Planning Programs to Break Down Cultural Barriers

Unit 2

A six-part curriculum designed to assist Extension professionals in planning and implementing more effective programs that target diverse audiences

Table of Contents

Unit 2

Planning Programs to Break Down Cultural Barriers

An Overview of Unit 2

Facilitator's Guide to Lesson 1

Lesson 1: Cultivating Cultural Competence

Topic 1: Defining culture and cultural competence in Extension programs

Topic 2: Paving the way for cultural competence and its benefits

Topic 3: Shedding light on culture group norms, values, beliefs, and practices

Topic 4: Culturally congruent learning styles

Attachment 2.1: African American culture

Attachment 2.2: Asian American culture

Attachment 2.3: Hispanic/Latino culture

Attachment 2.4: Native American culture

Attachment 2.5: African American learning styles

Attachment 2.6: Asian American learning styles

Attachment 2.7: Hispanic/Latino learning styles

Attachment 2.8: Native American learning styles

Facilitator's Guide to Lesson 2

Lesson 2: Connecting Across Cultures

Topic 1: Making the most of cultural guides for an insider's point-of-view

Topic 2: Building meaningful relationships with diverse ethnic communities

Topic 3: Finding common ground when connecting across cultures

Unit 2

Planning Programs to Break Down Cultural Barriers

An Overview

The previous unit provided a look into four of the different ethnic groups that make up a portion of the American landscape, as we know it today. This unit will serve as a foundation for developing a richer understanding of the diverse cultures within this curriculum. Unit 2 will explore running themes of cultural competence throughout its two lessons. It also includes eight key attachments highlighting African American, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American cultural norms and learning styles.

The ongoing process of breaking down cultural barriers and becoming culturally competent begins with an honest assessment of our personal values and beliefs, the worldviews and prerogatives that shape the way we view others. Most likely, these culturally shaped "lenses" through which we view the world have been cultivated for years within our individual ethnic communities, neighborhoods, extended families, and/or tribes (Dresser, 1996). Although members of mainstream society often find their culture to be "invisible," this belief stems from living within the culture so completely that the presence of cultural customs and norms becomes blurred into the backdrop of life (Lynch & Hanson, 1997). Many people that belong to the majority group do not recognize their specific culture and may believe that they have no true "culture." However, what these individuals fail to account for is the way in which society as developed to accommodate them. In this sense only those who differ from the dominant culture are seen as possessing cultural characteristics, values, and norms.

Some of the more dominant cultural mainstream American values are competition, individualism, and independence. Many of these cultural beliefs spiraled outward from the first European settlers who occupied this nation and the founding fathers who governed it. It is important to note that these are not universal values and beliefs; in fact, many other cultures hold beliefs that directly oppose this value system. For example there is a sharp contrast between current mainstream American culture and that of the Native Americans. Whereas mainstream America promotes competition in all aspects of life—from the educational system to the job market—many members of other ethnic communities promote cooperation and working together

to achieve a common goal. For those whose cultural heritage differs from the mainstream culture, it may be difficult—if not impossible—to "outdo" another in an educational competition in order to elevate themselves. People like these may be more inclined to work with others in collaborative projects, striving towards a common goal and shared rewards. The same may be true of an individual who declines a promotion to avoid directly supervising friends and peers, preferring to work as a group member rather than individually. Understanding and respecting cross-cultural differences such as these is the foundation of cultural competence.

Learning about cultural differences in customs and beliefs is the beginning of a rewarding journey toward building trust, cross-cultural communication, and competence. Studying cultural traditions, norms, practices, values, and learning styles can enable Extension professionals to effectively deliver services and connect with culturally different individuals on a deeper level. However, it is critical to keep in mind that all individuals, children, and families are unique; although they may be influenced by their ethnic, cultural, and language backgrounds, they are not fully defined by them. Therefore, differences should be viewed as guidelines, not absolutes, serving to enhance services and communication rather than to stereotype individuals. The goal of cultural learning is insight, not stereotype. General descriptions and guidelines will not apply to every person or situation, simply because there will always be exceptions when describing individuals. The barriers and walls between cultures begin to crumble when we further our understanding of others' differences, respect their points of view, and strive toward cultural competence.

Unit 2: Planning Programs to Break Down Cultural Barriers

Facilitator's Guide to Lesson 1

Lesson Title: Cultivating Cultural Competence

Goal: To provide participants with information to assist them in building cultural competence and develop an understanding of cultural learning styles within African American, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American ethnic groups.

Objectives: At the conclusion of this lesson, participants will:

- Have a broader knowledge of culture and cultural competence
- Understand the necessity for cultural competence and realize its benefits.
- Have a firm grasp of what some cultural norms and practices are for the four ethnic groups explored. These four groups are: African American, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American.
- Develop an appreciation for cultural learning styles and the modes in which particular ethnic groups learn best—maximizing their learning potential.

Materials needed

A copy of Attachments 2.1 through 2.8 for each participant

Paper and pencil (culturally relevant stationary will be provided)

A deck of *Compatibility* cards

TV and VCR (if available)

Videotape (clips that emphasize cultural learning styles)

Time needed: Approximately 1 1/2 hours

Background

The United States stands apart from many countries around the globe in respect to its diversity of people. From its very conception, our nation was built by a diversity of immigrants who arrived to this "new land" from all walks of life and cultural backgrounds. Differences in cultural heritage, ethnicity, religion, customs and traditions, values and beliefs, and cultural practices set

the stage for America's once-popular "melting pot" image (discussed in Unit 3). The strength of America today still lies in its diversity and the ability of its people to work together to achieve great things. At the core of this ideal is the essence of cultural competence. We all must work together to understand, respect, and celebrate the richness that individual differences bring to our lives.

Striving for cultural competency is an ongoing process, and there is no blueprint for success. Cultural competency is a continuous process of assessing and broadening our knowledge and respect for differences in those whose culture, ethnicity, or language differs from our own. If Extension programs are to effectively serve an increasingly diverse population (described in Unit One), it is crucial that we become more culturally aware, responsive, and competent. Culturally competent educators consider factors such as language, customs, ethnicity, family structure, and community/tribal dynamics when designing their programs. Once Extension programs have learned to fuse the strengths and perspectives of culturally diverse audiences into their programs, relationships with those diverse individuals, families, and communities have the potential to flourish.

