

Research in Brief



MASON E. MILLER, editor

Remember the Farm Wife—It's Not All "Man" in Management

Key Finding: Rate of adopting improved farm practices is highest when husband and wife have high aspirations for farm improvement.

There's quite a bit of research about farmers and their adoption of new farm practices. We've suspected for some time that this research may be overlooking a significant variable—the farm wife.

How important is she in deciding whether to adopt a new practice? As a partner, often the bookkeeper, and sharer in the farm fortunes, does it make any difference how she feels about new farm practices? And if she and her husband feel the same about the farm, does that affect farming decisions?

Research by Wilkening and Guerrero in Wisconsin looked at relationships between two major variables: (1) extent of adopting new farm practices and (2) degree of consensus between husband and wife over how much they were striving to achieve several farm goals.

Study in Brief

The authors gathered information from a statewide multistage probability sample of 505 Wisconsin farm families in 1962. Husbands and wives were questioned separately. Each was asked to compare his farm improvement aspirations with most other families by responding "trying much less," "trying about the same," "trying somewhat more," or "trying much more" to achieve than the others.

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From a series of responses about developing high-producing livestock, increasing per-acre production, making higher profits, changing livestock feeding programs every year or two, getting labor-saving equipment, and expanding the farm, each person was listed as "high" or "low" in aspirations for farm improvement.

This meant couples could be divided into four groups: husband and wife aspirations both high, both low, husband high and wife low, or vice versa.

Adoption was checked on six practices: dairy management, side-dressing corn, soil conservation practices, weed control, forage and harvesting mechanization, and general mechanization.

The researchers' first hypothesis was supported: Adoption for all practices was higher when both had high aspirations for the farm. Their second hypothesis wasn't supported: They thought the husband's aspirations would have more influence on farm practice adoption than the wife's. But that wasn't how it worked out. There wasn't much difference.

The researchers figured that income level might influence the relationship between aspirations and adoption. So they again looked at those two variables, holding income level constant.

When they did, the relationships between aspirations and adoption were less clear. But they did find some support for their second hypothesis—cases where the husband's aspirations were more

influential than the wife's.

First they looked at the low-income families. With high-husband, low-wife aspirations, adoption was higher for dairy management, side-dressing corn, and soil conservation practices than it was with low-husband, high-wife aspirations.

In high-income families, the same was true for soil conservation, weed control, and general mechanization. Level of farm income did alter the general finding of "no difference" for the second hypothesis.

The authors saw evidence that the husband and wife each have a different conception of what constitutes "improvement in the farm enterprise." The wife may see labor-saving equipment as improvement more than he does. He sees dairy management and soil conservation practices as improvement more than she does. She's more concerned with practices that are readily observable and affect immediate cash outlay as well as return. He's more concerned with management of land and livestock. Of these, the consequences for economic return, prestige, or saving labor may not be so apparent to the wife.

Implications

From this research, agricultural agents and specialists may want to consider what influence the farm wife has on innovations they're trying to promote. In farm management, for example, what might be the payoff of having both husband and wife take the course? And what

might be needed to convince the wife of the worthwhileness of certain innovations—the same thing, or something different from what's convincing to her husband?

Might there be need to involve Extension home economists in farm management training more than is being done now? And agricultural agents in home management training? We might develop a more unified approach on both the "training team" and the "audience" side.

Might just be a return to the old approach of involving as many members of the family as possible in Extension programs! And of having the ag agents and home economists working together more, too.

Eugene A. Wilkening and Sylvia Guerrero. "Consensus in Aspirations for Farm Improvement and Adoption of Farm Practices." *Rural Sociology*, XXXIV (June, 1969), 182-96. Prepared by Sidney C. Cleveland, Edwin H. Amend, and Mason E. Miller.

Incompatible Agents and Counties

What if you have a county agent who wants to move out, change things—and he's in a county where the atmosphere is against change generally? Or an agent who resists change, living in a county noted for its change-proneness?

Thompson used a mail questionnaire and a panel of judges to help him look at these change incompatibilities among 181 male agents in Michigan. His "propensity-for-change" measures revolved around a series of "new" programs

Extension is in—programs based more on the changing social structure of today. These included whether or not the agent thought Extension should be working with low-income homemakers, youth other than 4-H enrollments, farm organizations and marketing, bargaining, organizing human resources, and six other areas.

