

research in brief

Women's Involvement Program

Much of the theory and practice of community development centers on several related goals: increase in ability to define community problems, development of the democratic process through joint action and shared decision making, increase in grass-roots leadership capability, and solution of community problems.

The common denominator throughout all this is the decision-making process—it's the key to effective citizen participation. Barone says, "A review of the literature indicates that women, per se, are neither identified nor treated as a specific community resource marked for development . . ." This effort was intended to improve communities by increasing the involvement of women in community development activities.

Three other objectives were also developed for testing: an increased potential for self-actualization, a heightened sense of self-expression, and a greater feeling of community efficacy.

The project ran for two years in two counties in the Colorado River area of southwestern Arizona. Three modes were developed for the study: Mode I—ad hoc coalition of professionals, Mode II—Programming with Extension home economists and Homemakers Clubs, and Mode III—programming for women's organizations (other than E.H.C.'s).

Mode I was the most effective in achieving the stated goals. Mode III also produced favorable results. Mode II showed little program impact. Although the home economists were supportive, there was little interest in Extension Homemakers Clubs.

The author concludes the basic framework of the Women's Involvement Program can be achieved by Extension without new program funding or additional staffing. Helping women pays off in increased community activity and improvement.

"Women's Involvement Program." Mary A. Barone. Tucson: University of Arizona, Cooperative Extension Service, February, 1977.

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