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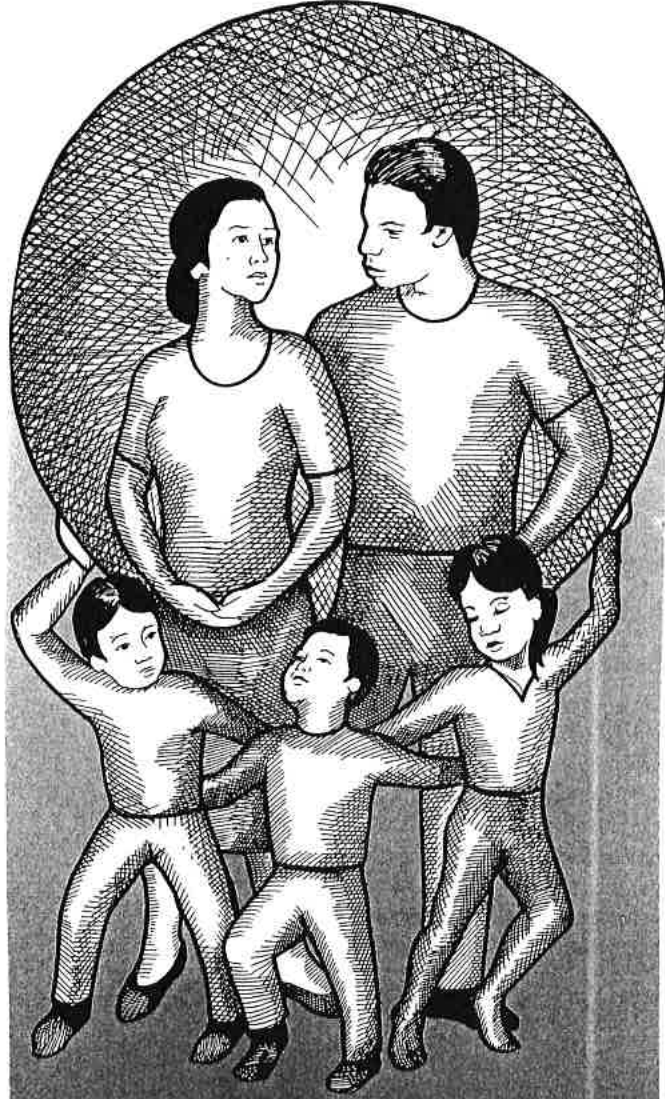


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SOMOS FAMILIA

The Hispanic-Latino Family

...some considerations and implications for families in Hispanic-Latino ministries

Center for Hispanic Studies
Concordia Seminary
2021, 2022, 2023



Center for Hispanic Studies

CONCORDIA SEMINARY, ST. LOUIS



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La misión del Centro de Estudios Hispánicos del Seminario Concordia de St. Louis es la de formar pastores y diaconisas luteranos para proclamar a Cristo en nuestras comunidades hispanas en los Estados Unidos.

The mission of the Center for Hispanic Studies of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, is to form Lutheran pastors and deaconesses to make Jesus Christ known in U.S. Hispanic communities.

THE HISPANIC-LATINO FAMILY

Who are our Hispanic-Latinos neighbors? What are their families like? What can we learn about each other? How can we minister with and among each other?

This presentation will provide participants with a brief overview of some of the realities involving U.S. Hispanic-Latino families and how ministry can occur among them.

Note: It is impossible and unfair to attempt to describe in a brief presentation the vast number of cultural, social and linguistic realities in the combined phrase: The Hispanic-Latinos family. For that reason, this presentation is an attempt (an approximation) in terms of a “generally speaking”, to present some general concepts, which should be considered when thinking about, initiating and supporting ministries among, within, among and with Hispanic-Latino populations.

It begins with attitude...

1. Acknowledging, accepting and welcoming

How does the very nature of being a family – “belonging, becoming, and building a sense of community and intimacy” – manifest itself while ministering among the immigrant and non-immigrant Hispanic-Latino families?

