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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

SANTA CRUZ

**“Becoming the Heroes, the City Deserves”: A Multimethod Approach to  
Understanding Latino Men's College Friendships**

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

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

PSYCHOLOGY

by

**Ruby Arabella Hernandez**

September 2018

The Dissertation of Ruby A. Hernandez is

approved:

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## Abstract

### “Becoming the Heroes, the City Deserves”: A Multimethod Approach to Understanding Latino Men's College Friendships

Ruby Arabella Hernandez

There is currently a paucity of research regarding Latino men’s friendships. This dissertation relies on the friendship literature to analyze Latino men’s friendships in the college context. Using a multimethod approach, three studies are presented, (1) How are Latino men defining their engagement with others in their friendships? (2) Does the racial/ethnic composition of their college friends influence their consciousness around feminist attitudes (3) What role does a Latino men’s college organization, and the friendships created within, play in their success?

This dissertation draws from two separate studies. The first study is from “The Success in Higher Education” survey data collected across two UC campuses. The survey encompasses demographics, educational and parental background, home socialization, gender attitudes, encounters with the law, loneliness and friendship characteristics. The first two study chapters use data subsets from this larger study for analysis. The first study chapter analyzes responses of 52 college-going Latino men and the open-ended question, “How do you define a friend?” and measures their levels of loneliness. Latino men in college experienced low amounts of loneliness and define their friendships in caring and vulnerable terms. The second subset uses regression analysis on 102 Latino men’s responses, analyzing their current close ethnic/racial group composition, critical engagement with their male friends, and how



they predict feminist attitudes. Having more Latino and diverse close friend group lead to a weak prediction of higher feminist attitude endorsement.

The second study, The Hermanos Study, is an ethnographic study of a Latino men's college organization and ten qualitative interviews with members in the organization conducted at the University of California, Santa Cruz. A subset of the data was used, I selected two participants who were interviewed as a group to use as a case study. Members of the organization seek familiarity and refuge within the space and friendships to create familial connections in college.

The concluding chapter reviews the findings and implications for Latino men's friendship definitions, their friends' influence on feminist attitudes, and the friendship benefits of joining a Latino men's organization. Future directions for studying Latino men's friendships are discussed based on the studies reviewed.

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## **Chapter 1: Intersectional Understandings of Latino Men's Friendships in**

### **Context**

The language of friendship is not words but meanings.

-Henry David Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, 1849

Friendships can be investigated as a relational context that creates multitudes of possible outcomes. The relational context is concerned with examining how the dynamics and pathways of friendship affect behavior and the developmental life course of the people involved in close personal relationships (Reis, Collins, Berscheid, 2000). The friendship relational context has impact on personal and interpersonal benefits that range from gaining personal insights about the self to influencing attitudes and sociopolitical beliefs in the complex settings in which the friendship formed (Dun, 2008; Galupo & St. John, 2001). Therefore, it is possible for the interpersonal, or personal relationship, to indirectly create positive social significance for those involved.

The research on Latino men's friendships is limited. Few have information on Latino men's experiences in their adult friendships (Greif, 2009), and most examine Latino men's friendships with quantitative measures (Rodriguez, Ratanasiripong, Hayashino, & Locks, 2014). The focus of Latino men's friendship research is often in comparison to other groups and is conducted primarily on adolescents, not exclusively on adult Latino men (Azmitia & Cooper, 2001; Azmitia, Ittel, & Radmacher, 2005; Way, 2011). Furthermore, Latino men's friendships are rarely

examined using intersectional social categories, such as class, race, ethnicity, and sexuality (Galupo & Gonzalez, 2012; Galupo & St. John, 2001; Rodriguez, Ratanasiripong, Hayashino, & Locks, 2014; Way et al., 2014). Understanding how Latino men's experiences affect the formation of their friendships within the college context can provide insight into their adjustment in higher education. Latino men entering college are often first-generation (first in their families to attend college), from working-class backgrounds, and struggle being retained in institutions of higher education (Covarrubias & Stone, 2015; Sáenz, García-Louis, De Las Mercédez, & Rodriguez, 2018). Friends can be a resource in the context of higher education when students are the first to attend college and the transmission of institutional information becomes important to succeeding (Dueñas & Gloria, 2017). They can provide resources such as psychological and instrumental support that advance students' academic achievement and engagement with the new academic institution (Dueñas & Gloria, 2017; Perez & Sáenz, 2017).

