A Decade of Research on Latina Adolescent Suicidal Behaviors: Lessons Learned

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National Hispanic and Latino ATTC
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BACKGROUND
Sexual and racial/ethnic minority youth are burdened with higher rates of ideation, planning, attempts, and deaths by suicide than their non-minority peers (Liu et al., 2012; Silenzio et al, 2007; Marshal et al, 2011)
Non-lethal suicidal behaviors during adolescence are part of a trajectory involving future suicide attempts and adult psychopathology (Goldman-Mellor et al., 2014).

Non-lethal suicidal behaviors are strong predictors of completed suicide (Suominen et al., 2004).
EPIDEMIOLOGY
Suicidal Behavior in the U.S.

Rate of attempted suicide among adolescents girls in the U.S. in 2015*

• Latina: 15.1%
• Black: 10.2%
• White: 9.8%

Prevalence of Suicide Attempts among Female Adolescents – 1995 to 2015

[Graph showing the prevalence of suicide attempts among female adolescents from 1995 to 2015, categorized by race/ethnicity: White, Black, Latinas. The graph indicates a general decrease in prevalence over the years, with slight fluctuations.]

CDC YRBS, 1995 - 2015
Suicide Attempts and Suicides among Adolescents

Suicide Attempts

- **Per 100:**
  - White: 6.9%
  - Black: 15.1%
  - Latino: 2.8/100,000
  - Girls: Black
  - Boys: White

Suicides

- **Per 100,000:**
  - White: 7.9/100,000
  - Black: 2.8/100,000
  - Latino: 7.9/100,000

*CDC, 2012, 2015*
OUR STUDY
Sociocultural Processes in Latina Teen Suicide Attempts

NIMH, Grant R01 MH070689, PI: Luis H. Zayas

2005 - 2010

“One in five Latina girl nationally attempts suicide (CDC, 1996, 2000) and we do not know why.”

(Zayas et al, 2005)
R01 Conceptual Model

Culture and Cultural Traditions

Adolescent Development

Family Functioning

Family Sociocultural Environment

Emotional Vulnerability & Psychosocial Functioning

Subjective Experience of Adolescent-Family Conflict

Suicide Attempt

Why Do So Many Latina Teens Attempt Suicide? A Conceptual Model for Research

Luis H. Zayas, PhD,
Rebecca J. Lester, PhD, and
Leopoldo J. Cabassa, MSW
Washington University in St. Louis

Lisa R. Fortuna, MD, MPH
Harvard University
R01 Methods

Quantitative

Sample
- 121 Latina teen attempters
- 105 parents of attempters (86 mothers, 19 fathers)
- 110 Latina teens with no history of attempted suicide
- 100 parents of non-attempters (83 mothers, 17 fathers)

Questionnaire:
- Family structure
- Family environment
- Parent-child relationship
- Acculturation
- Behavior problems
- Demographics

Qualitative

Sample
- 73 Latina teen attempters
- 62 parents of attempters (46 mothers, 16 fathers)
- 68 Latina teens with no history of attempted suicide
- 62 parents of non-attempters (48 mothers, 14 fathers)

In-depth interview:
- Experience of attempt
- Family context
- Family dynamics
- Life outside the home
- Future expectations

Data examined to assess why Latina teens attempt suicide
R01 Findings

Stressed mother-daughter relationships
Zayas, Hausmann-Stabile, & Kuhlberg, 2011
Baumann, Kuhlberg, Zayas, 2010
Zayas, Bright, Alvarez-Sanchez, & Cabassa, 2009

Family dynamics characterized by conflict and dysfunctionality
Gulbas, Nolle, Hausmann-Stabile, Kuhlberg, Peña, Zayas, & Baumann, 2011
Peña, Kuhlberg, Zayas, Bauman, Gulbas, Hausmann-Stabile, & Nolle, 2011
Clashes with parents due to the girls’ increasing autonomy

