

# Family Strengthening Scholars Project Abstracts

**Project Title:** Examining the Influence of Cultural Values on Pathways to Strengthen Healthy Marriages and Responsible Fatherhood Among Mexican-Origin Fathers

Research among Latino families, particularly Mexican-origin families, has documented the critical role cultural values play in influencing family relationships and parenting. However, this work has primarily focused on mothers. The proposed project design involves testing an adapted family stress model by recruiting 80 Mexican-origin fathers to participate in in-depth interviews that include surveys on cultural values (familismo, machismo and respeto), father involvement (engagement, accessibility and responsibility), cooperative co-parenting, romantic relationship socioemotional support, sociocultural contextual stressors (discrimination, social isolation, economic pressure, English competency pressures), and depressive symptomatology. The proposed study will contribute to research in two important ways by: 1) identifying specific cultural factors buffering Mexican-origin fathers' psychological health from the influence of sociocultural contextual stressors and 2) examining the role of cultural factors in moderating the influence of Mexican-origin fathers' psychological distress on fathers' parenting and marital relationships. Examining culturally specific risks and strengths for family process pathways will pinpoint key information to inform future intervention work aimed at strengthening healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood among Mexican-origin families.

**Sample:**

80 biological fathers self-identified as of Mexican-origin with 3 to 6 year old children and who are married and/or cohabiting with the child's mother.

**Measures:**

Sociocultural Contextual Stressors

- Economic Pressure
- English Competency Pressures
- Discrimination

Psychological Distress

- Fathers' Depressive Symptoms

Family Processes

- Fathers' Parenting
- Coparenting Cooperation
- Relationship Quality

Cultural Values

- Caballerismo
- Familismo beliefs

**Project Title:** Effectiveness of OurRelationship.com to Underserved Couples

In the proposed study, the effects of the OurRelationship.com program on African-American, Hispanic/Latino, lower-income, and rural couples will be examined. Within a nationally-representative sample of 300 couples, OurRelationship.com demonstrated the ability to attract and retain a diverse population of couples. However, it is unclear whether results for the general population will hold for these underserved groups. To investigate this question, the proposed study has three aims: (1) Determine differences in couples' qualitative experience, program evaluations, and retention; (2) Examine how underserved couples differ in change in relationship functioning, mental health and quality of life, and important child outcomes; (3) Estimate the cost-effectiveness of OurRelationship.com. This study has the potential to demonstrate the ability to improve the romantic relationships of couples currently struggling or unable to reach couple intervention services. By testing OurRelationship.com, the proposed study will be able to show whether or not it is able to improve lives through the increasing romantic relationship functioning. Improvement in this domain has consistently shown positive downstream effects to mental health, physical health, and overall quality of life.

**Sample:**

300 couples (600 individuals) who enrolled in the recently-completed National Institute of Health (NIH) study of the OurRelationship.com program. For being eligible for this study, both partners needed to be 21-65 years old; heterosexual; residing in the United States; cohabiting for at least 6 months; engaged or married; and at least one partner needed to score below the standardized distress cut off on the Couple Satisfaction Index. Couples were excluded if they were dating, separated, divorced, having an affair, engaged in moderate to severe or fear of physical aggression and at risk for suicide.

**Method:**

Couples are enrolled to either receive the treatment or control condition. Following the completion of the program, couples are asked to complete a variety of measures at 3 months post treatment and one year post treatment.

**Measures:**

Demographic Information

Relationship Functioning

- Couples Satisfaction Inventory
- Relationship Commitment
- Emotional Intimacy
- Communication Patterns Questionnaire
- Physical Aggression
- Coparenting

Individual Functioning

- Depressive Symptoms
- Suicidal Ideation
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder Symptoms
- Alcohol and Drug Use
- Stress
- Physical Health

### Child Functioning

- The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

### Reactions to Program

- Quantitative Program Evaluation
- Qualitative Program Evaluation