

# Predictors of pregnancy rates among young Latinas

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## Outline

- Previous research
- Taboo
- Gender roles
- Familismo
- Religion
- Birth Control
- Hypotheses
- Method
- Results
- Limitations
- Future directions



## Previous research

- Statistics show Hispanic young girls have more than twice as many unplanned pregnancies compared to White/Caucasian young girls
- Texas has the worst teen birth rate in the country.
- Reported that Texas teen birth rate is 63 births per 1,000 females aged 15-19.
- The Center for Public Policy Priorities National Report (2007) ranked states of Texas and California, first and second, as having highest pregnancy rates among Latinas.
- The overall teen rate has dropped by 44 percent since 1991. Without that decline, the authors calculated, there would have been 3.4 million more babies born to girls by 2010.
- Although there has been significant decrease in pregnancy rates among teens, young Latina girls still have highest pregnancy rates in the nation and tend to become pregnant at an earlier age than teens of other ethnicities
- Increasing high number of unplanned pregnancies among young Latina girls poses major issue because many children born to Latina girls will live in poverty and be uninsured.
- Texas ranks 7th as having the worst child poverty rate in nation and 1st with highest rate of uninsured children in nation.
- Neural tube defects in newborn babies major health issue. Many newborn babies suffering from these defects are consequence of unplanned pregnancies in Latino community
- Out of every 10,000 births, 4.17 Hispanic children are born with spina bifida (one of a handful of conditions known as neural tube defects) compared to 2.64 non-Hispanic blacks and 3.22 non-Hispanic whites.

## Taboo

- Discussion of sex considered taboo subject in many Mexican families
- Lack of conversations concerning sexuality, sexual protection, and pregnancy associated with risk of pregnancy
- Airing of sexual issues openly considered inappropriate and disrespectful among many Latinos
- Latino adolescents compared to their non-Hispanic white counterparts are less likely to discuss sexual behavior and condom use with their parents, and communication with parents has been shown to be inversely associated with risk of pregnancy
- Study about group of pregnant and non-pregnant Latina female adolescents (13 to 19 years) and found that teens receiving information on sexuality from their parents are less likely to become pregnant

## Gender roles

- **Machismo:** gender role of a man that holds traditional masculine values and emphasizes strength and control over women, including making decisions about sex
  - Men perceived as being more knowledgeable regarding sexual matters (Machismo) and therefore held responsible for making decisions about contraception
- **Marianismo:** females being chaste before marriage and virtuous in marriage and motherhood
  - Places a strong emphasis on maternity
  - Maternal role is highly valued among Latinos.
  - For Latinas, pregnancy may signify accomplishment of planned goal—namely, becoming an adult
  - Studies show Latinas desire to start families earlier and have more children



## Familismo

- Family is basic unit of social structure for many Latinos
- Cultural psychologists characterize Latino culture as collectivist culture that prioritizes warm, emotionally positive social interaction and places special importance on close family relationships
- Research has shown that Latino teens experienced greater support for their pregnancies than did non-Latino pregnant teens
- Pregnant Latinas have been found to report highly positive attitudes toward pregnancy and motherhood and more support from infant's father and family relative to others
- Pregnant Latinas also report more frequent and satisfying interactions with family compared with other racial groups
- Parent/adolescent communication in Latino families likely to increase when pregnancy has occurred

## Religion

- Pregnancy prevention messages may be misunderstood as preventing families from growing by some Latina girls, i.e. not being able to have as many children as they would like
- The Latino culture is greatly influenced by the Catholic religion
- Catholic beliefs and values teach refraining from using birth control, contraceptives, or anything that prevents a child's birth
- Hispanic parents are less approving of birth control methods than non-Hispanic White parents
- Oral sex—still at risk for STDs
- Hispanic females have lowest use of contraceptive methods at first intercourse
- Hispanic families generally hold more conservative views toward condom use

## Contraceptive use

- Study focused on low-income, Spanish-speaking Latinas found that many women were misinformed about hormonal birth control, which is considered to be one of the most effective methods by health care workers
- Fears could be caused by lack of quality of sex education
- Most common reasons why Latinas do not use a condom is simply because they trust their own partner or were not able to convince their partner to use a condom
- Hispanic males and females less likely to use contraceptive protection at first sex encounters compared to other racial groups

## Hypotheses

- Hypothesis 1: Likelihood of getting pregnant will be linked to believing contraceptives harm their health or can cause illness, because in the Latino community women are raised to believe that contraceptives can prevent you from giving birth and harming your body.
- Hypothesis 2: Likelihood of having an unplanned pregnancy will be linked to having to be in love in order to have a baby, because generally many Latinas feel that it is okay to have a child with someone you are emotionally involved with.
- Hypothesis 3: How much they want to have a baby will be linked to having unprotected sex if you trust and love someone, because young Latinas feel that there is no need to use contraceptives if they are being sexually active with someone whom they are emotionally involved with.
- Hypothesis 4: How soon they want to have a baby will be linked to believing contraceptives should not be used because they prevent a child's birth, because in the Latino community many people are raised to believe that anything that prevents a child's birth is unacceptable.
- Hypothesis 5: In what time frame they intend to have a baby will be linked to having unprotected sex with someone they trust and love, because generally young Latinas who are emotionally involved with someone will be more likely to want a child at a young age.

