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Asia A. Eaton and Desdamona Rios

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Social Challenges Faced by Queer Latino College Men: Navigating Negative Responses to Coming Out in a Double Minority Sample of Emerging Adults

Asia A. Eaton
Florida International University

Desdamona Rios
University of Houston-Clear Lake

Objectives: In this paper, we qualitatively examine the social challenges experienced by queer, Latino college men in the coming out process. Using an intersectional perspective informed by the double jeopardy hypothesis, intersectional invisibility, and Latino/a cultural norms, we asked 22 queer Latino college men to describe the major challenges they experienced with their sexual identities. **Method:** To examine the subjective experiences of participants' multiple minority identities, we conducted semi-structured interviews. Our sample consisted of 22 college student men who identified as Latino, queer, and cisgender. Participant ages ranged from 18 to 29 ($M = 21.50$, $SD = 3.70$). For race/ethnicity, all participants identified with the broad category *Latino*. For sexual orientation, 18 participants self-identified as gay or homosexual, 3 identified as "other," and 1 identified as bisexual. **Results:** Sixty-eight percent of participants (15/22) described encountering negative social responses to their sexual identity disclosure, including *Loss of Relationships*, *Aggression*, *Pathologizing*, and *Self-Serving Responses*. Additionally, 55% spontaneously reinterpreted or *Cognitively Reframed* their negative experiences (12/22), including the subthemes of *It's never happened to me*, *Minimizing*, and *Victim Blame*. **Conclusions:** We relate each subtheme to potentially influential social and cultural norms among queer, Latino college men, such as collectivistic values and *familismo*. Suggestions for research and practice with individuals at this identity intersection are described.

Keywords: sexual minority, Latino men, queer men, coming out, double minority

In recent years, some public attitudes and policies toward sexual minorities in the U.S. have become more supportive (e.g., Kite & Bryant-Lees, 2016; *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 2015; Pew Research Center, 2015). For example, implicit and explicit preferences for heterosexuals over lesbians and gay men decreased significantly from 2006 to 2013 (Westgate, Riskind, & Nosek, 2015), and in 2015 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of marriage equality for same-sex couples across the nation (*Obergefell v. Hodges*, 2015). The court decision was, however, narrowly divided (5 to 4), setting off protests and criticism within and outside of the court (National Organization for Marriage, 2015; Scalia, 2015, p. 1). That same year also saw a record high in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) homicides in the U.S. (Shapiro, 2015), leading some to believe that with increased visibility comes increased risk. Indeed, the deadliest mass shooting ever committed in the U.S. occurred in 2016 and targeted patrons of a gay night-

club in Orlando, Florida; 49 LGBT people, most of whom were Latino/a, were murdered in that hate crime (Barry, 2016).

In a society transitioning toward acceptance of sexual minorities in the face of persistent opposition and prejudice, how do LGBT people experience coming out? The coming out experiences of LGBT individuals depend on myriad factors, including but not limited to their gender, age, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religion, geographic location, and ability (Cole, 2009). The recognition that people occupy multiple social identities that intersect to produce unique experiences within social structures is known as intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1993; McCall, 2005; Parent, DeBlaere, & Moradi, 2013; Shields, 2008).

Psychological research in the last few decades has acknowledged the need for careful examination of how multiple social identities intersect to produce social phenomena, rather than assuming identities have simple or additive effects on people's experiences (e.g., Cole, 2009; McCall, 2005; Shields, 2008). The intersection between gender, sexual identity, and racial/ethnic identity is especially complex given that gender and sexual identity are mutually constitutive (Parent et al., 2013; Parks, Hughes, & Matthews, 2004), and these identities are understood, expressed, and experienced differently based on race and ethnicity (Cole & Zucker, 2007; Warner & Shields, 2013). However, psychologists have tended to examine issues of gender, race/ethnicity, and sexuality as separate facets of a person's identity (Frable, 1997), resulting in understudy of certain minority groups (Cole, 2009).

Asia A. Eaton, Departments of Psychology and Women's and Gender Studies, Florida International University; Desdamona Rios, Departments of Psychology and Women's Studies, University of Houston-Clear Lake.

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Asia A. Eaton, Department of Psychology, Florida International University, 11200 SW 8th Street, DM 208, Miami, FL 33199. E-mail: aeaton@fiu.edu

In this paper, we closely examine the coming out experiences of queer, Latino men in an effort to develop a better understanding of this understudied group, and to contribute to research on the intersection of gender, sexual identity, and racial/ethnic identity more broadly. We use the term “queer” as an umbrella term to denote men who identify as anything but heterosexual including gay, homosexual, bisexual, and heteroflexible, among other terms. We use the term “Latino,”¹ which grew out of ethnic studies departments in academia (Orchowski, 2008), to refer to men who share a connection to the Spanish language and have cultural roots in a Spanish-speaking country.

