Culturally Responsive Strategies for Evaluating Community-Based Educational Programs for Latino Youth
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AEA's utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy standards of evaluation are implicitly defined in a cultural context. As the U.S. population continues to become more diverse racially, ethnically, and linguistically, it is important that those who design, deliver, and evaluate educational programs understand the cultural contexts within which these programs can effectively operate. Being sensitive and responsive to the cultural values of the target population is an important component of program development and evaluation that is increasingly gaining attention.   If program developers and evaluators are to successfully address cultural considerations, however, they must acquire a certain degree of cultural understanding and learn to practice related cultural competencies. While building capacity in these areas can be a lifelong endeavor, one of the ways the journey can be facilitated is by learning from the experiences of others.

Oregon Outreach, a statewide 4-H Youth Development initiative targeting the participation of recently-immigrated Mexican youth and their families, provides such an opportunity. The initiative also provides a framework of core cultural values to serve as a "cultural lens" for designing educational programs and responsive evaluation strategies for Latino youth and their families. It further offers examples of how these strategies can be operationalized as useful and effective evaluation approaches compatible with a Latino cultural context.

The Extension 4-H Youth Development Program at Oregon State University launched the Oregon Outreach initiative in 1997, funded by a five-year CYFAR (Children, Youth, and Families at Risk) grant from CSREES, USDA. It currently has funding support from a CYFAR New Communities grant. The purpose of the Outreach initiative is to (a) increase access to community-based programs for Latino youth and families, as well as (b) build Extension capacity for planning and delivering such programs. Efforts began with four demonstration sites across the state; currently about half of the state's 36 counties are engaged in Latino youth outreach programming. So far nearly 5,000 youth have participated. Some of these programs are tied to schools and some are located in housing developments for Latino agricultural workers who are permanent U.S. residents. Delivery has occurred through after-school activities, school clubs, community clubs, residential and day camps, community garden projects, summer activity programs, and group mentoring experiences. All the programs offered are bilingual and delivered by bilingual, bicultural program staff. The educational objectives vary for each site, but all have elements of cultural awareness and appreciation, leadership development, and community service. An overriding goal is to keep youth enrolled in school until they graduate.

The accumulated experience of Outreach staff working with these programs offers insights for others who might be considering similar programming efforts. The project model, described on the next page, sets the stage for sharing these insights. An examination of cultural values and their implications for educational programming follows, with particular attention to Latino populations. New applications and traditional evaluation approaches are then described in terms of their success within the context of the Outreach project.

The Program Evaluation Model

Oregon Outreach uses a five-tier evaluation model (Callor, Betts, Carter, and Marczak, 1996; Jacobs, 1988) that was foundational to CYFAR state-strengthening projects. The scope of the model is all-inclusive, with evaluation activities integrated into all steps of the overall programming process. The five tiers are:

- **Program definition**—documenting needs and assets and defining the program.
- **Accountability**—determining if the program serves those for whom it was intended and in the manner proposed.
- **Understanding and refining**—improving the program by providing information to staff, participants, and stakeholders.
- **Progress toward objectives**—documenting program effectiveness and outcomes in terms of project goals and objectives.
- **Program impact**—demonstrating long-term improvements in quality of life and program sustainability.

This model has served Oregon Outreach particularly well. Since the project staff was essentially initiating contact with a new audience it was important that all actions were done in a mindful way, and the model provided a framework that has helped maintain that focus. As staff learned and applied more information about cultural factors, the model served as a reminder that progress was being made (and marked) even though the process sometimes seemed slow and the methods used often differed from more familiar approaches.

Cultural Context, Values, and Competence

Although culture can be broadly defined inclusive of race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, social class, disability, language, and educational level or disciplinary background, the context for Oregon Outreach is on cultural aspects of ethnicity, specifically Latino. More precisely, the project focuses on recently-immigrated Mexican youth and families, who account for the greatest proportion of growth in the state's Latino population.

