

Doing Therapy with Latino Clients

(Issues, Dilemmas and Diversity)

Presented by

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Latino Demographics



Latino Demographics

- **Latino Population (U.S. Demographics)**
 - U.S. Census Bureau predicts that by 2050 Hispanic population will reach 81 million (1/4 total U.S. population).
 - Represents 20% of any group in the U.S. (will create social/political influence).



Latino Demographics

- **Demographic (Official Count)**
 - 22.8 million (9% of total population)
 - Represents 100% jump from 1980 (Continual increase of 50% between 1980 to 1990)
 - 1 of every 4 Americans will be Hispanic by 2050
 - Growth rate 3 to 5 times faster than the general population
 - Youngest median age of 18 years (compared to 28 years of general population)



Latino Demographics

- **Over the age of 65 years**
 - Latino population represents just less than half of the entire senior citizen population of U.S.



Latino Demographics

- **Hispanic**

- A term often interchanged with Latino or Latina.
- Diverse population that represents 21 Spanish speaking countries.



Latino Demographics

- **North America**
 - Mexico
 - Belize
 - Guatemala
 - El Salvador



Latino Demographics

- **South America**
 - Columbia
 - Venezuela
 - Ecuador
 - Peru
 - Chile



Latino Demographics

- **Caribbean Islands**
 - Puerto Rico
 - Cuba
 - Dominican Republic



Latino Demographics

- **European Countries**
 - Spain
 - Portugal



La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

IMPORTANT

***“All the countries
(with the exception of Portugal and Brazil)
share a common official language...Spanish”***



Latino Demographics

- **Most Prevalent Population**

- Mexico (67% or $2/3 = 13.5$ million)
- Puerto Rican (2.7 million)
- Cuba (1 million)
- Other Hispanic groups (5.1 million)



La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

IMPORTANT

“Its important for a therapist to be willing to familiarize themselves with a client's country or region of origin.”



Latino Demographics

- **Therapist (Needs to)**
 - Be aware of the areas where Hispanic dwell.
 - History of client (Hispanic) country of origin.
 - Helpful in understanding client/family that seeks help.



Latino Demographics

- **Mexican Americans**

- People who can trace their immediate ancestry to Mexico.
- Live primarily in (Highest Concentration)
 - Texas
 - New Mexico
 - Arizona
 - California (30% of population)



Latino Demographics

- **Socio-Economics (Mexican Americans)**
 - 6% are professionals (Exponentially increasing).
 - ½ of Hispanic (California) are middle-class.



Latino Demographics

- **Future Predictors (Mexican Americans)**
 - Strong political force
(Education is a critical factor in that prediction).



Latino Demographics

- **Puerto Ricans**

- Are Naturalized U.S. Citizens.
- Reflect a blend of indigenous (Originally Native Tainos influence) with a blend of African Slaves and European Spanish.
- Settlement (Northeast – New York/New Jersey).
- Represent more than ½ Latino population.



Latino Demographics

- **Puerto Ricans (Demographics)**
 - American citizens by birth.
 - Highest rates of poverty (38%).
 - Unemployment (11.2%).
 - Household headed primarily by single women (Highest among any Hispanic groups).



Latino Demographics

- **Cuban Americans**

- Largest Caribbean island.
- Historically a blend of Spanish and African cultures.
- Most immigrated during early phases of Castro's take-over.

(First wave, White European Backgrounds).

- Substantial losses of:
 - Extended family
 - Wealth/Properties



Latino Demographics

- **Cuban Americans (Cont'd)**

- Many already had professional training
- Quickly adapted to U.S. culture.
- Immigration came in waves (i.e., Tampa Settlement, 40's; 50's, "*Freedom Flight*"; "*Pedro Pan*", 60's; Mariel Boatlift, 80's, *Guantanamo Bay*, 90's)
- Have played a critical, political, economic and military role in the U.S.
- Reside primarily in Florida (60%) of overall population (Miami-Dade County).
- Firmly believe in Democracy and Free Enterprise.



Latino Demographics

- **South American Hispanics (Columbians)**
 - Median income comparable to Non-Hispanic (2/3 populations).
 - Have achieved economic success.
 - Mean family income - \$50,000. (Annually).
 - Educated professionals (like Cuban first-wave counterparts).
 - Concentrated (highest) Miami, Florida.



