

Self-Monitoring Strategies as a Unique Predictor of Latino Male Student Achievement

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We examined how self-monitoring (i.e., regulating one's behaviors; Snyder, 1987) relates to Latino male achievement. In Study 1, college students ($N = 413$) completed self-monitoring items and reported SAT math scores. As hypothesized, self-monitoring was positively correlated with achievement for Latino male students but was unrelated to achievement for Latina and White male and female students. Study 2 used a high school sample ($N = 174$) and observed math performance. Analyses revealed that, again, self-monitoring was positively related to achievement for Latino male students but unrelated to achievement for Latinas. These findings demonstrate the unique effects of self-monitoring on Latino male student achievement.

Key words: self-monitoring, Latino male students, academic achievement

Latino students lag far behind White students in academic achievement. For example, Latino students demonstrate higher dropout rates and lower high school graduation rates than other racial groups (Cammarota, 2008). A closer look at the data demonstrates that Latino male achievement also lags behind that of their Latina counterparts. For example, 28.4% of Latino males 16 to 24 years old were high school dropouts compared to 18.5% of Latinas (National Center of Education Statistics, 2005). Latino males are also more likely than Latinas to join the workforce immediately out of high school and not to finish a college degree (Solorzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005; Yosso & Solorzano, 2006).

Despite the persistent underperformance of Latino male students, how then do some Latino male students manage to succeed academically? In this article, we propose that self-monitoring strategies, the extent to which students regulate or monitor their behaviors in the classroom and peer group context, is one important factor in the performance of Latino male students. Specifically, we theorize that for Latino male students, endorsing self-monitoring strategies will correlate positively with academic achievement. The purpose of the current research is to examine

the link between self-monitoring strategies and achievement for undergraduate and high school Latino male students.

EXPLAINING LATINO MALE STUDENT UNDERPERFORMANCE

Research documents the unique social and cultural situations that negatively impact Latino student performance. Latino male and female students, for example, confront the stereotype of being intellectually inferior to White students, a threat that results in their underperformance (see Stereotype Threat Theory, Gonzales, Blanton, & Williams, 2002). In addition to the negative effects of group stereotypes, differences in the availability and quality of academic resources also help to explain the underperformance of Latino male and female students. Latino students, especially those from working-class backgrounds, are more likely to attend schools with inadequate funding, poor-quality teaching, and limited classroom resources (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1998). As a result, these students do not acquire the appropriate cultural capital (e.g., skills, practices, behaviors) to succeed academically.

Although research shows that negative stereotypes or limited academic resources are likely to result in the underperformance of Latino students compared to White students, this research does not account for achievement differences between Latino male and Latina students. Research does indicate, however, that Latino male students have access to less positive academic representations compared to Latina students. For example, according to 2011 statistics, only 16% of public school teachers were male compared to 84% female (National Center of Education Statistics, 2011); and less than 2% of all public school teachers are Hispanic males, compared to 5.5% Hispanic female public school teachers (Koebler, 2011; National Center of Education Statistics, 2011). Latino male students instead are inundated with stereotypic representations of their group as athletes, entertainers, and celebrities or, worse yet, as urban gang members or drug dealers (Bender, 2003). Assibey-Mensah (1997; Hooks, 2004), in his work with African American male youth, argued that minority male students dismiss academic figures as positive role models and disproportionately identify with the publicly available stereotypic roles. Past research on role models and achievement (Marx & Goff, 2005; Marx, Ko, & Friedman, 2009; Zirkel, 2002) suggests that having a few or no academic role models may decrease achievement for Latino male students compared to Latina students or to White male students.

Although role model research suggests that fostering positive group representations for Latino male students will positively affect achievement, other scholars have addressed an important point about the effectiveness of providing these role models. Assibey-Mensah (1997), for example, argued that minority male youth may not readily identify with these academic figures because they have learned to identify with representations that are unrelated to achievement (i.e., identifying with popular athletes or entertainers) or that contrast achievement (i.e., achieving in school is not “a Latino male thing to do”). Ogbu and Simons (1998) presented a similar argument in their theory of oppositional culture (Flores-Gonzalez, 2005; Fordham, 1996; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 1987, 1991, 2003) and claimed that ethnic minorities can develop an identity or culture that opposes school achievement because it reflects White American culture.

