



Module 6*

Working with Low-Resource and Culturally Diverse Audiences

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Slide 1: Introduction

Hello, and welcome to the presentation about developing relationship and marriage education for low-resource and culturally diverse audiences. I am Linda Skogrand, Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist at Utah State University. And I am Karen Shirer, Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist from Michigan State University.

Slide 2: Objectives of Presentation

The objectives of this presentation are (1) to provide educators with an understanding about how to learn about and partner with low-resource and culturally diverse audiences, and (2) to provide ideas about how relationship and marriage education might be different for low-resource and culturally diverse audiences.

Slide 3: Background for Extension Educators

Many of you in the audience are involved with Cooperative State Research, Education Extension Service, and, as a result, have directives about serving individuals and families in our nation, states, and territories. There are several documents that provide edicts about serving *all* people in our communities proportionately, including low-resource and culturally diverse populations. We need to be effective in reaching audiences that reflect the diversity in today's society and expand programming to reflect the population groups of our communities (U. S. Department of Agriculture, 1992). In addition, we need to develop partnerships with members of low-resource and culturally diverse audiences in developing and implementing programming (National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, 2002). Finally, we need to draw on what Extension has done historically, which is to spend time with perspective audiences to develop partnerships to learn what people value (Schauber & Castania, 2001). For many of us, our communities are more culturally diverse and more complex than they were in the early days of Extension, but the principle is the same.

In this presentation we will use these directives as a backdrop for the work we will be describing.

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Relationship & Marital Enrichment Education

Annual Family Life Electronic Seminar Series ♦ April 3 - 14, 2006

Slide 4: Learning about Audiences

Now we turn to Karen to talk about the work she has done with low-resource audiences. Although there are similarities between learning about and providing relationship and marriage education for low-resource and culturally diverse audiences, there are also differences. A major difference is that there is more social science literature and research available about low-resource audiences than culturally diverse audiences to inform relationship and marriage education programming and, therefore, there is less need to learn directly from the audience about how programming should be developed. However, the best program planning practices incorporate at least a minimal level of audience participation in planning and developing programs. We will talk about these strategies later.

Slide 5: Relationship and Marriage Education for Low-Resource Audiences

Thank you, Linda. We are going to focus on providing relationship and marriage education to low-resource audiences. The goal of this portion of the presentation is to give you a better understanding of the benefits of and barriers to marriage for low-income couples, and approaches that might be used to offer relationship education to these audiences.

Just a few words about the terminology I will be using when talking about low-resource audiences. I prefer to use the term "low income" because many individuals and families who are poor or have low incomes are very resourceful. Many are not limited resource in the sense that they have rich networks of support and are very good at meeting their basic needs with little money.

We will begin by looking at the case of Diane and Kevin, an unmarried couple who have a child together. Then, we will turn to a new area of research called "Fragile Families" to gain a better understanding of how couples like Diane and Kevin might be helped through relationship and marriage education. Lastly, suggestions for offering relationship and marriage education to low-income audiences will be given based on community-based, applied research done over the last few years.

Slide 6: Diane and Kevin

Let's begin with the case of Diane and Kevin who recently had a baby girl together. Diane and the baby live with her mother in a trailer, and she is finishing up high school this year. Kevin also lives with his parents. Neither of their families has much money but give a great deal of emotional support to their children.

Kevin really wants to marry Diane. He says that he loves her and the baby, and he wants to live with them full-time. Kevin works part-time at a gas station. He didn't finish high school; he found the reading and math very difficult. Kevin does not have enough money to rent a place for himself and Diane to live together.

Kevin's parents have invited Diane and the baby to live with them in their house until they have enough money to get a place of their own. However, Diane is unsure of this arrangement. She views Kevin's parents as "pushy" and "opinionated." Diane is happy living with her mother, but is frustrated because she would like to live with Kevin, too.