Kuhlberg, Peña, & Zayas, 2010

Low aspirations

Hausmann-Stabile, Gulbas, Zayas, 2013

Suicidal teens need developmentally appropriate treatments

Hausmann-Stabile, Gulbas, Zayas (in press)
Latino cultural gender roles
Nolle, Gulbas, Kuhlberg & Zayas, 2012

Latino idioms of distress
Zayas & Gulbas, 2012

Cultural vulnerability
Zayas & Pilat, 2008

Suicidal teens acculturate to street culture
Hausmann-Stabile, Gulbas & Zayas, 2016
Subjective Distress | Interpersonal Discord | Emotional Isolation
Low lethality, impulsive  
*Hausmann-Stabile, Kuhlberg, Zayas, Nolle, & Cintron, 2012*

Multiple suicide attempts using means available at home  
Zayas, Gulbas, Fedoravicius, & Cabassa, 2010

Following arguments with caregivers  
Zayas, Gulbas, Fedoravicius, & Cabassa, 2010

Different from non-suicidal self-harming behaviors  
Gulbas, *Hausmann-Stabile, & Zayas, 2015*

Very hard to study  
Zayas, *Hausmann-Stabile, Pilat, 2009*
• Complex problem that requires a multidimensional and interdisciplinary focus

• Research needs to be able to untangle how individual factors and stressful environments interact to shape suicidal behaviors

• Also important to consider protective factors that keep high-risk youth from attempting suicide
RESOURCES FOR LATINAS AND THEIR FAMILIES
Disseminating in the Community: Suicidal Latina Adolescents Brochures

Long Island Crisis Center, New York

Did you know that 1 in 6 Latina adolescents attempts suicide?

How to Prevent Latina Adolescents and Care for the Well-being of Our Communities

TIP #1: Many people do not know how to ask for help to address their suicidal behaviors.

If you are thinking of doing harm to yourself or have attempted suicide, you are not alone.

TIP #2: Suicide thoughts and behaviors are very common among Latina adolescents. Suicide thoughts and behaviors are common among people feeling if a lot of times, some are very uncommon to feel hassled in the face of conflicts or lived ones, such as family member's UF medical.

If you are suicide, ask for help!

TIP #3: Youth suicide attempts are a serious behavior. You can call for attention or something to be ended.

Protecting Latina Daughters

Calling on our Clinic and Our Communities

TIP #4: People who attempt suicide are very sad and depressed. Other times, people attempt suicide because they are very angry and upset. Others attempt suicide because they want their family to experience general or.

If you experience any of these feelings, and cannot stop feeling this way, ask for help!

Protecting Latina Daughters

Contacting on our Clinic and Our Communities

Preventing Suicide by Staying Connected

Did you have to 1 in 6 Latina adolescents attempt suicide? Latina adolescents have many different ways of experiencing physical and mental health issues, including self-harm and mental health problems. These are common among people feeling if a lot of times, some are very uncommon to feel hassled in the face of conflicts or lived ones, such as family member's UF medical.

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TIP #5: Suicide thoughts and behaviors are very common among Latina adolescents. Suicide thoughts and behaviors are common among people feeling if a lot of times, some are very uncommon to feel hassled in the face of conflicts or lived ones, such as family member's UF medical.

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If you are suicide, ask for help!

TIP #10: Youth suicide attempts are a serious behavior. You can call for attention or something to be ended.

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If you are suicide, ask for help!

TIP #12: Youth suicide attempts are a serious behavior. You can call for attention or something to be ended.

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TIP #13: Suicide thoughts and behaviors are very common among Latina adolescents. Suicide thoughts and behaviors are common among people feeling if a lot of times, some are very uncommon to feel hassled in the face of conflicts or lived ones, such as family member's UF medical.

If you are suicide, ask for help!

TIP #14: Youth suicide attempts are a serious behavior. You can call for attention or something to be ended.

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If you are suicide, ask for help!

TIP #16: Youth suicide attempts are a serious behavior. You can call for attention or something to be ended.
THANK YOU

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