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“A REAL MAN. . .”: DECONSTRUCTING MACHISMO HETERONORMATIVE  
STANDARDS WITH K–12 LATINO MALE EDUCATORS THROUGH DIALOGIC SPACES

by

Mario Echeverria

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

December 2023

Dissertation Committee

Sarina Chugani Molina, Ed.D., Chair  
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Pedro Nava, Ph.D., Member

University of San Diego

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**University of San Diego**  
**School of Leadership and Education Sciences**

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TITLE OF DISSERTATION: "A REAL MAN . . . : DECONSTRUCTING MACHISMO  
HETERNORMATIVE STANDARDS WITH K-12 LATINO MALE EDUCATORS  
THROUGH DIALOGIC SPACES

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## ABSTRACT

In a K–12 educational landscape where 75% of educators are white women, recruitment of Latino male educators is crucial for diversification, yet these educators represent just 2% of the teaching workforce in the United States (NCES, 2020). These educators grapple with a layered sense of identity as they navigate expectations of hegemonic masculinity and machismo norms that dictate their roles as disciplinarians and saviors, especially for young boys of color (Brockenbrough, 2018; Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Martino & Kehler, 2006; Mills et al., 2004; Singh, 2021). Unfortunately, Latino male educators leave the profession at twice the rate of their Latina counterparts (Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Partee, 2014). This critical qualitative case study employed critical sociocultural theory, racial identity development theory, masculinity studies, and LatCrit theory to explore how Latino male educators comprehend and negotiate their gender identities in K–12 educational spaces. Using *circulos enfocados*, findings revealed participants often navigated tension between their authentic selves and external and internal expectations of their machismo. Participants with a heightened critical consciousness demonstrated how they rejected heteronormative standards, engaged in critical pedagogical practices, and worked to dismantle patriarchal systems. Participants accumulated knowledge and skills vital to navigating their personal and professional lives. This study revealed how *circulos enfocados* can enhance critical machismo consciousness and support the complex journey of Latino male educators as they redefine their roles and challenge heteronormative gender standards in pursuit of inclusive and equitable education. Recommendations include how educational institutions can support programmatic efforts to retain these educators.

*Keywords:* retention, circulo, Latino male educators, diversity, qualitative, case study, masculinity, machismo, identity, focus groups, teacher, education, critical consciousness

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Ellie Echeverria. I disrupted systems that were never meant for me, for you. May you always disrupt by sneaking more of us in so we may dismantle oppressive systems to build a liberated society that focuses on empathy, compassion, and belonging to the complexity of humanity. I love you with all my heart and soul. You make me a better human, a better parent, and have healed me more than you will ever imagine. Know that I am always proud of everything you do, and you will always be ENOUGH!

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	xiv
LIST OF FIGURES	xv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
Background	1
Educator Diversity	1
Racial Demographics	2
Gender Gap	5
My Story	6
Changing the Narrative	9
Purpose of the Study	11
Theoretical Framework	15
Critical Machismo Consciousness	16
Critical Sociocultural Theory	17
Racial Identity Development Theory	19
Masculinity Studies	21
LatCrit Theory	22
Research Questions	23
Limitations and Delimitations	24
Researcher's Perspective	25
Organization of the Study	28
Definitions	29

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	32
Identity	34
Critical Sociocultural Theory	35
Racial Identity Development Theory	37
Brain Science	39
Initial Interactions	40
Gender Norms	41
K–12 Experience	42
Stereotyped From the Beginning	42
Gender Disparities	43
Masculinity	44
Masculinity Studies	45
Masculinity Norms	47
Machismo	49
Emotional Erasure	51
Latino Male Educators	52
Disciplinarians	52
Mentorship	53
Future Focus	54
Outcomes	55
Vanishing Latino	56
Lack of Representation	57
Identity Crisis	59

Latino Studies	60
LatCrit Theory	60
Supporting Latino Boys and Men	62
Reciprocal Love and Ethos of Care	64
Círculo y La Cultura Cura	65
Latino Men in Therapy	66
Critical Machismo Consciousness	66
Círculos Enfocados	68
Summary	69
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	71
My Ongoing Journey	74
Research Methods	75
Research Questions	77
Critical Qualitative Case Study	78
Participant Selection Procedures	81
Participant Demographics	82
Data Collection	84
Data Collection Procedures	84
Research Setting	86
Data Collection Tools	88
Círculos Enfocados	89
Memo Writing	92
Data Organization	92

Data Analysis	93
Open Coding	95
Axial Coding	97
Selective Coding	99
Trustworthiness and Credibility	100
Researcher Bias	103
Limitations of the Research Methodology	104
Summary	105
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS	106
Exploring Latino Male Educator Identity	108
Social Construction of Identity	109
Fatherhood Machismo Impact	110
External Gender Norm Impact	113
Creation of Masks	117
Internal Conflict	118
Caution	121
Othered	123
Exploring Counter-Machismo	126
Deconstructing and Disrupting	131
Deconstruction Through Critical Consciousness	132
Disrupting With Youth	136
Disrupting Through Critical Pedagogy	143
Surviving and Thriving in the Profession	149

Development From Mentors/Femtors	151
Surviving and Thriving	156
Chapter Summary	162
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION	165
Moving Away From Damage-Centered Research	165
Summary of Key Findings and Policy Recommendations	167
Key Finding 1	167
Key Finding 2	168
Key Finding 3	170
Recommendations	170
Creating Gender Affinity Spaces With Other Latino Male Educators	172
Creating Intentional and Consistent Coaching Cycles on Instruction and Pedagogy	173
Gaining Qualitative and Quantitative Survey Data on Latino Male Educator	
Experience	174
Intentional Identity Development: Critical Machismo Consciousness	174
Providing Mental Wellness Support Structures for Identity Development for	
Latino Men	175
Implications	177
Identity Negotiations	178
Implications for Fathers and Youth	179
Implications for Policy	180
Critical Machismo Consciousness	181
Implications for Practice	183

Implications for Research	185
Intentional Development	185
Implications for Practice	188
Limitations	189
Conclusion	191
REFERENCES	194
APPENDIX A. Diversifying the Teacher Workforce	224
APPENDIX B. CITI Certificate and IRB Approval	225
APPENDIX C. Research Recruitment Email Script	2
APPENDIX D. Latino Male Demographic Survey	3
APPENDIX E. Consent Form	5
APPENDIX F. Circulo Enfocado Protocol	8
APPENDIX G. <i>The Mask You Live In</i> Transcript	13
APPENDIX H. Member Checking Form	15
APPENDIX I. Codebook	22

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Latino Male Educator Participants	82
Table 2. Data Collection Tools	88

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Critical Machismo Consciousness	17
Figure 2. Nonlinear Process to Qualitative Research	94



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The first act of violence that patriarchy demands of males is not violence towards women. Instead, patriarchy demands of all males that they engage in acts of psychic self-mutilation, that they kill off the emotional parts of themselves.

—bell hooks, *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love*

Men have been socially conditioned through masculinity gendered norms to think, behave, and replicate an oppressive structure that violently destroys their empathy, inclusivity of all genders, and mental wellness (Berggren, 2014; Connell, 2005; Salisbury & Jackson, 1996; Singh, 2021; Waling, 2019). As schools begin to move toward inclusivity, an emphasis on gender equity would support educators' use of a critical and culturally sustaining pedagogy that affirms, values, and welcomes all forms of gender identity while dismantling patriarchal norms (Freire, 1970; Paris & Alim, 2017). Intentional emphasis on deconstructing masculinity for male educators and letting go of “a real man does . . .” narratives have the potential of leading to more intentional and supportive healing efforts for all male educators (Singh, 2021). If diversifying the teacher workforce is the goal, then encouraging progressive gender consciousness may support inclusive pedagogy for Latino male educators who use gender expansion to serve their diverse school communities.

### **Background**

#### **Educator Diversity**

The lack of diversity in the U.S. teacher workforce is a key issue when discussing inclusive and affirming schools. Research has shown student belonging is enhanced when the teacher workforce mirrors a multiracial, multicultural, multigendered, and multilingual

population (Paris & Alim, 2017). This culturally sustaining environment would “foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of schooling for positive social transformation” (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 1). Moving away from colonial frameworks of schooling to liberatory spaces that support the growth of critical consciousness for all community members can help to reimagine a world in which all can thrive (Freire, 1970; Love, 2019; Paris & Alim, 2017). When students are able to engage with teachers who look like them, there are benefits to student attendance and academic identity, which lead to increased achievement and higher expectations for all students being served (Dee, 2005; Romero et al., 2009; Singh, 2021).

Diversity is a word often overused in performative equity statements in U.S. society and organizations (Ahmed, 2012). Institutions use diversity statements as proof they have checked off a task on the list rather than truly diving in to issues of equity, thus maintaining existing hierarchal structures and leadership (Ahmed, 2012). As a result, when an individual raises concerns about inequity in an organization, they are marginalized and become a problem to maintaining the current hegemony. In public education serving kindergarten through 12th grade (K–12 schools), teacher diversity does not match the current student diversity in regard to demographics (de Brey et al., 2019). At the time of this study, 54% of U.S. K–12 public school students identified as nonwhite; however, 79% of the teacher workforce identified as white (de Brey et al., 2019). By 2029, predictions have indicated students of color will represent over 60% of the student population (Gottfried et al., 2022). With student racial demographics shifting, teacher demographics must shift to support these students.

### **Racial Demographics**

Diversifying the teacher workforce has been on the agenda for many U.S. schools, districts (see Appendix A), and state educational departments serving predominantly Black and

Brown students. However, these efforts have fallen short given 21% of the teacher workforce have been teachers of color and served a population of 54% students of color (de Brey et al., 2019). Teachers, in general, have struggled to stay in the profession because of poorly conditioned classrooms, inadequate teacher preparation, and the inability to sustain a work–life balance in a profession that requires working after school hours with grading, student concerns, and lesson planning (Barkhorn, 2013; Blanchard, 2013; Machado, 2013; Riggs, 2013). In addition, research has shown white educators do not deal with the same issues as teachers of color (Kohli, 2019). Teachers of color often have had to navigate daily microaggressions, confront white educators’ lowered expectations of students of color, and lead whole school events to process trauma from continued police violence in Black and Brown communities (Kohli, 2019; Matias & Mackey, 2016). It is difficult for teachers of color to find solidarity in spaces when they are one of few represented in the population and one of the few resisting the status quo.

Teachers of color have worked under continued pressure to support every student they serve because their purpose is deeply rooted to the community in which they grew up. They do this work and simultaneously deal with cultural insensitivity in school systems that do not take into account how policies affect their community (Machado, 2013). Internally, teachers of color have struggled to be enough for the community of which they have always been a part, continuing to give their time and effort past work hours, and donating part of their salaries to students who remind them of themselves. Unfortunately, teacher salaries do not build generational wealth for first- and second-generation teachers of color (Machado, 2013). Teachers of color have had an added pressure to persevere for their communities regardless of how

oppressive their school system is because they know the importance of their role in schools, particularly for students of color (Cormier et al., 2021).

Given the evidence presented, it is clear the current system of schooling has not supported an inclusive, affirming, and supportive environment for teachers of color. School and district hiring programs have not advertised true experiences of teachers of color in their recruitment efforts; thus, patterns of low retention numbers have continued. However, diversifying on the basis of race is not the only gap to address in creating a more inclusive teaching force.

Too often, racial demographics are highlighted in diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in hiring practices, yet the structural foundation of organizations still functions through whiteness normativity (Ward, 2008). White normativity defaults the thinking, speaking, and doing most prevalent to white culture, which automatically segregates people who do not fit these norms (Ladner, 1998; Ward, 2008). People of color may make up a large percentage of the work demographic data; but, they struggle to gain access to power in hierarchical positions because the structure in charge is predominantly white (E. Scott, 2005; Ward, 2008). Ultimately, diversity demographics data are used as a performative indicator in attempt to optically diversify organizations without real cultural changes to the work environment (Ward, 2008).

Hiring to bridge racial gaps, especially in K–12 schools, without structural change will not bring forth equity in a more diverse workforce. More importantly, people of color accumulate assets such as aspirational, linguistic, social, navigational, and resistance capital through white dominant centered spaces that mimic societal ideology (Yosso, 2005). This highlights the fatigue people of color experience in continuing to navigate spaces never meant for them in the first place. Identity intersectionality is an important component of humanity, and

race is only one factor that impacts an experience for educators. To build on inclusivity of diversity, gender needs to be a major component of K–12 educator intersectionality and experience to help recruit, hire, and retain newer teachers from marginalized identities.

### **Gender Gap**

Gender discrimination has always been a major issue impacting the diversity of the K–12 teacher workforce. In 2018, women made up 76% of the teaching workforce in K–12 schools, whereas men made up 24% (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2020). When breaking down the data by grade levels, 89% of women taught in elementary schools, 72% taught in middle schools, and 60% taught in high schools (NCES, 2020). Data for educators who identified as men indicated they made up 24% of the teacher population, and, when disaggregating by race, just 2% of the entire teaching workforce identified as Latino male educators (NCES, 2020).

This gender gap is not new to the field by any means. Once the Common School was introduced to the mainstream public educational system in the 1830s, feminization of the career began (Mondale, 2001). Women were recruited to teach because they were regarded as more nurturing to young children and men in charge could pay them one third of the salary a qualified male educator would be paid (Mondale, 2001). As women began taking up more teaching opportunities, the school year increased in length and time, which pushed men away from having a second occupation (Strober & Lanford, 1986). An increase in the certification needed to work coupled with a salary never made to support a family, led to a decrease in men staying or entering the profession of teaching (Strober & Lanford, 1986). However, the economic ramifications of feminizing the profession are only one small portion of the story. Critical scholars have contended patriarchy has significantly influenced the teaching profession, resulting

in a situation where women are subjected to control based on their performance and men predominantly assume administrative roles that dictate working conditions for women (Apple, 2013; Danylewycz & Prentice, 1984; Saavedra, 2006). Moreover, this phenomenon in teaching is closely linked to the societal norm of domesticity and the associated labeling of socialization norms. As a result, the profession of teacher has been “deskilled” in comparison to how difficult the work truly is, and feminization of the profession has continued, which is why there remains a major gender gap in the field (Apple, 2013; Saavedra, 2006).

### **My Story**

It is important to me to tell my story in relation to the information being provided. In my experience teaching for 10 years in parochial and public schools, it was a rarity to work alongside another Latino male educator. My identity as a man was always front and center as I navigated my day-to-day life. Women leaders often elevated unwritten codes I had not realized before coming to this profession. I was yelled at and reprimanded for having a female student alone in my classroom when I was eating lunch. However, administrators did not know the student had forgotten her juice and needed to get it from her backpack during lunch. I always left my classroom door open because of these types of situations. In this situation, the white female administrator created assumptions about the intentions I had for children and asked the student if I had asked her to come to my class. Being a man in this space was difficult to navigate when assumptions about what I was doing and questions about my motives were frequent challenges.

In another instance, a white female administrator told me I would never succeed as an English language arts (ELA) teacher because I was an English language learner and a man. The coded messaging about my intelligence was a constant occurrence with interactions around content with other educators and administrators. In addition, school personnel would, frequently

and without reservation, send me students, primarily boys of color, who were labeled troublemakers so I could discipline them for not following rules. The underlying coded messaging I internalized was I had to become a disciplinarian who could instill fear in young boys of color. Administrators admitted they could not believe students loved me because I was so serious and looked angry all the time. Every day I had to think about how I was showing up for others and never truly felt like myself. This constant feedback of how to act, think, feel was a major factor in my everyday life as an educator. I had to learn to survive; learn to put on another mask; and be careful how I portrayed myself to women, children, and parents because I never wanted anyone to think I would intentionally harm the young people I taught.

As I embarked on this dissertation journey, previous research affirmed many of my experiences and enhanced my critical consciousness of the power dynamics constantly at play in education. In describing the experiences of men of color, this study focused only on Latino male educators. When speaking in terms of men of color, most research has examined the Black and Latino male experience. Identity plays a major role in the constant stereotyping and assimilation of certain societal and behavioral norms used to set specific standards. For men of color, this means they have already been stereotyped as the type of educator they needed to be when they walked in the door (Brockenbrough, 2018; Singh, 2021).

Specifically, men of color have been targeted to teach in schools using the narrative of saviors needed to come rescue young boys of color (Brockenbrough, 2018; Singh, 2021). This is problematic for young boys of color because they begin to create a stereotype threat (i.e., internalizing the negative stereotypes defined for one's group) of being a problem that needs fixing (Baldrige, 2017; P. Johnson & Philoxene, 2018; Noguera, 2009; Pabon, 2016; Steele, 2010). Men of color enter educational settings through an established hegemonic,

heteropatriarchal, masculine archetype: the stereotypical disciplinarian who (a) models assimilated capitalist norms of being complicit to white male hegemonic success metrics, (b) is accepted as a model of a “successful” man, and (c) should be replicated by young boys of color (Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Singh, 2021). Ultimately, this archetype glorifies assimilation to white male patriarchal ways of being as a means to be successful and accepted in society.

In this standardization of manhood and masculinity, Latino male educators also have to consider *machismo* definitions in their cultural home life, work environment, and the community in which they serve (Pérez & Okello, 2017). Due to this constant awareness of gender and sexuality expectations, Latino male educators have reported they are in a constant identity crisis and are twice as likely to leave the profession compared to Latina women (Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Partee, 2014; Singh, 2021). The environment into which men enter the teaching profession has been created to emasculate the teaching profession and bring hegemonic masculinity into the spotlight to solve the “boy problem” (Martino & Kehler, 2006, p. 113). Centering hegemonic masculinity norms means every decision Latino male educators make is directly tied to how they live up to social constructions of their gender identity. With the feminization of the profession, teaching in elementary grades has been considered to be more of a nurturing role, which is why more men have tended to teach in middle and high school grades (Mills et al., 2004).

Male educators have gained awareness of how they are perceived in the educational environments in which they work. Male educators have reported difficulty in navigating the constant scrutiny of being viewed as less than a man by their social circles, families, and communities (Lara & Fránquiz, 2015). As a result of this scrutiny, men have tended to shy away from showing affection to students and around women. Lara and Fránquiz (2015) explained “homophobia and pedophilia are the societal discourses that act as a form of social control to



reinforce hegemonic views of masculinity while simultaneously conflating gay or effeminate men with pedophilia” (p. 211).

Men must survive the daily struggle of negotiating suspicions of being labeled as pedophiles, regardless of marital status, and performing heteronormative stereotypes to combat homophobic and transphobic community norms (Lara & Fránquiz, 2015). For Latino men, a hegemonic masculine archetype is constantly perpetuated by (a) female educators sending troubled male students to Latino male educators for discipline, (b) parents pressuring Latino male educators to make sure male students are being brought up like “men,” and (c) continuing a cycle of survival they grew accustomed to as students in the K–12 environment (I. Jackson et al., 2014; Lara & Fránquiz, 2015). Latino male educators are in constant fight or flight mode because of continued suppression of their vulnerabilities, using coping strategies to navigate society, and consciously or unconsciously perpetuating harmful stereotypes of successful hegemonic men. In a minoritized structure where there are very few Latino men, Latino male educators have struggled to navigate the constant external and internal messaging about what to do in every situation.

### **Changing the Narrative**

Gaining consciousness and awareness is an important aspect for teachers who are working to critically think and act toward social justice and equitable outcomes for students (Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008). Latino male educators can achieve awareness by understanding the criticality of their unique identities, power relations within those identities, the privileges they use, and how culture has developed their ways of being (Bartolomé, 2010). Ideological reflexivity allows for educators to critically evaluate their teaching pedagogy, the way they interact with all community members, and the hidden elements that keep society

functioning through inequity (Bartolomé, 2010; Darder et al., 2003). Latino educators can use a critical pedagogy to gain knowledge on dominant ideologies and begin to interact with counter hegemonic discourses. Such critical pedagogy can add purposeful intentionality to resistance efforts in every educational setting.

With the constant interrogation of identity Latino male educators face in their everyday lives, they need support for mental health and wellness for healing (Ginwright, 2015, 2018). Studies regarding retention efforts to support Latino male educators have indicated more research is needed on how institutions support educators' belonging, mental wellness, and how to develop affinity among Latino male educators (Falicov, 2010; L. Rodríguez et al., 2013). Developing critical consciousness (Freire, 1994) is beneficial for survival; yet, it can be traumatizing if individuals are not well-equipped to unpack traumas related to racism, sexism, and classism in a healthy manner. The process toward critical consciousness involves understanding the inequitable social conditions created by society and developing an awakening to combat these structures (Freire, 1994). As Latino male educators begin to grow their critical consciousness on machismo, sexism, and feminism, schools have the ability to provide structured support in their professional development programming. This reminds me of what I had to obtain during my journey for me to gain my critical consciousness.

I constantly reflect on where I would be if I had not grown my consciousness. This process was not and could not be done alone. My consciousness was raised through proximity to feminist mentors, coaches, and colleagues who pushed my thinking on masculinity, on how the world perceived me, and on how I could be more emotionally intelligent. My response when I was harmed had always been to fight back with verbal threats of physicality or to remove myself from the situation without confrontation. By suppressing my emotions from my traumas and

daily interactions, I created a version of myself I did not enjoy. I walked through the world with constant aggression, anxiety, and a lack of closure. Throughout my teaching experience, I received coaching on my identity from educational leaders and from a therapist. As I began to gain a healthy perspective on from where my behaviors, thinking, and actions stemmed, I began to heal and have been constantly growing into a newer version of myself I had never considered. This journey is just one example and is ongoing. My K–12 experience was both a harmful and a liberating experience because I chose to dive into the discomfort of unpacking my identities and began to directly deal with problems I had.

Diversity and inclusivity cannot be attained through the sole lens of antiracism when men of color have been conditioned to also perpetuate oppression through hegemonic masculinity and suppress their humanity (Ginwright, 2015; Singh, 2021). In my experience, I also needed to be an advocate for justice for people of color, women, and the LGBTQIA+ community, which reflects the nuance of true inclusivity in society. To retain Latino male educators in education, more work needs to be done to understand, validate, and support their full humanity and true understanding of all their identities.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this critical qualitative case study was to explore the phenomenon of how Latino male educators understand and navigate their gender identities in their K–12 spaces. This study aimed to discover how Latino cisgendered heterosexual men process, reflect on, and act by centering their understanding of masculinity and machismo. From a young age, all men are conditioned to create an archetype of masculinity that informs how they behave, feel, and think (Connell, 2005). In gaining a critical machismo consciousness, men have the potential to gain a deeper understanding of how they perpetuate harmful stereotypes and learn to expand

masculinity through reimagination, renegotiations of identity, and tapping into new skills they should have learned earlier in their lives. Due to different societal norms Latino male educators have to navigate, expectations from their Latino nationalities mixed with U.S. gender norms create different versions of masculinity and machismo each Latino male educator must navigate (Falicov, 2010; Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Pérez & Okello, 2017).

This study used focus groups, or *circulos enfocados*, to gather insight into how Latino male educators understand their roles through the lens of gender, how they combat or assimilate these norms, and what they have learned to be successful in their settings. Furthermore, I asked what more they need to stay in the profession. Focus groups were used to provide a safe and brave space to give a voice to participants, co-construct themes and interpretations, and gain multiple perspectives around similar topics (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005; Morgan, 1996; Rakow, 2011). It was important to me to give a voice to some of the most marginalized educators so educational institutions can learn from their stories, lived experiences, and unique realities. There was a need to center the voices of Latino male educators to understand contemporary versions of masculinities and gain insight about systems they must navigate in each of their respective spaces. Thus, four separate focus groups, *circulos enfocados*, were conducted with 17 participants who were Latino male educators. By using *circulos enfocados*, data collection and analysis centered Latino male educator voices on understanding how gender impacts their educational environments through the use of intentional dialogic spaces where they could push, challenge, and support each other on sensitive topics.

As a researcher and outsider, my goal was to raise Latino male educator voices to express their needs through purposeful and intentional spaces. By creating a group in which cisgendered heterosexual Latino men can share stories, be vulnerable, and dialogue, the opportunities to bring

forth collective knowledge and healing has the potential to increase support structures Latino men may need (Carrillo & Tello, 2008; Falicov, 2010; National Compadres Network, 2021; Winn, 2018). In their generic form, focus groups constitute a group interview, which is important, yet they lack a humanizing element. As a result, I created *circulos enfocados*, or focused community circles using restorative justice practices. *Circulos enfocados* encompasses different components of focus groups, culturally responsive focus groups (CRFGs), restorative practices, and community circles (Carrillo & Tello, 2008; Falicov, 2010; National Compadres Network, 2021; K. Rodriguez et al., 2011; Winn, 2018). My *circulos enfocados* focused on community building, invoking trust, and providing a space of healing by sharing vulnerabilities as humans.

Using *circulos enfocados* was helpful in creating a space focused on stories as asset-based opportunities from which the entire *circulo* could learn and uplift each other. Each group had the same questions to unpack, and the conversations, topics, and challenges were led in different directions based on the lived experiences of Latino male educators. My perspective as a Latino male researcher was to listen, to become an insider by sharing my experience with other Latino men, and to help facilitate a space where participants could be themselves without feeling judged. Balancing individual experiences with communal experience was difficult because the goal of the study was not to generalize these stories to all Latino male educators. The complexity in humanity was on display because intersectionality of many identities played a role in shaping current versions of participants' identities. My role in these *circulos* was to highlight these experiences, to affirm their identities, to foster dialogue, and to challenge heteronormative patriarchal characteristics Latino men have internalized. By understanding where Latino men are in their journeys with masculinity and *machismo*, this study has the potential to inform retention

efforts on how to support the growth of critical machismo consciousness of Latino men. In addition, this study recognizes the complexity of engaging in sensitive topics like masculinity and machismo to assist retention programming efforts for Latino men. Critical pedagogical educators would need to develop intentional and purposeful programming that supports, guides, and challenges gender dynamics to expand masculinities for Latino men.

This critical qualitative case study documented a humanized portrait—a portrayal of the power in words by centering Latino male educators and their words—to support the importance of critical machismo consciousness for Latino male educators in their work experience. Research has continued to provide deficit-based stereotypes of Latino male educators instead of enhancing methodologies to place their voices at the center of studies (Singh, 2018). Problematic narratives of saviorism, masculinity, manhood, mentorship, and father figures without critical analysis of their origins and definitions have continued an oppressive cycle (Singh, 2021). Creation of male-only affinity spaces that perpetuate hegemonic toxic masculinity norms are also not helpful to the inclusivity of multiple masculinities including queer, transgender, and nongender conforming community members.

As a trained facilitator of safety in circulo processing spaces, I sought to support, guide, and challenge Latino men to be co-conspirators in gender equity and give direct feedback on building awareness when hegemonic masculinity and machismo were brought into the space. I have had the honor and privilege to be trained in restorative practices to help facilitate, lead, and co-construct circulos throughout my professional experience. Ultimately, critical consciousness has helped me in how I model, how I pose questions, and how I challenge perspectives that lead to productive dialogue versus blaming, judging, or dehumanizing individuals for sharing their truths. My intention was to provide a space and opportunity for participants to gain awareness,

unpack why they think or behave in a particular way, and begin to heal by renegotiating their gender identities through consciousness work. Supporting Latino male educators through this deconstruction of masculinity and machismo actively disrupts heteronormative patriarchal structures and can influence critical sociocultural theories.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study used a critical review of literature focused on the understanding of identity development, the navigation of intersectional identities, and the responses of being a Latino male educator. The ways in which young Latino boys are conditioned by society, family, and schools may indicate how Latino male educators navigate their identities as adults. This study relied on literature and research with the potential to disrupt heteronormative patriarchy, enhance critical consciousness of gender, and support healing centered engagement through *circulos enfocados*. Four main theoretical frameworks guided the purpose of the study: critical sociocultural theory, racial identity development theory, masculinity studies, and Latino critical (LatCrit) theory. These frameworks established the foundation on which literature, research, and studies were analyzed and illuminated how to move forward in supporting Latino men in K–12 spaces.

In addition to the frameworks, the context of how transnational people navigate different ways of being based on their cultural lens in the home and mainstream societal norms in the United States was important to this study. This context helped to provide support to the current theoretical research and retention programming for Latino male educators in K–12 schools. Overall, this study focused on centering critical machismo consciousness for Latino male educators as a way to address retention efforts through direct disruption of heteronormative patriarchy while enhancing the agency and emotionality of men (Singh, 2018, 2021; Waling,

2019). The following theoretical frameworks focused on using literature and research to support the critical machismo consciousness of Latino male educators.

### **Critical Machismo Consciousness**

A tenet of critical pedagogy is critical consciousness, in which educators develop an awakening about inequities for marginalized people in society (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Freire, 1994). Individuals who develop a deep sense of critical consciousness take critical action to actively disrupt and dismantle oppressive structures. Critical consciousness allows educators to question what they are teaching, how they are teaching it, and whether they are supporting students to also become critically conscious (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Gay & Kirkland, 2003). This study aimed to examine all aspects of criticality and consciousness, which, for Latino cisgendered heterosexual men, is to examine, question, and disrupt heteronormative patriarchy.

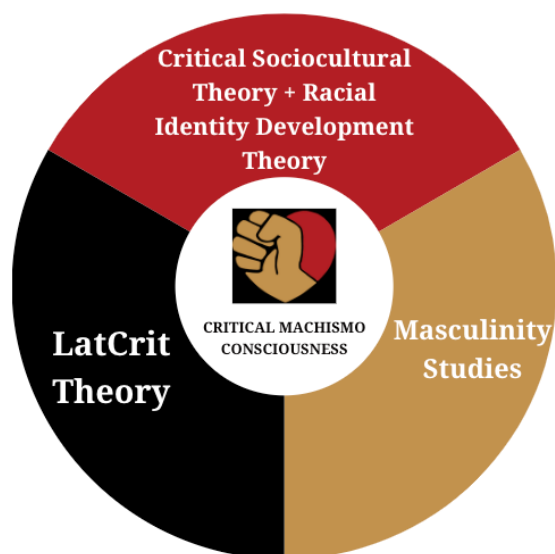
Built on critical race theory (CRT) and critical pedagogy, this study used *circulos enfocados* (i.e., focus groups) to create a supportive space in which to dialogue about critical machismo consciousness alongside Latino male educators (see Figure 1). Researchers have argued further development of critical consciousness should include the examination of core beliefs and practices that are misogynistic, transphobic, homophobic, and patriarchal because masculinity and machismo socialize men to maintain these structures (Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Singh, 2021). By engaging in deconstruction of masculinity and machismo with a focus on gender expansion, it is important to integrate coping strategies and support mechanisms for Latino male educators to handle this new knowledge in a productive manner. By using *circulos enfocados*, this research may suggest Latino male educators could benefit from the formalization of affinity groups in which they can dialogue, express their emotions, and collectively heal.



Centering Latino male educator experience while nurturing the development of critical machismo consciousness can support the implementation of initiatives to maintain and sustain their humanity. In essence, Latino male educators would gain the capacity to preserve their skills as educators dedicated to promoting inclusivity, actively challenge heteronormative patriarchy, and foster a secure environment conducive to further exploration of their gender identities.

**Figure 1**

*Critical Machismo Consciousness*



### **Critical Sociocultural Theory**

In the formation of identity, cultural norms are passed down through different inputs for all humans. Sociocultural theory argues the mind is mediated through intentional artifacts passed down generationally (Lantolf, 2000). Individuals take these symbolic tools of understanding the world in which they live as a guide for how they psychologically live up to those expectations (S. Scott & Palincsar, 2013). The translation of those artifacts can change over time based on the

different lived experiences of individuals. Ultimately, individuals gain consciousness through natural, individual, and social interactions and make meaning of the world through the collection of language (Vygotsky, 1978/1997).

For the purposes of this study, I used critical sociocultural theory because it brings in the critical tenets of power, identity, and agency as dimensions to navigate consciousness for Latino male educators. Learning is a participatory act between individuals involved in which learners bring their knowledge into a space and create new learning from others (Moje & Lewis, 2020). This process of learning and unlearning brings forth consciousness in discourse communities “that share ways of knowing, thinking, believing, acting, and communicating” (Moje & Lewis, 2020, p. 41). These discourse communities—or dialogical learning spaces—support trust building, create shared power, and bridge multiple lived realities in the production of knowledge (Molina, 2015). Learning is the internalization of ideas used to reformulate an individual’s identity, values, and understanding of the world. This growth leads to an unlearning through active resistance to what has been known, reevaluation of meaning, and co-construction of new discourses (Moje & Lewis, 2020). The participants in this study were active learners alongside the researcher as both parties produced new knowledge for a larger audience.

In terms of power, this particular study understood masculinity and machismo in relation to the system of patriarchy and how gender norms have been accumulated, assimilated, and accommodated in the lives of men (Moje & Lewis, 2020). The learning of these gender norms has been appropriated through patriarchal standards in society, and an active renegotiation through an expansion of masculinities can support efforts toward new formations of meaning. Through this learning and unlearning process, a new consciousness is formed by remaking identities based on new knowledge, and individuals are able to create different versions of

themselves in different discourse communities (Moje & Lewis, 2020). Ultimately, this process has the potential to lead to agency and a deeper understanding of purpose and meaning in regard to collective identities and active dismantling of power dynamics.

For Latino male educators, a structured gender socialization process begins in infancy and conditions them on how to think, behave, and feel or not feel. By diving into this discourse community, I hoped to promote more individual learning and unlearning to deepen the critical machismo consciousness of my participants. However, humanity is complex, and individuals may experience a multitude of intersectionalities, hence why this study used the framework of racial identity development theory.

### **Racial Identity Development Theory**

For this study, it was important to explore how Latino male educators formulate, navigate, and understand racial identity. Racial identity development theory directly connects to critical sociocultural theory because race is a major component of identity in U.S. society. Helms (1990) described racial identity development theory as established beliefs, perceptions, and affinity an individual has to a racialized group that evolves when they compare themselves to other racialized groups. Tatum (2004) noted “given the dominant/subordinate relationship of Whites and people of color in this society, however, it is not surprising that this developmental process will unfold in different ways” (p. 93). Further, Ferdman and Gallegos (2001) established Latino development occurs through an understanding of similarities in a cultural group and how one person is directly influenced by socialization experiences of home life, school, peer interactions, and the racialized U.S. caste system. However, *Latinidad* is not monolithic, and every person has a different relationship to how they racially identify given the othering that occurs in dominant, white caste U.S. society. For this study, *Latinidad* is a term used to describe

a sense of cultural identity and belonging to the broader Latin American or Hispanic cultural and ethnic heritage (Chávez-Moreno, 2021a; Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001; Gómez, 2020). Latinidad encompasses the shared cultural, historical, linguistic, and social experiences of people with roots in Latin America or with Latin American heritage. The term emphasizes a collective identity, including individuals or communities who identify with the diverse range of Latin American countries, languages, traditions, and customs. Latinidad is a complex and multifaceted concept and can encompass various aspects of identity, including language, ethnicity, race, nationality, and cultural heritage. Ferdman and Gallegos (2001) created the following lenses to describe individuals' identification of Latinidad: (a) Latino integrated (i.e., having a full understanding of racial construction), (b) Latino identified (i.e., an acceptance of Latinidad and white racial labeling constructs), (c) subgroup identified (i.e., acceptance of multiple Latinidad races and having proximity to a particular region or subgroup), (d) Latino as other (i.e., generic labeling to a Latinidad affinity through ancestral heritage), (e) undifferentiated (i.e., assimilation to U.S. imperial individualism through colorblind narrative), (f) and white identified (i.e., rejecting Latinidad as a racial construct and full acceptance of whiteness in racial construct).

Understanding the power dynamics of racial identities is important for deepening critical consciousness because they give insight to the lived experiences and attachments Latino male educators have regarding the intersectionality of their identities. Racial identity development theory and critical sociocultural theory help to bring another dimension of identity to this study that can lead to rich discussions, reflexivity, and, hopefully, healing. In addition to understanding identities, disruption of gender norms emphasize deconstructing masculinity and machismo norms Latino men have individually and collectively internalized.

## Masculinity Studies

From early stages of development, young babies understand the coded gendered messages they see from clothing, colors, toys, books, media, and sexist cultural norms (Rippon, 2019). Advertisements are focused on “what a real man” uses versus a woman’s version of the same product, which are deemed as inferior (Rippon, 2019). This coding becomes more problematic for young Latino boys as they enter their first school experiences. Latino boys walk into schools with a carried stereotype and definition of manhood they must achieve.

The social construction of gender derives from societal norms of masculinity and how specific ways of existing have been defined for men. Masculinity studies have evolved over time to include multiple typologies that explain a continuum men can navigate in their world. For example, Connell (2005) suggested the typologies of hegemonic, complicit, subordinate, and marginalized masculinity. The archetypal form of masculinity is *hegemonic* in exerting dominance through strength, aggression, race, and ableism (Connell, 2005; Lara & Fránquiz, 2015). *Complicit* masculinity archetypes are the “front line troops” that uphold hegemonic norms by wanting to be included in that fraternity. In *subordinate* masculinity, gay and nongendered men are targeted through exclusionary practices and by psychological and physical violence. In *marginalized* masculinity, men of different races support the white male hegemonic archetype yet are not fully accepted into mainstream masculinity culture (Connell, 2005; Lara & Fránquiz, 2015). This coded form of masculinity begins at a very young age, and young boys are conditioned not to show emotions, which can lead to problematic habits as they become adults.

Feminist scholars have noted the slow progress of masculinity studies in dismantling the power dynamics continued by men (Waling, 2019). In building consciousness through agency and emotionality to actively dismantle patriarchy, men must be held accountable for decisions

they make to intentionally uphold toxic masculinity behaviors (Berggren, 2014; Waling, 2019). *Sticky* masculinity supports the use of feminist theoretical frameworks to gain consciousness of the continued positionality men must navigate as they develop awareness of being oppressors (Berggren, 2014). Waling (2019) further suggested masculinity studies include feminist theoretical frameworks of agency and emotionality to enhance fluidity in identity navigation. This study looked at Latino male educator experiences and how they navigate U.S. culture and Latinidad cultural norms through gender, race, and class. For this study, it was also important for me to use LatCrit theory as this study aimed to add to the scholarship on individuals of Latinidad identity.

### **LatCrit Theory**

CRT is focused on issues of race, power, and class to disrupt all spaces in a white hegemonic formalized system (A. Martinez, 2014). As Latino male educators enter the field and notice they are marginalized in the K–12 environment, it is important to focus on racial disparities in their experiences (Carey, 2020). Latino male educators have been heavily recruited to diversify the teaching workforce because a large population of public school students identify as Latino boys. Dismantling sexism for Latino male educators must live simultaneously with racism and classism to gain awareness of their daily impact on the profession. In addition, advocacy for young Latino boys in K–12 spaces needs further development to enhance students' success in schools (Crosnoe et al., 2008).

As CRT has expanded over the years into education, LatCrit theory has emerged as a developing framework (Arriola, 1998). With the focus on Latino and Latinx perspectives, the focus of using LatCrit is to further expand on the damage caused by white hegemonic structures in society and how they impact multiple identities. LatCrit enhances the perspectives of Latinos

and Latinx people by theorizing where intersectionalities of race and racism meet with other forms of oppression such as classism and sexism (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Furthermore, a LatCrit framework in education hyper analyzes how schooling environments oppress and silence versus affirm and empower Latino and Latinx students, teachers, and community members (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). A tenet of CRT is using counternarratives in the form of storytelling from an oppositional view or perspective (Delgado, 1989). Counterstories from people of color must be recognized and acknowledged as a critical understanding of racism (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001).

For this particular study, I explored how Latino men deal with multiple positionalities and identities by navigating gender disparities, racial disparities, and academic identities to gain insight into what they navigate and how they survive (Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Martino, 2008; Sargent, 2001). A. Martinez (2014) noted a methodology of CRT includes storytelling, family history, biographies, *cuentos*, *testimonios*, and counterstories from people of color. Thus, this study purposefully used Latino male educator voices and their words from *circulos enfocados* as counternarratives to support the creation of intentional programming to retain their talents and to contribute to systemic changes in oppressive, racist, and sexist K–12 environments.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were intentionally designed to capture the voices and perspectives of Latino male educators and provide a deeper understanding of how they navigate their identities in K–12 schools:

1. In what ways do Latino male educators understand their masculinity and how it impacts their day-to-day lives in their educational settings?

