



¡Escuche Mi Voz!: Hear My Voice

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Developed by **Tiffany Ramirez** during her internship with the Temple University Collaborative on Community Inclusion under the supervision of Dr. Mark Salzer. The internship, as well as the final document of this project, were required for the completion her BS in Public Health from Temple University's College of Public Health. The Temple University Collaborative on Community Inclusion of Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities, which is supported by a grant from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR grant number 90RT5021). NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The contents of this document do not necessarily represent the policy of NIDILRR and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

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Introduction

My name is Tiffany. I am a student at Temple University studying public health. I am also Latina and want to give back to my community. I am interested in advocating for greater inclusion of people in the Latino/a/x/ community who experience significant mental health issues. The reason I am interested is because there is a lot of stigma around mental health in the Latino/a/x community.

There are a little over 60.5 million people who are Latino/a/x living in the United States (Office of Minority Health [OMH], 2021). This means that 18.4% of the United States population identify as Hispanic (OMH, 2021). This is a growing minority population. The population of Hispanics have increased by 23% in the United States, while the country's population increased by 7% (Passel et. al, 2022). Hispanics are the largest population in a few counties such as Miami-Dade, Florida, and Bronx, New York (Passel et. al, 2022).

There are an estimated 60 million Latinos/as/x in the United States, and 16% have a mental illness (Mental Health America [MHA], n.d.). This means that over 10 million people who identify as Latino/a/x have a mental illness (MHA,n.d). Although the rates are lower than their non-Latino/a/x counterparts, mental health issues are still on the rise for this community (MHA, n.d.). Between 2008 to 2018, the prevalence of serious mental illness (SMI) went from 4% to 6.4% among Hispanics 18-25 years-old (MHA, n.d). In addition, there was an increase of 2.2% to 3.9% among those 26-49 years-old (MHA, n.d.). It is important to note that there is a disparity between those Latinos/as/x that were born in the U.S. and those born outside the U.S. (MHA, n.d.). Major depression, suicidal thoughts, plans, and attempts also increased among the youth, young adults, and older adults in this population (MHA, n.d.).

My project was aimed at doing two things.

First, I wanted to amplify the voices of people in the Latino/a/x/ community who experience mental health issues by offering an opportunity for people to describe what they would like people to know about them and how they would like to be welcomed and embraced by their families, faith, and community. Second, I wanted to make people aware of the programs around the country that were designed to enhance independent living and participation of people in the Latino/a/x/ community who experience mental health issues, and advocate for more programs that benefit people in my community.

Hearing from People in the Latino/a/x/ Community Who Experience Mental Health Issues

I sought responses to five questions on topics related to community inclusion from people in the Latino/a/x/ community anywhere in the United States who have been diagnosed with a significant mental illness, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or major, recurring depression that has significantly impacted their life. I created two Google forms with five questions – one in English and the other in Spanish. The reason why I did both was because I wanted to be as inclusive as possible. I know that not everyone in the Latinx community speaks English, and not everyone in the Latinx community speaks Spanish. The Latinx community is very diverse linguistically and culturally.

I wanted to provide an outlet for Latinx voices on the following topics:

1. I wanted people to vocalize what they wanted people in their family to know about mental health and how to support them.
2. Many Hispanics are religious so I wanted their input on what they wanted their faith leaders to know about mental health.
3. I wanted to hear what they want others outside the Latinx community to know about their community and mental health.
4. I wanted to see how they wanted people in their own community to support them and inform their own community about mental health.
5. The last question asks about where they feel most accepted as being Latino/a/x and someone with a serious mental health issue

After making the Google form, I disseminated the form by making calls to psychiatric facilities all over the country. I got in contact with a representative from these organizations, which then turned into getting permission from the supervisor to get their permission to make individuals aware of this opportunity to express themselves. Calls were specifically made to states with substantial numbers of Latinx citizens, such as California, Texas, New York, New Jersey, New Mexico, and Arizona. Because many people did not answer the phone, the next approach was to disseminate it on social media, including Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

I wanted the responses of the community to speak for themselves. Therefore, I did not want to change or speak on behalf of the community or interpret the meaning of each response. I wanted to make each person feel that their voice using their own words was heard. I wanted this to be a space where Latinos/as/x with mental health issues are able to advocate for themselves.

