

Chapter 16

From Surviving to Thriving: Future Directions

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ABSTRACT

The authors of this book are part of a diverse network of scholars and practitioners with expertise in various aspects of Latinx psychology and mental health. They share a similar purpose of expanding the pipeline of Latinx counselors and psychologists to collectively create a just and healthy society for all Latinxs. This chapter reflects on the common linkages and underdeveloped areas among the chapters. Future directions for Latinx mental health are presented and include but are not limited to the incorporation of liberatory frameworks and interdisciplinary approaches.

FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING: FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As we finish this book, the U.S. midterm elections of 2022 are heating up. Latinx people in the U.S. have

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once again become the target of political attack ads, and the focus of pundits that speculate about how Latinx people will vote in this and the next (2024 presidential) election. Latinx people find themselves at the center of political discourse, paradoxically both as scapegoats and courted for votes at the same time. In a highly visible political stunt Latinx immigrants were used as political pawns by the governors of Florida and Texas (Henderson, 2022; Montoya-Galvez, 2022). Latinx asylum seekers were deceived with promises of nonexistent opportunities and then transported to northern “sanctuary cities” like Chicago and Martha’s Vineyard (Sandoval et al., 2022). These political stunts problematize the status of asylum seekers, in this case from Venezuela, as a public charge to literally be dumped elsewhere. Among the thousands of asylum seekers who have been caught up in these recent political stunts include many buses filled with children (ABC7 New York, 2022; Jorgenson, 2022). These recent acts are reminiscent of the “Reverse Freedom Rides” during the 1960’s when white segregationists and racist organizations devised the plan to bus African Americans to northern “liberal” cities under false pretenses (Brockell & Tillman, 2022; Simon & Emanuel, 2022; Webb, 2004). These cruel and inhumane tactics are rooted in racist, white nationalistic, and white supremacy ideologies that have permeated the social fabric of this country (GALE, ND).

These acts against immigrants and asylum seekers are used to gain political capital and threaten the mental health of Latinx people in several ways. First, by dehumanizing immigrants and asylum seekers as problematic and disruptors of law and order, all Latinx people may potentially be seen as invasive and a threat to the economic stability of the U.S. In the 1980’s the Cuban freedom flotillas were also portrayed as an invasion of the U.S. by criminal, communist and dark-skinned Cubans (Stephens, 2021). The constant stereotyping and dehumanization of immigrants can erode empathy for immigrants, asylum seekers, and the issues that impact them. Second, in response to constant portrayals of immigrants as not human and a threat to life in the U.S., Latinx people may instead align themselves with the oppressor. That is, they may choose to identify as white and adopt anti-immigrant and anti-Latinx sentiments. This insidious process of assimilation where culture of origin practices is sacrificed while white dominant culture norms are adopted can rob Latinxs from their history and impact their mental health. Dehumanizing other human beings, internalizing negative stereotypes, and within group fragmentation that takes place because of internalized oppression among Latinx people is not conducive to mental health (Friere, 1970; Duran et al., 2008; Comas-Diaz, 2012; Capielo Rosario et al., 2019).

This book is a critical look at Latinx mental health from the lens of research, practice, education, and personal accounts. Each chapter has examined the historical and contemporary context of Latinx people within an intersectional framework of identities and systems. That is, none of us hold only one identity, rather we are a dynamic mix of salient aspects of ourselves that interact with systems of oppression. Likewise, the systems that Latinxs navigate, and their oppressive nature are also intersectional and dynamic. These oppressive systems are embedded within the structural, institutional, community and individual levels of U.S. society and have a detrimental impact on the wellbeing of Latinx persons (Torres et al, 2022). Oppressive practices are evident in educational policies, immigration laws and practices, judicial policies, political rhetoric, healthcare inequalities, housing, and banking.

Each chapter has focused on a particular aspect of Latinx identity and attempted to inclusively represent the many manifestations of *Latinidad*. For example, in the Latinx feminist chapters, the authors are careful to examine the intersectional identities of Latinx feminists who operate within broad frameworks such as the feminist movement, which has historically excluded them. It is critical for Latinx people to reject simplistic, reductionistic, and stereotypical notions of who Latinx people are, who they can be, or what they can achieve in high-stakes arenas such as education, healthcare, and policy.

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