Latino Demographics

- **Central American Hispanics**
 - Blend of Indian and European cultures.
 - Many fled because of political issues/persecutions.



La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

IMPORTANT

***“Immigration to the U.S. has been constant
and Hispanics occupy all 50 States”***



Latino Demographics

- **Language (Spanish)**
 - The strongest force uniting Hispanic groups.



Latino Demographics

- **The Latino vs. Hispanic (Name)**
 - A general category
 - Californian incline to identify with “*Latino*” more than ‘*Hispanic*’ name.



La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

IMPORTANT

“What a group calls and identifies itself with is a fundamental human act that will represent the culture one is from.”



Latino Demographics

- **Who are You? (When asked)**
 - Many prefer to be identified with the name of their country-of-origin (i.e., Puerto Rican American, Cuban American....).



Latino Demographics

- **Therapist (Standing Rule)**
 - Don't presume to know the clients preference about how they identify themselves.
 - A “*Not-Knowing*” stance is not advisable.




Latino Demographics

- **What a Therapist Needs to Do**
 - Let go of labels.
 - Let client describe for themselves what their ethnic background should be called.
 - Take the time to listen.
 - Facilitate a trusting/genuine relationship.



‘La Familia Latina’
(The Latino Family)




La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

- **Cultural Understanding (For Therapist):**
 - Essential backdrop for therapy
 - Utilizes family resources
 - Enhances options available
 - Broadens perspectives




La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

- **Diversity and Uniqueness:**
 - Basic guiding principle when working with Latino populations:
 - 3 Basic Assumptions:
 - Diversity in family interactions (Cultural Contents)
 - Diversity within/between Latino Groups
(Break down ethnocentric or stereotypical views)
 - Diversity on a personal familial and cultural levels
(Draw from a clients personal and collective resources).



La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

- **“Who Am I” (“*Quien Soy Yo?*”):**
 - Universal question
 - Impacted strongly by:
 - Religion
 - Family of Origin
 - Migration
 - Settlement
 - Social class
 - Media (TV, Radio...)
 - Geographical Setting



La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

- **Culture (Defined):**
 - Set of:
 - Values
 - Beliefs
 - Language
 - Customs
 - Arts/Music



La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

- **Cultural Significance (Therapeutic Process):**
 - Important intervention
 - Creates space/respect
 - Essential part of helping a Latino client or family



La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

- **Personalism:**

- Essentially, a group norm that emphasizes that relationship formation must be established before a task can be accomplished.
- Inner quality of respect and dignity (“*Dignidad*”).




La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

- **Anglo (Defined):**
 - English-speaking people, or
 - Those descended from Northern Europe.




La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

- **Goodness vs. Task Orientation**
 - The accomplishment of a task (Anglo Orientation), not the person’s goodness (Latino Orientation), is what is most valued.




La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

- **Reasons for Coming to U.S.**
 - Economics (Central Americans)
 - Political Oppression (Cubans)




La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

- **Highest Labor-Force Participation:**
 - Hispanic Men
(More than any other male ethnic group).
 - Male ethnic group
 - The poorest group



La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

- **Latino Immigrants**
(What They Experience Most):
 - Psychological distress
 - Cultural shock
 - Marginal and social alienation
 - PTSD
 - Psychosomatic symptoms
 - Depression



La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

- **Latino (Therapeutic Orientation):**
 - Meeting basic needs
 - Developing the capacity to cope



La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

- **Therapeutic Errors:**
 - Putting Hispanic or Latino families in a position of having to choose between “*Anglo*” vs. “*Latino*” cultures (Creating an “*Us and Them*” mentality).



La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

- **What Can a Therapist Do?**
 - Help clients move beyond the idea of Latino culture (as “*static*” or “*fixed*”).
 - View bicultural identity as a process of becoming/recreating (weaving in “*old*” with the “*new*”).




La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

- **Family Culture**

- (Focusing on What is Important):**


- Establishes a means of negotiating differences.
- Remaining true to one’s distinct interpretation and system of thinking.



La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

IMPORTANT

The message is not to avoid the subject of culture/ethnicity, but not to automatically interpret every Latino’s presenting problem as culturally related.




La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

- **Latino Families (Biggest Fears):**
 - Losing connection with one’s family (immediate and extended).