Facilitating the Lesson

1. Welcome the group and introduce yourself and the session. Describe how the lesson will be carried out (interactively), and share the objectives. Then, ask participants to introduce themselves by stating their names and some other information of interest (e.g., their organization, the type of program they work with, etc.). If you have taught this group before, you can alter the introduction to be more appropriate.

2. After the welcome and/or introductions, begin the lesson with the interest approach. Instructions are provided. Please read the content and instructions prior to the training so that you will be familiar with how to carry out the activity.

3. There is information on each topic below, as well as questions that you can pose to the participants as you move through the lesson. These questions will serve to stimulate discussion and even more interaction. "Ask the Class" sections focus your attention on important points that should be made. "Facilitator Notes" throughout the curriculum provide important instructions or additional strategies for enhancing the lesson. There are also attachments/handouts included that you will need to distribute per the instructions. Use the PowerPoint transparencies to guide you through the each topic within the lesson.

4. Once you have covered all of the topics for this lesson, carry out the application exercise. Instructions are included. Again, please read the content and instructions prior to the training so that you will be familiar with how to carry out the activity.

5. If time permits, you can close the lesson with a summary of the major points.

6. Thank participants for their time and for sharing and working together. If you are continuing on with another unit on a different day, you should reiterate the important details of the next training and encourage them to participate.

Lesson 1

Interest approach

Pass out one deck of *Compatibility* cards per person. Although these cards were designed for the board game *Compatibility*, we will be using the cards today for a very different purpose. These cards will give us some insight on diversity: not the differences that first come to mind when the word diversity is mentioned, but the diversity of thoughts, beliefs, values and practices in the room.

To begin, all decks of cards are exactly alike. There are approximately 30 cards in each deck, and each card displays a large color picture. The pictures depict all walks of life and portray a variety of human plights, emotions, achievements, and desires. Once all participants have had an opportunity to look through their deck of cards, an abstract word—for example, "freedom"—is announced. All participants must look through their deck and select three cards that represent what freedom looks like to them. After everyone has made his or her selection, individuals will share their three cards and explain why they chose them.

There will undoubtedly be a wide range of diversity in thinking when the selected images are shared. There will also be compatible thinking between some members of the group. The selected cards will often represent cultural norms, values, beliefs, and practices. However, it is important to note how many individuals have responses that simply do not fit any mold or "norm." This reminds us how critical it is to acknowledge the individual diversity within these generalizations when discussing culture group norms. No two individuals from any culture are exactly alike. We all have unique identities that we develop within our cultures. Individuals may inherit some (but not all) of the cultural heritage, customs, traditions, and practices embedded in their ethnic community.

More rounds of this game can be played if time permits. Other abstract words or concepts that can be used are: commitment, death, honesty, wisdom, temptation, tradition, breathtaking, brave, cold-hearted, greed, illusion, plague, love, and paradise.

Topic 1: Defining culture and cultural competence in Extension programs

Ask the class: Why is culture important?

Culture is a key component in shaping who we are: our values, attitudes, beliefs, practices, and even the holidays we celebrate. It can account for our perceptions of what works and what doesn't work, as well as what makes sense to us (and our community) and what doesn't. We all have distinct cultural backgrounds that help define us individually and as members of our respective ethnic communities. In 2001, the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) defined *culture* as "the thoughts, ideas, behavior patterns, customs, values, skills, languages, arts, and faith or religion of a particular people at a given point in time" (p. VII).

The cornerstone of cultural competence is a better understanding of specific cultural groups. This helps Extension professionals understand how members of a particular community may behave and how they interpret their world. Respecting and learning about culture promotes a focus on the positive characteristics and strengths of a community. This leads to an appreciation of cultural differences.

In 2001, the Child Welfare League of America also defined *cultural competence* as "the ability of individuals to respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values individuals, families, tribes, and communities and protects the dignity of each" (p. VII).

Additionally, the perspectives of different groups of people must be considered with regards to the services that are provided. It is imperative that a comparison of the perspectives of both the larger social system and the individual group are conducted to become aware of alternative values and beliefs relevant to the group being served (Fong & Furuto, 2001). Ethnic minorities may have different ways of seeking assistance and services; therefore cultural competency is necessary and should address the following (Green, 1892):

- Awareness of one's own cultural limitations
- Openness to cultural differences
- Client-oriented, systematic learning styles
- Utilizing cultural resources

- Acknowledging cultural integrity

In the quest for cultural competence, knowledge about individuals and their communities is used to develop specific strategies, practices, and policies that are more relevant to the needs of a particular cultural group. As the population of our country continues to become more diverse, so will the needs of the individuals and families served by Extension. If Extension programs truly aim to offer services to diverse audiences in hopes of helping these individuals, communities, and/or tribes reach their full potential, then Extension must embrace cultural differences with open arms.

Topic 2: Paving the way for cultural competence and its benefits

Ask the class: What are some of the benefits to becoming culturally competent in Extension?

Successful Extension programs striving for cultural competence take the "That's the way we have always done it" mindset and ***replace*** it with "If we are failing to appropriately account for the needs of diverse groups of people, we must improve our system." Cultural competence results from a deliberate, systematic, and long-term approach to change (Nash, 1999). Culturally competent Extension programs must keep in mind the constantly changing needs of the population they serve. Change is the future; it cannot be avoided, and therefore should be viewed positively and embraced. Without change, there cannot be growth.

Culturally competent extension programs are more effective and powerful because they are "customer driven." They are designed to understand and respond to the specific needs of a cultural community. Learning and respecting the particular needs of a cultural group in order to better serve them is far more effective than simply doing what has always worked with other, more mainstream populations. Cultural competence includes improving relationships with various ethnic communities and designing programs that are directly related to their needs, lives, and individual goals in order to be effective with multicultural groups (Fong & Furuto, 2001).

Topic 3: Shedding light on culture group norms, values, beliefs, and practices

Ask the class: What are some of the basic differences and similarities between diverse ethnic groups?