In this dissertation, I consider Latino men in institutions of higher learning and their relationships with friends. Furthermore, friends can facilitate the exploration of new information that is being influenced by the college experience (e.g. enrolling in Ethnic Studies and Feminist studies classes; contact with a privileged institution and peers). I explore the relational context of friendship as a "practicing ground," or a site where men struggle to reach resolution regarding new narratives that encourage the promotion of change in attitudes regarding gender privilege (White, 2006).

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce literature that will aid in examining Latino men's friendships in higher education. I first review how friendship has been an asset for disenfranchised groups and Latinos in academic settings. I then explore how the feminist concept of Intersectionality can help explain social experiences of Latino men that in turn shape their attitudes and behaviors towards friendships. Next, I situate literature on relationships (romantic and platonic) that have demonstrated how the relational context can shift attitudes around gender in men. Finally, I give an overview of the studies and data subsets used within each chapter and provide a brief review of the chapters.

### **The Friendship Relational Context of Latino Men in College**

One of the more recent environments that Latino men have been struggling to enter is higher education (Sáenz, García-Louis, De Las Mercédez, & Rodriguez, 2018). Statistics show that few Latino men enter higher education (Santiago, Galdeano, & Taylor, 2015; Ojeda, Navarro, Morales, 2011). Latino men are the least likely to be enrolled in college (23%), compared to Black (29%), and white (41%) men (Jacobsen & Mather, 2010; Sáenz, García-Louis, De Las Mercédez, & Rodriguez, 2018). In 2013, only 10% of Latino men had a bachelor's degree by the age of 25 (Santiago, Galdeano, & Taylor, 2015). Once Latino men reach college, they struggle to stay in college (Dueñas & Gloria, 2017). College provides a unique setting where mostly young, unmarried men with similar experiences, are encouraged to create friendships during this transition period in their lives (Buote, et.al., 2007).

Latino men's college persistence may be helped by developing meaningful and supportive friendship networks.

Friendships can serve as a buffer for the vulnerabilities Latino students suffer as they enter higher education (Benner, 2011; Riegel-Crumb & Callahan, 2009; Schwartz, Galliher, & Domenech Rodríguez, 2011). Reports of harassment and discrimination by local and campus police, faculty, and peers (Hurtado, Haney, & Hurtado, 2012; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solózano, 2009) and the challenges of adjusting to a privileged and foreign academic setting can lead to disengagement and isolation, and eventual dropout (Figueroa, 2002; Stephens, Fryberg., Markus, Johnson., & Covarrubias, 2012; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009). Crosnoe and colleagues (2003) analyzed the interaction of race, class, school context and friendship patterns on academic outcomes between white and African American adolescents. Friendship networks provided role modeling of positive behaviors, emotional support when friends encounter barriers, support for specific academic subjects, and companionship. Crosnoe and colleagues show that academic success provides friends with direct lines of institutional social capital that can be shared within their friendship networks.

More recent research on Latino success in college points to unique obstacles that Latinos face within college. Latinos often enter as first-generation students from under resourced schools and working-class backgrounds (Dueñas & Gloria, 2017; Perez & Sáenz, 2017). Using a variety of survey measures, Dueñas and Gloria (2017) studied the impact of “mattering”, or believing they impact and hold a place within

