Research Report

Latino Men and Masculinities: A Multi-Institution Study of Community College Transfer Experiences

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Abstract

Objective: The purpose of this study was to investigate how Latino men's conceptions of masculinities influenced their attitudes and behaviors during the transition from community colleges to 4-year institutions. **Method:** A phenomenological approach was used to explore the lived experiences of 34 Latino men across Texas, California, and Florida. Each participant was interviewed twice; all data were recorded, transcribed, and coded for themes. **Results:** Findings suggest that, although prior conceptions of masculinities can sometimes provide positive tools during transfer, these conceptions also cause challenges as men negotiate incongruences between their masculine identity and what is required to succeed in college. Participation in on-campus men's groups and student organizations can help Latino students navigate these incongruences and negotiate their own intersectional identities and conceptualizations of masculinities in light of their new environment. **Contributions:** This study demonstrates that Latino men continue to face challenges related to masculinities and identity conflicts during the community college to 4-year institution transfer process. Future research might further investigate how the multiple, intersecting identities of Latino men (e.g., sexuality, class) influence masculinities and transfer experiences. Implications for practice include a recommendation that institutions consider creating on-campus spaces and learning environments to support men in navigating masculinities.

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Due to recent efforts to increase diversity in higher education, community college (CC) completion and transfer pathways have garnered much attention among scholars and practitioners. CCs are a primary pathway into higher education for Latina/o/x[1] students, with 49% of all Latina/o/x undergraduates across the United States attending a public 2-year college (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). Although many students enroll in CCs with the goal of transferring to a 4-year college (Okun et al., 2009; Wang et al., 2017), rates of successful transfer remain incredibly low (Jenkins & Fink, 2016). Taken together, Latina/o/x students' large enrollments in CCs, CC students' frequent desire to transfer to 4-year colleges, and low rates of successful transfer from CCs to 4-year institutions underscore the importance of understanding successful pathways to and through CCs, particularly for Latina/o/x students.

Latino Men and College Pathways

In exploring Latina/o/x students' college pathways, it is important to disaggregate groups and consider the unique experiences of Latino men. Compared with their female counterparts, Latino high school students report additional challenges in their pathways to 4-year colleges, suggesting a "need for more research that considers the factors that . . . facilitate the academic pathways of minority male youth in particular" (Riegle-Crumb, 2010, p. 591).

In terms of Latino men at CCs more specifically, despite their increasing rate of enrollment (U.S. Department of Education, 2017), CCs struggle to facilitate positive outcomes for Latino men, who experience significant disparities in transfer and college success (Nuñez & Elizondo, 2013; Vasquez Urias, 2012). For example, data indicate that only 15.4% of Latino men who enter CCs earn certificates, complete degrees, or transfer to 4-year institutions within 3 years (Wood et al., 2014). Although there is a small but growing body of literature on Latino men in both CC and university settings, less is known about their transfer experiences.

Masculinities and Socio-Ecological Outcomes (SEO)

Understanding Latino men's transfer experiences requires us to explore the role of masculinities, carefully considering how gender and ethnicity intersect (Riegle-Crumb, 2010); although little is known about this intersection in relation to Latino men specifically, scholars have explored conceptions of masculinities and CC success among Men of Color more broadly. Much of this literature relies on the SEO model, which provides a framework for understanding the interplay between identities, societal contexts, college environments, and other factors that shape success among Men of Color, highlighting ways in which masculinities intersect with race and ethnicity across different educational environments (F. Harris & Wood, 2016). Broadly, this

body of literature consistently (a) documents ways in which behaviors necessary for CC success (e.g., help-seeking) often conflict with normative conceptions of masculinities, and (b) points to a need for more research that disaggregates groups to consider the role of masculinities across a range of educational contexts (e.g., F. Harris & Harper, 2008; F. Harris & Wood, 2016; Sáenz et al., 2013). Still, among studies that focus specifically on Latino men at CCs, little is known about the role of masculinities in shaping college pathways and success (Sáenz et al., 2015; Vasquez Urias & Wood, 2015).

Objectives

Prior literature highlights the role of masculinities in shaping the college success of Men of Color and the importance of considering masculinities within an intersectional framework that accounts for gender and race/ethnicity. In this study, we explore the connections between masculinities, transfer success, and college experiences, focusing specifically on Latino men. Guided by F. Harris and Wood's (2013, 2016) SEO model, we utilized a phenomenological approach to understand the lived experiences of 34 undergraduate self-identified Latino men from Texas, California, and Florida who transferred from a CC to a 4-year institution. This cross-institutional, cross-state collaboration provides insight into the CC transfer experiences of Latino men from varying perspectives (i.e., geographic region, institutional type, and Latino panethnic subgroups) in three of the states with the largest Latino populations. The following research question guided this investigation:

> How do conceptions of masculinities influence the attitudes, behaviors, and meaning-making of Latino men during and after the process of transferring from CCs to 4-year institutions?

Literature Review

Although much research on Latino men in higher education has emerged, published work on the CC transfer experiences of Latino men is limited. Thus, we present literature that broadly examines masculinities and college student experiences before reviewing research related specifically to the educational, socialization, and transfer experiences of Latino men in CCs.

Masculine Socialization and Educational Experiences

Early gendering of education. Gender socialization shapes identity formation and attitudes toward education from an early age. Moving through educational pathways, boys are socialized to devalue stereotypical feminine activities (e.g., learning and studying) to maintain a masculine persona perceived to be superior to femininity (F. Harris & Harper, 2008; O'Neil, 1981). Over time, women and girls tend to accumulate higher levels of social capital than men and boys, including greater exposure

to a college preparation track, higher levels of parental involvement, possession of at least one parent who expects them to attain a bachelor's degree, and more friends attending college (Wells et al., 2011). Sallee (2011) found that gender was collectively created through routine interactions with others that set norms and values, particularly around masculinities, and that those who do not conform to these norms may experience hostility.

Intersectionality of gendered educational experiences. Scholars have recognized the importance and inherent complexity of utilizing intersectionality in higher education research (e.g., Duran & Jones, 2019; J. C. Harris & Patton, 2019; Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; Nuñez, 2014). Intersectionality, which is rooted in Black feminist theories and epistemologies, refers to the systematic erasure of individuals and groups with multiple marginalized identities. It is critical that scholars frame their understandings of the educational experiences of Men of Color within social, historical, and political contexts (Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1991; Dill & Zambrana, 2009). Intersectionality highlights the multiple dimensions of social identities and experiences among people of color, including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, nation of origin, gender, sexual orientation, (dis)abilities, age, immigrant status, class, language, and religion (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; Nuñez, 2014).

