

# Mindfulness Research in Diverse Communities

*Amigas Latinas Motivando el Alma (ALMA):*  
Using mindfulness to reduce mental health  
disparities among Latina immigrant women

India J. Ornelas, PhD, MPH

Assistant Professor, Health Services, University of Washington

Mindful Schools and Communities

April 28, 2017

# Collaborators

---

Serena Maurer, PhD, Consultant

Anh Tran, PhD, School of Medicine, Duke University

Giselle Corbie-Smith, MD, School of Medicine, UNC

Liliana Lengua, PhD, Center for Child and Family Wellbeing, UW

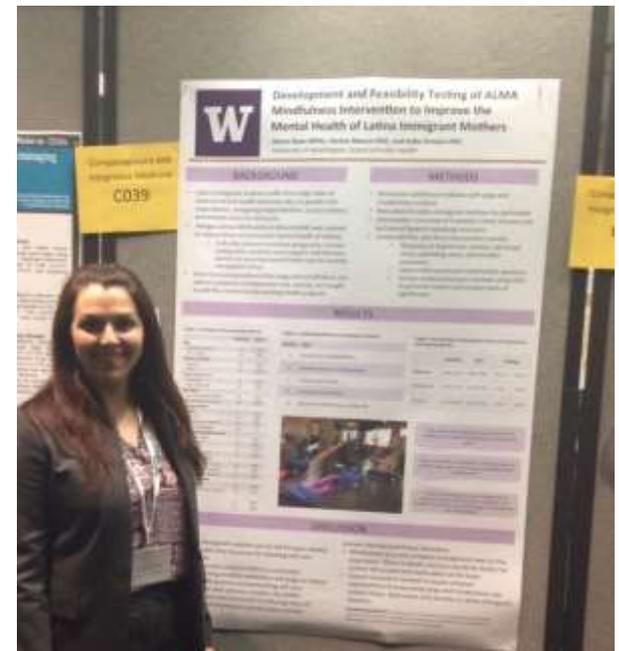
Bonnie Duran, PhD, School of Social Work, UW

Daron Ryan, MPH, Health Services, UW

Katie Querna, MSSW, School of Social Work, UW

Araceli Hernandez, Casa Latina

Marcos Martinez, Casa Latina



# Latino Population in Washington State

---

Latinos are the fastest-growing racial/ethnic group in US and Washington

- 13% of Washington state
- 17% of King County population

Latino immigrants make up 35% of the Latino population

Latino immigrants face many stressors:

- Discrimination & Racism
- Social Isolation
- Language barriers

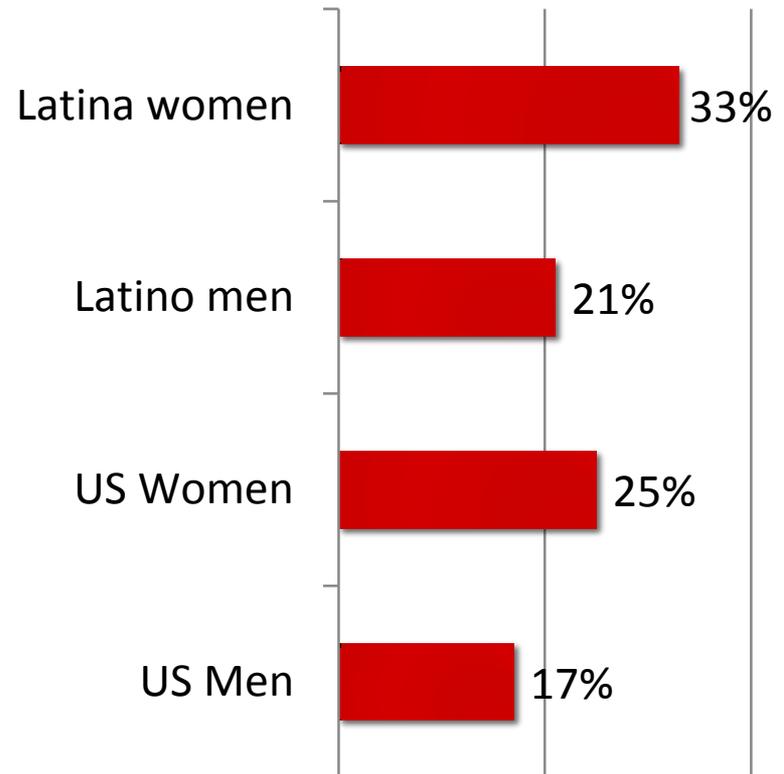
# Latino Mental Health

---

Latinos are at increased risk for depression, anxiety, and substance use disorders