We are interested in the coming out experiences of college students in particular because most college students are emerging adults (ages 18–29; Arnett, Žukauskienė, & Sugimura, 2014), and identity development is a fundamental task of this stage in the life course (Schwartz, Zamboanga, Luyckx, Meca, & Ritchie, 2013). Emerging adulthood, and college life in particular, is also a time when young adults experience a dramatic increase in their sexual autonomy and exploration (McAnulty, 2012). This increased independence in sexual and relational decision-making requires emerging adults to examine, refine, and draw upon their sexual and social identities, goals, and experiences. While coming out is a lifelong process, decisions around coming out and opportunities to disclose one’s sexual identity increase in college (Rhoads, 1994). Finally, because ethnic and sexual identity development occur simultaneously for LGBT people of color rather than sequentially (Jamil, Harper, & Fernandez, 2009), queer Latino emerging adults can be expected to be intensely and concurrently grappling with their sexual and their racial/ethnic identities—making this a fertile group for describing the challenges at the intersection of being queer and Latino.

The Presence of Prejudice and Discrimination

While research has found that queer, Latino college men do have social support systems to navigate their intersecting identities (Rios & Eaton, 2016), sexual orientation prejudice and discrimination persist in the U.S. (for a review, see Herek & McLemore, 2013). According to one study, 85% of LGBT youth reported being verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation, and 40% reported being physically harassed at school in the past year (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, 2009). This abuse continues into adulthood, where about half of LGBT adults experience verbal harassment, 20% report having experienced crime against their person or property based on their sexual orientation (Herek, 2009), and between 25 and 66% experience discrimination at work (Ruggs et al., 2013).

Double jeopardy and intersectional invisibility. In the case of queer, Latino men, sexual orientation prejudice and discrimination are coupled with racial/ethnic prejudice and discrimination (National Institutes of Health, 2011). For LGBT Latinos/as, coming out in the U.S. is likely “. . . compounded by coming out in the context of a heterosexist and sexist Latin culture immersed in racist society” (Espín, 1993, p. 348). The added stress and challenges of being in two stigmatized minority groups is known as the “double jeopardy hypothesis” (Ferraro & Farmer, 1996).

Based on the double jeopardy hypothesis, queer Latino men may face unique and elevated levels of prejudice and associated distress (e.g., Balsam, Molina, Beadnell, Simoni, & Walters, 2011). Re-

search supports this proposition, finding that Latina college women experience enhanced effects of stereotype threat on their performance compared to White women or Latino men, presumably due to the anxiety created by having two stereotyped identities (female and Latina; Gonzales, Blanton, & Williams, 2002). Research on the intersecting identities of African American queer men has found that they also face the unique challenge of managing a double minority status (Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2004), putting them at risk for psychological stress and sexual dysfunction (Zamboni & Crawford, 2007). However, not all research shows additive or interactive effects of being a double minority on the experience of discrimination and stress (Chen & Tryon, 2012; Kertzner, Meyer, Frost, & Stirratt, 2009).

Intersectional invisibility also occurs when a person is not considered a prototypical member of their social identity ingroup (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008), such as a gay Latino man being seen as neither prototypically Latino (heterosexual) nor gay (White). The experiences of persons who are not prototypical in more than one social membership are often overlooked (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). For queer Latino men this may result in lack of support from both Latino and LGBT communities, both of which may assume all members face singular forms of discrimination related to race/ethnicity or sexual orientation (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Indeed, research shows that Latino gay men are subject to racism and objectification within the mainstream gay community (Diaz, Ayala, Bein, Henne, & Marin, 2001; Han, 2007; Ibañez, Van Oss Marin, Flores, Millett, & Diaz, 2009; Teunis, 2007), and Latino/a LGBT young adults report lower levels of family acceptance, on average, than White LGBT young adults (Ryan, Russell, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2010).

Latino/a cultural norms. Latino/a Americans tend to endorse collectivism, the tendency to define oneself in terms of social and cultural roles, at higher rates than non-Latino White Americans (Oyserman, Coon, & Kimmelmeier, 2002; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). The importance of strong interdependent family relationships in Latino/a culture is known as *familismo* (Andrés-Hyman, Ortiz, Anez, Paris, & Davidson, 2006), which may have some bearing on how queer Latino men describe their coming out challenges in terms of social roles and duties, collaboration, and respect for hierarchies (e.g., Gabrielidis, Stephan, Ybarra, Dos Santos Pearson, & Villareal, 1997). Equally, queer Latino men may also describe their challenges in coming out in relation to Latino male gender role norms such as *machismo* (Arciniega, Anderson, Tovar-Blank, & Tracey, 2008; Torres, Solberg, & Carlstrom, 2002), which endorses hypermasculinity, dominance over women, and (heterosexual) promiscuity (Mirandé, 1997). However, more conducive to group harmony is the positive facet of *machismo* known as *caballerismo* (Arciniega et al., 2008), which includes flexible gender roles, harmony, and emotional expressiveness (Torres et al., 2002).

