

# NORMATIVE CULTURAL VALUES AND THE EXPERIENCES OF MEXICAN-AMERICAN MOTHERS IN THE NEONATAL INTENSIVE CARE UNIT (NICU)

Lisa M. Cleveland PhD, RN, CPNP-PC, IBCLC

Assistant Professor, University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio

Sharon D. Horner PhD, RN, FAAN

Professor, Associate Dean for Research, University of Texas at Austin



## San Antonio

# Purpose

- To explore the cultural experiences of Mexican-American mothers who have had an infant in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU)



# Design and Participants

- An qualitative approach
- A convenience sample of fifteen Mexican-American women was interviewed
  - ▣ Mean age: 30 yrs.; most unemployed
  - ▣ All had some high school education; 2 had a college degree
  - ▣ 13 infants (3 sets of twins) were premature, 4 withdrawing from methadone, 1 infant with fetal hydrops died

# Methods

- Audio taped, transcribed, semi-structured, individual interviews and field notes
- Directed content analysis with the 5 common normative cultural values for Latino families; 1) *simpatia*, 2) *personalismo*, 3) *respeto*, 4) *familismo*, and 5) *fatalismo* was used as a sensitizing framework to guide data analysis
- This type of analysis can be used when “existing theory or prior research exists that would benefit from further description”

# Results

- *Simpatia*-means kindness, emphasizes courteous interactions and an avoidance of hostile behavior
  - ▣ Simple gestures such as saying “hello”
  - ▣ “When I would come in, [the nurse] made sure that the moms had a rocking chair. She made sure we were comfortable.”
  - ▣ “Sometimes in the middle of the night I would be tired, so she would come ask me if I was okay or if I needed anything.”

# Results

- *Simpatia*-negative exemplars demonstrated feeling unwelcome (mothers taking methadone):
  - ▣ “They would rather just take care of him [the baby] and not have to deal with us.”
  - ▣ “I would be watched whenever I was holding him-how I was feeding him. I felt like I always had someone at my back watching.”

# Results

- *Personalismo*- a “formal friendliness” where the patient expects to form a warm and caring relationship with the provider
  - “I felt like – we were kind of on a different level than the other people. She knew something about me and I knew something about her.”
  - “It felt good because she knew all of my children, all of my family, so now I know hers, and we were bonding.”



# Results

- *Respeto*-means respect and is based upon an individual's age, social position, and gender
- Lack of *respeto* was particularly noted by the mothers taking methadone
  - “I would hear whispering. ‘That girl used to take drugs.’ It wasn’t ‘whispering’ whispering – I could hear it!”
  - “Just treat us like human beings.”
  - “Don’t judge us before you really get to know us.”

# Results

- *Familismo*- is a strong devotion to extended family that is more important than the needs of the individual
  - ▣ Placing family pictures and prayers near the infant
  - ▣ “I thank God I have family helping me here ‘cause it would be different if I would be depending on friends or people I barely know. Family – it’s different.”
  - ▣ “I was by myself. I didn’t know if something would happen, what would I do?”

# Results

- *Fatalismo*- the belief that some health issues are beyond human control and that the individual can do little to change what has been fated
  - “Sometimes they just don’t get better. I really didn’t think he was gonna make it.”
  - “At the end, you more or less know, yes, it’s time. You have to let your heart, and your mind connect with the Lord. We have to give ourselves time to get any miracle that he would have for us. After all my prayers, he started getting worse again, so I knew, it’s time to let go, this is just giving me preparation.”

# Conclusion And Future Research

- Findings may be used to inform nursing care provided for Mexican-American mothers (perhaps other ethnicities?)
- Future research:
  - ▣ Substance using mothers and healthcare providers who care for their infants
  - ▣ Discharge from the NICU

# Publication

Cleveland, L.M. & Horner, S.D. (2012). Normative cultural values and the experiences of Mexican-American mothers in the neonatal intensive care unit. *Advances in Neonatal Care, 12*(2), 120-125.

Questions?