the college context, on male and female Latino undergraduates. The authors' survey measured dimensions of their psychosociocultural framework that included items on self-belief (psychological), relationships (social), and values (cultural) in relationship to collective self-esteem and belonging at the university. First generation college students (FGCS) struggled the most on dimensions of self-esteem, cohesion, and belonging in the university compared to peers who were from a continuing-generation (Dueñas & Gloria, 2017). Possible explanations for the differing outcomes between FGCS and continuing-generation students included the increased time FGCS must dedicate to working off campus, effects of personal experiences with discrimination, and fewer social resources. In comparison, Perez and Sáenz (2017) focused on factors that allowed Latino males to thrive in predominately white institutions. Using qualitative data from The National Study on Latino Male Achievement in Higher Education, the authors determined five qualities using Schreiner's Thriving Quotient (TQ) (2010) that led to Latino college students' success. A student was considered "thriving" based on how the students engaged with their college experience on various levels: intellectual, social, and emotional (Perez & Sáenz, 2017). The three main categories they used to describe the five qualities were Academic Thriving, Intrapersonal Thriving, and Interpersonal Thriving. This final theme emphasized the importance of relationships for thriving in college which included having strong bonds with their families, peers and communities. Latino men located social connectedness through their Latino peers, naming student organizations as extended families and gaining "moral support" from them in college. When Latinos feel



disconnected or at odds with the university, creating social connections with friends can begin to bridge engagement between Latino students and the campus.

### **Intersectionality's Contribution to the Analysis of Latino Men's Friendships**

An intersectional approach can elucidate patterns that form friendships. Instead an analysis of just friendship characteristics, members of the friendship are described as belonging to multiple social groups. An influential concept that allows for the study of multiple social group identities is Intersectionality. The term was originally coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) and acknowledges the intersection of social stratification across multiple social categories such as race and gender. The concept has been expanded further by scholars to include additional significant social categories such as class, sexual orientation, and physical ableness, to capture a social experience that is affected by social inequality (Collins, 2015). Intersectionality is not measured directly in the studies presented in the following chapters, instead, an intersectional analysis is used to present a multifaceted explanation of young Latino's experiences that are potentially shaping their friendship patterns.

Social psychologist Aída Hurtado proposed that relevant social categories for understanding the consequences of Intersectionality could be understood through Tajfel's Social Identity Theory (Hurtado, 2003; Hurtado, 2018). British social psychologist Henri Tajfel (1981) first proposed Social Identity Theory to help explain the motivational and cognitive processes of intergroup relations. According to Tajfel it is difficult to interact with one another independent of social group or on solely

personal individual characteristics, therefore Tajfel argues for a distinction between the two. *Personal identity* is created from personally unique characteristics and temperament. In contrast, he defines *social identity* as being formed primarily through a self-categorization and referencing structure which leads to a perception of belonging that creates an integrative self-image (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Focusing on social identity, Hurtado (2003; 2018) argues that intersectional group memberships are only relevant to Tajfel's Social Identity Theory if the ascribed membership is systematically related to access of power and the membership cannot be easily changed. In her definition of *intersectional identity constellations*, she explains,

[I]ntersectionality refers to the particular constellation of social identities that are the primary basis for power distribution and for stigmatization and subordination: that is, class, race, sexuality, gender, ethnicity, and physical ableness. These same social categories are based on what sociologists call master statuses (Hughes, 1945) and are the basis for significant social identities because individuals must psychologically negotiate their potentially stigmatizing effects. Conversely, if these master statuses confer privilege, and that privilege becomes problematized, then individuals holding such privilege must negotiate the psychological effects of devalued group memberships. In the United States, as in many other countries, master statuses are used to make value judgments about group memberships and to allocate political, social, and economic power (Reicher, 2004). Furthermore, all

measures of inequality such as education income, and accumulated wealth are affected by these master statuses (Hurtado, 2018, pp. 65).

Intersectionality can thus provide a nuanced analysis of the social experiences of Latino men that complicates the discussion around their social privilege and access.

The expansion of Intersectionality to examine Latino masculinities has been previously utilized by researchers (Harnois, 2017; Hurtado & Sinha, 2008; Hurtado & Sinha, 2016). Undeniably, men often occupy a more privileged role in society through the system of gender privilege attributed to being male in this society.