In summary, in light of the double jeopardy hypothesis and research on intersectional invisibility, we expected many of our queer, Latino college men would have experienced some form of

¹ We recognize that the term “Latinx” has been recently used by students, activists, and scholars to avoid the gender binary posed by “Latino/a” (Barrett & Nñ, 2016; Logue, 2016). We use the gendered term “Latino” here because the present research focused exclusively on men.

discrimination during their coming out process. Based on the double jeopardy hypothesis, this discrimination may come from majority outgroups, such as heterosexuals and/or Whites. Based on intersectional invisibility, which suggests that queer, Latino college students are not seen as prototypical Latinos or members of the LGBT community, this discrimination may also come from the participants' own ingroups (e.g., gay men or Latinos). The double jeopardy hypothesis also proposes that the quality and quantity of this discrimination may be unique to those living at the intersection of queer and Latino. Thus, while some challenges around sexual identity disclosure may be universal to the LGBT community in the U.S., we are mindful that other challenges may be uniquely informed by and understood via specific sociocultural norms relevant to queer, Latino college men such as collectivism and *familismo*.

Method

To examine the subjective coming out experiences of queer, Latino men we conducted semistructured interviews, which are ideal for sensitive topics such as challenges faced in coming out to family and friends (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Using a semistructured interview protocol, we were able to ask follow-up questions based on participant responses as well as for clarification of culturally specific meanings participants ascribed to phenomena (Few, Stephens, & Rouse-Arnette, 2003).

Queer participants from various backgrounds were recruited from a large, Hispanic-serving, public research institution in the Southeast and a small, primarily White, private liberal arts college in New England (PWI; primarily White institution). Participants from multiple campuses were sought to capture a more diverse sample than what would be obtained from recruiting from just one region in the U.S., or from a Hispanic-serving institution (HSI) or private liberal arts college alone. Participants were recruited at both campuses by emailing student groups, posting flyers on both campuses, and by word of mouth. Participants at the research university received course credit or \$10 cash, while participants at the liberal arts college received \$25 Amazon gift cards for their time. All participants were guaranteed confidentiality, and all identifying references were removed from the transcripts. The project was reviewed and approved by the institutional review boards at both institutions.

Participants

Of the 51 queer men who participated in the study, 22 identified as Latino and cisgender. Of these men, 15 (68%) attended the large HSI in the Southeast and 7 (32%) attended the liberal arts college in New England. Participant ages ranged from 18 to 29 ($M = 21.50$, $SD = 3.70$), making all participants emerging adults (Syed, 2015). For race/ethnicity, all participants identified with the broad category *Latino*, with most subgroups being Latino (50%) and Mexican/Mexican American (23%). Sixteen participants were born in the U.S. (73%), and the remaining 6 (27%) were born in various countries throughout the Caribbean, and Central and South America. For sexual orientation, 18 participants identified as gay or homosexual (82%), 3 identified as "other" (e.g., heteroflexible or "normal"; 14%), and 1 identified as bisexual (4%).

Data Collection

Data collection proceeded in two stages. First, participants completed a short survey containing demographic questions. At the end of the survey, participants indicated if they were interested in being interviewed. Participants who indicated this interest were then contacted via email. All interviews were conducted in private spaces on campus. Participants enrolled at the research university were interviewed by two trained research assistants, and participants enrolled at the liberal arts college were interviewed by the second author.

The semistructured interview protocol included open-ended questions about participants' background including where they grew up, family structure, their college experiences, racial/ethnic identity, sexual identity, and masculinity. We identified specific questions that elicited responses related to tensions within their perceived support systems. Responses to the following interview questions were analyzed for this paper:

- (1) "You indicated that you identify as [sexuality]. What does that mean to you?"
- (2) "What would you say were/are the major challenges to feeling comfortable with your sexual identity?"
- (3) "What has your experience of coming to others been like?"
- (4) "Can you think over your entire college experience so far and identify some problem you have had—a pretty important problem that really worried you. Can you describe for me both what the problem was and how you handled it?"

Duration of interviews was approximately one hour in length.

Analysis

From the 22 interviews, we drew a subsample of three interviews to begin open coding. Two coders (i.e., both authors) followed a series of steps common in qualitative research including classification and naming of concepts to organize data with shared characteristics (Charmaz, 2000; Reinharz, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this article, the shared characteristics we focused on were those related to social challenges in the coming out process, guided by the double jeopardy hypothesis and research on intersectional invisibility.

