

*Healthy Marriages, Relationships and Families:
Interventions, Research and Policy Course*



Hispanic American Couples and Families



WEEK _

Promoting Child Welfare: Training Professionals to Support Healthy Marriages, Relationships and Families Project.

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Project Mission: To develop curricula and provide training for students and professionals that enhance their ability to facilitate healthy marriages, relationships and families in the child welfare population, with the end goal of promoting and improving the well-being of children.

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Course Objectives Covered:

- ✦ Learn and apply assessment tools, skills, and practices appropriate to the target population for couples, children and families as a whole in order to discern challenges and supports to family health, well-being and formation.
- ✦ Demonstrate the ability to apply knowledge of the best practices to assessing, choosing and adapting to target population marital and relationship enrichment, education and skill building programs.
- ✦ Demonstrate an understanding of the continuum from “traditional” to “acculturated” values, norms, beliefs and behaviors of major ethnic groups in the provision of child welfare services.



✂ It is important to understand the culture of a particular group of people that you are working with and to develop effective skills for working with them. It is equally important *not to use your knowledge to stereotype or oppress people* based on these collective characteristics and behaviors gleaned from research. This work is based on patterns. All patterns have exceptions. Treat people as individuals and with dignity and respect. (Know your professional code of ethics.) (Payne et. Al, 2005)

Administration of Children and Families Hispanic Healthy Marriage Initiative

- ✎ Addresses the unique cultural, linguistic, demographic and socio-economic needs of children and families in Hispanic American communities.
- ✎ Builds strong families and improves child-welfare by encouraging and supporting healthy marriages.



Population Information

- ✎ Largest minority population at 14.3%. Population is growing because:
 - Highest birth rate particularly among teens.
 - Youngest median age. Median age is 25 –30 yrs. old a time period where many have children.
 - Immigration. (Approximately 35% of the population)
- ✎ Hispanic American families are 200% more likely to live in poverty than White families.
- ✎ Hispanics Americans are educationally diverse.



(www.ecs.org, 2007)

64% of 18 to 24-year old Hispanic Americans completed secondary schooling in 2000 compared to 92% of Whites and 84% of African Americans. Many who have immigrated from South America come with professional degrees.

Understanding the Population

- ✦ The number of 2-parent families in U.S. would have declined significantly had it not been for the growth of the Hispanic population through immigration between 1990 and 2005.
 - Foreign-born Hispanics have the highest rates of marriage by far while US born have a similar rate to whites especially in the critical age group of 20-30 years old.
 - There is some evidence that the more quickly this population and their offspring adapt to the U.S. culture, the more likely they are to take on the prevailing trends in regard to marriage and single parenting.
 - Without continued immigration, the positive effect on the rate of 2-parent families will diminish.

(Suro, 2007)

Suro, 2007

- ✎ The family and marriage trends of the Hispanic population, newly arrived and native born, in the U. S. is going to have a tremendous impact on social policy in the U.S. given the growth of the population.
 - Future will be impacted by the current large, fast-growing & young (2/3rds under 18 yrs.) second generation who will resemble not their parents so much as non-Hispanics in terms of marriage and single parenthood.
 - This dynamic points to a potential conflict in government policy objectives; the promotion of marriage and the promotion of acculturation.

Example acculturation policy is the fostering of early adoption of English as the primary language which improves outcomes in education and economic well-being. But it might also promote the deterioration of attitudes that support traditional formulations of marriage and families as English is the vehicle for the acquisition of values and attitudes that are common in U.S. society.

“Moreover, the rapid pace of acculturation among Hispanic immigrants and their offspring has been found to produce a variety of stressors within Hispanic households. Native-born children tend to acquire English and American attitudes faster than their parents, leading to a kind of cultural generation gap which can both erode parental authority and inhibit the transmission of parents’ values on a variety of matters including family, marriage, and childbearing.”