Specifically, Ogbu and Simons (1998) contended that a persistent history of racial discrimination for minority groups (e.g., African Americans, Native Americans, Latino Americans) fosters feelings of distrust toward White American institutions and reinforces beliefs that barriers to

success (e.g., inferior schooling, ceiling effects in the workplace) will persist. In response to discrimination and barriers, ethnic minorities may develop behaviors or identities that create distance between themselves and the majority group. African American and Latino American students, for example, may resist behaviors such as speaking standard English, taking Advanced Placement courses, or conforming to school rules because they are typically deemed characteristic of White Americans.

To illustrate, Fordham and Ogbu (1986), using case studies, found that African American high school students demonstrate opposition to school by avoiding school tasks, placing no effort on schoolwork, and ditching class. Other research, however, has found that school resistance is more common among male students than female students (Lundy & Firebaugh, 2005; see also the Racelessness Scale in Arroyo & Zigler, 1995). Similarly, Davis (2001) found that African American male middle school students develop a strict masculine code of conduct that includes behaviors that are in conflict with school achievement (e.g., being perceived as cool). In contrast, Horvat and Lewis (2003) found that peer groups often affirm and embrace the school-related achievements of urban African American females, suggesting that the notion of school resistance is not as strong for minority female students.

Among Latino groups, Cammarota (2008) found that Latino male students resist academic contexts in the form of escaping school, which includes skipping class, acting out, or leaving school altogether. Cultural research on gender roles in Latino culture also shows evidence of school resistance. In traditional Latino cultural contexts, Latino males are often socialized to become independent, tough, and aggressive (Boulding, 1990), characteristics often associated with masculinity and *machismo* (Casas, Wagenheim, Banchemo, & Mendoza-Romero, 1994). Masculinity also involves the belief that school achievement and studiousness are associated with femininity (D. Epstein, 1998; Hooks, 2004; Paetcher, 1998; Parry, 1996; Renold, 2001). As a result of these cultural messages, Latino male students may reject behaviors that are conducive to academic success as way to be cool and to appear tough. The problem is that these self-defeating resistant behaviors may ultimately contribute to their underperformance in school.

In summary, Latino male students encounter multiple messages of school resistance both from their same-sex peers (i.e., doing well in school is a female thing to do) and from their same-ethnicity peers (i.e., doing well in school is a White thing to do). Although cultural notions regarding masculinity and school achievement may foster feelings of school resistance for male students, in general, the added cultural message that doing well in school is related to White culture may deter Latino male students from engaging in positive academic behaviors, resulting in their underperformance.

COPING WITH CULTURAL MESSAGES OF SCHOOL RESISTANCE

Latino male students may develop various strategies that help them to cope with the opposing forces of school resistance and the desire to perform well in school. One response to school resistance is to underachieve in school as a way to avoid ridicule from and to remain loyal to peers (Ford, 1996). Fordham and Ogbu (1986) found that low-achieving African American students cope with the resistance by endorsing the same beliefs as their peers regarding school and thus behave in ways that oppose school. Grantham and Ford (2003) argued that, when trying to manage

the conflict, African American students “sabotage their achievement by procrastinating, failing to do assignments, and refusing to be in gifted education and advanced-level classes” (p. 22). This coping strategy creates barriers to performance for these students.

High-achieving African American students, however, cope differently with this conflict. Fries-Britt (1997) argued that the pressure to earn the respect of peers is stressful for high-achieving minority male students. In managing this school and peer conflict, then, high-achieving African American students may display positive academic behaviors in the classroom but also resist school behaviors in front of the peer group (e.g., act like a class clown, demonstrate athletic prowess, downplay effort on school tasks, camouflage accomplishments to peers; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). By embracing aspects of both the academic and school resistance cultures, high-achieving minority students demonstrate that they manage the images they portray to different groups better than low-achieving students (Arroyo & Zigler, 1995). In fact, Fries-Britt and Turner (2002) argued that academically inclined minority students “have learned to become bicultural, developing a repertoire of expressions and behaviors from both the white and [the minority] community and switching between them as appropriate” (p. 320). High-achieving minority students, in other words, have learned to regulate the behaviors they display in specific situations by behaving studiously in school contexts and resisting school behaviors in peer contexts. Thus, individual differences in self-monitoring, which is the ability to monitor and regulate behavior in the presence of multiple audiences (Snyder, 1987), may predict differences in achievement for Latino male students.

