

FFA LEADERS AND PERSONALITY TRAITS

Jeffrey A. Owings
Agricultural Education
Purdue University

and

Clifford L. Nelson
Agriculture and Extension
Education
University of Maryland

Leadership training has always been an important and integral part of a vocational agriculture program. It is through this training that vocational agriculture students learn the skills they need to become the agriculture leaders of tomorrow. In a study conducted by Hampson, et al. (1977), it was found that of a sample of agricultural leaders in Ohio approximately one half (49.0%) were past officers in FFA. FFA members typically receive leadership training and so have the opportunity to progress through the organizational hierarchy from member to chapter officer, state officer and ultimately, for a few, national officer.

Current research, though, in the area of youth leadership, seems to indicate that leadership skills are not the only factors involved in becoming a youth organization officer. Benedetti (1977), in a study that attempted to discover the personality traits of young people participating in youth organizations, found that leaders in these groups more often tend to exhibit personality characteristics related to extroverted, intuitive, and feeling types as measured by a standardized personality instrument. Such leaders are characterized by their preference for favoring public contact over paper work, enjoying problem solving, and handling people with tact and sympathetic understanding.

Leadership behavior thus appears to involve a particular combination of skills and certain personality traits. Because it occurs in a group, it is an interactional process, sensitive both to the group context as well as the personal characteristics of group members. Shaw (1971) pointed out that individuals exert a powerful influence upon group processes by the personal characteristics they bring with them when they join a group. Idem (1964) wrote that "the degree to which an individual exhibits leadership depends not only on his characteristics, but also on the characteristics of the situation in which he finds himself." Thus, certain personal characteristics may be conducive for certain leadership functions.

It is likely that the behavior of leaders in different leadership positions can be seen to systematically vary along different personality dimensions. Based upon Jung's theory of personality, Myers (1962) has contended that people differ in what they perceive and the conclusions they draw about what they

perceive. Perhaps the basic differences in the ways people use perception and judgment, as theorized by Jung (1971), are apparent in FFA leaders.

Recognizing the importance of both leadership training and personality traits to potential leaders, this study was undertaken to address the following question: What are the personality traits of FFA officers who attended leadership training conferences at the National FFA Center during the summer of 1976? Two of the major objectives of this study were:

1. To determine the personality traits of FFA officers attending the 1976 leadership conferences at the National FFA Center.
2. To compare the personality traits of state officers and chapter officers.

Procedures

Population and Sample. The population for this study consisted of FFA officers from across the nation who attended leadership training conferences at the National FFA Center during the summer of 1976. Four conferences were held in July and August and were attended by either chapter or state officers. From these attendees a sample of 109 chapter officers and 38 state officers was randomly selected for inclusion in the study. All data were collected using standardized test administration procedures. Groups of 25 to 35 individuals were tested during afternoon sessions.

Instrumentation. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) was administered to the 147 FFA officers. The MBTI is a 166-item instrument that indicates a person's preference on each of four basic personality traits. Each of these preferences is measured by one of the following indices:

1. Extrovert or introvert (basic orientation to life) - whether to direct perception and judgment upon environment (extrovert) or world of ideas (introvert).
2. Sensing or intuitive (way of perceiving life around them) - which of these two kinds of perceptions to rely on; sensing (through five senses) or intuitive (through indirect perception by way of the unconscious).
3. Thinking or feeling (way of coming to conclusions about life) - which of these two kinds of judgment to rely on; thinking (discriminates impersonally between true and false) or feeling (discriminates between valued and not valued).

4. Judging or perceptive (method by which life is lived) - whether to use judging (deals with world as a judge) or perceptive (deals with world as a perceiver) attitudes for dealing with environment.

Based on the responses of the individuals who completed the instrument, each of the participants in this study was classified on each of the above four indices. For example, on the extrovert-introvert index, an individual would be classified as being either extroverted or introverted.

Analysis. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data; namely sub-programs of frequencies and cross-tabs. Sub-program frequencies provided a method of determining percentages in the sample that were represented by each personality trait. The Chi-square statistic was used to compare chapter officers and state officers on each of the indices. The level of significance was set at .05.

Results

The major findings of this study were:

1. Of the total sample, 72.1 percent were classified as being extroverted rather than introverted. An extrovert individual prefers to work with people. He/she prefers public contact over paper work, and is more likely to take charge and assert him/herself. No difference was found between chapter and state officers on this dimension.
2. Of the total sample, 68.0 percent were classified as being sensing rather than intuitive. A sensing individual is especially good with details and routine. He/she gets things done, and is immediately concerned with events as they happen.
3. A significant Chi-square statistic resulted when chapter officers and state officers were cross tabulated with the sensing-intuitive index. A higher proportion of state officers was classified as intuitive than was chapter officers. An intuitive individual would more likely prefer working at an abstract level, such as with ideas or associations and, thus, be more problem oriented.
4. Of the total sample, 62.6 percent were classified as being "feeling rather than thinking." A feeling individual is people-oriented and prefers tact and sympathetic handling of people. No difference was found between chapter and state officers.

5. Of the total sample, 59.9 percent were classified as being judging individuals rather than perceptive. A judging individual likes to work within a system and works well under structure. Again, no differences were found between chapter and state officers on this scale.

Conclusions and Implications

The results of this study seem to indicate that both chapter and state FFA officers who attended the 1976 leadership conferences at the National FFA Center have common personality traits. Based on these results, the authors characterize a typical FFA chapter officer who attended these conferences as being outgoing, good with detail and routine, people-oriented and working well under structured situations. There would be a tendency for a state officer to be more problem-oriented than the chapter officer.

Whether such traits as mentioned above are dominant in those individuals and become more prominent because of their leadership role or whether they are developed as a result of special training are questions to be answered by further research. Another possible area for inquiry is whether or not leaders are selected because of their leadership skills or because of their personality. Nevertheless, personality characteristics appear to be important in the development of leaders. A knowledge of these characteristics can provide useful information to teachers of vocational agriculture as they counsel and guide the prospective leaders of agricultural industry.

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or selected referees. Their deliberations will decide the fate of the article. The author will then be notified about the disposition of the article. If it is accepted, several months may pass before it is published. Sometimes one receives conditional acceptance, which means the author is to make certain revisions before it is published or reconsidered. If the article is rejected, that does not mean it is not publishable. The author may just have to submit it to another journal. Most letters of rejection include a statement of reason for rejection. Sometimes an article is submitted to several journals before it is finally accepted and revisions may be necessary.

The decisions are not all made by the editor. Editors cannot consider articles that are never written. Potential writers will not know if they can get an article published if they do not write. Competition for tenure, promotion and salary will continue to be based largely upon publications. Therefore, professionals in agricultural education must conduct research and report the findings. Perhaps it is not a fact of life that is liked, but it appears to be one that must be developed to advance professionally.

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Table II shows that ninety percent of the respondents rated the workshop as being very good or excellent. This rating, along with the data collected on individual sessions in the workshop, provided workshop planners with positive feedback that the workshop had been successful in answering teachers' questions about how to organize a young farmer program.

Teachers were asked if they planned to organize young farmer chapters based on what they had learned at the workshop. Interestingly, ninety percent of the respondents indicated that they planned to return home and organize young farmer chapters.