

Research in Brief

MASON E. MILLER, *editor*

DEALING WITH A "LONE WOLF"

Extension workers often run into a "hard nut to crack"—a person who opposes even widely-supported programs. This study suggests several things to keep in mind while dealing with such an "opponent" in a group-discussion setting.

First, he can sometimes influence others greatly—even if he's a minority of one. You often can't afford to ignore him. Second, you may have better luck converting him to the majority view if you let him speak his piece. Attempts to silence debate may even make him grow more adamant.

The Study in Brief

Respondents were students in an undergraduate college speech course. First step was a test of attitudes on two issues: capital punishment and the grading system. From this test, only students with quite extreme "pro" or "con" attitudes were chosen for the experiment.

Students were placed in groups of four, each dealing with one of the two issues. Some groups had three members who were "pro" on the issue in question, and one member who took a "con" stand. An equal number of groups had three "con" and one "pro" members. Each experimental group was then assigned to one of four conditions:

1. *Opinion declaration only*—Here each member gave a number showing how "pro" or "con" he was. Numbers ran from 0 (strongly opposing capital punishment or grading, whichever was the issue) to 10 (strongly "pro"). The "lone wolf" ("pro" member in a "con" group, or vice versa) spoke last. No discussion took place.
2. *15-minute discussion opinion declaration*—Respondents first discussed the issue for 15 minutes. Then each person orally announced his own opinion as described above in the "opinion declaration only" group.
3. *15-minute discussion only*—Respondents held a 15-minute discussion. They were not forced to announce personal opinions (though some may have done so, anyway).
4. *25-minute discussion only*—Here group members discussed the issue for 25 minutes. They were not forced to announce their own views.

MASON E. MILLER is Director, Institute for Extension Personnel Development, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan 48823.

After the discussion and/or announcement of opinions, group members took an attitude test (the same one taken before the session) to indicate where they stood *privately* on the issue.

Some Key Findings

First, the 25-minute discussion (group 4) and opinion declaration after a 15-minute discussion (group 2) both led members to develop more moderate views than they had before. "Pro" members became less strongly pro, "con" members less strongly con. As a result, agreement within these groups increased.

Second, the 15-minute discussion without opinion declaration (group 3) led to little or no moderation of views. Perhaps the 15-minute discussion didn't allow enough airing of views to greatly change member attitudes. The 25-minute discussion (group 4) apparently did.

Third, declaring opinions without discussion (group 1) brought little or no moderation of beliefs. In fact, there was a slight tendency for *deviates* to *deviate even more strongly* when forced to declare their views. Perhaps it seems unfair when one must declare his position with no chance to elaborate, to defend himself, or to challenge others. *Deviate* may refuse to "give in" to group pressure when placed under such conditions.

Fourth, attitude change depends not just on what happens in a meeting, but on many factors—and many people—outside the meeting room. In the study, people who were "pro" before the discussion, changed more toward a neutral view than did people who were "con" to start with (though this finding wasn't statistically reliable). Students lived in a liberal social setting—one where most folks *opposed* both capital punishment and traditional grading. Thus "pro" respondents may have felt "pressure" to change, both from society and from friends outside the meeting room.

Some Implications for Extension

The deviate can often influence others, even when he stands alone. The study doesn't tell why, but it's interesting to speculate. Maybe many people lean over backwards to "hear out" minority-group members. Maybe a progressive young farmer attracts attention within a group of conservative oldsters simply because his views are novel. In either case, the deviate may have an attentive audience.

You often can't convert a "lone wolf" by forcing him to publicly declare a stand without discussion.

The longer the discussion continues, up to a point at least, the more agreement you're apt to get—that is, provided the discussion goes smoothly. People, like politicians, often quit listening to each other when they argue heatedly.

One may pressure people to change by pointing out how their views conflict with basic, widely-held values of society. This could apply pressure on the deviate from society as a whole, as well as from other group

members. For example, capital punishment might be linked to values about "humaneness," "Christian charity," and "fair play."

Abstracted from Theodore Grove, "Attitude Convergence in Small Groups," *Journal of Communication* (December, 1965). Prepared by Louis-P. Albert, Hugh M. Culbertson, and Mason E. Miller.

NEW AUDIENCES VIA TV

Some advantages of teaching sewing by TV are: (1) you reach a large audience, (2) you reach a new audience made up of many women who are not regular users of Extension services, (3) you can reach across county lines, and (4) women can learn sewing this way and enjoy it.

These advantages are cited in a study of a 14-week series taught by a Pennsylvania county home economist to 1200 enrolled women and others in 18 northeastern Pennsylvania counties and 3 New York counties. Some 251 viewers were mailed questionnaires, and 24 were interviewed personally.

Most respondents were urban, had sewed before, were new to Extension, were young or middle age, and had children at home. One in 10 worked away from home. Seventy-three per cent reported having viewed over half the telecasts, while 26 per cent viewed all of them. Main reason given for enrolling was to learn new techniques.

