

# Counseling Latino Americans

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# Culture and its role in counseling

- In a constantly changing world, one of the stable elements of interaction is culture.
- As more Latinos/as consider the USA their home, this demographic reality calls for specific abilities and strategies that counselors must possess to be effective helpers.
- According to Tirandis (1972) "...culture cuts deeply into the person's inner life even shaping self-experience" (p.14).



## Race and culture interplay for Latinos

- The term Latinos/Latinas must be used with great caution as it represents a highly diverse group. Latinos are multicultural in their attitudes, choices and behaviors, racial backgrounds (white, native Indian, Black, bi-racial, etc.) and cultural beliefs and traditions.
- “Latinx” = most recent term used, it is more gender neutral than the 1<sup>st</sup> one listed.
- Even when many Latinos/as share Spanish as their common language, it is also important to remember that each Latino country speaks a unique dialect which adds to its within group diversity.

# Demographics

- Population Estimates July of 2006 (US Census Bureau)
- **Size & percentage of Latino population**: 44.3 million or 14.8 % of the US population
- Total US population=299 million
- Between 2000 and 2006- **Latinos accounted for ½ of the US population growth.**
- **The Latino population grew (24.3%) 3 times the growth rate experienced by the total US population (6.1%).**



# Top 5 states

- **Top 5 States by Latino Population Gain (2000-2006)**

- 1 California 2,010,514
- 2 Texas 1,644,262
- 3 Florida 930,437
- 4 Arizona 490,124
- 5 Illinois 342,244

## Latino population by region

- US key geographical regions:
  - West 18,864,823
  - South 15,376,215
  - Northeast 6,102,314
  - Midwest 3,977,686

## Latino population by country of origin

• Mexican	64.0 %	28,339,354
• Puerto Rican	9.0%	3,987,947
• Cuban	3.4%	1,520,276
• Dominican	2.8%	1,217,225
• Central American	7.6%	3,372,090
• South American	5.5%	2,421,297
• Other Hispanic	7.7%	3,394,089
• Total number	100%	44,252,278

# Comparison by Gender & Place of birth

- **Median Age by Gender**

- Median age All Males =35.2                      Median Age-Latinos=27.0
- Median age All Females=37.8                      Median Age-Latinas =27.6

- **Comparison Native Born Versus Foreign Born**

- Native born US Population 87.5 %
- Foreign Born US Population                      12.5%
- Native born for Latinos                              60.0%
- Foreign Born for Latinos                              40.0%

# Educational Attainment

	All Males	All Females	Latinos	Latinas
• <i>Less than 9<sup>th</sup> grade education</i>				
• 6.7%	6.3%	24.5%	23.3%	
• <i>High School or more</i>				
• 83.5%	84.6%	58.7%	61.7%	
• <i>Bachelor's degree /more</i>				
• 27.9%	26.2%	11.5%	13.1%	

# Median Earnings by Gender (employed, full time, year-round workers, 16 year old & older)

- All Males in the US \$42,210
- Latino Males \$27,490
- All Females in the US \$32,649
- Latina Females \$24,738
- (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006)

