



Interest of middle school age children in selected Montana schools to home economics content areas and learning experiences  
by Mary Elizabeth McAuley

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF SCIENCE in Home Economics  
Montana State University  
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**Abstract:**

The purpose of this study was to (1) identify areas of interest within the field of home economics to boys and girls in grades six through eight in selected Montana schools and (2) identify specific learning experiences to provide a data base for the development of curriculum guides for home economics in grades six through eight in Montana. The sample included 607 middle school age respondents from selected Montana schools: 236 sixth graders, 198 seventh graders, and 173 eighth graders.

An instrument was devised in order to obtain information concerning attitude of the middle school age respondents toward the content area/areas and the learning experiences of home economics. A Likert-type scaling technique was used enabling employment of the Chi square method of statistical analysis. The .05 level of probability was used to determine significance of statistical observation.

Based on the results a significant difference of interests to the content area/areas and to the learning activities of home economics were found for the different grade levels and by age. The content areas of most interest did not always coincide with the learning activities of most interest. For example, sixth grade students scored Human Development and the Family as the most interesting area of home economics but rated making main dishes, cakes and cookies, a Foods and Nutrition learning activity, as the most interesting activity to study. This finding is similar to many of the findings stated in the literature. It is possible to develop home economics middle school curriculum guides following the basic interests identified.

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Date December 1976

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MONTANA SCHOOLS TO HOME ECONOMICS CONTENT  
AREAS AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES

by

Mary Elizabeth McAulay

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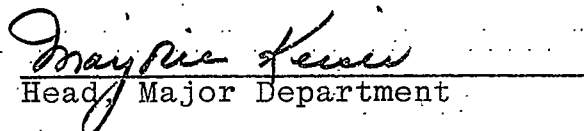
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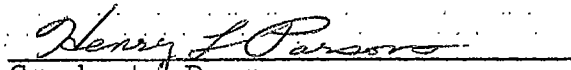
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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to (1) identify areas of interest within the field of home economics to boys and girls in grades six through eight in selected Montana schools and (2) identify specific learning experiences to provide a data base for the development of curriculum guides for home economics in grades six through eight in Montana. The sample included 607 middle school age respondents from selected Montana schools: 236 sixth graders, 198 seventh graders, and 173 eighth graders.

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Based on the results a significant difference of interests to the content area/areas and to the learning activities of home economics were found for the different grade levels and by age. The content areas of most interest did not always coincide with the learning activities of most interest. For example, sixth grade students scored Human Development and the Family as the most interesting area of home economics but rated making main dishes, cakes and cookies, a Foods and Nutrition learning activity, as the most interesting activity to study. This finding is similar to many of the findings stated in the literature. It is possible to develop home economics middle school curriculum guides following the basic interests identified.



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Importance

Major changes in curriculum and educational philosophy during the last decade have been based on specific concern for youth during the pre- and early adolescent period. Concurrently necessary is a shift in grade organization to focus on these students. In order to correlate their philosophy with action, public education is undergoing a revision in grade organization which divides the school years among elementary, middle and high schools. Because it also fills a need in the educational system for emphasis on social, emotional, and physical development of pre-adolescents in addition to their intellectual growth school districts are adopting the middle school organization in increasing numbers (Alexander, 1968:114).

With these grade organization innovations which bridge childhood (elementary) and adolescent (high school) education, academic fields at the middle school environment are challenged to meet these new

needs. As one of these curriculum offerings, home economics, too, must develop instructional programs consistent with the philosophy of the middle school (Weis, 1971:583).

#### Rationale of the Study

Since 1973 Montana State Law--Section 756609, the trustees of an elementary school district can establish a middle school if approved by the Superintendent of Public Instruction. This makes home economics a part of the curriculum for middle grades. There are three recognized official middle schools in Montana and 136 schools operating within the framework. This change in organization is due to the general philosophy that grade six through eight is a better social grouping than grades seven through nine. A concomitant reduction in senior high school population makes it possible to re-think in this area.

With the emergence of the middle school in Montana, the Montana Home Economics Education Supervisors and the Montana Elementary Education Supervisor of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction were eager to have the Home Economics curriculum guides

based on characteristics and interests of children in these three grades.

Few research investigations related to curriculum aspects of home economics in middle schools have been conducted. A national survey in 1971 of the 50 state supervisors ascertained the status of home economics programs in middle schools. Reported were some insights into the direction and nature of home economics curriculum and instruction in these schools. The research findings indicated that home economics programs developed for middle schools used content from secondary programs, failed to reflect the educational capabilities, needs and interests of pre- and early adolescents and variations in internal school organization caused difficulty in developing materials adaptable to all such schools (Weis, 1971:584). School administrators, school boards, state education supervisors, and home economics teachers do not have the decision-making materials for middle school programs. Concern was expressed that middle school home economics programs were developing their content from secondary school programs and failing to reflect the educational capabilities, needs and

interests of transescent students (Interview with Dr. Kinsey Green, February 1976).

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study was to (1) identify areas of interest within the field of home economics to boys and girls in grades six through eight in selected Montana schools and (2) identify specific learning experiences to provide a data base for the development of curriculum guides for home economics in grades six through eight in Montana. It would also serve as a guideline for criteria of home economics curriculum for the total K-12 grade organization.

The study was conducted to obtain answers to the following questions:

1. What home economics content area or areas were of interest to boys and girls in:
  - a. grade six?
  - b. grade seven?
  - c. grade eight?
  
2. What home economics learning experiences were of interest to boys and girls in:
  - a. grade six?
  - b. grade seven?
  - c. grade eight?

3. What additional home economics learning experiences, other than those stated on the instrument, were of interest to boys and girls in:
- a. grade six?
  - b. grade seven?
  - c. grade eight?

#### Limitations of the Study

Limitations were placed on the scope of the study. Only the content areas within the field of home economics were explored. The sample was selected to be representative of students in middle schools in Montana or grades six through eight.

#### Definition of Terms

The following definitions have been selected to clarify the terminology used in this study.

Home Economics Education: Refers to education designed to help individuals and families improve home environments and the quality of personal and family life, including instruction in food and nutrition, child development, clothing, housing, family relationships, and management of resources with emphasis on selection, use and care of goods and services, budgeting and other consumer responsibilities (Office of the Montana Superintendent of Public Instruction, May 1975).

Middle School: A school providing a program planned for a range of older children, preadolescents, and early adolescents that builds upon the elementary school program for earlier childhood and in turn is built upon by the high schools' program for adolescence (Alexander, 1969:5).

Adolescence: The state or process of growing up; the period of life from puberty to maturity terminating legally at the age of majority (Webster, 1972:12).

Transescence: The period in human development which begins in late childhood prior to the onset of puberty and extends through the early stages of adolescence (Eichhorn, 1966:107).

Pre-adolescence: The period of human development just preceding adolescence; the period between the approximate ages of 9 and 12 (Webster, 1972:668).

Learning Experiences: Instructional situations provided to further the educational program within the confines of the established curriculum (Smith, 1961:870).

Content Area: Content: The matter dealt with in a field of study (Webster, 1972:180). Area: The scope of a concept, operation or activity (Webster, 1972:47).

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The specific purpose of this section will be to present an overview of literature concerning the middle school.

#### The Middle School Defined

"The educational ladder of all public school systems has undergone considerable reorganization in the past decade. The middle school has emerged at a phenomenal rate, and the 7-9 grade junior high school, the most common pattern, appears to be replaced by 6-8 and 5-8 middle grade organizations" (Kealy, 1971:20).

The genesis of the middle school concept is to "provide a program planned for a range of older children, preadolescents and early adolescents that build upon the elementary school program for earlier childhood and in turn is built upon by the high school's program for adolescence" (Alexander, 1969:5). It is an educational unit designed to meet the needs of "in-between-agers" in a school bridging the elementary school and high

school (Alexander, 1969:19). The students vary in ages from 10 to 14 (Barnes, 1973:230).

A middle school should contain at least three grades to allow for gradual transition from elementary to high school instructional practices. These grades are not below grade five or above grade eight (National Education Association Bulletin, May 1969:49).

The middle school educational program is designed:

- "1. To serve the educational needs of the 'in-between-agers' in a school coming between the school for earlier childhood and the high school for adolescence.
2. To provide optimum individualization of curriculum and instruction for a population characterized by greater variability.
3. In relation to the foregoing aims, to plan, implement, evaluate, and modify, in a continuing curriculum development program, a curriculum which includes provision for:
  - a) a planned sequence of concepts in the general education areas,



- b) major emphasis on the interests and skills for continued learning,
  - c) a balanced program of exploratory experiences and other activities and services for personal development, and
  - d) appropriate attention to the development of values.
4. To promote continuous progress through and smooth articulation between the several phases and levels of the total educational program.
5. To facilitate the optimum use of personnel and facilities available for continuing improvement of schooling" (Strickland, 1969:398).

#### Evolution of the Middle School

The junior high school Americans have known in the twentieth century was intended by its founders to be a middle school. "What over the years we have come to know as the Junior High School is institutionally America's Middle School" (Popper, 1967:xi). Had the

junior high school achieved its original goals there would be little need for change (Kealy, 1969:152).

