



# HHS Public Access

Author manuscript

*Fam Process.* Author manuscript; available in PMC 2020 September 01.

Published in final edited form as:

*Fam Process.* 2019 September ; 58(3): 778–790. doi:10.1111/famp.12384.

## “I just kept it to myself:” The shaping of Latina suicidality through gendered oppression, silence, and violence

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### Abstract

Suicide is a critical issue among Latina youth. In this paper, we use family case analysis to explore how gendered oppression, silencing, and violence shape suicidal behaviors among a sample of Latina daughters (n=10), and their parents. For comparison, we include family narratives from Latina adolescents with no histories of suicide attempts (n=10). Results suggest how secrets and silence, as indicative of gendered oppression, may catalyze a suicide attempt. The risks are particularly salient when daughter and mother both have experienced violence that conflicts with gendered cultural scripts. Findings highlight the importance of parental engagement and exploration of histories of violence in the treatment of Latina suicide attempters. Future research should incorporate the risk factors of gendered oppression and violence to better understand the development of suicidality among Latina women.

### Keywords

Latina adolescents; suicidality; sexual violence; silence

### Introduction

Latina youth have higher rates of suicide attempts than their White and African-American female peers (Center for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2016; Romero, Edwards, Bauman & Ritter, 2013). They are also more likely to attempt suicide than Latino youth (Kann, et al, 2016). Literature documents the elevated attempt rates among Latinas living in the United States back to the mid-twentieth century (Trautman, 1961a, 1961b) and the higher prevalence of suicide attempts is reported across Latino sub-groups (Baca-Garcia et al., 2011). As Latinas are projected to form nearly one third of the U.S.’s female population by 2060 (Corby & Ortman, 2015), there is a need to understand the roots of this significant mental health disparity.

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The higher rates of suicide attempts among Latina youth warrants the use of intersectional frameworks in understanding the constructs that put these young women at risk. A feminist intersectional lens suggests that societal forces of oppression are interconnected and multilevel (Pitre & Kushner, 2015). Intersectional approaches can yield new understandings of how violence impacts Latina adolescents. For example, numerous studies suggest a strong link between exposure to violence and attempted suicide among Latina adolescents (Eaton, Foti, Brener, Crosby, Flores, & Kann, 2011; Gulbas, Hausmann-Stabile, De Luca, Tyler, & Zayas, 2015; Hausmann-Stabile, Gulbas, & Zayas, 2017; Pottie et al., 2015). Price and Kubchandani (2017) found that participation in physical fights, being threatened at school, and being forced to have sex were prevalent risk factors for suicidal behavior among Latina adolescents. This study explores how gendered oppression, violence, and silencing shape suicidal behaviors among Latina adolescent.

### Latino Families and Suicide

Previous literature supports the relationship between family dynamics and Latina suicide risk (Gulbas et al., 2011; Zayas, Gulbas, Fedoravicius, & Cabassa, 2010). Family cohesiveness and loyalty or *familism* (Kuhlberg, Peña, & Zayas, 2010), and empathic and empowering relationships or *mutuality* (Genero, Miller, Surrey, & Baldwin, 1992), are two constructs used to organize Latino domestic life (Kuhlberg et al., 2010). Incongruence in familism between parents and child has shown to deteriorate mutuality, and, indirectly, predict greater risk of suicide attempts among daughters (Zayas et al., 2010). Conflict surrounding parental expectations on dating and sexuality has shown to contribute to imbalanced family dynamics and resulting youth suicidality (Gulbas et al., 2011).