To work effectively with any ethnic group, educators and evaluators need to be aware of values in their own culture, as well as sensitive to differences in other cultures (Stewart & Bennett, 1991). One way to explore cultural values is to think in terms of cultural assumptions. Such assumptions are based on core values that are commonly held by members of the same culture and condition certain ways of thinking and acting. These values are often thought of as encompassing aspects of shared thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. In the worldview of anthropological literature, cultural values are often contrasted in terms of agrarian and industrial societies. (See the table on page 3.) In this diametric characterization, mainstream U.S. culture is representative of industrial values, while the traditional culture of recently arrived Mexican immigrants typifies agrarian values.

Cultural competence is the ability to learn from, and relate respectfully to, people of your own culture as well as people from other cultures. Developing cultural competence is a complex process, often described as journey rather than a destination. At a basic level, cultural competence is appreciation and recognition of other cultural groups and acceptance of the inherent differences that exist among them. At its highest level, cultural competence involves designing appropriate programs, standards, interventions, and measures so they are specific, relevant, and

Some Contrasting Values Underlying Cultural Differences

Values of Agrarian Society	Values of Industrial Society
Family and group oriented	Individual orientation
Extended family	Nuclear or blended family
Status determined by age, family role	Status achieved by individual's efforts
Well-defined roles for family members	Flexible roles for family members
Authoritarian orientation	Democratic orientation
Fate	Personal control
Harmony with nature	Mastery over nature
Cooperative orientation	Competitive orientation
Past, present, and future orientation	Present and future orientation
Emphasis on interpersonal relationships	Emphasis on self-fulfillment and self-development

Source: Adapted from SenGupta, Hopson, & Thompson-Robinson, 2004.

valid for each unique group. Further, cultural competence in evaluation can be broadly defined as a systematic, responsive inquiry that is actively cognizant, understanding, and appreciative of the cultural context in which the evaluation takes place; that frames and articulates the epistemology of the evaluative endeavor; that employs culturally and contextually appropriate methodology; and that uses stakeholder-generated, interpretive means to arrive at the results and use of the findings (SenGupta, Hopson, & Thompson-Robinson, 2004).

As theorists continue to frame concepts relating to cultural contexts and competencies, the author modestly offers the following framework of core value clusters that has provided practical guidance throughout the Oregon Outreach initiative. The framework summarizes traditional cultural values of Latinos (Mexicans, in particular) in terms of "core value clusters" addressing self and family, relating to others, attitude toward change, and forms of activity. This is not a definitive document; instead the content is intended to convey an awareness of *some* Latino values that contrast central themes reflected in mainstream U.S. culture and some possible implications for planning, implementing, and evaluating Extension programs for Latino audiences.   The values information is distilled from several sources (see the footnote at the bottom of the table for more information about the content of the table and the context in which it should be perceived). The implications are presented as suggestions or recommendations, primarily based on learning that has occurred through the Oregon Outreach experience.

Traditional Latino Cultural Values
Implications for Extension Programming[1]

SELF AND FAMILY	
Traditional Cultural Values	**Implications for Programming**
Family is all-important. Family structures are hierarchal and patriarchal. Extended families are the norm. Older siblings take care of younger siblings. Family loyalty is very strong. Children often participate in the family work, and preferred activities involve all family members. When a family obligation conflicts with a work obligation, the family usually takes precedence. Independence is not encouraged; the welfare of the group is of primary importance. Parents soon learn about the importance of education in the U.S. and are interested in their children doing well in school.	Assess the needs and assets of the specific community you want to reach. Plan efforts that build on group experience rather than individual effort. Use cooperative rather than competitive activities. Offer and promote youth programs emphasizing family values, cultural heritage, teamwork, group learning, and success in school. Expect that parents may bring children to parent activities and that older children may bring younger children to youth activities. Consider programs that involve the whole family. Promote programs in ways that inform males involved in family decision-making.

