

# Intergenerational Dynamics and Coping Strategies from Workshopping Games on Acculturative Stress with First-Generation Latine Communities

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## ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the nuanced experiences of acculturative stress among first-generation Latine individuals in the United States, focusing on their intergenerational dynamics and coping strategies. Building on previous research, we explore the dual challenge of maintaining cultural heritage while adapting to American society. Using a series of virtual focus group discussions and workshops, we qualitatively examined participants' familial relationships, communication strategies, and recreational activities, particularly games. These sessions revealed not only sources of acculturative stress but also the unique coping mechanisms employed by this first-generation Latine-American community. By highlighting these strategies, our research aims to contribute valuable insights to the field of Human-Computer Interaction and provide practical themes for developers and community organizations to create interactive experiences that address acculturative stress. By amplifying the voices of Latine individuals, we strive to promote opportunities for novel digital resources that recognize and enhance inclusive and culturally relevant approaches to addressing acculturative stress.

## Keywords

Acculturative Stress, Focus Group, Latine Communities, Family Relationships, Communication Strategies, Games

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Latine population in the United States significantly enriches the nation's cultural, social, and economic fabric, embodying the American Dream through their aspirations and resilience (The economic contributions of Hispanic Americans, 2021; Pérez et al. 2021). At the crossroads of their ancestral heritage and American culture, many Latine individuals navigate the intricate balance of preserving their roots while adapting to the dominant societal norms (Fascnet, 2023). This journey, while enriching, is often fraught with emotional and psychological stressors, collectively known as acculturative stress. Acculturative stress manifests as the psychological strain resulting from conflicts between one's cultural background and the host country's dominant culture (Latino History, 2021; UCLA, 2023)).

For immigrant and first-generation Latines, acculturation is a complex process that requires reconciling cultural heritage with the demands of their new homeland. Although this process can lead to personal growth, it also presents significant challenges (Fascnet, 2023). This paper aims to delve into specific instances of acculturative stress among Latine individuals in the United States, highlighting their diverse experiences.

We conducted a series of in-depth focus group discussions and workshops with Latine participants to explore their intergenerational relationships, communication strategies, and coping mechanisms. By examining their leisure activities, particularly their engagement with games, we sought to understand how these activities facilitate their daily lives and connections with others. Our focus on games stems from their potential to foster social connections and provide insights into the participants' coping strategies.

Through these discussions, we aimed to identify not only the sources of acculturative stress but also the unique strategies employed by this vibrant community to navigate these challenges. This study contributes to the field of Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) by providing practical themes for designing interactive technologies that address acculturative stress. By amplifying the voices of Latine individuals, we aim to foster the development of novel digital resources that enhance cultural relevance and inclusivity in technological design

## **RELATED WORK**

Acculturative stress among Latine communities in the United States, particularly first-generation individuals, reveals the psychological and social challenges these communities face. This study aims to delve into these experiences, focusing on how game design workshops can help mitigate such stress through intergenerational communication and cultural exchange.

Conde et al. (2023, 2024) provide a comprehensive review of acculturative stress and behavior change, particularly through the lens of serious games. Their framework for Acculturative Game Design (AGD) addresses the mental health risks stemming from intergenerational cultural norms, highlighting the potential of games to foster dialogue and understanding within Latine communities (Conde et al., 2023, 2024).

The use of serious games in addressing health and social issues has been widely documented. Baranowski et al. (2016) explored how games could be used to promote health-related behavior changes, suggesting that serious games can significantly enhance motivation and engagement, leading to positive behavioral outcomes (Baranowski et al. 2016).

Lee et al. (2014) emphasize the importance of incorporating cultural contexts in the design of stress management applications. Their work on the "Journey to the West" mobile app demonstrates how culturally tailored interventions can effectively address mental health challenges and promote social integration among Asian international college students, which is relevant for similar interventions for Latine populations (Lee et al. 2014).

Kim et al. (2013) highlighted the effectiveness of culturally adapted digital interventions in improving mental health outcomes by providing accessible, culturally relevant resources for immigrant populations (Kim et al. 2013).

