Latinos Substance Abuse and Mental Health: A Literature Review

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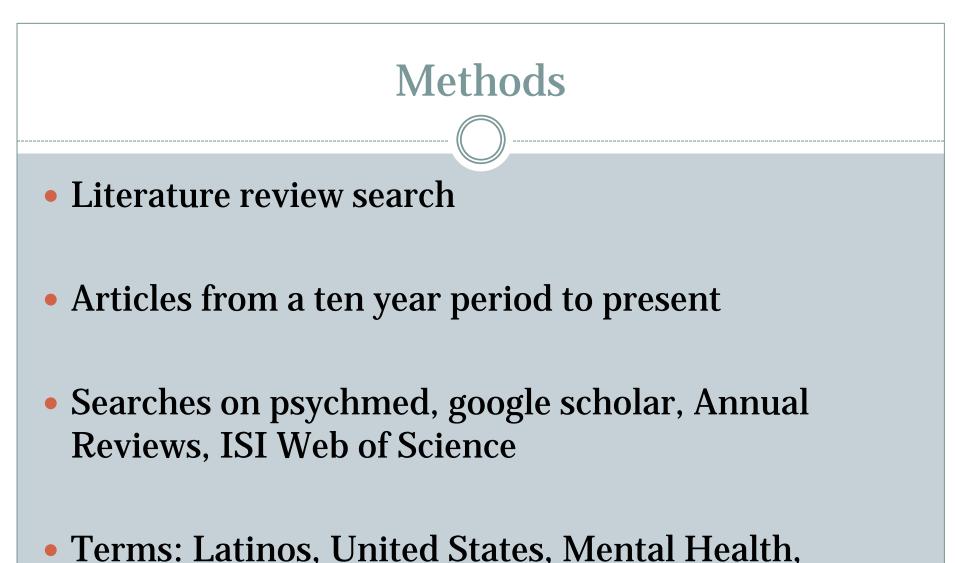- Julian Samora Research Institute

Introduction

- **Problem**
  - Disparities is social service care delivery for Latinos (Wells, Klap, Koike, Sherbourne, 2001)
    - Growing Latino Population
      - Growth predicted
      - Currently most adults are Foreign born
  - Financial barriers (insurance)
  - Institutional barriers (few Latino caregivers)
  - Structural barriers (culture not acknowledged)

Introduction, cont.

- General population in United States
  - 2.5 million adults aged 18 and over suffer from serious mental health and substance use problems
- Latinos 2nd only to American Indians/Alaska Natives as ethnicity with highest rate of substance use for 12 and over
- Yet 2nd least likely to seek group mental health care
- Latinos in US, quality of health care for substance use and mental health important
  - Cultural and social aspects

Current Study: Literature Review

- Aim: to conduct a literature review of the research and scholarship on substance use and mental health for Latinos in the United States

- Illuminate trends, provide directions for future research, study and interventions

Methods

- Literature review search

- Articles from a ten year period to present

- Searches on psychmed, google scholar, Annual Reviews, ISI Web of Science

- Terms: Latinos, United States, Mental Health, Substance Abuse, Co-morbidity

Methods, cont.

- Each study:
  - Authors
  - Title
  - Major Research Question
  - Method
  - Number of Research Subjects (N)
  - Results
  - Noted Other Issues

Results

- Initial searches yielded many results
- Few were focused on Latinos in particular
- We filtered with "Latinos" "United States"
- Fifteen articles
- Sample of Matrix:

Authors	Title	Research Question	Methods	Ns	Results

Sample of Matrix

Authors	Title	Research ?	Methods	N	Results
Canino, G., Vega, W., Sribney, W., Warner, L., Alegria, M.	**Social relationships, social assimilation, and substance use disorders among adult Latinos in the U.S.** *Journal of Drug Issues,* **38(1), 69-102.**	Latinos experiencing more social assimilation (as measured by proxies of nativity, parents' nativity among the U.S. born, age of arrival of immigrants, and language use) will have greater prevalence of lifetime substance use disorders than Latinos with less assimilation.	Secondary data analysis using the National Latino and Asian American Study (NLAAS)	2554	U.S. born Latinos had significantly higher prevalence of substance use disorders compared to immigrants.

Results, Cont.

- **The results indicate that there has been a movement beyond traditional views of substance use.**
  - Categories emerged indicating a categorical shift for studying Latino populations.
  - Shift from structural issues such as poverty, SES to issues of immigration and culture.
  - This socio-cultural shift has received attention.

Results

- **Major Categories:**

1. **Acculturation**
   - Acculturative processes are seen as a factor in substance use and mental health outcomes
   - "U.S. born Latinos had significantly higher prevalence of substance use disorders compared to immigrants." (Canino et al 2008)
   - Protective factors include recent immigrant status = less likely to abuse substances/mental health issues
   - "US born Latinos with immigrant parents (2nd gen) were 2.87 times more likely to attempt suicide, 2.27 times more likely to engage in problematic alcohol use, 2.56 times more likely to engage in repeated marijuana use and 2.28 times more likely to engage in repeated other drug use than were foreign-born youth." (Pena et al)

Results

2. Family

- Strength of family cohesion.
- Family important cultural aspect for Latinos
- Family stress, and differences in acculturation status between parents and children (Martinez)

3. Monolithic Myth

- All Latinos are lumped in to one group for statistical analysis
- Usually done because of lack of numbers
- However, different groups display different addictive issues and mental health issues (as well across country of origin as well as gender)

Results, cont.

4. Culture = between and within

- Culture between ethnicities indicate large disparities
  - Services in medical health, prisons, jails, treatment centers
  - Language, family, etc.
  - With dominant groups and with other non-dominant Latino/Hispanic groups
  - Diagnosing DSM
    - Non-Hispanic clinicians diagnosed significantly more substance related disorders than Hispanic clinicians. (Torres et al 2007)
- Within
  - Homophobia (homosexuality and HIV/AIDS)
  - Role of Women

Conclusion

- ## In sum,
  - There seems to be less attention on individual factors
  - Less focus on poverty per se as predictor
  - Socio-cultural factors that are specific to ethnic identity have come in to fashion. Immigration work has pushed this debate.
  - Future studies indicate genetic markers may illuminate some of these mysteries.

Conclusions

- Research with Latinos has taken a cultural and immigrant status shift in regards to substance use and mental health outcomes. Less attention to poverty, SES, etc. These are important, but are the subset to other factors.

- Processes for why this occurs are understudied and lack depth.

- Methodological Issues

Call for Research

- **More research is needed**
  - Across regions (not just CA, southern)
  - Across Latino/Hispanic Groups (data sets)
  - More attention to cultural aspects and attention to hows and whys, call for Qualitative Studies
    - Why does acculturation predict higher rates of substance use and greater likelihood of being diagnosed with mental health issues?
- **Interventions**
  - Must target immigration needs (language, culture, acculturative status, family)
  - Organizations could better meet this need (point of entry into social service agencies)
- **The necessary link between research and intervention.**

The End

- In Sum….
- Thank you

- Pilar Horner, PhD

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