2. Listening, learning and interacting

How do we learn about and with our neighbor?

Is there anyone who is not our neighbor?

How do we listen and “learn with the heart”?

How will our neighbor know Jesus Christ and trust in Him?

How will immigrant families and non-immigrant families hear the Gospel?

3. Celebrating baptism, remembering baptism

How does baptism enable – and teach – us to minister “with and among” immigrant families?

How do we become involved in an “incarnational” ministry?

What does this kind of intentional ministry look like with the Hispanic-Latino family?

4. Interacting and belonging

How do we become “instruments of interaction” and provide a sense of belonging?

How does “cultural anxiety” (including “white anxiety”) impede ministry with and among the Hispanic-Latino family (immigrant and non-immigrant families)?

5. Strengthening marriage and family

How can we become involved in strengthening marriage and family relationships especially with vulnerable and at-risk immigrant families?

How can Lutheran schools, high schools, universities and congregations become involved?

6. Forming leadership, honoring others

How do we acknowledge, enable and empower others to take ownership and becoming instruments of peace?

How do we develop, encourage and support leadership formation – informal and formal?

How do we reduce paternalism and dependency in order to strengthen inter-dependency?

7. Developing teamwork and networks, recognizing the multitude of gifts and opportunities

How do we develop and strengthen connections with others, through teamwork and networking?

How can we develop a ministry with and among Hispanic-Latino families (immigrant and non-immigrant families)?

Notes...

Some very, very broad concepts toward understanding Hispanic-Latino families...

1. “The nation's growing Latino community is affecting everything from politics to the economy to education, and I'm excited about this important opportunity to provide nonpartisan, objective facts to and about this changing population.” Mark Hugo López, Director of Hispanic Research, Pew Hispanic Center (Pew Research Center's Hispanic Trends Project)
2. There is no one definition for Hispanic-Latino families. Families are diverse and no one definition fits all situations; the population is multi-cultural and not united, rather a blend of nationalities and cultures that often remain loyal to their country of origin (or at least to that of their parents or grandparents) at least for one generation.
3. Hispanic-Latino cultures uphold an elevated concept of *la familia*. Evidence of brokenness and fragmentation are present and relationships become vulnerable to the effects of change. The challenge is to strengthen marriage and the family, enabling them to fulfill their calling. *La familia* includes the extended family, even incorporating godparents—*los padrinos*.
4. Hispanic-Latino cultures struggle to preserve social structures and traditions of the family (i.e. “*machismo*,” interchange of favors, sharing of resources, values sense of community), yet at the same time, there is an increasing lack or even a loss of interrelatedness in family dynamics.
5. Hispanic-Latino families are living a continuous process of change and adjustment, facing the fears of losing their heritage, dealing with migration issues, economic challenges (local and global), violence and cultural adaptations, as well as ever-present “generational gaps.” A single greatest fear: Parents fear their youth will become involved in gang activity.
6. The Hispanic-Latino families see themselves as a “*escuela para la vida*” (a school for life issues) faces the challenge to become effective in a new culture: teaching their heritage as well as issues related to becoming responsible citizens in this new country.
7. *La familia* is especially seen as an important bearer of Hispanic-Latino cultures, since the predominant “USA culture” can be seen as a threat or something to blindly embrace:
 - The importance of belonging – self and others, “*la raza*” (what makes us, us).
 - The importance of attaining education and “getting ahead in life”.
 - The challenge of languages – as bearer and preserver of culture and identity.
 - The expression of culture, music and art – “*lo nuestro*” (that which is ours).
8. Concerns for the Hispanic-Latino family:
 - Financial wellbeing: “A better life than I had (have)”.
 - Education for their children: Prepare for a life career.
 - Opportunity for something better: Want the best of two worlds: the traditions and way of life of the country of origin as well as the opportunities of the USA.
 - Preserve “*la familia*” at all costs: Indeed, at all costs.