RELATING TO OTHERS	
Traditional Cultural Values	**Implications for Programming**
Communication patterns are likely to be indirect. Sometimes intermediaries are used to convey messages, particularly in the case of bad news. When asked their opinion, people might be likely to tell you what they think you want to hear rather than what they actually believe. Formal titles are often used; status and authority are shown deference. Looking down while being addressed by someone in authority is a sign of respect. Teachers are considered to be authorities and knowledgeable experts. It is considered unusual for teachers to ask parents how much they think their children have learned-if the teacher doesn't know, then who does? People tend to avoid behavior that sets them apart from others. Some residents are undocumented and are therefore uncomfortable when questioned by authority figures. (Continued)	Be sensitive to role and status issues. Use formal names and proper titles when addressing or referring to adults (not just first names). Expect to be seen as an authority figure in learning situations. Don't call on a specific person to answer a question in a group-ask everyone the same question instead. Don't expect children (or even some adults) to "look you in the eye." Avoid introducing yourself or your program as being affiliated with the federal or state government. Take time to get to know the people. Hire bilingual, bicultural program staff and support them well. Use indirect methods of collecting data, such as end-of-activity de-briefing sessions, listening posts, dialogue and reflection. Ensure anonymity if paper-and-pencil instruments are used. Focus groups often work well in some situations. (Continued)

Traditional Latino Cultural Values
Implications for Extension Programming

(Continued)

ATTITUDE TOWARD CHANGE	
Traditional Cultural Values	**Implications for Programming**
Value is placed on stability, continuity, and harmony. Change is often thought to be brought about through fate or nature and assessed in a historical context, not managed by people. The supernatural may be part of everyday life. Behavioral motivators may be spiritual. Group decisions involve consulting with important family members, agreeing with authorities, or conforming to the group. Leadership is vested in authority and status. Respect, honor, and trust are important considerations. Survival depends more on knowing how to deal with particular people than in fitting comfortably into a smooth-running organization.	Focus early efforts on shared values to help build cooperation and mutual trust. Collaborate with other agencies and organizations. Involve respected leaders at key points in the process. Recognize that it will take time to build trust levels and that change is likely to occur in small increments. Don't be overly concerned if initial efforts don't reach a "critical mass" or attendance is erratic-revise your definition of participation. Incorporate opportunities for assessment from the very beginning of the program. Make mindful decisions, and be attentive to each aspect of the programming process.

FORMS OF ACTIVITY	
Traditional Cultural Values	**Implications for Programming**
One works primarily to satisfy immediate needs. Any accumulated wealth is shared rather than saved. Time is indefinite and incidental-things are done as they need to be done and take as much time as they need. Volunteer efforts tend to be informal and spontaneous. Emphasis is on living in the present, taking each day as it comes, rather than planning for the future or thinking in the long-term. People are used to doing many things at the same time (polychronic)-clerks may wait on more than one customer at a time; serious discussion may occur amid loud music and lots of varied activity.	Be flexible and responsive. Work "in tune" with group momentum. Try activities that occur simultaneously; play Latino music before or during activities to create a lively, welcoming atmosphere. Offer refreshments of ethnic foods. Build opportunities to observe or record behavior into the learning activities. Avoid firm timelines and due dates. Realize that other activities may take precedence over learning. Dispense with detailed plans of work or lesson plans. Extend personal invitations to potential volunteers. Initially recruit for short-term assignments only. Keep asking.

[1] **Source: Sawer, 2000, rev. 2006. Included in this table are *some traditional and generalized* Latino cultural values that contrast central themes reflected in mainstream U.S. culture. (Individuals in both cultures exhibit varied behaviors.) These values are summarized from several sources. The author, however, takes responsibility for how they appear in this table. The list of implications is not exhaustive, but intended to stimulate thinking, and was generated from programming experience. While the author has taken care to present this information from a respectful, non-biased perspective, it should be noted that her predominately Euro-American cultural background still influences her approach.**

Evaluation Techniques

A variety of evaluation techniques have been used in the Outreach Project. Some are qualitative, some are quantitative; some are direct while others are indirect. Some deal with process, others focus on outcomes. Overall, the project has chosen a "soft path" evaluation approach to enable trusting relationships with the Latino community to develop without intrusive or high-level scrutiny.

Data collection has included many of the usual activities—such as plotting participation patterns and tracking hours of community service. Other data have been provided from end-of-session evaluation forms (for example, at the end of the school year for an after-school program) and pre- and post comparisons (GPAs from school transcripts). In addition, the project has adapted some familiar techniques and tried new approaches to capture process and outcome information while accommodating cultural factors. Some of these are described below.

