

Book Reviews

Agricultural Sociology. By Walter L. Slocum, 1962. Available from Harper and Brothers Publishers, New York, N.Y. 532 pp. \$7.50.

The focus of this book is agricultural; comparisons are made to non-farm life to provide a basis for better understanding the unique characteristics of American farm life. It emphasizes not only recent and emerging changes but also the social and cultural backgrounds against which such changes must be evaluated. The ever-increasing specialization within agriculture and the continuing decline in farm population means that there is a growing need for current systematic information about how farm people live and work.

To provide this information, the author has organized and interpreted the results of a half-century of research on the sociological aspects of agriculture and farm life. In the first part of the book he analyzes some of the significant characteristics, trends, and shifts in the farm population. In Part II our general cultural heritage is discussed. Such matters as nationality stock, patterns of settlement, and standards and levels of family living are traced as a background for understanding the diffusion of modern technology. The culture of the society is basically a product of social interaction, the author maintains. Those whose interactions give rise to modification in culture are conditioned and influenced by their own heritage.

Parts III and IV concern social processes and systems. Changes in transmitting culture to the new generation are discussed in light of the importance that institutions play in the socializing process (as compared to the family in earlier years). Social systems are discussed in relation to their value to agriculture. Farm people derive many values from participation in a great number of social systems. Consequently, it is necessary to understand these social systems and the structure of rural society as a basis for building action programs.

In Part V, the modern rural community is described as no longer an isolated social system. Today, rural communities are so complex that formal organization is required for effective social action. "The process of organizing a community for social action to solve its problems can be facilitated through the application of relevant principles based upon the findings of basic research in the social sciences," the author maintains.

Although the length of this book makes it somewhat difficult to keep all ideas in perspective, it can provide the Extension person who does not

have a background in rural sociology a basis for understanding changes occurring in agriculture. It can also help county Extension workers understand the basis for planning programs to meet needs of changing clientele.

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Youth: Change and Challenge. By Erik H. Erikson (ed.), 1962. Available from Basic Books, Inc., New York, N.Y. 284 pp. \$6.50.

How are young people to cope with the explosive potentialities of the twentieth century? This book recognizes that young people have grown up amidst all kinds of changes and not only take them for granted but perceive technological advances as a challenge. However, in a brief lifetime they appear to have been confronted with new challenges.

Due to the nature of the subject, this book reads like a guide map into the future. The writings of the 12 contributors give a broad overview of the basic nature of the world of change, the historical forces behind these changes, and analyzes the social awareness and needs of youth. Some perceptive insights on key psychological and environmental concerns of modern youth are given. An attempt is made to answer questions of particular concern to those who deal with young people on problems of work and careers in informal settings.

The theme of the book stresses the basic nature of change as it has evolved in the brief lifetime of today's youth. The content may be grouped into four sections. The first chapters give a panoramic look at youth as an "evolutionary and a generational, a societal, and a national phenomenon." (Such language is characteristic of the writings.) Two chapters constitute a condensed course in sociological thought and introduces a group of topics concerned primarily with American youth. In the last three chapters an international perspective is provided with a description of how Japanese, French, and Russian young people experience the major transitions in their societies.

Youth: Change and Challenge is not easy reading and is not a book that will give an immediate answer to problems; it may help in understanding them. It can give all Extension workers, regardless of their fields of interest, a discerning look into a possible future.

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Family Development. By Evelyn Millis Duvall, 1962 (second edition). Available from J. B. Lippincott, Philadelphia, Pa. 532 pp. \$8.75.

Eight predictable stages of the family cycle (from inception to the

closing years) are described as a series of tasks which must be accomplished by individual family members and by the family as a whole if it is to continue and grow as a unit. The book was designed to give the mature student a way of looking at family life and to functionally equip the professional worker with a greater knowledge of the people with whom he works.

Each chapter ends with a list of suggested activities designed to enrich one's understanding of personal and inter-family relationships, such as (1) a symposium involving people of different specific backgrounds, (2) a series of "talk-out" sessions as a basis for problem-solving, (3) listening to recommended documentary recordings, providing participants an opportunity to react either orally or written, (4) involving families in special discussion sessions and in conducting studies, and (5) reviewing selected books. Excellent ideas are projected for family relations programs even at the lay leader level. The text is supplemented by pictures, charts, graphs, and tables which add to the reader's understanding.

Duvall's descriptive treatment of the family's needs and interests in each stage of its life cycle aids in understanding the behavior patterns of families. This book incorporates results of several studies and the thinking of creative people concerned with family living. The use of repetition adds greatly to the reader's ability to understand the book's content.

