



Engaging the Latina Immigrant Mother

Sarah Ramos, PhD

Katia McEvoy-Holguin, MS



Objectives

Identify several of the barriers and contextual nuances for mental health treatment of Latina immigrant mothers.

Identify at least two culturally adapted clinical interventions for use with Latina immigrant clients, as well as at least two methods for increasing engagement in treatment.

“Clinicians engaging with immigrants need to appreciate the complexity of the individual’s identity and many other contextual factors and sociopolitical conditions that have affected mental, physical, and spiritual well-being.” (Arredondo, 2018)



Three Phases of Migration

Pre-Migration

Provides an understanding of motivational factors to come to the United States

Period of planning, assessing, and finally making a decision

Migration-Specific Period

Often the migration journey has been one of terror and trauma with consequences for psychological, physical, and spiritual distress in the post-migration era

Post-Migration Era

Has no time limit (individuals can have continuous experiences managing acculturation-related stressors)

Distrust as a common dynamic for immigrants

- Immigration per se is not a “risk factor for a negative outcome”, but the negative experiences surrounding the immigration and acculturation process become the stressors and negative forces (Cardoso & Thompson, 2010)
- Migration is not a pathological event, however, for many it is a stressful experience (Falicov, 2014)
- Migration is not a uniform experience, be aware of generalizations (Falicov, 2014)



Latinx Immigrant Mental Health

Challenges can include:

- Xenophobic rhetoric
- Lack of services in languages other than English
- Mental health stigma in the Latinx community
- Lack of guidance in seeking out mental health services
- Focus on Western approaches