Complex immigration issues: Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and other reasons for collective anxiety.

9. The Hispanic-Latino population is the largest minority group within the United States: There are 63.6 million Hispanic-Latinos (U.S. Census, 2020 calculations) in the USA. Projections: By 2050, at least 25% of the US population will be Hispanic-Latino. About 11 million Hispanic-Latinos have documentation issues (about 21%). Among the largest Spanish speaking countries in the world (currently second place). Close to 80% of Hispanics live in urban areas. More than 30% are below the poverty line. Significant unemployment or underemployment. About 37% of the current Hispanic-Latino population is foreign born.
10. People thus identified as Latinos, Hispanics, or Hispanic-Latinos are now called, in many circles, Hispanic Americans or *Hispanoamericanos*. It should be clarified that this phrase refers to those who live in the United States; the inhabitants of Latin America are identified as Latin Americans, or *Latinoamericanos*.
11. Comparative birth rates (2010 Census): 1:1 White Anglo, 1:3 Native American, Afro-American and Asian-American, 1:9 Hispanic-Latino.

Notes...

Other underlining issues...

1. **Time:** Emphasis is placed on time spent with relationship building rather than being task-orientated or event-orientated. Therefore, time orientation can be dramatically different. An event begins, for example, when one leaves the house to go someplace, rather than the appropriate time to arrive.
2. **Planning:** Single event planning (sometimes even “last minute” planning) is more common than extensive yearlong planning. People orientated vs. event orientation; people are more important than time and people’s needs are to be considered before fulfilling objectives.
3. **Fiestas:** Participation in a *fiesta* is seen as important. Participation in Sunday worship Eucharist can be seen as a time of celebration. Also, *Fiesta* can be seen as a revolt against time restraints; a celebration of the moment. Any reason is good for a *fiesta*.
4. **Rituals:** Rites of passage, baptism (*padrinos*), first communion (*primera comunión*), *quinceañera* (young women celebrating their 15th birthday), blessing a new home, among others.
5. **Concept of limited good:** “Since so many bad things happen to us (to me), obviously it is fate playing against us and we will not succeed unless we able to ‘reconnect’ with good, or at least have what is good overshadow that which is bad.”
6. **Blessing predominates over salvation:** Finding the right source of blessing. Salvation is seen and often understood as avoiding something worst. The blessing is in the here and now and alleviates my sorrow and pain.
7. **Emphasis on mediators:** Others – saints, holy people, “*padrinos*” – have made it well with God, therefore are worthy of use as mediators. Most predominant: The Virgin Mary in her multitude of expressions. And yet, there is a justification to seek a personal non-mediated experience of God by “doing good to others” or “not being as bad as others”.
8. **Miracles:** Given the unreliable and unpredictable nature of life, one must seek God’s power, the intervention of saints and spirits, and depending on the situation, maybe even consult with an evil spirit. Shrines are present in homes as symbols of protection, a “just in case” they are needed, considered a source of help and protection.
9. **Good and evil spirits:** Sickness and misfortune are seen as caused by demons, the evil eye, and the spirits of the dead. Thus, exorcisms, amulets, and good luck charms are popular. Certain spirits are believed to have special powers to heal and help.
10. **Local over the universal:** The image of the local saint, *Virgen* or *Cristo* is often more important than the universal Christ. For example: *La Virgen de Guadalupe* patron virgin of Mexico.

- 11. Fatalism:** Since the poor and oppressed are conscious of not being in control of the events that determine their condition, they tend to attribute their condition to fate, destiny, the stars, the structure of the universe, karma, bad luck, the will of the spirits/gods and predestination. The death of Jesus overshadows His resurrection. Fatalism feeds into a mindset that expects the worst. “*Si Dios quiere*” – a common phrase, which keeps me out of the action/reaction mode, moves to the “*así es la vida*”.
- 12. Cultural anxiety:** Having to deal with “cultural anxiety”. Learning to “love the neighbor”. Defining, identifying and dealing with “white anxiety”.
- 13. Low self-esteem:** Social science authors agree that many families lack a healthy self-esteem which is conducive to being hyper-sensitive to conflict, joking around and how they see themselves in relation to others. It is easy to fear “losing face” and cultivate resentment.

