

## Research in Brief

ROBERT L. BRUCE, *editor*

### INFLUENCE OF ADULT EDUCATION ON ADOPTION

Studies of adoption of practices have typically measured the educational variable only in terms of years of school completed. Results have generally shown little or no relation between level of education and tendency to adopt new practices.

A somewhat different view is afforded by a recent study conducted by the University of British Columbia. Respondents in the study were 145 orchardists in the Okanagan Valley of British Columbia. Four specific educational activities were isolated in which the orchardists had had an opportunity to participate: (1) general adult courses; (2) adult courses in agriculture; (3) District Hall Chautauqua (a group method used by the Department of Agriculture to inform orchardists about new practices); and (4) district horticulturist discussion groups.

General adult courses were attended by 40 per cent of the respondents, but attendance was not significantly related to adoption. Attendance at adult agricultural classes was reported by 42 per cent of the innovators and early adopters, 7.4 per cent of the early majority, 7.1 per cent of the late majority, and 13 per cent of the laggards, indicating a significant relationship. Substantial numbers of all categories, ranging from almost all of the innovators and early adopters down to about one-fourth of the laggards, attended the specifically horticultural activities. Percentages attending District Hall Chautauqua were: innovators and early adopters, 85; early majority, 74.6; late majority, 56.5; and laggards, 25. Comparable percentages for district horticultural discussion groups were 90, 74.6, 60.5, and 21.7, respectively. Significant positive relations were found.

In general, adult education activities were found to be more highly correlated with adoption ( $r = .37$ ) than were such measures as educational level ( $r = .11$ ). Adult education activities designed for the particular audience yielded still higher coefficients of correlation (not cited in the study report), suggesting to the authors that amount of education is not as significant as recency and relevance in securing adoption.

As in most such studies, the relationships are weak and the direction of causality is in doubt. They do suggest areas for further exploration.

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Certainly the treatment of adult education activity as a discrete variable would be a useful feature in future adoption research.

Coolie Verner and Frank W. Millard, *Adult Education and the Adoption of Innovations by Orchardists in the Okanagan Valley of British Columbia*. Rural Sociological Monograph No. 1, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C., 1966.

#### FAMILY DECISION MAKING IN LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

Joint decision making involving both husband and wife (sometimes viewed as an ideal in Extension programs) is not necessarily a mark of success on the part of the family, according to a study recently conducted with low-income families in the South.

A total of 1405 low-income rural families was studied. As expected, families with low income and low level of living were found to be very low in joint decision making. On the other hand, many of the families with *high* joint decision-making scores were also in the lowest income category. Families with middle-level scores on joint decision making were the ones with the highest incomes and highest levels of living.

The author reasons that families with limited resources may be often faced with choices between spending money on the farm or on the home. With higher income, a purchase for the farm need not rule out one for the home, and vice versa. This, in turn, may free the higher-income family to specialize its decision-making roles.

The more education the wife has, the higher her earned income if she works outside the home, and the more likely she is to share in decisions.

Wives in families with high joint decision-making scores tended to show higher levels of anomia (pessimistic attitude) and to be less willing to borrow money for any purpose—neither attitude felt to be conducive to adaptation to change. The middle range on joint decisions was again the more promising from the standpoint of change. Wives in this group were less pessimistic and more willing to borrow money—at least for business purposes.

Obviously, the effects demonstrated may be the effect of level of income rather than of presence or lack of family consensus. It is equally evident, however, that a moderate amount of separate decision making is compatible with economic well-being and ability to adapt to change.

Benjamin E. Haddox, *Joint Decision-Making Patterns and Related Factors among Low-Income Rural Families*. Southern Cooperative Series Bulletin 109. Agricultural Experiment Stations of Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. Issued by Mississippi Agricultural Experiment Station, State College, Mississippi, 1965.

#### LEADERS' OPINIONS ON EXTENSION AND RESEARCH

Just what do the leaders with whom the Land-Grant University works expect of it and of its various branches? Pretty nearly what the University expects of itself, if a pair of Washington State studies is any indication.

In a study of the opinions of 398 faculty members and administrators

from Washington State University, 133 public leaders, and 207 agricultural leaders, it was found that most respondents agreed on the need for increasing emphasis on basic research and on a variety of other topics affecting the programs of the University.