Latino families may have “cultural scripts of silence” or “codes” regarding painful circumstances (Gulbas & Zayas, 2017, p.59) or that defy family expectations (Romero et al., 2013). These scripts are often modeled by family members and then adopted by children on how to communicate and behave regarding sensitive topics (Gulbas & Zayas, 2017). Cultural scripts of silence may lead to a child’s emotional distress (Fivush, 2010), or potentially harmful coping mechanisms (Gulbas & Zayas, 2017). Gender specific issues, such as sexism and gender roles, are critical to a Latina teen’s well-being (Arellano & Ayala-Alcantar, 2004). These issues are also inherent to the mother’s experience (Denner & Dunbar, 2004). Globally, across Latino and non-Latino samples, women who experience sexual violence and whose mothers experienced sexual violence have an increased risk of attempting suicide (Devries et al., 2011). This literature suggests that silence, gendered oppression, and violence transcend generations, highlighting the need for research that can elicit narratives from multiple family members when exploring life-threatening issues (Ayres, Kavanaugh & Knafl, 2003; Imber-Black, 1998, 2014).

### Understanding Why Latina Teens Attempt Suicide

Within suicidology, few theories and frameworks are specific to the Latina teen experience. Cognitive behavioral theory (Beck, 1976), the interpersonal theory of suicide (IPT; Joiner, 2005; Van Orden et al., 2010), and the Three-Step Theory (3ST; Joiner & May, 2015) are three prominent frameworks used to understand why a person attempts suicide. Yet, these theories have been based on research with White, adult populations (Joe, Canetto & Romer,

2008), and are criticized for overlooking the importance of various social structures and systems, including families and intergenerational oppression, which impact youth development (Romero et al., 2013).

In contrast, the ecodevelopmental model of Latina suicide is one framework that examines the multi-systemic influences on Latina mental health (Zayas, Lester, Cabassa, & Fortuna, 2005). Based on the work of Szapocznik and Coatsworth (1999), family functioning and culture are central to a Latina adolescent's development (Zayas et al., 2005). The ecodevelopmental model of Latina suicide suggests that a Latina adolescent may attempt suicide in the context of poor psychosocial functioning and family crises (Zayas et al., 2005).

While the ecodevelopmental model of Latina suicide recognizes the role of family (Zayas et al., 2005), the examination of gendered oppression and violence within the family requires an intersectional lens (Arellano & Ayala-Alcantar, 2004). Feminist intersectional family science approaches infer that familial and social cultures mutually influence each other and reinforce gendered roles (Pitre & Kushner, 2015; Rosetto & Tollison, 2017). Silence is a common cultural script in response to imbalances in power (Rosetto & Tollison, 2017), providing insight into how silence and gendered oppression may perpetuate experiences of violence within a family (Rosetto & Tollison, 2017). Yet, little is known on how exposure to violence might intersect with other forms of oppression to shape the onset of suicidal behaviors.

### **Present Study**

Building upon the Latina youth and family literature, we illustrate the utility of intersectional frameworks in understanding how silence, as a product of gendered oppression (Rosetto & Tollison, 2017), perpetuates violence and potential suicidal behavior. We use the qualitative approach of family case analysis (Knafl, Deatrick & Gallow, 2008) to integrate narratives from three groups of Latina daughters with varying exposure to suicidality and violence, and their parents. This paper compares experiences of gendered oppression and silence across the three groups of Latina adolescents to explore how these constructs shape violence, and, consequently, suicide. The three groups include: girls with exposure to violence who have attempted suicide, girls with exposure to violence who have not attempted suicide, and girls with no histories of violence or suicide attempts. The relationships between gendered oppression, silence, violence, and suicidality were explored and described with each group. Findings suggest that intergenerational experiences of gendered oppression and violence may contribute to suicidality among Latina teenagers.

### **Methods**

Qualitative data used in this paper derive from a sub-sample of adolescents who participated in a larger, mixed-method project that examined sociocultural process of suicide attempts among young Latinas (Kuhlberg et al., 2010). In the larger study, adolescents with and without histories of suicidal behaviors, and their caregivers, were invited to complete a series of quantitative and qualitative assessments. Participants with suicidal behaviors were recruited from community mental health centers and hospitals; and participants without

suicidal behaviors were recruited from after-school and community youth programs. Project activities took place in New York City from 2005 to 2009. Overall, 122 adolescents completed the qualitative phase of the larger project. Parents provided consent and the youth provided assent to participate in the study. The institutional IRBs where the study was undertaken approved the study.

