. Rather than seeking to address the conflicts women faced in balancing both family and profession, home economics educators and university administrators turned to men to fill its faculty ranks. As members of a feminized profession, home economists faced contradictions inherent in a field which reinforced traditional gender roles and expectations. These contradictions included: 1) reconciling a woman's professional responsibilities with the demands of her family; 2) maintaining a professional staff when most married women faculty left the field (perhaps temporarily) to marry or raise their own families; 3) adapting the profession to changing roles of women within society and the family and adjusting programs and

⁴Margaret Rossiter argues that the 1950s were a period of regression for women professionals, especially scientists, as the long history of female achievement in science was rewritten by men. "Then this 'scientific' evidence was used to justify curtailment of future opportunities for academic women. The result was that decades of women's struggles in academia, summed up in the phrase, 'celibate overachievement,' was by 1960 brusquely dismissed and a myth created that women could not become and never had been scholars and scientists." See Margaret W. Rossiter, "Outmaneuvered Again - The Collapse of Academic Women's Strategy of Celibate Overachievement," paper presented June 12, 1993, at the Ninth Berkshire Conference on the History of Women; Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York.

philosophy to those changes; and 4) struggling to attain equal status with other professions and conforming to the academic definition of scholarly excellence, which emphasized research over teaching.

This thesis examines the speeches and correspondence of the three deans who led the program at Michigan State University from 1929 to 1971 - Dr. Marie Dye, 1929-1956; Dr. Thelma Porter, 1956-1964; and Jeanette Lee, 1964-1971. A study of these papers, with particular emphasis on the postwar era through the fifties, reveals these contradictions and the accompanying problems these administrators faced during that era. They also illuminate the debate within home economics over its definition and direction, and the defense of its very existence as a profession at the university. This debate is evident in the speeches given by the MSU deans at professional gatherings, articles in the professional publication of the home economics field, the Journal of Home Economics, and in their speeches given within the MSU community. Writings by other faculty members, faculty meeting minutes, and faculty workshops also shed light on the issues and debates of other home economics educators. From this evidence, it becomes clear that the home economics program at MSU could not escape the contradictions outlined above.

Connected to the struggle to attain professional respect was the eventual debate over the inclusion of certain disciplines under the collective umbrella of home economics, and criticism from male college and university administrators who failed to see the importance of home economics. This latter phenomenon occurred most often at universities seeking to improve their academic prestige. Administrators at such institutions, including Michigan State University, saw the home economics program, with its lack of doctoral professors and students and

its emphasis on vocationalism, as detracting from their hoped-for prestige.⁵

This study also reveals the intertwining of home economics with the "life course" education idea endorsed by many educators and administrators in the postwar period. This concept entailed training women for the different stages in their lives: full-time professional/employee (before marriage), marriage and full-time motherhood, and the eventual return to the labor force after the demands of children and home lessened. This "life course" plan was the solution offered to educated women who wanted to pursue a career. Rather than addressing how to help women remain in the profession during those years, educators assumed that mothers wanted and needed to remain at home with their young children, and instead sought ways to help them return to the profession when their family duties decreased. They failed to account for those women who could not afford to remain at home fulltime, and they also assumed that all women professionals could leave their work for a period of time and be able to return after several years.

This study of the MSU program begins to explore the history of women in home economics, the difficulties they encountered, and the strategies they used to advance their opportunities. The study of women professionals is a growing field, but home economics has received little attention from historians. Traditional history of the professions tends to exclude a gender analysis, and even historians of women focus less on middle class women than the working class.⁶ Joan Jacobs Brumberg and Nancy Tomes noted this gap in historical work in a 1982 essay, arguing that much of the problem with earlier scholarship is one common to most

⁵See Margaret W. Rossiter, Chapter 8, "Protecting Home Economics, the Women's Field," in her forthcoming book, Women Scientists in America, 1940-1972, 225.

⁶Burton Bledstein's The Culture of Professionalism is a prime example of this. Although a standard text on the emergence of the idea of professions, it includes little on women and no gender analysis.

fields that fail to address the role of women and the concept of gender; most use definitions of professionalism that tend to exclude women or fields dominated by women.⁷ Newer scholarship has begun to examine women professionals, particularly those in traditionally female-dominated fields, such as nursing and social work, but no comprehensive work on home economics exists.⁸ It is often accorded a chapter in a book on women in the professions, such as Margaret Rossiter's Women Scientists in America: Struggles and Strategies to 1940, or in studies of housework or domesticity, as in Glenna Matthews's "Just A Housewife": The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America.⁹

The study of women in the professions requires a conceptual distinction between those women who entered male-dominated fields, and the problems, struggles, and strategies they encountered, and those women who trained for a feminized profession, such as home economics.¹⁰ In seeking acceptance and opportunity in the male-dominated sciences, women fought society's norms, which relegated them to roles as wives and mothers, and often opposition from men, who felt threatened by women.

⁷Joan Jacobs Brumberg and Nancy Tomes, "Women in the Professions: A Research Agenda for American Historians," Reviews in American History 10 (June 1982) 275-276.

⁸For nursing, see Darlene Clark Hine, Black Women in White: Racial Conflict and Cooperation in the Nursing Profession, 1890-1950 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); Barbara Melosh, "The Physician's Hand": Work, Culture and Conflict in American Nursing (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982); Susan M. Reverby, Ordered to Care: The Dilemma of American Nursing, 1850-1945 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987). For social work, see for example, Regina G. Kunzel, Fallen Women, Problem Girls: Unmarried Mothers and the Professionalization of Social Work, 1890-1945 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

⁹Other such works include Phyllis Palmer's Domesticity and Dirt: Servants in the United States, 1920-1945; Annegret Ogden's The Great American Housewife: From Helpmate to Wage Earner; Susan Strasser's Never Done: A History of American Housework; and Ruth Schwartz Cowan's More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave. These books deal with domesticity, and although their focus is not home economics, the authors address the profession's influence on the average homemaker and on domesticity.

¹⁰Brumberg and Tomes, 278.

For most women scientists in the early years of the twentieth century, the only positions open to them paid little and generally were those as assistants to male scientists.¹¹ Entering a field such as home economics yielded a very different experience. Women in home economics did not face the competition from men that women entering male-dominated professions encountered; home economics was not a threat to an area occupied by men, as few wanted to enter the profession. In addition, many saw the profession as "natural" or beneficial to a woman's future, which was seen as almost certainly to include marriage and children; this view continued to prevail in the profession throughout the postwar period.

Home economics, as a feminized profession, experienced not only "territorial" segregation, argues Rossiter in Women Scientists in America: Struggles and Strategies to 1940, but also "hierarchical" segregation; few women achieved the status of full professors, and salaries were often lower than other faculty.¹² MSU also experienced, particularly in its early years, a lack of full professorships, a problem also documented at Cornell University.¹³ As a feminized profession, home economics and the professionals within it struggled constantly to earn the respect accorded other professions and academic

¹¹Rossiter, Women Scientists in America, 55-63. Regina Markell Morantz-Sanchez provides an excellent overview of the experiences of women striving to enter the male-dominated field of medicine in Sympathy and Science: Women Physicians in American Medicine (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

¹²Rossiter, Women Scientists in America, 65. Also, Rossiter's Chapter 8, forthcoming. William Chafe also documents this in The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

¹³Charlotte Williams Conable, Women at Cornell: The Myth of Equal Education (London: Cornell University Press, 1977) 127-128. Conable documents that the first female professors were accepted only in the College of Home Economics. Also a study of faculty listings in Maude Gilchrist's The First Three Decades of Home Economics at Michigan State College finds no full professors in the college before Dr. Marie Dye who earned the title in the 1920s. This is in part due to the fact that few faculty members held doctorates in home economics in its first few decades.

disciplines; this study of the history of the MSU home economics program demonstrates this effort.

Home economics was also unique in that it was one of the few scientific fields virtually dominated by women until the late sixties and early seventies; at MSU a woman served as dean of the department until 1971. But the profession was also segregated from other science fields, and as other academic disciplines, professions, and educational administrators began to attack the value of home economics, it found itself isolated. Under such circumstances, home economists were unable to advocate new roles for women, but instead merely struggled to maintain the ground they gained in the last half-century.¹⁴ The profession, even after its emphasis shifted from teaching homemakers to training professionals, failed to address the problems its graduates faced as professional women. It also never resolved the tension between professional training and training for homemaking. The field continued to debate practical versus professional training, and a study of the students of home economics reiterates this conflict.

A study of the postwar period must begin with World War II. The war years and the postwar era were a period when more women than ever worked in the labor force, and women continued to enter the labor force after the war ended, despite the prevailing rhetoric that women should remain in the home. By 1952, there were two million more women working in the labor force than in the peak years of World War II. But although more women were working, they were employed in specific jobs, and during that same period fewer women were employed in the professions.¹⁵ Women were working to supplement family incomes to provide middle class

¹⁴Margaret Rossiter documents this change from female-controlled to male-controlled in "Protecting Home Economics."

¹⁵Barbara Miller Solomon, In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) 127. See also Alice Kessler-Harris, Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982) 302-303.

lifestyles, or in the case of lower-class families, women worked for their family's survival. That women were concentrated in certain occupations, largely low-wage with few benefits or opportunities for advancement, illustrates the discrimination women faced in attaining equal employment with men, and the need for strong challenges to a gender division of labor. Home economics, although offering professional opportunities, also trained women for many fields which were low-paying and labeled as feminine or "women's work."

Heidi Hartmann's analysis is useful in the study of home economics because it sheds light on the problem inherent in many feminized professions and fields: training women for what is inevitably low-value, low-wage employment. The persistence of patriarchy, Hartmann argues, is evident in the illustration of the division of housework within the home. She asserts that despite women's increased employment outside the home, they continue to do the majority of housework; thus men continue to maintain control over female labor.¹⁶ This also enforces lower wages for women, particularly in the "feminized" jobs and professions (such as home economics). Home economics, even as a profession, trained women for low-wage careers: teaching (even at the college level home economics faculties at MSU rarely had a full professor on staff), child care, food service, and clothing and retail trades. The continued subordinate status of women in society is rooted in the historical sexual division of labor, argues Hartmann.¹⁷ Such subordinate status also is linked to the educational opportunities available to women, and the professional

¹⁶Heidi Hartmann, "The Family as the Locus of Gender, Class, and Political Struggle: The Example of Housework," Signs 6 (Spring 1981) 381.

¹⁷Heidi Hartmann, "Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex," Women and the Workplace: The Implications of Occupational Segregation, ed. Martha Blaxall and Barbara Reagan (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976) 139.

paths open to them once they complete that education.¹⁸ Using Hartmann's analysis, home economics, in furthering such occupational segregation, has probably worked more to the detriment of women's opportunities than to their benefit.

What role did higher education, and home economics, play in women's opportunities? Jill Conway argues that educational opportunity, particularly that offered in coeducational institutions, was not the impetus for women to enter new fields. She asserts that colleges and universities and the education they provided for women did not necessarily translate into higher intellectual pursuits; instead, education often directed women into "acceptable" areas, such as home economics.¹⁹ Women's professions, including home economics, failed to question the sexual division of labor, thus resulting in stifling women's intellectual development and creativity, argues Conway. "Only the abandonment of a sexual division of labor in the life of the mind can effectively change women's consciousness of their worth as scholars and creative intellects," Conway concludes. Feminized professions - echoing traditional gender assumptions about abilities and reinforcing a gender division of labor - actually hampered women's professional

¹⁸Linda K. Kerber, Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1980) 192. Kerber writes, in the context of her discussion of education for women in early American, that the differences in literacy and education between women and men - "from the basic ability to sign one's name and to read simple prose to the sophisticated ability to read difficult of theoretical prose, foreign languages, and the classics - have enormous implications for the history of the relations between the sexes." (192)

¹⁹Jill F. Conway, "Perspectives on the History of Women's Education in the United States," History of Education Quarterly 19 (Spring 1979) 9. Conway asserts that liberating women's minds resulted not from educational opportunities, but from the increase in women's consciousness about themselves. She concludes by noting the danger of "institutionalizing certain kinds of feminine intellectual activity within an existing pattern of male controlled professions." Accepting any sexual division of labor, she argues, channels creativity and reinforces social patterns.

opportunities, rather than providing them with opportunities, according to Conway.²⁰

Conway's argument minimizes the opportunities feminized professions and education programs offered women, both professionally and socially. Male-controlled education, which ultimately occurred in some home economics programs, did affect the opportunities offered to women. But the predominance of women throughout most of the home economics programs created opportunities for women as teachers, researchers, and administrators. Home economics, although a segregated and feminized field, did offer women a place in professional life. Although the development of segregated fields for women did have definite limits, as Conway and Hartmann argue, the existence of such limits does not negate the benefits realized. Many women found opportunities in home economics that did not exist elsewhere, especially in the early decades of the century.

To understand these limits and opportunities, the interaction of the philosophy of home economics and its view of women and the family and the accompanying social changes is an important area of study. As Joan Scott argues, concepts of gender roles are not fixed, and the dynamics of change affecting those roles are an important focus of gender analysis. Social institutions, such as colleges, may reinforce social constructions of gender behavior, but such action is not without conflict and does not guarantee consensus. The analysis and recognition of that conflict and action against the accepted norms is a key part of historical work in gender.²¹ Disagreement existed within the profession of home economics and higher education in general over what women's role was and how best to educate them for those roles. This disagreement is an important area to consider as it reflects the type of conflict to

²⁰Conway, p. 11.

²¹Joan Wallach Scott, Gender and the Politics of History (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) 43.

which Scott refers, and also places home economics in the context of the debate within higher education. The profession of home economics was not a monolith, but a diverse group of individuals with varying ideas, despite the existence of majority opinions. Although many home economists reinforced more traditional roles for women, not all did. Such exceptions thus played an important role for women within their limited sphere. They challenged gender assumptions and provided role models for women students. Through such efforts, they chipped away at entrenched gender ideas held by society and higher education. The extent of such efforts within this feminized profession helps illuminate how it created and limited opportunities for women. Its limitations became more apparent as the profession, and society, grappled with the problem of the conflict between a woman's career and family responsibilities.

Home economics education reinforced not only traditional roles for women, but also reinforced the contradiction for its graduates between their professional and personal lives. Home economists were both professionals and individuals, with responsibilities in both areas. Home economics struggled to reconcile the professional responsibilities and values it taught its students in the postwar era with the responsibilities women faced as members of families, especially as wives and mothers. Ultimately the field subordinated professional goals to a woman's responsibility to raise her own children and to be a homemaker, rather than devising ways for women to pursue both.

Conflict over family roles and within family units is an important element in the historical study of the family. Given the connections between the family and the philosophy of home economics, one cannot study home economics without examining the family. Much of traditional family history focuses on the unity within the family, viewing the family as a single unit, rather than recognizing that it is comprised of

individuals with possible conflicting interests and goals.²² And as for women in other professions, family responsibilities created conflict between home economists' duties to the family, as taught to them in their education, and their professional aspirations and goals.

In the previous two decades, feminist historians questioned the conceptual framework of family history, focusing specifically on potential conflicts within the family unit, the subordination of women within the family, and the importance of the study of power relations within families. Gender became an increasingly important aspect of family history and theory, placing the idea of gender roles, particularly those of women, at the center of analysis.²³ Feminists working in family history also questioned the universality of the "nuclear" family, and "identified the family as a crucial institution in the reproduction of social relationships generally, and decisive for women's subordination."²⁴ Home economics educators, including those at Michigan State University, espoused and taught traditional gender roles, believing that women had special abilities, particularly as mothers, and should accept primary responsibility for child care.

²²Hartmann, "The Family as the Locus of Gender, Class, and Political Struggle," 369. See also Wini Breines, Margaret Cerullo, and Judith Stacey, "Social Biology, Family Studies, and Antifeminist Backlash," Feminist Studies 4 (1978); Barrie Thorne, "Feminism and Family: Two Decades of Thought," Rethinking the Family: Some Feminist Questions eds. Barrie Thorne and Marilyn Yalom (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993); and Tamara Hareven, "Family History at the Crossroads," Journal of Family History 12 (1987). The major historical analysis of women and the family remains Carl Degler's At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present. Degler argues that women's individual aspirations and attempts to achieve equality were at odds with the idea of the family; when women pushed against the boundaries of families and responsibilities, they often reached an impasse.

²³Thorne, Barrie, "Feminism and the Family: Two Decades of Thought," Rethinking the Family: Some Feminist Questions eds. Barrie Thorne and Marilyn Yalom (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993) 5.

²⁴Breines, Wini, Margaret Cerullo, and Judith Stacey, "Social Biology, Family Studies, and Antifeminist Backlash." Feminist Studies 4 (1978) 43, 62.

This responsibility makes the study of the relationship between an individual and family critical in the study of women in the professions, particularly in home economics where family was emphasized so much. This analysis (termed life course analysis by family historians) places family change within the context of historical time, and examines how families interact not only as a separate domestic unit but also in the context of outside influences, such as work, education, and community and social agencies.²⁵ Life course analysis also examines how social and cultural circumstances, ideas, and norms affect the planning of life events, whether they be marriage, children, work, or education.²⁶ Such interaction is important to consider in the study of home economics, which dealt with professionals who chose certain responsibilities at specific times in their lives, such as college, work, marriage, or child-rearing, and seldom opted to try to combine work and children at the same time, unless economically necessary.²⁷ It also is important given the dominance of the life course idea for women's education, which encouraged women, including home economists, to plan their lives, both personal and professional, entirely around the needs of the family.

²⁵Hareven, Tamara K. "Family History at the Crossroads." Journal of Family History 12, 1-3 (1987): x. See also Louise Tilly, "Women's History and Family History: Fruitful Collaboration of Missed Connection?" Journal of Family History 12, 1-3 (1987): 313. Tilly's idea of the relationship between women and institutions is critical for home economics education. See Charles Tilly, Forward, Transitions: The Family and the Life Course in Historical Perspective ed. Tamara K. Hareven (New York: Academic Press, 1978) xii-xiii. See also Hareven, "The Historical Study of the Life Course" and Glen Elder, Jr., "Family History and the Life Course" in the same volume. Life course analysis is more applicable than family cycle analysis, which tends to focus on the stages of life for an average nuclear family. The result often emphasizes parenthood, rather than the individual, in this study, the woman.

²⁶Ibid, p. xiii.

²⁷An alumni study done in late 1960s illustrates how women planned their lives in relation to their families. A more extensive analysis of this concept will be undertaken in chapter five, using the "College of Home Economics Alumni Study, 1948-1967," (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1969).

This thesis is organized into four major parts and analyzes not only the discourse and rhetoric presented by home economics educators to their students, but also the ways in which graduates received and implemented that discourse. The second chapter highlights the history of home economics at Michigan State University and its role in women's education, providing the backdrop for the issues and events of the postwar period. Chapter three discusses the prevailing ideas and attitudes and educational rhetoric of the fifties and early sixties, and how they affected women and home economists. It places the MSU deans - Marie Dye, Thelma Porter, and Jeanette Lee - in the larger context of the period, and demonstrates how their ideas fit into those of the larger society. What emerges is the prevalence of such ideas about women's education and their roles in society far beyond the confines of the profession of home economics. Chapter four addresses the profession's struggle to become a respected part of the professional and academic world, and the obstacles it faced, including the predominance of women in the field. The final chapter examines the students' education in the College of Home Economics - how they reacted to their education and how it affected their decisions in life. That chapter is based largely on the results of an alumni study conducted by the College of Home Economics in 1967. An analysis of these graduates' surveys and comments reveals their use of the education and rhetoric espoused to them by their home economics educators.

As noted earlier, an analysis of the speeches, articles, and other writings by the deans of the MSU program forms the core of the source base. The deans who headed the program did not speak for the entire college nor the profession, but their writings are significant given their role in the larger professional organization of home economics, including state and national organizations, and the debate about women's education both at MSU and in the academic community. Home economics, I would argue, is also a slightly different discipline than other colleges in the university, largely because its goal included training students

for a profession, rather than providing a general liberal arts education. All these deans taught at MSU in the college prior to assuming their administrative positions, and all were active in the profession beyond the confines of Michigan State University. They were situated between the day-to-day realities of running a college home economics program, which included extensive contact with groups, organizations, and businesses which would one day employ their graduates, and the larger philosophical and theoretical issues of what home economics was and how it should develop in order to serve society. All three women were highly respected in the field and clearly spoke for more than only themselves in the home economics community.

Faculty discussions in workshops and meetings and the articles and speeches by faculty members supplement the words of the deans and broaden the source base for this study. Given the limits of the sources available and the study undertaken here, the result, while not a definitive account of home economics and its debates in this period, yields important insights into the role of home economics education in the postwar period.

This study shows that home economists did not deal directly with the problems and contradictions their graduates faced in pursuing a professional career while also marrying and raising children. Like many other areas in society, home economists did not offer assistance with the responsibilities women faced as wives and mothers. This study uncovered almost no discussion about the need to reevaluate the division of labor within the home or to provide child care for mothers who also continued in their profession. It left the burden of combining both tasks on the woman, rather than developing institutional supports to assist them. Educators adopted the "life course" education model to address women's roles, but these women turned that to their advantage, as the final chapter shows. These graduates, facing a return to the profession when their children no longer demanded their full-time care,

turned to the university to provide them with the educational retraining to resume those careers.

This study also adds to the continued revision of the postwar period. Rather than depicting a profound break between the fifties, with its emphasis on conformity and consensus, and the sixties, characterized by social upheaval, this study points to more continuity between the two decades. Hints of change exist, but a definitive alteration of ideology is not evident. The extreme dissatisfaction experienced by women in their domestic roles, as described in Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique, also is not expressed. These women, while anxious to return to their chosen field and seeking help in doing so, are not rejecting their roles as wives and mothers. They are asking for recognition of those roles and the responsibilities and work attached to them.

This study addresses the issue of opportunities within a segregated feminized profession in one program: MSU's Department of Home Economics. Despite professional rhetoric, women in the postwar era also were inundated with ideas about their appropriate roles in society and the importance of home and family. Such information was potent competition for professional education and aspirations, and unfortunately the MSU program often reinforced these ideas. But despite the drawbacks, this study shows the positive side of the history of home economics, and its contribution as a source, although a limited one, of professional opportunity and advancement for women.