One thing he found was that agents with a high change-propensity tended to have low job satisfaction where their counties were rated low change-prone, and higher job satisfaction where they and their counties were more similar on this dimension.

The opposite didn't hold for low change-prone agents. Those in "compatible" counties were no happier on the job than those who were rated "incompatible." Thompson speculates that one thing that may be operating is that these agents tend to develop a stable "clientele," which insulates them from the more incompatible elements in their counties.

He found no significant relationship between high-tenure agents and high job satisfaction. What he did find was a strong tendency for high-tenure county directors to have high job satisfaction. This contrasted with high-tenure agricultural technology agents, who tended to have lower job satisfaction.

High-tenure agents tended to see their own counties as more change-prone than low-tenure agents saw theirs.

Agents whose professional im-

provement experiences, both informal graduate programs and in other ways, were oriented to the behavioral sciences tended to be higher change-prone than those slanted toward the physical sciences.

There wasn't a significant difference in change-proneness between agents with advanced professional improvement training and those with little or none.

Finally, in contrast to the county directors and ag technologists, 4-H agents with high tenure tended to have higher change-proneness scores than did 4-H agents relatively new on the job.

As is often the case, Thompson's research raises more questions than it answers. But the intriguing differences among types of male agents in both job satisfaction and in their reactions to change "incompatibility" with their counties merits further investigation.

Gray Thompson. "Change-Norm Incompatibility Between Male Michigan Extension Agents and Their Counties." Master's thesis, Michigan State University, East Lansing, 1969.

Abstracts from ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult Education¹

AC 003 527 MI

"The Conference Director as a Boundary Definer of the University." Donald A. Deppe. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, Illinois, 1965.

A study of university conference directors' role conceptions and criteria used to accept, reject, or ini-

tiate requests or ideas for programs. Interviewed 45 directors in 19 northeastern states. Directors dealt with requests and ideas arising from both within and without the university, but tended to be much more discriminating among those from outside. Their generative activity consisted almost wholly in "selling" faculty participation. Basic director types defined: (1) client-oriented, for whom the wishes of the people come first; (2) operations-oriented, for whom the process of planning and execution are paramount; (3) image-oriented, for whom the program is primarily a public relations tool; (4) institution-oriented, for whom the academic sanctions and standards of the university are paramount; and (5) problem-oriented, for whom contact between university resources and social problems is the ultimate objective.

AC 004 554 MI

"Education and Extension Education in Iran." Jafar Rassi. Ed.D. dissertation, Utah State University, Logan, 1966.

Major conclusions: (1) in agrarian countries having both community development and extension, preliminary administrative coordination is essential, with emphasis on training of personnel; (2) advisory work, mainly concerned with rural economic development, isn't suitable where the major problem is the lack of education; and (3) if supported by progressive school education, extension education can help raise living standards.

AC 004 989 FI ED 028 008
A Study to Compare the Scholastic Attendance and the Scholastic Achievement of First Grade Students Whose Parents Participated in the Adult Basic Education Program with the Scholastic Attendance and the Scholastic Achievement of First Grade Students Whose Parents Did Not Participate in the Adult Basic Education Program. Milton J. Kirby. Brownsville, Texas: Brownsville Consolidated Independent School District, 1969. MF \$.25, HC \$.95.

Experimental group composed of 160 children from low-income, Spanish-speaking families in which at least one parent had participated in the ABE (Adult Basic Education) program. Control group of 160 children from families where neither parent took part. Attendance rate of the experimental group was higher than the control group during 1967-68 school year, and also scored higher on a standard achievement test. Limited supplementary data indicate that the ABE program may have a beneficial effect on job performance, and social, civic, and economic activities of participants.

AC 006 015 ME
"An Analysis of the Improvement of Quality Instruction Programs for Cooperative Extension Personnel in Ohio."

Ansar Ali Khan. Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio State University, Columbus, 1968.