## Sample

In this paper, we use a sub-sample of participants who participated in the qualitative phase of the study. To develop the sub-sample, girls with histories of suicide attempts (including aborted or interrupted attempts) were included for analysis if: (1) both the adolescent and one or both of her parents completed the qualitative interview; and (2) the adolescent reported a violent experience. A violent experience included sexual or physical abuse, domestic violence, and neighborhood violence (physically bullying or crime). Based on this inclusion criteria, 10 suicide attempters were coded as having experiences of violence (Gulbas et al., 2015). Girls without histories of suicide attempts and/or violence were included for comparison. The two comparison groups included (1) 5 girls who did not attempt suicide and with histories of violence, and (2) 5 girls who no histories of suicide attempts or violence. Suicide attempters were matched with non-attempters based on age and either residency status or culture of origin. The matching resulted in a sub-sample of 20 adolescents: 10 suicide attempters with histories of violence, 10 non-attempters (5 with histories of violence and 5 with no histories of or violence), and their caregivers (N=43).

The sub-sample consisted of 13 mother-daughter dyads, 1 maternal grandmother-granddaughter dyad, 3 father-daughter dyads, and 3 daughter-parent triads (1 triad of biological parents, 1 triad including mother and stepfather, and 1 triad with two grandparents). The average age of the youth participants was approximately fifteen years old and girls mostly identified culturally as Puerto Rican, Ecuadoran, Dominican, Colombian, or Mexican. Most parents were born outside of the U.S. (see Table 1).

## Qualitative Interview

Qualitative interviews were audiotaped, transcribed, and analyzed in the language of the interviewee. Interviews ranged between 25 to 70 minutes. The interviewers were bilingual (English and Spanish speakers) and were multicultural counselors and social workers holding either a masters or doctoral degrees in their respected discipline. Sixteen (n=16) interviews were conducted in English and seventeen (n=17) were conducted in Spanish. Interviews began with general questions including daily life and routines, followed by more serious topics, such as family conflicts and the account of the suicide attempt (if applicable). The interview guide covered the topics of family life (relationships, roles, conflicts, and resolution), life outside of the family and home (social network, school, and extracurricular activities), dating and sexuality, and the suicidal incident.

## Data Analysis

Family-level analysis accounted for the daughter and parents' experiences of the suicide attempt and family interactions. Family-level analysis is a qualitative "method for maintaining the family as the unit of analysis" (Knafl et al., 2008, p.414). The family case

summary captures family dynamics while synthesizing individual data across family members (Ayres et al., 2003; Gulbas et al., 2011; Gulbas & Zayas, 2015). Analysis encompassed: (1) coding individual interviews to identify themes for family case summaries, (2) developing a thematic guideline and writing family case summaries using the guidelines, (3) identifying and refining of themes within the family case summaries, and (4) creating a thematic map of the dynamics between Latina adolescents and their parents (Gulbas et al., 2011; Gulbas & Zayas, 2015).

To identify general themes related to suicidality, gendered oppression, and sexual violence, individual accounts were initially coded and compared within and across families. This comparison of general themes allowed for the development of thematic guidelines that applied to our sub-sample and that reflected family experiences (Ayres et al., 2003; Gulbas et al., 2011). Initial themes from coding of individual interviews included: dating and sexuality, school, violence, the suicide attempt or alternative forms of coping, daughter's place in the world, parent's hopes for the future, and daughter's hopes for the future. The integration of individual examples according to the thematic guideline creates the family case summary (Ayres et al., 2003).

