

THE LATINO COMMUNITY: THE CULTURE, VALUES AND BEHAVIORS

- Understanding the Cross-Cultural Psychology and the Latino Community

Understanding cross-cultural psychology and the effects its premises can have on human development is often complex. The encouraging thing, however, there are many elements of culture that is similar to all cultures. For example, all cultures have a process of passing down from one generation to the next: traditions, values, and norms. It is important to recognize that in many cultures there are elements of behaviors that reflect several cultural values, and norms within that one culture. A good example is the American culture.

In American culture considered the cultural 'melting pot' of the world. There are sub-cultures such as that of African Americans, Irish, Asian, Latinos, and many others. So in developing creditable research on the American cultural, one must include the significant influences these cultural developments have on the overall majority cultural values. One of the things that have proved itself true cultural values in the United States has evolved over the last 25 years. Latinos also known as Hispanics have over the last 20 years grown to be second largest population in the United States. In fact the U. S. Census projections indicate that this population is about 15% of the United States population. This is about 45 million people one of the emerging cultures that have had a great influence on the evolution has been Latino culture. I chose this culture because there has been a lot of controversy over the migration of its members to American. In addition, the Latino people have not been given credit for the importance of their family traditions and heritage.

Through I am an African American, engrained with the White majorities norms and values, I identify with the Latino because I believe that a collectivize approach to family development is essential for generational continuity. I also believe that it is important to human development. The Latino culture with its strong religious beliefs, family values, and desire to overcome poverty through hard work is something I admire.

In the process of growth and migration, they have brought with them a collectivism of culture that can only be said to enrich the individualism of this country. Matsumoto (2001) points out that the framework of culture can be a catalysis that produces a collective human effort and create a dynamic integrative system which intersects religion, culture, and economic cohesiveness The Latino community demonstrates this integrative process that provides a significant impact on American cultural psychic. In understanding this one has to examine the psychological impact of integrative culture and effect on the culture of power. Kim (1995) explains that a cross-culture psychological approach to understanding human behavior is realizing that culture affects human behavior. The world can then be seen as culture bound.

- Latino Family Values

The Latino community's norms and values as well as its work ethics have proven to enhance the American experience and have made America a better place to live. The family is the cornerstone of any community. Latino community is a solid example that exemplifies that highest level of family cohesiveness. Clutter and Zubieta (2009) point out that the Latino family members are very close as a unit. In the traditional Latino family the father is the undisputed head of the family. The mother is responsible for the maintenance of the household.

The tradition of ensuring that the Spanish language among the young has continuity is a requirement by senior members of the family. Elderly members of the family insist that younger members are respectful, understand the importance of honor, and the meaning of good manners. Greeting each

other with kiss on the cheek and hugging is great part of demonstrating togetherness; not only among family members but those outside of the family. When traveling to other cities or states among their members it is traditional to stay with other relative in those cities or states. This is a process that takes place probably more so than any other culture in the American society.

Sexual orientation has become an issue and its impact on traditional family values has come to the forefront lately. Men having sex with men go against all past and even present Latino teaching. However, it has become more common than has been acknowledged in the past. The machismo image has begun to take a less significant posture. Some view this as a challenge the importance of the male head of the household. In spite of some of the new challenges facing the Latino community, the basic collectivism of culture seems to be the main ingredient that holds the society together. This is special process because the very significance of collectivism is the crust of family unity; each member having a willingness to sacrifice in some form for the betterment of other members or all.

▪ Similarities and Differences Between the Latino Culture and Larger American Culture

When looking at similarities and differences between the Latino culture. In the larger American Culture one needs to examine time orientation, communication, and they relate to physical and mental health as well as group relationships and perceptions and measurements of intelligence. When examining time orientation Latino though they have a respect for time, do not put the importance on it as the average American does. If a member of the family has issues that may interfere with the days plans family issues are going to come first. Latinos are flexible with their time schedules. They tend to make room for family, friends, and associates. Vivano (2013) explains that they are a culture that concerns itself with the present rather than the future. In addition, they are able to engage in various activities at the same time. They tend to have reputation for being on what Vivano terms “Latin time” generally out of concern for others. Vivano (2013) points out that Latinos tend to place inference on the solution of a situation rather than too analytical about the reasons.

