

The Personality of 4-H Leaders

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A sample of 527 first-year 4-H leaders in New York State responded to questions which were used in determining their scores on 16 personality factors.¹ Male and female first-year leaders were compared to males and females in the general population. Male leaders were also compared with female leaders. The possible influences on personality scores of 1) place of residence and 2) agreement between agent and leader on the tasks leaders should perform were examined. Those who scored at the extreme ends on personality factors were studied separately to see if they were more or less likely than the average leader studied to continue in 4-H. Differences were discovered that deserve the attention of professionals working with volunteer leaders.

SINCE ONE OF THE main objectives of the 4-H program is personal development, the impact of the leader's personality on boys and girls who participate is probably the most significant influence which the program exerts on their development. Yet the diffused nature of this influence makes it difficult to measure the impact. A description level of personality characteristics is an initial step toward a better understanding of adult 4-H leader influence. Awareness of

¹Material for this article is taken from Frank D. Alexander, *Study of First-Year 4-H Club Leaders in New York State—Tenure, Characteristics of Leaders and Evaluation of Job Performance by 4-H Agents*, Extension Study No. 12 (Ithaca, New York: Office of Extension Studies, Cornell University, 1966). Data for this report were obtained from a Northeastern Regional Study of First-Year 4-H Leaders. Findings of the regional study are presented in Laurel K. Sabrosky, *A Report of a Study to Determine Factors Associated With the Tenure of First-Year Local 4-H Club Leaders, 1961-1962 in 11 Northeastern States* (Washington, D.C.: Division of Extension Research and Training, Federal Extension Service, USDA, 1964).

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these characteristics should yield clues to the nature of the personality models with which 4-H boys and girls are confronted.

Constructing a frame of reference for a better understanding of 4-H leaders is the goal of this article. This will be attempted through description and analysis of the personality characteristics of a sample of first-year 4-H leaders in New York State. Admittedly, these findings cannot reveal the total picture. It is not known to what extent first-year leaders typify all 4-H leaders; nor is it known what impact certain personality characteristics have on boys and girls. We shall have to be content to learn a little more about the personalities of a selected segment of leaders.

Of the 54 counties in New York State having 4-H programs in the fall of 1961, 19 were randomly selected and all first-year leaders in these counties were designated as the study population. Of the 607 eligible leaders, questionnaires and personality tests were obtained from 527. "Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire, Form C," designed by Cattell, Saunders, and Stice of the Institute for Personality and Ability Testing was used. These 16 personality factors which constitute the focus of this analysis are in reality factor continuums (see Table 1). The midpoints of these continuums may

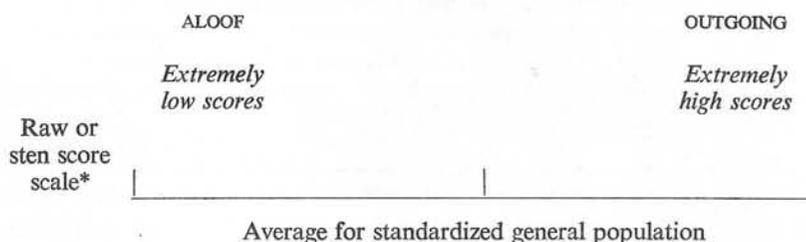
Table 1. Per cent of first-year 4-H leaders scoring at extremes of 16 personality factors, New York State, 1961.

Personality factors (lower end/upper end)	Per cent of sample at extreme	
	Lower end of factor scale	Upper end of factor scale
Conventional/eccentric	15	1
Aloof/outgoing	13	2
Glum/enthusiastic	10	4
Dependent/self-sufficient	9	3
Lax/controlled	9	2
Submissive/dominant	9	5
Emotional/mature	6	5
Conservative/experimenting	5	5
Simple/sophisticated	5	2
Low/high general ability	4	3
Stable/tense	4	8
Timid/adventurous	4	4
Tough/sensitive	3	14
Trustful/suspecting	3	7
Casual/conscientious	2	4
Confident/insecure	2	5

be considered norms, or averages, for a standardized general population or for standardized general male and female populations considered separately. One of the factor continuums, aloof/outgoing, is presented in Figure 1 as an example of what is meant by a continuum.