During this process we identified two umbrella themes related to social challenges faced by our participants in the coming out process including *negative responses* from others and *cognitive reframing* as a coping strategy for understanding these negative responses. Using this initial classification system, we reviewed five additional interviews and coded data based on these umbrella themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). From these eight interviews, we reviewed the coded text and defined subcategories. For example, we identified four types of *negative responses* based on distinct properties that characterized loss of relationships, aggression toward the participant, understanding same-sex attraction as abnormal, or interpreting participants' disclosure through a self-centered lens. A detailed codebook book was finalized, and three more

interviews were coded. Interrater reliability was .89 as assessed by percent agreement based on the presence of a coded theme (Boyatzis, 1998). Based on the high interrater reliability score and agreement of all coders, the second author coded the remaining 10 interviews.

Negative responses. Sixty-eight percent of participants described experiencing at least one negative response from significant others, such as family members, friends, and colleagues, in their coming out process. We defined negative responses as unfavorable reactions to a participant's disclosure of his sexual orientation by people he considered to be a source of support. In order of frequency, participants referred to the following social network members as responding negatively to their sexual orientation disclosure: nine respondents (41%) referred to mothers, seven referred to friends (32%), four referred to fathers (18%), four referred to coworkers (18%), classmates, or neighbors, and two referred to sisters and grandmothers (9%). Among negative responses described we identified four subthemes including *Loss of Relationships*, *Aggression*, *Pathologizing*, and *Self-Serving Responses*.

Loss of relationships. Coding criteria for *Loss of Relationships* included descriptions of the actual ending of relationships with friends and family members who responded aversely to the participant's disclosure of their sexual orientation. We also coded for loss of intimacy within significant relationships, often due to requests that the participant conceal his sexual identity. We highlight that our participants perceive this loss as driven by homophobia. For example, Johnny (PWI) initially describes his family as close knit, which is consistent with Latino/a cultural values (Campos, Ullman, Aguilera, & Dunkel Schetter, 2014):

We're a pretty solid family . . . we like to get together for the holidays. We can talk to each, we trust each other and, I don't know, it's just a pretty good family over all.

However, even within his "solid family," he describes the loss of intimacy with his younger brother as a result of acquiescing to his parents' request:

Yeah, he's [a teenager]. . . but we were always like close . . . but . . . recently, in the last couple of Years I've been a little more distant from him just because my parents do not want me to come out to him yet, so I do not want to be too close with him and want to tell him . . . I do not want to . . . go against what my parents asked me to do so I sort of do not talk to him as much. (Johnny, PWI)

Aggression. For the theme *Aggression*, we included both physical and relational aggression. Physical aggression included threats of physical harm ("my grandma threatened to beat the crap out of me in my sleep") and displacement from the participant's home ("when my mom first found out she kicked me out"), all of which were perpetrated by women family members. Acts of relational aggression were described by participants as intentional harm to their social relationships, feelings of acceptance, or inclusion within a group, often in the form of rumors or gossip. For familial relationships, Darren describes the following exchange between a family friend and his parents:

He told my parents. . . "you don't know your son . . . he's gay". . . And so [my parents said] "Oh, we wanna see him, we're gonna go pick him up. And we're gonna go straighten this out." Like as if like a little

threatening as well . . . I waited for them, I was scared shitless . . . and basically my father took away my car, said that I . . . betrayed him. (Darren, HSI)

For relational aggression in the college context, Jake describes a college peer spreading rumors to retaliate against him:

The first incident I guess of like coming out was freshman year, I was outed by someone . . . I didn't know about it until . . . later because he saw me leave a party with someone and he was upset . . . because he had a crush on me . . . apparently he went to [store on campus] and he was really drunk and started . . . yelling . . . slurs about me and outed me then, and so a lot of people kept . . . asking people to find out about me, which was just kind of annoying. (Jake, PWI)

Pathologizing. For the theme *Pathologizing*, participants reported that at least one of their important social contacts treated their sexual identity as pathological. Notably, pathologizing includes imposed religious judgment by others against the participant ("God banned it and God doesn't endorse it"), assumed promiscuity ("Do you know you shouldn't be having a lot of sex with a lot of men because that's unhealthy"), and sexual perversion or predatory tendencies. For example, Jay explains the interpretation of being gay as predatory of heterosexual men:

Being friends with . . . women or girls, it's easier for me because I feel more accepted . . . than with boys because they always think, you know, I'm hitting on them, or I have a crush on them . . . it's all in their heads . . . like "listen it's not like everyone has a crush on you, get over yourself." (Jay, HSI)

We also observed a sense of entitlement held by others to raise topics related to sexuality with participants in contexts that would be considered inappropriate under most circumstances, as in the case of Ivan being confronted by a coworker who assumes sexual trauma to be an antecedent to coming out as gay:

Some girl came up to me [at work] and she's like, "Have you ever been raped?" I'm like, "Raped? Like that's—no, that's crazy, no." She's like, "Oh I don't know, my cousin, he was raped and he . . . came out when he was fourteen." (Ivan, HSI)

For Jay, the assumption by his male friend that he would automatically be attracted to him demonstrates how being gay is confounded with predatory behavior, whereas the same assumption is not likely to be made by Jay's friend about a heterosexual woman. Additionally, Ivan's coworker's sense of entitlement to raise the sensitive topic of sexual violence in the workplace demonstrates the pathologizing of nonheterosexual orientation as non-normative and a result of trauma.