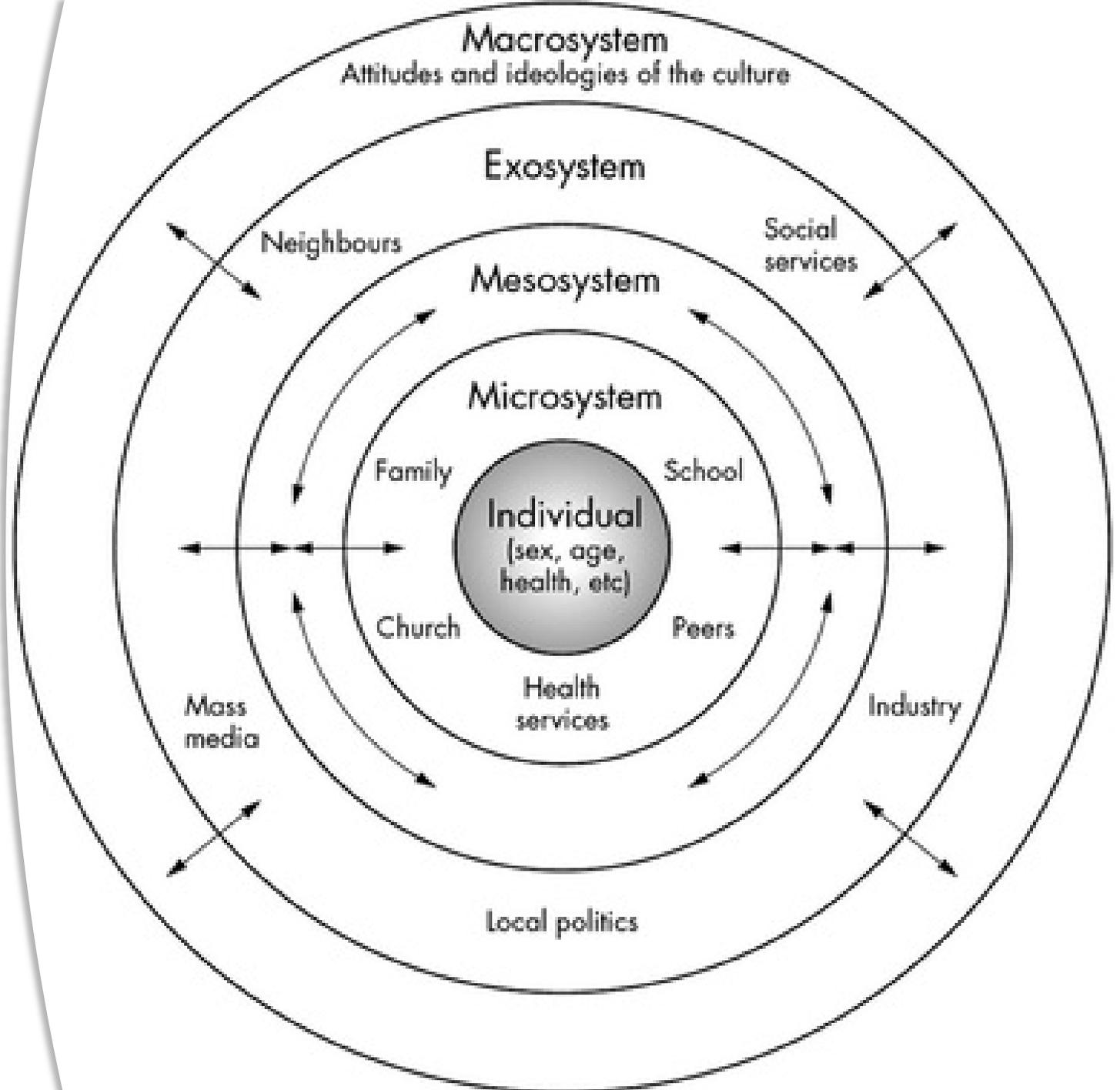
Psychological Strengths

Determination	The endless drive and courage to do what is necessary to meet goals despite the barriers encountered.
Esperanza	Faith that even during the most difficult situations things will turn out to be okay.
Adaptability	The ability to adapt and thrive in a variety of different environments.
Strong Work Ethic	Valuing the importance of working hard, producing quality, and taking pride in one's work endeavors regardless of social status or occupation.
Connectedness to Others	Valuing the need and enjoyment of being emotionally, physically, and spirituality connected with others throughout the lifespan in order to witness and share in life's challenging and joyous times.
Collective Emotional Expression	The ability, need, and desire to share strong emotions with others.
Resistance	The willpower and courage to stand firmly for one's beliefs, ideals, and practices.

(Adames & Chavez-Dueñas, 2017)