2. In what ways do Latino male educators disrupt heteronormative patriarchal standards of masculinity and machismo in their own beliefs and actions?
3. In what ways do Latino male educators acquire knowledge and skills in their teaching practices to help them remain and thrive in the teaching profession?

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

This research study focused on documenting and elevating the voices of Latino male educators in navigating their identities in K–12 spaces. The study was delimited exclusively to individuals who were educators in K–12 schools and identified as male, Latino/Hispanic, cisgendered, and heterosexual. In addition, this study recruited educators who varied in years of teaching experience to support research on retaining Latino male educators in their careers. Obtaining perspectives from experienced Latino male educators could add a different layer of internalized masculinity and machismo and provide further insight into how educators survive or thrive in their educational spaces.

Another aspect of this research study was to see how heterosexual Latino men defined masculinity in their own cultural home life, schools, and the greater society. Results from this study are not generalizable to the experiences of all Latino male educators but can provide guidance for retention programming. In addition, this study intentionally used the voices of Latino male educators to deconstruct definitions of masculinity and determine ways of being that were not oppressive, toxic, and hegemonic (Connell, 2005; Lara & Fránquiz, 2015). A limitation to this study is masculinity can be defined differently by race, region, religion, and other layers of culture. Masculinity and machismo can be similar and different yet coexist in the identity development of Latino men.



An intentional element to this research study was to have *circulo* (i.e., community circle) protocols to assist in building community, affinity, and trust in *circulos enfocados*. As health and safety continued to be a priority due to the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic, this study was limited to a remote setting. This setting allowed Latino men to participate from multiple zip codes rather than being confined to one school, district, or area. Set dates and times were selected and participants chose their *circulo enfocado* based on their availability.

This study aimed to add to the research on how to support Latino male educators. Given this aim, time constraints for participants, resources, and funding were limited in terms of the impact of the study. The time commitment from participants included one remote-based *circulo enfocado* that lasted 90–120 minutes based on the conversations and dialoguing. As a researcher, data collection and analysis time were driven by the four session recordings. Due to the amount of data, the information was extensive, and the scope of analysis was limited based on the time constraints of the entire process.

### **Researcher's Perspective**

As a researcher and learner in this study, I wanted to provide context regarding my relationship to the study topic. I identify as a Latino male educator who has had great success despite traumatic experiences as a K–12 student and in my career as an educator. I hold a unique bias of what allowed me to be successful that I developed through my own reflexivity, therapy, and decisions that helped me get to a space of healing and an administrative career level. My experiences are unique to me, and I am not suggesting educators should take this path to feel successful as teachers or administrators. I immersed myself in this study with the intention to build trust and show Latino male educators I wanted to be in this work alongside them.

I also understood each Latino male educator brought their own unique history, identities, and experiences that may not have always aligned with mine, and these differences could create other pathways that strayed away from the goal of retention in education. As a critical researcher, my critical consciousness is based on my learning and lived experiences, which is important to my healing journey. Every Latino male educator in this study had their own journey of consciousness that had to be honored in this inclusive space. My hope is for all Latino male educators to stay in the teaching profession, but I cannot control what happens outside of the time I had with them. My unique experience gives me agency in providing a humanizing representation of Latino male educator voices, and I hope to add to the scholarship in critically examining and critiquing retention efforts for Latino men.

### **Significance of the Study**

This critical qualitative case study focused on elevating the perspectives of Latino male educators. This research study builds on work supporting the use of critical consciousness to bring about systemic change through direct action. In addition, critical machismo consciousness was used as a tool to support retention efforts as Latino male educators learn to disrupt internal and external factors of hegemonic masculinity. With a critical machismo consciousness, Latino male educators can focus on implementation of inclusive practices that affirm all identities they serve. This research study also extends the notion of multiple masculinities through intentional deconstruction of manhood, mentor, father figure, and “real men” (Singh, 2021). Deconstructing masculinities embedded into programming for retention of Latino male educators can present a collaborative opportunity to extend the services to young Latino boys in K–12 spaces through critical machismo consciousness of Latino male educators and teacher development on gender bias in pedagogy.

Circuitos enfocados provided the methodological framework in which Latino male educator perspectives were centered as asset-based narratives to inform retention practices in critical machismo consciousness. The unique lenses and navigation of intersectionality of multiple identities support Latino male educators' journeys to build purpose for their work in disrupting oppressive systems. This case study attempted to understand Latino male educator identity development, deconstruction of identity, and reconstruction toward liberatory critical machismo consciousness and how that process contributes to culturally sustaining inclusive pedagogy.

This study focused on understanding the phenomenon of how Latino male educators understand and navigate their masculinity and machismo in their K–12 settings. Current research has shown educator retention efforts use a hegemonic masculinity lens to continue stereotypes of manhood and mentorship, therefore diminishing progress toward inclusivity (Singh, 2021). In enhancing the critical machismo consciousness of Latino male educators, support for inclusivity of multiple masculinities, including feminist, queer, transgender, and nongender conforming, can be embedded in spaces where men can be their authentic selves.

With the national trend of antiracist and antibias curriculum development in all learning spaces, there is no room for performative outcomes of inclusivity when further marginalization of multiple identities has continued and individuals are excluded, intentionally oppressed, and (re)traumatized in school settings. Research has documented ways Latino male educators navigate their deconstruction, reconstruction, and development of masculinity in support of inclusivity (Singh, 2019). Most importantly, this study hopes to answer whether this level of critical consciousness in their educational careers has enabled Latino male educators to continue working in education, especially given the magnitude of disruption in ways of being.

## **Organization of the Study**

This research study explored how Latino male educators navigate their lives through gender norms established for them and what they choose to exhibit in their K–12 settings. Through *circulos enfocados* (i.e., focus groups), the heart of this study showed a humanized portrayal of Latino men to help enhance retention efforts in K–12 schools.

Chapter 2 provides context for how Latino male educators experience the world as reported by existing research literature. The chapter also explores the potential of increasing critical masculinity consciousness as a way to support Latino men. The chapter is broken down into the following domains: (a) identity, (b) masculinity, (c) outcomes, (d) Latino studies, and (e) intersectionality.

Chapter 3 describes the critical case study methodological process and intentionality in using specific data collection tools and how data were analyzed. The data collection process began in June 2023 and all data were gathered by July 2023. The data collection tools included *circulos enfocados* (i.e., focus groups) about critical masculinity consciousness and memos created by the researcher. From the data collection stage, an analysis of *circulo* recordings were coded for saturation in understanding the phenomenon. The goal was to center the voices of the participants through intentional reflexive opportunities to learn from their experiences.

Chapter 4 presents the expertise, lived experiences, and complex voices from the Latino male educators in this study. The data represent only a small glimpse of what was collected from the *circulos enfocados*. The findings include themes, quotes from participants, and analysis that connects to the literature reviewed for this study. The chapter ends with a summary of the findings pertaining to the three research questions that guided this study.

Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the key findings in this study and their connection to the literature. The chapter dives deeper into the implications of the findings and future recommendations for institutions. The chapter ends with a reflection on my learning as a researcher throughout this dissertation process.

### **Definitions**

The following definitions of terms are supportive for full engagement in the research study.

#### **Archetype**

An archetype is the popular model generated for everyone to accept. Archetypes include imagery, figures, character types, settings, and story patterns typically found in literary works (Jung, 1969). Ultimately, these archetypes become so normalized, society obtains an unconscious rationale to any dominant archetype created.

#### **Familismo**

Among Latinos, *familismo* is a concept focused on the importance of family over all other decisions or opportunities. Instilled in young children, family support for large family networks is bestowed upon the oldest siblings in the family dynamics. Basically, an individual's reality is predetermined by their family's reality (Calzada et al., 2013).

#### **Critical Consciousness**

Critical consciousness refers to not just being in the world but also engaging in it by gaining an awakening of the social inequities and creating action to transform it (Freire, 1994).

## **Hegemonic**

Hegemonic refers to the maintenance of power dynamics created by elites for program citizens in society to accept norms, beliefs, values, practices, and policies (Lea, 2014). As a philosophy, it makes individuals believe the current state is normal or natural in the world.

## **Heteronormative**

Heteronormative refers to “an institutionalized group of pressures that transcend mere attraction to conform to a specific gender relationship based upon anatomy, psycho-social traits, and class” (Capaccio, 2011, p. 2). Coined in the early 1990s, heteronormative is the explanation that sex and gender identity play a role in the establishment of dominant social order (Warner, 1993). Sexuality, in this case, is defended through the determination of being human only if individuals participate in the nuclear version of male–female relationships.

## **Latinidad**

According to J. Martinez (2019), “As a movement in the U.S., Latinidad suggests that despite varying nationalities, racial and gender identities, generations, languages, immigrant status and mobility, among other factors, Latinxs are united under the term and identity” (para. 6). This study did not seek to silence the activism continued by Afro-Latinx, Indigenous, and LGBTQIA+ communities in the fight to be seen, heard, and valued in Latinx society.

## **Machismo**

Machismo is the term accepted in Latinidad for how men, predominantly Mexican men, understand the characteristics created for them on how to behave, think, and act. Machismo has transferred into all Latinx cultures and has connections to sexism, chauvinism, and violence (Arciniega et al., 2008).

**Marginalization**

Marginalization is a form of oppression in which one group is directly silenced, forgotten, and intentionally left out of participation in a particular setting (Young, 2011). For the purpose of this study, Latino men, who have very few representations as educators in K–12, often are not included in discussions about supporting their success.

**Masculinity**

Masculinity, as a term, creates expectation for how men behave, think, and act in gender superiority over women and feminized men. Descriptions of masculinity including aggression, social respect, strength, and sexual drive are used to create a dominant model in U.S. society (Salter, 2019). Ultimately, these expectations are unattainable, which is why many “real men” are fictional characters.

**Patriarchy**

Patriarchy ultimately refers to the intentional domination of men over women. According to Pateman (1988), “the patriarchal construction of the difference between masculinity and femininity is the political difference between freedom and subjection” (p. 6).

**Pedagogy**

Pedagogy is the art and science of teaching students in education, in which a knowledgeable educator passes down cultural knowledge and skills to novice learners and enhances their understanding of the world (Hardman, 2008).

**Stereotype Threat**

A stereotype threat refers to an individual’s ability to accept and confirm negative stereotypes about their group (Steele & Aronson, 1995).

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

All men support and perpetuate sexism in one form or another . . . men have been socialized to passively accept sexist ideology. While they need not blame themselves for accepting sexism, they MUST assume responsibility for eliminating it.

–bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*

This chapter is intentionally organized using numerous works of literature and research to build context for the masculinity and machismo identities Latino male educators navigate on a daily basis. To understand how to best support Latino male educators with coded identities such as manhood, mentor, masculinity, and machismo, a foundational baseline must be presented for programs that support them. Latino men must navigate identity formation through a dominant U.S. cultural society and their Latinidad. There are many differences in how Latino men internalize identities. This study focused on highlighting Latino voices in the description of these identities to further support organizational efforts to retain these men. This chapter is organized through the following theoretical frameworks: (a) critical sociocultural theory and racial identity development theory combined, (b) masculinity studies, and (c) Latino critical (LatCrit) theory. These frameworks intentionally use theory to frame the literature that connects to the purpose of this study. Afterward, the intersectionality of all frameworks is analyzed to create a theoretical framework that supports critical masculinity consciousness of Latino male educators as a way to engage further studies and programming efforts pertaining to this marginalized population.

The goal of this study was to provide insight and much needed support to the retention of Latino male educators in schools, districts, teacher preparation programs, and any setting directly



supporting Latino men. However, the implications from this study do not need to translate only into educational and schooling spaces. There is potential for the results to support multiple fields, professions, and initiatives. Diversifying efforts in organizations requires more than just hiring people to fill gaps, and research on effective retention initiatives can help support sustainability for marginalized groups. Another important element to highlight is existing research and initiatives have shown a plethora of programming tailored to Black male educators, which is extremely important, and there is much knowledge to gain from these efforts in support of Latino male educators. In conducting this research, men of color were too broad of a descriptive identity marker to fully understand the scope of the problem in retaining Latino men.

Latinidad is not a monolith, and researchers have begun to understand how masculinity and machismo intersect. Yet, these findings cannot be transferred into all ethnicities, nationalities, and races in Latinidad. This inability to generalize has left a major gap in understanding Latino male educator experience because Latinos identify in so many different ways. Terms such as Hispanic, Latino, Chicano, Latinx, Latine, and all the Latin American identifying nationalities play a huge role in how people begin to internalize who they are (Gómez, 2020). This nuance in identity, mixed with U.S.-dominant culture, has created and evolved versions of being that need to be highlighted to understand contemporary and historical contexts for Latino men. This study used Latino as the connecting identity label with an understanding of nuanced intersectionality all individuals have in their identities. Furthermore, this study focused on cisgendered and heterosexual men given the extent of violence heteronormative patriarchy has inflicted on women, children, and LGBTQIA+ members (Chávez-Moreno, 2021a; Connell, 1987, 2005). As mentioned, there have been numerous efforts to recruit, accept, and hire Latinos in programming and employment; however, there have been

very few efforts to deconstruct masculinity and machismo as part of their goals, which is what this chapter and study highlight. This study presents a significant contribution to the research literature by using Latino male educator voices as experts of their unique understanding of the world as they begin to illuminate their levels of consciousness. The domains presented in this chapter are as follows: (a) identity, (b) masculinity, (c) outcomes, (d) Latino studies, and (e) critical masculinity consciousness.

### **Identity**

Identity development is an evolution throughout the lives of human beings. People become versions of themselves based on awareness they obtain from their own environment, relationships they experience, questioning of unique perspectives and core beliefs, and healing through learning and unlearning (Erikson, 1968). These lived experiences can affirm one's identity, or they can cause an individual to internally question who they are. This transformation people go through is a constant change involving internal reprogramming and creation of a new version of the individual (Chandler et al., 2003; Jennings et al., 2014). Identity development is a complex process for all people, especially when society has created archetypes for gender, race, socioeconomic status, and many other intersectional identities.

Because of these complexities, people create commitments to who they want to be. Meeus et al. (2010) described this process in cycles. The first cycle is considered the identity formation cycle in which young people make commitments to who they want to become through constant internal and external negotiations. The second cycle, identity maintenance, allows for deeper inner work to determine if choices affirm the initial commitments (Meeus, 2011). This chapter first explores critical sociocultural theory, racial identity development theory, how people are socialized to make certain choices and commitments to their identities, and whether

they are helpful or harmful to their identities. Before ever becoming educators, Latino men experience constant stereotypes based on their identities and committing to these stereotypes can be difficult.

### **Critical Sociocultural Theory**

From an early age, people are programmed for how they are supposed to behave in their environments. The current study focused on critical sociocultural theory as a lens to understand how people interact, change, and remake themselves in their environments. Vygotsky (1978/1997) theorized people are conditioned through social and mental interactions that have been constructed from culture over time. These specific interactions, or artifacts, that are passed down can evolve over time based on how they are influenced by the contemporary society in which they currently exist (Lantolf, 2013). According to Lantolf (2013), “as with physical tools, humans use symbolic artifacts to establish an indirect, or *mediated*, relationship between ourselves and the world” (p. 1). Ultimately, Vygotsky argued a person’s mind develops through natural, individual, and social interactions that lead a person to develop consciousness. Thus, a key element of developing consciousness in young people is how they make meaning of the world through social interactions.

People constantly interact with their world through word meaning and verbal thinking because words are central to how thought is created, thus formulating consciousness (Lantolf, 2013; Mahn, 1999). This interaction is vital to understanding how language can influence the ways people internalize how they are supposed to engage in the world. Young people are meaning makers who are heavily influenced by culture and nature around them (Mahn, 1999). Sociocultural theory describes *semiotic mediation* as the navigation of language and other symbolic systems through which people begin to internalize culture (Vygotsky, 1978/1997).

From the birth, children are intentionally or unintentionally programmed to live up to versions of identities dictated by home life, society, and schools.

From sociocultural theory, Moje and Lewis (2020) created critical sociocultural theory by adding critical tenets of learning, power, identity, and agency to expand people's consciousness. Learning is a participatory act between individuals that allows learners to bring their knowledge to the space and create new learning from others (Moje & Lewis, 2020). This act of learning and unlearning occurs through discourse communities "that share ways of knowing, thinking, believing, acting, and communicating" (Moje & Lewis, 2020, p. 41). These discourse communities—or dialogical learning spaces—support trust building, creation of shared power, and bridging multiple lived realities in the production of knowledge (Molina, 2015). According to Moje and Lewis (2020), "learning thus involves both awareness of differences and distinctions, and, ultimately, an act of subject formation, that is, identification with particular communities" (p. 45). Learning is the internalization of ideas used to reformulate who an individual was prior to the learning. This growth leads to an unlearning through active resistance to what has been known, reevaluation of meaning, and co-construction of new discourses (Moje & Lewis, 2020).

Through this learning and unlearning process, a new consciousness is formed by remaking identities based on new knowledge, and people are able to create different versions of themselves in different discourse communities (Moje & Lewis, 2020). Ultimately, this process leads to new agency and a deeper understanding of purpose and meaning in regard to identities and dismantling hierarchical power dynamics in society. The constant messaging young people obtain plays a crucial role in how they will respond to the world they have been given. Critical sociocultural theory gives a glimpse into how deconstruction and consciousness begin for people

and questions the impact it can have through the negotiation and renegotiation of identity. As individuals learn about their identities, identity markers, like the U.S. construct of race, play an important role in understanding which identities are formed internally or externally.

### **Racial Identity Development Theory**

This study explored the intersectionality of identity, specifically how racial identity is formulated, navigated, and understood through Latinidad. Racial identity directly connects to critical sociocultural theory in that race is a major component of identity in U.S. society. Helms (1990) described racial identity development theory as established beliefs, perceptions, and affinity an individual has to a racialized group that evolves when they compare themselves to other racialized groups. Tatum (2004) explained “given the dominant/subordinate relationship of Whites and people of color in this society, however, it is not surprising that this developmental process will unfold in different ways” (p. 2). Because Latinidad is not a monolith, every person has a different relationship to how they racially identify given the othering that occurs in dominant, white caste U.S. society.

A bigger dilemma is how an individual identifies with their background and proximity to Latinidad. Census data from 2020 showed the second largest demographic group identified as “some other race,” and more than 90% of people reported an identity of Latinidad (N. Jones et al., 2021). These data indicate a persistent exploration of belonging and othering for a group that has never fully aligned to a single race. As educators who identify as Latinidad enter the field to serve a diverse population of students from different Latin American origins and multilingual, multiracial, and multicultural backgrounds, educators need to fully grasp their own intersectionality of identity.

Individuals who live in the United States have experienced ongoing tension around identity and belongingness because of the colonization of race, racism, and imperialism. The constant othering individuals experience depends on their proximity to whiteness, which brings nuance to lived realities in the United States. Individuals with an identity in Latinidad constantly live in a state of being a foreigner, in which they never fully belong in any spaces they enter (Gómez, 2020; Huynh et al., 2011). As members of the Latinidad diaspora figure out where they belong, they must understand they are conditioned through double colonization or multiple colonialisms (Chávez-Moreno, 2021b; Gómez, 2018), namely the dual colonization of Europeans in Latin America and the contemporary imperialist state in which they reside, the United States (Chávez-Moreno, 2021a, 2021b; González, 2011). Race is a social construct created in the establishment of hierarchy in the United States. Race can also be fluid as acceptance of specific types of people, in proximity to whiteness, has gained approval by the hierarchy and resulted in earned privileges.

Ferdman and Gallegos (2001) established Latino development occurs through an understanding of similarities in a cultural group and how an individual is directly influenced by socialization experiences of home life, school, peers, and the U.S. racialized caste system. In addition, Ferdman and Gallegos presented the following lenses to describe how people identify in relation to Latinidad: (a) Latino integrated (i.e., having a full understanding of racial construction), (b) Latino identified (i.e., acceptance of Latinidad and white racial labeling constructs), (c) subgroup identified (i.e., acceptance of multiple Latinidad races and having proximity to a particular region or subgroup), (d) Latino as other (i.e., generic labeling to a Latinidad affinity through ancestral heritage), (e) undifferentiated (i.e., assimilation to U.S. imperial individualism through colorblind narrative), and (f) white identified (i.e., rejecting

Latinidad as a racial construct and full acceptance of whiteness in racial construct).

Understanding the power dynamics of racial identities is important for deepening critical consciousness because they give more insight to the lived experiences and attachments Latino male educators have regarding the intersectionality of their identities. Racial development theory and critical sociocultural theory helped in providing understanding of the identities in this study, leading to rich discussions, reflexivity, and, hopefully, healing.

### **Brain Science**

Another area of identity formed early in life is gender. Conversations about gender differences, such as physical, emotional, and intellectual differences, are common starting when a pregnancy is announced. Studies have shown brains of male babies tend to have a larger overall brain volume and larger specific brain regions, yet brain size alone is not an indicator of intelligence, cognitive ability, or any specific skills or trait (Rippon, 2019). However, boys' brains tend to culminate in development at 14.5 years of age whereas girls' brains culminate around 10.5 years of age. Researchers have stated this finding is not an advantage or disadvantage in any way (Lenroot & Giedd, 2006; Rippon, 2019). In fact, brain scientists have recommended 14-year-old boys should be learning what 10-year-old girls are learning in school (Halpern et al., 2011). In a school environment, this rate of development could place boys at a disadvantage because state learning standards dictate what they should be learning in their specific grades. Unfortunately, schools have not adapted state standards and curriculum according to gender or brain development because they have focused on equal access for all. Standardization of schools does not benefit the different needs children have regarding their cognitive abilities. Schools have perpetuated inequitable outcomes because of ableist, compliance-based outcomes in terms of intelligence. Even though brain development and

capacity have shown no significant gender differences, society and the media have continued to suggest notable differences based on gender. The nurturing element of child development must be discussed as well.

### **Initial Interactions**

The nature versus nurture debate in the explanation of child development has never been settled. It is essential to note research findings on both sides of the argument to paint a full picture of what parents and society need to support the development of children. As babies are born and enter the world, differences in how they are treated can have an impact on development. One study found mothers tend to talk to their girls from the time they are pregnant until 11 months of age (K. Johnson et al., 2014) and communicate with boys through more mobile and physical forms, which significantly reduces language communication and learning opportunities with their parents (Fausto-Sterling et al., 2015). These findings supported a discrepancy in the nurturing of boys versus girls. Because people use different language with girls and boys, facial recognition can also be a factor in childhood development.

Another study found girls and adult women were better at recognizing and remembering faces compared to men and boys (Herlitz & Lovén, 2013). This skill could be attributed to girls receiving more eye-gazing opportunities than boys from the onset of life (Rippon, 2019). Furthermore, other studies have shown how mothers tend to be more expressive with their daughters, which may provide evidence showing girls are prepared to be more emotionally attuned to their environments (McClure, 2000). From early on, adults are socialized to respond to boys differently than girls, which may call into question whether boys are emotionally attuned.

By 4 years old, even with all the experiences named for girls, both boys and girls are primed for social input (Wellman et al., 2001). Children have awareness of others' emotions and



when people have a different perspective than their own. At 4 years old, boys and girls can be both viewed as “tiny social workers” who want to be empathetic to everyone around them (Rippon, 2019, p. 191). However, something happens at this stage. As boys get older, studies have shown a huge decrease in empathy scores whereas girls’ scores keep rising. As children enter middle school, boys and girls begin to fit social expectations of who they must be when it comes to gender social norms (Michalska et al., 2013). Gender stereotypes perpetuated by societal norms are expectations present every day.

### **Gender Norms**

Children begin to understand gender messaging they obtain daily from the home and outside world (Rippon, 2019). There are coded gender messages in books, toys, education, media, jobs, and clothing, to name a few. Stereotypes, which are ways of being individuals are conditioned to anticipate and predict, guide how individuals behave with a particular group of people (Rippon, 2019). These stereotypes are embedded into children’s lives at the start of their development. Toys are some of the first items people observe as being for boys or for girls. One study discovered girls tend to believe Lego blocks are for boys and showed how much slower girls were at construction-based problem solving (Shenouda & Danovitch, 2014). By establishing which gender roles can do specific tasks, society gatekeeps opportunities for jobs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), which are dominated by men (Rippon, 2019).

In addition to toys, technology use among toddlers has increased. Data from 2013 showed 80% of 2- to 4-year-olds used digital phone media, which is filled with gender-based advertisement algorithms for children (Rideout, 2017). With the constant messaging young children receive daily, 4- and 5-year-olds have established which genders perform specific roles

in society based on how they play with their toys. Martin and Ruble (2004) found both boys and girls know men can be police officers, firemen, lawn mowers, and barbecue grillers and can use a tool like a hammer. In contrast, women are nurses and domestic housekeepers who wash the dishes or do the laundry while wearing lipstick. Obviously, this strict adherence to gender-assigned roles is a problem if society wants to diversify working fields and establish there are no differences in capability based on gender.

Another problematic issue is the pink versus blue color divide. Up until the age of 2, children do not have a preference for either color, and as they get older, boys start to reject pink because of the gender labeling behind it (Zosuls et al., 2009). The pink evolution and marketing scheme for girls has shown an increase in focus on STEM-based fields with standardized beauty standards combined with an explosion of pink tools (Sherman & Zurbriggen, 2014). Girls are encouraged to break gender stereotypes by playing more with cars, Legos, and toy trucks, yet 5-year-old boys know if they played with toys considered to be feminine, their fathers would not approve of those decisions (Freeman, 2003). A double standard of power has been established from the onset.

## **K–12 Experience**

As boys begin to navigate the world, society has already established how they should behave. For the purpose of this study, the K–12 experience for Latino boys was reviewed to understand how Latinos start to internalize messaging from their educational environments. For Latino boys, society has already created a version of who they are.

### ***Stereotyped From the Beginning***

Latino boys and men have struggled in educational settings due to a lack of academic identity obtained from their schooling experiences (I. Jackson et al., 2014; Milner, 2010; Romero

et al., 2009). Before Latino boys ever walk into their schooling spaces, terms such as at-risk, disadvantaged, poor, underprivileged, dysfunctional, inadequate, and intellectually impaired have been embedded for them through coded messages to educators (Campos, 2012). These messages have stemmed from a historical eugenics movement that painted Latinos as genetically deficient beings who should be segregated from white counterparts because they were only meant for labor occupations (Terman, 1916; Yosso & García, 2021). Following this movement, negative stereotypes of Latinidad focused on having large dysfunctional households, a lack of access to the English language, and Latino families who do not assimilate to U.S. culture (Yosso & García, 2021). It could be argued Latino boys have been set up for failure from the start given the system has established lower expectations of their abilities. A stereotype threat involves living up to negative associations pertaining to one's identity (Bell et al., 2003). Seo and Lee (2021) found Latino and Black boys experienced the most stereotype threat in a math classroom pertaining to academic achievement. As discussed earlier, boys are taught to be better mathematicians based on the toys they play with, yet when considering the stereotype threat present in math classrooms, this math ability may only pertain to white boys and coded messaging on racial superiority. Despite this deficit mindset for Latino boys, they still manage to meet learning outcomes.

### ***Gender Disparities***

At the time of this research, Latina girls have outperformed Latino boys in almost every academic category assessed in elementary and secondary schooling (Gándara & The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, 2015), even though both groups still have some of the lowest high school and college graduation rates in the United States (Vasquez-Salgado & Chavira, 2014). Latino boys (86.9%) and Latina girls (91.6%) increased their high

school graduation completion rates since 1980, yet Latino boys were twice as likely to drop out and unenroll at school compared to white boys (Ryu et al., 2021). The experiences of both groups have been vastly different with Latino boys more likely to receive harsher discipline under zero tolerance policies including suspensions, expulsions, and juvenile detention referrals than their white counterparts (Castillo, 2014). Latino boys are included in the school to prison pipeline narrative given their experience of being pushed out of their classrooms. This harmful stereotype produces trauma for Latino boys in a place that is supposed to provide safety for all students (I. Jackson et al., 2014). Another aspect of their academic identity is how Latino boys have been overrepresented in special education compared to Latina girls (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Losen & Orfield, 2002; D. E. Thomas & Stevenson, 2009), which has directly impacted Latino boys' access to opportunities in terms of educational attainment. Conversely, Latino boys have been underrepresented in advanced placement courses, gifted programs, and honors courses throughout their schooling experiences (Noguera, 2008). In addition to dealing with the added layer of stereotype threat, there is direct evidence Latino boys do not belong in K–12 schools because society has already deemed their worth.

Given the existing gender disparities in K–12 schools, educators need to understand how they are creating gendered biases and address them without taking away the progress Latina girls have obtained in the setting (Crosnoe et al., 2008). Ultimately, there is a gender gap in academic attainment in the United States, and educators need to focus on what they are doing to address these disparities (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009).

### **Masculinity**

The socialization of gender is an identity marker that dictates how one is to behave or resist in their environment. Masculinity studies have evolved over time, and there is a need for

collaboration with feminist and queer theories to actively dismantle heteronormative patriarchal violence that has consistently held power over women and gender expansive folks (Singh, 2021; Waling, 2019). Most masculinity studies focus on creating typologies to explain how men behave without providing a full analysis of how they actively choose to engage in violent and harmful norms (Waling, 2019). As Latino male educators enter a highly feminized profession, their expectations of masculinity are at the forefront of how they are judged (Lara & Fránquiz, 2015). These educators have to navigate how they should or should not act regardless of whether they cause harm. Men need more than just awareness about masculinity and its impact; they need to engage in combating internalized oppressive behaviors that continue to have damaging effects on society. This study focused on masculinity studies to add a counternarrative to past studies and continue creating change in an archaic system that emboldens hegemonic masculinity as the aspirational man.

### **Masculinity Studies**

Masculinity studies have focused on exploring how men navigate the social conditions from which they have benefitted. According to Waling (2019), masculinity focuses on understanding the ways in which men behave in the confines of society and applying specific typologies to affirm, sustain, or resist certain categorizations. Connell (1987) established hegemonic masculinity to explain the power dynamics men perpetuate against women and marginalized masculinities of men as a means to gain dominance over them. Typologies of complicit, marginalized, and subordinate categorizations evolved to enhance the description of where men could classify their masculinity, with most men trying to fit into hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005). Posthegemonic masculinity has continued this trend of naming categories of masculinity such as *mosaic* (Coles, 2008), *inclusive* (Anderson, 2010), and *hybrid*

(Bridges & Pascoe, 2014) to give reference to where men stand in these multiple masculinities through their behaviors and lived experiences (Waling, 2019).

Most masculinity studies do not collaborate nor do they uplift the work of feminist scholars. Berggren's (2014) categorization of posthegemonic masculinity involves sticky masculinity, which brings in poststructuralist and phenomenology feminist theoretical contributions. Berggren (2014) noted, "Bodies are shaped by what they come into contact with, by encounters that make 'impressions'" (p. 244), which supported Ahmed's (2004, 2006) understanding of how people actively engage and resist the discourses around them. Furthermore, bodies begin to orient themselves with sticky impressions that reveal what they are actively carrying with them (Ahmed, 2004). The bodies mentioned are those of men and the cultural norms they are actively negotiating with to portray or resist. For men to transform and actively resist notions of manhood, they must directly combat their own decisions through vulnerability and emotionality, which begins to change their understanding of the world. This transformation can create tensions for men in how they show up and begin to deconstruct masculinity because they are constantly moving between two worlds: manhood and selfhood (Stoltenberg, 2000). Manhood symbolizes the world of power, strength, aggression, and sexualization of women, whereas selfhood symbolizes a world of vulnerability, emotionality, and social justice (Berggren, 2014; Stoltenberg, 2000). Sticky masculinity can be further defined as an:

account of power, conflicting positioning as well as of lived experience. . . . While there is flexibility and contradiction, this does not leave subjects unattached; the circulation of norms stick to bodies, and the more masculinity is performed, the stickier it becomes. (Berggren, 2014, pp. 246–247)

Ultimately, boys and men are already positioned in society as oppressors when they engage in cultural norms of masculinity (Berggren, 2014). Men are socially constructed by masculinity, which informs how they navigate in the world, yet masculinity is not the only discourse that positions them or creates tension between the different versions of who they are (Berggren, 2014; Salisbury & Jackson, 1996).

Latino men must navigate westernized U.S. masculinity norms, machismo norms brought from their specific nationalities, and Latinidad. The following section describes the different definitions already created for Latino men, which show up in their experiences as young boys and educators in K–12 spaces. Ultimately, to combat patriarchy, there needs to be active resistance to cultural norms of masculinity while engaging in feminist practices geared toward revealing authentic and vulnerable beings.

### **Masculinity Norms**

Young boys come into the world with curiosity, empathy, and countless opportunities to be the people they want to be. Masculinity is one of the first encounters with identity they experience, and it has a long-lasting effect on how boys see themselves. Masculinity was established to go against femininity; namely, male control and dominance over women provided complete control of employment, wealth, and opportunities (Connell, 2005). Masculinity studies began defining and describing men as strong, assertive, aggressive, intelligent, tough, competitive, individualistic, thrill seeker, power hungry, stoic, risk takers, and anything antifeminist (Carrigan et al., 1985; Connell, 2005; Goldberg, 1976; Levant, 1996; Levant & Pollack, 1995; O’Neil, 1982). Because gender is a social construct, the fact masculinity holds power through a fixed notion of what a “real man” should be is troublesome.

For masculinity to continue to hold power, it must protect its place using violence against women or feminized men who do not meet this inherent definition (Connell, 1987). The levels of masculinity used to describe how young boys and men should behave include the terms of hegemonic, complicit, marginalized, and subordinate masculinities (Connell, 2005). The archetypal form of masculinity is hegemonic in exerting dominance through strength, aggression, race, and ableism (Connell, 2005; Lara & Fránquiz, 2015). There are very few hegemonic archetypes in society that are usually depicted by Hollywood action films, sports athletes, or fictional characters. Many military, corporate chief executive officers, and business leaders would fit a hegemonic archetype by the power they hold and how they lead through intimidation. Men with complicit masculinity can be seen as the frontline troops because they uphold hegemonic masculinity by cheering on men who are the athletes while also complying to the nuclear family prerequisites of being married to a woman, being a father, and being the breadwinner (Connell, 2005).

Men of subordinate masculinity are excluded from accepted forms of masculinity through exclusionary practices that target gay and nonbinary men through religious rationale, legal policy violence, physical street violence, and discrimination through economic opportunities. Lastly, marginalized masculinities include men from different races who support the hegemonic masculinity white male archetype. This can be seen in how Black athletes are glorified as extremely masculine while, at the same time, Black men can be seen as rapists if they have sexual relations with a white woman (Connell, 2005). Another example of the exclusion of marginalized men is the constant policing of Black and Brown bodies in U.S. society and continued colonization efforts of using slave labor among those incarcerated in the legal system, increasing poverty in urban areas and maintaining a strong labor force of capitalist corporations



(Connell, 2005; Menakem, 2021). Men of color do not just have to deal with U.S. versions of masculinity, they also have to navigate the meaning of their national and ethnic identity versions.

### **Machismo**

This study focused on the experiences of Latino male educators. As noted in the context presented, this study specifically focused on Latino men who live in the United States. Latino boys have to deal with an overwhelming messaging of gender dynamics from a U.S. lens and from a Latino lens. As they get older, Latino boys must navigate the U.S. version of masculinity and machismo. There are some similarities to the described hegemonic masculinity mentioned earlier; however, there are some evolutionary differences not mentioned in mainstream U.S. society. Originally, machismo, which is a Mexican and Spanish gender construct, was formulated on the basis of dominance over women (Paz & Kemp, 1961). Ultimately, a *macho hombre* does not show any sign of weakness or emotions because doing so would constitute a lesser version of manhood (Paz & Kemp, 1961; Torres et al., 2002). In addition, machismo has a much more negative connotation of masculinity in the United States compared to hegemonic masculinity created narratives. Quintero and Estrada (1998) found U.S.-created narratives described machismo as dominating, authoritative, promiscuous, alcoholic, holding off all forms of emotions, and employing oppressive actions toward women and children. Those coded messages have led to an identity crisis for Latino men in the United States because they trap men into showing up based on these definitions versus gender expansion (Pleck, 1981). Also, if Latino men try to fit the hegemonic archetype norms of masculinity in the United States, they are not generally accepted because they are meant for white men (Pollack & Levant, 1998). Other descriptions of machismo include descriptors such as hardworking, bravery, pride, and protectors of their home and families (Falicov, 1998). Further evolution of machismo has shown

characteristics such as emotional intelligence, agency, advocacy, self-confidence, and being affectionate and caring toward themselves and others (Abaci et al., 1974; De La Cencela, 1991; Falicov, 1998; Torres et al., 2002). Latino men must navigate through dominant U.S. masculinity norms and the evolutionary elements of machismo that are driven through social, political, and cultural elements of male identity (Torres et al., 2002).

Studying the multiple versions of machismo is just as important as understanding the multiple masculinities described by Connell (1987). There is potential to develop an understanding of what best supports Latino men in contemporary versions of gender roles. Torres et al. (2002) studied Latino men's definitions of what machismo means to them and how they navigate the world. Five categories resulted from the study: (a) contemporary masculinity, (b) machismo, (c) traditional machismo, (d) conflicted/compassionate machismo, and (e) contemporary machismo. Men who described contemporary masculinity held a more egalitarian familial perspective of gender roles and have an enhanced emotional intelligence that promotes a harmonious living environment. In spending more time in the United States, men who affirmed machismo held a less traditional view of gender roles; however, there are still elements of competitiveness and familial obedience to traditional male hierarchy. Traditional machismo is a traditional authoritarian definition of manhood that demands full familial obedience, traditional gender dynamics, and very minimal emotional intelligence. Conflicted/compassionate machismo holds authoritarian, traditional gender dynamics; is extremely competitive; shows more compassion; and is often in conflict with life roles. Contemporary machismo maintains less traditional demands of familial obedience, respect, and gender dynamics while also being more emotionally expressive, balancing life roles, and varying levels of competition. Given these

versions of machismo, it is important to see whether different lived experiences of Latino men show the evolution of social constructs for gender roles.

Because Latino men do not fit the hegemonic masculinity definition in the U.S. context and are automatically ostracized from accessing the benefits of U.S. patriarchy due to racism, machismo has evolved. This context provides a foundation for understanding what Latino boys have to navigate early in life, which leads to varying definitions of what it means to be a man in their present day lives. Schooling and education play a major role in academic identity for Latino boys and men, which can transfer to their identities as educators.

### **Emotional Erasure**

Another aspect of masculinity is the thought process behind emotionality. Due to common expressions of masculinity and how strength and aggression are celebrated, men have been conditioned to suppress their emotions (Gross & John, 2003). By suppressing their feelings, men tend to exude more outward aggressive reactions (Brody, 1993). As this study focused on Latino men, their relationships with emotions are quite different from the western archetype of masculinity (Falicov, 2018). From an early age, Latino boys are publicly and privately shamed, ridiculed, and humiliated as a form of behavior management, which results in negative internalizations of emotional expression. Conversely, for Latino male adults, they have engaged in affectionate behaviors to express their feelings toward their families, such as publicly kissing other men, including their sons. Crying is still frowned upon in private and public spaces as an expression of emotion, which is connected to western masculinity (Falicov, 2018). Thus, Latinos have to navigate the masculinity of U.S. culture and the machismo from their country, nationality, or specific region. On a positive note, although white men are seen as resistant to therapeutic interventions, Latino men have displayed emotions, positive and negative, without

much hesitation in therapy sessions (Falicov, 2018; Garfield, 2010). This provides evidence that therapeutic interventions can support Latino men in ongoing reflexive practices for their mental wellness. Knowing this background about Latino men is helpful in understanding their experiences as educators in K–12 spaces.