Self-serving responses. Finally, characteristic of *Self-Serving Responses* was the tendency of friends or family members to ignore the experience of the participant and instead focus on what the disclosure would mean for them. Examples of this included disappointment in not being able to date the participant, or concern over what others would think of them in relation to the participant. For example, Javi describes his heterosexual female friends' disappointment about not being able to date him:

Well my female friends they do not like it. Because they're like, "Well, why do you have to be gay?" (Javi, HSI)

Some mothers responded in self-focused ways such as being embarrassed rather than being responsive to their sons' needs. For example,

She told me she was . . . ashamed and embarrassed by it . . . I didn't know how to respond to that . . . I mean it felt pretty bad . . . with my best friend's sister it was easy, she just told her mom and her mom was like I do not care . . . you're still my daughter. So . . . I was just hoping for a similar reaction, even though I knew it probably was not going to be that way . . . (John, PWI)

Finally, some friends were perceived by participants as insensitive to the particular challenges faced by the LGTB community. For example, Ryan describes the following exchange with his African American friend:

Sometimes they do not understand where I'm coming from. I was literally just in . . . a fight the other day with one of my friends . . . she's African American . . . we were just talking . . . and then she's like, "You don't know what it's like to be Black." I'm like okay . . . you're right . . . I do not know what it's like to be Black . . . but at the same time, you have to understand you do not know what it's like to be gay" . . . she was telling me like, "Oh you have no idea. I had someone come up to me once and say I hate you because you're Black." I'm like "I get that every week! Like I get that every single week" . . . I literally have less rights . . . cause . . . the LGBT community is not considered . . . a minority group . . . we have less rights than any other group does . . . a lot of people just do not understand that, like some of my peers . . . they do not necessarily understand the needs of the LGBT community. (Ryan, HSI)

In sum, negative responses to participants included losing valued relationships or relationship intimacy due to coming out or remaining in the closet, physical and relational forms of aggression, pathologizing their sexual orientation as dysfunctional, and insensitivity to participants' experience.

Cognitive reframing. While recounting their social challenges in coming out, 12 participants (55%) spontaneously described ways they cognitively reframed or reinterpreted negative responses they received. Reframing included denying the personal experience of discrimination while acknowledging that discrimination does happen to LGBT individuals or the LGBT community more generally, and explaining their experience as something other than discrimination. Subthemes we identified include *It's never happened to me*, *Minimizing*, and *Victim Blame*.

It's never happened to me. For the subtheme *It's never happened to me*, we coded for participant denial of being the target of discrimination because of their sexual orientation. Of the 14 men who denied any personal discrimination, the majority (10/14) also referred to negative experiences in their interviews. For example, Javi described female friends responding negatively to his disclosure, but denies discrimination in the following way:

Well personally I didn't have many issues, my family was very supportive. I mean like my mom, she still loves me, I didn't have any of those like really intense coming out stories, I mean here at the university I haven't had issues. (Javi, HSI)

Carlos also denies any experiences with discrimination and minimizes the threat of rejection because of his sexual orientation:

Problem? I cannot think of one. I guess people would say . . . acceptance? Like I said . . . that doesn't bother me at all. If you reject me or not I really do not care, you know? A lot of people,

when they feel rejected I guess they cannot take no for an answer . . . not everyone's gonna like you, no matter who you are. So, I try to look at it that way. . . . I cannot think of any problems that I have come across. (Carlos, HSI)

Minimizing. Coding criteria for Minimizing included describing offensive behavior by others or discriminatory experiences as motivated by something other than prejudice, such as personality characteristics of individuals. For example, Thomas explains:

The concept . . . of . . . choosing to be gay instead of born and being gay, you know? . . . I've had people that I've had issues with and . . . I've tried not to . . . get offended or upset because, you know . . . I cannot blame them cause they do not really understand. (Thomas, HSI)

Minimizing also took the form of denying potentially dangerous situations, such as Ryan who describes bullying behavior as rudeness:

There's one Time I was walking back to my dorm and there was like a big group of guys and they were all staring me down . . . they were trying to intimidate me . . . and I'm assuming maybe they thought like that, hey I'm gay. So I was just walking past . . . they made like, you know, slurs against me. So, I literally just kept walking . . . I was angered but I was not going to do anything cause . . . I'm not angered by the slur, I'm angered by . . . the need to like go out of your way to like try to hurt someone . . . cause it really doesn't hurt me at all. But other than that . . . I'm just mad at people that are ignorant, rude, or like unconscientious. (Ryan, HSI)