I hope this project leads to future conversations among different communities and among our own community. In addition, I hope this leads to research about the needs of people in the Hispanic community. It is great that we have programs that address mental health, but there are different needs of different communities that also need to be taken into consideration. This is for all people to learn from. I hope that this reaches the people that make policy to ensure cultural competency and that the needs of the Hispanic community are met.

Q1: How would you like your family to support you around your mental health issues and being a welcomed family member?

I would like for them to not try and fix me and just see me for who I am. Additionally, not belittle the moments of success I have while working on the mental health issues and be more understanding.

No judgment; I'm the same person, my diagnosis shouldn't change that. If anything, it should bring answers to some questions.

I would like the space to speak and be open about what I'm going through. I would like family members to understand we don't need them to fix us, just to support us. I would like family members to listen to what is being said and NOT judge, criticize, belittle, talk down to or be disrespected...

Just be willing to listen to me talk. I tend to use figure of speech a lot. Especially when I am trying to organize my thoughts. Always had a hard time talking with my parents about it since I don't like being lectured about how I SHOULD be feeling than how I feel at that moment.

Just being there for me with love and affection is enough. Care about who I am for me and no other reason.

To know how to communicate and be there for me in the ways that I need.

have patience

To help me through my best and worst days, love me and support me when I'm scared and attend any appointments with me...again without judgment.

Open your eyes, give me unconditional love, and be kind and understanding for I am doing my very best despite the intensity of my experiences.

Have more talks about mental health, and understand how certain comments and conversations can be triggering in different ways.

By trust
Not act like it's no big deal and just that I'M LOCA
Educate themselves on how to be an emotionally responsible and respectful person
To be understanding and accepting
By following the techniques and guidelines
Don't ask me in front of everyone else if I seem "off". I don't want my mental issues to be a "topic". When I speak to them, I want things to stay confidential. I don't [want] everybody to know what's going on in my head.
Acknowledge it. Not make fun of me for it. I wish parents could either help, offer, or find therapy or support groups for their child's mental health issues (such as test anxiety), and not shaming them or not understanding that it's not that their child isn't trying their best, sometimes it is that they have to perform their best. (That's how I feel.)
Support
To understand my mental health illness
To engage in effective communication in which they are actively listening

Q2: If you attend a place of worship or practice a religion, how can leaders of your faith or other members in your religious community support your mental health? Please put N/A if this does not apply to you.

Responses:

Leaders can create supportive small groups that are relatable. Small groups that address socio-emotional health in consideration of spiritual health.
Simply put, that God has made us as complicated creatures. God works with us with time, not in the snap of a finger.
By giving stories we can relate to, and to remind us that we are not alone
I did find myself in a Church for some years and my walk with faith helped me. Unfraternally, I realized that judgment lies everywhere and sometimes we have to move away from it even in what we thought was a safe place
When they are non-judgemental. I haven't had this issue with my religious leaders; they have been very understanding and take into account how important spirituality can improve mental health, at least it does for me.
Not tell me to pray more or I've done something for god to punish me
Continue to treat me with love, understanding, respect and dignity so that I can learn by observation. Walk with me at my pace so that I can keep walking.
Create more events, activities, and plan things that help exercise self love, self acceptance, and embracing the importance of mental health.
By acknowledging your feelings without judgment and supporting your MH
Providing awareness, networking and empowerment opportunities and activities.
I am Catholic but my religious leaders can't do anything to help.
Support groups
I am Catholic but my religious leaders can't do anything to help
Definitely Church

Q3: What would you like people who are not Latino/a/x to know about people who are Latino/a/x and have a mental health issue?

Responses

That failed political systems have marginalized its people for generations resulting in human affect being close to non-existent. That disconnect, family division has forced migration, enslaved parents to labor, neglected innocent children to fend for themselves using the worst coping skills, drugs vs, hope for a healthy life; and or bottling up emotion and confusions to the point of no return. Bipolar, Schizophrenia, and depression are just a few social ills due to failed political, economic religions systems.

We are the same as everyone else.

We are just humans like them.

Us latinos can be pretty prideful. We aren't ones to say we have a problem. But we also have a hard time hiding how we are feeling and thinking.

It's not an easy subject to openly discuss with others, there is stigma and judgment around MH. We seek better community resources and Spanish speaking providers that can culturally understand the rooted problem in our communities.