Intersectionality has often been designated to examine oppressed groups and identities and men's vulnerabilities are rarely examined because men also tend to benefit from male privilege (Hurtado, Haney, Hurtado, 2012). Given their mixture of subordinated and privileged social categories, men of Color inhabit what Hurtado and Sinha (2016) have come to call a "contradictory intersection," where socially they are afforded male privilege through their gender, but are subordinated by their racial identity as non-white, and this privilege shifts further based on other social categories (sexuality, physical ableness, etc.). Latino men experience social constraints because of their gender socialization into hegemonic masculinity (or prevailing notions of what masculinity is in society) making it difficult to cultivate relationships that expose vulnerabilities and demonstrate caring (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2002; Hurtado & Sinha, 2016). The intersectional experience of men's masculinity consequently has direct implications for men's friendship formation.

In failing to examine how Intersectionality plays a role in men's friendships, questions around why different groups of men might score differently, or similarly, across dimensions of gender questioning or friendship patterns, may not be fully explained by incorporating only one of the social categories men belong to (Galupo & Gonzalez, 2013; Mcdermott & Schwartz, 2013). The work done by previous Latino scholars argues for a more complex view of Latino masculinities (Arcieniega & Anderson, 2008; Mirandé, 1997) that can potentially extend to their friendships and their homosocial, or same-sex settings. Latino hypermasculinity has been identified both negatively ("machista", "mandolin") and in positive terms ("caballerismo", and the "hombre de verdad") (Arcieniega & Anderson, 2008; Mirandé, 1997). However, the evidence shows that Latino masculinity is more multifaceted (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016) and perhaps capable of sustaining competing characteristics that are not necessarily captured by mainstream measures (Mirandé, 1997). In a longitudinal interview study of Latino, White, Chinese, and Black American boys from 6<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> grade, Way and her colleagues (Way, et al., 2014) found that ethnicity plays a significant role in resistance to masculinity. The Latino participants exhibited their resistance to dominant masculinity by displaying high levels of emotional expression, vulnerability and by forming close friendships. Latino adolescent boys demonstrated these characteristics at a higher rate than other white, Black, or Asian participants in the study. The results of this study augur well for Latino men's ability to maintain meaningful relationships with other men and resisting traditional masculine expectations.

Given the existence of differing forms of masculinity (see Coston & Kimmel, 2012) it can be argued that men who do not belong to hegemonic forms of masculinity, can present an alternative form of friendship that is intersectional and culturally different (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2002). *Intersectional identity constellations* as proposed by Hurtado (2003; 2018; Hurtado & Sinha, 2016) therefore become relevant to the analysis of friendships when they are navigating gender expectations, racism, and classism in the environments they occupy. In the next section, I introduce the relational context as a force of influence towards egalitarian views on gender for men.

### **Relationships' Influence on Men's Gender Questioning**

To establish how friendship as a social relation can aid in structuring and restructuring how men respond to social norm expectations around gender, I first review literature on relationships (romantic and platonic), that have been shown to shift masculinity, and continue with how friendship can potentially behave similarly.

Relationships can influence gender views over time (McDermott & Schwartz, 2013). In examining men's gender role theory, McDermott and colleagues examined contextual factors and intrapsychic processes across several phases: 1) acceptance of traditional gender roles (support of rigid gender roles); 2) ambivalence about gender roles (confusion as men explore their gender role ideology); 3) anger over gender roles (fear and anger from trying to resolve their gender role ideology) 4) personal-professional activism (men actively advocating for feminism); and 5) celebration/integration roles (transcending gender norms). As men grow older, gender

questioning leads to a distancing from traditional gender roles. Research has focused on the degree of internalization of masculinity but not much at the questioning of gender roles, probably because questioning can be a source of stress and anxiety. McDermott and colleagues' study attempted to determine if subgroups could be formed from men's gender role journey phase attitudes, and if there would be significant differences across age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, relationship status, and parental education. The results yielded four classifications: Not Questioning/Accepting of Traditional Gender Roles (NQ/ATGR), Questioning With Strong Ambivalence (QWSA), and Questioning With Weak Ambivalence (QWWA), and Pro-Feminist Activists (PFA). Overall most men (~70%) were in the middle categories of questioning (QWSA and QWWA). White and Latino males scored about equally and had higher questioning towards traditional gender roles than Asian and Black males. However, McDermott and Schwartz were unable to articulate the similarities between high questioning groups beyond saying they were similar in their high questioning. Further findings show that number of years of education and involvement in romantic relationships were strong indicators of men with higher questioning of traditional masculine roles. Married and engaged men in the sample were more likely to be placed in a feminist subgroup compared to single men. Based on these findings, Latino men demonstrate they question their gender roles the same as white men, and more than other groups, however, no clear explanation was given regarding the results. Nevertheless, work by other scholars can shed light on why men may have high questioning.