## Method

- Women ranging from the ages of 15-30
- 73 participants
- Identified themselves as Hispanic/Latina and were not married and had no children
- Most of the women in the study were from Texas, specifically from the border of Mexico and United States
- Most of the women were high school or college students
- Reason these women were selected is because this study focused on young Latinas' beliefs
- Survey consisted of questions related to cultural beliefs, questions about their intentions and likelihood of getting pregnant, and how soon and how much Latinas want to get pregnant
- Qualtrics program
- Recruiting- Social media

## Results

Table 1  
Descriptive Information

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
DV Likelihood of getting pregnant	73	2.49	1.701
DV Likelihood of unplanned pregnancy	73	1.90	1.064
DV How much want a baby?	72	1.56	.803
DV Intend to have baby in	72	4.44	2.562
Baby at young age is accepted	71	2.75	1.222
Using contraceptives before marriage looks promiscuous and less trustworthy	73	2.37	1.399
Contraceptives not be used because prevent a child's birth	73	2.21	1.518
Contraceptives harm health or cause illness	73	3.10	1.609
Unprotected sex if you trust and love	73	2.82	1.602
Be in love to have a baby?	73	6.29	1.307

## Results cont.

Table 2  
Summary of Intercorrelations

	Baby at young age is accepted	Using contraceptives before marriage looks promiscuous and less trustworthy	Contraceptives not be used because prevent a child's birth	Contraceptives harm health or cause illness	Unprotected sex if you trust and love	Be in love to have a baby?
DV Likelihood of getting pregnant	.026	-.035	.159	.296*	.335**	-.242*
DV Likelihood of unplanned pregnancy	.208	-.143	.057	.324**	.378**	-.345**
DV How much want a baby?	.204	.184	.156	.105	.406**	-.229
DV Intend to have baby in	.113	.347**	.366**	.348**	.153	-.252*
DV Intend to have baby in	.232	.170	.353**	.220	.484**	-.037

Note: N=71  
\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01

## Results cont.

- Five hypotheses were supported
- Significant correlations between cultural beliefs and perceptions of likelihood of getting pregnant were found
- Belief that contraceptives harm health or can cause an illness was linked to likelihood of getting pregnant
- Belief that it is okay to have unprotected sex if you trust and love someone was 14 linked to the likelihood of having an unplanned pregnancy, how much they wanted a baby, and in what time frame they intended to have a
- Belief that contraceptives should not be used because they prevent a child's birth was linked to how soon they want to have a baby
- Significant correlations
  - Belief that contraceptives harm your health or cause an illness was linked to likelihood of having an unplanned pregnancy
  - Belief that it is okay to have unprotected sex with someone you love and trust was linked to likelihood of getting pregnant
  - Belief that you have to be in love to have a baby was inversely related to likelihood of having an unplanned as well as likelihood of getting pregnant
  - Belief that using contraceptives before marriage looks promiscuous and less trustworthy was linked to how soon they want a baby
  - Belief that contraceptives should not be used because they prevent a child's birth was linked to when they intend to have a baby
  - Belief that contraceptives harm health or can cause an illness was linked to how soon they want a
  - Belief that you have to be in love to have a baby was inversely related to how soon they want a baby

## Limitations

- Study only studied relationships between variables
- Cannot conclude how predictor variables affected criterion variables
- Culture alone cannot be the only predictor to why Latinas have such alarming pregnancy rates, since there is still the possibility that there may be other factors that intertwine with the culture
- Other possible factors that may influence pregnancy rates among Latinas are parental as well as peer influences
- Study only examined how perceptions regarding pregnancy are related to cultural beliefs
- Methodological issues: Framing of questions
- Theoretical issues: Marianismo and Familismo overlap but still different

## Future directions

- Future studies may measure parental and peer influences in greater depth
- Parents and peers may play a role in Latinas' beliefs regarding sex and contraceptives
- Future study may examine how parents and peers can influence pregnancy rates among young Latinas
- How much young Latinas know about pregnancy and contraceptives needs to be examined
- Questions regarding what risk factors exist when having a baby at a young age as well as why they believe contraceptives harm their health or can cause illnesses will be measured

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