### **Latino Male Educators**

Diversity recruitment efforts have focused on hiring Latino male educators to increase the number of men who can support Latino boys and students of color. Because Latinidad does not constitute one nationality, when diversifying a teaching staff in a particular community, schools must know the cultural, national, and linguistic representation of the full community (Carey, 2020). As mentioned previously, Latino men have already been stereotyped, just as Latino boys have been before they walk in the school building. Recruitment efforts place exaggerated pressure on men of color to come and save young boys of color in the community, make them fall in line with heteronormative beliefs they need tough love and harsh discipline, and support students' assimilation in compliance-based environments (Carey, 2020). However, as saviors, these men still comply with heteronormative patriarchal expectations of manhood that continue to communicate to young Latino boys what it means to be a “man” rather than deconstructing masculinity (Singh, 2020). With these added layers, Latino men must navigate more obstacles as educators, which questions whether they are set up to fail.

### **Disciplinarians**

Once men of color become educators, they navigate a number of problems in their teaching experience. Men of color are often labeled as disciplinarians for troubled boys or are used as authoritative figures in the school environment (Brockenbrough, 2012; Cooper & Jordan, 2003; Singh, 2019). Latino men are already regarded as having obtained the skills needed to

support the lack of “Latino maleness” exhibited by Latino boys (Singh, 2018, p. 289). They are the first line of defense when it comes to teaching troubled young boys because these boys are sent to their classrooms prior to any administrative intervention (Lara & Fránquiz, 2015). Due to gendered societal norms that call Latino men to be aggressive and tough, these educators experience a pressure to be performative rather than authentic (Singh, 2019).

With so much emphasis on discipline and culture, men of color are unable to obtain professional development for their pedagogical and instructional skills, thus perpetuating the same lack of academic identities they obtain as young boys (Griffin, 2018; Griffin & Tackie, 2017; Singh, 2019). Having more “successful” Latino male educators in classrooms would support schools that struggle with controlling a population of students labeled as “trouble” (Harper, 2015). In examining the Black male teacher experience, Brockenbrough (2015) found Black men are exhausted in being used to push a hegemonic masculinity of being tough on Black boys. Researchers can learn from studies about Black male educators because these same stereotypes exist for Latino male educators and other men of color.

### **Mentorship**

As advertisements for teaching jobs have focused on Latino men to come and “save” Latino boys, programs must examine what they are asking men to replicate. According to Merriam-Webster (n.d.), mentorship is defined as a relationship in which an individual passes down skills, knowledge, and lived experiences to a mentee. This relationship can be problematic if it passes on hegemonic masculinity and perpetuates cycles of antifeminist violence.

Latino men have to navigate the hegemonic masculinity notions of U.S. culture and the machismo gendered notions of their own cultures (Connell, 2005; Torres et al., 2002). Unfortunately, men of color are called to be mentors to fix problematic young boys (Dumas,

2016; Singh, 2019) when they have not been given the opportunity to understand the problematic, oppressive ideology they have been engrained to follow in masculinity (Lara & Fránquiz, 2015). Media have created a “societal curriculum” for Latinos depicting a legacy of racism and inferiority of intelligence (Yosso & García, 2021, p. 311). Movies in educational settings have portrayed Latino boys as aggressive, unintelligent students who need a violent male protagonist to control them or a caring and nurturing female protagonist to save them (Yosso & García, 2021). Ultimately, Latino boys have been portrayed similarly to Black boys as needing saviors or needing to be “fixed” (Campos, 2012; Noguera, 2012; Singh, 2021). Looking deeper into the creation of male centered spaces, programs such as *My Brother’s Keeper*, which focuses on recruiting men of color to be saviors, can be spaces of oppressive hegemonic masculinity because there is no deconstruction of manhood in any of the program training (Crenshaw, 2014; Singh, 2019, 2021). Furthermore, when advertising for the control of disciplining problematic boys, hegemonic masculinity is allowed to thrive because that form of masculinity is accepted as ideal manhood (Carrington & Skelton, 2003). As there are few male representatives in a school community, it is difficult for Latino men to find success, and, without support, the diversity gap will not improve.

### **Future Focus**

This study has potential to add to the literature because masculinity and machismo have continued to have categorical definitions of how men should identify. Critical machismo consciousness is more expansive, and evolutionary reimaginings of masculinities can support Latino male educators through the use of feminist and queer theory. One such evolution is for Latino men to begin developing a Latino feminist masculinity (Hurtado & Sinha, 2008, 2016). Latino feminist masculinity reconsiders the definitions of manhood through intersectional social

factors like race, ethnicity, social class, and, to a lesser extent, sexuality. These definitions integrate cultural background, racial identity, social class, and, sometimes, the questioning of heterosexual male privilege. Hurtado and Sinha (2008) expanded traditional masculine identity and emphasized emotional connections, openness to change and help, collaboration, and comfort with multiple social identities. Essentially, being able to redefine masculinity has enabled men to embrace a broader range of human experiences, unbound by traditional gender roles, and allowed them to be more than conventionally defined men (Hurtado & Sinha, 2008; Pleck, 1981). For Latino men, gaining empathy about women's oppression can support the resulting tension with masculinity/machismo values that dehumanize other genders (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; Tajfel, 1981). This path could support Latino men in moving away and rejecting masculinity/machismo norms and starting to fight for social justice on issues where they have power to create change. If Latino feminist masculinity can be a newer version of masculinity, then this study supports the creation of spaces that are catalyst moments for Latino men to deconstruct their gender identity

### **Outcomes**

Latino male students have struggled in their K–12 experiences because their identities have been targeted through negative stereotypes. Latino men must navigate through multiple worlds of being based on defined social constructs of race and gender. As they learn to navigate those worlds, survival within the confines of school involves actively resisting negative stereotypes created for them. The need for this resistance—to be seen, heard, and affirmed—suggests society has already created the outcomes it expects from Latino boys and men.

## **Vanishing Latino**

The concept of the “vanishing Latino” (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009, p. 4) was first brought up in the 2000’s because Latino boys and young men were not enrolling in college. Since then, Latino boys and men have increased their rates of graduation from high school, enrollment in college, and graduation with college degrees (Ryu et al., 2021). However, due to the COVID-19 global pandemic and economic recessive consequences, Latino men have been impacted in educational attainment more harshly because of the added layers of responsibility in their lives (Ryu et al., 2021). Latino male college applications and college attendance has been behind their Latina counterparts. There has been a gender gap between Latino boys (59.4%) and Latina girls (67.9%) enrolling in college at the age of 18 and 19 years old, the traditional transition phase (Snyder et al., 2019). As both people from genders get older, it is more likely for Latina girls to attend college later when they are adults compared to Latino boys (Ryu et al., 2021; Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). There are many factors why Latinos do not seek educational attainment given how they are pushed out of schools early because of the negative internalization of their academic potential (Romero et al., 2009; Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009).

Statistically, Latino boys and men who drop out of school are more likely to enter the low-skill job workforce, are incarcerated as the second largest demographic in prisons, or obtain combat positions in all branches of the military (NCES, 2020; Noguera, 2012; Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). Latino men are less likely to be seen in science and business sectors of employment and are more inclined to be a part of construction, natural resources, and maintenance occupations, leading to less lifetime earnings as a result of fewer educational opportunities (Ryu et al., 2021). Thus, it seems Latino men are primed to enter a labor force that maintains the current state of society. As Latinos enter the workforce early in their lives, they also may need to provide for



their families, both financially and emotionally (Marin & Marin, 1991), which is intensified during times of economic financial hardships (Ryu et al., 2021).

Educators would benefit from understanding the pressure Latino boys receive from their families if they are the first in their family to attend and graduate from high school and college in the United States. This aspect, known as familismo, is a cultural norm instilled in Latino boys, both foreign born and native born, to be providers for their families because of a strong familial bond that ties them to the perseverance of the entire family, rather than the individual (De Leon, 2005; Fry, 2005; Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). This purpose has been bestowed upon them from an early age regardless of input from the child themselves. Latino men still do their best to persevere to obtain a college degree, yet Latino men have a lower percentage of obtaining a bachelor's degree because the lack of preparation they receive in their K–12 experiences lead them to enroll in community colleges rather than 4-year colleges (Ryu et al., 2021; Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). Latino men in higher education settings lack necessary skills to navigate the system; therefore, they revert to dropping out because these institutions replicate experiences they had as young boys in K–12 classrooms. It is difficult for Latino boys and young men to navigate institutions when they do not see representations of success for individuals who look like them.

### **Lack of Representation**

In their educational experiences, young Latino boys have lacked Latino men as teachers (Saenz & Ponjua, 2009). In the United States in 2018, 8% of the teacher workforce identified as Latino/a, with Latino men representing 2% of the entire teacher workforce (NCES, 2020). Latino boys, Latina girls, and nonbinary students have not had cultural representation among minoritized educators who would be more able to connect with the disparities their families face

in the community compared to teachers from different backgrounds (Saenz & Ponjua, 2009). An opportunity for Latino male educators to mentor Latino boys has been missing from schooling experiences, which would support the navigation of the educational system (Lahelma, 2000). Boys of color tend to distance themselves from their educational institutions because there is a void of male representation in their experiences (Carey, 2020). Despite this lack of representation, the public school student population has been “browning” (Santa Ana, 2002, p. 67), as predictors of demographics have suggested the enrollment of Latino and Latina students is on a continued rising trend. By 2029, 56% of all students in public schools will identify as students of color (NCES, 2020). Thus, it is imperative diverse representation becomes a part of recruitment and retention efforts.

Districts, schools, and teacher education programs are all supportive of diversifying the teaching workforce by having more male teachers in the pipeline. Studies have shown academic success for boys of color. Gershenson et al. (2018) found Black boys performed better academically and had a reduced probability of dropping out of school when matched with a Black male educator early in their elementary school experience. Another study focused on same-gender programming of Black boys taught by Black male educators in the Manhood Development Program at Oakland Unified Schools (Watson, 2014). Watson (2014) found pedagogical advantages when Black men taught Black history, supported academic success, and had high expectations for Black students in the classroom. Black male students had higher grade point averages and were reading higher than male students not in this program (Watson, 2014).

Having male representation in the classroom has an effect on more than just academic achievement. Men of color support boys of color when oppressive school policies are harmful to their identities by mediating purposeful interventions instead of punitive disciplinary action

(Allen, 2015; Carey, 2020; Pabon, 2016). Some men of color display more playful and restorative behaviors than disciplinary enforcement archetypes, which results in more supportive and caring role modeling (Allen, 2015; Brown, 2009; Carey, 2020). Carey (2020) amplified the voices of boys of color and found boys wanted more male representation in their school because it garnered connection, bonding through informal conversations, representation, and shared experiences related to their own lives. Men of color add value to schools and to the student experience if they themselves are valued, affirmed, and supported.

### **Identity Crisis**

The socialization of masculinity comes with layers of questioning identity that men of color had not considered before entering the teaching profession. When Latino men enter a highly feminized profession, their manhood is questioned constantly. Allan (1994) called this an anomaly. Regardless of marital status, there is an element of suspicion as to why Latino men teach (Lara & Fránquiz, 2015). Even when they fit the heteronormative masculinity archetype, Latino men are still not fully trusted to teach young children because of the negative stigma of homophobia in the field (Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Sumsion, 2000). Because the teaching profession is a highly feminized environment, hegemonic masculinity does not fit into the educator identity structure (Allan, 1994). When Latino men opt to teach particular grade levels, particularly in elementary education, societal biases may stereotype and label them as gay or feminized versions of masculinity (Skelton, 2003). Unfortunately, the labeling they receive about perceived masculinities can escalate to accusations and violence, specifically associated with pedophilia (Skelton, 2003). Conversely, men are heavily recruited for secondary educational environments versus elementary environments because they are assumed to be less nurturing to

younger youth (Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Mills et al., 2004). This added layer of identity is worrisome and creates tensions in the daily experiences for Latino male educators.

When presented with questioning their manhood, Latino male educators emphasize hegemonic masculinity actions to navigate any accusatory remarks about their identities, which has potential to shape youth perceptions that all men should conform to these behaviors (Lara & Fránquiz, 2015). With the constant negotiation of identity in every interaction, Latino men have reported experiencing an identity crisis and leave the profession twice as fast as Latina educators (Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Partee, 2014). Latino boys and Latino male educators are struggling in K–12 settings, which provides evidence in support of creating programming to address the myriad of problems presented thus far.

### **Latino Studies**

The final theoretical framework used to enhance the review of literature and research on educational studies for Latinos is LatCrit theory (Arriola, 1998). This study focused on the experiences of Latino male educators in K–12 spaces and how they navigate their identities through race, gender, and class. Centering their voices and perspectives as educators can support future programming efforts in their respective spaces.

### **LatCrit Theory**

Critical race theory (CRT) is focused on issues of race, power, and class to disrupt all spaces in a white hegemonic formalized system (A. Martinez, 2014). As Latino male educators enter the education field and notice they are marginalized in the K–12 environment, it is important to focus on racial disparities in their experiences (Carey, 2020). The U.S. system has methodically shifted over time to a more sophisticated form of racism that uses the weaponry of language, laws, structures, and perspectives (M. Jackson, 2009). More importantly, if race issues

are dismissed, institutional racism is guaranteed to continue and thrive (Olson & Fazio, 2003). Five central tenets of a framework using CRT include (a) the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism and multiple subordinating examples, (b) challenging dominant ideologies, (c) commitment to social justice, (d) highlighting experiential knowledge and its importance, and (e) using transdisciplinary perspectives (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

To understand U.S. culture, Latino male educators must understand racism is central or a “normal” part of society, and it is so ingrained that it looks ordinary to anyone (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). More importantly, Latino male educators need to think critically about racial discrepancies in the lack of success young Latino boys have in K–12 settings and whether they are perpetrators in that lack of success (Crosnoe et al., 2008). Illuminating voices of Latino male educators serves as active resistance to the dominant narrative in U.S. society.

Counter-hegemonic storytelling or counternarratives began as part of CRT as a form of storytelling from an oppositional view or perspective (Delgado, 1989). Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) mentioned counterstories from people of color must be recognized and acknowledged as a critical understanding of racism. If counterstories are not a part of obtaining knowledge, then “majoritarian” stories continue to perpetuate the white dominant legacy of racial privilege and hegemony for white people, white men, heterosexuals, and the upper class (Yosso et al., 2004). Furthermore, stories from people of color, women, and marginalized groups would continue to be defined as bad, whereas white, upper-class stories would be defined as good (Yosso et al., 2004). A. Martinez (2014) noted a methodology of CRT includes storytelling, family history, biographies, cuentos, testimonios, and counterstories from people of color. Overall, counterstories are used to dismantle “majoritarian” stories or “master narratives” to empower marginalized racial groups (A. Martinez, 2014). This form of resistance in

understanding racist U.S. society and history can live in any structure as there are always marginalized voices in a given setting. With Latino male voices constituting 2% of the teacher workforce, their voices resist the dominant narrative of teacher experience in K–12 schools.

As CRT has expanded into education, LatCrit theory has emerged as a developing framework (Arriola, 1998). With a focus on Latino and Latinx perspectives, the purpose of using LatCrit is to expand on the damage caused by white hegemonic structures in society and how they impact multiple identities (Iglesias, 1997). LatCrit enhances the perspectives of Latino men by theorizing where the intersectionalities of race and racism meet with other forms of oppression such as classism and sexism (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Furthermore, a LatCrit framework in education hyper analyzes how schooling environments oppress and silence versus affirm and empower Latino and Latinx students, teachers, and community members (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

### **Supporting Latino Boys and Men**

As a researcher, it has been difficult to identify Latino programming efforts that retain educators. Therefore, this review presents literature on Black male initiatives that have been created to help retain men of color in the teaching profession. R. Jones et al. (2019) examined a program that actively recruited Black boys in high schools, helped them apply to a teacher preparation program, and supported these young men in college and postgraduate studies. Clemson University's Call Me MiSTER (CMM) cohort teacher training program recruits and supports Black male students using living-learning communities, leadership development and mentoring opportunities, summer internships, workforce development, and community engagement (R. Jones et al., 2019). MiSTER stands for mentors instructing students toward effective role models (R. Jones et al., 2019). Since 2004, 85% of CMM's 250 graduates, or

MiSTERs, have remained teachers and administrators in K–12 settings, increasing South Carolina’s Black male educator presence by 90% (R. Jones et al., 2019). Intentionality of retention efforts has been key for CMM and has led other institutions to replicate the program, which has expanded to 25 higher educational institutions in South Carolina and other universities across state lines (R. Jones et al., 2019). Programs like CMM are important to learn from given their success in the retention of Black male educators both in university programming and after obtaining teaching jobs.

L. Rodríguez et al. (2013) recommended a similar program be created for Latino men. The four Latino men who graduated from the same graduate degree program at Harvard University argued the importance of providing structures in programming and creating a cultural mind shift in beliefs of the people being served. Latino men need (a) institutions to dialogue with them about their experiences, (b) quality relationships with their teachers, (c) a mentorship program with other Latinos who have been successful in the system, (d) internships in the professions they want to pursue, and (e) programs to enhance their academic skills (L. Rodríguez et al., 2013). Currently, no program has been created for Latino male educators with all the elements listed in the CMM programming. However, initiatives across the country exist in individual districts and schools that focus on supporting retention efforts for men of color.

Mentorship is an important element in retention programs for men of color. Project Mentoring to Achieve Latino Educational Success (MALES), out of the University of Texas at Austin (UT-Austin), has focused on gathering contemporary and relevant research to support Latino men in education, providing a student mentoring program to retain Latinos in college and insight to state and local officials on best practices to support their success (Sáenz et al., 2015). The Project MALES student mentoring program has impacted Latino middle, high school, and

college students directly by matching them with a trained Latino mentor from UT-Austin who can support their retention in all levels of education (Sáenz et al., 2015).

Another program for supporting Latino students—Encuentros Leadership College Preparatory Academy—was created by Latino community leaders. The Encuentros program focused on the success of Latino boys through a culturally relevant and healing centered curriculum that has improved self-esteem, worthiness, agency, and confidence (Quintanilla, 2017). Since the inception of the program, 100% of the participating Latino men have graduated high school, 97% have enrolled in college after graduation, and 75% have advanced into a master's degree (Quintanilla, 2017). Encuentros leadership has also expanded to provide father-son workshops and high school ethnic studies courses while enhancing the overall grade point average and school attendance for Latino boys in San Diego County.

The programs described have been successful because of collective efforts to support Latino male students in a community. Thus, the current study relied on the understanding of recommendations for intentional mentorship and creating a sense of belonging in educational spaces. The current study further sought to expand these notions by critically examining gender consciousness in regard to the hegemonic masculinity norms enacted by society and schools and learning from Latino male educators' voices regarding what would support their retention in K–12 schools.

### **Reciprocal Love and Ethos of Care**

Programming efforts must consider co-created spaces designed for men to be human, to be vulnerable, and to experience the power of love. As there are few Latino male educators in education, it is important to create a space focused on the social, emotional, and pedagogical (i.e., academic) success of every man in the cohort. Reciprocal love is a deep connection to one's



love for self and how that is linked to another human being (I. Jackson et al., 2014). More importantly, this kind of love is instilled in a community and nurtured to grow and flourish by understanding a deeper purpose to replicate it for future generations (I. Jackson et al., 2014). An ethos of care is the personal responsibility an individual has for others in their community, meaning others' success is also success for the entire community (I. Jackson et al., 2014). As men are socialized to create a hegemonic masculinity, heteronormative role in society, it is important to dismantle patriarchal archetypes through intentional fostering of deep relationships in which men can be vulnerable, build trust, and heal.

### **Circulo y La Cultura Cura**

Circulo, or community circle, is an indigenous practice used in restorative justice practices to increase community, healing, and belonging (Winn, 2018). Circulo mixed with *La Cultura Cura* emphasizes how men must connect with their cultural and ancestral roots to heal (National Compadres Network, 2021). *La Cultura Cura* suggests all beings are sacred and have a sacred purpose to use their culture to bring balance, belonging, and connection (Carrillo & Tello, 2008; Tello, 1998). This healing-centered approach moves away from trauma-informed work. Because deficit-based stereotypes of young Latino boys and Latino male educators have been prevalent, using indigenous ancestral practices can support healing by uplifting the sacredness of every person in the space. Healing-centered engagement focuses on Latino male educators making meaning of the world, gaining awareness, and establishing their purpose for engaging in the work as social justice educators (Ginwright, 2018). Healing is a continuous journey with no set culmination point. Because masculinity has created a culture in which showing emotion is discouraged, mental health support has continued to have a negative stigma for men. As a result, more research needs to show the benefits of healing for men to make it a mainstream habit.

## **Latino Men in Therapy**

Dealing with a constant identity crisis by navigating the separate worlds Latino men encounter can be a difficult experience. Contemporary Latino men understand the nuance in social constructions of masculinity and machismo and have become reflexive about what they have experienced and what actions they perpetuate (Falicov, 2018). With this sense of well-being, both internal and external, Falicov (2018) created a therapeutic social constructivist plan to support Latino men in unpacking their relationship with masculinity and machismo. Falicov used the following evaluative treatment tools: (a) the multidimensional ecological comparative approach, (b) concepts of shame and humiliation in the cultural gaze of others, (c) deconstruction of internalized dominant gender discourses, (d) discovery of positive cultural and personal constructs of masculinity, and (e) use of movies in therapy with Latino clients. Using these methods, Latino men can begin to challenge the intersectionality of their identities through therapy in support of deconstructing masculinities that:

entrap them and discover alternative cultural narratives . . . space for dialogue, reflection, and choice among various conceptions of masculinity as portrayed in the client's own life, his family and friends, and in the larger culture, such as film characters. (Falicov, 2018, p. 326)

Latino men can use therapy to begin transforming, deconstructing, and healing from the experiences they have had throughout their lives. The goal is to destigmatize therapy and advertise it as a form of wellness, coaching, and self-discovery.

### **Critical Machismo Consciousness**

As discussed in this literature review, this study used the components of critical sociocultural theory combined with racial identity development theory, masculinity studies, and

LatCrit theory to construct critical masculinity consciousness and deepen critical consciousness of gender for Latino men. Critical consciousness, or *conscientização*, is defined as not just being in the world, but also engaging in it by developing an awakening to what is happening in the environment (Freire, 1994). Danielewicz (2014) focused on how the act of becoming self-conscious can lead a person to deeply understand who they are in relation to their social environments, which creates an awareness of how they are socially influenced and how they behave in that society. As Latino male educators have identified having experiences with identity crises through internal and external notions of gender, this study explored the possibility of obtaining critical masculinity consciousness as a support structure in retention efforts. Figure 1 displays the theoretical framework for this study.

Latino men have been socially constructed through masculinity and machismo, which has led them to engage in or resist oppressive hegemonic structures of gender. As a result, Latino boys and men have been constantly stereotyped in their experiences as students and K–12 educators (Singh, 2018). Hiring initiatives have focused on recruiting more Latino male educators, yet there has been no mention of the problematic notions of masculinity these men have been asked to replicate for themselves and for the young Latino boys in schools. Because Latino men represent a small number of educators in any community, few affinity spaces exist in which they can process what has occurred. Retention efforts, programming, and initiatives to support Latino male educators can use therapeutic programming elements to deconstruct masculinity and machismo and enhance their critical masculinity consciousness (Falicov, 2010; Singh, 2021).

Therapy is a vital component for Latino men to process, reflect, and heal when learning and unlearning about their lived experiences and stickiness with masculinity and machismo. The

support of feminist theory, accountability, emotionality, and healing can lead to transformations in how Latino men successfully navigate the world they have inherited (Waling, 2019). Latino men have a responsibility to dismantle oppressive structures of masculinity and machismo and demonstrate agency to support a more inclusive environment in every space (Berggren, 2014). This study aimed to use Latino men's voices to inform future research studies and retention efforts and not replicate deficit-based stereotypes of Latino men in their environments.

### **Circuitos Enfocados**

As a researcher, it was important to me to have Latino male educator voices at the center of this study. These men were experts in how they have internalized and navigated their unique intersection of identities. Focus groups, or group interviews, provide a space in which individuals come together to dialogue and interact (Kitzinger, 1995). Instead of a general interview protocol in which each participant is asked to answer particular questions, a focus group encourages participants to respond to each other in the moment, ask questions, exchange anecdotes, and build on other participants' points of view (Kitzinger, 1995). This method can be useful in reflexive exploration of how people behave, how they think, and why they think in a particular manner. For this study, circuitos, or community circles, were an added component to this structure wherein norms are set regarding how participants interact, engage, challenge, and support each other's perspectives. Participants support the co-construction of these norms and support the facilitator in holding the group accountable. To promote trust, belonging, and affirmation, community circle questions bring in participants' identities, their unique stories, and their roots. The resulting vulnerability, trust, and transparency are necessary as topics become more intense based on the themes discussed. The intention is not to (re)traumatize participants but to provide a space in which their authenticity is celebrated, their stories are heard, and they

are able to dialogue about topics they generally do not have an opportunity to discuss (Dilshad & Latif, 2013). This methodology is further explained in the next chapter of this dissertation.

### **Summary**

This chapter presented relevant literature and research to provide an understanding of Latino men's lived experiences in K–12 schooling environments. This understanding supports the development of theory to improve retention of Latino men by supporting their critical masculinity consciousness. This research study addresses a critical need to move beyond the typologies of masculinity and machismo to describe where men situate themselves and collaborate with feminist theoretical studies to enhance male agency and emotionality as they purposefully engage with structured gender norms.

By establishing a critical masculinity consciousness, Latino men have the potential to navigate their identities through authenticity, vulnerability, and agency, which can lead to more inclusive advocacy for themselves and for the young people they teach. There is a need for more research on how deconstruction of masculinity and machismo impacts Latino men in the spaces they navigate. Latinidad is not a monolith; however, even with the evolutionary pathway of identities and how they all intersect, Latino men intentionally choose ways of being and interacting with the world that are harmful, violent, and oppressive toward women, LGBTQIA+ folks, and children. A reframing of positive and healthy formations of consciousness through mental wellness research, literature, and studies can support the creation of programming that directly supports inclusive gender spaces for all. Societal messaging has negatively stereotyped Latino men as a problem for far too long, and further research needs to use their voices as asset-based co-constructors for new programming to help other Latino men.

The research detailed in this chapter provides important context to the issues facing diversity hiring in K–12 schools for Latino men. By gaining a full understanding of what these men are dealing with on a daily basis, retention efforts can provide supportive measures to increase proximity to and interaction with marginalized demographics. The constant othering in U.S. society takes a toll on all individuals, and communal supportive measures can support processing, awareness, and healing so Latino men feel they belong. This study focused on centering Latino male educator voices as experts and historians of their lived experiences as teachers by humanizing the constant shifting in their identities due to a multitude of social constructs. By learning from them, this study aimed to make significant contributions to the limited research on Latino male educators that centers their voices through consciousness.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

They are heretofore untold stories of courage, resilience, pain, and struggle. They are their stories. They are my story. . . . They provide a way to gain understanding and to aim for transformation and change toward a pedagogy of liberation.

–Margarita Machado-Casas, *Narrating Education of New Indigenous/Latino*

*Transnational Communities in the South*

This research study focused on the lived experiences of Latino male educators. This dissertation is their words, their lived experiences, their reflections, and, more importantly, their vulnerability regarding the struggle of engaging in internal and external consciousness work. Freire (1998) referred to the work of understanding one's self and the surrounding world as *conscientização*, which involves not just being in the world but engaging in it by developing an awakening to what is happening around an individual. As a researcher, it was important for me to model vulnerability by telling my story and experience from my perspective before I asked any questions of participants. My intention was to build connection, to bring up past experiences, and to name my experience as just one example. Ultimately, I wanted to showcase how I would have benefited from a group like this, one in which I could be vulnerable about my insecurities, my traumas, and the constant negotiation of my identities. A goal of this study was for Latino male educators to reflect on their identity development through an intentional dialogic space rooted in their lives, experiences, and truths to (a) foster affinity with other Latino male educators who have similar experiences, (b) learn from one another through dialogue, and (c) notice how these dialogic spaces can foster development.

As such, this research focused on understanding the construction and deconstruction of identity through the lens of masculinity and machismo and through the negotiation of how Latino male educators think and behave in their K–12 spaces based on gender norms. Identities for Latino men are often influenced by heteronormative gender norms that perpetuate stereotypes of “being a real man” through U.S. and Latinidad intersectionalities (Singh, 2020, 2021). Latino male educators are often stereotyped once they walk into a school building as being authoritative, a disciplinarian, a role model, a mentor, and a savior of Black and Brown boys (Allan, 1994; Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Mills et al., 2004; Partee, 2014; Singh, 2021; Sumsion, 2000). However, this study centered the voices of Latino male educators using *circulos enfocados* to gain insight on their lived experiences in their respective K–12 spaces. These spaces created opportunities to foster discussions among heterosexual cisgendered men by providing space to explore deep consciousness topics. The specific focus of this study was on gender because of its role in the construction of identity or identity development of heterosexual, cisgendered men. My work built on Waling’s (2019) call for men to interrogate masculinity beyond acting a certain way and how it intentionally has focused on internal and external harm. More importantly, Waling (2019) called researchers to consider two things: “the positives or the pleasures in engaging with particular forms of masculinity when framed as a negative and therefore oppressive structure, and how men negotiate such engagement through a consideration of their agency and emotional reflexivity” (p. 103).

*Circulos enfocados* were used as an opportunity to show Latino male educators a different way to interact. Delicacy and nuance in interactions with Latino male educators in the *circulos enfocados* was necessary to reframe, deconstruct, and enhance healthy forms of masculinity through agency and emotional reflexivity. It was not my intention to make Latino



male educators feel their gender identities are negative. Instead, the intention was for these Latino male educators to find a safe and brave space in which to explore their lived experiences with gender and how gender has affected and influenced the understanding of their present identity.

Masculinity in this study was framed by the duality of negotiating intersectionalities between U.S. masculinity norms and machismo Latinidad norms for Latino male educators. Key to this study was understanding that social construction of multiple identities are at play because of a constant state of othering in the United States. For Latinidad, there are layers that contribute to the social construction of identities. Among these layers is the duality of double colonization: colonized within European Latin American imperialism and the contemporary imperialist state of the United States (Chávez-Moreno, 2021a, 2021b; González, 2011). An individual who identifies through a Latinidad identity may internalize the perspective of being a perpetual foreigner in the United States, which means they never feel a sense of belonging in any space because that individual is always considered the other (Chávez-Moreno, 2021b; Gómez, 2020).

In terms of gender, Latino male educators must also navigate the challenge of being one of the few, if not the only, Latino men in their school building (NCES, 2020). Being one of the only men in the school building can lead Latino male educators to feel isolated and siloed as they navigate their gender identities (Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Singh, 2019, 2020). My hope was to begin to deconstruct masculinity/machismo and reconstruct a more inclusive definition of gender expansiveness beyond the stereotypical heteronormative definitions and add to the spectrum of multiple masculinities in the research field. My particular focus was how Latino men navigate, reflect, and dismantle oppressive masculinity norms through the particular medium of sharing their stories with other Latino men. By providing spaces for Latino male educators to engage,

confront, and reimagine issues of masculinity, I hoped this work could lead to healing, joy, and reimagination as they co-construct a vision of progressive masculinity/machismo.

### **My Ongoing Journey**

My particular experience in this country has been consistent with *otherhood*, which has made me feel I never truly belonged in any setting (Molina, 2015). The consistent reminders that I am different and must have a rationale for why I exist in this space and time and the constant frustration with deficit-based language of my identities have made me struggle. This struggle has led me to question whether I truly belong in any location because there was nothing collective about humanity.

My mental health has been affected by an ongoing internal battle of feeling I was enough, of being told I had to act a certain way, and never living up to everyone's expectations of me. I never had the language, the coping strategies, or the outlets to heal when I was younger nor when I entered the world to begin my professional career. My experience of being a Latino male was based on other people defining who I was, living up to expectations I never enjoyed or questioned, and feeling there was always something missing to truly be authentic. I felt like an actor in a role I was never meant to play.

As a Latino male educator, I was constantly asked to represent the male or boy experience for Latinidad in the communities I served. This expectation was an added layer to my responsibilities, which included supporting the discipline of Latino boys, being the model of what success looks like, and explaining why boys act or behave a specific way. I was dehumanized by people who questioned my intelligence, questioned my motives when a third-grade female student gave me a hug, and questioned my classroom culture practices because students "talked too much." Too many times I was considered the unicorn in the room because I

was one of the few Latino men who stayed in the profession long enough to see success. Success meant conforming to masculinity norms, disciplining young boys who were negatively labeled, and withholding my comments about instruction because, as one white female administrator stated, “Latino men don’t know what they are talking about.” These macroaggressions (Solórzano & Huber, 2020) were constant, and I worried about the version of myself people were seeing. My experiences as an educator provided the first feedback on how I should respond to people, how my face was perceived, and how my sarcastic humor was a human resource related issue. My feedback was tied to my personality, not my teaching pedagogy.

Once I was accepted into a doctoral program, the purpose had already been set for my research because I had lived through what the literature explored. This research study was close to my heart because I have grown so much from intentional proximity to healing with therapy, being coached by men who have deconstructed and reimagined masculinity, being in proximity to feminist femtors, and gaining consciousness by understanding the historical experience of groups that are marginalized. A femtor is “a mentor who identifies as a woman and can offer a woman’s perspective, support, guidance, and knowledge” (Lucht, 2022, p. 7). I have shared this story as a way to connect to readers. I wanted to be careful about sharing my story with Latino male educators so I would not influence or superimpose my experiences onto them. Also, I wanted to be vulnerable about my experience and center my experience with masculinity/machismo in the hope that Latino male educators would feel brave and safe in these spaces to share their experiences.

### **Research Methods**

Rooted in the theoretical framework of LatCrit, masculinity studies, critical sociocultural theory, and racial identity development theory, I wanted to use a method that supported the

voices of Latino male educators by honoring their stories and elevating their perspectives (Cruz, 2012; Ginwright, 2018; I. Jackson et al., 2014). Human identities are nuanced, and I did not want to focus on one specific theory given the intersectionalities constantly present in life. LatCrit focuses on Latino experiences through multiple intersectional identities (Huber, 2010; Iglesias, 1997; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). For this study, I focused on race, sex, and gender of Latino male educators and the nuances of how they navigate and unpack these identities. Given the power dynamics of sex and gender through a patriarchal lens, I wanted to understand how current Latino male educators describe their experiences as marginalized educators in a field dominated by women. In terms of masculinity studies, I wanted to expand the conversation and dialogue beyond the constant stereotypical labeling used in research such as hegemonic, subordinate, sticky, mosaic, hybrid, and others (Abaci et al., 1974; Ahmed, 2004; Anderson, 2010; Berggren, 2014; Bridges & Pascoe, 2014; Coles, 2008; Connell, 2005; De La Cencela, 1991; Falicov, 2010; Torres et al., 2002; Waling, 2019). My goal was to showcase the spectrum of masculinity by highlighting Latino men's lived experiences and how they use their identities intentionally or express their identities unintentionally. I hoped having Latino men share what this gender expansiveness can look like through their discussion could support future research on the potential of multiple masculinities exploration. As a researcher, having Latino male educators share their variety of experiences is important to me because I have been labeled or placed in a box in almost every space and interaction I have navigated in the United States. I hoped to showcase how all Latino male identity experiences are different, nuanced, and important to understand.

Critical sociocultural theory supports my study in co-creating dialogic spaces with Latino male educators where there is trust, shared power, and multiple perspectives from which to

engage in this sensitive topic (Moje & Lewis, 2020; Molina, 2015). Certain conditions, such as growth points and growing edges, are necessary in these dialogic spaces for Latino men to receive feedback about their identities, which may cause cognitive and emotional dissonance as they reimagine a new way of understanding their masculinity/machismo (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStafano, 2018; K. E. Johnson & Golombek, 2016; Molina, 2021). Through these dialogic spaces, learning and unlearning of critical consciousness is intentional as it relates to sex, race, and gender of Latino male educators.

Last, being a researcher who is racialized, racial identity development theory was important to include in this study's framework because everyone has a different relationship to their race. Creating a racial and gender affinity space for Latino male educators allowed for the unpacking of cultural beliefs, ideas, and perceptions of race. Research has shown, and I was intentional to showcase this point, Latinidad is not a monolith in experiences of all intersectional identities when it comes to race and nationality (Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001; Gómez, 2020; Huynh et al., 2011). My hope was to allow participants to display perceived understandings of their identities and how they navigate them. All these theories guided my research and work to support Latino male educators in gaining critical machismo consciousness through the intentionality of these dialogic spaces, *circulos enfocados*, which are defined later in this chapter.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided my research study:

1. In what ways do Latino male educators understand their machismo and how it impacts their day-to-day lives in their educational settings?
2. In what ways do Latino male educators disrupt heteronormative patriarchal standards of masculinity and machismo in their own beliefs and actions?

3. In what ways do Latino male educators acquire knowledge and skills in their teaching and leadership practices to help them remain and thrive in their educational profession?

### **Critical Qualitative Case Study**

The methodological approach used for this study was a critical qualitative case study. Case studies are used to explore a topic of interest or phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2017). Mixed with constructivist ideology, a critical qualitative case study recognizes people have their own unique ways of understanding the world (i.e., subjective), while also considering there are aspects that have more universal understandings (i.e., objective; Baxter & Jack, 2008; Crabtree, 1999). My approach was to center and recognize how multiple perspectives (i.e., pluralism) come into play without thinking everything holds equal weight in knowledge (i.e., relativism). This study emphasized an ongoing interaction between how things are seen and what is actually being observed (i.e., subject and object). Yin (2017) asked researchers to consider a case study approach when aiming to uncover underlying conditions relevant to a specific phenomenon. In this study, the phenomenon explored was how Latino male educators navigate their K–12 spaces through their gender identities of masculinity/machismo.

In addition, Stake (1995) focused on an instrumental case study type, which supported my interest in achieving a specific goal beyond understanding the case itself. My goal was to provide insights on the broader issue of retaining Latino male educators. As a researcher, my role was to support a greater community aiming to add to and refine present understandings about the phenomenon of gender identity navigation for Latino male educators using an approach not yet fully explored. Meredith (1998) identified three strengths of a case study design: (a) the phenomenon can be studied in its natural state while gaining meaningful understanding through

observation of practices; (b) research questions asking, what, why, and how are asked and answered with a full understanding of the complexity and nuance of the phenomenon; and (c) the case study supports an exploratory investigation where there is still unknown variables and the phenomenon is yet to be fully understood. Handfield and Melnyk (1998) further supported the use of this approach for my study with the following purposes of case study design: (a) to continue pursuit of uncovering and deconstructing areas for theory development, (b) to engage in intentional theory construction to identify/describe the connection between variables at play and explain why they exist in this way, (c) to test and explore to support predicting future opportunities and potential outcomes, and (d) to refine or extend the structures of the theories that support the phenomenon due to the data results. It was important to me to use a case study approach because (a) the phenomenon of understanding how Latino male educators understand their gender identities is complex, (b) there is not much literature to support their experiences, and (c) it allows for an unpacking of their context and lived experiences (Dul & Hak, 2008).

The intent and purpose behind using critical qualitative case study research methodology was to support the development of consciousness for all participants involved, including the researcher, and to the readers of this dissertation (Korth, 2002). This study particularly focused on the hegemony of heteronormative patriarchal standards posed upon society that create disparities in the identities of masculinity and machismo, nonbinary identities, and other genders (Giroux, 1988; Korth, 2002). Furthermore, adding criticality to this study was politically intentional to face the injustices masculinity and machismo gender norms have caused and hold these norms accountable as a hierarchical authority (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011; Schostak & Schostak, 2007). Kuntz (2016) cautioned critical researchers:

Any inquiry process that seeks to intervene in traditional formations of knowing and being . . . with the hope for social justice and progressive change . . . must necessarily grapple with the means by which truth is produced and sustained in our culture. (pp. 95–96)

Throughout this journey, my goal has been to learn, unlearn, and continuously reflect as a researcher.

