DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 056 807 RC 005 730

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TITLE Factors Relating to Program Development with Indian People.
INSTITUTION Wisconsin Univ., Madison, Univ. Extension.
SPONS AGENCY Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.
REPORT NO DCA-69-2
PUB DATE 69
NOTE 12p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *American Indians; *Community Involvement; Community Relations; *Extension Education; Leadership; Negative Attitudes; Power Structure; *Program Development; Program Planning; *Success Factors

ABSTRACT

Factors contributing to successful extension programs in American Indian communities are presented in this paper. Implications of the professional person's attitude toward Indian people are discussed, and concepts of program development as their application related to Indian communities are explored. Community involvement in program planning is emphasized as the primary prerequisite to developing successful programs. Other considerations include (1) allowing local Indian leadership to function to legitimize the program; (2) knowledge of past programs which are related to the projected program; (3) the time element in relation to employment, climate, and other factors which might affect program participation; and (4) the level of knowledge and background of experiences of program participants. (JH)

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FACTORS RELATING TO PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT WITH INDIAN PEOPLE

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
Report Number 69-2

FACTORS RELATING TO PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT WITH INDIAN PEOPLE

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INTRODUCTION

Approximately 15,000 Indian people are residents of the State of Wisconsin. The majority of them live in distinct Indian communities. This group has a need for the resources of University Extension, The University of Wisconsin. However, if University Extension resources are to benefit Wisconsin Indian people, appropriate program processes and favorable staff attitudes are essential. Thus this paper will:

1. Discuss the implications of the professional person's attitude toward Indian people.
2. Explore some concepts of program development as their application relates to Indian communities.
3. Emphasize the appropriateness of basic program planning principles when programming with Indian people rather than identifying needs for different concepts.

ATTITUDE OF PROFESSIONALS

Often the professional attempting to develop programs for or with Indian people believes ideas such as:

Indian people are difficult to work with.
Indian people are hard to change.
Indian people don't care about their homes and families the same as non-Indian people do.
Indian people do not know what they want in regard to programs.
Indian people aren't interested in programs to better their lot in life.
Indian people are like children.
Indian people have been mistreated by society, and therefore need sympathy.
Indian people do not have leadership ability.

Indian people, the same as other people, are quick to sense such attitudes. The resulting tension can make it difficult to develop programs. It is possible

to develop programs if professionals can develop their attitudes so they believe, feel, and act that Indian people are motivated by the same needs and situations as other people, that they care what happens to their families, that they do want to change if it seems advantageous to do so, that they are as mature and intelligent as any other people, and that their values have as much variety as those of other people.

Sociologists identify minority groups as sharing certain racial or ethnic similarities which are considered to be different from or inferior to the traits of the dominant group. These characteristics serve as a means of identifying members of a minority group, who are then singled out for differential and unequal treatment![1] It often appears that Indians do not have characteristics or traits that identify them as being different. Rather, white society looks upon them as being different or inferior, thus seeming to expect such characteristics when dealing with them. If successful programs are to be developed, Indian people need to be viewed as being as alike and as different as any other group of people.

Another factor to consider is that the professional need not try to change his personality when working with Indian people. Indian people can be serious or full of jokes--in short, they can be as individual as any other group of people. Rather than attempting to be "professional and formal" or "informal and casual," one needs to react to an individual, a group, or a situation in a completely natural manner. One needs to remember he is communicating not with Indians, but with people who are individuals. He needs to use the same naturalness, good manners, and judgment as when communicating in any other situation. Indian people, like other people, are quick to sense any artificiality in one's manner. This can lead to mistrust on either side. Both Indian and non-Indian can work together more effectively if they meet as human being with human being rather than as a superior being with an inferior being.

For the purposes of this paper, a discussion of the culture of any of Wisconsin's Indian tribes would be an oversimplification of the subject. Certainly each of Wisconsin's Indian tribes--Stockbridge-Munsee, Oneida, Potawatomie, Winnebago, Menominee, and each of the six Chippewa bands--has a tribal identity

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[1] Rose, Peter I., They and We. (New York: Random House, Inc., 1964), p. 13.

at is special to them as a people. This tribal identity needs to be respected by e professional person attempting to develop programs.

Herzog points out the dangers of oversimplification of culture. She states at some current programs reflect the cookie-cutter concept of culture--that is, ne assumption that a culture molds all its members by identical forces, so that ney turn out like cookies, all produced by the same form. Individual differences nd the interaction of manifold influences affecting an individual are overlooked. She contends that the culture of poverty is really a subculture, so that in this country the value system of the middle-class white population also pervades the subculture of poverty.[2]

Some professional people working with Indian tribes become very concerned about the culture of the tribe and use it to explain various program efforts. Certainly the history of Indian people indicates they have experienced a culture different from a person whose heritage traces back to Europe. However, culture is a changing thing. A belief that Indian tribes in 1969 have the same culture as they had in 1469 or 1869 can be detrimental to the development of programs. Rather, each Indian community needs to be approached in terms of what is important to them today.

