

Culture in Evaluation #5: Hispanic/Latino Communities Tobacco Control Evaluation with Hispanic/Latino Communities



The Hispanic/Latino (Hispanic) Population in California

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, people who are of Hispanic origin may be of any race; the federal government treats Hispanic origin and race as separate and distinct concepts. Hispanics or Latinos are those people who classified themselves in one of the specific Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino categories listed on the Census 2000 questionnaire. Hispanics comprise 36 percent of the entire California population (US Census Bureau).

Tobacco Use among California's Hispanic/Latino Population

- In 2005, smoking prevalence among Hispanic persons in California was 11.9% (compare to U.S. prevalence of 16.2% that year). Smoking rates vary among subgroups of the Hispanic population.
- Among the major Hispanic subgroups, the highest smoking rates are among Cuban men and women (29.8% and 30.0%), followed by Puerto Rican men and women (26.1% and 14.1%) and Mexican men and women (22% and 8.9%).
- In 2005, 22 percent of Hispanic high school students smoked, a 19% increase over the 2003 smoking rate of 18.4 % (2005 National Health Interview Survey).
- Occasional smokers are more common in Hispanic populations (Hispanic/Latino Adult Tobacco Survey). Hispanic smokers in all age groups are more likely than non-Hispanic blacks or whites to quit or cutback their smoking in response to cigarette price increases.
- Hispanics have low rates of health insurance coverage and limited access to medical care

so it is less likely that Hispanic smokers will be advised by a health care provider to quit smoking or have access to cessation treatments (Fact Sheet, Tobacco Use and Hispanics).

Vulnerability to the Influence of Big Tobacco

- The tobacco industry has profited from its understanding of Hispanic and other immigrant cultures, and has identified assimilation (Americanization) as a force that can promote smoking among the Hispanic population. For example, tobacco company documents from the 1990s show that RJ Reynolds increased its efforts to “better understand the assimilated/non-assimilated phenomenon within the Hispanic community” in order to “improve Camel’s performance among the non-assimilated Hispanic smoker” in the Los Angeles market (Acevedo, 2004).
- The tobacco industry frequently provides large cash contributions to organizations representing Hispanics. It can be difficult for a community group struggling financially to turn down funds. Some local tobacco control programs in California are encouraging community organizations or events to adopt a (voluntary) policy against accepting sponsorship money from tobacco companies.
 - In some cases, a tobacco control program is able to offer small grants to community organizations to fund a portion of its activity expenses; the grant may be used as an incentive for the organization to adopt a policy against accepting tobacco money.

Culture in Evaluation #5: Hispanic/Latino Communities

Tobacco Control Evaluation with Hispanic/Latino Communities

Cultural Values Held by Hispanics: Implications for Evaluation

Closely held values are important to consider when determining the best methods for evaluating tobacco control interventions with Hispanic populations. Major ethnic subgroups within the larger Hispanic population (for example, Hispanics of Cuban, Puerto Rican, Mexican, and Spanish origin) all have their own unique and nuanced interpretation of the values shared by members of the Hispanic community.

Cohesiveness and loyalty characterize relationships among close and extended family members, regardless of the number of years lived in the U.S.

Hispanic culture emphasizes the need for behaviors that promote smooth and pleasant social relationships. Giving socially desirable responses to an interviewer's questions, out of a desire to please, may jeopardize the quality of evaluation data.

Assertive behaviors (i.e., pushy recruiting) are typically perceived negatively by Hispanics.

Planning your Evaluation

Planning: Getting Acquainted with the Community

- Start with demographic information specific to the community. In addition to the ethnic subcultures mentioned above, migrant workers, recent immigrants, rural and urban inhabitants, and youth make up other subgroups of the Hispanic population. Remember that there is a great deal of overlap among members of the various Hispanic subgroups.
- Get a current map of the area to note the location of important gathering places and of Hispanic subgroups within the population. Map out all locations that could be access points to your population. Contact the United Way and the CA/Nevada Community Action Partnership to find out which organizations operating in the community serve your target population. Note Hispanic community organizations by location and by the Hispanic population sub-group served.

