Best Practices for Outreach and Engagement to Latino Audiences Using Community-Based Programs

Liliana Vega
University of Idaho

Barbara Brody
Oregon State University

Missy Cummins
Washington State University

The Latino community continues to grow at an increasing rate. Latinos have become the "majority-minority," and by 2043, minorities will be the majority in the United States with Latinos as the largest ethnic minority group. The lack of targeted programming to ethnically diverse audiences is a growing concern for many organizations. This article describes research-based strategies and best practices for providing culturally appropriate Extension programs to the Latino community through community-based programs. This is illustrated through examples incorporated into three community-based programs offered in Southwest Idaho, Southeast Oregon, and Southwest Washington. The objective is to discuss the value of each key component when providing services to the Latino community; describe what the research indicates; and offer practical applications for educators, staff, and other professionals to expand outreach and engagement efforts to the Latino population. Implications for professionals working with the Latino community are discussed.

Keywords: Latino, Hispanic, Latino outreach, Latino programs, minority outreach, outreach and engagement, Latino youth development

The Latino population is growing at a rapid rate and is expected to continue to increase. The 2010 United States Census indicates the Latino population growth at 43 percent, which is four times the total population growth of 10 percent (United States Census Bureau, 2011). Latinos have become the "majority-minority" (United States Census Bureau, 2011). According to the 2012 Census, Latinos made up 53.3 million of the population compared to 41.2 million Blacks and 15.9 million Asians (United States Census Bureau, 2012).

It is essential professionals use best practices when reaching and delivering programs to Latino audiences in ways that are culturally appropriate and meaningful to the Latino community.

Engagement with the Latino community occurs when culturally competent professionals intentionally use appropriate programming and outreach practices. This article presents research findings on best practices or key components essential for delivering programs for Latino audiences and connects the research to practice through examples of the researchers' community-based programs offered in Southwest Idaho, Southeast Oregon, and Southwest Washington. All regions have populations with school demographics between 25 and 70 percent Latino, and more than 50 percent of the students receive free or reduced lunch. The needs of each community are varied. Therefore, programming needs and delivery will be different at each location.

Community-based programs highlighted in this article were designed by the researchers using the social-ecological model which considers the complex interplay between individual, relationship, community, and societal factors. Ecological theory acknowledges individual behaviors are influenced by several layers of the social structure. The social-ecological model serves as a reminder that individual knowledge is not sufficient for behavior change; increasing knowledge and skills at various levels within the community are also important components of the behavior change model (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

As professionals, it is essential to understand the cultural differences of all audiences and adapt our outreach efforts to the intended audience. For example, the way Extension professionals dress and the teaching methods used are adjusted depending on the audience. Working in a low-income setting requires different teaching techniques than working with middle-class audiences and vice versa. The handouts used for one audience will not be effective for all audiences. Dress, teaching methods, classroom content, and materials should reflect the needs of the audience. This article addresses what research suggests are ways to adapt to working with Latino audiences.

Limitations

The limitations to this article are due to the limited research currently available on outreach and engagement for Latino families. The majority of the research currently available focuses on individual program results, rather than successful strategies for outreach and engagement. However, in many cases, various articles identify specific strategies to help attain specific program results. The research clearly indicates there is a need for additional research on how to develop culturally relevant approaches to engage unserved, underserved, and disenfranchised audiences (Borden et al., 2006).

Methods

The research strategies and design included an independent, systematic literature review. The overall research goal was to identify strategies and methods leading to successful Latino

outreach and engagement. The criteria for the literature search were clearly outlined with pre-defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Articles published within the last 20 years were included if they addressed implications and strategies for Latino engagement and did not solely focus on the author(s)' projects. Multiple online databases were searched for articles related to Latino outreach. In order to capture as many relevant publications as possible, a keyword list was created which included any combination of the following: Latino, Hispanic, Latino outreach, Latino programs, minority outreach, Latino outreach, and engagement. Titles and abstracts were read to determine if the literature was appropriate based on the search criteria. Several databases and journals were included in the initial search, yielding over 2,692 articles. Only the literature meeting the inclusion criteria was retained, resulting in 66 articles for final analysis.