Pimentel et al. (2020) conducted a scoping review on the effectiveness of game-based learning interventions in fostering cross-cultural care training among healthcare professionals. Their findings indicate that educational games are a promising tool for enhancing cultural competence, underscoring the potential for game-based interventions to address cultural barriers in healthcare settings, which is relevant to our focus on mitigating acculturative stress through interactive technologies (Pimentel et al. 2020).

Sanchez (2022) investigates the psychological impact of family support on the college adjustment of Latine undergraduate students during the COVID-19 pandemic. This mixed-method study reveals that high perceived family support and low levels of family achievement guilt significantly predict better college adjustment, highlighting the crucial role of familial relationships in educational resilience among Latine students (Sanchez, 2022).

Moedano (2024) explores the psychosocial experiences of first-generation college students using an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) research design. The study highlights the challenges these students face, including feelings of isolation, identity renegotiation, and acculturative stress, emphasizing the need for institutional support to promote mental health and well-being among this population (Moedano, 2024).

Alcántara (2018) examines the development of Latine immigrant youth in anti-immigrant contexts, focusing on how adaptive cultural resources promote competencies and wellness. This study underscores the importance of culturally responsive strategies in supporting the mental health and development of Latine youth, which can be applied to game design interventions aimed at mitigating acculturative stress in Latine communities (Alcántara, 2018).

The intersection of HCI and cultural adaptation is crucial in designing effective interventions for marginalized communities. Sengers et al. (2005) advocated for incorporating critical perspectives in HCI to create more inclusive and culturally sensitive technologies, emphasizing the importance of understanding user needs and cultural contexts in technology design (Sengers et al. 2005).

Isbister (2016) explored how games can evoke emotions and facilitate social connections through design. Her work, "How Games Move Us: Emotion by Design," delves into the emotional impact of games and their potential to foster empathy and understanding, which is particularly relevant to addressing acculturative stress through intergenerational gaming experiences (Isbister, 2016).

The study of acculturative stress among Latine communities in the United States has been the focus of several research efforts, highlighting the complex interplay between cultural adaptation and psychological well-being. Previous research has emphasized the importance of understanding the unique challenges faced by immigrant and first-generation Latine individuals as they navigate their dual cultural identities.

To build upon the insights gathered from previous research, our study aims to explore the specific ways in which intergenerational dynamics and recreational activities, particularly games, influence the coping strategies of first generation United States Latine individuals facing acculturative stress. By understanding the unique challenges and coping mechanisms within this community, we seek to provide actionable recommendations for the design of interactive technologies that can support mental health and foster cultural exchange.

## **Study Goals**

We conducted a virtual focus group discussion and workshop that lasted approximately two hours, with this paper focusing on the first portion, the focus group discussion. This study aims to advance our understanding of the nuanced experiences of first-generation Latine communities in the United States. By examining their intergenerational relationships, communication strategies, and recreational activities, we seek to elucidate the coping mechanisms they employ to manage acculturative stress.

Our objective is to contribute valuable insights to the Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) field, providing practical guidance for community organizations and policymakers dedicated to supporting and empowering this resilient and diverse population. Ultimately, our research aims to amplify the voices of Latine individuals, fostering a more inclusive and culturally responsive society that celebrates the richness of their heritage and the complexity of their lived experiences.

The problem we address is the significant impact of acculturative stress on the mental health and well-being of first-generation Latine individuals in the United States, who often struggle to balance maintaining their cultural heritage with adapting to American society. While previous research has explored various aspects of acculturative stress and the potential of serious games to foster cultural understanding and mental health, there is a notable gap in studies specifically addressing the intergenerational dynamics and coping strategies within the Latine community through the medium of games and interactive technologies.

This study seeks to introduce a novel approach by analyzing the role of games and intergenerational interactions in mitigating acculturative stress. The specific goals of this study are:

1. To explore the intergenerational dynamics within first-generation Latine families and how these relationships influence their experiences of acculturative stress.
2. To identify communication strategies and recreational activities that serve as coping mechanisms for acculturative stress.
3. To provide actionable recommendations for the design of interactive technologies that can support mental health and foster cultural exchange within Latine communities.