That it is a very serious issue

People who aren't latino should be aware that not everything we deal with is directly related to our heritage, there are more systemic and genetic factors that cause a person to suffer from mental health issues that simply being born latino

Research

Just treat me like anyone else and don't be surprised when something bothers me. I don't mind talking about it as much with people outside my family, I just don't want my issues to be my identity.

We are all different

That the stigma surrounding mental health stems from machismo within the communities
Same as the above. We should be supportive of individuals in all shapes, sizes, and races. Mental health issues are not the same for everyone. It doesn't affect everyone the same, and mental health does not discriminate based off appearances or races.
That is a lot of us with Mental Health issues and we are not alone
That I have autism and proud
I honestly don't think being Latino/a/x has anything to do with it. I know plenty of people who are not Latino/a/x and have very similar situations/ feelings to mine when it comes to mental health.
That goes against our nature to seek help
That mental health issues are treatable outside of substance abuse and are something that should not be thought of as shameful
We want help just as others do, ours is not in traditional medications.
We are all suffering in many different ways and no-one should feel afraid to express the need for support. Asking for help doesn't mean we are weak or incapable of being amazing, resilient people of color.....
Be understanding and more empathetic, you mofos.

Q4: What would you like other Latino/a/x people to know about Latino/a/x people who experience significant mental health issues?

Responses:

That's life. It's beautiful at times but also messy. It happens.
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<p>There is nothing to be afraid or ashamed [of]. It is nobody's fault. One has to be brave and speak up. All will be ok</p>
<p>Having a mental illness does not mean weakness or worthlessness.</p>
<p>To listen with an open heart, support loved ones, and provide a safe space without judgment.</p>
<p>Even if you think it does not affect you it probably most likely will affect you</p>
<p>By asking a lot of questions and doing research because you don't do the research you won't probably don't know the next step.</p>
<p>I would like them to know that it looks entirely different for everyone and no one's issues are better or worse than another's.</p>
<p>Research</p>
<p>To understand where we are coming from, and not to pry into us to get a straight forward answer. I know they are only trying to help, but there are times where we want to keep things simple and not worry them with our own problems.</p>
<p>Everyone is different</p>
<p>Try to seek medical help regardless of the negative connotation you may receive from your family. Your health, physical, mental, and emotional is the most important aspect in which you carry throughout your life.</p>
<p>Mental health doesn't discriminate. All races and individuals experience mental health issues in different chapters of our lives and that should be taken into consideration. It is okay to need help or support.</p>
<p>That they are not alone</p>
<p>You are planned, developed and programmed to develop mental health disorders. We are the new business. If we reconcile with our faith, hope, will and action all that matrix disappears.</p>

Anyone with a mental health issue can benefit from support. Some may benefit more from others with commonalities such as same race/ethnicity.
Have compassion and understanding
The communities that you spend time [with] can be healing/supportive if they are full of love and compassion. Evaluate the community you are in. Do they help you or is it making it more difficult for you to address your mental health issues?
we can and do get better
Yes, because we are not alone and shouldn't be afraid to share about what is going on, we are human too.
We aren't recognizing or supported!

Q5: What are some places where you feel included or accepted as being Latino/a/x and living with a significant mental illness? What is it about those places that make you feel accepted?

Responses:

Family, Churches, community events, libraries, mental health settings and my job. I am "normal" I am loved, respected and treated with dignity. NO hard demands but not slacking on my responsibilities either. Being validated and accepted for doing my best.
I take a Zumba class at the YMCA, and I always feel included and accepted. The Zumba instructor I see is Hispanic and she has such positive energy and consistently encourages others to love and accept themselves.
Places that speak my language and I can communicate back with them, places that they accept my illness