After final analysis, researchers cross-checked and compared findings and completed a literature map to identify emerging themes and categories. Categories were shared and validated through local, state, and national peer-refereed presentations. A summary of those findings are presented in this article.

Research Findings

Community-Based Program Defined

At all stages, community-based programs incorporate multiple partners from the individual to community levels. Effective programming responds to community needs and involves the community in the delivery and participation of the program. Based on findings from the literature review, researchers incorporated examples of Latino outreach and engagement techniques to link the research to practice. Due to the growth of this population, it is critical Extension educators, staff, and other professionals are aware of the importance and benefits for outreach to Latino audiences.

Community-based programs are a method for program delivery leading to successful outcomes in reaching Latino audiences. These programs involve the entire family at different levels, value the participants' culture and assets they bring to the program, and are culturally relevant and appropriate. The community-based programs in all three states provide an out-of-school, safe environment where Latino youth and their families participate in educational, hands-on programming. All programs are a cooperative effort led by Extension staff and numerous program partners allowing youth the opportunity to participate in year-round, culturally relevant programming at little or no cost.

In Washington, the Latino Community Resource Group (LCRG) is an active organization with representatives from a variety of Latino-serving organizations, including Extension. The LCRG's purpose is to promote the success and empowerment of the Latino community through

facilitating outreach, education, and community connections. Extension professionals are members of this group and rely on this group for feedback and insight into the programmatic needs of Latinos.

Key Components for Latino Outreach

Community-based programming focuses on the unique needs of the community by developing programs that address the identified needs of each community. The following key components were identified as best practices when developing and implementing programs for Latinos as indicated by the research results from the literature review:

- Bilingual & Bicultural Personnel,
- Caring & Trustworthy Staff,
- Trust & Relationship Building,
- Culturally Appropriate Programming,
- Family-Centered (*Familismo*),
- Valuing Relationships/Cooperation (*Simpatía*),
- Time & Effort – Commitment & Availability,
- Community Partnerships,
- Connecting Families with Resources & Referrals,
- Research & Program Evaluation, and
- Cultural Competence.

Bilingual and Bicultural Personnel

The research emphasizes the importance of using bilingual and bicultural educators, staff, and volunteers to provide outreach to the Latino community (Ahrens, Isas, & Viveros, 2011; Behnke, 2008; Brandt & Arnold, 2005; Farner, Cutz, Farner, Seibold, & Abuchar, 2006; Hobbs, 2001, 2004; Vesely, Ewaida, & Anderson, 2014). Being bicultural is also essential as "working with Latino families requires an understanding of different worldviews that affect how individuals communicate and interact with professionals" (Allen, Gudino, & Crawford, 2011, p. 2). This model requires people hired from within the community and used as bilingual community liaisons to work, advocate, validate, listen, and promote new ideas in Latino communities (Gregory et al., 2006; Newman & Yang, 2007; Robinson, Anding, Garza, & Hinojosa, 2003), or at the very least, have invested volunteers who can assist.

It is critical organizations hire bilingual (Spanish/English) and bicultural staff. This strategy ensures personnel are able to communicate effectively with Latinos and adapt programs to address the needs of the Latino community. Latino youth are able to see the staff as mentors and

role models. Having bilingual and bicultural staff gives the organization credibility and demonstrates the organization is making a commitment to serve Latino families.

The Idaho and Washington community-based programs always seek to hire bilingual and bicultural staff who can build strong connections with youth participants and their families. The majority of 4-H volunteers are also bilingual and bicultural themselves. Educators and staff serving the Latino community make it a priority to recruit volunteers from Latino-based organizations at local high schools, colleges, and universities. Recruiting bilingual and bicultural volunteers is essential in helping youth see themselves in the volunteers who mentor them.

All three programs use local and state cultural liaisons to help build a bridge between Extension and the Latino community. Educators utilize cultural liaisons who are trusted Latino volunteers to help teach and assist with relationship building with the Latino community.