Establishment of junior high schools resulted from a general reconstruction of secondary education at the turn of the century. The predominant pattern of reorganization was the 6-3-3 plan--six year elementary school, three year junior high school, and three year senior high school (Alexander, 1969:44).

"The 6-3-3 structure did not evolve from a careful investigation of the characteristics of the children who were to be served by the three institutional segments, nor was it based on knowledge of human growth and development. Most of the seeds of discontent with the educational system of the traditional colonial 8-4 configuration (consisting of the elementary grades 1-8 and a secondary level of grades 9-12), were sown by university administrators who were concerned with lowering the age of college entrance" (Alexander, 1969: 45).

Other factors cited by education leaders at the close of the nineteenth century for the need to change to a 6-3-3 grade organization were:

1. The economics and program deficiencies of isolated small grammar schools
2. The elimination of pupils at the end of the eighth grade
3. Lack of the influence of male and female teachers for early adolescents
4. Elementary teaching methods too long continued and too suddenly changed
5. Articulation with corresponding elimination at the end of the ninth grade
6. The inadequate provision for personal, social, educational and vocational guidance in the elementary school and the high school (DeVita et al., 1970:16).

Arguments for the 6-3-3 arrangement proved to be convincing and the first junior high schools for pupils in grades seven through nine, emerged in Berkeley, California, and Columbus, Ohio, in 1909-1910 (Alexander, 1969:45).

A survey conducted in 1917 found that there were at least 272 junior high schools in operation throughout the United States. The study found there was indeed a rapid acceptance of the 6-3-3 plan (Briggs, 1920:32). In the intervening years since, the junior high system became a tradition and by 1960 the separate junior high school enrolled over 80 percent of the nation's students in grades seven through nine (Vars et al., 1967:41).

Since World War II, however, junior high schools have been criticized for their failure to accomplish what they had purported to do. Many feel that the junior high has become a mirror image of the senior high school. Other arguments against the junior highs have included:

1. Its program is fragmented and rigid. 2. It's teachers and administrators too often feel they are there on a temporary basis and have received little or no training specifically designed for teaching at that level. 3. The high school impinges on the program of the ninth grade (Alexander, 1969:59).

The factors mentioned above, coupled with new insights on the wide range of individual differences and needs of the "in-between-ager" have resulted in a new type of grade level organization, commonly referred to as the middle school (Alexander, 1969:12). Emphasis on this concept came into full blossom in the 1960's. The rapid growth of the middle school can be observed by looking at national surveys. During the 1965-1966 school year, 499 middle schools were in operation in 29 states (Cuff, 1967:83). One year later there were 1,101 middle schools functioning (Alexander, 1969:10). In the United States during the 1969-1970 school year

only two states did not have a middle school and the total number of middle schools for the country had risen to 2,298--a quadrupling of middle schools between 1965 and 1970 (Kealy, 1971:20).

#### Characteristics of the Middle School Child

The middle school is not merely a rearrangement of grades but is a definite attempt to provide for the period in a child's life known as transescence.

"Transescence is the stage of development which begins prior to the onset of puberty and extends through the early stages of adolescence. Since puberty does not occur for all precisely at the same chronological age in human development, the transescent designation is based on the many physical, social, emotional, and intellectual changes in body chemistry that appear prior to the time which the body gains a practical degree of stabilization over these complex pubescent changes" (Eichhorn, 1966:3).

Growth stages for students between ages 10 to 14 are diversified in physical maturation and in emotional, social and intellectual characteristics (Kindred et al., 1976:19). Indications are that today, society is

producing a child that is reaching earlier social, physical and emotional maturity (Havighurst, 1965:1).

Important changes in the maturation and development of children and youth have taken place over the past one hundred years, and even more dramatic and observable changes have come about in the past two decades (Chamberlien, 1976:301). Research findings support the following:

- "1. Today's early adolescents are physically larger and maturing at an earlier age than youngsters during the early years of this century when the junior high school movement began.
2. Boys and girls who are early physical maturers tend to experience less difficulty in adjusting to their environment than their late maturing peers.
3. The earlier physical maturation of today's youngsters is accompanied by a greater interest in heterosexual activities than previous generations.
4. The peer group is a major force in determining the attitudes and behavior of early adolescents.
5. Ninth grade students tend to be physically and socially more like senior high school students than their junior high classmates in grades seven and eight.
6. Sixth grade students tend to be more easily influenced by older adolescents than other age/grade groups.
7. The least amount of difference between students in the six to ten grade range as measured by social maturity, emotional maturity, physical maturity,

and opposite sex choices exists between students in grades six and seven and between students in grades nine and ten" (Schoo, 1974:343).

In the area of human development, studies of pre-adolescence has been the most neglected. This age is a uniquely awkward range that bridges the gap between childhood and adolescence. Knowledge about these students is critical in order to meet their needs (Thornburg, 1970:150).

While today's middle school age children exhibit wide variation in development some common physical, social, emotional and intellectual traits may be identified.

"Physical. In relation to body development, appearance, and activity, students of middle school age exhibit:

1. Increased interest in the physical aspects of the body, including its functions and changes.
2. Generally rapid, though irregular, physical development with resultant differences among peers due to uneven growth and development.
3. Generally a more advanced physical maturity on the part of girls than of boys at the same chronological age.
4. Awkward and clumsy movements due to bone growth preceding muscle growth.

5. Considerable attention to personal appearance and concern with irregularities such as skin blemishes, scars, and obesity.
6. Conformity with 'in' styles, such as clothing and hair style.
7. Extreme restlessness with great need to release physical energy
8. Talkativeness.
9. Responsiveness to a variety of nonstructured and leisure activities.

Social. With their concern for individuality, conformity, and development of values, students of middle school age evidence:

1. Desire to be 'different', yet within the overall limits of peer conformity.
2. Desire for opportunities to exercise selectivity in the choice of food, activities, and friends-- with frequent changes in 'close' friendships.
3. Considerable peer consciousness: strong need for a feeling of belonging to a group.
4. Adherence to peer group standards along with awareness of 'acceptable behavior'.
5. Concern for 'right', 'wrong', and 'social justice'.
6. Concern for less fortunate 'others'.
7. Attempts to identify with adults other than parents.

Emotional. In relation to their uncertainties and conflicts, students of middle school age tend to:



1. Be frequently impulsive with words and actions: impatient to get things done in a hurry.
2. Have ambivalent desires: want freedom, but fear the loss of certain securities.
3. Become more independent, yet still feel the need for direction and regulation.
4. Desire to make their own evaluation of suggestions from others.
5. Exhibit a wide range of overt behaviors and mood instability: quiet-loud, shy-boisterous, fearful-confident, anxious-assured.
6. Need experience with frequent success and desire attention and recognition for personal efforts and achievements.
7. Seek approval of and acceptance by adults.
8. Be sensitive to criticism of personal shortcomings and often easily offended.
9. Be anxious, doubtful, and confused about their physical and intellectual development, social relationships, and adult authority.

Intellectual. In relation to their intellectual experiences, students of middle school age tend to:

1. Be curious and inquisitive.
2. Prefer active over passive learning activities.
3. Relate intellectual activities with immediate and short-range goals.
4. Prefer interaction with peers during learning activities.

5. Desire opportunities to express originality on an individual basis.
6. Be interested in both concrete and abstract exercises and be more able to deal with abstract concepts than formerly.
7. Desire opportunities to participate in practical problem-solving situations.
8. Show interest in races and cultures other than their own.
9. Challenge 'idealistic' teachings.
10. Be interested in making fuller utilization of basic skills used in the elementary school.
11. Evaluate personal capabilities, both attributes and limitations.
12. Show strong, intense interests, not always sustained, in various pursuits" (Tobin, 1973:201-202).

Research indicates that there is compatibility between sixth, seventh, and eighth graders (Madon, 1966:329). "The socio-psychological model provides research evidence that students presently placed in a sixth grade elementary setting possess much greater similarity of physical maturation and social interests with seventh and eighth grade students than they do with children in grades kindergarten through five. For similar reasons, this same phenomenon of earlier physical maturation and social interest patterns suggests

that it is inadvisable to place most present ninth grade junior high school students with the transescent grouping. The ninth grade student reflects physical, mental, and social characteristics appreciably more advanced than middle school transescents" (Eichhorn, 1966:103).

#### Criteria for the Middle School Curriculum

If the middle school is to serve the specialized needs of the transescent learner, its curriculum should include certain characteristics (Alexander, December 1969:153).

1. A proper ratio between active experiences and quiet experiences. Elementary schools are heavily activity-oriented. In most middle schools, the student spends approximately two-thirds of his time in the Expressive Arts which are activity oriented. Even in the academic areas, activities and projects are often more appropriate than lecturing and listening.
2. A balance between concrete experiences and abstract experiences. Developmentally, middle school age students are getting well into the time in life when they can deal with abstractions with increasing success; however, the demand for abstract reasoning still needs to be balanced with a considerable amount of concrete experience. All adolescents do not mature mentally at the same time just as they all do not mature physically at the same time.

