

***Methodology of Public
Policy Education***

COMMUNITY CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT: A PUBLIC AFFAIRS EDUCATION PROGRAM IN FLORIDA

*E. B. Bolton,
Florida Cooperative Extension*

Background and Rationale

The view that Cooperative Extension Services should be concerned about cultural development as well as general economic development within communities is based on the assumption that cultural and economic development within communities are not separate and distinct processes.

Each to some degree supports the other. Whether planned or unplanned, viable or stagnant, these two forces are operating within a community. Stable and economically-sound communities attend to their cultural life as one means of promoting and maintaining economic vitality. Communities, like people, need more than a single facet of life in order to be a healthy and stable entity.

Community cultural development by necessity must operate as an interdisciplinary program because of its relationship with other aspects of community life. As a concept, community culture is a legitimate concern of extension Home Economics because of the implied relationship with the quality of family life.

The effect of cultural programs on communities was the subject of an economic impact study prepared by Steinike and Stevens. Conclusions showed that: (1) household income totaling \$51 million was generated by arts and cultural activities occupations, (2) the arts and cultural activities generated \$161 million in sales and payrolls, and (3) eighty-two percent of the arts and cultural organizations in Florida consider themselves connected with community goals or programs.

The cultural life of a community also affects it economically in terms of its human resources. The general population is more likely to develop local resources at their disposal if they value the life style and environment of the community. Young people are less likely to leave a community that manifests a rich cultural heritage (Beaulieu and Spirtas).

Project Description

Cultural Development in Rural Communities is a Public Affairs Education Project sponsored by Florida Cooperative Extension and funded by the Florida Endowment for the Humanities.

The plan of the project is to provide a holistic approach for rural communities interested in preserving and enhancing their indigenous cultural heritage. A holistic approach is activity oriented and involves many groups and has many foci.

The goal of the project is to develop cultural programs and activities in rural communities by integrating aspects of the humanities with applied science and technology programs. The anticipated outcomes of the project are: (1) rural communities in Florida will have a means of assistance, through Cooperative Extension, for stimulating and maintaining activities concerned with the indigenous elements of community culture, (2) special interest groups not traditionally associated with extension programs will work cooperatively for a common goal, (3) rural communities will discover and capitalize on their unique cultural elements and thereby realize economic benefits. A model program for promoting cultural activities in other rural communities will be developed.

Current Status and Developmental Activities

Coordination with counties. Since a direct focus on cultural development is new in Florida extension, several rural counties have been worked with to develop the specific components of the program. Thus far, two counties have been selected.

The community cultural development program will vary among counties, because different community groups represent different cultural interests and different stages of cultural and economic development. For example, in one county the interest focuses on preserving the older section of the county seat and the main township. In the other county, interest centers on developing community cultural leaders.

Cultural Development Programs in Other States. Response by 34 of the 50 state humanities agencies to a survey conducted by the project showed that with a few exceptions most rural cultural development programs are short term, single programs consisting of lecture series, panel discussions, or film series.

With only 15 of 50 responses to a survey of the State Cooperative Extension Services in, it appears that few Extension Services have broad community cultural development programs. However, some aspects of cultural development take place in other programs. There is evidence of interest in rural cultural development but programs by state humanities agencies as well as Cooperative Extension Services are limited in scope and tend to be in rudimentary stages of development.

Coordination with other Florida Extension Programs. From the beginning, there has been a major effort to make other extension programs aware of the cultural development project, to coordinate programs whenever possible and to work from an interdisciplinary approach. There are plans to develop a faculty colloquia within the Department of Extension Home Economics to involve extension specialists in discussions of philosophies, values and culture, and how these relate to various subjects and delivery methods.

Community Cultural Profile. To provide county extension personnel with a list of local and regional resources a directory of all organizations, agencies, unique activities and noted experts having any relationship with arts, humanities or cultural activities is being developed. Specific cultural needs of communities will be identified in a needs assessment survey. The needs assessment and community cultural directory will assist in the development of a community profile. Inherent in these activities is the involvement of local advisory groups, special interest groups and interested individuals.

A Training Module. Curriculum materials are being prepared for use by extension in planning for cultural development programs. These materials include: (a) a definition of culture, (b) a rationale that explains the importance of developing and maintaining indigenous elements of community culture and how these elements contribute to other aspects of community life, (c) directions and suggestions for organizing community interest groups, (d) information on setting up specific cultural programs, (e) presentations designed to stimulate interest in community culture and arts, and (f) suggested press releases and general announcement brochures.

REFERENCES

- Beaulieu, L.J. & N. Spirtas, *Focus on Baker County: The Citizen's Viewpoint*. Gainesville, Florida: Center for Community and Rural Development, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, May, 1980.
- Steinike, G.C. & D.N. Stevens, *The Economic Impact of the Arts in Florida*. Tallahassee, Florida: Division of Cultural Affairs, Office of the Secretary of State, December, 1979.