Study: Strong Marriages in Latino Cultures

- ✎ Study of 25 married, Latino couples
- ✎ Source: Skogrand, L. & Shirer. (2006) Working with Low-Resource and Culturally Diverse Audiences. Paper presented at the 2006 Annual Family Life Electronic Seminar Series: Relationship and Marital Enrichment Education. Retrieved May 2, 2006 from <http://hec.osu.edu/eseminars/rme>

Three Major Themes on *What Makes Marriages Strong*

- ✦ Communication – Spending time together and talking often to understand each other, solve problems and make decisions.
- ✦ Religion – Provides guidance, spiritual strength for the tough times and enhances commitment.
- ✦ Children – They are the glue that keeps the family together. Having children is the reason for getting married and staying married. Marriage is not separate from family life.

(Skogrand & Shirer, 2006)

Considerations Unique to Hispanic Americans.

- ✦ Spanish-speaking minorities share a Hispanic cultural background but there are many differences among them depending on their country of origin.
 - Important to look beyond broad categorizations and learn about the specific culture and countries of origin in the particular population being served.
- ✦ Hispanic Americans are also known as Latino-American, Spanish-Speaking Americans and Spanish - Americans as well as by their country of origin such as Cuban-American, or Mexican-American.



(McLoyd, 2000)

Example:

Puerto Rican families were twice as likely to be headed by a female as Mexican American or Cuban American families.

Cuban American women had the lowest nonmarital birth rates and the highest age at first birth of a child.

(2000, McLoyd et al)

Considerations Unique to Hispanic Americans cont.

✿ Immigration status

- Legal or illegal
- Separated Families. Presence or Absence of Family Members.
- Stress related to separation and re-unification.

✿ Length of Time in the U.S./Generational Differences

- First Generation or Second or fully acculturated.

✿ Even if both partners in a couple are Hispanic American, how do their different backgrounds impact their relationship?

✿ Context in which they live

- Experiences of Hispanic Americans in medium to high density Hispanic communities differ from those in lower density or mixed communities.

(Hispanic Healthy Marriage Initiative, 2006)

Immigration status examples: Puerto Ricans are US citizens yet they experience many of the same tensions as immigrants from other Hispanic nations. Some choose to remain on “alien status” others seek citizenship. Some come in the country illegal but have children who are born here who have legal status, etc.

This is information generated out of the Hispanic Healthy Marriage Initiative: Literature Review on Hispanic Families, 2006, prepared by Administration for Children and Families. Handout copies.

Acculturation: occurs when the various cultural threads of ethnic and mainstream cultures become intermeshed.

Assimilation: a gradual process, occurring over time in which one set of cultural traits is relinquished and a new set is acquired through participation in the mainstream culture. **Dual socialization:** The informal and sometimes formal education of people from certain ethnic/racial groups about what is acceptable behavior



Cultural Values in Relation to Family Structure for Hispanic Americans

👉 FAMILISM or FAMILISMO

- Cultural emphasis on maintaining strong intimate, and supportive relationships with both nuclear and extended families. Often a protective factor.
- The Hispanic American has a very deep awareness of and pride in his/her membership in the family.
 - The importance of family membership and belonging cuts across class lines and socioeconomic conditions.
- An individual's self-confidence, worth, security and identity are determined by his/her relationship to other family members.

Familism and Marriage

- ✦ Parenthood is as important as “partnerhood.” Marriage and family are perceived to be the same.
- ✦ The primary goal of marriage is to have children and the family life that ensues.
 - Nuclear family does take priority over extended family.
 - Supporting extended family (materially and emotionally) can place strain on the nuclear family.

(Skogrand, Hatch & Singh, 2004)

• Cultural Values in Relation to Family Structure for Hispanic Americans


👉 PERSONALISM

- Along with familism, a Hispanic American defines his/her self-worth in terms of inner qualities that give self-respect and earn the respect of others.
- Each feels an inner dignity (*dignidad*) and expects others to show respect (*respeto*) for that dignity.
- A person who believes that every individual has personal dignity (*as opposed to larger American society that gives status based on occupation and wealth*) will be sensitive about showing respect to others and expecting respect for self.
 - When working with Hispanic families, developing trust and *personal* relationships will be critical.