Hurtado and Sinha (2008; 2016) examined educated Latino men and their questioning of traditional forms of masculinity. Hurtado and Sinha (2008) asked 36 feminist identifying Latino men from working class backgrounds about their definitions of manhood. The Latino men's definitions demonstrated an intersecting awareness of their race, ethnicity, social class, and sexuality. This led to definitions of manhood that were counter-hegemonic and focused on relationships with family and community rather than asserting dominance (Hurtado & Sinha, 2008). Their work delves further into this critical consciousness by extending their analysis to a larger sample of feminist identified men. Hurtado and Sinha's (2016) analysis of 82 feminist identified Chicano/Latino men revealed that men's intersectional identities allowed them to identify with the plight of sexism, racism and violence that women were exposed to due to their instruction in higher education, and workplace practices. Other factors included family upbringing and parental relationships, such as being privy to the differential treatment of their sisters and being in relationships and friendships with feminist women. Although the men were keenly aware that they themselves had not been on the receiving end of sexism, conversations and situations regarding their sexism led to reflection on their own defensiveness after being interrogated on their privilege by feminist women. Further observations and personal exploration, which included their own experiences being wronged in other important identity domains (e.g. racism), helped Latino men to understand and correct traditional practices and ideologies around gendered practices in which they were complicit (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016). The relational context of friendship and other

relationships, along with outward experiences and observations of discrimination, influence the way Latino men relate to sexism and their own gender privilege.

Research suggests that men are capable of supporting feminist values (Ashe, 2004; Adu-Poku, 2001). A significant contribution from White's (2006) study on cross-sex friendships and Black men's masculinity was its alternative portrayal of Black men as reconstructing their own masculinity through their friendships with feminist women. In an interview study on Black men's friendships she examined cross-sex friendships of feminist identified Black men. Respondents in the study had to be identified as a feminist by their female friends, be actively involved in feminist work, and the relationship had to be platonic (nonromantic). The interviews conducted asked about the direct influence of friendships between the Black men and feminist women and how this might have changed their beliefs surrounding masculinity and their behavior towards women. The results of her study revealed that many of the men took refuge in their feminist female friendships in order to practice a different type of masculinity, one that might not be acceptable in wider society. These relationships helped satisfy a need for intimacy that was easier to establish with women. Furthermore, the exposure to women led to a sensitivity about women's issues, although this did not always translate into an automatic correction of their non-feminist behavior. The relationships led the men to grapple with their own past and current harmful behavior toward women and to confront the fact that they sometimes still engaged in it despite the advantage of having the alternative "insider" perspectives they received from their feminist cross-sex friendships. Some men come



to understand through their relationships with women the harmful aspects of masculinity (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; White, 2006). Exposure to higher education such as taking Women's Studies and Ethnic Studies courses and experiences with discrimination and cross-sex friendships facilitate men questioning the unearned privileges of masculinity (Antonio, 2004; Hurtado, 2009; Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; White, 2006).

White proposed friendships were “practicing grounds” for evolving definitions of masculinity in private and public spheres (White, 2006, p.535). According to White (2006) men reach a state of cognitive dissonance (inconsistency between what they believe and how they behave) as they evaluate their treatment of women and they question their expressions of masculinity. Since the men do not automatically shift behaviors and need time to incorporate and reevaluate this new narrative, they need a space to practice their attempts to change. Friendships require trust where men might feel more comfortable to transgress rigid gender roles and expectations and expose aspects of themselves that can be socially sanctioned by peers (Way, 2011). I seek to examine if the “practicing ground” of Latino men is restricted to only cross-sex friendships, or if they can also initiate this setting between other men.