3. Whatever the demands of the program, there is consistency. The failure to be consistent, in the classroom and outside the classroom, leads only to confusion and frustration on the part of the early adolescent. Inconsistency will cause the middle school student to feel insecure. This problem can be dealt with in the context of teaching teams. Team teaching brings consistency into the life of the students. He or she studies with a small group of teachers, gets to know them and they get to know the student.
4. The relationships between students and adults are open, humane, and honest. While the term "open" may refer to open or flexible buildings, in a more basic sense "open" refers to a program that is non-rigid, in which all courses are not tightly sequenced, requiring prerequisites; where the environment is structured but not stifling; and where the development characteristics of the students are understood and accepted by adults. Middle school students need to be accepted as individuals and should be dealt with in a frank, straightforward manner.
5. The program provides for experience in values clarification. Early adolescence is a time of trial and uncertainty because, regardless of the external environmental factors, it is a time of rapid, irregular growth and development. Students put both people and institutions to the test.
6. Adequate attention is given to the learning of basic skills and concepts. When students emerge from elementary school, they still need to have the basic academic skills they have learned and to learn new ones. Academic skills are such skills as reading, writing, math problem-solving, and critical thinking. By providing adequate time for academic courses, the middle school provides the curriculum and instruction in basic education to equip the student for further education; and in a broader sense, for life.

7. The program provides the opportunity to make choices. In a vital sense, life is a matter of making choices. These choices should be realistic, not contrived. The middle school concept can accommodate a program which provides for this experience by allowing students to select new courses in the Expressive Arts every few weeks.
8. Counseling is a function of the entire staff. While special counselors may be desirable, every teacher in a full-functioning middle school is geared to the notion that teaching also includes counseling. At no other time in her or his life is the student quite so insecure, or so acutely in need of constant understanding and assistance, as when he or she is in middle school. (Thompson, 1976:154-155).

#### Home Economics Curriculum Development

"Home Economics, as much as any area in the secondary school, has had a rich history of curriculum development" (Mallory, 1964:51). With the launching of Sputnik and the space age in the late 1950's, curriculum reform in the United States gathered great momentum (Bruner, 1961:3). Home Economics recognized new and emerging problems in curriculum and in 1959 the American Home Economics Association prepared a statement of the definition, philosophy and goals of home economics. The definition of home economics was two-fold:

Home economics is the field of knowledge and service primarily concerned with strengthening family life through:

educating the individual for family living  
 improving the services and goods used by families  
 conducting research to discover the changing needs of individuals and families and the means of satisfying these needs  
 furthering community, national, and world conditions favorable to family living

Home economics synthesizes knowledge drawn from its own research, from the physical, biological, and social sciences and the arts and applies this knowledge to improving the lives of families and individuals. Its concern is with these aspects of family living:

family relationships and child development  
 consumption and other economic aspects of personal and family living  
 nutritional needs and the selection, preservation, preparation and use of food  
 design, selection, construction, and care of clothing, and its psychological and social significance  
 textiles for clothing and for the home  
 housing for the family and equipment and furnishings for the household  
 art as an integral part of everyday life  
 management in the use of resources so that values and goals of the individual, the family, or of society may be attained  
 (American Home Economics Association, 1959:4-5).

This was the first step toward curriculum reform within the field of home economics.

A national study of the status of home economics in secondary schools during 1959 further indicated the need for re-examination of the home economics curriculum (Coon, 1965). The report revealed that home economics was a curriculum offering in 95 percent of all secondary schools. In schools offering home economics, 1 percent (63,000) of the boys and 49 percent (2,353,000) of the girls were home economics students (Coon, 1965:31-35). In practically all of the courses taught some time was spent on eight subject areas: child development; clothing; consumer education; family relations; foods and nutrition; health, first aid and home care of the sick; the house, its furnishings and equipment; and management of resources. In grades seven through eleven more than one-half to three-fourths of the home economics class time was spent on clothing and foods. In grade twelve there was an equal distribution of time among the eight areas of instruction (Coon, 1965:77).

Following this study a national curriculum project was sponsored by the U.S. Office of Education and seven institutions of higher education: Iowa State University, Merrill-Palmer Institute, University of Missouri, New

York State College of Home Economics at Cornell University, Oklahoma State University, Pennsylvania State University and Washington State University. Two conferences and seven workshops were held for primary work on the curriculum project (American Home Economics Association, 1967:19). In 1962 and 1963 the first six workshops were attended by approximately 200 participants. All states were represented with the exception of Alaska and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (Mallory, 1964: 54).

When planning curriculum for elementary and secondary schools "school programs have often dealt inadequately or incorrectly with contemporary knowledge, and we have not reaped the benefits that might have come from a joining of the efforts of eminent scholars, wise and skillful teachers, and those trained in the fields related to teaching and learning." (Bruner, 1961:3) To prevent this error participants for each workshop included high school home economics teachers, home economics teacher educators, supervisors active in home economics in secondary schools and specialists and scholars from the particular subject-matter area under study (American Home Economics Association, 1967:21).



"At each workshop participants had an opportunity to review the content in the subject-matter area under consideration. They heard presentations by the subject-matter specialists, read current literature, examined recent research, and participated in discussions of the subject area. After this they identified concepts and developed generalizations which they felt defined a particular area of home economics. Following the workshops the concepts and generalizations were edited and revised by the Home Economics staff of the Office of Education on the basis of evaluation and suggestions by workshop participants" (Coon, 1965:54-55).

In June 1964, the seventh and final workshop was held. At that time thirty-one persons selected from the previous workshops met with four representatives of the Office of Education. Materials from all six workshops were again reviewed and further revisions made in the outlines of concepts and generalizations. (Mallory, 1964:55)

The outlines of concepts and generalizations which resulted from the nine meetings were organized under five subject-matter areas: Human Development and the

Family; Home Management and Family Economics; Foods and Nutrition; Textiles and Clothing; and Housing (American Home Economics Association, 1967:23). These identified basic concepts of home economics helped to define the field and serve as resource materials for curriculum development.

#### Home Economics in the Middle School

A national survey in 1971 reported the status of home economics in middle schools. It provided some insights into the direction of home economics curriculum and instruction in these schools at the time. The research findings indicated that home economics programs in middle schools: (1) used content from secondary programs, (2) failed to reflect the educational capabilities, needs and interests of pre- and early adolescents, and (3) variations in internal school organization caused some difficulty in developing materials adaptable for all middle schools (Weis, 1971:584).

In a similar study which attempted to develop an appropriate curriculum guide for grades five and six it

was found that (1) schools were developing their curriculum from secondary programs with little attention to needs and interests of the middle school learners, (2) internal organizational patterns were varied causing difficulties in program development, (3) several programs were experimental in nature and lacked adequate teacher preparation and curriculum materials, and (4) teacher certification were non-existent in many states for home economics below grade seven (Horn, 1972:202-207).

These surveys supported results from a forty-four state survey conducted during 1965-1966. Findings from the state survey indicated that home economics was offered in the middle schools and as early as the fourth grade in some of the schools. Home economics for boys was also part of the curriculum in several states (Cuff, 1967:84).

In another report of 154 middle schools enrolling over 12,000 pupils it was found that home economics was among the most frequent special subjects being taught. Home economics was required more often in the upper middle school grades (7 and 8) than in grades 5 and 6.

When home economics was available to fifth and sixth graders it was usually required as part of a practical arts program. Some schools required home economics for both boys and girls. In two schools the practical arts classes were coeducational (National Education Association Research Bulletin, 1969:51). Middle school age pupils might be best served when teaching is based on small segments of curricular material focused on the development of a particular skill and based on a degree of proficiency in certain prerequisite skills. In the middle school, subject-matter selection should be materials used to achieve the goal of developing the skills of learning and living. Home economics is a subject-matter offering appropriate for this age group (Wilson, 1969:10).

As home economics is a part of the curriculum for middle grades the following guidelines have been suggested to stimulate middle school home economics program development or evaluation. "Middle school home economics programs:

1. Feature instruction in which the educative processes as well as the course content function to satisfy meaningful objectives.

2. Differentiate learning which is appropriate to group instruction from learning which requires the individual to perform alone.
3. Insure that each transescent can progress at his own rate and to the depth appropriate to his needs and abilities.
4. Include objectives appropriate to the physical, social, and emotional as well as to the intellectual needs and capabilities of transescent learners.
5. Promote understanding of the transescent's growth and development as well as the implications of this growth for emerging relationships with others.
6. Introduce transescent learners to all areas of home economics in ways which stimulate continued independent exploration.
7. Emphasize experiences which improve the effectiveness of the transescent in functioning and coping within his immediate environment.
8. Cultivate and encourage skills in self-directed learning.
9. Provide the learner with a basis for organizing and expanding his perception of individual and family life" (Weis, 1971:585).

## CHAPTER III

### PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to (1) identify areas of interest within the field of home economics to boys and girls in grades six through eight in selected Montana schools and (2) identify specific learning experiences to provide a data base for the development of curriculum guides for home economics for grades six through eight in Montana.

#### Population Description

In light of recent grade organization innovations there is a lack of data to determine the interest of students within the middle school group in home economics. For this study it was believed that the students in the middle school grades would best assess their interests. The population was defined therefore, as boys and girls within the sixth, seventh and eighth grade in Montana schools. As there are 42,890 students enrolled in Montana schools at this grade level it was deemed necessary to design a representative sample.