CHAPTER 2

Home Economics at MSU: From a Women's Course to Academic Discipline

Home economics grew from efforts to help women in their domestic tasks, to elevate the value placed on those tasks, and to apply scientific knowledge to the home, giving wives and mothers the benefits of such knowledge to improve the management of their homes. Professionalizing the home through home economics or "domestic science" began at the turn of the century, and, as reflected in most areas of society, generally failed to question the division of labor; domestic work was women's work, and it was the woman's role to protect, serve, and enhance family life. When the Women's Course (later the Department and College of Home Economics) began in 1896 at the Michigan Agricultural College in East Lansing, the course catalog noted that the purpose of the program in its early years was

To give a good college education in which the science and art of home making shall be a prominent feature. We endeavor to so train young women that they will be able to apply science to the ordinary duties of the home. At the same time we give them a training in music, art, modern languages, literature and such other studies as will develop them into broad-minded, cultured women.¹

The catalog also noted that since 90 percent of most women would assume the role of homemaker, their education should prepare them for that role. And, "Why should not science be compelled to relieve women of much of the drudgery of life, just as it has accomplished this for men?"² The first curriculum for the Women's Course included

¹Maude Gilchrist, The First Three Decades of Home Economics at Michigan State College (East Lansing: School of Home Economics, MSC, 1947) 9.

²Ibid., 9.

mathematics, history, English, languages, and the sciences, in addition to domestic arts, physical education, and music. Forty-two women enrolled that first year to study under the new program.³

If women were to be taught the proper way to maintain a home, they must have teachers to instruct them, and thus came the new profession of home economists, the "experts" on foods and nutrition, child care, home management, clothing, textiles, and a host of other duties and activities associated with the home. Many of the early pioneers of the field were scientists, trained in some of the best colleges and universities in the country, both coeducational and women's colleges. Ellen Swallow Richards, assumed to be the founder of home economics, was a chemist who earned her first degree from Vassar College in 1870 and earned a second degree from MIT in 1873.⁴ She continued to study for two more years at MIT, but never was granted an advanced degree.⁵ But as was the case with other women who successfully broke the barriers to women's education in science, Richards had few employment prospects despite her advanced education. Her husband's position on the MIT faculty enabled her to do some work, unpaid, for the university, but she had few other opportunities. She eventually taught sanitary chemistry, and began her efforts to use science to improve housework and the home.⁶

Richards did not question women's domestic role or child rearing responsibilities, but believed that housekeeping was a profession that could utilize the knowledge of science to improve its efficiency and

³Jeanette Lee, Katherine M. Hart, and Rosalind Mentzer, From Home Economics to Human Ecology: A History Digest (East Lansing: College of Human Ecology, 1972) 2.

⁴Margaret W. Rossiter, Women Scientists in America: Struggles and Strategies to 1940 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982) 68-69.

⁵Glenna Matthews, "Just a Housewife": The Rise and Fall of American Domesticity in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) 147.

⁶Rossiter, Women Scientists in America, 68.

reduce the labor of women. Learning the practical art was not enough. A woman also needed to learn to think and to apply basic science knowledge to her tasks:

The head can save the heels only when the heels have had practice young and remember *without telling* what to do at the slightest hint. In other words, *housework* is a trade to be prepared for by manual exercise, as *housekeeping* is a profession to be prepared for by mental exercise.

Richards advocated equal education for women, believing that their future roles demanded it, and that such education was not wasted on women who devoted their lives to homemaking:

We must awaken a spirit of investigation in our girls, as it is often awakened in our boys, but always, I think, *in spite of* the school training. We must show to the girls who are studying science in our schools that it has a very close relation to everyday life. We must train them by it to judge for themselves, and not to do everything just as their grandmothers did, just *because* their grandmothers did it...⁸

Richards wanted women to apply science to the home, and to do so, they had to learn basic scientific principles and broaden their education. Her goal was to educate women to be "experts" at homemaking, because homemaking demanded special education and training.

Most early home economists followed an education path similar to Richards. Isabel Bevier also studied chemistry at several universities and colleges, including MIT, as did Marion Talbot. Bevier entered the field after being told by a professor that the only place for a woman chemist was in food chemistry.⁹ Home economics became a field in which women scientists could achieve some success and faced no competition from men for jobs, as men did not want to work in the field, particularly in its early years. For women with aspirations beyond the lower, entry-level positions in science fields, home economics was virtually the only occupation open to them. Home economics was the only

⁷Ellen Richards quoted in Carolyn L. Hunt, The Life of Ellen H. Richards (Boston: Whitcomb & Barrows, 1912) 172.

⁸Ellen Richards quoted in Hunt, 181.

⁹Matthews, "Just a Housewife", 147.

field to accept women as full professors, department chairpersons, or deans.¹⁰ At MSU, the department did not have a male dean until 1971, and although few faculty members achieved the status of full professor, women held virtually all department chairs and other administrative posts.¹¹

Home economics at MSU was an outgrowth of the Morrill Land-Grant Act (1862), which established colleges in rural areas to teach agriculture and mechanic arts to both women and men.¹² A result of this was the establishment of home economics courses for women to provide them with a practical education that they could use in their roles as wives and mothers. The sons of Michigan's citizens were to learn agriculture and other practical arts; the daughters were to learn cooking, sewing, and other homemaking skills. Prior to the establishment of the Women's Course, some women did take agricultural courses along with the men, although few remained to take a degree. After the college began the Women's Course to serve the educational needs of women, federal legislation further stimulated the program's expansion. The first was the Hatch Act (1887), which allocated funding for Agricultural Experiment Stations throughout the country. The stations were to provide teaching and research in agriculture and rural living. The station was a major source of research funding, primarily in foods and nutrition, for the home economics program, and in 1925 the School of Home Economics received a grant to begin its first major research planning effort.¹³

The Smith-Lever Act (1914) provided funds to expand the Extension work, which began in 1897 and focused primarily on rural farm women.

¹⁰Rossiter, Women Scientists in America, 70.

¹¹Lee, From Home Economics to Human Ecology, 37.

¹²Rossiter, Women Scientists in America, 67.

¹³Lee, From Home Economics to Human Ecology, 5.

The Smith Hughes Act (1918) designated Michigan Agricultural College as one of two state institutions to prepare teachers in vocational home economics.¹⁴ Training home economists to teach in secondary schools would become one of the largest parts of the MSU program, and the demand for trained teachers, certified under the Smith-Hughes Act, remained high, even during the Depression and World War II, providing employment opportunities for numerous young women.

Another legislative act important to home economics was the Purnell Act (1925), which endorsed the use of federal funds, channeled through the Experiment Stations, for research related to rural homes, which provided money for home economics research. Dr. Marie Dye's first project using these funds entailed studying the vitamin content in commercially canned peas in 1926. Other projects included studying the relation of soil fertility to the vitamin A content in leaf lettuce.¹⁵

The department, as noted, began in 1896 as the Women's Course, under the direction of Edith F. McDermott. She taught a program in domestic economy, instructing the 42 women enrolled in care of the home, foods and nutrition, health, clothing, and medical emergencies (first aid and anatomy and physiology).¹⁶ The curriculum also included mathematics, English, history, languages, and science.¹⁷ Originally housed in Abbot Hall, the program moved into the new Women's Building (now Morrill Hall) in 1901; the building was constructed with funds appropriated by the Michigan legislature. By 1905 teacher training had

¹⁴Ibid., 4-5.

¹⁵Ibid., 11-12.

¹⁶Gilchrist, The First Three Decades, 9. McDermott was a teacher of domestic science in Alleghany's Fifth Ward Manual Training and Domestic Science School prior to coming to MAC. She received her training at Alleghany College, Drexel Institute, and Cornell University. In addition to teaching, she served as matron for the women students during the year.

¹⁷Lee, From Home Economics to Human Ecology, 1.

begun in earnest at MAC, and the program's primary emphasis was to train homemakers and teachers of homemakers, through a single curriculum.¹⁸

1908 saw the formation of the American Home Economics Association, the field's professional society, which also published the Journal of Home Economics, and 1912 marked the beginning of Omicron Nu, the profession's national honor society for college students. Maude Gilchrist, dean of Home Economics at MAC from 1901 to 1913, founded Omicron Nu which was to become one of the most powerful women's honor societies in the 1920s and 1930s; by 1940, 32 chapters existed throughout the United States.¹⁹

Women continued to be excluded from most scientific societies, and "women's" groups and societies such as Omicron Nu provided an important professional support base for women.²⁰

The twenties proved to be a decade of many changes, including the construction of a new building for the program. Funded by a \$400,000 grant from the Michigan legislature, the building opened in 1924.²¹ At that point, the program had four areas of specialization: foods and nutrition, clothing and textiles, vocational education, and general.²²

¹⁸Ibid., 6. It was in 1920-1922, under the administration of Dean Mary Sweeney, that the curriculum underwent a major revision. The program expanded the number of elective courses offered and instituted four fields of concentration: foods and nutrition, clothing and textiles, vocational education, and general.

¹⁹Rossiter, Women Scientists in America, 299.

²⁰See Chapter 11, "Women's Clubs and Prizes: Compensatory Recognition," in Rossiter, Women Scientists in America. For a discussion of the professional subculture of women in social work, see Daniel J. Walkowitz, "The Making of a Feminine Professional Identity: Social Workers in the 1920s," American Historical Review 95 (October 1990) 1054.

²¹Lee, From Home Economics to Human Ecology, 4. The building still houses the College of Human Ecology at MSU. Efforts to expand the college's facilities throughout the next half-century were never realized, despite repeated efforts to secure additional space. Such requests are found throughout the period of this study, and are a continual theme in the department's annual reports to the administration. See chapter four for a more extensive discussion of these efforts.

²²Ibid., 6.

A nursery school and a nursing training program began during this decade. The first nursery school was established in 1927, but the home economics program did not offer child development as a major until World War II increased the need for nursery school teachers and child care workers. A five-year nursing program conducted jointly with Sparrow Hospital of Lansing started in that decade. The Depression years saw a drop in enrollment, although the department responded to the times with increased emphasis on frugality and the best use of resources, again adjusting its work to the needs of the times. By 1935 enrollment was on the rise, and continued to climb until World War II began. The department became the Division of Home Economics in 1935, and was renamed the College of Home Economics twenty years later.

Those years also saw expansion in other areas of the university, prompting changes within home economics. Music, elementary and physical education, and nursing all began in the home economics program, but slowly developed into separate departments on campus. Physical education became the Department of Physical Culture in 1916 and music left home economics in 1919, although home economics majors were still required to take both.²³ The School of Education absorbed the elementary education program in 1942 and the five-year nursing program with Sparrow Hospital was transferred to the College of Science and the Arts in the new nursing curriculum in 1950.²⁴ All originally were housed in the Women's Course and later home economics because they were considered "feminine" fields and natural extensions of women's role in the domestic sphere.

Perhaps more important to the history of the MSU home economics program are the people who led it and formulated many of its changes and developments. After 1929, the department was led by three deans before it reorganized in 1970 as the College of Human Ecology. Dr. Marie Dye

²³Gilchrist, The First Three Decades, 31, 41.

²⁴Lee, From Home Economics to Human Ecology, 18.

became dean of the home economics program in 1929, seven years after joining the faculty at MSC. She oversaw the program until 1956. Dye was a well-known scholar and teacher in the field of foods and nutrition. She began the first research efforts and organized the department's graduate studies program. By 1930 she was directing four major research projects.²⁵

Dye was greatly respected within the profession of home economics. She served as secretary (1931-33), treasurer (1942-44), and president (1948-50) of the AHEA and was president of the Michigan Home Economics Association from 1929-31.²⁶ She published numerous articles in the Journal of Home Economics and served on several committees in the AHEA. She held influential positions in state and national organizations, and was a well-known, published scholar in home economics.

Dye headed the program for 27 years - the longest tenure of any administrator of home economics at MSU. She was followed by Dr. Thelma Porter, who oversaw the program from 1956-1964; Jeanette Lee, who was Porter's assistant, became dean in 1964 and retained the position until 1971. Porter was the only one of the three who married. All three women earned great respect within the profession. They served on AHEA committees, university committees, and also contributed research and papers to the Journal of Home Economics and to various professional meetings. All three were trained in the fields of foods and nutrition; Lee was the only one without a doctorate. Dye and Porter received their doctorates from the University of Chicago. Porter was the chairperson of the Department of Foods and Nutrition at MSU until 1945, when she

²⁵Lee, From Home Economics to Human Ecology, 11-12. Her four projects in 1930 (all under Purnell funds) included two regarding the vitamin content in vegetables, another on physiological needs of children, and the fourth was the "effect of the antirachitic factor and ultraviolet irradiation on calcium metabolism." Because of the funding source (agriculture), many of the research projects dealt with foods and nutrition. This would later limit investigations in matters related to social and economic factors in family life.

²⁶Who's Who in America, v. 29, 1956/57 (Chicago: Marquis, Who's Who, Inc.) 740.

left to head the home economics department at the University of Chicago. She returned to MSU to serve as dean of the College of Home Economics in 1956, after the University of Chicago abandoned its home economics program.²⁷ Lee, a graduate of the University of Minnesota, joined MSU's foods and nutrition faculty in 1937, becoming assistant dean in 1941. Lee also was chairperson of the French Lick Seminar in 1961, which was a major event in the reevaluation of the field of home economics.

In the midst of Dye's administration, the department began a lengthy curriculum revision in the late 1940s. In 1940-41, all home economics students were required to take 14 courses: orientation, color and design, clothing selection, clothing construction, textiles, nutrition, food preparation, meal planning and table service, home management practice, child study, home furnishings, social and economic problems of the family, the child and his family, and consumer buying.²⁸ Student and alumni evaluations revealed a growing discontent with the program; common complaints were that the program was too rigid, requiring too much laboratory work and courses that were not related to the major field. By 1953-54, only eight core courses were required of all home economics majors; clothing courses, consumer buying, and the child and the family were eliminated from the core program. Home economics enrollment was not keeping up with the rise in student enrollment in the university, despite employment opportunities in the field, thus prompting a reappraisal of the program. The result was a decrease in home economics requirements and a shift in focus from the

²⁷Marie Dye, Home Economics at the University of Chicago, 1892-1956 (Chicago: University of Chicago Alumni Association, 1972) 94.

²⁸Lee, From Home Economics to Human Ecology, 20.

technical aspects of study to a more professional focus, reflecting wider trends in education during the 1950s.²⁹

Each of the next two decades also saw additional curriculum changes and major debates over the field's focus. The faculty finalized one revision in 1961, further reducing the number of core requirements, and another revision a decade later, with a shift in focus from simply a study of people and their immediate environment to the study of the interaction of the environment and people.³⁰ This latter change coincided with the adoption of a new name: the College of Human Ecology.³¹

Dye, Porter, and Lee oversaw the program during its most tumultuous years. They adapted to and guided changes within the field, and helped the profession seek a redefinition during their administrations. Their words, both in publication and speeches, help us to begin to understand the meaning of home economics education for women. Although all recognized, and perhaps encouraged, women's traditional role in the family and society, all three women were strong advocates of women's education. They believed in equal opportunities in education for women and stressed that women were the intellectual equals of men. They all firmly believed that home economics and its concerns with the family had much to offer both women and men - husbands and fathers - and society as a whole. As educated professionals, they likely served as powerful role models for many of the students whose

²⁹Lee, From Home Economics to Human Ecology, 17-18; "Home Economics and Core Curriculum," March 1948 committee report and "Core Courses Required of all Home Economics Students"; MSU Archives, Box 379, Folder 36.

³⁰Lee, From Home Economics to Human Ecology, 37-38; Rosalind Mentzer, "A Report on the Process Used in Revising Curriculum in the College of Home Economics," published pamphlet, 1962; MSU Archives, Box 379, Folder 38, p. 1-17.

³¹A similar change occurred at Cornell University in 1969. See Charlotte Williams Conable, Women at Cornell: The Myth of Equal Education (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977) 154-155.

education they oversaw. They also fought to keep home economics in the university curriculum, believing it to be a necessary field of study to improve family life and health.

All attained professional stature within the field, and contributed greatly to education philosophy and practice at the college level. Their contributions were not limited to home economics; instead they participated in education debates university-wide. The following chapters detail more fully their own views about home economics, education, and women's roles, and also document how their ability to support changes in traditional roles was limited by the growing attack on home economics at the university level. Home economics, as a feminized profession, increasingly was on the defensive, and all three administrators were involved in the effort to defend and advance home economics as a viable academic and professional discipline.

The next chapter analyzes more fully these women's beliefs - both written and spoken - about women's roles and the education appropriate for those roles. A study of their work illustrates the messages conveyed to their students, the next generation of home economists.

CHAPTER 3

Conformity and Consensus: Home Economics in the Fifties

Few periods in American history present the anomaly that the 1950s do, and few eras illustrate more fully that history is not always a story of progress and improvement. For women, the 1950s was a decade of limited choices and a regression of opportunities accompanied by a renewed emphasis on traditional roles and values. Fewer women pursued college degrees, and a larger proportion of those who did left early to marry.¹ Marriage and birth rates went up for the first time in decades, and ideas about women's education returned to a philosophy of the inevitability of women's roles as wives and mothers and how best to prepare them for those roles.² Few women opted to combine marriage and career, and almost no institutional supports to enable them to do so existed. Yet when women became a more needed element in the work force as the decade progressed, many commentators lamented the lack of ambition among the nation's young women, often not realizing the role they had played in fostering such feelings.³

¹Barbara Miller Solomon, In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Higher Education in America (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) 63.

²Douglas T. Miller and Marion Nowak, The Fifties: The Way We Really Were (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977) 147; Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life (New York: The Free Press, 1988) 178-179; and Eugenia Kaledin, Mothers and More: American Women in the 1950s (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984) 49-54.

³Frank Stricker, "Cookbooks and Law Books: The Hidden History of Career Women in the Twentieth Century." Journal of Social History 10 (1976) 12. Stricker argues that "it was as much this conservatism of academic thought as the alleged disillusionment among anonymous women that allowed the surge of domestic ideas in the late 1940's and 1950's."

Many women did choose marriage in the 1950s. Rates of marriage, divorce, and births were all out of line with demographic trends up to that time. There were 2.5 million fewer single women at the end of World War II than in 1940, "and by the end of the 1950s, 70 percent of all women were married by the age of twenty-four, compared to just 42 percent in 1940 and 50 percent today."⁴ Both women and men married younger, and most couples had larger families than was the historical norm. The 1940s and 1950s were the first decades in which the birth rate reversed its downward pattern, with the fertility rate rising 50 percent from 1940 to 1957.⁵ Likewise, the divorce rate increase was lower in the 1950s than any other decade in the twentieth century.⁶

The 1950s, while a period of conformity and consensus, was also one of tension and change. Social and economic forces prompted redefinitions of women's roles even as the public discourse lauded the importance of motherhood and marriage; those same forces affected women differently, depending upon their race and class. Betty Friedan's study of fiction articles in popular women's magazines found the "happy housewife" to be the dominant theme for white, middle-class women, with few images of working wives or mothers, except for sad cases of economic necessity.⁷ Historians have begun to reexamine the pervasiveness of that image in middle-class women's magazines, and the result is a picture of women that is more diverse than simply one that entails domesticity, babies, and marriage. Joanne Meyerowitz's study describes a more complex picture, one filled with tensions between conflicting roles for women. Meyerowitz did not find any direct challenges "to the

⁴Mintz and Kellogg, Domestic Revolutions, 178-179.

⁵Ibid., 179.

⁶Ibid., 179.

⁷Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique (New York: Dell Publishing, 1983, rep. 1963) 33-68.

variegated oppression of women," but her study revealed "ambivalence and contradictions in postwar mass culture, which included a celebration of nondomestic as well as domestic pursuits and a tension between individual achievements and domestic ideals."⁸

The tension and conflict highlighted by Meyerowitz can also be found in the profession of home economics, where women's traditional roles and their professional aspirations were often in conflict. Women in the program often received conflicting messages: the importance of family life and the need to contribute to society through meaningful, paid work. Compounding this problem was the profession's need for committed home economists to continue and to grow as a discipline. Educators sought to balance the needs of the home economics profession with the prevailing cultural ideas about women's roles. Attempts to reconcile these often resulted in conflicting messages to home economics students, messages which also mirrored conflicting ideas about women's roles in society as depicted in the mass media. These contradictions, found in many feminized professions, increasingly become apparent in the speeches and writings of the MSU home economics faculty. Like many Americans, home economists at MSU predicated many of their ideas on the assumption that most women would eventually be mothers, thus leaving the work force at least for a period of time. In addition, they often espoused ideas of the "natural" abilities of women, voicing ideas about women's difference from men, rather than emphasizing equality between the sexes.

Home economics educators expressed such beliefs and ideas in the 1950s and into the 1960s, providing another example of the continuities

⁸Joanne Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958," Journal of American History 79 (March 1993) 1465. See also William Chafe's The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) 177-193, and Kaledin, Mothers and More. Susan Lynn suggests that historians have too readily accepted Friedan's assessment of the period, resulting in a distorted view of the period. See Lynn, "Gender and Post World War II Progressive Politics: A Bridge to Social Activism in the 1960s U.S.A." Gender & History 4 (Summer 1992) 216.

in ideology between the two decades. This chapter depicts that continuity in thought, a continuity that does not shift until women become more in demand in the labor force. But the shift does not result in changes in women's roles as wives and mothers (or in men's roles as husbands and fathers). Instead, it results in the "life course" plan for women's education, which encouraged women to return to the workforce after their children were grown.

The assumptions about women's future roles held by home economists, both at MSU and elsewhere, are found in many mediums of society at this time. Pervading much of the literature of the period, either in the media, textbooks, or advice books, is the assumption that women aspired to be wives and mothers. Women were found in the home and not in the public world, not because of discrimination, but because they did not want to be there; they preferred to be homemakers. Helen Sherman and Marjorie Coe argue this in their book, The Challenge of Being a Woman: Understanding Ourselves and Our Children, an advice book published in 1955:

But isn't it true that the majority of American women prefer to make their contribution by functioning as wives and mothers? The relatively small number of women in top positions in this country is best explained not by men's desire to keep them out by an insufficient drive on the part of the women themselves to get in.⁹

Sherman and Coe acknowledged that some women did combine marriage and career, and did so successfully, "but only a woman of great energy married to an *unusually understanding* husband is likely to succeed in this dual role." Most women who tried to do both, argued the authors, failed at great cost to their self-esteem and happiness.¹⁰ In short, a woman could try to do both, but she probably would not succeed and would likely harm her husband and children in the process. Authors, educators, and other commentators usually characterized career pursuits

⁹Helen Sherman and Marjorie Coe, The Challenge of Being a Woman: Understanding Ourselves and Our Children (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955) 18.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 15.

and goals by mothers and wives as selfish and not in the interests of the family or society.