I understand my positionality as an insider by knowing my own lived experiences of Latinidad, machismo, American masculinity, educator, and other intersectional identities that may be present among participants. I anticipated some level of tension in these dialogic spaces because having similar identities does not gain me full access to or garner trust with someone's humanity. Being an insider can impact my study by holding a specific bias, influencing participants to share a similar perspective, and pushing my own agenda on the research, dialogues, and analysis. I was cognizant of these concerns and mitigated many of these influences by centering and displaying the voices of Latino male educators as they shared their experiences. As an outsider who is studying, researching, and engaging with Latino male educators, I have been intentional in how I represent their stories, gain their trust through this process, and model for them through my own vulnerability and storytelling. This critical qualitative research inquiry consisted of "both a kind of care and kind of recklessness" (Denzin et al., 2017, p. 491) needed to disrupt and enhance consciousness. Ultimately, the criticality of this study came from elevating a more progressive voice to the forefront of scholarship and continuing to push future studies to listen to the voiceless (Denzin et al., 2017). In reflecting on the impact, I wanted this study to have in education, new knowledge was formalized through this process that can support retention efforts through educator programming and proactive support



structures for Latino male educators. Given the limited research there has been on Latino male educators, my hope was to add to the theoretical research to support efforts for this population.

### **Participant Selection Procedures**

Before beginning this study, I completed my CITI training for human subjects research and my institutional review board granted approval (see Appendix B). From that point, I strategized on the most effective way to obtain participants for my study. This study used convenience sampling, in which I selected participants based on a specific criterion in their identity and demographics (Etikan et al., 2016; Ritchie et al., 2013). I sent emails to my network of educators with whom I have directly worked in both public and public-charter K–12 environments to be forwarded to their network of educators (see Appendix C). To participate in this study, educators had to meet the following criteria: (a) be a male, heterosexual, and cisgendered educator; (b) have a Latinidad identity; and (c) currently work as a K–12 educator. For this study, the term *educator* was expanded in its definition. Educators could work as a teacher, an administrator, a regional or district leader, or any other roles with influence in the K–12 environment (e.g., college counselor, mental health counselor, after-school coordinator). I expanded this definition to overcome limitations imposed by teachers' restricted accessibility and aimed to dive into the nuanced experiences of Latino male educators as they advance in their K–12 educational spaces. This expansion supported the study's research and context and enhanced visibility into educators' learned strategies for remaining in the field of education. When participants were interested, they filled out a survey to provide their contact information, their relationship to masculinity and machismo, and the nuance of racial identity in terms of their Latinidad (see Appendix D). Twenty-seven educators completed the survey, and 20 were selected to participate in four *circulos enfocados*. Participants who were selected met criteria for

participation and had availability to attend one of four dates and time slots for a *circulo enfocado*. A consent form was sent to all qualifying participants to sign before they could attend a *circulo enfocado* (see Appendix E). All 20 participants signed and confirmed attendance on a digital calendar invite. A total of 17 Latino male educators attended and participated in the *circulo enfocados* in this study. The following section breaks down the demographics of the participants.

### Participant Demographics

From the 27 people who filled out the survey, there were individuals who identified in the LGBTQIA+ community. As a researcher, I wanted to include these individuals in the study, yet I did not want to perpetuate any harm from heteronormative beliefs and mindsets that could be present in the space. It was a reminder of the bridge needed to expand masculinity and machismo beyond heteronormative standards. Instead, 20 participants were chosen for the study, which translated to five participants in each of the *circulo enfocados*. Actual attendance in the *circulos enfocados* included 17 total participants, with three of the *circulos* having four participants and one having five participants. Table 1 illustrates the participant demographics.

**Table 1**

#### *Latino Male Educator Participants*

Name	Latinidad	Years of experience	Location	Educator role
Javier	Latino & Chicano	4	Houston, TX	K–12 district hiring role
Michael David	Latino	15	Los Angeles, CA	K–12 nonprofit director
Dani	Latino	6	Long Beach, CA	K–12 teacher
Antonio	Hispanic & Latino	13	Dallas, TX	K–12 district administrator

Name	Latinidad	Years of experience	Location	Educator role
Taco	Hispanic & Latino & Mexican	10	San Diego, CA	K–12 teacher
J.O.	Latino & Chicano	6	Los Angeles, CA	K–12 teacher
Espy	Latino	16	Houston, TX	K–12 regional director
Sandro	Hispanic & Latino	15	Houston, TX	K–12 regional director
Jaime	Afro-Latino	12	Los Angeles, CA	K–12 teacher + administrator
Kevin	Latino & Chicano	12	Los Angeles, CA	K–12 administrator
Christian	Chicano	4	Las Vegas, NV	K–12 administrator
Bobby	Hispanic & Chicano	18	Houston, TX	K–12 regional director
Jose Jesus	Chicano	24	San Diego, CA	K–12 teacher
Justino	Chicano	12	Houston, TX	K–12 administrator
Miguel	Latino & Chicano	8	Los Angeles, CA	K–12 teacher
Leon	Hispanic & Mexican-American	5	Los Angeles, CA	K–12 teacher
Alonzo	Hispanic	5	San Diego, CA	K–12 teacher

The 17 participants selected from the 27 who completed the survey included a range of Latinidad identities, showcasing how Latinidad is not a monolith. Some participants disclosed identities pertaining to Latinidad mainstream identification such as Hispanic and Latino, whereas others identified more with nationalities or progressive identities like Chicano or Mexican-American. The diverse racial identities showcased what connection to Latinidad the educators had and how they felt most comfortable identifying. I did not define these racial identity markers and allowed participants to self-select or add the identification with which they had more affinity. Six participants identified with the term Hispanic, 11 participants identified with the term Latino, eight participants identified with the term Chicano, one participant identified as

Afro-Latino, one participant identified with their nationality of Mexican, and one other participant added Mexican-American to their racial identity.

Participants' educator roles ranged from content teachers in K–12, teacher leaders in grade levels or content, deans of culture or instruction, principals, regional leadership development facilitators, talent and recruitment team, college access, athletics, and nonprofit directors with direct ties to schools. In terms of years of experience, I was surprised at the range of responses. The mean years of experience was 10.88, the median was 12, and the mode was 12. Latino male educators' years of experience ranged from 4 years in education to 24 years in education. Ten participants had more than 10 years of experience with one participant having over 20 years of experience in education. This context can provide valuable knowledge about what they have done to navigate their professional experiences and continue working in education.

### **Data Collection**

Rooted in the theoretical framework of LatCrit, masculinity studies, critical sociocultural theory, and racial identity development theory, my data collection focused on gathering valuable insight into the lived experiences and perspectives of Latino male educators through dialogic spaces. The ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic created an opportunity to reimagine the research setting and how it could provide dialogic spaces around sensitive topics such as masculinity and machismo. The following sections break down the intentionality I took through each portion of the process to gather data in support of answering my research questions.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Participants engaged in their choice of one 120-minute *circulo enfocado*, during which they were asked a set of open-ended questions (see Appendix F). The selection of each group

was based on participant availability for specific dates and times. The total participation time for one participant in the study was about 150 minutes of data collection, with 120 minutes of time on the Zoom círculo enfocado and about 30 minutes of reviewing how their voices would be represented in the study. Due to the topics that came from the dialogues, the time allotted was often insufficient because (a) certain topics needed more processing time with certain groups, (b) all the questions in the protocol could not be answered, and (c) participants wanted to follow up with each other on specific things someone shared.

Honoring participants' voices and experiences was the main objective in highlighting their perspectives through these dialogic spaces. Participants were asked to think of their own name or pseudonym for use in the study. I wanted to humanize participants and not use a generic label of "Participant A" or "Participant 2;" using participant-selected pseudonyms allowed me to honor their stories and how they wanted to be represented in this study. Transparency was key to building trust with participants so they would not feel as if their experiences were represented in a negative light. Before participating in dialogue, I modeled vulnerability by telling my story, the purpose of my study, and sharing a small video clip on masculinity from the documentary, *The Mask You Live In* (Newsom, 2015; see Appendix G). These steps were important to establish a baseline of knowledge about masculinity/machismo from which to engage in conversation about something we had communally experienced in the moment. I was curious about the potential topics participants would discuss based on what was shared. The dialogues and conversations brought up much richness in the data, which further validated why this study was important. This experience beautifully reminded me of the opportunities these spaces can possess with intentionality.

Each círculo enfocado was recorded and transcribed for data analysis. Participants were asked to member check what data were presented in the study, and they were encouraged to review, add, or edit anything they wanted. The accumulated data from the four círculos enfocados, with a total of 17 Latino male educator participants, included 519 minutes of transcribed recordings.

### **Research Setting**

This study took place remotely through the Zoom virtual platform. Following the COVID-19 global pandemic, remote virtual communication had become a more normal means for interactions. For this study, círculos enfocados were intentionally designed to co-create a digital space that felt safe for Latino male educators. To make the space feel welcoming, cameras were asked to be on, norms were set on how to engage throughout the session, and participants were able to log in from wherever they felt the most comfortable. These decisions were made to support the health and safety of each participant as the pandemic was still very prominent at the time of this study. In my role as a remote worker, I have seen the benefits of having dialogic spaces on Zoom and have continued to enhance my pedagogical framework in how to approach these spaces. The flexibility in having this option allowed Latino male educators to participate from various locations across the United States, which added different Latinidad experiences and gave variation in context. In developing a schedule for círculos enfocados, time zones were taken into consideration to support the locations in which participants resided; participants Zoomed in from Southern California, Texas, and Nevada. The time of year in which data collection occurred was also a beneficial factor because most participants had finished the school year, which gave them more flexibility to commit to the time frame of the data collection. I used digital tools to

reach consensus from participants on the best dates and times to have the focus groups, ensuring the maximum number of participants in each setting.

To build trust in a remote space, norms were set to support participants in feeling safe and brave enough to share. Participants were asked to turn on their cameras so everyone could engage in dialogue. Having cameras on allowed me to look at facial expressions and nonverbal cues of each participant on one screen and provided the opportunity to read the room as much as possible, which was done during facilitation so I could respond immediately. Nonverbal cues I focused on were facial expressions as participants shared, eye contact, body language, and vocal intonations when they spoke (McArthur, 2022; Wood, 2018). Noticing nonverbal cues allowed me to follow up with questions in the moment, make general statements of patterns in the space (e.g., “I noticed most of us were nodding our heads in agreement when Christian was sharing”), and chat with participants privately to make sure they were okay. This process reminded me of the pedagogical knowledge I obtained in my K–12 experience as an educator and in my current role in facilitation. I realized I had strengths in being a researcher and a practitioner by engaging in this work.

With remote environments being a new normalcy for communication, my goal was to create a space in which participants felt welcomed, affirmed, and a sense of belonging. Being a facilitator of virtual training in my current role and an administrator during the COVID-19 global pandemic afforded me the confidence to engage in this space in a way that felt authentic to who I am. I participated when I needed to, I validated and affirmed participants’ responses, and I pushed participants to share more about their experiences. I can only imagine what an in-person space could have created in terms of trust, vulnerability, and belonging; however, I was satisfied with the overall experience. In thinking about norms, content, and practices, there is potential for

in-person, virtual, and hybrid formats to support similar goals and objectives when dialoguing around difficult themes. I discuss this potential more in the limitations section and how it solidified an opportunity to expand these dialogic spaces to a full curricular model.

### **Data Collection Tools**

Rooted in the theoretical framework of LatCrit, masculinity studies, critical sociocultural theory, and racial identity development theory, the data collection tools for this research study supported the elevation of Latino male educator voices. The goal was to collect the internal and external dialogue Latino men have engaged in as they uncover consciousness work about their lived experiences. I intentionally chose to use tools that support a collective dialogic approach to gaining insight from Latino men who share many of the same intersectional identities. The two tools used in this study were *circulos enfocados*, which represents a mix of various focus group methodologies and dialogic space formation, and memo writing, which supported my reflexive processing and analysis as a researcher. Table 2 summarizes the methods tools used to collect data.

**Table 2**

#### *Data Collection Tools*

Tool	Purpose
Circulos enfocados	The purpose of <i>circulos enfocados</i> is to provide a space for radical dialoguing of gender and race of Latino men to gain insight into their reflexivity, empathy, and healing of the oppressive social structures they navigate each day (Cruz, 2012).
Memo writing	The major purpose in using memos is to continuously learn and unlearn through the data collection process as an ongoing exploratory reflexive component (Charmaz, 2008).



### *Circuitos Enfocados*

Focus groups, or group interviews, provide a space for individuals to come together to dialogue and interact (Kitzinger, 1995). Instead of a general interview protocol, in which one question is asked and each participant answers the question, a focus group encourages participants to respond to each other in the moment, ask questions, exchange anecdotes, and build on others' points of views (Kitzinger, 1995). This method can be useful in reflexive exploration of how people behave, how they think, and why they think in a particular manner. The dialogical spaces in this study focused on deconstructing masculinity and machismo norms for Latino male educators. The discussions allowed for participants to share their unique lived experiences and determine what they wanted to share regarding their machismo with people they were meeting for the first time. The nuance of humanity is on display in focus groups because everyone who participates has a different perspective and point of view to add when talking about sensitive issues (Dilshad & Latif, 2013). Focus groups are a self-contained method that can serve as a primary source of data collection versus doing individual interviews. Through the research lens of critical sociocultural theory, learning and unlearning is participatory in nature because participants bring in their knowledge and perspective to create collective knowledge (Moje & Lewis, 2020). Through discourse, participants form a new consciousness by deconstructing identities and pushing each other on previously held knowledge. In addition, I was curious about how a group like this could empower Latino male educators to share more of their stories, perspectives, and points of view, particularly if they see others engaging in similar types of dialogue.

Given the criticality of this qualitative case study, I wanted to move away from traditional, Western, research-based methodology pertaining to the use of focus groups. K. Rodriguez et al.

(2011) designed culturally responsive focus groups (CRFGs) to support researchers and educators in understanding their own identities prior to critically questioning beliefs, ideas, and knowledge. By understanding power dynamics present in the research process, researchers can “minimize the intimidation and discomfort that may be experienced in traditional research methodologies and enhance the participants’ ability to co-construct knowledge within the research setting” (K. Rodriguez et al., 2011, p. 405). Due to the marginalization Latino male educators’ experiences in the field of education, facilitating a CRFG was important for understanding the delicacy of this sensitive topic, creating an affirming space, and enhancing comfortability with being uncomfortable through intentional dialoguing (Hall, 2020; K. Rodriguez et al., 2011; Talleyrand et al., 2022).

The focus groups were further enhanced by the use of community circle structures. *Circulos*, or group community circles, has a direct connection to decolonizing methodology focused on community building, healing, and co-creating a space of belonging (Winn, 2018). Because virtual settings have become more of a normal practice for engaging in meetings, interviews, and daily communication since the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic (Falter et al., 2022), I intentionally translated the practice of *circulo* into a virtual setting. I ensured participants were able to select a space in which they felt comfortable engaging, set intentional norms on how to engage in dialogue through Zoom settings, and monitored discussions to ensure everyone had an opportunity to participate (Falter et al., 2022). Establishing these norms in a Zoom setting supported various forms of communication regarding sensitive topics raised by the Latino male educators.

A final component involved in these *circulos* was the inclusion of my experiences with restorative practices. As mentioned, the subject matter in these spaces was personal to me and to

the participants. Latino male educators deal with deficit-based ideology of their identities in the professional settings they navigate (I. Jackson et al., 2014; Milner, 2010; Romero et al., 2009). A goal of this study was to co-construct critical countercultural communities of practice; these communities are spaces in which direct opposition to racist and sexist environments exists to combat and engage with internal and external conflicts posed by society to Latino male humanity (Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008; Singh, 2021). My intention behind using *circulo* as a form of data collection was to directly engage in the learning process with Latino men, build a safe space for reflection, and challenge and support each other's perspectives. As such, it was important to establish myself as a strong and supportive facilitator in this space with the ability to provide safety, model bravery, and promote a healthy dialogue about a potentially sensitive topic. My role as a researcher was to stimulate participant voices, offer thoughtful follow-up questions, keep the topics at the center of discussion, listen, and be sensitive to the needs of all participants (Dilshad & Latif, 2013). The combination of these elements led to the creation of *circulos enfocados* (i.e., community circle focus groups), in which trust, vulnerability, and healing support the structures of group dialogue through intentional open-ended questioning, encouragement of all participants' voices, dialogue around conflict in an effort to understand rather than judge, and affirmation of identities in the space (National Compadres Network, 2021). Bringing in all these elements helped to humanize the experience with Latino male educators and showcase a way in which to engage with others in the future. This process presents an opportunity for Latino male educators to build affinity spaces that center humanity, love of self, and love of community and provide a support system for others in the same learning and unlearning journey (I. Jackson et al., 2014). For this study, I also wanted to have an opportunity to reflect on how I was affected by the data collection process.

### ***Memo Writing***

Memo writing was used to gather my thoughts, perspectives, and exploration of data in a process that moved beyond summarization (Charmaz, 2008). My goal was to consistently examine codes and categories of data collected to check my own biases and elevate the voices and perspectives most important to my study: those of the participants (Charmaz, 2008; Glaser, 1999). I wrote memos during the *circulos enfocados*, after the group sessions, and throughout every portion of the data reading, rereading, and my own writing. These memos were included in the data analysis process to reflect and compare my understanding of the data with my own biases, my own lived experiences, and how I was being affected by the words of the participants. This process was personal to my lived experiences and my identity as both a researcher and a Latino male educator. The memoing, reflexive component supported my own healing by allowing me to relive my experiences and release emotions based on what was shared by participants. Memoing also served as a reminder to focus on the participants' stories and not mine.

### **Data Organization**

As I gathered all of the data for this critical qualitative case study, I developed a plan for engaging with the data moving forward. First, the Zoom virtual platform saved and recorded all the audio files from the *circulos enfocados*; I saved these files to my Google Drive folder where I created a password-protected code to keep all of the data safe, as recommended by the institutional review board. Google folders were organized by the dates of *circulos enfocados* and included participant demographic data and consent forms. I went through each *circulo enfocado* and transcribed participant responses line by line. I then created a spreadsheet, saved in Google Sheets, with each of the questions asked and how each participant answered. This spreadsheet

helped me reference and organize how each participant engaged in the study and provided a strategic way to come back to data pertaining to specific questions. This strategy supported me by having everything centrally located and provided an opportunity to back up my data through an external data drive. The transcription process was the longest portion of data organization as I had to transcribe 519 minutes of data. However, this process allowed me to re-engage with the data multiple times by listening to and reading what was said by each participant.

### **Data Analysis**

For the purpose of this study, the goal was to illuminate and highlight the voices of Latino male educators as they dialogue their critical machismo consciousness. The goal was not to generalize the issues Latino male educators have but to illuminate the variability in their experiences and struggles as professionals. Saldaña and Omasta (2016) stated researchers should consider:

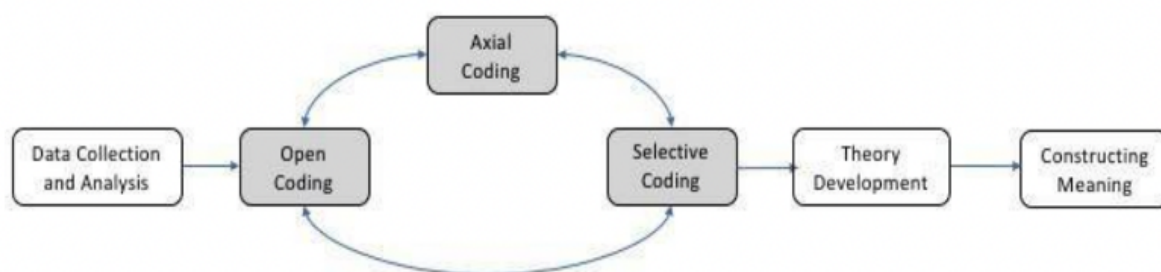
not taking everything at face value, of reading between the lines, interpreting subtexts and embedded meanings, detecting hidden agendas, digging underneath to reveal the covert . . . peeling back the layers, and assessing subliminal tactics that persuade or motivate us to action. (p. 67)

Data were abundant in this critical qualitative case study and intentional reading, thematic inductive coding, and reflexivity were all used in the process of analysis. Transcripts from the four *circulos enfocados* and memo writing I engaged in throughout the process were coded and analyzed. The thematic inductive coding process went through three stages of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Williams & Moser, 2019). This loop of intentional coding forced me to constantly compare data through each stage of reading and rereading (Williams & Moser, 2019). Themes emerged through this nonlinear process of

movement between the three forms of coding, which supported opportunities to add to current literature and the theoretical framework for this study. This study adopted Williams and Moser's (2019) nonlinear process to qualitative research used in grounded theory approaches, even though this study did not create or develop a new theory. Instead, this study sought to understand the phenomenon of Latino male educators' experiences in their K–12 spaces. This process is very much aligned with the cyclical approach to coding that is used in many qualitative approaches. Figure 2 displays the model used for coding data in this study. This process was essential to compare data for consolidation and data reduction (Williams & Moser, 2019).

**Figure 2**

*Nonlinear Process to Qualitative Research*



Fusch and Ness (2015) noted data saturation is reached when replication of the present information occurs and there is no more data to continue coding or gathering. A key takeaway in reaching data saturation is to obtain enough quantity filled with nuance (Fusch & Ness, 2015). This thematic, inductive coding process was seen through my eyes, my reflexivity, and my lived experiences and interpreted to enhance new knowledge gathered from participants in this study. As a critical researcher, I could not generalize one particular instance to other similar settings or events. I used a cautious approach to recognize the uniqueness and context-specific nature of

each situation; thus, these findings may not universally apply to others. However, I did acknowledge the relevance of research findings may be transferable to similar contexts in the future (Bhattacharya, 2017; Gray, 2013). Schwandt and Gates (2017) noted a critical realist researcher would not make generalizable statements extending beyond one case because the world is so complex there are too many layers in it, even in similar settings.

### **Open Coding**

In the first cycle of coding, I reread the data from each circulo enfocado by engaging in line-by-line coding. This process was the initial stage of determining codes from intentional classification of concepts by looking for words, phrases, and patterns in the data (Flick, 2009; Williams & Moser, 2019). Using the digital software platform NVivo, I highlighted phrases and words and began to color-code initial codes that emerged. I read each portion a few times before determining a specific code, highlighted evidence that supported the code, and constantly compared what I found against previous codes I had noticed. There were many moments of pausing, rereading, and rewriting my thoughts in this initial stage. Williams and Moser (2019) reminded researchers how “identifying a sufficiently developed theme and determining an appropriate code requires attention to thematic association and a subjective sense of a code’s accurate representation of the essence of a theme” (p. 48). It was my job to constantly connect these emergent codes to the evidence and not prematurely determine codes that could tell a different story. A quote from Javier illustrates an example of line-by-line coding that produced emergent codes. Javier shared:

I’m always having to think and undo and think about, am I reacting this way because this is how I viewed a man react in certain situations, or is it because this is how I’m truly feeling? It’s been a long process.

This quote shared what it takes to deconstruct machismo. Javier showcased meaning making around his decisions relating to his machismo. By making meaning from his machismo, he actively developed what his identity meant or had meant based on his lived experiences. In the open coding stage, the theme of deconstruction became a major component. I concentrated my efforts on how deconstruction happened for participants. In the example provided by Javier, he modeled identity development and meaning making as codes that contributed to this theme.

Through this process, I wrote memos after each stage of coding to gather my thoughts, reflections, and push against my biases. I also added these memos into NVivo to cross reference the codes I had initially obtained with what I processed and analyzed from my own reflections. An example from my memo coding connected the quote Javier shared with my reflection. From my memo:

For Javier, it was really eye-opening to hear him and Leon who talked a lot about how normalized a lot of the things that are feminized, you know the social emotional skills, the things that masculinity is opposition to right, they were able to articulate how they could show up in the space and be more emotional and it is normalized now compared to the veteran male educators who didn't really have that as a background to how to show up.

As indicated by this memo excerpt, I noticed a tendency in younger Latino male educators to display more emotions, which they were able to express more freely. I coded the passage as emotional intelligence in how they want to show up and reimagining what masculinity meant for them in their lives. Both of these codes connected to the deconstruction of machismo and masculinity I noticed in the data. Through this reflection, I was able to check my own thinking and bias that all Latino male educators would struggle in expressing their emotions like I did in



my experience as an educator. That was not the case in every *circulo enfocado* as Latino male educators who were in their first four years of education were able to express more emotional intelligence than I ever had at their stages in life. From this first stage of data analysis, 45 codes emerged from the data before intentional categorization. This process helped me determine patterns before grouping codes together. During this process, I adhered to the following steps: (a) deconstruct data into parts to examine, (b) group similar thoughts and ideas together, (c) begin to conceptualize categories and subcategories as they begin to emerge, and (d) begin to experiment with categories if they were significant to participants (Odegard & Vereen, 2010). Following this procedure for open coding allowed me to see the connection between open coding and axial coding and how they complement each other because one is needed as building blocks for categorizing (Corbin & Strauss, 2007; Odegard & Vereen, 2010).

### **Axial Coding**

The second stage of the coding process focused on the creation and construction of categories from the emergent codes. In this stage, I looked for relationships between each of the open codes and transitioned to the development of core codes, which have the strongest evidence to support them (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Williams & Moser, 2019). For this refinement, I used constant comparison analysis. Fram (2013) focused on using constant comparison analysis methods to systematically compare all forms of data in a study. By using this method, data gathered were compared rather than thrown out of the study because it did not fit a theme (Fram, 2013). In this comparison process, I looked for information pertaining to the research questions of my study, new information I did not consider or anticipate, and interesting or out of the ordinary information (Creswell, 2013). Comparing data in this way helped me refine open codes to ensure they were supported by strong evidence.

The process of axial coding was best captured in an example provided by Michael.

Michael shared:

Like, am I raising my voice? Am I taking a domineering stance? Am I using my size to control in the same way that I was shown that? Like talking about the way that your fathers did things. My dad is a product of his family and his upbringing, but we were around some violence growing up, and that was just the way things were. As much as I was trying to be conscious of being better—In schools, you are put to your limit as far as stress, right? Oftentimes, you get into the point where you're triggered, and it's when you're triggered, those things that are unconscious come out, and you have to be really, really mindful of those things.

In this specific example, I was starting to build evidence on the major code of deconstruction. As Latino male educators gained a level of criticality to machismo, they began to showcase how they unlearned things about “being a man.” Michael was able to articulate how he had made meaning and how that meaning has formed his identity. For axial coding, I brought in a second layer of codes to showcase reimagination of what it meant to be a man and the actual unlearning and learning Latino male educators do on a daily basis, internally and externally, in their K–12 spaces. Michael displayed learning and unlearning in this example by understanding his triggers from his traumatic machismo home life and how they impact his responses to young people. Michael actively unlearned his responses by understanding what those triggers were and how he did not want to respond as his father once did. This process solidified the complexity of deconstruction based on the lived experiences of Latino male educators. Axial codes built a stronger foundation for the major themes from the data.

After refining the open codes, I was able to create categories using the open codes that built a strong case for each category. This process continued as I constantly compared and referred back to the data to ensure saturation was reached in the creation of these categories. Thus, the process of open and axial coding followed these steps: (a) employing line-by-line coding, (b) revisiting and analyzing the data during open coding, and (c) through axial coding and constant comparison, thoroughly reviewing all the lines again (Charmaz, 2014; Williams & Moser, 2019). These stages of coding allowed for data stabilization by defining and redefining themes, challenging my biases, and forcing me to stay in proximity to the data as much as possible. Through this refinement, 45 open codes were condensed into 30 open codes. From these codes, I generated 13 categories after multiple constant comparisons, categorical reflections, and memo writing cycles. This process allowed me to state thematic relationships and continue examination and categorization of those themes (Williams & Moser, 2019).

### **Selective Coding**

The final cycle involved selective coding, which further enhanced understandings determined in the axial coding cycle. Selective coding allowed me to systematically align the core themes from axial coding with a deeper significance or story by presenting selective themes from the data (Flick, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Williams & Moser, 2019). This deeper connection can foster an opportunity for theory to arise and for the construction of meaning in how data are presented to a broader audience (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Williams & Moser, 2019). My goal with this cycle was to create deeper meaning directly connected to the categories and open codes of the previous cycles. This direct connection allowed me to tell a deeper story of what participants shared, which is presented in Chapter 4. Throughout all coding cycles, I wrote

and analyzed memos to check my biases, reflect on how I engaged with the data, and see how I was affected by what was shared, both as an insider and outsider in the study.

### **Trustworthiness and Credibility**

Because critical qualitative study has not been considered as rigorous as quantitative research in academia, I have addressed the credibility of this research both for implications of future research and for the participants in this study. The first important concept related to the credibility of data analysis is *thick description*, which:

deals not only with the meaning and interpretations of people in a culture but also with their intentions. Thick description builds up a clear picture of the individuals and groups in the context of their culture and the setting in which they live. (Holloway, 1997, p. 154)

As Latino male educators shared their lived experiences and their deepening of consciousness, thick description was essential to capturing:

the thoughts and feelings of participants as well as the often complex web of relationships among them . . . leads to thick interpretation, which in turns leads to thick meaning of the research findings for the researchers and participants themselves. (Ponterotto, 2006, p. 543)

Ultimately, it was my responsibility as a researcher to describe and provide rich descriptions of each participant so readers could visualize participants in this study, which directly connects to the consciousness and intersectionality of identities (Ponterotto, 2006). Describing the participants fully helps enhance thick descriptions of the setting and results, leading to a thick meaning.

With relationships and trust being major elements of this study, another component, *crystallization*, was vital for credibility. According to Ellingson (2014):

Crystallization is a relational support to qualitative research due to its ability to enhance the voices of the participants in the study. Crystallization is ideal for constructing portraits of everyday relating because it brings together vivid, intimate details of people's lives shared via storytelling and art with the broader relational patterns and structures identified through social scientific analyses. (p. 443)

Thus, crystallization, in this study, builds a vivid interpretation of participants' accounts while highlighting my own vulnerabilities, lived experiences, and positionality. The goal of this study was to learn from the experiences of Latino male educators in deepening their consciousness and how it may illustrate a particular phenomenon regarding their potential for leaving the teaching profession. My hope was to illustrate, through storytelling, a compelling perspective on the opportunities missed by retention programming.

The third component used for trustworthiness and credibility was peer debrief sessions regarding my methodology, data collection, and data analysis. In this process, peers who did not have expertise in the field of study provided feedback to support how I was aligning, connecting, and reflecting on my processes throughout the study. This feedback was vital in developing my explanation of the entire process to folks who were not in my field of study and produced insights on gaps I had missed in my own interpretation and presentation. A check for trustworthiness instrument was created, which included sample codes and portions of transcripts, was sent to peers via a Google Form (see Appendix H). The form included 15 quotes from Latino male educators in total, 10 codes focused on one major theme in which each participant had to choose between multiple themes to determine which were present in each of the quotes. The form also included five quotes that comprised multiple subcategories to each of the major themes in the axial coding stage to display the nuance in each of the major themes of the study. I

sent my codebook along with the form so participants could use it as a reference (see Appendix I). The participants responded with more than 96% accuracy the codes matched the themes and subcategories from the quotes. From all the questions used in the first 10 quotes, 8 out of the 10 quotes received 100% agreement. Two quotes received 83%, which confirmed the nuance and complexity in what was shared by the Latino male educators. For the second set of five quotes, 3 of the 5 quotes received 100% agreement the subcategories matched the themes, and two of the quotes received 83% agreement. Once I obtained these results, I met with one of my colleagues who filled out the survey to discuss the results of the trustworthiness check and how they, as a respondent, approached matching the codes and themes. My colleague stated the codes felt very intentional and easy to follow because there was a clear connection to the definitions in the codebook. Furthermore, the colleague added there were possibilities to have more than one code based on the nuances of the quotes and how complex the Latino male educators' experiences were. This trustworthiness check helped determine if my approach was headed in the right direction and allowed respondents to suggest changes or different interpretations that could push my thinking. The trustworthiness check process supported my reflections and analysis of my data, which affirmed and confirmed the alignment I wanted to see with my research questions. From this point, I was able to discuss my process with my dissertation chair and have productive conversations about how to articulate and present findings in Chapter 4.

The last focus of credibility supports the shared power of participants and researchers. Member reflections, or member checks, provide feedback to the researcher to support the continuation of the study and validate for participants what is being recorded and shared (D. R. Thomas, 2017). According to D. R. Thomas (2017), "Member checks are often seen as a useful 'validation' technique to ensure that participants agree that findings constructed by the

researchers adequately represent the realities that participants have reported” (p. 12). Ultimately, these member checks created a greater level of accuracy of what was being portrayed from each participant and enhanced trust with my outsider–insider positionality. Participants were sent copies of my interpretations and asked to provide feedback and enhance their responses if they wanted to add more layers. Validity of truth was important to me; I did not want to only convey my interpretations of data because I hold biases and lived experiences that could sway my findings. By incorporating member reflections and checks, I ensured accountability for my actions and interpretations. Additionally, gathering diverse perspectives helped establish a shared understanding of power in my study.

### **Researcher Bias**

The methodology presented in this study was complex because humanity is complex. As an individual who identifies as a Latino male educator, I have biases about what has made me more conscious of my actions, thoughts, and feelings. My unlearning is part of my lived experiences, but my experiences do not illustrate the only ways to deconstruct masculinity/machismo gender norms. My purpose was not to impose my biases on Latino male educators but to use this research as an opportunity to engage with participants through an emic–etic approach. I was curious about how Latino male educators navigate their educational settings across different years of experience and what they have created as definitions for success with regard to being a male educator, an emic perspective (Punnett et al., 2017). Hearing directly from participants allowed me to compare their experiences and perspectives to theories on heteronormative patriarchal standards of masculinity/machismo and to existing literature, from which to critically analyze data in a broader context, an etic perspective (Punnett et al., 2017). Integrating both perspectives, I developed a nuanced understanding of masculinity/machismo

norms by honoring the unique lived experiences of Latino male educators in their cultural contexts while critically examining them in relation to broader socialized structures and theories pertaining to the topic of gender. By understanding Latino male educators' experiences through their gender identities, I hoped to add to the literature on how to best support these educators in K–12 retention efforts through intentional development of critical consciousness. In centering Latino male educators' voices, new understandings can support program development efforts for current and future educators.

### **Limitations of the Research Methodology**

This study centered the voices of Latino male educators in four *circulos enfocados* in a virtual remote setting. I used critical qualitative case study methodology to generate themes based on the theoretical framework from this study. The theories guided my predictions of what to look for in the data and allowed for new information to emerge. The purpose of this study was to understand the phenomenon of how Latino male educators understand and navigate their masculinity/machismo in their respective K–12 spaces. Findings from this study are limited to the experiences of these 17 Latino male educators, and I cannot generalize the findings to all Latino male educators. However, this limitation supports the potential impact incorporating these dialogic spaces, whether remote or in person, can have on the development of critical machismo consciousness. There was an opportunity to break the *circulos enfocados* into groups by years of experience. It was difficult to coordinate participants in committing to specific time slots. I made the decision to make the *circulos* mixed groups, regardless of experience. The study also used a remote setting, which had its own limitations for encouraging authenticity and vulnerability and for creating a safe space for participants. Remote virtual settings have become more normalized



in how people communicate, and there is potential to see how these dialogic spaces may look based on in-person, hybrid, and virtual models.

### **Summary**

Chapter 3 provided context on how my positionality as a Latino male educator and researcher connected to the purpose of this study. I restated the research questions to center what was being studied and connect the theoretical framework to this critical qualitative case study. Chapter 3 provided demographics of the participants, the procedures of the study, and the research setting. I explained the intentional cocreation of a virtual affinity space for *circulos enfocados* so participants could feel safe and be vulnerable about sensitive topics. I outlined data collection tools, processes for analysis of the data, and opportunities to unpack my own biases. I explained how Latino male educators' voices were used as experts of their lived experiences as they shared their vulnerability related to the relationships they have with masculinity/machismo. Last, I described the credibility of this study through the components of trustworthiness necessary to validate the study.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study, which include the data, themes, and dialogue from the *circulos enfocados*. Chapter 5 presents a discussion on the implications of the study, recommendations for future research, recommendations for implementation of interventions to support and retain Latino male educators, and final conclusions.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS

Never use data to understand people. Use people to understand data.

–Dr. Ivory Toldson

This chapter provides an overview of the purpose and findings from this study. The purpose of this critical qualitative case study was to understand the ways in which Latino male educators understand their masculinity and machismo to support retention efforts given the high attrition rates for this population. Furthermore, this study provided insight into the dynamics and navigational experiences Latino male educators face in their K–12 spaces. A major component of this study was to co-construct a critical countercultural community of practice, in which all people are in direct opposition to racist and sexist environments and reimagine how to dialogically engage in difficult conversations (Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008) that actively deconstruct dominant, privileged identities to make meaning of something new. The format in which the data are presented is a response to each research question and provides the reader with a glimpse into the intimate and nuanced dialogizing that took place in the *circulo enfocado*. As mentioned in the Chapter 3, *circulos enfocados*, rooted in the theoretical framework of LatCrit, masculinity studies, critical sociocultural theory, and racial identity development theory (Arriola, 1998; Connell, 2005; Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001; Helms, 1990; Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Moje & Lewis, 2020; Molina, 2015; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Tatum, 2004; Waling, 2019), combined culturally responsive focus groups (CRFGs), *circulos* (i.e., group community circles), and focus groups to humanize the experience with Latino male educators by creating a dialogic space that supported the deconstruction of difficult topics (Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008; I. Jackson et al., 2014; National Compadres Network, 2021; K. Rodriguez et al., 2011; Singh, 2021;

Talleyrand et al., 2022). This chapter reports the themes that emerged from the data through the presentation of voices from 17 Latino male educators. Throughout the dialogic spaces, there were many codes created both from the literature and through the data analysis of the transcripts. The codebook includes more information on the coding and analytical process (see Appendix I). The following research questions informed my study:

1. In what ways do Latino male educators understand their masculinity and how it impacts their day-to-day lives in their educational settings?
2. In what ways do Latino male educators disrupt heteronormative patriarchal standards of masculinity and machismo in their own beliefs and actions?
3. In what ways do Latino male educators acquire knowledge and skills in their teaching and leadership practices to help them remain and thrive in the teaching profession?

The chapter continues through an organizational order to support this qualitative case study. This chapter includes three sections on how data themes connect to each of the research questions that were posed. Each section includes the major findings in answering each question through intentional data analysis, inclusion of quotes from participants, and a summary of each section. The first section highlights the social construction of gender identity for Latino male educators and how it supports or hinders how they show up as men or express themselves through their intersectional identities. The second section highlights how Latino male educators deconstruct masculinity and machismo while actively disrupting heteronormative patriarchal standards once they have attained a level of critical consciousness in their awareness. Lastly, the third section highlights the knowledge and skills that Latino male educators have obtained that would support retaining their talents.

### **Exploring Latino Male Educator Identity**

Research Question 1 asked the following: In what ways do Latino male educators understand their masculinity and how it impacts their day-to-day lives in their educational settings? My purpose in asking this question was to see how masculinity and machismo created definitions of how Latino male educators show up or express their gender identity. Definitions of masculinity and machismo come from many examples Latino men obtained throughout their lives as they experimented with what it means to “be a man.” This led to findings showcasing multiple ways Latino male educators intentionally wear masks as they experimented with what it means to be authentic across their internal and external definitions of masculinity.

The first finding showcased how Latino male educators understood their masculinity and machismo from their lived experiences through internal and external definitions that construct what it means to “be a man.” This understanding of masculinity and machismo led to identity exploration and experimentation through the concept of masking that intentionally supported acceptance of gender norms or actively disrupted negative versions of masculinity and machismo. Data from the *circulos enfocados* provided an understanding of how Latino male educators obtained masculinity/machismo norms in their lifetimes and unpacked the masks they intentionally or unintentionally wore as educators. From their understanding of their definitions of manhood, participants began to unpack and deconstruct how they showed up or expressed themselves using these specific masks, which afforded participants privilege, acceptance, and success through external definitions of how they were supposed to show up as Latino male educators. This process of unpacking and deconstruction led to a more in-depth look at participants’ lived experiences, how they obtained these masks in their lives, and how these masks influenced and affected their identities.