### **Dissertation Overview**

The studies in the following chapters explore Latino men's friendships in the college context. I explore the following questions, (1) On a primarily interpersonal level, how do Latino men identify and define the ways that they engage with other

Latino men in their friendships?, (2) Do college friendships help shift attitudes that allow Latino men to question their gender privilege, and, (3) How are Latino men's friendships formed within a student organization established to help them succeed in college. To study these questions, a multimethod approach was utilized. Below I outline the data sets used and supply a brief overview of the chapters.

### **Data Sets**

This dissertation draws its data from two separate studies. The first study is "The Success in Higher Education" survey data collected across two UC campuses. The second study, "The Hermanos Study," is an ethnographic and interview study of a Latino men's college organization at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

**Success in Higher Education.** The data collected from this study included multiple investigators across two University of California campuses, UC Santa Cruz and UC Santa Barbara. Both campuses are certified as Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI's), or campuses that serve a population of at least 25% undergraduates that identify as Latino/a (HSI Fact Sheet, 2018). Student requirements to participate in the study required they be enrolled in a 4-year institution and be at least 18 years of age. Undergraduates were recruited from both campuses via the campus research pool and through in class recruitment from willing instructors. All participants were compensated with course credit. Data was collected from the Spring of 2016 through the Summer of 2018.

Participants were required to come into a research lab and the survey was administered by IRB certified and trained research assistants or graduate students. To

take the survey, participants had the option of choosing a hardcopy or online format. Hardcopies were later inputted by undergraduate and graduate students into the online survey system. The online survey was administered through a web-based and server protected program (SurveyMonkey). The survey contained scales, open-ended, and close-ended questions on: basic demographics, educational background and parental background, home socialization, gender attitudes, encounters with the law, loneliness and friendship characteristics. Participants took an average of 45 minutes to complete the study.

***Friendship Definitions Subset (FDS).*** The first two study chapters use data subsets from “The Success in Higher Education” study for analysis. The first study chapter analyzes the subset of 52 college-going Latino men and their response to one open-ended question, “How do you define a friend?” and further included a scale on loneliness, number of friends and friend demographics.

***Critical Friendship Masculinities Subset (CFMS).*** The second study chapter uses a subset of 102 Latino men’s responses. It analyzes their responses to items taken from three different scales and categorical responses. Items on parent educational background, class background, year in school, the ethnic/racial group composition of their friends, critical engagement with their male friends, and items on support of feminist support are measured.

**The Hermanos Study.** Data collected for this study includes ethnographic fieldnotes from an ethnography conducted over 12 weeks at the University of California, Santa Cruz. The notes were based on a Latino men’s organization on

campus called Hermanos Unidos, de UC Santa Cruz. In addition to the field notes collected, ten semi-structured qualitative interviews with members of the organization were conducted. Eight men and two women in the organization were interviewed. Requirements to be interviewed asked participants to be members of the organization and be at least 18 years of age. The interviews asked members demographic and background questions, how they became involved in the organization, how the organization has affected their time on campus, and questions concerning the relationships and connections they created through the organization.

Participants were recruited by the ethnographer through the organization. On average, the interviews took approximately 45 minutes. The interviewees were provided with snacks during the interview as compensation for their time. Interviews were audio and video recorded. Audio was later transcribed by trained undergraduate research assistants and crosschecked from the video by a different trained research assistant. Participants were given the option of using a pseudonym, but only one chose to remain anonymous. In addition, participants were asked to return to take a modified version of “The Success in Higher Education” study to supplement the interview data. Only 3 participants chose to return to complete it. Participants spent about 52 minutes taking the survey. Compensation for participating in the follow-up survey was a \$10 gift card to a popular coffee shop.

***Hermanos Subset.*** The third study chapter uses data from the ethnographic field notes collected and two interviewees. The interviews had chosen to be interviewed as group, and who were active members Hermanos were the basis of the

case study analysis. Data from their survey responses was used to clarify or elaborate on their background information.

