



HOUSATONIC
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Stay Close. Go Far.

**Latino College Students:
Mental Health Awareness**

Maria M. Hernandez

Presentation Agenda

- Identify Latino Population in the United States
- Current Latino Population Trends
- Latinos in Higher Education
- Latinos in Community Colleges
- Stressors Affecting Latino College Students
- Latino College Students and Mental Health
- Special Populations – Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)
- Mental Health Care Awareness for Latino College Students
- Supports for Mental Health Care Services for Latino Students

About Me

- ❑ Health Career Academy Advisor/Coordinator of Contextualized Learning and Continuing Education Assistant
- ❑ Assist Counseling and Wellness Department
- ❑ Born in New York to Puerto Rican parents. Raised in the South Bronx by a single parent (mother) who only spoke Spanish.
- ❑ First Generation College Student
- ❑ First Advanced Degree in my Family
- ❑ Bachelor's degree in Psychology from The College of New Rochelle
- ❑ Master's in Social Work from Fordham University



Hispanic vs. Latino

- Hispanic and Latino are often used interchangeably though they actually mean two different things.
- Hispanic refers to people who speak Spanish and/or are descended from Spanish-speaking populations.
- Latino refers to people who are from or descended from Latin America.
- In today's United States, these labels are often thought of as racial categories and are often used to describe race, in the manner that we also use White, Black and Asian.
- However, the populations they describe are actually composed of various racial groups, so using them as racial categories is inaccurate.
- They work more accurately as descriptors of ethnicity.
- Example of a Hispanic: Sonia Maria Sotomayor
- Example of a Latino: an Ecuadorian

Current Latino Population Trends

- The U.S. Hispanic population reached a record of 60.6 million in 2019.
- Between 2010 and 2019, the Latino share of the total U.S. population increased from 16% to 18%.
- The share of Latinos in U.S. for immigrants declined to 33% in 2017, down from 37% in 2010.
- About 79% of Latinos living in the country are U.S. citizens.
- Nearly 78% of Latino immigrants have lived in the U. S. for more than 10 years.
- In 2017, 70% of Latinos ages 5 and older spoke English proficiently.

Source: Pew Research Center

Latinos in Higher Education

- ❑ In 2017, 20% of traditional U.S. college students were Latino.
- ❑ In the same year, 36% of Latinos aged 18-24 enrolled in college.
- ❑ Latino students are overrepresented in public associate's degree programs. As of fall 2018, 27% of Latino students are in public associate year programs, compared to 49% of White students, 6% of Asian students and 14% of African-American students.
- ❑ Latino students are underrepresented in bachelor's degree programs. As of fall 2018, 20% of Latino students are enrolled in public bachelor's degree programs compared to 56% of White students, 8% of Asian students and 12% of African-American students.
- ❑ Latino students often face many economic challenges. 60% of Latino students received some type of federal financial aid, compared to 53% of White students, 44% of Asian students and 73% of African-American students.

Source: Postsecondary National Policy Institute

Latino Students in Connecticut Colleges

- ❑ Latinos have a low degree achievement rate compared to all adults and a low graduation rate compared to Whites in Connecticut.

Latino degree completion in CT for 2019 *% of graduations in CT (Latinos vs. Whites)* *% of HCC enrollment by race/ethnicity for 2019*

DEGREE ATTAINMENT

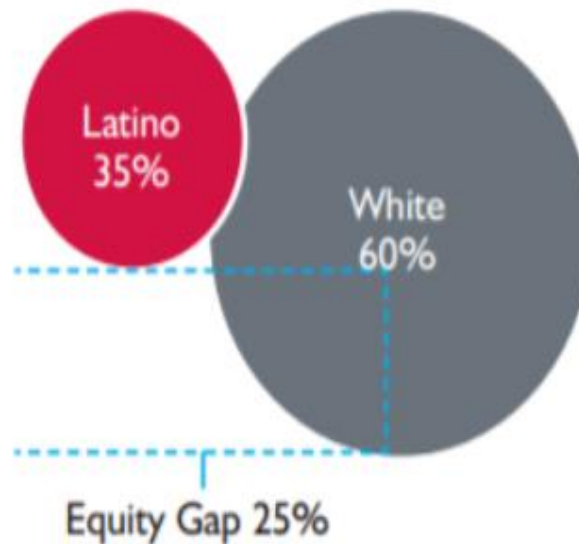
In Connecticut, 22% of Latino adults (25 and older) had earned an associate degree or higher, compared to 46% of all adults.⁵

Latino Adults = 2.2 of 10



All Adults = 4.6 of 10

GRADUATION RATES: 2014-15



% Asian

4%

% Hispanic

27%

% Black

30%

% White

37%

Stressors Affecting Latino College Students

Being a first-generation college student/lack of family support

First-generation Latino students often cannot rely on their parents or other family members to provide adequate support during college.

