

research in brief

4-H Career Program Challenge

Do farm and nonfarm parents differ significantly in life aspirations for their children? In a recent Colorado State University research project, 52 farm (34 mothers and 18 fathers) and 69 nonfarm (35 mothers and 34 fathers) parents completed an inventory designed to measure the attributes most adults feel are important for children to develop:

1. Upward mobility: success in education and work.
2. Aesthetic values: appreciation for art and literature.
3. Civic-mindedness: awareness of responsibilities as a citizen.

It was found that farm parents scored higher for all three attributes. In other words, they had stronger desires than nonfarm parents for their children to achieve upward mobility, aesthetic, and civic values. Boys in both farm and nonfarm families received more encouragement than girls to develop upward mobility, while girls were encouraged to adopt aesthetic values. No difference was noted in civic responsibilities.

With the chances of maintaining the profitable small family farm decreasing in America, farm parents are preparing their children for the possibility of nonfarm life. 4-H Career Educational programs can greatly encourage both parents and children.

"Life Aspirations for Farm Youth: A Challenge to 4-H Career Education Programs." Jerry Bigner and others. Research report, 1979 (unpublished). Available from: Department of Human Development and Family Studies, College of Home Economics, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado.

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