Latino Males in Texas Community Colleges:
A Phenomenological Study of Masculinity Constructs and their Effect on College Experiences

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Outline of Presentation:
The Latino Male Educational Challenge

Understanding the Silent Crisis
• Latino Males in Education
  A look at the data

From Awareness to Research
• Findings from our qualitative study at Texas community colleges

From Research to Action
• Promising Practices
• Project MALES
Understanding the **CRISIS**

- **Stealth Issue**
  - Many are unaware of the depth of the gender gap; It’s a SILENT CRISIS

- **Skeptics & Naysayers**
  - Some are unwilling to discuss; some find it counter-productive
  - Gender Equity Debate Persists!

- **What is the Gender Gap?**
  - High School Graduation
  - College Enrollment
  - Degree Attainment
The Texas Context

All Male 8th Graders (1996-98)

100

47.9

16.1

Starting cohort

Enrolled in Postsecondary Ed. within 11 years

Earned a HE credential within 11 years

All Female 8th Graders (1996-98)

100

57.2

23.9

The Texas Context

LM 8th Graders (1996-98)  
100  
36.5  
8.9

Black Male 8th Graders (1996-98)  
100  
40.9  
7.7

All Male 8th Graders (1996-98)  
100  
47.9  
16.1

Starting cohort

Enrolled in Postsecondary Ed. within 11 years

Earned a HE credential within 11 years

Projection of Bachelor’s Degrees Awarded to U.S. Latinos by Gender: 1977 to 2040

Literature Review

Growing Gender Gap

- There exists a growing gender gap resulting in severe underrepresentation of Latino males in postsecondary education (Castellanos & Jones, 2003; Saenz, Oseguera, & Hurtado, 2007; Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009)

Educational Disparities

- Hispanics are more likely than whites to enroll in two-year colleges than four-year institutions after high school (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2002; College Board, 2011), and, for those who finish, it is estimated that for every two Latina females who attain a postsecondary degree, only one man does (Aud, Fox & Ramani, 2010).
Literature Review

**College Men as Men**
- Researchers have begun to examine college men using an explicitly gendered focus.
- However, the examination of men within a community college context has received limited attention.

**Gender & Masculinity**
- Latino males receive conflicting messages about what masculinity means.
- Can have negative educational implications or cause apathy.
Theoretical Framework:

Male Gender Role Conflict (O’Neil, 1981)
Purpose of the Study

This study examined the community college experiences of Latino males utilizing an explicitly gendered theoretical framework, male gender role conflict (MGRC), in order to understand one core research question:

How do masculinity constructs influence Latino males’ college experiences?
## Qualitative Research Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>SITE VISIT</strong></th>
<th>Research Collaboration among 7 community colleges throughout the State of Texas</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phenomenology</strong></td>
<td>Focus on the lived experiences of social and psychological phenomena shared by participants&lt;br&gt;Explore meanings and interpretations given to decisions, events, and ideas</td>
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<td><strong>METHOD</strong></td>
<td>170 Latino male undergraduate students&lt;br&gt;Focus groups at community colleges</td>
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<td><strong>TIMELINE</strong></td>
<td>Conducted Interviews/focus groups Fall 2010 through Spring 2012</td>
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Texas Research Sites

- Texas Research Sites
- South Texas College
- Lone Star – CyFair & North Harris
- Tarrant County College
- Alamo Colleges – Palo Alto & SAC
- Austin Comm. College
- South Texas College
Findings:
Restrictive Emotionality

Latino men have difficulty expressing emotions since feelings are a sign of femininity and reveal vulnerability.

- For our Latino male college students, this can translate into avoiding asking for help, even in the face of impending failure.

- Often labeling their lack of help-seeking as *pride* and/or *machismo*.

- Double-edged: source of strength and weakness.
It also comes from a sense of pride. You know, you’re always taught to be a man, and you're proud and if you fall, if you stumble, then that’s your own fault. You don't bring anybody down with you.

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As far as we’re concerned; we want it [education], but we don’t want to wait for it. So, if it starts taking too long, or if something stands in the way; makes it look like we might not finish it, rather than risk the opportunity for failure, we’d rather just give it up now before it comes up.
Findings:
Control, Power, and Competition

Latino males are often socialized to seek control and power, reduce competition

- Taught to be autonomous/self-reliant
- Must be in control of their circumstances and control their own destiny
- Afraid to appear weak, especially in front of other males who are potential competition
I would hear stories about my dad, he would tell me about how he raised us and that he didn’t need help from anybody. So when I’m in school I’m thinking I have to do everything by myself because I have something to prove, and asking for help I guess kind of weakens the cause of what I’m doing. So there is some sense of machismo in that.

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You don't ask for help because it's your doing. You shouldn't have to ask anybody for help, and so it's just that sense of pride that carries over - that in the end, makes you fail…because with that, if you're failing, you don't come back up because you don't want anybody to help, and sometimes you can't come back up without... So it's that sense of pride that just holds…that...
Findings:

Obsession with Achievement/Success

Latino men are preoccupied with idea that work, status, wealth, and power are needed to achieve personal value

- Status achieved through accumulation of money/wealth; Quick/easy money constant temptation
- Education too time-consuming while work provided more immediate status and self-worth
Like, most of ‘em, they’re arrogant. Like, they think, you know, by working right now, they’re gonna get more money, like instead of sticking with school. Sticking with school, like, it’ll pay off in the long run. But they don’t see that in the future. They just want the money now.

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“Yeah, with mine it is because like my mom, right after I got out of high school, she was like, ‘When are you going to get a job?’… She constantly keeps reminding me, ‘When are you going to get a job? You have to help us with the income, and stuff.’ ‘When are you getting a job? When are you going to help out?’”
Implications for...

**THEORY**

- MGRC – positive manifestation of masculinity (competition/pride)
- Latino male masculinity conceptualization and development
- Revisiting/retooling identity models in terms of Latino males

**PRACTICE**

- Facilitate Latino male awareness of rigid gender roles
- Community college as a space for exploring masculinity norms
- Encourage Latino males to see college as freeing
Promising Programs for Latino Males in Education

**FACE**
- GEAR-Up Grant
- Work with school districts and colleges in South Texas
- Father/Son College Tours

**X-Y Zone**
- Part of Communities in Schools
- Started 12 years ago in Austin, TX
- National model, adopted through CIS network
- Serve Black & Latino males
- Journey into manhood

**Encuentros Leadership**
- San Diego County (CA)
- Summer Leadership Academy
- Prepare young males for success in college & career

**Project MALES**
- UT-Austin & South Texas College
- Latino Male Mentoring Program
- College Readiness
- Partner w/...
Project MALES

(Mentoring for to Achieve Latino Educational Success) is a research-based mentoring initiative at The University of Texas at Austin that creates and cultivates a network of Latino male students at the university, within local school districts, and throughout the surrounding communities.

www.projectmales.org
Our Thanks to TG!

For more info:
www.projectmales.org

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