One of the more obvious components of cultural competence is the importance of gaining a deeper understanding and respect for the variances between cultures. Learning about culture group norms and practices, contemplating community belief systems, and studying behavioral patterns all add layers to the overall package of cultural competence. It is beneficial to learn what is valued in a cultural community, simply because values have a direct impact on behavior. The recognition that many people who belong to minority groups hold world views that are different from the dominant culture (Sue & Sue, 1990) is important for an understanding and respect of difference. And although it is inappropriate to stereotype ethnic groups with fixed, inflexible notions of how they will think or behave, education about general norms that have been observed by those who study cultural groups may help improve communication, program design, and delivery capabilities among Extension professionals.

Of course there will be those who do not fit the cultural norms or do not subscribe to the same value system as others in their cultural community. (This issue will be explored more in Unit 3.) However, many people within an individual culture do tend to hold the general values of that culture, making a knowledge of those values very useful. When this knowledge is used flexibly and with good intentions in order to connect and communicate with people unlike ourselves, it can only assist in breaking down cultural barriers.

At the end of this lesson are Attachments 2.1 through 2.4. These attachments outline cultural norms for African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic/Latinos, and Native Americans that have been identified through an extensive search of the literature. There are many components of culture. For instance, cultures may have different attitudes or beliefs about eye contact, gestures, physical distance, body language, time, touch, silence, and space. The attachments are intended as helpful guidelines, not absolutes. Cultural norms may be useful in gaining an understanding of the differences between ethnic communities, and possibly as a reference. Below are four brief examples of the important role culture plays in our lives. Each cross-cultural encounter will be

set up as an example, followed by the background information necessary to explain the behavior from a culturally competent perspective.

These brief anecdotes are from *Los Angeles Times* columns published in the volume *Multicultural Manners* (Dresser, 1996).

Facilitator Note: If time permits, participants can be divided into four groups and given a cross-cultural encounter to discuss the various ways culture impacts our daily lives.

Example #1:

People are lined up at the DMV to have their photos taken for their drivers' licenses. Russ is the man behind the camera. Most people give him a great big smile when he gives the cue. However, one day a Japanese man outright refuses.

Background #1:

The Japanese man didn't smile because the picture was for a government document. To smile would have meant he didn't take his driving responsibility seriously enough. Generally, in their native country, the Japanese do not smile for photo IDs. Equating smiling with frivolous behavior may also be the reason why so few Japanese government officials are photographed with smiles, except when they are coached to do so for photos taken with American dignitaries.

Similarly, newly arrived children from several different Asian countries refused to smile when first having their picture taken with the Easter Bunny. This was a serious moment for them, one where smiles would have been inappropriate (p. 21).

Example #2:

Caroline works in the administrative office of a community college informing students how they fared on the English as a Second Language Placement test. One day a girl from the Middle East came in to inquire about her test. She had done very well, so Caroline gave her the thumbs-up gesture. When the girl saw this she turned red and rushed out of the office without saying a word.

Background #2:

The thumbs-up sign has the same connotation as the American middle finger gesture in various countries throughout the world. Some Middle Eastern countries, as well as Nigeria and Australia, think of it as obscene. During the 1992 Democratic Convention, president nominee Bill Clinton used the thumbs-up sign on national TV to indicate his pleasure over being nominated. One can just envision the amazed reaction of global TV viewers (pp. 18-19).

Example #3:

The exhibitors at the busy trade show can't figure out why most of the Chinese patrons shun their booth. Those working the booth wear green hats and use them as a freebie too. The Chinese visitors steer clear of this booth and the few who do stop by dump the hats in the trash immediately after leaving the booth.

Background #3:

For the first two days of the convention, the absence of Chinese patrons was a mystery. When one of the booth owners tried to give a green hat to a lone Chinese man passing by, the man became angry. He rejected it and exclaimed, "I don't want to wear a green hat before I marry, and I don't want to wear one after I am married either!" Finally, the exhibitors discovered that the Chinese expression "He who wears a green hat" means that a man's wife or girlfriend is cheating on him (p. 67).

Example #4:

Mr. and Mrs. Lin came to their city's planning department to discuss what they felt was an urgent matter. The house they just purchased had the number 4 included in the address. They were adamant about making a change to the address no matter what the cost amounted to or what the process entailed.

Background #4:

Mr. and Mrs. Lin were Chinese and, in both Mandarin and Cantonese dialects, the word for the number four sounds like the word for death. It has a meaning of death for Japanese and Koreans as well. For the Lins to have death in their address would bode poorly for their future in this new home. Planning departments in cities with large immigrant Chinese populations have become familiar with this issue. China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan hotels often eliminate the fourth floor. Some airports eliminate Gate Four as well (pp. 107-108).

Mainstream American Values	Diverse American Values
Competition and individual achievement	Cooperation, teamwork, group achievement
To the point, direct communication	Nonverbal and indirect communication
Dominant over nature	In harmony with nature
Future oriented	Past oriented
Emphasis on nuclear family	Emphasis on extended family
Independence and individuality	Interdependence, putting the group first
Time management and punctuality	Time is generously shared
Eye contact (especially when listening)	May avoid eye contact as sign of respect, etc.
More relaxed about touching members of the opposite sex than same sex in public	More relaxed about touching members of the same sex than opposite sex in public

Πριμαρψ σουρχεσ: (Δρεσσερ, 1996) ανδ (Λψνχη & Ηανσον, 1997), οτηερ σουρχεσ λιστεδ ιν ρεφερενχεσ ατ τηε ενδ οφ υνιτ.

Topic 4: Culturally Congruent Learning Styles

Ask the class: *How can I communicate more effectively to reach diverse ethnic communities?*

Valuing cultural learning styles, background knowledge, and life experiences is an important component of building meaning for culturally diverse learners. Every ethnic group has a preferred means for gathering, transferring, interpreting, and processing information. There are many modes and methodologies to the learning process, and each cultural community has ways of receiving and processing information that are more efficient and natural for them. Researchers report that youth and adults at all levels find greater motivation and perform at higher levels when instructional methods complement learning styles (Vaszuez, 1990). Teaching in a way that is culturally congruent with the learning style of a particular group is an ongoing challenge that requires cultural competency as well as an in-depth study of cultural learning styles.