Latino male educators showed how they looked at machismo growing up, how femininity from their mothers influenced some of their lives and expanded gender norms, and how they explored their gender identity in silos. The constant connection to lived experiences allowed for further deconstruction of what it meant to be authentic. Ultimately, authenticity was a struggle for Latino male educators because they were intentionally using masks when different versions of masculinity/machismo were not fully accepted by their peers or structures in which they worked. This constant negotiation of identity was exhausting because participants would perform masculinity/machismo in ways that did not fully align with beliefs they held after unpacking toxic heteronormative patriarchal standards. Furthermore, in not fully feeling authentic, participants questioned where they were allowed to explore multiple versions of masculinities if they were constantly reminded they could not deviate from default gender norms. Authenticity and exploration in this dialogic space allowed for vulnerability through the emotional and heavy stories Latino male educators shared. Due to the vulnerability that was shared by participants, it brought forth connection, reflection, and healing in a very short amount of time. As a researcher, so much of my own, ongoing experience (i.e., how I wore masks to hide, masks to engage in versions of myself I did not agree with, and constantly questioned how I was being perceived by everyone around me) resonated with their stories.

### **Social Construction of Identity**

Identity is socially constructed through individuals' lived experiences and meaning-making from the people and environment around them (Ahmed, 2004; Berggren, 2014; Chandler et al., 2003; Connell, 2005; Erikson, 1968; Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001; Jennings et al., 2014; Lantolf, 2013; Meeus et al., 2010; Moje & Lewis, 2020; Molina, 2015; Quintero & Estrada, 1998; Torres et al., 2002). Latino male educators obtained how they should act throughout their

lives from archetypes that accepted masculinity/machismo norms in the separate spaces in which participants interacted. Latino male educators unpacked their lived experiences of where this performance originated. The current versions of how Latino male educators decided to express their intersectional identities in the study were reflective of how their lived experiences impacted how they chose to show up for their students, with their peers, and with families in the community. Latino male educators did not want to perpetuate any harm they obtained from men in their lives and wanted to reimagine what it meant to be a man who is more emotionally aware, reflective, and disruptive of oppressive gender norms that are harmful to their own humanity. The following sections highlight the influences Latino male educators obtained throughout their lives that supported the current versions of how they express their intersectional identities and understanding of masculinity and machismo.

### ***Fatherhood Machismo Impact***

Data showed how Latino male educators first obtained definitions of being “a man” from their fathers through direct behaviors they were required to exhibit as well as socialization on what they witnessed from the men in their families. Characteristics of being “a man” were taught through fathers never showing emotion to their boys, redirecting specific behaviors Latino boys could engage in because they were men, and how emotions by men were only shown through alcoholism (Abaci et al., 1974; Bell et al., 2003; De La Cancela, 1991; Falicov, 2018; Gross & John, 2003; I. Jackson et al., 2014; Romero et al., 2009; Torres et al., 2002). More importantly, participants had few opportunities to unpack their lived experiences because they were conditioned to hold everything in and not ask for any help or guidance from their fathers. Fathers played a specific role in the household as providers and protectors and were present, though without engagement, in dialogue. Some Latino male educators mentioned that they had more

positive expressions of the gender identity as they have gotten older and processed conversations about lived experiences with their fathers, but their relationships have been building slowly throughout their lives. In sharing the multiple descriptions of participants' lived experiences, the dialogic space observed many head nods, emojis through Zoom indicating agreement, and gratitude in sharing the hardships of what definitions of masculinity/machismo entailed. For three Latino male educators, they wanted to sit with the information more because they had not unpacked it and appreciated how others were vulnerable to speak about their lives in a transparent way. The exploration of identity started very early in Latino male educators' lives, and they began to connect how their lived experiences created the current version of how they express their intersectional identities.

As a young person, Espy reflected on his upbringing in his household and how his father was an exemplar of not being in touch with his emotions. Espy shared:

I was just reflecting on my father who didn't really know how to be in touch with his feelings, express feelings, talk about feelings. He was never okay . . . he's also the leader of the household, who sets the tone, and people follow his direction.

It's like both of those together create this struggle that we're facing.

Not being able to gain emotional intelligence as a skill was a struggle Espy was in the process of unpacking and deconstructing for how he shows up in his relationship with himself and with others. The mention of "he was never okay" was something embedded in his thoughts and memories of how his father struggled to live up to the expectations set out by masculinity and machismo. Espy actively disrupted the pattern he saw from his father by engaging in dialogue, being vulnerable, and supporting his students and Latino men he coached.

Three Latino male educators also shared their experiences about their dads. Sandro mentioned how his dad would reinforce gender norms like, “Hey, *eres hombre guey*, you got to go outside. Don’t help your mom in the kitchen,” or “Hey, *no seas mandilon*, don’t be washing or cooking. . . . Stereotypes of what is, ‘a man,’ what is ‘female’ responsibilities.” Sandro obtained direct feedback of what activities he needed to engage in versus what he wanted to do to help his mother. Receiving feedback on how not to be helpful, to leave specific jobs to women, and to engage in “male” activities caused tension and harm for Sandro. Sandro knew how problematic these norms and stereotypes were and actively disrupted them by expanding his definitions of gender and being a supportive person in every setting.

Javier added how his father’s major role in the family was as a provider, yet “I think the first time I ever got a hug from him might have been my graduation day in high school, and then the next time was in my graduation day in college. So, it was very weird.” The lack of affection displayed as a result of masculinity and machismo caused a strange dynamic in how men in Javier’s family expressed love or care. Javier described the tension and conflict he felt because he knew his dad served a particular role in providing care through work, his dad’s actions put food on table, and his dad never intentionally hurt him. Seen through the lens of being a provider, Javier also mentioned how the expression of emotion from his father was awkward, which impacted how he expressed emotions growing up. Javier also mentioned the conflict he saw regarding emotional expression through direct observation of his uncles, “who would drink and get drunk to the point where that’s the only time they could show their emotions. It was a very negative, I don’t know, just a traumatic trigger for me.” Javier shared his vulnerability in how he continued to be triggered and learned how not to express emotions from the men in his family. Javier actively expressed emotions, dialogued, and explored the vulnerability of his lived



experiences in all the spaces he worked in to disrupt the negative patterns he experienced growing up.

Kevin mentioned how his expectations were modeled through the provider lens of masculinity and machismo. He shared, “I just remember growing up, and everything was just work, work, work. That’s all my dad knew. That’s all my uncles knew. The exposure that I got was just a blue-collar mentality.” Kevin described how gender norms were established through work ethic and providing for one’s family. Passing down the value of hard work was easier to do for fathers than expressing emotionality. As Kevin shared multiple times, his emotions came pouring out as he released stories about his experiences, which modeled a different reality for him and his students. He mentioned how he has supported young people, especially boys, to explore their skills, strengths, and aspirations and to be the best versions of themselves. Latino male educators described how their first entry point into masculinity and machismo was passed down through their fathers or men in their families, which gave them insight into how they were accepted by their immediate surroundings. Outside of homelife, masculinity and machismo also created definitions of how Latino men understood the world around gender.

### ***External Gender Norm Impact***

The outside world influenced Latino men in how they showed up as “men” as well. The gender norms they learned from their peers and other outsiders reinforced survival skills they would need. In their school life, once participants transitioned from middle school to high school, they were required to handle emotions and problems on their own, engage in homophobic and sexist stereotypes, lose friendships to become their own individuals, and figure out ways to be accepted as a man through certain activities, like sports (Connell, 2005; Gross & John, 2003; Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Paz & Kemp, 1961; Torres et al., 2002). Most Latino men in

this study shared that they did not have an opportunity to express their emotions at home or at school, they struggled to navigate any of the spaces in which they engaged. There were some positive outlets from teachers, friends, or family members, yet it was not a consistent occurrence to have a space to express what they were struggling with in regard to their gender identities. Having to deal with everything alone transferred to their current versions of how they express their intersectional identities as they continued to explore how they expressed their emotions, how they built connections, and how vulnerable it felt to ask for support. Latino male educators had a constant tension in wanting to explore who they were while also having others define how they were supposed to show up. Examples of where they learned this behavior came from their schooling experiences.

Acceptance was a key to feeling a sense of belonging for Latino men because living up to a standard gave them credibility to navigate a space without creating conflict among the majority of people. Jose Jesus described himself as smaller in stature and had to figure out ways to be accepted in social circles. He explained:

You know, at school, all that pressure of being a man starts to hit you different than it did in elementary school . . . I liked wrestling because it was individual and you competed with people your own size and it was you . . . I think part of me getting into that even in high school was a way of buying into the toxic masculine culture of showing toughness of developing my body, developing my muscles as a little guy. It gave me—What do you call it? I guess, just the street cred of, Okay, you're a small guy, but you're tough, you'll hold your own. . . . It gave you that respect.

There was not a moment where Jose Jesus was accepted as a person without having to prove himself in a masculinity and machismo standard. Jose Jesus noticed moments where he actively chose what battles to fight with other men at his work, “when you’re socializing or comments that are oftentimes feeling like, ‘Do I want to say something right now?’ . . . you just chuckle at a sexist comment or not knowing how to address it with other males.” He had to be strategic in how he showed up so he was accepted and also thought about when to disrupt patterns of heteronormative gender norms that were problematic.

The friendship component reinforced gender norms Latino men were not ready to deal with on their own. Unpacking and deconstructing friendships created additional tension because of the gender norms everyone was trying to embody. Three Latino male educators shared how they decided to disrupt patterns that negatively affected them growing up. Michael David mentioned how difficult it was to make friends because of “the othering that goes on as you mature as males, a lot of the things that are coded within friendship, like connection and being close are things that you’re taught to move away from.” Michael David processed and deconstructed those patterns in himself to engage with others, particularly when he sees those patterns happen for his students and colleagues. Michael David actively supported young people in not buying into the negative connotation of friendships boys get when it comes to connection, care, and belonging.

Jaime had the same experience in learning a new rule he had to accept: “You was buddy-buddy in middle school, but now in high school, you can’t really be that close like that.” As Latino male educators shared in this study, as they got older, they were taught to deal with their own emotions, understand the dynamics at play without processing or dialoguing, and accept expected standards to belong. Jaime received these messages from other men in his K–12 spaces.

He shared, “I worked at my current school where people would say certain things like, ‘Man up.’ Or, ‘Don’t be a bitch.’ Or, ‘Yo, come on, bro, you being a girl right now.’” Jaime also noticed when he did speak up and try to educate other men or coworkers, he received reactions such as, “All right, bro. We’re not trying to offend nobody here. We know.” By expressing anything not accepted as the standard norm for gender, which is not unique to Latino men, schooling cycles of losing friendships continued because participants were seen as different or othered. As Latino male educators began to experiment with different behaviors not consistent with standard gender norms, they reverted back to heteronormative stereotypes of what it means to be “a man.”

Navigational skills developed were rooted in individualism, and participants noted if they showcased anything different or could not handle things on their own, they internalized not being seen as capable of success. Alonzo summarized this feeling of self-preservation, saying:

Just figuring that out on your own. It’s hard for me to reach out and ask for help in general. It’s not so much that the support hasn’t been offered to me. I think it’s also embedded in me to not ask for help. It’s not that I expect to know everything to be perfect. I just think it’s a matter of self-preservation, I guess. Not showing any vulnerability in that sense.

Alonzo described the immigrant mentality ingrained for him as a Latino child, wherein he had to figure everything out on his own because he has no other option. Many Latino male educators in the *circulos enfocados* agreed with what Alonzo stated. The data showed that Latino male educators believed there is no time for failure, there is no time to waste because they have to seize opportunities, and there is no time to bother someone else with your problems. Repeated in every *circulo enfocado*, the conversation of never asking for help was a theme among participants in trying to figure out what success meant in the schooling environment and

professional careers. Christian added how it was not just physicality in feeling isolated, it also deal with emotionality for him, saying, “the emotional isolation that really digs a little bit deeper and gets into you. I know that just growing up, sharing my emotions wasn't one thing that I was necessarily invited to do or given the opportunity to do.” Data showed Latino male educators’ default behavior was to be on their own because it was what they had experienced most of their lives as they engaged with masculinity and machismo norms as well as their intersectionality of coming from a working class family. Latino male educators have had to survive within their gender identities, which many connected in how problematic that siloing of doing everything alone has impacted their current lives in many ways. As the *circulos enfocados* expanded on how Latino male educators actively chose to display their masculinity and machismo identities, participants gravitated to thinking of their actions as wearing a mask.

### **Creation of Masks**

This portion of the findings toward which Latino male educators gravitated was not anticipated. Participants connected to the aspect of wearing masks from the video I showed at the beginning of the *circulo enfocado*. In terms of Latino male identity, the wearing of masks supported or hindered participants’ full understanding of masculinity and machismo. For Latino male educators, masks were a form of acceptance for masculinity/machismo norms and allowed for navigational capital at the expense of a Latino male’s authenticity (Breault, 2016; Colwill & Boyd, 2008; Meeus et al., 2010; Yosso, 2005). Also, masks were worn for survival purposes when participants had to show up a particular way for a specific audience. In realizing they wore masks, participants began to unpack the purpose of masks and how they appear in interactions at school with young people, colleagues, and families. Ultimately, Latino male educators who were their authentic selves in deconstructing norms established for them at a young age knew which

masks they wore and for what purposes (Ahmed, 2004; Berggren, 2014; Breault, 2016; Colwill & Boyd, 2008; Meeus et al., 2010; Stoltenberg, 2000).

### ***Internal Conflict***

There were many layers to the different types of masks Latino male educators wore on a daily basis. From the words of the Latino male educators, I noticed they experienced internal conflict knowing they had been given opportunities because they were men, having to act or a look a particular way to be considered a man, using masculinity to gain credibility in sustaining a complicit culture of youth, and navigating awareness of the tension and exhaustion mask wearing brought them (Brockenbrough, 2012; Carey, 2020; Connell, 2005; Cooper & Jordan, 2003; Moje & Lewis, 2020; Singh, 2021; Torres et al., 2002).

Antonio displayed an ongoing identity crisis in considering what allowed him to be successful in his career as an educator. He explained:

An ongoing challenge for me, to be honest, and should I struggle going home knowing that I had to put a mask on? Should I be okay with it because it got me in the room, or got me a seat at the table? Those are all questions that still, day to day, 13 years into the game are very real.

Antonio was afforded opportunities based on his gender, and he questioned if he was actually authentic to himself or replicating what others wanted to see of him. In addition, Latino male educators were required to perpetuate Eurocentric norms of successful behaviors for masculinity and machismo. Five Latino men in the *circulos enfocados* felt similarly and shared their experiences.

Espy described the structure that made him feel successful in his mask wearing that he questions now because of its impact, saying, “the oppressive systems as a disciplinarian that I’ve

been a part of and partaking and not having known better to further my career. A privilege it's been at the cost of those who I want to serve the most." As Espy gained consciousness in his masculinity and machismo, he knew he had caused harm to young people by perpetuating stereotypical gender norms that made him skilled at being a disciplinarian. His administrators would respond with "Oh, wow, you can do that a lot. Like, 'Let's give you more responsibility to do that.' . . . I'm raising my voice, posturing up, the tone in my intonation is borderline aggressive." Espy affirmed how wearing heteronormative patriarchal masks perpetuated harmful stereotypes of what it meant to be "a man." By intentionally harming and scaring children through the usage of his gender identity, Espy was accepted and given more opportunities to perpetuate those behaviors in his K-12 spaces.

Kevin mentioned how masking affected him, saying, "sorry, it gets a little heavy . . . how do you show up authentically, but at the same time, how are you viewed as, right? It's like this double consciousness of, how can I be real and myself." Kevin struggled with what authenticity meant because he knew he intentionally wore masks to be seen; he worried how others would respond to his exploration and experimentation of identity when he took the mask off. Kevin was conscious of the spaces he was in "when [he was] in a room with just like people from all walks, there's like an imposter syndrome that kicks in of like just coming correct and showing up" and said he wondered, "Am I professional enough? Am I being accepted?" Latino male educators looked for acceptance from what the outside world throughout the sharing of masks that they wore, even if it meant the masks were problematic based on gender norms.

Miguel wore a professionalism mask rooted in whiteness constructs for his own survival of identity. He noted, "I also try a lot to be clean shaven at work too and keep my hair short and keep this nice, professional, very prototypical masculine appearance about me so I'm not

perceived as less than.” Miguel mentioned how being seen as “less than” created a constant mode of survival in which he had to perform being “a man” through mask wearing. One’s outward appearance and perception of identity were constant factors in the current version, or identity expression, of masculinity and machismo Latino male educators decided to display for people. External pressures dictated how Latino men showed up and caused constant tension between belonging in an environment where they could not explore their authentic selves and replicating oppressive forms of gender expression.

Justino mentioned how he responded to students in his school, mainly boys of color, who constantly wore masks pertaining to their gender. He shared, “When they come to school, it’s like there’s never a moment that they want to be seen slipping . . . I don’t know if it’s that I’m wearing the mask or that I’m interrupting it. There’s a blend there.” Justino attempted to model taking off the mask with students and noticed how he intentionally put on a mask to be accepted or trusted by the students he tried to support. Data showed anytime participants were seen as “slipping” or not meeting gender expectations to masculinity and machismo, they would be seen as less than a man.

Latino male educators were constantly negotiating when to actively disrupt these moments for themselves and for students while also maintaining the influence they wanted to have on the youth they served. J.O. beautifully described how he felt about the constant negotiation: “a lot of times I’m just thrown into things that I don’t really want to do, like roles I don’t want to play. I think it’s exhausting at times.” The constant exhaustion in having to be different versions of one’s self because of what others expected and performing harmful behaviors not in alignment with one’s core values, led Latino male educators to question their authenticity and purpose in being in education.



### ***Caution***

By actively choosing to participate in mask wearing, there was constant tension in what it meant to be authentic because norms had been established by society, by their professional space, or by other people in participants' proximity. As noted by Latino male educators, as other participants shared the need to wear a mask to be successful or to be seen as a "man," it began a collective reflexive moment in thinking about what authenticity means (Breault, 2016; Carey, 2020; Singh, 2021). Data showed Latino men wore masks for different circumstances. They wore masks because of internal and external socialization processed from their families, peers, and community expectations and reinforced or understood as unspoken truths for survival. Furthermore, external dominant ideologies, like Eurocentric gender masculinity norms, whiteness constructions of professionalism, and assimilation rooted in erasure of one's culture, externally influenced what masks they wore. External stereotypes also influenced how Latino men understood their masculinity and machismo, which forced them to be cautious of what they showed to others. By being cautious about the outward perspective they portrayed to people in their K–12 spaces, they protected themselves from being fired, created assumptions of their character, and made sure their presence exuded safety. Some of the experiences participants navigated ranged from making sure they did not come off as being a child sex offender, having extra labor asked of them to support boys, being in spaces with toxic masculinity/machismo, and allowing heteronormative stereotypes to persist to achieve acceptance (Bell et al., 2003; Berggren, 2014; Connell, 2005; De Leon, 2005; Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001; Torres et al., 2002; Waling, 2019). As Latino male educators began to share these experiences, more connections and stories emerged in the space.

Michael David described his caution with his masculinity through the active state of filtering. He explained:

Just trying to be above approach with everything and making sure that parents felt super comfortable that I'm not some creepy person who likes kids. It's like, that's the elephant in the room a lot of the time . . . I loved the way that kids could go in and hug their female teachers and felt loved. I feel like I couldn't connect with my kids in that way because I was so self-aware that I shouldn't be doing those things. I would try to find alternative ways. I'm going to give you a side hug because I wanted kids to feel like I cared for them each and every day, but those were things that were constantly the lens with which I had to filter through my teaching.

Michael David filtered what masks he wore to ensure the actions he showed were socially accepted by peers, families, and students. He mentioned the way he as a Latino man showed love was different than what female educators in his K–12 space showcased. Michael David had to accept that difference as a form of survival and knew his expression of how he showed love was being dissected by the people around him. Michael David, and many of the Latino male educators in this study, mentioned that they saw how women were allowed to express what they believed to be love in different ways, and they struggled as men in being treated differently in that level of expression. The topic of love expression is something most of the Latino male educators have struggled with throughout their lived experiences.

Dani and Taco mentioned unwritten rules that forced them to make sure they had witnesses to how their masculinity and machismo was perceived by everyone around them. Dani mentioned what he did when meeting with a female student, saying, “that door needs to remain

open. For me, that was you to consciously always make that known. If somebody's coming in, make sure you keep that door open." For Taco, knowing the rule of always making sure there were witnesses to how his gender was perceived made him switch the grade levels he supported "because of the stigma that male educators can't be alone." Taco explained, "There's a notion that we may be predators or something. For me, that left a bad taste. I actually walked away from becoming a preschool teacher." Taco moved into high school because there was less stigma for him to navigate even though he still knew he had to be cautious and conscious of the decisions he made regarding those with whom he interacts. Even though this filtering was to make sure everyone feels safe, Latino male educators' actions and words were not always accepted.

### **Othered**

Data revealed when Latino male educators experimented and tried to show up in more intentional and filtered ways, their attempts were weaponized through direct connection to toxic masculinity. Latino male educators discussed how, regardless of the internal work, they constantly were reminded what they had done was not enough to be seen as different or expansive of gender norms. Justino was aware of how people perceived everything he did or said through gender stereotypes. He described moments of conflict with others, and, instead of working out the differences, he was labeled "unapproachable," which determined his behavior and actions. Justino explained:

I feel like I'm very approachable. . . . At first, I was uncomfortable with telling people no and stuff, but it's funny because now when I do put my foot down and I'm like, "I'll still listen, but I still got my choice. This is still my decision; I'm still taking this pathway." It's funny how many people will be like, "Ah, he's so unapproachable." . . . I don't know, but I've always found that funny is that I've,

literally, had people pat me on the back and they're like, "Man, you're such a great leader." Then the moment that I say no, I can think of one experience in the moment that I said no, it's like I'm a tyrant. I'm like, "Wow, it's crazy."

He expanded on this awareness and noted how he intentionally worked on dialoguing and expressing his emotions as an educator. Because of this dialogue and emotional expression, people responded with, "I thought you were gay." Justino explained, "I was like, why would you think that? What actions? I'm humoring, I'm laughing at it. What actions or what are your metrics? What are you gathering that makes you think that I'm gay?" If individuals he worked with did not perceive him as a tyrant, they perceived him as gay. Justin's expanded masculinity was not affirmed by others and resulted in labels given based on assumptions of gendered behavior; thus, he was targeted through a specific label that elicited a response from him. In addition, Justino laughed at the term gay or consideration of acting gay, which he acknowledged as something he needed to unpack further because displaying other forms of masculinity and machismo should not be considered a negative; instead, it should affirm his intentionality to display something different.

Kevin and Bobby had similar experiences with being othered. Kevin mentioned how he was constantly aware of what he was going to say and how he was going to say it. He actively considered how much his reputation would be impacted by every decision he made because he had direct experience of othering through gender stereotypes. Kevin mentioned how he constantly processed these experiences:

There are double standards sometimes of my words may come across whether it's a little too strong or aggressive. Like, "How do I get my point across?" At the same time, I know I have these good intentions, but sometimes they're

misconstrued, and it sucks, and it's the reality of it. It's just, I think that was something that was a constant battle and a constant struggle, for sure.

Kevin shared how everyone he interacted with was a woman. Although he did his best to filter his masculinity and machismo and get second opinions on what he wanted to share, he was constantly called into the principal's office because the person with whom he dialogued had an issue with how he shared his thoughts. Kevin added, "It's like now you have to defend yourself in a way. It's just crazy. It's like gaslighting in a sense." Kevin constantly had to defend his humanity, connect his thinking to the vision of the school and the purpose of education, and fight for equity and justice in his community. Even with all that intentionality, his masculinity and machismo overshadowed his attempts to be authentic, live his values, and express something different.

Bobby had a difficult experience when he managed a female staff member who was not doing her job. As he followed the protocol laid out by his organization to hold her accountable, Bobby also did his best to filter how he communicated, supported, and valued the staff member's humanity. This staff member decided to leave the organization and, during the exit process, filed a formal complaint on Bobby "and cited, in her perspective, my male dominance, machismo, intimidating her . . . I didn't agree with it. It bothered me because I've worked so hard not to be that because that's what I knew growing up." Going through this experience left Bobby with unanswered tension and conflict about how he was showing up. Even at the time of this study, he was thinking about this experience and said, "What did I do? So that I don't repeat it because that's not a way that I ever want to show up for anybody, period." Even though Bobby was intentional about not harming people through his gender identity, his gender identity was weaponized and described through toxic masculinity and machismo descriptions. Such

weaponization showed how one experience, one dialogue, and one person's perspective reminded Latino men they would revert to the default stereotype.

The final type of othering included the role of being an educator. Latinidad and immigrant families expect their children to disrupt patterns of survival and to thrive in high-paying jobs to increase their opportunities and gain generational wealth. Antonio's family othered him because he did not live up to the American Dream. Antonio received an engineering degree, and he did not enjoy that line of work. Once he decided to go into education, Antonio shared his family "felt like I had failed by settling for going into education as opposed to continuing my studies with engineering because I worked so hard for it . . . That took some years to really get over." Antonio noted the tension he experienced in living a new purpose as an educator and having to defend the new opportunity he wanted to pursue. His family wanted him to be an engineer, which was a predominantly masculine profession, versus an educator, which was a predominantly feminine profession, and uphold gender stereotypes he then had to navigate. Antonio chose to disrupt those patterns and also knew it would take time to feel seen, heard, and valued by his family in a profession he truly enjoyed. Latino male educators showcased many different experiences in how they actively tried to disrupt the pattern of mask wearing. Data revealed this gender expansion came from their understanding of masculinity and machismo at an earlier age.

### **Exploring Counter-Machismo**

Data showed different experiences regarding expanding gender roles based on the influence of motherhood or counter-machismo. Data revealed counter-machismo included fathers doing more work around the house, which was not expected in society, and the support of a progressive, educator household that did not partake in societal definitions of identities and

supported a deeper exploration of values, traditions, and community (Berggren, 2014; Falicov, 2018; Torres et al., 2002; Waling, 2019). Data also revealed how motherhood (a) supported the exploration of identity because mothers were the decision makers in the family, (b) supported single parent households through work and education, and (c) protected their young Latino boys from traditional archetypes of masculinity/machismo (Berggren, 2014; Falicov, 2018; Torres et al., 2002; Waling, 2019). The role of gender expansion to show up in their identities was helpful for some of the Latino male participants to see a different version of what was possible (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; Tajfel, 1981).

Dani mentioned he struggled with what it meant to be “a man” because that concept was never modeled for him. He shared:

I am two generations of single parents. My mom was raised just by my nana, and I was raised just by my mom . . . I was raised by women. I struggled so much understanding what it meant to be a man which is difficult communicating this with my kids and trying to help coach them . . . I come from a mother who was a teacher . . . she was a hairstylist, a cosmetologist. She went to school, did hair, did nails, ran a little beauty shop out of the back room of our house. . . . I saw that my mom was able to make a transition from a trade into a profession that is respected and people looked up to her for that. I’m like, “I can do this. If my mom did this, I can do this.”

With his students and his own children, he constantly questioned if he was passing down harmful stereotypes or disrupting patterns more supportive for their futures. The lack of masculinity and machismo left a void in his understanding of his identity, but he looked for ways to be seen as “a man” because that was how he was accepted by others. On the other hand, he saw how his mom sacrificed so much and had become successful in her life without the presence of masculinity and

machismo norms in the household. He negotiated and unpacked what gender norms are and how they benefited or harmed the people he influences as an educator and father. Dani was not the only person who grew up without a father.

Taco's family owned a panaderia, and he supported his mother in running the shop. The work was overwhelming—a constant grind culture embedded in immigrant survival. Taco reflected on his exposure to this culture of “the only rest we get is when we die, which is something that I'm trying to let go of because it was pushed on me sometimes. I am grateful that she was able to protect me.” Taco was still letting go of the grind and overwork culture that had been pushed on him. His mother disrupted those patterns, and he witnessed his mother pushing back masculinity and machismo norms, which gave him a different perspective of identity because his mother was the positive exemplar in his life. Taco confirmed he still calls his mom daily as she is a major supportive structure for him, and he engages in dialogue about what he is experiencing in his life. Having this support structure is counter-machismo because Taco engaged in ways of being and identity exploration that built emotional intelligence, which he passed on to his students. Taco expressed something different because a different version of his gender identity was accepted, and he was supported in that identity exploration early.

Jaime shared another way counter-machismo showed up was his father who engaged in domestic responsibilities around the house, such as cooking and cleaning, which was not a normal observation in other households he visited. Because dynamics around gender identity were not unpacked or discussed, Jaime was left with unanswered questions of why his father disrupted these patterns. Jaime questioned how he shows up and why he chooses to act a specific way because he saw how his upbringing created differing behaviors and perspectives in how he



views gender and what it means to be “a man.” Counter-machismo also showed up in ways other than a father not being present.

Jose Jesus saw how his mother influenced the dynamics in the household. Jose Jesus said he grew up “pretty supported at home from my mom emotionally. . . . In my house, my mom wore the pants. My dad, he’d say things, but at the end of the day, my mom was the one that would get things done.” Due to his mother’s support of emotionality, Jose Jesus was able to express emotions with his partner, his students, and his colleagues. He was able to showcase a different version of masculinity and machismo students noticed, which allowed for more intentionality in how he expressed his vulnerability and his identity to disrupt harmful patterns.

Alonzo grew up in a more progressive household led by two educators, which allowed him to explore identity and authenticity earlier in his life. He described how his parents both deconstructed societal norms on his identity and they intentionally unpacked that with him to support him living through his values. He shared:

Luckily, I was raised to be true to my identity too. My ethnicity, my race, my gender. I was never told I had to follow this path of masculinity. I was told just to, like I said, stay true to myself, stay true to my values, to my community.

Alonzo displayed how deeply influenced people are by their environments when imagining something different is the norm. Alonzo was given a sense of permission and opportunity to explore what it meant to be himself, to be true, to be authentic, and to never apologize for that expression. He was able to engage with youth, with colleagues, and with families through this perspective because he was not tied to a survival skill of living up to being “a man.” He was able to make decisions based on progressive familial values that actively dismantled and deconstructed all forms of oppressive identities to create something new.

In sharing about counter-machismo, there was a consistent pattern and theme throughout the data of ongoing negotiation of what it means to be a man (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; Torres et al., 2002). As a facilitator in these discussions, my emphasis was to name the patterns that emerged and also leave participants with something to consider. I asked participants, are there multiple versions of masculinity/machismo we need to continue exploring? (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; Tajfel, 1981). The group did not get to answer this question in this dialogical space even though it came up in every single *circulo enfocado*. Latino male educators revealed they knew which traits and characteristics were problematic, harmful, and toxic to themselves and their lived experiences. Thus, there was an opportunity to expand, reimagine, and redefine gender norms more prevalent to who they were and how they wanted to impact the spaces they occupy (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; Torres et al., 2002).

This section showcased the complexity of understanding the nuances in “being a man” and how those nuances impacted Latino male educators in how they wanted to show up in their K–12 spaces. Latino male educators constantly battled internal and external definitions of who they were supposed to be, which led to wearing masks that supported or hindered their identities. Ultimately, Latino male educators displayed evidence that “being a man” was something no one could ever attain because of everyone’s perceived notions of what that phrase meant. Latino male educators in this study struggled to be their authentic selves and to find a safe space to explore what new versions of their gender identity they wanted to engage in. Experimentation and exploration are something that all the Latino male educators connected with in how they express their intersectional identities. As Latino male educators gained more criticality of machismo and masculinity, they started to gain a heightened critical consciousness that allowed

them to disrupt heteronormative patriarchal patterns, internally and externally, in their K–12 spaces.

### **Deconstructing and Disrupting**

Research Question 2 asked: In what ways do Latino male educators disrupt heteronormative patriarchal standards of masculinity and machismo in their beliefs and actions?

The intention behind this question was to understand how Latino male educators actively disrupted their thinking, mindsets, and beliefs of masculinity/machismo and how they were intentional in their actions. The reason I wanted to look at this question was because the deconstruction of gender norms and roles Latino male educators already have are important to understanding how they continue to survive or thrive in their professional careers.

Deconstruction of masculinity/machismo can look different for each Latino male educator in their journey and my hope was to gain insight on ways that could support other Latino male educators as they enter the profession.

The second finding from the data provided evidence that Latino male educators built their critical consciousness through a deep internal deconstruction of masculinity/machismo that led to exploration and experimentation of expanding gender by disrupting gender norms in themselves, disrupting gender norms with youth, and disrupting through critical pedagogical instructional practices. Findings from the data provided insight into the action steps Latino male educators intentionally experiment with in terms of their critical consciousness. Through the deconstruction of masculinity/machismo, Latino male educators began to analyze how they wanted to be perceived by others through a more humanizing lens, began to unpack how their identities cause harm in spaces, and began to reimagine what masculinity/machismo means in their new meaning making. This self-awareness in critical consciousness allowed for deeper reflexivity and constant

questioning of what was being done for the students they serve through curriculum and culturally relevant experiences.

Gaining deeper consciousness and awareness gave Latino male educators the opportunities to think through what action steps they wanted to take in their expansion of gender. As they gained this awareness, they were able to experiment through critical pedagogy and began to create lessons that disrupted problematic language, stereotypes, and negative assumptions of the expansion of masculinities. They were able to create dialogical spaces for youth to engage in difficult conversations and lessons on the criticality of gender. Furthermore, when given opportunities to lead these spaces from awareness to action, Latino male educators had a broader impact than the four walls of their classroom and began to shift cultural norms in their school settings. Data showed how Latino male educators had more intentionality and purpose in exploring their identities because they had obtained new knowledge, language, and opportunities to engage with their authenticity, which allowed them to share those practices with young people as well. Through this ongoing identity development, one Latino male educator mentioned how therapy enhanced their ability to feel more liberated because they were equipped with more skills around their emotionality. Latino male educators actively disrupted heteronormative patriarchal norms through pedagogical exploration that directly connected to their critical consciousness.

### **Deconstruction Through Critical Consciousness**

Data revealed Latino male educators gained critical consciousness and were intentional in how they disrupted patterns of heteronormative patriarchal standards because of the ongoing reflections they had. Critical consciousness involves developing an awakening to what is happening in the world, in this case, how masculinity/machismo impacted their identities

(Danielewicz, 2014; Freire, 1994). Latino male educators showed evidence of understanding the problematic ways masculinity/machismo impacted their lives and began to disrupt those patterns. They engaged in these actions on their own without prompting, without development opportunities to unpack these practices, and without direct feedback about the impact of their masculinity and machismo as an educator. The first way Latino male educators disrupted patterns of masculinity/machismo was by decentering themselves in spaces and thinking about how they were showing up with specific audiences, listening to others before speaking, and understanding the perceptions others have of their specific gender identity (Berggren, 2014; Connell, 2005; Falicov, 1998; Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001; Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Paz & Kemp, 1961; Pleck, 1981; Singh, 2020, 2021; Stoltenberg, 2000; Torres et al., 2002).

Javier displayed the critical consciousness cycle of awareness and action. By deconstructing the ways he intentionally or unintentionally chose to behave, he critically analyzed if his actions were rooted in gender norms he was actively trying to disrupt or if they were genuine human behaviors he wanted to exhibit. Javier shared:

It was just like you're starting to see the generational effect of what it means to be a man. I think it's something that has been very prevalent in my own identity, both as a teacher and even in my relationships, and how I show up as a man in my partnerships. I'm always having to think and undo and think about, am I reacting this way because this is how I viewed a man react in certain situations, or is it because this is how I'm truly feeling? It's been a long process.

Javier understood how gender norms of masculinity and machismo impacted the way he was perceived and the way he perceived himself, which allowed him to reflect on ways to express his identity in a more productive way.

Sandro also connected to how he sees his gender identity and recognized that it “comes with stereotypes, perceptions, but then it could also be real powerful, and so just being mindful of what space I’m in and what I’m trying to do or what am I obligated to do in that space.”

Sandro showcased an acceptance to perceptions the outside world has of his gender identity while actively choosing to show something different to people to change those perceptions.

Sandro also mentioned how he was obligated to show up in particular ways by specific people; in those instances, he actively chose to disrupt patterns other people have of masculinity and machismo and to expand gender norms and ways of being. One way he intentionally decided to disrupt a pattern he had early in his professional career was to stop overreacting and to use new strategies from the critical awareness he gained from his experiences. Sandro shared, “I think just to be a better person and just to be a better Latino man, I think I just listen first, and I don’t listen for anything too specific except for themes.” Sandro used to react and go into fight-or-flight mode, but he reflected and gained awareness of the impact of his identity, which gave him new skills to experiment and supported how people respond to his masculinity and machismo. The concept of being “better” was interesting to dissect given there was a negative connotation in being “a man.” Sandro was conscious of what behaviors were problematic and addressed them by bringing new behaviors into his daily interactions.

Two other Latino male educators revealed in the *circulo enfocado* they entered the profession with context, knowledge, and outside development experiences that allowed them to experiment with their critical consciousness in the classroom. Jose Jesus gained more awareness

in dialogue spaces in college through Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA) and in learning about masculinity and machismo from peers. He shared, “I was able to put words and concepts to things I experienced, because I think I was always grounded in being okay having emotions, just learning how to control them.” Jose Jesus participated in debates on homosexuality in MEChA, deconstructed machismo and what it meant to be a man, and attended gender and sexuality workshops that supported his understanding of his identity. By having these experiences before becoming an educator, Jose Jesus had gained critical consciousness about how he intentionally acted regarding his masculinity and machismo, which he continued to expand during his 24-year teaching experience.

Justino shared how his graduate course work expanded his identity development on his own gender. He claimed he actively chose to show “the piece about acting on it or proving to be a man, it gave me words for some things that I haven’t been able to name for people. It just made a lot of sense for me too.” Justino gained vocabulary and knowledge on how gender impacted his identity and humanity and was able to articulate his emotions, his thinking, and his actions to be supportive of a more expansive masculinity and machismo. Data showed Latino male educators were aware of the impact masculinity and machismo had on their own upbringing and identity, and they chose to actively be someone different. For those who gained critical consciousness in coursework and group settings, like Justino and Jose Jesus, they also were able to gain a deeper understanding of expectations they grappled with in trying to be seen as men. By doing that identity development work, critical consciousness supported their ongoing experimentation and disruption of stereotypical heteronormative standards. Once Latino male educators gained a level of critical consciousness, they also actively disrupted heteronormative standards with their students.

## Disrupting With Youth

The second way Latino male educators disrupted heteronormative standards was by supporting youth in expanding their definitions of masculinity, disrupting stereotypes by setting boundaries, and starting to redefine what it meant to be a “man” with the youth they influenced (Berggren, 2014; Cruz, 2012; Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008; Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; I. Jackson et al., 2014; Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Singh, 2020, 2021; Stoltenberg, 2000; Torres et al., 2002; Waling, 2019). Latino male educators were able to impact youth because they saw themselves in many of the situations their students experienced regarding the navigation of internal and external gender norms to express their masculinity and machismo.

Through deconstruction and gaining of critical consciousness, Michael David shared how he actively disrupted negative patterns present in his own childhood. He actively supported boys in displaying their definitions and understandings of masculinity and machismo while disrupting the harmful patterns he experienced. Michael David explained:

I think there's a lot of things that I did as an educator that swung in the opposite way of being affirming to things that do not include the full scope of being a male teacher or being a certain gender. Then I would see the young boys who were trying to figure that stuff out . . . How do you make space for other people, and not affirming the things that they are actually going through in their bodies. I have, as a way of wanting to counter my own upbringing, and trying to deconstruct all those things that I feel were harmful in the spaces that were created back in the '80s and '90s. Overcorrecting for these things, and also that there's a lot of space for people to be a boy, and be a man, and that's okay too.



Michael David's critical consciousness was hyper aware when boys were in silos trying to figure out what it means to be "a man," and he supported identity development that would have been useful to him in his own upbringing. Through critical consciousness, Michael David reflected on how he dialogues and interacts with the boys in his classroom. He stated, "I had gone through a transformation of, again, deconstruction, and who am I as a male and patriarchal norms, but on the day to day stuff, what was I doing to get the kids' attention?" Michael David analyzed how he responds to triggers he experienced as a young Latino boy and actively disrupts the patterns he saw from male adults in his life. He explained, "like, am I raising my voice? Am I taking a domineering stance? Am I using my size to control in the same way that I was shown that?" Michael David actively deconstructed and reflected on his own without someone supporting his development and understanding of masculinity and machismo. His experience growing up gave him abilities to support youth with similar experiences beyond traditional academic instructional practices.