Notes...

Some specific challenges...

1. Ministering to different Hispanic-Latino generations:

- a) first generation
- b) 1.5 generation
- c) second and third generations
- d) blended families because of blended marriages
- e) inter-cultural marriages (from different countries) and families with different cultural heritages

2. Caught-in-the-middle: Some analysts suggest a rough going for Hispanic-Latino youth born in this country. Second and third generations are sometimes known as the “hyphen generation.” These generations are “at-risk,” live in the shadows, want to be accepted for who they are, and may not be sure who they are.

3. Language—important transitions and acquisitions: Spanish to bilingual-spanglish to English (and a lot of in between combinations).

4. The strength of Hispanic-Latino cultures: The significance of almost 62 million (2020) of which at least 37% are foreign born means that Spanish will be their dominant language.

5. Cultural sensitivity: How do we as Christian Lutherans develop and live a life of cultural sensitivity, seeking interaction and inter-relatedness? A ministry “with and among” rather than only a ministry “to”.

6. The mission of the Church is the Lord’s: At times, it may appear a bit messy and “chaotic” compared to our likes and dislikes.

7. The global south: The effect of the “global south” has its very distinct mark in the Christian Hispanic-Latino population. How is the effect observed, studied, and possibly embraced?

Notes...

Some proposals...

1. Stop, look, ask, and listen...and listen some more. Hispanic-Latinos are here to stay.
Who is my neighbor? Is there anyone who is not my neighbor? Do I listen and learn with the heart? Does my neighbor know Jesus Christ?
2. Develop a core group of leaders to encourage, plan, endorse, promote and sustain Hispanic-Latino ministries.
Who in the congregation is needed for the “core group”? What kind of formation does this “core group” need? What kind of ongoing formation is needed?
3. Their need to feel that they belong. The need to develop meaningful interaction and relationships: Not just “going to” both rather a being “with and among” (incarnational ministry). And in a very real manner, the church needs to retool for many kinds of urban involvement, instead of urban flight.
How do I become an instrument of interaction? Does my neighbor enjoy a sense of belonging? Am I isolated? How could I potentially isolate myself from others? Do I isolate others? How do we deal with our isolation and potential to isolate?
4. Their need to become involved in ministry with children, youth, young adults, and families—intentionally involved. Hispanic-Latino children and youth are most vulnerable and at-risk.
How can I become the Lord’s instruments of peace in the lives of others? Through Lutheran schools? Lutheran congregations?
5. Encourage and support leadership formation among Hispanic-Latinos – both pastors and deaconesses. Develop networks and teamwork.
How do I develop and strengthen connections with others, networking and teamwork? How do I accept or reject change? How can I prepare myself for change? Is my church preparing for change?
6. Love your neighbor; welcome the stranger. Dealing with “cultural anxiety.” Defining and identifying “white anxiety.”
Who suffers from “white anxiety”? Does the church? As a church body, how do we deal with “white anxiety”? How do we manage power and control in my congregation? School? How am I doing? Do minority groups (such as Hispanic-Latinos) have to prove themselves before they gain my trust?

Notes...

Some additional points for personal and group reflection...

...God's love overflowing in Christ is true:

1. ***Problem:*** Even though Hispanic-Latinos generally profess a “faith in God,” for many, faith in Christ, “as that of a child,” is questioned, irrelevant, or abandoned, especially as they become integrated into the USA reality.
 - Hope:*** Jesus’ Words remain true and complete: “I am the way, the truth and the life...”
 - Challenge:*** Exercise daily the blessing of being molded into His faithful servants, sharing His Word.
 - Culture:*** Faith is often expressed differently in many cultures; the Gospel always speaks to all cultures. Sometimes culture becomes a god. God is above all cultures, peoples, and nations; He is God.