KNOW THE COMMUNITY AND ITS PEOPLE

Various techniques can be usefully used when becoming acquainted with an Indian tribe. Inform people in the community of your purpose, that you represent University Extension, and that you wish to offer assistance with the development of economic resources, a youth program, or whatever the case may be.

Methods of learning to know a community include home visits; group discussions; visits on the street and at the post office, grocery store, or other gathering places; tribal council, church, and school meetings; coffee klatches; and discussions with staff personnel of various programs, local men's and women's groups, both formal and informal, and members of neighboring white communities. However, one must be careful not to take the words of one person as the absolute

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[2] Herzog, Elizabeth, About the Poor, Some Facts and Fictions. U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Social and Rehabilitation Services. Children's Bureau, Publication No. 451 (Washington: U.S. Government printing office, 1968), p. 13.

truth regarding the community situation. Rather, listen to many sources of information and then analyze the situation. In any program endeavor it is important to know people from more than one faction or sector of the community.

This writer has had the experience of being affiliated with Great Lakes Inter Tribal Council, a group composed of the ten Indian tribes in Wisconsin. The organization has paraprofessional staff members in each Indian community. Many of these workers have been valuable in developing programs. They have introduced the writer to people in the community and informed her of various problems, situations, and relationships within the community which can affect program development. Through their assistance with a variety of contacts, it has been possible to observe various views of the community situation.

A word of caution--quietly listen to and observe what people say and do, rather than asking many questions or providing "instant information." The aggressive non-Indian who has many questions for the Indian community with little time to listen to answers and who offers much information for solving problems has not been a rarity in Indian communities. Allow the Indian person to acquire respect for the professional person. He will, if the non-Indian acts respectful toward the Indian community.

THE MARGINAL MAN

The marginal man can be identified as one who attempts to belong to the dominant group as well as to the minority group and as a result belongs to neither group. Too often the marginal man is the contact person for the professional attempting to develop programs within an Indian community. The marginal man enjoys his close association with a member of the dominant group and visualizes a close association with people of the minority group through projected programs. This type of attempt at developing programs usually leads to frustration for the professional, and in time he begins to believe that it is difficult if not impossible to develop programs with Indian people.

This is not to say that all Indian people who have considerable contact with the dominant society, or who have "made it," are marginal men. The attitudes of such individuals toward Indian people vary from real concern to very negative.

Marginal men can be identified much as leadership is identified, by becoming acquainted with people in a community. Conversation with various people in

an Indian community identifies individuals who are truly members of the community and those who are not members. During conversations, a marginal man will often reveal his status by his references to Indian people, his attitudes toward them, and his associations with them.

INVOLVEMENT OF PEOPLE

A primary prerequisite to developing successful programs with Indian people is to involve them in program planning. Various methods can be used to bring about involvement of people in program development. One method is to make home visits to individual families explaining some program possibilities both in subject matter and scheduling of programs. These visits allow the professional to become acquainted with people and their situation, problems, and interests as well as with the characteristics of the community. From these visits a program may be developed, as the same concerns may be repeatedly discussed. Sometimes people suggest a community meeting to plan programs.

In some communities either the paraprofessional staff members of Great Lakes Inter Tribal Council or volunteer leaders may arrange community planning meetings so that the professional does not need to make home visits for this purpose.

It seems to this writer that it is quite unfair to simply ask people what their problems are or what needs they have, when they may not even be sure of the competencies of professional people. Rather, the planning can be approached by asking their interests, then describing various areas of possibilities for program development. During home visits this can be done orally, while at a planning meeting this can be done by visual or graphic presentations which lead to the discussion of problem areas. With a group, a concrete example of program content can be more meaningful than an abstract discussion of data relating to problems.

However, the planning process can take one of these avenues.

1. The Indian people, upon knowing the competencies of the professional, identify areas of concerns for which programs may be implemented.

2. The professional needs to help identify problem areas and suggest program possibilities which will alleviate them.

3. The planning process may be a combination of both approaches.

The professional contributes his knowledge of needs by the information he presents. For example, if use of leisure-time activities does not seem to be a high priority need, he does not suggest craft projects but concentrates instead on such areas as nutrition, consumer competency, and family relations. Local people can be very effective in the direction which a program takes. For example, one person's response to a request for knitting classes was, "We must consider the time and resources of the home economist, determine the real needs of the people, base our objectives on those needs, and focus on those objectives."