Society's prescriptions advised women to conform to their probable, and supposedly preferred, roles as wives and mothers. Sherman and Coe wrote that "Marriage also requires that [women] accept the role of woman." Women and men were different and a successful marriage hinged on both sexes accepting that difference and filling their appropriate roles.¹¹ Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia F. Farnham, in their book Modern Woman: The Lost Sex, also voiced these beliefs. According to Lundberg and Farnham, women who espoused feminist goals or who sought to break out of women's "natural" role were actually pursuing masculinity. The sexes were not equal, but different, and that difference had inevitable consequences for their social roles.¹² Women had to "submit..to their own nature, or suffer, as men must also do."¹³

A part of women's nature, according to many commentators, was caring for children. Women who pursued a professional career faced a common dilemma if they decided to have children: whether to remain at home with their children, especially before they reached school age, or to find alternate care for the children while they continued to work. This dilemma created an obvious problem for women in home economics, particularly in academic life; their philosophy emphasized the importance of the family and the mother's role within it. Leaving a child to go to work outside the home, particularly for professional advancement and not out of economic necessity, seemed to contradict the very tenets of their profession. Many women chose to place family obligations first, resulting in an extreme shortage of qualified

¹¹Ibid., 42.

¹²Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia F. Farnham, Modern Woman: The Lost Sex (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947) 162.

¹³Ibid., 171.

personnel, particularly at the college level, to teach and conduct research.¹⁴

Despite the need for home economics professionals in business, education, and academia, some commentators and educators believed that the trend toward freeing women from home responsibilities to allow them to pursue careers was not necessarily good, despite the needs of the profession. Some saw a direct link between the dissatisfaction and discontent of homemakers and the feminist movement. An article in a 1956 issue of the Journal of Home Economics addressed the role of women in the family, and author Agnes Meyer made this connection. She conceded "that great numbers of American women are unhappy, confused, and, therefore, suffer from emotional attrition." This prompts them, she continued, to rebel against family responsibilities. But Meyer did not agree with women who chose to rebel, although she sympathized with them. She blamed the existence of such discontent on those people seeking to expand women's opportunities:

Much of this mental and emotional confusion among women is a bitter heritage of the feminist movement which taught women to see themselves as rivals of men rather than as partners of a common endeavor.¹⁵

Meyer wasn't the only person to blame the feminists. Sherman and Coe warned their female readers that if they were in the market for a husband but had not been successful, the reason may be because they were "something of a feminist."¹⁶ Farnham and Lundberg equated feminism with the hatred of men, arguing that the women's movement "stood on a bedrock

¹⁴This became a major problem during this period in the profession of home economics, and will be addressed in the next chapter.

¹⁵Agnes E. Meyer, "Woman's Responsibility for the Family," Journal of Home Economics 48 (September 1956) 499. Meyer's article is cited in Porter's address at the vocational education meeting (see note 20).

¹⁶Sherman and Coe, The Challenge of Being a Woman, 62.

foundation of hatred."¹⁷ Not only was feminism based on hatred, but it also signified an illness:

[The feminist] ideology, to come directly to the point, we regard as an expression of emotional sickness, of neurosis. Feminism, despite the external validity of its political program and most (not all) of its social programs, was at its core a deep illness.¹⁸

These authors were not the first to espouse these ideas, but Lundberg and Farnham based their ideas on the foundation of social science, including Freud and functionalism. Their book blamed women for many modern problems, and what made their work stand out was that it was not just an emotional diatribe, but was (seemingly) grounded in fact; it was "dense and cerebral" and "its statements appeared more intellectual and scientific."¹⁹ Their book carried the weight of "scientific" evidence and the opinions of "experts."

Antifeminism was found in countless arenas in the 1950s. The term "feminist" was a pejorative, and was equated with unmarried, angry women who hated men. Such women were "ill" and suffered from neuroses. In addition, the media furthered the ideas espoused by "experts" such as Farnham and Lundberg, and reiterated ideas about women as happy housewives with little, if anything, to complain about.²⁰ The media also played a role in its lack of attention paid to the women's rights movement. Feminists were seldom connected to an active women's rights movement, perpetuating the idea that no movement existed. As Leila Rupp

¹⁷Lundberg and Farnham, Modern Woman, 33.

¹⁸Ibid., 143.

¹⁹Miller and Novak, The Fifties, 1977) 153. Miller and Novak provide an excellent overview of women in the fifties in the chapter, "The Happy Home Corporation and Baby Factory." For another good discussion of these works and their role in the fifties, see William Chafe, The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) 176-179. For a contemporary analysis, see Friedan, The Feminine Mystique, 119-120.

²⁰Rupp and Taylor, Survival in the Doldrums, 18.

and Verta Taylor have shown, an active, although small, women's movement did exist, but received little attention.²¹

Clearly authors such as Sherman, Coe, Farnham, and Lundberg do not speak for the entire society. Meyerowitz characterizes the positions of the antifeminists and women's rights advocates as the two extremes of opinion, representing only a minority, in American society. She argues that most Americans held views somewhere between these two extremes.²² While this may be true, the beliefs held by the three MSU deans tend to place them, if not directly in the antifeminist camp, on its margins. Little evidence of pro-feminist views or any notions challenging a woman's traditional responsibilities appears. Porter held the most extreme views, while Jeanette Lee, who headed the program throughout the 1960s, seemed to have a greater understanding of the conflicts women faced and struggled to deal with those issues. Dye's position is harder to pinpoint, as she left few clues in her writings.

Thelma Porter downplayed any contradictions between family and work for women, arguing in the mid-fifties that home economics utilized "the intellectual capacities in which [women] tend to be most adequately endowed" and that the profession did not discourage marriage and family, but rather encouraged it and contributed to its success. "This point of view seems in opposition to the feminist attitudes. The facts are, however, that Home Economics is natural and negotiable as training for young women," Porter noted.²³ Porter's comments, however, seem to apply only to those women who earned a bachelor's degree and then joined the work force. For them, returning to the profession after raising their own children was less problematic than for a woman who pursued a graduate education. Porter also commented on the applicability of home

²¹Ibid., 20-23.

²²Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique," 1477.

²³Thelma Porter, Speech given at the Faculty Women's Association Luncheon, October 10, 1956; MSU Archives, Box 364, Folder 33, p. 6.

economics education for homemakers, which she believed many women would be, at least for a period of their life. As noted, Porter was the only one of the three deans to be married; her writings and speeches offer no clues as to how she managed to combine family with a successful career as a college teacher, researcher and administrator. But her ideas about women's roles are clear and she had definite ideas regarding a married woman's duties and responsibilities. A woman's first responsibility was to her home and family, and her professional life should be secondary.

Porter held very firm convictions regarding the traditional role for women, despite the increasing number of women in the work force. While acknowledging that phenomenon, Porter distinguished between those who worked out of economic necessity and those who chose to work, and alluded to the loss in values inherent in a career mother. "She may find many satisfactions in her job, but the chances are that she, her husband and her children will suffer psychological damage and that she will be basically an unhappy person," Porter noted. She did not think women should sit home idle, with no intellectual pursuits, but argued that those endeavors should center around the family responsibilities.²⁴ She shared Dye's view of different educational needs, although she also believed in more basic differences between the sexes and found fault with feminists who espoused equality:

The feminist movement has resulted in broader educational and professional opportunities for women but it is based upon a concept of equality of men and women which denies the reality of sex difference and there are some very real and complex intellectual and emotional, as well as biological, differences.²⁵

This was a speech Porter used often and for different audiences; she also loaned it to others to use, indicating how strong her views were on the subject.

²⁴Thelma Porter, "Occupations for Women and Their Dual Role," speech given at the Kellogg Center, Fall 1956, at a vocational education meeting; MSU Archives, Box 364, Folder 33, p. 5.

²⁵Porter, "Dual Role," p. 8.

Conflict between a woman's role in the family and her profession was not an easy one to resolve, even within a field that seemed to espouse traditional values and gender roles, as noted by Porter's assistant and later successor, Jeanette Lee. Lee struggled with the problem of maintaining an adequate faculty in a field comprised primarily of women, whose first commitment, according to society and the system that educated them, should be to their families. Many of her teachers and faculty members resigned, either to raise their own families or because their husband's career required them to move, before they achieved experience and stature within the profession. Because women tended to subordinate their careers to men, they were less likely to remain long enough to obtain tenure and make a continuous commitment to the program.²⁶ Some women also accepted only part-time or temporary positions, preferring not to take a full-time jobs. Consequently, Lee was torn between the traditional view of women and their family responsibilities and the need for them to make a professional commitment. In one of her speeches to an administrative group, she penciled in the margin: "The only reason I got where I am is because I don't have a husband," indicating her struggle to deal with that contradiction.²⁷ In the same report, she also added an observation that a woman's commitment to a career was second to family responsibilities, "as it probably should be." She recognized the inherent conflict between women as professionals and their traditional, and subordinate, role to men in the family, and struggled to find a resolution. Yet she only felt comfortable commenting on the problem in the margins, rather than in the body of the speech. Perhaps like other educators, she did not feel able to address the problem directly.

²⁶Jeanette Lee, notes for a report to be given to the dean's group in home economics, January 26, 1965. MSU Archives, Box 364, Folder 20, p.22. The files of the three deans contain several letters from former students seeking assistance in finding positions after their husband's careers have forced them to relocate.

²⁷Lee, "Notes," p. 22.

The profession also struggled with whether to emphasize practical or professional training, and what a woman's education should entail. Was the program training its graduates for a vocational career, or for a profession? In its earlier years, home economics programs sought to train homemakers, believing that a formal domestic education would serve women's future roles as wives and mothers. At a conference in May 1925 at MAC, "the discussion indicated a tendency toward a general education for intelligent living, but with a decided slant toward preparation for home-making." And the faculty discussed plans to include more courses for the general homemaker.²⁸

The emphasis on a woman's traditional future as a wife and mother continued, despite a trend toward professional training in higher education and also in home economics.²⁹ The philosophy of most programs entailed training women as home economists in the employment market, particularly since most women would work for a period of time before marriage and family. But because most eventually married, it seemed wise to prepare them for that part of their life too. This assumption about women's future roles served as a basis for planning women's education, and not only by home economists.

An address given by Lynn White, Jr., president of Mills College, dealt with the question of women's education and whether it should be different from men. White made the speech at a 1947 American Association of University Women convention, and it was published in the fall edition of the Journal of the American Association of University Women. In it, he maintained that the problem was that women did need a different education than men, and that in trying to teach women a male-defined education, educators were doing women a disservice. He called for "equality of differences as well as equality of identities," and

²⁸Maude Gilchrist, The First Three Decades of Home Economics at Michigan State College (East Lansing: School of Home Economics, MSC, 1947) 57-58.

²⁹Lee, From Home Economics to Human Ecology, 18.

reiterated the almost inevitable future for most women: "The great majority of women will, and should, devote themselves to building and maintaining homes and families."³⁰

White argued that women should uphold domestic values and that education for women should include homemaking and family living skills; in not teaching those, women were succumbing to male definitions of importance. But not all agreed with him. According to an editor's note, the address and publication caused a heated debate, and the journal published two responses to White's viewpoint in a later issue. One questioned his assumption that women must be full-time homemakers, and that educators should de-emphasize gender stereotypes, not re-emphasize them, in education. Opportunities and social expectations have limited women's accomplishments; until they are accorded equality in education and opportunity in employment, differences would remain.³¹ Another author responding to White's article questioned society's assumption that all women would marry, but still believed that women must learn certain "feminine" duties, including "how to be a gracious hostess, to make guests feel at ease; in a word, to smooth the way for all those she touches."³²

The debate depicts the divisions created by the question of women's education, and Porter's citations in her speech, "Occupations for Women and Their Dual Role," shed light on where her viewpoint rested. Porter firmly agreed, as evidenced from her writings, with White's ideas about women's proper role and responsibilities and how

³⁰Lynn White, Jr., "New Yardsticks for Women Education," Journal of the American Association of University Women 41, 1 (Fall 1947) 5. See also, Lynn White, Jr., Educating Our Daughters: A Challenge to the Colleges (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950) 68.

³¹Mirra Komarovsky, "Measuring the Yardsticks," Journal of the American Association of University Women 41, 4 (Summer 1948). Komarovsky was an associate professor of sociology at Bernard College.

³²Dorothy Yost Yeegan, "Education for Spinsters," Journal of the American Association of University Women 41, 4 (Summer 1948) 214.

best to educate women for those roles. She quoted him in her speech on women and their dual role, and clearly shared many of his beliefs about women's education. She never alluded to the responses to White's speech published in the AAUW Journal, which differ from his viewpoint. All were published before she gave her speech.³³

John Hannah, MSU president from 1941-1969, shared Porter's views about women's education, at least in relation to home economics. In a 1952 speech to the home economics faculty, Hannah, citing the declining numbers of women enrolling in home economics at MSU, addressed what he believed was "wrong with home economics," targeting the college's emphasis on professional training. He argued that universities should educate women not only for their working lives (which will be short, given that women would marry and remain at home to raise their children) but also as homemakers, "giving them courses so they might be more efficient in the operation of the home deriving pleasure and satisfaction from that operation" and "making them more intelligent spenders."³⁴ Home economics was to play an integral role in providing this important education, even for students who did not major in home economics:

"[Home economics] has gone overboard on dignifying Home Economics and has lost sight of the greatest contribution of a School of Home Economics which lies in the area of providing training for all women in the fields only Home Economics can offer."³⁵

While Porter focused on the need for women to fulfill their roles as wives and mothers, Marie Dye's emphasis was on the need for education for women. Dye argued that women and men were intellectual equals, but her views on whether women and men should have different types of

³³Porter, "Dual Role." See note 20.

³⁴John Hannah, "What Is Wrong With Home Economics?" Speech notes from a presentation at a home economics faculty meeting at MSU on September 17, 1952; MSU Archives, Box 359, Folder 18, p. 1. Unfortunately the record does not include any mention of discussions about Hannah's remarks at this meeting or at a future meeting.

³⁵Ibid., 2.

educational training are less clear. She was a firm believer in the value of home economics as a profession and an academic discipline. Since many women would become wives and mothers, home economics could serve two purposes. "If this training for an occupation can be related to woman's probable future role in her own home, a double purpose is served," she noted.³⁶

Dye also believed women should have equal access to financial aid for their college education. More than once she voiced her opinion about equal opportunities for scholarships and other financial aid for women. In responding to a questionnaire about federal aid for education, Dye said that "any aid for education should be given to both men and women. Able young people should have some help in attending college if they wish."³⁷ In another instance, Dye urged the granting of scholarships to members of Future Homemakers of America, an organization for high school girls. Such scholarships already existed for members of Future Farmers of America, an organization for boys, and 4-H clubs. Dye took a strong stand on the issue and noted that while local chapters of the organizations gave scholarships to local members, other sources of financial aid would enable MSU to "attract more of the outstanding young girls."³⁸ Dye was a strong advocate for women's education, despite her ideas about their roles.

To resolve the dilemma about women's education, educators, both in home economics and elsewhere in the university community, focused on planning a woman's education and her career around the "inevitability"

³⁶Marie Dye, "The Place of General Education," Journal of Home Economics 43 (April 1951) 251-252.

³⁷Marie Dye, letter of February 7, 1951, in response to a letter dated January 18, 1951 from the Association of Land Grant Colleges and Universities to MSU president John Hannah about a proposal for education aid for students. Hannah forwarded the notice to the university deans, including Dye, for input; MSU Archives, Box 379, Folder 1.

³⁸Marie Dye letter dated April 6, 1956, to John Hannah, in response to his request for input on the issue; MSU Archives, Box 379, Folder 21.

of her roles as a wife and mother. Underlying this "solution" was the assumption that all women would follow a similar life course. In the postwar era, a woman's life had four recognizable stages, according to most education professionals: pre-marriage, which included work; early marriage, as evidenced by the increasing numbers of women choosing marriage in the fifties; "peak years" when a married women had young children and was most likely a full-time homemaker with no paid work outside the home; and the years when the children were either in school or grown and on their own, thus freeing a woman to pursue her own interests, which might include a return to professional work.³⁹

Discourse about these four stages are found in countless places in the papers of College of Human Ecology. It is hard to overemphasize how many people assumed women would follow this course and the dominant acceptance of this life course plan for women.⁴⁰ If women did pursue a career, it was expected that they would leave the work force while their children were young. The idea that a mother might work, out of choice, while her children were young carried with it the stigma that the woman was neglecting her "first" commitment and responsibility - her children.

Among the eight goals for women's education outlined in a subcommittee report in MSU's College of Home Economics were to "Help her recognize and respect homemaking as her unique role in society" and that "homemaking is the most important job in our or any society and that she as a woman has the unique privilege of doing that job."⁴¹ A study of 1951 alumni of Michigan State College in home economics showed most of the graduates eventually married, prompting Marie Dye to note:

³⁹These four stages were laid out most clearly in a faculty subcommittee report, "What Is More Important in Women's Education?" Dr. Irma Gross was the subcommittee's chairperson. Subcommittee report dated November 11, 1950; MSU Archives, Box 360, Folder 21, p. 1.

⁴⁰The issue of whether students actually followed this trend will be discussed in chapter 5, which focuses on the graduates of MSU's home economics program.

⁴¹"What Is More Important in Women's Education," p. 2.

It would seem advisable then, to reconsider our goals in home economics education to provide training for successful homemaking as well as for the specific payroll job which is, in most cases, held for only a short time after graduation.⁴²

The acceptance of the inevitability of a marriage and children for women, and that this would require their exit from the paid labor force, was in effect an easy way for education administrators to avoid dealing with the complex issue of women's education. Many women did marry and have children, but rather than address the problems facing those women who wanted to continue their professional lives, administrators tended to assume women needed and wanted to remain at home with their children. Questioning women's unequal burden of responsibility in the family, both in attending to household chores and caring for children, or addressing the issue of child care for women who did work was more difficult and simply not considered by the majority of educators. The life course "solution" also assumed a family had the financial means to do without the mother's wages, allowing her to remain at home full time with her own children. For working-class women, and for many minorities, this was simply not the case. For them, the idea of leaving the work force during the "peak years" was not an option, and thus the solution offered them no help with the problem of combining work and family.

The acceptance of a specific life course for most women is found in the final report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women, released in 1963. The Commission was formed in 1961 with an executive order issued by John Kennedy, and its report reiterated the need to educate women for the world of work and their responsibilities at home. Women must be educated for their "special role" and that her future as a wife and mother "differentiates the educational requirements of girl and boy from the very beginning."⁴³ Programs also should be

⁴²Marie Dye, "Revaluation in College Education in Home Economics," undated; MSU Archives, Box 364, Folder 11, p. 2.

⁴³Excerpt from Education Committee Report quoted in Harrison, On Account of Sex, 154.

designed with a woman's "traditional" role in mind, and thus should strive to enable women to return to the labor force when her children were grown. Its proposals were very similar to those articulated by educators at MSU and the committee also failed to see the conflict women faced between their family and professional goals: "Many of the characteristically male-dominated fields did not mesh well with the traditional roles of women."⁴⁴

This retreat into beliefs about "feminine" education accompanied declines in numbers of women attending and completing college.⁴⁵ In 1940 40.2 percent of all college students were women, but in the next decade women comprised only 30.2 percent of the college student population. Their share of the college population would not reach the 1940 level until 1970, when women made up 41.9 percent of all college students.⁴⁶ Fewer women also remained in college to complete degrees.⁴⁷ Numbers of women staying in college to earn doctorate degrees also declined. In 1920 women earned 15 percent of all doctorates, but only 10 percent in 1950.⁴⁸

Numbers for professional and academic career women also reflect these trends. Numbers of women entering medicine declined from 12 percent of all medical students in 1949 to 5 percent in the mid-fifties.

⁴⁴Harrison, On Account of Sex, 155. The report also demonstrates the persistence of these ideas about a woman's life course. Evidence of this plan appears as early as 1950 in the College of Home Economics, and is still a dominant idea in 1963, when the report was issued.

⁴⁵Solomon, In the Company of Educated Women, 193-194. Solomon discusses the rationale, both scientific and religious, which backed those people advocating a "feminine" education, and the difficulties faced by those who opposed such ideas.

⁴⁶Ibid., 63. Solomon notes that although percentages declined, actual numbers of women attending college increased.

⁴⁷Solomon, In the Company of Educated Women, 133; Mabel Newcomer, A Century of Higher Education for American Women (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959) 46.

⁴⁸Johnston, Sexual Power, 348, footnote 22.

Likewise, the percentage of women faculty at the college and university level declined after peaking at 28 percent in 1940. By 1950 the percentage of women serving as faculty declined to 25 percent and further dropped to 22 percent in 1960.⁴⁹

The declining numbers of women college graduates and professionals began to concern educators and other public commentators. Too many young women were conforming to society's prescriptions for women's roles. Lee discussed this problem in a 1964 speech, although the concern arose before then:

Never has American society in terms of its own survival been so greatly in need of using its intellectual and social womanpower - and never have women internalized so little those societal needs as personal goals and aspirations. Never have American women had so many opportunities open to them - and wanted so little.⁵⁰

Lee ended her speech by challenging students to heed these remarks and avail themselves of the opportunities before them. Although women might not try to combine both children and a career, they should prepare themselves for those years when children did not demand their full attention. A part of that preparation was completing their college education.

By the late fifties and early sixties, administrators in home economics and other areas of academia were beginning to realize that they had to play a role in changing how women students viewed their futures. Women were a growing proportion of the population, and represented a large pool of underutilized talent and intellect.⁵¹ But they needed to help young women realize their potential and intellectual abilities, regardless of society's prescriptions for behavior.

⁴⁹Solomon, In the Company of Higher Education, 133, 189.

⁵⁰Lee discusses this problem in "College Night for New Students," September 28, 1964; MSU Archives, Box 364, Folder 19, 4-5.

⁵¹Solomon, In the Company of Educated Women, 198-199.

Most of the women at the university have heard the facts about the potential for years of working in their lives, but certain societal pressures make it difficult for coeds to accept them - to absorb them into their thinking and planning for the future. Helping our students to absorb and encompass the full range of their lives in their educational and future plans is difficult. It will take imaginative planning, it involves guidance and motivation. It involves helping young women to project into their futures.⁵²

Thus the profession of home economics realized the importance of not only recruiting women, but also cultivating their professional aspirations and talents. Although it did not intend to discard the entire philosophy of the family, the profession sought to maximize women's potential when her life was not dominated by family duties, especially the care of small children. This is the first hint of the recognition of a problem many women in professional and academic fields faced then and continue to face: how to retain professional status if time off is taken to raise children, and how the profession can facilitate the return of such professional women to the field. Increasingly educators began to consider a woman's education in terms of her own life course and the duties associated with its different stages. They did not see the limits of the life course plan for women's education.