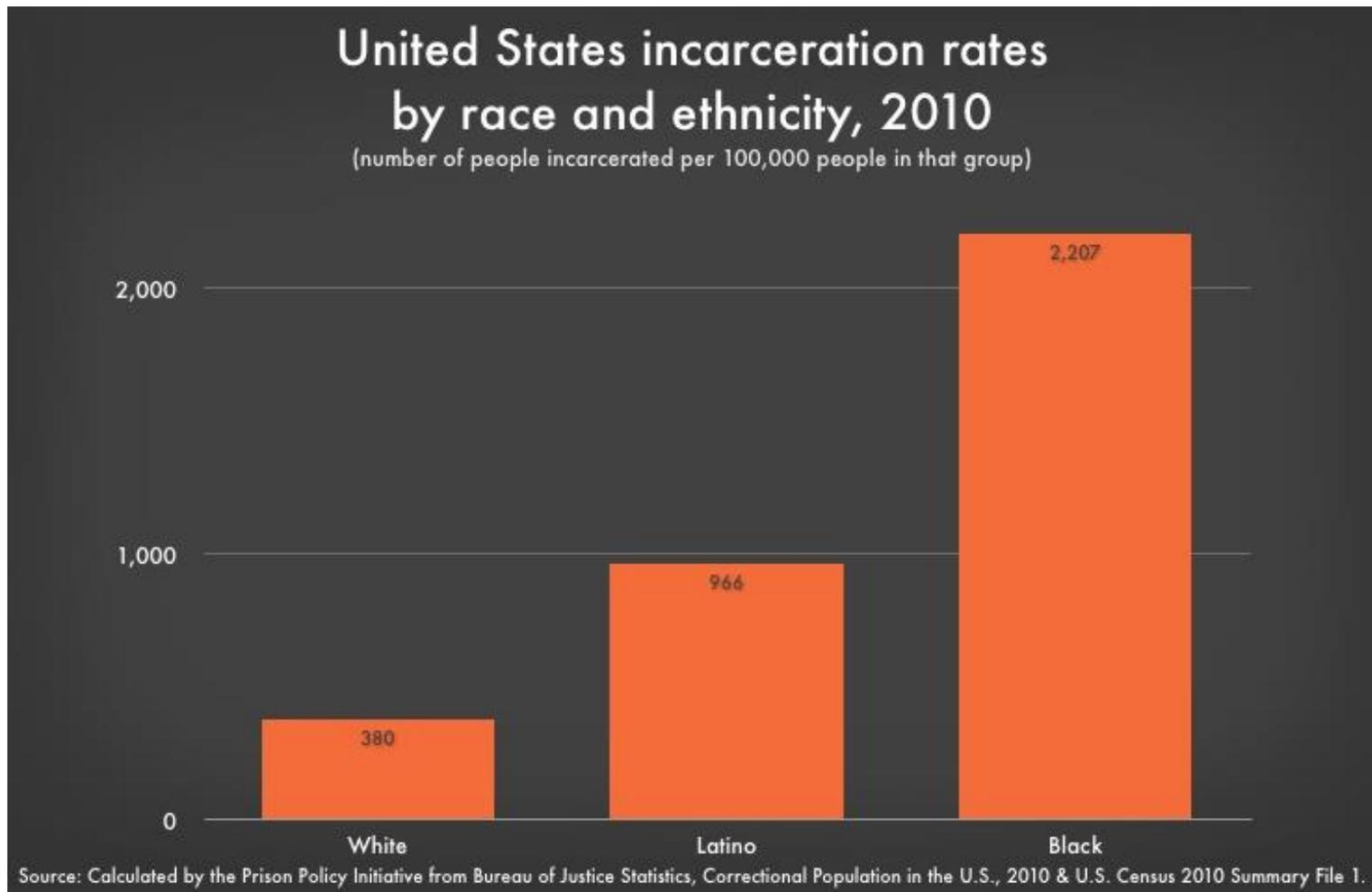
# US industries and Latino rates

- **In 2014, Hispanics and Latinos accounted for 16.1 percent** of the 146.3 million employed people in the United States.
- Among major industries, 27.3 percent of workers in construction were of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity in 2014.
- Other industries with high concentrations of Hispanics and Latinos include agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting (23.1 percent) and leisure and hospitality (22.3 percent).
- Hispanics had the lowest share of employment in public administration (11.4 percent), financial activities (11.3 percent), and information (10.5 percent).

## Percentage of industry employment that is of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 2014 annual averages (Bureau of Census statistics)

Construction	27.3%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting	23.1
Leisure and hospitality	22.3
Other services	19.0
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	18.6
Transportation and utilities	17.2
Wholesale and retail trade	16.4
Total, all industries	16.1
Professional and business services	16.0
Manufacturing	15.8
Education and health services	11.5
Public administration	11.4
Financial activities	11.3
Information	10.5

# Correctional population in the US (US Census statistics)



## Basic cultural values shared by many Latino/Latina clients (\*)

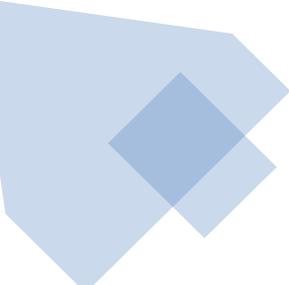
- For the most part, Latinos share a common language (Spanish), a religion (Roman Catholicism), and some basic values and orientations in life.
- These are some of their basic cultural values:
- 1. Importance of family, both nuclear and extended. This is labeled as "familismo" in the scientific literature.
- 2. Interdependence and cooperation. This is referred as "simpatia" (Simpatia is linked to social hierarchy. Everyone is part of a system of duties and responsibilities and each one must respect each lines of authority as a way to show respect in daily life.)
- (\*) Santiago-Rivera, A.L, Arredondo, P. & Gallardo-Cooper. (2002)

