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March 15, 2020
Word Count: 2027

<u>Mental Health and Culture Coexisting</u>

Part 1: General Analysis

History and Social Impact

Our mental health. Everyone has their own ways of dealing and understanding mental health. There are many diverse cultures which influence how a person distinguishes, responds to and even reacts to a diagnosis based on their mental health. Culture has a major influence on how some people can react to or diagnose themselves. Because there are several ranges of groups (culture), it is important to notice how big of a role being surrounded by a certain culture can affect one. This genre surrounding mental health is explaining how some of the different cultures view mental health which is important for society to perceive because mental health is not often acknowledged and or accepted. Depending on the person and which culture they are affiliated with, most people are not often open and willing to discuss or accept mental health as a priority. If society made it normal for people to be okay and willing to ask for help, it would break the negative stigma tied to culture that people follow back at home. People who are deep and are in touch with their culture at home, are unaccepting to mental illness and do not view it as an actual problem. In reality there are negative effects if one does not seek mental treatment and are untreated. Those who are followers to a designated culture brush mental health disorders off as if one is being "dramatic". Realizing the negative effect (sucide) of an untreated mind can convince and influence older people deep in certain cultures. If society normalized seeking help it can be culturally accepted to minimize some labels that are given to those who look for help. Normalizing can help a person's mental state to improve. For example, the different communities, specifically Latino's and African American's can often shrug off mental health, some are called "exaggerated" or "crazy". Instead of naming and not handling mental health as if it is a dramatization, normalizing the conversations about mental health and erasing the bad

vocabulary are steps to improve one's way of perceiving mental health. By doing so it can make one feel hopeful, instead of feeling shameful to look for help. There is a cultural stigma that exists, which makes us look "weak" if we were ever to find therapy or medication for help. Which is why only 27% of Latinos would seek mental treatment for mental health. There is not much acceptance in minority groups for their mental health, they are told to brush it off, making one feel over exaggerated if they were to look for help. When in reality it is a necessity to take care of your mental health, not a decision or a special treatment. When those non-believers in mental treatment do not address medical health in their communities, many lives lie in their hands. When it is not accepted those people do not know the reality of its negative effects. An example of a person who has worked in the field to improve people's knowledge on mental health is, Dior Vargas. She is a mental health activist who is one of the most known to help communities eradicate the stigma of mental illness for people of color. Not only is she helping mental health and disconnected the cultural influence/stigma but famous artists have contributed as well. Two are J Balvin and Demi Lovato who have spoken about their struggles regarding mental health which has been a new perspective or eye opener to their followers and to those who do not think or want to look for help. When they speak on their struggles/mental health they can help achieve an overall normalized cultural acceptance, breaking the negative stereotype of being seen as weak. There are several examples on how culture can negatively influence certain people. This is seen in different religions, which is another major factor.

Discourse Community

A discourse community is a group of people who have like minded ideas and or beliefs. Some deeply religious people can be categorized as a negative community surrounding mental health. They are driven by what their beliefs are, which impact how those struggling people perceive or seek medical help. They reside in prayer or meditation, instead of seeing that mental issues are not made up by man but a reality which every human goes through. For example, in Chirstianity many people do not consider mental illness as a real subject. It has to do with the act of faith, they believe strongly in prayer and relying for God to heal. There is nothing wrong with turning to prayer or anything spiritual but if your mental health is at stake why not look for

professional medical treatment. The primary ways they communicate about mental health is by belittling it and making it seem that one is dramatic or crazy for even believing that they have anxiety, clinical depression or any other mental disorder. There are many minority parents who lived without professional treatment for their mental health, they are another group of people who do not believe in seeking help. Since this is a cultural stigma, they never were able to rely on a therapist because they never had that opportunity, it was not accessible for them. They grew up having to deal, maybe relying on other ways of communication to cope with their mental struggles. Parents who did not have the opportunity to receive such help have passed down to their children to not seek help because they have been "surviving" or "living" without any medical treatment for however long. For example, Latino parents often brush aside any signs of mental health issues from their kids because they are told that they have to be "strong" and to "get over it" just like the parents were growing up. This stops the help that many latino children can get. Suicide is a major consequences for unattended mental health. It's very often seen that hispanic girls and boys do not get to acknowledge their mental struggles at home. Sucide attempts for hispanic girls were 50% higher than for white girls in the same age and grade group. These numbers are higher than white or non black students. By upholding the cultural stigma surrounding mental health it can put people in minority communities at great risk.