Family case summaries were analyzed in several passes to further explain the roles of gendered oppression, violence, and suicidality across families. To aid in comparison across families, spreadsheets were used to organize subthemes secrets and silence, redemption, and violence (Ayres et al., 2003). Analysis resulted in the following overarching themes (Table 2): daughter as redemption, redemption gone awry, daughter's secrets and silence, mother's secrets and silence paralleling daughter's experience, and secrets and silence colliding. Analysis within and across family summaries from the three groups did not yield any new codes or revisions to the six final themes, suggesting that code saturation had been reached (Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013). Interpretations of the data were compared between two researchers twice a month to achieve consensus in code application for individual accounts and family case summaries (Eisikovits & Koren, 2010). The Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ; Tong, Sainsbury & Craig, 2007) provided direction for describing the analysis process and for reporting findings.

## Results

Analysis of the interviews highlights the interplay among gendered oppression, silence, violence, and suicide risk among Latina teens included in the sub-sample. Dating and sexuality were subthemes across the family case summaries, as they were often catalysts for family conflict and/or disintegration in parent-child communication. Mothers' experiences of gendered oppression motivated parents to view daughters as a source of redemption and an opportunity to maintain family integrity. Daughters were expected to abstain from behaviors that detracted from school work. When daughters deviated from these gendered scripts, secrets and silence were used to preserve the moral integrity of the family. A daughter attempted suicide when her and her mother's secrets could no longer be maintained within the family structure. Figure 1 describes how the final themes relate between the daughter and mother, and, potentially, result in a suicide attempt. Examples of the categories across the three groups are shared in the following sections.

## Daughter as Source of Parental Redemption

Gendered oppression emerged through several processes. A salient form of oppression were the ways in which daughters were expected to “redeem” the family. Mothers and female caregivers discussed their own experiences of gendered oppression, including abusive marriages and lack of opportunities for academic achievement and career goals. Parents hoped for their daughters to have a career before becoming pregnant or marrying to develop a new family narrative.

Most daughters who attempted suicide did not know of the motivation behind their parent’s expectations (i.e. histories of family violence, teen pregnancies). For one daughter, her mother’s hypervigilance caused a rift in their relationship. When the daughter wanted more freedom, the mother would “get mad cause me and her used to be like extremely close when [I] was little.” The daughter had requested to talk to a therapist, instead of her mother, weeks before the suicide attempt. Unbeknownst to the daughter, the mother’s strict parenting derived from being a childhood sexual abuse victim herself.

In contrast, daughters who did not attempt suicide and had exposure to violence appeared to understand why parents had certain rules and expectations regarding dating and academic achievement. While daughters did not always agree with their parents, this understanding strengthened the mother-daughter relationship. For one daughter, her mother wished for her “to come up like my father, cause my father had... a short career ...he used to go to school.” Her father had been murdered before realizing his dreams of completing his education.

Daughters who did not attempt suicide or have exposure to violence did not necessarily know the histories of their parents’ expectations, but they had a clear sense of their parents’ rules. Both mothers and fathers described the importance of keeping daughters safe from deviant boyfriends and other distractions from school work. In turn, daughters internalized their parents’ voices. For example, one daughter told her new boyfriend that “we can’t go out [any longer] ...I have no time for a boyfriend.”

## Redemption Gone Awry

Across the sample, daughters did not adhere to their parents’ expectations. Therefore, the hopes for the daughter to redeem or maintain the integrity of the family were complicated or thwarted. How the parents reacted to their daughter’s behavior differed among the three groups. Among daughters who attempted suicide, redemption gone awry resulted in a mother’s denial of her daughter’s issues or even rejection. One mother discussed her dream for her daughter to refrain from dating and to become financially independent one day. This mother went to the extent of reading parenting magazines on how to talk to her daughter about sex and sexuality. Yet, the daughter attempted suicide after being repeatedly sexually abused by her stepfather and cousin. When the abuse became known, the mother denied her daughter’s account and told her that it was “ugly to say something if you knew it wasn’t the truth.”<sup>i</sup>

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<sup>i</sup>Es feo –le digo- que tú digas una cosa si sabes que no es verdad.

