

A STUDY OF HOME DEMONSTRATION WORK AMONG THE
WHITE RURAL FAMILIES OF WAKE COUNTY - 1947

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The purpose of the study was to determine the coverage of Home Demonstration work; to evaluate the effectiveness of the program itself, and the effectiveness of the Project Leaders in handling their share of the program.

Results of the study show a coverage of 14%. The sample shows that areas serviced by the 27 Home Demonstration Clubs differ widely from the county as a whole. A higher percentage of rural families have electricity, telephones, and running water, and in general a higher standard of living. Good attendance at meetings was evidence of interest in the program. 81% of the members attended regularly (8 per year). 19% who were irregular gave reasons as procrastination or small children at home.

The Home Demonstration Club interested more women in the 40-59 age group and those who have more education. 31% of members and 12% of non-members interviewed, had attended college, and 48% of members as compared with 29% of non-members have held positions carrying salaries.

Home Demonstration members are far more active in community clubs and organizations than non-members. One-third of the members had at one time been 4-H Club members. 55% of the members' children in contrast to 35% of non-members' children belong to a 4-H Club. From this we conclude that Home Demonstration Club membership influences children's 4-H membership. About half of the members have served as Neighborhood Leaders and three-fourths had, at some time, served as Project or organization leaders. The average number of years members have been affiliated with their clubs was 9-plus. The majority of members took advantage of services offered by the Health Department and other available county services.

Transportation to club meetings was not a problem for members or non-members. Almost one-fourth of non-members interviewed had at one time been a Home Demonstration Club member and 86% had been asked to join a club. Members are in closer contact with the home demonstration office and look to club meetings for new ideas on homemaking while non-members depend on radio and newspapers for homemaking information. 95% of the whole group interviewed have radios, 93% receive daily and weekly papers in their homes and 92% have farm magazines.

The test of an effective extension program is the extent to which those who participate actually change their behavior along the lines of extension objectives.

In this study practices were classified in subject matter areas and the tabulation showed that in changed practices there was an average of 1.5 areas per member. Practices changed most often were in the field of foods: meal planning, preparation, serving and canning. The field of house furnishing was second. The amount of education has little bearing on adoption of practices by members. There appears to be more association existing between age and changing practices than education, those under 40 adopted practices in more fields. The number of years a person has been a member of Home Demonstration Clubs is closely associated with practices adopted. Those members in the 6 to 10 year period adopted 9 or more practices.

It is interesting to note the degree of contact with the Home and Farm Agents and their offices in connection with changing or adopting practices. If the members have visited or telephoned the Home Demonstration Office for information, if the Home or Farm agents have visited their homes, if they know the Home and Farm Agents rather than the Home Agent only, and if they have received homemaking bulletins, they are more likely to have changed practices.

Of the demonstrations given at club meetings during the past year more members used those dealing with production and use of foods than clothing and house furnishings. Age is significant in determining the number of demonstrations used. For the 40 to 59 age group the average number of demonstrations used was 29. Standard of living as measured by the presence of labor and time-saving equipment is associated with the number of demonstrations the members used. 73% of members thought program belonged to the community and 26% thought it belonged to Home Demonstration Club members only. More than half of the members preferred that the club meet in community house rather than in homes because attendance was better. Members are cooperative in contacting non-members, inviting them to join the club and keeping records of ways they help non-members.

The test of the effectiveness of the project leader is seen in the results of the extension program. 86% of the members thought the leaders had strengthened the program. 75% of the members preferred that the Home Agent give the demonstration because she was better trained and had more materials and equipment at her command. However, two-thirds of the members recognized advantages of the leader as developing and inspiring leadership. A majority of the leaders think that the program is geared to the level of the people. They feel that they need more training but they do not object to the time and travel demanded of them, or that they are asked to give too many demonstrations. The responses indicated that from one-half to three-fourths of the membership attend meetings held by project leaders. The findings indicate that each leader had attended an average of two Leader Training Meetings, but that she gave only 1.1 demonstrations during the year. 36 out of 41 leaders stated that they had changed often enough for long tenure in office not to become noticeable.

Information of possible use in future program planning is shown in the findings dealing with needs in the homes and the communities. The majority of members and non-members listed their greatest need as more electric lines, more telephones and better roads. Better farm and home equipment and labor-saving devices as second, and better management of the home and farm as third.

In planning the Home Demonstration Club program, three-fourths of the members desire more active interest and participation by more of the members, better parliamentary procedure, and better planned local programs.

Home Demonstration Club leaders were used as enumerators. Three leaders from each of the 27 Home Demonstration Clubs in the county were selected by the home agent on the basis of intelligence, ability to talk with people and willingness to cooperate. Each leader filled out a schedule and interviewed one club member and three non-club members. The club members interviewed were chosen at random from the club rolls. The non-members were chosen by selecting at random on the map households shown on roads throughout the club areas.