Rules and Message

Lacking the right medical help and or assistance to those minority groups, is a major factor in accepting mental health. Many Latinos and African American's do not have access to health care, because they do not have jobs that insure health coverage. On the other hand, non minority groups are given more advantages, for their jobs insure health coverage. If one does not have accessible care for their health, they would have to spend their own money to look for treatment or help. At the same time we are not given jobs that can support us enough financially, which means we are not able to even afford help or access treatment for our mental health. In terms of looking for help not everyone can afford it, on top of that, it has been stigmatized as bad and other things as I said prior. Racial and ethnic minorities have less access to mental health services than do whites. They are less likely to receive needed care. People with bipolar disorder,

depression, schizophrenia or any intellectual handicap may also be considered to be suffering from culture bound syndrome. Culture bound syndrome is a limitation by or valid only within a particular culture intelligence which is commonly from a certain culture, to some degree. This all plays a major role in the government assistance and society. If there are not many people in the medical field that are Latino/Hispanic or African American who can help normalize the need to achieve a healthy mindset. We need people to be more involved in eradicating the cultural stigma. Government assistance, there are not many groups or public assistance programs that help assist minority communities, not all are easy access for quick, easy and simple assistance.

Part 2: Focused Analysis

A very similar text which discusses mental health and the cultural stigma is "Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity: A Supplement to Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General", written by the Office of the Surgeon General (US); Center for Mental Health Services (US); National Institute of Mental Health (US). This text documents the existence of striking disparities for minorities in mental health services and the underlying knowledge base. It goes in depth for each race and their ways of accessing, opinions/view, communicate, diagnosing and coping methods with certain mental health issues. Their message or goal is to increase public awareness of mental illness and they want treatments to be developed for racial and ethnic minority communities. They want to help irradicate and overcome shame, stigma, discrimination, and distrust. The intended audience is all, it is made for everyone from all races or ethnicities to read opon, to inform them on the different cultural views on mental health. It is a very important topic for everyone to look upon, not only will some be able to relate to the point given but it is good to show the appropriate or different races and their own ways of seeking help for a mental health disorder. This book explains many ways to seek help and the different ways it can be accessed from different minority groups. They do not hesitate to write and advocate about the reality, dark truth of mental health and how some cultures can negatively impact one. There aren't any constraints because the text is very straight forward not favoring, being biased or untruthful. It's supported by statistics. This is important to me for society and or other discourse

communities to see because it is a current reality. Times are changing and each time sucide rates increase from minorities and it's because discourse communities, society and minority communities are not accepting and realizing the danger there is diminishing mental health in their communities. There are minorities who are more prone to mental disorders and are silently suffering and can't find help at home because they are attached to the culture believing and simply "getting over it". Common concepts that are relevant to this example which are said a lot are some mental illnesses such as, clinical depression and anxiety. There are the two mentioned the most because they are very common in young minorities. Some other terms that are often used are "cultural stigma" and other terms with the words culture.

To conclude, accepting mental health is the first step to help and give access to minority children who undergo mental struggles. Acknowledgement and acceptance can be difficult to achieve based on the culture a minority is surrounded by. Factor can be a religious background, the lifestyle he or she has in their household or the culture their parents grew up in. As well as giving access medically to them so they can be treated. Normalizing conversation, eradicating negative vocabulary or labels will help future generations to succeed in acknowledgement for mental health care. Not all parents from different cultures accept them because they did not grow up with such form of help, but it's time to eradicate the cultural stigma so that children can grow and live with a healthy mindset.

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