

Latino/a Students Attending Predominantly White Institutions: Culturally Significant Relationships Promoting Academic Resilience

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Introduction

This study aims to bring awareness to the inequities that Latina/o students experience at a predominately white institution (PWI).

- The current research argues that Latino students in higher education do not receive the appropriate academic support (Robertson, Bravo, & Chaney, 2015).
- We have identified the Comadre Relationship (CR) as a critical peer connection for college students. The CR should be recognized as an important protective factor for the academic success of Latina/o students.
- “Two comadres should visit each other often, borrowing things from each other and providing material or emotional assistance whenever necessary” (Jelm, 2010).

Research Question

How do culturally significant social networks amongst Latina/o students attending predominantly white institutions affect their academic and social resilience?

- This study documents and identifies the purpose and value of the Comadre Relationship as developed by Latina/o college students in order to succeed in a PWI.

Methods

Participants

- n=41
- Sonoma State students between 18-23 years old
- First-generation, Latina/Hispanic/Mexican(95%)
- One male and one white participant(5%)

Procedure

- Twenty pairs participated of face-to-face interviews
- We transcribed, coded and analyzed the interviews based on 16 recurring themes
- Themes included: difficulty attending a PWI, social support, cultural characteristics, and academic resilience and motivation

Results

When Latinas start college, they lack a sense of belonging which leads them to struggle socially and academically.

- As a consequence, Latina students establish these peer relationships that help them navigate the world of higher education.

The establishment of the CR facilitates academic benefits such as:

Promoting Academic Value

"I feel like having her there and...she knows my schedule better than I do. She always- I always tell her what I have to get done so she can remind me. We're always supporting each other, making sure we get everything done or like turning it in"

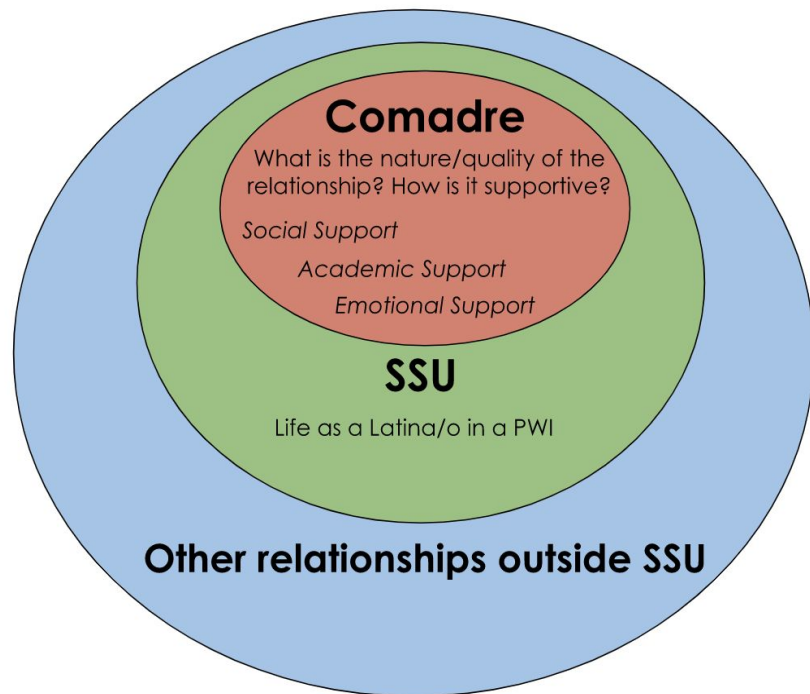
Advising:

"I think because she's an Early Childhood major and I want to work with children, we kind of compliment each other in that. So I asked her, 'Oh do you think if I take this class it'll help me in the future'..."

Sharing Resources

"...for our English class, there was like a book we had to buy for like thirty-two dollars and our teacher was like 'okay, well you can split it with another person' so then we just split it, so we shared that book..."

Results



Additional Academic Benefits

- Scheduling study sessions together
- Quizzing each other to learn the material better
- Reading each other papers to improve writing and paper structure
- Developing a calendar with each other deadlines to complete all academic tasks on time
- Going to the library to optimize their use of time and focus
- Sending each other reminders about important upcoming deadlines
- Providing support during stressful times so they can focus

Discussion

1.

Latina college students form the Comadre relationship, based on mutual trust and unconditional acceptance, which solidifies their Comadre relationship in a profound and culturally significant way.

2.

Institutions must facilitate the creation of culturally inclusive spaces and provide cultural resources to promote academic and social resilience of Latina/o/x students.

3.

Our results strongly suggest that SSU must be intentional and effective in hiring and retaining faculty and staff of Latina/o/x background.

References

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Robertson, R. V., Bravo, A., & Chaney, C. (2014). Racism and the Experiences of Latina/o College Students at a PWI (Predominantly White Institution). *Critical Sociology*, 1-21.