A place that accepts being hispanic with a mental illness I find that it's restaurants. The atmosphere just makes it welcoming to anyone who wants to sit and enjoy a meal or drink.
Selected Family and friends have walked with me in my journey
Certain online groups, and others who are going through the same thing
School , Church even at home
Church , the community and even at home because those are your safe places
The places that make me feel included are online spaces where others are advocating for mental health support and awareness. Most of these places are diverse and allow for different perspectives to be shared instead of the one type.
Everywhere
Aside from home with my brother and mother or a behavioral health center, I'd say homes of other friends outside of family. It's more so that I have the comfort of being honest and vulnerable around people who are outside my heritage, while being with family induces my mental disorders.
My friend group
I don't have a safe space
Any mental health support group.
Haven't found one
Church
community involvement is key
I have never really felt accepted anywhere, especially with being a Latina and Native American with Mental Health issues. I have always been treated like I was less than a human. It wasn't until I became a part of Parents Anonymous® 15yrs ago, that I really felt a sense of belonging. I was

respected and treated like a person, they were kind, mindful, and patient. I was given a safe space where it was okay to feel unwanted by the world and those who felt they were better than me. I was able to share freely without judgment or fear. Parents Anonymous® provided me with free emotional support and safe space to process my Adverse Childhood Experiences. This kind of support help me find my empowerment for personal growth and change.

When I studied abroad in Spain.

I don't have a place. Being Latina doesn't make a difference in my experience. Mental illness is mental illness.

OK, I can't answer this one with fidelity, as I keep my health to myself.

Identifying Programs that Promote Community Inclusion Among Latinx People with Significant Mental Health Issues

Many people have concerns about the availability of mental health services for people in the Latinx community. There are certainly barriers to access these mental health services. Some barriers include language, culture, insurance, stigma, and lack of representation in the workforce. An alarming statistic is that 18% of Hispanics do not have health insurance (MHA, n.d.). In addition, among those between the ages of 18 and 25, 56.8% of those with an SMI did not receive any services (MHA, n.d.). Also, for those 26-49, 39.6% of those with an SMI did not receive any services to treat their illness (MHA, n.d.). Of the Hispanic population in the United States, 71.1% do not speak English (OMH, 2021). Only 5.5% of psychologists in America can provide services in Spanish (Phillips, 2021).

There is already a need for psychiatric rehabilitation programs across the country. It is likely that these programs might be especially scarce for the Latinx community. Psychiatric rehabilitation programs focus on reintegration or inclusion of people with psychiatric disabilities into the community and include a focus on two strategies: 1) focusing on the individual to develop skills to help cope with their environment and 2) developing resources for the individual to cope with stress (Rössler, 2006). Some programs may include helping people with psychiatric disorders seek employment or find housing, advocacy, peer support, and parenting classes. Many people do not know that programs like these exist or that there is a need for more programs. Psychiatric rehabilitation is vital for those who have a serious mental illness because without it, it can lead to homelessness, unemployment, substance use issues, and in some cases death. In a study conducted by Arizona State University, they took the cost of nine homeless people with an SMI and found that their health cost was \$123,000 per person (Faller, 2021). After placing them in the Lighthouse residence, their health cost decreases by 12% (Faller, 2021).

I attempted to find any descriptions of psychiatric rehabilitation programs that specifically catered to Latinx individuals. The main purpose was to make it easier for the Hispanic community to find sources no matter where they are in the country and highlight the need for psychiatric rehabilitation services for the Hispanic community since these types of programs are scarce. I looked closely at 12 states with large populations of Latinx people, including Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York,

Florida, Massachusetts, Texas, Ohio, New Mexico, Utah, Arizona, Oregon, and California. I looked for employment, housing, peer support, general psychiatric rehabilitation, and advocacy programs for people with psychiatric disabilities in the Latino/a/x community.

Specific programs for Latinx community members were very hard to find. I typically found programs that were available to all individuals with significant mental health issues, but also offered bilingual and Latinx culturally-sensitive services. I made calls to these programs to get more information about what they do. I made an excel sheet with the programs that I found specifically for the Latinx community. The intersectionality of being Latinx and a person with a psychiatric disability can be challenging to navigate or feel included whether in their own communities or outside their communities. As a person who identifies as being Latina with a mental health issue, I wanted to advocate for people like me who want to feel more included or supported by their own and other communities.

Psychiatric Rehabilitation Programs for the Latino/a/x Community

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

NAMI is a non-profit organization that advocates about mental health through public policy. They also have local affiliates, meaning that they partner with the states and certain counties within the state to provide services, such as peer support, to its people.

To find your local Nami:<https://www.nami.org/findsupport>

NAMI California

Compartiendo Esperanza

Compartiendo Esperanza is a series of videos that spread awareness about mental health in the Latino/a/x community. To watch the

video:<https://www.nami.org/Support-Education/Mental-Health-Education/NAMI-Compartiendo-Esperanza-Mental-Wellness-in-the-Latinx-Community>

NAMI Alameda County (CA)

In this county, they offer peer support for serious mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia, major depression, and bipolar disorder. They also offer family support groups in

many different languages.