At the end of this lesson are Attachments 2.5 through 2.8. They outline the cultural learning styles that have been found to be most prevalent for African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic/Latinos, and Native Americans. There are many components of cultural learning styles, including differences between cultures regarding eye contact, gestures, physical distance, body language, time, touch, silence, and space. The four attachments are intended as flexible guidelines for expanding teaching practices to meet the needs of diverse audiences. If becoming culturally competent includes making Extension services more relevant to a specific cultural group, then presenting material that is in sync with the ethnic background of the group is obviously a top priority.

Application

For this activity, participants will need to be divided up into four groups. It would be preferable for each group to have approximately five members, but this is not essential. Groups may easily have fewer members; however, if groups are very large, this may keep some group members from participating. The aim of this activity, called the "Pass-On Writing Activity," is to find out what the group knows about a particular culture or ethnic group, and what they would like to know about that particular group. It requires cooperative thinking and a group effort that is sure to build communication and foster cultural competence.

To begin, each of the four groups will be assigned a particular cultural group: African American, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino, or Native American. The group will write their cultural/ethnic group across the top of their paper in bold letters. Then the team is asked to work together to come up with two statements that reflect what they know, or have recently learned, about the cultural learning styles of the specified ethnic group. These will go on the left-hand side of the paper. On the right-hand side, they will try to come up with teaching strategies that could be used to address the two cultural learning styles identified. (Participants can refer to Attachments 2.5 through 2.8 on cultural learning styles if they need additional assistance.) After collaborating and writing is complete in all groups, all papers will be passed on to the next group in a clockwise fashion.

Now each group has a new paper started by another group with a different cultural group in bold letters on the top. They are again to work collaboratively to come up with two statements that encompass what they know, or have recently learned, about the learning styles of the new culture group. They will write these statements on the left-hand side, underneath the statements from the previous group. After this, they will write teaching strategies on the right-hand side, below the previous group's strategies. Again, when all teams have finished discussing and writing, all papers should be passed on to the next group simultaneously. This cycle will continue until all four groups have had an opportunity to collaborate, discuss, and write what they know to be true or have experienced about the learning styles of all four cultural groups. Then the papers should go back to their original group.

At this point, the original group is assigned the task of sorting through all the statements from each group and forming a paragraph using the information given. All paragraphs are then shared aloud with the entire group of game participants. It is always quite astonishing to witness the wealth of information that can be uncovered when many participants work together towards a common goal. Undoubtedly, this learning experience will broaden the horizons of all participants and move the group forward in the quest for cultural competence.

A "second round" of this game can be played if time permits. This involves the exact same "cycle" of events except for one key difference: the groups should write about what they would *like to know* about a particular cultural or ethnic group's learning style instead of what they already know. This variation of the game provides a forum for discussion on how much more there is to learn about various culture groups, and how the next step in cultural competence could begin with investigating some of these important questions.

Unit 2: Planning Programs to Break Down Cultural Barriers

Facilitator's Guide to Lesson 2

Lesson Title: Connecting Across Cultures

Goal: To provide participants with information to assist them in building meaningful relationships and fostering effective communication with African American, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American cultural groups.

Objectives: At the conclusion of this lesson, participants will be able to:

- Develop an appreciation for the wealth of information and insights a cultural guide has to offer an Extension professional working with diverse audiences.

- Build meaningful relationships and cross-cultural connections with individuals, children, families, and communities/tribes from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

- Recognize important strategies in connecting with diverse audiences to make programming more powerful, relevant, and effective in ethnic communities.

Materials needed

Paper and pencil (culturally relevant stationary will be provided)

One table of culturally related props (masks, flags, artifacts, etc.)

Ethnic music CD and portable CD player

10 culturally related prizes

TV and VCR (if available)

Videotape (clips from select ethnic movies that emphasize cultural norms)

Time needed: Approximately 1 hour

Background

Over the next 15 to 20 years in the United States, Latin Americans will account for 47% of the population growth, African Americans will account for 22% of the population growth, and Asian Americans and Native Americans will account for 18% of the population growth (Ting-Toomey, 1999). It is only logical that more time and energy than ever before will need to be invested in

learning to communicate mindfully and effectively with individuals from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. In connecting with others whose cultural heritage differs from our own, we may have to open our minds, ears, eyes, and hearts with more alertness and closer attention to detail. Our willingness to improve cross-cultural connections and explore cultural differences will undoubtedly enrich the depth of our own life experiences.

From a human creativity standpoint, we learn more from people who are different from us than from those who are similar to us (Ting-Toomey, 1999). The most creative periods of human history have been infused with diversity, new ideas, and cross-cultural encounters. When we really get to know an individual from another ethnic community, we get a glimpse into another world. The possibilities for learning, growing as individuals, and stretching our worldviews are endless when lines of communication between cultures are open and sincere. Learning about values and belief systems that are unlike our own may at first make us feel uncomfortable, but emotional vulnerability is part of the journey toward improving cross-cultural connections, communications, and competence. With this level of honesty and commitment to improving communication between cultures, we can listen thoughtfully and see things through fresh lenses.

Facilitating the Lesson

1. Welcome the group and introduce yourself and the session. Describe how the lesson will be carried out (interactively), and share the objectives. Then, ask participants to introduce themselves by stating their names and some other information of interest (e.g., their organization, the type of program they work with, etc.). If you have taught this group before, you can alter the introduction to be more appropriate.

2. After the welcome and/or introductions, begin the lesson with the interest approach. Instructions are provided. Please read the content and instructions prior to the training so that you will be familiar with how to carry out the activity.

3. There is information on each topic below, as well as questions that you can pose to the participants as you move through the lesson. These questions will serve to stimulate discussion and even more interaction. "Ask the Class" sections focus your attention on important points that should be made. "Facilitator Notes" throughout the curriculum provide important instructions or additional strategies for enhancing the lesson. There are also attachments included that you will need to distribute per the instructions. Use the PowerPoint transparencies to guide you through the each topic within the lesson.

