

Research in Brief



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Info Sources for Low-Income Farmers

“Convenience” is a very strong factor in low-income farmers’ judgments of a particular information source. This was one of the key findings from interviews with 204 farmers in two south Missouri counties. In responding on semantic differential scales to lists of personal and mass media sources of farm information, low-income farmers tended to rank “convenience” higher than did middle-class farmers. Thus, Extension staff working with low-income farmers (under \$3000 annual total income) must identify and use the “convenient” sources as much as possible.

Middle-class farmers had more positive judgments of newspapers, magazines, vocational agriculture teachers, and college bulletins—and

less positive judgments of almanacs—than did disadvantaged farmers. In general, they had more positive judgments of both mass media and personal sources than did low-income farmers.

The study also indicated that there are many subaudiences within the total low-income farm audience. Younger disadvantaged farmers (40 years old or less) had significantly less positive judgments of friends and neighbors, dealers and salesmen, and personal sources in general than did older disadvantaged farmers. Better educated disadvantaged farmers (more than eight years education) had more positive views of mass media and personal sources generally as well as vocational agriculture teachers. They were less positive about radio, friends and neighbors, dealers and salesmen, and almanacs than those

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with less education.

Low-income farmers in the program had greater awareness of five improved farm practices than did a control group. Also, leader aides were the second most important source of awareness for all farmers—not just the low-income ones—even though they worked directly with only 100 of the 204 farmers interviewed. Thus, aides were reaching low-income farmers not formally included in the educational efforts, suggesting the effectiveness and “spillover effect” of program aides hired from the target audience to act as teachers.

Personal sources seemed to offer the most hope of getting current farm information to disadvantaged farmers. Face-to-face contact between teachers and students produced the most positive results.

Lee concludes: “Just as there is no one total low-income farm audience, there is no one communication strategy that can be used in carrying out educational programs aimed at the disadvantaged. There must be as many strategies as there are audiences. Communication strategies must be flexible to meet the specific conditions needed to communicate with each audience.”

Richard L. Lee, “The Flow of Information to Disadvantaged Farmers,” unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, Ames, 1967.

Fatherless Homes

Over six million children in the U.S. are growing up in fatherless homes. People are making many ad-

verse generalizations about such children as to their problem behavior, intellectual ability, achievement, and emotional adjustment. Are these generalizations justified?

The evidence from 59 research studies is ambiguous. It depends. In some cases—where he is a naval officer, for example—the father is absent for long temporary periods, but his absence is socially approved because of the nature of his work. In other studies, undesirable behavior in early childhood seemed to disappear later. In one study, it seemed that “fatherless” children took longer than children in two-parent homes to develop certain characteristics, and seemed more dependent on other children for learning certain kinds of behavior. Age of separation from father is important, as is the age of the child when studied.

On the whole, ascribed effects of father’s absence are more marked in children whose parents are divorced or separated than in children whose fathers are dead. The former are cases where the cause of fatherlessness is potentially viewed with social disfavor.

Being in a two-parent home is no guarantee of a happy, well-adjusted child. Few studies compare the effects of harmonious, well-organized, one-parent homes. Even fewer studies inquire about how the image of an absent father is presented to his children. For example, does the mother continue to berate the father even after he has left the home, as contrasted to praising the good points of the father?

What about the lack of sex-role models for boys? In all the studies using the M-F scales to rate masculinity-femininity, there is a tendency in the direction of lower masculinity scores on the part of fatherless boys. But the verdict here isn't decisive and is based only on a moderate difference comparing the mean scores of the two groups.

The authors conclude that we need to broaden the context of our studies to look at the fatherless home as a family form itself, rather than as a mutilated version of some other form. We can look at it as a form that exists and functions and represents something other than the mere absence of a true family. We can't assume that fatherless boys automatically lack male models. There may be effective male models outside the home.

Elizabeth Herzog and Cecilia E. Sudia, "Fatherless Homes: A Review of Research," *Children*, XV (September-October, 1968), 177-82. Adapted from abstract by Nelson Trickey in University of Missouri's Youth Research Abstracts.

Abstracts from ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult Education¹

AC 003 178 FE

Development of an Automated Program for Teaching Military Justice to Men of Various Aptitude Levels. Morris Showel. Alexandria, Virginia: George Washington University, June, 1968.

Military has the problem of teaching cognitive-type material to

men of widely differing aptitudes. This was exploratory work to teach quite an abstract subject—military justice. Two slide-tapes were developed: one slow-paced and designed for low-aptitude men and one fast-paced for high-aptitude men. The programs differed primarily in speed of presentation and amount of repetition. Comparable groups of trainees were tested immediately for recall, and four weeks later for retention. A comparable group was tested before attending the classes to measure entry level knowledge. Men at all aptitude levels learned from the programs and tended to remember what they learned. The programs did not have differential effectiveness; whatever their aptitude, the trainees who took the fast program were more favorable to it than those who took the slow program.

AC 003 120 I

Comparison of Low- and Middle-Income Families Utilizing Parent Group Education Services. Oscar Rabinowitz and Ada M. Daniels. New York, New York: Child Study Association of America, Inc.

Study of 603 middle-income and 218 low-income parents. Dealt with the recruitment and parental concerns of persons using parent education group discussion services. Low-income parents expressed the greatest interest in character development, educational values, and future life positions of their children. It was difficult to recruit low-income parents for the discussion groups. A

telephone calls, and circular letters as the least effective.

AC 003 536 I

Leader Behavior and Its Relation to Innovativeness of County Extension Chairmen. Ratan Chand Mehta. Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University, 1967.

Age, amount of formal education, tenure in Extension, number of family dependents, participation in in-service workshops and conferences, and recency of assuming the position of county Extension agent chairman weren't significantly related to innovativeness as measured by adoption of program innovations. Recent participation in graduate courses and self-perceived role as innovator were positively correlated with program innovation.

AC 003 541ME ED 025 712
Role of Information Sources and Communication Channels in Adoption of Improved Practices by Farmers in M. P. State, India. Devendra Kumar Sharma. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 1967.

Two hundred farmers were interviewed. For information sources,

neighbors were named by all respondents, village level workers by 72 per cent, chairmen of village panchayats by 26 per cent, and agricultural and university extension personnel by 20 and 17 per cent, respectively. Among the channels, demonstrations led with 50 per cent, followed by radio (38%), audio-visual aides (posters, films, exhibits), general meetings, and reading materials. Face-to-face contacts between extension agents and farmers had the greatest influence on adoption, and mass media the least.

Footnote

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