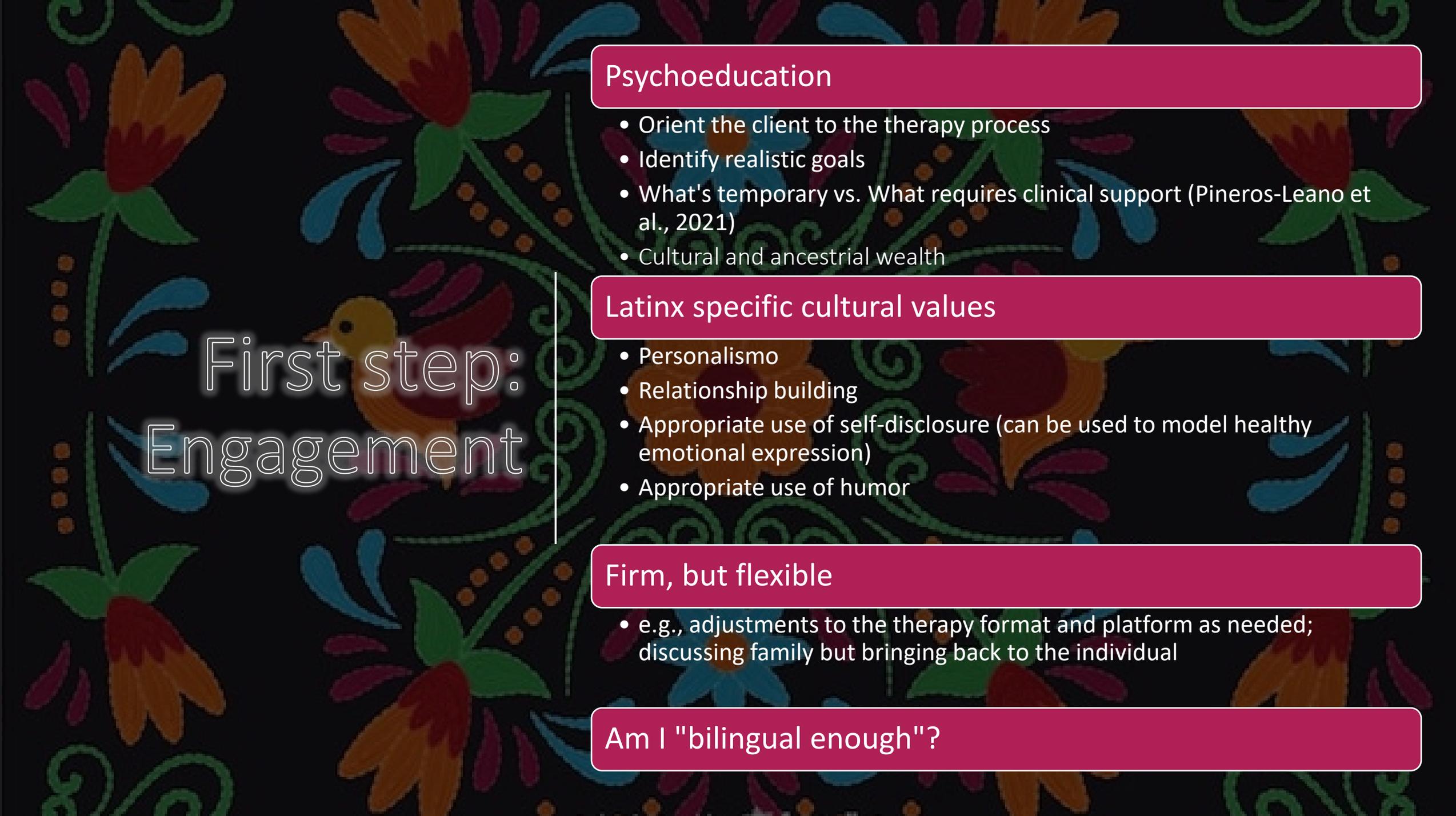
Latina Immigrant Mothers

- Trauma experiences
- Acculturation challenges
- Cultural values around Latina mother's role (Pineros-Leano et al., 2021) - needs of husband, children, or other family members before their own
 - Marianismo



A photograph of three elderly women standing outdoors, looking at a smartphone held by the woman on the left. The woman on the left is wearing glasses, a white top, and a colorful beaded necklace. The woman in the middle is wearing glasses and a leopard print top. The woman on the right is wearing a white sleeveless top. They are all smiling and appear to be engaged in a conversation about the phone. The background shows a building with a yellow door and some greenery.

Implications for Clinical Practice



First step: Engagement

Psychoeducation

- Orient the client to the therapy process
- Identify realistic goals
- What's temporary vs. What requires clinical support (Pineros-Leano et al., 2021)
- Cultural and ancestral wealth

Latinx specific cultural values

- Personalismo
- Relationship building
- Appropriate use of self-disclosure (can be used to model healthy emotional expression)
- Appropriate use of humor

Firm, but flexible

- e.g., adjustments to the therapy format and platform as needed; discussing family but bringing back to the individual

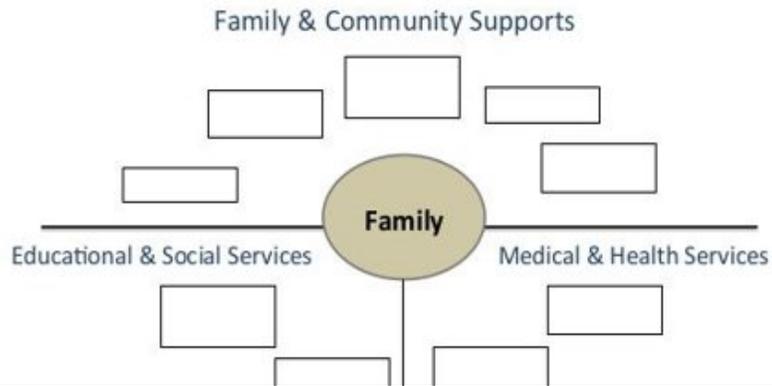
Am I "bilingual enough"?