Despite information from the professional, people must participate in the determination of needs and solutions if programs are to benefit the people.

A professional may discover that there is not a need for the area in which he has competency. Through the program planning process other needs may be identified. His contribution may then be to identify resources which can relate to the indicated needs. On the other hand, representatives of the Indian community may contact an agency with a specific request for a program. In such cases it becomes the role of the professional to carry out the requested plan if it is his area of responsibility.

When a series of educational meetings is planned, some time should be allowed for specific planning of the next meeting. People can approve plans or make suggestions. As an example, in one community, sessions had been conducted on food buying. At the last meeting the women asked for another session so they could discuss menu planning. This concept also applies to programs which are not educational meetings. As any program is carried out, people need to evaluate the various steps and either give approval of present plans or new direction to the project.

LEADERSHIP

People with an Extension background sometimes misunderstand the concept of leadership among Indian people. They may hold up their hands in helplessness saying, "We cannot work with Indian people because they do not have leaders in the group."

Leadership is found among all groups.[3] Hobbs and Powers state that leadership is present in every political system...whether it be a democracy or dictatorship, nation, state, or native tribe.[4] Leadership may be defined as those individuals who have influence over others. It is a challenge to seek out the people who possess qualities of leadership which will be helpful in developing and implementing programs. Leadership will be found in any community if one looks for it and then allows that leadership to function. The professional person is not likely to find himself in a leadership role in an Indian community, so unless local Indian leadership is allowed to function it is not likely that the program can be successful.

A leader's style of leadership reflects how he became a leader, the nature of the group in which he functions, and his personality attributes and those of his followers. Leadership can be identified by visiting with members of the group. They will indicate people who influence them or people whose judgment they respect. When working with a group, one is able to identify people whom others regard as leaders or who have the ability to influence others. People who are in positions of authority within a tribe may or may not be the actual leaders. While these people may be helpful in program development, there may be others who guide the "public leaders."

Depending upon the program area, different leaders will be recognized. Some people will be leaders who can best relate to youth programs, others to family living programs, and still another set of leaders will influence economic development plans. However, some individual may have the interest and ability to provide leadership in many areas of program development.

Since a leader's position is also influenced by his followers, the interests and concerns of the people will be reflected by the actions of the leader. Thus a leader who believes the people are not interested in a program is not likely to provide leadership for the program. This provides support for the concept of involving people in program development, meaning "the man on the street" must be involved in program development, not just leaders of the group.

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[3] Krech, David, Crutchfield, Richard S., and Ballachey, Egerton L. Individual in Society (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962) p. 422.

[4] Hobbs, Daryl J. and Powers, Ronald C. Leadership (Ames, Iowa: Cooperative Extension Service, 1962) p. 1.

THE POWER STRUCTURE AND LEGITIMATION OF PROGRAMS

To have a successful program, it is important to have the idea of the program, and possibly its content, legitimized by various key leaders within the community. It helps to ask them to identify needs of the people and to provide suggestions for programs, names of people, meeting places--to involve them as much as possible. These key leaders may be tribal chairmen, tribal council members, church group members, community action personnel, town chairmen, housing authorities, school or church personnel. They may well be people who have no title but who are key leaders within the community. Even though people are involved in program development, it is unlikely that the tribal chairman would help plan a family living program or an influential older woman a youth program. Thus, without the blessings of the power structure, it becomes extremely difficult to implement meaningful programs.

Consult with various agency people such as social service workers, county health nurses, clergymen, and school personnel. In some instances these people have some influence as to what happens within an Indian community. Agency personnel can provide the benefits of past experiences with Indian people. They can give clues as to why programs have been successful or unsuccessful, how Indian people are viewed by non-Indian people, and problems which the Indian people face.

After talking with a number of Indian and non-Indian people, it occasionally becomes apparent that there are some people who are viewed as outsiders or marginal men, as taking advantage of the Indian, or as thinking that the Indian is inferior. However, ignoring these groups or individuals is not always the answer. The professional may use his ability so that greater understanding is brought about. In one community there were unfavorable relationships between the church and community. The community felt they had a right to use the church building, but church officials were not eager to have it used. Arranging to hold a series of classes in the church facilities without paying rent greatly enhanced the program.