Daughters who did not attempt suicide and had exposure to violence were often able to effectively problem solve issues with their mothers. One daughter who did not attempt suicide confided that she was pregnant, and the mother assisted her daughter in receiving an abortion. The daughter shared that her parents remained concerned about her sexual activity, but that she understood that this reaction came from her mother's own teen pregnancy: "[My parents] have told me that if it wasn't for me... my mom would have a future."

Daughters who did not attempt suicide or have exposure to violence were less likely to deviate from cultural scripts regarding their position within the family. As mentioned, daughters echoed their parents' goals as their own. If the daughter received a bad grade or started dating, the topic was openly discussed with the parents. One daughter described wanting to be "good" and that she would first talk with her father about boys that she had a crush on.

### **Daughters' Secrets and Silence**

Daughters who struggled to uphold the integrity of the family often lost familial approval. Secrets and silence surrounding the realities of the daughter's life was a consequence of gendered oppression. Therefore, silence emerged to prevent breaches in the family's integrity or the discovery of redemption gone awry.

Daughters who attempted suicide often kept secrets about sexual or physical abuse that tarnished their redemptive image. One daughter experienced repeated sexual abuse by her brother. She was told by her mother to keep this a family secret, especially from her father (an ex-partner), as there "were two other accusations against [the] son." The father later learned that his daughter's school had also silenced her after disclosing the abuse.

Daughters who did not attempt suicide and who had exposure to violence mostly kept secrets regarding social life or school performance. One daughter refused to tell her mother why she did not want to attend school and her silence resulted in having to repeat ninth grade. Additionally, daughters without histories of suicide attempts or violence were not always transparent with their families. We found examples of daughters who expressed missing parents who lived abroad or were estranged from the family. Daughters did not talk about this parent to protect the harmonious balance of their immediate family.

### **Mother's Secrets and Silence Paralleling Daughter's Experience**

Mothers also kept secrets or remained silent about their own episodes of sexual violence to promote redemption for their daughters. At times, the mother's secrets surrounding gendered oppression or sexual violence paralleled the daughter's own secrets of struggles with sexuality and individuality. The experience of gendered oppression and sexual violence became an intergenerational phenomenon for the women in the family.

Most mothers with daughters who attempted suicide described secrets and silence of ongoing or unresolved violence. The mother of a daughter who attempted suicide shared her own memories of having an abusive father and of romantic relationships that involved domestic violence. Incidentally, the mother did not know about her daughter's experience of sexual abuse until it was revealed in her suicide note.

Within families of girls who did not attempt suicide and had exposure to violence, mothers also kept their own violent experiences a secret. An adopted mother disclosed that she had been raped by her stepfather as a young girl. The adopted mother was vigilant of protecting the daughter from sexual predators: “I don’t trust any man and that is why I don’t have men at my house, who could harm my girl.”<sup>ii</sup> The daughter did not know why her parent disapproved of dating, but she respected her rules. Still, she refrained from talking about boys with her mom.

### Secrets and Silence Colliding

A daughter’s suicide attempt was often the product of parallel secrets and silence within the family. Furthermore, a suicide attempt suggested that the intergenerational repetition of gendered oppression and violence of women in the family had been felt by the daughter and was detrimental to her development. Among the family narratives with daughters who attempted suicide, secrets and silence fed the toxicity of violent experiences, particularly if the mother struggled to address her own exposure to violence. If the mother and family did not have the emotional space to support the daughter, the resulting silence and isolation contributed to the decision to attempt suicide.

For example, the mother of a daughter who attempted suicide shared her traumatic experiences of migration and of an abusive relationship with her children’s father. Recently, her daughter found cocaine and a gun under her father’s bed and kept this discovery a secret in fear of implicating her father in further legal problems. The guilt of keeping and breaking the secret resulted in an overdose on Tylenol and Prozac and cutting. The daughter feared that “my dad would not love me anymore, and that my mom probably hated me for not telling her that I had the drugs.” After her suicide attempt, the daughter discovered that her paternal grandmother was in the hospital due to her father’s neglect. In this case, gendered oppression was experienced across three generations of women.