Research indicates Extension lacks bilingual and bicultural staff and identifies the need for bilingual and bicultural educators and staff (Behnke, 2008; Farner et al., 2006; Hobbs, 2001). It is difficult to hire bilingual personnel, and it is more difficult to retain them. It is critical for Extension to incorporate ways to recruit and support bilingual educators (Behnke, Gonzalez, & Cox, 2010; Hobbs, 2001). Having bilingual and bicultural individuals employed by Extension helps illustrate a greater commitment to the Latino community (Escott, Mincemoyer, Nauman, Rodgers, & Sigman-Grant, 1996). Traditionally, organizations do not focus on hiring bilingual and bicultural personnel. Incorporating this recommended strategy would strengthen the organization's ability to successfully reach underserved audiences. Youth-serving organizations struggle to reach youth who identify with specific ethnicities or religious cultures (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1994).

Youth workers and researchers have noted that youth do not participate equally in youth programs and that there is a need for more research to develop "culturally-sensitive approaches to engage diverse audiences and communities" (United States Department of Agriculture Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, 2000, p. 9). Organizations and professionals need to create a culture within the organizations that helps foster the ability to discuss how to create programs for and engage unserved, underserved, and disenfranchised audiences.

Caring and Trustworthy Staff

Although having bilingual and bicultural staff is strongly recommended, having staff with *corazón* (heart) is essential. Having the *corazón* and patience to work with the Latino community is also valuable when staff show the Latino community they truly care and find effective ways to communicate. Employing people who can speak the same language and

implement programs in Spanish is likely to lead to more successful outcomes; however, it is not the only answer. Borden et al. (2006) found two of the greatest reasons Latino youth participate in youth programs is having a safe place and strong relationships with program staff. While safety and relationships are important to many cultures, it is especially relevant for Latino communities because trust can be difficult to earn. The name of an organization does not automatically lend itself to trustworthiness, but rather the personnel themselves have to earn the trust of the families.

The educators who oversee the Oregon and Washington sites are not Latinas themselves, nor are they bilingual. The success of these educators is because of their *corazón.* Their commitment to serve and care for the Latino community contributes to the success of the programs. They have overcome communication barriers by building strong partnerships with key volunteers and agencies. Too often educators state they do not serve the Latino community because they do not speak the language. Gándara (2006) noted, "The number and ability of adults in a young person's life who can provide support and guidance have a significant impact on their success" (p. 222). If Extension professionals are willing to make the effort and commitment and show *corazón*, then one can certainly have success in reaching the Latino community.

Trust and Relationship Building

Building trust and positive relationships with the Latino community is critical (Bruyere & Salazar, 2010; Gregory et al., 2006; Hobbs, 2001; López & Safrit, 2001; Newman & Yang, 2007) because the Latino culture is more relationship based. Organizations must strive to provide programs where Latinos feel safe, comfortable, and supported (Behnke, 2008; Brandt & Arnold, 2005; Bruyere & Salazar, 2010; Castañeda, Clayson, Rundall, Dong, & Sercaz, 2003; Farner et al., 2006; Hobbs, 2001, 2004). This often means providing separate or modified programs for Latino participants (Hobbs, 2001, 2004; López & Safrit, 2001) with programs addressing specific cultural needs and focusing on Latino cultural values when teaching topic content. Programs often need to be adapted to meet the needs of the Latino community. For example, a typical healthy living curriculum may need to be modified to include foods more familiar to Latino families.

It is vital Extension and community programs realize they need to commit for the long-term if they want to maintain relationships and trust (Behnke & Kelly, 2011; Escott et al., 1996; Farner et al., 2006; Hobbs, 2001; Newman & Yang, 2007). Unfortunately, Latino communities, especially low-income communities, are faced with too many organizations that come and go from their community, which creates distrust among Latinos when new organizations want to provide programs. Extension must strive to establish, strengthen, and maintain trust and relationships with the Latino community and Latino-serving organizations and provide consistent programming and presence (López & Safrit, 2001).

