

Suicide Attempts and Culturally Responsive Approaches for Latinos



Suicide is a major public health concern as it is among the leading causes of death in the United States.¹ Death by suicide and suicide attempts need to be understood with the context of the person's culture and subculture, social position, and the cultural characteristics, values, and beliefs that can create risks for suicide or provide protective factors.

Latinos, in general, die by suicide at rates similar to other minority populations. Yet for Latinas—from 14 to about 18 years of age—the rates of suicide attempts have been higher than non-Hispanic White teen females and African American or Black teen females. From 1991 up to 2015, Latinas outpaced other adolescent girls in their rates of suicide attempts.²

Variables to consider include psychopathology, cognitive processes, affective processes, and adverse experiences.³ In Latino populations it is important to consider:

- Acculturation gaps
- Acculturative stress
- Trauma experiences including immigration process
- Cultural values

Culture as a Protective Factor

Familism: Represents the value of close family interaction and emotions. Affection, loyalty, unity, and clear lines of emotional attachments are part of what add to the protective factors for Hispanic suicide.⁴

Spirituality and Religion: Religious beliefs that discourage suicide or one's personal beliefs about the value of living are protective factors.



Culturally responsive models recognize that culture shapes beliefs about causes, explanations, the way individuals experience and respond to distress.

Culturally Responsive Prevention and Intervention Models

- **Con Mi MADRE (www.conmimadre.org):** This program, while not specifically targeting the reduction of suicide attempts, fosters precisely the relationship that reduces harmful behaviors among young Latinas.
- **Family-Oriented Family Therapies:** Maximize the effects of intervention for adult and adolescent Latinos, since family therapy builds bridges between family members who were estranged or parents and adolescents who were in conflict. Family-oriented interventions provide a unique opportunity as they recognize that suicidal behaviors of Latinas are most often rooted in longstanding family problems.
- Culturally-responsive Family Therapy models include: **Brief Strategic Family Therapy (BSFT), MultiDimensional Family Therapy (MDFT), Culturally Informed Flexible Family Treatment for Adolescents (CIFFTA) and Familias Unidas.**⁵

Other Resources:

The Suicide Prevention Resource Center: <https://www.sprc.org>

SAFE-T: <https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/sma09-4432.pdf>



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