2. ***Problem:*** Christian education is often limited to children and youth, but often excludes the whole family or is missing an emphasis on marriage enrichment.
 - Hope:*** In Christ, our relationships are restored and strengthened, especially in our families.
 - Challenge:*** Address family issues in all aspects of Christian education and church activities.
 - Culture:*** The dynamics governing family relationships are cultural, systemic, and meaningful. Interacting with families is always a learning experience and an opportunity to serve.

3. ***Problem:*** Survival in hard times often hampers sensitivity to the needs of others; we can become entrapped in our own world.
 - Hope:*** Christ comes to us (in Word and Sacrament) in our sinful life with His forgiveness and restoration.
 - Challenge:*** Continue to learn so that we can be God’s effective instruments of proclamation and restoration.
 - Culture:*** The perception of time and organization are related to how relationships are developed and cultivated. Culture defines time, organization, and relationships and governs its expression. Interacting with other cultures is an opportunity to learn.

4. ***Problem:*** Anger and hate are increasingly affecting us all (UNESCO study, 2000).
 - Hope:*** In Christ, love overcomes fear, hate, and anger; He has made us His peacemakers.
 - Challenge:*** In all we do, think, feel, and speak, we visibly act as His instruments of peace.
 - Culture:*** Conflict resolution in all cultures is complicated; the Gospel brings forgiveness and restoration to damaged and broken relationships.

5. ***Problem:*** We are more inclined to focus on “having” rather than on “being.”
 - Hope:*** We are made anew in Christ; we are “new creatures”; this we can share with all.
 - Challenge:*** All motivation needs to be centered in Christ for the wellbeing of the whole person; everything of value needs to be centered in, around, and on relationships—we are stewards of God’s creation.

Culture: How the earth is being treated is affected by culture and affects culture. Our human nature is primarily concerned about “having” rather than “being one in Christ”.

6. *Problem:* Difficulties can cloud our judgments, and as a result, others will suffer our prejudice.

Hope: We can love others because God first loved us; Jesus Christ is God’s expression of perfect love.

Challenge: Define our limits, keep a clear vision, seek solutions, and work together with a purpose.

Culture: Our relationships are important in all cultures; how we strengthen our affective domain continues to be our greatest human challenge—only in Christ is there true hope.

7. *Problem:* Financial stability is an ever-growing complexity.

Hope: In Christ “all things are possible,” even during the most challenging financial difficulties.

Challenge: Exercise the wisdom to maintain money as a servant (rather than the other way around).

Culture: The issues of poverty and wellbeing need to be addressed responsibly without equating poverty and wellbeing only with material wealth. It is important not to become paternalistic, treating others only as recipients of our love and creating dependency. Much better: serving “within”, “among” and “together with”.

8. *Problem:* We trust in ourselves and what we have; we forget that Christ is Lord of all.

Hope: Jesus said, “I am with you always”; “follow Me”; “truly, truly I say to you...”

Challenge: Accept the calling to take up our cross, serve others, and proclaim Christ to all nations (in all cross-cultural settings); rejoice and be glad in Him always.

Culture: The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is salvation for all. Should culture dictate and change our faith or should faith influence and even change our culture?

Notes...

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on Hispanic-Latino realities in the USA**

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www.pewhispanic.org

significant Hispanic statistical studies

www.lirs.org

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service – extensive resources

www.census.gov

US Census Bureau – extensive information and statistics

reliable statistical information by states – search Iowa, for example

<http://www.infoplease.com/spot/hhmcensus1.html#ixzz1GFLgeStE>

Hispanic Americans: Census Facts

www.brookings.edu

articles in English and Spanish with research in Hispanic-Latino realities

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jrowk04bqZM&feature=related>

Who are the “Latinos”?