Victim blame. Participants also engaged in *Victim Blame* as a form of deflection from their own sense of powerlessness in some situations. For this theme, participants suggest that by conforming to gender norms, or otherwise not calling attention to themselves ("I don't feel the need to vocalize it"), they should be able to control the response of others. Implicit in their responses is the idea that those who face discrimination or harassment because of their sexual orientation bring it upon themselves for not conforming to gender norms. For example,

Hispanics I guess are a little bit like antigay, so I do not feel fully accepted . . . So I always like tend to . . . let's say whenever I go to [South American country] I'm not gonna wear my girl jeans . . . You know what I mean? I'll dress up accordingly. Of course I'm seeing my parents' family so I try to respect. I do not have a problem respecting . . . I try to do that . . . I do change my act up a little bit. (Darren, HSI)

Another form of victim blame was to focus on the target's response rather than the perpetrator's actions. For example, George explains,

Yes, bad things happen, and yes, people shouldn't use language that's offensive to other people, but sometimes people will and you cannot just be upset about it . . . I'm also not one to really be offended, so I cannot really empathize with people who are offended by things, but especially words, so, like that. So how did I deal with it? (*Laughs*), I kind of, I dealt with it by not dealing with it. (George, PWI)

In sum, our participants used a number of defensive cognitive strategies to deny personal experience with discrimination including completely denying personal discrimination, minimizing harmful or dangerous experiences, and victim blame.

Discussion

The double jeopardy hypothesis suggests that queer Latino men may have unique or augmented social challenges in coming out because they possess multiple marginalized identities (Ferraro & Farmer, 1996). The concept of intersectional invisibility suggests that queer Latino men may also face social challenges in their LGBT and Latino/a ingroups because of their nonprototypical ingroup status (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Consistent with these general perspectives, most queer Latino college men we interviewed (68%) reported that some people in their social networks responded negatively to their sexual identity disclosures.

Most participants (55%) also spontaneously cognitively distanced themselves from these negative experiences. The emergent category of “cognitive reframing” was revealed through the use of qualitative methods, which enable participants to articulate their feelings, thoughts, and experiences in their own words and free from the limitations of finite response options or interviewer-driven hypothesis testing (Eagly & Riger, 2014; Gergen, Josselson, & Freeman, 2015). Asking participants about the challenges they faced in a broad and open-ended manner gave us the unique opportunity to hear them engage coping mechanisms naturalistically, highlighting one of the strengths of qualitative approaches (Ponterotto, 2010).

Negative Responses From Others

We identified four forms of negative responses from others: the loss of relationships, aggression, pathologizing, and self-serving responses. The loss of relationships and intimacy resulted both from revealing and concealing one’s sexual identity. Thus, our participants faced a “double bind” common to other LGBT individuals (Legate & Ryan, 2014), in which they had to choose between coming out and risking rejection or concealing their identity and losing personal and relational authenticity. Our queer, Latino college men also expressed a third form of tension in the coming out process specific to their unique cultural vantage point: commitment to the collectivistic value of prioritizing group harmony and social obligations over the needs of the individual (e.g., Chang, 2015; Janoff-Bulman & Leggatt, 2002). Participants such as Johnny (PWI) described actively concealing their sexual identities from some family members out of respect for and obligation to their parents and family unit, leading to a loss of intimacy, or Alex (PWI), who describes getting a “look from one of my parents” when extended family members ask him if he’s dating anyone.

Research supports the idea that individuals from collectivistic cultures can face special challenges in seeking social support for personal issues (Kim, Sherman, Ko, & Taylor, 2006). Some qualitative research on Latino American college students has suggested that collectivistic values may undermine social support utilization due to cultural mandates to maintain group harmony and not burden others (Chang, 2015). On the other hand, the Latino/a cultural values of *personalismo*, which refers to the importance of respect, care, and self-disclosure in interpersonal relations (Savani, Alvarez, Mesquita, & Markus, 2013), and *familismo*, which emphasizes warm and supportive family relationships, have been shown to increase self-disclosure, facilitate social support, and improve health outcomes among Latino Americans (Campos et al., 2008, 2014; Rios & Eaton, 2016; Schwartz et al., 2011). In this

way, our queer Latino participants were experiencing three or more cross pressures in making decisions about coming out. Queer Latinos/as appear to have the multifaceted challenge of navigating the double bind of LGBT identity disclosure and the bind of whether to disrupt group harmony or seek closeness through self-disclosure. Consistent with the double jeopardy hypothesis, the combined negative social effects of being queer and Latino result in exponential rather than additive challenges, including challenges related to ingroup cultural norms and pressures.

Physical and relational aggression was experienced by some participants when disclosing their sexual identities, and in contrast to traditional gender norms, perpetrators were both men and women. In both Latino American culture and in mainstream U.S. culture, women are expected to be more gentle, understanding, warm, and submissive than men (Eisenman & Dantzker, 2006; Stephens & Eaton, 2014). However, these expectations are contextual (Peplau, Veniegas, Taylor, & DeBro, 1999), with relational and physical aggression being legitimate or normative under certain conditions (Rivera-Maestre, 2015).