Self-Monitoring Theory and Latino Male Achievement

According to self-monitoring theory (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000; Snyder, 1987), there are reliable differences in the extent to which people monitor, regulate, or control the public appearance they display in social situations. High self-monitoring entails monitoring or controlling projected self-images to a great extent and regulating one’s behaviors in order to fit different situations. In academic and peer contexts, for example, learning to self-monitor would enable students to adopt behaviors that are conducive to academic success (e.g., studying for tests, completing homework) while engaging in behaviors that ensure their popularity with the peer group (e.g., wearing cool clothes, downplaying school effort).

Low self-monitoring, in contrast, entails regulating or monitoring one’s projected self-image to a lesser extent; it is the tendency to display more consistent behaviors across situations and contexts (Snyder & Cantor, 1980; Snyder & Swann, 1976; Zanna, Olson, & Fazio, 1980). For example, compared to individuals high in self-monitoring, individuals low in self-monitoring were more likely to parallel their attitudes with a counterattitudinal essay they wrote (i.e., they experienced more dissonance from being inconsistent), suggesting a stronger need for consistency between attitudes and behavior (Snyder & Tanke, 1976). A failure to engage in self-monitoring strategies in academic and peer group contexts, therefore, means that students would likely behave the same way in academic and peer group situations.

These contrasting self-monitoring propensities may contribute to differences in achievement and performance in the school context. For example, Inzlicht, Aronson, Good, and McKay (2006) reported that in numerical minority status situations (i.e., women taking a difficult math test with

two men, Black undergraduates completing a GRE test with two other White undergraduates), students high in self-monitoring performed better than students low in self-monitoring. Inzlicht and colleagues argued that self-monitoring strategies make students more resilient and better able to cope with stressful academic situations.

The resiliency of self-monitoring skills may help explain the achievement of Latino male students who encounter messages of school resistance. School resistance from peers may pose a threat to school achievement for Latino male students. These students may find it difficult to achieve in the classroom when they are confronted with pressure from their friends to resist working on school tasks. However, in line with Inzlicht and colleagues (2006), when coping with peer school resistance, Latino male students high in self-monitoring may outperform those low in self-monitoring. In addition, given that female students are less likely to have to deal with issues of school resistance compared to male students (Arroyo & Zigler, 1995; Davis, 2001; Horvat & Lewis, 2003; Lundy & Firebaugh, 2005), self-monitoring may provide a less useful coping strategy for Latina students compared to Latino male students. For Latina students, balancing one's academic and peer environments may not require managing one's behavior to the same extent as for Latino students. Given this, we predict that self-monitoring may have less of an impact on achievement (i.e., may be unrelated to achievement) for Latina students compared to Latino male students.

Previous research has yet to examine how self-monitoring, including which specific aspects of self-monitoring, relates to achievement for Latino male students. The construct of self-monitoring includes *acting* (i.e., the ability to act), *situational specificity of expressive behavior* (i.e., the ability to behave differently in different situations), and *extraversion* (i.e., a personality trait; Snyder & Gangestad, 1986). Examining these components separately will allow us to distinguish coping responses like acting and engaging in situation-specific behavior from a broader personality characteristic in achievement for Latino male students. Based on research showing that high-achieving students can better regulate their behaviors differently in school and peer contexts compared to low-achieving students (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002), we hypothesize that endorsing items associated with the ability to act or to adjust to situational cues will correlate positively with achievement for Latino male students. Extraversion, a personality trait associated with being talkative or outgoing, is not expected to correlate with achievement.

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDIES

The current research examines the link between self-monitoring and achievement for Latino male students. Specifically, Study 1 aims to establish the relationship between self-monitoring and self-reported achievement (i.e., SAT math performance) for Latino male undergraduate students. Given that self-monitoring strategies are particularly important for resiliency in academically stressful situations, we predict that self-monitoring will be positively related to achievement for Latino male students but unrelated to achievement for Latina students and White female and male students. Furthermore, we predict that acting and situational specificity in particular will relate positively to achievement for Latino male students; extraversion will be unrelated to achievement.

