

Hispanic cultural views and traditional values



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Hispanics are the largest minority population in the United States.

Projections suggest that the estimated 46.9 million Hispanics who currently reside in the United States (U. S. Census Bureau 2009) will grow to over 62 million by 2020 and to more than 133 million by the year 2050 (Bean, 2001).

Research is crucial in learning how this population functions, assimilates and understanding the societal trends that have the strongest impact on Hispanics. Hispanics display an exceptional resilience to assimilating into mainstream American cultural patterns while maintaining their traditional cultural norms, beliefs and customs (Acevedo, 2009). Research that examines the underlying factors which facilitate Hispanic assimilation gives insight into understanding Hispanic culture. It can serve as the foundation for developing a guideline in studying cultural assimilation and aiding other cultures in achieving it. An individual's beliefs, motivation, and actions are defined and influenced by connections and investments with groups they consider themselves to be a part of. In the realm of behaviors and attitudes, groups are exceedingly significant (Acevedo, 2009). Therefore, studying Hispanics as a group supplies researchers a unique advantage in gaining relevant insight.

One of the most prominent values of Hispanic culture is familismo, the emphasis on family relationships, which includes gender roles, childbearing, familial hierarchy, etc (Raffaeilli & Ontai, 2004). It is a cultural value that highlights the priority of family connections, participation in larger family networks and harmony within relationships. In traditional Latino families, it is generally believed cultural values reflect traditional hierarchical gender roles. Women are supposed to be "virginal" until marriage. In essence this

means they are expected to remain virgins until they marry and be ignorant in sexual manners because the husband is responsible for educating his wife in this arena (Quadagno, Sly, Harrison, Eberstein & Soler, 1998). The woman's most important roles are as wife and mother – being the caretaker for the children, her husband, and home life in general. Traditional male roles are defined as machismo, in which males maintain dominant and aggressive attitudes and are responsible for working to support the family (Saez, Casado & Wade, 2009). Men are considered to be the head of the household and possess the most power in making decisions. The traditional definition of these gender roles also implies that women are the more subservient sex and men being not only more powerful but also domineering, macho, and potentially excessively controlling and abusive. The relationship between gender-role socialization and hypermasculinity suggests that the home environment is a powerful source of messages regarding male gender role norms (Saez, Casado & Wade, 2009) as well as female gender role norms. Scholarly research has criticized this depiction of traditional gender roles as stereotypical and invalid (Amaro, 1988). In the Latino world, machismo is defined as the expectation that a man will be honorable, responsible and loving towards his family (Parra-Cardona & Busby 2006). Hispanic partners are also very likely to be influenced by cultural values that emphasize personalismo, which refers to a high level of emotional resonance in interpersonal encounters (Parra-Cardona & Busby, 2006). Therefore, communication and connection between partners and within the family carry significant weight, promoting familial harmony, strength and growth.

Clinicians are responsible for understanding the familial gender roles as defined by different ethnicities in order to maintain cultural competence to work with those populations. Multicultural competence is generally characterized as involving three main areas: clinician's awareness of the culture they identify with, clinician's knowledge of the client's perception of society, and clinician's knowledge and implementation of culturally appropriate treatment strategies and interventions (Bean, 2001). Since the Hispanic population continues to grow, the demand for therapists who are trained to work with Hispanics will also rise. Therefore, research will supply information that can be applied toward developing and implementing treatment plans that will best serve Hispanics.

There exists an overwhelming amount of research concerning gender roles amongst the Hispanic population. However, research concerning roles as defined by the elderly Hispanic population is quite scarce, creating a significant gap in understanding the populace. The population of U. S. Hispanics older than 64 years is one of the fastest growing segments of elderly Americans (Beyene, Becker & Mayen, 2002). Respeto, or respect, is a traditional value in the Hispanic culture. All members of the family are expected to be respected and give it in return. Traditionally, Hispanic elderly were highly valued for their role and function as well as their ability to contribute their knowledge and experience to their family. They have served as repositories of history, tradition and values (Beyene, Becker & Mayen, 2002). They are addressed as " Don" or " Doña," titles of reverence and respect. Children are socially and morally obligated to support their elderly parents, which typically translates to parents moving in with their children's

family once their condition limits their independence and inhibits their ability to care for themselves. However, the Hispanic elderly that have emigrated from their native country live in a different society that possesses values that differ greatly from the society they were raised in. In the modern Hispanic culture it remains common practice to seek out the elderly for advice concerning childrearing and family relations, but young Hispanics who were raised in the United States are more likely to align their values with those based on the U. S. culture, which emphasizes youthfulness and personal independence (Beyene, Becker & Mayen, 2002).

