

TWO YEARS INTO THE PANDEMIC: WHEN SCIENCE IS NOT THE ONLY ANSWER

A DOS AÑOS DE UNA PANDEMIA:
CUANDO LA CIENCIA NO ES LA ÚNICA RESPUESTA

Mae Lynn Reyes-Rodríguez ¹

¹The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, North Carolina, United States of America

This is the second number of the volume 32 of 2021 of the *Puerto Rican Journal of Psychology*. The 2021 has been a year of many challenges. Still immersed in the middle of a pandemic for about two years, despite scientific advances, particularly with the development of effective vaccines, was unthinkable for many. This reality reminds us that scientific advances do not automatically translate into real changes in the quality of life of communities. The dire history of unethical clinical trials with African American and Latino communities could be one of the many factors that are contributing to people's mistrust of COVID-19 vaccines. However, history also reminds us that science alone is not enough to produce changes in prevention and intervention practices in communities. Educative effort with transparency and with the involvement of communities is required to be more effective in translating science into concrete actions.

The imposition approach used by government agencies has been shown to create more resistance and does not address the real concerns that people may have around vaccines and the measures that have been imposed to mitigate the pandemic. A comprehensive approach is required to address the fears, concerns, and misinformation that have permeated during the pandemic. The implementation of science in disconnection from communities does not allow progresses in the translation of it into changes in behaviors, beliefs and practices that advance us towards the resolution of a pandemic state. Punitive efforts, beyond joining forces, tarnish people's ability to do what is right for their well-being and the people who make up their community. Why we are not appealing to the values and virtues of human nature to follow security protocols? Why focus on a state of repression and not educate on what we can do and how we can use safety measures to reduce infections? History tells us that pandemics can take several years and for our immune defenses to learn to co-exist with the virus. It

will be important to use strategies that connect and highlight those values that promote personal and collective well-being. Science disconnected from communities and their practices, faces the possibility of being a science only for those who practice science and not for the general population.

Certainly, we have a lot of work to do to address the effects that this pandemic has had and continues to have in our communities. This issue presents the second part of the special section "Emotional health and COVID-19." The purpose of this section is to continue reflecting on the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have on the different aspects of our society. In this issue, we present six articles corresponding to this special section. These articles document the impact of the pandemic on the ways in which interpersonal and partner relationships are experienced due to social distancing and quarantine. The pandemic has required reinforcing the connection with our support system, including family, friends and/or partners. Sustained coexistence due to confinement has had a positive effect on those people who have managed to make the necessary adjustments to support themselves during the sudden changes in routines, workloads, and use of spaces, among others. Similarly, the sexual life of couples has been impacted in multiple ways as reported in the study of changes in sexual functioning of couples during the pandemic. On the other hand, the support of meaningful relationships has proven essential to cope with the psychological stress during the pandemic. A look at our strengths of character is presented as an alternative to transform the crisis. The workforce has also been impacted by the pandemic. Not only health care workers have been affected, but also essential non-healthcare workers. Maintaining a functioning economy has had an emotional toll for essential non-healthcare workers who have had to continue working, despite the psychological stress of a possible contagion for them and/or

their family. Finally, in our effort to promote interdisciplinary discussions, we integrate in this section a case study of the effect of the surveillance, tracing and tracking of cases system. This presentation of a false-positive case, beyond presenting the complexity of this pandemic from the epidemiological and medical standpoint, also highlights the intersection of the emotional aspect and the stigma for a person who is “labeled” as a COVID-19 case.

Beyond the pandemic, life continues its rhythm. We continue facing the same issues that were making a lot of noise in pre-pandemic times. It is documented in two regular articles that address important aspects of emotional wellbeing. We present a study that explored the supportive role of pets in victims of gender-based violence. The second regular article explored correlates and predictors of chronicity in adolescents with a history of depression. Both articles highlight the importance of promptly serving vulnerable populations such as victims of gender violence and the population of adolescents who struggle with symptoms of depression. Prevention programs, early identification and the availability of accessible treatments continue to be the challenges and the goals to be achieved. I hope that this issue promotes not only reflections, but also fair and equity actions that translate into substantial changes in the quality of life of people in all communities.

Mae Lynn Reyes-Rodríguez, PhD., FAED
Editor-in-chief
Puerto Rican Journal of Psychology