

# Factors Contributing to Seeking Preventive Dental Visits among Mexican Americans in Central Indiana

## An Integrative Model Approach

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# Background

- Latinos in the USA : large, expanding, and highly diverse ethnic minority
- Health disparities population
- Understanding causes of poorer health status → Better health and health care programs
- Multiple manifestations and impacts of poor oral health: Are they important?

# Background

- **They are!** Dental caries (tooth decay) commonest childhood chronic disease: 5+ times more than asthma in USA
- Also common in adults and older adults
- Affects disproportionately minorities and low income people
- 51 M school hours and 164 M work hours lost each year due to dental problems

# Background

- Periodontal (gum) diseases are also common in adults and older adults
- Affect disproportionately minorities and low income people
- Periodontitis is linked to T2 diabetes
- Evidence supports associations between oral and systemic conditions, including CVD, asthma, stroke, PT/LBW pregnancy

# Current Situation

- Latinos and oral health disparities
- High experience of tooth decay
- Gingivitis and periodontal (gum) disease
- Considerable barriers in access to care
- Low socio-economic status
- So, the solution is we need more dentists and more dental care. Right?

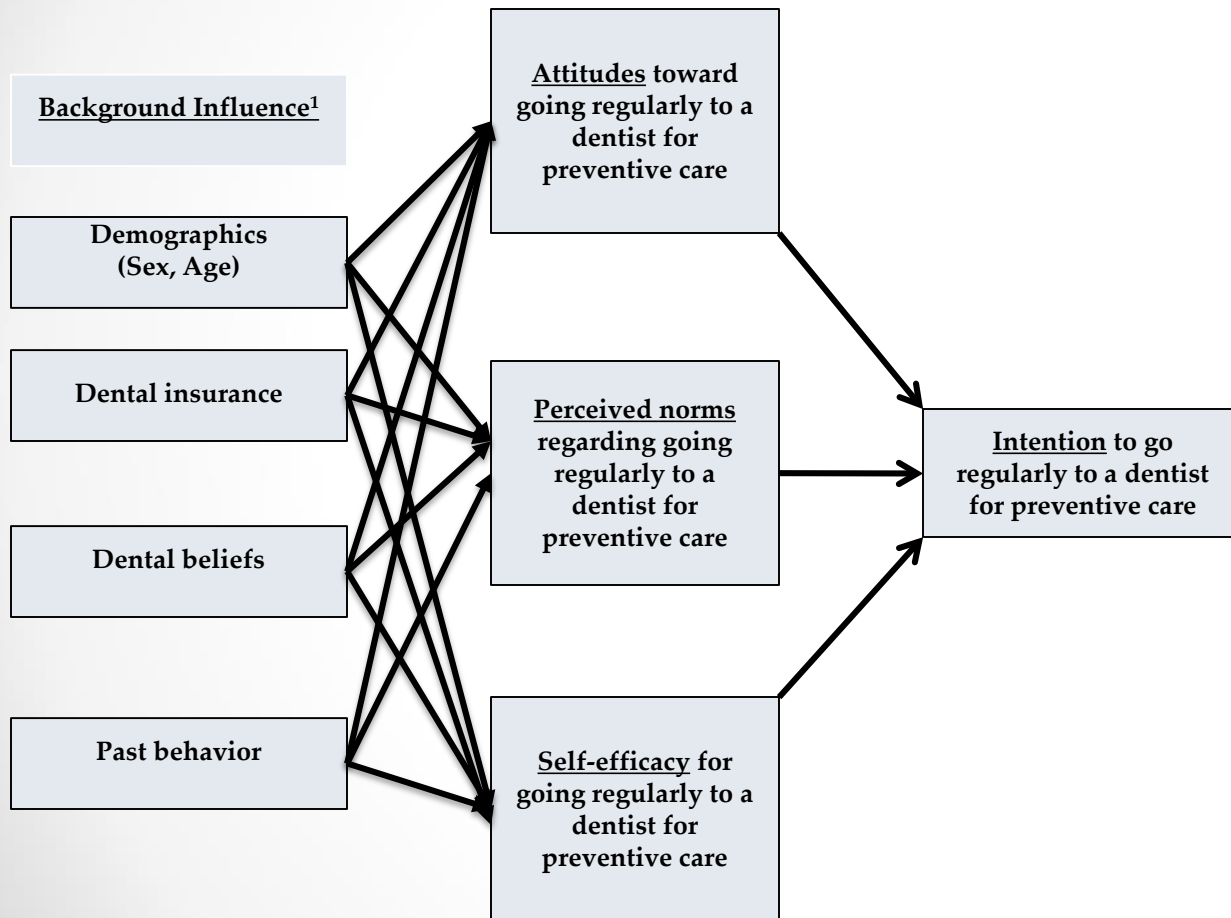
# Partial knowledge

- NB: Focus on Mexican-Americans (people of Mexican origin). MAs ~2/3 of Latinos
- Norms about oral health and dental care
- Dental culture of episodic clinical care
- Access to decay-inducing food/drinks?
- Self-care and prevention – use of tap water, brushing, flossing, mouth rinses

# Partial knowledge

- We know, however, that MAs:
  - Rely on peer support to seek care and info
  - Incorporate *familismo* and *personalismo*
  - Lack many formal health resources
  - Vary in their health status and need profiles
  - Share some traits across subgroups (eg, rural vs. urban) but are also quite diverse

# Theoretical Framework for Understanding the Behavior of Seeking Preventive Dental Care



<sup>1</sup>Hypothesized to influence intention through attitudes, perceived norms, and/or self-efficacy.