Research shows a significant connection between emotional well being and family support for the elderly Hispanic population. Elderly Hispanics deem emotional support, understanding, compassion and love from their adult children as the most important form of assistance. Thus emphasis is given to social relationships and emotional connection. An exchange of attention and affection with grandchildren also has a significant influence on the sense of well-being for Hispanic elderly (Beyene, Becker & Mayen, 2002).

The elderly Hispanic population tends to have a strong connection to religion and religious tradition. This is believed to aid in helping with the stresses of old age. Religious beliefs help people make life bearable, and determine their relationship to the supernatural, to the environment, to time, to activity, and enhance their self-worth (Beyene, Becker & Mayen, 2002).

Religious beliefs are aligned closely with the conservative sphere, which indicates the possibility that elderly Hispanic whom are less assimilated into American culture and feel a more powerful connection to their culture are more likely to possess conservative views and ideals than young Hispanics or

Hispanics who are more assimilated into U. S. culture. Most Hispanics in the United States identify with Catholicism or evangelical Protestantism which are traditions that have a tendency to embrace conservative theological and social values, such as opposing abortion and contraception (Ellison, Echevarría & Smith, 2005). Ultimately, conservative views call for more traditional gender roles in the family, embracing old-fashioned practices which become scarcer as the United States continues to embrace and incorporate a more modern way of life

Methods

The literature suggests that within Hispanic cultures, there are strong traditional moral ties connecting younger and older generations, including traditions like adult children caring for elderly parents and women remaining celibate until marriage. However, these relationships may be different from generation to generation, particularly as some generations become more acculturated to American life. The question we will attempt to answer is exploratory in nature and serves to ask whether or not there is a relationship between age and traditional beliefs within the Hispanic population in the United States. In order to test this question, we will utilize data taken from the Pew Hispanic Center in 2002.

The Pew Hispanic Center conducted the National Survey of Latinos in 2002 among 2929 Latinos and 1284 non-Latinos. This was a broad survey that asked a number of socially relevant questions related to culture, experience and relationship to the United States. These were telephone surveys conducted in both English and Spanish among a randomly selected sample

of adults. The respondents were selected using a four-stage stratification system to identify areas more densely populated with Hispanic people and computer assisted calls were made to random phone numbers within these areas. The data received was proportioned to match expected area population values based on country of origin.

We will use the data collected from only the Hispanic population in the sample, as this is the target population relevant to our research question. In order to test our question, we will look at two variables: age and level of agreement with the statement, "It is better for children to live in their parents' home until they get married" (Pew Hispanic Center, 2002). This question is valid for our study due to its relationship to traditional Hispanic family values regarding child and parent roles. The answers were coded in the survey using possible responses of four levels of agreement, from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" and additionally allowed respondents to state "don't know." For our purposes, we will recode the data received from this question to include just the four levels of response and encode the "don't know" responses as missing data, because these responses give us little insight within our exploratory analysis. We will begin our analysis by conducting descriptive frequencies analysis of our two variables, utilizing the dataset's included recoded age data, which grouped age responses into five age groups, and the responses to the survey question. We will then run a crosstabulation of the two variables and conduct a Pearson chi-square test using SPSS software.