Miguel shared a similar experience about how he thought about his students expressing themselves. Miguel described himself as someone who struggled to express himself through masculinity and machismo norms. He mentioned he never felt fully accepted as a man by others, even though he displayed archetypical heterosexual masculine behaviors, people still questioned his manhood. Miguel talked about how with his own struggle, he constantly experienced tension with specific, school-wide expectations of how Latino boys should express themselves. In his school, uniforms were used as a form of professionalism, and Miguel questioned whether this practice was supportive for boys who are, "more at risk to not be as successful in the school system, or is it actually hurting them and hindering their individuality . . . so they have to find other ways to try to 'express themselves.'"

Miguel thought about how to disrupt systemic approaches to support the development and belonging young boys of color need in their lives. He considered how he struggled to express himself because he did not go with the mainstream masculinity and machismo expectations set out by his environment. Miguel explained, “I think for me, though, my favorite part is [clears throat] going back to where we started highlighting differences, that being a Latino male can mean all kinds of things.” As Miguel unpacked masculinity and machismo with young people, mainly young Latino boys, they were able to find other ways to express their individuality and not feel pressured to conform to heteronormative standards.

Miguel affirmed differences and supported the decisions of young boys in his classroom. He shared, “those Latino males, like, ‘You guys love anime? That’s great. That’s your thing. Do it.’ Really encouraging them to find the things that make them unique and individual.” Miguel actively disrupted stereotypes and showed students he enjoys science-fiction, he reads books when he is on a break, and not all males have to love the same things. As Latino male educators began to expand their identities of masculinity and machismo, they directly impacted youth perceptions of what it means to be “a man” and to express something different from what stereotypical gender norms ask boys to suppress, which is their humanity.

Eight more Latino male educators showcased how they impacted and carried the words their young Latino boys have shared with them. Leon mentioned how he created culture with his boys. He explained, “I guess, in educating over 5 years that I had my own classroom, is just putting myself in their shoes, and not always being, ‘I’m the boss. I’m the teacher.’ I feel sometimes we forget about that.” Leon experienced the authoritative disciplinarian archetype he was called upon to mimic to control young people. He disrupted that particular stereotype of being dominant and authoritative by always showing empathy to the boys who struggled to be

seen. Leon was able to put himself directly in their shoes and support them in understanding the world.

Antonio shared he supports his young boys learning how to ask for help by reframing the practice as a strength rather than a sign of weakness. He explained, “We try to celebrate in that classroom space, and so that was super valuable for me because it even pushed me to make it okay to do the same in the spaces that I was then going into.” Antonio shared actively disrupting masculinity and machismo stereotypes with his boys pushed him to also live up to the expectation he sets with youth. Antonio was able to see the impact expanding masculinity norms had with his boys and his own well-being, which supported knowing how to navigate the spaces he had struggled with early in his life.

Kevin shared how building connections with boys around the same life experiences he had motivated him to do this work. Kevin was able to deconstruct masculinity and machismo with young boys by modeling a different version that was more emotional, was vulnerable with them, and shared his own learning. Kevin shared he “feels good off the bat. I think that’s one of the pieces of the work that I enjoy the most is being able to connect authentically and knowing that students know that you have their best interest in mind.” Kevin also added how he saw other people in the school struggle with this skill of building connection and relationships with boys. He knew he was needed in his K–12 spaces because of this struggle, and this realization supported his purpose of reimagining what masculinity and machismo meant to him and his students.

The impact Latino male educators saw from their intentionality fueled their practices with experimenting and exploring different versions of masculinity. Javier shared how students would mention to him:

I just want to let you know, you are one of the first positive Latino male role models I had in my life, who we didn't need to go out drinking or shooting or doing something like that. You showed me that masculinity meant to be just be us. We could do other things.

Javier saw how his intentionality was affirmed through the ways Latino boys experienced his masculinity and machismo. Many of the skills mentioned regarding how Latino male educators built connections and relationships with boys were not highlighted as strengths by their administrators or colleagues. These Latino male educators had strong assets and strengths to drive positive cultural impact, if used effectively.

Jose Jesus expanded on the calling bestowed upon Latino men to expand gender identities, which stemmed from what his students shared with him that included:

You taught me things about being a man that I should have learned from my own father. I think it's that. It's not a charge I signed up for, but I realize as I got into education, the community I teach in has a lot of single-family or mixed families because of the socioeconomics of the neighborhood.

Jose Jesus mentioned how many students saw him as a father figure because he displayed something that was missing for both male and female students in their Latinidad households. In a similar fashion, Justino had students calling him uncle or *tío* because he gave off a vibe of someone who supported their individuality. Alonzo allowed young people to be themselves and unpack their values. He shared, "I think it's important for me to push that narrative for them to be true to themselves because a lot of these students don't have that opportunity to learn from their families." Latino male educators like Alonzo actively supported identity development and exploration of youth. Alonzo's critical consciousness helped guide his actions in filling gaps

youth may need to be more successful in understanding who they are through the intersectionality of their identities.

Data showed how Latino male educators were proactive and purposeful in how they chose to support youth in addressing the gaps they had in their childhoods, unlearning what they had done based on negative experiences with masculinity and machismo, and expanding their definitions of being “a man” through exploratory moments with youth. Michael David summarized the impact a critically conscious Latino male educator could have on boys’ academic and social development with the intentionality to disrupt heteronormative patterns, saying:

They’re really searching for something, and if I can give them a hint of what they’re looking for and start to push their expectations for what does it mean to be a man, and be nurturing, and be caring, but also be physical, and be all the things that they’re questioning about themselves and push for academic excellence, right? Be thoughtful, be eloquent. Like give yourself this opportunity to read incredible books, and have these discussions, and that I saw so many kids in my classroom blossom as a result of being that type of way, and now a lot of them are in college and it’s incredible to see the seeds that were planted then, and what these young boys and now men have become. It was a lot, and it was necessary.

Michael David knew this work of deconstructing and disrupting negative patterns of masculinity and machismo was necessary, for his own mental wellness and for the well-being of the next generation of men. Michael David directly supported a new generation of expansion in gender norms that displayed the positive impact and breaking of harmful cycles that pertain to young Latino boys.

Data revealed Latino male educators had many intentional skills to build deeper relationships with students, especially young boys. Latino male educators intentionally broke down masculinity/machismo barriers of emotional erasure and allowed young boys to explore their emotions, gave them space to ask for help, and displayed multiple masculinities in their own behaviors (Connell, 2005; Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008; Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001; Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; I. Jackson et al., 2014; Noguera, 2012; Romero et al., 2009; Tajfel 1981; Torres et al., 2002). Also, participants were able to have empathy for what young people in their communities were experiencing by reflecting on their own lives, planting seeds of potential interests and career opportunities, and humanizing interactions with students labeled as “trouble” or “at-risk” (I. Jackson et al., 2014; Noguera, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017; Romero et al., 2009). There were many examples of the impact these relationships had on the future of their youth. Having a deeper connection in their school experience was valuable for young Latino boys, and Latino male educators reflected how intentional they were in creating them given their experiences growing up. A deeper level of consciousness allowed for Latino male educators to be more intentional in how they built relationships, how they explored their identities, and they supported youth to not experience the struggle they experienced in their own lives. These skills were supportive of enhancing a school environment to impact the lives of all youth. The examples showcased from the data thus far focused on relationships and social practices Latino male educators use. Once Latino male educators had a clearer understanding of the impact they wanted to create, they began to also support disruption in what curricular activities and experiences they provided for youth.

## **Disrupting Through Critical Pedagogy**

As Latino male educators enhanced their critical consciousness, intentional and purposeful decisions were made in their lesson planning that directly impacted youth. These decisions began a phase of action through critical pedagogy in how they thought about creating shifts, changes, and disruption through their curricular experiences for students. A critical pedagogical framework supported educators in relinquishing power to youth, created dialogical spaces to build criticality, and supported the liberation of individuals in oppressive structures (Danielewicz, 2014; Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008; Freire, 1994). The awareness of the structures they navigated internally and externally supported a deeper understanding of what power dynamics were present, and participants intentionally tried not to replicate the problematic aspects of masculinity/machismo they had experienced. Data revealed Latino male educators were able to deepen their exploration of expanding masculinity/machismo through intentional planning on what they were doing for the youth they served. Latino male educators disrupted heteronormative patriarchal norms by breaking down how they communicated with youth without gendering them, moving to a welcoming presence rather than a fear-based compliance environment, and disrupting stereotypical toxic masculinity/machismo language that dehumanized multiple masculinities (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Singh, 2020, 2021; Stoltenberg, 2000; Torres et al., 2002; Waling, 2019).

Miguel reflected by breaking down patterns of his own masculinity and machismo through deconstruction. He shared:

Early on in my teaching practice, I recognized, “Oh man, I sound like my parents.” . . . I’m very gendered in how I’m talking to my students, whether they’re male or female. Then, if I do have students that are nonbinary, that are

trans or anywhere on the spectrum, I am gendering them by how I'm talking to them unintentionally. I took a few years to very intentionally unpack that, break that habit. What I settled on is I talked to all of my students regardless of gender identity, with a more like loving, raising my tones or I pitch sometimes, so it's like softer and more welcoming because that's how I wish I would've been talked to more by males and females alike. It's not for everybody and that's fine, but at least it's much more welcoming.

By gaining awareness through critical consciousness of how he presented himself to students and gathering feedback on how he impacted youth through his communication, he was able to adjust his tone in how he spoke to all students, regardless of gender. Miguel displayed growth through this reflexivity, moved beyond feeling guilt or shame of what he had done, and focused on what he could change to impact the current students he served. Miguel also experimented with his masculinity and machismo to display something different in every single interaction he had with anyone he encountered in his K–12 spaces. Miguel connected how he replicated something missing in his life from adult men, and now he gets to display something his younger self needed. Much of the pedagogical practices Latino male educators focused on pertained to the harm they obtained as young Latino boys and what would have supported their younger selves. Latino male educators were able to get direct feedback from youth when they experimented in this way, which motivated them to pursue a different version of masculinity and machismo. Additionally, five Latino male educators shared how they actively disrupted heteronormative standards in their classroom practices.

Javier directly disrupted homophobic and transphobic language that dehumanized others in his classroom. Javier mentioned how students would use homophobic terminology like “that’s



gay or don't be a fag," which he could have easily shut down through rules and norms. Javier went deeper in his pedagogical practices by "taking the time to pause and unpack the history, the implications, and the impact of that kind of language and its effects on the space we're trying to co-create within the classroom." Javier provided experiential and dialogical spaces for students in his classroom to have productive conflict conversations on topics of masculinity and machismo. Furthermore, he gave students the power to co-create norms, structures, and cultural collective accountability on how they were all building the existing space. Going deeper and having academic opportunities to engage in cultural harm had a positive impact in his classroom by fully grasping the purpose of disrupting heteronormative toxic masculinity and machismo and becoming a space that was more inclusive of everyone's differences.

Jose Jesus also focused on language with youth, particularly with terms used daily that focused on the connotation of gendered Spanish words. He shared, "I'll bring up some of the language we use, sometimes I'll even joke like little jokes. Why do we say when something's cool, we say, '*Qué padre*,' but when it's bad we say, '*Qué madres?*'" Jose Jesus was able to bring in everyday terminology students do not think twice about and have a critical conversation on the origins of words and their historic impact. Through his critical pedagogy, Jose Jesus actively built the critical consciousness of youth so they question why they do or say the things that are a part of their lives.

Michael David and Antonio discussed how they created practices that supported boys in particular. Michael David mentioned needing to "be really careful that I wasn't setting up a precedent for kids to be listening to me out of fear, because the science teacher or the art teacher who were female didn't have that same presence." Michael David intentionally filtered his masculinity in how he communicated all directions, all instruction, and any reactions he had to

youth to show care, love, and support, which was something he did not experience in his schooling experience. Antonio used his classroom as an opportunity for youth to escape from the traumatic environment outside of the four walls he controlled. Antonio supported youth to “take off the mask that they had to wear when they were walking the rest of the hallways, because it was basically a defense mechanism for them to be able to get through the day safely.” Antonio had to go against the curricular pacing plans to allow youth to build trusting relationships with him in an environment where they did not feel safe. Antonio had to create a countercultural space where youth were able to experiment with being themselves through intentional activities, experiences, and opportunities to just be human. Once Latino male educators were able to start experimenting with instructional practices, they had the potential to have a greater impact on school-wide initiatives that support systemic approaches to inclusion, belonging, and equity.

Through work in the classroom and curriculum for over 20 years, Jose Jesus spoke about how he was able to create a Gender Empowerment Day for everyone in the school. Jose Jesus led a committee of educators, trained staff on pedagogical practices, and created curricular experiences that allowed all youth to engage with gender expansion with all the adults on campus. Jose Jesus explained:

Then in the classrooms, we reassigned all the males to different classrooms. One of the things they watched was clips from *The Mask You Live in*. They watched a small TED Talk, a little clip of a TED Talk from Jeff Duncan-Andrade on the roses that grow from concrete . . . *The Feminist on Cellblock Y*. It’s in Soledad Prison. The guy is reading bell hooks and he’s teaching other inmates about masculinity . . . They’re breaking down these concepts, so they watch clips of that

as they're having discussions. It was about maybe a 4-hour lesson that myself and another colleague of mine put together.

Jesus Jose brought in content to supplement the experiences youth were having in his high school. He collaborated with other educators on what content could push specific themes and patterns they were noticing in their youth and actively engaged youth in a proactive way to learn and unlearn. Through the Gender Empowerment Day, Jose Jesus mentioned how women supported young girls and gender expansive students were able to obtain a space where they felt supported in their experiences and in the topics they wanted to engage in. Through the partnership Jose Jesus gained from his administration and colleagues, he was able to experiment with curriculum at a level where all people in the high school were being influenced to become more inclusive and equitable to the experiences of all their students. As Latino men gained opportunities to engage with different forms of pedagogy, they were able to gain even more criticality of what they were teaching youth through required content versus what they could supplement to support youth in a more culturally responsive way.

Michael David beautifully summarized his growth in pedagogy and what he learned through this exploratory process, saying:

My first avenue into pedagogy was actually counter. We were given a pedagogy based upon high-performing charter schools in the East Coast, which has now come to light as a little bit more carceral in its ways of being. I knew that was part of why kids feared coming to school, especially in fourth grade, right? Fourth and fifth grade, that's not a space that you want to be, and again, this was as a result of high expectations, right? High expectations at the cost of kid's humanity, and so

that was a lesson to me that not all quote unquote effective pedagogy is good pedagogy, and it's not humanizing.

Michael David unpacked what it meant to humanize his content and curricular experiences for youth. He was able to break down why certain practices he was instructed to perform were actually harmful to the identities of young people. Through his critical consciousness, he actively disrupted what content he put in front of students and was more intentional about experiences that affirm all the intersectionalities his youth showcase. Through critical consciousness, Latino male educators were able to plan, think, and execute reimagining experiences for youth in school environments focused on inclusivity, belonging, and equity.

Pedagogically, Latino male educators questioned the curriculum based on the coded messaging it used, provided opportunities for youth to unpack their identities through curricular-based experiences, and intentionally supported a classroom space that helped young boys of color take off their survival masks (Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008; Freire, 1994; I. Jackson et al., 2014; Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Noguera, 2012; Singh, 2020, 2021). Critical pedagogy takes on a political stance and provides a great opportunity for disruption of masculinity/machismo norms, stereotypes, and beliefs (Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008; Freire, 1994; I. Jackson et al., 2014; Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Noguera, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017; Singh, 2020, 2021). Another way critical pedagogy was enhanced was through continued identity development and intentional unpacking. Espy mentioned how he felt more liberated going through marriage counseling and therapy by having the emotional intelligence to navigate spaces with tools that support his identity exploration, which he explored with youth (Falicov, 2010, 2018; Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Singh, 2020, 2021). Being able to acquire tools to express feelings and emotions and engage in

healthy conflict supported the use of critical pedagogy in knowing triggers, gaining awareness of what continues to affect identities, and exploring new content to become more authentic.

This section showcased how Latino male educators actively disrupted heteronormative patriarchal standards once they had a heightened level of critical consciousness. Through this critical consciousness, they began to deconstruct what masculinity and machismo meant to them and interrogated their intentions and behaviors. By interrogating their masculinity and machismo, participants began to disrupt heteronormative standards through their interactions with youth and through intentional lesson planning, expand masculinity and machismo exploration of identity, and use critical pedagogy to critique systematic patterns that affect young boys of color. Active disruption of heteronormative patriarchal standards supported Latino male educators to heal their own wounds regarding how masculinity and machismo impacted their lives and support the next generation of young men to be different, to expand their identities, and to not hide their humanity.

### **Surviving and Thriving in the Profession**

Research Question 3 asked: In what ways do Latino male educators acquire knowledge and skills in their teaching and leadership practices that have helped them stay in the education profession? Asking this question brought forth the opportunity for Latino male educators in this study to have an impact on the future Latino male educators who want to become teachers, administrators, and K–12 regional and district leaders. By understanding what skills and knowledge they obtained, there is an opportunity for teacher education programs and school professional development programs to create proactive and reactive interventions to retain Latino male educators. I wanted Latino male educators in this study to be seen as experts of their

experiences, which could lead to more positive results in terms of teaching and leadership experiences for Latino men in education.

In this study, data revealed Latino male educators acquired knowledge and skills to be successful in their K–12 experiences in two distinct ways. One way was through intentional skill development from mentors/femtors who supported growth opportunities for Latino male educators to lead. The other way they obtained knowledge and skills was through lessons they had learned independently and wished they had learned earlier in their careers to make them more successful.

Data revealed the resilience and agency many of Latino male educators possessed throughout their careers which led them to stay in the profession. For Latino male educators who did not have intentional development at their schools, they created opportunities to develop skills on their own. This siloed experience connected to masculinity studies wherein men try to figure out everything by themselves, from early age to adulthood (Berggren, 2014; Connell, 2005; Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001; I. Jackson et al., 2014; Milner, 2010; Romero et al., 2009; Salisbury & Jackson, 1996; Torres et al., 2002). This agency also connected to previous experiences unpacked through the data in which Latino men assumed they had to navigate everything on their own. Latino male educators gained valuable skills and knowledge in their identities, learned how to navigate the K–12 spaces they encountered, and examined what they unlearned through pedagogical lessons in their careers. In acknowledging the knowledge and skills they obtained, *circulos enfocados* became a space to share those practices, to unpack what all Latino male educators were going through, and to support each other through similar experiences. *Circulos enfocados* became a space in which intentional learning was provided for Latino male educators who needed to gain new insights to support their current work. My hope was for future

institutional support structures to take into consideration the investment Latino male educators seek to develop their mindsets and skills and reach their full potential in their careers.

### **Development From Mentors/Femtors**

Data revealed different ways mentorship and femtorship positively impacted Latino male educators' lives by obtaining valuable skills from people they trusted. Latino male educators obtained awareness of their identities, knowledge of critical scholars who pushed their thinking, experiential learning to support their pedagogy, and philosophical beliefs that pushed their thinking about students (Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008; Freire, 1994; I. Jackson et al., 2014; R. Jones et al., 2019; Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Noguera, 2012; L. Rodríguez et al., 2013; Sáenz et al., 2015; Singh, 2019, 2021; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Torres et al., 2002). In their teaching practices, mentors and femtors enhanced participants' instructional toolkits, pushed them to be reflective of their teaching practices, exhibited beliefs in their abilities to grow into someone they had not seen yet, and supported their development to become coaches for others. Mentors and femtors had the ability to increase Latino male educators' confidence, skillset, and purpose in education.

Justino mentioned how someone saw something in him at an early stage in his career. Justino stated:

I can't remember a moment that I didn't want to be a principal, because someone always fed that to me. Someone was always like, "All right. Well, you're a 1st-year teacher right now, but when you're a principal, here's the knowledge you need to have." . . . When you make a teacher become their own driver of development, you're the coach now, you're coaching me what it means to be you, and that kind of thing. . . . When I think about my own experiences, that's what I

think about. Is just being able to, one, know who I was has helped a lot, or at least be in the progression of this is how I understand myself, and then this is how I understand my role and myself in that role. . . . Those are just some elements, just the identity piece, the affinity. That someone genuinely cared about my progression, or what I was trying to accomplish. Even if it was just in the classroom, they just knew.

Justino did not go into education to become a principal and the fact that someone intentionally developed him to reach that potential afforded him the opportunity to unpack his impact on a classroom and on a school-wide scale. Justino gained insights about how to become an instructional expert, lead through others, and implement change in his school site. As a result, Justino was able to support others as an administrator who could continue the positive development cycle he had experienced.

Kevin mentioned a similar experience with his former principal who saw something he had not yet seen in himself. He built trust with his principal by her actions that allowed him to explore his pedagogy and aspirational goals of impacting his schools community at a larger scale. Kevin shared, “I leaned on her, asked her questions. Those first 5 years, it was a lot of learning and growing. It was easy because, again, I know that she had my best interest in mind.” Kevin made lots of mistakes through his practice, and the feedback relationship he had with his principal allowed him to use those moments as growth opportunities. Kevin also took advantage of opportunities to reach out for help and learn from a person he was aspiring to become in the future. Kevin explained, “She always made herself available. My love language is time spent. If she was able to jump on the call, if she was able to answer questions, jump in a meeting with me, it just means a lot.” The mentor Kevin had was able to model high support and differentiation for



his needs so Kevin was able to thrive in his career. Kevin added how he gained so many skills, strategies, and tools that impacted the way he coaches teachers and how he leads through the exemplary model he had. Like Justino, Kevin experienced someone who was invested in his growth and development from the beginning, and both Latino men are now in administrative roles leading in similar ways to impact their school sites. However, development and growth did not mean participants had to go into leadership.

J.O., who won many accolades being an educator, received support to become the best educator possible through intentional development of his pedagogy. J.O. received feedback on his planning and execution of lessons, and he was able to process and dialogue about his own development path with his femtor. J.O. shared, “She helps me see things that I don’t think about, I guess, engagement-wise or proximity-wise, or what could we have done differently?” J.O. trusted the perspective of his coach and was able to gain insights into his awareness of his teaching practices to support his development. J.O. appreciated how he was able to transfer what he learned in coaching sessions to his own practice on a daily basis. J.O mentioned how he was on the same page with his coach, which allowed him to explore the creation of his curriculum and make adjustments at any time based on the needs of his students. J.O. explained, “Usually, even like teaching crossfits, I’m teaching the same lesson, the first one is usually like trash and then it gets better and better. By the time it’s the end, it’s like, ‘Oh, now it’s like this is money.’” Because of the intentional development he obtained from his coach and femtor, J.O. implemented his own feedback after reflecting on his lessons in the moment. He made adjustments based on what he learned and adapted to the needs of his students, which made his lessons more meaningful and produced deeper, trusting relationships with his students.

Javier mentioned how his mentors and femtors supported his pedagogy through direct feedback that enhanced his skills. Javier explained, “I had some really great coaches, and so, they would help me with the instructional side of it, and just on the logistical, what feedback to provide, right? Like making sure that it’s measurable, and it’s pointed.” Javier gained awareness of his planning and execution in ways that aligned to his values as an educator, and he felt challenged to continue growing to support his students. Through this coaching experience, Javier mentioned how he learned to build intentional connections with people and drive results through others by building a trusting working relationship.

Jose Jesus had a similar experience with his first principal when he began teaching. He recalled how his principal “just knew how to let you know when you’re not doing something right, but that you’re not in trouble. But you felt it. You’re like, I don’t want to disappoint this man.” Jose Jesus experienced a trusting relationship with a mentor who supported his growth and development. Jose Jesus was able to take the feedback he gained from his principal and start to experiment with his pedagogy, apply new skills to strategies and practices, and gain confidence in his abilities. He explained, “I learned to always be well prepared in my instruction. And it was recognized. I got that recognition early on. He would actually send some older teachers to come observe me and ask me to coach them.” Through Jose Jesus’s implementation of feedback, he gained more opportunities to be recognized for the experiential learning he provided for students in the school. Jose Jesus continued to impact newer educators in their instructional practices and push people to have a more critical pedagogy based on the opportunities he obtained through his mentor.

Bobby, who did not go into education as a teacher, worked directly with students to support their future college experiences. He recalled how his first Latina femtor supported his growth in seeing his own worth, which he always has struggled with, saying:

I think it's just like seeing a lot in me that I don't know if I've ever seen or said about myself. I think that's something I continue to struggle with is seeing what I'm worth. It was very refreshing to have somebody see that in me.

Through the experience of seeing his worth, Bobby enrolled in a graduate program to support knowledge and skills to further expand the theory and practices he uses in his current leadership role. He actively sought feedback from his femtor on decisions that impacted him internally and on external decisions that impacted other adults and students. As a result, Bobby supported all his direct reports through an asset-based lens and guided people to reach their fullest potential, which had been his experience with a femtor who believed in his abilities. Latino male educators were able to gain valuable skills in pedagogy, leadership development, coaching, and identity based on trusting relationships they had with mentors/femtors who believed in their potential.

As Latino male educators continued to grow and experience success in their K–12 spaces, they gravitated to mentors/femtors who supported their development in acquiring skills they could use in their pedagogy, in their leadership opportunities, and for their own critical consciousness. Many studies have pointed to the proactive support mentorship can have by providing models of what success can look like, enhancing navigational skills such as agency for new opportunities, and providing a safe space for Latino men to dialogue with someone they trust (I. Jackson et al., 2014; R. Jones et al., 2019; Quintanilla, 2017; L. Rodríguez et al., 2013; Sáenz et al., 2015). Latino male educators appreciated having someone on their side to support their trajectory in the development goals that made them successful in their profession.

## **Surviving and Thriving**

Data revealed how Latino male educators gained certain skills and knowledge later on in their careers and wished they had gained them earlier. Latino male educators wanted to be developed, observed, and supported in their pedagogical instructional practices beyond compliance-based cultures of student control (Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008; Freire, 1994; I. Jackson et al., 2014; R. Jones et al., 2019; Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Noguera, 2012; Singh, 2019, 2021). They also wanted development on their identities and knowledge about how to continue a trajectory in deconstruction, unpacking, and reimagining how they present their authenticity as educators (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Tajfel, 1981; Torres et al., 2002). They wanted mentorship/femtorship opportunities in which they could connect with someone who had knowledge, skills, and guidance on what they needed to focus on to be the best version of themselves and what it takes to access leadership opportunities their mentors/femtors had obtained (L. Rodríguez et al., 2013; Sáenz et al., 2015). Last, healing and mental health was part of identity work because of how traumatic masculinity had been in the lives of Latino male educators; these pieces of identity work had the potential to further enhance skills that support how they show up, reflect, and continue to unpack experiences (Breault, 2016; Falicov, 2018; Hall, 2020; hooks, 2004; Lantolf, 2013; Mahn, 1999; Moje & Lewis, 2020). Throughout Chapter 4, I discussed how identity played a major role in the development of Latino male educators. Identity development was a key component and a skill-building opportunity to support how Latino men understand who they are.

Antonio gained an awareness and context from which to support future Latino male educators in unpacking and deconstructing their masculinity. Antonio shared:

For me, in my education trajectory or educator trajectory, I didn't once have an opportunity to reflect on identity broadly until I was in my master's program pursuing my administrative certificate. That was no part of my teacher preparation or onboarding or development, and I think there is a recognition of not only what are our own self-defined identities, and how we aspire to be recognized and seen, but also recognition of what are our ascribed identities, so an opportunity to reflect on because of the way that I look stepping into whatever space I'm stepping in, these are potential ways in which we'll be seen, and here is how to navigate.

Antonio gained words, theories, and practical application skills to intentionally support his own growth and development through his intersectional identities. Being able to navigate the school professional structure and gain opportunities to be successful showcased his abilities to be resilient. Antonio also noted tension between acquiring his new knowledge and unlearning many practices, which could have supported his own development and impacted the youth in his classroom when he was a teacher. Digging deeper into understanding his own identity, Antonio saw how everything he did as an educator was influenced as he began to unpack his own identity. Antonio explained, "The understanding of what navigational capital is, and how we're able to finagle and operate within different spaces I think are things that create value in our being and in our practice and gives the confidence to really influence pedagogy." Antonio saw the ripple effects identity development could have and knew the potential impact it could have on Latino male educators if given the opportunity.

Five Latino male educators also added how identity development skills were needed earlier in their careers. Espy mentioned the "more we can deconstruct some of our own

masculinity and our own self-work and not feeling that we have anything to prove . . . I feel we can overcome a lot of the obstacles that come from within ourselves.” Espy saw how critical it had been for him to deeply analyze his own masculinity and machismo, which led him to break down inner barriers that did not allow him to thrive earlier in his career. Espy gained these skills through “identity-based leadership and values-based leadership and what it meant to lead authentically” in his principal development program. Transferring that identity and values-based skill development would support more Latino male educators in understanding and unpacking who they are. Espy was able to help other Latino male educators understand his trajectory and lessons and advise them on strategies that directly supported his gender expansiveness.

Bobby also agreed how deconstruction was a skill needed when thinking about how identities impacted the spaces they navigate on a daily basis. Bobby shared, “In the piece of working on ourselves because that’s, inevitably, if you truly are bringing yourself right to work and your authentic self, then all the good and the bad is coming with you.” Bobby directly saw the benefits deconstruction had on how he navigated spaces with more authenticity and allowed more Latino male educators to do the same by sharing what he had done or was currently doing in his journey of deconstruction. Bobby also mentioned how intentional development of deconstruction skills through identity could have potential for critical consciousness if it was employed with young Latino students who struggled in navigating their identities, especially if those students waited to learn about their identities later in life like most of the Latino male educators in this study.

Miguel mentioned how identity development was the focus of just one lesson in one course in his credential program. He did not even recall what the lesson was about because it was forgotten throughout the program and not embedded in all the curricular experiences. Miguel had

to employ his individual agency to seek out identity development on his own and know where he wanted to intentionally focus. Miguel shared, “It took years, it took a while and it took a large confluence of things. It took being able to find a mentor or two, it took unfortunately trial and error. It took my own personal therapy.” As he gained skills in awareness and consciousness of his identity and how it impacted him, he saw the gaps Latino male educators experienced coming into the school settings from their teaching programs. Miguel mentioned both of the student teachers in his classroom only had one module on identity and that module barely touched on how identity impacts pedagogy. Miguel suggested having a deeper understanding of one’s self through identity would support educators early in their careers. Latino male educators saw the benefits identity development had on their own lives and how they navigated their experiences in education. Not all Latino men in the *circulos enfocados* had done this work, and the ones who participated in this setting for the first time claimed to be processing what they were hearing and how identity development was something they had always struggled with throughout their lives.

Another recommendation that resonated for Latino male educators was mentorship. Mentorship was something participants longed for or gained so much value from to directly support their skill development. For J.O., the sooner one could have a mentor, the better. He claimed, “I think that 1st year is really tough for everybody. Not having someone that you can lean on.” Because of the hardships associated with being a 1st-year educator and having intersectional identities, J.O. noted having a mentor who could provide guidance, insight, and support could be beneficial for developing Latino male educators’ skills. For Sandro, mentorship had a great potential to build dialogical skills missing in his career. According to Sandro, creating mentorship opportunities for Latino male educators was important “to have the safe space, to have conversations that realistically you probably won’t have with your manager, or

have the skill set to have that level of conversation.” Such mentorship could enhance the experience to gain navigational perspective and capital to thrive in the profession. Sandro had a positive impact through mentorship, and it was why he remained in education. He was able to pass on what he learned about his identities to support what new educators go through and retain their talents. Michael David wished he had mentors in his career but had never found one. Learning from someone he looked up to would have been beneficial in his exploration of pedagogy, instructional practices, and the tension he experienced with certain school initiatives. Latino male educators also recommended other examples of practices that could be beneficial to their careers.

Alonzo mentioned instructional practices needed an evolution of growth and not just stagnation after reaching mastery as an educator. He noted, “We always need to update our practices, update our understanding of the education system, and understanding of our students as a whole because students are changing, people are changing, and we need to change with that.” Alonzo knew his pedagogical skills would always need to grow because society constantly changed. He wanted to advance with the times while deeply understanding the current students he served and meeting their needs with new pedagogical skills to support a deeper understanding of learning.

Miguel mentioned how he never gets observed by administrators, even as he sought support to grow instructionally in his practices. He noted constantly asking, “admin, come to my class. Tell me what I’m doing wrong. Tell me what I can improve. Tell me what I can get better at.” Miguel believed no one came to observe him because he gave off “this male confidence that sometimes is overinflated.” As a result, Miguel shared, “I don’t get the same levels of support that I hope.” Miguel created an assumption of his male identity and exhausted his ability to



advocate for what he needed to grow. Miguel called for help and support so he could feel challenged and affirmed in the practices he was intentionally working on and achieve the growth he wanted to showcase for himself and students.

Michael David showcased how education and impact could be achieved through ways other than becoming a school administrator. Specifically, Michael David said he looked for:

Having pedagogical heroes within the academy, and just people you can look up to as people who are doing the research, and people who are making their way through educational systems to become chief academic officers or people who are instructional coaches, and people who have pedagogical expertise beyond just classroom management pieces, and so, I think being able to see how you don't just have to become an assistant principal, or you can actually be an effective leader in pedagogy and become a pedagogical leader, I think, that's something that's highly needed in the profession.

Intentional skill building, focus on what it takes to become leaders in pedagogy, and reimagining curricular experiences for students were beneficial in constructing a new educational model. More importantly, Michael David mentioned learning navigational skills people use to move into different roles and experiences could broaden the landscape of education for Latino male educators. Michael David coached educators in understanding what was available for them to learn about different roles and how pedagogical heroes supported his deeper critical consciousness of what instruction looked like in his teaching experiences. Latino male educators acquired many skills and knowledge to directly support new Latino male educators, even though current Latino male educators continued to struggle with their careers.

This section showcased the knowledge and skills Latino male educators obtained to support retention efforts of their many talents. Latino male educators are experts in their lived experiences and can provide new knowledge to support others. If I could sum up how I want Latino males to feel in their education careers, it would be through Christian's words on how his classroom felt: "It was my happy place. I loved being there. Sometimes I didn't want to leave because it felt good to me, and I want that for more teachers, especially teachers who look like me." An educator like Christian can directly impact other Latino men using the skills he acquired through his experiences. Through intentional development from mentors and femtors, Latino male educators were able to acquire knowledge of skill sets they needed to perform well in their roles while also gaining insight to specific behaviors to enhance their experiences in K–12 spaces. Latino male educators gained skills in agency, advocacy, and pedagogy that enhanced their abilities to impact the spaces they inhabit with colleagues, youth, and families. Latino male educators thrived when they had deep relationships with leaders who saw their worth and strengths and pushed them through intentional development to help them grow and succeed. Latino male educators wished there was more development for those educators who still navigate siloed experiences, and the *circulos enfocados* supported Latino men who continued to struggle on their own.

### **Chapter Summary**

The purpose of this study was to explore how deepening critical machismo consciousness could support Latino male educators in gaining awareness about how they navigate their K–12 spaces, both internally and externally, and advocate for dismantling heteronormative patriarchal standards. Through these dialogical spaces (i.e., *circulos enfocados*), Latino male educators shared, connected, and expressed vulnerability in their thoughts, beliefs, and healing, which were

ongoing. There was much data from the 17 Latino men left out of this chapter. As a researcher, there was tension in what I shared because there were so many more topics that could have been highlighted; however, those data did not pertain to the research questions. The research questions that drove my study were the following:

1. In what ways do Latino male educators understand their masculinity and how it impacts their day-to-day lives in their educational settings?
2. In what ways do Latino male educators disrupt heteronormative patriarchal standards of masculinity and machismo in their own beliefs and actions?
3. In what ways do Latino male educators acquire knowledge and skills in their teaching and leadership practices to help them remain and thrive in the teaching profession?

This chapter synthesized and analyzed results in the data that gave a glimpse into how participants understood their masculinity/machismo and how they navigated educational spaces.

The three main findings that emerged from the study connected to the literature review and added nuance to support future research on Latino male educators. First, Latino male educators constantly explored what authenticity in their identities meant by wearing masks coded by societal constructs, tried to be accepted and affirmed on how they show up, and unpacked the potential of multiple masculinities as they rejected heteronormative patriarchal standards and archetypes. Second, Latino male educators enhanced their critical consciousness through their own internal and external work on deconstruction of masculinity/machismo and actively engaged in critical pedagogical practices in their planning and execution of lessons pertaining to gender. Third, Latino male educators acquired knowledge and skills from intentional development by mentors/femtors and colleagues, and they learned so many skills and knowledge to support what beginning educators need. When Latino male educators did not have professional development

opportunities through their schools, they navigated their identities within this space on their own without obtaining support and figured out how to survive and thrive in their individual contexts. In the data, participants provided insight on what skills and knowledge could have supported their development early in their careers. In the next chapter, I summarize the findings from the data, discuss the implications of this study, and provide recommendations to support Latino male educators in their K–12 spaces.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

This chapter summarizes the key findings of this study. In addition, this chapter discusses the implications of the findings to support the retention efforts for Latino male educators through building critical consciousness in identity development, intentional development of critical pedagogy, and using a *circulos enfocados* model to provide a shared group experience in learning and unlearning. Furthermore, K–12 institutions can support Latino male educators by providing staff and administrators with professional development in critical consciousness of gender, supporting Latino boys and fathers with deconstructing machismo, and creating community-wide initiatives that disrupt heteronormative patriarchal standards to create a more inclusive environment.

#### **Moving Away From Damage-Centered Research**

This study aimed to humanize the research experience of participants in the study. Given the complexity and delicacy of deconstructing masculinity and its effects on Latino male educator identities, my goal was to create a supportive structure in *circulos enfocados* and incorporate touchpoints in the study for participants to provide feedback on how their words were being represented. I saw Latino male educators' lived experiences and insights on how they navigate K–12 spaces as expertise from practitioners in the field, which can be informative to future Latino male educators as they enter the profession. In addition, participants were invited to the dissertation defense to witness the culmination of the study and engage in the full process. Tuck (2009) discussed how researchers should move away from damage-centered research, which is flawed in its approach to creating harmful narratives of marginalized communities. Tuck urged communities to consider long-term repercussions of viewing marginalized people as

broken and begin to reimagine a new research framework that empowers, rather than victimizes, communities. My research is a letter to all Latino male educators who constantly think about how to express or present their gender identities through the complexity of what it means to be authentic given the myriad of definitions by others on how they should express their masculinity or machismo. My intentionality was not to paint Latino male educators from a deficit lens because so much research has already painted them as a problem to fix (Brockenbrough, 2012; Campos, 2012; Carey, 2020; Cooper & Jordan, 2003; Griffin, 2018; Griffin & Tackie, 2017; Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Noguera, 2012; Singh, 2019, 2020; Yosso & García, 2021). Participants in this study were asset-based experts who provided valuable insight into the complexities of their humanity while also providing feedback throughout the process for my practice, my methodology, and the presentation of their data.

My research focused on Tuck's (2009) recommendation that researchers evolve toward a desire-based research framework (i.e., instead being damage focused) to fully understand complexity, contradiction, and the self-determination of lived lives. I, as a researcher, constantly reflected and questioned my approaches, my writing, and the ways in which I communicated and interacted with participants in the study. In moving toward a desire-based framework in my research, my hope was to dismantle stereotypes, which are damage focused, and move toward humantypes or complex personhood, which are desired focused and depict real bodies and faces in research as full of complexity, nuance, and contradiction (Tuck, 2009). Ultimately, this study supported doing research with participants rather than to participants through active resistance to deficit-based research models and, instead, used a more holistic, humanizing model that can support reimagination of community-based research opportunities.

## **Summary of Key Findings and Policy Recommendations**

This study presented three major findings that support new insights to the complex personhood of Latino male educators as they navigate their K–12 spaces. Furthermore, this study offered an opportunity to reimagine new ways of engaging in complex and delicate topics through a humanizing, desire-based research framework for future research. In addition to theoretical implications of critical machismo consciousness, the study presented evidence for collective institutional shifts that can support the retention efforts for talented Latino male educators. I highlight each key finding and provide recommendations for practice and policy in K–12 spaces.