- Find out who the players and the subgroups are within a community before you design your evaluation activities. One way to do this is to conduct key informant interviews with directors of organizations serving the Hispanic population in your area of interest. Find out who the leaders are in the community and invite them to participate in all levels of the planning process; keep in mind that the real leaders are often not those in positions of power but are often the info sources, role models, and problem-solvers in the community. These people can act as your cultural guides to the community – advising on the cultural appropriateness of your evaluation approach and data collection, and translating cultural cues. Ask people who give you a contact if you can mention them as the source of the information.

Connecting with the Hispanic Community for Evaluation Purposes

Connecting: Practical Considerations

- Learn the routines of the community – when clinics, schools and churches open and close, when people get off work, when and how holidays are celebrated. This will enable your project to use its time most effectively.
- Recruit evaluation study participants by going to places often frequented by members of the Hispanic community:
 - schools (k-12, adult)
 - Hispanic business or service organizations
 - farm/labor organizations
 - Union meetings (hotel workers, restaurant workers, casino workers, etc.)
 - legal aid programs
 - ESL classes
 - neighborhood parks, malls, grocery stores
 - day labor meeting points
- Plan evaluation activities that coincide with school-related events when working with Hispanic youth. Many youth have family or job

Culture in Evaluation #5: Hispanic/Latino Communities

Tobacco Control Evaluation with Hispanic/Latino Communities

responsibilities that make it difficult to participate at other times.

- Learn what is most appropriate for you to wear and how you should approach someone in the community who doesn't know you. Every subgroup within the Hispanic population will have its own cultural norms that you need to be attuned to if you want to encourage participation in evaluation activities. In general, dressing well but not extravagantly is the best practice.
- Be aware of the intimidation factor. Minimize any fears the community may have about you as an outsider by building a relationship with them as a trustworthy, caring person. Some members of the Hispanic community may fear that data gatherers are attempting to obtain information about them in order to check their immigration status. Others may be wary of being contacted by phone or in person because of concerns about unscrupulous marketing practices they have heard of.
- Wear a badge that identifies your affiliation with a legitimate project that has nothing to do with marketing or immigration.
- Recognize that the tendency to want to avoid unpleasant social interactions may affect subject recruitment and retention; people might say "yes" (to avoid saying "no") but then not show up for a scheduled interview.

Connecting: Encouraging Participation in Evaluation Activities

- Work with a community leader or organization to obtain support for your evaluation project. Cooperation and participation increase when an individual or agency that in the past has shown concern for the welfare of community members is involved.
- If possible, ask someone known and respected by members of the community to accompany you when recruiting people for your sample.
- Frame the tobacco control issues and the importance of participation in evaluation activities in

terms of protecting children and the family. Even though many Hispanic individuals smoke, they aren't likely to want their children to smoke.

- Offer incentives (small gifts like \$5 gift cards, a T-shirt, pens, or notepads) for children or relatives to encourage participation in evaluation activities.
- Offer help with access to needed resources or services if it will be possible to follow through.
- Don't underestimate the value of offering a meal or snack and a chance to socialize as incentives for taking part in a focus group or other data collection activity.
- Make it a point to always carry through with any promises you make, recognizing that certain Hispanic individuals or subgroups may already be skeptical of services, providers, and outsiders.
- Inform sources why you're collecting data, how it will be used, the level of confidentiality, and how it might benefit the community. If possible, offer to share results of the evaluation with a community group.

Connecting: Communicating Effectively

- Know beforehand, by talking with key informants, what factors you need to consider before approaching a community (i.e., what might be offensive or intimidating to that population). Communication can be hampered by unintended insensitivity to different (and perhaps hidden) cultural norms.
- Avoid the perception of an outsider coming into community to tell people what to do. Some members of the Hispanic population may have been hurt, humiliated, or mistreated by the system that is supposed to help them.
- Hire bi-cultural, bilingual evaluation staff whenever possible.
- Establish rapport and build trust through cultural humility when conducting evaluations with Hispanics or any other ethnic group. Cultural humility requires good listening skills,

Culture in Evaluation #5: Hispanic/Latino Communities Tobacco Control Evaluation with Hispanic/Latino Communities

an open mind, and a non-threatening demeanor. Convey your respect to people with your speech and actions. As you would with any other unique ethnic group, be aware of participants' needs and the desire to feel valued.