Study 2 tests the relationship between self-monitoring and observed exam performance among Latino students in high school. High school is a time when students are especially sensitive to the

feedback they receive from their peer groups (Larson & Richards, 1991; Steinberg & Monahan, 2007), as well as a time when students begin to seriously contemplate their academic careers and identities as students. We predict that self-monitoring will be positively related to achievement in a classroom context for Latino male students but unrelated to achievement for Latina students. We predict that, again, acting and situational specificity will correlate with achievement for Latino male high school students.

STUDY 1

Method

Participants

Participants were 265 White (73 males, 192 females) and 148 Latino (43 males, 105 females) undergraduate students from the University of Arizona.¹ Students received course credit for their participation.

Procedure and Measures

As part of a large survey in an Introduction to Psychology course, students completed questionnaire packets that included our dependent measures. We relied on survey measures in order to collect a large sample for our first initial study. This approach allowed us to easily examine the relationship between self-monitoring and achievement.

Self-monitoring. Self-monitoring was measured with an 18-item scale from Snyder (1987). This scale is the original measure of self-monitoring and has been reliable in previous work (Snyder & Gangestad, 1986). On a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), participants rated the extent to which they agreed with each item ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 0.52$). Example items included “I’m not always the person I appear to be,” “In different situations and with different people, I often act like very different persons,” and “I have trouble changing my behavior to suit different people and different situations” (reverse coded). The scale was reliable ($\alpha = .71$).

An exploratory factor analysis revealed three different subscales within the larger scale. Specifically, the items loaded onto the following categories: acting (e.g., “I would probably make a good actor,” “I have considered being an entertainer”), situational specificity of expressive behavior (e.g., “In different situations and with different people, I often act like very different persons,” “I’m not always the person I appear to be”), and finally extraversion (e.g., “At a party, I let others keep the jokes and stories going,” “In a group of people I am rarely the center of attention”). The subscales were adequately reliable; alphas ranged from .65 to .73.

¹Given study restrictions on time and survey length, we focused on demographic measures that were most central to our primary hypothesis (e.g., ethnicity, gender). Additional demographic information (e.g., socioeconomic status, parent’s level of education) was not collected in this research.

Math performance. Students were asked to report their scores from the math portion of the SAT.²

Results

Hypothesis 1: Self-Monitoring Will Be Positively Related to Achievement for Latino Male Students but Unrelated to Achievement for Latina Students and White Female and Male Students

Before examining the link between self-monitoring and self-reported SAT math performance, the first step was to examine any group differences in either of the main variables: self-monitoring and self-reported SAT math scores. A 2 (gender: male, female) \times 2 (ethnicity: White, Latino) analysis of variance was conducted with self-monitoring and self-reported SAT math scores as the dependent variables. Although no significant Gender \times Ethnicity interaction effect or ethnicity main effect was found on self-monitoring ($ps > .09$), a main effect of gender on self-monitoring was found, $F(1, 413) = 13.19, p = .00$. Post hoc comparisons revealed that males ($M = 3.18, SD = 0.52$) reported higher self-monitoring than females ($M = 2.99, SD = 0.51$). In terms of self-reported SAT math scores, the overall Gender \times Ethnicity interaction effect was not significant, $F(1, 286) = 0.03, p = .87$. There was a significant main effect of gender ($p = .00$) and a significant main effect of ethnicity ($p = .00$) on self-reported SAT math scores. Post hoc comparisons revealed that males ($M = 597.41, SD = 99.97$) reported higher SAT math scores compared to females ($M = 548.48, SD = 102.07$) and that Whites ($M = 580.95, SD = 91.81$) reported higher SAT math scores compared to Latinos ($M = 534.44, SD = 117.24$).

To directly test our hypothesis, the second step was to conduct Pearson correlations to determine the relationship between self-monitoring and SAT math performance across male and female Latino and White groups. The analyses revealed that, as predicted, self-monitoring scores were positively related to SAT math scores for Latino male students ($r = .492, p = .00$) but not related to SAT math scores for Latina students ($r = .099, p = .43$), White male students ($r = .029, p = .83$), or White female students ($r = -.07, p = .45$). See Figure 1.

A Hotelling's t test (one sided) was used to compare the magnitude of the correlations across the four groups. Analyses revealed that the correlation for Latino males was significantly greater than the correlations for Latinas ($p < .01$), for White females ($p < .01$), and for White males ($p < .01$). There were no significant differences in correlations between Latinas, White females, and White males (all $ps > .17$).