Finally, the remaining two negative reaction themes, pathologizing and self-serving responses, revealed that participants were sometimes viewed as deviant or disregarded altogether, consistent with the concept of intersectional invisibility (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Participants whose social network members pathologized their sexual orientation were treated by them based on limited and inaccurate representations of queer men in those communities. Because being queer is a marginalized identity in Latino/a communities, our participants reported that racial/ethnic ingroup members assumed they were sexually predatory or promiscuous, sexual assault survivors, or psychologically unhealthy.

Similarly, the self-serving responses our participants encountered when coming out served to make their experiences invisible. In these cases, friends and family members literally ignored the participant’s words or actions and focused instead on how the disclosure would affect them. Other participants expressed regret over lost relationship potential or fear of personal embarrassment as a result of the disclosure. Even social network members who suffered from racial/ethnic oppression and discrimination were at times described as overlooking or minimizing the stigma faced by members of the LGBT community.

On some occasions, participants described heeding the criticisms articulated by others, such as altering one’s appearance in an effort to fit in and show respect (*respeto*) that is consistent with Latino/a and collectivistic values (Albert & Ha, 2004). In conclusion, our participants experienced invisibility at the intersection of culture and sexual orientation, with many of them having to navigate mainstream American culture with friends, Latino American culture with family, and for some participants, Latin cultures abroad.

Finally, the finding that women were often reported as behaving negatively toward our participants may at first appear to challenge gender schemas for social and emotional behavior in Latino/a culture (e.g., Durik et al., 2006; Greer, Neville, Ford, & Gonzalez 2013). It is important to note, however, that our participants may have noticed and remembered gender inconsistent behavior more often than gender consistent behavior in response to their sexual identity disclosures. We suggest that men and women are capable of social support as well as aggressive, intolerant, and self-centered behavior. Future research should identify more discretely

the conditions under which Latina women are permitted to express anger and aggression, and the ways these exceptions may relate to larger cultural values, such as protecting the integrity of the group, or duty to one's family.

Cognitive Reframing

In our coding for *cognitive reframing*, we uncovered patterns for how participants cognitively coped with negative responses to their sexual identity disclosures. One way our participants reported coping with discrimination was to mentally distance themselves from their stigmatized ingroup. Specifically, 58% of participants perceived their sexual identity ingroup to be more of a target for discrimination than themselves—a phenomenon known as the personal/group discrimination discrepancy (PGDD; Taylor, Wright, Moghaddam, & Lalonde, 1990). PGDD has received broad support over the last 25 years and has been observed in various ethnic groups (Dion & Kawakami, 1996), in lesbian women and gay men (Birt & Dion, 1987), and in immigrants (Taylor et al., 1990) among others.

In fact, participants occasionally contradicted themselves by describing experiences consistent with racism and homophobia while also denying that they had been the personal target of discrimination. As we found in the theme *It's never happened to me*, denying that one is the personal focus of racism or homophobia, or exaggerating the difference between one's own experiences and the experiences of one's ingroup, may enable queer Latino men to establish a sense of control in their social environments (Ruggiero & Taylor, 1995, 1997) and achieve some distance from the negative attributes and unjust experiences associated with their social category membership (Hodson & Esses, 2002).

Supporting PGDD, the Latino college men in our sample also engaged in *minimizing* their personal experiences of discrimination relative to the social groups they belong to. On the other hand, seeing one's own discrimination experiences as discrepant from one's group may be because individuals blame themselves for the mistreatment they receive (Foster & Matheson, 1999), as in the case with *Victim Blame*. Looking through a culturally relevant lens, we considered the possibility that these cognitive reframing strategies were related to larger cultural values, such as protecting the integrity of the group or duty to one's family. When contextualized at the intersection of Latino, White American, and LGBT cultures, taking some responsibility for their responses to discriminatory acts indicates a much more complicated landscape that queer Latino college men must navigate when coming out.

However, the reframing strategies uncovered in this study are not unique to queer, Latino college men. Minority group members of all kinds have been found to cope with stigma-related stress by denying or minimizing the extent to which they are targets of prejudice (Miller & Major, 2000). For example, aboriginal people in Australia have been found to minimize the significance or severity of the racism they experienced in an effort to cope (Ziersch, Gallaher, Baum, & Bentley, 2011), and women, Asians, and Blacks in the U.S. have been found to minimize gender and racial discrimination to maintain perceptions of control (Ruggiero & Taylor, 1997; Ruggiero, Taylor, & Lydon, 1997). Denying one's own discrimination, victim blaming, and minimizing appear to serve general self-protective motivations by distancing and differentiating oneself from in-group targets of bias (Jones, 2003, 2005).