In an era when we are destined to learn more about what activates people and to become more effective in our assistance to families, it seems that this book would be helpful to Extension workers at all levels.

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Educational Psychology. By Frederick J. McDonald, 1962. Available from Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., Belmont, California. 748 pp. \$6.95.

The central theme of this book is that the successful teacher is, and must continue to be, a maker and tester of hypotheses and that inquiry and critical thinking are the only effective means of improving teaching and advancing sound educational practice. Its primary thesis is that psychological generalizations for improving teaching have only conditional and probable validity for a given concrete teaching situation and, until proven, such generalizations must be regarded as tentative. Supporting theses are that: (1) education is a dynamic, ever-changing process; (2) the teacher is essentially a creator and organizer of learning experiences and situations; and (3) teaching and the character of personality development are closely related, intimately entwined, and interwoven processes.

Each of the four parts to this book has several chapters related to the total educational process. Part I deals with basic concepts and principles. Learning is defined and the school is related to the total environment. The role of the teacher is described as that of a decision maker and researcher and the educative act as including the formulation of educational objectives, the organization of learning experiences, and the evaluation of learning. Basic psychological concepts in analyzing, describing, and explaining human behavior are also explored.

Part II is concerned with learning and the development of personality. Needs are related to motivation. The part which experience, inference, and generalization play in concept formation and development are explored. These chapters emphasize the importance of identification, rewards, and reinforcement in the development of attitudes and values.

The evaluation of learning is considered in Part III from the standpoint of behavior change, classroom procedure, and the need for objectivity in score performance. In Part IV the school is described as a social system and the need and means for improving educational practice are identified.

A logical and systematic pattern of development is followed throughout. The book is particularly interesting and useful for those who see education as a dynamic, ever-changing process and desire to gain an understanding of broad educational principles. The primary strength of the book is its straightforwardness and its realistic approach to teaching. A possible weakness is that the book challenges and appears to be somewhat contradictory to much of the time-honored theoretical material written in support of the educational profession. This is certainly permissible, and perhaps even desirable; however, the author leaves the burden of rebuilding to the often groping practitioner. Those who are inexperienced in the educational field may become somewhat confused.

While the book appears to have definite value for the formal classroom teacher, it may have somewhat less meaning and value for the Extension teacher. Certain principles and psychological generalizations, which have only conditional and probable validity for informal teaching situations, would certainly need to be critically examined before they are accepted for Extension teaching.

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New Understandings of Leadership. By Murray G. Ross and Charles E. Hendry, 1957. Available from Association Press, New York, N.Y. 158 pp. \$3.50.

The authors undertake to provide "a relatively simple summary of

recent thinking and research on the nature and meaning of leadership." They present this summary in an effective, readable manner by (1) reviewing briefly some of the major theories concerning leadership, (2) referring to a large number of research studies, and (3) suggesting some obvious implications and applications of research findings. Attention is directed to practitioners in the field who face day-to-day needs for leadership training and development in the belief that resources are being used in "leadership training schemes with little or no awareness of the implications that emerge" from research such as is reviewed.

Part I sets the theoretical framework for the remainder of the book. Major areas include theories of leadership based on traits within the individual leader, functions of the group, and functions of the situation. It is the contention of the authors that any truly adequate conception of leadership involves elements from all three areas. "Attempts to separate and insulate such interdependent elements are as futile as they are arbitrary. Leadership is an interactional phenomenon and it is this view that constitutes the thesis of this book."

Research findings are presented in Part II under three major headings: (1) what the leader must do, (2) what the leader must be, and (3) group factors affecting leadership. Each is treated in a manner that should be interesting and useful to any reader who desires practical information in leadership training and development.

In Part III, research findings reported in Part II are applied to leadership implications in practical situations. The theoretical framework of Part I guides these applications and calls attention forcefully to the limitations of piecemeal research results in understanding leadership and in developing training programs. The authors point out that "what is done in each of these practical situations is not dependent merely upon the situation, as we may have tended to imply, but also upon the philosophy of the leader, or the organization or agency.

Applications of research findings that are suggested are not as clearly related to leadership situations in Cooperative Extension as to those in industry, the military, or elective positions. This is not a serious deterrent, however, since the authors move lucidly through the situations discussed. A transfer of ideas from the situation under consideration to those faced in many other areas is not difficult.

This entire book should aid anyone who is interested in a clearer understanding of the nature and meaning of leadership. In addition to about 125 pages of textual material, the bibliography should be a valuable guide to further study.

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