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## Research in Brief

MASON E. MILLER, *editor*

### FARM OPEN HOUSE?

It's not unusual in America to have farm tours—where a caravan of cars, buses, and trucks carries farmers from one farm to another, with stops at each place to see and hear about a new or interesting feature. But what about having an "open house," where anyone can visit selected farms at any time during a given day?

This free-choice "Open Day" was tried on six grain and drying storage demonstration farms in North Buckinghamshire, England. Visitors could drop in between 10:30 A.M. and 3:30 P.M. Agricultural Land Service and National Agricultural Advisory Service staff members present at each farm answered questions and showed the installations.

Who attended? Mostly medium-to-large-scale cereal growers. They usually came the greatest distance, primarily because of a desire to keep aware of technological advancement rather than because of a need for new equipment.

Most of them, 77 per cent, found out about the Open Day via a postcard invitation. They also tended to visit farms in either the same or reverse order as the places were listed on the card.

Of what value was the Open Day? Nearly a fourth of the participants had already decided to adopt the storage or drying installations, or both. So the day was mainly a reinforcer for their existing ideas and decisions to adopt.

Another group, the majority of participants, was considering the equipment and evaluating its worth. Probably the Open Day was most beneficial for this group. In making their decisions, they could get personal advice and help from an expert. They were active information-seekers.

Another group, about a fourth of the farmers, was not considering the equipment but attended to "keep up-to-date." Most of these men already had adequate equipment and were the larger cereal growers. Their presence and motivation thus point to another aspect of the adoption process. People can become aware of some new idea or practice not only

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because of a felt need, but also because they have a need to keep up-to-date and a real desire to learn.

One interesting sidelight: an increase in attendance at the Open Day would have had to have come from among the smaller cereal growers, since most of the larger growers in the area attended. The smaller growers who did attend accounted for the largest proportion of persons at the "considering" stage. Probably the demonstrations held during Open Day were most effective for people at this stage. Thus, finding ways to increase the attendance of these smaller growers at such a Day would increase the effectiveness of the Day.

Gwyn E. Jones and Jeremy Howell, "A Farm 'Open Day' on Grain Drying and Storage—an Assessment of an Advisory Method." University of Reading Agricultural Extension Centre, Reading, England, June, 1966.

#### IM BETTER THAN YOU VS. EVERYONE WINS!

Workers in 4-H have long debated: Is competition a good thing as the basis of a club program, or is there an alternative? One alternative to the straight strive-for-awards-and-recognition competition (CE) orientation in many state 4-H programs is an approach called Individual Member Evaluation (IME).

In a study in four Michigan counties, these two approaches—CE and IME—were analyzed to see whether youth operating under one system were more accepting of self (AS) and accepting of others (AO) than they were under the other system. The study was based on the presumption that the more "adequate" person is both AS and AO. If 4-H strives to help young people grow into effective adults, then measurement of how well a 4-H program helps youth become AS and AO would be one measure of program success.

In CE, the member's entry behavior (his attitudes, skills, and knowledge at the beginning of the learning experience) is informally assessed by his leader, or is taken for granted by the project outline he is to follow. Members' needs and inadequate entry behaviors are not explored. Terminal behavior goals (ends the learner is to achieve) are set by the leader and explained in the project—and are the same for everyone. Members are evaluated via competition against other members and/or standards set by someone outside the local club structure.

With IME, members work closely with their leader to assess: (1) entry behavior level for each individual, and (2) terminal behavior goals, based on entry behavior level. Thus members have a real hand in assessing themselves and setting realistic and desirable learning goals.

Findings indicated that CE was perceived as threatening to some members, and a challenge to others. Youth with higher acceptance of self were less likely to perceive competition as a threat, and so were more likely to be found in a CE club. Members with lower acceptance of self tended to be found in clubs that used IME. These tendencies were truer for girls than for boys, possibly because in our culture boys are encouraged to compete more than girls are.

The author makes a case for grouping members on the basis of their levels of AS and AO. Those who accept others but don't accept self, need more individual attention in project teaching. Those who accept themselves but reject others need to work with members who accept both self and others. Persons in the latter group are likely to be challenged in either group or individual work—and so can be offered a choice.