Do Diane and Kevin sound like people that you might work with in your nutrition education and parenting programs? They have a desire to get married and/or live together as a family but do not have



Relationship & Marital Enrichment Education

Annual Family Life Electronic Seminar Series ♦ April 3 - 14, 2006

the financial resources to do so. Their lack of money relates to working in low-wage jobs and not having finished high school. How might a couple like Diane and Kevin be helped through relationship and marriage education?

Slide 7: Use These Principles for Developing Programs

Several years ago, my colleagues and I at Michigan State University were asked to develop a curriculum for couples like Diane and Kevin. These efforts resulted in the *Caring for my Family* program. It was designed to help unmarried new parents make healthy decisions about their relationship, and gave them the skills to work together to raise their child. We learned early that most, if not all, marriage education curricula available at the time were developed for middle-class, European American populations who did not face the issues that Diane and Kevin faced.

In order to create a suitable program for this group of low-income, unmarried parents we carefully followed a research-based process with these steps:

- Examined the social science literature to learn about family formation issues for low-income families
- Interviewed agency representatives who worked with the target audience and talked with members of the target audiences
- Found a theory of change to guide the development of lesson materials and evaluation tools
- Pilot tested the program to determine implementation and outcome impact
- Changed the program to better meet the needs of the target audience and their contexts

This work continues today and much of what I am sharing with you in this module is grounded in and drawn from these experiences.

Slide 8: The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study

When we started reviewing the social science literature, we came upon the early results of a new research study that were just beginning to be published in 2001. It was called the *Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study* (McLanahan, Garfinkel, Riechman, Tietler, Carlson & Audigie, 2003). Although we were able to find a great deal of research on single-parent families and unmarried child bearing, few studies examined the couples relationship between the mother and father, and what happened in these families over time.

The research team for fragile family study has defined a *fragile family* as an unmarried, low-income couple with a new baby. At the time of the baby's birth, the couple is living together or romantically involved with each other. This definition is important because the researchers showed that for the majority of these families, the couples were no longer together by the time the baby reached two years of age. Something happened over time that prevented these families from forming.



Slide 9: Graph of What Happens to Fragile Families over Time

The graph you see on Slide #9 is based on data from the 1997 National Survey of American Families, which shows what happens to Fragile Families over time. The first column shows the types of families that children aged birth to one year live in. Almost 30% live with their mother only, 27% live in a fragile family, and 38% live with two natural, married parents. By the time the children reached their teens, 59% lived with their mother only, 5% in a fragile family, and 19% with two natural, married parents.

The study showed that as children get older, father involvement declined sharply. To put it simply, two factors were contributing to this increase in single parent families: 1) fragile families were not forming; and 2) married families were dissolving, hence, the use of the term “fragile,” which is meant to denote potential but also a great vulnerability in these poor families (Fragile Families Study, 2003; McLanahan et al., 2003).

Slide 10: Study Goals

Based on these data, the *Fragile Family and Child Wellbeing Study* was implemented (McLanahan et al., 2003). The primary goal of the study is to learn more about these couples in order to inform policies and programs to help these families realize their family formation goals. Researchers are following a cohort of nearly 5,000 children born in the United States between 1998 and 2000. The study has also over sampled for births to unmarried couples.

The study was designed to answer four questions that have long been of great interest to researchers and public policy makers:

1. What are the conditions and capabilities of unmarried parents, especially fathers?
2. What is the nature of the relationships between unmarried parents?
3. How do children born into these families fare?
4. How do policies and environmental conditions affect families and children?

To answer these questions, interviews have been conducted with both mothers and fathers at the baby's birth and again when the baby was ages one, three and five. In addition, in-home assessment of children and their family environments were done at ages three and five years.

Slide 11: So What Does It Mean?

