

Research in Brief

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YOUNG HOMEMAKERS READ A BULLETIN

How much difference in bulletin readership does an explanatory cover letter make? Not much, according to a study of the *Clothes for Tots and Toddlers* Extension bulletin sent to young married women age 25 years and under who had children born in Dane County, Wisconsin, between March 1 and August 31, 1965.

Of the 843 women who fit these requirements, three sample groups of 50 each were drawn randomly. The first group received the bulletin and a regulation Extension enclosure from the Dane County home economics agent. The second received the bulletin and an explanatory cover letter. The third group served as a control and did not receive mailed material.

All 150 young mothers were contacted via 10-to-20-minute telephone interviews. The special cover letter did not appear to influence the women to either read or retain the information in the bulletin.

Most of the 100 young homemakers who received the bulletin read at least part of it. Eighty-seven recalled receiving it, 75 could briefly describe the contents, 66 read some of it, and 63 saved it.

When asked seven questions on key ideas in the bulletin, the 87 women who received and read the bulletin answered correctly significantly more often than did the 50 control-group women. However, there was a considerable range among both groups in the number of homemakers who could answer specific questions correctly.

Most found the bulletin to be of average or above-average interest. Several said it would likely be of great interest prior to or just after the birth of the first child (over half the women studied had more than one child). Selection of clothing for the various age groups was the information most often mentioned as helpful. Twenty-three said they would be willing to pay for the bulletin; 44 said they felt it was something that their friends with young children would like to have.

Most helpful sources of information on purchasing children's clothing were: mother (21 per cent), friends and neighbors (18 per cent), and salespeople (15 per cent). Less than 3 per cent listed bulletins and pamphlets; 12 per cent listed books, and 19 per cent magazines. Home economists and other professionals were seldom mentioned. Over a third of

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the women said they would have liked more help in selecting children's clothing than their sources of information had given them.

Conclusions

A carefully-selected bulletin is a fairly successful way to get educational information to young homemakers. The cover letter appeared to have little or no influence on the reading of the bulletin. Most of these young homemakers rely on nonprofessional sources of information. This suggests that training salespeople and enlisting their aid in distributing educational literature may be an effective tactic. Too, home economists have considerable to do to establish themselves as available sources of information for young adults.

Martha Lee York, "Extension Bulletins with and without a Cover Letter as a Way to Reach Young Homemakers with Educational Information." Unpublished M.S. thesis, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, 1966. From an abstract by Sara M. Steele.

TRAINEES—DO THEY LEARN?

The success of much educational work in Extension is evaluated on the basis of how the staff conducting the program feel it went. Here's an attempt to systematize and make more "objective" the evaluation of what happened to a group of 13 home economics majors in a Kansas summer preservice training program in 1966.

Women were given a "Knowledge of Extension" test before starting the training and again at the end of the nine-weeks' period. Result—all but one of them increased their test scores. Verdict—at least in the areas tested, the training program had the kind of effect the training staff had hoped for.

Analysis

This wasn't meant to be a high-powered study. But the ideas behind it and the general procedures are well worth examining. Too seldom do we use the procedure of testing knowledge and skills level before people start a training program, using these results to help us decide what we're going to have in the training program, and then checking after the program to see what happened to participants. Future and current trainees should benefit from such a procedure.

Phyllis E. Kemp, "Junior Assistant Home Economics Agents in Kansas—An Evaluation of the Kansas Preservice Training Program." *Extension Study* 3, Kansas Extension Service, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, April, 1967.

LEARNING FROM SHOWING

Most diffusion studies look at actual adoption of practices to see how effective an educational program or method has been. A recent study of a field demonstration in two Philippine barrios concentrated instead on knowledge, understanding, and attitude.

Demonstrations of various rice varieties and fertilizer treatments were

preceded and followed by interviews with 120 farmers. No significant increases in knowledge of rice varieties were found between the two interviews. However, knowledge of fertilizer use increased significantly among nonusers of fertilizers. Among farmers who typically had high yields, understanding of rice varieties and fertilizers did increase.