Theлма Howard, "An Exploratory Study of a Comparison of Expressed Acceptance of Self and Others between 4-H Members Involved in Two Types of Project Evaluation." Unpublished Master's thesis, Institute for Extension Personnel Development, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, 1966.

#### ATTITUDES TOWARD ANTI-POVERTY PROGRAMS

What are the attitudes of Extension staff members and local support groups toward anti-poverty programs in Extension? Cebotarev and King asked Extension state and county staff, county Extension executive committee members and leaders, county government officials, and county welfare agency managers in a rural Pennsylvania county what they thought about Extension getting into low-income programs.

One group opposed any change in present Extension programs. They would support getting into anti-poverty programs only if it would not interfere with already existing programs. If the poor were interested, they had the same right as anyone to take part in Extension programs. But there was no point in putting together a special program. As far as this change-opposing group was concerned, present programs, with minor changes, fit the requirements of low-income groups. Yearly net income below \$3000 per family is generally used as a measure of poverty. However, rather than defining poverty by this standard, the change-opposing group thought of poverty as a distinctive pattern of behavior different from the middle-class way of life. They saw the causes of poverty as lack of initiative, reluctance to change and improve, and aversion to hard work on the part of the poor—as well as indifference to supposedly helpful programs. Slightly over half the 52 persons interviewed felt this way.

A second group, about a quarter of those interviewed, favored change in Extension programs to fit the needs of low-income groups. They had a different view of poverty and its causes. Whereas the change-opposing groups tended to blame poverty on the poor, this group tended to blame the circumstances in which the poor found themselves for causing both poverty and the personal characteristics resulting from poverty. This change-favoring group saw a need for special programs for the poor, taking into account their situations, values, and frames of reference. This group felt that the poor are unable to overcome these circumstances without outside help. This view means that higher socioeconomic groups in society—rather than the poor themselves—must be responsible for alleviating poverty.

A third group, 19 per cent, included those indifferent to the idea, and those who had no opinion.

The authors conclude that if changes advocated by the change-favoring group are to be made, Extension personnel must take firm action and direct an intensive educational program toward local support groups. Otherwise, it appears that Extension will continue its traditional programs with only occasional specific poverty-ameliorating efforts on the part of individual Extension staff members.

Eleonora A. Cebotarev and Gary W. King, "Attitudes toward Anti-Poverty Programs in the Extension Service: A Case Study." Paper delivered at the annual meeting of the Rural Sociological Society, Miami Beach, Florida, August 26-29, 1966.

#### CONFERENCE ANXIETY

People attending a several-day conference are more anxious on some days than on others. This was the major finding of a study of two "residential conferences"—where participants live at the same place as their conference is held. Fales studied a six-day executive seminar in sales management held at Michigan State University, and the five-day American Home Economics Association Workshop, "Working with Low-Income Families," at the University of Chicago.

The pattern of anxiety—roughly M-shaped—was similar for both of these conferences, despite their different content, audience, and structure. Average anxiety was low at the beginning of the conference, rose to a high point on the second full day, dropped somewhat on the third day, and rose again one day before the last day.

#### *Analysis*

Although there are dangers in generalizing from this small study, the findings are intriguing. Psychological findings indicate that arousal and perhaps some level of anxiety may be beneficial and necessary for a person to learn. In other words, we may have to be "shaken" out of our complacency before we're ready to learn something new. Certainly anxiety among learners can get so high that no learning can take place. But it may be that with a "reasonable" level of anxiety (whatever that may be), learners are the most ready to learn.

Thus, if the M-shaped anxiety pattern holds for many types of longer conferences, planners of meetings might want to plan for the most learning during the "peaks" of anxiety. And rather than worrying about how to reduce tension and anxiety in a conference, planners might well spend more time on creating the right kind of tension and taking advantage of whatever tension pattern evolves in the conference.

Ann Wohlleben Fales, "The Pattern of Anxiety in Residential Conferences." Continuing Education Report No. 11, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, 1966.