La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

- **Extended Family (What It Represents):**
 - Valuable and cherished characteristic of a Latino Family.
 - A means of support and nurturing.
 - Transcends national boundaries.
 - Forms a “*Global Community*” of sorts.
 - Fundamental underlining in all Latino people.
 - Closely related to “*Blood*” (i.e., *Abuelos, Abuelas, Tios, Tias, Padrinos, Madrinas, Compadres, Comadres...etc.*)



La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

- **Therapist (What Should Be Asked?):**
 - The extended family involvement and influence in the family and for the client.
 - Who’s important?
 - How connected?



La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

IMPORTANT

“The greater the social support system in place, the greater the survivability and resilience of the client.”



La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

- **Extended Family (Advantages):**
 - During times of conflict, it represents a place where the client will feel and find:
 - Support
 - Love
 - Care
 - Refuge
 - Help




La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

- **Extended Family (Disadvantages):**
 - Lack of confidentiality
 - Protective system vulnerable



La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

- **Latino Family (Family-of-Origin):**
 - Purveyor of culture
 - Unique patterns of interaction
 - Interpreter of the culture



La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

IMPORTANT

“The less connected a person is with his or her culture, the more poorly he/she does in adapting/succeeding in the U.S.”



La Familia Latina”(The Latino Family)

- **Therapeutic Goal:**

- Tapping the clients resources to help themselves in adjusting and overcoming difficulties.
- Encourage clients to be proud of their heritage.
- Acknowledge a client's cultural uniqueness.
- Validate a client's cultural values and experiences.
- Preserve and express their cultural traditions/practices.
- Discover the strengths of a client's culture.



“El Hombre Latino ”
(The Latino Male)



“El Hombre Latino ” (The Latino Male)

- **Latino Men (Defined):**
 - Similar to other people, but
 - They are also differentiated apart of Americanos.



“El Hombre Latino ” (The Latino Male)

- **Latino Men**


- (Function Within the Constraints of):**

- Poverty
- Unemployment
- Racism



“El Hombre Latino ” (The Latino Male)

- **Latino Men (Challenges):**
 - Increased demands for gender equality.
 - Threatened by changes to conform.




“El Hombre Latino ” (The Latino Male)

- **Machismo (Commonly Defined):**
 - Violence in orientation.
 - Often exerted over Latina women to conform to social-role expectations.
 - Underlying element is often directed against Latina women.
 - Serves to perpetuate negative conceptions and/or myths of Latinos.
 - Legitimizes economic and political subordination.



“El Hombre Latino ” (The Latino Male)

- **Machismo (Another Viewpoint):**
 - A man’s responsibility to provide for, protect, and defend his family.
 - His loyalty and sense of responsibility to:
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Community



“El Hombre Latino ” (The Latino Male)

- **Therapist (What Can We Do?):**
 - Acknowledge that the client (Latino Male) is in a process of:
 - Evolving and changing, as part of the acculturation process.



“La Mujer Latina”
(The Latina Female)



“La Mujer Latina” (The Latina Female)

- **Latina Female Represents:**
 - Largest growing population (U.S.)
 - 54.1% increase since 1996
 - 1,485,000 out of 6,2000,000 families (U.S.)
 - Average size: 3 to 4 persons
(Family composition)
 - Lower median incomes
 - Median income: \$13,474 (Female headed)



“La Mujer Latina” (The Latina Female)

- **Latina Female Growth:**
 - 59.4% Mexican
 - 24.2% Puerto Rican
 - 11.4% Cuban



“La Mujer Latina” (The Latina Female)

- **Cuban Women (Demographics):**
 - Higher educational attainment
 - Typically older
 - Lower unemployment



“La Mujer Latina” (The Latina Female)

- **Latina Women**

- (Lower Socio-Economic Strata):**

- Puerto Rican
- Mexican



“La Mujer Latina” (The Latina Female)

- **Concept of “*Familiso*”
(Among Latina Women):**
 - Promotes:
 - Resilience
 - Quiet Survival
 - Marginalization
 - Working hard
 - Endurance
 - Social invisibility



“La Mujer Latina” (The Latina Female)

- **Latina Mothers and Grandmothers (What Roles Do They Have):**
 - Social construction of Latina female to be:
 - Pure
 - Virginal
 - Respectful (Self/Others)
 - Marriage to men (Latino) deemed appropriate by the family.