In Idaho, Oregon, and Washington each program spent many months (or years) establishing relationships with local residents, key stakeholders, and volunteers acquiring input before implementing programs within the community through home visits, focus groups, needs assessments, community meetings and events, and one-on-one conversations. Forming relationships and building trust is an ongoing process. It is critical to be culturally responsive during the recruitment and retention stages in order to build trust and maintain personal contact with participants (Reidy, Orpinas, & Davis, 2012). Planning frequently involves input from participants, parents, and community partners and is integrated into the program. Strategies to collect input vary drastically from traditional audiences. Latinos prefer to provide input verbally rather than in writing; collecting surveys orally is more effective. Input is gathered informally in conversations with families and when participating in community meetings or events. Strategies for building relationships and trust can be implemented by assisting families when needed, sharing a meal when invited, and making ongoing home visits, which all require additional time and effort. Interaction with youth helps build a relationship with parents.

All sites build trust and relationships by working collaboratively within the community. Being an active and contributing partner with community agencies builds capacity. All educators participate on various community boards and projects. Engaging with local Latino and/or statewide Latino-serving organizations is a strategy to increase outreach with Latino audiences. It is important to identify if there are Commissions on Hispanic Affairs, Latino civic and social organizations, and/or professional associations serving Latino audiences.

Culturally Appropriate Programming

Research shows it is extremely important to adapt and provide culturally relevant, appropriate, and sensitive programming (Cudaback, Marshall, & Knox, 1994; Delgadillo, 2003; Escott et al., 1996; Guion, Chattaraj, & Lytle, 2004; Newman & Yang, 2007; Vesely et al., 2014; Watson, 2001). The literature points out that successful programs account for the Latino community's needs and cultural values when providing programs (Ahrens et al., 2011). They adapt or create new programs accordingly rather than relying on programs or curricula intended and created for the Caucasian middle-class population. This means "staff must promote, adapt, and deliver such programs in new ways" (Bruyere & Salazar, 2010, p. 6). For example, when teaching a cooking and healthy living class, make sure recipes include foods from the Latino culture and address ideas for improving Latino recipes to make them a healthier option.

For youth, there is a need for affirming culture (Hobbs, 2004; Viramontez Anguiano, 2001) to support positive ethnic identity development. Latinos need to know they are valued for whom they are and are recognized for their cultural strengths and expertise (Viramontez Anguiano, 2001). Idaho, Oregon, and Washington adapted and created programs that integrate traditional Latino culture. For example, sites in these states have incorporated mariachi, *baile folklórico*

(traditional Mexican) dance groups, and Latino foods into programs. In addition, sites include activities that discuss Latino values and culture, helping Latino youth develop a positive ethnic identity. Ethnic identity is an essential component of personal identity that helps form feelings of belonging, commitment, and affirmation with a specific group and is essential to positive youth development (Alvarado & Ricard, 2013). *Baile folklórico* dancing provides youth the opportunity to learn about and embrace their Latino culture.

Family-Centered (*Familismo)*

The concept of *familismo* (i.e., importance of involving the family as a whole) emerged as being very important to Latino families (Ahrens et al., 2011; Allen et al., 2011; Behnke 2008; Behnke, Falk, & Storm, 2009; Bruyere & Salazar, 2010; Delgadillo, 2003; Escott et al., 1996; Gándara, 2006; Gregory et al., 2006; Hobbs, 2001, 2004; López & Safrit, 2001; Vesely et al., 2014; Viramontez Anguiano, 2001; Viramontez Anguiano & Kawamoto, 2003; Wallace, 2008; Warrix & Bocanegra, 1998). It is critical to create programs that involve the family as a whole and to use family-sensitive models (Viramontez Anguiano & Kawamoto, 2003).

Offering adult and youth programs occurring concurrently and in close proximity to each other is essential (Wallace, 2008). This delivery method is very different from traditional programs which are usually segregated by ages; Latinos programs need to be more family-based, and our agencies need to be more family-friendly. Additionally, it is important to realize that Latino families often extend beyond the nuclear family to include extended family (Delgadillo, 2003; Escott et al., 1996; Viramontez Anguiano, 2001. Ignoring the importance of offering family-friendly programs results in low Latino participation.