In the context of this study, it is important to recognize how gender and masculinities are shaped by multiple marginalized identities. Some scholars argue that masculinity has become falsely regarded as "unidimensional and implicitly universal . . . [which] obscures the diversity and complexity of the constructions of so-called masculinities . . ." (Davis, 2003, p. 518). In college settings, the presumed universal, unidimensional construction of masculinity (Davis, 2003) is largely defined around a hegemonic White masculinity that centers White men and marginalizes Men of Color. However, multiple masculinities exist, and Men of Color successfully negotiate masculinities in college (Harper & Harris, 2010; Sáenz et al., 2013). While Latino men carry "power and privilege," using an intersectionality framework allows one to address how these social identities also reproduce marginalization and oppression "that contribute to reproduction of education inequities" (Nuñez, 2014, p. 35). Intersectionality highlights seemingly contradictory elements of subordination and privilege (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016). For example, despite being men, Latino men can experience less privilege due to their race/ethnicity and/or being from a lower socioeconomic class, being part of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community, or speaking only Spanish (among other oppressed identities). Studies of Latino men challenge traditional notions of masculinities as factors leading to school disengagement; masculine identity may motivate Latino men's goal attainment (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; Sáenz et al., 2013).

Latino Men and Masculinities in College

Latino men's success in college. Although Latino men's representation and graduation rates have increased modestly, they remain outnumbered by their White counterparts.

Scholarship points to financial challenges and pressures that contribute to college attainment inequities (Abrica & Martinez, 2016; Salinas & Hidrowoh, 2018; Sáenz et al., 2013) and reveals that campus engagement, student–faculty engagement, and establishing a sense of belonging are vital to Latino men's CC success (e.g., Garcia & Garza, 2016; Rodriguez, Massey, & Saenz, 2016). Some literature has focused on noncollege factors such as the forms of community cultural wealth Latino men draw upon, particularly from their father and women family members (e.g., Sáenz et al., 2017, 2018). Other scholarship has highlighted conflicts between college-going Latino men and their families, particularly regarding intersecting identities such as gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality (e.g., Duran & Perez, 2017; Rodriguez, Lu, Bukoski, 2016). Together, this work documents the importance of institutional characteristics, college environments, and noncollege factors (e.g., family influences). However, it is also important to consider how Latino men's success may be related to gender socialization and perceptions of masculinities.

Latino men's gender socialization. Some studies have begun to explore Latino men's perceptions of masculinities in college. Vasquez Urias and Wood (2015) found that degree utility, locus of control, and intrinsic interest significantly predicted perceptions of school as a feminine space. Men who perceived their degree to have value, had a high level of agency over their educational pursuits, and reported strong internal motivation to pursue education were less likely to view it as a feminine domain. This highlights a need for more intersectional inquiry as these findings question the connection between Latino men's perceptions of school as gendered and their motivations to pursue higher education (Vasquez Urias & Wood, 2015).

Other research highlights issues of *machismo* or *caballerismo*, which may influence faculty, peer, and familial interactions (Rodriguez, Lu, Bukoski, 2016; Sáenz et al., 2013, 2015), as well as connectedness at school, ethnic identity, and support-seeking (Estrada & Jimenez, 2018). *Machismo* refers to hypermasculine pride, whereas *caballerismo* is family-centered, socially connected, and honorable (Arciniega et al., 2008). *Machismo* may lead to difficulty seeking academic support and challenges with cultural and familial expectations that contrast with educational ones (Sáenz et al., 2013). However, *caballerismo* may promote connecting to institutions, maintaining an ethnic identity, and seeking academic support (Estrada & Jimenez, 2018; Sáenz et al., 2015). *Caballerismo* may also manifest in Latino men keeping academic victories secret to appear academically modest or building friendships based on character, industriousness, and trustworthiness. (Ballysingh, 2016).

Machismo and *caballerismo* provide examples of how men's gender socialization is inherently intersectional, that is, whereas the vast majority of the literature on college men has operated under "flawed assumptions regarding the universality of male privilege in college" (Harper & Harris, 2010, p. 2), treating masculinity as a singular, unidimensional concept (Davis, 2003; Harper & Harris, 2010), *machismo* and *caballerismo* highlight the complexity of Latino students' gender socialization experiences. Latino men may be uniquely taught to hide struggles (*machismo*) and victories (*caballerismo*), contributing to oppression and erasure within higher education, which is

exacerbated by the literature's failure to recognize the intersectional and multidimensional nature of college men's masculinities.

The Transfer Process

Latina/o/x CC students are less likely to transfer to 4-year institutions than their White counterparts (Wang, 2012). The literature on CC transfer documents the significance of race and ethnicity for student outcomes (D'Amico et al., 2014). Yet little is known about how Latino men navigate the transfer to 4-year institutions (Vasquez et al., 2020). Existing studies emphasize the importance of gender and support networks; in one example, women faculty played a key role in supporting Latino men through the transfer process (Sáenz et al., 2018). Although not focused on transfer, another study documented the role of professional, service-oriented, and identity-based fraternities in creating opportunities for support during the first year at a predominantly White 4-year institution (Ballysingh, 2016), suggesting that such fraternities may play an important role during college transitions. More broadly, transfer experiences are often characterized by complexity and ambiguity, as students navigate resources and policies from different institutions (Musoba et al., 2018). Looking back to the broader literature on gender, masculinity, and identity conflicts in education contexts (discussed above), we might expect that these complex and ambiguous transfer processes may lead to unique conflicts between normative masculine values of independence and stability.

Gaps in the Literature

While masculinities and gender socialization are key to understanding how men navigate higher education (Sáenz et al., 2013, 2015; Vasquez Urias & Wood, 2015), little is known about how they shape the transfer experiences of Latino men (F. Harris & Harper, 2008). Recent work includes studies on the transition to higher education and experiences in CCs (e.g., Garcia & Garza, 2016; Vasquez et al., 2020; Vasquez Urias & Wood, 2015) and in 4-year institutions (e.g., Estrada & Jimenez, 2018) or in a combination of these sectors (e.g., Sáenz et al., 2018). Still, research connecting the experiences of Latino men and masculinities during and after the transfer process is sorely needed (Rodriguez et al., 2017).