Sampling Procedure

To obtain a sample of students in grades six, seven and eight the following criteria were used:

1. Be an accredited middle or junior high school
2. Be a Class I, II or III school
3. Have a minority representation
4. Be an elementary school receiving budgeting power at the high school rate for grades 7 and 8

Item one was established since junior high schools and middle schools have students in these age groups. The district classification was used to ascertain a population breakdown. A first class school district has a population of 6,500 or more; a second class district has a population of between 1,000 and 6,500; and a third class district has a population of less than 1,000 residents. The dominant minority in Montana is American Indian. It includes thirteen tribes on seven reservations. The last criteria was based on the fact that 136 school districts have this arrangement and contain the majority of students of middle school age.

If the school met criteria one or criteria four and one of the additional criteria the school was

included as it would contribute in obtaining a representative sample of Montana sixth, seventh and eighth grade students.

The sample was further refined because of Montana's large geographic area. Therefore, it was coordinated with school visitations that were scheduled for the spring by the State Supervisors of Home Economics and Elementary Education. By using the criteria, Conrad, Rudyard, Sunburst, Havre, Cut Bank and Browning, Montana, were selected.

Within the selected schools cited, students were chosen from homerooms. A listing of homeroom instructors for the schools selected is available in the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Montana School District 1975 Fall Report was used in selection of the specific classrooms. A maximum of two homerooms per school were chosen from each grade: six, seven and eight. This was a total of three to six homerooms per school. The numbers two and four were randomly drawn. This meant that instructors homerooms which were the second and fourth on the list were deleted, and the



first and third instructors on the list were asked to have students in his/her classroom to participate.

#### Survey Instrument

Survey was the the method determined to collect the information. A questionnaire provided a collection of data quickly. It was also a reliable method as each student would receive the same set of questions and would have the same length of time to complete the instrument.

Selection of the Learning Activities. The American Home Economics Association lists five major content areas for the field of home economics: Human Development and the Family, Home Management and Family Economics, Food and Nutrition, Housing, and Textiles and Clothing (1967:23). These areas were selected following an analysis of related literature based upon the historic subject-matter divisions of home economics. In this research these subject-matter divisions were used as the content areas of home economics. Using these five broad areas as a point of reference specific learning activities were identified. These were derived from

learning activities described in various curriculum guides, textbooks, research reports and resource materials. Few home economics materials were specifically designed for grades six through eight.

Both the Montana Cooperative Extension Service, Montana State University, Bozeman and the Maryland Council for Family Financial Education, had lists of home economics learning experiences appropriate for pre- and early adolescents. Since these experiences were developed by specialists in youth development and were used with youth of similar age and development as sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students, they were selected for this survey.

To aid in identification and selection of each learning activity and to make assessment of each the learning activity had to develop one competency or skill normally accepted as the provenance of home economics. Home economics competencies used for this evaluation were those stated in the Montana 4-H Projects publication (Montana Cooperative Extension Services, 1975:5-8).

If a competency was met, the learning activity was placed in the list under the appropriate content area.

Activities were written as statements within the lists to facilitate scoring. Using this method, the list of learning activity statements were categorized in the following manner:

TABLE 1  
Categorization of Learning Activities

| Content Area                         | Number of Activities |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Food and Nutrition                   | 9                    |
| Housing                              | 13                   |
| Textiles and Clothing                | 7                    |
| Human Development and the Family     | 9                    |
| Home Management and Family Economics | 6                    |

To obtain an assessment of the reliability of the proposed research six students, a boy and girl from each of the three grades, were randomly selected to meet by grade with the researcher. These respondents were given the list of the learning activities and were instructed to evaluate, delete, rewrite and make comments as necessary regarding the survey instrument. As a result, the instrument was extensively revised

including removal of content area headings from each page and editing and deleting some activity statements.

In order to obtain attitude toward the activity five descriptive categories based on Likert-type scaling techniques were used: 5--Very Much Interested; 4--Quite A Bit Interested; 3--Somewhat Interested; 2--Not Very Much Interested; and 1--Not At All Interested. This enabled employment of the Chi square method of statistical analysis. The .05 level of probability was used to determine significance of statistical observations.

At the bottom of each grouping of content area a space was provided for the individual to write-in other learning experiences that he or she would like to do. It made possible not only an assessment of activities but which of the five content area groupings found the most interesting activities. In addition, the individual indicated which content area of home economics they found most interesting by recording the page number of the area they most preferred in the space provided on the last page of the instrument. It was possible that students found a great many activities interesting in one area but might have greater interest in one in

which fewer activities were identified. This technique eliminates such a bias. The same method was used to indicate the content area the students found least interesting.

A pilot investigation was conducted in the Helena school system. It included two sixth grade, two seventh grade and two eighth grade homerooms. Techniques similar to those for choosing participating homerooms in the final sample were used. Minor rewording changes were all that were necessary.

#### Procurement of Data

A telephone call to principals of all potential participating schools explained the survey, who sponsored the survey, the importance of student participation, the number of people asked to participate, and how the results would be used. If they agreed it was possible to include students from their school to participate in the study and the classrooms were identified.

In May 1976 the instrument was administered by the researcher to the subjects. Opening remarks were read and the instrument was prefaced with directions for

executing the evaluation. See Appendix A. All subjects were given twenty minutes to rate the home economics subject areas and learning experiences.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This discussion analyzes data concerning middle school age children in selected Montana schools in order to determine interests in home economics content areas and selected learning activities in those areas.

#### Characteristics of the Sample

There were 607 middle school age respondents from selected Montana schools: 236 sixth graders--127 boys and 109 girls, 198 seventh graders--105 boys and 93 girls, and 173 eighth graders--88 boys and 85 girls.

There appears to be a similarity between the sample surveyed and the state population of middle school age children. One of Montana's three official middle schools was represented in the study (14.28 percent of the respondents). There were twenty-five junior high schools in the state and two of these schools participated providing 28.57 percent of the responses. The largest proportion of students in the study, 57.14 percent (4 schools), attended elementary schools receiving seventh and eighth grade funding.

One hundred thirty-nine schools in the state operate under this funding arrangement.

Of the students in grade six, seven and eight in Montana 4.8 percent (2,115) are Indian youth. At least 9 percent of the participants in the survey were Indian students. The proportion of middle school age children in Class I, II and III schools in the state are 47,821 (47.09 percent), 39,873 (39.26 percent), and 13,854 (13.64 percent) respectively. The sample consisted of 207 (34.10 percent) subjects from Class I schools, 364 (59.96 percent) students from Class II schools and 36 (5.9 percent) respondents from Class III schools. (State statistics from the State of Montana, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1975.) See Table 2.

#### Examination of Findings

To develop appropriate home economics curriculum for middle school home economics programs it is necessary to know interests of students to both content areas and learning activities of the subject. Subjects in the survey ranked forty-four home economics learning



TABLE 2

## Characteristics of the Sample

| School   | Grade 6 |     | Grade 7 |    | Grade 8 |    | Middle School | Junior High | Class | Minority Group | 7th & 8th Grade Funding |
|----------|---------|-----|---------|----|---------|----|---------------|-------------|-------|----------------|-------------------------|
|          | B       | G   | B       | G  | B       | G  |               |             |       |                |                         |
| Conrad   | 25      | 19  | 26      | 24 | 13      | 9  | X             |             | II    |                |                         |
| Rudyard  | 7       | 8   | 8       | 4  | 6       | 3  |               |             | III   |                | X                       |
| Sunburst | 12      | 10  | 14      | 9  | 16      | 14 |               |             | II    |                | X                       |
| Havre    | 25      | 20  | 24      | 18 | 20      | 24 |               |             | I     | X              | X                       |
| Cut Bank | 16      | 23  | 18      | 20 | 18      | 17 |               |             | II    | X              | X                       |
| Browning | 28      | 17  | 3       | 9  | 2       | 2  |               | X           | II    | X              |                         |
| Helena   | 14      | 12  | 12      | 9  | 13      | 16 |               | X           | I     |                |                         |
| Total    | 127     | 109 | 105     | 93 | 88      | 85 | 1             | 2           |       | 3              | 4                       |

activities according to their degree of interest. The respondents also indicated the content areas of home economics they found the most interesting and the content areas they found the least interesting.

To determine the relationship in interests to the home economics content areas and learning activities, the chi square method of statistical analysis was used. Percentage scores were obtained for each of the five content areas and for the forty-four learning activities because the number of respondents from the three grades were not consistent.

#### Content Areas of Home Economics

The major areas which comprise the subject-matter divisions of home economics are: Foods and Nutrition, Housing, Clothing and Textiles, Human Development and the Family, and Home Management and Family Economics. These broad areas were used in this research as the content areas of home economics.

Variation by Grade Level. Human Development and the Family was scored as the most interesting area of home economics by the sixth grade respondents in the

survey. The content area of Foods and Nutrition was the area of least interest to this age group.

Seventh graders closely ranked three areas of home economics as the most interesting. These were Housing (29 percent), Human Development and the Family (25 percent), and Clothing and Textiles (24 percent). Foods and Nutrition (4 percent) was of little interest.

The content area of Housing was found to be the most interesting area of home economics for eighth graders in the survey. This group was the only one to indicate a high level of interest in Home Management and Family Economics. The eighth graders also found Foods and Nutrition to be of least interest.