The chi-square test will allow us to see if there is a significant relationship between the two variables. It will measure the significance of the difference

<https://assignbuster.com/hispanic-cultural-views-and-traditional-values/>

between the expected and observed frequencies when comparing categories of the two responses within a crosstabulation. The crosstabulation will allow us to identify specific frequencies of each response divided by age group. The null hypothesis is that there is no significant relationship between the two variables and that the frequencies of responses will be distributed equally. We will use a two-tailed test in order to be fully able to observe if a relationship exists, either positively or negatively. Based on the literature, our hypothesis is that there is a positive relationship between age and the belief among Hispanics in the U. S. that children should remain at home until marriage.

The usefulness of this exploratory analysis is that a relationship between these variables may be indicators of greater trends or differences in beliefs among generations and may serve as a basis for additional exploration. The limitation of this study occurs due to its exploratory nature in that we are looking at only one variable as an indicator for the relationship of tradition and age. Although limited in terms of general relationship, discovering a relationship with these variables specifically may help clinicians to better picture and predict generational belief differences within families regarding child and parent roles.

Results

By running descriptive frequencies on the recoded age variable, we were able to visualize an unequal distribution among our five age groups. The data (see Table 1) shows that of the 2929 respondents, the largest group were 18-29 years old, representing 32. 0% of the total sample. The next two

age groups, 30-39 and 40-54, reported in similar numbers, with 748 (26. 0%) and 721 (25. 1%) respectively. The largest drop then occurred, with only 8. 5% reporting each for the next two groups, 55-64 and 65 or older.

Descriptive frequencies run on our question variable (see Table 2 and Chart 1) shows heavily skewed responses, with 1779 (61. 5%) of the 2929 respondents answering that they “ agree strongly” that children should live in their parents’ home until they get married. 512 (17. 7%) responded “ agree somewhat.” Disagreement comprised of only 20. 4% of the respondents, with 11. 9% disagreeing “ somewhat” and 8. 9% disagreeing “ strongly.” Of the total sample, 38 responses equally 1. 3% of the total were counted as missing data.

Running a crosstabulation on these two variables found 85 (2. 9%) missing cases (see Table 3), which leaves 2844 (97. 1%) cases that are valid for comparison. Within the frequency table generated by the crosstabulation (see Table 4,) we can see the degree to which each age group agrees or disagrees with the survey question. Although 61. 4% of the total population strongly agrees with the question, the 65+ age group gave this response most frequently, with 78. 0% of that age group strongly agreeing and 14. 5% agreeing somewhat. The three middle age groups responded similarly in nearly equal numbers when proportioned for their age groups, representing 64. 8% to 65. 8% of each age group strongly agreeing and 16. 7% to 17. 8% of each age group agreeing somewhat. Although a lower proportion of the youngest age group responded with “ strongly agree,” it is important to note that 49. 4% of this age group still gave this response and 19. 8% agreed somewhat.

Disagreement with the question displayed fewer responses among the sample population, but skewed toward the younger age group, with 18.0% of that age group disagreeing somewhat and 12.8% disagreeing strongly. The numbers decrease with each age group, with 4.1% of the oldest age group disagreeing somewhat and 3.3% disagreeing strongly. From the crosstabulation results, there appears to be a relationship wherein older respondents respond more frequently in agreement with this question. Although younger respondents strongly agree in large numbers with the question, they also report disagreement more frequently.

The results of the Pearson chi-square test (see Table 5) indicate that the relationship between these two variables is significant, with a p-value below the .0005 level, based on a chi-square value of 117.985 with 12 degrees of freedom. The results of our analysis thus reject the null hypothesis that there is an equal distribution of frequencies and no relationship. The results show a higher frequency of general agreement with our study question among the oldest group of respondents and a higher rate of general disagreement among the youngest respondents. The middle three age groups responded slightly more conservatively than the oldest group, however, they still responded more frequently with agreement to the survey question. The results of our analysis show a somewhat positive relationship between age and level of agreement with the survey question, thus confirming our initial hypothesis.