This work is novel in its integration of intergenerational relationships and recreational activities, particularly games, into the context of acculturative stress among first-generation Latine individuals. The contribution of this work lies in its potential to inform the design of culturally relevant and inclusive digital resources that support the mental health and well-being of Latine communities. By highlighting practical coping strategies and fostering a deeper understanding of these experiences, this research aims to enhance the HCI field and provide valuable tools for community support and empowerment.

| <b>P-ID</b> | <b>Age</b>        | <b>Gender</b> |
|-------------|-------------------|---------------|
| PA1         | 25 - 34 years old | Female        |
| PA2         | 25 - 34 years old | Undisclosed   |
| PA3         | 18 - 24 years old | Female        |
| PA4         | 18 - 24 years old | Female        |
| PA5         | 18 - 24 years old | Female        |
| PA6         | 18 - 24 years old | Male          |
| PA7         | 25 - 34 years old | Female        |
| PA8         | 18 - 24 years old | Undisclosed   |
| PA9         | 18 - 24 years old | Female        |
| PA10        | 18 - 24 years old | Female        |
| PA11        | 25 - 34 years old | Undisclosed   |
| PA12        | 18 - 24 years old | Female        |

**Table 1:** Table displaying participants age and gender. p-ID stands for Participant Identification.

## EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

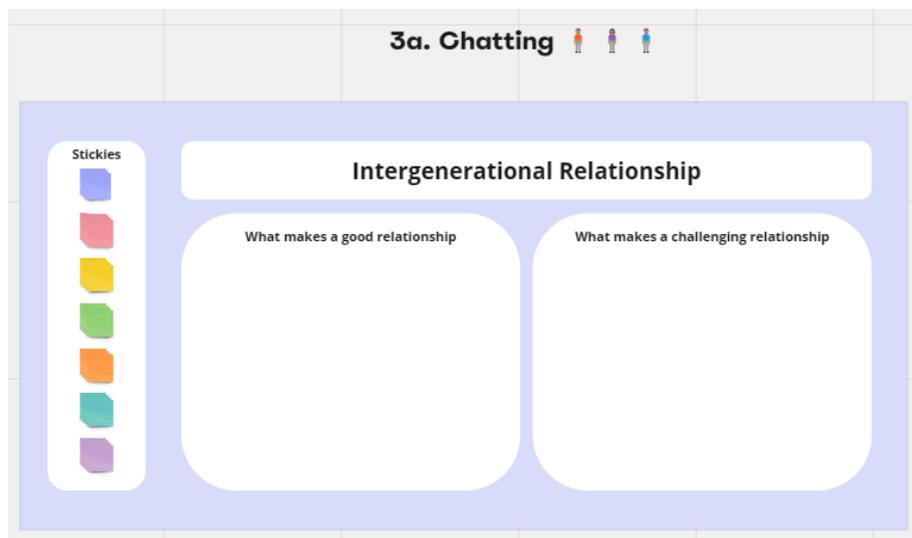
### Participants

Participants were recruited through various channels, including email invitations, word of mouth, social media posts, and physical flyers. A screening procedure was implemented to ensure all participants identified as Latine, currently resided in the United States, and had access to a laptop or computer. We successfully recruited 12 participants, consisting of 8 females, 1 male, and 3 individuals who preferred not to disclose their gender. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 27 years old and all confirmed their identification with Latine or Hispanic ethnicity.

### Experiment Design

For this study, we utilized a Miro Board, an online virtual whiteboard, to create a collaborative space where participants could jot down notes and read each other's responses from their own laptops or computers. The Miro Board was chosen for its accessibility, accommodating participants who may be better listeners or readers.

The Miro Board was structured to include both focus group discussions and workshop activities<sup>1</sup>. As our focus was on acculturation and leisure activities, the board was divided into three main sections corresponding to the discussion topics, each with starter questions to facilitate conversation (see Figures 1, 2, and 3). For the workshop portion, we deconstructed the Acculturative Game Design Framework, designed by Conde et al. (2023), to allow participants to brainstorm game or playful concepts aimed at connecting different familial generations and fostering closer relationships through play. Each session had its own dedicated Miro Board to mitigate any potential biases in responses.



**Figure 1:** Miro Board used to place notes in relation to Familial Intergenerational Relationships.



**Figure 2:** Miro Board used to place notes in relation to Communication Strategies.



**Figure 3:** Miro Board used to place notes in relation to Game Mechanics.

## Study Protocol

Our entire procedure was as follows and can be summarized in Figure 4: Participants were invited to join via Zoom and initially placed in a waiting room until all participants had arrived. During this waiting period, participants were asked to anonymize themselves in Zoom if they had not done so already.