The content area considered to be most interesting varied significantly. The content area of least interest for all three grades was Foods and Nutrition.

Variation by Sex. There was a significant difference of interests between boys and girls at all three grade levels. The content areas that were in general the most interesting were Housing and Human Development and the Family. The least interesting was Foods and Nutrition. See Table 3.

TABLE 3

CONTENT AREAS OF HOME ECONOMICS MOST INTERESTING  
TO MIDDLE SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

|                | Foods and Nutrition |    | Housing |    | Clothing & Textiles |    | Human Development & the Family |    | Home Manage- and Family Economics |    |
|----------------|---------------------|----|---------|----|---------------------|----|--------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|
|                | N                   | %  | N       | %  | N                   | %  | N                              | %  | N                                 | %  |
| Grade 6--Total | 21                  | 9  | 62      | 27 | 32                  | 14 | 84                             | 36 | 32                                | 14 |
| Boys           | 17                  | 14 | 34      | 28 | 7                   | 6  | 38                             | 31 | 27                                | 22 |
| Girls          | 4                   | 4  | 28      | 26 | 25                  | 23 | 46                             | 37 | 5                                 | 5  |
| Grade 7--Total | 10                  | 4  | 56      | 29 | 46                  | 24 | 48                             | 25 | 31                                | 16 |
| Boys           | 9                   | 9  | 29      | 29 | 16                  | 16 | 16                             | 16 | 30                                | 30 |
| Girls          | 1                   | 1  | 27      | 30 | 30                  | 33 | 32                             | 35 | 1                                 | 1  |
| Grade 8--Total | 11                  | 7  | 47      | 28 | 33                  | 20 | 33                             | 20 | 41                                | 25 |
| Boys           | 6                   | 7  | 20      | 24 | 6                   | 7  | 13                             | 16 | 38                                | 46 |
| Girls          | 5                   | 6  | 27      | 33 | 27                  | 33 | 20                             | 24 | 3                                 | 4  |

TABLE 4

CONTENT AREAS OF HOME ECONOMICS LEAST INTERESTING  
TO MIDDLE SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

|                | Foods and Nutrition |    | Housing |    | Clothing & Textiles |    | Human Development & the Family |    | Home Management and Family Economics |    |
|----------------|---------------------|----|---------|----|---------------------|----|--------------------------------|----|--------------------------------------|----|
|                | N                   | %  | N       | %  | N                   | %  | N                              | %  | N                                    | %  |
| Grade 6--Total | 71                  | 31 | 34      | 15 | 46                  | 20 | 23                             | 10 | 59                                   | 25 |
| Boys           | 25                  | 20 | 19      | 15 | 43                  | 35 | 22                             | 18 | 15                                   | 12 |
| Girls          | 46                  | 42 | 15      | 14 | 3                   | 3  | 1                              | 1  | 44                                   | 40 |
| Grade 7--Total | 69                  | 36 | 16      | 8  | 41                  | 21 | 27                             | 14 | 39                                   | 20 |
| Boys           | 26                  | 26 | 9       | 9  | 37                  | 37 | 21                             | 21 | 8                                    | 8  |
| Girls          | 43                  | 47 | 7       | 8  | 4                   | 4  | 6                              | 7  | 31                                   | 34 |
| Grade 8--Total | 60                  | 36 | 21      | 13 | 32                  | 19 | 26                             | 15 | 29                                   | 17 |
| Boys           | 15                  | 18 | 11      | 13 | 28                  | 33 | 22                             | 26 | 9                                    | 11 |
| Girls          | 45                  | 54 | 10      | 12 | 4                   | 5  | 4                              | 5  | 29                                   | 24 |

For the five content areas of home economics there was a significant difference in interests between sixth grade girls and sixth grade boys. The sixth grade boys and girls agreed that Human Development and the Family (31 percent, 37 percent), respectively, was the content area of home economics of most interest. They were also in agreement that Housing was the area of their second choice (28 percent, 26 percent), respectively. The sixth grade girls scored Home Management (5 percent) and Foods and Nutrition (4 percent) as the subject matter areas of least interest. The boys indicated Foods and Nutrition (14 percent) and Clothing and Textiles (6 percent) were the areas of least interest to them.

There was also a significant difference in interests between the seventh grade boys and girls. Home Management and Family Economics was the area of most interest to the boys (30 percent) whereas, it was the area of least interest to the girls (1 percent). They both agreed that Foods and Nutrition was not interesting (9 percent, 1 percent), respectively.

The eighth grade boys were most interested in studying Home Management and Family Economics (46 percent) followed by Housing (24 percent). They were least interested in Clothing and Textiles (7 percent) and Foods and Nutrition (7 percent). The girls in this grade level were most interested in Clothing and Textiles (33 percent) and Housing (33 percent). The content areas of least interest were Foods and Nutrition (6 percent) and Home Management and Family Economics (4 percent). There was a significant difference of interest between the eighth grade boys and girls to the content areas of home economics.

#### Learning Activities of Home Economics

The five major content areas of home economics, as defined by the American Home Economics Association, were used as points from which specific learning activities/experiences could be identified. For ease of discussion the rank order of each learning activity is denoted by the rank number in respective order.

Variation by Grade Level. The students in the sixth, seventh and eighth grade show difference in



TABLE 5

RANK AND CHI SQUARE VALUES OF HOME ECONOMICS LEARNING ACTIVITIES  
BETWEEN SEXES WITHIN GRADES SIX, SEVEN AND EIGHT

| Learning Activity                  | SIXTH GRADE |      |      |          | SEVENTH GRADE |      |      |          | EIGHTH GRADE |      |      |          |
|------------------------------------|-------------|------|------|----------|---------------|------|------|----------|--------------|------|------|----------|
|                                    | B*          | G*   | T*   | $\chi^2$ | B*            | G*   | T*   | $\chi^2$ | B*           | G*   | T*   | $\chi^2$ |
|                                    | (rank)      |      |      |          | (rank)        |      |      |          | (rank)       |      |      |          |
| Growing and Marketing food         | 24.5        | 44.0 | 42.0 | 4.20     | 27.0          | 44.0 | 42.0 | 5.48     | 24.0         | 44.0 | 43.0 | 8.27     |
| Traditional service of food        | 35.5        | 42.0 | 41.0 | 4.75     | 34.5          | 41.5 | 42.0 | 6.95     | 33.5         | 40.5 | 41.5 | 10.69    |
| Low calorie snacks and meals       | 13.5        | 29.0 | 23.0 | 7.38     | 30.0          | 15.5 | 21.0 | 43.72    | 20.0         | 25.5 | 26.5 | 30.54    |
| Food needs of various ages         | 32.5        | 35.5 | 35.0 | 8.48     | 41.0          | 37.0 | 40.0 | 16.62    | 29.0         | 40.5 | 38.0 | 7.74     |
| Cost comparison of foods           | 24.5        | 34.0 | 34.0 | 10.55    | 20.5          | 32.0 | 31.5 | 5.45     | 8.0          | 34.0 | 28.5 | 10.18    |
| Family meal planning and shopping  | 16.5        | 31.0 | 27.0 | 16.31    | 13.0          | 19.0 | 17.0 | 24.14    | 17.0         | 23.0 | 24.5 | 18.11    |
| History and food value of food     | 28.5        | 39.5 | 36.5 | 9.35     | 38.0          | 43.0 | 44.0 | 5.70     | 37.0         | 43.0 | 44.0 | 9.85     |
| Special occasion entertaining      | 8.5         | 9.0  | 3.0  | 21.66    | 6.5           | 7.0  | 6.0  | 26.64    | 12.5         | 7.5  | 7.0  | 34.97    |
| Making main dishes, cookies, cakes | 4.5         | 3.0  | 1.0  | 26.99    | 3.0           | 1.0  | 1.0  | 28.14    | 3.5          | 4.5  | 3.0  | 32.87    |
| Make a color wheel                 | 18.0        | 23.5 | 23.0 | 16.31    | 17.0          | 21.0 | 21.0 | 10.82    | 22.0         | 17.0 | 22.0 | 35.67    |
| Make a picture                     | 13.5        | 21.0 | 16.0 | 11.77    | 20.5          | 25.5 | 24.5 | 14.42    | 29.0         | 27.0 | 30.5 | 22.08    |
| Study architectural styles         | 22.0        | 35.5 | 32.5 | 12.01    | 14.0          | 38.0 | 31.5 | 4.70     | 12.5         | 31.5 | 28.5 | 4.02     |
| Color and furniture arrangements   | 28.5        | 21.0 | 29.0 | 39.09    | 15.5          | 12.0 | 15.0 | 29.18    | 15.0         | 6.0  | 6.0  | 42.59    |
| Make a wall hanging                | 10.0        | 15.5 | 14.0 | 27.26    | 10.5          | 13.0 | 8.0  | 15.73    | 22.0         | 15.0 | 14.0 | 40.27    |
| Make a pillow or desk blotter      | 21.0        | 6.5  | 11.0 | 56.05    | 24.0          | 6.0  | 11.5 | 50.39    | 26.5         | 11.0 | 12.0 | 58.76    |
| Make a storage helper              | 16.5        | 29.0 | 26.0 | 12.94    | 18.0          | 31.0 | 30.0 | 5.19     | 16.0         | 18.0 | 18.0 | 17.43    |
| Do piecework, weaving, macrame     | 28.5        | 11.5 | 19.5 | 52.84    | 15.5          | 5.0  | 7.0  | 52.23    | 31.0         | 12.0 | 15.5 | 64.44    |
| Buying household linens            | 39.5        | 39.5 | 43.0 | 37.17    | 44.0          | 34.0 | 39.0 | 65.49    | 42.5         | 33.0 | 38.0 | 56.39    |
| Making or buying drapes            | 44.0        | 43.0 | 44.0 | 36.54    | 42.5          | 39.0 | 42.0 | 27.72    | 33.5         | 39.0 | 40.0 | 29.49    |
| Decorate a wall or room            | 4.5         | 3.0  | 2.0  | 29.64    | 2.0           | 4.0  | 2.0  | 16.66    | 5.0          | 3.0  | 4.0  | 52.65    |
| Plan a table setting               | 41.0        | 33.0 | 39.0 | 35.30    | 40.0          | 34.0 | 36.5 | 33.57    | 37.0         | 36.5 | 38.0 | 47.13    |
| Buying appliances or furniture     | 28.5        | 41.0 | 36.5 | 53.26    | 34.5          | 36.0 | 36.5 | 10.68    | 29.0         | 35.0 | 36.0 | 11.84    |