Although no attempt was made to call attention to the demonstrations, most farmers were aware of them. Many of these farmers had asked the farmer-cooperators about the fertilizer, cultural practices, and the new variety of rice being grown in comparison with standard varieties. Thus the demonstrations had an effect as a teaching tool. Interestingly enough, only about 2 per cent of the farmers mentioned the demonstration as a source of information. Those who talked with the cooperator placed him, not the demonstration, as their source of information. Obviously the demonstration did serve as the stimulus for the farmer to talk with the cooperator, however. And farmers did talk about the plant color, size, and nonlodging characteristics in the test plots. So they were also looking at the demonstration.

Too, it seemed that support of the demonstration through field days and meetings would be necessary if greater learning among the farmers were to occur. Farmers said they'd like to have the cooperator highly informed on the demonstration before and during its existence, and to have him tell them in detail about the demonstration prior to planting.

A negative aspect of the demonstration: farmers were very critical of the way the test plots were laid out. The research design of the plots had meant construction of levees. The farmers saw this as tedious, expensive, and wasteful of land. They didn't understand the need to control as many variables as possible. The researcher's recommendation is that future demonstrations, if possible, should avoid changing the size or shape of existing paddies on the cooperator's farm.

Leopoldo M. Villegas, "Field Demonstration: Its Effects on Level of Knowledge, Understanding, and Attitudes of Farmers about Choice of a Rice Variety and Use of Fertilizers." Unpublished Master's thesis, College of Agriculture, University of the Philippines, Laguna, Philippines, October, 1966.

TIME ON THEIR HANDS

"Kids don't have time these days to join 4-H." Fact or fiction? Fiction, at least among ninth and tenth graders in three schools in Howell County, Missouri. School officials administered questionnaires the first week in March, 1964. Data were obtained from 747 usable questionnaires. Subjects were asked to record their activities by 30-minute intervals between 4 and 10 P.M. for one designated weekday the previous week (one-fifth of the sample provided records for each weekday). Subjects were also asked to record their activities for the preceding Saturday by one-hour intervals between 6 A.M. and 10 P.M.

Unstructured recreational and leisure-time pursuits occupied the youth an average of over 4½ hours on Saturdays, plus slightly more than an hour on weekdays after school. Activities listed included reading for

pleasure, engaging in hobbies, participating in nonteam sports, listening to records and radio, talking on the telephone, attending socials and movies, dating, visiting, shopping, riding around, and loafing. Watching TV was the greatest single pastime on school days—about 1½ hours on the average. It slipped to fourth place on Saturday, but still occupied an average of two hours.

Doing chores at home and working for pay away from home took almost half a day Saturdays and not quite an hour during the week. Homework averaged 45 minutes on school nights and 20 minutes on Saturday. Twenty minutes a day were spent participating in organized activities of school, church, and other organizations.

Town youth clearly devoted more time to unstructured and organized leisure-time activities than did rural youth—partly because it took rural youth longer to get home from school. But rural youth also spent more time doing chores and working for pay outside the home.

Girls differed from boys in their use of time primarily in the greater amount of time they spent on personal grooming. Both rural and town girls spent about an hour Saturdays on personal grooming. On weekdays, town boys averaged four minutes on personal grooming, rural boys two minutes.

Interpretation

Putting the unstructured time with the TV viewing time, the average student spent over 2½ hours on weekdays and nearly 7 hours on Saturday in these activities. That's over 20 hours a week. Some of these activities undoubtedly are constructive. Some are not. Students need some unscheduled time to unwind from the rigors of school life. However, it does look as if an unusually large block of time is used for watching TV and for other passive enterprises. So the time for some organization such as 4-H is there.

Why, then, aren't more youth in organized youth programs? (Seventy-two per cent did belong to one or more youth organizations.) This research doesn't say. But personal preferences, situational obstacles, and social obstacles all could contribute. The challenge for the professional youth worker is to organize a program which will help remove these obstacles to increased participation.

Gilbert Rader, "A Survey of How Boys and Girls Use Their Time." Department of Extension Education, University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri, June, 1965. From an abstract by George P. Rowe.

MORE ERRONEOUS conclusions are due to lack of information
than to errors of judgment. —LOUIS BRANDEN