

CPU College Freshmen's Reasons for Taking the Course They Are Pursuing

*Elma S. Herradura **

What factors influence Filipino young men and women's choice of their college courses? In order to shed some light on this question, a survey was made of the reasons of the college freshmen of Central Philippine University of the school year 1973-1974. The reasons for the choice of one's college course were elicited as part of a questionnaire survey that was conducted among the freshmen of six colleges of the University; namely College of Arts and Sciences, Agriculture, Commerce, Education, Engineering, and Nursing. The freshmen were asked to complete the completion-

type item, "I decided to take the course I am taking now because . . ." Out of a total of 1,529 enrolled as "freshmen," 1,197 participated in the survey. Only 1,192 fully accomplished questionnaires could be included in the analysis of the data.

Each of the college groups was divided into the younger and older sub-groups. The younger students consisted of those who were born in 1955 and later; the older respondents included those born in 1954 and earlier. Each age subgroup was sub-divided into two--those who belong to the low socioeconomic group (from now on to be

*Dr. Elma S. Herradura is Dean, School of Graduate Studies, Central Philippine University.

referred to as the low SES sub-group) and those who belong to the high socio-economic group (from now on to be called the high SES sub-group.) The low SES sub-group was composed of students who got scores of 10.5 and less; the high SES sub-group made up of students who got scores of 11.0 and higher, in the Socio-Economic Scale.

Thirty questionnaires were randomly chosen for the purpose of establishing the categories that were used in the content analysis of the freshmen's responses. At first, twelve categories were established. The mutual exclusiveness and exhaustiveness of the twelve categories were further tested as the researcher content-analyzed more papers. One category "the course is in demand" was eliminated because it soon became evident that the respondents emphasized different things when they described a course as being "in demand," depending on what was emphasized by the respondent, his response was classified under either of two other categories. Two other categories were eliminated for a similar reason. A fourth was excluded when it became evident that there were not enough responses to warrant its being treated a separate category.

Each of the remaining eight categories was defined in terms of an anchor statement or phrase and in terms of typical statements tallied under the category. In order to check on the reliability of the categorization of the responses, the two members of the Social Science Research Unit of CPU were asked to make an independent content analysis of the responses of the Nursing and Agriculture students. A clerk then checked on the correspondence between the researcher's categorization and that of the independent content analysis. It was found that there was one hundred per cent correspondence between the two content analyses. This was probably because the two Social Science Unit researchers were using the detailed definitions of the categories that had been set up. A one-hundred per cent correspondence might not have been obtained on all the questionnaires. However, a very high percentage of correspondence could be safely presumed.

In the analysis of data, it was found necessary to obtain scores for various categories of responses, rather than frequencies of mention, for the various reasons:

Most respondents gave more than one reason for their choice of

a college course. Below the stimulus-phrase "I decided to take the course I am taking now because _____," was written "You may write your other reasons below, if **you had more than one reason.**"

This was done because the try-out studies showed that even when the students were asked only for one reason, the majority of them gave more than one, a fact clearly indicated that in most cases the student or his parent had more than one reason for their decision. If additional reasons had not been solicited, there would have been no way of knowing, which respondents had really only one reason and which ones gave only one reason simply because they were the type who follow instructions carefully. Since it was not easy to ignore the additional responses, it was decided to give all the respondents equal opportunity to give more than one reason, if they wanted to. In the final survey, the desire to give more than one answer was shown by the student's writing more than one answer on the space provided for the first reason. This indicated that even if their reasons had not been solicited, they would have given multiple reasons, anyway.

Since it was cumbersome to deal with three frequencies for each

category, it was decided to score each by giving a weight of 2 to the first-mentioned response and 1 to each additional reasons. Reasons after the third one were arbitrarily ignored.

FINDINGS

The three high ranking reasons for choosing a college course were the same for boys and girls, both when they were taken as whole groups and as age or SES sub-groups. However, only the first-ranking of these three reasons (suitability to the respondents abilities, personality, etc.) was given first by all sub-groups, except the high SES sub-group of boys who ranked this only second. This finding shows that even when students and/or their elders considered other important factors in choosing a college course, the primary consideration was the student's interest in the work, his aptitude and inclination for it and the feeling that he can intellectually cope with the course work. This interest or inclination was commonly expressed in phrases like "I enjoy working with people" (given by social work students), "It has always been my ambition to be a _____", "I

want to know more about _____ (a particular kind of work is mentioned) and I am sure I will succeed as a _____." Under "suitability to the respondent's abilities, aptitudes, personality" are included only those responses that clearly indicate the respondent's own inclination, interest, or desire. Responses like "My parents (or other elders) and I chose this course" and "I like this course. My parents like it too," were tallied under influence or urging of elders." The arbitrary decision to so classify such responses was made with cognizance of the fact that the choice could have been primarily been made by the student in view of his own inclination, abilities, and personality and was only endorsed by the elders for the same reason. Despite this, it was decided to categorize such replies under "elders' influence" because the mention of the parents' concurrence with the choice indicated that the child considered important his parents' opinion on the matter.

The next two most popular reasons of boys and girls were given different ranks by the two groups. The girls ranked economic considerations only third; this was the boys' second choice. Altruism, the third

choice of the boys, was the girls' second choice.

Among the boys, only the high SES sub-group did not rank second "economic consideration." Respondents whose replies were tallied under this category generally looked upon the college education on the whole, not necessarily the particular course they had chosen, as an avenue to economic security or at least to the improvement of the economic lot of the respondent and his family.