Family and work come first for many Latino families. Latinos often do not get involved in programs because of family and work commitments (Farner, Rhoads, Cutz, & Farner, 2005; Fidalgo & Chapman-Novakofski, 2001; Gregory et al., 2006; López & Safrit, 2001; Wallace, 2008). Latinos often work extremely long hours or work rotating shifts, prohibiting them from participating in programs. In order to strengthen programs and enhance access, it is critical to coordinate with the agricultural calendar since so many Latinos work in the agricultural sector (Moran, Cooper, López, & Goza, 2009). Programs that accommodate family and hectic work schedules will increase involvement.

In Idaho, Oregon, and Washington, the programs hold community events and meetings on days that are convenient to the families and not dictated by the days and times most convenient to staff. Being adaptable and flexible in relationship with program implementation and times offered is essential (Vesely et al., 2014). This typically means community events and meetings are conducted Friday evenings and weekends to accommodate Latino families' work and home schedules. Community events and meetings often include meals and youth activities while the

adults receive education and/or resource information, which is different from traditional program delivery because it includes the entire family in the program. In Western culture, time is often valued over relationships, whereas Latinos value relationships over time; this means programs may start and end late versus being structured.

Valuing Relationships/Cooperation (*Simpatía*)

Latinos are often looking for opportunities for socialization with others (Auerbach, 2004; Borden et al., 2006; Hobbs, 2001; Vesely et al., 2014; Viramontez Anguiano, 2001). Programs should strive to discover various ways to provide Latinos and their families with the opportunity to socialize with others outside the home and work environment.

Simpatía is often a part of Latino culture and refers to the value of cooperation (Fidalgo & Chapman-Novakofski, 2001) and valuing relationships (Ahrens et al., 2011; Allen et al., 2011). In a study by Gregory et al. (2006), volunteer leadership and engagement was most energized when the participants were collectively organized. As a result, Latinos may favor programs or activities that they can attend or accomplish as a group, and for youth, this may include components of community involvement and service (Borden et al., 2006). For evaluation purposes, this can lead to complications when participants want to complete their evaluations as a group rather than individually. Professionals need to take this into account when creating programs and formulating evaluations.

Recruitment methods with Latino audiences are different because forming relationships is essential for success. The traditional approach for recruitment, utilizing newsletters and flyers, usually does not work; recruitment usually requires a personal conversation from someone whom they trust.

Each educator from Idaho, Oregon, and Washington values and incorporates *simpatía* by adapting traditional 4-H projects into group projects rather than individual projects. For example, when working on displays or contests, youth complete them as a group rather than as an individual. Group learning activities, such as having students share garden boxes and participate in cooperative activities, are incorporated into program planning.

All programs incorporate teens as mentors where they have the opportunity to teach and learn leadership skills. Teens are provided the opportunity to serve their community and serve as role models. These projects are dependent on cooperation and group success, which are both strong Latino values. All sites incorporate time for youth and families to socialize and create activities that incorporate *simpatía*. This model varies from the traditional 4-H program model, but it is an example of how traditional Extension programming needs to change in order to be successful when working with the Latino community.

Time and Effort – Commitment and Availability

Trust and relationships are not built overnight, and it will take time and dedication by program personnel to build programs for the Latino community. It is critical for professionals to realize that it will take a lot of time and effort to outreach to minorities (Allen et al., 2011; Behnke, 2008; Castañeda et al., 2003; Escott et al., 1996; Gregory et al., 2006; Hobbs, 2001, 2004; Hoorman, 2002). As Gregory et al. (2006) suggested, "There are no shortcuts to investing time" (p. 2). Having available and dedicated personnel who can provide direct support can go a long way in outreaching to Latinos (Allen et al., 2011; Bruyere & Salazar, 2010; Hobbs, 2001, 2004).

It is essential that time is spent listening, learning, and allowing the community to get to know the organization and its staff (Hobbs, 2001). Too often people want shortcuts for how to outreach to minorities. Organizations and their personnel need to realize they must have patience, invest time, and put in effort if they want to be successful working with Latinos. Each educator has invested a considerable amount of time, many months (or years), getting to know the Latino community and their needs. All three educators from Idaho, Oregon, and Washington know it is critical to set aside time to meet with families one-on-one, plan, and attend community events involving the Latino community.

