Suicidal Behavior and Acculturation among Hispanics in the United States

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A recent study found that the lifetime risk of suicidal ideation and suicide attempts for Hispanics living in the United States increases along with their acceptance of and identification with U.S. culture (e.g. speaking English, having social networks with a greater proportion of people from non-Hispanic ethnic groups, and a lessening self-identification as Hispanic/Latino). A higher level of perceived discrimination was also found to be associated with a higher risk for suicidal ideation and attempts.

Each of the five variables used to measure acculturation (time spent in the United States, age at migration, Spanish vs. English language orientation, composition of social network, and Latino/Spanish ethnic orientation) was also found to increase the risk of suicidal behaviors. The relationship between suicidal behaviors and acculturation was “dose-related” – that is, the more acculturation, the higher the lifetime risk of ideation and attempts. Gender, participation in religious services, and size of social networks were factors not found to affect risk.

The authors suggest that suicide risk among Hispanics in the United States could be reduced by employing some of the “protective aspects of the traditional Hispanic culture (e.g. extended social networks, high social support, moral objections to suicide)” and by “normalizing the use of Spanish as a second language by the Hispanic population.”


SPRC Resource Note

For more information on how suicidal behavior affects Hispanics in the United States, see SPRC’s Suicide among Racial/Ethnic Populations in the U.S. – Hispanics [1].

Populations: Racial and Ethnic Groups, Hispanics and Latinos
About Suicide: Suicidal Thoughts and Behavior

Links within this resource