For more information, contact:

Phone Number: 510-835-5010

Address: 954 60th Street, Suite 10 Oakland, CA 94608

Latino Behavioral Health Services

Latino Behavioral Health Services (LBHS) is a non-profit organization in Utah that offers many different types of services for the Latinx community, such as peer support, support groups, and education classes for those with lived experiences or loved ones of those with lived experiences. For more information, contact: Latino Behavioral Health Services

3471 S West Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah

Call (801) 935-4447

contact.lbhs@gmail.com

HUNE (PA)

Youth Program

The youth program offers support to children with any disability including psychiatric disabilities. It entails an after-school and summer program to provide multiple support in a child's life. They focus primarily of Latinx descent. This program goes up until the person is 21 years of age and offers:

1. *Individualized Assistance and Training*: This program offers multiple areas of support for individuals ages 0-26 years. This program primarily assists with their needs in a public school setting.
2. *The Hispanic Outreach Program*: This program provides support for the families and loved ones of the child with the disability. They train families and loved ones on how to support their child or loved one that has the disability.

Contact: 215-425-6203

Latinx Mental Health Podcast

This podcast is run by young people who talk about mental health in the Latinx community

Contact:

latinxmhpodcast@gmail.com

Facebook: The Latinx Mental Health Podcast

Instagram: @latinxmhpod

Twitter: @latinxmhpod

Respectability

Respectability is an organization that advocates for representation of people with disabilities, including psychiatric disabilities. They focus on advocacy in four different areas: Entertainment and News Media, Leadership, Policy, and Faith Inclusion.

For more information: <https://www.respectability.org/>

COMHAR (PA)

Open Door Clubhouse

The Open Door Clubhouse is a psychiatric rehabilitation program that helps people with psychiatric disabilities seek employment opportunities. They also help people access community-based services.

Contact: 3147 Emerald Street, Philadelphia, PA 19134

(215) 427-5763 (Mon-Fri 8:30am-4:30pm)

<http://www.comhar.org>

opendoor@comhar.org

Community Residential Rehabilitation Services

This program allows for an individual with a psychiatric disorder to feel as much independence as possible. They provide skill-based training, education classes, and activities.

Contact: 100 West Lehigh Avenue · Philadelphia, PA 19133

Phone: (215) 203-3000 · Fax: (215) 203-3011

HOPE Program

The HOPE Program is a psychiatric rehabilitation program that offers services to people with psychiatric disorders, HIV/AIDS, and those that have Spanish as their first language. They offer services in areas such as family inclusion, community integration, education, employment/volunteerism, financial counseling, housing, spirituality, and legal help. This program also offers services to the loved ones of those who are dealing with these issues.

Contact: 100 West Lehigh Avenue · Philadelphia, PA 19133

Phone: (215) 203-3000 · Fax: (215) 203-3011

Mixteco Indigenous Community Organizing Project (CA)

The Health Advocacy Program

This program advocates and educates the indigenous and immigrant population about health programs that exist and barriers.

Safe + Strong (OR)

Safe + Strong offers a wide range of resources such as peer support for the Latinx and indigenous community, especially those that live in Oregon state.

For more

information: <https://www.safestrongoregon.org/mental-and-emotional-health/care-in-your-community/latino-latina-hispanic>

ADAA Grupo de Apoyo en Linea

ADAA Grupo de Apoyo en Linea offers online peer support for those in the Latinx community who are suffering from anxiety and depression.

For more information:

<https://adaa.org/find-help/support/grupodeapoyoenl%C3%Adnea>

Pinal Hispanic Council (AZ)

Supportive Employment

This program is a psychiatric rehabilitation program that offers resources to help those with a psychiatric disorder find employment and staying employed.

Contact:520-466-7765

Permanent Supportive Housing

This program is a psychiatric rehabilitation program that allows people with psychiatric disorders to live independently with resources available to them.

Contact:520-466-7765

Life is Precious (NY)

This program aid Latina teens who have depressive symptoms, suicide ideation, suicidal thoughts. Although there is a treatment-oriented side, they take the girls on field trips, offer academic support, music, and health activities.

Contact:917-304-3645.