Taking a more personalized approach by making the time to conduct personal phone calls, home visits, and receive ongoing unscheduled visits from families is normal and expected when working with Latinos (Ahrens et al., 2011; Castañeda et al., 2003; Vesely et al., 2014). In Idaho, Oregon, and Washington, there is an educator committed to providing programs and being available to the Latino community. Administration in all three states committed to funding positions whose primary focus is outreach to the Latino population. A commitment from administration to fund positions for bilingual and bicultural staff is crucial for program success.

It is essential for organizations outreaching to Latino families to acquire and provide hard funding, not just soft funding (e.g., grants or temporary funding), to support Latino outreach efforts. Too often, organizations obtain short-term funding which does not support continuing programs and leads to the Latino community mistrusting the organization. The Latino community is led to believe the organization is not committed and invested long-term. Many funding sources and organizations focus on short-term initiatives, rather than considering the actual needs and time it takes to develop and build strong relationships with the community.

Organizations would be more successful if funding sources funded projects with longer time frames. Developing relationships and programs specific for the Latino communities requires more than money to purchase supplies and hire part-time staff; it requires relationship and trust building and a need to shift the culture of Extension programming. Often, the funding time frame has ended as these relationships are beginning. Organizations need to show commitment

and make every effort to support staff conducting the outreach. Collaborating with community organizations and Latino leaders has helped sites develop programs, obtain program participants, work collaboratively to seek funding, and share resources to better serve the Latino community and provide support to staff.

Community Partnerships

Research states that in order to improve educational opportunities for Latino youth, many individuals (e.g., students, families, teachers, policy makers, organizations) will need to collaborate and work together (Behnke & Kelly, 2011). This statement is true of all educational opportunities for both youth and adults. Extension needs to collaborate with others to ensure educational opportunities are available and provided to the Latino community. Community partnerships are essential for developing successful programs that are culturally appropriate and serve the needs of the Latino community (Castañeda et al., 2003; Vesely et al., 2014; Warrix & Bocanegra, 1998).

Extension alone cannot provide and meet all the needs of Latino families. All three educators from Idaho, Oregon, and Washington realize it is critical to ensure their program partners include Latino-serving agencies with a successful track record working with the Latino community. Other examples of community partners include faith-based organizations, local Latino nonprofits, local Latino high school and college organizations, migrant education programs, and various other Latino-serving agencies and organizations. Success is difficult without collaborating with other organizations and agencies to connect families with the resources they need. Working with other Latino-serving agencies builds trust and relationships with Latino families by becoming a program that focuses on meeting the communities' needs, not just the individual organization's goals and objectives (Vesely et al., 2014).

Connecting Families with Resources & Referrals

Research confirms Latino families often face higher incidences of poverty and lack the ability to access the resources they need. As a result, Latino families will often rely on personnel from organizations to help them connect to the resources they need. It is important personnel realize they will need to help connect families with resources whenever possible (Vesely et al., 2014). Behnke and Kelly (2011) state that "Latino parents need to learn that Extension staff are trustworthy and will provide them with safe and reliable resources for their families" (p. 11). Latino families need to see an educational benefit for their families (Viramontez Anguiano & Kawamoto, 2003) and that the organizations truly care about their well-being beyond the program they offer by connecting them to other resources (Castañeda et al., 2003).

Beyond the primary programs, all sites provide resources to Latino families and connect parents to the resources their families need. In some cases, assisting with reading and explaining paperwork is essential since families need someone they trust to translate and complete documents. Community Resource Fairs are a common event hosted by family-serving agencies. The typical event includes booths with handouts and giveaways used to attract people to the booth. Community Resource Fairs specifically targeting Latino audiences are successful when they include components important to the Latino audience (i.e., mariachi, music, dancing, food, and activities that engage the entire family).

Helping parents connect to the schools and advocate for their children is another resource professionals can provide. All three state programs help both 4-H and non-4-H family members apply to colleges or connect them with university resources. If programs do not help families and youth by being a resource, or connect them to resources, the organization would lose trust and credibility with Latino families. Professionals need to be aware of this need and look for ways to assist at various levels outside of their traditional work in order to be successful when working with Latino audiences. Administrators need to fully support their personnel with these efforts. This may be uncomfortable to both the administrator and personnel due to the fact it is different than working with traditional audiences.