For example, responses indicated that influentials, interest group representatives, and political leaders were in slightly stronger agreement with the need for basic research than was the University faculty. Agricultural leaders supported the idea by a 2:1 majority. On the question of coordinating all university extension programs, about 70 per cent of the leaders supported the idea in some degree, compared to 55 per cent of the faculty.

The question of expansion of Extension into urban areas caused some division among leader groups, but again faculty opinions paralleled those of leaders as a whole. Influentials, political leaders, economic dominants, social participational leaders, and agricultural leaders tended to disagree with this direction of movement. Interest group leaders supported it, and university faculty fell in between.

When queried as to whether agricultural extension should be limited to a production-type program, 47 per cent of the public leaders, 53 per cent of the faculty, and 63 per cent of the agricultural leaders felt that it should not.

E. C. Ericson, *Public Leader and Faculty Attitudes on University Research and Extension*. Washington Agricultural Experiment Stations Bulletin 654, Washington State University, Pullman, Washington (undated) and E. C. Ericson, *Agricultural Leaders' Opinions on Extension and Research*. Washington State Experiment Stations Circular 434, Washington State University, Pullman, Washington (undated).

#### EFFECT OF GRADUATE WORK IN EXTENSION

The practical value of graduate level courses for Extension field workers is sometimes questioned by the people who teach the courses, as well as those who take them. One example of short-range evaluation is a recent study conducted at Virginia Polytechnic Institute.

In this study agents enrolled in two courses in a special graduate program were paired on a number of variables with agents who had not taken the courses. Both groups (36 agents in all) were interviewed. Ten open-ended questions were asked in each area of study. Interviews were tape recorded and scored by the instructors in the courses. The courses involved were Program Development and Group Dynamics.

Agents who had taken the courses scored significantly higher than non-enrollees on knowledge of selected concepts, on vision of needed adjustments in Extension programming, and on understanding of their professional roles. The enrollees scored about 20 per cent higher than non-enrollees on the two sub-tests, and in only 5 of the 36 comparisons did the non-enrollee equal or better the score of his experimental counterpart.

While a study of actual agent performance at some later date might be desirable and is recommended by the author, this study demonstrates

the feasibility of short-range evaluations to provide indications of success and bench marks for further study.

John B. Shyrock, "A Comparative Analysis of the Effect of Special Graduate Study on Selected Extension Agents Responsible for 4-H Club Work in Virginia." Unpublished M.S. thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Blacksburg, Virginia, March, 1966.

#### FIRST YEAR 4-H LEADERS

Regional studies aimed at finding out why 4-H leaders drop out after short periods of service continue to be reported. The findings are of interest because participating states have often supplemented the studies with additional data, larger samples, or both.

Latest to be reported from the Northeastern region is the New York phase of the study. In addition to finding out what factors were associated with continuing or dropping out of 4-H work, this study attempted to get at the relationships among various leader characteristics and to get an evaluation of leader performance.

Almost half of the leaders tested were in their 30's. Almost three-fourths of them were women. Less than one-fifth were urban, and the remainder were almost evenly divided between farm and non-farm. Almost four-fifths had completed high school and a little over a third had gone beyond. Slightly more than four-fifths continued into a second year of leadership.

None of the personal characteristics of leaders was found to be significantly related to their dropping out or continuing. Although the association in all cases was weak, six factors were found to be associated with dropping out:

1. Small club.
2. No other leader in club.
3. Short service as leader.
4. Expectation of short tenure as leader.
5. Not attending at least one county-wide training meeting.
6. No training at any meeting.

Among other results of interest was the finding that men and women leaders differ in personality as do urban and rural leaders. Leaders differ from the general population as well, with men leaders being significantly different on 8 of 16 factors and women leaders differing on 10.

In general, there was agreement between leaders and agents as to the jobs leaders should and should not be performing.

Frank D. Alexander, *Study of First-Year 4-H Club Leaders in New York State*. Extension Study No. 12, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y., 1966.

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AT NO TIME in the history of the world have so many people had so much; and in a way this is frightening. I suppose this comes from something my mother dinned into my head night and day: "It's bad when things are too good." —HARRY GOLDEN.