Though there are similarities between the Latino culture and the American culture as it relates to communication such as handshaking, building trust before exposing ones hand. There are several differences such as Latinos are more hesitate to reveal issues of personal importance. They have a tendency not to be quick to discuss family problems as the larger American society. Vivano (2013) points out that they tend to be “less confrontation” and in addition they first “establish trust, support, warmth, and caring before dealing with difficult issues” (p. 10).

Non-verbal communication is very important. Latinos are much more likely to touch a person when they are speaking to them. They stand closer to people with whom they are talking than Whites. They are fast to introduce themselves and often provide a kiss on the cheek. Vivano (2013) explains that they see long term eye contact as a sign of disrespect. The non-verbal communication process is very important to this culture. It is not only significant to the heritage but to development interpersonal relationships.

As we examine how Latinos look at the importance of their physical or mental well- being, we see that there is very little concern about what many Americans would consider health issues. Luquis, Garcia, and Asford (2003) conducted a qualitative assessment to evaluate the views Latino students had on health. They point out that a majority of those responding to the assessment believe that not having a disease either mental or physical problems as good health. Luquis, Garcia, and Asford explained that when it came to substance abuse some 80 to 90% viewed this as par to course among peers. Bisco (2004) identified with drug use such as marijuana, alcohol, tobacco, ecstasy, and acid. The research revealed that experimenting sexual activity was seen as a natural part of college life. Cintron, Owens, and Cintron (2009), explain that “sexually transmitted diseases and physical problems associated with substance abuse” is a major problem among the Latino community (p.85). Though these same issues are challenges for the general American community, the issues same to be extremely prevalent in the Latino Community.

In terms of Latino adults, Afable-Munsuz and Brindis (2006) explain that research shows that though the “role of acculturation” found greater risky sexual behavior the mechanism of family remain close kit (p. (208). In general Latinos have been associated with having lifetime partners but there has been a greater risky sexual activity such as oral sex. They point that there appear to a greater increase, however in the use of contraception for both men and women. It may not seem like it but this is a sign that the tradition religious anti-contraceptive use is not as strong as it once was. This is encouraging for greater improvement of health.

Intelligence is something that is relative to each culture. What may be considered intelligent in one culture may be consider less intelligent in another. The American general culture is a culture that is considered to be comprised of very intelligent people. There are similarities as well as difference as it relates to intelligence among Latinos and the American general culture. Latino children face an uphill battle in being perceived as having the same abilities as the majority American culture. A great deal of the problem exists as a result of language barriers. Becerra (2012) point out that student of Latino decent in order to “maximize” their potential, capabilities and contribute to society that prevent them from progress must be eliminated (p.167). The perception of Latino children is that they are not capable of learning at the same pace as the general American society.

Becerra points out that Latino perception of the barriers in education are important because to believe that their inability to compete with White and African American students can prevent them for making the necessary efforts to overcome barriers.

Becerra (2012) points out that achievement academically is different among Latinos and it varies depending on where they enter the educational system. He explains that achievement in the area of academic is much lower for Latinos in general. He goes on to point out that acculturation produces negative results on behavior and the achievement of Latino students academically. He posits that academic achievement is measured differently among the Latino community and there are two processes that have a great impact on its level. One is language and the generational status. These are according to him the most well-known ways of measuring acculturation. Language is a stand in commonality taken as a proxy. The English acquisition provides the means to engrain the values and norms of majority culture. An, Cochran, Mays, and McCarthy (2008) point out that generation in society similar as language which brings about integration in the majority culture also promote the adoption of majority- cultural norms. Latino students are often not given the same leveled playing as a result the difficulty in assimilation.

▪ Mental Health Treatment

In examining the attitudes and behaviors of Latinos as relates to mental health and mental health treatment one sees that they are less likely to seek therapy. In Kouyoumdjian, Zamboaga, and Hansen (2003) point out that there is an underutilization of services pertaining to mental health among Latinos. One would think as the Latino culture becomes more assimilated into the majority American society there would utilization of mental health services. The new challenges now faced by the Latino community such as socioeconomic conditions, acculturative stress, and the new family strains as a result of coming out of the closet by some male members have caused greater mental health challenges. Kouyoumdjian, Zamboaga, and Hansen explain that the barriers in utilization of mental services by the Latino community have numerous cultural variables. They are “diverse and numerous” (p. 30). They posit that some of the reasons for the underutilization of service are things such as the general perception of mental illness. No group or individual wants a stigma of mental illness. In the Latino community it is more viewed as the individual not being able to conform to traditional family values or that there is a way that the problems can be worked out among the family members. Though there are similarities in the majority American community as it relates to trying and work out emotional issues within the family. The majority American population is more likely to receive

therapy and accept the concepts as defined by the American Psychological Association.

