

## Abstract

Parental cancer has a strong influence on the psychological well-being of children at all ages. Children whose parents have more distress and advanced disease tend to have lower rates of healthy psychological adjustment. Further, children from the U.S. Latino/a population may face additional challenges that compound the stress of having a parent with cancer and culture (*la familia* (family), *espíritu* (spirit), and *respeto* (respect)), and may play a crucial role in how Latino/a adolescents cope with their parent's cancer. This dissertation examined four aims: 1) The associations between children's coping responses and their psychological adjustment to parental cancer 2) The moderation effect of Latino/a cultural values of *la familia*, *espíritu*, and *respeto* on the coping-adjustment association 3) The main effects of age and gender on coping responses, cultural values, and psychological adjustment outcomes 4) The associations between severity of the parent's cancer and the parent's level of distress with children's psychological adjustment. A sample of 38 Latino/a adolescents and young adults (12-25 years of age) and their mother (n =25) diagnosed with breast cancer completed questionnaires either in-person or by mail. A subsample of seven children completed an optional interview either in-person or via Skype. Results demonstrated positive associations with children's coping responses and psychological adjustment. Cultural values of *la familia* and *espíritu* were associated, in both direct and indirect ways, with lower symptoms of depression and anxiety, but only for a few coping responses. No evidence was found for age and gender differences in stress appraisals, coping, Latino/a values or adjustment. Further, the ill mother's distress and illness severity were not associated with their child's adjustment. Results suggest that cultural values of the *la familia* and *espíritu* play an important role in

the coping experiences of Latino/a AYAs coping with their mother's breast cancer diagnosis.