By the design of the instrument used, a group is defined as "aloof" if its average score on the aloof/outgoing factor continuum is below the average for the standardized general population. If the group's average is above, it is considered "outgoing." An *aloof* group is composed of persons who on the average tend to be stiff and cool, like things rather than people, work alone, avoid clashes of viewpoints, and at times tend to be critical, obstructive, or hard. An *outgoing* group is composed of persons who on the average tend to be good-natured, easygoing, ready to cooperate, attentive to people, softhearted, kindly, trustful, adaptable, generous in personal relations, not overly concerned with criticism, and not always dependable in precision work and obligations.

Thus, to describe 4-H leaders as "aloof" means they are to the left of or lower in score than the average (either raw or sten) score for the standardized general population (see Figure 1); they would have to score far enough below this average so that the difference would be statistically significant. The same idea would hold if male



* Except for one of the 16 continuums, the raw score scale ranges from 0 to 12, and the sten score scale to which the raw scores may be converted ranges from 1 to 10. (The one exception is the continuum of low general ability/high general ability. It has a raw score scale ranging from 0 to 8 which is convertible to a sten score scale ranging from 0 to 10.) The average sten score for the standardized general population is 5.5. The average raw scores for these populations tend to vary with each continuum.

Figure 1. Personality factor continuum (aloof/outgoing).

or female leaders were examined separately in comparison with the standardized male or female population.

In this article, the description of personalities of 4-H leaders is highly generalized. Basically, it deals with averages and distributions. It is recognized that specific personalities are the concern of

the 4-H professional who works with volunteer leaders. He may be helped, however, if he can have some general perspective of the kinds of persons on whom he relies for working with boy and girl participants in the 4-H program.

Comparison with the General Population

The male and female 4-H leaders included in this study are somewhat different from their respective sex in the general population. Scores on the 16 personality factors for male and female 4-H leaders were compared to average scores for their respective sex in the general population. The raw scores of the men leaders as a group differed significantly (.05 level of significance is used throughout the article) from those of men in the general population on fewer characteristics than did similar scores of women leaders from those of women in the general population. Men leaders differed significantly from men in the general population on 8 of 16 personality characteristics. Compared to men in the general population, first-year men leaders in New York State may be characterized as being:² *more aloof*—tending to be stiff, cool, more oriented to things than people; *more submissive*—tending to be dependent, group-oriented; *more glum*—tending to be reticent, introspective, silent; *more conscientious*—tending to be strong in character, responsible, planful; *more timid*—tending to be withdrawn, slow in speech, cautious; *more conventional*—tending to be conscientious, practical, balanced; *more simple*—tending to be unsophisticated, easily pleased, awkward; *more insecure*—tending to be depressed, anxious to avoid people.

Women leaders differed significantly from women in the general population on 10 of the 16 characteristics. Compared to women in the general population, the first-year woman leader in New York State may be characterized as being: *more aloof*—tending to be stiff, cool, more oriented to things than to people; *higher in general ability*—tending to be intelligent, a fast learner; *more submissive*—tending to be dependent, group-oriented; *more enthusiastic*—tending to be cheerful, alert, often a leader; *more tough*—tending to be practical, independent, masculine; *more trustful*—tending to be cheerful, free of jealousy, good team worker; *more conventional*—tending to be conscientious, practical, balanced; *more simple*—

²The explanatory words following each characteristic in this and subsequent lists were taken partially or entirely from definitions which appear in the *Handbook Supplement for Form C of the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire, "The 16 P.F. Test,"* published by the Institute for Personality and Ability Testing, Champaign, Illinois, 1956.

tending to be unsophisticated, easily pleased, awkward; *more dependent*—tending to seek social approval, be conventional; *more controlled*—tending to control emotions and behavior, be a careful, effective leader.

(It is important to keep the definitions of these terms in mind. Their meaning can be interpreted only on the basis of the definition in the measuring instrument—not by common usage.)

What does this mean to a 4-H agent? Specifically, it means that the agent should anticipate that, compared to women in general, first-year women leaders will tend to have higher general ability and be more aloof, more submissive, more enthusiastic, tougher, more trustful, more conventional, simpler, more dependent, and more controlled. First-year men leaders, compared to average males, will tend to be more aloof, more submissive, glummer, more conscientious, more timid, more conventional, simpler, and more insecure. This exercise of thinking about leaders in terms of these characteristics should not be used as an easy way to categorize individual leaders; it can provide, however, a system by which the agent can more systematically analyze his leaders as a group.