- Avoid correcting English language mistakes, and try not to be judgmental in any way. Don't make the mistake of equating non-English speakers with a lack of intelligence. Don't assume that a person of Hispanic origin does not speak English.
- Start out every conversation with small talk. Friendly interaction and conversation is very important when recruiting Hispanic evaluation participants or collecting data. Trying to cut the conversation short to get to the point is likely to be considered rude and uncaring.
- Gracefully accept expressions of hospitality (coffee, etc.) when gathering data in a participant's home.
- Engage people without alienating them. Avoid making smokers feel defensive about smoking, and don't preach about the health consequences of smoking.

Developing Data Collection Instruments

- Use an evaluation instrument that reflects cultural assumptions of the Hispanic community. In some cases it is better to develop a brand new instrument than try to adapt an existing one.
- Develop or locate Spanish language evaluation materials for both participant recruitment and data collection, and then pilot test (pretest) with your target population.
 - Ask about the comprehension and appropriateness of instructions, images, and format, as well as of each item and its response choices. Simply translating English language evaluation materials into Spanish does not ensure that materials will be culturally appropriate because many concepts and terms have culture-specific meanings.

- Consider asking the same question in more than one way and providing necessary context for difficult phrases in order to help clarify the intended meaning of a survey or interview item.
- Use effective translation techniques. The following two techniques are often used:
 - Have one bilingual person translate the original version into Spanish and then have another bilingual person translate the Spanish version back into English (or other source language). This increases the chance that the original meaning has been retained and helps to find mistakes.
 - Form a committee of bilingual individuals that can translate the evaluation instrument jointly and discuss ways to clarify the wording (Harpaz, 2005).
- Make sure the wording, images and directions are appropriate and clear, and that all language or images have only one meaning to all subgroups. This will maximize the likelihood of capturing meaningful and consistent responses. The following example from the Hispanic/Latino Adult Tobacco Survey (H/L ATS) illustrates the importance of pilot testing your evaluation tool:
 - One item asks the respondent if he/she has "ever smoked a cigarette, even one or two puffs." The Spanish translation of the English word "puffs" was a dilemma because respondents of different national origins refer to puffs with different Spanish words. Terms tested in interviews ("pitadas" and "jaladas") were not universally understood; therefore, the term was changed to "probadas" (literally, "tries") for the Spanish versions of the H/L ATS.
- Always take the language, education, and literacy levels of respondents into consideration when designing the format of the data collection tool. When working with certain Hispanic subgroups, such as poorly educated rural residents or recent immigrants, it may be necessary to use images rather than text (or a combination

Culture in Evaluation #5: Hispanic/Latino Communities

Tobacco Control Evaluation with Hispanic/Latino Communities

of the two) when developing data collection tools.

- Look closely at the subgroups that exist in your sample. Decide if there would be added value to be able to separate out data by subgroups (like age, gender, or country of origin). If so, include demographic questions to identify subgroups.
 - One way to be able to analyze your evaluation data by country of origin is to include an item like this on the evaluation tool: “The families of the majority of people in the United States come from other countries. Where does your family come from?” Note that the language in this item is likely to be seen as non-threatening.

Collecting Evaluation Data

Collecting Data: Choosing a Method

- When determining which data collection methods will work best with Hispanic populations, consider the type of information you need as well as the comfort level of your participants in responding individually or in a group. Regardless of the method used, hiring data gatherers with both Spanish and English language skills cannot be overemphasized.
- Telephone surveys or interviews may produce more candid responses than face-to-face, but may increase the rate of discontinued participation; it is easier to hang up on an interviewer than to walk away. If your project is considering telephone interviews or surveys, first identify the percentage of Hispanic households with telephones. Pay attention to the language used in answering the call when contacting possible participants over the phone. If Spanish is used, the conversation should be initiated in Spanish.
- Focus groups may be particularly well-suited for use with Hispanic populations because they draw on oral traditions, norms of helping, and existing social networks. While face-to-face or telephone surveys or interviews are often an effective method of gathering data to assess

individual knowledge and practices, focus group interviews can be used to assess community attitudes and explain the reasons behind survey findings.

