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Theme: **Sensitivity & Effectiveness: Working with Minorities**

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What are some of the specific cultural characteristics of the Latino/Hispanic and Asian-Pacific communities that make them different from other minority populations?

The Asian-Pacific population also places a significant amount of priority on extended family and religious institutions. Additionally, the term “Asian-American” encompasses a vast number of very diverse cultures and languages. Among this group there is no linking language, so this provides particular difficulties when working with Asian-Pacific populations.

The Latino/Hispanic population often embraces a broad definition of family that includes godparents, priests, and other non-blood relations that would not be included in the concept of family in most cultures. This notion of family plays a large role in the decision-making process of an individual. Thus, the interests of all within the family must be addressed when attempting to provide services and information.

When we talk about HIV, how do these communities perceive HIV and associated prevention efforts?

In Asian-Pacific communities HIV/AIDS is highly stigmatized, so a “sweep-it-under-the-rug” mentality prevails. It is quite a challenge to even raise the issue of HIV in the community.

The Latino community does not see HIV as a priority, especially when compared to issues of job-security and immigration concerns. It is often perceived as a disease that only affects the gay community and not an issue for the overall community.

In each population, what are some of the issues we should be especially aware of and sensitive about?

Again, the diversity within the classification of “Asian-American” and associated behaviors within these groups. Terminology and context can vary greatly between different groups, so it is important to choose language carefully. No one is really certain about the level of sensitivity surrounding words and meanings associated with HIV/AIDS. It is important to establish positive relationships within the community, before tackling the bigger issues. When you are successful in establishing those relationships, engaging in HIV discussions from a family or clan perspective is better suited for the Asian-Pacific community than discussions from an individual perspective.

In the Latino community building trust is of vital importance. Sharing personal experiences can help break down barriers and act as a bridge to having conversations that require a large degree of trust between the parties. Additionally, approaching conversations about HIV from a family or community perspective can be effective. Try to understand the whole family concept behind the individual as opposed to the personal opinion of the individual.

What are cultural barriers that can prevent an organization from working effectively in the community? How do you break these barriers?

The high level of stigma associated with HIV and the difficulty of establishing credibility in the Asian-Pacific community are two difficult issues to address. It is extremely important who delivers your message to the community. It is much more influential and effective if community leaders and community organizations with credibility deliver the message as opposed to a newcomer. This can be extremely difficult in communities that don't have easily identified leaders, but focusing on the hierarchal system of relations in the Asian-Pacific community can provide a good starting point. It is extremely important to be certain that any intervention is culturally competent. Involving members of the community in advisory groups is a great way to develop buy-in in addition to be certain that the messages and interventions you are working on are pertinent.

The level of stigma associated with HIV, the gay community, and the association between the two is an extremely difficult barrier to breach in the Latino community. The low literacy levels among the Latino community can present challenges as well. As a result, community interactions should focus on verbal communication and less on written communication in the form of flyers, pamphlets, etc. Collaborations with other organizations can provide a means of illustrating that HIV affects the entire community. Informal collaboration events often work well, bringing together different people and food in a comfortable setting.