4. Once you have covered all of the topics for this lesson, carry out the application exercise. Instructions are included. Again, please read the content and instructions prior to the training so that you will be familiar with how to carry out the activity.

5. If time permits, you can close the lesson with a summary of the major points.

6. Thank participants for their time and for sharing and working together. If you are continuing on with another unit on a different day, you should reiterate the important details of the next training and encourage them to participate.

Lesson 2

Interest approach

When you are trying to gain a deeper understanding of a particular ethnic community, an insider's point of view can be an invaluable source of knowledge. Getting insight into another culture through a cultural guide (someone immersed in that ethnic community) can benefit Extension professionals in all aspects of programming, cross-cultural communications, and cross-cultural connections. At times, the only way to truly understand an individual, family, or community that differs dramatically from your own cultural heritage is to hear about their needs and concerns straight from the source.

To begin this activity, participants must break off into small groups consisting of three to four members. Groups will need to brainstorm all the ways a cultural guide might be of use in understanding a specific ethnic community at a new level. A jumpstart has been provided on the cultural guide webbing activity below; however, there are many more dimensions of support and background knowledge that a cultural guide can bring to the equation. Attempt to add as many branches to the web as possible.

CULTURAL GUIDE/ INSIDER

Knowledge of Ethnic Community Leaders

Knowledge of Community Events
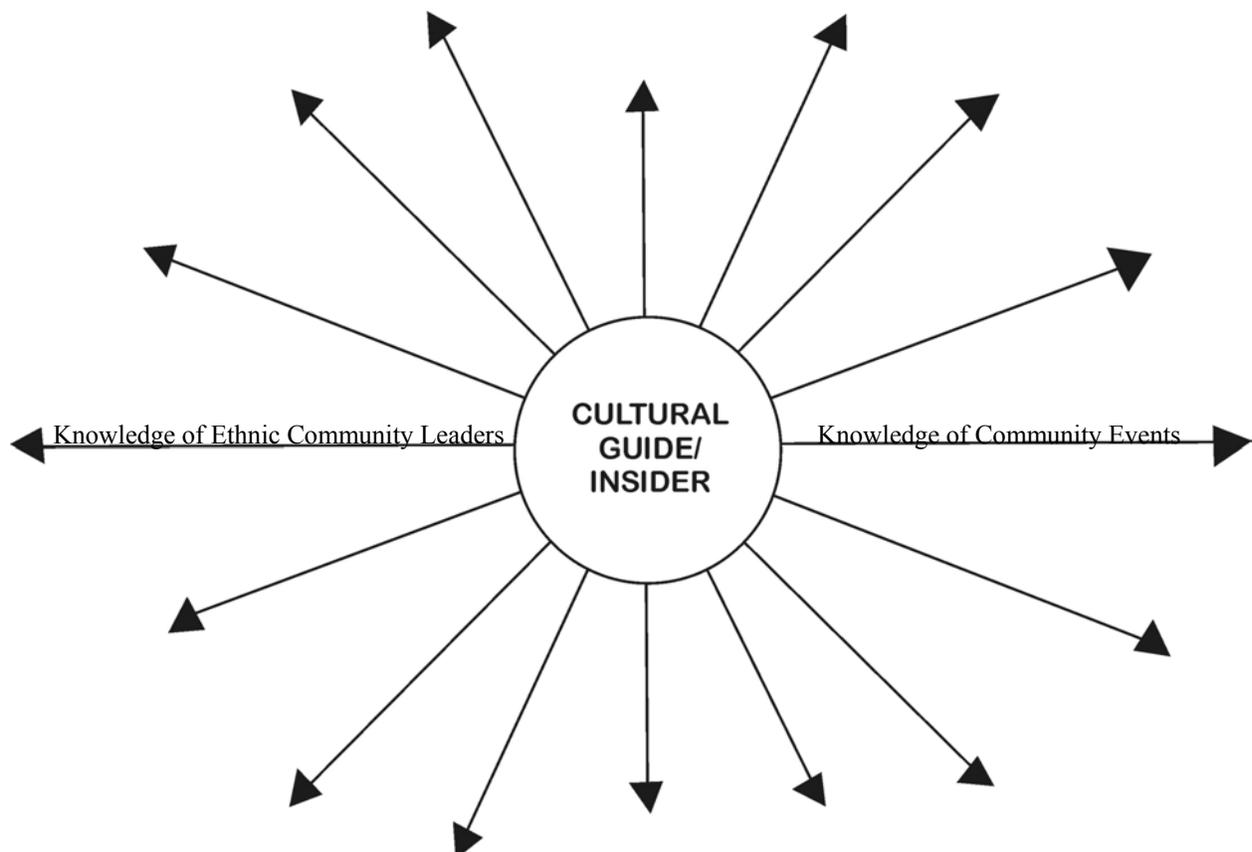
Topic 1: Making the most of cultural guides for an insider's point of view

Ask the class: What are some of the benefits to accessing a cultural guide when designing programs?

As discussed in the interest approach above, cultural guides are a superb method of breaking through cultural barriers to connect on a more intimate level with diverse ethnic communities. When Extension professionals reach out and make genuine efforts to increase knowledge and awareness of others, they are often met with positive responses. A cultural insider may be willing to engage in a learning/teaching process when approached from a position of equality and shared meaning. Extension programs may benefit from seeking consultation with more than one cultural guide, as there may be numerous organizations, advocates, and outside experts who represent the cultural and ethnic groups in the communities receiving services. Focusing solely on members of a particular ethnic group who hold formal offices or positions may not be the best strategy for connecting with diverse cultural communities. It is important to remember that formal leaders of a community are not necessarily viewed positively, so contacting informal leaders is also very important. However, there must be some level of caution in identifying the cultural insider as some individuals who do not want to be viewed as "the voice" of their community. For example, if there is one Asian person in a group, it is unrealistic to ask the person questions like, "So what do Asians think about this…?" Or "How can we best serve the Asian culture?" Careful consideration and dialogue with an individual ensures that the person does not feel as though he or she is a victim of tokenism.

