The Publics in Our Program

Extension program depends upon organized efforts by people who tend to form around subjects of common concern.

J. W. Scheel

THE EXTENT of program expansion that is feasible in Extension will depend upon how wide a range of interests we are willing to serve and how much financial support our publics will provide for staffing. It may be significant that our farm publics have been and still are the most politically potent of our clientele. This may suggest some very practical limits to expanding the scope of the program to serve other categories of publics; but, regardless of what clientele groups we seek to serve, it is important to recognize that such publics do not remain static. We should be alert to:

1. Changing publics resulting from the effects of our educational work.
2. Potential publics with whom we have not yet established productive mutual interests.
3. Emerging publics created by changes in society.

Extension publics have been classified by public relations committees and thoughtful students of Extension in a number of ways. Most such classifications differentiate between farmers and non-farm residents; some classifications recognize differences between people whose income, educational, and age levels differ. Such classifications are not used extensively in program development, perhaps because they do not fit practical needs.

There may be a different basis for classifying publics that can be useful in program development. Research will be needed to clarify some features of the concept, but much of the idea involves merely a different way of analyzing information already available. The key to the idea is that the Extension program depends upon organized

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Agricultural publics often fall into one of several categories based on their common interests and concerns. These categories include occupational, geographic, and sociological factors. Each category represents a different aspect of public interest and can influence how services are provided and received. For example, an occupational group might include farmers, while a geographic group might include residents of rural areas. These groups can be influenced by social and economic factors, and can change over time as circumstances change.

The following categories can be used to define agricultural publics:

1. **Occupational**—The central focus is on earning a living. Examples include farmers, ranchers, and workers in the food industry. This category can be further divided into subcategories, such as farmers, ranchers, and workers in the food industry. This category can be further divided into subcategories, such as farmers, ranchers, and workers in the food industry.

2. **Geographic**—The central focus is on the area of residence or community. Examples include residents of rural or urban areas. This category can be further divided into subcategories, such as residents of rural or urban areas. This category can be further divided into subcategories, such as residents of rural or urban areas.

3. **Sociological**—The central focus is on the social and economic characteristics of the public. Examples include low-income households, middle-income households, and high-income households. This category can be further divided into subcategories, such as low-income households, middle-income households, and high-income households. This category can be further divided into subcategories, such as low-income households, middle-income households, and high-income households.

The effective use of public services requires an understanding of the characteristics of these different groups. This can help in tailoring services to meet the specific needs of each group. For example, a program aimed at low-income households might need to focus on providing services that are accessible and affordable. In contrast, a program aimed at high-income households might need to focus on providing services that are high-quality and prestigious.
gists involves lower, middle, and upper classes and breaks each of these into three subdivisions (i.e., lower-lower, middle-lower, and upper-lower). Differences in interests between these groups can be identified. Extension has had far more experience in working with middle-class groups than with those at the opposite ends of the scale.

5. Educational—This one has not been clearly defined, but it is apparent that certain subjects seem to “sort out people” according to educational levels. The American Association of University Women, for example, seems to have a natural affinity with certain areas of concern that many other groups do not. There obviously are mixtures of educational levels in the publics of other categories, so there may well be uncertainty as to the usefulness of this particular item in Extension program planning; it may be pertinent where illiteracy is an apparent handicap.

6. Avocational—We serve quite a range of groups whose avocational interests have a base in agricultural or home economics subject matter. There is a large potential for education with other avocational groups. There also are significant questions of public policy regarding how such work should be financed.

7. Ethnic—In some areas, cultural background stemming from national origin and other sources is quite significant. It may affect both objectives and methods in program as well as defining the human groups that can be involved.

There may be a number of other categories of publics that research should identify. The purpose of this paper is merely to suggest that this classification of publics can be useful in analyzing present programs and in identifying expansion opportunities.

I have briefly reviewed the Journal of Cooperative Extension.

... It looks interesting. I believe the publication shows considerable promise because in my opinion Extension personnel now and ... in the future will need to be as familiar as possible with the situations with which we are related, both directly and indirectly. Only through broad understandings of these situations and the many variables that exist within them can we be effective. I believe this journal ... will be helpful, especially in this respect. The biggest weakness lies, not within the Journal itself, but within the ranks of Extension workers. Will they read it and let it help them? This is an individual problem.

—from Tom Braddock, Assistant County Agent, Florida.