A group of people's hands are clasped together in a circle, symbolizing unity and support. The hands are of various skin tones, and the background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the central gesture. A semi-transparent white box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the text.

Empowerment/Strengths Based Approach

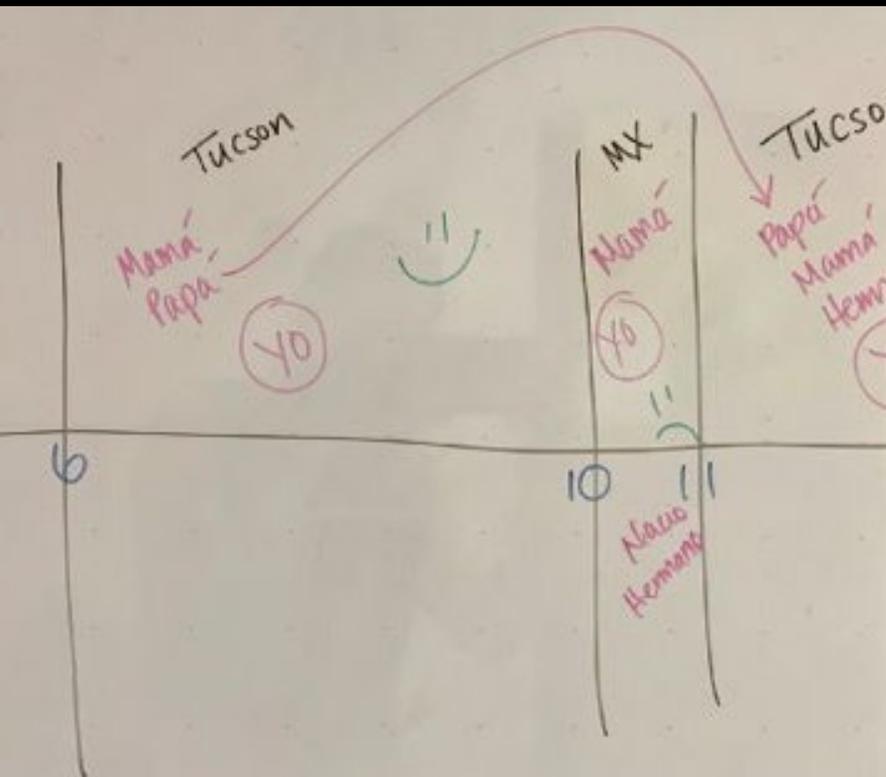
Eco Map

DRAFT



Interventions to tend to immigrant experience

- Creative interventions:
 - Family Timelines
 - Family Maps
- Permission to grieve for a sense of home (Falicov, 2014)
 - Validation of living with “two hearts”
- Finding community social capital to combat isolation (Falicov, 2014)
 - Eco-maps



- Storytelling
 - Use of cultural-relevant tools to destigmatize mental-health.
 - Fotonovela (Hernandez & Organista, 2013)
- Art Therapy
 - “Art therapy can facilitate communication about the complex nature of acculturation and can be incorporated into research methods for understanding family drawings” (Linesch et al., 2012)





Other clinical interventions

- Psychoeducation regarding somatic expressions to emotions
 - Use of body scan
- Racing thoughts
 - Mindfulness; self-compassion (Ryan et al., 2017)
- Reducing social isolation (Pineros-Leano et al., 2021)
 - Role plays; problem solving; interpersonal effectiveness skills
- Parenting support (Parra-Cardona, 2019)
- Use of dichos for opening venues of exploration (Zuniga, 1991)
- Use of play; joy