- Prevalence of mental health and substance use disorders increase with time spent in the United States
- Impact on health varies by gender
- Latinos are less likely to access and utilize mental health care due to economic, linguistic, social, and political barriers

## Rates of Depression



# ALMA : *Amigas Latinas Motivando el Alma*

Intervention to promote mental health of Latina immigrant women

- Trained groups of 12 – 15 *promotoras* over 6 sessions
- *Promotoras* recruited through churches, community organizations and agencies
- Skill building in coping strategies for isolation, anxiety, sadness
- Topics covered: immigration, isolation, family re-organization
- 1 – 2 sessions focused on guided relaxation, meditation as coping strategies

*Promotoras* shared information with other Latinas in their social network (*compañeras*) to increase capacity of women in the community.

**Saw reductions in depressive symptoms and perceived stress, and increases in coping skills in pilot tests in North Carolina.**

# ALMA at Casa Latina

Received small internal pilot award for academic/community partnership (2011)

- Co-led by Casa Latina and UW staff
- 22 participants
- 12 came to sessions, 9 attended all 5
- Reduced stress and depression but follow-up rates were low

Curriculum: Five weekly sessions

1. Introduction to the program, stress and its impact on the body
2. Separation from their home/country of origin
3. Adjusting to life in Seattle
4. Coping with stress (yoga and meditation)
5. Seeking mental health services



# Focus Group Findings

Feedback on program content and implementation



*“I have a lot more abilities than what I believed.”*

*“To value ourselves, to make time for ourselves...it is very valuable for me because I give all of my time...I have 4 sons.”*

*“Free time is also for me...to get rid of stress and be better.”*

*“You have the ability to transform stress...to decrease stress...by a variety of ways, like meditating.”*

# ALMA Mindfulness Pilot

---

Received small internal pilot award from Center for Child and Family Wellbeing (2015)

## **Specific Aims**

- Develop additional modules of the ALMA intervention focused on using mindfulness to decrease stress, depressive and anxiety symptoms among Latina immigrant mothers.
- Assess the feasibility and potential efficacy of the modules using a pre- and post-test study design.
  - 5 sessions, 20 women

# ALMA Mindfulness Curriculum

---

## **Five Weekly Sessions**

To introduce participants to the concept and practice of the two wings of mindfulness: Compassion and Awareness

Intro Session: What is Mindfulness? (Pre-Test Surveys)

1: The Two Wings of Mindfulness + Mindfulness of the Breath

2: Mindfulness of Thoughts

3: Compassion for Others

4: Self-Compassion

5: Review and Wrap-Up

Follow-up Session: Group Feedback (Post-Test Surveys)

# Activities

---

## **Large and small-group discussion**

- Awareness, Compassion for Others, Compassion for Self

## **Writing and Drawing**

- “What is Mindfulness?” “May I be...,” Self-Compassion Letter

## **Mindful Movement/Yoga**

- Slow, steady, adaptive movement with the breath

## **Guided meditation**

- Mindfulness of Breath, Mindfulness of Thoughts, Loving-Kindness, Compassion

## **Homework**

- Weekly meditation + mindfulness in our daily lives

# Making the Program Culturally Relevant

---

- All sessions and evaluations conducted in Spanish
- Incorporating social and cultural context into the content
- Starting from their own understanding of mindfulness and compassion
- Drawing on what brings them peace, quiet, mindfulness
- Providing food and time to eat and socialize together
- Providing materials (yoga mats, cushions, blankets)
- Incorporating time for rest, music
- Offering sessions after work and in familiar location
- Providing child care
- Staying flexible and open to the needs of the participants



“I really liked the yoga because it helped me to rediscover myself and my values. It helped me to meditate in my own space and change my thoughts to be more positive.”

“The classes have helped me love myself more, meditate more, know myself deeper, and learn to relax.”

“The most important thing is to value ourselves; if we don’t take care of ourselves we can’t take care of anyone else.”

