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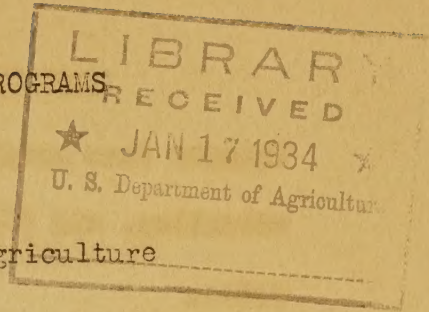
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NEEDS FOR ADJUSTMENT IN HOME ECONOMICS RESEARCH PROGRAMS  
AT LAND-GRANT INSTITUTIONS<sup>1/</sup>

By

Sybil L. Smith

Office of Experiment Stations, U.S. Department of Agriculture



I have taken the liberty of changing the wording in the title of my paper from State Experiment Stations to Land-Grant Institutions as more inclusive. In this connection may I call your attention to the mimeographed material which has just been given you? The list of active projects has been compiled from the records of the Office of Experiment Stations of projects approved for Federal support and from letters received in response to the request sent to the administrative heads of home economics departments and divisions at all Land-Grant institutions for a complete list of their active research projects. In the bibliography of published reports for the year I have likewise attempted to include the titles of all published reports of home economics research at these institutions instead of confining it as heretofore to reports of research receiving Federal support. These lists, together with the list of active projects and publications of the year from the Bureau of Home Economics, should give a fairly complete picture of home economics research programs receiving Federal and State support.

As I see it, there are three types of adjustment in the research programs in the States which might well be considered at this time: (1) Adjustments to meet reduced budgets, for if there has as yet been no reduction in Federal appropriations for research in the States, reduced State appropriations have necessitated spreading the Federal funds a little

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<sup>1/</sup> Presented before the Home Economics Section of the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities at the Forty-Seventh Annual Convention, November 14, 1933.



thinner than usual, (2) adjustments to meet the present emergency relief situation, and (3) adjustments to meet the changing social and economic order.

Adjustments to meet temporarily reduced budgets. I am glad to say that as far as I can judge from the programs which have been sent me and from what I have learned in correspondence and visits to the stations, home economics research is holding its own at Land-Grant institutions and has suffered no greater curtailment than research in agriculture. With reduced budgets careful planning has been necessary, however, to keep expenditures down to the minimum. This is particularly true of laboratory research requiring rather expensive equipment and supplies. I want to read you a part of a letter I received recently from one of our nutrition research workers telling how she is meeting the situation.

"I am not quite sure yet that I can carry on all the work in the laboratory with the funds at hand. At best I have only enough for consumable supplies and have had no capital or equipment additions for the past year and of course will have none for this. I am hoping that by careful planning I will not have to cut down on the work. We are being careful to feed no more animals than are necessary to establish a point. We make periodic inventories of our supplies and equipment in both the chemical and rat laboratory. All supplies in the chemical laboratory are checked out to any member of the staff desiring them so that we know where everything is. Then again the Dean of our college is making it possible for one department to borrow equipment from another department which is not in use. Hitherto we all thought we ought to have our own equipment for keeps.

"Then I am using cheaper help for the routine work in the laboratory and saving the trained worker for work that requires more intelligence. It pays, for a lot more is accomplished. For example, I find my fellow too valuable help to put to scrubbing screens as I first thought I would have to do. I use an hour a day of an undergraduate student in place of my more highly trained graduate and get more results for the money spent.

"The only adjustment I am making therefore is to use what I have more carefully and efficiently, cut down on waste and run on what I have, knowing that a day of reckoning is coming, but hoping that in the near future more money will be available for capital equipment and replacement."



Planned economy such as this might well be carried over, to a certain extent at least, into the post-depression period.