These early and subsequent findings have created a great deal of interest in offering relationship and marriage education to low-income, unmarried parents (Carlson & McLanahan, 2005; Seefeldt & Smock, 2004). The findings show that 82% of fathers are highly engaged with their children and partner at the child's birth—82%. Both fathers and mothers reported high hopes for their relationship and their future as a family at this time. The researchers have called this a “magic moment” and a “reachable moment” when unmarried couples are committed to each other and optimistic about the future.

As a result, intervening with unmarried parents at or near the time of a child's birth may have the best chance for success (McLanahan et al., 2003). If new parents can learn the skills and attitudes for a healthy couple relationship, they might be able to avoid conflict and other difficulties that lead to relationship dissolution. However, these interventions need to go beyond offering skill-building for a healthy couple relationship.



Relationship & Marital Enrichment Education

Annual Family Life Electronic Seminar Series ♦ April 3 - 14, 2006

Slide 12: Barriers to a Stable Marriage

Diane and Kevin, who we talked about earlier, faced several barriers to getting married and living together as a family. From the case study, we knew that Diane still needed to complete high school and Kevin had low-wage, part time work. The fragile families study (Fragile Families Study, 2003; Haskins, McLanahan & Donohue, 2005) has also revealed that couples like Diane and Kevin face many barriers to attaining and sustaining a stable marriage including:

- Mothers and fathers both have low human capital. They lack the education and training to obtain jobs that pay a livable wage.
- The employment they are able to obtain is unstable and pays low wages.
- They have health problems or substance abuse problems that interfere with their ability to work and maintain healthy family life.
- A parent may have children by several different partners, none of which they are married to, leading to step family issues.
- Parents report relationship problems related to unfaithfulness and high levels of conflict and violence.

Slide 13: Marriage+ Approach

These barriers show that most of these couple need more than relationship education to create a stable marriage and family. Theodora Ooms and Pamela Wilson (2004) conservatively estimated that about one-third of all fragile families would benefit from relationship and marriage education alone. For the remaining two-thirds a Marriage + Approach is needed (Ooms & Wilson). In addition to relationship education, participants would be involved in a comprehensive program that continues their education, provides employment assistance, addresses mental and physical health problems, and deals with challenges of having children with other partners. This is an important point for you to consider if you plan to offer relationship and marriage education to low-income, unmarried parents.

Slide 14: Promising Practices for Relationship and Marriage Education

In the last few years, marriage and relationship education programs have begun to be developed and tested for fragile families. Although few of these intervention studies have been published in peer-reviewed journals, promising practices are beginning to emerge to guide this work (Ooms & Wilson, 2004). These practices include:

- Determining realistic goals for the program you are designing
- Focusing your educational efforts on a specific target audience
- Finding and testing innovative approaches to recruiting participants
- Selecting and training facilitators who can connect with the target audience (Ooms & Wilson, 2004; Shirer, Adler-Baeder, Contreras & Spicer, 2004)

I would like to make a few comments about each of these areas.



Relationship & Marital Enrichment Education

Annual Family Life Electronic Seminar Series ♦ April 3 - 14, 2006

Slide 15: Determining Realistic Goals

In my experience of developing curricula for low-income audiences, it is important to set realistic and flexible goals for what can be accomplished. For example, we learned that for many couples we have worked with that marriage was not a realistic or even safe goal for them. Instead of focusing on getting people married, focus on helping them build the interpersonal and personal life skills that build the foundation of a healthy relationship.

In the *Caring for my Family* program, our goals were to teach co-parenting, communication and conflict management skills, and decision-making and goal setting. We also discussed the importance of father involvement and a healthy couple relationship for their children's well-being and development. We learned from our pilot test that success stories varied depending on the individual or the couple. One pilot site reported two success stories from their session. The first was a couple that decided to get married after participating in the classes. The second success was a woman who decided to leave a physically abusive man who was the father of her three children.

Slide 16: Focus on a Target Audience

A key theme in this presentation is to consider your target audience when offering relationship and marriage education. I have only focused on low-resource audiences but you also need to consider race and ethnicity, community and other differences. Also keep in mind the Marriage + Approach described earlier in which most couples would benefit from a comprehensive approach that includes not only relationship education but other services needed to build strong and healthy families.