Relationship of Personality to Variables³

When the first-year *men* leaders were compared to the first-year *women* leaders in this study (rather than being compared to the general population), it was found that the two sexes differed significantly on 10 of the 16 personality characteristics.

Comparison of Male and Female Leaders

Referring back to the model presented in Figure 1, it can be seen that the words used to designate the characteristics on which male and female leaders differ significantly are derived from the position of their average scores either above or below the average for the standardized general population.⁴ Thus, if men leaders should score below the average (sten) score on the aloof/outgoing continuum, they would be characterized as being "aloof." If they should score

³ In the remainder of the article the comparisons and discussion of subgroups of the first-year 4-H leaders required the use of sten scores (instead of raw scores) obtained from a standardized general population combining males and females. Sten scores convert raw scores to 10 levels or ranks, from one through 10.

⁴ Partially because of the statistical difficulties involved, no attempt was made in the analysis of the various selected variables discussed in this part of the article to determine the significance level of the position of the 4-H leaders relative to the standardized population used for indicating their position.

above the average, they would be characterized as being "outgoing." In this study, both men and women leaders scored below the average; both groups are characterized as being "aloof." However, when *comparing* women leaders to men leaders, the men scored significantly lower on this continuum, consequently men leaders are described as being "more aloof."

Another example: Men leaders scored *above* the average of the general population on the conservative/experimenting continuum, while women leaders scored below the average of the general population on this same factor. When men and women 4-H leaders were compared, they differed significantly, with the men being defined as "experimenting" and the women "conservative." (Note that the comparison of males and females in this section is based on a reference to a standardized population that is different from those used in the previous section where males and females are compared to their standardized counterparts in the general population. Here the comparison is between males and females with reference to a total standard general population.)

The factors (personality characteristics, continuums) on which men and women 4-H leaders differed significantly are presented below.

1. Aloof/outgoing—women aloof (stiff, cool, and oriented to things rather than people); men more aloof.
2. Submissive/dominant—men submissive (dependent, group-oriented); women more submissive.
3. Tough/sensitive—men tough (practical, independent, masculine); women sensitive (tender-minded, fastidious, negative in groups).
4. Conventional/eccentric—women conventional (conscientious, practical, balanced); men more conventional.
5. Simple/sophisticated—women simple (unsophisticated, easily pleased, awkward); men sophisticated (hard-headed, analytical, unsentimental).
6. Confident/insecure—men insecure (depressed, anxious, avoids people); women more insecure.
7. Conservative/experimenting—women conservative (cautious, opposed to change); men experimental (interested in intellectual matters, inclined to try things).
8. Dependent/self-sufficient—women dependent (seeks social approval, conventional); men self-sufficient (resolute, takes action on own).
9. Lax/controlled—women average; men controlled (controls emotions and behavior carefully, effective leader).

10. Stable/tense—men stable (emotional stability); women tense (impatient, disapproves of group unity).

Generally then the agent should expect to find important differences in the personalities of first-year men and women 4-H leaders. More important, however, is the specific nature of the findings. While both first-year men and women leaders are "aloof," men are significantly "more aloof." Although both groups are "submissive," women are significantly "more submissive." Men leaders are "tough" and women are "sensitive"; while the men are below the average for the standardized general population and women are above this average, the positions of the two groups are significantly different. As an agent deals with his first-year leaders, whether in recruitment or training, he should be reminded of the full range of possible differences as recorded in the foregoing list.

Place of Residence

Seven of the 16 personality factor continuums were found to be significantly related to place of residence. (The relationships examined were between farm/rural non-farm; rural non-farm/urban; farm/urban.) Since the 4-H program originated among farm people but has recently been moving into urban areas, comparisons of the personality characteristics on which leaders from these two places differed is especially pertinent. Six of the seven factor continuums found to be significantly related to the leader's place of residence involve farm and urban differences. The following tabulation presents those personality characteristics:

1. Aloof/outgoing—farm leaders aloof; urban leaders average.
2. Glum/enthusiastic—farm leaders glum; urban leaders enthusiastic.
3. Timid/adventurous—farm leaders timid; urban leaders adventurous.
4. Tough/sensitive—farm leaders sensitive; urban leaders more sensitive.
5. Conventional/eccentric—urban leaders conventional; farm leaders more conventional.
6. Confident/insecure—farm leaders insecure; urban leaders more insecure.

