

Self-Acceptance and Leader Effectiveness

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Does the volunteer leader's acceptance of self relate to how effectively the leadership role is performed? If the answer is yes, how can an Extension staff member measure the self-acceptance of a leader or potential leader? The author used a measure of self-acceptance with 4-H leaders in 25 Texas counties and determined that self-acceptance and leadership effectiveness are indeed related. The measuring device and implications of this study may have something to say for both volunteer leader selection and training.

Viewing Ourselves and Others

Is there a positive correlation between the way an individual views himself and the way he views others? Yes, I think so.

Horney¹ proposes that the person who doesn't see himself as lovable is unable to love others. Fromm² states that we should love ourselves, for the ability to love self and the ability to love others go hand in hand. Furthermore, he says that a failure to accept self is accompanied by a basic hostility toward others.

Additional evidence on the relationship of self-acceptance and acceptance of others is found in studies done at the University of Chicago under the influence of Carl R. Rogers. These studies tried to mea-

sure the attitudes of individuals toward themselves and others by using rating scales.

Sheerer³ found a positive correlation between self-acceptance attitudes and attitudes of acceptance of others. These results were confirmed by Stock.⁴ Berger further tested the relationship between self-acceptance and acceptance of others by developing a group instrument to measure these two variables.⁵

The following definition of the self-accepting person is the one Sheerer used, with slight modification by Berger. The self-accepting person:

1. Relies primarily on internalized values and standards rather than on external pressure as a guide to his behavior.

2. Has faith in his capacity to cope with life.
3. Assumes responsibility for and accepts the consequences of his own behavior.
4. Accepts praise or criticism from others objectively.
5. Doesn't try to deny or distort any feelings, motives, limitations, abilities, or favorable qualifications that he sees within himself, but rather accepts all without self-condemnation.
6. Considers himself a person of worth on an equal plane with other persons.
7. Doesn't expect others to reject him whether he gives them any reason to reject him or not.
8. Doesn't regard himself as totally different from others or generally abnormal in his reactions.
9. Isn't shy or self-conscious.

Berger's study was done to determine if the evidence for a positive relationship between acceptance of self and acceptance of others would be strengthened by using larger groups and more varied samples than had previously been studied.

To do this, he constructed scales to measure expressed acceptance of self and expressed acceptance of others. His scales were found to have satisfactory matched-half reliability and considerable evidence was found in favor of the scales validity.⁶

Denmark: Self-Acceptance

Leader Effectiveness

It seems logical that if self-acceptance is related to acceptance of others it would also be related to leader effectiveness. To test this hypothesis, 25 Texas counties were drawn at random for a sample (see Figure 1).

A county Extension agent in each of the 25 counties selected as the sample was asked to provide a mailing list of all individuals currently serving as volunteer 4-H adult leaders in that county.

These county Extension agents were then asked to place each of their leaders into 1 of 3 categories of effectiveness—Group 1 as "most effective," Group 2 as "somewhat effective," and Group 3 as "least effective."

This leader effectiveness rating was to be based on a set of criteria considered the important elements of effective 4-H leadership as well as the county Extension agent's observation and judgment of the leader's general effectiveness.

For the purpose of this study, an effective volunteer 4-H leader is identified as one who: *10 items*

1. Has a sincere interest in boys and girls and enjoys working with them.
2. Is liked and respected in the community by both adults and youth.
3. Works democratically with youth and other adults.
4. Is willing to share responsibility with others.

