Introduction

- Research indicates that women within the Latino population process their loss-related grief through cultural traditions and rituals that may often be overlooked or misunderstood by others in a traditional grief group.

- In the absence of support systems and inadequate coping abilities, the bereaved individual’s level of functioning can be negatively affected causing conditions as severe as posttraumatic stress disorder, major depression, or generalized anxiety disorder (Jordan & Litz, 2014).

- Latinas play important familial roles, such as being the caregiver of the household. Caregivers are at a higher risk for symptoms of depression due to the high levels of care they provide for their loved ones (Stroebe et al., 2008).

- In comparison to non-Hispanic whites, Latino/as and other minority groups reported low accessibility to mental health services (Sorkin, Pham, & Ngo-Metzger, 2009).

- Overarching goals:
  - Decrease grief-related depressive symptoms among bereaved Latinas using Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Art Therapy.
  - Increase Latinas’ accessibility of community mental health resources and provide evidence-based coping tools to help them readjust to life.
Social Work Relevance

- Accessibility to a culturally competent support group is vital for individuals seeking services in disenfranchised communities.

- The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) promotes the core values of service, social justice, dignity and self-worth, relationships, integrity and competence to best serve clients (2008). The core values allow for social workers to be competent when working with bereaved families who are experiencing issues in such difficult times of their lives.

- Latinas way of coping may not always be fully understood. It is a social worker’s duty to assess and comprehend each client’s psychosocial environment to provide adequate services.

- Low utilization of support groups and mental health services can be due to lack of Spanish speaking therapist, culturally insensitive environments, and socioeconomic factors (Dobalian & Rivers, 2008; Schoulte, 2011).
The continuous growth of the Latino population draws attention to the importance of cultural competence and the understanding of traditions, family roles, and emotional responses when working with the loss of a loved one to death (Schoulte, 2011).

Although bereavement is felt and experienced universally, culture is a factor that differentiates how it will be processed.

- Religion and spirituality have been shown to be important in the grieving process for Latinas, continuing their relationships with the deceased through visits to their loved one’s graves as well as through prayer (Hardy-Bougere, 2008; Lobar et al., 2006).

- More recently, Latino groups have become involved in bereavement support groups demonstrating the change from depending on family for emotional support to sharing with people outside of the family for support (Houben, 2012).
Methods

• Target population: Spanish- speaking and/or bilingual Latina adults residing in Orange County, California who have experienced a recent loss of a loved one.

• Strategies used to identify and select a funding source included research on both federal and state level websites.
  • Results included: The Weingart Foundation, The California Wellness Foundation, and The Orange County Community Foundation
  • Keywords for search criteria: “nonprofit sector,” “arts,” “health,” “Spanish support groups,” and “cultural grief”

• The California Wellness Foundation was selected as its mission statement focuses on the health and well-being of traditionally underserved, low-income communities in Southern California.

• According to The California Wellness (2014) Grants Database, the foundation has granted more than $912 million since its founding year in 1992 and it continues to support nonprofit organizations.
Methods (Continued)

• Needs Assessment Sources
  • U.S. Census Bureau (2010): *2010 Census Briefs* and *State and County Quick Facts* provided information on Orange County demographics.
  • The California Department of Public Health: Information on mortality indicators within the Orange County community.
  • Personal Communication: Host agency, social service agencies, hospice spiritual counselors and social workers, and art therapists.

• The total projected budget is $47,602.00 for one year. The budget includes:
  • Personnel: Part-time, bilingual, MSW
  • Direct Program Costs: program supplies, refreshments, mileage, office supplies, and equipment.
  • Indirect Program Costs: Administration
  • In-Kind Donations: Rent and utilities
A curriculum will be created based upon a psychoeducational support group with the use of art therapy techniques and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) interventions while incorporating Latina cultural values and traditions.

- Groups will include information on grief and loss while engaging in therapeutic art projects and group processing.
- Sessions will include religion, spirituality, and other common values in the Latino culture as appropriate.

The Latina bereavement support group will be scheduled to take place throughout six sessions of six weeks, with two separate groups running concurrently.

The group would serve Latina women who have been grieving the loss of a loved one for over six months. Participants must be over the age of 18 and speak Spanish or be bilingual. The group will be held exclusively in Spanish.

Sustainability: Through partnership with the host agency and through community outreach, resources will be accessible and referrals will be received.
Program Objectives:

- **Objective 1:** In order to increase the accessibility of community mental health resources, information will be distributed to at least 1,000 community members throughout the Orange County community. Information will be inclusive of the benefits of the Healing Through the Arts Bereavement Support Group for Latinas via public community health fairs, referrals to other organizations and churches.

- **Objective 2:** Provide four evidence-based coping methods, which include CBT techniques, within the 6-week sessions, utilizing the arts such as writing and music as well as additional counseling resources available in the community.

- **Objective 3:** Through CBT, education on coping with loss, and art activities, participants will decrease symptoms of depression as evidenced through pre- and post-testing using the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale-Revised (CESD-R) screening tool for depression and depressive disorders.

Program Evaluation:

- A participant satisfaction survey will be used to measure the progress of the overall program.

- The CESD-R (The Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale-Revised; Radloff, 1977) tool will be used to measure the likelihood of a Major Depressive Episode during the pre-program and the decrease in depressive symptoms for the post-program.

- One month post group sessions, follow-up phone calls will be conducted by the Social Worker to each participant.

- Results will be analyzed within the program.
Lessons Learned/Implications For Social Work

- There is a limited amount of literature on the grieving process among Latinas and scarce research on the use of Art Therapy with the Latino Culture.
- Grant funding sources can be limited based on specific requirements and eligibility from the foundation. Narrowing a foundation posed challenges.
- The use of support groups among Latinos has increased over the years.
- Low use of mental health services continues to be reported by low-income and minority groups.
- There is a need for culturally sensitive mental health services that incorporate the importance of religion and spirituality in individuals’ care.
REFERENCES