Studied attitudes and understanding of participants and nonparticipants. The workshops had enabled participants to use a greater number of approved teaching methods and educational practices than nonparticipants, and to use educational practices more effectively. Respondents aged 30-49 had higher cognitive knowledge scores than older or younger groups. Participants perceived the value of the workshops more favorably than nonparticipants. Experience in Extension, formal education, and position in Extension had no effect on attitudes. Higher-position respondents had higher knowledge scores than the lower-position respondents did. And over half the respondents were found to be using more than half of the approved methods and procedures.

AC 006 154 E
Financial Survey of Western State Extension Division: Summary Report. Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii, Division of Continuing Education and Community Service, 1969.

Questionnaire data from 26 state institutions west of the Mississippi, plus some Big Ten schools east of the Mississippi. State appropriations contributions to the Extension divisions' total annual budgets ranged from 100 percent (1 school) to 0 percent (5 schools).

Revolving funds on a self-support basis provide 85-100 percent (10 schools), 70-84 percent (7 schools), 30-69 percent (5 schools) and under 30 percent (3 schools). The majority reported 5-15 percent cancellations of degree-credit courses, and a slightly higher mortality among noncredit courses. Of 101 per-course salaries, 77 fell in the range \$525-\$825. Noncredit salaries per hour of instruction varied from \$5.50 to \$100. Tuition ranged from \$15-\$25 per credit.

Abstracts from ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Media and Technology¹

ED 029 503

An Experimental Study of the Use of Visual Illustrations Used to Complement Oral Instruction on Television. Francis M. Dwyer, Jr. University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 1968. MF \$.25, HC \$.75.

Five sequences of 39 black-and-white slides designed to complement oral instruction, and carrying a 32-minute oral instructional unit on the heart, were presented to 269 college students in 5 groups through a television receiver. Results indicate that visual aids are effective when learning objectives are similar to those measured by a drawing test, but are unnecessary and even distracting when learning objectives are similar to those measured by terminology, identification, comprehension, and total criterion

tests. This may be because college students have already been selected for their verbal and conceptual ability. Therefore, in televising presentations for college-level instruction, visual materials should be used only if they are justified by learning objectives and achievement.

ED 025 949

Immediate Audio and Visual Confirmation: "Breakthrough" for the Low-Aptitude Language Student. Theodore H. Mueller. 1968. MF \$.25, HC \$.75.

Concludes that low-aptitude language college students learn more of a foreign language when the words and phrases they say are confirmed orally *and* in writing, than if they are only orally confirmed. Control students used a programmed course in French in a language laboratory. They got audio confirmation of right responses. Experimental students had the same situation, but also used a form of the course in which the correct response was written in invisible ink. These students gave an oral response and then marked the proper space in the written material with an impregnated pen. The pen fluid caused the right answer to appear. The experimental group did significantly better, and had less than half the dropout rate of the control class. Low-aptitude students—those below the 40th percentile—particularly profited from simultaneously hearing and seeing the right answer.

ED 027 750

The Motion Variables in Film Presentations. William H. Allen and Royd Weintraub. 1968. MF \$.75, HC \$6.50.

Stimulus sequences were shown as motion pictures, sequenced still pictures, or single still pictures to 582 randomly assigned fifth- and sixth-grade students. The motion picture methods were superior to the other 2 for 7 of 10 stimulus sequences. This superiority prevailed regardless of grade level, sex, mental ability, subject-matter content, or instructional objective. Implication is that under most conditions the motion picture is the most effective for presenting information to be learned cognitively.

ED 029 506

The Effect of Varying the Amount of Realistic Detail in Visual Illustrations Designed to Complement Programed Instruction. Francis M. Dwyer, Jr. University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 1968. MF \$.25, HC \$1.20.

Eight test groups had verbal descriptions of the heart, plus black and white or color versions of abstract line representations, drawings (detailed and shaded), heart model

photographs, and realistic photographs. A single group had only the verbal symbols to learn from. The visually aided programmed material wasn't significantly superior to the control group material consisting of verbal symbols only. Conclusions: Students don't know how to learn from drawings and photographs, a continuum of visual illustrations extending from line drawing to the object itself isn't an effective predictor of learning, color can aid some student achievement, and students given the abstract line illustrations took longer to complete their instructional unit.

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