The relationship between secrets and family violence also became part of the familial social life. After breaking her silence surrounding her sexuality, one daughter and her mother had a violent argument that resulted in the daughter living with her grandparents. The grandparents’ veiled narratives demonstrated the pervasiveness of family secrecy, by providing little clarity on the mother-daughter relationship or the details of the daughter’s suicide attempt. This dynamic suggested why, after realizing the severity of her wounds from cutting, the daughter recalled: “I just kept it to myself.”

This intersection of mother and daughter gendered oppression did not emerge in family summaries of children who did not attempt suicide (with and without exposure to violence). The exception was a family summary of a non-attempter daughter exposed to physical violence. Her mother explained that she had been physically abused by her father because this was “how he thought you raised daughters.”<sup>iii</sup> Yet, the mother would violently hit her daughter when she felt burdened by parenting decisions.

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<sup>ii</sup>No creo, no confío en ningún hombre y por eso yo no cojo ningún hombre en mi casa, para que nadie venga a abusar de mi nena.

<sup>iii</sup>Él pensó que así se criaban las hijas.



### Resiliency from Silence

The familial code of secrets and silence described among the two groups of non-attempters were less detrimental to the daughter's safety. This may be related to the transparency and intimacy of their child-parent relationships. Daughters who did not attempt suicide did not report exposure to sexual abuse, in comparison to the daughters who attempted suicide. Most mothers of daughters who did not attempt suicide did not report experiences of violence. Without this added stress, these mothers may have been more emotionally prepared to support their daughters.

As mentioned, one non-attempter narrative described the mother's history of physical abuse and a violent relationship with her daughter. Yet, the daughter was able to understand the mother's limitations and refrain from self-harm. While this family narrative involved characteristics of the attempter cases described above (i.e. silence intertwined with family violence), the daughter demonstrated resiliency. In the interview, the daughter described her disappointment and anger with her mother's behavior, but she realized that her mother's erratic actions were linked to her mother's vulnerability as a single parent. The daughter sought out friends and her boyfriend for support and separated her sense of self from her mother while sustaining their relationship.

### Discussion

These results intend to inform researchers and family practitioners of the nuanced intergenerational dynamics that maintain gendered oppression within Latino families and potentially result in youth suicidal behavior. A Latina youth's silence may engender isolation, a known risk factor for suicidality (CDC, 2017). Biomedical models of suicidality often point blame to family members for being responsible for their child's suicide attempt (Peña, 2003). In contrast, this paper's application of intersectionality emphasizes the Latina daughter's and mother's distress because of family scripts and silence which promote generational gendered oppression. Our findings may inform future research in extending the constructs from IPTS (Joiner, 2005; Van Orden et al., 2010), and the Three-Step Theory (Klonsky & May, 2015) to Latina youth experiences. For example, future studies using IPTS (Joiner, 2005; Van Orden et al., 2010), may want to test how gendered oppression and secrets and silence surrounding certain types of violence thwart belongingness and contribute to suicide attempts among Latina youth.

Being raised a Latina daughter includes adherence to gendered scripts that uphold the moral integrity or honor of the family (Espin, 1984/1987; Raffaelli & Ontai, 2001). Despite best intentions, certain parenting strategies may promote silencing and additional risk of violence and mental illness for the daughter. Previous studies from this sample propose that the pull between the dominant, U.S. society and Latino socio-cultural scripts create family conflict surrounding academics, sexuality, and dating (Gulbas & Zayas, 2015, 2017; Kuhlberg et al., 2010; Zayas et al., 2010). While poor parent-child communication is a risk factor for suicidality among Latino youth (Vidot et al., 2016), this paper suggests that unaddressed family and sexual violence may intensify parent-daughter dynamics and contribute to suicidality (Zayas et al., 2010). Poor communication surrounding unaddressed violence may deteriorate mother-daughter mutuality and familism (Kuhlberg et al., 2010).

