From the Voices of Men:

How Latino Males Cope with Academic and Social Obstacles

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Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to provide insight into the coping responses that Latino male students use to overcome academic and social obstacles.
Research Questions

What type of coping responses do Latino male students use to overcome academic obstacles?

What type of coping responses do Latino male students use to overcome social obstacles?

Under what circumstances and at what point are these coping responses employed?
Background

- Studies show that Latina/o students continue to be the fastest growing minority group in the nation (Quijada & Alvarez, 2006)

- However, Latino males continue to experience lower levels of success
  - Gender and cultural differences
    (Castellanos, Gloria, & Kamimura, 2006; Saenz & Ponjuan, 2011)
Significance

- Research has found that Latino male students must often overcome an abundance of academic and social challenges to persist through higher education.

- We must be better equipped to help Latino students cope with these obstacles.
Theoretical Framework

Model of Coping Responses
Phinney & Haas (2003)

- **Proactive** – student takes direct action to manage circumstances
- **Seeking support** – student seeks support from other in order to resolve obstacle
- **Distancing/avoidance** – student neglects obstacle in order to relax or to forget about the circumstances
- **Acceptance** – student accepts that obstacles are a part of life
- **Positive reframing** – student refers to optimistic mentality and believes that he/she can overcome the obstacle
Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative Approach
- Qualitative case study
- Fostering discovery, exploring new areas
- Data represented in context (Miles & Huberman, 1994)

Research Site
- Large, urban public university
- 38,420 undergraduates
- Undergraduate Hispanic population = 19%

Interviews
- Series of 2 semi-structured interviews
- 10 undergraduate Latino male students
  Sophomore - Senior
Latino Male Obstacles

Academic Obstacles
- Issues of preparation
- Balance & prioritizing
- Connection to academic resource

Social Obstacles
- Financial constraints
- Issues of sexual preference
- Creating support system
Overview of Findings

- All 5 coping responses were found among my participants.
- However, they tended to primarily cope individually with obstacles, rather than seeking outside support.
- When they did seek support, from biological/fictive family.
Acceptance & Positive Reframing

• Accepted obstacles as a normal part of the collegiate academic process and be assured that their efforts were not in vain
  – Focused on long-term goals

• Reframed the obstacle in terms of how to overcome
  – How experience could benefit them
“Yeah, that’s a lot of what I’m struggling with; accepting that that’s something that he wants and accepting that he might not be the one for me, when this whole time it’s been him.”

“I try to look forward. I try to look like I know I’m going to get out of it, whatever this is.”
Distancing/avoidance

• Tended to avoid the situation by suppressing their thoughts and feelings on the obstacle
  – Focusing energy to activities such as running, partying, or alcohol abuse
Proactive Behaviors & Seeking Support

• Talked themselves through multiple options and encouraged themselves to continue, despite their circumstances

• Sometimes looked to their biological and fictive families for support
  – Parents, siblings, extended family
  – Peers, advisors, mentors
“I just feel like I have to duke it out by myself.”

“‘It’s always going to be okay. Don’t worry.’ My parents will always be there no matter what.”

“Yes, a support system [is what] they gave me…finding that friendship was very important in college, those friend networks.”
Implications for Research

Examine different contexts – CC vs. 4yr, public/private

Re-evaluating the coping responses model in terms effects of intersectionality

How social media interacts with obstacles and coping

Delving into particular areas of coping in more depth (process 5 major coping responses)
## Implications for Practice

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<tr>
<th>Need for Latino male self-reflection</th>
<th>Promote multiple types of coping responses</th>
<th>Encourage proactive action plans</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Self-reflection experiences into the curriculum and the lived experience at the college campus</td>
<td>• Especially those that encourage Latino males to go beyond themselves and utilize support system networks of peers, mentors, family etc.</td>
<td>• To assist in overcoming obstacles that may be too complex to deal with alone</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Educate on how to positively reframe with a purpose</td>
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<td>• Taking action early, before obstacle internalized or worsens</td>
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References