“The creativity of drawing and writing was really good because we don’t (tend to) identify and express our thoughts and feelings.”

“I work in housekeeping and when I have time I do one of the exercises I learned. In terms of mindfulness, I go to the park where there are trees and I look at the birds and listen to the wind.”

“It helped me to get closer to my children and have more communication with them.”

“I’ve had to be persistent (with this work) so that my daughter can follow my example.”



Table 1. Participant Characteristics (N=24)

	Mean/N	(SD) %
<b>Age</b>		
Younger than 45	13	54%
45 or older	11	46%
<b>Country of Birth</b>		
Mexico	19	79%
Peru	3	13%
<b>Years lived in U.S.</b>		
10 or less	9	38%
More than 10	15	62%
<b>Education</b>		
Less than High School	12	50%
HS graduate or more	12	50%
<b>Marriage Status</b>		
Single	4	17%
Married	15	65%
Divorced or widowed	4	17%
Number of Children	2.8	(1.2)
<b>Weekly Household Income</b>		
Less than \$300	6	26%
\$300-\$500	8	35%
\$500-\$700	4	17%
More than \$700	5	22%
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Employed year-round	13	54%
Temporarily employed	6	25%
Currently not working	5	21%
<b>Languages Spoken</b>		
Only Spanish	5	21%
Spanish and some English	19	80%

Table 2. Participant Baseline Mental Health (N=24)

Measure (Range)	Mean/N	(SD) %
Parenting Stress (18-90)	38.1	9.4
Perceived Stress (10-50)	27.1	3.8
Mindful Awareness (1-6)	3.18	0.51
Anxiety (0-21)	6.1	5.4
Mild	18	75%
Moderate	4	17%
Severe	2	8%
Depression (0-27)	6.7	5.6
Mild (0-9)	17	71%
Moderate (10-19)	6	25%
Severe (20-27)	1	4%

Total Attendance Per Session		
Session	Enrolled Participants	Total Attendees
Pre- test survey	24	26
1	19	21
2	15	21
3	13	19
4	14	19
5	14	20
Post-test survey	21	24

Pre and Post Intervention Scores on Outcome Measures (N=21)					
Measure	Baseline		Post-Intervention		Change
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Actual
Parenting Stress	37.8	9.9	37.8	10.8	0.0
Perceived Stress	26.7	3.9	25.2	5.2	-1.5
Mindful Awareness	3.2	0.5	2.8	0.6	-0.4
Depression	6.3	5.7	5.1	6.3	-1.2
Anxiety	5.7	5.5	4.2	5.4	-1.5

Changes in Levels of Depression Stratified By Attendance (N=21)						
Session Attendance	Baseline		Post-Intervention		Change	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Actual	%
0-3	7.5	4.4	6.4	7.0	-1.1	-14.7
4-5	5.2	6.7	3.8	5.8	-1.4	-26.9

Changes in Levels of Anxiety Stratified By Attendance (N=21)						
Session Attendance	Baseline		Post-Intervention		Change	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Actual	%
0-3	6.9	5.6	6.0	6.3	-0.9	-13.0
4-5	4.5	5.5	2.6	4.2	-1.9	-43.5

# Conclusions & Next Steps

---

- Participant satisfaction with the program was high.
- Program builds on existing coping strategies and resources within social networks.
- ALMA and other mindfulness interventions may be an effective way to improve mental health in underserved diverse communities.
- Future studies should assess the program using more rigorous study designs.
- Research team has applied for larger NIH grants to further test the program.

