



National Stepfamily  
Resource Center

LATINO STEPFAMILIES



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# OBJECTIVES

Increase awareness and appreciation of Latino stepfamilies.

Help listeners be more successful in working with Latino stepfamilies.



# PREVALENCE

The Latino population is now the largest minority group in the U.S.

- Pew Hispanic Center, 2008

52% of marriages including Latino females will divorce before the 20<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

- Bramlett & Mosher, 2001

68% of Latino females will remarry within 10 years of their divorce.

- Bramlett & Mosher, 2001



# PREVALENCE CONT.

Over 50% of Latino American women between the ages of 15 and 44 will enter into a postmarital cohabitation within 5 years of their first divorce.

- Bramlett & Mosher, 2002



# RESEARCH RELATED ISSUES

Lack of trust, literacy, many instrument are not cultural sensitive or normed for Latino populations.

- Weaver, Umana-Taylor, Hans, & Malia, 2001

Heterogeneity within the diverse Latino ethnic groups, acculturation issues, and non-cultural factors that influence relationship stability.

- Halgunseth, 2004



# CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

Over 90% of Latinos self-identify as having a religious affiliation, with the majority self-identifying as Catholic.

- Espinosa, Elizaondo, & Miranda, 2003

Religious beliefs about the sanctity of marriage may influence feelings about divorce, remarriage, and stepfamilies.

- Coltrane, Gutierrez, & Parke, 2008; Skogrand, Barrios-Bell, & Higginbotham, 2009



# FAMILISM

**A strong loyalty, attachment, or identification with family.**

- Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo, & Gallardo-Cooper, 2002

**Familism also encompasses relationships with extended family members and steprelationships.**

- Coleman, Ganong, & Rothrauff, 2007



# FAMILISM “DILEMMA”

“A certain degree of stigma may arise...from the perception that they are not unified or cooperative, which violates the value of familism. Therefore, some Latino families may be reluctant to readily specify that they are a stepfamily or to discuss the origins of their current family structure.”

- Coltrane, Gutierrez, & Parke, 2008; p. 107





# FAMILISM CONT.

“[We are] a normal family ... when we are together, we do all that a family does...We eat together, go out together, and spend time together...Family is ...uhmm... ...a father, a mother, the children, a dog, and the birds... ...and we live together.”



# ACCULTURATION

The length of time in the United States influences acculturation.

- Negy & Woods, 1992

Acculturation also appears to affect the rate of marriage.

- Oropesa & Landale, 2004



# RELATIONSHIP CHARACTERISTICS



# BIOLOGICAL FATHERS AND THEIR NONRESIDENTIAL CHILDREN

Adolescent Mexican American children were more alienated from their birth father than adolescents in the Anglo comparison group.

64% lived entirely with their mother and had no overnight visits with their biological father.

Daughters may have even less contact from nonresidential parents than sons.

- King, Harris, & Heard, 2004



# STEPFATHERS AND THEIR RESIDENTIAL STEPCHILDREN

The relationships between Mexican American adolescents and their stepfathers tend to be positive.

86% of the adolescents felt they "really mattered" to their stepdad.

Most stepfathers rejected the idea that a stepfather does not have the full responsibility of being a parent.



# NSRC QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

Latino parents give little indication that they consider their stepfamily different than that of a nuclear biological family.

Latino adolescents are aware of the stepfamily structure and are mindful of their nonresidential parent.

Latino adolescents seem to adapt, without much resistance, to a stepparent assuming a primary parental role.



# PERCEIVED INTERGENERATIONAL OBLIGATIONS TO STEPPARENTS

Familistic thinking extends to older stepparents.

Marriage endows upon a stepparent kinship status.

Most just felt an obligation to help.

- Coleman, Ganong, & Rothrauff, 2007



# COMPARISON TO OTHER GROUPS

Do not differ much on mean levels of father involvement and parenting.

Consistent with other samples, when there is a strong romantic relationship and cooperative parenting practices, the stepfather-stepchild relationship is better.

- Coltrane, Gutierrez, & Parke, 2008





# HISPANIC HEALTHY MARRIAGE INITIATIVE

[www.acf.hhs.gov/healthymarriage/about/hispanic\\_hhmi.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/healthymarriage/about/hispanic_hhmi.htm)

Knowledge about the countries of origin of the populations served is recommended.

- Skogrand, Barrios-Bell, & Higginbotham, 2009

There may be differences in how family structure is viewed depending on country of origin.

- Oropesa, 1996



# IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Expand vocabulary.

Involve children.

Parenthood often becomes more important than partnership.

- Skogrand, Hatch, & Singh, 2008

Recruitment may be more effective as it focuses on the family rather than the marriage.



# IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Respect and understand how religious values and practices influence family practices and views about family structure.

Some Latino clients will be embarrassed while other will embrace their stepfamily structure.

Cartoons or scenarios that poke fun at the complexity of stepfamily life may be viewed as offensive.

- Skogrand, Barrios-Bell, & Higginbotham, 2009



# IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Encourage discussions about how extended family members can be part of strengthening the stepfamily.

Co-parenting might not always be feasible or in the best interest of the child.



Skogrand, L., Barrios-Bell, A., & Higginbotham, B. (2009). Stepfamily education for Latino couples and families: Implications for practice. *Journal of Couple and Relationship Therapy: Innovations in Clinical and Educational Interventions, 8*, 113-128.



# RESOURCES

National Stepfamily Resource Center:

[www.stepfamilies.info](http://www.stepfamilies.info)

Utah State University's stepfamily education site:

[www.stepfamily.usu.edu](http://www.stepfamily.usu.edu)



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