Other forms of psychosocial harms aside from discrimination may also trigger cognitive restructuring as a coping mechanism. For example, victims of rape have been found to use cognitive reappraisals and self-blame as coping strategies (Arata & Burkhart, 1998). Victim-blaming is also a known response to when an individual's just world beliefs are threatened by presentation with any unfair outcome a target experienced—particularly when the victim is likable, as one might expect when evaluating oneself or members of one's ingroup (Haynes & Olson, 2006).

Limitations

One limitation to the current study is that we did not have a sufficiently large sample to examine within-group differences in the experience or construal of social challenges and discrimination in coming out. We captured a diverse sample of queer, Latino college men, but we did not tease out all aspects of that heterogeneity in this analysis. We analyzed our participants as a single group when there was variation in their identities as sexual minorities (e.g., bisexual vs. gay), their ethnic subgroups (e.g., Mexican vs. Cuban), their socioeconomic status, their colleges (a large, public HSI vs. a small, private liberal arts college), and so forth. Moreover, research shows that variables such as traditionalism, religiosity, and socioeconomic status significantly influence the coming out experiences of racial/ethnic minority adolescents and emerging adults (Merighi & Grimes, 2000; Potoczniak, Crosbie-Burnett, & Saltzburg, 2009; Ryan et al., 2010). Future research may focus on the challenges faced by queer Latino college men who occupy still more specific social locations, or it may compare the coming out experiences of queer Latino college men along a particular dimension, such as family traditionalism.

A second major limitation of the current study is that, as with all qualitative research, we cannot easily generalize from our sample of 22 queer Latino college men to other samples. It is possible that queer Latino men who are not in college, or even those who are in college in different regions of the U.S., have different experiences and interpretations of social challenges in coming out. Qualitative research such as ours also does not lend itself to clear tests of theories. Thus, while our research questions and data analysis was guided by and consistent with the double jeopardy hypothesis and intersectional invisibility, we do not test these concepts and cannot make formal conclusions about the extent to which our findings support them.

Clinical Implications

In addition to shedding light on the challenges faced by queer, Latino college men, the current work offers some potential inroads for improving the health and well-being of this double minority population. First, our research shows that hostile and pathologizing responses to LGBT identity disclosure persist for Latino men, even from social network members who are stereotyped as loving and nurturing, like mothers (Greer et al., 2013). Practitioners should make efforts to acknowledge the unique experiences of LGBT individuals rather than attempting to remain "blind" to clients' sexual orientation (Brown, 2006). Clients and their families may also benefit from education on the modern perspective of medical and psychological professions toward LGBT individuals, which view same-sex attraction and identity as normal expressions of

human sexuality and not mental disorders (e.g., Glassgold et al., 2009). Finally, while some social network members initially react in adverse ways to queer Latino college men's LGBT identity disclosure, many grow toward acceptance and appreciation in covert and overt ways over time (e.g., Rios & Eaton, 2016). Clients and families may find this reassuring as they undergo the process of reframing their experiences and expanding their education and awareness around LGBT issues.

Second, our participants spontaneously demonstrated the use of cognitive reframing to cope with social challenges in coming out. As mentioned earlier, coping with discrimination by minimizing it, denying it, or blaming the victim may temporarily preserve individuals' self-esteem and/or perceptions of control (e.g., Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Ruggiero & Taylor, 1997), but in the long run, and in general, these strategies appear to have adverse impacts on well-being (e.g., Aldwin & Levenson, 1994; Arata & Burkhart, 1998; Paradies, 2013). Therefore, practitioners working with queer Latino college men may want to capitalize on the general tendency of clients to use reframing by teaching them instead to interpret acts of discrimination in realistic but healthy ways to gain perspective and self-confidence moving forward. Indeed, healthy cognitive reframing and restructuring has been used by clinicians for many decades to cope with maladaptive thoughts and stigmatized labels (Bagwell-Reese & Brack, 1997; Ivey & Ivey, 1998), and has been explicitly suggested as a treatment modality for clients victimized by hate crimes (Dunbar, 2001).

Finally, our research points to the importance of developing culturally competent interventions on emotion-focusing coping responses to discrimination. Cognitive reframing interventions among double minority clients should be done within the client's cultural orientation and relative to his or her position in the social structure (Noh & Kaspar, 2003). The cognitive reframing articulated by our queer Latino participants was partly motivated by the desire for harmonious social relationships—a core feature of collectivistic cultural identities (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998).

Conclusion

Not all research suggests that queer Latino men will have as many or more social challenges in coming out than non-Latinos. Indeed, experiences reported by our participants have been found in other racial/ethnic groups, age groups, and genders, such as the double bind in coming out as a sexual identity minority (e.g., Bing, 2004) and PGDD (e.g., Dion & Kawakami, 1996). However, our work highlights how cultural values and multiple group memberships interact to produce unique experiences of sexual identity navigation and disclosure among queer, Latino college men.

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