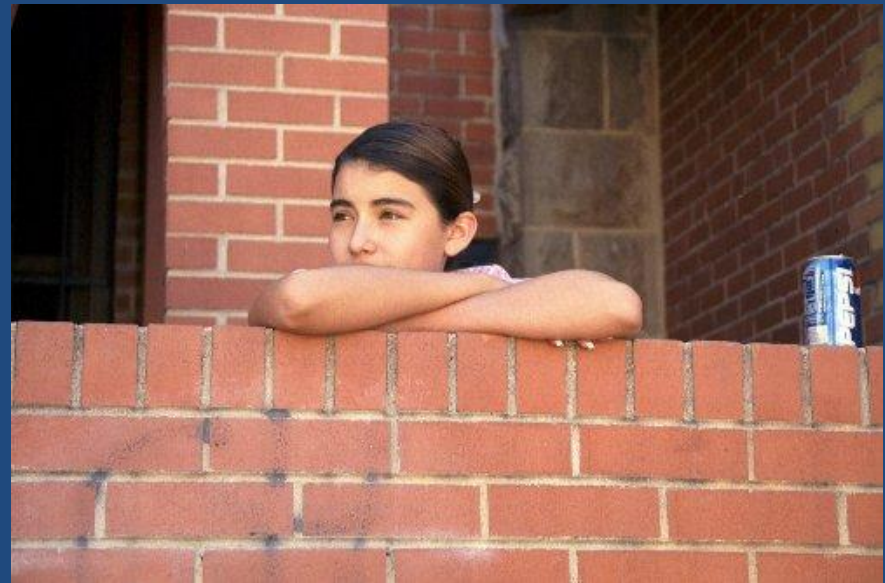


# Latina Adolescent Suicide: Towards a deeper understanding of therapeutic interventions for Latino adolescents in distress

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# Acknowledgements

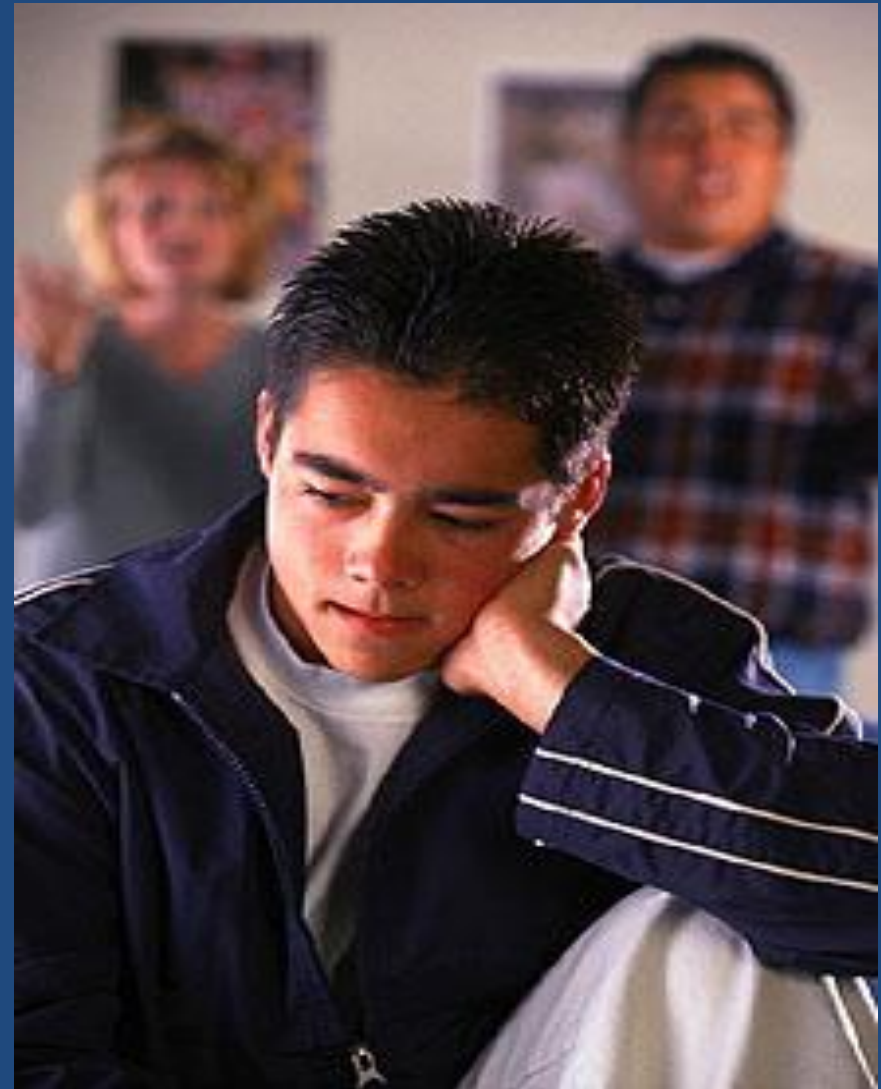
- National Institute of Mental Health
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# Outline