Conceptual Framework

Our analytical process was guided by F. Harris and Wood's (2013, 2016) SEO model, given its focus on the experiences of Men of Color and the unique aspects of masculinities and racial/ethnic elements that influence the college-going process for Latino men. Informed by prior research on masculinities, racial/identity development, student engagement, campus climates, and institutional responsibility, the model includes seven key constructs that influence student success outcomes for Men of Color:

background/defining factors, societal factors, the noncognitive domain, the academic domain, the environmental domain, the campus ethos domain, and student success.

The seven constructs are organized as either inputs, socio-ecological domains, or outcomes. F. Harris and Wood (2016) describe inputs as "factors and experiences that occur for men of color prior to matriculation" (p. 37), such as background characteristics (e.g., age, primary language, and citizenship status) and societal contexts (e.g., stereotypes, economic conditions). In our analysis, we considered the ways that Latino men have been influenced by broader sociocultural elements (e.g., family, racist stereotypes, and societal messages about Latino men) and how such conditions played a role in their understandings of masculinities and their academic trajectories.

The socio-ecological domains include the experiences and interactions that Men of Color encounter as they navigate the college environment. Harris and Wood (2016) assert that noncognitive, academic, environmental, and campus ethos factors play a significant role in student success. Thus, our analysis considered how participants' narratives were reflected within and across the domains. Noncognitive factors refer to intrapersonal characteristics (e.g., self-efficacy, locus of control, and action control) and salient identities (e.g., gender, racial/ethnic, sexual, and spiritual). Academic factors include faculty–student interactions, academic services use, time on task, and commitment to course of study. Environmental factors refer to other mediators, commitments, or life stressors (e.g., finances, family responsibilities, and employment). Campus ethos factors include sense of belonging and welcomeness to engage, campus climate and resources, and validating faculty/staff agents.

Our analysis builds on prior studies that have used the SEO model to examine noncognitive outcomes (Vasquez Urias & Wood, 2015), student–faculty interactions (Rodriguez, Massey, Saenz, 2016), and campus ethos (Rodriguez et al., 2019) as influences on Latino men in CC. Finally, the student success outcomes associated with the model include persistence, achievement, attainment, and transfer for Men of Color in CCs. Our analysis considered how participants navigated each of these milestones, while also making meaning of masculinities and their racial/ethnic identity. Although this model has not been widely used to study Latino men and transfer, some scholars have utilized the SEO model to explore transfer among Men of Color (Vasquez Urias et al., 2017). Aside from Rodriguez et al. (2017), analyses of masculinities within the context of the 4-year transfer process are lacking; thus, this study provides a unique examination of how masculinities shape the transfer process.

Method

This research study explored the experiences of 34 Latino men. We used relationships with administrators and faculty at participating institutions to send electronic recruitment invitations to potential participants. Eligible participants met the following criteria: (a) were above the age of 18 years, (b) identified as Latino or Hispanic, (c) identified as men, and (d) had transferred from a CC (in any state) to a 4-year institution in Texas, California, or Florida.

Participants had transferred from 23 different CCs and were enrolled at nine universities in Texas, California, and Florida. Most were enrolled full-time (82.4%) and were third- or fourth-year students (88.2%). The vast majority planned to earn advanced degrees. Students represented many majors across campus, most commonly in business ($n = 8$), engineering ($n = 6$), natural sciences ($n = 6$), and liberal arts ($n = 5$). As shown in Table 1, the majority (59%) were of Mexican descent, born outside the United States (69%), and had parents born outside the United States (92%). Slightly less than half (41%) spoke Spanish at home.

A hermeneutic phenomenological approach (Heidegger, 1962; Moustakas, 1994) allowed us to delve deeply into the meaning-making and essence of each participant's experience with masculinities and the transfer process. Hermeneutic phenomenology encourages historicality and situatedness to understand the essence of participants' lived experience and discover meanings they attach to those experiences. This study was interpretive in nature, with both participants and researchers coming to it with their own pre-understandings which could not be put aside and, instead, influenced the co-construction of knowledge and interpretation.

Each student participated in two 1-hour, semi-structured, and face-to-face interviews about socialization, masculinities, and transfer, and we clarified issues as they arose. Three researchers (one for each state) conducted the interviews. This allowed us to recruit participants, build rapport, and contextualize findings within our state's environment. A shared semi-structured interview protocol used the same initial questions, and then allowed us to follow up with additional questions. The first interview focused on understanding participants' overall CC and transfer experiences (e.g., How would you describe your CC experience? How would you describe your transition to the 4-year university?). The second interview followed up on questions from the first and explored how gender socialization, masculinities, and identity conflicts influenced the transfer process (e.g., What traits do you believe men should possess? How do you believe that your gender and/or race has influenced your experience?). Throughout, students were encouraged to address other information that they felt might be relevant. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed.

Our hermeneutical approach to phenomenology emphasized multiple stages of analysis and interpretation as well as a process of self-reflection (Laverty, 2003). Each transcript was read several times and electronically coded for significant ideas and quotations, with emphasis placed on the historicality and situatedness of Latino men within college and larger societal settings. Initial themes emerged for each student, which were then compared within and across states. Significant patterns were noted and possible explanations for findings were proposed.

In line with our hermeneutical approach, we engaged in self-reflection to consider possible biases and differences in perspective throughout the study (Laverty, 2003). We met throughout the process to discuss data collection and analysis, explore interpretations, and shape emerging findings and implications. Member checks were performed by sharing transcripts with participants and asking follow-up questions. Rather than attempting to bracket or set aside our biases and assumptions, we examined our positionalities in relation to the study and its participants.

Table 1. Participant Information.