Personal relationships – may mean sharing more about your family than you typically would. Managing a balance between personal revelations/friendship and professional relationships.

Gender Roles

- ✎ Traditional gender roles in the Hispanic culture greatly affect marriage and family dynamics.
- ✎ Machismo refers
 - to maleness or manliness
 - it is expected that a man be physically strong, unafraid, and the authority figure in the family,
 - Has an obligation to protect and provide for his family.
- ✎ Motherhood is an important goal for women.
 - Mothers are expected to sacrifice for her children and care for elderly relatives.



The common cultural Hispanic values of familism, personalism and gender role expectations significantly influence Hispanic family organization and structure.

Best Practice: It is important to use cultural generalizations to provide a foundation to your practice, it is equally important not to stereotype or oppress people based on these collective characteristics and behaviors gleaned from research. All patterns have exceptions.

(Payne, DeVol and Smith, 2005)

Show Tito/Latino Vignettes. Some themes include –

- The diversity among Hispanics.
- Family control – youngest forbidden to get married.
- Trust – who do you trust
- Tito fend for himself – doesn't want to get locked up
- Fast buck, needs money every day
- Understanding his context
- Got to support my family: money to girlfriend and mother
- Get acculturated to the system.

Variables Relevant to Marriage/Relationship Education

- ✎ Language
- ✎ Immigration Status, history and generation
- ✎ Degree of acculturation
- ✎ Degree of traditionalism and role expectations between partners.
- ✎ Discrimination
- ✎ Familism

Individual Variables Relevant to Marriage/Relationship Education

- ✂ Staggered migration, and resulting tensions between partners because of separation and reunification.
- ✂ Age at marriage.
- ✂ Income and economic stress.
- ✂ Education.
- ✂ Cohesion, attachment, independence.
- ✂ Religious beliefs and involvement.

Staggered migration: ex: husband may come first, then send for oldest son and finally bring Mom and younger children.

Skogrand & Shirer Study's Implications for Programs

- ✦ May need to reframe the program as being for the family and include information about couple relationships.
 - Typically do not want to attend marriage education programs without their children.
- ✦ Communication is an important content area, however, it needs to be culturally appropriate.
- ✦ Content on Spiritual connection should be included.
- ✦ Program partnership with religious organizations may be effective.

(Skogrand & Shirer, 2006)

Implication for Programs cont.

- ✎ Family outreach efforts should be directed towards women as caretakers of the family, but Hispanic men are an important part of the decision-making process for any activities involving the family.
- ✎ The presence and importance of extended family members must be considered in providing programs.

(Skogrand, Hatch & Singh, 2004)

The Future of Marriage and Hispanics

(Oropesa & Landale, 2004)

- ✎ Authors postulated that marriage behavior of the majority population might be affected by the diffusion of ethnic cultures. Acculturation is both ways.
 - Media – TV, music, internet, etc.
 - Education system using more multicultural materials.
 - Friendships
 - Global economy and niche marketing.