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B=Boys; G=Girls; T=Total or Both Boys and Girls

Critical value of chi square at .05 level at 4 degrees of freedom equals 9.488.



TABLE 5 (continued)

| Learning Activity                | SIXTH GRADE |      |      |          | SEVENTH GRADE |      |      |          | EIGHTH GRADE |      |      |          |
|----------------------------------|-------------|------|------|----------|---------------|------|------|----------|--------------|------|------|----------|
|                                  | B*          | G*   | T*   | $\chi^2$ | B*            | G*   | T*   | $\chi^2$ | B*           | G*   | T*   | $\chi^2$ |
|                                  | (rank)      |      |      |          | (rank)        |      |      |          | (rank)       |      |      |          |
| Sew a simple blouse or shirt     | 39.5        | 5.0  | 23.0 | 110.87   | 33.0          | 10.5 | 19.0 | 71.75    | 26.5         | 13.5 | 15.5 | 80.75    |
| Make pillows and curtains        | 42.5        | 3.0  | 23.0 | 120.82   | 38.0          | 10.5 | 21.0 | 80.51    | 42.5         | 9.5  | 20.0 | 96.94    |
| Learn to use a sewing machine    | 35.5        | 10.0 | 17.5 | 84.67    | 24.0          | 9.0  | 15.0 | 58.64    | 22.0         | 13.5 | 12.0 | 55.28    |
| Good grooming                    | 38.0        | 13.5 | 29.0 | 74.11    | 36.0          | 14.0 | 24.5 | 67.26    | 33.5         | 4.5  | 9.0  | 90.34    |
| Make a sewing box                | 42.5        | 32.0 | 39.0 | 68.86    | 42.5          | 34.0 | 38.0 | 52.10    | 42.5         | 36.5 | 41.5 | 68.64    |
| Clothing styles and fashions     | 11.5        | 6.5  | 6.5  | 49.69    | 10.5          | 2.0  | 4.0  | 50.79    | 9.0          | 1.0  | 1.5  | 59.50    |
| Individual color selection       | 19.5        | 8.0  | 11.0 | 53.57    | 8.5           | 3.0  | 3.0  | 42.38    | 6.5          | 2.0  | 1.5  | 61.10    |
| Toy selection                    | 8.5         | 21.0 | 11.0 | 8.86     | 12.0          | 21.0 | 18.0 | 19.72    | 19.0         | 19.0 | 22.0 | 26.86    |
| Make a toy chest                 | 1.5         | 18.0 | 6.5  | 10.25    | 6.5           | 21.0 | 10.0 | .83      | 3.5          | 23.0 | 9.0  | 9.14     |
| Stories and games for children   | 15.0        | 15.5 | 15.0 | 25.19    | 28.5          | 23.0 | 28.5 | 30.54    | 37.0         | 20.5 | 30.5 | 49.08    |
| Make a picture book              | 23.0        | 17.0 | 19.5 | 29.86    | 28.5          | 25.5 | 28.5 | 28.14    | 39.5         | 23.0 | 32.0 | 53.72    |
| Caring for infants               | 31.0        | 29.0 | 17.5 | 62.34    | 38.0          | 15.5 | 26.5 | 74.81    | 33.5         | 16.0 | 26.5 | 61.49    |
| Holding and handling a baby      | 11.5        | 1.0  | 4.0  | 53.67    | 20.5          | 8.0  | 13.0 | 61.96    | 25.0         | 7.5  | 9.0  | 59.53    |
| Make a toy                       | 7.0         | 11.5 | 6.5  | 14.24    | 8.5           | 18.0 | 9.0  | 8.79     | 10.0         | 28.5 | 24.5 | 13.35    |
| Care for a child                 | 35.5        | 26.0 | 32.5 | 38.02    | 31.5          | 30.0 | 33.0 | 25.58    | 39.5         | 30.0 | 34.0 | 39.02    |
| Visit a nursery                  | 32.5        | 13.5 | 23.0 | 53.39    | 31.5          | 17.0 | 23.0 | 46.58    | 42.5         | 9.5  | 18.0 | 76.74    |
| Price comparisons                | 19.5        | 37.0 | 32.5 | 2.39     | 20.5          | 41.5 | 35.0 | 1.43     | 12.5         | 38.0 | 33.0 | 8.45     |
| Banking system                   | 6.0         | 25.0 | 13.0 | 8.15     | 4.0           | 28.5 | 11.5 | 8.54     | 2.0          | 31.5 | 12.0 | 3.87     |
| Cost of owning a pet             | 3.0         | 23.5 | 9.0  | 2.24     | 5.0           | 28.5 | 15.0 | 1.32     | 6.5          | 28.5 | 18.0 | 5.86     |
| Cost of hobbies                  | 1.5         | 19.0 | 6.5  | 4.15     | 1.0           | 25.5 | 5.0  | 12.17    | 1.0          | 25.5 | 5.0  | 3.52     |
| Taxes                            | 35.5        | 38.0 | 39.0 | 6.68     | 24.0          | 40.0 | 34.0 | 4.70     | 12.5         | 42.0 | 35.0 | 4.85     |
| Qualities desirable for clothing | 26.0        | 27.0 | 29.0 | 27.24    | 26.0          | 25.5 | 26.5 | 18.92    | 18.0         | 20.5 | 22.0 | 20.88    |

49

B=Boys; G=Girls; T=Total or Both Boys and Girls  
 Critical value of chi square at .05 level at 4 degrees of freedom equals 9.488.

TABLE 6

CHI SQUARE VALUES SHOWING THE SIGNIFICANT  
DIFFERENCE AMONG GRADE LEVELS FOR  
HOME ECONOMICS LEARN-  
ING ACTIVITIES

| Learning Activity                  | Chi Square Value |
|------------------------------------|------------------|
| Growing and marketing food         | 44.90            |
| Traditional service of food        | 24.05            |
| Low calorie snacks and meals       | 29.75            |
| Food needs of various ages         | 33.78            |
| Cost comparison of foods           | 11.59            |
| Family meal planning & shopping    | 23.22            |
| History and food value of food     | 49.00            |
| Special occasion entertaining      | 30.47            |
| Making main dishes, cookies, cakes | 19.14            |
| Make a color wheel                 | 24.15            |
| Make a picture                     | 36.33            |
| Study architectural styles         | 17.41            |
| Color & furniture arrangements     | 5.66             |
| Make a wall hanging                | 25.41            |
| Make a pillow or desk blotter      | 28.16            |
| Make a storage helper              | 15.42            |
| Do piecework, weaving, macrame     | 8.44             |
| Buying household linens            | 19.53            |
| Making or buying drapes            | 13.55            |
| Decorate a wall or room            | 23.32            |
| Plan a table setting               | 24.71            |
| Buying appliances or furniture     | 15.74            |
| Sew a simple blouse or shirt       | 20.27            |
| Make pillows and curtains          | 13.88            |
| Learn to use a sewing machine      | 19.39            |
| Good grooming                      | 10.05            |
| Make a sewing box                  | 23.59            |
| Clothing styles and fashions       | 11.88            |
| Individual color selection         | 7.24             |
| Toy selection                      | 29.96            |
| Make a toy chest                   | 21.48            |

TABLE 6 (continued)

| Learning Activity                | Chi Square Value |
|----------------------------------|------------------|
| Stories and games for children   | 40.05            |
| Make a picture book              | 32.37            |
| Caring for infants               | 28.58            |
| Holding and handling a baby      | 28.07            |
| Make a toy                       | 39.24            |
| Care for a child                 | 20.95            |
| Visit a nursery                  | 15.04            |
| Price comparisons                | 17.17            |
| Banking system                   | 13.47            |
| Cost of owning a pet             | 24.57            |
| Cost of hobbies                  | 8.19             |
| Taxes                            | 15.46            |
| Qualities desirable for clothing | 12.24            |

Critical value of chi square at .05 level at 8 degrees of freedom equals 15.507

interests to many of the home economics learning activities. They were consistent in selecting making main dishes, cookies and cakes (ranked 1, 1, 3 respectively) as one of the most interesting learning activities. They also all ranked growing and marketing food (ranked 42, 42, 43 respectively) and the traditional service of food as very uninteresting (ranked 41, 42, 41.5 respectively).