Characteristics	n	%
State		
California	10	29.4
Florida	13	38.2
Texas	11	32.4
Class standing		
Second year	2	5.9
Third year	15	44.1
Fourth year	15	44.1
Missing	2	5.9
Enrollment status		
Part-time	6	17.6
Full-time	28	82.4
Major		
STEM	16	47.1
Non-STEM	18	52.9
Highest degree intention		
Bachelor's	6	17.6
Master's	11	32.4
Doctorate or other terminal degree (e.g., PhD, EdD, or MD)	17	50.0
Mother's highest education level		
Less than high school	13	38.2
High school graduate	5	14.7
Associate degree or some college	8	23.5
Bachelor's	3	8.8
Advanced degree (e.g., MA, PhD)	3	8.8
Not applicable	2	5.9
Father's highest education level		
Less than high school	13	38.2
High school graduate	4	11.8
Associate degree or some college	4	11.8
Bachelor's	6	17.6
Advanced degree (e.g., MA, PhD)	3	8.8
Not applicable	3	8.8
Not sure	1	2.9
Family income		
Below US$19,999	4	11.8
US$20,000–US$29,999	8	23.5
US$30,000–US$39,999	2	5.9
US$40,000–US$49,999	4	11.8
US$50,000–US$59,999	5	14.7
US$60,000–US$69,999	4	11.8
US$70,000 or above	4	11.8
Unsure	3	8.8

Note. Description of participants ($N = 34$). STEM = science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Although the authors have different personal and professional experiences, we collectively believe that the CC is one of the most transformative venues for access to postsecondary education. As researchers, we held a variety of insider and outsider statuses and approached the study from a variety of standpoints. Each of us maintains an active research agenda concerned with the intersections of gender, race, and higher education. Some of us attended CCs, whereas others did not; some identified as Latinx or Latino men, whereas others did not. In entering this research, we understood that we brought both privilege and bias to the work. From these identity and experiential perspectives, we were able to utilize our positionalities to build rapport with participants, confront biases as they emerged, and contextualize findings and implications. As cocreators of knowledge, our positionalities specifically allowed us to contextualize the findings and elicit implications by drawing upon our own backgrounds, identities, and expertise areas. In addition, our engagement with the scholarly research on Latino men and situatedness within each of the states allowed us to make relevant connections between our study and local, statewide, and national initiatives.

Findings

This research asks how conceptions of masculinities influenced the attitudes, behaviors, and meaning-making of Latino men during and after the CC to 4-year institution transfer process. Preliminary findings reveal the role of early gender socialization experiences. In addition, we found that perceptions of masculinities not only functioned as sources of motivation but also created challenges throughout the transfer process. At times, participants questioned their identities as men if they did not have, or potentially did not want, traits associated with their early conceptions of masculinities. Through formal and informal experiences with peers, they were eventually able to negotiate identity conflicts by redefining certain aspects of masculinities.

Prior Gender Socialization and Concepts of Masculinities

In keeping with our conceptual framework emphasizing the role of inputs, it is important to consider prior gender socialization experiences that shaped participants' conceptions of masculinities. Participants tended to hold normative ideas about physical, personal, and behavioral traits. Physically, participants associated traits such as "beards" or "mustaches" with masculinities, connecting these with their father and other influential men in their lives. Manuel, from Florida, said,

> In high school, I would do anything just to have more facial hair . . . I thought that was cool . . . that made me feel like a man, because my dad would [shave] every morning . . . that's masculine.

Some described being socialized to speak in a lower register and use mannerisms that would not be perceived as overly expressive. This was also tied to performing their sexual orientation, as demonstrated by Fernando's discussion of how his gender performance was complicated by his identity as a gay man:

> When I was growing up, and I was gay, and I was in the closet, I . . . made myself have a deeper, lower voice . . . People say it's like the gay speech, like you talk like a gay man. . . . As soon as I started recognizing it when I was younger . . . I made my voice deeper, lower. I will speak slower and I wouldn't use my hands a lot. (Texas)

Fernando and others drew connections between masculinities and sexual orientation. Fear of being perceived as gay led Fernando to exaggerate stereotypically masculine mannerisms.

Participants were also socialized to connect certain behaviors and personality traits with masculinities. They expressed a positive image of Latino men as providers who respected and cared for their families. As family leaders, Latino men were socialized to anticipate issues that might arise, provide for loved ones, and demonstrate strength. As Victor, from California, pointed out, men were to be "strong, brave, [and able] to provide." Kido echoed his sentiment as follows:

> [Men should look] after those who can't look after themselves, or those who are in their care. . . . As problems arise, they take care of those problems. They always perceive future problems and try to do something about it and fix it where it needs to be fixed. (Florida)

Furthermore, men should be the "backbone of the family . . . being there . . . whether it's medical, family, mother-in-law for example, father-in-law, sister, siblings," according to Aaron, in Texas.

Participants also discussed the need for independence and control as core masculine values. They characterized men as controlling their emotions, behaviors, and finances. Shawn explained that Latino men had a responsibility to become independent, emotionally intelligent, and introspective to meet their personal needs and those of their family and community:

> Men should be strong . . . independent, and . . . financially responsible. They should be . . . moral, they should be ethical . . . They should be . . . introspective . . . if you're not introspective about the nature of men, the nature of woman and the nature of our society, you don't really get to learn the ins and outs, the dos and the don'ts, the reason as to why we do things and why we think it's necessary. . . . (Florida)

Shawn's comments were echoed by others who described the pressure to provide emotional, moral, and financial stability. Jack from Texas elaborated as follows:

> You're supposed to not show emotion, not show sadness . . . like how would your kids see you if you just break down and you're crying? I don't think your kid would respect you as a man knowing that you're breaking down.

Through prior gender socialization, Jack and others learned to restrict their emotions.

Identifying the origins of masculinities. Participants believed that their concepts of masculinities originated primarily through interactions with male family members, Latin

a/o/x cultures, and the media. For example, when Johnny in Texas failed to perform normative masculinity, his family referred to him as a "princess":

> My dad's hands and my uncles' are rough because of the work they have to do. They're all like, "You're scared to get hit or get a little cut." That's [when they] refer to me as a "princess," because I'm not used to doing the things that they're able to do . . .

In particular, masculinities were reinforced by brothers who encouraged participants to become independent and self-reliant. Carlos related,

> My brothers were always tough guys . . . very independent, they always did their own thing. They never really asked anybody for help. I remember my brother telling me, "Hey man, you know what you need to do. Don't let anybody stop you . . . Don't try to rely on anybody because you can ultimately do everything on your own." (California)

Participants also highlighted ways men in their extended families contributed to their understandings of masculinities:

> All the males in my family, like my uncles and cousins, men should never display weakness. . . . Physical weakness, not to be stepped over by other people, and emotional weakness, especially that fact that men don't cry no matter what. Suppress feelings, suppress emotions. (David, California)

Participants consistently identified men in their family as key to forming their conceptions of masculinities. Sometimes they learned by passively observing those family members, but family also actively regulated their gender performance, as when they called Johnny "princess."