Even Porter, who believed the primary duty of women was to their family, recognized that a small portion of their lives was dedicated to raising children, especially in light of the trend of women having their children younger in the fifties and living longer lives. She viewed these women, the married home economists, as a potential that must not be wasted, but she nonetheless had firm ideas of what that potential should be and when such women should reenter the work force.⁵³ Helping women return to professional life when their family responsibilities

⁵²Quoted (no citation given) in Jeanette Lee, "The Role of Administrator," November 5, 1965; MSU Archives, Box 364, Folder 20, p. 8.

⁵³Thelma Porter, "Home Economics and Higher Education," Speech to summer students, July 5, 1960; MSU Archives, Box 364, Folder 37, p. 2.

lessened was a common theme during this era. Finding ways to facilitate a woman's return from the "deep freeze," as the period when a women remained at home to raise children was termed at one home economics seminar, consistently entered the education discourse.⁵⁴

Home economics educators did urge women to return to the profession, particularly at the graduate level, but they also placed the burden on the women, as professionals, to do so. While recognizing the challenge this posed for women, Lee also offered few specifics about how women should accomplish this:

So challenge Number One then is to the professionally motivated alum woman home economist, the one who is an intellectually competent person, who is prepared to become deeply involved and committed to an academic program and a career, to use her intellectual capacities to the fullest. This may require some adjustment in life style if there has been a period of break in the continuity of one's education. Undoubtedly, it requires cooperation from family and friends, it will require considerable drive, as well as a willingness to fill in the gaps, refresh, and often undergird a graduate program with some of the knowledge that has either gone stale in the interim or that has become completely obsolete.⁵⁵

Lee also urged the same "retraining" for those women who did not wish to pursue a career at the graduate level, but who had a bachelor's degree and wanted to resume a career as a professional home economist in their trained field. She compared home economics to other professions (nursing, medical technology, or social work) in the need of members to adapt to advances and changes in the field, but noted that such efforts were necessary for professions: "So, if one's commitment is to re-enter the profession as a serious venture, then one must face the necessity of

⁵⁴See "Home Economics in a Changing World," suggested topics of discussion in the planning of the workshop, December 1957; MSU Archives, Box 379, Folder 30. The workshop was held January 2-4, 1958, in the MSU Union Building in East Lansing, MI.

⁵⁵Jeanette Lee, "The Challenge to Home Economics Graduates," presented at the Home Economics Alumni Symposium, April 14, 1967; MSU Archives, Box 364, Folder 22, p. 3.

getting oneself ready to do a professional level job."⁵⁶ Recruiting trained home economists who had left the field to raise their families to return to the profession was discussed, and the College conducted the alumni study that year with the specific purpose of finding ways to help its graduates further their education. But the burden was on the individual woman to find a way to balance both family and professional responsibilities; those advocating her return to the profession did not see fit to consider how they might assist her.

In line with these ideas, some educators believed women's education needed to be diverse enough to permit her return, later, to professional employment. As undergraduates, many women had less commitment to their work than men, largely because many expected to leave the work force after they had children. A broader, more liberal education, some educators argued, would help a woman to adapt her later career aspirations with her experiences as a homemaker and activities associated with those years. A broad education also would serve her better, some educators believed, because her interests and goals likely changed during her years at home.⁵⁷ If a home economics education was not broad with numerous courses in the sciences, humanities, and liberal arts, then "our home economics graduates may not be most effectively prepared for the multiple roles which women are sure to play in our society during the coming decades."⁵⁸ Home economics should "develop

⁵⁶Lee, "Challenge," 4-6. Interestingly, Lee uses traditional female fields (nursing, medical technology, and social work) rather than more male-dominated professions as a comparison for home economics.

⁵⁷Pauline C. Paul, "The Purpose of Higher Education in Modern Society," August 1960; MSU Archives, Box 365, Folder 8, p. 7. Paul, of the Department of Home Economics at the University of California - Davis, spoke at the Home Economics Administration Workshop held August 8-12, 1960, at MSU.

⁵⁸Roland R. Renne, "Responsibilities for Home Economics in Developing the Intellectual Potential of Women of All Ages," address given before the Division of Home Economics meeting, American Association of Land Grant Colleges and Universities, Michigan State University, November 16, 1953; MSU Archives, Box 385, Folder 16, p. 5. Renne was president of Montana State College. A major theme in his speech was the need to ensure that women's education prepared them for

the maximum thought power of women students" to enable them to fill their "multiple roles."⁵⁹

This theme was reiterated at a faculty workshop in 1965. Dr. Laurine Fitzgerald, Assistant Dean of Students at MSU, urged a redefinition of women's education that "might be broader than a curriculum or a major...I am talking about the totality of preparing them not only for potential employment within the home and the community or for remuneration but for the cultural role. I think perhaps this is where we are failing."⁶⁰ Fitzgerald again returns to the idea that women are different from men in their life courses; their lives will not be continuous period of employment, but rather one with interruptions and changes. She also faults educators for their inability to see this, and suggests that women's maturation and education is like "growing up absurd":

We've done some very strange things to these young women in terms of fitting them into a mold as if they were to have a single line continuum using their education for full time employment as if it were to relate under one ratio.⁶¹

Such concerns about motivating young women to aspire for more than a husband and home are common in the commentary of the fifties and early sixties, and highlight the mixed messages women received about their futures, as Meyerowitz argues. The profession of home economics illustrates the tensions and conflicts over women's roles, and how they were changing. While many recognized the need for change, few offered concrete solutions to "women's dilemma." Some educators, like Porter, believed that women should remain at home to raise their children, and

their needed role in the labor force.

⁵⁹Renne, "Responsibilities," p. 5.

⁶⁰Laurine Fitzgerald, "The College Student Today: The Michigan State Student," presented at the Gull Lake Faculty Workshop, College of Home Economics, September 19, 1965; MSU Archives, Box 365, Folder 3, p. 10.

⁶¹Fitzgerald, "College Student," p. 6.

others blamed women for not being assertive or ambitious enough. An increasing need for women - including home economists - in the labor force prompted a rethinking of these issues, resulting in the "life course" plan for women's education.

Labor shortages in the postwar period prompted many people, outside of home economics and academia, to encourage women to pursue college educations, and also for employers to hire and train them for management positions. These ideas are found at numerous levels in society, from the university level, as shown in the College of Home Economics and at MSU, to women's magazines. Women's labor was increasingly needed, and analysts strove to find ways to attract women into employment.⁶² More and more people within home economics were anxious to recruit top talent to the profession, and to motivate them beyond the undergraduate degree; home economics faced a serious shortage of members with advanced training, a problem noted by Dye, Porter, and Lee. A large part of that was social pressure; young women, even by the early sixties, were not supposed to enter advanced training. An undergraduate college education was accepted, and for some young women it was seen as an effective way to find a husband, but graduate school was at odds with what society expected of women.⁶³

But herein lay a critical problem for the profession: too many young women were conforming to society's concept of gender roles, and the profession struggled continuously to secure an adequate faculty. That issue, which is connected with the increasing attack from other academics and education administrators regarding the validity of home economics as an academic discipline, and how the profession, particularly at MSU, resolved those concerns, is dealt with in the next chapter.

⁶²Sheila M. Rothman, Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1978) 230.

⁶³Graham, p. 770-771.

CHAPTER 4

Fighting an Uphill Battle: Attaining Equal Status in the University

The profession of home economics faced a continuous battle to attain equal status with other professions throughout its history, but this battle reached new heights during the postwar period. The struggle to become an accepted part of the academic community plagued all home economics programs, and Michigan State University was no exception. Continuing attacks on home economics as an academic discipline and as a valid part of the university community characterized the postwar period, prompting home economics professionals in academia to spend much of their time defending and defining their field for administrators.¹

Balancing "pressures for both prestige and practicality" was a task home economists faced throughout their history, but those efforts reached new heights in the postwar era.² The hostile and antagonistic environment limited the ability of the profession to assert new ideas about the field, or women's roles and education; most home economists in academia simply tried to keep their programs from being eliminated from the university curriculum, as occurred in some instances, or from being sentenced to a slow death through budget cuts and a lack of administrative support.³ The profession debated its direction, focus,

¹Margaret W. Rossiter, Chapter 8, "Protecting Home Economics, the Women's Field," in Women Scientists in America, 1940-1972, forthcoming, documents the attacks experienced throughout the profession during this period.

²Margaret W. Rossiter, Women Scientists in America: Struggles and Strategies to 1940 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982) 67.

³Rossiter, "Protecting Home Economics," 205-207.

and goals repeatedly during the postwar period and the MSU home economics faculty, like others, conducted numerous studies, seminars, and reports to address the issues before them. Efforts to increase the research output of the profession also dominated the period, while requests for additional building space, new equipment, and facilities - critical elements for any successful research agenda - continued to be rejected.

Achieving equal status with other fields and conforming to professional standards became particularly important issues during the 1950s and 1960s, largely as a result of the growth in the behavioral sciences and their overlap with issues and concerns in home economics.⁴ The field faced intense pressure to meet the standards of other disciplines, including the hiring of more faculty with doctorates and producing more doctoral candidates. Administrators expected the College to produce more and better research, as well as teaching large numbers of undergraduate students. The home economics faculty at MSU conducted three curriculum revisions in this period - one during each decade - and the field also began an in-depth self-analysis that continued through the sixties, to come to a consensus on what home economics was and what a good program entailed. This process was done under the auspices of the American Home Economics Association. Marie Dye was the chairperson of the AHEA committee organized to plan the workshops, which were held in the different regions of the country. The AHEA also published New Directions, A Statement of Philosophy and Objectives in 1959, reiterating the field's focus on the family.⁵ Another study, Home Economics in Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, was published later that year by the American Association of Land-Grant Colleges and State

⁴Marjorie East, Home Economics: Past, Present, and Future (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1980) 55.

⁵AHEA, New Directions, A Statement of Philosophy and Objectives, (Washington, D.C.: The Association, 1959); MSU Archives, Box 385, Folder 54; see also Jeanette Lee and Paul L. Dressel, Liberal Education and Home Economics (New York: Teachers College, 1963) 32.

Universities.⁶ The French Lick Seminar, held in 1961, was sponsored by the same organization to discuss the future direction and focus of home economics.⁷ The home economics faculty also conducted its own study, culminating in the "Report of the Committee of the Future of Home Economics at Michigan State University" in 1968.⁸ Clearly home economics was searching for an identity, or more importantly, a unified definition of what home economics was and should be in the future.⁹ The critical issue debated was whether the family was still the foundation of the profession. Connected to that was the organization of home economics programs; if the family was no longer the unifying principle, then some educators questioned the inclusion of the various disciplines within home economics and suggested reorganizing the field.

The MSU program played an integral part in these debates, and also experienced much of the administrative hostility firsthand on its own campus. Questions about the place of home economics in the university began in the 1950s, but reached their height in the 1960s. By the end of that decade, the MSU program, although still on campus, is in a very different form. Reorganized and renamed, the College of Human Ecology replaced the College of Home Economics. That change coincided with the naming of the first male dean of the college, as well as a substantial

⁶Lee and Dressel, Liberal Education, 33.

⁷Jeanette Lee was the chairperson of the committee organizing the seminar, which focused on what curriculum and courses would be included in home economics. This seminar, and its results and implications, will be discussed later in this chapter.

⁸"The Report of the Committee on the Future of Home Economics," January 1968, Michigan State University; MSU Archives, Box 398, Folder 63.

⁹Earl J. McGrath, "Forward" in Lee and Dressel's Home Economics and Liberal Education, vii. McGrath writes that "the most critical problem now facing those involved in home economics education seems to be the lack of a consensus concerning what it ought to be if it is to have an integrity of its own and a program different from the instruction offered by other related departments and schools." This question occupied home economists in countless workshops, meetings, and seminars, including an Administrators' Workshop held at MSU in 1960.

increase in the number of male faculty. The road taken to the reorganization of the college in 1970 is the subject of this chapter, and a study of the events and debates reveals the roles played by the faculty and the deans, many of whom supported the changes to their program. Few verbally disagreed with the criticisms about the fact that women dominated the field and that many of these women were also unmarried, and thus could not truly understand family life. But the outcome could have been much worse. Although the changes at MSU were significant, they were still less severe than those experienced on other campuses.

Home economists were aware of the reduced stature of their field in the eyes of other academics, and responded to such criticism by seeking ways to improve their standards and their programs. Dye articulated the problem in discussing the shortage of home economists with advanced training:

Even though the training of college teachers in home economics has been improved in amount and quality over the years, it is still below the educational qualifications for faculty in other subject matter areas.¹⁰

That sentiment was echoed by Lee in 1965, when she noted the importance of adequately preparing home economists

to meet the demands and responsibilities of the "professional" in our society. The expectations for professional, intellectual competence and depth of knowledge are rising in all fields and so it must be for home economists.¹¹

Establishing membership requirements in the AHEA was an initial step toward upgrading the field and likening itself to other professional associations with membership restrictions. In the 1942 AHEA handbook, requirements stipulated that members hold a college degree in home economics or a related field for voting members;

¹⁰Marie Dye, 1942 speech to the AHEA; MSU Archives, Box 364, Folder 10, p. 5.

¹¹Jeanette Lee, "The Role of Administrator in Implementing Plan of Action," speech given November 5, 1965, at the College Club Advisers' Workshop, MSU; MSU Archives, Box 364, Folder 20, p. 5.

homemaker organizations could join as a group, but had no voting rights.¹² Dye noted in a speech on the AHEA's 40th anniversary that the requirements "made the AHEA a professional organization with increased responsibilities for upholding high educational standards." She also said that

by defining the educational requirements for home economists, it provides status for the professional person and should help to assure good training for those who enter this field. Membership in a professional association provides employers with a rough measure for judging qualifications of applicants for positions.¹³

Like other professional societies, AHEA sought to provide stature for itself by rigorizing standards and restricting membership.¹⁴

The Journal of Home Economics, the field's major publication, also was a sign of professional status. Like other professional publications, the journal was the mode of written communication of information for the profession.¹⁵ Its issues covered all areas of home economics: teaching, research, and Extension. The journal kept its readers current on the AHEA's events and activities, including its annual meetings, as well as developments in the field. MSU home economics faculty members played an important role in both the AHEA and the Journal. All three deans during the postwar period contributed to the publication and were also active in the AHEA, serving on numerous

¹²American Home Economics Association Handbook, 1942; MSU Archives, Box 364, Folder 53.

¹³Marie Dye, AHEA speech, 1942; MSU Archives, Box 364, Folder 10, p. 4, 2.

¹⁴Burton J. Bledstein discusses this trend in The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1976). Although he gives home economics only a passing mention, the profession's efforts do fit into the general professionalizing methods described by Bledstein. See also Magali Sarfatti Larson, The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

¹⁵Bledstein, The Culture of Professionalism, 303-304.

committees. Their efforts were indicative of the status MSU held within the home economics professional community.

A vital and productive research program, with clear results, was an important element in the issue of gaining respect for the profession, and home economists spent considerable time addressing this issue in the postwar period. Generating research was a problem, in part owing to the shortage of experienced faculty with advanced graduate training, and also because of funding constraints. Most of the program's research funding came from the Agricultural Experiment Station; with the station's emphasis on agriculture, much of the research was on foods and their nutritional value.¹⁶ Other funding sources, also for foods and nutrition research, were the National Institute for Health and the United States Department of Agriculture. Home economics, as an academic field, was not considered a science by many organizations and foundations which provided research funds, except in the case of foods and nutrition, and thus was not eligible for many research grants.¹⁷ The problem was that funding sources for research in child and human development, family life, and consumer behavior were scarce and funds difficult to obtain.¹⁸ The college did not obtain its first large grant for child development research until 1967; that funding came from the Institute for Educational Development for the establishment of research centering on the new Head Start education programs.¹⁹ The profession had difficulty obtaining funds in the very areas that were growing most

¹⁶Lee, From Home Economics to Human Ecology, p. 5, and Lee, notes for a report to the dean's group in home economics, January 26, 1965; MSU Archives, Box 364, Folder 20, p. 13.

¹⁷Rossiter, "Protecting Home Economics," 201. Rossiter notes that the National Science Foundation, the National Institute of Health, and the National Institute for Mental Health only saw the nutrition and developmental psychology aspects of home economics as qualifying for its research funds.

¹⁸Lee, notes to dean's group, p. 13.

¹⁹Lee, From Home Economics to Human Ecology, p. 32.

rapidly in importance. Not until the late 1960s, with the rise of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs, did funding become available for research outside of foods and nutrition. As Rossiter notes, however, the increased funding was not necessarily a bonus for home economics:

But ironically this sudden federal interest in funding home and family projects was to backfire on the women home economists, for rather than finally helping them to do research and to earn prestige, it was a signal to powerful men in academia that, however trivial 'home economics' had once seemed, it was now a potentially lucrative field worth taking over as soon as possible.²⁰

When funding for research connected to Head Start programs and other social programs was available, and a Head Start research and evaluation program was started at MSU, a man was named director.²¹

The postwar period was a time of expansion and growth at Michigan State University. On-campus enrollment increased from 16,243 in 1949 to 42,541 in 1969 and the number of faculty increased from 343 in 1935 to 2,590 in 1969. The institution had 44 departments in 1935; by 1969 MSU had 104. The dramatic rise in the numbers of students and faculty demanded increased classroom and dormitory space, as well as buildings to house department and faculty offices.²² The university responded by constructing numerous buildings. Many of the dormitories were built with borrowed money, with administrators using the fees collected from student residents to repay the debt, as the Michigan legislature was reluctant to provide funds for residence halls.²³ Years could elapse between the submission of plans for buildings and the actual

²⁰Rossiter, "Protecting Home Economics," 215.

²¹Faculty and Staff Directory, 1968-1969, Michigan State University, (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1968) 140.

²²Paul L. Dressel, College to University: The Hannah Years at Michigan State, 1935-1969 (East Lansing: Michigan State University Publications, 1987) 374, 395.

²³*Ibid.*, 373.

construction of them, and priority lists changed annually. Administrators looked at numerous factors in prioritizing projects, including enrollment demands and the "'saleability' of a facility to the current crop of legislators."²⁴

The College of Home Economics, however, never made the final list for renovations or new buildings, which further hampered its research and teaching efforts. The lack of success by the home economics department throughout the tenure of the three deans to secure any major improvements or expansions in the college's facilities was a continued source of frustration and discussion. Space was a problem throughout much of this period. The program at MSU remained in the building constructed for it in 1924, and repeated requests for more space and new equipment yielded few results. Dean Marie Dye requested more space and staff in a letter to President John Hannah (1941-1969) in 1948. Without the additional staff and space, Dye warned that the program may have to begin to refuse students. In the letter she asked that he request funds for a new building from the state legislature, which provided funds for the construction of the building then in use.²⁵ Dye's frustration at her inability to secure the needed facilities evidenced itself in a letter to a home economics colleague, who had told Dye that their program's building recently was redecorated. In response, Dye wrote:

How fine to have your building completely redecorated. Ours needs it too but I am not sure when we will get it. We have done over some of the laboratories and this Christmas my office was done over...We so much need an addition to our building but I feel discouraged about getting it. They have even taken the small sum for our nursery school off the budget in the Legislature. I don't see how we can get along without a nursery school. At present we have put it in one of the home management houses and we need the house for home management purposes.²⁶

²⁴Ibid., 374.

²⁵Letter from Marie Dye to John Hannah dated October 7, 1948; MSU Archives, Box 365, Folder 76.

²⁶Letter from Marie Dye to Dr. Gladys Branegan, School of Home Economics, Ohio State University, March 2, 1954; MSU Archives, Box 379, Folder 16.

The efforts to obtain additional facilities continued after Dye's retirement, with no success. Jeanette Lee reiterated this need in 1965 in an administrative meeting with John Hannah, the provost, and other members of the administration, to no avail.²⁷ Faculty and administration emphasized the need for improved and expanded physical facilities in its 1968 "Report of the Committee on the Future of Home Economics." In conjunction with its recommendation to increase the amount and quality of research produced by the college, the committee noted that without the appropriate facilities and support, such a goal was unattainable: "Present facilities are critically inadequate to accommodate programs projected from the philosophy and focus and to carry out many recommendations contained in this report."²⁸ Because of the scope of the space and facility needs, and the long neglect of requests for expansion and repair, the committee recommended the construction of an entirely new facility, rather than simply remodeling the existing building.²⁹

Another contributing factor to the home economics program's lack of prestige was its emphasis on undergraduate teaching. The MSU program stressed the importance of teaching undergraduate students, and in the academic world where the route to scholarly acclaim was via research, teaching did not carry the prestige that publications and important research contributions to the field did. This phenomenon also affected the land-grant institutions, like MSU, which were begun to transmit practical knowledge to the state's citizens. "As the society evinced great need for the expert or specialist, tolerances have diminished for

²⁷Jeanette Lee, "Notes for dean's report," January 26, 1965; MSU Archives, Box 364, Folder 20, p. 23. See also Rossiter, "Protecting Home Economics," 211-212.

²⁸"Report of the Committee," 68.

²⁹"Report of the Committee," 69.

non-professional expertise among professors,"³⁰ argues Patricia Albjerg Graham. Graham asserts that this trend worked against women in education, as they often covered the teaching and committee roles; women's "natural" abilities gravitated them toward teaching, and they also often served on committees, a project not valued highly in the education hierarchy. As home economics was not a great producer of research, particularly in the growing behavioral sciences and their connection to family issues, this concept worked to the profession's detriment.

The fact that teaching was important to the home economics program at MSU is clear. Lee noted more than once in speeches that the teaching mission was the critical one, and that teaching undergraduate or beginning-level courses was not second-class when compared to research or administration. Although Lee recognized that this hurt the status of home economics in academia, she still firmly stood behind her belief in a teaching emphasis:

Perhaps the "publish or perish" myth has not been as prevalent in Home Economics as in other disciplines, yet I suspect that in the large universities at least the relatively smaller productivity in research and publication in Home Economics has been a deterrent to full acceptance as a bona fide field within the academic community, in some instances.³¹

Lee reiterated her dedication to the teaching mission later in the same speech: "The ultimate factor determining the quality and excellence of a student's educational experience depends to a large degree on the teacher and the teaching process."³² She also believed it was the administrator's role to instill in the faculty "that good teaching is as important a criteria for membership in the academic community as is

³⁰Patricia Albjerg Graham, "Expansion and Exclusion: A History of Women in American Higher Education," Signs 3 (Spring 1978) 763.

