

***Of Races & Places: What You Need to Know About Latin American Breastfeeding Families in the United States***

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**Objectives:**

The learner will be able to:

1. Compare and contrast the racial and ethnic classification systems of Latin America and the United States
2. Explain the impact of immigrant acculturation to the U.S. on breastfeeding rates and practices
3. Discuss the demographic breakdown of the Hispanic population of the United States

**Session Description:**

Race as a social construct is defined differently in Latin America than it is in the United States; in Latin America race is more fluid, less biological, and more class- and context-dependent than in the U.S., embracing qualities that in the U.S. are regarded as ethnicity or culture. And because the racial classification categories of Latin America are also much broader than that of the United States, part of the struggle that Latin American immigrants experience is how to fit their racial sense of self into the U.S.'s binary black-or-white system. In this session, attendees will learn information crucial to their ability to better understand and serve the breastfeeding needs of Hispanic families in the United States. It will examine the fundamental differences between the racial and ethnic classification systems of Latin America versus the United States, the demographics of the Hispanic population of the United States, the current state of breastfeeding and the IBCLC profession in Latin America, and the research on the impact of immigrant acculturation to the U.S. on breastfeeding rates and practices. Throughout the session, the presenter will put a human face on the topic using real stories from her nearly twenty-year practice as an IBCLC in a large Hispanic community.

**Outline:**

**I. Race and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Latin America**

- a. Latin Americans are descended from three peoples: the native population of Latin America, Europeans, and Africans
- b. Over 90% of enslaved Africans were taken to the Caribbean and South America. Brazil = nearly 5 million; United States = approximately 450,000

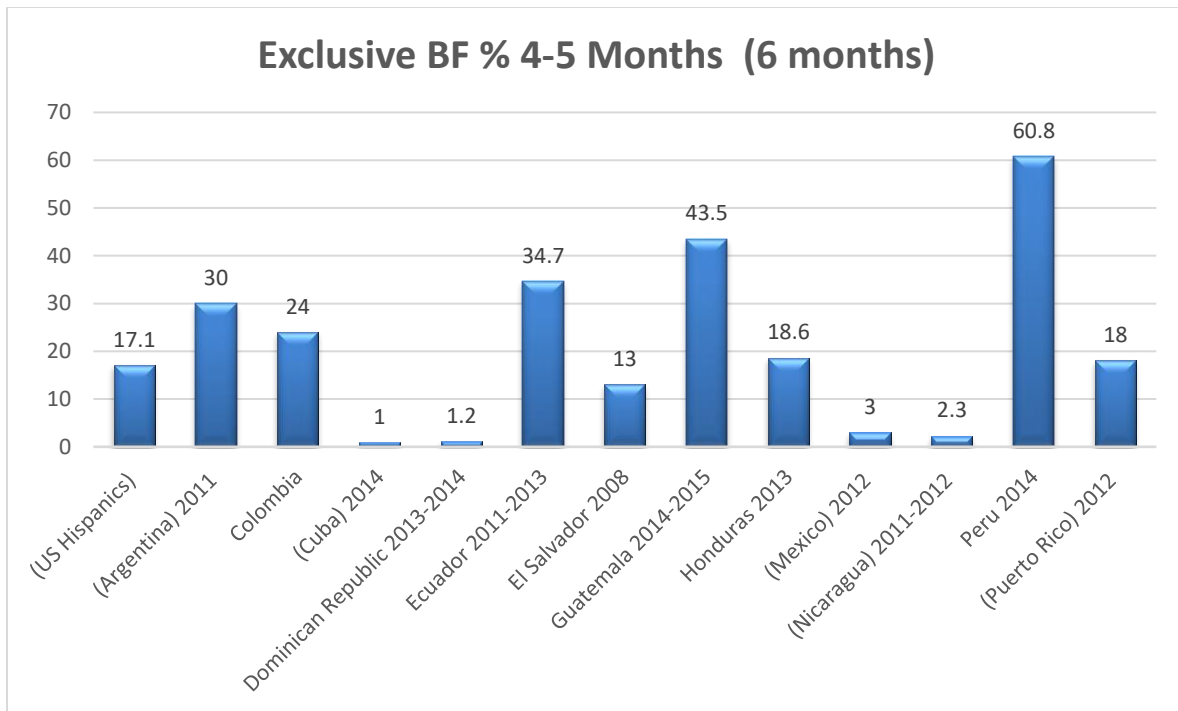
- c. From the beginning, there was much intermixing between the Europeans, enslaved Africans, and the native population.