As a 4-H agent deals with both farm leaders and urban leaders, the preceding comparisons should provide clues for dealing with the two classes of leaders. It would be unfortunate if 4-H agents should accept these categories as stereotypes; yet some frame of reference,

such as these clues provide, should help him to be more precise in his understanding of his leaders.

Agreement Between Agents and Leaders

An examination of common concerns between agents and leaders involves the question: Do personality factors influence agreement between a leader and his agent regarding the tasks the leader performs? This question can be viewed from two perspectives: (1) If the agent communicates freely with a leader concerning what he expects the leader to do, would it be likely that the leader's personality characteristics might influence his acceptance of the agent's expectancies? (2) Might leaders with certain personality traits tend to define their tasks as the agents would, whether or not leaders and agents communicated extensively? Neither of these aspects of agreement between agents and leader is supported by the data.

The 97 possible jobs identified for leaders (and used in this study) were grouped and classified according to whether there was high or low agreement between agent and leader as to performance or nonperformance of the jobs by leaders. Relatively few comparisons were statistically significant when scores on personality factors were compared with whether or not the agent and leader had high or low agreement. In other words, it appears that scores on personality factors do not have extensive relationship to whether the leader and his respective agent agree on the leader's performance of tasks.

Extreme Scores

The extreme scores for the various personality factors tend to designate individuals who may be considered sufficiently deviant from the normal population to warrant special attention in their leadership roles. Thus, for example, those leaders who scored at either extreme of the glum/enthusiastic continuum might be given special examination. Sten scores of first-year 4-H leaders on each of the 16 personality factor continuums were examined to find the extent to which the scores could be considered extreme. For each factor, those leaders who had sten scores at the lower end of the 10-point scale (scores of 1 or 2) and at the upper end (scores of 9 or 10) were sorted out. The per cent these were of the total population of leaders was calculated. The personality characteristics designating the lower end (characterized by the word on the left) of each factor scale are arranged in Table 1 from highest to lowest per cent of all leaders falling at this end of each scale. The per cent of those at the

high (right) end of the continuum is reported in the second column of Table 1 (see page 105).

According to this table, leaders scored at one or the other extreme end of the continuum on nine personality characteristics fairly frequently (7 to 15 per cent of the total sample). In no case did the proportion of 7 per cent or more occur at both ends of the same continuum. These data mean that 4-H youth and 4-H professional workers were involved with a number of leaders characterized as being markedly conventional, aloof, glum, dependent, lax, submissive, sensitive, tense, or suspecting. To throw further light on what these nine characteristics involve, each is defined below:

Extremely conventional—tends to be extremely conscientious, anxious to do the right thing, practical; is easily concerned and expressive, able to keep his head in emergencies; is often rather narrowly correct.

Extremely aloof—tends to be extremely stiff, cool, aloof; likes things rather than people; works alone, and avoids clash of viewpoints; is very apt to be precise and rigid in ways of doing things and in personal standards; tends to be very critical, obstructive.

Extremely glum—tends to be extremely taciturn, reticent, introspective; is sometimes uncommunicative, melancholic, anxious, depressed, smug, languid, slow.

Extremely dependent—tends to greatly prefer to work and make decisions with other people; very much likes social approval and admiration; tends to be conventional and may lack in resolution.

Extremely lax—tends to greatly lack will control and character stability; is not too considerate, careful, or conscientious.

Extremely submissive—tends to be extremely dependent, a follower; to lean on others in making decisions and taking action; to go along with the group; is often soft-hearted, expressive, and tends to be easily upset.

Extremely sensitive—tends to be very tender-minded, imaginative, introspective, artistic, fastidious, excitable; is sometimes demanding, impatient, dependent, impractical; dislikes crude people and rough occupations; tends to slow up group performance and to upset group morale by negative remarks.