## Key cultural values (2)

- 3. Worth and dignity of the individual. This is referred as "personalismo" (Latino/a client expects to be treated as a person whose dignity is centerfold).
- 4. Valuing the spiritual dimension of life.
- 5. Accepting life as it exists.
- 6. Using “dichos”(proverbs) & rituals for daily coping:
  - Ex: “El que canta, espanta sus penas.  
(The person who sings, scares sorrows away.)
  - Ex: “Cuando una puerta se cierra, otra se abre”.  
(When one door closes, another opens.)

- 7. Although all clients want to be treated as individuals, Latino clients consider their dignity and spiritual worth to be central to relationship building.
- 8. Family always comes first while individual concerns are always seen as secondary.
- Commitment and obligation to the family takes precedent over any other concern.
- Family guarantees protection and caretaking for life as long as the person stays in the system. Any member who experiences physical and/or mental health problems will be helped.
- Relatives mostly responsible for taking care of the relatives with any illness are those members who enjoy the most stable position.

## Key cultural values (3)

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- Status according to Generation (related to family support / other support networks)
  - Language use (corresponding to preference and proficiency in speaking English and/or Spanish)
  - Occupational and educational status
  - Example: Latinx who achieve greater social mobility may adapt faster to the US cultural norms than those who are employed in low paying jobs or are under-employed.
  - Frequency of mobility to the original country (culture specific attitudes and value orientation).



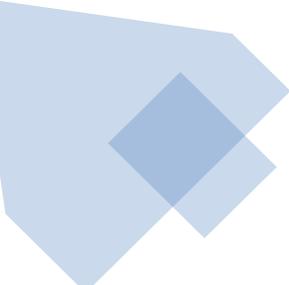
## Some acculturation factors related to Latinos/as



Our families=  
our greatest  
treasure

- **Enter the session with an open mind.**
- **Check your stereotypes at the door.**
  
- **Latin Americans generally have a smaller personal space. Friendly physical contact such as touching the shoulder is appreciated after initial rapport is established.**
  
- **Maintaining eye contact is valued while acknowledging the elders' higher status.**
  
- **Many Latinos have strong notions of social hierarchy. This is part of the "simpatia" cultural norm: everyone respects the place each one occupies in the family system.**
- **Generally, Latinx clients have high regard for expert knowledge. They expect the counselor to be very directive and provide practical advice.**
- **Due to the personalismo cultural norm, Latinx clients expect the counselor to be concerned about them personally. They want to be treated with respect.**
- **Ex: use surnames and titles (e.g. Mr. and Mrs.) for the first meeting and every time for the elderly. This simple sign of respect will facilitate trust building in the relationship.**

## **Counseling tips for Latino Clients**

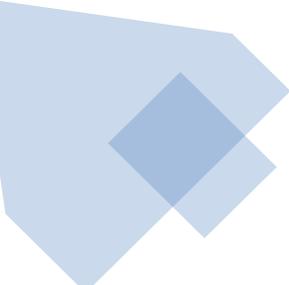


## Counseling tips (2)

- **Latinx clients are not cut the same. Consider their specific cultural influences and customize interventions for the specific client you serve.**
- **Assess their level of acculturation to mainstream American society while working with their desire to maintain strong ties to their culture (bi-culturalism).**
- **Involve and gain support of family members. Changes in the client may have profound effects on the family.**
- **Consider gender differences and males' higher authority level (men typically "lead") when working with Latinx families.** Explore different socialization patterns for males/females.
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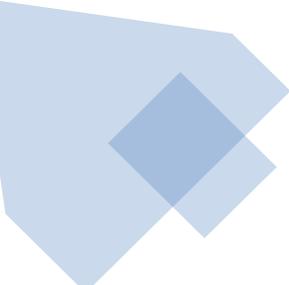
- Consider three counseling themes: 1) identify their own cultural values, 2) help them deal with the necessities of life, and 3) help them express their individuality within the family structure.
- Family is the core of Latinx's identity. Caution should be exercised before suggesting any change to the client.
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- **Garza & Watts (2010) tested filial therapy (FT) with great success. FT focuses on behavioral/symptomatic changes that result from a changed parent/child relationship rather than focusing on family problems.** FT places the focus on the therapeutic role played by the parent and strengthens the natural bond between parent/child.
- **Consider holistic interventions (body +mind +spirit): assess if they rely on folk healers:** curanderos, shamans, espiritistas and or yerberos (herbalists) to address their mental and physical health needs.
- Explore if they use herbal remedies to deal with their mental health concerns: using "te de tilo" to manage anxiety or "nervousness"
- **Children are expected to be obedient and they are not fully consulted when making family decisions in more traditional Latino families. This poses a problem for bicultural Latino children (mostly raised in the US) as they must** harmonize this set of values with mainstream American ways. These different messages may create tension between different generations within the family.