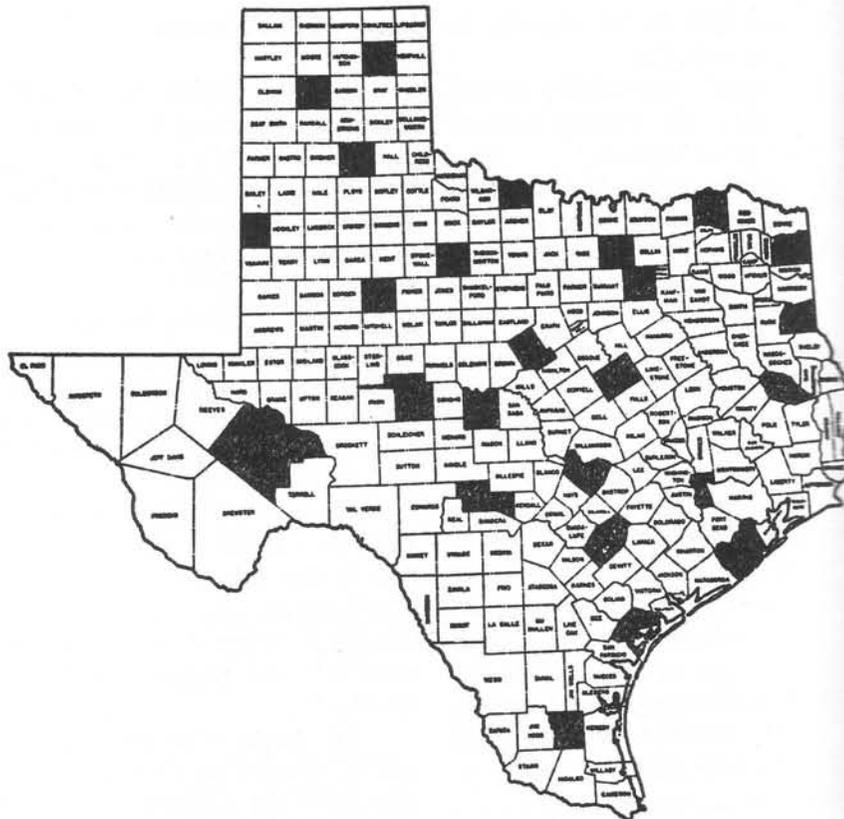


Figure 1. Distribution of counties in sample.

5. Plans and organizes work in advance.
6. Is a good teacher.
7. Has perseverance—is slow to give up.
8. Is a mature individual and is somewhat aware of own strengths and weaknesses.
9. Is willing to attend training meetings.
10. Is enthusiastic about 4-H.

The degree of a leader's self-acceptance was measured by Berger's 36-item, self-acceptance scale

(Table 1 on p. 10). The maximum possible score would be 180, indicating the highest degree of self-acceptance. The minimum possible score indicating little or no self-acceptance would be 36. Responses range from "not at all true of myself" to "true of myself." A total of 613 leaders completed and returned the scale.

Findings

The data indicate that a direct and positive association between

self-acceptance and leader effectiveness exists. In other words, the leaders with the higher mean scores for self-acceptance were the leaders that had been rated as being "most effective" by their county Extension agents.

The mean score for the group of leaders in the "most effective" category was the highest at 157.31. The group of leaders rated as "somewhat effective" had a mean score of 152.12. The mean score for the "least effective" leader group was the lowest at 136.98.

The summary of the analysis of variance shows an F ratio of 69.88, which is highly significant beyond the .05 level. The Duncan multiple-range test was applied to determine if and where significant differences existed between groups. It was determined that each group was significantly different from the other 2 groups at the .05 level—each of the 3 groups of leaders was homogeneous with itself only.

There's then a positive association between the Extension agents' ratings of leader effectiveness and the degree to which leaders accept themselves.

Implications

This positive correlation between leader effectiveness and the way people accept themselves could have many implications for Extension, since we rely so heavily on effective volunteer leadership in all phases of Extension education. Volunteer leaders should be selected from among those individuals exhib-

iting higher than average degrees of self-acceptance.

Self-acceptance can be characterized by behavior guided primarily by internalized values rather than external pressure, a faith in his capacity to cope with life, an attitude of responsibility, an objective acceptance of criticism, a sense of self-worth, and an absence or low level of shyness or self-consciousness.

In the identification, selection, and recruitment of potential volunteer leaders, Extension personnel could measure the degree to which each individual accepted self. This could be done using Berger's self-acceptance scale or perhaps a modified, shorter version of his scale.

By using a measure of self-acceptance, Extension personnel would be able to predict how effective or ineffective a volunteer leader might be.

This could also be useful in developing training programs for leaders. Perhaps specific training is needed to help leaders increase their self-acceptance. Furthermore, knowing which leaders have the greatest potential for "effectiveness" might open new opportunities for developing a career ladder for volunteer leaders. That is, leaders with a high degree of self-acceptance might become "leaders of leaders" and serve in a specialized volunteer leader role.

Additional research is needed to identify a shorter, more convenient instrument to measure self-acceptance of volunteer leaders. Perhaps additional study could even establish a given point or score on

such an instrument that would indicate potential leader effectiveness or ineffectiveness.

Finally, volunteer staff development programs should be established that would further increase an individual's self-acceptance. The rewards of such efforts could be at

least twofold: (1) individuals with the greatest leadership potential could be recruited and (2) individuals could grow further through the development of a more positive self-concept providing Extension with volunteer leadership that would be even more effective.