- Background on Intervention Needs for Latino Adolescents
- The Epidemiology of Latina Adolescent Suicide Attempts
- Phenomenological Study of Latina Adolescent Suicide Attempts
- Implication for Research and Intervention Development

# Background & Motivation

- An abiding concern with the lack of empirically based knowledge about evidence based treatments for Latino adolescents.
- Need for studies that clarify social and cultural factors in the etiology and consequences of health and illness, and that link basic research to prevention and treatment.



# Latino & Adolescent

- The proportion of minority children in the US is increasing from 31% of all children in 1990 to 48% by 2015 (USDHHS 2001)
- By 2010, 22% of school age children will have immigrant parents



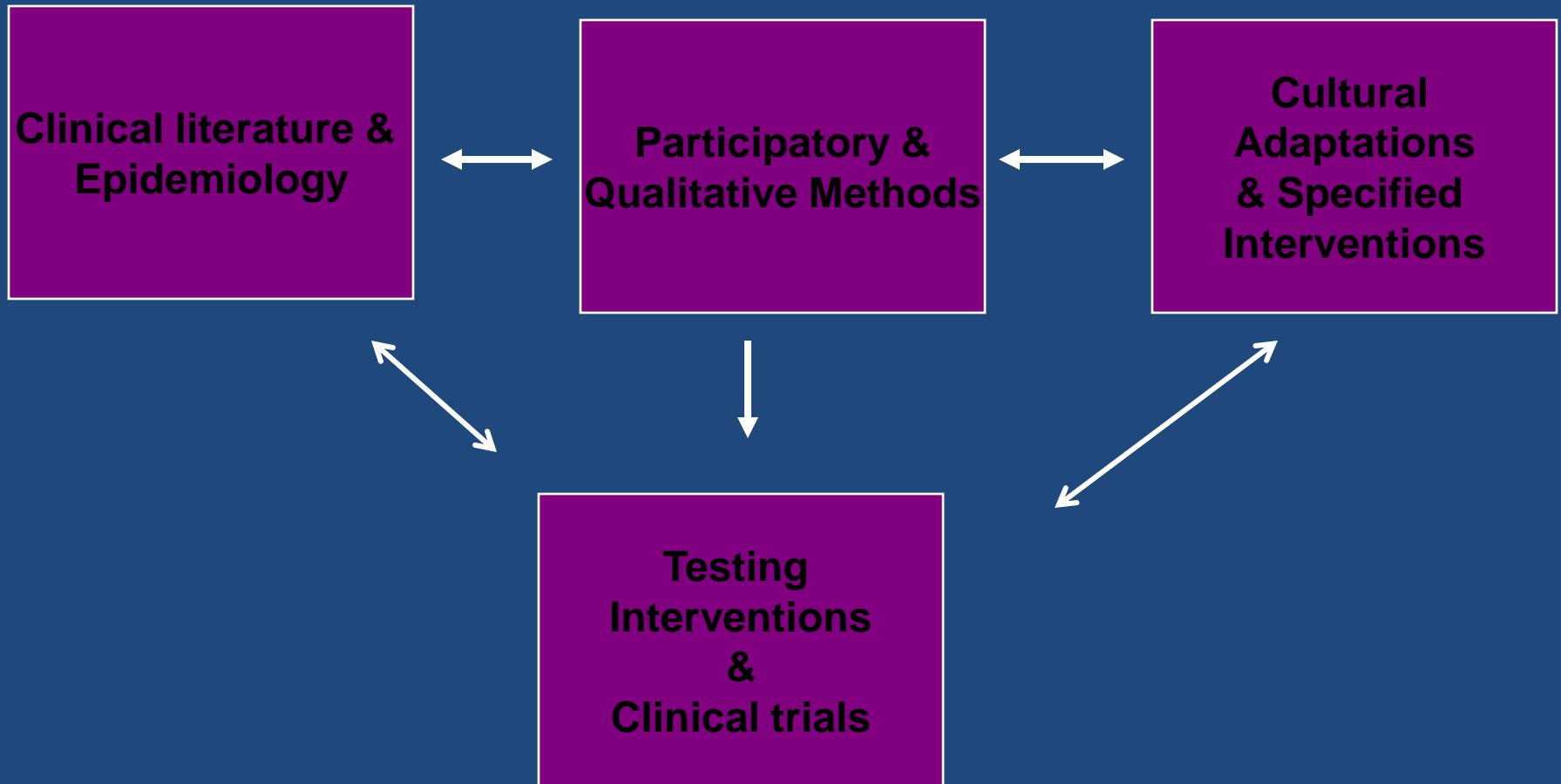
# Latino Adolescents

- Many of the studies done thus far have not addressed within-group ethnic or racial differences.
- Unique risks for immigrants and refugee families
- Adolescents in general poorly studied despite special vulnerabilities

# Theoretical and Empirical Approaches

- Inductive, intra-ethnic approach
  - The dynamic role of acculturation for families and youth
  - Environment and special vulnerabilities for adolescent development
  - Parent-child factors in treatment

# Intra-ethnic approach for intervention Development



# Epidemiology: Latina Adolescent Suicide

- Rates of suicide higher than for their non-Hispanic counterparts (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2000).
  - One in five Hispanic girls nationally attempts suicide (CDC, 1996, 2000, 2004), ( 2x counterparts)
  - The literature on the factors associated with suicide attempts by adolescent Hispanic females is sparse
  - primarily descriptive and does not explore empirically the dynamics of Hispanic suicide attempts.

# Latino Suicide in the US

- The lifetime prevalence of suicidal ideation and attempts among Latinos was 10.2% and 4.4% respectively.
- Puerto Ricans more likely to ideate and attempt suicide than other Latinos.
- Most often occurring under the age of 18 years.
- Female gender, any DSM-IV diagnosis and dual diagnosis associated with an increased risk of lifetime suicidal ideation and attempt.

Fortuna, L. R., Perez, D. J., Canino, G., & Alegria, M. Prevalence and correlates of lifetime suicidal ideation and attempts among Latino subgroups in the United States. *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* 2007; 68(4): 572-81.

