

Research in Brief

R. L. BRUCE, *editor*

AT THE START of this enterprise it seems appropriate to say a word or two about the purposes of this feature and the methods we will use in trying to achieve those purposes. First of all, we recognize that the practice of Extension Education (or whatever name *you* apply to our profession) is still more art than science. In the absence of demonstrated fact, we often must rely on supposition. This feature will be an attempt to supply tested information on which practice can be based. Second, we will try in this space to call to your attention information which may not have been available to you otherwise. We will try not to duplicate other excellent sources of this sort of data. Finally, we will deliberately try to call your attention to varied sources of information and help.

To do this, we plan to offer six to eight brief abstracts in succeeding issues. For the most part, these will be reports of research with direct relevance to Cooperative Extension, but a few will be from other fields and will be less directly related. We will give full source data so that you can get more details if you want them. Most items will be from recent studies.

For this feature to be a success, two things are needed: (1) a large volume of possible studies from which to select and (2) someone to select and abstract them. If you will pass along material which you feel will be appropriate to this column, we will take care of the rest. The selection must be somewhat arbitrary, but we welcome your criticisms and suggestions on that score as well.

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RETENTION OF 4-H CLUB MEMBERS

THIS STUDY was an effort to identify some of the factors influencing the retention of senior 4-H Club boys in Hamilton County, Tennessee. All senior boy 4-H Club members (73) attending the April meeting and senior boy 4-H Club dropouts (92) in attendance at the school the same day (at five high schools in Hamilton County) were interviewed in April, 1964.

The findings indicated that the following factors appeared to be influ-

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ential in the retention of senior 4-H Club boys: (1) active participation in 4-H Club work; (2) some definite recognition received for 4-H Club work; (3) membership of friends in the same 4-H Clubs; (4) a sufficient number of home visits from agents and leaders; and (5) mothers not working outside of the home.

The following factors appeared to be related to losses in 4-H Club membership: (1) lack of sufficient interest in 4-H Club projects and activities; (2) participation in activities other than 4-H; (3) interference of high school work; and (4) teasing by nonmembers.

Some values associated with 4-H Club work, in order of frequency of mention, included: (1) learning through projects; (2) participating in general 4-H Club activities; (3) enjoying fellowship; (4) learning to become better citizens; (5) participating in meetings; (6) attending camp; (7) learning to speak in public; and (8) developing leadership qualities. Certain things which tended to keep members from receiving maximum benefit from 4-H Club work, most of them related to the adequacy of meetings, projects, and activities, were listed.

W. F. Rouse, "Factors Influencing Retention of Senior 4-H Club Boys in Hamilton County, Tennessee." M.S. thesis, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tenn., 1964.

INTERVIEWS WITH PARENTS of members and leaders of four 4-H Clubs in Stevens County, Washington, were analyzed in an attempt to determine the reasons for dropout or re-enrollment. The clubs, two with the highest and two with the lowest dropout rates in the county, were composed of members older than 14 years.

Primary factors associated with dropout were activities other than 4-H, and high school activities and homework. Associated with re-enrollment were adequate leadership, recreation and social activities, parent or leader interest in projects, importance of 4-H to parents, and meetings held in members' homes.

Of additional interest, because they contradict other studies, were findings that the average age of first enrollment was lower for "high" dropout members than for "low," and that the dropout or re-enrollment of friend apparently had little effect.

Frank W. Stowe, Jr., "Reasons for Dropouts and Re-enrollments by Older 4-H Club Members in Stevens County, Washington." M. Ext. special problem, Washington State University, Pullman, Wash., 1963.

RETENTION OF HOMEMAKERS IN PROGRAMS

WOMEN WHO DID NOT re-enroll in Chautauqua County, New York, home demonstration units for the 1960-61 program year were compared on a number of characteristics with 1958 and 1962 members. Compared to the 1958 membership, dropouts were somewhat younger, had somewhat higher income, were slightly more likely to be employed, and less likely to live on farms. They were similar in marital status, and in educational level. The dropouts tended to belong to more organizations and to

have fewer years of membership in home demonstration units than the 1962 membership.