- Observation methods can serve a number of evaluation purposes. Collecting observation data is often useful in order to:
 - learn more about a particular Hispanic community;
 - document a problem in order to gain community leader support for a tobacco control policy; or
 - measure the outcome of an intervention.
- Consult with Hispanic coalition members, partner organizations, or individuals familiar with the local Hispanic community for advice on observing and recording data in a respectful way.

Collecting Data: Practical Suggestions

- Choose gathering places that are familiar and comfortable to those participating in your project’s evaluation activities. For some, more formal settings like schools are fine; others might prefer to meet in parks, churches, or even grocery store parking lots. By providing transportation and allowing children to accompany their parent/s, participation rates will often be higher.
- Select times that are convenient for your population. Take their work, childcare or family duties into consideration. For example, right after elementary school starts is often a good time for Hispanic moms.
- If appropriate, consider recruiting evaluation participants when people are gathered for a traditional Hispanic or Mexican celebration or holiday - for example, El Día de los Muertos/ Day of the Dead or All Souls’ Day, November 2nd; Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe/Our Lady of Guadalupe, December 12th; Cinco de Mayo, May 5th. Check with the event chairperson or venue manager ahead of time.

Culture in Evaluation #5: Hispanic/Latino Communities Tobacco Control Evaluation with Hispanic/Latino Communities

- Add an extra 10 minutes when scheduling key informant interviews to allow for making small talk before and/or after the interview.

Collecting Data: *Data Quality Considerations*

- Be willing to ask for clarification of responses if necessary. However, be careful not to pressure the respondent if he or she seems uncomfortable sharing more information. For example, an item on the Hispanic/Latino Adult Tobacco Survey is about the number of adults living in the respondent's household. This may be a sensitive question for respondents who live in multifamily households, which sometimes violate maximum-occupancy rules; pressing for clarification in the responses to questions like this is likely to seem threatening.
- Ask the person/group the same question in more than one way during a interview or focus group. In the H/L ATS item about the number of adults living in the household, a few interview respondents who were recent immigrants interpreted "su hogar" (in English, "your household") as referring to their household in their country of origin. Since the intent of this question is to ask about the respondent's current household in the United States, no matter how temporary

that may feel, it may be necessary to repeat the question with slightly different wording to provide clarification.

- When interpreting results, take into account the possibility that responses to an item may be biased because of cultural norms against expressing negative or strong opinions. Questions can often be worded in a way that encourages people to be frank. For example, "Some people smoke 20 or 30 cigarettes in a day and some smoke none at all. How many cigarettes do you smoke in a day, if any?"
- Consider inviting participants to tell you their stories about the topic (e.g. how a policy was eventually passed) instead of asking direct questions. Select the data you need from the story as it is told to you.

In conclusion, evaluating tobacco control interventions with Hispanic populations requires knowledge about, and respect for, the many nuances of Hispanic culture. Whether conducting evaluations with Hispanic/Latino populations or one of the many other cultural groups in California, care must be taken at each phase in the evaluation process – from planning to data collection and beyond – in order to end up with meaningful, culturally appropriate, and useful results.

Culture in Evaluation #5: Hispanic/Latino Communities Tobacco Control Evaluation with Hispanic/Latino Communities

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Toward a Tobacco-Free California. Master Plan of the Tobacco Education and Research Oversight Committee for California, March 2006. www.dhs.ca.gov/tobacco/documents/pubs/MasterPlan

US Census Bureau. <http://factfinder.census.gov>

Additional Resources

CA State Department of Finance, Demographic Research Unit <http://www.dof.ca.gov/Research/Research.php>

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Health Education Council <http://www.healthedcouncil.org>

Latino Coalition for a Healthy California <http://www.lchc.org/>

National Council of La Raza (NCLR)/ California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) Center for Latino Community Health, Evaluation and Leadership Training <http://www.csulb.edu/centers/latinohealth/home.html>

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