³¹Jeanette Lee, Speech given at the North Central Regional Meeting of College Teachers of Textiles and Clothing," Chicago, IL, October 27, 1966; MSU Archives, Box 364, Folder 21, p. 11.

³²Lee, North Central speech, p. 7.

research and publication."³³ But there is little doubt that the wider academic community did not share this vision, and the teaching emphasis harmed the stature of home economics. Home economics faced a dual feminized stigma; not only was it oriented toward the "feminine" occupation of teaching, but its faculty also was dominated by women.

Home economists realized the importance research played in establishing the field as a legitimate part of the university community, and in response to questions about the home economics' focus, organization, and value, the profession took steps to improve its research efforts to try and counteract the criticism of its programs and faculty. As awareness of the large social problems facing America grew, home economics realized that it must play a role in helping to solve these problems.³⁴ The profession recognized, as evidenced by the continuous attention both by the MSU faculty and the profession in its journal, that a strong research program was essential to its very survival.³⁵ But despite these efforts, the output was "never enough to satisfy the relentless demand in these years at many campuses for ever more research."³⁶ And the MSU program reiterated its commitment to teaching in its 1968 report. In that report, the committee recommended that both teaching and research potential be considered of prospective faculty. It also noted that "since the primary function of the College

³³Lee, North Central Speech, p. 11. Lee espoused these views in another speech, made during the College Week for Women in 1965. See Lee, "The Challenge of Home Economics at Your University," given during the College Week for Women, MSU, July 27, 1965; MSU Archives, Box 364, Folder 20.

³⁴"Report of the Committee," 18-19.

³⁵"Report of the Committee," Recommendation 11: "The Committee recommends that the major research emphasis of the college in the future be in accord with the focus as defined herein and that a concerted effort by faculty and administrators be directed toward substantially increasing research activities in the college in the next 5 years," p. 49.

³⁶Rossiter, "Protecting Home Economics," 211.

is the education of young people, the most important aspect of the work is the teaching function."³⁷

Ironically, MSU was among the top producers of home economics research in the profession. A 1968 study commissioned by the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, and funded by a \$200,000 grant from the Carnegie Corporation analyzed data from 75 institutions and their faculties.³⁸ The Changing Mission of Home Economics, by Earl McGrath and Jack Johnson, was the published results of the study. McGrath and Johnson ranked MSU's program fifth in research activity, behind programs at Cornell, Iowa State University, Florida State University, and Pennsylvania State University. At the time, MSU had 30 research projects in process; PSU had 31, FSU had 38, and ISU had 41. Cornell was the leader with 57.³⁹ Clearly MSU had an active research program in the field, although the report faulted the overall research activity, as only 49 of the 75 institutions had research in progress.⁴⁰

The MSU faculty did begin compiling an annual report of its research activities in 1962. The report listed all faculty members and their research projects. The introductory letter states that the report is intended to keep graduate students informed about the faculty's research, but another likely reason for the reports was to provide

³⁷"Report on the Future," 59-60.

³⁸Earl J. McGrath and Jack T. Johnson, The Changing Mission of Home Economics: A Report on Home Economics in the Land-grant Colleges and State Universities (New York: Teachers College Press, 1968) ix. See also Rossiter, "Protecting Home Economics," 217. Rossiter discusses this report at length, including the association's intention to have the study conducted by an outside group to consider the merits of home economics.

³⁹Ibid., 58.

⁴⁰Ibid., 59.

documentation of the faculty's research efforts.⁴¹ The report's content included a description of the project, funding source, current status, and the future steps to be undertaken. The report also listed projects by master's and doctoral students. Faculty members undertook research projects in an assortment of topics, from studies of family expenditures to the nutritional values in certain foods.⁴² Other projects looked at the effect of clothing selections and attitudes on adolescents.⁴³

Margaret Rossiter convincingly documents the growing attack on the field of home economics during this period, and argues that the McGrath report, was the culmination of years of hostility toward the female-dominated field. Continuous efforts by home economics faculty and administrators to provide documentation and evidence of the field's importance and contribution fell on what appeared to be deaf ears. Many programs faced reorganization, cuts, or even elimination, despite their size and prestige. One such victim was the home economics program at the University of Chicago, which terminated its home economics program in 1956, after the departure of its chairperson, Thelma Porter, for MSU. The reasoning given by university administrators was that the program was unable to compete with the "great advance in the programs of the state universities," and thus the administration opted to close the program. Marie Dye disagreed. An alumna of the University of Chicago

⁴¹Annual Research Accomplishments Report, College of Home Economics; MSU Archives, Box 383, Folder 137; letter dated October 23, 1962. The reports began in 1962 and continue through 1969.

⁴²Annual Report, 1967 and 1968; MSU Archives, Box 383, Folder 138. A sampling of projects includes "Family Receipt and Expenditure Analysis" by Barbara M. Ferrar; "Values Underlying Managerial Decisions in the Family" by Jean D. Schlater; "Biological Value of Bread Proteins for Adult Human Beings" by Olaf Mickelsen; and "The Effect of Drying Processes on the Functional Properties of Eggs," by Doris Downs and Kaye Funk.

⁴³Annual Report, 1967 and 1968,; MSU Archives, Box 383, Folder 138. Projects included "The Measurement of Clothing Attitudes and Behavior" and "The Relationship of Clothing to the Personal and Social Acceptability of Adolescents," both by Anna M. Creekmore and "Adolescent Girls' Viewpoints from Ninth Through Twelfth Grade Concerning Dress, Social Acceptance and Related Factors" by Joanne Eicher.

and retired by then from MSU, she wrote a history of the program, and blamed the program's demise on the lack of administrative support and funding for adequate space and staff. But beyond that, wrote Dye:

perhaps the basic factor was that the University did not want to continue to offer work in Home Economics. Certainly the University has given little recognition to its Home Economics Alumni who have achieved national and international recognition as scholars and leaders.⁴⁴

Dye faulted the administration's negative view of home economics, despite the program's success, for home economics' demise at the institution.

The program at the University of California-Berkeley encountered similar hostility from administrators, and while the program survived, much of it was moved to other campuses, so that its existence would not detract from Berkeley's prestige.⁴⁵ Rossiter notes that many of these instances occurred at schools with presidents who wished to increase their institution's prestige. Many of these men (including MSU's John Hannah) saw home economics as detracting from the university's status.⁴⁶ Rossiter attributes changes in the home economics programs to the ambition of university presidents "to remake overnight what had been perceived as a 'cow college' into a prestigious university."⁴⁷

Improving home economics' professional standards and addressing the research program were two methods used by home economics professionals to respond to the criticisms of other academics and administrators. Another method was to develop a unified definition and direction for the profession as a defense against efforts to challenge its validity. The profession recognized that it needed to adapt to the

⁴⁴Marie Dye, History of the Department of Home Economics, The University of Chicago (Chicago: Home Economics Alumni Association, 1972) 153. See also Rossiter, "Protecting Home Economics," 206.

⁴⁵Rossiter, "Protecting Home Economics," 207.

⁴⁶Ibid., 225.

⁴⁷Rossiter, "Protecting Home Economics," 225.

changing needs of families and people and began to address how home economics could serve those needs. The debate centered on the search for a consensus on a definition of the field and what the unifying concepts were. To address these issues, the AHEA formed the Committee on Home Economics in Higher Education, and Dye was named chairperson. The committee sought to determine, by investigating and studying the programs around the country, what constituted a good program, and what was necessary for one. Rather than accreditation, the committee recommended self-evaluation as a means to standardize the field, and held twelve workshops in the different regions of the country to help institutions conduct the process.⁴⁸ As a profession, little was resolved immediately, but the work resulted in a curriculum revision at MSU that was instituted in 1953-54; the changes included fewer requirements in home economics and a greater professional focus.⁴⁹ It was the first of several programs to debate the purpose of home economics, its focus, and definition. A critical issue was whether the family, which was originally the cornerstone of the study of home economics, was still the profession's central idea. The organization of home economics, or whether the disciplines within it belonged together, also was a constant topic of debate.

A speech by Paul Miller, an MSU provost, addressed these issues and highlighted the controversy within the home economics community and the faculty at MSU. Miller's speech, presented at the 1960 meeting of the American Association of state Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, addressed many of the issues confronting home economics, including the lack of a definition and a unifying concept, and the profession's

⁴⁸Marie Dye, "Implementing the AHEA Study on Home Economics in Higher Education," undated, MSU archives, Box 385, Folder 55; and "Higher Education Moves Ahead," Journal of Home Economics, 43, 9 (November 1951).

⁴⁹Lee, From Home Economics to Human Ecology, p. 18.

"anchor of relevance" in the family.⁵⁰ Miller's comments clearly placed him in the camp that advocated a reorganization of home economics, and questioned the inclusion of so many varied disciplines in one college. The speech touched off a heated and lengthy discussion among the home economics faculty, which invited Miller to attend a faculty meeting to discuss the paper. In a rare instance, the meeting's proceedings were carefully documented, with 12 pages of discussion entered into the meeting's minutes. During the meeting, the faculty's dissension over the meaning of the family for home economics and the organization of the college were the primary topics.⁵¹ The faculty debated whether the family was the "anchor of relevance" for home economics and how that related to the College's core curriculum and organization. Little agreement existed within the faculty itself about these issues, reflecting the dissension within the profession.

The debate continued, and another attempt to deal with the lack of unity among the disciplines within home economics was made in the sixties, beginning with a week-long seminar in French Lick, Indiana, in 1961. Lee was chairperson of the committee organizing the week-long July seminar. The critical task of the profession was considering, and justifying, what was included in the College of Home Economics. The profession included disciplines rooted in sociology, psychology, chemistry, and the arts. Again, the question was whether that was the

⁵⁰Paul A. Miller, "Higher Education in Home Economics: An Appraisal and a Challenge," Presented November 15, 1960 at the meeting of the Division of Home Economics of the American Association of Land-Grant Colleges and State Universities; MSU Archives, Box 364, Folder 28. Miller was a provost at MSU at this time. He left MSU in 1962 to become president of another land-grant institution, West Virginia University. Lee referred to Miller as "one of [home economics'] most vocal critics" in a faculty meeting. See Faculty Meeting Minutes, September 21, 1966; MSU Archives, Box 359, Folder 36, p. 2.

⁵¹Faculty Meeting Minutes, College of Home Economics, MSU, January 12, 1961; MSU Archives, Box 359, Folder 34. What is perhaps more telling is what was not discussed, and this will be dealt with later in this chapter.

best way to organize them and if a unifying concept justified their inclusion in home economics.⁵²

The seminar, while laying important groundwork on the issue, resolved little. The closing speech of the seminar reflected the lack of unity within the field over what the unifying concept was and whether, in fact, a college focused on the family was necessary. Dr. Paul Dressel, a consultant for the seminar and an assistant MSU provost as well as director of Institutional Research, questioned the necessity of such an organization when virtually all parts of the university dealt with the family in some way, a theme also voiced by Miller in his 1960 speech. Dressel suggested essentially dismantling the college by placing the different departments with the appropriate discipline: biological or physical sciences, the social sciences, business, and the arts. Grace Henderson, of Pennsylvania State University, disagreed in her closing address to the seminar:

It is precisely because the family is dealt with piecemeal by so many forces in society - it is the focus of pressure from the many segments of industry, law, church, medicine, and school - that a branch of learning devoted exclusively to the family as a whole (rather than to its fragments or to those agencies that have vested interest in it) is essential. In such a college, all fields of learning merge to help the family find itself and its most effective routes.⁵³

By 1963, Lee, too, doubted the focus on family for home economics, not because the profession's center had shifted from family issues or helping people deal with them, but again because of the field's lack of research on family issues. Despite her commitment to teaching, Lee

⁵²Home economics, because it originally contained many areas considered "feminine" fields, had lost other disciplines. Music was originally taught in the Women's Course, but was moved out of home economics when the department of music was organized in 1919 (Gilchrist, The First Three Decades of Home Economics, p. 31). Music continued, however, to be required of home economics students (Gilchrist, p. 41). The School of Education absorbed the elementary education program in 1942 and the five-year nursing program with Sparrow Hospital was transferred to the College of Science and the Arts, in the new nursing curriculum in 1950 (Lee, From Home Economics to Human Ecology, p. 18).

⁵³Grace Henderson, "Speech at Last Session of French Lick Seminar," July 28, 1961; MSU Archives, Box 385, Folder 35, p.2.

believed research was important to the advancement of any field, and home economics research was not at the level of other disciplines, some of which were more directly related to the family. Even in areas such as foods and nutrition, where home economists conducted much of their research, the output was "relatively small compared with the total." She also noted that a comparison of the total number of dissertations on the family found few from home economics; "yet we talk about being the only field that focuses on the family."⁵⁴ The numbers seemed to dispute the dominance of home economics in dealing with family issues in Lee's mind.

In addition to the issues of a definition of home economics and what the field's fundamental basis was, the profession also faced growing attention on its status as a predominantly female field. Throughout these years women held most of the faculty positions, a fact that was gaining increased notice on the part of administrators. The program's preponderance of women made it "suspect" or "unnatural." The continued shortage of qualified faculty probably enhanced the importance of this issue in home economics. But instead of addressing the fundamental reasons why more home economics undergraduates - who were predominantly women - were not pursuing advanced degrees, many administrators and educators, including those in MSU's home economics program, looked to recruit faculty men to solve the problem. Yet the turn to men also revealed the suspicion surrounding a faculty predominantly comprised of women. Some administrators, including Miller, questioned the view of the family held by these faculty women, many of whom shared the same role in society:

⁵⁴Jeanette Lee, "Comments on the paper 'The Roles of Home Economics in Higher Education' by Dorothy Scott," given at the March 1967 meeting for the Central Region Home Economics Administration; MSU Archives, Box 364, Folder 22, p. 4.

How stylized and rigid may one expect a faculty of women to be when are involved in addressing one of the most fluid and dynamic zones of social life from a life style which necessarily involves them disproportionately in one of them - the professional role of the unmarried women.⁵⁵

This point was raised in the faculty discussion of Miller's paper, when Dr. Dorothy Arata mentioned her unmarried status - a status shared by many of her colleagues - in relation to the discussion about the profession's focus on the family:

For the most part we do not have a notion of what families do or what they are like or what it is to be a member of one. It is a completely different sphere from what we have been in contact with.⁵⁶

As the critics of home economics equated a woman's ability to understand the family with her marital status, some home economists were beginning to question the validity of their position. Underlying these ideas was the belief that unmarried professional women were not "normal" or "natural," and could not truly understand American family life, although all grew up in a family and remained a part of an extended family. Miller's comments were a small but significant part of his paper, especially in light of the fact that one of his suggestions for the field was to hire men, a view shared by other administrators.⁵⁷ None of these administrators thought to consider why these women were unmarried, or that perhaps pursuing both a professional career and a family was difficult, given the division of labor within the family and society's expectations about women's roles as mothers and wives. Instead, they equated marriage with a woman's ability to understand family life, and,

⁵⁵Miller, "Higher Education and Home Economics," 40.

⁵⁶Comments by Dorothy Arata in faculty meeting minutes, January 12, 1961, 9. Dr. Arata was an associate professor of foods and nutrition on the faculty.

⁵⁷Rossiter, "Protecting Home Economics," 216-217; Miller, "Higher Education and Home Economics," 41. Miller wrote: "As we look to and plan for the future, I would expect the faculties of your divisions to not be almost entirely composed of women, nor to be exclusively led by them."

as evidenced from Dr. Arata's remarks, some of the home economists agreed.

The belief that home economics needed larger numbers of men on the faculty to make it a legitimate profession gained credence. Even married women could not truly understand family life; men were necessary as well to complete the picture:

I submit that as long as home economics remains predominantly an arena for female action and opinion it has no right to presume to speak for the family and cannot develop and implement those programs needed to strengthen and improve family life.⁵⁸

The same author also noted that "home economics as a field of family studies will have come to maturity when the presence of men among its members is no longer an item worthy of publicity."⁵⁹ Men were a needed component to make home economics a legitimate profession that could study and research family interests.

As noted earlier, Lee struggled to deal with the shortage of faculty, and one of the solutions she considered was to hire men, who had the necessary "commitment" to their career. Women were obtaining fewer doctorates than men, and Lee, and the profession, viewed the hiring of males as an immediate solution. Virtually no evidence exists that administrators and home economists considered fundamental changes in women's education and family responsibilities as a means to address the lack of women pursuing graduate careers. Instead, they sought to hire a more "committed" labor force. These were not the first efforts by home economists to encourage men to join their professional ranks,

⁵⁸Luther G. Baker, Jr., "The Enigma of Men in Home Economics," Journal of Home Economics 61 (May 1969) 371.

⁵⁹Ibid., 373. Baker's article also contains some progressive ideas about gender roles, stating that "homemaking is man's work too" and that "fathers are parents too." But although he does recognize the changes in women's roles, and thus the need for change in men's roles, he neglects to take his consciousness about the oddity of being a male in a women's profession and attempt to relate that to the numbers of professions where the woman is the oddity. Apparently it is not necessary for other professions to include women to the point where their numbers are "no longer an item worth of publicity" to come to maturity.

but it is the first time that they made major changes in their profession's organization and name to attract male faculty members.

Adding men to the faculty also served to help remove the perception of home economics as strictly a female field; Dye, Porter, and Lee all recognized that the feminized nature of home economics was in part responsible for the lower stature of the profession in academia. In 1967, Lee wrote,

The fact that home economics is essentially a feminine oriented field is undoubtedly one of the major contributors to our present dilemma both related to image and related to leadership.⁶⁰

What had prevented competition for jobs and provided opportunities for women in science now was their chief problem: keeping women in leadership positions within the field, as well as finding any qualified leaders. Ironically, a field once thought to be the "natural" domain of women turned to recruiting men to maintain a quality faculty. Conforming to male-defined standards of excellence proved to be the end of the female domination of the profession.⁶¹

In 1957, the College of Home Economics at MSU had just one male faculty member, an assistant professor in the Home Management and Child Development department, out of a total staff of 80.⁶² In 1962, four men served on the faculty: two in foods and nutrition, one in home

⁶⁰Jeanette Lee, "Comments on the Paper," March 1967; MSU Archives, Box 364, Folder 22, p. 1.

⁶¹Regina Kunzel discusses this trend in relation to the professionalization of social work, another female-dominated field, in her book, Fallen Women, Problem Girls: Unmarried Mothers and the Professionalization of Social Work, 1890-1945 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993) 45. Kunzel writes that "The goal of raising standards in social work often seemed to translate into a search for men to join the profession."

⁶²See Directory of Faculty and Staff, 1957-58, Michigan State University (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1957) 98. At this time, the college had four departments: Foods and Nutrition, Home Management and Child Development, Institution Administration, and Textiles, Clothing and Related Arts.

management, and one in textiles.⁶³ In 1965, the college had seven men on the faculty, out of a total staff of 81.⁶⁴ The faculty had six men in 1968, and by 1969 there were 10 men on the faculty. Four were in the department of Family and Child Science (formerly home management and child development), four were in textiles, and two in foods and nutrition. That year also saw the first man appointed to head a home economics department, when Robert Rice was named chairperson of the textiles department.⁶⁵ The year the college's name was changed to the College of Human Ecology, 1970, saw little change in the make-up of the faculty, although a man was named head of the new Institute for Family and Child Research.⁶⁶ When Lee retired later that year, Rice was named acting dean of the college, the first male to hold that position since the Women's Course opened in 1896.⁶⁷ MSU's program actually had fewer men than other programs. In 1965, while MSU's faculty was only 7 percent male, Pennsylvania State University's home economics faculty was 21 percent male, and Cornell University's was 17 percent male. As noted, by 1971 MSU's human ecology faculty was more than 30 percent male, but PSU's faculty was nearly 50 percent male, while Cornell University's faculty was 38 percent male.⁶⁸

A shift to a higher proportion of men on the faculty coincided with the college's name change to human ecology, a change supported by the MSU home economics faculty. The "Report of the Committee on the

⁶³Faculty and Staff Directory, Michigan State University, 1962-63 (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1962) 109-113. Another man was a technician in foods and nutrition.

⁶⁴Jeanette Lee, Notes for dean's group, p. 22-23. See note 33.

⁶⁵Faculty and Staff Directory, 1969-70, 138, 140, 143, 145, 170, 177.

⁶⁶Faculty and Staff Directory, 1970-71, 185.

⁶⁷Lee, From Home Economics to Human Ecology, p. 48.

⁶⁸Rossiter, "Protecting Home Economics," Table 8.3.

Future of Home Economics" endorsed the concept of a name change.⁶⁹ The change was necessary, the report stated, because of the college's changing focus to the interaction of people and their environment and because of the image attached to the term "home economics". Home economics was a pejorative among many in academia, and the MSU faculty believed a name change would help remove that stigma:

In some respects, the name [home economics] is incidental in comparison with what we actually do and how we contribute through education to the well-being of individuals. On the other hand, the name has come to hold for many such limiting connotations that some who are trained in our various fields believe a name change is essential for creating a more accurate, positive image.⁷⁰

An article in the Journal of Home Economics echoed these beliefs, noting that the scope and definition of home economics had changed since its inception, and a new name would reflect those changes. The author also spoke of "the hidden nuances in the name," or the connection between home economics and sewing, cooking, and the "less-able student."⁷¹ The name "home economics," though, also was perceived to be a part of the reason why more men were not interested in majoring in home economics, another reason to institute a change:

⁶⁹"Report of the Committee on the Future of Home Economics at MSU,"
⁷¹ For a discussion of the presentation of the report, see Jeanette Lee, "Dean's Remarks, Presentation of Report of the Committee of the Future of Home Economics," Home Economics Faculty Meeting, January 26, 1968; MSU Archives, Box 364, Folder 23. No records of subsequent faculty meetings reflect the discussions about this report. A minority report is mentioned, but is not included in the archival materials. The minority chapter dealt with the philosophical background of home economics, an early chapter in the report. Dr. Anna Creekmore, a member of the MSU faculty, published a version of a minority report in the Journal of Home Economics, but she also favored restructuring the college, although she does not address the issue of a name change. See Anna M. Creekmore, "The Concept Basic to Home Economics," Journal of Home Economics 60 (February 1968) 93-102.

⁷⁰"Report of the Committee," 71.