# Latino Suicide in the US

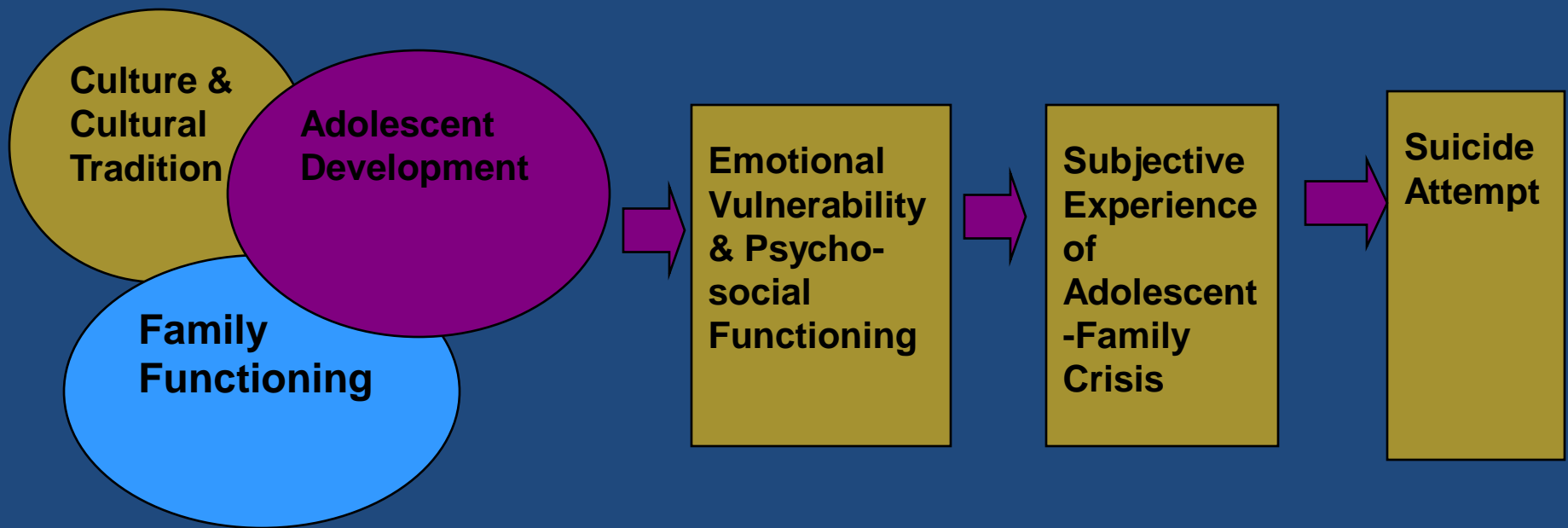
- Family cultural conflict, English proficiency, English language of childhood and US nativity were correlated with suicidal behavior among Latinos.
- Family Cultural Conflict positively associated with lifetime suicide attempt even without any lifetime DSM-IV disorder

# Clinical and theoretical formulations for understanding suicide attempts

- focusing on such issues as:
  - discrepant acculturation
  - family integrity and fragmentation ( Fortuna et al, 2007)
  - adolescent development
  - parent-adolescent relations

Zayas, L. H., Lester, R. J., Cabassa, L. J., & Fortuna, L. R. (2005). Why do so many Latina teens attempt suicide? A conceptual model for research. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 75(2), 275-287.

# Expanding upon a Conceptual Model for Intervention



# Study Aims

- Compare the family sociocultural environments of adolescent Latina suicide attempters and non-attempters and their parents
- Explore the phenomenology of the suicide attempts from the girls' perspective in contrast to the subjective experiences and behaviors of non-attempters in similar critical situations
- Explore parents' understandings of their daughters' suicide attempts

# Design

- Purposive sampling in mental health clinics
- Primarily mainland Puerto Rican or Dominican
- In-depth interviews with attempters and non-attempters
- Measures
  - self-esteem
  - Familism Scale
  - parent-child relations—CBQ; Robin & Foster, 1989
  - acculturation –Bidirectional Acculturation Scale
  - Mutuality

# Qualitative Methods

- Consensus Code Book
- Coder Agreement and Resolution
- NVIVO

# Demographics

	Attempters N=47	Non-Attempters N=46
Mean age	14.1 years	13.8 years
US Born	60.4%	67.4%
Puerto Rican	26.3%	18%
Dominican	21.1%	13.9%
Mexican	23.7%	13.9%
Colombian	7.9%	13.9%
US Citizen	65.8%	80.6%
Undocumented	7.9%	8.3%

# Results: Mutuality

## Adolescent MPDQ Scores – Evaluating Mutuality with Mothers Means (SD) and t-tests

Attempters (n=47)	Non-attempters (n=46)	t
3.81 (0.87)	4.36 (0.71)	3.04**

*\*\*p<.01*

Mutual Psychological Development Questionnaire (MPDQ; Genero, Miller, Surrey, & Baldwin, 1992).