## **II. Racial Classification of Hispanics in Latin America and the United States**

- a. The United States tends towards a binary black-or-white system of racial classification. The “rule of hypodescent” (or the “one-drop rule”) assigns persons of mixed race to the status of the subordinate social group, and a change in social status does not lead to a change in perceived race.
- b. Latin America: a kind of “reverse one-drop rule” – persons with any white European ancestry are not considered black.
- c. Four major differences between the racial classification systems of the US and Latin America
  - i. Latin America: race = a more social concept, & not necessarily passed down to the next generation; US = more genealogical or biological.
  - ii. Latin America: not based solely on skin color; other traits both physical and social - such as hair texture, social class, preferred language and educational status - help to define one’s race
  - iii. Latin America: change in social status can change one’s race
  - iv. Latin America: many more racial categories. Not always well defined and sometimes overlap
- d. Similarities also exist
  - i. Both have histories of conquering the indigenous population, slavery and immigration
  - ii. Both use their constructions of race to perpetuate the benefits and positions of those in power over those without it

## **III. Breastfeeding and the IBCLC Profession in Latin America**

- a. Breastfeeding initiation is nearly universal throughout Latin America – over 90% everywhere except Puerto Rico
- b. Duration to 1 year varies widely but is generally higher than it is in the United States
- c. EBF rates to 6 months demonstrate that supplementation is widespread in Latin America, and that the Hispanic population of the US is dominated by those from countries with the lowest rates – usually lower than the US EBF rate



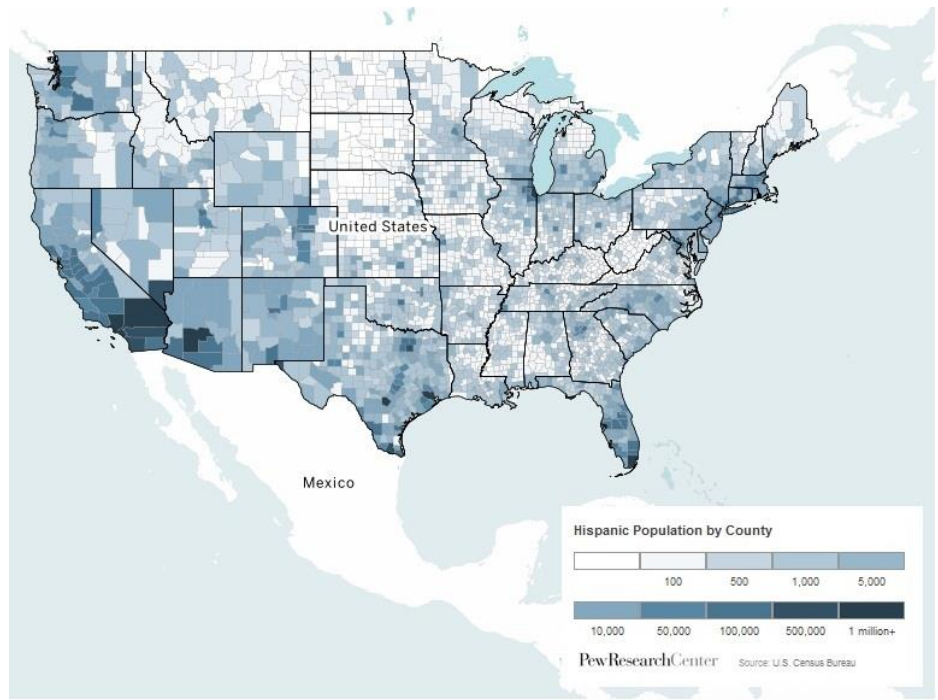
d. The number of IBCLCs in Latin America varies widely by country, with the greatest number in Brazil, Peru, and Mexico. Brazil alone has more IBCLCs than most of the rest of Latin America combined.

Argentina	8
Brazil	61
Chile	9
Colombia	7
Costa Rica	4
Dominican Republic	1
Ecuador	7
Guatemala	2
Honduras	1
Mexico	28
Panama	1
Paraguay	3
Peru	50
Puerto Rico	15
Uruguay	6
Venezuela	5

Bolivia, Cuba, El Salvador, and Nicaragua have 0 IBCLCs

#### IV. Who Are the Hispanics of the United States?

a. Distribution – throughout the US but primarily in California, Texas, Florida and New York



- b. Group Share – the vast majority of the nation’s Hispanics are Mexicans, but group share varies widely across the country with Mexicans dominating the west, Puerto Ricans the northeast, Salvadorans in the nation’s capital, and Cubans in southern Florida