Discussion and Conclusion

The data collected shows that there is a relationship between age and traditional beliefs of people of Hispanic origin in the United States. The findings, as explained in the results section, indicate that there is a positive correlation between age and the belief that children should remain home until marriage. The older the individual surveyed is, the more likely he/she is to strongly agree with this belief. This finding assists social workers in understanding the importance of familial relationships as well as the effects of assimilation across generations within the Hispanic culture. Understanding the impact of these two factors helps to inform therapeutic work with members of this population by assisting clinicians in becoming culturally competent. Cultural competence is an important quality that all social workers ought to possess when working with individuals from a culture different from one's own. "Cultural competence is then aspirational at best and requires the continuous development of practitioners' cultural sensitivity, awareness, knowledge, and skills" (Furman et al, 2009) learning is an ongoing process and it is imperative that social workers keep this in mind in order to be able to serve clients from different backgrounds. By engaging in cultural competent practices clinicians will be able to better understand and empathize with his/her clients. Through the clinician's personal awareness and cultural sensitivity, client and clinician can build a trusting relationship. Without cultural awareness, social workers contribute to oppression when working with clients from other cultures. This is unethical practice and can cause clients great harm (Sue et al., 1992). This understanding amongst the clinician and client will serve to build a therapeutic rapport between the two, which is the foundation for successful work with a client.

The effect of assimilation and acculturation across generations is another important factor that clinicians should be aware of. Though attitudes don't dramatically differ across age groups, it is important to recognize that traditional beliefs within the Hispanic population are slowly changing as many Hispanics assimilate into the American culture. " Generally, acculturation has been measured in terms of behavior, cultural identity, knowledge, language, and values. These aspects, then, are critical components in understanding and addressing factors that cause intercultural conflict and distress related to adapting to a new culture" (Furman et al, 2009). As social workers, it is important for us to realize the potential effects that this assimilation may have. For example, one noticeable difference between the American culture and the Hispanic culture is our value system. The American culture values independence and individualism while the Hispanic culture values interdependence and collectivism. Anderson & Sabatelli point out this fact; they explain that, " Workers need to recognize that a behavior or coping mechanism is not dysfunctional simply because it does not match dominant culture patterns" (1999). This is very important for practitioners to realize when working with cultures that are different from their own. By becoming aware of potential differences in interpretations and problems practitioners will be able to better understand and relate to his/her clients. Even problem identification itself is a part of this awareness process. What may be interpreted as a problem to the client may not be viewed as a problem to the clinician and the same is true the other way around. For example, in terms of the survey that was conducted, it was found that older Hispanic people strongly believed that children should remain home until married. If a client came to seek counseling because his/her son/daughter

<https://assignbuster.com/hispanic-cultural-views-and-traditional-values/>

moved out of the home to pursue a single lifestyle, a clinician without cultural competency may shrug this problem off. He/she may attempt to convince the individual that this is not a pressing problem because every day, people move out of their parent's homes in order to live on their own. This is an example of the practitioner not placing the client's values high in regard. This blatant disregard may make the client not want to participate in services.

Researcher Tina Hancock further describes the interdependence of the Hispanic culture as it relates to family, " the family generally is regarded as the survival net for its members, who internalize a strong sense of duty to one another and across generations. The foundation of this cultural orientation is the value of la familia and the principle of familismo" (2005). We must look at the effects that such a change in traditionally held beliefs may have on the family unit and culture as a whole. Using a systems perspective to analyze the interactions between an individual and his/her family, social workers can better understand conflict and potential interventions, by acknowledging that the individual, family, and cultural systems all interrelated.

Conclusion

The Hispanic population in United States is growing faster than all other minority populations combined, " The Hispanic, population is projected to swell from 28 million from 1990s to about 100 million in 2050"(pewhispanic.org). With this increase in diversity in the population it is necessary for social workers to be able to work with a variety of cultures in their work with the

American population. By using the information gathered on the issues of assimilation and familial relationships clinicians can develop better and more effective interventions in their work with this particular population.

Developing cultural competency is one way of achieving this task. In this study we were limited by the variety of responses that we were able to obtain, as the questions that were asked were very broad in nature. For future research it would be beneficial for researchers to delve deeper into the topic of assimilation upon cultural attitudes. Additionally, further study the effects of cultural competency as it relates to client-clinician relationships would also be effective in shaping social work practice. By becoming more aware of the different values and traditions, practitioner's work with varied populations will become more informed and effective.