# Results

## Adolescent Child Report of Parental Behavior (Schaefer, 1965) ) and t-tests – Evaluating Relationships with Mothers

Subscale	Attempters (n=46)	Non-attempters (n=46)	t
Affection	17.58 (5.18)	20.40 (3.93)	2.57*
Communication	16.44 (5.42)	19.34 (4.19)	2.51*
Intrusiveness	11.78 (2.99)	10.74 (2.56)	1.57
Support	25.44 (4.92)	27.54 (4.51)	1.87*

\* $p < .05$

# Lugo Familism Scale

	Attempter		Non Attempter		
	M	SD	M	SD	T values
Support	7.77	1.35	7.65	0.94	-0.46
Interconnected	7.68	2.14	8.09	1.16	1.02
Honor	5.78	1.87	5.95	1.77	0.40
Subjugation of Self	7.07	2.04	7.31	1.72	0.54
Familism	7.19	1.52	7.28	1.07	0.29

# Results

## Adolescent Youth Self-Report Subscale Means (SD) and t-tests

Subscale	Attempters (n=42)	Non-attempters (n=43/44)	t
Anxious/Depressed	11.03 (5.47)	6.40 (4.50)	-3.84****
Withdrawn/Depressed	7.59 (3.05)	4.83 (2.97)	-3.81***
Somatic	7.56(4.33)	5.46 (3.55)	-2.21*
Rule Breaking	7.76 (5.33)	3.34 (2.95)	-4.25***
Aggressive	14.50 (7.54)	8.29 (5.68)	-3.88***

\* $p < .05$

\*\*\* $p < .001$

\*\*\*\* $p < .0001$

# Results

- No differences between attempters and nonattempters in:
  - mother's evaluation of relationship with daughter
  - Adolescent or maternal orientation towards *familismo overall*
- Differences between parents and daughter :
  - In bidimensional acculturation,
  - feelings of family interconnectedness
  - Mutuality and parental affection
  - communication and support

# Conflict Resolution

**“..if they knew that, the way I was feeling, cause I didn’t, I didn’t know how to express myself. So I figured that if they knew the way I was feeling, that I didn’t want to be there, that I felt like I didn’t belong, that maybe they would change”.**

*--13 year old, US born daughter of US born Dominican Mother and Colombian born father.*

**“I tell her I cut myself because I can’t handle it. I get really angry, there is nothing else I can do if I get angry.”**

*--13 year old, US born Ecuadorian Girl*

# Preliminary Themes

- Attempts appear to be a means of coping with intense emotional distress
- Attempts related to conflict with parents
  - Girls are reluctant to share how they feel with parents
  - Girls don't think parents will understand them or their situation
  - Difficulties in resolving conflicts
- Dating, sexuality and relationships with boyfriends appear emblematic of the acculturative rift between these girls and their parents.

# Immigration Separation



# Immigration Separation

- As opportunities for documented and undocumented employment for women have increased, larger numbers of women have initiated their family's "stepwise" migration to the United States (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992).
- Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) data show that in 1991, the male: female immigrants ratio was 66: 34, whereas in 1996, it was 46: 54 (U.S. INS, 2000).

# Immigration Separation

- History of mother– child separations plays a decisive role in weakening the bond between mothers and children and disrupts key parenting practices.
- On reunification, children have to adapt to a new country, mothers and children have to adjust to living together again, and the children often have negative feelings about the separation.
- Negative sequelae for children including attachment difficulties, depressive responses, and behavior problems

# Immigration Separation: Overall themes

- Separation of the children from loved ones left behind
- Immigration/acculturation processes
- Relational effects of family separation and reconstitution
- Normative changes of adolescence
- Posttraumatic stress from neglect/abuse or traumatic migration
- Challenges of simultaneously reuniting and blending a family.

# Initial Implications for Interventions

- Specifics of family based therapies
- Prevention for adolescent girls
  - Navigating family integrity and acculturation
  - Parent child mutuality and mirroring
  - Social environments
  - Sexuality
  - Expectations
- Assisting immigrant parents to understand daughter's environment and developmental needs and to respond to these with competence

# Target Risk Factors

- Engagement and joining
- Identification of Core Family Processes
  - Problems with parental alliances
  - Disruptions in parental functioning
  - Inexperienced parenting
  - Escalating resentment in the family
  - Disruptions in the quality of the parent adolescent relationship
  - Response to environmental stressors and risks

# Strategies

- Establishing the cognitive “frame.”
- Addressing conflict resolution
- Managing Affect
- Generalizing to other content areas