Slightly less than half of the dropouts held no leadership position during their membership. Average number of persons per household was 3.8. Almost half were in Stages II (children under 10) and III (one or more children under 10 and one or more between 10 and 19) of the family cycle. About one-fourth had had no formal training in home economics, but about one-half had some home economics in high school. [No comparative data are offered on these last points, so it is unknown whether the dropouts differed from the general membership.]

The authors feel that the study supports work with temporary and special interest groups, and that effort to attract younger women and non-farm women is in order.

P. M. Coolican and F. D. Alexander, *Study of Dropouts in Chautauqua Home Demonstration Membership in 1959-60*. Extension Study No. 5, Office of Extension Studies, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y., June, 1964.

RADIO AND TELEVISION BEHAVIOR

IN FOUR AREAS in Kansas the most influential persons and farmers living within those areas were identified. A radio and television time and program preference questionnaire was mailed to all the identified influentials and to a random sample of farmers. There was a high correlation between influentials and farmers in their liking news and weather and other informational programs. Among the cultural and educational programs, influentials favored programs of a more general long-range nature and farmers favored those with a more immediate economic or family application.

More than 60 per cent of both groups said a convenient radio listening time was on week day mornings from 6:30 to 7:30. Influentials claimed 12:00 to 12:30 noon and after 7:00 P.M. was about half as convenient, while farmers said these two periods were nearly as convenient as the morning period. Younger influentials started listening to radio earlier in the evening than the others, and a higher percentage of younger farmers listened after 7:00 in the evening.

Convenient television periods also were 6:30 to 7:30 A.M., 12:00 to 12:30, and after 7:00 P.M. Morning and noon viewing peaks were higher for farmers than for influentials, and for younger than for older farmers. Sunday afternoon was more convenient for radio for both groups than other afternoons. For television, it was more convenient for influentials and nearly as convenient for farmers as the mid-week, noon-time period.

The author concludes that radio and television programs which reach farmers in these four areas should also reach influentials since their claimed convenient times to receive these programs and their program preferences are quite similar. The high percentages, particularly of younger men, who claimed the evening as convenient for both radio and television indicates that these media may not be as exclusive as is popularly supposed. He also concludes that Extension should take advantage,

when possible, of both media in the evenings and on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. [No evidence is presented, however, as to whether these audiences will select Extension programs in preference to entertainment during these hours.]

C. A. Rogers, "Radio and Television Programming Preferences of Influentials and Farmers in Four Areas of Kansas." M.S. thesis, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kans., 1964.

LEARNING CAPACITY OF ADULTS

THE QUESTION OF WHAT HAPPENS to learning capacity as an individual ages has great importance to Extension workers. Early work in the area of intelligence testing assumed that mental growth leveled off during adolescence. Later tests demonstrated that growth did continue at least into early adulthood, but did not distinguish among the several kinds of mental abilities.

Bradway and Thompson analyzed data on 111 young men and women who had been tested as pre-schoolers in 1931, as adolescents in 1941, and as young adults in 1956. Among their findings are several that may be of interest. The investigators found a general increase in mental abilities from adolescence to adulthood. The greatest increases were in vocabulary and abstract reasoning abilities, with somewhat lesser increases in practical reasoning and memory. This did not appear to be affected by the amount of formal education received. Female subjects demonstrated a greater growth in mental ability from preschool to adolescence than did the males, but showed less increase from adolescence to adulthood.

While this study does nothing to alter our beliefs about the interest of the adult learner in "practical" matters, it does present evidence that the ability to learn abstract concepts actually increases at least into early adulthood. This means that any barriers to adults' learning basics are likely to come from lack of interest rather than from inability to deal with abstractions.

K. P. Bradway and C. W. Thompson, "Intelligence at Adulthood: A Twenty-Five Year Follow-Up," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, LIII (1962), 1-14. Also reproduced in Richard E. Ripple, *Readings in Learning and Human Abilities* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964).

A THOROUGHLY capable employee hardly ever harbors jealousy. Almost always the supremely able are eager to help others. Thus they win good will. Jealous individuals are rarely picked for promotion. Many a man has been chosen as chief executive because he has won the warm loyalty of all his co-workers.

—from B. C. FORBES as quoted in *Forbes*, XCIII
(April 1, 1964), 66.

A MOMENT'S INSIGHT is sometimes worth a life's experience.
—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.