# Proposed ALMA Combined Curriculum for Randomized Control Trial

Title and Topic	Content Covered
<b>1. Welcome and Introductions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce participants to each other and to the program</li> </ul>
<b>2. Migration Journey and Coping Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify &amp; share current coping strategies for self and others</li> <li>• Introduce yoga and mindfulness of the breath as a technique for working with the stress, depression and anxiety that can accompany migration and the daily realities of life as a Latina immigrant woman</li> </ul>
<b>3. Identifying Stress in the Body and Practicing New Coping Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use vignettes to identify and describe immigration-related stressors</li> <li>• Expand practice of mindfulness to include bodily sensations that may include physical symptoms of depression and anxiety</li> <li>• Practice mindfulness of the breath and yoga</li> </ul>
<b>4. Challenges to Coping and Self-Care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use vignettes and mindfulness techniques to identify depression and anxiety symptoms amongst program participants</li> <li>• Group yoga and mindful movement practice</li> </ul>
<b>5. Identifying and Seeking Social Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify current sources of social support</li> <li>• Describe resources available</li> <li>• Discuss and practice mindfulness of interconnection, compassion and support</li> </ul>
<b>6. Compassionate Self-Awareness &amp; Reducing Internalized Stigma</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce compassionate self-awareness</li> <li>• Reflections on group sitting practice and discussion about how to incorporate compassionate awareness of thoughts and feelings</li> </ul>
<b>7. Next steps: Looking forward</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review self-care, yoga and mindfulness techniques to continue individually and as a group</li> <li>• Practice yoga and mindfulness techniques learned in weeks 2-6</li> <li>• Panel of guest speakers from local mental health agencies to discuss other resources for addressing depression and anxiety</li> </ul>
<b>8. Closure, Reflection and Graduation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect on skills learned and their effects, identify changes in symptoms and behaviors</li> <li>• Create and share individual and group mindfulness intentions</li> <li>• Closing activity and celebration</li> </ul>

# ALMA for Service Providers

---

Building capacity and addressing stress within community-based organizations and social service providers serving Latino immigrant communities

## First retreat: Half-day

- Introduction to mindfulness
- Mindfulness meditation: meditation of the breath
- Yoga: mindfulness of the breath in motion
- Walking meditation

## Four Workplace Sessions: 2 hours, once a month

- Mindfulness of thoughts
- Body scan
- Mindfulness of emotions
- Compassion and kindness
- How to use skills at work, how this relates to our work

## Second retreat: Half-day

- Review of content, yoga, meditation, writing activity and discussion

# Workplace Sessions

---

Often Started with an Opening Meditation

- Example: Mindfulness of the Breath

Reviewed Material from Past Session

Activities in Pairs or Small Groups

Body Scans

Discussion: How to use mindfulness and compassion to build awareness of oppression?

# Retreats

---

- Retreat was held offsite for half day in relaxing location
- Room set up for yoga and meditation practice
- Allowed for more in-depth learning
- Healthy lunch and snacks provided



# Staff Evaluation

---

- Appreciated having instruction in Spanish
- Participants enjoyed being able to practice walking and sitting meditation and yoga
- Most participants indicated they would be likely to do some of the mindfulness practices after the program
- Staff felt like it was an affirmation of the work we do, how valuable it is and how stressful it can be
- Staff enjoyed time together outside of work setting
- All participants indicated that it was **very likely** they would recommend mindfulness practices to others

# Participant Reflections

---

*Me gusto mucho participar. Es una herramienta muy poderosa.*

I really enjoyed participating. It is a very powerful tool.

*El nivel de yoga es bueno. No muy difícil pero bastante ejercicio.*

The yoga level was good. Not very difficult but enough exercise.

*La oportunidad de reunirnos como colegas en un contexto muy diferente, compartiendo una experiencia que era fuera de lo común para nosotros, fue un punto culminante para mí.*

The opportunity to gather as colleagues in a very different context, sharing an experience that was out of the ordinary for us-that was a highlight for me.

*Más ideas para aplicar las técnicas a la vida y al trabajo. Ideas para seguir practicando como grupo profesional.*

More ideas to apply the techniques to life and work. Ideas to continue practicing as a professional

# Lessons Learned and Next Steps

---

- Opportunity to provide something to community partner with low research burden
- Sustainability can be challenging – How do you support organizations and communities after the programs end?
- Month was too long between sessions
- Core group came to all or most sessions, but there were some staff that did not attend at all. How does this impact organization culture?
- Participants were able to tie what they learned to their work
- Bringing mindfulness to diverse communities requires self-awareness and reflection
  - Is the program something the community wants or has asked for?
  - Are you willing to adapt the program to make it relevant and accessible to the community?

# Acknowledgments

---

Casa Latina staff and clients

Gigi Perez, MSW, Consultant

Student/Staff Interviewers:

Samantha Serrano, Vanessa Torres, Ivonne Poveda, Olivia Vargas,

Annika Van Gilder

Funders:

Center for Child and Family Wellbeing

Institute of Translational Health Science