Conducting Research and Program Evaluation with Latino Audiences

In reviewing the research, it is evident that most studies used qualitative methods, with focus groups and interviews being among the leading evaluation methods. Qualitative methods are cited as the preferred research or evaluation method for Latinos (Ahrens et al., 2011; Borden et al., 2006; Delgadillo, 2003; Fidalgo & Chapman-Novakofski, 2001; Malek, 2002; Ortiz & Plunkett, 2003; Parker, Pinto, Kennedy, Phelps, & Hermann, 2007; Vesely et al., 2014; Viramontez Anguiano, 2001). Focus groups, participant testimonies, intentional journaling, observational checklists, and field notes are examples of qualitative evaluation methods. Focus groups were noted as the most "comfortable approach to obtaining information directly from Latinos" (Malek, 2002, p. 1). Finding effective, time-allowable, and cost-effective evaluation tools continues to be a challenge but is critical to adapting and documenting the success of programs.

Cultural Competence

Educators and staff need to make it a priority to gain an understanding of other cultures if they want to be successful in reaching minority audiences, including Latinos (Allen et al., 2011; Behnke, 2008; Delgadillo, 2003; Escott et al., 1996; Farner et al., 2006; Guion et al., 2004; Hobbs, 2001, 2004; Hoorman, 2002; López & Safrit, 2001; Newman & Yang, 2007; Ontai & Mastergeorge, 2006; Viramontez Anguiano, 2001; Warrix & Bocanegra, 1998). Staff must

strive to get a "grasp of general principles for working successfully amidst cultural diversity" (Guion et al., 2004, p. 2). Professionals must realize becoming culturally competent is an ongoing process (Guion et al., 2004; Warrix & Bocanegra, 1998) and continuously learn about cultural differences and similarities to be effective in delivering programming to minorities. From an organizational perspective, it is critical personnel are provided opportunities, strongly encouraged, and rewarded for increasing their cultural competence. This will result in improved success of providing programs to minority and underserved communities.

Community-based programs have faculty who are encouraged and provided the opportunities to further their cultural competencies through training and involvement with diversity programs, projects, and/or committees. In Oregon, a state specialist supports the educator's work. The educator in Idaho provides cultural competency training for Extension professionals throughout the state. All three educators recognize the need for ongoing support and training in their states related to Latino outreach and cultural competency. Cultural competency training never stops; organizations and professionals need to always continue to have ongoing dialogue, discussions, and trainings about how to become culturally competent individuals and organizations.

It is critical professionals understand the importance to continue learning from each other and from the audiences we serve. Cultural competency is most successful when each group learns from each other and can culturally adapt in different situations. All three educators understand the importance of learning from different groups and that we can learn as much from the groups we work with as they can learn from us.

Discussion

Successful Extension programming adapts and adjusts to meet the needs of the audience. A clear definition of success as it relates to culturally-appropriate programming for Latino audiences is different than the definition of success for traditional Extension programming. When considering the research, it is evident Extension programs for the Latino community will not look the same as programs delivered for non-Latino audiences.

Program success when programming to Latino audiences typically depends on having smaller groups with longer duration and depth of programming based on identified community needs. The traditional norm of sending out promotional flyers, people signing up, then going in to teach and immediately leaving, will not work with this audience because it takes commitment and time to develop an ongoing relationship. For example, Latino families often show up to classes or events when they have built a positive relationship with the person, not necessarily the organization. When working with Latinos, it should not be about the numbers reached but about the difference made in a person, family, and community.

Much of what has been discussed can be viewed as assets or barriers to involvement. Professionals need to recognize Latino families often face different circumstances such as language barriers, higher incidences of poverty, discrimination, oppression, and many other disparities. Identifying these circumstances and taking them into account can help implement strategies that will minimize any potential barriers. Ignoring the differences will continue to lead to a lack of Latino involvement in Extension programs.