An important consideration when working with any target audience on relationship and marriage education is the issue of domestic violence. We strongly recommend that you work with your community's domestic violence program and develop a screening process and protocol for addressing these issues when they arise.

Slide 17: Innovative Recruitment Approaches

Many of you are "seasoned" program planners and have many good ideas about how to market your programs and to get participants coming back to multiple sessions. What I want to share here are ideas and lessons we gleaned from pilot testing of the *Caring for my Family Curriculum*.

- Use men, including former program participants, to recruit men to sign up for the class. You want to especially give thought to how you will involve men in relationship and marriage education efforts if you are not accustomed to having them in family life programs.
- Secure a time and location that fits the needs of your participants and helps them to feel comfortable. This will likely not be the local human services office. But it could be a church basement or someone's home.
- Build partnerships with community agencies that can provide referrals to your program. If you are new at offering relationship and marriage education to Fragile Families, you will want to spend time explaining what the program is designed to do and designed NOT do. We found in our pilot efforts that even trusted community partners were skeptical at first and needed to be coached along. Linda will talk more about developing partnerships later.



Relationship & Marital Enrichment Education

Annual Family Life Electronic Seminar Series ♦ April 3 - 14, 2006

- Examine other programs your organization currently offers low-income families. If you work for Extension, you probably have a nutrition education or money management program you offer. Would these participants be interested in relationship and marriage education? You might also consider offering relationship and marriage education in conjunction with parenting or childbirth education. We are experimenting with this approach in Michigan.
- Invite members of the target audience to a focus group where they examine the curriculum and other materials that will be used. Have them critique the materials for you and modify them based on their critique. If possible, pay participants an honorarium for their time and expertise, and provide them with refreshments or lunch.
- Provide educational extenders, if funding permits. If not, seek out donations from local businesses and organizations. One pilot site gave “baby bucks” that could be redeemed at a local “baby supply” pantry for infant clothes, disposable diapers or cribs (Adler, Lippert, Pflieger, Higginbotham & Armstrong, 2004). We used scrap-booking techniques in the *Caring for my Family* program as a way to extend learning much like people use professional portfolios. Participants came back to class so that they could continue to work on their baby’s memory book. Most could not afford to buy scrapbook supplies on their own.

Slide 18: Find the Right Facilitators

The quality of the instruction makes or breaks any educational program. Extension, through its work with low-resource audiences, has learned that instruction needs to be warm, personal, engaging, interactive, and experiential. In addition, you want facilitators who can serve as positive role models for the participants and can see their strengths and assets. We also found that a sense of humor, including the ability to laugh at oneself, was important in our pilot efforts.

Most of you are skilled teachers but may not have taught relationship and marriage education content for a number of years. Whether you integrate this content into existing programs, use an already developed curriculum (there are many to choose from), or develop your own, you will need to make sure you have the training to deliver the material effectively.

In addition, you will want to be sure that you know the line between education and therapy. In our pilot work, we found this line to be a gray area but one that facilitators were very aware of when they crossed over it. Have referral sources in place for participants who need support beyond what you are able to deliver.

Another important lesson we learned in the pilot efforts was the importance of having male co-facilitators. In Michigan, we were not accustomed to recruiting and teaching men in our programs. We learned how critical it is to have men involved in leadership roles. Try partnering with a local fathering program or a faith-based group to get this male involvement.



Relationship & Marital Enrichment Education

Annual Family Life Electronic Seminar Series ♦ April 3 - 14, 2006

Slide 19: Where to Find the *Caring for my Family* Program

I have mentioned a number of times the *Caring for my Family* curriculum and you may be interested in learning more about this resource. It is available at no charge on the Internet at URL:

www.fcs.msue.msu.edu/cfmf/

Thank you for the opportunity to talk with you about offering relationship and marriage education to low-income couples. Now I will turn the presentation back to Linda who will talk about working with and developing programming with diverse audiences.