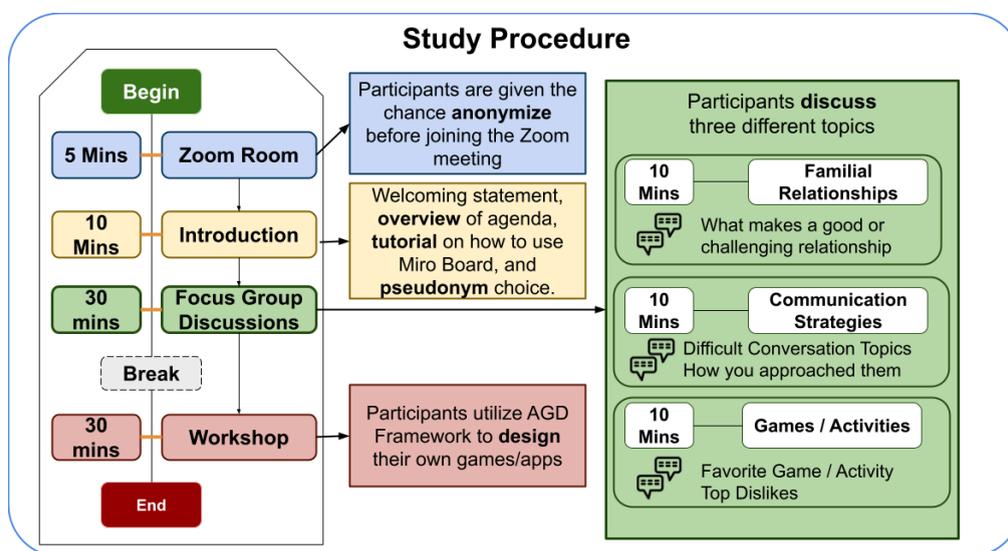
Once all participants were present, the moderator welcomed everyone and provided a brief introduction to the session, outlining what to expect. Participants were asked to familiarize themselves with Miro prior to the session by spending a few minutes exploring its features. Nonetheless, the moderator also provided a brief tutorial on how to navigate the Miro board.

Participants were then asked to choose their own pseudonyms, which they would use throughout the session. This step is beneficial for maintaining participant anonymity and fostering a comfortable environment for open discussion (Van den Eynden et al. 2011) and corresponding sticky notes on Miro board.

The session proceeded with the discussion portion, where each topic had a time limit of approximately 10 minutes. Participants took turns speaking or writing down their responses on sticky notes. Each discussion topic was introduced with preset questions to facilitate the conversation:

1. Intergenerational Relationships
  - a. What makes a good relationship?
  - b. What makes a challenging relationship?
2. Communication
  - a. Difficult Conversation Topics (e.g. Conflicts)
  - b. How do you discuss them? (e.g. Approaches)
3. Game Mechanics
  - a. Favorite Games
  - b. Favorite Game Mechanics
  - c. Top Dislikes

Following the discussion portion, there was a 5-10 minute break to allow participants to recharge before continuing with the workshop portion of the study. The workshop involved participants brainstorming game or playful concepts that could connect different familial generations and foster closer relationships through play. This activity was guided based on the workshop materials proposed by Conde et al (2023).



**Figure 4:** Procedure for each workshop → Zoom Room, Introduction, Focus Group Discussion, Break, Workshop, End.

## **RESULTS**

Our analysis revealed several key themes across the three main areas of focus: intergenerational relationships, communication strategies, and games and game mechanics. These themes provide valuable insights into the experiences and coping mechanisms of first-generation Latine individuals dealing with acculturative stress.

### **Intergenerational Relationships**

In examining intergenerational relationships, we identified themes in both positive and challenging aspects.

#### *Positive Relationships*

Participants highlighted the following themes as crucial to maintaining good intergenerational relationships:

- **Communication and Understanding:** Effective communication and a deep understanding of each other's perspectives were seen as foundational for strong relationships.
- **Support and Compassion:** Emotional support and compassion were repeatedly mentioned as vital for fostering trust and bonding between generations.
- **Trust and Honesty:** Trust and honesty were identified as essential components that underpin healthy and resilient intergenerational relationships.