Although participants identified family members as the primary gender socialization agents, some also commented on Latina/o/x cultures and media as driving forces. Pablo, from Florida, said he derived his understanding of masculinities from "observing other people . . . like my own dad or my own brother, but also other people." Victor in California said "exposure to the media" taught him how to be a man:

> Cultural-wise, probably just the way that's always been so it gets passed down and passed down as to what the idea of a man should be . . . like boys don't play with dolls, they play with trucks. . . .

Like Victor, some participants felt culture and media together influenced how men are socialized. Whether through their immediate or extended family, or the larger culture, participants recognized a variety of ways that they developed perceptions of masculinities prior to college. This provides important context for understanding how evolving conceptions of masculinities shaped transfer experiences, which is the focus of the findings discussed below.

The Transfer Process, The Double-Edged Sword of Traditional Latino Men's Masculinities

Learning to ask for help. The desire to be independent and a provider was central and had both positive and negative repercussions. It led not only to self-reliance, a focus on personal growth, and giving back to participants' communities, but also to reluctance to seek help, admit failures, and recover as they struggled with pressure to prove themselves:

> I'm hesitant to ask for help sometimes . . . I feel like I can do everything when I know I can't . . . I guess those conflict with each other . . . Even if I don't know how to do things . . . I'll usually kind of screw up and try to fix things myself. (Carlos, California)

Carlos's comments were echoed by Edwin, also from California, who reflected on how his previous conceptions made him feel insecure when he needed help: "You don't ask questions . . . I did have that fear of asking professors like, 'Okay, is that what I heard?' Especially just me feeling for my own insecurities."

This is consistent with prior research that found that Latino men in CCs did not ask for help due to fear of failure and internalized expectations of *machismo* (Harris et al., 2015; Sáenz et al., 2013). However, fear of help-seeking manifested differently in the present study, as participants sought to maintain independence although ambiguous or complex transfer policies and procedures made it necessary to ask for help to succeed in college.

After gaining more experience, students learned that they benefited from asking for help:

> The first year . . . I didn't ask for help. The second year I asked for help, but I didn't use that help to its full potential . . . so that's why I did not pass the second year . . . one year later, and I asked for more help, and I actually utilized that help. (Salvador, Texas)

Participants also reflected on their experiences with student support services at their CC and transfer institutions when they did ask for help. Many times, they expressed not knowing *where* to seek help at their CC, in comparison with their 4-year campus. Andres in Florida said, "[At the four-year institution] they have services to try to come to the student if you need something, 'Let me know, I'll be here for you,' like that. In CC, you have to look for them." As Salvador and Andres described, students faced barriers even after they overcame their initial aversion to help-seeking. They had to also learn how to ask for help. This included knowing *what* resources were available, *where* they were located on campus, and *how* to fully utilize those resources.

Fear of failure and uncertainty. Participants identified a fear of failure that sometimes felt stifling, generally associated with uncertainty about what came after college; whereas similar feelings may affect many college students, participants' notions of control and stability were deeply rooted in their conceptions of masculinities. This

posed a challenge during and after the transfer process, when much related to feelings, finances, and emotions seemed outside of their control:

> Fear of failing school. Fear of failing to pay it back. Fear of failing in general. Basically, I was just scared of not being able to be the person I was planning on being or being able to have the financial resources to pay everything back . . . Just a big fear. (Johnny, Texas)

In addition to generalized anxiety and fear of failing academically, Johnny and others also identified fear associated with financial strain and worries about student debt. As described in the next section; this too resulted in both identity conflicts and motivation to succeed.

Seeking financial independence and success. Perceptions of masculinities and independence were visible in the ways that participants viewed college financial pressures and manifested differently depending on their access to resources and support systems. Receiving financial support from families conflicted with conceptions of masculinities. David in California said,

> [My parents] always told me, don't worry about working. If you want to work, that's up to you, but we'll help you [with] whatever we can. . . . But I was still working because I still wanted to help them. . . .

Similar to David, many struggled to negotiate an internalized responsibility to be the breadwinner and a decision to prioritize their academic goals. Others also navigated immigration policies that limited their ability to work, leading to additional financial pressures. Mantis in Texas described identity conflicts related to not being able to earn money to support himself: "I felt like I was putting a burden on everyone . . . and I did not like that. That's one of the things that really pushed me towards applying for DACA . . ."

Although financing education was a source of stress, the long-term desire for financial independence served as a motivator. In some cases, knowing that in the future they would be independent and able to share their success helped students cope:

> I always tell people, "Everything I do, I do for [my parents]." I want to get to a point . . . where I can pay them back . . . Not necessarily financially, but . . . support them after so much time of them supporting me. Everything that I do, I honestly do it for them. . . . Every time I achieve a goal. . . . (James, Florida)

In this example, James was motivated by thinking about supporting his family, both financially and interpersonally, after college. Using future success to benefit their community served as a consistent motivator; however, some grappled with what sharing their success meant. Fernando, studying government and business, struggled to see how to support his community:

> Before I left [for college] I was . . . a community activist . . . around health care, immigration, and education, and then I went to [college] and it was all about getting a

good corporate job. . . . Then after a year at [college], you can expect my mind to be like I'm going to go into consulting, I'm going to go into private equity because . . . that's what I've been taught is good for the Latino community is to get more Latinos into business, to get more access to capital in the Latino community. (Fernando, Texas)

Although Fernando experienced conflict over the alignment between community activism and a corporate career, giving back to his community was a major source of motivation. This was further complicated by his perceptions of masculinities; while being a community activist more closely aligned with what he thought a man should do, he also saw benefits to corporate careers and working "within the system." Importantly, Fernando and others adapted their definitions of masculinities to be more flexible and inclusive over time, as we describe below.