## Practice Implications

The study yields the following practice implications for clinicians working with Latina youth and their families. First, the daughter who attempted suicide and the mother are both clients. Despite adversities, mothers did their best to make a better future for their daughters. Mothers may participate in therapy to receive parenting support and to address their own histories of sexual violence (Gulbas & Zayas, 2017). A study on intergenerational gendered oppression demonstrated the utility of maternal involvement in therapy to promote resiliency in their Latina daughters (Vasquez, 2017).

Yet, not all families can participate in therapy together, and clinicians can help youth individually acknowledge their parents' strengths and weaknesses. Within this sample, daughters that internalized the gendered oppression connected to family violence and isolation attempted suicide. Narrative therapy is one well established practice that allows for parents and daughters to externalize from the problems and to reduce blame (Dickerson, 2010). The non-attempter daughter who experienced domestic violence allowed herself to be angry with her mother and used silence to gain emotional distance while maintaining a civil relationship. This understanding appeared to relieve the tension of meeting gendered expectations, allowing her to continue her path of individualization.

Finally, results suggest that there is not a clear path to addressing these secrets and silence within a family. As shown, not all secrets are toxic, and may empower individuals (Imber-Black, 1998). Therapists working with young women from other cultural and ethnic backgrounds than their own and who have experienced oppression must be careful of not furthering oppression by revealing secrets (Imber-Black, 1998, 2014). Here lies the challenge for the provider and the youth in identifying how to handle secrets and silence and meet the daughter's goals (Imber-Black, 1998, 2014). Clinical research is needed in exploring how the use of secrets and silence can prevent harmful behaviors, such as suicide attempts.

## Limitations

This qualitative analysis is not generalizable to all Latina youth and their parents. The intergenerational experiences of women may vary across socioeconomic levels, exposure to traumatic experiences, country of origin, and geo-political events. Still, the inclusion of both daughter and parent narratives as the unit of analysis enhanced the reliability of the interpretations for this sample of Latino families (Ayres, 2003). Additionally, the study sample was limited by not matching dyads according to parent participation. Also, future studies would benefit from including greater participation from fathers. Further confirmatory research and analysis is needed to determine how intergenerational gendered trauma impacts female suicidality across Latino culture and countries of origin and other minority demographics.

## Conclusion

This paper provides explanatory information about problematic parent-child communication and the relationship between violence and suicide attempts among Latina adolescents (Vidot et al., 2016). The cycle of violence and suicidality may be propelled through gendered

scripts of secrecy and silence, particularly if the girl's mother has unresolved exposure to violence. Findings may contribute to researcher and family practitioners' conceptualization of how profiles of youth who attempt suicide can vary by gender, ethnicity, and generation. Unacknowledged suffering can impact parenting and current family members' lives. To address suicidality among Latina young women, future interventions must explore the intergenerational repetition of oppressive social structures.