Belonging to a low social economic group

Students from these families will more than likely attend schools that are greatly lacking in resources and preparation for higher education.

Being perceived as academically inferior

Racial and ethnic stereotypes as well as lower academic expectations are significant obstacles for Latinos going to college.

Lacking guidance from parents, role models, mentors, and counselors

Some immigrant parents may be unfamiliar with the college systems in the United States. It also may be difficult to find motivational role models and mentors (especially Latinos) who have attended college because of the college completion gap.

Being constrained by family pressures

Parents may not want their children to attend college because they want or need them to work and support the family financially.

Latino College Student and Mental Health

- Latino college students experience high levels of stress and conflict with their parents due to differences in upbringing.
- Significantly higher levels of emotional distress were reported by those students who felt they were not able to communicate with their parents.
- Suicidal ideation and suicide attempts were more likely to be reported by students whose parents were not around.
- Latina students felt that a focus on traditional gender roles was a stressor, as males generally had more freedom and fewer family obligations.
- Differences between students and parental cultural values and levels of acculturation were identified as stressors for students.

Special Populations: DACA

- ❑ Many DACA students experience grief and loss, depression, anxiety, PTSD, and low self-esteem.
- ❑ Since the recent decision by the Supreme Court, DACA students are reporting higher levels of stress and anxiety. In addition, they are coping with the COVID-19 crisis which adds further uncertainty to their futures.
- ❑ The role of mental health providers is to understand DACA students' pain and suffering. Providers are supporting these students by helping them cope through their difficulties by:
 - *Integrating trauma-informed care and multicultural competence as part of best practices*
 - *Listening to their pressing issues*
 - *Helping them become aware of their psychological and behavioral well-being*
 - *Connecting them to college and community resources*

Mental Health Care Awareness for Latinos College Students

- ❑ As stated in the JED's Equity in Mental Health Framework, many colleges can implement practical strategies to reduce the stigma related to student mental health issues.

The stigma in Latino communities towards mental health care prevents many college students from seeking beneficial services from mental health professionals. In Latino communities there is a lack of understanding and knowledge regarding mental health.

Only 20% of Latinos who experience symptoms of a psychological disorder talk to a doctor about their symptoms and only 10% contact a mental health professional.

Following the JED framework Latino students can be encouraged to develop life skills for example by taking a life skills course during their freshman year. A typical Life Skills course may include modules on daily living strategies, money management, study skills, personal and career development and communication skills. All of which may have a positive impact on a Latino student that may be struggling in these areas.

- ❑ Identifying Latino Students at Risk

Many times faculty, staff and even peers can identify a student who may be exhibiting signs of anxiety and stress. College professionals should ensure that students are aware and have easy access to the Counseling and Wellness Centers in and outside the college community. Connecting Latino students to someone they can relate to such as a mentor or Latino support peer groups can also be an effective way to promote social connections.

Supports for Mental Health Care Services for Latino Students

Hispanic Clinics & CT Latino Behavioral Health System

34 Park Street

New Haven, CT 06519

Contact Number: (203) 974 – 5800

Greater Bridgeport Community Mental Health Center

1635 Central Ave

Bridgeport, CT 06610

Contact Number: (203) 551 – 7400

The National Alliance and Mental Illness (NAMI)

1-800-950-NAMI (6264) or info@nami.org

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

<tel:800-662-4357>

Therapy for Latinx

A portal for finding mental health care professionals that serve Latino communities

<https://www.therapyforlatinx.com/>

211 of Connecticut Suicide Hotline: (800) 203 – 1234

Resources

Breaking Silence: The State of Mental Health in Latino Communities – Fourteen East. (n.d.). 14 East. Retrieved August 9, 2020, from <http://fourteeneastmag.com/index.php/2017/10/20/breaking-silence-the-state-of-mental-health-in-latino-communities/>

Connecticut. (n.d.). Excelencia in Education. Retrieved August 9, 2020, from <https://www.edexcelencia.org/research/latino-college-completion/connecticut>

Fast Facts. (n.d.). Housatonic Community College. Retrieved August 9, 2020, from <https://www.housatonic.edu/about-us/institutional-research/college-reports>

Latino Students – PNPI. (2018). Pnpi.Org. <https://pnpi.org/latino-students/>

Latinos | NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness. (2017). Nami.Org. <https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Identity-and-Cultural-Dimensions/Latinx-Hispanic>

Latinx/Hispanic Communities | Anxiety and Depression Association of America, ADAA. (n.d.). Adaa.Org. <https://adaa.org/finding-help/hispanic-latinos>

Mental Health Providers Guide to Working with DACA Recipients. (n.d.). Informed Immigrant. Retrieved August 9, 2020, from <https://www.informedimmigrant.com/guides/daca-mental-health-providers/>