Slide 20: Developing Partnerships

I will talk a bit about developing partnerships with diverse audiences as we think about ultimately providing programming about relationship and marriage education. When I talk about diverse audiences I am talking about culturally and ethnically diverse audiences. These audiences may have cultural values that are very different from the dominant culture. Culturally diverse audiences usually have not had good experiences with the dominant European American, middle-class component of society; therefore, extra efforts need to be made in working with these audiences. Developing partnerships is important in low-resource audiences as Karen has suggested as she talked about developing partnerships that would involve men in facilitating programs. It is also *critical* that partnerships be developed with diverse populations because the history of lack of trust of the dominant culture that may exist in working with culturally diverse populations.

Slide 21: Developing Partnerships (cont.)

This process of developing partnerships must begin with the attitude that members of the diverse population have much to teach us about who they are and what programs will be most effective (Anguiano & Kawamoto, 2003; National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, 2002; Skogrand, 2004). This attitude will help Extension educators learn from their community partners. For example, Extension educators may have the content knowledge but need to learn from individuals representing diverse populations about how to effectively provide programs.

We also need to share leadership and partner with those who have the most relevant information and who operate at a level close to the issues (National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, 2002; Skogrand, 2004). As one begins the process of learning about a population, which we will talk about in a minute, it is helpful to be aware of possible community partners with whom programs can be developed.

Slide 22: Why Members of Diverse Audiences Do Not Attend Programming

Many of us would agree that when we provide programming in traditional ways, we typically do not have participation from diverse audiences. We may advertise, we can even be deliberate about targeting populations, but we typically attract European American, middle-class attendees. What are we doing wrong? Why don't they come? Any of us that have done family life education programming can identify with these questions. I believe they do not come because we are not developing and implementing programming that is meeting their needs or is consistent with their cultural values. Therefore, we must learn about the audience we wish to serve in order to create programming that is culturally meaningful and relevant.



Relationship & Marital Enrichment Education

Annual Family Life Electronic Seminar Series ♦ April 3 - 14, 2006

Slide 23: Strategies for Learning about a Diverse Audience

I will briefly describe some strategies for learning about low-resource and culturally diverse populations. The information about strategies to use to learn about diverse audiences is taken from an article I have written entitled "A Process for Learning about and Creating Programs for Culturally Diverse Audiences" in *The Forum for Family and Consumer Sciences* that is provided as a handout.

First, it is useful to read about the population with which you want to work. The reading could include journal articles, books, and online materials. The field of marriage and family therapy has produced several books about the values in various cultures. Authors such as Monica McGoldrick (1998) and Derald Sue and David Sue (2003) have provided overviews of various cultures. Harriette McAdoo (1999) and Mary Kay DeGenova (1998) have also written books about family ethnicity. These sources are provided in the reference list.

Reading scholarly literature might be a place to start, but that is only the beginning. Although some learning can take place by reading, it is also important to remember that every group we might serve has values and needs that are unique within a local community. Therefore, we need to learn about the population locally as well.

Slide 24: Strategies (cont.)

We can also listen to television or radio stations and read newspapers. Learn from what has been created by and for the diverse population you want to serve. For example, I read the *Navajo Times*, a Navajo newspaper, to learn about cultural values of the Navajo people. When I read the *Navajo Times* I learned that children and schools are highly valued components of the Navajo culture. I also learned about how they raise up the achievements of the children in this culture.

Another strategy to learn about a population is to attend cultural events such as pow wows, Cinco de Mayo celebrations which are evident in the Latino community, or Juneteenth celebrations, which are a celebration of the ending of slavery in the Black community. When we attend these events, we can pay attention to personal interactions. We can learn about parent/child relationships, marriage relationships, and family life. One might learn about the extensive involvement of fathers in the lives of Latino families and how Latino family members have fun together by attending a Cinco de Mayo celebration. Attending a Juneteenth celebration, one might learn about the influence of African culture on family traditions for African American families.