Incorporating Spirituality

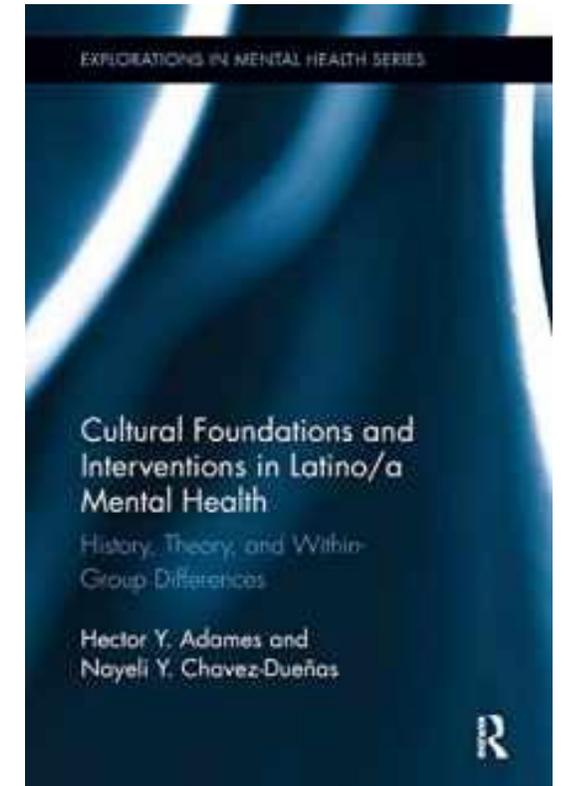
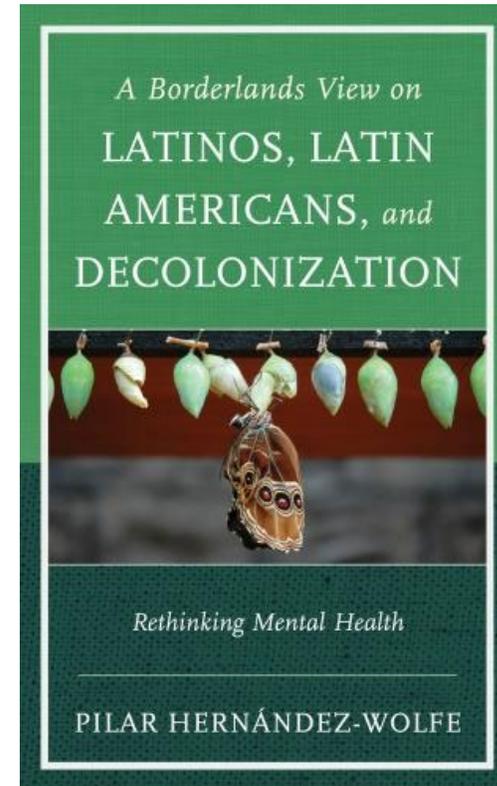
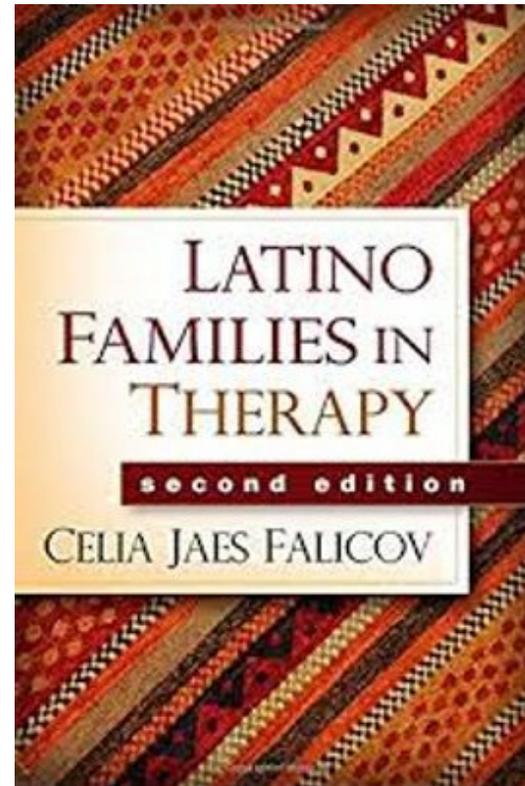
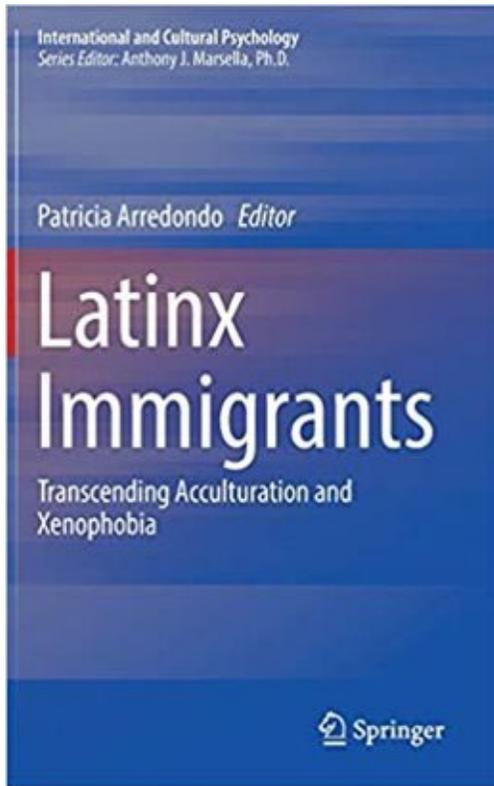
- Focus on soul, spirit, and something greater than self (not necessarily tied to religion).
- Most Latina women learned spirituality through "cultural osmosis" (Comas-Diaz, 2006) and living in lo cotidiano (Isasi-Diaz, 1996).