The sub-groups of girls un-animously chose altruism second. Responses tallied under altruism emphasized human welfare, service to God, fellowmen, community and country.

The reason that ranked fourth in importance as a determinant of the boys' and girls' choice of a career is the influence of elders. However, the figures in Tables I and II show that among both the boys and girls, it was a poor fourth. All the sub-groups of girls ranked this fourth, but the older and low SES sub-groups of boys ranked this sixth and fifth. Taken as a whole group, the boys gave this category fourth rank.

Among the girls, the first four reasons were given the same ranks

by the various age and SES sub-groups.

The other four reasons included in the analysis obtained low scores. It may be worth noting that "the course chosen being in line with the family's business" was a close fifth to "elders' influence" in the case of the boys' "Family business" was also ranked fifth by the girls. The last three reasons, viz., "the course is second only to the first choice which could not be

pursued for reasons," "desire to go abroad," and "it is an inexpensive course" got negligible scores among the boys as well as among the girls. Each of these last four reasons got about the same ranks among the various sub-groups of boys and girls. A rho of .91 was found between the boys' and girls' reasons, signifying substantial agreement between the two sex groups. The same extent of agreement was found between the older and younger boys

TABLE I
Scores and Ranks of Boys' Reasons for Choice of Courses

Reasons	Scores					Ranks				Whole Group
	Older	Younger	High	Low	Whole	O	Y	H	L	
1. Fitness for line of work (as to interest, inclination, intellectual abilities, personality)	75	212	64	223	287	1	1	2	1	1
2. Economic considerations (security, improvement of one's lot)	74	153	74	153	227	2	2	1	2	2
3. Altruistic reasons	34	107	40	101	141	3	3	3	3	3
4. Influence of elders	6	59	20	45	65	6	4	4	5	4
5. Preparation for helping with family business	10	51	14	47	61	5	5	5	4	5
6. First choice beyond reach	11	10	4	17	21	4	6	6	6	6
7. Avenue for going abroad	3	5	2	6	8	7	7	7	7	7
8. Low expenses involved	0	3	0	3	3	8	8	8	8	8

Full definitions and examples of these categories are given in the full report. The concise forms of the responses given above do not always adequately express the reasons included in each category.

as well as between the older and younger girls. ($\rho = .91$ in each case.) A slightly higher agreement was found between the SES groups ($\rho = .95$ between the two SES groups of boys and $\rho = .98$ between the SES groups of girls.)

A SUMMARY AND A COMMENTARY

Regardless of sex, age, and SES, the college freshmen tended to consider important three reasons in choosing their college courses;

suitability to their abilities, interests and personality; altruism; and economic considerations. Of paramount concern to all groups and sub-groups was one's fitness for the kind of work, in regard to interest, capacities, and personality. The development of this concern is a task of vocational guidance; in case of present respondents this task seems to have been accomplished. Altruism and economic considerations were ranked second and third by the girls and conversely by the boys. Parental influence was a poor

TABLE II

Scores and Ranks of Girls' Reasons for Choice of Courses

Reasons	S C O R E S				R A N K S					
	Older	Younger	High	Low	Whole Group	O	Y	H	L	Whole
1. Fitness for line of work	89	627	195	521	716	1	1	1	1	1
2. Altruistic reasons	68	592	191	469	660	2	2	2	2	2
3. Economic considerations	49	438	108	379	487	3	3	3	3	3
4. Influence of elders	16	119	24	111	135	4	4	4	4	4
6. Avenue for going abroad	4	45	14	35	49	7	5	5	5	5
6. Preparation for helping with family business	11	28	9	30	39	5	7	6	7	6
7. First choice beyond reach	7	31	7	31	38	6	6	7	6	7
8. Low expenses involved	2	12	3	11	14	8	8	8	8	8

Full definitions and examples of these categories are given in the full report. The abbreviated forms of the reasons here do not always adequately express the reasons included in each category.

fourth choice; this influence was reported by a greater proportion of the boys than of the girls. The latter fact seems contrary to the common belief that girls heed their parents' wishes more than the boys do.

That the girls gave slightly more importance to altruism than economic considerations, and that the boys did conversely, are not surprising. These findings seem to indicate the boys' anticipation of their role as bread winners. Heads-to-be of families naturally would be concerned with completing a college course which promises greater capacity for securing economic adequacy and stability. In a content analysis of adolescent high school boys and girls' compositions (in General Santos, Cotabato), de la Cruz¹ found that the boys had significantly more frequently made mention of materialistic or economic concerns than did girls.

The greater concern of the girls with humanitarian and altruistic considerations gives further support for the belief, championed by Ashley Montagu, that the female is the more humane of the sexes. "Women are the carriers of the true spirit of humanity — the love of the mother for her child."² Frank³ society, the family can still serve as the primary source of goals and standards while the adolescent shifts from a dependent to an independent role. If Frank's statement is valid, this finding implies that the Philippines, the Western Visayas (where most of CPU freshmen come from) to be more accurate, is not exactly tradition-bound but is a society in which traditions still play some part. "Parental influence" would probably have scored higher if this were a tradition-bound society. □

¹Juanita de la Cruz, "Likes and Dislikes (about Adults of Filipino Adolescents)" (unpublished Master's Thesis, Central Philippine University, Iloilo City, 1972)

²Ashley Montagu, *The Natural Superiority of Women* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1953).

³K. Frank, "The Adolescent and the Family," *Adolescence Forty-Third Yearbook, NSEE*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944), p.240.