We can also visit locations frequented by a population about which you want to learn by visiting locations such as grocery stores, market places, galleries, and restaurants. We can learn about foods which are eaten, cultural influences, and history. These things all have an impact on relationship and family life.

Slide 25: Strategies (cont.)

Finally, it is helpful to identify a *cultural guide* to teach us and help us enter the community. A "cultural guide" is someone representing the diverse audience who can teach about and clarify understanding of a population, and provide direction to additional resources. A formal or informal relationship can be developed with one or more cultural guides. For example, an individual may have an occasional



Relationship & Marital Enrichment Education

Annual Family Life Electronic Seminar Series ♦ April 3 - 14, 2006

informal relationship with a person who answers questions. We might also have a more formal arrangement with a person that includes regular meetings.

In some cases, depending on the time involved and the relationship, the cultural guide should be compensated for his or her time and knowledge. This compensation should be appropriate within the person's culture. In some cultures, money is not considered an appropriate gift to show appreciation; rather giving an item of value within that culture may be more appropriate.

Some individuals from some cultural groups are very willing to teach others about their culture and others are not. There are no clear-cut guidelines for how to find cultural guides, but they are likely to emerge as the other strategies are pursued. An attitude of respect for the culture and the cultural guide's way of teaching are important. Let the cultural guide teach in the way he or she chooses to teach, which may be the way that teaching is done in that culture. In some cultures teaching is done through story-telling and questions are not answered directly. If the Extension educator has a desire to learn and gain an appreciation for the richness of a specific culture, a member of the diverse audience will most likely emerge as a teacher.

In summary, all of this learning must occur with an attitude of respect. Sometimes we need to observe and not participate in events such as a dance at a pow wow, because we do not understand the cultural significance of the activity. It is also important to know learning takes time, and that it will continue for the duration of a relationship with a community.

Slide 26: Learning May Be Different

As we reflect on what we learn about a diverse population, we might begin to ask ourselves questions about how our learning might affect how we would create programming. We, as Extension educators, are very comfortable with participants sitting around a table with the educator providing information. PowerPoint slides might be used, coffee breaks might be included. A typical format might be for the educator to provide information, followed by equal time for a discussion by participants.

Learning about a specific diverse audience through the strategies described so far may teach us that the educational model preferred by members of the dominant culture might not be appropriate for other audiences.

Slide 27: Questions to Consider

Some questions one might ask after we have learned about a diverse population are:

How do members of this audience learn? For example, people in some cultures learn through story telling, which is true in the American Indian culture. Should programming include story telling?

Another question one might ask is: Who participates in learning? I will be talking about Latino families in a few minutes and I have learned that the Latino couples I interviewed will not participate in relationship and marriage education if they have to leave their children at home.

Yet another question we might ask is: Where does learning take place for this audience? Many of us work for Extension and work in government buildings. This might not be a comfortable place for



Relationship & Marital Enrichment Education

Annual Family Life Electronic Seminar Series ♦ April 3 - 14, 2006

relationship and marriage education for some populations. Would schools or churches may be more welcoming? Karen has also talked about the need for finding comfortable locations and times for programming in recruitment of low-resource couples.

This discussion might raise other questions for you as you think about providing programming focusing on relationship and marriage education. What has been provided is certainly not an exhaustive list of questions to be asked.

Slide 28: Lack of Research about Relationships and Marriage in Diverse Audiences

Scholarly materials are available about *cultural themes and features* of diverse populations. For example, there is information about the importance of religion in the African American community as cultural value (McAdoo, 1998; Sue & Sue, 2003; Willie & Riddick, 2003). However, there is very little *research* about marriage and family dynamics in most culturally diverse populations.