Hypothesis 2: The Acting and Situational Specificity Subscales Will Relate Positively to Achievement for Latino Male Students; Extraversion Will Be Unrelated to Achievement

Given the unique relationship between self-monitoring and achievement for Latino male students, further detailed analyses were conducted for this cultural group only. Pearson correlations were used to determine the relationship between the acting, situational specificity of expressive

²The larger research project was interested in gender differences in math achievement. Therefore, students were only asked to report SAT math scores and not verbal scores.

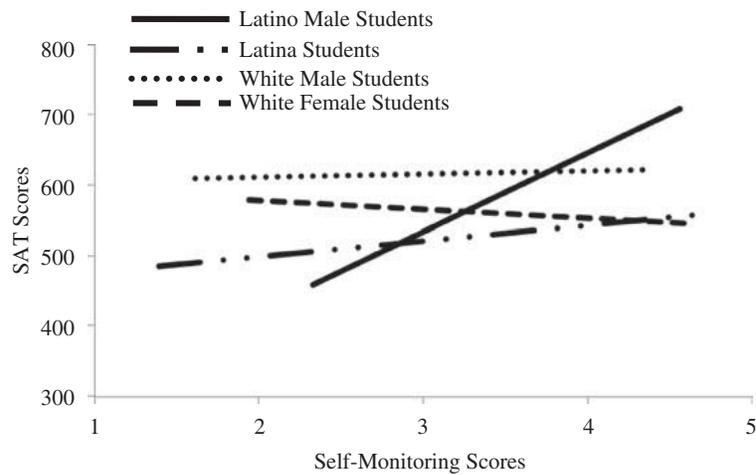


FIGURE 1 The relationship between self-monitoring and SAT math scores.

behavior, and extraversion subscales and SAT math scores for Latino male students. Analyses revealed that both acting ($r = .460, p < .01$) and situational specificity of expression behavior ($r = .446, p < .01$) were positively related to SAT math scores. Extraversion was not significantly related to SAT math scores for Latino male students ($r = .256, p = .14$).

Discussion

Study 1 found that, as predicted, higher scores on the self-monitoring scale were related to higher SAT math scores only for Latino male students. Self-monitoring was not related to SAT math performance among Latina and White male and female students. Moreover, analysis of the specific subscales of self-monitoring revealed that the goal or ability to act and to adapt one's behavior based on specific situational cues, rather than broader personality characteristics such as extraversion, predicted SAT math achievement for Latino male students. Consistent with the current perspective, these findings suggest that for Latino students, learning to adopt certain abilities or skills, such as the ability to act or to adjust to situational cues, may have an important impact on academic performance. Other stable personality traits that reflect a person's tendency to engage in social interactions or to be talkative do not predict Latino male performance. These differences in subscales of self-monitoring reveal the utility of developing behaviors (e.g., acting, vigilance to different situational cues) that enable Latino male students to meet the demands of different audiences and situations.

Although Study 1 established a relationship between self-monitoring and achievement for Latino male undergraduate students, our conclusions are limited by the self-report nature of the measure of math achievement. Past research has shown that students tend to overestimate their past academic achievements on self-report measures (Alexander, Entwisle, & Bedinger, 1994; Dobbins, Farh, & Werbel, 1993; Frucot & Cook, 1994), and that overestimation on self-report

achievement measures is also more commonly found for ethnic minority students, such as African American students, compared to White students (Fetters, Stowe, & Owings, 1984). Consistent with this research, Latino male students, especially those who are particularly motivated to manage their behaviors and presentations to others (i.e., high self-monitors), may be likely to overestimate their performance when asked to report their achievement scores. Study 2 aimed to address this concern by examining the relationship between self-monitoring strategies and performance on a math test.

Another goal of Study 2 was to replicate the relationship between self-monitoring and Latino math performance among a high school sample. Compared to high school students, undergraduate students have experienced school success (i.e., they were successful enough to attend college) and may represent a group of students who have experienced less peer resistance to school. High school students, in contrast, likely have a wider range of experience with school success and more exposure to messages of peer school resistance (Larson & Richards, 1991; Steinberg & Monahan, 2007), which can impact their academic achievement (J. L. Epstein, 1983). Thus, high school students permit a less restricted test of the relationship between self-monitoring and academic performance for Latino male students.

