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Writing a Thesis

Cold uterus and other beliefs about fertility on the
US-Mexico border

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Border Region

- 83 births per 1000 in the border region to 68.6 in the US
- Over half of the border population is Hispanic (52.1%) (14.7% of the total U.S. population) □
- Just under one-third of the border population (31%) is under the age of 19

March of Dimes. 2011. "Maternal and infant health profile: United States/Mexico border region." Accessed November 28, 2014. <http://www.marchofdimes.org/Peristats/pdfdocs/brp/99brp.pdf>

Border Health Commission. 2006. "The U.S./Mexico border: Demographic, socio-economic, and health issues profile I." Accessed March 22, 2015. http://www.borderhealth.org/files/res_805.pdf

Problem

- Birth rates in both the US and Mexico border region are higher than rates in non-border regions of either country, respectively
- 2009, Adolescent Hispanic birth rates: 73.8 births per 1000 in the US border region compared to 63.6 in the US overall, and 86.7 in the Mexico border region compared to 72.5 in Mexico overall
- Despite dramatic declines in birth rates in recent years, the border region adolescent birth rates still remain significantly higher than elsewhere in either country, respectively.

McDonald, J. A., O. Mojarro, P. D. Sutton, S. J. Ventura. 2013. A binational overview of reproductive health outcomes among US Hispanic and Mexican women in the border region. *Preventing Chronic Disease, 10*. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd10.130019>

Problem

- Current surveillance instruments
 - Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System [PRAMS]
 - Encuesta Nacional de Salud y Nutrición [ENSANut]

Study Question

What influences are impacting fertility behavior among women in the border region?

Methods

- Secondary data analysis
- The data were originally collected as part of a pilot study to develop a binational health surveillance system
- Read the transcribed and translated discussions
 - To become familiar with the text
 - To develop codes and identify themes – inductive thematic analysis techniques
- Translation
 - Cuidarse
 - Aliviarse

Methods, cont.

- Codes were discussed between two investigators and a codebook was agreed upon
- Theme identification was supported by the codebook
- MaxQDA 11 software



Original Study

Location	Age group	Average Age	Total Participants
Brownsville			
Group 1	≤ 19 years	17	6
Group 2	≤ 19 years	17	5
Group 3	≥ 20 years	22	8
Group 4	≥ 20 years	30	7
Matamoros			
Group 1	≤ 19 years	16	9
Group 2	≤ 19 years	17	8
Group 3	≥ 20 years	26	8
Group 4	≥ 20 years	22	10

Themes

- Trusted Information Sources
- Pregnancy and Birth Prevention
- Gender Roles
- Concept of Family Planning
- Trusted sources of information
- Pregnancy prevention
- Gender roles
- Family planning and abortion

Conclusions

- Two findings that have not been documented
- Others identified are consistent with previous literature
- Future research and health education strategies
- Improvements in reproductive health surveillance instruments that are used to inform programs and policies

Reasons I chose a thesis

Opportunity!

- Academic support and resources
- Become an expert on a topic of my choice
- Personal goals
- Time

Helpful Resources

- Publish and Flourish
- Library
- IRB
- Research course electives
- Professors

Process

- Talk with your professors – you'll need at least three of them on your thesis committee
- Get familiar with the handbook – there are a lot of requirements, signatures, dates, and deadlines
- Organize yourself and a timeline
- Start early

Timeline

- 1st semester – decision to complete a thesis and choosing a committee chair
- 2nd semester – writing prospectus and proposal
- 3rd semester – IRB approval, data analysis, writing
- 4th semester – writing

Lessons Learned – Thesis writing

- Drafts, Drafts, and more Drafts!
- Trying to write a little each day
- Start with what you think is early, and then move at least 2 weeks before that
- The reward is completely worth the extra work

Lessons Learned – Publishing

- Find several journals whose requirements fit your manuscript
 - Subject matter
 - Article length
 - Qualitative vs quantitative
 - Formatting style
 - How often they publish
- Drafts, Drafts, and more Drafts!
- Stay on top of the editing
- The reward is completely worth it

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Link to article:

<https://www.clinmedjournals.org/articles/ijwhw/international-journal-of-womens-health-and-wellness-ijwhw-2-032.php?jid=ijwhw>