Consulting with cultural and ethnic community organizations to learn more about the overall effectiveness of Extension services may be of major importance to program design. Cultural guides may prove invaluable in: 1) planning the way lessons are taught—maximizing learning style preferences; 2) determining activities and learning experiences that would be most effective and meaningful for the specific cultural or ethnic group; 3) designing marketing approaches to reach diverse audiences and ethnic communities (this will be discussed in Unit 3); and 4) obtaining volunteers from within the ethnic group to assist Extension professionals in providing the best service possible.

Topic 2: Building meaningful relationships with diverse ethnic communities

Ask the class: How can I get beyond cultural barriers to develop real connections across cultures?

Creating an atmosphere of understanding, respect, and support for cultural diversity is at the heart of building trust with diverse audiences and making meaningful connections. Knowledge of the history, culture, traditions, customs, language or dialect, values, religious or spiritual beliefs, art, music, learning styles, and practices of a cultural group is vital to Extension professionals in laying the foundation for true connections to occur. Written information and visual aids used in Extension should reflect the populations served in their content and design. The languages used and the photographs, graphics, and artwork should reflect the ethnic diversity of the individuals, children, families, and communities/tribes being served.

Extension agents have to value and respect the community in order to be valued and respected themselves. Being involved in the community also allows the community to be involved in Extension services. Recognizing the community as important in the process of change and inviting community members to participate in all stages of Extension programming is the first step toward building a deeper relationship with the community. This also gives Extension professionals invaluable information about what the community needs and expects, making the services relevant, connected, and meaningful (Nash, 1999). Likewise, it also informs Extension of the assets within the community that may support and extend the work of Extension (this will be discussed more in Unit 4).

Culturally sensitive language is another aspect of building relationships in diverse communities that should not be overlooked. Insensitive language can and will interfere with developing quality cross-cultural connections. Sensitive language will most likely yield positive responses, while insensitive language creates further barriers to cross-cultural communications. Because strong negative responses may be evoked when insensitive language is used, it is critical that Extension professionals be aware of language that values diversity and cross-cultural connections. If possible, cultural guides should be asked to evaluate Extension materials before they are distributed within diverse cultural and ethnic communities to ensure that they are culturally sensitive.

Finally, another language-related dimension of building meaningful relationships has to do with being mindful of how other individuals preferred to be "named" and identified. Mindful cross-cultural communication requires sensitivity to how others define themselves if feelings of trust, respect, and being understood are to develop. An excellent example is the naming traditions of many Hispanic and Latin Americans. Often, a Hispanic/Latino person will utilize both the father's and the mother's surname. For example, a child may be named Juan Perez Diaz; Perez is the father's name and Diaz is the mother's maiden name. A mainstream American secretary who is not used to writing two last names as part of a child's name may choose to omit the middle one (Perez, in the above example), thus unknowingly implying that the child is illegitimate (using his mother's name only). This can create confusion and conflict in cross-cultural connections and communications. The cultural lesson here is to ask questions before acting on assumptions or personal values. Then the people involved can let you know their preferences. Of course, these preferences may vary from person to person and family to family.

Topic 3: Finding common ground when connecting across cultures

Ask the class: *What are some strategies for connecting with diverse audiences in Extension programs?*

It is clear that many cultural groups live in and relate to neighborhoods and communities in deeply interlocking ways; therefore, Extension professionals must include neighborhoods and communities as vital components of their program planning, design, and resource base. Knowledge of neighborhood needs and resources is essential for success. Unit 4 will delve further into "asset mapping," a means of uncovering many of these community resources. In addition, a listing of ten essential strategies for making connections across cultures is given below. These strategies can serve as a valuable roadmap toward finding common ground.

❶ Develop programs to address "real life needs" of the community—this involves talking to teachers, clergy, community leaders, coaches, childcare services, community volunteers, etc.

❷ Offer programs in familiar surroundings: neighborhood churches, schools, community centers, and so forth.

❸ Meet in a location serviced by public transportation systems for limited-resource audiences.

❹ Take childcare needs into account when planning Extension services. For example, consider recruiting a volunteer to watch children, planning activities for children, or meeting during school hours.

❺ Offer culturally appropriate door prizes or refreshments donated from local merchants. Local supermarkets will often donate produce or bakery items that must be moved off the shelf quickly.

❻ Take cultural holidays and community gatherings into consideration when scheduling Extension programs.

❼ Dress appropriately and respectfully for the culture group you are serving so that others feel their clothing is acceptable.

❽ Select visuals that reflect the cultural and ethnic identity of the individuals, families, and communities receiving services.

❾ Use materials written at an appropriate level and in the appropriate language. Bilingual community members are helpful.

❿ Find out what commonalities exist and build on those; be sensitive and informed about cultural norms and values (Pearson, 1995).

Application

One thing that seems clear when reaching out to connect across cultures is the need for cultural competence, authentic communication, and sincere interest in learning more about diverse ethnic communities. This desire to understand another culture and open the lines of communication builds respect and trust between diverse audiences and Extension professionals. These relationships are cultivated by a genuine effort to move beyond stereotypes and truly become immersed within another culture. Although cultural guides are a fabulous place to begin gaining inroads into cultural groups, there are many other ways to gain personal knowledge of diverse ethnic groups. The ultimate goal of this activity is to expand participants' knowledge of specific cultural groups with the goal of making deeper connections to diverse audiences.

In this activity, all participants will be competing individually against one other in a fun game of "*Name That Group*." Although it has similarities to the old game show *Name That Tune,* the subtle difference is that instead of identifying individual songs, the participants will be identifying specific cultural groups. There will be a table at the front of the room covered with a display of culturally related props, such as decorative masks, symbolic flags, cultural artifacts, ethnic music, greeting cards from other countries, traditional items of clothing worn in some communities, and so forth. The participants will be asked to identify the ethnic community (African American, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino, or Native American) that the item belongs

to. The participants will be given a time limit of 5 to 10 minutes (depending on the size of the group) to evaluate the table and make their choices. Ethnic music will entertain participants during the "viewing" session. Allowing diverse individuals to work in groups of two may strengthen participation if the audience does not seem to respond well to competition.