#### *Challenging Relationships*

Conversely, several themes emerged around challenges in intergenerational relationships:

- **Communication Barriers and Lack of Communication Skills:** Difficulty in expressing thoughts and emotions, often due to language barriers or differing communication styles, was a significant issue.
- **Trust Issues and Misunderstandings:** Mistrust and frequent misunderstandings, often stemming from generational gaps in experiences and values, were common.
- **Societal and Family Pressures:** External pressures from societal expectations and family traditions created strain and conflict within relationships.
- **Personal Growth and Challenges:** Differences in personal growth trajectories and life challenges led to friction and disconnect between generations.

### **Communication Strategies**

Communication strategies used by participants covered various aspects of their lives, with themes emerging around both topics of communication and approaches to communication.

### *Topics of Communication*

The main topics of discussion where communication strategies were applied included:

- Educational and Career Choices: Conversations around academic and professional paths were frequent and often contentious.
- Personal Identity and Lifestyle Choices: Discussions about personal identity, including sexual orientation and lifestyle choices, were common.
- Relationship and Social Issues: Participants often communicated about their romantic relationships and social interactions.
- Mental and Physical Health: Health-related discussions were crucial, encompassing both mental and physical well-being.

### *Approaches to Communication*

Participants employed various strategies to approach these sensitive topics:

- External Support: Seeking advice and mediation from external sources, such as counselors or community leaders, was a common strategy.
- Direct Communication: Some participants preferred direct and open communication to address issues head-on.
- Adaptation and Compromise: Flexibility and a willingness to compromise were key in managing conflicts and finding common ground.
- Incremental and Strategic Disclosure: Gradual and strategic disclosure of sensitive information helped in easing difficult conversations.

## **Games and Game Mechanics**

Participants shared their preferences and dislikes regarding games and game mechanics, revealing distinct themes.

### *Preferred Game Mechanics*

Preferred elements in games included:

- Customization and Creativity: Opportunities for customization and creative expression were highly valued.
- Exploration and Open Worlds: Games that allowed for exploration and featured open-world environments were popular.
- Narrative and Lore: Rich narratives and engaging lore were important to participants.
- Strategy and Skill-Based Gameplay: Games requiring strategic thinking and skill were preferred for their engaging and challenging nature.

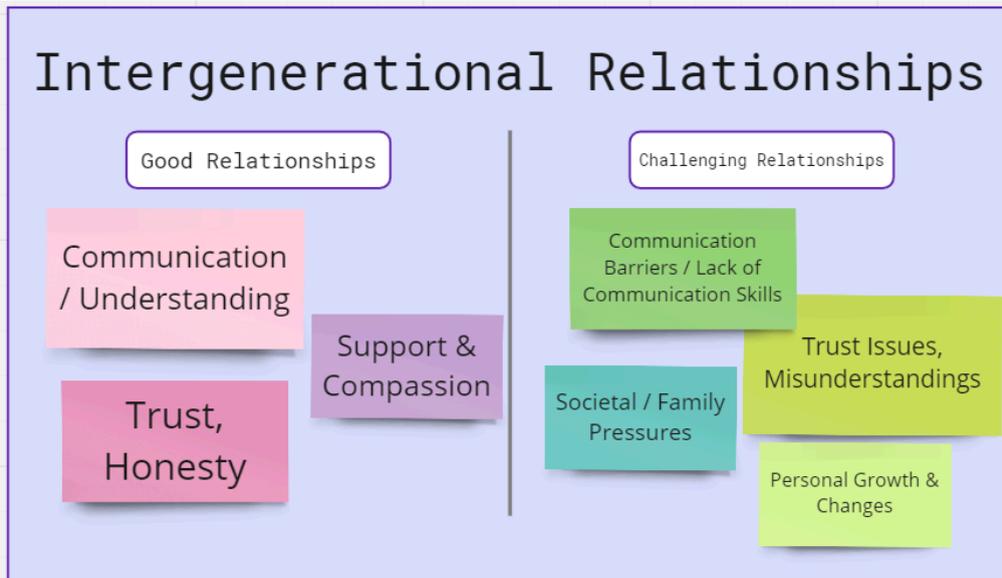
### *Disliked Game Mechanics*

Participants also identified several aspects of games they disliked:

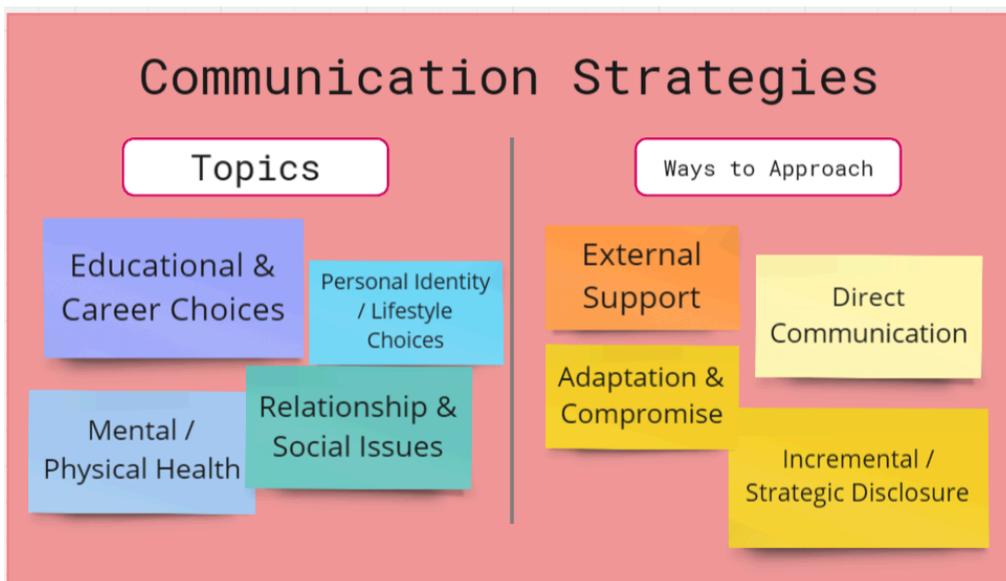
- Complexity or Steep Learning Curves: Games that were overly complex or had steep learning curves were less favored.

- Time-Consuming and Slow Progress Pace: Games perceived as time-consuming with slow progress were not well-received.
- Pay-to-Win Monetized Gameplay: Monetization strategies that favored pay-to-win models were disliked.
- Negative Social Interactions: Negative interactions within gaming communities detracted from the overall experience.

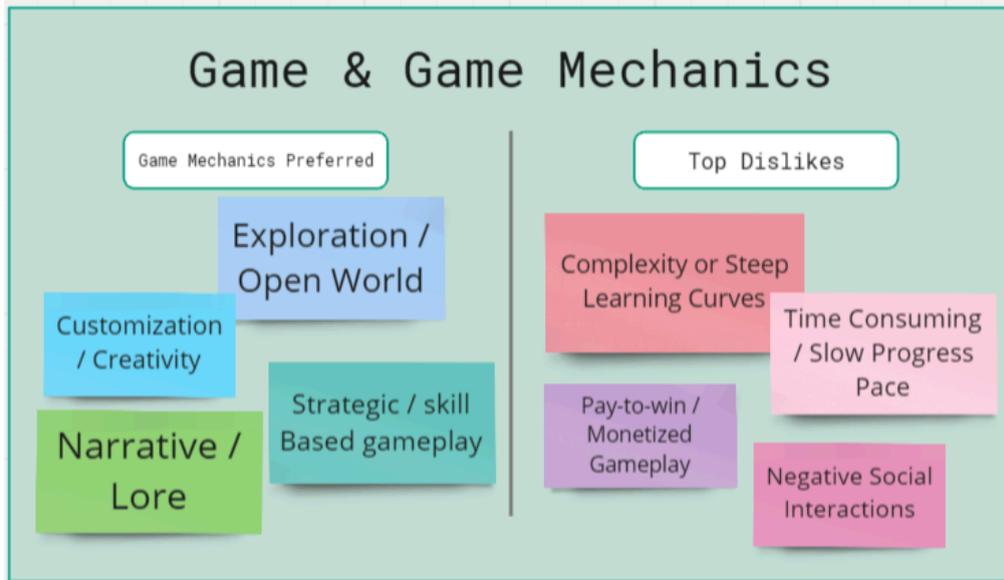
These findings provide a comprehensive view of the participants' experiences and preferences, offering valuable insights for the development of culturally relevant and supportive interactive technologies.



