

spiritual and physical worlds. It has opened new horizons for the study and interpretation of many psychic phenomena (i.e., channeling, clairvoyance, clairaudience, automatic writing, distant healing, mental telepathy) and has helped establish a scientific classification for *mediumship*. What was once explained as a magical phenomenon is now defined as the psychobiological predisposition inherent in those who under certain conditions are allowed to capture the thoughts of discarnate spirits, experience the astral plane, and establish contact with the spirit world.

Important principles found in the theory of relativity of quantum physics, and the newly developing fields of vibrational/energy medicine, as well as transpersonal psychology, support the concepts found at the core of Spiritist philosophy: the universal natural laws of reciprocity, cause and effect, karma, and reincarnation. In studying the organic and psychic phenomena of mediumship for more than a century, Brazil has led the world in establishing essential understanding of mediumistic healing principles that began with the teachings of Allan Kardec in 1858. His works have established essential principles for psychic healing and surgeries—innovative treatments that respond to patients' wider social, cultural, and cosmic realities.

Spiritist medical practitioners (individuals who are Spiritists and are also biomedical professionals) are convinced that physical and mental ailments that are not explained or successfully treated by conventional medicine can often be explained and treated with the intervention and assistance of the spirit realm. Within this new transcendental medicine, patients' symptoms of illness may be caused by accumulated negative energy, retribution for bad deeds, something neglected in this life or in a previous incarnation, or spells cast by others—all etiological elements that are beyond the diagnostic and treatment parameters of traditional biomedicine.

Drawing from a unique combination of spiritual and classical science, *espiritismo* uses both spiritual wisdom and material knowledge gained through a systematic study of illuminating spiritual and scientific texts. Its aim is to prepare individuals for more active roles as agents of change, working toward a society of universal order and progress, based on solidarity and selflessness. Individuals are encouraged to embark on a path of self-discovery by individual efforts of study, work, and activities of good works. The natural laws that regulate human behavior and guide the individual's free will, offered by the Spiritist explanation of the Gospels of Christ, are the patient's therapeutic modalities for everyday life that help redefine concepts of human

imperfections, disease, and suffering. It is the fundamental moral concepts that have great potential to activate personal transformation and promote revolutionary ideas and critical thinking about individuals and their world, particularly where social, political, economic, health, and moral conditions are irrational. By redefining old habitual and destructive ways of thinking and encouraging a greater degree of personal responsibility, critical thinking, and discernment, *espiritismo* helps heal past emotional and physical wounds, gradually rebuilding the individual.

Aiming to contribute to the implantation of a new medical model throughout the world, and uniting professionals and their research efforts from all parts of the globe, Brazilian Spiritist physicians are working toward the development of the world's first integral model of health. They have formed important professional organizations, such as the National Congress of Spiritist Medical Doctors and the Medical-Spiritist Association, in their effort to construct a new generation of integrative health professionals working to create the world's first transcendental and humanistic model of medicine.

—Sandra Nuñez

*See also* Indigenous Treatments and Healers

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## RELIGIOUS/SPIRITUAL BELIEFS: FATALISMO

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Research has shown that in the Latino American population, there is a notable discrepancy between the need for mental health services and the utilization of mental health services. When these services are actually sought, research has found a significantly higher tendency for Latinos to prematurely terminate treatment. These issues have become a growing concern in research and clinical practice as the population of Latinos in the United States continues to increase.

Many socioeconomic, psychotherapeutic, and cultural factors have been identified as possibly contributing to lack of utilization and premature termination. One of these factors is the notion of fatalism, or *fatalismo*, which is a part of Latino culture and is often linked to

religious beliefs. *Fatalism* is the tendency to view life as controlled by divine will, with little or no control over the environment. Positive or negative life events may be attributed to simple good fortune or harmful wishes made by adversaries. Thus, Latinos who believe in fatalism and have a mental illness may view their difficulties as being a part of God's plan, as a curse, or as punishment for some previous misdeed or offense. When mental illness is viewed as out of their control, individuals may believe that they are incapable of changing their condition. As a result, Latinos are less likely to seek help from the mental health community for their psychological problems or may first look to the Church for help. When Latinos do seek therapy, a fatalistic view of life may be counterproductive, because most types of therapies encourage taking control of one's life to make change.

The degree to which Latino Americans adhere to fatalism varies greatly according to socioeconomic status and acculturation level. Studies have shown that individuals with higher socioeconomic status and greater level of acculturation tend to report less fatalistic views of life.

Many Latino immigrants reside in economically challenged areas and maintain strong cultural identities by preserving the language and cultural characteristics native to their countries of origin. This can make integrating the majority culture with their traditional culture a difficult and sometimes stressful process. Although acculturation difficulties, in addition to socioeconomic challenges, may place Latinos at risk for mental health problems, fatalism may hinder the utilization of mental health services.

It is important to note that a fatalistic orientation is not always maladaptive, particularly when combined with high levels of religiosity. Research has shown that, in less acculturated Latinos, individuals reporting high levels of fatalism in combination with high religiosity report less depression than do individuals with high levels of fatalism and low religiosity. In certain traumatic situations that are indeed out of a person's control, a fatalistic view can help absolve individuals of the blame or guilt they may initially place on themselves. In such instances, fatalism can facilitate therapy.

When working with Latino clients, it is important that clinicians explore how fatalistic beliefs affect both clients' mental health and their perceptions of the ability of therapy to help them. Because of the heterogeneity of the Latino population, it is important to recognize how different socioeconomic backgrounds and levels of acculturation influence fatalism in clients.

Such understanding may pave the way to bridging the gap between the need for mental health services and their utilization in the Latino population.

—Joseph D. Hovey

—Lori R. Morales

*See also* Hispanic Americans; Religion; Spirituality

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## RELIGIOUS/SPIRITUAL BELIEFS: MARIANISMO

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*Marianismo* refers to the traditional idealized gender role and values associated in Latino cultures with being a woman. It is heavily influenced by Catholic religious doctrine and rooted in an emulation of the Virgin Mary by honoring and imitating both her virginal and maternal qualities. Within marianismo, qualities such as virginity, chastity, sexual naïveté, modesty, and self-sacrifice for the sake of one's partner's or children's needs are idealized. Furthermore, the belief that suffering is part of being a woman and part of the female identity is a part of marianista values.

Marianismo is significant in that it defines the female gender role within Latino cultures, including behavior that is acceptable and unacceptable for women, as well as shared values related to women. For example, according to traditional marianista values, premarital sexual activity, sexual knowledge, and placing one's own needs or desires above others are considered inappropriate qualities and behaviors for a woman. Given that marianismo promotes a particular set of values about what is acceptable female behavior, it influences normative beliefs about women, female sexual behavior, and the ways in which women care for themselves and others. Unlike machismo, the male gender role that, among other values, promotes proving virility through sexual relations and the belief that men's sexual urges are uncontrollable, marianismo

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