After all participants have contemplated their decisions, the group will return to their seats to see how accurate their cultural estimates were (ethnic music may continue in the background if desired). Members will check their own papers while the true cultural identities of the items are revealed aloud. The top 10 winners will be those participants who made the highest number of direct matches between the actual ethnic group and the cultural prop. It is also possible for different pairs to announce the correct answer so that it is seen as a more cooperative learning experience than an individual competition. Culturally related prizes can be awarded to the top 10 contestants/groups, or everyone can be a prizewinner, in the educationally enlightening game of "Name That Group!"

Facilitator Note: If you have been informed about who the participants will be prior to the activity, an alternative would be to contact the participants and have them bring in one or two items they feel would represent their cultural heritage. A number would then be assigned to the ethnic props they brought to the program, and those items would be placed on the table with all other cultural props. The application would then be carried out as described above.

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PLANNING PROGRAMS TO BREAK DOWN CULTURAL BARRIERS

Attachments

Attachment 2.1: African American Culture

Attachment 2.2: Asian American Culture

Attachment 2.3: Hispanic/Latino American Culture

Attachment 2.4: Native American Culture

Attachment 2.5: African American Learning Styles

Attachment 2.6: Asian American Learning Styles

Attachment 2.7: Hispanic/Latino Learning Styles

Attachment 2.8: Native American Learning Styles

AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURE

1. Expressiveness (in language, emotion, and gestures)

2. Strong kinship bonds, extended family networks, and connection to others in their ethnic group/community

3. Connection with heritage and history is strong

4. Informality, and flexibility to adjust to various conditions/situations

5. Collective orientation (value of group effort for the common interest)

6. Strong oral language tradition; humor and imagery in language

7. High-context communication (nonverbal cues, gestures, and expressions)

8. Religious, spiritual orientation; visible ties religious organizations

9. Extended family provides authoritarian child-rearing practices/guidance

10. Respect for the elderly and their role in the family

11. More oriented to situation than time; time is flexible

12. Use of Ebonics and use of slang in some subgroups

13. Ability to navigate between two cultures, high assimilation in some subgroups

14. Motion, body language, and touch are all valued

15. Education as a means to a better life

16. Value of African American colleges and universities

17. Direct eye contact when speaking, less eye contact when listening

18. Independent, competitive, and achievement oriented (pride in overcoming obstacles and barriers to success)

19. Importance of music (for communication, self expression, spirituality)

20. Communicating with passion, expression, spontaneity, and animation

Note: Cultural norms are intended as general guides--not absolutes for all members of an ethnic group. Sources include: (Davis, G. & Rimm, S., 1997) (Dresser, N., 1996) (Education Alliance at Brown University, 2002) (Lynch, E. & Hanson M., 1997) (McPhatter, A., 1997) (Murphy, E. & Nesby, T., 2002) (Nash, K., 1999) (Pearson, M., 1995) (Robinson, L., 1998) (Sparks, S., 2000) (Srebalus, D. & Brown, D, 2001) (Ting-Toomey, S., 1999) (Vasquez, J., 1990). Unit 2, Lesson 1, Attachment 1

ASIAN AMERICAN CULTURE

1. "We" over "I"--support for the group has higher value than the individual

2. Use of self-control, self-denial, and self-discipline

3. Cooperation, non-confrontation, and reconciliation are valued

4. Formality and rules of conduct

5. Direct physical contact (particularly between men and women) should be avoided; public displays of affection are not acceptable

6. Dedication to the extended family, one's company or work, and community

7. Honor/status given to position, gender, age, education, financial status

8. Achievement and goal oriented, diligent, and persistent

9. Spiritualistic, humanistic, and often believe in fate

10. Contemplative, circular thinking (never making decisions in haste)

11. Tradition and conformity to the group are valued

12. Family solidarity, responsibility, and harmony

13. Traditional hierarchical family roles, children are extension of parents

14. Parent provides authority, expects unquestioning obedience

15. Mutual interdependence within the family unit and community

16. Hierarchy, role rigidity, status defined by ascription (i.e. birthright inheritance, family name, age, sex)

17. Emotionally controlled, modest, and stoic

18. Indirect and nonverbal communication used, often implied meanings

19. May avoid eye contact as a mark of respect to authority figures

21. High value placed on education, reverence/status given to teachers

HISPANIC/LATINO CULTURE

1. Personal and interpersonal relationships highly valued and come first

2. Strong extended family system more pronounced than other ethnic groups

3. Commitment to the Spanish language

4. Direct physical contact expected, affectionate hugging and kissing on the cheek are acceptable for both the same sex and opposite sex

5. Relaxed with time

6. Strong religious beliefs (primarily Catholicism)

7. Value cooperation--not competition

8. Courtesy, sensitivity, and formality in relationships

9. Collective orientation, group identity

10. Interdependence of the group, and loyalty to the family

11. Saving face, use of indirect communication

12. Tendency toward more traditionally defined family structure (father as head of house) and more defined sex roles

13. May use both the father and mother's surname

14. More overt respect for the elderly

15. Subgroups of highly educated and very affluent

16. Subgroups of extremely poor (for example, migrant farmers)

17. Past orientation, listens to experience

18. Independence/development of early skills not pushed in young children

19. High-context (nonverbal communication, gestures, and expressions)

20. Females may have restricted freedom (chaperones, group dating, etc.)

Note: Cultural norms are intended as general guides--not absolutes for all members of an ethnic group. Sources include: (Davis, G. & Rimm, S., 1997) (Dresser, N., 1996) (Education Alliance at Brown University, 2002) (Lynch, E. & Hanson M., 1997) (McPhatter, A., 1997) (Murphy, E. & Nesby, T., 2002) (Nash, K., 1999) (Pearson, M., 1995) (Robinson, L., 1998) (Sparks, S., 2000) (Srebalus, D. & Brown, D, 2001) (Ting-Toomey, S., 1999) (Vasquez, J., 1990). Unit 2, Lesson 1, Attachment 3

NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURE

1. Individuality--approximately 550 tribes in the United States

2. Value cooperation--not competition

3. Avoidance of conflict, non-interference

4. Horizontal decision making, group consensus

5. Respect for nature and human's place within

6. Group life is primary, collective orientation

7. Respects elders, experts, and those with spiritual powers

8. Introverted, avoids ridicule or criticism of others if possible

9. Accepts "what is," holistic approach to life

10. Emphasizes responsibility for the family and tribal community

11. Seeks harmony and values privacy

12. Observes how others "behave," emphasis on how others "behave" and not on what they say

13. Incorporates supportive non-family or other helpers into family network

14. Native languages still used and taught in many tribal communities

15. Use nonverbal communication (gestures, expressions, body language)

16. Interconnectedness of all things, living and nonliving

17. Emphasis on preserving a natural balance, both in nature and life

18. Self-sufficient at an earlier age than other ethnic groups

19. Living in the here and now, time is flexible, actions are controlled and influenced by cultural traditions rather than linear time systems

20. Oral history, songs and dances, ceremonial activities, and reservation communities are all important aspects of Native American life

AFRICAN AMERICAN LEARNING STYLES

- Movement and kinesthetic abilities highly developed

- Value imagination and humor

- Ability to express feelings and emotions, both verbally and nonverbally; strong oral language tradition

- Richness of imagery in informal language

- Experience with independent action and self-sufficiency

- Physical action orientation (learn by doing)

- Learn quickly through hands-on experience, manipulative materials, and multiple stimuli

- People oriented (focus on people rather than objects)

- Resourcefulness, unique problem solving abilities

- Tend to view things in their entirety--not in separate pieces

- Preference for the oral mode of presentation in learning

- Use of inferences, may approximate time/space/number

- Alert, curious, good retention and use of ideas

- Ability to navigate between two cultures, some subgroups have high assimilation to mainstream learning styles

Note: Cultural learning styles are intended as general guides--not absolutes for all members of an ethnic group. Sources: (Davis, G. & Rimm, S., 1997) (Dresser, N., 1996) (Education Alliance at Brown University, 2002) (Lynch, E. & Hanson M., 1997) (McPhatter, A., 1997) (Murphy, E. & Nesby, T., 2002) (Nash, K., 1999) (Robinson, L., 1998) (Sparks, S., 2000) (Srebalus, D., & Brown, D., 2001) (Ting-Toomey, S., 1999) (Vasquez, J., 1990).
Unit 2, Lesson 1, Attachment 5

ASIAN AMERICAN LEARNING STYLES

➡️ High achievement motivation

➡️ Use of intuition in learning and problem solving preferred

➡️ High degree of self-discipline, self-motivation, self-control

➡️ High level of concentration and persistence on academics

➡️ Possible language barriers in some subgroups

➡️ Disagreeing with, arguing with, or challenging the teacher is not an option; this has to do with respect

➡️ Attitude toward discipline as guidance

➡️ Modest, minimal body contact preferred

➡️ Respects others, ability to listen and follow directions

➡️ Excellent problem-solving ability (female Asians have higher math scores than any other female ethnic group)

➡️ Indirect and nonverbal communication used, attitudes unfavorable to participate in discussion groups

➡️ Keen awareness of environment

➡️ Strong valuing of conformity may inhibit creative thinking

Note: Cultural learning styles are intended as general guides--not absolutes for all members of an ethnic group. Sources: (Davis, G. & Rimm, S., 1997) (Dresser, N., 1996) (Education Alliance at Brown University, 2002) (Lynch, E. & Hanson M., 1997) (McPhatter, A., 1997) (Murphy, E. & Nesby, T., 2002) (Nash, K., 1999) (Robinson, L., 1998) (Sparks, S., 2000) (Srebalus, D., & Brown, D., 2001) (Ting-Toomey, S., 1999) (Vasquez, J., 1990).

Unit 2, Lesson 1, Attachment 6

HISPANIC/LATINO LEARNING STYLES

➡ Large supportive extended family; the learning process benefits by involving the extended family often

➡ Value cooperative group learning--not competitive learning

➡ Most communicate fluently in native language (Spanish) within the family and ethnic community

➡ If not bilingual, possible language barriers may arise without the assistance of a translator

➡ Less independent and more modest

➡ Children have unusual maturity/responsibility for their age

➡ Youth initiate and maintain meaningful interaction and communication with adults (adults may also take the lead)

➡ More affectionate and physically closer to others in class, conversation, asking questions, and all learning activities

➡ Use intuitive reasoning (making inferences) naturally

➡ Experience with giving advice and judgments in disputes

➡ Eagerness to try out new ideas and work collaboratively

➡ Value history, oral tradition, and visual/kinesthetic learning

Note: Cultural learning styles are intended as general guides--not absolutes for all members of an ethnic group. Sources: (Davis, G. & Rimm, S., 1997) (Dresser, N., 1996) (Education Alliance at Brown University, 2002) (Lynch, E. & Hanson M., 1997) (McPhatter, A., 1997) (Murphy, E. & Nesby, T., 2002) (Nash, K., 1999) (Robinson, L., 1998) (Sparks, S., 2000) (Srebalus, D., & Brown, D., 2001) (Ting-Toomey, S., 1999) (Vasquez, J., 1990).
Unit 2, Lesson 1, Attachment 7

NATIVE AMERICAN LEARNING STYLES

➡ Oral traditions give value to creating stories, poems, and recalling legends; good at storytelling

➡ Value cooperation--not competition; work well and communicate effectively in groups

➡ Learn holistically; beginning with an overview or "big picture," and moving to the particulars

➡ Trial-and-error learning by private (not public) experiences

➡ Developed visual/spatial abilities, highly visual learners

➡ Value life experiences in traditional learning

➡ Value design and create symbols to communicate, often exhibit visual art talent

➡ Often exhibit performing arts talent

➡ Intuitive ability valued and well developed

➡ Seeks harmony in nature and life, are good mediators

➡ Excellent memory, long attention span, deductive thinkers

➡ High use of nonverbal communication

➡ Accept responsibility and discipline of leadership

Unit 2, Lesson 1, Attachment 8