## Acknowledgments

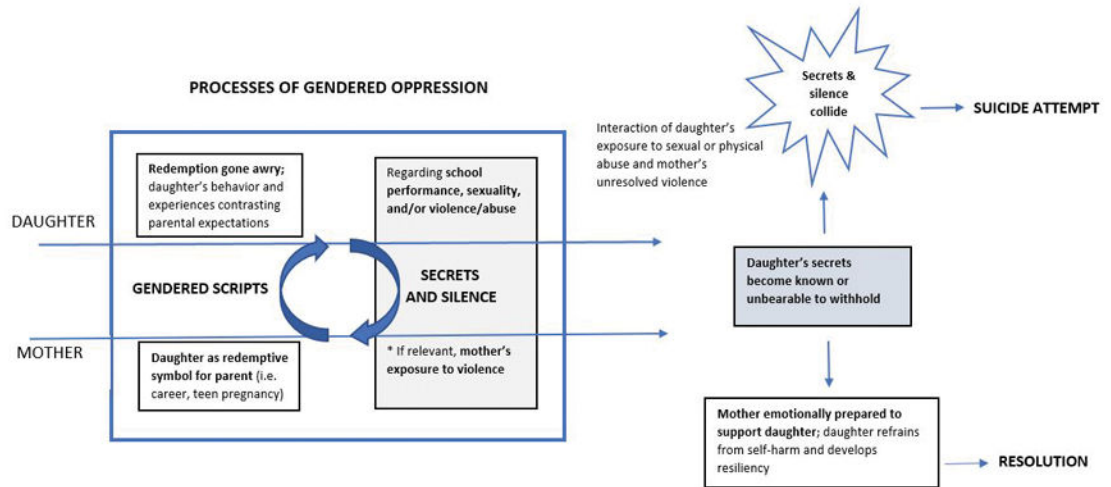
Funding Note: Support for this article was provided by grant R01 MH070689 from the National Institute of Mental Health to Luis H. Zayas

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**Figure 1.**  
Gendered oppression and silence shaping violence and suicidality among Latina teens

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**Table 1**

Attempter and non-attempter daughter and parent demographics

	Attempter		Non-Attempter	
	<i>M</i>	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>M</i>	<i>n</i> (%)
<b>Mean Age of Daughters</b> (years)	15.38		15.49	
<b>Place of Birth</b>				
Argentina				
Colombia		0 (0)		1 (10)
Dominican Republic		2 (20)		1 (10)
Ecuador		1 (10)		0 (0)
Puerto Rico		1 (10)		1 (10)
USA		6 (60)		7 (70)
<b>Cultural Identity</b>				
Argentinian		1 (10)		0 (0)
Colombian		1 (10)		1 (10)
Dominican		2 (20)		2 (20)
Ecuadoran		1 (10)		0 (0)
Mexican		4 (40)		3 (30)
Puerto Rican		3 (30)		3 (30)
Peruvian		1 (10)		0 (0)
<b>Resident Status</b>				
U.S. Citizen by birth		6 (60)		8 (80)
Legal Alien		3 (30)		2 (20)
Undocumented		1 (10)		0 (0)
<b>Mean age of Mother</b> (years)	41.22		40.4	
<b>Mother's Place of Birth</b>				
Argentina		1 (10)		0 (0)
Colombia		0 (0)		1 (10)
Dominican Republic		2 (20)		2 (20)
Ecuador		1 (10)		0 (0)
Mexico		4 (40)		3 (30)
Puerto Rico		1 (10)		1 (10)
USA		0 (0)		2 (20)
<b>Father's Place of Birth</b>				
Colombia		0 (0)		1 (10)
Dominican Republic		2 (20)		2 (20)
Ecuador		1 (10)		0 (0)
Mexico		3 (30)		2 (20)
Puerto Rico		2 (20)		1 (10)
Peru		1 (10)		0 (0)
USA		0 (0)		2 (20)

**Table 2**

Final themes from family case summaries

Themes	Definitions	Suicide Attempters (N=10)	Non-attempters (N=10)
		<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)
Daughter as source of parental redemption	Hope for the daughter to live a life not hindered by gendered oppression or violence, contrasting the mother's experience.	8 (80)	10 (100)
Redemption gone awry	When the hopes for the daughter to follow gendered cultural scripts are complicated or thwarted.	8 (80)	5 (50)
Daughter's secrets and silence	The daughter's withholding of information or when parents overlook information to sustain familial scripts.	10 (100)	7 (70)
Mother's secrets and silence paralleling daughter's experience	When the mother's secrets surrounding gendered oppression or sexual violence coincide with the daughter's own secrets and silence.	8 (80)	2 (20)
Secrets and silence colliding	When the daughter's and the family's secrets and silence can no longer be contained. The daughter may attempt suicide and/or when third party individuals become involved in the family dynamic (i.e. school staff).	7 (70)	1 (10)