

# HISPANIC IMPACT

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## A Career's Dream: Building Resilience and Support in Mental Health

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While many young professionals consider their future career paths, Ynette has a clear direction: Her psychology degree will allow her to educate Latinos, treat children and help individuals cope with the challenges presented by mental and behavioral health issues. Although US born Hispanics have higher risk than immigrants to be challenged with mental health issues, older Hispanics and children are most vulnerable to psychological stress produced by immigration and acculturation. Today, we explore the plans and future of a dedicated Latina leader who is ready to serve.



***“My education and my experience will allow me to educate minorities about mental health and assist in the closing of the treatment gap for Latino patients.”***



### **Could you share a bit about yourself?**

I am a first-generation student attending Ohio Dominican University. Born and raised in Texas, I lived 20-30 minutes away from the border of Mexico in the Rio Grande Valley. My parents were migrants who worked in the sun every day. They pushed me to attend a university because they never had the opportunity to do it themselves. I have lived in the state of Ohio for the past two and a half years, while working on my degree. My passions include education, family, in addition to helping others, and I am dedicated to everything I set out to do with a strong endeavor for success.

### **Can you tell me more about your major, what you are currently studying?**

I am in the Psychology Program at Ohio Dominican University. The program focuses on psychological, behavioral, and environmental influences on behavior. Students are taught a range of subject matter in areas such as learning development, memory, personality traits, relationship styles, psychological disorders, and human development skills. We also have the opportunity to conduct our own research project during our senior year, which I am currently doing.

### **How did your family and friends take it when told them your choice of studies?**

When I told my family about my choice of study, they did not understand why I wanted to pursue a career in psychology. They did not see it being a viable career where I could be successful. They viewed psychological treatment as something negative, which is only necessary for those who have serious mental health issues. I believe this view is influenced by our culture. While my parents had reservations, they have been supportive of my decision.

### **How do you plan to use what you have learned to help the people in your community?**

I plan to educate my community about psychology and the benefits that come from it. Having to deal with a serious mental illness and not knowing where to get help is an ongoing problem. The main solution to this problem would be to educate people who are in school or in a workplace that there are professionals who are able to help through therapy. There are also many different cultures, who view therapy as pointless in general. This is especially true when it comes to minorities. Especially within the Hispanic culture, where individuals have been raised to believe that mental health conditions are something that can be resolved on their own. Being able to change current mindsets on treatment can have an impact on how future generations will perceive it as well.

### **Could you tell me about one of your biggest accomplishments as a student at ODU?**

One of my biggest accomplishments at Ohio Dominican University (ODU) was getting on the dean's list. I transferred to ODU from South Texas College and quickly realized after my first semester that the environment and curriculum were much more challenging. There was a greater difference in the program expectations. I felt like I was not going to make it. I would call my mom crying; she would tell me was that I was the smartest person she knew and that I could do anything I put my mind to. I struggled through it, but with time, I was able to develop better study habits, grasp information better and refine my testing abilities. When I got on the dean's list, I became teary-eyed because it showed me how all that hard work paid off.



**Is there an experience or individual who influenced your decision to work with children and decide on your choice of major?**

I have a member of my family who, while going through some rough times, confided in me a great deal. He would share how isolated and alone he felt at school. There were many tearful conversations about events that were taking place in his life; he was being bullied and having a hard time making friends. Communicating with his parents was not an option. It would not have been received positively from his parents. Therefore, he continued to suffer alone, to the point where he began to have thoughts of self-harm and suicidal ideation. I was able to ease his mind when we spoke and help him as best as I could. I supported him to build a more positive outlook on his future and became his confidant. I spoke to his parents and asked them to consider taking him to see an expert. They quickly rejected the idea, because they felt that he would just be on medications and it would make things even worse. Thus, I made it a point to support him as best as I could. For years, I was the one he reached out to when he was going through a rough time. He now has friends and is in a better place than he was.

That experience really influenced my decision to select Psychology as my major. I believe that this career will empower me to help children who are suffering. I can be the one who gives them the support and tools they need to manage their conditions in the present so that they can develop into happy and balanced adults. My education and my experience will also allow me to educate minorities about mental health and assist in the closing of the treatment gap for Latino patients.

**What goals will you accomplish through your work?**

I want to focus on educating minorities about the benefits of treatment. An area I would like to also concentrate on is research, specifically on children who are separated from their families when they cross the border. Researching the



long-term impact of that experience will help us figure out what can be done to help these children and their families recover from that type of trauma.

**What do you think will be most challenging for you in the future as a psychologist?**

The biggest challenge I foresee will be my ability to reach out to those in need; figuring out how to connect with those that need help, but may not have the means to receive mental health services. This is a challenge because mental health treatment requires long-term treatment for it to be effective. Without adequate medical insurance or available resources to pay for services, it becomes unattainable for individuals who really need help.

**What is next for you after graduation, what are you looking most forward to?**

Currently, I am considering graduate programs at The Ohio State University and Capital University. My long-term academic goal is to obtain my Doctorate. I look forward to being able to do work in a field where I can impact people's lives on a different level.

**Is there any advice you give to those incoming freshmen or those considering the same area of studies as you?**

Psychology is a broad subject and some areas may not be as interesting as others. The exposure to all the different areas in psychology will help you determine which areas you are passionate about and want to concentrate on. You are on the path that will lead you to personal and professional success. Hitting rough patches is part of the journey, so do not feel discouraged. Instead, let those moments drive you more towards your goal.

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