Kouyoumdjian, Zamboaga, and Hansen (2003) explain that clinicians have provided a variety of ways they believe can improve delivery of mental health services to Latinos. They believe accessibility is a major reason for the lack of utilization of services. They believe that greater distribution of information concerning services, and address general challenges such as time, cost, and location. They also posit that there must be a better education program to assist practitioners in understanding the Latino community. There should also be a greater effort to involve clergy, physicians, and other community leaders. They insist that mental health services to the Latino community must become more assessable and greater utilize.

- Cultural Influence on Human Development, Identity Development, and Personality Development

In the evaluation of the Latino culture on human development, it is apparent that the history of this Spanish speaking people is rich. They built the Pyramids in Latin America; they have maintained a heritage of family cohesiveness that is an example not only to Americans but to the world. The music of Latinos is well known and emulated around the world. The tradition and devotion to the Catholic Church is unparalleled. The Latinos' contribution to human development has been substantial and unique.

As it relates to identity development the Latino culture is a very proud culture that has a positive identity. They have been able to assimilate into the American society but yet maintain their heritage, language, and family values. The men are the head of the family but the mother and other females are held in reverence. As it relates to personality development low self-esteem is not one of their traits. The Latino people can be said to be a fun loving people with balanced personality development. The greater American society has contributed a great deal to human development particular in the 20th century. Americans contributed to defeating the German's twice as well as the Japanese in World War II. This in itself has made the world safe for democracy. There is no doubt that Americans, at least White Americans has issues with identity in general and though the whole concept of personality disorders is a Western element. Americans in general are not balanced as well in self-assurance.

- Morality Development, Gender, Aggression, and Psychological Process within the Latino Cultural

Morality in Latino culture is the cornerstone that holds that culture together. The insistence that the males marry young women they have sex and get pregnant, respecting the heads of the family, respecting the elderly are benchmarks of Latino culture. The Latino culture is rich with religious devotion and believes that God and his laws are the ultimate authority. The children in Latino families are taught young that they are to obey their parents and respecting their rules. Even though the Latino culture is engrained with alcohol as a part of their beverages they tend to not let that interfere with the family responsibilities. They tend in general to oppose birth control as well as abortion.

Women in the Latino culture are highly respected but they are still treated as second class citizens. The mother and grandmother are viewed as the homemaker even if they may work. They are never viewed as independent but must consult with their husbands when making any important decisions. Their daughters are taught that they must always respect their male mate. Their heritage is rich in tradition of machismo. It is important for the women, no matter how much education they receive, to be subservient to the male.

In general the Latinos are not aggressive people but they present an image that they are not to be messed with. In general, if one member of the family has a problem with someone the other males of the family will rally to their aid. Latino men in spite of the fact that have this machismo attitude are not violent towards their women. As mentioned above in general they are a fun loving people. They work hard, drink hard, and play hard.

The psychological processes of the Latino culture is one that maintains self-efficacy but not at the risk of betraying family members. Family is the center of psychological function and having the approval of the family for any adventure is extremely important. If a Latino goes against family desires there are feelings of guilt and anguish. I once read where a young Latino female was in therapy and the therapist suggested that the young women take a particular course of action. The young women replied "I must first ask my father". The therapist replied "you are over 18 you can make your own decisions". The young women never returned to therapy. The psychological impact of family is very significant and compliance is essential in maintaining meaningful psychological stability.

- Explain Biases that may have Influenced your Analysis

I have to admit that I am bias as it relates to studying the Latino culture. I am a great admirer of the family togetherness. I believe that the values and norms of this culture are attributes to human development and the type of societal organizational structure that brings a reliable community. The teaching of the young,, the respect for the elderly, the maintenance of the native language is all indicators of a strong community.

- Summary

In summary the Latino culture has a lot great characteristic some of these are values, and customs and traditions. Their desire for a better life for their children is admirable. Latinos has made great sacrifices to migrate to United States in order to provide their children with a better economic, educational and social life. These basically rural people have had an uphill battle trying to assimilate into a society that has not always been friendly to them. It is very important to understand the language barriers, the conflict tradition and the commitment to religious structure have been an admiral struggle.

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