⁷¹Patricia Durey Murphy, "What's in a Name?" Journal of Home Economics 59 (November 1967) 705.

Implications in the name seem to be a formidable deterrent to recruitment of men into the program, either as students or faculty, since the name and image seem to reflect home economics as primarily a woman's field...Perhaps more men (faculty, majors and non-majors) might be attracted to this College if the present name and image were changed.⁷²

The name change also reflected a shift in emphasis of study and research. Rather than simply concerned with people and their near physical environment, which was the original goal of home economics, the term "human ecology" reflected the study of the interaction of people and the environment and the examination of the family, group or home as an ecosystem. The new name signified a shift to a more ecological approach in study and research.⁷³

Although the faculty report encouraged a name change, it recommended that a uniform name change be adopted at the national level, preferably by the AHEA. Other programs already had instituted name changes, but without any uniformity. The MSU report expressed concern that several different name changes would result in a loss of identity and unity within the profession.⁷⁴ While it recommended that the faculty take a leadership role in presenting the issue at the national level, it did not recommend a name change only at MSU, but thought the professional organizations should take steps to institute a national name change.

Although the committee report included these recommendations, the faculty reaction is unclear. No records of the discussions about the

⁷²"Report of the Committee," 73.

⁷³Jeanette Lee, "Change and Redirection at Michigan State University," commencement speech, March 14, 1971, Michigan State University; Voice Library, Michigan State University. Lee gave the address at the morning commencement for graduates earning advanced degrees that term from MSU.

⁷⁴"Report of the Committee," 73. Name changes either instituted or under consideration included the College of Human Development, College of Family Living, College of Family Life, and the College of Human Development and Environment.

report appear to exist, although in her remarks at the presentation of the report to the faculty, Lee had concluded her speech by noting that:

For the time being these reports are to be kept "within the family" while we have the time to deal with the report and its recommendations within this college.⁷⁵

No initiative was forthcoming from the AHEA or the land grant association, and the MSU program formally changed its name in 1970 and reorganized the structure of the college. The college still had four departments, but they now included Human Nutrition and Foods (formerly Foods and Nutrition and Institution Administration), Human Environment and Design (formerly Textiles, Clothing, and Related Arts), Family and Child Sciences (formerly Home Management and Child Development), and Family Ecology, a new program.⁷⁶

The largest changes occurred the following year, when the department of Human Nutrition and Foods merged with the Food Science department of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. After 1971, the department was held jointly by the two colleges, and the faculties merged. The department office was moved to the Food Science building, although faculty previously connected with the home economics program kept their offices in the Human Ecology building. Dena Cederquist, who headed the Foods and Nutrition department since 1956, retired that year. Jacob Hoefer was acting chairperson for one year, and Gilbert Leveille was appointed department chairperson the following year.⁷⁷ In 1970, before the two departments merged, the human ecology

⁷⁵Lee, "Dean's Remarks, Presentation of Committee," p. 10.

⁷⁶Lee, From Home Economics to Human Ecology, 39.

⁷⁷Lee, From Home Economics to Human Ecology, 49. Hoefer, whose doctorate was in animal nutrition, was a professor of animal husbandry at MSU and served as the chairperson of that department from 1966-68. He served as acting chairperson of the newly-formed Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition in 1970-71. He was also named associate director of the Agricultural Experiment Station at MSU in 1967. He became assistant dean of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources and the College of Natural Science in 1978. See American Men and Women of Science, 16th ed., volume III, 1986, p. 749.

Leveille, whose doctorate was in nutrition, was hired as a professor at MSU in 1969. He had been an associate professor at the

faculty had 10 male faculty members.⁷⁸ In 1971, with the faculties and departments combined, 26 men served on the faculty of 84, or nearly 31 percent. Sixteen of those male faculty members were full professors, 14 of whom were from the former department of food science. Three of the four male associate professors and three of the five male assistant professors also were from food science; four men were in the department of Family and Child Science, and one was in the department of Human Environment and Design. None of the instructors in the college were male.⁷⁹ In addition, men headed three of the College of Human Ecology's five departments: food science, human environment and design, and the Institute for Family and Child Study, and Robert Rice was acting dean, in addition to his position as chairperson of the human environment program, although Lois Lund would be named dean of the college in 1973.⁸⁰

A 1972 survey of home economics programs throughout the country sought to evaluate the changes within the profession during the previous decade. Considered in the survey were structural and organizational changes, as well as changes in how those outside the profession perceived home economics.⁸¹ Many reported a positive view of these changes, reflecting improved attitudes toward home economics and a rise

University of Illinois at Urbana. He was chairperson of the Department of Foods and Nutrition from 1971-1980, when he left the university to work for General Foods Corporation. See American Men and Women of Science, 16th ed. volume IV, p. 714.

⁷⁸Faculty and Staff Directory, 1970-71, 146, 152-153, 185. The breakdown of men according to department: four in family and child science, three in human environment and design, two in human nutrition and foods, and one family ecology.

⁷⁹Faculty and Staff Directory, 1971-72, 146-147, 152-154, 186.

⁸⁰Lund had been chairperson of the department of home economics research at the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. See Who's Who in America, 40th ed., volume 2, 1978-79, p. 2021.

⁸¹Susan Weis, Marjorie East, and Sarah Manning, "Home Economics Units in Higher Education: A Decade of Change," Journal of Home Economics 66 (May 1974) 11.

in enrollment, signifying perhaps that the efforts to better the profession's status and to upgrade the field itself succeeded.

The survey found that just ten percent of those responding changed the name of the program to something other than home economics. Just four of the twenty-two reporting name changes chose human ecology, as MSU did. Whether MSU participated in the survey is not known, but it is evident that its name change was in the minority. What is more interesting is that those reporting name changes also cited one improvement factor more frequently than those not changing the name: "Forty percent said the enrollment of men majoring in the field has increased, while 28 percent of the total group recognized an increase in men majors."⁸² Why this occurred is only speculation, but the stigma attached to the term "home economics" and the reluctance of men to pursue that study may be a part of the reason.

MSU's home economics program was at the forefront of efforts to adapt and develop to changing demands in the university community. Its faculty was aware of the criticisms of home economics, and spent a great deal of time addressing and debating the issues raised. That may be, in fact, why it survived with the changes described above. Lee hints at this in a 1966 speech, just as the debate over the profession begins to accelerate, culminating in the McGrath report and the restructuring at MSU:

Home Economics has been criticized and praised, misunderstood and challenged to greater things. But I think more important than what is taking place at other institutions is the character and spirit of the higher education enterprise at Michigan State University. Michigan State is a University on the go...I have heard both the Provost and the President say that those programs, those colleges, those areas of study that come up with the most forward looking and imaginative plans for the future - that are consistent with the basic philosophy and objectives of this great Land-Grant institution - will receive support. I am sure the call is clear for us in Home Economics to lay out our projections, our plans for the future.⁸³

⁸²Weis, East and Manning, p. 15.

⁸³Lee, Faculty Meeting Minutes, September 21, 1966, p. 3.

If the College of Home Economics did not address the changes the administration believed necessary, then its future was in jeopardy. The College did address the issues raised, and thus remained a part of the university community.

The postwar period was a defensive time for home economics. Its efforts to defend its place in the university and the academic community consumed much of the profession's energy and efforts, and also placed its members in a disadvantageous position to put forth new ideas about women's role in the academy and society. Home economists did turn to men to fill their faculty ranks, rather than aggressively questioning why women were reluctant, or unable, to pursue graduate study in home economics. They also accepted the drastic changes in their program, and the idea that a part of its problem was the high numbers of women in it, rather than asserting their value and equality. Feminized pursuits continued to be devalued in a male-defined academic community, and "women's work" was unworthy of men unless it adjusted its standards, name, and content to accommodate men. The MSU faculty also acquiesced as men began to take on more of the leadership positions and even the deanship of the college. It adapted to society's definition of value and worth instead of asserting its own.

But these results are not surprising, given the cards stacked against home economists. They did try to communicate the importance of their field to administrators and educators, but no one seemed willing to listen. Their lack of public outcry at the treatment of home economics is puzzling, and an explanation will likely come from a more in-depth study of the women who led these programs, their activities, and background. Eventually the seasoned defenders of the field retired, most of them quietly with little said about these tumultuous years.⁸⁴

⁸⁴Rossiter, "Protecting Home Economics," 227. Rossiter notes that virtually none of these women became active in the women's movement, including the National Organization for Women, although other groups of academic women did participate. She speculates that these women may have been too conservative "politically and stylistically" to join such groups, although much more work on this remains to be done to draw any

Marie Dye's documentation of the elimination of home economics at the University of Chicago is a rare exception, and she never wrote or spoke about what occurred at MSU, or at least she did not leave any record of it. These home economists did leave a legacy in the students they taught and mentored during their years at MSU. Those students, how they used their home economics education, and their reactions to that education, are the subject of the next chapter.

definite conclusions.

CHAPTER 5

The Meaning of Home Economics Education: Students at MSU

In a 1969 study of alumni of the College of Home Economics, a 1956 graduate proudly noted on her survey that

home economics is related to my present job. I owe MSU and my excellent teachers, and my field of emphasis very much for the kind of person I am.¹

What kind of person was the Michigan State University home economics graduate? Much of this thesis analyzes the role of professional home economics educators and the message and values they presented to their students. This chapter turns to the students to address how they reacted to their education; what beliefs and practices they internalized and embraced, and which they rejected. Although the graduates span a period of nearly two decades (1948-1967), they shared a common experience - their education in the College of Home Economics at MSU - and that experience helped to shape the course their lives would take.

The major part of the source base for this chapter is an alumni study conducted in 1967 and 1968 and published the following year. The study included input from graduates from 1948 to 1967, and its main goal was to consider how the College of Home Economics could contribute to the continuing education of its alumni. The study also aimed to analyze what the home economics graduates thought of their MSU education and how they used it. Because the study was geared specifically to serving the educational needs of graduates living in Michigan, it was confined to

¹College of Home Economics Alumni Study, 1948-1967: Implications for Future Educational Programs (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1969) 119. The original surveys did not survive, therefore the published results were used.

those alumni who were Michigan residents.² The college hoped to use the information and insights gained from this study to plan future programs, both for the continued education of its graduates and the education of incoming undergraduates.

The College sent surveys to 1,829 alumni, or about 47 percent of the total degree recipients during the period (1948-1967). The College selected the participants based upon residence (Michigan) and whether current addresses were available. Of those sent, 75 percent, or 1,379, were returned.³

An analysis of the study's results again points to continuities between the 1950s and 1960s, especially in the discourse and rhetoric about women's roles. But the hints of change appear. The alumni's comments reveal the persistence of traditional values and gender roles, but their rhetoric often conflicted with the reality of their lives, including the large numbers who worked outside the home. Many assumed primary responsibility for their children's care, and subordinated their careers and education to those of their husbands. Many left the work force while their children were young, emphasizing the need for them to be full-time mothers and wives during those years. But a significant shift appears in the comments of the alumni of the 1960s; although they still believe their children need them at home, many return to work earlier. While graduates of the 1950s might wait to return to work until their children finished high school, the graduates of the 1960s returned to work when their children began to attend school full time.

²Ibid., 2-3.

³Ibid., 9. The College of Home Economics awarded 3227 bachelor's degrees and 661 advanced degrees during that period, for a total of 3,888. As noted earlier, the study coordinators targeted those graduates living in Michigan, thus accounting for the difference between degrees awarded and alumni contacted.

The College had a remarkably high return rate on its surveys. A normal return rate for a mailed survey is between 33 and 40 percent, according to Marcus Cheatham, Survey Director, Institute of Public Policy and Social Research, Michigan State University.

The study also sheds light on what did not affect these graduates. Although the College of Home Economics conducted this study in a period of rising awareness about women's rights and the need for change in women's roles, little overt evidence exists that these ideas affected these graduates. But the vehemence with which some alumni defended their decision to be full-time mothers suggests that perhaps the women's movement was affecting their mindset, prompting them to justify why they followed traditional expectations for women. But these graduates' lives were not the image of the fifties full-time housewife catering to her children. Employment rates and beliefs about when a mother should return to work shift over the years of the study. Despite their claims that they needed to be at home to care for children, nearly two-thirds were working.⁴ These findings call into question the prevalence of the image of the "happy housewife" and the "problem that has no name" put forth by Betty Friedan, and instead present a more complicated picture of American women during this period.

Many of the survey's respondents accepted the dominant life course idea for women's education, and followed that plan, but they then used that idea to gain assistance from the university for the problems they faced as mothers. They expected the university to provide accessible educational opportunities to facilitate their return to the professional world, and to accommodate their schedules which centered around their children and husbands.

The sixties brought profound changes in the expectations of women and the roles they occupied. More were working and the women's movement called into question the rigid prescriptions of women as wives, mothers, and housewives. The role of housewife and full-time mother was increasingly recognized as unpaid labor.⁵ This study demonstrates that

⁴Ibid., 49.

⁵Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life (New York: The Free Press, 1988) 207-209 and William H. Chafe, The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th

the issues, ideas, and concerns raised during the sixties did not reach all people. Some issues held more appeal than others to these graduates, but their silence on some of the key issues raised during the movements of the 1960s speaks volumes about the limited appeal such ideas held.

The study also offers an opportunity to consider how these graduates dealt with the contradictions they faced as members of a feminized profession.⁶ What emerges are contradictions similar to those found in the lives of many American women, including the image of a full-time mother and homemaker against the reality of employment rates above the national average among the graduates. Comments regarding their home economics education and its curriculum reflect tensions found among educators and administrators of home economics in the debates between practical and professional education and the appropriate education for women. Some graduates criticized the college for being too "professional," resulting in what they saw as a neglect of the practical arts, including sewing, needlecrafts, and cooking.

Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) 194-202. Works covering the goals, ideologies, and activities of the women's movement include Sara Evans, Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement & the New Left (New York: Vintage Books, 1980); Jo Freeman, The Politics of Women's Liberation (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1975); Cynthia Harrison, On Account of Sex: The Politics of Women's Issues, 1945-1968 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Ethel Klein, Gender Politics: From Consciousness to Mass Politics (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).

⁶Many of these graduates completed their education at the bachelor level. But despite the lack of advanced training, the College of Home Economics (and the entire field) emphasized that its graduates were professionals, training for a career. Home economists worked in business, industry, education, social and community welfare programs, and the Cooperative Extension Service. All three deans referred to their training as one for a profession, and the students accepted that definition.

The commitment to professional training was repeated in the alumni study:

An important function of home economics at college level [sic] has been generally regarded as education for a profession. The data from this study may raise some interesting points in this regard, even though data for women from other areas of specialization are not available for comparison. (p. 47-48)

But, ironically, in an era when educators and policymakers emphasized a woman's traditional roles as wife and mother, fewer women who attended college chose home economics as their course of study. While nearly all home economics students at MSU were women, not all women chose home economics, and home economics graduates represent a minority of women with MSU degrees. Rarely did women comprise less than 96 percent of the students enrolled in home economics, and more often women occupied 99 percent of enrollments.⁷ Women also accounted for more than 99 percent of respondents to the College's study in 1968.⁸ Although women dominated the MSU's home economics program, home economics was not the education chosen by all, or even most, women at MSU. By the middle of the century, women looked elsewhere at the university for their majors.

The number of women attending MSU increased dramatically during the postwar period. In 1946-47, women comprised about 27.9 percent of the total student population at MSU; in 1950-51 that number was up to 31.7 percent. Women were 33.8 percent of the student population in 1955-56 and up to 39.1 percent of the total student body by 1960-61. In 1965-66 women accounted for 42.5 percent of all MSU students and in 1968-69 women were 45.2 percent of the student population (see Figure 1).⁹

⁷A Compilation of Data on Faculty Women Enrolled at Michigan State University (East Lansing: Office of the Provost, 1970) 36; and a study of registrar's reports from 1946-47 to 1958-59 shows this trend. Women were 99 percent of enrollments in home economics in 1946-47; 98 percent in 1950-51; 99 percent in 1955-56; 98.9 percent in 1962; and 96.8 percent in 1971. (Registrar's reports from 1959-60 to 1970-71 do not provide a breakdown of enrollment by college and sex.)

⁸Alumni Study, 101.

⁹A Compilation of Data on Faculty Women and Women Enrolled at Michigan State University (East Lansing: Office of the Provost, 1970) 45a.

Figure 1.

- x - percentage of total enrollment occupied by women at MSU**
- o - College of Home Economics' market share of degrees awarded to all women at MSU.**
- * - College of Home Economics' market share of total number of degrees awarded by MSU.**

Source: Reports of the Registrar, Michigan State University, 1946-1971, were used to compile information on degrees. For information on enrollments of women, see A Compilation of Data on Faculty Women and Women Enrolled at Michigan State University East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1970) 45a. The Reports of the Registrar between 1965 and 1968 do not include a breakdown of degree awards by gender or college, thus accounting for the break in the data (o). Because the College of Home Economics' share of degrees awarded to all students remained constant during those years, one can speculate that the number awarded to women followed a similar path.

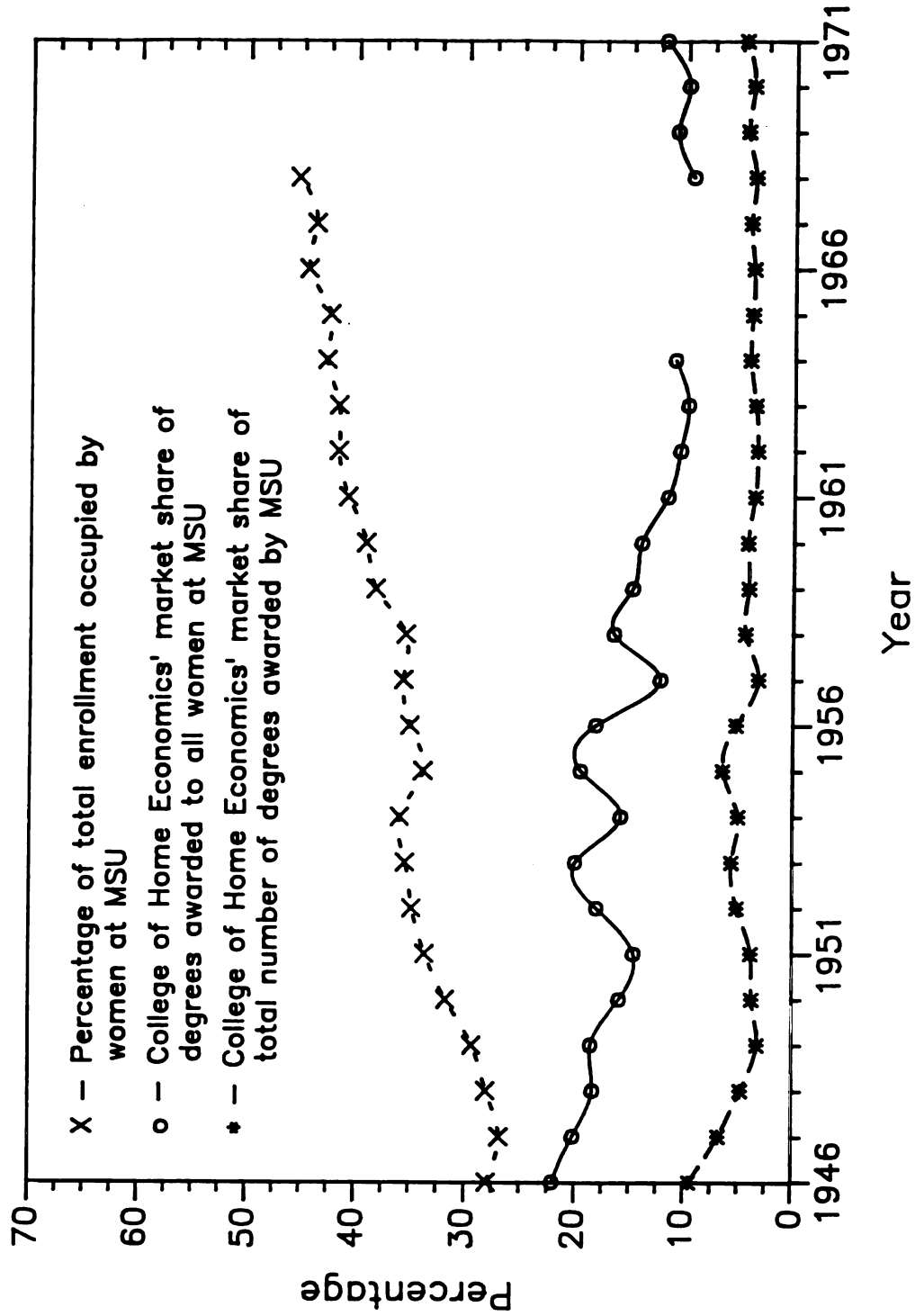


Figure 1.

Women students majored in many colleges on campus. Their numbers were smallest in the colleges of Agriculture, Business, and Engineering; in 1962 only 2.8 percent of all agriculture students, 12 percent of all business majors, and 0.6 percent of engineering students were women; by 1971 those numbers increased to 10.9 percent in agriculture, 16.1 percent in business, and 4.6 percent in engineering. In 1962, when women were 38.1 percent of the MSU student population, they comprised a majority of the student enrollments only in the colleges of Arts and Letters, Education, and Home Economics: 61.3 percent of arts and letters students, 67.8 percent of education majors, and 98.9 percent of home economics students were female.¹⁰ Degrees granted to MSU students in home economics rarely accounted for more 5 percent of the total degrees awarded after World War II. For women students, home economics degrees occupied a range of the market share of student majors. In 1946-47, home economics degrees accounted for 22 percent of all degrees granted to women, but that number slowly dropped during the next fifteen years, reaching a low of 12.2 percent in 1957-58. After 1960, home economics granted about 10 percent of all degrees to women (see Figure 1).¹¹ The actual number of degrees awarded in home economics continued to rise, but a declining percentage of women majored in home economics.¹²

¹⁰A Compilation of Data, (1973), 36.

¹¹Compiled by the author from a study of the Registrar's Reports from 1946-47 to 1970-71. Reports from 1965-66, 1966-67, and 1967-68 again failed to provide a breakdown of degrees by college and sex, thus accounting for a break in the author's compilation of data. See Figure 1.

¹²The same trend was true for enrollments between 1946-47 and 1958-59. The actual number of women enrolling in home economics courses increased, but the percentage of women choosing such courses slowly declined. In 1946-47, 14.6 percent of women students enrolled in some type of home economics course. By 1951-52 that number dropped to 10 percent. It rose slightly in the next four years, but dropped to 9.8 percent in 1956-57, 9.5 percent in 1957-58, and 8.9 percent in 1958-59.