In line with the findings of Study 1, we expect that self-monitoring will predict performance on a math achievement test for Latino male students but that self-monitoring scores will be unrelated to performance for Latina students. More specifically, we predict that the ability to act or to adjust one's behavior in different contexts will relate to achievement for Latino male students.

STUDY 2

Method

Participants

Participants were 82 Latina (M age = 15.72 years, SD = 1.18) and 92 Latino (M age = 16.15 years, SD = 1.17) students from a high school in South Tucson, Arizona. According to 2013 statistics (GreatSchools, 2013), the high school qualified as low income (i.e., 65.1% of students qualified for free or reduced lunch) and as low performing (i.e., the percentages of students who attained state testing standards [math: 33%, reading: 68%, writing: 45%] were lower than the state averages [math: 62%, reading: 83%, writing: 70%]). The racial/ethnic student demographic of the school was predominantly Latino (89%). Native American, White, and Black students consisted of approximately 10% of the student population. To recruit for the study, we told students and teachers about the details of the study during brief class visits, and parental consent forms were sent home. Students who returned signed parental consent forms participated in the study.

Procedure

Because of school regulations and time restrictions, students were run in either small groups (two to five students) in the library or larger groups (12–15 students) in the classroom. Students

were given individual folders with a complete packet of study materials. All instructions were read aloud as students followed along. Students were first instructed to complete the first page of the packet, which consisted of the self-monitoring scale items. After completing the survey, students then completed the math performance task, which consisted of solving 10 math problems. Upon completion of the study, students were debriefed about the purposes of the study and thanked for their participation. Participation took approximately 20 min.

Measures

Self-monitoring. Self-monitoring was measured using a shortened version of the Junior Self-Monitoring Scale (Granziano, Leone, Musser, & Lautenschlager, 1987).³ This scale was developed to measure self-monitoring in younger populations and has been shown to be reliable (Howells & Fishfader, 1995). Similar to Snyder's (1987) self-monitoring scale, there were items that measured acting and situation specificity of expressive behavior; however, there were no items that measured extraversion. On a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), students were asked to rate various statements ($M = 2.58$, $SD = 0.57$). The scores ranged from 1.29 to 4.50. The scale was reliable ($\alpha = .72$).

An exploratory factor analysis revealed loadings on two different factors: acting (e.g., "I would probably be good at acting in a school play," "I have considered being an entertainer") and situational specificity of expressive behavior (e.g., "In different situations and with different people, I often act like very different persons," "When I'm with my friends I act different than I do when I'm in the classroom," "I try to figure out how each teacher wants me to act and then that's how I try to act"). The subscales were adequately reliable; alphas ranged from .61 to .68.

Achievement task. Performance was measured using 10 math problems from a practice Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) test packet ($M_{\text{Task Score}} = 5.47$, $SD = 2.23$; $M_{\text{Task Attempted}} = 9.82$, $SD = 0.73$).⁴ There was no significant gender differences in the number of math problems attempted ($p = 1.0$). For these students, the AIMS test is the most relevant standard measure of school performance and is required for graduation. Given this, if self-monitoring

³Given that our primary focus was on monitoring behaviors in school and peer school contexts, we removed items that did not align with our main focus in the research. The following four items were removed: "Sometimes I help my mom without her asking me, so she will let me do something I want to do later," "There are things about me that I wouldn't want to tell to anyone," "I feel unhappy when I don't have the things my friends have," and "I feel embarrassed when I don't have the same kind of clothes as my classmates."

⁴A brief version of the achievement task was pretested with a group of 23 high school students (10 males, 13 females; M age = 15.78 years, $SD = 1.08$). Students were given 5 min to complete seven math problems. The average score on the task was 3.13 math problems ($SD = 1.28$). After conducting item analyses, we removed problems that were difficult (no student selected the correct answer) from the task. All students attempted all seven math problems. On a scale from 1 to 7 (with 1 being the lowest rating, 4 being average, and 7 being the highest rating), students also completed items that assessed perceptions of task difficulty, motivation to complete the task, and ability to understand the task. Student ratings indicated that the task was average in difficulty ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 1.73$), that their motivation to complete the task was slightly above average ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 1.77$), and that their ability to understand the task was average ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 1.64$). The average scores from students indicated that the task was suitable for this age group; this could allow for movement (i.e., an increase or decrease in scores).