There was very little relationship between learning activities which appealed to sixth graders and content areas that interested them. In the sixth grade, boys and girls were very much interested in making main dishes, cookies, and cakes (ranked 4.5, 3 respectively), as well as decorating a wall or room area (ranked 4.5, 3 respectively). While the latter was in a content area of high interest to these students, the two learning activities that ranked in first and third place were from Foods and Nutrition that was judged as the least interesting content area. This paradox might be related to the word nutrition or that little was known about what one would study or do if studying this content area. In addition, studying how to make or buy drapes

(ranked 44) and the purchases of household linens (ranked 43) were the two activities of least interest to the sixth graders.

Seventh grade students, like sixth graders, also rated making main dishes, cakes and cookies (ranked 1) and decorating a wall or room area (ranked 2) as the most interesting learning activity. They too rated as most interesting a learning activity from the Foods and Nutrition area although it was a content area they selected as least interesting. They chose history and food value of food, growing and marketing food, traditional service of food and food needs of various ages (ranked 44, 44, 42, 40 respectively) as the learning activities of least interest.

The relationship of colors and fashion and style to an individual were ranked as the most interesting by eighth graders (ranked 1.5, 1.5 respectively). They also chose making main dishes, cookies and cakes (ranked 3) as an interesting activity. They were not interested in studying about the history and food value of food (ranked 44), growing and marketing food (ranked 43),

traditional service of food (ranked 41.5) or making a sewing box (ranked 41.5).

Variations in Interest by Sex. Learning activities of great interest to sixth grade boys was learning how much different hobbies would cost as well as learning how to make a toy chest (ranked 1.5, 1.5 respectively). They were also interested in investigating how much it would cost to own a pet (ranked 3). The sixth grade girls on the other hand were more interested in activities related to home and family such as learning how to hold and handle a baby correctly (ranked 1), making pillows and curtains for a room (ranked 3), and making different kinds of main dishes, cookies, cakes and breads (ranked 3). Sixth grade boys thought that the most uninteresting learning activities dealt with this information. They rated purchasing or constructing window curtains and drapes, as least interesting, followed by making pillows and curtains for a room and making a sewing box (ranked 44, 42.5, 42.5 respectively). The sixth grade girls indicated they felt learning how food grows and is marketed (ranked 44) was least interesting. They also agreed with the boys in

their grade that learning about purchasing and constructing curtains and drapes (ranked 43) would be very uninteresting.

Examining how much different hobbies would cost (ranked 1) and decorating a wall or room area (ranked 2) were highly interesting to the boys in the seventh grade. The girls in this grade chose making different kinds of main dishes, cookies, cakes and breads (ranked 1), and learning about fashions and styles of clothes for the individual (ranked 2) as most interesting.

The activities selected as most uninteresting by the seventh grade boys were: review buying of household linens, learn about information needed to purchase or construct window treatments and making a sewing box (ranked 44, 42.5, 42.5 respectively). The girls indicated learning about the growing and marketing of food and the history and food value of food were the most uninteresting learning activities (ranked 44, 43 respectively).

Eighth grade boys agreed with the sixth and seventh grade boys that examining the cost of different hobbies (ranked 1) would be an interesting learning activity.



They were also very interested in investigating the banking system (ranked 2). Girls in the eighth grade found activities dealing with personal appearance most interesting as they scored clothing styles and fashions (ranked 1), individual color selection (ranked 2) and good grooming very high (ranked 4.5).

Reviewing the buying of household linens (ranked 42.5), making pillows and curtains for a room (ranked 42.5), making a sewing box (ranked 42.5), visiting a nursery (ranked 42.5), making a picture book for a child (ranked 39.5) and stories and games for children (ranked 37) were scored as very uninteresting by eighth grade boys. The girls in this grade indicated two activities, the growing and marketing of food (ranked 44) and the history and food value of food (ranked 43), were uninteresting.

These findings may be related to the pre-programming of little girls to be mothers and family members as it is generally recognized that "children are natural imitators. From infancy to adulthood their attitudes are formed and adults need to be aware that their feelings, actions, and attitudes will be mirrored by



the young" (Seibel, 1969:5). Children's literature also stereotypes the sex role images in society. Little girls play with dolls and dishes while little boys play with puppies and fire engines. Games such as these greatly contribute to a child's attitude toward his/her role in society.

#### Other Areas and Activities of Interest

In order to obtain a more broad description of interest of the subjects related to home economics, respondents were requested to state additional activities they would find interesting or would like to know more about. Their response to this question might be viewed as an indication of interest in home economics programs for grades six through eight. Responses were:

Sixth Grade Boys: Outdoor cookery, farm problems of food production, microwave ovens, processing and storage of food, baking and cooking, wise buying of food, plant a garden and preserve the food harvested, meal planning for children, build a house model, build furniture, reupholster, study furniture styles, patch jeans, operate a sewing machine, compare cost of store

bought clothes and home sewn clothes, teach young children a game, babysitting techniques, make toys, learn about the banking system, selling crafts, phases of marketing, taxes and grocery shopping.

Sixth Grade Girls: Foreign foods, visit a cheese factory, cooking techniques, bread baking, nutrition and calorie comparison, be a wife for a day, large quantity cooking, make "sew" furniture, pottery and ceramics, string and wire art, landscaping, decorate a doll house, decorate a camper or mobile home, decorate a home for a low income family, picture arrangements, use of room accessories, draw floor plans, decorate a child's room, make a quilt, skin care, posture and exercise, study of fabrics, study of line, balance and color in clothing, pattern sizing, sew a dress, sew doll clothes, make story books for children, bathe a new baby, help with a junior high day care center, rates and responsibilities of babysitting.

Seventh Grade Boys: Family meal planning, outdoor cooking, preservation of fruits and vegetables, food for the elderly, candymaking, build furniture, design a home, correct method of home painting, floor planning,

graphic designing, sew clothing, make downfilled vests and jackets, babysitting tips, making things for a baby, banking system, budgeting, economics system.

Seventh Grade Girls: Economical and nutritious meal planning, diets for weight control, foreign foods, large quantity cooking, flower arrangements, landscaping, room arranging, weaving, crocheting, sew slipcovers for chairs, sew a quilt, hairstyling, clothing alterations, basic sewing machine maintenance, patching, sewing garments, forming a sewing club, child care, growth rate of children, toys for various ages, medical care of infants, foods for a baby, first aid, make a safe toy, how to become a home economics teacher, cost of establishing a home and the banking system.

Eighth Grade Boys: Visit a restaurant kitchen, cooking and baking lessons, role of the United States Department of Agriculture, Montana's contribution to the world food supply, how to use room accessories, build simple furniture, cost of home remodeling, interior design, styles of clothing, fabric care, how to patch and repair clothes, babysit, help in a nursery school, budgeting, banking system, stocks and bonds.

Eighth Grade Girls: Foreign foods, cost of food per serving, food preservation, national and private food companies, foods for various ages, service of a formal meal, compare food prices, variety dishes to make, function of nutrients in the body, snack ideas, room arrangements, construct simple furniture, house cleaning methods, outdoor home decorations, floor plans, design a miniature room, sew downfilled vests, color combinations, knit, crochet, clothes for different figure types, make-up, games for children at different ages, plan a child's day, help in a nursery school, make toys for children, babysit, how to be a home economics teacher, money management, income tax system and the banking system.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

With the emergence of the middle school in Montana it has become important for the Montana Home Economics State Supervisors and the Montana Elementary Education State Supervisor of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, to have home economics middle school curriculum guides based on the characteristics and interests of children in the sixth through eighth grades.

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to (1) identify the home economics content area or areas that were of interest to boys and girls in grades six through eight and (2) identify the home economics learning experiences that were of interest to them. An instrument was devised to identify degree of interest in the five content areas of home economics. These five content areas were the subject-matter divisions of home economics identified by the American Home Economics Association in 1967. These broad areas were also used

as points of reference from which specific learning experiences were identified. Questions were designed to obtain information concerning the interest of the middle school age respondents. Space was also provided on the questionnaire for the subjects to state other home economics learning activities, other than the one listed, that they felt would be interesting.

The sample which included 607 middle school age respondents from selected Montana schools--236 sixth graders, 198 seventh graders and 173 eighth graders--had characteristics similar to middle school children in all Montana schools.

Results showed that Housing and Human Development and the Family were content areas of interest to all students. Activities dealing with making main dishes, cookies and cakes were considered interesting while growing and marketing food and the traditional service of food were not.

Sixth grade boys and girls agreed that Human Development and the Family was a content area of most interest and both indicated Foods and Nutrition was the area of least interest. Both sexes were very much

interested in making main dishes, cookies and cakes as well as decorating a wall or room area. The boys were interested in cost of various hobbies as well as making a toy chest. The girls were most interested in activities related to the home and family.