How does spirituality aid in the healing process?





Let's practice!



Resources

References

- Arredondo, P. (2018) Latinx immigrants set the stage for 2050. In P. Arredondo (Ed.), *Latinx immigrants: Transcending acculturation and xenophobia*.
- Adames, H. Y. & Chavez-Dueñas, N. Y. (2017). Cultural foundations and interventions in Latino/a mental health: History, theory, and within-group differences. New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Bryant-Davis, T., & Diaz, L. C. (2014). La Diosa: Syncretistic Folk Spirituality among Latinas. In Religion and spirituality for diverse women: Foundations of strength and resilience (pp. 215–235). essay, Praeger, an imprint of ABC-CLIO, LLC.
- Hernandez, M. Y., & Organista, K. C. (2013). Entertainment-education? A fotonovela? A new strategy to improve depression literacy and help-seeking behaviors in at-risk immigrant latinas. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 52(3-4), 224–235. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-013-9587-1>
- Isasi-Díaz Ada María. (1996). *Mujerista theology a theology for the twenty-First Century*. Orbis Books.
- Linesch, D., Aceves, H. C., Quezada, P., Trochez, M., & Zuniga, E. (2012). An art therapy exploration of immigration with Latino families. *Art Therapy*, 29(3), 120–126. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07421656.2012.701603>
- Parra-Cardona, J. R. (2019). Healing through Parenting: An Intervention Delivery and Process of Change Model Developed with Low-Income Latina/o Immigrant Families. *Family Process*, 58(1), 34–52. <https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12429>
- Pineros-Leano, M., Yao, L., Simonovich, S. D., Piñeros-Leaño, N., & Huang, H. (2021). “I Don’t Have Time to Be Sad”: Experiences and Perceptions of Sadness among Latina Mothers. *Social Work*, 66(2), 119–127. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/swab008>
- Page, R. L., Chilton, J., Montalvo-Liendo, N., Matthews, D., & Nava, A. (2017). Empowerment in Latina Immigrant Women Recovering From Interpersonal Violence: A Concept Analysis. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, 28(6), 531–539. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1043659617707014>
- Falicov, C. J. (2014). *Latino families in therapy* (2nd ed.). The Guilford Press.
- Ryan, D., Maurer, S., Lengua, L., Duran, B., & Ornelas, I. J. (2017). Amigas Latinas Motivando el Alma (ALMA): An Evaluation of a Mindfulness Intervention to Promote Mental Health among Latina Immigrant Mothers. *The Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11414-017-9582-7>
- Zuniga, M. E. (1991). "Dichos" as metaphorical tools for resistant Latino clients. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 28(3), 480–483. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-3204.28.3.480>