### **Key Finding 1**

Latino male educators understood their masculinity and machismo through identity exploration and experimentation with the concept of masking that intentionally supported acceptance of gender norms or actively disrupted negative versions of masculinity and machismo. This portion of the data aligned with research on identity negotiation, meaning-making, and intentionally choosing how to express one's intersectional identities (Ahmed, 2004; Berggren, 2014; Breault, 2016; Chandler et al., 2003; Connell, 2005; Erikson, 1968; Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001; Jennings et al., 2014; Lantolf, 2013; Meeus et al., 2010; Moje & Lewis, 2020; Molina, 2015; Quintero & Estrada, 1998; Torres et al., 2002). Through the concept of masking, data aligned to the literature on how Latino male educators intentionally chose how they behaved in specific K–12 spaces, which required them to live up to a certain level of masculinity and machismo and actively disrupt heteronormative standards through their own gender expansion (Abaci et al., 1974; Bell et al., 2003; Breault, 2016; Brockenbrough, 2012; Carey, 2020; Colwill & Boyd, 2008; Connell, 2005; Cooper & Jordan, 2003; De La Cancela, 1991; Falicov, 2018;

Gross & John, 2003; I. Jackson et al., 2014; Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Paz & Kemp, 1961; Romero et al., 2009; Singh, 2021; Torres et al., 2002). In adding to the literature on Latino male educators, when they began to deconstruct masculinity and machismo, they began to question what it means to be authentic. When Latino male educators chose to expand their definitions of masculinity and machismo maleness, they became different versions of themselves, versions they wanted to display (Berggren, 2014; Falicov, 2018; Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; Tajfel, 1981; Torres et al., 2002; Waling, 2019). Latino male educators explored and experimented with multiple masculinities based on learning they obtained from their lived experiences and the ongoing tension they had with heteronormative stereotypes that defined their identities. With the constant wearing of masks, Latino male educators struggled with what it meant to be authentic because many of the definitions for their identities had been predetermined and affirmed when showcased. Participants were reminded to always display the masculinity and machismo they tried to disrupt. Through the creation of a dialogic space with Latino male educators, actively deconstructing masculinity and machismo created a collective consensus on how problematic the masks have been to their identities. The deconstruction of masculinity and machismo directly supported Singh's (2020) vision of not reconstructing masculinity or machismo into a revised manhood while actively disrupting "real" with any connection to masculinity and machismo.

## **Key Finding 2**

Latino male educators built their critical consciousness through a deep internal deconstruction of masculinity/machismo that led to exploration and experimentation of expanding gender by disrupting gender norms in themselves, disrupting gender norms with youth, and disrupting through critical pedagogical instructional practices. This finding adds to the literature of expanding masculinity and machismo studies by highlighting the intentionality



Latino male educators displayed when they obtained a heightened critical consciousness (Danielewicz, 2014; Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008; Freire, 1994; Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Singh, 2020, 2021; Stoltenberg, 2000; Torres et al., 2002; Waling, 2019). Through their lived experiences, Latino male educators actively deconstructed masculinity and machismo to expand their critical consciousness of gender norms and determine how they applied or disrupted them, which added to the literature of understanding the potential impact these educators can have on youth (Berggren, 2014; Cruz, 2012; Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008; Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; I. Jackson et al., 2014; Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Singh, 2020, 2021; Stoltenberg, 2000; Torres et al., 2002; Waling, 2019). In supporting Latino male educator impact on youth, participants showcased purposeful actions beyond awareness and analysis of masculinity and machismo norms through intentional decisions to redefine what manhood meant to them and to the people with whom they interacted on a daily basis in their K–12 spaces. Adding to the literature, Latino male educators who supported youth with deconstructing masculinity and machismo felt almost covert in most cases because their pedagogical decisions were rarely observed in the classroom. Through an expansion of multiple masculinities and gender, they actively supported youth to reimagine masculinity and machismo by centering youth's emotionality, which most of the Latino male educators struggled with in their lives. Latino male educators recalled their lived experiences and purposefully disrupted those narratives through experimentation with supporting young Latino boys in their understanding and deconstruction of masculinity and machismo. With this critical consciousness, Latino male educators impacted all youth in their K–12 spaces through critical pedagogical instructional practices, culture creation of inclusive practices in regard to gender, and whole school initiatives that disrupt heteronormative standards. Future research has the potential to

collect more evidence and data on the impact having Latino male educators with critical machismo consciousness working with youth.

### **Key Finding 3**

Latino male educators acquired knowledge and skills to be successful in their K–12 experiences in two distinct ways. One way was through intentional skill development from mentors/femtors who supported growth opportunities for Latino male educators to lead. The other way they obtained knowledge and skills was through lessons they had learned independently and wished they had learned earlier in their careers to make them more successful. One way participants obtained skills was direct development from mentors and femtors who took Latino male educators under their wings and gave them navigational skills to gain more opportunities to develop instructional and leadership skills, which directly supported the research on intentional support structures that mentorship has on marginalized populations (Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008; Freire, 1994; I. Jackson et al., 2014; R. Jones et al., 2019; Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Noguera, 2012; L. Rodríguez et al., 2013; Sáenz et al., 2015; Singh, 2019, 2021; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Torres et al., 2002). Through mentorship and femtorship, participants were able to gain skills like agency, identity development, and active reflection on the impact they had on students and staff. Adding to the literature on retaining Latino male educators, data revealed if Latino male educators were not developed intentionally, they learned many skills on their own in regard to directly influencing their impact on pedagogy and youth. Future research efforts can support Latino male educators in development to become better instructional leaders, expand their knowledge of their identities, and engage in intentional mentorship and femtorship opportunities that show possibilities for educational impact on a greater scale. Data revealed participants noticed skills and knowledge gaps in their current versions of professional

development, and they knew possessing those skills could have propelled them to be more successful earlier in their careers. Latino male educators in this study passed on what they knew about their K–12 educational career experiences to support Latino men as they entered the workforce in education.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, I have laid out strategic reactive and proactive recommendations for how to support Latino male educators. The *circulos enfocados* demonstrated the power dialogic spaces have when they center intentionality in disrupting heteronormative patriarchal standards. J.O. mentioned this in the closeout of one of the *circulos*, saying:

I was going to say this feels like therapy for me. All these things, concepts or questions, I didn't even think on a daily basis. It's just really good to hear from all the gentlemen here . . . After this, it makes me think maybe we should hang more or even text more or just get on a Zoom or just hang out a little more just because . . . I think it is important to have that camaraderie and just the conversations from our perspective.

Hearing J.O. mention how he never thought about the topics covered in the conversation solidified how important holding these spaces can be for Latino men. J.O. could have easily continued to navigate his educational experience under the assumption that what he was going through was normal and always struggled with how to express his emotions, express the needs he had to his managers, and overcome the conflict of having to wear masks that caused him exhaustion. In realizing the power in their stories, Latino male educators supported each other through potential networking relationships that have the potential to continue outside of the

circulos enfocados. Circulos enfocados was just one example of how this work could be done, and there needs to be more intentionality, purpose, and curriculum collaboratively created by multiple, diverse perspectives on gender identity. Reactive recommendations to support Latino male educators include: (a) creating gender affinity spaces with other Latino male educators, (b) creating intentional and consistent coaching cycles on instruction and pedagogy, and (c) gaining qualitative and quantitative survey data on their experiences in your K–12 spaces. Proactive recommendations to support long-term impact for Latino male educators in K–12 spaces include: (a) intentional identity development curriculum for Latino men and (b) providing mental wellness support structures for identity development for Latino men.

### ***Creating Gender Affinity Spaces with Other Latino Male Educators***

At the foundation of reactionary response, teacher education programs and K–12 educational spaces can support Latino male educators by creating a gender affinity space. Gender affinity spaces, as mentioned in the literature, provide Latino male educators an opportunity to talk about their experiences, learn from others' experiences about how to handle certain situations, and begin to build relationships with people who share similar identities (I. Jackson et al., 2014; R. Jones et al., 2019; Quintanilla, 2017; L. Rodríguez et al., 2013; Sáenz et al., 2015). Singh (2021) pushed for gender affinity spaces to disrupt heteronormative standards by deconstructing masculinity and machismo to expand the horizons of what gender means and get rid of phrases that begin with “a real man” because authenticity is not tied to gender specific roles. Gender expansion would support multiple masculinities to exist and create an opportunity for Latino men to begin their critical machismo consciousness. In creating a disruptive gender affinity space, intentionality in the development of pedagogical facilitation and leadership would be needed to have a program that supports men through their experiences, challenges

problematic stereotypes, and decenters heteronormative standards through intentional content to enhance male identity. In addition, Latino male educators need a space to experiment with their new versions of masculinity, explore what it means to “be a man” not rooted in heteronormative standards, and not feel “less than” in their humanity by trying to be more authentic to their beliefs, values, and culture. *Circuitos enfocados* ran for 2 hours with either four or five participants. The conversations and dialogues were rich in nuanced Latino male educator experiences. By centering on one question for each space, there was opportunity to expand deeper into particular topics, themes, and supports in which participants wanted to engage. Latino male educators shared they were one of few Latino men, if not the only Latino male educator in their space; so, I also recommend partnering with other schools, districts, and educator programs at universities or nonprofit organizations to yield a large enough group to create meaningful spaces.

### ***Creating Intentional and Consistent Coaching Cycles on Instruction and Pedagogy***

Latino male educators want to be developed to be more than just disciplinarians. The added labor they acquire by being the first point of contact when young Black and Brown boys have trouble with educators who do not know how to connect with them can be exhausting. These educators are more than just an outlet for bad teacher pedagogical school practices. Latino male educators want to develop their pedagogical skills and enhance their instructional practices to be more inclusive, rigorous, and critical of any dominant structure. A consistent coaching cycle from an instructional expert or trusted mentor/femtor could support Latino male educators feeling seen, affirmed, and valued in their K–12 spaces. In addition, coaches and administrators need to be developed critically in deconstruction of masculinity and machismo so they do not perpetuate stereotypical responses to how Latino male educators show up. Coaches and

administrators must also support the disruption of heteronormative patterns they see in the Latino men whom they develop. Providing development through a more intentional gender lens has the potential to provide more clarity for Latino male educators in how they intentionally or unintentionally display their masculinity and machismo. By having consciousness in how their gender shows up, these educators have the ability to choose to actively disrupt those patterns or continue replicating harmful practices. K–12 institutions have the opportunity to gather insight into the impact they create by supporting Latino male educators through intentional development on critical machismo consciousness.

### ***Gaining Qualitative and Quantitative Survey Data on Latino Male Educator Experience***

As a former K–12 educator, I always participated in yearly staff surveys that tried to gather my perspective of how I was experiencing the profession of teaching. Data are used to enhance the work experience and retain staff members. Every school and district operate differently in how they interpret survey information and implement specific feedback through intentional strategies. My recommendation is to include a gender feedback survey for Latino men within the K–12 space to support the understanding of their experiences, what they are struggling with, and what recommendations they have for supporting them. Schools and districts would then have feedback from which they can implement something. These data would honor Latino male educators' voices, affirm their experiences, and establish trust with people in power who want to retain their talents. Gathering these data can also present an opportunity to incorporate structural, cultural, and policy changes for a more inclusive environment for all educators.

### ***Intentional Identity Development: Critical Machismo Consciousness***

Latino male educators, through the *circulos enfocados*, described deconstruction they engaged with in regard to their masculinity and machismo. Deconstruction happened throughout

their lived experiences as youth and as men. They constantly negotiated how they were supposed to behave and act based on other people's perceptions of their gender norms. Intentional curriculum that centers critical machismo consciousness can be a foundational entry point in how they understand their gender, how they actively deconstruct masculinity and machismo, and how they begin to experiment with the possibilities of multiple masculinities rooted in more human-centered approaches. Waling (2019) called on researchers and practitioners to support men in finding joy in being a man while also gaining skills in agency and emotional reflexivity. Having access to spaces where Latino male educators can actively engage, experiment, and explore their identities without judgment can be impactful for how they begin to think of themselves in an authentic lens. Differentiation of development opportunities are needed in K–12 spaces based on the intersectionalities people bring in diverse spaces. If the goal of an educational space is to create an inclusive environment, the group that needs the most support is the one that comes from the oppressive dominant group. Schools and educational programs that center antiheteronormative, antimachista, and antipatriarchal development of identities showcase a stance that Latino men coming into the field must show competence in expanding their gender consciousness to impact the lives of youth.

### ***Providing Mental Wellness Support Structures for Identity Development for Latino Men***

Supporting Latino male educators through intentional mental wellness initiatives is crucial for their well-being and the overall enhancement of the educational environment. Latino male educators often grapple with the complex task of navigating societal expectations, stereotypes, and gender norms ingrained in them from such a young age. To address this complexity, schools and educational programs should prioritize intentional mental wellness initiatives tailored to the unique needs of Latino male educators as they undertake the

challenging process of deconstructing their gender identities, traumas, and negative lived experiences.

First and foremost, educational institutions should establish a supportive and inclusive environment that acknowledges and embraces diversity through specific vision and values. This environment would include the creation of safe spaces where Latino male educators can openly discuss and explore their gender identities and the associated challenges they face. Schools should promote a culture of openness, acceptance, and respect for all gender identities; encourage honest conversations; and foster a sense of belonging.

Mental wellness initiatives should be integrated into the fabric of the educational experience, not just as an add-on, but as an integral component of professional development. Regular mental wellness workshops, seminars, and training sessions should be organized to address specific issues related to gender identity deconstruction. These sessions should be facilitated by mental health professionals and facilitators who specialize in gender identity, trauma, and mental well-being.

Mentorship/femtorship programs should be established to connect Latino male educators with lifelines that have successfully navigated similar identity deconstruction processes. These mentors/femtors can provide guidance, share personal experiences, and offer coping strategies to ensure educators do not feel isolated in their journey. Additionally, peer support groups should be encouraged for educators to come together, share their experiences, and provide mutual encouragement and understanding in going through this active deconstruction of identity.

Incorporating culturally relevant practices and therapies is essential for effectively supporting Latino male educators. Culturally tailored mental wellness initiatives can help address unique challenges and experiences tied to their cultural and gender identities. Education



programs should collaborate with mental health professionals with expertise in Latino culture to ensure mental wellness initiatives are culturally sensitive and effective. Furthermore, schools should advocate for policies that support mental wellness and encourage open dialogue regarding mental health. By destigmatizing mental health challenges, schools can create an environment where seeking help is encouraged and normalized. Policies should ensure access to mental health resources and support for educators, including confidential counseling services and workshops focused on mental well-being.

Last, ongoing research and assessment of the impact of these mental wellness initiatives should be conducted to tailor and improve support strategies. This assessment strategy would involve gathering feedback from educators and making necessary adjustments to better address their evolving needs. By implementing intentional mental wellness initiatives, schools and educational programs can empower Latino male educators to navigate the complexities of their gender identities and traumas effectively. Creating an inclusive and supportive environment, integrating mental wellness into professional development, and promoting culturally relevant practices are essential steps toward ensuring the holistic well-being of Latino male educators and, consequently, the students they serve.

### **Implications**

As discussed in the major themes from the data, Latino male educators gave advice to retain their talents in the future. Latino male educators revealed one of the most prevalent skills they wished they had more of was identity development because it had been necessary for their success. Understanding and deconstructing all their intersectional identities, especially their gender identity, would have supported them sooner and had a direct impact in how they showed up to be their most authentic selves. Many Latino male educators shared how these skills were

learned on their own or through supplemental support in graduate programs or course work outside of K–12 spaces. Identity development through mentorship/femtorship, professional development training, and affinity spaces would directly support efforts to understand themselves and the impact they could have on education.

Latino male educators mentioned how being in dialogical spaces felt therapeutic in some ways, affirmed their experiences, and provided an opportunity to learn from men who had so much knowledge to support their careers. Affinity spaces had the potential to be more than just venting and processing spaces and to be intentional development spaces that deconstructed layers of identity to directly enhance skills and knowledge needed to thrive in their careers. To further extend retention efforts and support Latino male educators, providing staff and administrators with professional development in critical consciousness of gender, supporting Latino boys and fathers with deconstructing machismo, and creating community-wide initiatives that disrupt heteronormative patriarchal standards to create a more inclusive environment would also create meaningful proactive and reactive efforts at the K–12 level. The following sections of this chapter focus on implications regarding retention efforts to support Latino male educators to remain in the profession.

### **Identity Negotiations**

The identity negotiations Latino male educators experienced support the need for educational programming and K–12 professional development spaces to create opportunities for Latino male educators to engage in dialogue about their experiences. Much of the literature has focused on providing space for Latino men through mentorship and affinity spaces rooted in what they experience as students or teachers (Crenshaw, 2014; Singh, 2019, 2021). Singh (2021) called for active disruption of heteronormative standards and deconstruction of masculinity and

machismo for Latino men. This study supported the literature by displaying the possible conversations and topics when gender norms, roles, and expectations are centered. More importantly, through active deconstruction, dialogic spaces like *circulos enfocados* can focus on dismantling heteronormative standards through active discussion of particular themes, experiences, and reflections Latino male educators encounter (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; Moje & Lewis, 2020; Molina, 2015; National Compadres Network, 2021; K. Rodriguez et al., 2011; Talleyrand et al., 2022; Torres et al., 2002). The opportunities deconstruction of masculinity and machismo present for research studies can support how this work might look for practitioners in developing a professional development series for gender identity development. Identity development, when connected to culturally responsive, relevant, and sustaining pedagogy, is needed for educators to understand their intersectional identities and how those identities impact the planning of content, instructional practices, and co-construction of classroom culture with youth (Freire, 1970; Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2017). For Latino male educators, heightening their critical machismo consciousness means deeply deconstructing and dismantling heteronormative standards of how masculinity and machismo impact them while allowing for experimentation and exploration of multiple masculinities.

### ***Implications for Fathers and Youth***

By supporting Latino male educators in deconstructing masculinity and machismo for their own awareness and consciousness, institutions have the potential of creating greater impact in the community that they serve. In supporting deconstruction of masculinity and machismo, Latino male educators can participate in community-led initiatives to directly support fathers of the young Latino boys that they work with. Having a connection between home and schooling experiences can support the overall experience for Latino young boys in breaking generational

trauma in regard to masculinity and machismo. Through a fatherhood series of deconstructing gender norms and heightening their critical consciousness, more progressive partnerships could translate in the homes of young Latino boys as they begin to experiment with different and more expansive versions of gender identity. More importantly, as Latino male educators mentioned in the data, most of them currently struggle with emotional expression and dialoguing through conflict, which are essential skills that are needed to productively communicate in society. Research studies have the potential of creating a fatherhood series and measuring the impact on youth, families, and the schooling environment. Raising fatherhood engagement in understanding their positionality in how they directly impact their young Latino boys through gender norms has the potential of expediting youth criticality in deconstructing heteronormative standards and equipping young boys with healthier versions of masculinity and machismo in their lives.

### ***Implications for Policy***

By supporting gender inclusive spaces in educational settings, institutional and policy changes could support Latino male educators in having opportunities to center their experiences as men as part of their development as educators. More importantly, by centering masculinity and machismo through active deconstruction of heteronormative standards, institutions support the creation of a more inclusive environment that guides the expansiveness of gender. Latino male educators could benefit from understanding what multiple masculinities and gender expansiveness are to support opportunities to engage in other behaviors through intentionality and exploration of authenticity. Through intentional identity development of gender, supports for mental health and well-being are structural needs for Latino male educators in this ongoing renegotiation and reimagination of masculinity and machismo. Institutions can supplement direct

support to Latino male educators by providing therapeutic mental wellness and also adding gender affinity spaces. Having supplemental institutional structures can set the precedent that Latino men's exploration of gender identity is needed for them to reflect, explore, and heal as they actively increase and enhance their critical machismo consciousness. As Latino male educators continue to explore authenticity, there are opportunities for long-term professional development, skill development, and addressing specific challenges related to gender and cultural identities. Last, Latino male educators who have a deep criticality of gender and have actively been disrupting heteronormative patterns in themselves have the potential to lead *circulos enfocados* in their schools and communities as leadership opportunities. Critically conscious Latino male educators can create initiatives in educational institutions, in community organizations, and with policymakers to support the creation of a more inclusive and supportive environment for Latino male educators. Having more Latino male educators with critical machismo consciousness would support the entire school community or K–12 spaces they engage in if they were allowed to explore who they are and want to be from an inclusive and supportive environment invested in their growth as men.

### **Critical Machismo Consciousness**

Latino male educators, through their work and lived experiences, gained criticality of gender and its impact on their identities. As discussed, all Latino male educators in this study struggled with their identities, mainly their masculinity and machismo. They struggled with their identities in their relationships with the men in their lives, with their peers, and with a society that labeled how they were supposed to exist (Berggren, 2014; Connell, 2005; Falicov, 1998; Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001; Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Paz & Kemp, 1961; Pleck, 1981; Singh, 2020, 2021; Stoltenberg, 2000; Torres et al., 2002). As they gained a critical consciousness of

what it meant to “be a man,” there was active exploration of disrupting heteronormative standards (Abaci et al., 1974; Ahmed, 2004; Breault, 2016; Colwill & Boyd, 2008; De La Cancela, 1991; Meeus et al., 2010; Molina, 2015; Singh, 2020, 2021).

Participants did not want to replicate the harm and trauma they experienced in their lives by living up to standards that made them lose parts of their humanity. Many of the Latino male educators shared how they tried to find who they were through active exploration of their identities, going to therapy for support, and exploring different versions of masculinity they wanted to display (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Singh, 2020, 2021; Stoltenberg, 2000; Torres et al., 2002; Waling, 2019). Latino male educators had an easier time expressing different versions of masculinity and machismo with young Latino boys, especially the ones who struggled the most in K–12 spaces. Participants actively helped redefine and support those students to find new ways of engaging with their gender. They supported Latino boys in tapping into their emotionality, advocating for their needs, and expressing their manhood in different ways (Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008; Freire, 1994; I. Jackson et al., 2014; Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Noguera, 2012; Singh, 2020, 2021). Participants also intentionally planned opportunities for youth to engage in meaningful dialogic spaces in curricular activities and lessons to support deconstructions of masculinity and machismo. In beginning to experiment with critical pedagogical strategies and frameworks, Latino male educators had the potential to enhance, supplement, and co-create a more inclusive teaching pedagogy for their schools, districts, and communities. Latino male educators would be able to codify a curriculum that measured the impact of incorporating diverse perspectives, challenging gender norms, and promoting open dialogue on identity.

### *Implications for Practice*

Implications of having critical machismo consciousness educators support Latino men experimenting with supplemental curriculum content and experiences to build more inclusive and diverse schools. Having Latino male educators directly create their own pedagogical curricular experiences in regard to deconstructing masculinity and machismo could create more impactful experiences for youth that would showcase the need for Latino male educators to stay in the profession. Retention efforts of Latino male educator talents should start with how they are supported in creating their pedagogical framework and enhancing their opportunities to lead classroom, schoolwide, and community initiatives in regard to disrupting heteronormative standards. Data from this study showed Latino male educators covertly supported disrupting heteronormative standards with young boys of color without any support, direction, or feedback from administrators or colleagues. Participants chose to covertly show different versions of manhood to youth because they were still required to be authoritative disciplinarians to these boys. Latino men knew they had to engage these young Latino boys in different ways than they had received at a young age. Administrators and instructional experts need more support in building their critical lenses related to gender to help Latino men who are educators in their buildings because of the added labor they acquire just by being men in school buildings. Coaching and feedback cycles for administrators and instructional experts can support Latino male educators in gaining even deeper criticality of how their gender impacts their planning, instruction, and interactions with all community members. Latino male educators need targeted, yet supportive, feedback and direction on their gender identities to expand their masculinity and machismo.

Development of critically conscious leaders and educators is necessary in all intersectional identities, and especially for gender dynamics. By developing critically conscious leaders, teacher pedagogy would be supplemented by directly taking a stance to disrupt heteronormative patriarchal standards in the institutions where educators serve. Leaders who actively deconstruct gender norms can support instructional practices through direct coaching and feedback to humanize the efforts of increasing critical machismo consciousness for Latino men. Just as antiracism pedagogy, frameworks, and training are centered in schools, antipatriarchal, antimachista, and antiheteronormative pedagogy also need to be incorporated in developing curriculum, skill building, and creating new school visions for inclusive spaces. Leaders who understand the experiences of Latino male educators would support retention efforts because they could actively support educators' growth in both personal and professional goals. Normalizing the expansion of gender through intentional pedagogical development would support Latino male educators in experimenting and exploring more diverse and multiple masculinities to welcome new layers of authenticity. As Latino male educators actively deconstruct gender norms, they can directly see the connection it has to their pedagogical impact on youth. Disrupting pedagogical practices that promote standardization is needed to support a more inclusive gender expression in how educators experiment and explore their identities and how they engage with youth and colleagues. As the data mentioned, Latino male educators navigate their K–12 spaces with lots of caution because of how others are hyper focused on their movements. With having more critically conscious leaders in K–12 spaces, deconstruction of all intersectional identities would support spaces for people to explore what authenticity means to create a collective environment where everyone belongs.



### ***Implications for Research***

Ultimately, critical machismo consciousness is an entry point for researchers and scholars to engage with the foundational knowledge and skills Latino male educators need before they can move toward more feminist, queer, and gender expansive forms of masculinity and machismo. Latino male educators need their own pedagogical development rooted in gender to disrupt the harmful patterns they have been conditioned to believe are tied to their gender expression and relocate elements of their humanity they need to feel more human, such as emotionality. Unfortunately, Latina feminist and queer activists, scholars, and researchers seem to be the only people naming the ongoing harm machismo and masculinity have had on women and LGBTQIA+ folks in the community (Anzaldúa, 1987; Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2022; Torres et al., 2002; Waling, 2019). Latino male educator leaders, scholars, and researchers should be creating actionable projects, initiatives, and research topics to supplement the foundation of gender expansion other activists have started. A more inclusive beginning to dismantling heteronormative patriarchal standards starts by developing more Latino machismo consciousness in men and boys.

### **Intentional Development**

Latino male educators expressed how they struggled to obtain professional development in their instructional and pedagogical practices. Some of them expressed, once they learned to manage and control their classrooms, administrators left them alone and did not focus on building their skills. By not intentionally developing their pedagogical practices, Latino male educators struggled to know the effectiveness of their teaching and support for youth. Instead, some Latino male educators gained affirming feedback on their display of disciplinarian and authoritative roles, which afforded them leadership opportunities to become administrators in

their schools (Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008; I. Jackson et al., 2014; R. Jones et al., 2019; Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Noguera, 2012; Singh, 2019, 2021). Latino male educators who are administrators reflected how they doubled-down on heteronormative standards to be seen, affirmed, and accepted in the educational settings. When Latino male educators gained criticality on their gender expression by deconstructing their understanding of gender norms, they saw the harm they had caused to themselves and youth in their careers and had to live with guilt about replicating problematic and harmful behaviors. Latino male educators who thrived earlier and obtained more opportunities in their careers directly obtained skills from mentorship/femtorship relationships that gave them insight into how to successfully navigate K–12 spaces. Latino male educators mentioned how they were able to have a trusting relationship with a mentor/femtor who directly challenged them to grow their skills and develop their identities, which they found extremely valuable in becoming successful leaders. To enhance mentorship and femtorship experiences with critical machismo consciousness, opportunities rooted in the expansion of masculinity and machismo through direct deconstruction could support retention efforts for Latino male educators (Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008; Freire, 1994; I. Jackson et al., 2014; R. Jones et al., 2019; Lara & Fránquiz, 2015; Noguera, 2012; L. Rodríguez et al., 2013; Sáenz et al., 2015; Singh, 2019, 2021; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Torres et al., 2002).

Many of the Latino male educators in this study wished they had more opportunities to dive into their lived experiences through intentional development. Though they were able to obtain identity development as they became administrators or in their graduate coursework, participants mentioned how development should have started before they became educators or when they began their careers. The potential impact of such development on their pedagogy could have supported more intentionality in disrupting heteronormative standards with youth.

More importantly, participants mentioned how they would have gained knowledge, skills, and much needed language about what they experienced. Instead, Latino male educators gained many skills and acquired knowledge on their own without very much development of pedagogy and identity (Berggren, 2014; Connell, 2005; Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001; I. Jackson et al., 2014; Milner, 2010; Romero et al., 2009; Salisbury & Jackson, 1996; Torres et al., 2002). Data showed how researchers and scholars can support the creation of projects to intentionally support intersectional identity development, such as racial, gender, and professional identities, for Latino men to increase their teaching and leadership skills.

This study also showed Latino men needed their own development spaces to experiment with their masculinity, deconstruct delicate topics, and gain affirmation on the experiences they typically experienced in silos because there were very few Latino men in their K–12 spaces (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Tajfel, 1981; Torres et al., 2002).

Collaboration between multiple schools, districts, and educational teacher programs can reach more Latino male educators instead of focusing on a single school or educational site. By engaging in collaborative work to develop Latino male educators, Latino men can network with more educators who look like them and are struggling with similar issues around their masculinity and machismo. In addition, these Latino men can learn and make new meaning of what it means to “be a man” in education. Through these types of efforts, schools and districts would create supportive structural efforts to show Latino male educators they belong, they need to be critical of gender in their pedagogy, and their humanity is centered through this ongoing journey of deconstruction. Programming efforts at this scale would need practitioners to lead through a critical machismo consciousness in their pedagogy, planning, and execution of inclusive diverse affinity spaces.

### *Implications for Practice*

The implications of creating skills and knowledge rooted in gender identities supports how Latino male educators experience much of their careers in silos. Latino male educators in this study were conditioned to not ask for help or support; instead, they were always cautious of how they expressed their gender identities, based on the perceived stereotypes pertaining to their gender. By not asking for support, continued assumptions of their interest, motivation, and loyalty came into question by their administrators or managers. Latino male educators experienced constant tension in how they were supposed to engage with their masculinity and machismo with everyone they encountered. By gaining identity development through intentional programming in their teacher education programs, district level trainings, school coaching development cycles, and supplemental affinity spaces, Latino male educators would be equipped to deconstruct their gender identity, have skills to navigate every space with which they interacted, and constantly reflect on the impact of their experimentation of multiple masculinities. Having embedded competencies in what it means to be critically conscious of masculinity and machismo would directly benefit their criticality of pedagogy. With the intentionality to increase skills and development through gender, researchers and scholars can gauge the impact criticality gained by Latino men has on young boys of color, the school settings they work in, and the relationships they have with all community members. Furthermore, future research can measure the impact on retention efforts of Latino male educators who have heightened critical consciousness and the intentional decisions that they make with their criticality.

### **Limitations**

Limitations were expected given the nuance of lived experiences of all participants. To obtain quality, qualitative data, dialoguing and sharing of stories were essential to my study. One limitation to this study pertained to trust and authenticity from participants. The more participants trusted the space they were in, the more vulnerable and authentic they were in the study. This vulnerability looked different for each of the participants, and it showed in the data as some voices sharing more than others. Some participants claimed they were processing everything as they listened, which was why they did not engage more in sharing their experiences. My limited time with participants could have impacted the deepening of trust with me as a researcher and among the participants in the space. Trust and vulnerability go hand-in-hand, and it would be presumptuous for me to expect every individual to have full trust in the space right away. I expected hesitancy, lack of trust, and methodical navigation of participants in what they wanted to share and how they wanted to share it. By sharing my story, my history, and my vulnerability, I hoped to break down some of those barriers. Also, I understood the bias I had about what vulnerability means to me versus what it meant to participants, and I did not want to inhibit progress by establishing expectations of sharing one's humanity. The goal was for participants to experience growth through this process, and the timeframe given for the study may not have been enough time for growth to occur. This limitation supports the opportunity for longer intentional identity deconstruction and development to be used with Latino male educators.

Another limitation in this study was having a limited scope of masculinity and machismo by not having LGBTQIA+ folks included in the study. This exclusion was intentional for me as a researcher because I did not want to harm these folks through heteronormative patriarchal

perspectives that could have been shared by participants. I knew this choice limited the expansiveness and spectrum of masculinity/machismo, but I wanted to focus on theoretical practices that could support the identity development for Latino male educators who identify in the dominant gender group. By showcasing what these practices could look like, they could support development needed directly for heteronormative patriarchal archetypes before dialoguing with folks who have been directly harmed and traumatized by masculinity/machismo.

A third limitation in this study was not being able to obtain 1st- and 2nd-year educators. In thinking about retention efforts after hiring, the first few years are crucial to the success any educator has. By not having their perspective, findings and recommendations are limited for what more can be done in the moment to support Latino male educators in K–12 spaces. There was an opportunity in the *circulos enfocados* for more veteran educators to give wisdom to newer educators, and my hope was the data shared could support any Latino male educator regardless of their years of experience.

A fourth limitation pertained to thinking about the humanity of people and how they experience being in spaces where they are dialoguing about difficult topics. Humanity is very complex, and understanding the healing process was an essential part of this study. There were elements of trauma brought up in the *circulos enfocados* based on lived experiences of Latino men, and I made sure to check with all participants before they left if they needed any additional support or resources. Mental wellness was important for me and consistently mentioned before, during, and after the groups through a follow-up email. As a researcher, I was cautious and hyper aware of how men would show up and share their humanity with a deep topic like masculinity/machismo. Overall, I was honored to witness what was shared and made sure to mention this to participants as I received their stories, words, and lived experiences. I did not

want to replicate hierarchical masculinity and machismo identities; instead, I wanted to show Latino male educators a different space to engage in, one which they may not have been accustomed to (Singh, 2021).

A fifth limitation to this study was the use of Zoom to conduct *circulos enfocados* through a virtual platform. If connection and humanity are essential components in co-constructing a dialogical space based on trust, then I suspect these spaces might have felt different if they were conducted in-person. My purpose in hosting these groups through virtual platforms was to obtain varied perspectives from folks in different, localized contexts and provide an opportunity for participants to network with more Latino male educators. Health and safety were also important for me as the COVID-19 global pandemic was ongoing at the time of this study. I wanted to ensure all participants felt safe, did not have to travel far, and were in a comfortable space when they shared. Also, conducting the groups through a virtual platform allowed for different time slots to host the spaces, and participants were able to self-select what times best met their needs.

A sixth limitation was the time of year these data were collected. June, at the end of the school year, can be a difficult time to have educators commit to a research study given the multitude of end-of-year responsibilities they have. In my reflection of not having 1st- and 2nd-year educators, getting through the year is success in itself and adding their voices to this study could have been overwhelming.

### **Conclusion**

In this study, I showcased narratives of 17 Latino male educators in K–12 spaces. Their experiences were complex because gender identity is complex in a society that socially constructs levels of dominance pertaining to specific intersections of identity. I specifically

identified how literature has perceived Latino boys and men as stereotypical archetypes of masculinity and machismo norms that negatively portray their humanity. Latino male educators, through their responses in *circulos enfocados*, described how they struggled to understand what it meant to “be a man” and truly feel authentic in how they decided to perform their identities. I wanted to show the complexity of how Latino male educators understand their identities, actively explore and experiment, and constantly experience tension in how others perceive who they are. More importantly, participants did not know who they truly were and had not been given the opportunity to engage in multiple masculinities that could bring them more clarity, more acceptance, and more affirmation of their humanity.

I conducted this study for the multiple versions of myself I employed throughout my life: from the little boy Mario, who was taught to never show emotion, to display aggression through controlled outlets of sports, and to constantly question what it meant to be himself; to the beginning teacher Mario, who did not deserve to be questioned as if he was a child abuser, believed he had lower intelligence than his women counterparts, and was constantly told how he was perceived by others regardless of his intentions. I did my best to arrive at my most authentic self, which was a daily struggle to deconstruct the effects of masculinity and machismo. I am grateful for the support I obtained from femtors, mentors, and peers who supported my identity development and provided guidance for me to navigate through my career. I am now in a place where I can support other Latino male educators in doing the same.

The lived experiences shared by 17 Latino male educators reflected much of my own lived experiences: the added pressure of having to perform a specific way in displaying masculinity and machismo, discipline young boys of color, and never display any other form of masculinity because it came with certain consequences. Latino male educators expressed how



much tension and exhaustion they experienced in trying to be enough for others, yet never feeling like enough for themselves. Masculinity and machismo negatively affect the lives of young Latino boys as indicated by this study; however, support to expand gender norms, roles, and expectations to be more expansive and inclusive will have a positive impact on the future societal expectations pertaining to gender. Critical machismo consciousness is a foundational step that can support critical consciousness. During my involvement in K–12 spaces, much of the training only supported racial identity development. My study focused on the specifics of a marginalized population of educators who are actively recruited to come into the teaching profession yet are not fully supported in their gender identities. The dialogic spaces showed the struggles Latino men currently experience and their recommendations for what they needed, and still need, to be more successful in their roles. I wanted to center their voices, their experiences, and their knowledge so their stories have a direct impact in the development of critical machismo consciousness for future educators.

This dissertation process was difficult to say the least. I have struggled with how to write and humanize the words of Latino male educators. I wanted to honor their voices and expertise to give guidance on how to engage with them. My hope was this dissertation would support Latino male educators entering the profession, those who are actively working in K–12 spaces, and leaders who are responsible for creating support structures needed to retain Latino men. I was humbled to have been a part of this process and to have my name forever connected to the 17 Latino male educators who have done amazing work in their K–12 spaces. I hoped to support the co-construction of a more inclusive gender environment for all individuals and to dismantle archaic heteronormative patriarchal standards that continue to harm and oppress people. A gender inclusive world is a more liberated, free, and healed world.

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## APPENDIX A

## Diversifying the Teacher Workforce

11/9/23, 9:40 PM

HCM leads effort to hire more Black and Latino male teachers | The Hub



YOU ARE AT: Home » News » Inside Dallas ISD » HCM leads effort to hire more Black and Latino male teachers



## HCM leads effort to hire more Black and Latino male teachers

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BY THE HUB ON APRIL 19, 2021

INSIDE DALLAS ISD, NEWS

As part of an initiative aimed at recruiting teachers who represent the students they serve, Dallas ISD will hire 20 male professionals of diverse backgrounds who will serve in high-priority campuses.

In the Fall of 2021, the soon-to-be educators – 10 Black and 10 Latino men – will be paired with exemplary educators as adjunct teachers in Dallas ISD classrooms. At the same time, the Human Capital Management department (HCM) will support them on their path toward becoming licensed teachers through the district's Alternative Certification program.

“Our ongoing effort to transition career professionals of diverse backgrounds to educators strengthens our district's commitment of providing greater equity, diversity and inclusion in our




<https://thehub.dallasisd.org/2021/04/19/hcm-leads-effort-to-hire-more-black-and-latino-male-teachers/>

1/5



## APPENDIX B

## CITI Certificate and IRB Approval

		Completion Date 08-Nov-2022 Expiration Date 08-Nov-2025 Record ID 51165833
This is to certify that:		
<b>Mario Echeverria</b>		
Has completed the following CITI Program course:		Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.
<b>Human Subjects Research - SBR</b> (Curriculum Group)		
<b>Social &amp; Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher</b> (Course Learner Group)		
<b>2 - Refresher 1</b> (Stage)		
Under requirements set by:		
<b>University of San Diego</b>		
 Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative		
Verify at <a href="http://www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w812a6111-98bb-46f2-9b37-c450c186545b-51165833">www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w812a6111-98bb-46f2-9b37-c450c186545b-51165833</a>		



Re: Expedited - Initial - IRB-2023-155, "A Real Man...": Co-constructing dialogic spaces of deconstructing masculinity/machismo heteronormative standards with K12 Latino male educators

Dear Mario Echeverria:

The University of San Diego Institutional Review Board (USD IRB) has rendered the decision below for IRB-2023-155: "A Real Man...": Co-constructing dialogic spaces of deconstructing masculinity/machismo heteronormative standards with K12 Latino male educators.

Decision: Approved. This study may start no earlier than January 5, 2023.