When research about relationship and marriage has been done with culturally diverse and low-resources couples, it usually compares a particular ethnic or a low-resource population to European American, middle class couples and we learn what is wrong about the diverse population (Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo, & Gallardo-Cooper, 2002). For example, we often hear about the higher divorce rates in diverse the European American, middle class couples as the standard. We are then working from a deficit model. This data does not tell us what strengths there are or what is working in the cultural or economic group which family life educators can capitalize on to help couples. We need to validate the strengths in couple relationships and families, even though it may clash with the values in the dominant culture (Santiago-Rivera, et al.)

In addition, when we use research findings that were gathered with European American, middle class couples—which is available—we do not serve couples from diverse populations well, because we do not provide the education within a cultural context. Couples from diverse populations do not attend, and if they do attend, they do not benefit.

If members of diverse audiences do try to implement practices that are in conflict with strengths that exist within the population, an educator can actually cause harm to the family because there can be a “cultural clash” which negatively affects family life. For example, if we teach communication skills that are effective with the dominant culture, which are different and that clash with ways of communicating in the culturally diverse community, we can cause harm to that family system.

So, there is a problem in that we do not know very much about what makes relationships and marriages strong in low-resource and culturally diverse couples from which to develop programming. We must rely on cultural themes or features of the culture that are written about such as “family is an important value in the Latino culture.” Certainly this is helpful, but we do need more research about what makes families work in culturally diverse populations.

Slide 29: Study: Strong Marriages in Latino Culture

I have recently completed a study about what makes strong marriages in Latino culture. We interviewed 25 Latino couples, which included 50 individuals, who had strong marriages to learn what made their marriages strong. We really wanted to know, from a cultural perspective, is what makes their marriages strong, so that we can create programming for other Latino couples who want to have strong



Relationship & Marital Enrichment Education

Annual Family Life Electronic Seminar Series ♦ April 3 - 14, 2006

relationships and marriages. I am sharing these research findings with you as an example of how research findings about a cultural group can have implications for developing educational programming for diverse audiences.

I used a model by Grills and Rowe for creating culturally competent research teams to complete community-based research (Grills & Rowe, 1999). These authors emphasized the development of a value orientation which is respectful and knowledgeable about the community being investigated and the completion of the research *in partnership* with the community, with the ultimate goal of sharing the results and benefits with the community being researched. There is a new edited book by Trimble and Fisher (2006) that also provides guidance in respectfully doing research with diverse populations. My personal experience working with disenfranchised populations has helped me understand that individuals from such populations (a) feel that they have been studied extensively, (b) feel "used" by a system that gave them no opportunity for input, and (c) see no direct benefit in having participated in research studies. When we do research, we must be sensitive and responsive to these issues.

Slide 30: Components of Strong Latino Marriages

There were three major themes that came from the findings of this study about what makes marriages strong in these 25 Latino couples. We found that having children, religion, and communication made the marriage strong. I will talk about each of these (Skogrand, Hatch & Singh, 2005).

Forty-seven of the 50 individuals in this study indicated that children were a key component in making the marriage strong. They indicated that children make the marriage strong because children are the "glue" that keeps the marriage and family together. Children are the reason for getting married and the reason for staying married. One man said, "a man can leave his wife, but he can't leave his children," so you find a way to solve problems and not divorce.

As participants in this study talked about their children it also became clear that marriage and family life were not separate. We asked about their marriages and they provided answers about their family life. In addition, these couples made it clear that they typically did not do things as a couple, they only did things as a family. They did not leave their children in someone else's care. These couples talked about how all family members supported each other. As researchers we concluded that these couples did not talk about their marriage separate from family life, but rather their couple life was subsumed within the context of family life.

Slide 31: Components of Strong Latino Marriages (cont.)