Field Study.   After an extensive community needs assessment project identified concerns about the high rate of school dropout for Latino youth, 4-H staff at one of the project sites arranged for a young adult (a traditional Latina respected in the local Latino community) to interact with Latino youth as a school volunteer. She visited local schools several times a week over a three-month period, informally engaging Latino youth in conversation about their interests and listening to their responses. Her information and insights were shared in dialogue with the 4-H staff throughout this process and informed the eventual development of 4-H Tech Wizards.   The resulting program design incorporates the youths' expressed interests in a mentoring and leadership development program that would (a) teach media, computer and Internet technology skills; (b) promote awareness of technology industries; and (c) explore engineering, math, and science careers.

Visualization.   Also in the needs/assets assessment phase, one site used what was described as a "visual variation of a focus group" in an initial meeting of Latino students and parents, school officials, and Extension staff. Some were bilingual, others monolingual. Through translators, group members were asked to visualize a future for their children and create a simple poster or collage to communicate that vision. Paper, paste, tape, paints, pens, scissors, magazines for clipping, and other supplies were available. The activity served as an icebreaker, helped to identify program direction, and began to build rapport and a support base as people realized the commonalities of their visions.

Trolling and Eavesdropping. These two related techniques take advantage of the indirect communication patterns characterizing Latino culture. Project staff circulate during an activity (a family program, for example) alerted to listen for comments they are intended to overhear. A variation, similar to a "listening post" technique, involves orienting designated listeners to troll a room or activity. These designates listen for comments relating to particular aspects of programming or ask previously determined questions to individuals or small groups of participants in an informal way.

Home Visits.   In the Tech Wizards program, bilingual, bicultural program staff conduct home visits throughout the year, as well as call parents frequently to keep them updated and to assure that family support continues. These contacts are part of the process evaluation and are designed to make sure that parents, particularly fathers, are fully comfortable and informed about the program and therefore better able to support their children's participation. Staff write field notes on their visits; these are reviewed by and discussed with the local project coordinator.

Embedded Assessments. This category includes data that are collected as part of an activity. Examples here include periodic end-of-activity Q & A sessions to review learning and check

comprehension, de-briefing of field trips or other special activities, and incorporating assessment opportunities into the ongoing learning experience. For example, youth in the Video and Media Arts project were videotaped at the beginning of the project answering, "What do you expect from this project?" and at the end of the project responding to "What did you get out of this project?" At the same time they were learning skills in videotaping (at the beginning) and demonstrating taping and production skills (at the end).

In 4-H Tech Wizards, group mentors who are also high tech professionals record student skill acquisition in technology advancement logs. An individual log is kept for each student; each item in a list of competencies is "checked" and initialed by a mentor as skills are mastered. Since there was an initial concern that this practice might not be consistent with a cultural emphasis on group rather than individual achievement, the logs were first used as unobtrusive measures. The students soon took notice, however, and got caught up in the excitement of seeing their list of competencies growing. The "group effect" played out as all members of the group helped each other "get" the skills so they could all advance to the next level. Through the years, about 95% of the 500 Tech Wizards have demonstrated mastery of all 75 technological competencies outlined for the three skill levels.

Interviews and Written Surveys. Many of the parents of Outreach youth have about two years of formal schooling, so literacy can be an issue in terms of evaluation instrumentation. The project usually relies on group or individual interviews where adults are concerned.   Short paper-and-pencil surveys have worked well with youth in Grade 5 and up as long as simple vocabulary and few response categories are used. Some groups want the surveys in English, while some prefer Spanish. Some surveys are printed in both. Group interviews also work well with youth and are consistent with Latino group orientation. A bilingual, bicultural staff person collects all data where face-to-face contact is needed with clientele. The project has also involved Latino volunteers in collecting data, but these are carefully selected. For example, a retired high school principal with Latino cultural roots was very effective in interviewing parents about their children's experience in a 5-day residential camp.