relates to performance on this task, then study findings could provide practical implications for student performance. Students were given 8 min to complete the activity.⁵

Results

Hypothesis 1: Self-Monitoring Will Predict Performance on a Math Achievement Test for Latino Male Students, but Self-Monitoring Scores Will Be Unrelated to Performance for Latina Students

As in Study 1, in the first set of analyses, group differences were explored for both self-monitoring and task performance. A one-way (gender: male, female) analysis of variance was conducted with self-monitoring and task performance as the dependent variables. No significant gender differences were found for self-monitoring or task performance ($ps > .68$). Specifically, Latino male students reported similar self-monitoring scores ($M = 2.57, SD = 0.57$) compared to Latina students ($M = 2.60, SD = 0.57$). Latino male students also achieved similar scores on the achievement task ($M = 5.49, SD = 2.27$) compared to Latina students ($M = 5.46, SD = 2.20$).

Next Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to test the relationship between self-monitoring and task performance for Latino male and Latina students. Replicating Study 1, analyses revealed that self-monitoring was positively related to task performance for Latino male students ($r = .214, p = .044$) but was unrelated to task performance for Latina students ($r = .089, p = .445$). However, unlike in Study 1, a Hotelling's t test (one sided) revealed that the correlation for Latino male students was not significantly stronger than the correlation for Latina students ($p = .17$). See Figure 2 for correlations.

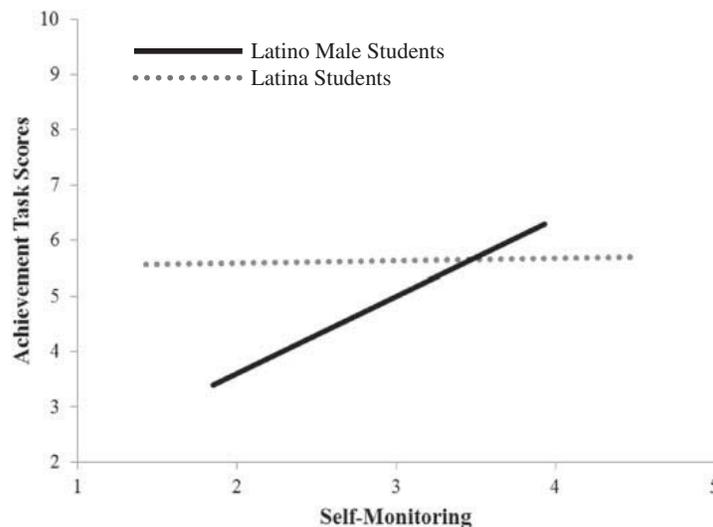


FIGURE 2 The relationship between self-monitoring and achievement task scores for Latino male students and Latina students.

⁵Given time restrictions stipulated by the school, we could only allot 8 min for the achievement task. Because students were able to successfully attempt seven problems in 5 min, we reasoned that 8 min was sufficient time to complete 10 problems.

Hypothesis 2: The Acting and the Specificity of Expressive Behavior Subscales Will Relate to Achievement for Latino Male Students but Will Be Unrelated for Latina Students

Also consistent with Study 1, the two subscales for self-monitoring—acting ($r = .258, p = .013$) and situation specificity for expressive behavior ($r = .207, p = .048$)—were significantly related to performance for Latino male students but were unrelated to performance for Latina students ($ps > .26$). However, the correlations for Latino male students were not significantly stronger than the correlations for Latina students (both $ps = .18$) on the subscales.

Discussion

Study 2 supported the prediction that self-monitoring uniquely predicts performance on a math test for Latino male high school students. Consistent with Study 1, self-monitoring was significantly related to achievement for Latino male students but was not related to achievement for Latinas. Also consistent with Study 1, the ability to act and to adjust one's behavior to different specific situational cues related positively to performance for Latino male students but not for Latina students.

