



July 2011 Webinar Questions and Answers

OFA Healthy Marriage Program's Learning from Evaluations-to-Date

Moderator: Rich Batten

July 29, 2011

12:00 pm CT

Q: For all presenters: Did you collect data on education levels of participants and was that consistent with the findings that Alan saw in the meta-analysis?

A: Alicia La Hoz: Yes, we did collect information about the education levels and yes, that is consistent. But I would say that most of our population, if not all, is low income so it's difficult for us to have a comparison base.

A: Craig McGuire: We also collected educational level data as part of the baseline information.

Q: For Alicia and Eiko: Did you have Latinos who couldn't read and how did you handle that with surveys?

A: Alicia La Hoz: Yes, in those instances the facilitator would read the items. But we excluded that from the raw information. One of the things that we did at the very beginning is understand that it was a lot faster if the facilitators would read all of the items of the group exercise. It diminishes the time to 15-20 minutes versus an hour.

Q: For Family Bridges: Did you ask the same questions of participants at each data collection period? For example, a pre- post and follow-up survey?

A: Alicia La Hoz: Yes, and exit as well. And at exit interview there were additional questions and a little bit more economic indicators. But we repeated it continuously so we were able to compare that across time.

You know, another thing for evaluators to take into consideration is communication styles. Our audience is very non-verbal, at least when I'm looking at the Latino community and the minority populations. A lot of the measurement instruments used in the field tend to be more verbal in nature. The components that they measure - communication, conflict resolutions--they're very verbal. It's very difficult to look at the non-verbal aspect.

And so I would recommend in terms of future research designs to consider doing some observational research and coding to look at the nuances of the non-verbal pieces. We're doing a lot of focus groups now and one of the things that we're picking up is a lot of some of the non-verbal pieces that are otherwise not captured by traditional measurement tools.

We put so much of an emphasis in the marriage enrichment curricula on communication. And yet what we tend to teach is verbal communication. But when the culture itself is so non-verbal I think that it's important for us to capture that and design research designs that are not just pre- and post-surveys.

Dr. Alan Hawkins: Let me reinforce that. The research out there confirms that when you invest in those observational measures, you get stronger outcomes. We've seen that consistently in our meta-analytic studies. It is hard to do in the field. If you want to show the results, those observational measures are often the best way to go.