

My understanding of diversity is rooted in personal experience and direct social work practice. In my social work practice, I have heard the experiences of those deeply impacted by structural inequalities. My career goals are to produce scholarship that yields social change, to train effective leaders, and responsible global citizens that are committed to making a positive impact on the diverse world in which we live. In alignment with the mission of higher education, I pursue these goals through research, teaching, and service. I strive to live my life and conduct my work based on the values of diversity, inclusion, and equity. These values are central to higher education, because university stakeholders, including students, parents, employers, and society – come from various cultural groups and operate under differing value systems; therefore, they interact with one another in multiple ways. Race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical ability, mental ability, religious beliefs, education, age, income, language, marital status, parental status -among other- are factors known to moderate social interactions. I seek to engage all these identities productively, and within these conversations, I aim to amplify the voices and identities of those with histories of marginalization.

I embody many sources of diversity, both at the surface level as well as beyond. I am first generation college student, born and raised in México. As an immigrant and non-traditional graduate student, mother of two young children, and non-native English speaker, I have encountered several institutional barriers in academia. These experiences have shaped the way in which I conceptualize and contextualize diversity. My personal history, as well as my work in the community, and doctoral training, have broadened my perspective on the effect of institutional policies on the minority populations. Through these experiences, I have come to understand that institutional governance is best done in community with others; a collective identification of the right policies could increase health, occupational, and educational for many communities. My clinical background and extensive community work can guide me to the right policies. My research, teaching, and community practice are all motivated by this search.

Much of my professional experience pertains to individuals of Mexican ancestry in the United States (IMA-US). This is partly because IMA-US is one of the most populous minority groups in this country. They are over-represented in the workforce -but underrepresented in higher education. As a result, they are often employed in professions that do not provide high earnings or social status. Low socio-economic status can lead to low health literacy, thereby also leading to greater health disparities. Therefore, addressing educational disparities can address health equity. My future work will highlight the need to tap into the wellness resources within IMA-US. This work is needed to develop interventions geared toward fostering healthier and productive lives, through a more inclusive societal participation. My most recent publication explores how historical traumatic events have influenced educational and health services for this IMA-US. I found that institutional maltreatment, inspired by colonial thinking, have contributed to distrust in social welfare organizations, thereby worsening social disparities. The next step for this work is to research ways to increase institutional citizenship, and to add diverse voices in decision-making processes. However, the integration of these voices into the language of the academy is not a simple task; it requires a community of collaborators and the explicit institutional support. History has shown us that despite these historical inequities, IMA-US are determined to survive. I am committed to supporting this vision of survival and hope for a better future.