During the anxious weeks last spring when a reduction in Federal appropriations for research seemed inevitable some of your research workers wisely looked ahead and concentrated their efforts in completing projects so that if this proved to be a lean year the time might be spent with the least expenditure of funds in preparing for publication the results of their research. Less researching, more thinking and writing seem to be in order in some places and might well be adopted in others. In any type of subsidized research, the research worker is under obligation to render account of his work. In field or laboratory studies involving the cooperation of human subjects there is the additional obligation of giving information to the subjects themselves (or their parents in the case of children) concerning the outcome of the project. If this is delayed too long, the project leader or the institution responsible for the research becomes the target for deserved criticism. In checking over the active projects receiving Federal support, I found a total of 20 projects which had been running for five years or more without revision or publication beyond fragmentary progress reports. In some instances the projects are of such a type as to require no revision and to necessitate long continuation to accumulate sufficient data. In other cases the projects undoubtedly need revision to show their present scope. In still others it is difficult to suggest a satisfactory reason for failure to bring the project to completion with a published report. The situation is not yet quite as bad as that referred to yesterday by Secretary Wallace concerning some of the long-continued research projects in agriculture--but it

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might be well to take warning from his remarks and bring some projects to an end by taking time to digest the data which have been piling up and to prepare the material for publication. This is perhaps a digression from the main topic, but to my mind one of the most serious mistakes commonly made in home economics, or for that matter any other kind of, research is to go on and on accumulating data and postponing the final day of reckoning.

It is not a bad thing for research occasionally to call a halt and catch up with itself. In the coming annual Chemical Exposition in New York City I understand that there is to be a section devoted to Children of Depression, the term being used for all inventions, new processes, etc., which are the outcome of ideas laid aside in busier, more prosperous years and taken up and pursued to a successful issue during the stark days of Depression. Perhaps next year's list of published reports will contain many Children of Depression born under similar circumstances of a dull period in active research.

Adjustments to meet the emergency relief situation. It seems to me that there are two types of adjustment to be considered in this connection:

(a) Adjustments necessitated through the demands made upon the research staff for personal services in the recovery program and (b) adjustments in existing research programs to meet present-day problems.

Dr. Stanley has shown how many are the demands on the members of her staff for emergency service. I was interested that she used the weekly reports to the Secretary of Agriculture concerning contributions to the recovery program as the basis for her report, for I have been wondering for some time if home economists at the experiment stations were not making similar contributions in their State organizations or elsewhere, which might be in-



cluded in the weekly memoranda which the Office of Experiment Stations prepares for the Secretary of Agriculture, summarizing the contributions of the experiment stations to the recovery program. So far as I know the only experiment station research worker in home economics who is in Washington is Ruth Clark from Nebraska who is an advisor to Labor on Code hearings in the National Recovery Administration. Just where she fits into the elaborate organization described so graphically yesterday by Miss O'Brien I do not know, but she is grateful to the Nebraska Station for the adjustments which were made to give her the opportunity to make some contribution to the recovery program. I wish very much that we might keep a record of the services rendered by other home economics research workers at the experiment stations in order to complete the record of experiment station contributions to the recovery program. If you will keep me informed as to the calls made upon your research staff for help, either in State or National relief programs, I will see that the information is passed on to the proper authorities. The more demand there is for the services of home economics research workers in this crisis the more justification will there be for a continuation and expansion of home economics research throughout the country.

During the coming winter you will be called upon as never before for contributions from your research staff which will inevitably mean a temporary upsetting of their research program and adjustments that will seem difficult to make. It will require wisdom to steer an even course between an enthusiastic but unwarranted sacrifice of the entire research program and a conscientious but perhaps equally unwarranted refusal to lay aside regular work temporarily for emergency services unrelated to research.



There has already been so much discussion of the types of information needed in carrying on effectively the work of the various recovery administrations that it is hardly necessary to enumerate these further except to point out some of the ways in which your own research program fits in to the picture or lends itself to adjustment. Dr. Stanley has emphasized the need of nationwide food consumption studies to help in the work of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration and has stated that the data collected in previous food consumption studies in the States are being put to practical use. In several States studies are under way at the present time which may be expected to yield more information of the type desired, or can be adjusted to do so. Running rapidly through the list of projects please note studies of this type at California, Connecticut, Illinois, Michigan, Nebraska, New York, North and South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and Wisconsin. Not all of these are primarily food consumption studies, but if it is urgent that a coordinated study be made of food consumption habits throughout the entire country, adjustments might be made to correlate these projects with the nationwide study. Are those of you who are responsible for these projects willing to make such adjustments? Furthermore, are you willing to unearth the records of earlier food consumption studies which were treated more from the standpoint of the adequacy of the diet than actual quantities of food consumed and have your research workers divert their attention for the time being to a further analysis of the data? This is one form of emergency adjustment which you may be asked to make. Another may be to divert temporarily your research workers trained for this type of work from other projects in which they are now engaged. This food consumption project, if set up, will require concerted action all



over the country and will offer an unparalleled opportunity for nationwide team work.