Home Management and Family Economics was the area of most interest to seventh grade boys whereas Human Development and the Family was selected by the girls. Seventh grade students rated making main dishes, cakes and cookies and decorating a wall or room area as the most interesting learning activities. Examining how much different hobbies would cost and decorating a wall or room area were highly interesting to the boys; and the girls in this grade chose making different kinds of main dishes, cookies, cakes and breads as more interesting.

The eighth grade boys were most interested in studying Home Management and Family Economics. The girls in this grade level were most interested in Clothing and Textiles. The relationship of colors and fashion and style to an individual were ranked as the most interesting learning activity by eighth graders.

The boys in this grade were interested in the cost of various hobbies and the banking system. Personal appearance was the most interesting activity for the eighth grade girls.

Students from all three grade levels indicated a variety of other interests in home economics.

### Conclusions

The following conclusions can be drawn from this research:

Curriculum for home economics for grades six through eight based on the interests of boys and girls at these grade levels are identifiable. It is possible to identify content area/areas and learning activities of home economics that is of interest to the students of middle school age.

Based on the results a significant difference in the content area/areas and the learning activities was found for the different grade levels and by age. The content areas of most interest did not always coincide with the learning activities of most interest. For example, sixth grade students scored Human Development and the Family as the most interesting area of home



economics but rated making main dishes, cakes and cookies, a Foods and Nutrition learning activity as the most interesting activity to study. This finding is similar to many of the findings stated in the literature.

It is possible to develop curriculum guides for home economics middle schools following the basic interests identified.

#### Recommendations

For Improvement of the Study. In analyzing the data, it was found that the survey instrument contained a weakness in semantics. The content areas of home economics were not defined the same by all respondents. A statement of clarification for each of the content areas should be included at the top of each content area section in the questionnaire.

For Future Research. As any study opens up new areas of exploration, the following recommendations for further research were considered appropriate following analysis of information derived from this study.

1. Future research studies in home economics are needed to determine additional home economics content areas and learning activities.

2. Independent living skills are important aspects of everyday life. As even pre-schoolers have evidenced interest in home economics by playing house or imitating other family roles it would seem appropriate to include lower grades in another study of this nature.
3. An important recommendation for further use of this study would be to make the results available to educators for guidelines in planning home economics programs.
4. The development of curriculum materials based on this study and the development of curriculum guides would give educators a better understanding of the place of home economics in curriculum planning.

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APPENDIX

## APPENDIX A

## Survey Instrument

## INSTRUCTIONS:

Given in this booklet are learning experiences which might be studied in home economics. We all have different interests and this scale is an attempt to let you express your opinions and interest to each statement. As you read through each statement, please make a circle around the number that best expresses your feelings to the specific item. The following scale will be used:

- 5--Very Much Interested
- 4--Quite A Bit Interested
- 3--Somewhat Interested
- 2--Not Very Much Interested
- 1--Not At All Interested

## EXAMPLE:

5 4 3 2 1 1. Plan and help carry out a party for children at a nursery school.

If you would be Very Much Interested in this activity you would draw a circle around 5; if you would be Not At All Interested you would draw a circle around 1.

Go rapidly but carefully. Do not spend too much time on any one statement; respond and then go on. PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS.

On each page at the bottom of the statements there is a space for you to write in other learning experiences you might like to add to each listing.



Name of School \_\_\_\_\_

Town \_\_\_\_\_

Circle your grade: 6 7 8

Circle your sex: Boy Girl

5--Very Much Interested  
3--Somewhat Interested  
1--Not At All Interested

4--Quite A Bit Interested  
2--Not Very Much Interested

Circle the number (only one) for each statement that best tells your feelings:

1 2 3 4 5

1. Learn how food grows, how it is processed, transported and sold.

1 2 3 4 5

2. Investigate traditional food used in your home or a neighbors home. What is its origin? When is it traditionally served? What other foods are served with it?

1 2 3 4 5

3. Plan one meal or snack using non-fattening (low in calorie) food.

1 2 3 4 5

4. Compare the amounts of certain foods needed by 2 different age groups in your family--example: the amount of milk needed by a preschooler and a teenager.

## PAGE 2

5--Very Much Interested  
 3--Somewhat Interested  
 1--Not At All Interested

4--Quite A Bit Interested  
 2--Not Very Much Interested

1    2    3    4    5

5. Study several foods to see the number of ways in which each food can be purchased, which form costs the most, which is easiest to prepare, what forms are time savers.

1    2    3    4    5

6. Plan all meals and snacks for your family for one day and make a grocery order for these meals.

1    2    3    4    5

7. Study one food or food product, investigating the history, nutritive value (how good the food is for you), forms available in local stores, price comparisons, time involved in preparation--example: Orange and orange juice products.

1    2    3    4    5

8. Plan and prepare 3 different types of events where you will entertain guests. Example: birthday party, entertaining out-of-doors, after the game party.

1    2    3    4    5

9. Make different kinds of main dishes, cookies, cakes and breads.

OTHER things I would like to do that are related to the activities on this page:

PAGE 3

5--Very Much Interested  
3--Somewhat Interested  
1--Not At All Interested

4--Quite A Bit Interested  
2--Not Very Much Interested

1 2 3 4 5

10. Make a color wheel and plan a color scheme for a room in a house.

1 2 3 4 5

11. Collect objects that have a variety of textures and make a picture.

1 2 3 4 5

12. Look at interesting buildings in your community for difference in styles.

1 2 3 4 5

13. Look at various color arrangements and furniture arrangements for one room in a house.

1 2 3 4 5

14. Create a wall hanging or bulletin board.

1 2 3 4 5

15. Decorate a pillow or desk blotter.

1 2 3 4 5

16. Make a storage helper (shoeholder, covered boxes).

1 2 3 4 5

17. Do any of the following: Applique or piecework, weaving, macrame.

1 2 3 4 5

18. Review buying of household linens (towels, bedspreads).

1 2 3 4 5

19. Learn about information needed to purchase or construct window treatments (curtains, drapes).

## PAGE 4

5--Very Much Interested  
3--Somewhat Interested  
1--Not At All Interested

4--Quite A Bit Interested  
2--Not Very Much Interested

1 2 3 4 5

20. Decorate a wall or room  
area.

1 2 3 4 5

21. Plan a table setting.

1 2 3 4 5

22. Study the planning required  
to purchase an appliance or  
item of furniture.

OTHER things I would like to  
do that are related to the  
activities on pages 3 and 4:

## PAGE 5

5--Very Much Interested  
 3--Somewhat Interested  
 1--Not At All Interested

4--Quite A Bit Interested  
 2--Not Very Much Interested

1 2 3 4 5

23. Learn to make a simple blouse or shirt.

1 2 3 4 5

24. Make pillows and curtains for a room.

1 2 3 4 5

25. Learn how to operate sewing machines correctly and do different types of hand sewing.

1 2 3 4 5

26. Have a demonstration on phases of good grooming-- care of hair, make-up.

1 2 3 4 5

27. Make a sewing box.

1 2 3 4 5

28. Learn what fashions and styles of clothes look best on you.

1 2 3 4 5

29. Study what colors look best on you.

OTHER things I would like to do that are related to the activities on this page:

## PAGE 6

5--Very Much Interested  
 3--Somewhat Interested  
 1--Not At All Interested

4--Quite A Bit Interested  
 2--Not Very Much Interested

- |   |   |   |   |   |     |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|-----|--|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 30. | Select safe and appropriate toys for children.                           |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 31. | Make a toy chest for storage of toys.                                    |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 32. | Learn stories and games to teach to young children.                      |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 33. | Make a picture book for a child.   |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 34. | Watch a mother bathe a baby to learn how to care for the baby correctly. |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 35. | Learn how to hold and handle a baby correctly.                           |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 36. | Make a safe toy for a child.   |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 37. | Care for a child and report activities to your class.                    |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 38. | Visit a nursery to observe the children there and the things they learn. |

OTHER things I would like to do that are related to the activities on this page:

5--Very Much Interested  
 3--Somewhat Interested  
 1--Not At All Interested

4--Quite A Bit Interested  
 2--Not Very Much Interested

1 2 3 4 5

39. Visit a store and see the relationship between articles and their prices. Compare like products, and the way that they are packaged and priced.

1 2 3 4 5

40. Investigate the various types of checking accounts offered by the local bank and how your money is kept in the bank.

1 2 3 4 5

41. Investigate how much it would cost to own a pet.

1 2 3 4 5

42. Examine how much different hobbies would cost.

1 2 3 4 5

43. Make a list of things children and parents buy each day. Find out if there are any taxes included in the price. Find out where the tax goes and what services it helps provide.

1 2 3 4 5

44. Decide on qualities or features that are desirable for clothing that you might purchase--such as serviceability, comfort, beauty, pleasure, and care required.

OTHER things I would like to do that are related to the activities on this page:

PAGE 8

Circle the answers in the two questions below:

45. If there was only enough time to study the activities from one of these pages in this booklet, which page would you choose?

Pages 1 & 2

Pages 3 & 4

Page 5

Page 6

Page 7

46. If there was time to study the activities on only four out of the five sections, which would you leave out?

Pages 1 & 2

Pages 3 & 4

Page 5

Page 6

Page 7



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| <i>3 pm</i>    | <i>B.</i>                 |
| <b>2 WEEKS</b> |                           |
| <b>2 WEF</b>   |                           |

N378  
 M119  
 Cop 2