**Figure 5:** Top themes came up during discussions in relation to Intergenerational Relationships.



**Figure 6:** Top themes came up during discussions in relation to Communication Strategies.



**Figure 7:** Top themes came up during discussions in relation to Game Mechanics.

## DISCUSSION

The findings from this study provide significant insights into the intergenerational dynamics and coping strategies of first-generation Latine communities in the United States, particularly through the lens of gaming and recreational activities. This discussion will explore how these findings relate to our study goals and the broader implications for addressing acculturative stress.

### Intergenerational Dynamics and Acculturative Stress

Our study aimed to explore the intergenerational dynamics within first-generation Latine families and how these relationships influence their experiences of acculturative stress. The themes identified in positive relationships, such as communication and understanding, support and compassion, and trust and honesty, underscore the importance of strong familial bonds in mitigating acculturative stress. These elements foster a sense of security and belonging, crucial for individuals navigating the complexities of acculturation.

Conversely, the challenges highlighted, including communication barriers, trust issues, societal and family pressures, and personal growth discrepancies, reveal the multifaceted nature of intergenerational conflicts. These stressors often exacerbate feelings of isolation and cultural dissonance, contributing to heightened acculturative stress. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing targeted interventions that can help bridge generational gaps and promote harmonious family relationships.

### Communication Strategies as Coping Mechanisms

Identifying communication strategies and recreational activities that serve as coping mechanisms for acculturative stress was another key goal of this study. The themes

around topics of communication, such as educational and career choices, personal identity, relationship issues, and health, reflect the critical areas where Latine individuals seek support and guidance from their families. The approaches to communication—external support, direct communication, adaptation and compromise, and incremental disclosure—demonstrate the adaptive strategies employed to navigate these sensitive conversations.

These strategies highlight the resilience and resourcefulness of Latine individuals in managing acculturative stress. By leveraging both familial and external support systems, they are able to find ways to communicate effectively and address the challenges posed by cultural adaptation. These insights can inform the development of support programs and resources that emphasize communication skills and cultural sensitivity.

### **Recreational Activities and Game Mechanics as Supportive Tools**

The preference for certain game mechanics, such as customization and creativity, exploration and open worlds, narrative and lore, and strategy and skill-based gameplay, indicates the types of recreational activities that resonate with first generation Latine individuals. These preferences suggest that games can serve as a valuable tool for coping with acculturative stress by providing a sense of control, escapism, and cognitive engagement.

Conversely, the dislikes identified, including complexity, time-consuming gameplay, pay-to-win models, and negative social interactions, highlight potential pitfalls that can detract from the supportive potential of games. These insights are crucial for game designers aiming to create inclusive and culturally relevant games that support mental health and foster cultural exchange.

### **Actionable Recommendations for Interactive Games**

Based on our findings, we offer several actionable recommendations for the design of interactive technologies that can support mental health and foster cultural exchange within Latine communities:

- **Culturally Relevant Content:** Design games and applications that reflect the cultural heritage and values of Latine communities, incorporating narratives and characters that resonate with their experiences.
- **Facilitate Positive Intergenerational Interactions:** Develop features that encourage collaboration and communication between different generations, such as family-based challenges and cooperative gameplay.
- **Accessible Communication Tools:** Include tools and resources that support effective communication, such as language translation features, prompts for difficult conversations, and access to external support resources.
- **Flexible and Adaptive Gameplay:** Create games that allow for customization and flexibility, accommodating various skill levels and preferences to reduce frustration and promote engagement.
- **Focus on Positive Social Interactions:** Design mechanisms to foster positive social interactions and minimize negative experiences, such as community guidelines, moderation features, and opportunities for positive reinforcement.