Those of you who were at the Monday morning session do not need any further arguments concerning the justification for what has already been done, and the need for much more work, on quality grades and standards for foods, textiles, and other commodities and grades for services. As Dr. Kyrk said, we have reached the stage where the need is urgent to acquire technical knowledge concerning consumers' goods. Perhaps research along this line has lagged because it has not been directed to a given need, but with the need made as vivid as it was yesterday through the talks of Mr. Agnew, Dr. Kyrk, and Miss O'Brien, the impetus has been given to whatever adjustments may be necessary to take part in the general program of setting up grades and standard specifications. Some of this work is highly technical and can be done only in well-equipped laboratories, but one of the contributions of the past few years in home economics research in Land-Grant institutions has been the establishment of such laboratories. Would it not be well for those of you who have gone to the expense of installing constant humidity rooms and essential textile testing apparatus to adjust your research program to give increased support to such problems in textile testing as will contribute information most needed at the present time, even if it must be at the expense of curtailing research in other fields in which you cannot make as unique a contribution. For clothing and textile projects under way at the present time look at the programs of work at Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, and Texas. In at least three of these institutions constant humidity rooms have been installed since Federal funds first became available for home economics research at Land-Grant insti-



tutions. As a final recommendation for timely topics for research in textiles and clothing, may I read a memorandum prepared by Miss O'Brien at my request?

"The present economic situation has further emphasized the need for facts concerning textile merchandise upon which definite recommendations for purchases might be made. These facts will be obtained from two types of research. It is essential first that complete analyses be made from time to time of a large number of items in each class of staple merchandise on the market. Much of such work would be routine in nature but if accurately and thoroughly done would furnish data of inestimable value to consumers and home economists teaching consumers as well as other agencies attempting to improve present merchandising practices.

"Second, the reaction of fabrics of different compositions and constructions to wear and cleaning must be known before recommendations regarding good selections can be made. In many cases this means setting up facilities for producing fabrics of known composition and construction (a prerequisite difficult for many laboratories) and studying the physical and chemical changes which take place in the fabrics during service.

"The need for quality grades and standards for textiles is becoming more and more apparent. The question has arisen in connection with a number of codes submitted under the NRA but no quality standards exist for textile commodities and it is therefore impossible to have any consumer assistance of this kind included in the codes. Such standards should be established but they must await information from such studies as I have mentioned above."

In spite of the urgent need for information on grades and standards for goods, the only project listed is one at the New York Station at Cornell. I am wondering if some of you in connection with your class work on buying problems and your master's thesis problems are not carrying on the type of study which, taken by itself, might perhaps not be called research with a capital R, but added to similar studies elsewhere will contribute much needed information for the setting up of grades and standards. I was glad to see that out of yesterday morning's discussion came the suggestion of gathering together all such information in some clearing house.

Concerning standards of performance for various types of equipment,



both large and small, I think that we may point with considerable pride to the beginnings which have been made in home economics research programs at the Land-Grant institutions. Here again, if we are thinking of the country as a whole and the greatest good to the greatest number of people, I feel that the work should be concentrated in those institutions with adequate equipment and, perhaps even more important, research workers who understand the problems of household engineering and are capable of tackling them. There has been considerable lost effort in this field owing to the dearth of research workers qualified in engineering, or lack of satisfactory cooperation with departments of engineering and physics. The list of projects shows research in equipment or household engineering in progress at Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Nebraska, and Virginia, with published reports during the year from Georgia, Iowa, Maine, and Nebraska. I would like to call your attention also to a bulletin by Mr. Baragar at Nebraska on surface units for electric stoves, which I saw in proof the other day, and to the blueprints of outlines for research in household engineering prepared by Mr. Potter of the Virginia Station and listed among the published reports. Mr. Baragar is a physicist and Mr. Potter an agricultural engineer. Both are making notable contributions, based upon sound research, to much needed consumer information on household equipment. I would also call your attention to the fact that there is an active household equipment committee in the rural electric division of the American Society of Agricultural Engineers, with one of your home economics workers, Miss Redfield of Indiana, as present chairman, and with two others, Miss Sater of Iowa and Miss Roberts of Washington among the five other members of the committee. Among the objectives for the coming year of this committee, the following are of particular interest at



this time:

Summarize the equipment testing work being done by commercial concerns and note wherein cooperation may be secured between experiment station and commercial workers. Derive a set of standards for the major pieces of equipment. Establish cooperation with the Standards group of the American Home Economics Association.

It is gratifying to note these signs of a growing cooperation between agricultural engineers and home economists on problems in household engineering.

So much for the background or foundation for intensive work to meet present demands. In my opinion the needed adjustments in these major fields of work lie not so much in changing radically your research programs to set up something entirely new as in strengthening those types of research in which your staff can make the best contributions, even if it is at the expense of closing out or curtailing drastically less urgent or productive research.

Before leaving the problem of adjustments to meet the emergency situation there is the question of the extent to which it is our responsibility to study the present economic situation as it relates to the home and the family. You may remember that this was the first plank in the program of work of the American Home Economics Association for the past year. Home economists were urged to assume their full responsibility in this matter. To do so has meant or will mean adjustments in research programs at this time when there is little opportunity for expansion unless public works funds or other subsidies become available. Again running through the list of projects, we find several new projects dealing directly with some phase or another of the effect of the present economic situation on the home and family, as well as others of longer standing which are all the more valuable in that they afford an opportunity for comparing the period of depression with the preceding period of prosperity.

For such studies, which I cannot take time to enumerate, look through the programs for California, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Maine, Michigan, Mississippi, Nebraska, New York, Tennessee, Vermont, and Wisconsin. Are adjustments possible in other States to study more widely some of the temporary and permanent effects of these bewildering times upon family life? Thinking that it would be interesting to get the views of those who are closely connected with the recovery program concerning timely topics for research, I asked Dr. Ruth Clark from the standpoint of her connection with the National Recovery Administration and Dr. Kirkpatrick from that of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration for suggestions. Quoting from Dr. Clark's reply:

"Begin such a program with a study of the place home economics is now playing in the relief work of the country, more especially in the rural areas and small towns, and of the part it might be made to play. . . . Other studies which might be undertaken could include general food consumption studies among relief families; studies of the consumption of various special foods, as milk; housing problems of such families, with an attempt to determine the housing recommendations we should like to make; mobility of farm families due to foreclosure of mortgages or other phases of the depression; changes in composition of farm families due to return to the farms of members of the families who were originally employed in cities and towns; the social attitude of rural and small town communities toward public relief, including the attitude of the schools. . . . What recommendations could we make for handling relief problems in such communities; how are farm home practices changing and how might they be changed to meet the situation; can we not arrive at some decision on what we desire in a standard of living for rural families?"

Dr. Kirkpatrick expressed the opinion that among the factors pointing to needed adjustment in home economics research programs are "the evident shift from production to consumption economy, the probable changes in social groupings, increased leisure resulting from reduced hours of labor in industry and probable curtailed production of farming activities, and new problems accompanying the giving of relief to unemployed and under-privileged families."



Considering the last of these factors in more detail, Dr. Kirkpatrick mentioned three points as worthy of immediate careful study. (1) What standard of living should be regarded desirable and logical? (2) What experience in choice making shall be encouraged and what knowledge of consumer-purchasing habits shall be provided, and (3) what type of rural community shall be encouraged?

The suggestions of both Dr. Clark and Dr. Kirkpatrick involve not only adjustments to meet the present emergency relief situation, but also adjustments for the future. And this brings me to the final and perhaps most important question to discuss.

What adjustments are needed in home economics research programs to meet the changing social and economic order? I had intended somewhere in my paper to raise certain practical questions concerning policies in our research programs such as long-time versus short-time projects; avoidance of duplication; cooperative projects with other departments and with home economics departments in other institutions; service studies for other departments, particularly studies to promote production rather than consumption. Perhaps some of these questions can be brought up in the informal discussion which, after all, is worth more than a formal paper.