Family Fiestas. The Outreach staff has learned to capitalize on cultural values that celebrate family togetherness and involve music, food and fun. A recent evaluation of 4-H Adventure Trips provides an example. The Adventure Trips are 4-day excursions by bus that typically involve about 20 youth, 10 youth leaders, and 5 or 6 adults. Each day participants are involved in setting up camp, preparing food, and cleaning up. In addition to seeing new territory, the daily agenda includes visits to historical sites and other points of interest, as well as recreational opportunities. Three years into the program, evaluation data were collected in a "reunion" of former Trip participants and their families. The evening program consisted of a buffet dinner, music by the 4-H Family Guitar Band, and slides featuring Adventure Trip highlights. Following these activities, the attendees were divided into three groups: older Trippers, younger Trippers, and parents/family members. The older youth were further divided to participate in group interviews and also fill out brief survey forms. The interviews were facilitated by youth leaders supported by Extension staff. Younger youth were also interviewed as a group, then individually selected responses to three evaluative questions by putting tokens into containers labeled with simple response choices. The parent/family session was facilitated by local project staff, with feedback sought through a group conversation including evaluative questions and a request for suggestions/recommendations for future Trips. The turnout was excellent and both youth and adults commented on their enjoyment.

Focus Groups. At the outset of the project, focus groups were used to increase understanding of the Latino culture as it relates to volunteerism in community-based organizations. Three focus groups involved a total of 18 participants, including 13 who were Latino. All had actively recruited and

supported Latino volunteers in their organizations. Transcriptions of taped discussions formed the basis of a qualitative study, with data analyzed and interpreted using a schematic content analysis strategy. The findings were extremely useful and have been applied to develop strategies for recruiting, supporting, and recognizing project volunteers (Hobbs, 2000).

Program Reviews. The program review is a participatory process where state staff and local project teams meet collaboratively for an in-depth look at a local program. It is intended to be a congenial, informative session where local staff can showcase their program, while at the same time state staff can become more knowledgeable about program activities and more aware of how they can best support local efforts. The reviews occur annually at each local site and are timed to take advantage of such regularly scheduled reflective activities as annual planning and reporting. Questions for state staff to pursue are selected from a set of items addressing each major element expected to receive attention in local project sites, such as educational programs, collaborative efforts, involvement of volunteers, and sustainability. Some questions may not be appropriate for some sites; additional questions can be added to the list or spontaneously asked as the discussion progresses. The overall tone of the session is conversational rather than interrogative, and the questions and responses generate productive discussion. This approach has also helped to introduce Latino project staff to the "culture of Extension" and provided state project staff with ideas for staff training. The final agenda item involves a summary of observations, reactions, recommendations, and expectations expressed by both groups.

Dialogue and Reflection. In the spirit of *The Reflective Practitioner* (Schön, 1999) and *Evaluative Inquiry for Learning in Organizations* (Preskill & Torres, 1999), dialogue and reflection are used by state and local project staff in quarterly staff meetings to check program progress. The resulting data have been framed in terms of "successful practices" that address building partnerships and relationships with the Latino community, developing culturally appropriate programs for youth, and staffing factors related to paid and volunteer staff. This information has also been incorporated into a set of informational sheets used in staff development and project-sharing opportunities. (Available online at (oregon.4h.oregonstate.edu/oregonoutreach/successful_practices/index.html)

Portfolio Materials.   The Outreach project has an extensive website that features project philosophy, goals, objectives, materials, forms, descriptions of programs offered at project sites, evaluation findings and reports, papers prepared, articles published, and many photos of Latino youth involved in a variety of youth development activities. (See oregon.4h.oregonstate.edu/oregonoutreach)

Benefits and Accomplishments List. This list captures outcomes related to the project's goal of building Extension capacity for planning and delivering Outreach programs. The list provides a cumulative perspective across project sites as well as the state level. The listed "benefits" include such things as expanded resources in state and county offices, new computers and technology provided by grant funds to build connectivity, and the staff development and training opportunities supported by the project budget. "Accomplishments" include the number of programs offered, the number of participants served, the number of hours contributed by volunteers, the titles of original materials produced, the occasions recognizing the newly-acquired expertise of staff and participating youth, the awards conferred on the project, and so on. The list is presented as a succinct overview in a bulleted format that quickly and cleanly communicates the "big picture." The B&A List seems to be especially well-received by administrative types. A copy is attached as an appendix to this paper; it reports the cumulative effects of the project during the five years it was supported by a State-Strengthening grant.

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