Redefining Masculinities Through Feminist Lenses and Organizational Programming

Although participants identified conflicts between their conceptions of masculinities and opportunities for success, many described resolving identity conflicts over time. Luis discussed how his prior conception of "normative masculinity" changed, introducing a more inclusive definition he was still grappling with:

My idea of masculinity has changed . . . I just want to be a better me. Is that just masculinity? Why can't people who identify as feminine just want to be a better them? . . . The way I'm seeing my manhood now is I just want to be a better person daily versus before, I just wanted to have a wife and make money and have children . . . (Texas)

Luis's ability to articulate an alternative definition may stem from additional conflicts he faced as a gay man negotiating his sexual orientation and masculine identity. Despite describing masculinity as bettering oneself, he struggled to articulate how this differed from the experiences of those with feminine gender identities. Similarly, Manuel in Florida articulated an inclusive definition: "I feel like the whole viewpoint of masculinity has shifted completely and totally. . . . as long as you're doing what you need to do and you're sticking to who you are, that's a man to me."

While many were still grappling with their definitions, Manuel, Luis, and others recognized ways in which their conceptions had changed. In particular, students pointed to ways in which classes and peers had challenged their assumptions:

Growing up, definitely I believed . . . You had to control your woman. You had to be in charge . . . as long as you provided for the family, as long as you were there for the family, you could do whatever you want. . . . Being a college student, you have to go deeper into any subject. You have to analyze. You have to question everything. My different classes that I have had, made me change my mind about a lot of things . . . The successful Latino males I do meet here . . . don't have the old school mentality . . . (David, California)

For David, rather than identify with traditional elements of *machismo* and *caballer-ismo*, classes encouraged him to question assumptions and be socialized with similarly minded Latino men.

The importance of peers. Consistent with prior literature, students often connected their ability to redefine masculinities to their involvement with peers on campus, in the context of both informal relationships and formal student organizations. For example, Aaron in Texas credited his development to his romantic relationship, where his part-ner challenged him to see alternatives to how masculinities play out in heterosexual relationships:

> When we go out, she doesn't mind paying. . . . I grew up with the idea that . . . the man has to pay. It does relieve some stress . . . financially. It just takes a little bit of getting used to, I think.

Student groups were another source of support. Texas students specifically men-tioned on-campus men's groups that helped them redefine masculinities and develop mentoring relationships based on trust, honesty, and care. This was illustrated by Fernando's discussion of Men of Excellence:

> I think joining [an on-campus organization for Men of Color] was great for me . . . They do a really good job of making sure that I had male friends who listen to me and who are there for me.

Similarly, Luis described benefiting from an organization for Men of Color on cam-pus, which helped him to connect with mentors and meet students who encouraged him to seek help and reconsider his conceptions of masculinities:

> [O]ur shirts from [our on-campus organization for Men of Color] said, "Real men ask questions," and that was true . . . we [used to] sit in the back or . . . keep our mouth shut and participating in class would be deemed weak.

Whereas Luis and Fernando described organizations focused on men, others dis-cussed those that fostered community, particularly among transfer students. Attending a transfer bridge program helped Chris in California connect with peers and gain access to resources: "We would get immersed, we would have campus tours, we'd meet with people from each facility . . . kids that were at transfer bridge already know where to go for resources, for help, for anything." Taken together, comments from Chris and others show how groups focused on Men of Color may be particularly important for redefining masculinities in terms congruent with college success.

Synthesis of Findings

Our research question asked about how conceptions of masculinities shaped Latino men's attitudes, behaviors, and meaning-making both during and after the transfer

process. To address this question, we first documented prior gender socialization experiences that shaped the conceptions of masculinities that Latino men brought with them to their higher education experiences. These deeply ingrained expectations of what it meant to be a Latino man (e.g., maintaining independence, control, and provider status) were often at odds with the precarious nature and ambiguity of the transfer process (although conceptions of masculinities served as a double-edged sword, as discussed above). After transferring, prior conceptions of masculinities were challenged and reframed as a result of experiences both inside and outside of the classroom. In particular, participation in campus men's groups helped students navigate incongruences and negotiate their intersectional identities and understandings of masculinities.

Discussion

This study highlights how conceptions of masculinities influenced the attitudes and behaviors of Latino men during and after the transfer process, demonstrating that, although prior conceptions of masculinities can provide positive tools (e.g., motivation to succeed and gain independence), they can also lead to conflict as men negotiate incongruences between their masculine identity and what is required to succeed in college. Together, the findings above expand upon existing research and theory, highlight the important role of family and financial contexts, and point to the need for structured campus environments.

However, comparing Latino men with other minoritized men can conflate performance outcomes and elide the multiple social identities and experiences of transfer Latino men in postsecondary institutions. With an understanding that Latino men in higher education are underrepresented and have poorer performance outcomes in comparison with Latina women, this form of research has categorized such students as the "vanishing" Latino male in higher education (Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009, p. 54); yet the social identity of Latino men reproduces a form of power and privilege that continues to be buried, marginalized, and oppressed by mainstream media socially, politically, and economically.

Expanding Upon Literature on SEOs and Latino Men

Our findings align with the SEO model that guided this inquiry, documenting the significance of background characteristics and prior gender socialization as well as ecological factors. In particular, societal context and economic conditions (e.g., student debt, rising costs of tuition, and the defunding of higher education) influenced how participants defined masculinities and experienced emotional and financial aspects of the transfer process, consistent with prior literature (see F. Harris & Wood, 2013). Furthermore, we documented conflicts between normative masculine values and the behaviors and attitudes necessary for transfer success; for example, some participants struggled to seek help and guidance through the complex transfer process due to normative values around independence. However, transitioning to a 4-year institution often

required a redefining of masculinities as students experienced dissonance between transfer experiences and prior conceptualizations of masculinities, particularly those associated with maintaining control. That is, normative markers became complicated in a situation that may be marked by instability. Although this is largely consistent with prior literature documenting similar gender conflicts (e.g., Sáenz et al., 2013), our study extends this literature to the specific context of Latino men's transfer experiences.

Given these conditions, Latino men may feel increased pressure to seek financial independence and provide for their families during and after the transfer process. Our findings expand upon prior theories and document the connections between prior socialization, ecological factors, and how Latino men navigate college environments, focusing specifically on transfer. In addition, our study demonstrates that prior and evolving masculinities may play a more complex role than previously thought as conceptions of masculinities were shaped by ethnicity, cultural contexts, and sexualities.