It seems to me, however, that the time calls for more serious consideration of our present programs as to the degree to which they are functioning primarily for home economics in this changing social and economic order. We have read much and thought much in the last few months about home economics in its relation to the social and economic changes which are going on so rapidly all about us. The Journal of Home Economics has carried excellent articles

on the subject, not written especially for the Journal, but given before various organizations, thus showing how widespread is the interest in this question of changing values. And yesterday we heard Secretary Wallace prophesying even greater changes ahead. May I quote a paragraph from his speech?

"The adjustments which must be made, not only on our farms and factories but in our methods of thinking, are, I believe, fully ten times as great as the majority of the people realize. The things which this administration has done thus far in 1933 may seem spectacular, but they are only a faint foreshadowing of some of the things which ultimately will be necessary before the United States has finally made for itself a new, true place in the family of nations and won for the people the high standard of living to which their resources and productive power entitle them. To the Land-Grant colleges I say that they must be prepared to go beyond technical agriculture and engineering and even economics into a new realm which none of us yet fully senses."

If home economics research is to function to its fullest capacity in this changing world, it must first of all deal with home economics problems. Project titles do not always convey a true picture of the scope of the problem, but I am sure that all of you will agree that not all of the projects listed as constituting the research programs in the various States really belong to home economics. Why is this the case? I am going to quote from a letter from one of you which helped my own thinking on the subject. Speaking of the adjustments which had already been made in the research program in her institution, this administrator explained, "We are not always successful in being able to project ourselves into the field which we believe rightly belongs to home economics." She then went on to say, "Many of our home economics workers have had their graduate work in the field of animal nutrition. Thus far few of them have used their training and information to reach out into new fields. Rather they have begun a miniature program following the line of their specific training." Does this not tend to explain the rather academic nature



of some of the projects, not only in nutrition, but in other subject matter fields as well? I am sure that we all know instances where the research workers have not been able to project themselves into the field which rightly belongs to home economics, or, as Dr. Slesinger might perhaps say, they have not succeeded in socializing their physical and biological studies.

I know of no clearer statement of the relation which should exist between home economics and the subject matter fields in which research in home economics must of necessity be conducted than that given by Dr. Kyrk in a recent paper entitled The Selection of Problems for Home Economics Research<sup>1/</sup>. Defining the problems of home economics as those of most direct concern to the health, comfort, and well-being of the family per se, including physiological, psychological, economic, esthetic, and technological, she clarified her position still further by two corollaries.

"The proper field for home economics research I have said is the problems of the family. Home economics research is not anything or everything pertaining to food or to textiles or clothing, to equipment, or to any other commodity the family uses. I can see nothing unified or integrated in a plan of research that proceeds along commodity lines. The second corollary is that all problems of home economics research inevitably fall into some branch of the fundamental sciences, arts, or learnings. Home economics is the concept, the organization, that integrates and focuses. The research problem, like the teaching material, taken by itself falls into one of the background fields. In other words, there is no such thing as home economics research as a special field differentiated from all other lines of research. Home economics represents rather the plan or the direction behind the research that gives it point and meaning, that makes the whole greater than the sum of its parts."

Somewhat the same idea was brought out by Miss Zuill in her paper on New Frontiers in Home Economics Education<sup>2/</sup>. Although her discussion was on education, the same ideas hold equally well for research. Her main argu-

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<sup>1/</sup> Jour. Home Econ., 25 (1933), No. 8, pp. 680-686.

<sup>2/</sup> Jour. Home Econ., 25 (1933), No. 7, pp. 551-558.



ment, as some of you will remember, was that in refocussing home economics for the future, family functions rather than subject matter should be the focus of attention. In attempting to evaluate your research program, I wish that you would reread Miss Zuill's paper, substituting research for education, for it touches upon important aspects of social, psychological, and economic functions of the family and shows the relation of the familiar subject matter groups to these various functions. The question which she raises at the end is worth considering with relation to research as well as education.

"If it were possible to lay aside all preconceived notions in regard to home economics education and to think only of the environment that would insure the best development of the members of the family and provide the most satisfying home life, what type of home economics education would you propose? A new program for home economics is just ahead."