There was evidence that the specially prepared workbook the enrollees received was a major factor in the success of the program. The plan was that viewers would make both a skirt and a blouse. Garments were completed by 102 of 216 respondents.

Suggestions for improving the series were: (1) allowing enough TV time so that each subject or step could be treated adequately and clearly, and (2) giving viewers a chance to call in questions and have steps repeated if necessary.

Howard J. Bonser, "Teaching Sewing by Television." *Extension Studies* No. 35, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania, June, 1966.

4-H LEADER COMMUNICATION STYLE

Authoritarian or democratic—which should a 4-H leader be? In this study, the researcher looked at the question from the view of communication behavior of these two types of leader.

Subjects were 160 4-H Club leaders in Montana. These leaders were tested as to their degree of authoritarianism or democratic orientation. Twenty-one who answered most democratically and 21 who answered most autocratically were asked to lead their 4-H groups in a discussion. Discussions were taped so the author could analyze the leader's communication behavior later. Members were asked to respond as to how satisfied they were with the discussion.

Authoritarian leaders made significantly more attempts to answer the discussion questions; democratic leaders more frequently assisted the

group in finding a group solution. Democratic leaders made significantly more attempts to encourage participation in the discussion by group members. They asked more questions of the group, offered more alternatives, and did more speculating about the problem under discussion than did the authoritarian leaders.

Authoritarian leaders tended to engage in more communication. However, in terms of leader participation or nonparticipation in the group, there was no difference between the two leader styles. In both groups, there were leaders who participated actively in the discussions, and leaders who were essentially nonparticipants.

Members did not seem to be more satisfied with the group under one style of leadership than under the other. In general, the findings support the general notions that differences between authoritarian and democratic leaders are observable.

James F. Sargent, "Differences in Communication Behaviors of Authoritarian and Democratic Leaders." Unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Communication, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, 1967.

AREA POSITIONS—WHO'LL PICK UP THE TAB?

With Extension's move to more and more area specialists in agriculture, the problem arises of how to finance these positions. Figuring that counties would have to lend financial support to expand such positions, the researcher in this Kansas study asked 29 county commissioners, 34 Extension executive board members, and 50 selected county farm leaders from 10 counties how they felt about the idea of area specialists.

Overall, the respondents favored more area specialists—although not strongly. Fourteen strongly agreed there is a need for area specialists, 69 agreed, and 17 failed to recommend the addition of area specialist positions. Farm leaders and board members were more favorable than were the commissioners.

Fifty-five per cent of the 113 respondents indicated that the county and state should cooperate to support financially any added area positions. Again, the county commissioners differed: only 38 per cent indicated that county and state should do the financing, and 14 per cent indicated that individuals receiving the educational service should pay. Some 14 per cent of the commissioners said that some combination of state and individual financing was desirable.

Persons with previous contact with area specialists were a bit more favorable to the idea of additional area positions than were those with no such contact. And the younger the respondent was, the more likely he was to recommend there be more area positions.

Farmers indicated that when problems arose, they wanted these solved immediately. The author believes that new two-way communication devices such as two-way radio may be needed if area specialists are to meet this demand.

Location of the area specialist—in the respondent's county or in

another one—seemed to be relatively unimportant. However, if county funds are to be involved, local people will have to be convinced that the area specialist is needed and is available to anyone who needs him, that the method of finance is fair, and that his services are worth the county funds allocated for his support.

Eugene Ross, "Factors Affecting the Allocation of County Resources to Area Specialist Positions in Kansas." Extension Service Publication ES-2, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, February, 1967.

TOP SCHOLAR, TOP EMPLOYEE?

This is a review of 46 studies concerned with the relationship between college grades and adult achievement. The studies were in the areas of business, teaching, engineering, medicine, scientific research, miscellaneous occupations, studies of eminence, and nonvocational accomplishments.

It appears from the review that the criteria and measuring devices used for relating success to post-college achievement have not been adequately defined or tested. Yet the evidence given indicates that college grades have little, if any, actual relationship to adult success in the occupation areas studied. If this is true, it reinforces Extension's general hiring approach of looking at many other "indicators" of a person's abilities—as well as looking at his scholastic achievement.

In the studies relating college grades to teaching success, some relationships did exist between grades in student teaching and success as a teacher after graduation from college. Additional research studies are needed in the whole area of college grades and adult achievement.

Donald P. Hoyt, "The Relationship between College Grades and Adult Achievement—A Review of Literature." American College Testing Program, ACT Research Report #7, Iowa City, Iowa, September, 1965. Abstract by Phyllis E. Kemp, Kansas State University.

THE SWEETEST PLEASURES I have enjoyed have flowed out of my work. I have done much work that was drudgery and its immediate effect was deadening and dispiriting, but life has mostly been good to me, and has presented me with zestful tasks. I do not know how to advise any one to find happiness, but I do suggest that they seek it in doing their immediate job well. Within the limits of their daily work, I recommend that the effort toward perfection be conscientious and persistent. I have observed people in all trades and in all elevations, and I do not recall a single instance of a thoroughly good workman who was a thoroughly unhappy man.

—WILLIAM FEATHER