Forty-five out of the 50 participants identified communication as a necessary component of having a strong marriage. These couples indicated that, as a couple, they needed to spend time together and talk often which would help them understand each other better. This understanding also led to greater love between them. They also indicated that couples needed to talk in order to solve problems and make decisions.



Relationship & Marital Enrichment Education

Annual Family Life Electronic Seminar Series ♦ April 3 - 14, 2006

Slide 32: Components of Strong Latino Marriages (cont.)

Finally, 37 out of the 50 participants stated that religion was a key component in having a healthy marriage. Religion contributed to a healthy marriage by providing guidance to stay on the right path in marriage. It also provided spiritual strength to cope with crises, and it helped them stay committed to their spouse.

Slide 33: Implications of the Latino Study for Relationship and Marriage Education

I will now talk about implications of these findings for education.

The conclusions I am drawing about implications for relationship and marriage education for Latino couples come from my knowledge about Latino culture which I have acquired through the strategies presented as well as the findings from the study I have just described. For example, reading the literature about Latino culture and paying attention to the findings of the study described, it is clear that we need to invite the entire family to relationship and marriage education. In fact, because the family is so important to members of this culture, we might reframe programming as being for the family. Content may be about how family members rely on and support each other, which strengthens marriages and family life. The Latino couples clearly stated that they would not attend if they could not bring their children.

Slide 34: Implications (cont.)

I have not been able to find any literature about communication being an important cultural theme or feature of the Latino culture. However, the findings of the study of Latino marriages would suggest that content about communication should be included in programming. The couples in the study did not talk about "I" messages or focus on listening skills. Instead, they simply talked about spending time together so they could talk to each other, better understand each other, and the result would be that there would be increased love between the husband and the wife. These findings might guide the content about communication.

Slide 35: Implications (cont.)

Finally, religion is written about as being an important value in Latino culture. One study of Latino individuals in the United States indicated that 94% self-identified as having a religious belief (Espenosa, Elizaondo & Miranda, 2003). The study of Latino couples with strong marriages also supports the idea that religion is an important value in Latino culture. Therefore, relationship and marriage education for Latino couples might include content about how couples benefit from affiliations with religious institutions or how a spiritual connection can be helpful in marriage and family life. Another implication of this finding might be that programming should be planned in partnership with spiritual leaders. Religious leaders who serve Latinos appear to be trusted community leaders and religious organizations might be trusted meeting places for couples.



Relationship & Marital Enrichment Education

Annual Family Life Electronic Seminar Series ♦ April 3 - 14, 2006

Slide 36: Native American Audiences

I want to mention that I am doing a study about what makes strong marriages in the Navajo culture. Although I cannot share those findings with you at this time, I will say that the components of strong marriages in the Navajo culture are different from the results of the Latino study. This suggests that relationship and marriage education needs to look different for different cultural groups in order for programming to be effective.

I might also mention that working with American Indian populations often require approval or connection with the tribal nation. For example, the Navajo Nation has their own Institutional Review Board that approves any gathering of data or reporting of findings on the Navajo Reservation or with Navajo people. Other tribes have a business committee that approves work on their reservations.

Slide 37: Summary of the Module

Providing relationship and marriage education for low-resource and culturally diverse audiences creates new challenges for us as Extension educators. Needs, values, and teaching techniques are likely to be different than our traditional way of doing educational programming. It is, however, within our historical mission to meet those challenges by doing what Extension educators have always done: Getting to know one's audience. The future will require that we use creative and innovative approaches to working with low-resource and ever increasing culturally diverse audiences.

The programs and approaches that we have provided are a place for us to start in providing programming for low-resource and culturally diverse audiences. Each of us participating in this program, however, has the opportunity to use our own skills in contributing to this body of literature.

We hope that you will provide feedback and contribute to the dialogue that is part of this program.



Module 6 References

Working with Low-Resource and Culturally Diverse Audiences

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Relationship & Marital Enrichment Education

Annual Family Life Electronic Seminar Series ♦ April 3 - 14, 2006

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