Selected Category: 7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Findings: Thank you for addressing all of the previous review feedback. Research Notes: N/A Internal Notes:

*The USD IRB requires annual renewal of all active studies reviewed and approved by the IRB. Please submit an application for renewal prior to the annual anniversary date of initial study approval. If an application for renewal is not received, the study will be administratively closed.*

*Note: We send IRB correspondence regarding student research to the faculty advisor, who bears the ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the research. We request that the faculty advisor share this correspondence with the student researcher.*

*Applications for full review must be submitted at least two weeks prior to the next scheduled monthly IRB meeting; see <https://www.sandiego.edu/irb/updates/> for specific deadlines. You may submit an IRB application for expedited or exempt review at any time.*

Sincerely,

Truc Ngo, PhD IRB Administrator

*Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost  
Hughes Administration Center, Room 212  
5998 Alcalá Park, San Diego, CA 92110-2492  
Phone (619) 260-4553 • Fax (619) 260-2210 • [www.sandiego.edu](http://www.sandiego.edu)*

## APPENDIX C

### Research Recruitment Email Script

Hello,

My name is Mario Echeverria and I am a PhD candidate in the Education for Social Justice program at the University of San Diego in San Diego, California. I am currently in my dissertation process and my study is titled: “A Real Man...”: Co-constructing dialogic spaces of deconstructing masculinity/machismo heteronormative standards with K–12 Latino male educators. I am conducting focus groups-community circles/*circulos enfocados* about the experiences of Latino male educators in K12 spaces to elevate your voices. For the purpose of this study, Latino male educators include the following intersectional identities:

1. Latinidad Identity (i.e., Latino, Hispanic, Chicano, Afro-Latino, etc.)
2. Educator in K12
3. Heterosexual
4. Cisgender

If you decide to participate in the focus groups-community circles/*circulos enfocados*, I will invite you to participate in a virtual session lasting 90–120 minutes to understand about your experiences as a Latino male educator in K–12 spaces. The session will take place online via zoom and will be audio recorded only. All data collected from you will be coded with a pseudonym (fake name). Your real name will not be used. Focus groups-community circles/*circulos enfocados* will be conducted with participants based on your years in the education field (e.g., 0–1 years of teaching experience, 2–4 years of teaching experience, and 5+ years of teaching experience). With this study being completed virtually, there is the ability to bring in multiple participants from diverse locations to gain a broader perspective. There will be no compensation for your participation in this study. Your feedback will be important to my study before it is published and an additional 30 minutes will be asked of you to review the data pertaining that you shared. Your voice matters throughout the entirety of the process.

I would be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at xxxxx@xxxx.xxx.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Mario Echeverria  
Ph.D. Candidate  
University of San Diego

Dr. Sarina Molina  
Faculty Advisor  
xxxx@xxxx.xxx  
(XXX) XXX-XXXX

If you would like to participate, please click on this link to give your demographic information (confidential) and I will contact you through email to begin the process.

## APPENDIX D

### Latino Male Demographic Survey

Thank you for taking the time to consider being a participant in the study: “A Real Man...”: Deconstructing masculinity/machismo heteronormative standards with K12 Latino male educators through dialogic spaces." Please take the opportunity to fill out the following demographic questions to fulfill the prerequisites of being in this study. I appreciate your time and look forward to engaging in dialogue with you.

With Gratitude,  
Mario Echeverria  
PhD Candidate  
University of San Diego

1. What is your first and last name?

Short answer text

2. Which Latinidad Identity do you identify most with (Select all that apply)

Hispanic

Latino

Chicano

Mestizo

Afro-Latino

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

3. How long have you been a K–12 educator for?

0-1 year

2-4 years

5+ years

4. Sexual Identity/Sexual Orientation (Select all that apply)

Aromatic

Asexual

Bisexual

Fluid

Gay

Pansexual

Queer

Questioning or Unsure

Straight (heterosexual)

Prefer not to disclose

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Gender identity (select all that apply)

Agender

Man

Non-Binary

Questioning or Unsure

Prefer not to Disclose

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Best email to reach you at?

Short answer text

7. Are you comfortable in dialoguing in a virtual (Zoom) setting about masculinity?

Yes

No

Maybe

8. Check any or all the boxes if you are available on the following dates and times (If not, offer up some times that work better for you)

June 13 9am – 11am PST

June 14 9am – 11am PST

June 16 9am – 11am PST

June 20 10:30am – 12:30pm PST

Other...

## APPENDIX E

### Consent Form

**University of San Diego  
Institutional Review Board Research  
Participant Adult Consent Form**

**For the research study entitled: “A Real Man...”: Co-constructing dialogic spaces of deconstructing masculinity/machismo heteronormative standards with K12 Latino male educators.**

#### **I. Purpose of the research study**

Mario Echeverria is a doctoral student in the School of Leadership and Education Sciences at the University of San Diego. You are invited to participate in a research study he is conducting on your experience as Latino male educators at your respective school sites. The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of Latino male educators in their teaching experience given that Latino men are twice as likely to leave the profession compared to Latina women. The goal of my study is to discuss how your masculine/machismo identity impacts your day-to-day experiences and understand how educational environments can support you. This is important so that future studies and initiatives can be directed toward retaining your talents as educators.

#### **II. What you will be asked to do**

The total participation time for this study will be about **120–150 minutes**. This study will involve one focus group-community circle or *circulos enfocados* that will be through a virtual Zoom setting. The goal for this is to combine community circles and focus groups where dialogue among the participants is encouraged, fostered, and supported through deep questions regarding a specific topic, in this case, masculinity/machismo. The focus groups-community circle/*circulos enfocados* will last about 90–120 minutes and will be recorded and transcribed for analysis purposes. Only audio will be recorded in the setting. A feedback opportunity will be provided that will take about 30 minutes of your time on the transcript of what you shared in the virtual space.

#### **III. Foreseeable risks or discomforts**

This study involves no more risk than the risks you encounter in daily life. Some of the questions may invoke emotional responses. If you need further assistance, please contact the National Alliance for Mental Illness. The NAMI HelpLine can be reached Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. – 10 p.m., ET. Call 1-800-950-NAMI (6264), text “HelpLine” to 62640 or email us at [helpline@nami.org](mailto:helpline@nami.org). HelpLine volunteers are working to answer questions, offer support and provide practical next steps. Another option is the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration or SAMHSA. SAMHSA’s National Helpline, 1-800-662-HELP (4357) (also known as the Treatment Referral Routing Service), or TTY: 1-800-487-4889 is a confidential, free, 24-hour-a-day, 365-day-a-year, information service, in English and Spanish, for individuals

and family members facing mental and/or substance use disorders. This service provides referrals to local treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations.

#### **IV. Benefits**

While there may be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study, the indirect benefit of participating will be knowing that you helped teacher educators, school administrators, and University Teacher Prep Programs better understand the Latino male educator experience in K–12 environments.

#### **V. Confidentiality**

Any information provided and/or identifying records will remain confidential and kept in a locked file and/or password-protected computer file in the researcher's office for a minimum of five years. All data collected from you will be coded with a pseudonym (fake name). Your real name will not be used. The results of this research project may be made public and information quoted in professional journals and meetings, but information from this study will only be reported as a group, and not individually. You will have the opportunity to review what is written from the transcript review and findings. It is important to this research study that the information shared in the focus group to not be shared with anyone outside of the group. It is important to know that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed with what you decide to share with the group. Your name and privacy will be protected and maintained throughout this study and you should not use anyone's name from this study when talking about this study to anyone.

The information or materials you provide will be cleansed of all identifiers (like your name) and may be used in future research.

#### **VI. Compensation**

There will be no compensation for your participation in this study.

#### **VII. Voluntary Nature of this Research**

**Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You do not have to do this,** and you can refuse to answer any question or quit at any time. Deciding not to participate will have no effect on your employment status with your respective school site. **You can withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.**

#### **VIII. Contact Information**

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact [include yourself and your advisor]:

**Mario Echeverria**

**Email:** xxxxx@xxxx.xxx

**Dr. Sarina Molina**

**Email:** xxxx@xxxx.xxx

**Phone:** (XXX) XXX-XXXX

**I have read and understand this form, and consent to the research it describes to me. I have received a copy of this consent form for my records.**

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant (Printed)	Signature of Participant	Date
_____		_____
Signature of Investigators		Date



## APPENDIX F

### Circulo Enfocado Protocol

#### **PhD Research Title:**

“A Real Man . . .”: Deconstructing Masculinity/Machismo Heteronormative standards with K–12 Latino Male Educators through Dialogic Spaces.

#### **Framing Focus Groups-Community Circle/Circulos Enfocados**

Facilitator states: “I appreciate the opportunity to be in community with you all today. The goal of this study is to listen to your voices about your experiences as Latino male educators. Your experience can be very beneficial in understanding how masculinity/machismo impacts your lived experiences as a teacher. This study will involve our participation in focus groups-community circles or *circulos enfocados*, which is rooted in our connection to our Spanish language, culture, and intersectional identities here in the United States. Latinidad is complex and we must always showcase how we are not a monolith in our lived experiences. The goal for this is to combine the purpose of community circles, which is a restorative justice practice in creating dialogic spaces of trust and healing with the concept of focus groups, which tackles a specific topic through deep questions in this case, masculinity/machismo.”

Confidentiality: “Confidentiality is very important for me as a researcher in this study. Although I will take every precaution to maintain confidentiality of the data, the nature of focus groups prevents me from guaranteeing confidentiality. I would like to remind you as participants of this study to respect the privacy of your fellow participants and not repeat what is said in the focus group to others. Can we agree to confidentiality in our group today?” (Have participants unmute and verbally agree to confidentiality)

First, I will share with you my story of who I am and where my journey has taken me personally and professionally. I, like all of you, identify as a Latino male cisgendered heterosexual educator who taught for 10 years and was an administrator in elementary and middle schools in Los Angeles.

Facilitator shares story:

- Purpose of becoming an educator
- Experience in Catholic Schools
- Move to public charter schools
- Experience with masculinity/machismo and stereotypes perpetuated for me as an educator
- How I was able to become a successful teacher and administrator
- Purpose of becoming a researcher that can further support Latino male educators in K–12

“I appreciate you all listening to my story and journey and hope that it has made connections to your journeys.”

## **Agenda for Today**

Facilitator states: “The goal for today is to create a space where we can have a conversation about masculinity/machismo and how it shows up for us male educators. All our experiences are different and I do not want to state that my story connects to your experience. Having you here is an opportunity for your voice to be elevated and to be heard. We are going to watch a movie preview clip from the documentary: “The Mask We Live In” and that will jumpstart our conversation for today. I have a set of questions that I have for you as well as we get deeper into the topic. We will not be going in a particular order; we will have an open forum where anyone who is ready to speak can respond and anyone can reply to a person’s response. This is by no means a space that will bully, belittle your experience, judge your responses, or question your lived experiences. As a facilitator, my role is to keep the conversation going, ask further questions to elaborate, and push your thinking so that your words and experiences are documents thoroughly for this study”

## **Confidentiality**

Facilitator states: Your responses will be kept confidential; nobody will know your identity. This focus groups-community circles/*circulos enfocados* will be recorded through audio settings via the Zoom platform. Video will not be recorded during this session. We will use pseudonyms to represent the different people participating in this focus group (you have the choice to come up with a name that supports your identity). Does anyone have any questions before we begin?

- Watch a clip from “The Mask We Live In”
- Time frame of video:
  - Start Time: 0:00
  - 3 minutes and 9 seconds (3:09)

## **Full Transcript of Video:**

(Begin Transcript) Stop Crying, stop with the tears.

Don't cry. Pick yourself up.

Stop with the emotions.

Don't be a pussy. Don't let nobody disrespect you.

Be Cool and be kind of a dick.

You always keep your mouth shut.

Nobody likes a tattle-tale.

Bros come before hoes

Don't let you woman run your life. You a bitch.

What a fag.

Get laid. Do something. Be a man. Be a man. Grow some balls.

The three most destructive words that every man receives when he is a boy is when he is told to be a man.

We've constructed an idea of masculinity in the United States that doesn't give young boys a way to feel secure in their masculinity, so we make him go prove it all the time.

Within their peer group culture. Each of them is posturing based on how the other boys are posturing, and what they end up missing is what they each really want, which is just that closeness.

In good times, guys are really close to each other, but when things get a little bit worse, you're on your own.

From Middle school, I had a four really close friends, but once I kind of went into high school, I struggled finding people I can talk to because I feel like I'm not supposed to get help.

Our kids get up every morning. They have to prepare their mask for how they're gonna walk to school. A lot of our students don't know how to take the mask off. What is it you don't let people see? Almost 90% of you have pain and anger on the back of that paper.

If you never cry, then you have all these feelings stuffed up inside of you and then you can't get them out.

They really buy into a culture that doesn't value what we feminized. If we're in a culture that doesn't value caring, doesn't value relationships, doesn't value empathy, you are going to have boys and girls. Men and women go crazy.

I have anger issues. In high school, I felt like an outcast.

I've been suspended at least once every year I was here; we would just look for trouble and just like try to fight.

Boys are more likely to act out. They're more likely to become aggressive. Most people miss that as depression or see it as a conduct disorder or just a bad kid.

I felt like just giving up on life. You know, I had suicide thoughts in my head at sixth grade.

I felt alone for a long time and I actually thought about killing myself.

Whether It's homicidal violence or suicidal violence, people resort to such desperate behavior. Only when they are feeling shamed and humiliated or feel they would be if they didn't prove that they were real men.

If you're told from day one, don't let nobody disrespect you, and this is the way you handle it as a man. Respect is linked to violence.

If I can man up, why step down from that? You feel me? It's like instinct.

So, man up! Man up! Man up! Man up! Grow some fucking balls!

Act like a man. Be a Man. Be a man.

For my kids. I was gonna end this hyper masculine narrative here.(End transcript)

## **Focus Group/Circuitos Enfocados Question Set:**

### **Shared Experience (Watching the Movie Clip)**

- What reactions or feelings did you have as you watched the movie clip?
- Where do you wear a mask as a teacher and how does it benefit you?
- As an educator, what would you add or take away from this movie clip about boys' experience in K–12?
- How important is your masculinity/machismo identity as a K–12 educator?

### **Probing Questions**

- Do you agree with how masculinity was described in the video of having to wear masks which forces us as young boys to withhold our emotions? Why or why not?

### **Purpose**

- What made you want to become an educator? What made you want to teach the grade you are currently in?
- What people influenced you to become an educator?
- What are your goals as an educator?

### **Masculinity/Machismo**

- What do you enjoy the most about being a Latino male educator?
- How does your masculinity, manhood, machismo, show up in the work that you do every day as a teacher?
  - Would you say that you are your full authentic self in all K–12 spaces? Why or why not?
  - How are you changing the perspective of masculinity/machismo in your school setting?
- Have you been othered (treated differently/negatively) based on your masculinity/machismo during your time as an educator? How?
- What do you believe your women colleagues think of you as a Latino male educator?
- What do families, parents, say about a Latino man teaching their children? What are some things you have heard, processed, or reflected on?
- When you are in a room or space with other male educators, do you act differently than when in a room full of women educators? Why?
- What are some ways you support young boys in your school or classroom?
  - What would you say the young boy's experience in K–12 is versus when you were a K–12 student? What is different? What is the same?

### **Probing Question**

- How would you describe how you are respected as a Latino male educator by other teachers? Parents? Students? Administrators?

### **Pedagogy**

- How have you been developed to become a better educator at your school?
- What have you heard that are your strengths and areas of growth as an educator?
  - Do you get observed and are given feedback?
  - What have your evaluations said about your teaching practices?

**Inclusivity**

- How are you inclusive to all gender identities in your classroom? In your school?
- If we walked into your classroom, what would you say is the culture that we would see in that space?

**Retention**

- How long do you see yourself teaching or being in the K–12 educational space and why?
- (If returners) Why have you chosen to stay in the teaching profession? What keeps you coming back?
- What is some advice that you have for future Latino male educators that would help them stay in the profession like you?
- What are things happening in your school setting that if they do not change soon, would impact your decision to stay in the teaching profession for your future?
- How would you describe how you are respected as a Latino male educator by other teachers? Parents? Students? Administrators?

## APPENDIX G

### *The Mask You Live In* Transcript

#### **Full Transcript of Video:**

(Begin Transcript) Stop Crying, stop with the tears.

Don't cry. Pick yourself up.

Stop with the emotions.

Don't be a pussy. Don't let nobody disrespect you.

Be Cool and be kind of a dick.

You always keep your mouth shut.

Nobody likes a tattletale.

Bros come before hoes

Don't let you woman run your life. You a bitch.

What a fag.

Get laid. Do something. Be a man. Be a man. Grow some balls.

The three most destructive words that every man receives when he is a boy is when he is told to be a man.

We've constructed an idea of masculinity in the United States that doesn't give young boys a way to feel secure in their masculinity, so we make him go prove it all the time.

Within their peer group culture. Each of them is posturing based on how the other boys are posturing, and what they end up missing is what they each really want, which is just that closeness.

In good times, guys are really close to each other, but when things get a little bit worse, you're on your own.

From Middle school, I had a four really close friends, but once I kind of went into high school, I struggled finding people I can talk to because I feel like I'm not supposed to get help.

Our kids get up every morning. They have to prepare their mask for how they're gonna walk to school. A lot of our students don't know how to take the mask off. What is it you don't let people see? Almost 90% of you have pain and anger on the back of that paper.

If you never cry, then you have all these feelings stuffed up inside of you and then you can't get them out.

They really buy into a culture that doesn't value what we feminized. If we're in a culture that doesn't value caring, doesn't value relationships, doesn't value empathy, you are going to have boys and girls. Men and women go crazy.

I have anger issues. In high school, I felt like an outcast.

I've been suspended at least once every year I was here; we would just look for trouble and just like try to fight.

Boys are more likely to act out. They're more likely to become aggressive. Most people miss that as depression or see it as a conduct disorder or just a bad kid.

I felt like just giving up on life. You know, I had suicide thoughts in my head at sixth grade.

I felt alone for a long time and I actually thought about killing myself.

Whether It's homicidal violence or suicidal violence, people resort to such desperate behavior. Only when they are feeling shamed and humiliated or feel they would be if they didn't prove that they were real men.

If you're told from day one, don't let nobody disrespect you, and this is the way you handle it as a man. Respect is linked to violence.

If I can man up, why step down from that? You feel me? It's like instinct.

So, man up! Man up! Man up! Man up! Grow some fucking balls!

Act like a man. Be a Man. Be a man.

For my kids. I was gonna end this hyper masculine narrative here.(End transcript)

## APPENDIX H

### Member Checking Form

**Response Number**

**Respondent Email**

**Date Submitted**

**Q1: I think just like growing up, I look at my educational experience, and then what it means to jump into the professional world as a man of color. Something that I struggled with was that aspect of a mask. Sorry, it gets a little heavy. I think the struggle of like, how do you show up authentically, but at the same time, how are you viewed as, right? It's like this double consciousness of, how can I be real and myself, but then come off as I didn't attend an Ivy League, I didn't go to UC, but nonetheless, I know I'm educated, I know I'm powerful and proud. When you're in a room with just like people from all walks, there's like an imposter syndrome that kicks in of like just coming correct and showing up, but then I feel like in the recent years when society has become more embracing of anti-racist work, I feel like more doors have been open, and I think that's been welcoming, but for a minute, it just felt like I was walking on eggshells, like, "Am I professional enough? Am I being accepted?"**

*Check all that apply.*

Deconstruction

Circle of Influence

Identity Masking

Ethos of Care

How to Retain Us

Critical Consciousness

**Q2: It's helped me a lot, just reflect on my growing up. I grew up pretty supported at home from my mom emotionally. I was the fourth kid of six. In my house, my mom wore the pants. My dad, he'd say things, but at the end of the day, my mom was the one that would get things done. I had that as a model . . . We had some kids that came from some very, very machista households, where the whole be a man concept was something that you grew up around. I think for me, I grew up just being okay knowing if people were going to mess with me, I was going to talk my way out of the fight. I could count two instances that I'd got in two fights that I could remember in school. One of them was just with the other small kid because all our friends were thinking who would beat who up and we were friends but we ended up getting into a fight in middle school and then laughing about it when we were in the principal's office. I remember that's one of the reasons why I joined wrestling because I did feel even though I have the support at home, it's like, you don't know what it's like when I get to school, mom.**

*Check all that apply.*

Deconstruction

Circle of Influence



Identity Masking  
Ethos of Care  
How to Retain Us  
Critical Consciousness

**Q3: I was going to share when I think about the many masks that I wear, I feel like it was one that was given to me in a way, in that, I was young, I just wanted to earn a paycheck, pay out loans. I was in the classroom, and then just happened to be pretty good at managing students. It's like, "Oh, wow, you can do that a lot." Like, "Let's give you more responsibility to do that. Let's give you the grade level chair role, let's-- man, you'd be a really great dean. You have a knack for using your masculinity to instill fear in students." Like, "Stand up, sit down, sit down now," and I'm raising my voice, posturing up, the tone in my intonation is borderline aggressive. Like, "I'm going to do something if you don't, do not." That just what pays the bills. I for a long time put that mask on because it fit, and it's afforded privilege along the way. I look now, and it's exciting, the story in one narrative, but it's also a bit sad. The oppressive systems as a disciplinarian that I've been a part of and partaking and not having known better to further my career. A privilege it's been at the cost of those who want to serve the most.**

*Check all that apply.*

Deconstruction  
Circle of Influence  
Identity Masking  
Ethos of Care  
How to Retain Us  
Critical Consciousness

**Q4: They were like, "Oh, you're going to work wonders at the school, you're going to change things up. These kids are going to love you." I'm like, that's a lot of pressure. I want to make sure these kids are academically ready for the next school year, and so that they can live a choice filled life, and et cetera . . . I was like, "Dude, what?" I got parents relying on me to try to change the lives of the kids, and I'm like, I don't even know what to do. I don't know how to properly manage behavior . . . This all came with its own expectations. That was always like a chip on my shoulder. It's like there's a lot of expectations as to the impact that you can have, but at the same time, you just need to focus on your relationships with your students, and building a strong relationship with them, and then also building their academic capacities, because those are the two things that you should focus on . . . As I shared earlier, I think because there was an expectation as to the good that I could do with my identity, I think I showed up more confident, and because of that high expectation, I could make a lot of change, I felt more comfortable leaning into that identity and talking about it in the classroom, especially with my lesson plans. My school leaders were like, "Oh, this is so incredible." All six admin I had, they loved seeing culturally relevant lessons. I think that was very much celebrated in those spaces, but then at some point, you become the point person sometimes of that work.**

*Check all that apply.*

Deconstruction  
Circle of Influence  
Identity Masking  
Ethos of Care  
How to Retain Us  
Critical Consciousness

**Q5: Then I was in fourth grade and having to be really careful about how I talk to kids, and all of that stuff that made me valuable, that I thought made me valuable as a human being growing up in high school and in college, and I had to really check, like, can I talk to kids? . . . I had gone through a transformation of, again, deconstruction, and who am I as a male and patriarchal norms, but on the day to day stuff, what was I doing to get the kids' attention? What was I doing to show frustration with kids? Those are things that I, over 15 years, that I am still processing. Like, am I raising my voice? Am I taking a domineering stance? Am I using my size to control in the same way that I was shown that? Like talking about the way that your fathers did things. My dad is a product of his family and his upbringing, but we were around some violence growing up, and that was just the way things were. As much as I was trying to be conscious of being better, in schools, you are put to your limit as far as stress, right? Oftentimes, you get into the point where you're triggered, and it's when you're triggered, those things that are unconscious come out, and you have to be really, really mindful of those things . . . From, again, this machismo, like, this is on me and I'm going to do this, versus what does it mean to be part of a school system and help families and kids be self-determined, and I'm just a part of this puzzle, has also been liberatory for me as I go through this and think of myself more as a servant than I am a leader.**

*Check all that apply.*

Deconstruction  
Circle of Influence  
Identity Masking  
Ethos of Care  
How to Retain Us  
Critical Consciousness

**Q6: I think being from the community, and knowing the community, and seeing either the presence of males in these students' lives or the lack of presence of males in these students' lives was really telling about the types of care that these young boys would need, and entering into like, so they're 9 and 10 years old, right? They're really searching for something, and if I can give them a hint of what they're looking for and start to push their expectations for what does it mean to be a man, and be nurturing, and be caring, but also be physical, and be all the things that they're questioning about themselves and push for academic excellence, right? Be thoughtful, be eloquent. Like give yourself this opportunity to read incredible books, and have these discussions, and that I saw so many kids in my classroom blossom as a result of being that type of way, and now a lot of them are in college**

**and it's incredible to see the seeds that were planted then, and what these young boys and now men have become. It was a lot, and it was necessary.**

*Check all that apply.*

Deconstruction  
Circle of Influence  
Identity Masking  
Ethos of Care  
How to Retain Us  
Critical Consciousness

**Q7: Similar to what was said earlier, I do appreciate too pointing out the commonalities with my students and myself. When you ask them what they did this weekend, "Oh, we all went to the carne asada. The whole family came over." Like, "Oh, man. I remember those." Talking to them, music, interests, food, just cultural things, growing up, you can share that. I think for me, though, my favorite part is [clears throat] going back to where we started highlighting differences, that being a Latino male can mean all kinds of things. Yes, it means you have very similar cultural experiences, but we don't all love soccer. We don't all love Reggaetón. We don't all love the same exact things. If you do, that's fine, but I share with my kids all the time, "I'm a nerd. I'm a huge Sci-Fi guy." Those Latino males, like, "You guys love anime? That's great. That's your thing. Do it." Really encouraging them to find the things that make them unique and individual. If they are things like soccer and Reggaetón, that's fine. People love those, those are great. I love them too, but you can also have other interests that maybe sometimes are more coded as like White and Asian and society, or more coded not as Macho and cool and things. Like you said, Alonzo, like a book. I love reading them always to my kids. I don't often make enough time to read, but reading is so important. Like, "Let's, actually, pick up books." You're going to watch me pick up a book on my break and not just scroll through my phone. When I'm on my lunch I'm either working or I'm reading.**

*Check all that apply.*

Deconstruction  
Circle of Influence  
Identity Masking  
Ethos of Care  
How to Retain Us  
Critical Consciousness

**Q8: Not only in my teaching, but I'm filtering through my masculinity. I'm filtering through how I'm being perceived. I was given a lot of the behavioral challenges because I had a certain presence, and a certain tone. I had to be really conscious of how, again, I was using my voice. I'm a huge believer that you teach in schools and not classrooms. I had to be really careful that I wasn't setting up a precedent for kids to be listening to me out of fear, because the science teacher or the art teacher who were female didn't have that same presence.**

*Check all that apply.*

Deconstruction  
Circle of Influence  
Identity Masking  
Ethos of Care  
How to Retain Us  
Critical Consciousness

**Q9: I think for me, putting time back to what I impact is, I don't know if it was year one or year two, but pretty early on in my teaching practice, I recognize like, "Oh man, I sound like my parents." Sometimes that was just like how I gave classroom management directions about being direct, but it was also the gendered way that my parents talk. For example, my dad, when he talked to other males, it was a very matter of fact, straightforward tone, not a lot of inflection in tone. Not using like pet names, like my friend, my buddy, whatever, just like, "Hey man." With females, my dad would be like, even receptionists, waitresses, whatever, like, "Hi, dear? How's it going? How's your day like?" Like rise in tone and much more like endearing and sweet language. I recognized in my first couple years teaching that I was mimicking that. When I talked to female students, it was like, "Oh, hi. How are you? What do you need?" My tone would, literally, go up and with male students like, "Hey man? How's it going? How are you doing today?" Reach your hand out for a fist bump or a handshake and like, "Wow." I'm very gendered in how I'm talking to my students, whether they're male or female. Then, if I do have students that are nonbinary, that are trans or anywhere on the spectrum, I am gendering them by how I'm talking to them unintentionally. I've always took a few years to very intentionally unpack that, break that habit. What I settle on is I talked to all of my students regardless of gender identity, with a more like loving, raising my tones or I pitch sometimes, so it's like softer and more welcoming because that's how I wish I would've been talked to more by males and females alike. It's not for everybody and that's fine, but at least it's much more welcoming than the matter of fact like, "Hey, how's it going?"**

*Check all that apply.*

Deconstruction  
Circle of Influence  
Identity Masking  
Ethos of Care  
How to Retain Us  
Critical Consciousness

**Q10: This, to me, it's having pedagogical heroes within the academy, and just people you can look up to as people who are doing the research, and people who are making their way through educational systems to become chief academic officers or people who are instructional coaches, and people who have pedagogical expertise beyond just classroom management pieces, and so, I think being able to see how you don't just have to become an assistant principal, or you can actually be an effective leader in pedagogy and become a pedagogical leader, I think, that's something that's highly needed in the profession.**

*Check all that apply.*

Deconstruction  
Circle of Influence  
Identity Masking  
Ethos of Care  
How to Retain Us  
Critical Consciousness

The next set of quotes focuses on more specific axial codes. The selections on the checklist contain the codes that connect to the themes. Please select as many themes that you feel represent the quotes that are shared. You may look at the codebook to help you as you go through each of the examples.

**(Identity Masking Exploration) I think for me, and this may not make me the most friendly teacher, but I tend to just stay on my own. I've been known as a mad scientist in my previous school, the only STEAM teacher. I didn't go to staff meetings. I only went when I went to IEPs, but I always just felt like I'm doing my own thing. The kids and I get along. Do I really need to get along with the teachers? I just avoided it . . . When you're a teacher, there's all these protocols. At a certain point, I decided I don't want to deal with too much, so I would just hide in my room and that's it. That's what I would do.**

*Check all that apply.*

Impostor  
Survival + Self Reliance  
External Pressure  
Othering  
Benefitting

**(Deconstruction) I was just reflecting on my father who didn't really know how to be in touch with his feelings, express feelings, talk about feelings. He was never okay . . . he's also the leader of the household, who sets the tone, and people follow his direction. It's like both of those together create this struggle that we're facing.**

*Check all that apply.*

Meaning Making  
Identity Development  
Emotional Intelligence  
Joy  
Dialogical Power

**(Critical Consciousness) It wasn't until I started teaching using materials like this, going to workshops, dialoguing in spaces, that I remember like understanding the concept of masculinity more. I was able to put words and concepts to things I experienced, because I think I was always grounded in being okay having emotions, just learning how to control them. I remember in college at a MECHA conference, we were in a male circle and they were discussing should MECHA accept homosexuals in the movimiento . . . Yes if someone's down to help people, who cares who they're with?" I remember that discussion**

**was pretty heated . . . I was like, dude, we're in college and these guys are also being college educated but they're holding on to this. They're threatened by their manhood.**

*Check all that apply.*

Purpose

Disruption

Gender Expansion

**(How to Retain Us) Have a good understanding of yourself before starting the work or very, very early on in the work. When I was in my credential program, I think we had a lesson on your identity and how that factor into the classroom. It's like a very, very first lesson in your credential program, so by the time you're done, you've forgotten it. I had a student teacher a couple years ago and I have another one for this upcoming year, and in both of their credential programs, it's a module on your identity and how it affects the classroom. I don't remember anything in my induction program about my identity and how that seeps into my teaching practice in both good ways and in ways that may be harmful to students. It took years, it took a while and it took a large confluence of things. It took being able to find a mentor or two, it took unfortunately trial and error. It took own personal therapy at my end to really start to unpack and figure out who I am.**

*Check all that apply.*

Develop Us

Include Us

Help Us Heal

Stop Tokenizing Us

Disrupt Hidden Rules

**(Ethos of Care) The advantage is I feel like I can connect with them quickly and they view me differently whether it's through a disciplinary lens or whatever that is . . . I want to make sure that I'm coming off as approachable and not like authoritarian or whatnot. It is an advantage where just checking in with them, they already see me off the bat. They see me differently . . . We grew up with shared experiences so being able to connect. The selfishness is there's other teachers that struggle with it. There's other admin that struggle with it. That just feels good off the bat. I think that's one of the pieces of the work that I enjoy the most is being able to connect authentically and knowing that students know that you have their best interest in mind. I think that's definitely, it fills my cup, for sure, man.**

*Check all that apply.*

Student Response

Impact

Success

Affinity

Belonging

**Use this to add anything you would like to add**

# APPENDIX I

## Codebook

Selective coding		Axial coding	Open coding	
Themes	Definition		Code	Definition
Deconstruction (Hall, 2020; Moje & Lewis, 2020)	Learning is the internalization of ideas and taking them to reformulate who one is compared to who one was before the learning occurred. This growth leads to an unlearning that happens through active resistance to what we have known, reevaluating meaning, and co-constructing new discourses (Moje & Lewis, 2020). This is an ongoing practice that Latino men exhibited in their stories. Hall (2020) argues that identity is constructed and deconstructed through discourse and continuously shifts on the influences in society, community, and culture. These identity shifts are seen throughout	<b>Learning + unlearning</b>  Cyclical opportunities to gather new information that creates new meanings.	Meaning making	Actively deconstructing their identities in relation to gender, race, ethnicity, language, and as educators to align with who they want to be seen as.
			Identity development	This process is ongoing from childhood to the present and which identities they gravitate more to in terms of where they have influence and where they still need to grow in.
		<b>Reimagining</b>  Expansion of masculinities and how to express manhood.	Emotional intelligence	Gathering of a life essential skill that shows emotional growth and consciousness of how to use these new skills in interactions, in making meaning of situations, and displaying a counter archetype.
			Joy	Understanding the joy in being a man that has something to support all

	the lives of people as a constant negotiation and resistance of where they identify based on specific beliefs.			students, adults, and the K–12 system.
		<b>Future support</b>  Affinity spaces where deconstruction can be safe to have these conversations while holding accountability to toxic masculinity/ machismo.	Dialogical power	The pushing and analysis that was brought forth through this dialogical space and how it can support in meaning making for Latino male educators.
Circle of Influence (Levant et al., 2003; Saez et al., 2010)	The people in Latino male educators lives that supported their understanding of how to survive and succeed. Counter to that, villains can be examples of people they did not want to be like, and in most cases, it was their fathers or previous male teachers, family members, or community members (Saez et al., 2010). This allows for the continued exploration of multiple version of masculinities rather than once	<b>Rejection of identity</b>  Moments where there is questioning and rejection of being a “man” based on what was observed by loved ones, educators, and professionals.	Machismo	Stereotypical and negative experiences of what it means to be a man in their lived experiences.
			Villains	Counter-machismo focuses on catalyst moments where machismo redirects the formation of an affinity to masculinity/ machismo for Latino male educators. Direct questioning of how problematic this behavior and characteristics are.
		<b>Counter-machismo</b>  People that showcased more	Mentor/ Femtor	Positive role models that guided Latino male educators both in their lives



	archetype that men have to follow (Levant et al., 2003; Saez et al., 2010).	than the general stereotypes and provided reimagination and redefining gender roles/dynamics.		and in their professional careers.
			Motherhood/ Femininity	Positive view on gender dynamics and how mothers and women in the lives of Latino male educators took on the responsibilities of caretaking, redefinition of roles, and passing of femininity toward the development of identity.
Identity Masking Exploration (Breault, 2016; Colwill & Boyd, 2008).	Masking is a way that Latino men try to replicate who society/schooling is informing them of how to show up and also a survival mechanism to not fully show their authenticity for fear of not belonging. Breault (2016) describes pedagogical masking as a preparation by educators on what character would be the most appropriate to portray in the	<b>Follow the script</b>  Latino male educators performing to archetypes because of what society and people have defined or need of them in replication of masculinity/machismo.	Impostor	Performing stereotypical roles and definitions of how to be a man and not feeling like one belongs. In addition, there is relation to trying to be authentic and not feeling.
			Survival + self-reliance	Having to put up with constant feedback on how one is supposed to show up and continuing to endure it because there is lack of agency/advocacy for Latino male educators to disrupt (Sáenz et al., 2015).

	<p>next moment where you are in front of a specific audience or setting. To further expand on this concept, it is important to understand why people use specific masks and how it benefits them or harms them through its usage (Breault, 2016; Colwill &amp; Boyd, 2008).</p>		External pressure	People in specific proximity require Latino male educators to act and behave in a specific way in their professional settings. An added layer is Latino men know they benefit from performing certain masculinity traits.
		<p><b>Constant confusion</b></p> <p>Latino male educators' confusion of how they are supposed to act and haven tension in performing what is expected of them rather than who they are.</p>	Othering	When Latino male educators do not show up in the way people expect, they are othered for showing a gender expansion or reimagined version as they experiment.
			Benefitting	Conscious that they benefit from specific archetypes and tension of acting in this way based on professional goals.
		<p><b>Real me</b></p> <p>A continued exploration of gender roles and dynamics. Experimentation of what is "real" and authentic and not wearing a mask.</p>	Authenticity	Space where Latino male educators feel they can be themselves and not act in a specific way. The safest space is with students.

Ethos of Care (I. Jackson et al., 2014)	At the core of their pedagogy and how they navigate the world, Latino men look for strong relationships to support their identities, their worth, and how they are affirmed. Their impact and belonging is rooted to young people and the impact they create in the classroom (I. Jackson et al., 2014). Once Latino men feel reciprocal love from youth and families, they begin to create an ethos of care where they feel they are planting seeds to support generational impact and they care about the success of young people's futures.	<b>Creators of culture</b>  Latino male educators support creation of positive student culture by focusing on relationships with youth	Student response	Immediate respect for just showing up and engaging with youth. Easily connects to youth without pedagogical training.
			Impact	A continued and constant state of affirmation on why they became educators and seeing the short term and long term impact from students.
			Success	Success is highlighted when classroom culture or "management" is seen as exploratory or when admin do not think the class is on fire in any way. Success is rooted control of bodies through masculinity characteristics.
		<b>Acceptance</b>  Opportunities to feel connected to a greater community based on the strengths that are seen about their identity.	Affinity	Latino male educators seek connection from people around them. It is rare they have affinity to other Latino male educators in their own buildings. They see how they benefit in creating

				easier connections with youth based on their gender and race.
			Belonging	There is a sense of belonging to the greater community if they serve in predominantly Latino/a/x communities. They are connected to the purpose of education based on their own lived experiences.
How to Retain Us (Griffin, 2018)	This is a call to action for K–12 spaces, education teaching programs, and educational department initiatives to support the recruitment, hiring, and retention efforts for Latino male educators. Griffin (2018) highlights the experiences and struggles of Latino educators and this adds on to what specific ways changes can be effective to the retention of Latino male educators.	<b>Proactive development</b>  Latino male educator development needs to be intentional and focused on the ongoing support of critical pedagogy.	Develop us	Develop us through intentional proactive opportunities for growth in pedagogy, in identity, and reaching professional goals.
			Include us	Include us as creators of initiatives, culture, and projects that support a proactive measure to increase positive student and school culture.
			Help us heal	Help us heal by supporting our mental wellness in unpacking our identities so that we can become

				our most authentic selves.
		<b>Reactive response</b>  Immediate changes to the experiences that Latino male educators go through and support a sense of belonging.	Stop tokenizing us	Stop tokenizing us by believing that we speak for all Latino masculinity/machismo and do not treat us as the saviors in the space because we are the only Latino male educator you have
			Disrupt hidden rules	Disrupt hidden rules of how people expect us to act. Disrupt biases and microaggressions to support a sense of belonging for us as educators.
Critical Consciousness (Freire 1970, 1994; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008)	A tenet of critical pedagogy is critical consciousness where educators develop an awakening about inequities for marginalized people within society (Freire, 1970, 1994; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Even more important is the critical action that people with a deep sense of	<b>Critical pedagogy</b>  Latino male educators that have critical pedagogical knowledge are able to take action steps that model effective disruption of heteronormative patriarchal standards and create long term impact in their professional environments.	Purpose	Once Latino male educators have more criticality, they begin to create a more meaningful purpose on how they want to engage as educators in their careers.
			Disruption	Once Latino male educators have more criticality about different portions of their identity, they begin to disrupt this through

	<p>critical consciousness take to actively disrupt and dismantle oppressive structures. Critical consciousness allows educators to question what they are teaching, how they are teaching it, and if they are supporting young people in also becoming critically conscious (Duncan-Andrade &amp; Morrell, 2008). This is more than just racial critical consciousness for Latino male educators though, they must also focus on creating inclusivity of all the spaces they take up. Critical consciousness is understanding the inequitable social conditions created by society and developing an awakening to combat these structures (Freire, 1994).</p>			intentional moments in their teaching practice, interactions, and structurally.
			Gender expansion	Once Latino male educators have more criticality about gender, they begin to take steps in creating an inclusive environment for all forms of gender in the spaces they work in.