Figure 1  
**U.S. Hispanic Population, by Origin, 2011**  
*(in thousands)*

Origin	Population (in thousands)	% of Hispanics
All Hispanics	51,927	
Mexican	33,539	64.6
Puerto Rican	4,916	9.5
Salvadoran	1,952	3.8
Cuban	1,889	3.6
Dominican	1,528	2.9
Guatemalan	1,216	2.3
Colombian	989	1.9
Spaniard	707	1.4
Honduran	702	1.4
Ecuadorian	645	1.2
Peruvian	556	1.1
Nicaraguan	395	0.8
Venezuelan	259	0.5
Argentinean	242	0.5

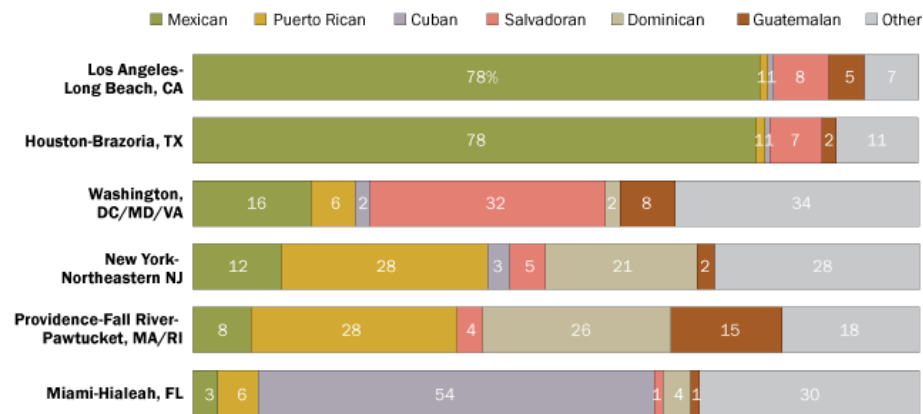
Note: Total U.S. population is 311,592,000 (rounded to the nearest thousand).

Source: Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of the 2011 ACS (1% IPUMS)

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**Largest Hispanic Origin Group Shares in Selected Metropolitan Areas, 2011**

Percent of the Hispanic population in the metro area that is ...



Notes: In Los Angeles-Long Beach, CA, and Houston-Brazoria, TX, Dominicans make up less than 0.5% of the area's Hispanic population. In Providence-Fall River-Pawtucket, MA/RI, Cubans make up less than 0.5% of the area's Hispanic population. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of the 2011 American Community Survey (1% IPUMS)

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- c. Nativity – 64% of Hispanics in the U.S. were born in the U.S.; 75% are U.S. citizens
- d. Education – 29% of the U.S. population overall have a Bachelor’s degree. South Americans in the U.S. (except for Ecuadorians) are more likely to have a Bachelor’s degree than the overall US population, or than individuals from the Caribbean, Mexico, or Central America

Venezuelans	51%
Argentinians	40%
Spaniards	32%
Colombians	31%
Peruvians	31%
<b>US Average</b>	<b>29%</b>
Cubans	25%

Nicaraguans	20%
Ecuadorians	19%
Puerto Ricans	16%
Dominicans	16%
Mexicans	10%
Hondurans	8%
Salvadorans	7%
Guatemalans	7%

**V. Impact of Acculturation on Breastfeeding**

- a. Increased years of residence in the US was associated with lower breastfeeding initiation and shorter duration of exclusive and any breastfeeding (Harley, Stamm & Eskenazi 2007)
- b. Immigrant women of each racial/ethnic group had higher breastfeeding initiation and longer duration rates than native women. Acculturation was associated with lower breastfeeding rates among both Hispanic and non-Hispanic women (Singh, Kogan & Dee 2007)
- c. Gibson-Davis & Brooks-Gunn (2006)

- i. Native-born mothers had 85% reduced odds of breastfeeding compared to foreign-born mothers and 66% reduction in the odds of breastfeeding at 6 months.
- ii. Each year of US residency decreased the odds of breastfeeding by 4%; this held true for Mexicans, other Hispanics, and non-Hispanics.
- iii. Having a partner born in the US decreased breastfeeding initiation by 83%
- iv. For every year a father resided in the US, a mother was 5% less likely to breastfeed and less likely to be breastfeeding at 6 months
- v. For every year a foreign-born father resided in the US, the odds of breastfeeding at 6 months decreased by 2%
- d. Higher acculturated women were less likely to BF than less acculturated women even after controlling for education, age and income (Gibson et al 2005)

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