The Registrar's reports for the remainder of the period in this study do not include a breakdown of enrollments by sex and college, nor does it include enrollment totals for the academic year.

The decline in the "market share" of students in home economics was an area of concern for administrators, both at MSU and elsewhere in the profession. Attrition rates averaged about 50 percent in home economics, and prompted numerous studies as well as program revisions to try to remedy the problem.¹³ The efforts resulted in curriculum revisions at MSU, but the College's share of the student population did not increase. As with the case of home economics faculty, the profession began to recruit men to increase the numbers of home economics majors and enrollments. In part because of the demand for home economics professionals, educators renewed their efforts to attract men to the profession, prompting one author to suggest:

Since a large turnover in personnel is characteristic of every home economics field, could we consider more carefully our practice of depending on women graduates as the professional workers? Perhaps the increasing number of men graduates points toward a more stable personnel.¹⁴

Despite recruiting efforts, men, and most women, continued to look elsewhere in the university community for their education, and women continued to account for the majority of home economics enrollments and majors. One historian suggests that declines in enrollment occurred for two reasons: the availability of increasing opportunities elsewhere in the university community and also because of the negative stigma attached to home economics.¹⁵

¹³"Report of Committee 'A' on Enrollments in Home Economics and Drop-outs from this School of Home Economics," 1950; MSU Archives, Box 365, Folder 4. For an overview of the period and its decline in enrollment, see Ruth L. Bonde, "A Time of Growth, a Time of Decisions," Journal of Home Economics 68 (January 1976): 29-32. See also: Florence Corbin, "What Can We Do About Drop-Outs," Practical Home Economics 33 (September 1954): 38-39; Beulah I. Coon, "Trends in Home Economics Enrollment," Journal of Home Economics 44 (May 1952) 334-337.

¹⁴Beulah I. Coon, "Trends in Home Economics Enrollment," Journal of Home Economics 44 (May 1952) 337. For discussions of men in home economics, see Luther G. Baker, "The Enigma of Men in Home Economics," Journal of Home Economics 61 (May 1969): 371-373; Arnold Baragar, "Opportunities for Men in Home Economics," Journal of Home Economics 52 (December 1960): 833; Royston J. Lawson, "Men and Home Economics in the U.S.: 1900-1975," Journal of Home Economics 85 (Spring 1993): 47-52.

¹⁵Rossiter, "Protecting Home Economics," 203-204, 227.

Students in home economics, although representing a diversity of backgrounds, did share similar characteristics. The alumni study, in conjunction with other documents, provides a partial picture of the home economics student population. The student population in the College of Home Economics was predominantly white, middle class and from a traditional, nuclear family. According to a study done by MSU faculty of incoming freshmen in 1957-58, 91 percent of the new students were from "intact families," or in families with both parents present.¹⁶ In addition, most came from "families in the higher status occupations," with 35 percent of the fathers listed as proprietors, managers, or officials. Another 22.2 percent of the students' fathers were listed as professionals and 15 percent were skilled workers. Nearly two-thirds (63.9 percent) of these students' mothers were full-time homemakers, with only 10.6 percent of the mothers listed as professionals. Most families in the study had three children.¹⁷ Nearly all the students indicated a religious preference, with 85 percent categorizing themselves as Protestant, 10.6 percent as Catholic, and 2.8 percent as Jewish.¹⁸

Many of the students' parents were only high school graduates, although some did attend college, even if they did not complete a degree. Only 16.1 percent of the fathers and 23.9 percent of the mothers held a bachelor's degree, and only 13.9 percent of the fathers had education beyond that. Just 1.1 percent of the mothers held a degree above the bachelor's level. Thus only a quarter of the mothers earned a college degree and about a third of the fathers.¹⁹ Sending

¹⁶Rosalind Mentzer and Jeanette Lee, "Report of a Population Study of Freshman Students Indicating Home Economics Preference, 1957-58," November 1958; MSU Archives, Box 364, Folder 52, p. 3.

¹⁷Ibid., "Report," 3-4.

¹⁸Ibid., "Report," 8.

¹⁹Ibid., "Report," 6.

their own daughters to college likely constituted an effort to provide their children with more opportunities than they had.

Little evidence exists concerning the numbers of minority students in MSU's College of Home Economics, and the lack of information is probably significant in itself. It is not until the sixties, with the rise of the civil rights movement and federal legislation seeking to protect minority rights, that attention to minorities begins to surface. Even as late as 1969, only eight, or four percent, of the incoming class, which numbered 199, were African-American.²⁰ For much of the century, home economics at MSU was predominantly for white students.

The College's alumni study does provide some information about the lives and backgrounds of the graduates participating in the alumni survey. Overall, 80.4 percent were married. 82.2 percent of those graduates holding a bachelor's degree were married, while 73.2 percent of those with a master's degree were married. Only 28.6 percent of those graduates educated beyond the master's level were married.²¹ The

²⁰"Academic Advising of Black Freshmen in the College of Home Economics," MSU Archives, Box 359, Folder 58. One of the only other allusions to minority students is a disturbing letter among the correspondence of the dean. The letter, addressed to Lee, then assistant to the dean, requests racial information about one of its applicants, a home economics student at MSU. Although the application form does not ask for such information, and there are no restrictions, the camp organizer is concerned:

This summer, however, it happens that the entire staff is white, and I feel that if Pauline were colored she might feel somewhat alone. She will share housing with 3 other girls and I am anxious to have all the kitchen staff on the happiest possible terms with each other.

Therefore, wrote Ruth Morris, a 1946 home economics graduate of MSU, she requested a "statement of her race."

Lee replied, through her secretary, simply that "Pauline Wiggins is a white girl."

Such an incident not only indicated the feelings about African-Americans at the time, but also suggests that although their numbers may have been small, African-Americans were in home economics. See letter to Lee from Ruth Morris, dated May 25, 1953; MSU Archives, Box 379, Folder 9.

²¹Alumni Study, 101.

average number of children per graduate was two.²² The educational level attained by these women did affect their life course. Those with more education had lower marriage rates; more chose to remain single.

Perhaps the most useful portion of the study is the collection of comments written by the alumni.²³ These comments bring to light the ideals, values, and beliefs held by these graduates about balancing their professional goals and plans with family responsibilities and illuminates to some degree why those who worked outside the home did so. The issues of how to juggle employment, further education, and family responsibilities appeared most often in the comments by the alumni. The graduates also discussed the ideas of women's education, including the life course proposal common among educators of this period. To a lesser extent respondents addressed the home economics curriculum, and brief allusions to events and movements of the period, such as the women's movement of the sixties, also appear. Examining these graduates' comments for the above issues helps us to understand their reaction to and use of their MSU education in home economics during a time of questioning of women's roles.

The most common response from the graduates about employment and further education was that the pursuit of both was contingent upon the needs of their family. Most graduates expressed the belief that their place was at home with their children, at least until they reached school age. One graduate took issue with the definition of work and education implicit in the questionnaire, noting that women worked inside the home, even if the work was unpaid:

²²Ibid., 101. The compilation of the alumni study results does not provide a breakdown of numbers of children per graduate according to age or level of education. Instead, the study simply lists the number of children collectively under each education level, by the age of the children. Thus it is impossible to tell how many had younger children, when they graduated, or what their education level was. Without the original surveys, this information is unfortunately lost.

²³Of the 1,379 surveys returned, 216 (15.7 percent) included written comments.

When people ask, "do you work?", my answer is, "Yes, I am the wife of Dale, the mother of Martha, Amy, Linda, and Jill." I believe that motherhood is the most difficult, most challenging, most rewarding job in the world!²⁴

She went on to note that her role as mother encompassed many duties and skills both inside the home and in the community. She was a Girl Scout leader and coordinator of the church women's group, and looked forward to the opportunity to work through her church with low income mothers on home management. She felt that such pursuits were as valid as paid employment:

To me this type of "work" is just as important as the woman who supervises the school lunch program, the dietitian in the hospital, the high school home ec. teacher and the so-called child guidance experts.²⁵

This woman was not the only respondent to note that being a wife and mother was a full-time job. Numerous others noted that "full time homemaking is full time employment."²⁶ Few entertained the idea that working full-time was an option with children in the house. The notion that such a combination - professional work and raising a family - was possible or desired does not appear in these comments. Respondents often used such phrases as "can't," "won't," and "of course" in their decision not to work and the placement of their family's needs ahead of their professional goals and aspirations. Most of the women responding who alluded to family and work definitely placed the family first while the children were young. Such responses as "I have a young family and an obligation to them and my home" capture the sense of duty in these women's words.²⁷ Another example reads:

²⁴Alumni Study, 119; respondent is a 1956 graduate of the MSU home economics program.

²⁵Ibid., 119.

²⁶Ibid., 131; respondent was a 1957 graduate of MSU living in Grand Rapids.

²⁷Alumni Study, 106. A 1954 graduate living in Sault Ste. Marie, this woman was working full time despite her belief that her children needed her at home. She had been out of the work force for eight years but was unable to find part-time employment teaching home economics.

My most vital function at this time is as a homemaker. My "free time" I devote to my family - at this time they are all still young and need mother to be "at home."²⁸

The importance these graduates placed on remaining at home with their children is constant over the course of the study; graduates of the fifties were as committed to their full-time role as mother and wife as graduates of the forties. What does change is when they return to work. While mothers who graduated in the early fifties tended to express their intention to remain out of the paid workforce until their children completed high school, graduates from the late fifties and sixties expressed the intention to return to work once their children were in school. Three women, all graduates before 1952, specifically say that they would return to work after their children completed high school. None do so in the later years. Some specifically say first grade or elementary school, while others simply say when their children reach school age. Only one respondent, a 1966 graduate, wrote that she would return to work before her son entered school.²⁹

Other women commented that their future plans depended on their husbands' activities and wishes; a woman's goals competed with those of her husband, and the husband's often won. One graduate's husband was finishing a law degree, "which must come first."³⁰ Another noted that she was teaching full time, but planned to quit at the end of the year:

Why she was working (economic necessity or personal choice) is unclear.

²⁸Ibid., 117; respondent is a 1957 graduate.

²⁹Ibid., 139. Respondent was a 1966 graduate from Webberville who taught full time until her son was born. She continued to substitute teach, but "probably" would return to full time, "within the next year or two."

³⁰Ibid., 132; a 1953 graduate from Dearborn. Frank Stricker discusses this trend in his study of professional women in the early decades of the twentieth century. Frank Stricker, "Cookbooks and Law Books: The Hidden History of Career Women in Twentieth Century America." Journal of Social History 10 (1976) 10.

My working has caused my family great inconvenience. Therefore, my husband insists I not work full time again until my children are grown.³¹

This graduate had substitute taught in an effort to only work part time, but noted that "there is very little personal satisfaction in substitute teaching." As a result, she returned to full-time teaching, but its strain on her family (including her husband) prompted her to leave the work force.

This woman expressed her frustration at her inability to find rewarding part-time employment, a feeling shared by many other graduates. Rather than rejecting her career, she wanted to make it fit within the demands her family responsibilities placed on her. As she noted:

From speaking to other women, I know my situation is not unique. Many of we 1960 college graduates love our professions and want to use our knowledge, ability and talents outside the home. We find we can't be competent full-time professionals, attentive mothers and loving wives - and we cannot find part-time jobs that suit our needs. HELP!! I'm first in line!³²

Working full time and assuming all the duties expected of a wife and mother was difficult for this woman, probably because her marriage was based upon traditional gender roles. We do not know the dynamics of the sexual division of labor in their home, but given her husband's displeasure at her full-time employment, he probably expected her to fulfill the usual duties in the home and was unwilling to help. Without a change in gender expectations, and the institutional supports necessary for mothers to work full time, such an endeavor clearly was difficult. Many women who had children expressed a wish for professional, part-time employment, especially jobs that would fit their children's school hours. Many noted their inability to find such

³¹Ibid., 132; a 1962 graduate.

³²Ibid., 132. See Stricker, "Cookbooks and Law Books," 4. Stricker argues that women who did interrupt their careers to raise children often did so for practical reasons, including a lack of sufficient earnings to afford domestic help or child care, if they were even able to find child care.

positions, prompting them either to leave the field or the work force until their children were older.³³ The burden was on the individual woman to find ways to accomplish both tasks and these women expressed frustration at their inability to do both.

Not all the survey respondents' voiced such beliefs, but the comments from women who were active in the profession and engaged in full-time employment seldom mentioned children, marriage, or husband. The lack of reference to children or husband make it difficult to determine whether they had either, and without the original surveys, such information is lost. If some of these respondents were balancing both professional and family responsibilities, they provided no clues to explain how they did so or why they were different from their fellow alumni.

Despite the preponderance of comments regarding the importance of full-time motherhood and homemaking, the study results report that 62.5 percent of the respondents were employed at the time of the study.³⁴ That figure is significantly higher than the employment figures for women in the United States in 1967, at the time of the alumni study. In 1967, about 39.7 percent of all women over 16 years of age were in the

³³Stricker, "Cookbooks and Law Books," 4; Alice Kessler-Harris, Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982) 312.

³⁴Alumni Study, 49. This figure includes those respondents (5.7 percent) who did not answer the employment questions. If those surveys are excluded, 70.2 percent of the respondents are employed. I chose the other figure, reasoning that although they did not provide an answer to the employment question, they still were a part of the survey's source base. Also, the lack of a response suggests that the respondent was not employed, rather than working outside the home.

For a discussion of women's employment rates in the late sixties, see Kessler-Harris, Out to Work, 300-301.

labor force (and 37.8 percent of all married women).³⁵ The study also found that 17.9 percent of the respondents had never worked or had been employed less than one year after graduation from college. Of those working, 68.1 percent were in education; 17.1 in business; 5.5 percent in health fields; 3.8 percent in community service; and 5.5 percent in related fields.³⁶ Sixty four percent of those employed were working in a home economics or related position.³⁷

When the employment figures are broken down for each alumni group, those women graduating in the sixties tend to have higher rates of employment than those in the fifties. Forty-five percent of the 1948 alumni were employed at the time of the study; 50 percent of the 1950 graduates; 55.2 percent of the 1955 graduates, and 46.1 percent of the 1960 alumni. Seventy-one percent of the 1963 graduates reported employment, and 80 percent of the 1965 graduates were employed. Of the 1966 alumni, 80.5 percent were employed, and 93.6 percent of the 1967 graduates were employed.³⁸

One reason for the higher employment rates as compared to the national figure may be that most of the women responding to the survey likely were older than 22, as they all held college degrees.³⁹ Also, the pool of respondents who were more recent graduates was higher than for earlier years. Numbers of alumni from 1948 to 1963 returning

³⁵U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970 (White Plains, NY: Kraus International Publications, 1989) Part I, 133. The number of married women with children under 17 years of age who were employed at that time was 27.4 percent. Given the organization of the study results, it is impossible to determine how many of the respondents who reported employment also had children.

³⁶Ibid., 62.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Alumni Study, 49.

³⁹Employment figures for 1940-1966 include all women over the age of 14, and after 1966 statistics included all women over the age of 16. See Historical Statistics, 123.

surveys was between 42 and 76 (per class). That number jumped to 90 for the class of 1964 and continued to rise: 115 members of the 1965 graduating class returned surveys, while 158 did so from the class of 1966 and 169 from the class of 1967, the last group included in the study.⁴⁰ Recent graduates were less likely to be married and have children, and thus were more likely to be employed full time in their profession. The number of comments regarding the conflict between employment, further education, and family responsibilities also drops when the more recent alumni are studied. The bulk of such comments originated from alumni from the late forties and fifties. What does seem clear is that most women dealt with the conflict between their profession and family responsibilities by not attempting to do both at once, or by choosing part-time employment. Instead, they adopted the life course idea that women would leave the workforce during the "peak years" while their children were young. They combined motherhood and a career by fulfilling these roles serially, focusing on the children when they were young, and then returning to the paid labor force. But the conflict between the high percentage of alumni employed and the large number of comments expressing the commitment to full-time homemaking suggests that perhaps women who were not employed felt compelled to justify their decision to stay out of the paid labor force.

What is harder to pinpoint among the study respondents is why they worked. The questionnaire offered three possible reasons: financial, self-satisfaction, and commitment to the profession. Financial reasons were cited by 48.6 percent of the respondents, and 43.8 percent listed self-satisfaction as the major reason for working. Only 7.6 percent listed professional commitment as the major reason.⁴¹ Some respondents did comment on their reasons for working. Two noted that one answer did

⁴⁰Ibid., 9.

⁴¹Ibid., 80. Unfortunately this is one of the few instances in the study results where no breakdown by alumni group is given.

not suffice, but that all three played a role in the decision to seek employment outside the home. Some women worked with their husbands in their business or profession (one worked with her husband in his dentist office, two with their veterinarian husbands and another in an unidentified small business). Another woman made draperies for J.C. Penney Company in her home, noting that it allowed her "to take care of my family and help with the financial problems, too."⁴²

Nearly half of the respondents said they worked for financial reasons, but that category encompasses a range of possible classes and financial situations. It is not clear whether they were working to afford the middle-class lifestyle or if they were working to provide for the basic necessities of their family's survival. One woman noted that she worked because her husband was ill and unable to work, but also that she worked for self-satisfaction.⁴³ Another mentioned returning to work to provide a college education for her children, and a 1963 graduate noted that she worked part time for "luxury items...while we do spend my earnings, the money goes for items we don't really need but are glad to have."⁴⁴ It is difficult to assess what the motivations were for women who did not comment on their reasons for working.

The fact that some women were able to remain at home and care for their children full time, rather than working outside the home, or to work only part time, indicates that the husband's income was sufficient to provide for the family's basic needs. Likewise, some women expressed the urge to return to their profession, but believed their place was at home with their children until they entered school. It is impossible to determine the class make-up of this group, but this study suggests,

⁴²Ibid., 134; a 1961 graduate living in Ann Arbor.

⁴³Ibid., 115; a 1949 graduate from Fenton.

⁴⁴Ibid., 118 (a 1952 graduate), 132. Although she did work, this respondent noted that she only worked part time (substitute teaching two days per week) because of her children and household duties.

although tentatively, that many were middle class, and that the graduates' incomes, if they did work, were not vital to the family's survival.

A few women mentioned the difficulty of finding adequate child care for their children, although day care concerns were not an expressed major hindrance to these women's employment. One woman did note that "a babysitter could not provide the religious-related moral training we are trying to guide our children by."⁴⁵ What is perhaps more significant is that nowhere in the study's questionnaire were respondents asked who cared for their children if they worked, or if securing such care was a problem. The study's content again illuminates the attitudes and beliefs of the educators behind it; rather than considering what factors inhibited women from pursuing careers or education while they had young children, the study's authors (MSU home economics faculty) accepted the "life course" idea of the era. Implicit in the study's neglect of such an issue as the availability of child care is the notion that women should not be concerned with day care, as most are raising their own children; it is a part of their "dual" role. But this also points to the class bias of the study. It assumes women have the luxury of making the decision to not work outside the home, but instead could remain home to raise their children and be full-time homemakers. The study does not fully address the financial or class aspects of the employment issue. Do women *need* to work; is it not a choice? And if they do work, how are they caring for their children? These questions remain unanswered.

The alumni plans for further education were similar to their employment plans - any activities were contingent upon the family needs, if any conflict was mentioned. Many women noted the difficulty of pursuing graduate study with children and a husband, either because of

⁴⁵Ibid., 133. Comments of a 1958 graduate residing in Elsie. Despite her commitment to raising her own children, she did express a desire to return to the business world: "I yearn strongly to re-enter the business world at a future date."

the time or cost of both tuition and child care. Transportation was another major problem for many women, particularly those who did not live within commuting distance of MSU or other colleges and universities. The lack of available courses also prompted some women to pursue study outside of home economics, often in education:

Graduate courses in home economics are so difficult to obtain off-campus and with many of the home economists assuming a dual role of family life, I am feeling compelled to change my master's degree area to obtain off-campus courses.⁴⁶

Some women faulted the university for its lack of support and understanding concerning the desire of women (and mothers) to continue their education. Some criticized the lack of coordination between the various state universities regarding the transfer of credits or restrictions on when credits were voided, and also the lack of understanding about the constraints on many women's time and resources:

The universities must recognize that women with school age children who are attempting to maintain a home (sometimes work) and go to school have extremely severe demands made on their time and energy and the universities should favor a position which would help them (this being a basic philosophy of home economics) instead of making restrictions so severe that all but the most determined become thoroughly disgusted and quit!⁴⁷

One woman, frustrated at having her credits voided after five years, questioned whether the university and the College of Home Economics were truly interested in the married graduate or the experiences she had outside mainstream education or employment:

The experiences I have had, have been more than equal to other credits I might have been accumulating, in making me a more effective teacher of Homemaking - or is the University advocating the "well-rounded spinster" as a teacher of home economics?⁴⁸

Not all graduates viewed the university or the College of Home Economics as negatively. Many of these graduates expressed pride in their profession, or at least wrote that their "leave" from employment

⁴⁶Ibid., 112; a 1962 graduate. For similar comments, see 121.

⁴⁷Ibid., 114; a 1954 graduate from Athens.

⁴⁸Ibid., 108; a 1949 graduate.

was temporary and due to the needs of their families. Some graduates placed a great value on their education, and were looking for ways to use it that fit into their lives:

Your questionnaire is so appreciated; how wonderful to know your committee is aware of the needs of frustrated Home Economist - homemakers, who would rather donate their skills and efforts than to spend the rest of their lives seeking time consuming entertainment...I for one human being find myself burned to the core with activities that are all talk and no concrete evidence of work accomplished! Gaining an education was the fight of my life and I want to do something with it as soon as I'm able.⁴⁹

Another graduate expressed a similar desire to contribute her talents to society, placing a high value on the education she received:

I work because I enjoy it but closely behind that is the fact that I feel very strongly that I have an obligation to more than my profession - to the community and to society - to not waste the education which I, my parents and the state have financed. I plan to always (assuming reasonable health, etc.) to work at least part time.⁵⁰

Clearly many women accepted the "life course" education idea (see chapter 3). This concept reiterated the likelihood, if not inevitability, of a woman's eventual role as wife and mother. During the "peak years" when a woman had small children, the dominant thinking was that she would leave the workforce (assuming her family was financially able to allow this) and raise her children. The comments of this study tend to show that these women followed this prescription, if they were able, but the employment statistics are more difficult to assess, largely because we do not know how many of those women working were married or had children.