Table 1. Berger's self-acceptance scale.

Following are 36 statements that have to do with some of your attitudes. Of course, there's no right or wrong answer for any statement. The best answer to each statement is the one you feel applies to you. Please respond to each statement according to the following key:

- 1 Not at all true of myself
- 2 Slightly true of myself
- 3 About halfway true of myself
- 4 Mostly true of myself
- 5 True of myself

1. * I'd like it if I could find someone who would tell me how to solve my personal problems.
2. † I don't question my worth as a person, even if I think others do.
3. * When people say nice things about me, I find it difficult to believe they really mean it. I think maybe they're kidding me or just aren't being sincere.
4. * If there is any criticism or anyone says anything about me, I just can't take it.
5. * I don't say much at social affairs because I'm afraid that people will criticize me or laugh if I say the wrong thing.
6. * I realize that I'm not living very effectively but I just don't believe I've got it in me to use my energies in better ways.
7. † I look on most of the feelings and impulses I have toward people as being quite natural and acceptable.
8. * Something inside me just won't let me be satisfied with any job I've done—if it turns out well, I get a very smug feeling that this is beneath me, I shouldn't be satisfied with this, this isn't a fair test.
9. * I feel different from other people. I'd like to have the feeling of security that comes from knowing I'm not too different from others.
10. * I'm afraid for people that I like to find out what I'm really like, for fear they'd be disappointed in me.

11. * I'm frequently bothered by feelings of inferiority.
12. * Because of other people, I haven't been able to achieve as much as I should have.
13. * I'm quite shy and self-conscious in social situations.
14. * In order to get along and be liked, I tend to be what people expect me to be rather than anything else.
15. † I seem to have a real inner strength in handling things. I'm on a pretty solid foundation and it makes me pretty sure of myself.
16. * I feel self-conscious when I'm with people who have a superior position to mine.
17. * I think I'm neurotic or something.
18. * Very often I don't try to be friendly with people because I think they won't like me.
19. † I feel that I'm a person of worth, on an equal plane with others.
20. * I can't avoid feeling guilty about the way I feel toward certain people in my life.
21. † I'm not afraid of meeting new people. I feel that I'm a worthwhile person and there's no reason why they should dislike me.
22. * I sort of only half-believe in myself.
23. * I'm very sensitive. People say things and I have a tendency to think they're criticizing me or insulting me in some way and later when I think of it, they may not have meant anything like that at all.
24. * I think I have certain abilities and other people say so too, but I wonder if I'm not giving them an importance way beyond what they deserve.
25. † I feel confident that I can do something about the problems that may arise in the future.
26. * I guess I put on a show to impress people. I know I'm not the person I pretend to be.
27. † I don't worry or condemn myself if other people pass judgment against me.
28. * I don't feel very normal, but I want to feel normal.
29. * When I'm in a group I usually don't say much for fear of saying the wrong thing.
30. * I have a tendency to sidestep my problems.
31. * Even when people do think well of me, I feel sort of guilty because I know I must be fooling them—that if I were really to be myself, they wouldn't think well of me.
32. † I feel that I'm on the same level as other people and that it helps to establish good relations with them.
33. * I feel that people are apt to react differently to me than they would normally react to other people.

- 34. * I live too much by other people's standards.
- 35. * When I have to address a group, I get self-conscious and have difficulty saying things well.
- 36. * If I didn't always have such hard luck, I'd accomplish much more than I have.

* The closer the answer is to "1" the more self-acceptance the person has.

† The closer the answer is to "5" the more self-acceptance the person has.

Footnotes

1. Karen Horney, *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time* (New York, New York: Norton, 1937).
2. Erich Fromm, "Selfishness and Self-Love," *Psychiatry*, II (1939), 507-23.
3. Elizabeth Sheerer, "An Analysis of the Relationship Between Acceptance of and Respect for the Self and Acceptance of and Respect for Others in Ten Counseling Cases," *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, XIII (1949), 160-75.
4. Dorothy Stock, "An Investigation into the Interrelations Between the Self-Concept and Feelings Directed Toward Other Persons and Groups," *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, XIII (1949), 176-80.
5. Emanuel M. Berger, "The Relationship Between Expressed Acceptance of Self and Expressed Acceptance of Others," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, XLVII (1952), 778-82.
6. John P. Robinson and Phillip R. Shaver, *Measures of Social Psychological Attitudes* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan, Institute for Social Research, 1970), pp. 115-20.