Extremely tense—tends to be very tense, excitable, restless, fretful, impatient; is often over-fatigued, but unable to remain inactive; takes a poor view of group unity, orderliness, leadership.

Extremely suspecting—tends to be very mistrusting and doubtful; is often involved in his own ego, self-opinionated, and interested in internal, mental life; is usually deliberate in his actions, unconcerned about other people, a poor team member.

Relationship of Extreme Scores to Tenure

An analysis was made to determine if those leaders whose scores were at one extreme or the other of each of the 16 personality factors were more or less likely to continue their roles of leadership than was the entire group of leaders studied. If they continued for a second year as a leader, they were considered to be continuing leaders. For example, in the case of the continuum aloof/outgoing, the data in Table 2 were used for comparison.

Table 2. Tenure comparison of first-year 4-H leaders with extreme scores on the aloof/outgoing continuum with total sample of first-year 4-H leaders, New York State, 1961-62.

Tenure	All leaders		Leaders scoring at extreme			
	No.	%	Aloof		Outgoing	
			No.	%	No.	%
Continued	434	84	61	90	7	88
Discontinued	81	16	7	10	1	12
Total	515*	100	68	100	8	100

* Twelve of the 527 leaders discontinued because of death, moving from the county, or ill health.

The proportion of leaders scoring at the aloof end of the aloof/outgoing continuum who continued for the second year of leadership (90 per cent compared to 10 per cent who discontinued) was not greatly different from the per cent of all leaders who continued (84 per cent compared to 16 per cent who discontinued). These differences were not statistically significant.

Similar data were used for each of the other 15 factors; and the significance of the difference between the per cent for each extreme who continued leadership and the per cent of *all* leaders who did likewise was obtained. In only two cases were differences statistically significant. The proportion of those scoring at the "self-sufficient" extreme on the dependent/self-sufficient factor who continued their leadership (61 per cent) was significantly different from the 84 per cent of all leaders studied who continued. Likewise, the 65 per cent of those scoring at the "tough" extreme of the tough/sensitive factor who continued was significantly different from the 84 per cent of all leaders who continued. However, it should be noted that the number of leaders scoring at the extreme in both cases was relatively small (each was 3 per cent of the total—see Table 1). It does not appear that an extreme position on person-

ality factor scales is importantly related to whether or not a leader continues in 4-H work.

Summary and Implications

The personality characteristics of first-year 4-H leaders were not found to be importantly related to their place of residence, agreement with their 4-H agents on jobs which they should do, and, in the case of extreme scores, to continuity of leadership. However, three aspects of their personality characteristics deserve mention:

1. *Comparison to the general population:* Volunteer first-year 4-H leaders differ in personality characteristics from the general population. Thus, the personality models with which 4-H youth are confronted and with which 4-H professionals must work are different from people in general. The desirability of this situation or its possible impact cannot be appraised on the basis of this study. However, the following question can be appropriately posed: Do men leaders who differ from males in the general population and who, therefore, may be characterized as being more aloof, submissive, glum, conscientious, timid, conventional, simple, and insecure present the kinds of personality models with which to confront youth? What about women leaders who differ from females in general and who have high general ability, are more aloof, submissive, enthusiastic, tough, trustful, conventional, simple, dependent, and controlled? Do they present the kinds of personality models with which to confront youth? Perhaps all we can ask is that more serious attention be given to what is needed in terms of the personality of a 4-H leader.

2. *Differences between sexes:* There is considerable difference between personality characteristics of men and women first-year 4-H leaders. Which sex tends to present acceptable models for youth to follow? Are men leaders more desirable for boys, and women better for girls? To answer these questions, value judgments must be made regarding personality characteristics.

3. *Characteristics occurring in extreme degrees:* Among the first-year 4-H leaders were a number of individuals who scored at the conventional, aloof, glum, dependent, lax, submissive, sensitive, tense, and suspecting extreme of these respective factors. Value judgments need to be made about these personality qualities. Perhaps considerably more attention needs to be directed to whether or not it is desirable to have leaders in whom these characteristics exist to a high degree. Confrontation with this kind of question should cause busy 4-H professional leaders to pause and seriously evaluate their methods of selecting lay people for leadership in 4-H activities.