One respondent believed that motherhood was the most important job for a woman and demanded her full attention, as prescribed by the life

⁴⁹Ibid., 117. In stating "when I'm able," the respondent is referring to raising her children. She expressed the intention to return to work once they were in school.

Another graduate expressed a desire to have materials and seminars which would help her update her knowledge in home economics. She noted that she was "sick of Women's Magazines (Journal and McCall's)." See Alumni Study, 113; a 1951 graduate.

⁵⁰Ibid., 135; a 1964 graduate living in Grand Rapids, this person does not mention family or children; it is unclear whether she is married or has children.

course concept. She also, however, asserted that not all women could be good mothers. She suggested that couples should be carefully screened before marriage "to find out if they will make good parents" as "there is too much social pressure to have children." She believed mothers should remain out of the workforce "until our other vastly more difficult and rewarding job is over." She saw no contradiction between motherhood and a profession. For her, it was an either/or choice. One could not do both at the same time. She did not plan to pursue her career or further education until her children were grown, as the life course prescription suggested.⁵¹

Many of the respondents did plan to return from their "leave" from home economics, and noted that the College of Home Economics could best help its alumni by offering "refresher" courses to enable them to do so. Their requests for such programs echo the recommendations of the President's Commission on the Status of Women, whose report suggested assisting women in their return to the labor force after raising their children. The report urged the utilization of community colleges and university programs to encourage and facilitate the continuing education of women.⁵² The MSU graduates requested similar programs from their alma mater, or other state schools. They wanted programs that would enable them to obtain the education and training they needed to return to the profession, but expressed frustration at the obstacles in their path.

The president's commission suggested that older women could be trained to alleviate labor shortages in specific occupations. One such

⁵¹Alumni Study, 119; a 1956 graduate.

⁵²Margaret Mead and Frances Balgley Kaplan, eds. American Women: The Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women and Other Publications of the Commission (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965) 103-107. See also, Harrison, On Account of Sex, 154-155.

occupation was elementary and secondary school teaching.⁵³ One alumni addressed this topic, questioning the talent wasted:

Why are the Universities permitting thousands of former teachers to stagnate for six or eight years (while their children are small) without making a real effort to help these young mothers continue their education?⁵⁴

This woman suggested that more course offerings in home economics be available within a reasonable distance for travel. She also suggested that local schools be used as colleges in the evenings to house these off-campus course offerings:

As a result of an effort like this, thousands of college trained people could continue their education, earn higher degrees and be ready to rejoin their profession when family obligations are decreased.⁵⁵

Other women wrote of the need for "updating" their knowledge, but again within the bounds of their family's needs:

I am very interested in being 'updated' by taking courses at a nearby center (future) without neglecting my first commitment - my husband and children.⁵⁶

The respondents wanted to return to work and school, but did not question the common beliefs about a women's life course, or the desired "leave" from professional employment while their children were young. They did not advocate a change in gender roles in the home and a shift in responsibilities with their spouses to enable them to do more than care for their families and homes. These women did believe that the university, and the College of Home Economics, could do more to enable them to return to the professional world when their family responsibilities diminished. Their comments urged more accommodation to their roles, rather than a change in those roles.

⁵³Mead and Kaplan, American Women, 106.

⁵⁴Alumni Study, 109; a 1953 graduate.

⁵⁵Ibid., 109. For other examples of interest in "refresher" courses, see 124 (1959 graduate); 134 (1958 graduate); 104 (1955 graduate); and 107 (1952 graduate).

⁵⁶Ibid., 104; a 1959 graduate.

Regarding the specifics of the education they received at MSU, the comments tended to reflect a split found in the education profession throughout the fifties and sixties: professional versus practical training. And although the College of Home Economics faculty espoused the training of professionals not just homemakers, some of the graduates commented on the use of their education in their roles as housewives and mothers.⁵⁷ Some graduates who noted that their first responsibility was to their family, commented that their MSU education prepared them well for homemaking.⁵⁸ A 1944 letter to Dean Marie Dye captures the spirit conveyed by later graduates about the value of their education for their roles as wives and homemakers:

Keeping house has been fun and many times my friends have remarked that if they had it to do all over they would take home ec as then they would know how to cook and sew and do things the easy way. One friend remarked that she had to laugh because her cousin took home ec and that the two of us went about things in the kitchen in the same manner - that we thought things out before we plunged in.⁵⁹

Other alumni echoed these feelings, stating that their education helped them in their roles as mothers and homemakers, although the prevalence of such comments declines for the more recent graduates.⁶⁰

Other graduates, especially those either teaching or working as agents in the Cooperative Extension Service, lamented the lack of practical arts learned at MSU. As high school teachers, some noted, their college education did not prepare them for the basic, fundamental how-to questions they encountered when working with adults through the

⁵⁷Ibid., 47-48. This belief is reiterated in the text describing the employment status of the study participants. See note 6.

⁵⁸Ibid., 132 (1952 graduate), 132 (1956 graduate), 118 (1959 graduate), 121 (1960 graduate), and 117 (1962 graduate).

⁵⁹Letter from Betty (Nilsson) Stisser to Marie Dye, dated October 2, 1948; MSU Archives, Box 365, Folder 76.

⁶⁰Alumni Study, 132 (1952 graduate); 119 (1956 graduate); 118 (1959 graduate); 121 (1960 graduate); and 117 (1962 graduate).

Extension Service or teaching students (mainly girls) in secondary school programs. They found the emphasis on theory impractical in their everyday work experiences, and wished the curriculum had included more basic skills, such as sewing, cooking, and canning. As one graduate commented:

I feel that the College of Home Economics could better prepare the girls who will teach by requiring more courses in the practical fields of sewing and cooking. Theory is a fine thing for college but children in junior high and some in senior high expect to learn how to sew and cook and many students taking home economics in high school have a great deal of trouble applying the amounts of theory that we are expected to teach them.⁶¹

A woman working in the Cooperative Extension Service also criticized the lack of training she received in practical skills. She particularly noted this void in dealing with the homemakers she served as an extension agent:

When I got into Extension work, a good 25 [percent] of my questions from women concerned canning and freezing. I had never done either one or even discussed it in school. In Extension there should be far more in sewing and tailoring.⁶²

A 1958 graduate recalled an experience she had concerning this issue during her senior year at MSU. A faculty member, seeking input from the soon-to-be graduates, asked the class what courses they thought were missing from their college education. This woman responded that a course in needlecrafts ("knitting, embroidery, crocheting, etc.") appeared to be necessary:

I was most embarrassed when she "ha-ha'd" me and laughingly explained that these things were all considered old-fashioned and we should try to show others how impractical these things were. However, when I planned homemaking units with my students they invariably asked me to teach them to knit.⁶³

This woman also noted her lack of knowledge about other subjects, such as upholstering and slipcovers, when people sought her out for help. She, in fact, was undertaking her first slipcover project, "with the use

⁶¹Ibid., 123, a 1967 graduate from Mason.

⁶²Ibid., 118, a 1956 graduate from Clark Lake.

⁶³Ibid., 109, a 1958 graduate from Grant.

of a very general article I found in one of my magazines. How much easier it would be if I knew what I were doing."⁶⁴ Another graduate noted that the lack of skills was a common problem for teachers working with student teachers from MSU: "I have heard so many, many teachers complain about the student teachers they get from State who don't even know how to apply zippers."⁶⁵

This lack of preparation for teaching basic skills prompted two of the study's respondents to leave their fields, due to their own feelings of inadequacy. One Extension agent left her position for elementary education, noting that her lack of practical training was certainly a part of her decision: "I did not feel well enough informed to be teaching women who had been homemakers for many years."⁶⁶ Another graduate echoed this belief:

I am leaving the field due to frustration in having to teach subjects I have had little training in and will work in a minor field which gave me subject matter training.⁶⁷

Such attitudes about emphasizing the practical arts over theory are not confined to one era of graduates; instead, women from the entire range of alumni included in the study expressed these concerns. Clearly the tension between professional and practical training existed among home economics students as well as its faculty and university administrators.

Not all women shared this view of home economics at MSU. Several women, especially recent graduates, commented positively about their education, and noted that they saw no need to further it at the time. This in part might have been because they had recently graduated, and had not been out of the profession for long, if at all. Some, although they did not remain in home economics, branched into related areas of

⁶⁴Ibid., 109.

⁶⁵Ibid., 130; a 1966 graduate.

⁶⁶Ibid., 118.

⁶⁷Ibid., 127.

interest, such as education, social work, or journalism. Two of the respondents commenting in the survey were college professors (a professor in biology at Calvin College and an assistant professor of foods and nutrition at Marygrove College) and another was an instructor at MSU who was also working toward a doctoral degree.⁶⁸ Several respondents noted that they went on to earn master's degrees in education, either at the elementary or secondary level. Another used her family life education in her position as a guidance counselor at a small high school.⁶⁹ One graduate took her training in teaching basic living skills and combined it with graduate work in special education.⁷⁰ Another graduate used her education in home and family living in her job at the Department of Social Services.⁷¹

One graduate was a newspaper reporter and copy editor in Detroit, and although little of her time or work dealt directly with home economics, she wrote that her education was very valuable. She also expressed an interest in short courses to update her knowledge of the profession:

I have an education in home economics because I believe this is the best preparation for putting together a newspaper section that is of interest to and beneficial to women and families.⁷²

⁶⁸What is interesting about these three women is that although all three were originally trained in home economics, and two were teaching it at the college level, none of them were pursuing graduate degrees in the field. The Calvin College faculty member was working toward a degree in microbiology and the Marygrove professor's doctoral work was in bacteriology. The instructor was teaching in the clothing and textiles department at MSU, although her doctoral work was in sociology. See Alumni Study, 137, 143 (1961 graduate); 136 (1957 graduate); and 143 (1964 graduate).

⁶⁹Ibid., 143, 1958 graduate.

⁷⁰Ibid., 110, a 1949 graduate

⁷¹Ibid., 135; a 1955 graduate. At the time of the questionnaire, this woman was on maternity leave, but wrote that she planned to return to work within two or three years.

⁷²Ibid., 136, a 1966 graduate.

What is common to many of these professionals is that they were taking their knowledge of home economics taught by them at MSU and passing it on to others: middle and high school students, college students, social service clients, adults through the Extension Service, and newspaper readers. Here is found the legacy of the home economics faculty and professionals discussed in the previous chapter. The beliefs and values they taught were being carried on through these women. And although home economics did carry a stigma in the academic world, a stigma faced by some of these alumni who pursued graduate education outside of MSU or home economics, these women considered themselves professionals. They took pride in their professional roles, or in roles which they believed to be worthy of the term, "professional," such as homemaking and motherhood. And those who left the world of the paid professional to raise their families often expressed the intention to return to the profession. Whether they indeed did is not known, but they expressed professional pride in their comments.

But these women were writing in a period of profound social upheaval and change in American society. Student movements, the civil rights movement, and the women's movement were just a few of the changes sweeping the United States. While these events do not pervade the survey comments, hints exist. Criticisms of the white, middle-class focus of the home economics program and the people it was intended to serve appear in the comments of the graduates from the 1960s. Several graduates called attention to this bias, both economic and racial, and asserted that it was time the program adapted to the realities of American society:

Most of the traditional Home Economics training is geared to the "middle class" child from a "traditional" home environment. The usual curriculum is most ineffective and meaningless when presented to the individual coming from the unusual home, with experiences peculiar to these situations.⁷³

⁷³Ibid., 110; 1949 graduate.

In her comments, this graduate spoke not only of the special education students with whom she worked, but also of lower-income and inner-city residents, such as those served through the anti-poverty programs by the Johnson administration.⁷⁴

Another respondent noted this void in the home economics program:

I have had to become aware of an all new, moral standard, life goals and way of life which the persons I've worked with have. It's a shock at times - to my middle class - white background. It would have been a help for me and for any of our teachers to have had some knowledge of a person in the low income and welfare groups.⁷⁵

Clearly the changes of the sixties, including the heightened awareness of the problem of poverty and the large numbers in the non-middle class was affecting some of these graduates. While the home economics student population might be predominantly white and middle class, the people they were increasingly serving in their efforts to improve family life were not, and some graduates were beginning to see this void in their college training. Like much of the nation, these graduates were seeing another side to American society, and expressed the desire for educational training to enable them to deal with these problems as professionals.

What is also interesting, however, is what apparently did not affect these graduates. By 1968, the women's movement had begun, although its full force was yet to come.⁷⁶ The President's Commission on the Status of Women, the first national commission to address issues

⁷⁴See William H. Chafe, The Unfinished Journey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) and Jim F. Heath, Decade of Disillusionment: The Kennedy and Johnson Years (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975) 192-193, and chapter 7, "The Years of Triumph". For further discussion of the sixties, see Godfrey Hodgson, America in Our Time: From World War II to Nixon, What Happened and Why (New York: Vintage Books, 1978) and Allen J. Matusow, The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1984).

⁷⁵Alumni Study, 113; a 1951 graduate.

⁷⁶One author targets 1970 as the year the women's movement began full force, although it began earlier. See Freeman, The Politics of Women's Liberation, 148.

relating to women, was formed in December 1961 and issued its report two years later. The report did not advocate radical changes in women's roles or argue women's equality with men, and in fact asserted that "women's obligation to be the primary nurturers of children remained immutable, a critical difference between men and women as workers." But the commission and the report did bring women's issues to a national forum for discussion.⁷⁷ Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique, appeared in 1963, the same year the Equal Pay Act was passed by the U.S. Congress.⁷⁸ The Civil Rights Act was passed the following year and the National Organization for Women was formed in 1966. All of these events drew attention to the position of women in society. Yet these graduates appear untouched by these events or issues.

The "feminine mystique" image made so popular by Betty Friedan is not found among the few archival resources relating to students or in the alumni study comments. The alumni do not express boredom or frustration, although some are anxious to return to the workforce. None refer to the presidential commission, the Equal Pay Act, or NOW. The one reference made to the feminine mystique rejects the notion that women were unhappy in their roles as wives and mothers and reinforces the idea that full-time motherhood is critical:

And I say "humbug" to the Feminine Mystique advocates who say a woman must leave home to be fulfilled...If a woman doesn't want a family, fine, she can be a "professional". The rest of us should wait until our other vastly more difficult and rewarding job is over.⁷⁹

Not only did this woman reject the feminine mystique, but she did not believe women can be professionals and mothers. She placed a high value

⁷⁷Harrison, On Account of Sex, 138. Harrison provides a very thorough analysis of the commission and its relationship to the Equal Rights Amendment controversy. See also Mead and Kaplan, eds., American Women.

⁷⁸Harrison, On Account of Sex, 89-105.

⁷⁹Alumni Study, 119. Also see note 51. See also Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1974 [1963]).

on her role as a mother, and did not believe she could divide her time between her children and a job. And like many in the home economics profession, and elsewhere in academia and society, she does not question why fathers are able to be parents and professionals, but women are not.

Despite the lack of specific references to new ideas about women's roles, one respondent hinted at a need to rethink the secondary place a woman's aspirations took to those of her husband's:

I think it would be interesting to ask how many husbands were involved in giving up work. When I was first married my husband was in the service and his job involved moving to a different place every three months so it was impossible to work for that short a period. When the first child appeared my husband said I couldn't work until the children were in school full days.⁸⁰

This woman raised an issue central to a rethinking of women's roles: why was her career secondary? But her comment was an exception, as no other graduates raised that issue.

Like the faculty who taught them, these graduates showed little evidence of new ideas about women's roles, sexism or discrimination touching their lives. These women placed their children, husband, and family ahead of their own work, for the most part, subordinating their own careers to those of their husband's. Women who opted not to combine career and family did not question why no institutional supports, like child care centers, existed to help them, or why roles in the home could not change to assist their efforts to be both professionals and parents.

Those women who were anxious to return to their profession did not express boredom or feelings of inadequacy. One result of the events of the sixties and the women's movement may have been a feeling that they needed to justify their lives and career decisions to the college that educated them. This might account for the large number of alumni who emphasized the need for their remaining at home with their children. But like the educators in their MSU classrooms, these women did not question the roles assigned to them. Gender roles and ideas about

⁸⁰ Alumni Study, 118; a 1961 graduate from Clawson.

motherhood were not challenged nor are alternatives to society's expectations offered.

Women who were pursuing either graduate education or professional careers gave no hint of their family status; were they unmarried and thus "free" to devote themselves to their careers, or were they married but with no children? If they were married and had children, how did they manage both? Yet their comments do not suggest that they had rejected the roles prescribed by society or the educators who taught them. We are not sure if they reflect a decision - professional over family life - or if these graduates did manage to combine both family and career, and just failed to address their experiences in their comments. They may simply have seen their efforts to do both as their own problem, just as many educators and public policymakers saw a woman's effort to combine a career and family as an individual burden and not a public policy issue.

The alumni of the College of Home Economics offered little explicit commentary on the changes and events of the sixties, but subtle shifts exist. Although many of these graduates espoused the need for them to be full-time mothers and homemakers and the primacy of family responsibilities for women, nearly two-thirds were working outside the home. As noted earlier, the percentage of women working outside the home was higher than the national average; while this may not hold true for all home economics graduates, it does indicate that the "radical consequences of incremental change" and the desire to maintain class standing were affecting these graduates.⁸¹ Like many other women in this period, many married women with children were working outside the home, not only for financial reasons but also for personal satisfaction. In addition, comments about the importance of remaining home during the so-called "peak years" diminish throughout the study's chronology;

⁸¹Kessler-Harris, Out to Work, 300-319.

alumni from the late sixties did not comment on the importance of full-time motherhood.

The graduates' personal goals were important to many of the survey respondents, and they looked to renew their education and professional pursuits when their time was less encumbered by children and home. The alumni showed a tendency to return to work or school when their children were at younger ages than their predecessors, a change that is evidenced in the alumni study's comments.

These women, although not representative of all home economics graduates, do provide a glimpse into their beliefs and values. The alumni study illuminates the limits of the dominant images associated with the fifties and the sixties, including the feminine mystique. Their comments reveal as many continuities between the 1950s and 1960s as changes. The social upheaval and questioning of societal norms characteristic of the 1960s do not appear explicitly in these graduates' comments. These women's lives were much more complex than simply being housewives raising children. Like the rest of society, including the profession of home economics, these women dealt with contradictions and tensions between their family roles as prescribed by society and their professional lives.

EPILOGUE

Like many feminized professions, home economics struggled to reconcile ideas about women's traditional roles and nature with the tenets of professionalization. Originally based upon women's "natural" abilities and domestic talents, home economics remained caught between its history as a field which emphasized the practical arts and its goal to be a profession with equal status in the academic community and society. Ironically, educators and administrators eventually called into question the legitimacy and value of home economics because it was comprised predominantly of females; to be a true profession, it had to include men.

The postwar era was a time when women's roles were in flux. Exhorted to work and contribute to society, women also were told by society to remain at home and raise their families. These conflicting messages also are found in home economics, which trained its graduates for a profession while emphasizing traditional roles for women. In response to the need to reconcile a woman's professional ambitions and family responsibilities, home economists, and other educators and policy makers, turned to the "life course" solution. Most women married and had children, and thus it was assumed that women would leave the labor force during the "peak years." Rather than seek ways to enable women to be both professionals and mothers at the same time, educators began to look for ways to facilitate a mother's return to the workforce through continuing education programs and counseling services. Because most women would marry and have children, women's education should include training to be mothers, wives, and homemakers.

These ideas and beliefs pervade the speeches and writings of this period, and are found both inside and outside of home economics. Not only did the life course idea permit educators and policy makers to avoid addressing the problems facing women with young children who worked, but it also failed to address all women. Assuming a woman could leave the labor force for several years did not help working class women, who did not have any choice but to combine work and family. It also did not solve the problem faced by professional women who could not leave their work for that length of time if they planned to continue their career. The life course solution offered educators and policy makers an easy out, and solved little for many women, although it did offer them a context in which to make demands of the university which educated them.

This study adds another layer to our understanding of the 1950s and 1960s, pointing to areas of the population which exhibited more continuity between the two decades than disruption. It also reiterates the arguments put forth by historians such as Joanne Meyerowitz, who questions the pervasiveness of Betty Friedan's "feminine mystique" and the dissatisfaction connected to women's roles as wife and mother. The responses of the MSU alumni illustrate the persistence of traditional values and beliefs, and the limited range of new ideas about women's roles generated by the burgeoning women's movement. These women seem to be untouched by the women's liberation movement, Betty Friedan, the National Organization for Women, or the Equal Pay Act. Although women's issues were increasingly a topic for national discussion, these graduates continued to place their primary commitment with their family.

But the reality of their lives did not mesh with the images conveyed in their comments. Although many discussed the importance of raising their own children and being full-time homemakers and mothers, two-thirds are working. Many graduates commented on their desire to return to the profession or to further their education. They were not rejecting careers or meaningful work; they simply were placing their families ahead of their work while their children were young. The

graduates of the 1960s were returning to work earlier than the graduates the decade before, highlighting the subtle changes taking place.

The conflict between the practical arts - cooking, sewing, etc. - and the increasing emphasis on creating "professionals" and not wasting time on those practical skills continued throughout the postwar era.¹

The alumni comments illustrate this conflict best, with many women expressing frustration at their inability to teach these skills to homemakers and students; they were not the "experts." Clearly home economics' practice did not always mesh with its goals.

Home economics offered women important opportunities when few choices were available in the early 20th century, and it continued to provide women with positions as teachers, administrators, and researchers. But ultimately the "separate but equal" strategy failed. The fact that women dominated the faculties and classrooms of home economics programs stigmatized the field's professional image. Home economists at MSU and elsewhere believed other academics who asserted that these unmarried professional women could not understand the "family," as they had never been married, or that without men, their profession was not complete. Home economists exhorted all to believe that their profession was important for both men and women, but eventually turned to men to make it a profession. Rather than questioning male values, they acquiesced to those standards and lost much of the autonomy they had gained in the previous 75 years.

A minority of women college students chose home economics as their field of study at MSU and other colleges and universities. The stigma attached to it deterred not only men, but also women, from entering home economics. Now home economics is taught to both boys and girls in secondary schools; girls are not the only ones to learn to cook and sew. Yet such courses are offered under different names. As MSU opted to

¹This conflict calls to mind the situation described by Melosh in "The Physician's Hand", which describes the differences between nursing leadership, who advocated professionalism, and the nurses. Further study is needed to determine the differences and parallels.

select a new name for its program, so did many middle and high school programs. Home economics is still taught in today's curriculum, but in a different way and to different students. The path it took to reach that point remains largely a mystery, and one that warrants further study.

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