“La Mujer Latina” (The Latina Female)

- **Latina Female (Foreign Born):**
 - Most often forge an integrated identity that often does not challenge (Includes):
 - Class
 - Gender role assignment
 - Sexuality



“La Mujer Latina” (The Latina Female)

- **Therapist Responsibility:**
 - Acknowledge unique family patterns of expectations
 - Consider the intersection of:
 - Gender
 - Race
 - Class
 - Sexuality
 - Nationality
 - Spirituality



“La Mujer Latina” (The Latina Female)

- **Therapy (Can Be Viewed as):**
 - Powerful vehicle for change.
 - Creation and implementation of culturally sensitive interventions.
 - Creating a safe space where a Latina women can explore options.



Cultural Considerations and Sensitivity



Cultural Considerations & Sensitivity

- **Cultural Sensitivity (For Therapist)**
 - A necessity
 - Knowledge of culture and ethnicity is needed to be an effective vehicle of change for the client.



Cultural Considerations & Sensitivity

- **Hispanic Culture (Defined):**
 - A collection of Latinos from different nations with many different customs.



Cultural Considerations & Sensitivity

- **Cultural Labels (What It Implies):**
 - Common geographical origins.
 - Presumption that Latino people share cultural commonalities as:
 - Customs
 - Emotional temperaments
 - Health issues
 - Single linguistic base
 - Shared experiences of discrimination



Cultural Considerations & Sensitivity

- **McAdams's Theory (Life Stories):**
 - Over time, we create a sense of identity or personal myth.
 - Sharing our stories with each other creates meaning out of our cultural setting – facilitating the constructs of culture.



Cultural Considerations & Sensitivity

- **Therapist Responsibility:**
 - Listen to our clients:
 - Stories
 - Interpretations
 - Ask questions
 - Remain curious
 - Assess family-of-origin issues
 - Determine existing support systems
 - Create therapeutic solutions
- (A *“New Normal”* where it is needed)

Anderson, 1997; Freedman and Combs, 1996; White and Epston, 1990



Cultural Considerations & Sensitivity

- **Language (Cultural Connection):**
 - The bridge through which we connect with each other.
 - It constructs our “*reality*” (Our shared meaning).



Cultural Considerations & Sensitivity

- **Therapy**

- (Positive Changes Acquired Through):**

- Shared meaning
 - Connection
 - Mutuality
 - Authentic relating



***The Latino Couple
(Intimacy Explored)***



The Latino Couple (Intimacy Explored)

- **Intimacy (Defined)**
 - A quality of a relationship characterized by:
 - Emotional closeness
 - Trust
 - Self-disclosure
 - Reciprocity



The Latino Couple (Intimacy Explored)

- **Intimacy (To Develop and To Be Sustained):**
 - Partners must:
 - Be committed to becoming honest with themselves.
 - Take into account the “*world view*” of their partner.
 - Negotiate their positions as an expression of “*good will.*”



The Latino Couple (Intimacy Explored)

IMPORTANT

“Maintaining intimacy and satisfaction in a marriage is, at best, a formidable task.”



The Latino Couple (Intimacy Explored)

- **Timmerman's Operational Definition of Marital Intimacy**
 - Closeness
 - Reciprocity
 - Self-Disclosure
 - Trust



The Latino Couple (Intimacy Explored)

- **Intimacy and Latino Couples**

- **(What a Therapist Needs To Know):**

- Explore the personal and cultural positions (Includes):
 - Gender roles and expectations
 - Significance of spirituality in each partner
 - Role of extended family
 - Expression of intimacy
 - Negotiation of boundaries
 - Negotiation of power
 - Role of authority figures
 - Expression of affection and sexuality
 - Parenting styles

Flores, and Carey, 2000



Religious Considerations (Therapeutic Sensitivity)

Religious Considerations (Therapeutic Sensitivity)



- **Latinos (Most Influential Factors)**
 - Religious belief in Latino cultures.
 - Primarily Roman Catholic (Majority of Latinos).
 - Most Latinos have a religious “*world view*” and look to their faith and religious beliefs to make sense and interpret the world around them.
 - **Faith:** Comes from deep within the person and transcends the person(s) and connect him/her to others in the Latino community.

Religious Considerations (Therapeutic Sensitivity)



- **Faith and Religion:**

- **Faith:**

- Is about belief in the sacredness of the world and an experience of a divine presence and will.