It is clear that Extension cannot continue to do business as usual. Extension must reassess and rethink expectations for its staff and how they outreach to Latinos, as well as the time commitment involved and how long it will take to achieve program outcomes (Hobbs, 2001). Extension needs to rethink traditional approaches when conducting Extension programming (Gregory et al., 2006) and challenge the traditional model. Assuming that one approach fits all and addresses everyone's needs is likely to lead to failure (Vesely et al., 2014).

Latino communities are very diverse. Therefore, it is critical to realize these are only general guidelines to consider when providing programs to the Latino community and that one must take into account the individuality of the community. Professionals need to be prepared to invest time and effort when providing services and make sure programs are culturally sensitive to avoid mistakes. They need to be willing to learn and be patient as they implement programs: "Educators need to understand, respect, and balance participants' beliefs with the goal of the program" (Fidalgo & Chapman-Novakofski, 2001, p. 4). Personnel must be ready to entertain new perspectives and new ways of conducting programs (Hobbs, 2004).

Due to the population growth, it is clear there is an enormous need to serve the Latino community, and Extension must invest in building organizational capacity to outreach to the Latino community. This includes hiring, training, and ensuring they retain staff with the ability and willingness to outreach to diverse audiences. Extension may need to use a "grow its own" model to ensure success in recruiting and retaining multicultural staff (Hobbs, 2001). "Grow its own" model refers to hiring paraprofessionals, staff, and educators with less education and experience to help them develop professionally and pursue graduate degrees to fill higher positions within the organization. The Idaho educator obtained her role because Idaho used the "grow its own" model, and program partners have seen the positive outcome of using this model with Latino college students.

Application of best practices outlined in this article will contribute to the success of outreach and engagement of the Latino community. Professionals can use the research information and practical applications provided in this article to implement programs for the Latino community. Community-based programming is an investment in a community and provides programming that truly meets the needs of the community.

Implications and Conclusions

It is critical Cooperative Extension Systems and other organizations recognize the need and importance of serving the Latino communities in their local counties and states. They must adapt to changing demographics and begin to make the shift in programming to meet the needs of this growing audience. This importance is further stressed by the fact that the Latino population has become the largest minority group. In addition, Latinos have already become the majority of the overall population in many counties across the United States (United States Census Bureau, 2011).

Cooperative Extension and other agencies need to be able to assess and provide culturally appropriate educational services when providing services to diverse audiences. As stated by Hoorman (2002), "It is Cooperative Extension's responsibility to disseminate information to benefit all people" (p. 1). Programs need to recognize and meet the needs of the local minority and culturally diverse audiences. Latinos have considerable positive economic impact on the future of the United States. In order to ensure Latinos are able to make even more significant contributions, Extension and other agencies, including educational systems, need to ensure Latino families are able to gain access and receive adequate and culturally appropriate services to help ensure successful outcomes.

Extension professionals cannot continue to ignore or provide inadequate or culturally inappropriate services for Latino families that lead to poor outcomes. Although many Cooperative Extension Systems across the country have made some efforts to outreach and provide services to the Latino community, it is evident more needs to be done to serve this ever-growing population. Organizations need to commit to and contribute resources, especially hard funding, to ensure outreach efforts to the Latino community are successful and continue to expand. Professionals need to be intentional and purposeful in the programming and collaboration they create and establish. Kim, Johnson, Kang, and Lee (2014) state that "Extension educators can learn about the Latino culture by effectively interacting with their Latino audiences and engaging key community leaders and organizations as collaborators" (p. 98). The best practices supported by the research and implemented in community-based Extension programs in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington proved successful in reaching Latino families and could be used as a model.

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Liliana Vega is a University of Idaho Extension 4-H Educator who focuses on minority and low-income audiences. Her expertise is in reaching and culturally adapting programs for Latino audiences.

Barbara Brody is a Family Community Health and 4-H Educator for Oregon State University Extension. Her expertise is in program implementation and delivery to underserved audiences.

Missy Cummins is a Regional Specialist with Washington State University 4-H Youth Development. Her areas of expertise are volunteer development, financial literacy, and career readiness for teens.