Participants often discussed their gender socialization in terms of traditional *machismo* concepts (e.g., physical features, restrictive emotionality control) and *caballerismo* concepts (e.g., problem-solvers, providers, and forces of stability). Our findings largely confirm those of previous scholarship on *machismo*, which has highlighted ways that family members (particularly men) and Latin American cultures promote normative ideas about physical features and behavioral and personality traits (e.g., Sáenz et al., 2017). Latino men are expected to be "tough," physically working hard, and maintaining traditional appearances and mannerisms. Aligning with previous research, we also found that Latino men are socialized to perform masculinities in specific ways (e.g., minimizing weakness, suppressing feelings, and reducing expressiveness) to be perceived as heterosexual (see Kimmel, 2010). Findings highlight the complex nature of masculinities in relation to sexual orientation, consistent with literature documenting the role of homophobic discourse and gendered sexualities in teaching boys and men to perform masculinities (Kimmel, 2010; Pascoe, 2007).

While participants identified a variety of experiences, identities, and contextual factors that shaped their transfer experiences, it is important to highlight the role of intersectionality. Intersectionality not only refers to experiences where multiple identity statuses meet but also requires us to interrogate power dynamics and sources of social oppression (Crenshaw, 1991). Therefore, we must acknowledge and examine the multiple dimensions of oppression that influenced participant transfer experiences with masculinities. For Latino men, transfer experiences are shaped by a backdrop of racism and hegemonic masculinity perpetuated by a deeply patriarchal social system.

Documenting the Importance of Families and Financial Uncertainty

Our findings further the argument that masculinities are complex and that we need to reconsider hegemonic masculinities. Using an intersectional lens allows us to interrogate masculinities to better understand the duality of privilege and oppression that Latino men navigate on a daily basis. This is important for institutional agents who seek to support Latino men as they navigate the CC to university pipeline. This study presents future opportunities to explore how raced-gendered ethnic identities and experiences

impact the socialization of Latino men in postsecondary education. It also points to opportunities to explore how *familismo* is central to the impact of raced-gendered ethnic identity and to the developmental consciousness of Latino men's understandings of intersectionality. The current study draws connections to a growing body of literature that explores the experiences of Latino men, perceptions of masculinities, and the role of the family (Duran & Perez, 2017; Rios & Eaton, 2016; Sáenz et al., 2017, 2018). It highlights the environmental factors of family responsibilities and finances. In this study, men are seen as supporting the family, including large extended families, and are expected to be emotionally, morally, and financially stable throughout college.

Being socialized as providers, participants acutely felt the precarious nature of their finances during and after the transfer process. Whether supported by parents or unable to work due to immigration regulations, they were unable to feel financially independent, which they saw as crucial to performing masculinities. Cultural *caballerismo*, which praises family-oriented, stable providers, may be problematic for Latino men. The provider role can be connected to patriarchal notions of the roles of men and women (often excluding nonbinary individuals). Socialization as family-oriented, problem-solvers, and providers influences Latino men's path to higher education and how they cope with the transition, access campus resources, and plan for the future. Departing from norms could mean departing from family, support bonds, and other stability factors (e.g., finances, housing, and sense of place).

Campus Ethos and Structured Environments

This study also highlights ways that academic, environmental, and campus ethos factors create a difficult context for Latino men conceptualizing masculinities during transfer. Regarding academic factors, even when men knew of campus resources, they had to overcome socialization that contrasts help-seeking and reliance on others with masculinities. Other studies have also documented Latino men's difficulty with seeking help (e.g., Sáenz et al., 2015).

The current study also highlights campus ethos factors such as redefining and reconceptualizing masculinities in ways congruent with academic success. This was especially prevalent among participants from Texas institutions involved in mentoring programs for Men of Color, which may be related to recent statewide initiatives. For example, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB, 2013) named Black and Latino men's success as a goal in its 2013 strategic plan; perhaps we are now seeing the impacts of these strategic efforts, which would highlight the importance of statewide policies and practices. Regardless, our findings demonstrate the value of programming that supports Men of Color, described by participants as essential to academic success and reconceptualizing their masculinities.

Unfortunately, most participants noted that they were only able to reconceptualize masculinities after transferring to 4-year institutions with more structured support systems. These findings, along with our conceptual framework, underscore the importance of creating supportive spaces for Latino men earlier in college to support successful transfer. Given that CCs are the primary access point to higher education for

Latino men (Vasquez Urias, 2012), support is key to advancing equity within higher education more broadly.

Limitations and Future Directions

It is important to consider several limitations and contextual factors when interpreting this study's results. First, we rely on a sample of Latino men from three states (Texas, California, and Florida). Each of these states has unique contexts that may have shaped the results. For example, in California, there are several concurrent initiatives addressing CC transfer (e.g., California Community College Chancellor's Office *Vision for Success*, the guided pathways movement, and the implementation of the Associate Degree for Transfer) and success for Men of Color specifically (e.g., Minority Male Community College Collaborative at San Diego State University, Male Success Alliance at California State University Dominguez Hills, and Male Success Initiative at California State University Fullerton). At the same time, Florida has been one of the most progressive leaders in CC transfer by creating 2 + 2 transfer articulation agreements, strengthening 2-year/4-year transfer partnerships, and adding CC baccalaureate degrees to increase access (Florida Department of Education, 2018). Initiatives throughout the state have sought to enhance educational experiences for Men of Color (e.g., Minority Male Success Initiative at Florida State College at Jacksonville, Men of Character Initiative at Daytona State College). Finally, as discussed above, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has named Black and Latino men's success a strategic goal (THECB, 2013). Furthermore, all three states have large populations of Latin American descent. Future research should explore the extent to which our findings apply to Latino men from regions where they are more underrepresented. Researchers might also focus on state-level factors that shape transfer outcomes for Latino men as such insights may lead to important implications for state policy.

The majority of participants in our study come from middle- or low-income backgrounds; future research might disaggregate analyses by income. In addition, our sample included relatively few part-time students, whose transfer experiences may be shaped by other contextual factors (e.g., full-time work). Most of our participants were Mexican; thus, the findings may not be representative of all Latino men's experiences. Future research should use more diverse samples. Finally, the SEO model guiding this study was developed to study the experiences of Men of Color more broadly. While we adapted it to study Latino men, there is a need for more theories focused on gender and Latino men's experiences. Despite these limitations, the findings suggest important implications for research, theory, policy, and practice.