Oropesa and Landale Conclude

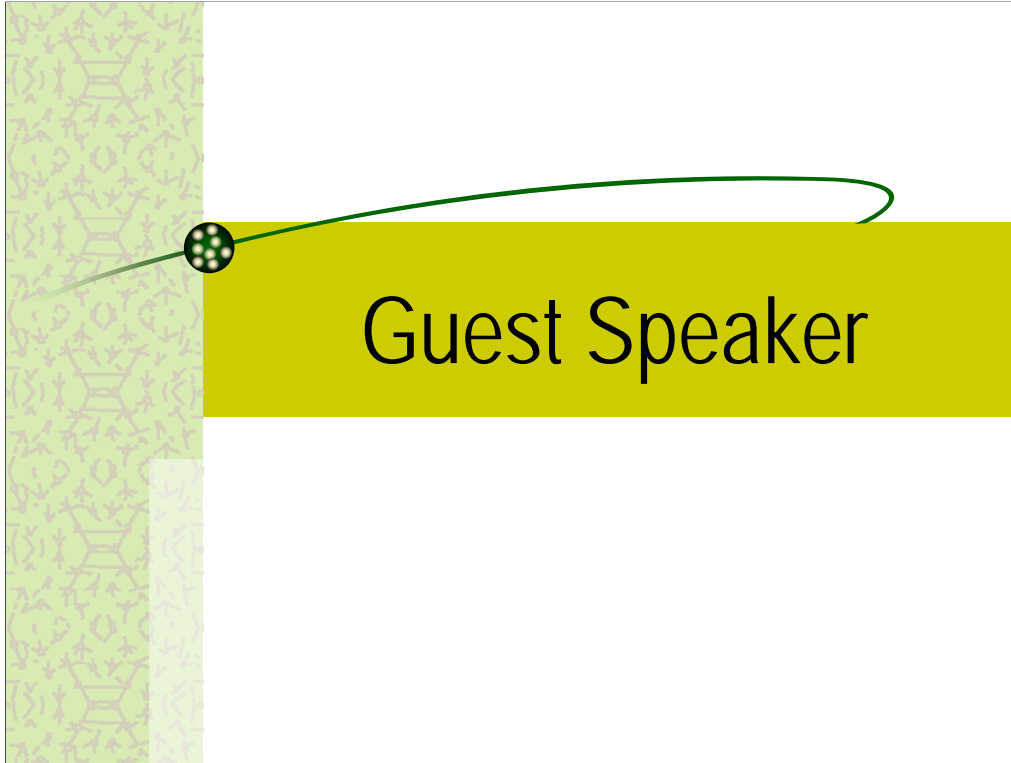
(Oropesa and Landale, 2004)

- ✦ First generation Hispanic Americans have a strong pro- marriage orientation and values that stem from their country of origin.
- ✦ The future of marriage among Hispanic Americans is most likely to be shaped by the social and economic trajectories of the 2nd and 3rd generations.
- ✦ If the education and skill levels are similar to their parents, the current generation will not be in a position to support marriages and families.
- ✦ Expansion of Hispanic American population is unlikely to slow the retreat from marriage in the U.S.



Research Gaps

- ✘ Overall neglect of Hispanic American children and families in research has occurred despite their growth in the U.S. population.
- ✘ Stresses and unique issues facing immigrant families and children.
- ✘ How the acculturation process has impacted families.
- ✘ Differences among the different sub-populations of Hispanic Americans.
- ✘ Rapidly changing demographics and growth of Hispanic Americans makes older studies less relevant.



It is highly recommended that a guest speaker of Hispanic descent be included in the presentation to ensure authenticity of the presentation. It would be helpful to find an individual/or couple who can speak from personal or professional experience regarding values, couple relationships and marriage as well as marriage customs.



Required Readings

- ✦ Oropesa, R.S., and Landale, N.S. (2004). The future of marriage and Hispanics. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66, 901-920.

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- ✦ Payne, R.K., Devol, P.E., & Smith, T.D. (2006). *Bridges out of poverty: Strategies for professionals and communities*. Highlands, TX: aha Process, Inc.
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- ✿ Suro, R., 2007. *The Hispanic family in flux*. Center on Children & Family Working Paper. The Brookings Institution.
- ✿ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Administration for Children and Family's Hispanic Healthy Marriage Initiative materials:
 - Cultural Adaptation and Relationship Dynamics, 2007.
 - Special Issues to be Considered in Marriage Education Curricula Adaptation, 2007.
 - Literature Review on Hispanic Families, 2006.