Study 2 also rules out several explanations for the relationship observed between self-monitoring and math achievement among Latino male students in Study 1. For example, showing that self-monitoring predicts performance in a classroom context for Latino male students rules out the possibility that the relationship observed in Study 1 was due to the self-report nature of the performance measure. Replicating the relationship between self-monitoring and math performance among high school students also addresses the potential restriction in range that might occur on the measures among undergraduate students.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present research was to establish the relationship between self-monitoring strategies and achievement for Latino male students. In Study 1, we found that, as expected, self-monitoring was uniquely and positively related to self-reported SAT math scores for Latino male students but unrelated to achievement for Latinas and for White male and female students. Furthermore, we found that the relationship between self-monitoring and achievement was primarily driven by endorsing the ability to act and to adjust one's behaviors to suit different specific situations. Generally being extraverted did not relate to achievement for Latino male students.

Study 2 replicated and extended the predicted relationship between self-monitoring and achievement among a high school sample using a measure of observed math performance. The results again showed that self-monitoring was positively related to achievement for Latino male students but not for Latina high school students. Endorsing the ability to act and to adjust to different situations was again found to relate to achievement for Latino male high school students. Together, the two studies converge to suggest that the relationship between self-monitoring and achievement in math for Latinos is reliable and robust.

The findings from the present research reveal an important new insight into Latino male student achievement. Although past research shows that Latino male students are more likely to experience school resistance compared to Latina students (Cammara, 2008; Lundy & Firebaugh, 2005), our research suggests a strategy that Latinos may use to cope with this cultural conflict. Specifically, self-monitoring skills (i.e., the ability to act and to adjust one's behavior across different situations) may be a useful tool for improving achievement for Latino male students.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although the present research reveals unique patterns in self-monitoring for Latino male students, there are some important directions for future research. First, the current research did not examine the combined impact of peer school resistance and self-monitoring on Latino male student achievement. We did not test Latino male students' perceptions of peer school resistance and the impact that self-monitoring may have on these perceptions and subsequently on achievement. Future research should explore ways of testing the relationship between peer school resistance, self-monitoring, and achievement together.

Second, across the two studies, we found that endorsing the ability to act and to adjust one's behaviors to different situations is positively related to achievement for Latino male students. We relied on students' endorsements of these items to determine individual differences in acting and situation-specific behaviors; however, we cannot conclude whether students' motivation to act or to adjust behavior or their ability to do so is what determines achievement. Future research should directly measure students' motivations and ability to regulate behaviors in different contexts and examine how this relates to achievement differences.

Third, despite the robust finding that self-monitoring is positively related to achievement for Latino male students, these findings are correlational in nature. Future research should examine the impact of self-monitoring on achievement when Latino male students are confronted with a situation of peer school resistance. For example, using an experimental approach, future work could examine whether Latino male students who are high in self-monitoring can perform well in a situation of peer school resistance versus no peer school resistance (control condition).

Finally, given the consistent finding that endorsing self-monitoring strategies, and specifically the ability to act and to adjust to different situations, relates positively to achievement for Latino male students, future research should examine the benefits of teaching self-monitoring strategies for this group. Specifically, future research should aim to devise materials that teach Latino males to develop the skills necessary to become more vigilant of cues in different situations and adjust their behavior accordingly. This component of self-monitoring proves to be most effective in influencing achievement for Latino male students.

Conclusions

Latino male student underachievement continues to be an important issue in education. There are many challenges that these Latino male students face as a result of their multiple cultural identities. As part of the masculine culture (D. Epstein, 1998; Hooks, 2004; Paetcher, 1998; Parry, 1996;

Renold, 2001), male students are more likely than female students to encounter and perceive negative messages about school from their peers. However, for Latino males, these messages can impact how they will perform in school. This unique negative effect may provide one explanation for the discrepancy in performance for Latino male students.

Our research, however, provides insight into ways to improve the achievement of Latino male students. If school officials and teachers want to alleviate the achievement gap of this cultural group, one way to start, as suggested by the current research, is to teach students how to develop skills that help them to monitor their behaviors across situations. Teaching students how to become vigilant to the cues and demands of multiple contexts, and also how to adjust their behaviors to meet these demands, may help better prepare them for practical situations of future success (e.g., job interviews). For example, a student high in self-monitoring who is able to understand how to adjust his or her behavior to facilitate a good interview may have a better opportunity to get hired than a student who does not acquire this skill (i.e., a student low in self-monitoring), especially when the home culture is not likely to include or actively discourages these behaviors. In exploring the school conflicts of Latino male students and practical ways of combating these conflicts, research on self-monitoring strategies may provide important answers on how to increase school success for this cultural group.

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