Implications

Complicating Our Understanding of Gender and Masculinities

Our findings extend prior research and theory to focus on transfer experiences, shedding light on the nuanced ways in which students perceive gendered roles and selves,

and highlighting unique ways in which documented gender conflicts manifested for Latino men navigating transfer processes. Perhaps because of our specific focus, our findings document ways in which prior gender socialization and masculinities fostered a beneficial sense of independence, in addition to creating identity conflicts documented in prior literature. Future theories of gender in higher education should recognize the challenges associated with masculinities and femininities without condemning either. Research on gender in college has tended to focus on negative impacts of masculine identities (e.g., overconfidence, unwillingness to seek help) or feminine identities (e.g., lack of confidence). Our findings highlight the importance of considering gender socialization through a feminist lens and advocating for more balanced and inclusive conceptions of masculinities.

Directions for Intersectional Inquiry on Latino Men's Experiences

It is critical to better understand Latino men's experiences throughout the educational pipeline, especially as they transition to 4-year institutions. Future studies should consider their multiple identities and the multiple forms of oppression they may experience in higher education. Our findings underscore the importance of theories and methods that account for the intersectional role of sexuality. Specifically, we document ways in which Latino men's identities were also shaped by gendered sexualities (e.g., equating heterosexuality with masculinity).

The core components of masculinities, which participants identified suggest further avenues to explore. This study presents future opportunities to explore how raced-gendered ethnic identity and experiences impact the socialization of Latino men in postsecondary education, and how *familismo* is central to the developmental consciousness of Latino men's understandings of intersectionality and the impact of raced-gendered ethnic identity. Future research could investigate masculinities and finances during transfer, the need for control during college, and mental health. In addition, Men of Color participating in men's organizations could be studied to see how these organizations impact them throughout transfer and college. Understanding how programming affects students post-transfer could shed light on how interventions enable student success and identity development. Future research should consider the extent to which existing programming and organizations meet Latino men's needs.

Creating Spaces for Men to Navigate Masculinities on Campus

This study calls for educational stakeholders to suspend assumptions about Latino men only having unhealthy projections of masculinity and advocates for the need to foster personal relationships with Latino men, which can help identify positive and healthy expressions of masculinities. Similar to other calls for programming targeting men (Wells et al., 2011), this study's findings document benefits of and a need for campus spaces for discussing issues related to masculinities and help-seeking. Although our participants learned how to seek help, this only occurred after years of resisting it. Creating support for men at the CC level may better prepare them for

transfer experiences and encourage them to take advantage of resources earlier. In particular, spaces that allow men to explore conflicts with and concepts of masculinities are needed. At both the CC and 4-year institution levels, men's organizations can provide models of masculinities and show men how they can be themselves without sacrificing their identity to pursue higher education.

Notably, whereas many participants attributed changing conceptions of masculinities to interactions with peers and student groups, only those attending Texas institutions discussed how they benefited from groups designed for Men of Color and only a small group of men from California were engaged in an undergraduate research program that targeted Latino men in the transfer process. This highlights an opportunity for other regions to develop similar programming. In addition, it is important to consider the need for structured programming within a larger societal context. The demand for spaces to navigate masculinities can be seen through the proliferation of online "men's rights" movements that spread misogynistic ideals, often using sophisticated recruiting techniques to prey on young men seeking support for their identity conflicts (Romano, 2018). In less extreme cases, students may be drawn to resources like recently popularized conservative self-help books that package strategies to negotiate masculinities and success alongside sexism (see Bowles, 2018). In light of these recent cultural movements, it is increasingly important to offer spaces to discuss masculinities and work through identity conflicts.

Teaching Guided Independence

Similarly, there is a need for programming that allows a balance of control and support through models of guided independence. Programs should provide models and tools that normalize failure and recovery as well as help-seeking. In particular, CCs and partner 4-year colleges may need to offer men tools to support themselves and their families. One approach might include enhancing transfer resources and adapting transfer policies. Developers of policies and programs need to consider men's multiple intersecting identities, both in the initial conception stage and through evaluation and refinement. Finally, clearer transfer articulation agreements, along with accessible resources for students, could remove some of the uncertainty from the transfer process, which would benefit all students, including Latino men who may experience gender conflicts related to uncertain and unpredictable transfer processes. Although transfer processes are often characterized by ambiguity and complexity, there is no reason why this must be the case.

Providing Financial Resources

Our findings document the significant challenges of financial insecurity and the pressure to be financially independent. Campus programs that teach financial literacy may help Latino men understand the costs of their education and feel in control of their finances (Abrica & Martinez, 2016; Salinas & Hidrowoh, 2018). Offering monthly payment plans may also facilitate independence in paying for college. Our

findings highlight additional financial challenges facing undocumented students, particularly regarding the lack of opportunities for employment. The inability to work created intense identity conflicts for undocumented Latino men who had to rely on others for financial support. Colleges should create work-study and other campus employment opportunities for undocumented students. In particular, paid research experiences may help Latino men gain a sense of financial security while also developing academically.

Conclusion

This tristate study investigated how conceptions of masculinities influenced the attitudes and behaviors of Latino men during and after the CC to 4-year institution transfer process. Prior gender socialization served as a double-edged sword when navigating college transfer. Masculinities motivated Latino men to succeed and give back to their communities but were also tied to restraining emotions and maintaining independence, which restricted help-seeking and led to financial pressures that conflicted with perceptions that men should be providers. Participants redefined masculinities with the help of peers and structured campus spaces, making it possible to resolve conflicts. The findings suggest several important implications for policy and practice, including the need for structured spaces to discuss masculinities in a healthy way, opportunities to teach guided independence, and the importance of financial support and resources. Overall, the study points to the complexity of masculinities for Latino men during transfer from a CC to a 4-year institution and highlights the need for contextualized statewide and localized efforts to honor and support the needs of Latino men in the transfer process.

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Note

1.   We use "Latina/o/x" to be inclusive of people who identify with one of those terms. The term "Latinx" aims to be inclusive of people who do not identify with the gender binary of masculinity (Latino) and femininity (Latina; Salinas & Lozano, 2019).

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