# Study Objectives

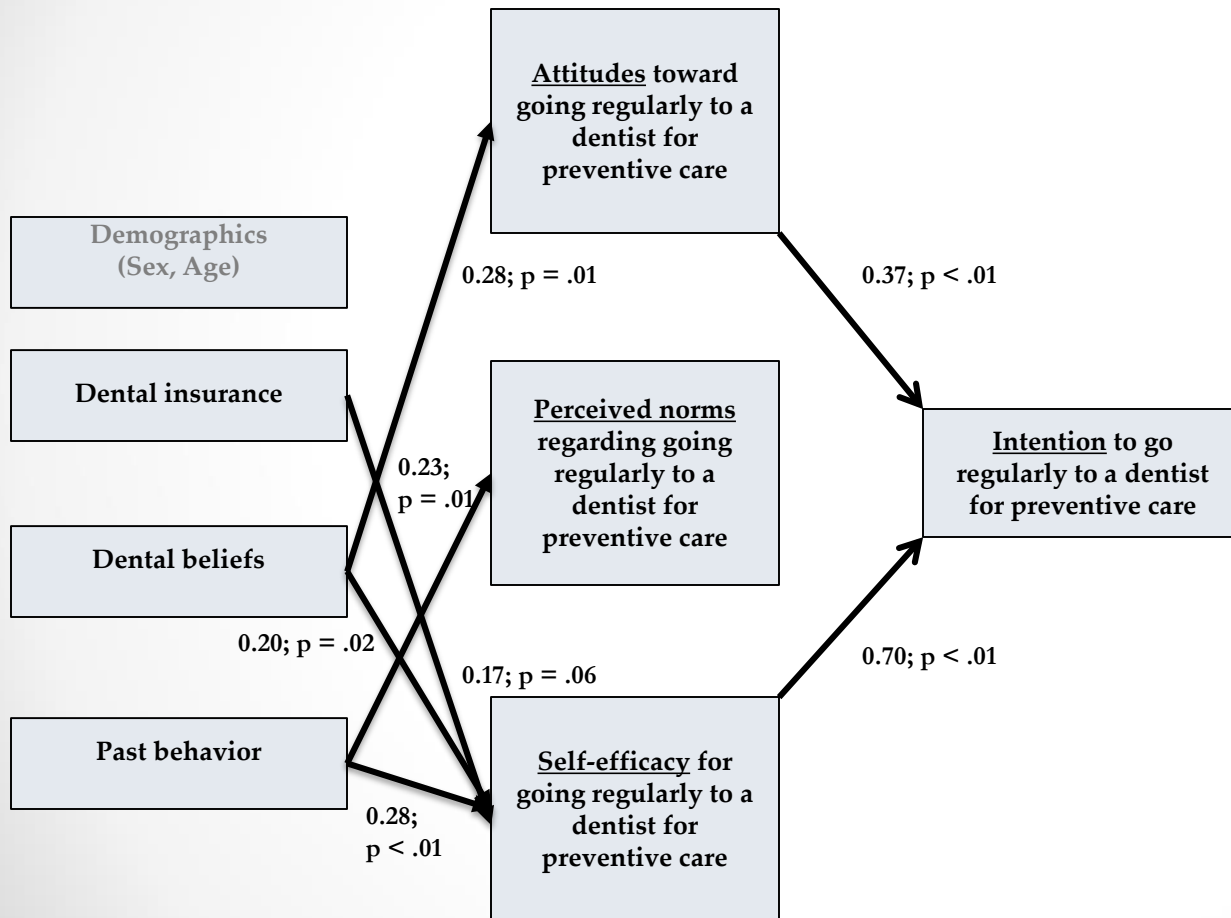
- To test theory-based predictors of intention to seek preventive dental care in a sample of Mexican Americans in Central Indiana
- To test whether the effects of background variables on intention to seek preventive dental care are mediated through attitudes, perceived norms, or self-efficacy

# Methods

- 160 Mexican Americans recruited from church congregations and lay community organizations in Central Indiana
- 64% female
- Age: 34  $\pm$  11 years
- Structural Equation Modeling used to test hypothesized paths

# Results

(standardized coefficients and p-values for significant paths shown)



# Key Findings

- Attitudes and self-efficacy were significantly associated with intention to seek preventive dental care
- The effect of dental beliefs on intention was mediated by attitudes and self-efficacy
- The effect of past behavior on intention was mediated by self-efficacy
- Past behavior was related to perceived norms
- Having dental insurance was marginally significantly associated with self-efficacy

# Limitations

- Relatively small sample size
- Sample limited to Mexican Americans in Central Indiana; no claims for wide generalizability
- Urban-based Mexican Americans
- We omit an investigation of important structural influences (e.g., health systems, public policies)
- Cross-sectional design precludes solid suggestions about causality
- Largely recruited in Catholic parishes or ancillary groups

# Strengths

- Few studies in a new, evolving Midwest gateway location for Latinos: faster growth than traditional Latino areas
- Novel use of IM framework to disaggregate factors underlying oral health disparities
- Controlling for nationality of origin instead of aggregating all Latinos in one large category – effects unknown
- Yields insights into clinical care implications, and supports culturally sensitive understanding of oral health

# Implications

- Interventions to increase preventive dental care seeking behavior among Mexican Americans should focus on changing attitudes and increasing self-efficacy
- Findings support use of interventions to influence dental beliefs
- Previous experience with preventive dental care generally positive; increases self-efficacy
- Improving access to dental insurance also will likely increase self-efficacy

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**Thanks for your time!**  
**Questions,**  
**comments?**