## Counseling tips (3)

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- **Catholicism plays a strong influence on this cultural group but other Christian denominations are gaining influence in the last decades.**
  - **Explore their alliance to informal religions and folk-healing practices as these can enhance their coping skills/strategies.**
  - **Consider language issues. The client may use English to talk about factual matters and may prefer to use Spanish to discuss feelings or vice versa.**
  - **Allow clients to express their issue in the preferred language at the time even if the counselor does not know this language. This may help in gaining trust.**

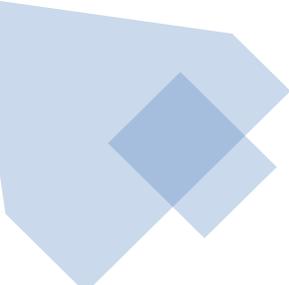


## Counseling tips (4)

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- Vanier 's quote(1998)
  - "...love and respect, like fear and prejudice, are legacies passed on from one person to another. The movement from seeking approval to taking responsibility, to being open to those who are different, implies a shift of consciousness" (pp.81-82).



## Quote

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- One necessary shift for counselors is deeply valuing the client's cultural identity.
  - Being open to the client's cultural experience & values is key to a positive counseling process
  - As a cultural group that is both diverse racially, yet shares a common language, Latinos/Latinas are in a very unique situation to teach and learn from professional counselors.



## Shift in consciousness

- **Advocate** (advising the clients about the problems they or their families might encounter)
- Three main messages to Latinx clients:
  - 1) Validation= Being understood/ reflective listen
  - 2) Trust= “I care” about you; Counselor sets respectful boundaries
  - 3) Normalizing= When client speaks how they feel out of control/crazy due to oppression, tell them “YOU ARE NOT CRAZY”.
- **Advisor** (counselor speaks on behalf of the client who could be one individual or a group of people experiencing oppressive conditions)
- **Facilitator of clients’ natural support systems** (clients may trust the counselor who respect clients’ indigenous sources of support. Key support systems are ethnic churches, community centers & family networks)

The various  
counselors roles  
that ethnic  
minority groups  
may invoke

- **Facilitator of Indigenous healing systems** : It is the counselor's duty to honor, acknowledge, and respect the client's belief system.
- **Example-Worry dolls** (Central America)= give all your worries to the dolls.
- **Consultant**: The counselor can help minorities to learn new skills in order to interact successfully with the dominant society.
- Example: Breathing exercises to deal with microaggressions. “Respirar juntos”
- **Change Agent**: Counselor attempts to change the social environment that oppresses racial/ethnic minorities by using narrative therapy: 1) identify the dominant story (saturated with distress); 2) Deconstruct this story by focusing of contradictory/parallel themes; 3) Reauthoring dominant story by using client’s own words to create an empowered version in which they not only mention their obstacles but their strengths & dreams for a better life.

## Other counselor roles (2)

- **Counselor**: Helping client to make decisions by listing alternatives considering their consequences, pondering the probability of each alternative, and choosing or deciding.
- Be aware of your own biases as they may influence the client's decision when deciding a new course of action.
- **Individual therapist**: Facilitator serves as a psychotherapist when the level of acculturation of the client is high, the problem is internal and a situation wants to be resolved.
- a) the conceptualization of a client's problem must be congruent with the client's belief system;
- b) the counselor's required responses and suggestions from and to the client must be culturally compatible and acceptable;
- c) the definition of goals must be the same for counselor & client (Sue & Zane, 1987)

## Two more roles



# Isaac Hernandez

Benois de la Danse 2018 Winner (the Oscar for ballet dancers)

# Mayor Carmen Yulin Cruz





Dr. Ted Judd



# Carlos Mencia

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