By implementing these recommendations, developers and community organizations can create interactive experiences that not only entertain but also provide meaningful support for managing acculturative stress. This approach aligns with our study goals of exploring intergenerational dynamics, identifying effective communication strategies, and offering practical guidance for the development of supportive technologies

## **Limitations and Future Work**

### *Limitations*

While this study provides valuable insights into the intergenerational dynamics and coping strategies of first-generation Latine communities, several limitations should be acknowledged:

- **Sample Size and Diversity:** The study involved a relatively small sample size of 12 participants, which may not fully represent the broader Latine population. Additionally, the demographic diversity within the sample was limited, with most participants being young adults aged 18-27. Future research should aim to include a larger and more diverse participant pool to enhance the generalizability of the findings.
- **Self-Selection Bias:** Participants were recruited through various channels such as email, word of mouth, and social media, which may have introduced self-selection bias. Those who chose to participate might have a particular interest or experience with the topics discussed, potentially skewing the results.
- **Online Format:** The virtual nature of the study, conducted via Zoom and Miro Board, may have affected the dynamics of the focus group discussions and workshops. Technical difficulties, varying levels of familiarity with online tools, and the lack of physical presence could have influenced participants' engagement and responses.
- **Temporal and Contextual Constraints:** The study's findings are based on a specific timeframe and context, which may limit their applicability to different settings or periods. Longitudinal studies are needed to understand how intergenerational dynamics and coping strategies evolve over time.

### *Future Work*

Building on the findings of this study, several directions for future research and development can be identified:

- **Expanding Participant Demographics:** Future studies should aim to include a broader range of ages, socioeconomic backgrounds, and geographic locations within the Latine community to capture a more comprehensive understanding of intergenerational dynamics and coping strategies.
- **Longitudinal Studies:** Conducting longitudinal research would provide insights into how acculturative stress and coping mechanisms change over time, particularly in response to significant life events or shifts in societal norms.
- **In-Person Workshops:** Organizing in-person focus groups and workshops could provide a richer and more nuanced understanding of participant

interactions and experiences. This approach would allow for the observation of non-verbal cues and foster more spontaneous discussions.

- **Intervention Testing and Evaluation:** Developing and testing specific interventions based on the study's findings, such as culturally tailored games or communication tools, would be a valuable next step. Evaluating the effectiveness of these interventions in reducing acculturative stress and enhancing intergenerational relationships would provide practical applications for the research.
- **Cross-Cultural Comparisons:** Comparing the experiences of first-generation Latine individuals with those of other immigrant communities could highlight unique and shared challenges in acculturation. Such comparative studies could inform the design of more universally applicable support mechanisms.
- **Exploring Additional Coping Mechanisms:** Future research should explore other forms of recreational activities and coping strategies beyond gaming, such as art, music, and community events, to provide a more holistic view of how Latine individuals manage acculturative stress

By addressing these limitations and pursuing these avenues for future work, researchers and practitioners can develop a deeper understanding of the complexities of acculturative stress and create more effective, culturally relevant interventions to support first-generation Latine communities.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study aimed to explore the intergenerational dynamics, communication strategies, and recreational activities that serve as coping mechanisms for acculturative stress among first-generation Latine communities in the United States. By conducting virtual focus group discussions and workshops, we identified key themes in positive and challenging intergenerational relationships, effective communication approaches, and preferred and disliked game mechanics.

Our findings reveal that strong intergenerational relationships are characterized by communication, support, and trust, while challenges often stem from communication barriers, trust issues, and external pressures. Effective communication strategies include seeking external support, engaging in direct communication, and practicing adaptation and strategic disclosure. Participants' preferences for game mechanics highlight the potential of games to provide engaging and culturally relevant coping tools, although complexity and negative social interactions can detract from their effectiveness.

These insights contribute valuable knowledge to the field of Human-Computer Interaction, providing practical recommendations for designing interactive technologies that support mental health and foster cultural exchange within Latine communities. By addressing the unique experiences and needs of first-generation Latine individuals, we can promote a more inclusive and culturally responsive approach to mitigating acculturative stress and enhancing overall well-being.

## ENDNOTES AND REFERENCES

### Endnotes

1. To see the more in-depth visuals of the board, click [this link to open a skeleton version](#).

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This template (used originally in DiGRA 2011 conference) was developed based on a similar template for the CHI conference (Doe and Smith 2011) and the template from DiGRA 2005. Some of the references cited in this paper are included for illustrative purposes only. Special thanks to Annika Waern and José Zagal.

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