

Research Statement

In the Latinx community, there is a mental health stigma that has become a barrier to access help. It is the different perspectives of mental health in Latinx culture that have significantly affected this community. For example, Latinx culture treats mental health as a label. Many Latinxs do not want to be labeled with a mental health illness, therefore they neglect to get help. For this reason, researching Latinx low-income communities is important to me because of the different challenges the community goes through. Thus, my research focuses on the relationship between Latinx culture and mental health stigma in low-income communities.

In the United States, fewer than 9% of American Latinxs seek mental health support, and undocumented Latinxs are far less likely to receive mental health treatment (Nadeem et al., 2007). These communities are highly disadvantaged and lack the necessary resources to help end the mental health stigma. According to a report from the American Psychological Association, BIPOC and low-income populations experience more stress during their lifetime compared to wealthy, white individuals (2018). Low-income communities are in a constant cycle of stress because of rent, food, income, etc. Living with these problems does not allow them to prioritize their mental health, especially when culture could also be a setback. “Many interventions are costly and complex, and/or are not suited to the service systems and sociocultural contexts in LMICs” (Mascayano et al., 2019).

Low-income communities are constantly fighting between financial burdens and mental health. Unfortunately, living in a place with a lack of resources ultimately affects your health. Many Latinx communities reside in a low-income community, making it more difficult for them to reach out for mental help, especially with the set perspectives a family might have. “When considering the entire income distribution of households with children from birth to age 18 in the United States, from 2004 to 2006, Hispanic children were more likely than their non-Hispanic peers (black, white, and other non-Hispanic children) to live in the lowest-income households and less likely to live in the highest-income households” (Gennetian et al., 2019). I learned that many women living in low-income communities are less likely to reach out for help because of the mental health stigma they grew up with. Women of color in disadvantaged communities are especially affected by the lack of resources and mental stigma. When women of color are diagnosed with depression, sometimes it is too late to help. People with lower socioeconomic status are at 8 times greater risk of developing schizophrenia than those of the highest socioeconomic status (Rathod et al., 2007).

Culture in low-income communities could be a barrier to ending mental health stigma. Culture comes with set perspectives on certain things. Therefore, reducing mental health stigma can be hard in these communities. According to a study conducted by the Hispanic Health Care International, Latinxs report experiencing mental health issues at about the same rates as white non-Hispanics in the United States, but they are only half as likely to seek treatment, largely due to stigma influenced by cultural and religious views. Religion plays a huge role in Latinx culture. Mental illnesses in religion are often attributed to spiritual dilemmas or “moral failing”. Most religious individuals believe that suicide was the lack of faith one had because if one had faith, one would never consider suicide (Caplan et al., 2019). The subject of mental health is taboo in this community and rarely discussed.

Bringing awareness to Latinx low-income communities is important to help reduce the mental health stigma. Due to the lack of resources that are available in these communities, it is important to implement mental health education in schools. This would allow people to learn about something that is not talked about so much at home. At a young age, they would learn the importance of mental health and resources that are available to them when reaching out. Many of the mental health stigmas are developed from older generations that were taught negative stereotypes of mental illnesses. However, allowing younger generations to learn more about the importance of mental health would allow them to inform family more about this issue.

After researching the relationship between Latinx culture and mental health stigma in low-income communities, I became interested in the mental illnesses that low-income communities are more likely to develop based on the experiences and challenges they undergo. If I were to pursue additional research on this topic, that is what I would plan to investigate further.

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