HISTORY OF PROGRAMS

When developing programs with Indian people it is necessary to have some knowledge of past programs which have had some relationship to the projected program. Have such programs been successful, or have they failed? It is

helpful to discuss this with local people as well as with those who initiated the program. In one community an extension home economics program became confused with a social service homemaker program. The social service program had not been well received by people in the community, nor was the home economics program. In another area a group of women under the auspices of a church group have maintained an Extension Homemaker Club for many years. A visit to this group to explain possibilities for expansion of a home economics program and to ask for their suggestions strengthened the expanded program.

TIME ELEMENT

The seasonal nature of employment for many Indian families is a factor to be considered when scheduling programs. People who are working in the harvest fields have little energy left for learning. The same is true for people who are involved in tourist work in the summer. Spells of unseasonably hot or cold weather also can affect participation in programs.

The time between learning experiences needs to be considered. Extension workers often like to hold to a monthly meeting concept. Before trying this approach, consider how much is remembered from a two-hour session for one month. Did the two hours provide enough learning so that there is something left to build on a month later? How much effort is required to get people involved once a month? Perhaps more meaningful learning experiences can be provided by a series of short sessions. Four to six sessions, held once a week, with intensive efforts that relate to one or two major concepts can be more meaningful than an irregular approach. Also, the process of program development and involvement focusing on a series of sessions can take less time and yet be more effective than a monthly effort.

When approaching Indian people about program development, it is important to have time to develop and implement the program immediately. Indian people have been plagued with program ideas that have not developed, and they do not get too excited at the idea of another new program. To build their confidence in programs, carry them out in a reasonable time.

LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE

It is necessary to know the level of knowledge and background of experiences of program participants. A program which focuses on information which people

already know will be short-lived. As this writer has become acquainted with Indian people, she cannot help but have a great respect for these people who, with limited incomes, manage to feed their families so they appear to be healthy and to clothe their families so they look acceptable. When dealing with programs, it is important to build on their strengths and to make it easier for them to carry out their roles by presenting information which is relevant to them.

This writer had the experience of conducting a program on use of color in the home. In attempting to simplify the information, she discussed various types of color schemes without using "technical" terms. One woman said, "Aren't you talking about monochromatic color schemes?" Others joined in with comments such as, "I thought that was what you meant." At the same session, colors were identified as basic rather than as primary and secondary. The women in turn explained to the writer about primary and secondary colors. Not only was the information already known by the women, but in greater detail than presented. The women then requested home visits to help with individual home furnishing problems. The session could have provided a situation that would have allowed the women to solve their own problems.

To determine the level of knowledge of people, a number of methods may be used. By becoming acquainted with people, talking with them about problem situations that might be developed into programs, by observing their homes, activity in the home and family and community relationships, by asking questions and by listening, an indication of the level of knowledge can be determined.

Entry behavior tests also may be used to determine level of knowledge. This type of measurement instrument can then be used to determine change in the level of knowledge or behavior. Judgment needs to be made in the use of these instruments, as they may be detrimental or beneficial. This writer has used them in some instances where they not only served to determine the level of knowledge, but also provided motivation for learning. Other times they have not been used for fear of offending the group.

RELEVANCY OF INFORMATION

Unless information has some meaning to people they cannot be expected to be enthused about it and to continue to participate in the program. When women have a major task of feeding their families three basic meals a day, meals for

entertaining is not a meaningful program. On the other hand, information can be helpful when it pertains to basic nutrition and helps the homemaker appreciate the need for using fruits and vegetables in her family's diet and reducing the amount of carbohydrates. Information that helps the homemaker to use her resources so that more fruits and vegetables can be provided may be the most relevant to her.

Information on using frozen food when the homemaker has limited freezer space does not have much meaning, but new ideas on how to use rolled wheat, corn meal, corn grits, oatmeal, bulgar, rolled oats, and rice, when she receives an abundance of these foods through the surplus commodity programs, can be useful to her.

Observation will indicate that many families need new home furnishings. Discussing information relative to purchasing furnishings has little meaning if the family does not have the financial resources to do so. Information on home improvement can be meaningful when a family has the necessary money, skills, or time to manage.

When a mother obtains a good share of her family's clothing from rummage sales, talking about saving labels so fabrics can be cared for correctly does not mean much. However, when homemakers are bombarded by advertising on the new enzyme cleaners, information on their use can be helpful.

Telling youngsters and parents that they must do well in school so that they can graduate from high school does not mean much unless they know what opportunities a high school education may provide.

SUMMARY

To effectively program with Indian people, the professional person must see Indian people as human beings who are concerned about their families and communities. These are not new ideas for program development, but perhaps part of the problem when developing programs in Indian communities has been that we often think we need a different approach because the people are different. When programs are developed with involvement of local people, with consideration of leaders and groups and the needs and situations of the people and the attitude that Indian people are people, not "those" people, then programs can be successful in Indian communities.

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