- **Religion:**

- A mechanism for survival.
- A way to understand and put order in ones universe.

Religious Considerations (Therapeutic Sensitivity)



- **Therapist Responsibility**

- **(With Respect to Religion in Therapy):**

- Religious material should not be introduced by the Therapist.
- When introduced by the Latino client:
 - Explore how religion affects:
 - Self-concept
 - Interpersonal relationships with family
 - Perception of reality

Religious Considerations (Therapeutic Sensitivity)



- **Therapist Responsibility (Cont'd)**
 - Assist the Latino client in developing adaptive skills that facilitate adjustment to their new land.
 - Adjust to new situations that facilitate developing new realities.
 - Sort out the tensions of living in two worlds; and,
 - Help them (Latino clients) in choosing what's best for them (given their particular circumstances).
 - Explore feelings of “*Self-Worth.*” (“***La Vida Tiene Valor***”)
 - *Be open to contemplate and deal with spiritual ideas that may arise in a session.*

Religious Considerations (Therapeutic Sensitivity)



IMPORTANT

“Clients with a sincere belief in God and a faith-oriented disposition may be able to draw strength from their religious traditions.”

Religious Considerations (Therapeutic Sensitivity)



- **Latinos (Raised in Religious Families):**
 - Call on: (To help them along their path)
 - God
 - Jesus
 - Mary
 - Saints
 - Latinos find comfort in their church, where, for a brief moment, they feel at home and are safe.

Religious Considerations (Therapeutic Sensitivity)



IMPORTANT

“When immigrants leave their home, everything may seem strange/unknown, but the church is a place of familiarization (the priest, the Mass, etc.) becomes an oasis away from the stresses of being in the United States.”

Religious Considerations (Therapeutic Sensitivity)



IMPORTANT

“Latinos have a passion about life that is missing in the mainstream society. It is that passion that indicates the presence of a soul, a spirit that permeates feelings and actions.”

Religious Considerations (Therapeutic Sensitivity)



- **Christ (As The Model for Latinos):**
 - He has a special place among Latinos.
 - 87% of Latinos believe that Jesus is God.
 - His humanity is a reflection of the humanity of the Latino people.
 - Christ (Latinos believe) understands their suffering, because he himself endured persecution/abuse.
 - They (Latinos) do not suffer in isolation.

Religious Considerations (Therapeutic Sensitivity)



- **The Concept of the “Virgin Mary”
(For Latinos):**
 - She is an archetype in the Latino psyche.
 - She is seen as “*Nuestra Madre*” (“*Our Mother*”).
 - Viewed/seen as:
 - “*Our Lady of Guadalupe*” (Mexican)
 - “*La Virgen de la Carida del Cobre*” (Cuban)
 - “*Immaculate Conception*” (Puerto Ricans)
 - She is revered and exemplifies the “*Ideal Mother.*”

Religious Considerations (Therapeutic Sensitivity)



- **Priest and Ministers:**

- May be the first person a Latino or Latina turns to for help or advise.
- Priest have historically been the “*chief*” interpreters of “*God’s will.*”
- A priest may be a rich source of information for therapist when pastoral counseling is not enough.
- A collaborative involvement with the church and the therapist is the ideal setting.



Acculturation and Therapy



Acculturation and Therapy

- **Acculturation:**

- The process by which an ethnic group accepts the cultural patterns and traits of the other group with whom they (Latinos) are in contact with.
- Changes occur while in the process of moving towards adoption of the majority culture.
- It is manifested at the (Level of Functioning):
 - Behavioral Level
 - Affective Level
 - Cognitive Level



Acculturation and Therapy

- **Acculturation (For the Therapist):**
 - Has been found to impact the nature of problems presented by Latinos in therapy.
 - Knowledge of the process is an important issue for the therapist working with Latino clients.
 - Levels of acculturation correspond with preference of a therapist's ethnicity.
 - It is not uniformly experienced by each (Latino) member the same way.



Acculturation and Therapy

- **Acculturation (For the Therapist): Cont'd**
 - Uneven rates of acculturation occurs between Latino Husbands and wives.
 - Role reversal between Latino parent and children can occur (“*Parentification*”).
 - Incorporating the acculturation implications and measurements as part of the in-take process may be helpful.



Thank You

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