## **Chapter Overviews**

### **Chapter 1: Intersectional Understandings of Latino Male Friendships in Context**

The first chapter opened with explaining the relational context of friendship. The chapter focused on reviewing literature on the known benefits of friendship for Latino men in college, how intersectionality can help us better understand the research on Latino men's friendships, and how friendship has previously helped shift attitudes on gender. A review of the data sets used in this dissertation and a brief overview of the upcoming study chapters is presented.

### **Chapter 2: "Being There for You": College Going Latino Men's Experiences of Loneliness and Definitions of Friendship**

The next chapter begins by presenting the first of three empirical studies and directly addressed an important gap in the literature. The chapter reviews existing literature and identifies the lack of research on Latino men and their friendships in general. It also provides a brief overview of what is known about the benefits of friendship over the lifespan. It emphasizes the importance of friendship in combating loneliness, and friendship qualities that can be useful for Latino men in higher education. The Friendship Definitions Subset analyzes 52 responses of Latino men enrolled in a 4-year institution and who answered the open-ended survey question, "How would you define friendship?" Responses to this question have been analyzed inductively and have been coded into themes. A scale on loneliness is further

analyzed and discussed in relationship to their qualitative response. I explore what Latino men most value in their friendships and what the implications of those themes for Latino masculinity. I further analyze how these men think about and the degree to which they experience “loneliness” and how loneliness is related to their definitions of friendship.

### **Chapter 3: Friendships Representing a World in Us: Consciousness in the Racial Compositions of Latino Men’s Friendship Group and its Role in Predicting Feminism Attitudes**

The second study builds off the first in its expansion of the role of friendships. It considers whether and how feminist consciousness can be produced through friendships and how different and similar friendship groups can help determine and create divergent psychological benefits. Thus, the Critical Friendship Masculinities Subset quantitatively analyzes the responses of 102 Latino men. This analysis is interested in learning the extent to which Latino men’s close friendship ethnic/racial group composition, and critical social engagement with their male friends helps predict support of feminist attitudes. I examine the extent to which the racial and ethnic composition of friendship groups play a role in the degree of Latino men’s endorsement of feminist attitudes and beliefs.

### **Chapter 4: “Becoming the Heroes the City Deserves”: Latino Men Transforming through Friendship and Community**

The final chapter study ties together the quantitative and qualitative studies through an in-depth case study. Thus, the Hermanos Study reviews the deeper and

more nuanced meanings of friendship that emerge and are expressed within exclusively male spaces, how the men's consciousness about their own race/ethnicity develops within their friendships, and what roles supportive organizations can play for Latino men in otherwise privileged, foreign college spaces. Using ethnographic and interview data collected from a Latino male organization, Hermanos Unidos, I explore the significance of joining a gendered and ethnic site and what friendship in such a space means to its members in the college context.

### **Chapter 5: Latino Male Friendships and Resistance**

The concluding chapter reviews the findings and implications of the studies conducted, synthesizing the overall impact and meaning of Latino men's friendships presented in this dissertation. Implications are considered on how Latino men's interpersonal friendships influence their adjustment to the college context, how they consider gender issues, and how identity-based organizations can help with Latino men's college retention. Future directions for studying Latino men's friendships are discussed based on the studies conducted.

## **Chapter 2: “Being There for You”: College Going Latino Men’s Experiences of Loneliness and Definitions of Friendship**

Mark Greene, editor for the Good Men Project, asks the question "Why Do We Murder the Beautiful Friendships of Boys?" (Greene, 2017). The title of his piece invokes a violence against something that is meant to be treasured and is the beginning of the author's reflection on loss and friendship. The realization of this loss comes to him after attending a talk by Dr. Niobe Way, a Developmental Psychologist and Professor of Applied Psychology at New York University who studies the friendships of Latino teenage boys in urban New York City. Greene laments, "It is a heart rending realization that even as men hunger for real connection in our male relationships, we have been trained away from embracing it," and concludes that Dr. Way's work highlights a source of male loneliness driven by culture (Greene, 2017). What is noteworthy about Greene’s reaction is his response indicates men are perhaps unaware of the implications of losing or not having friendships and the benefits that may be reaped from friendship until it is brought to their attention.

Although Greene’s lament is from the perspective of an adult, white male, one is left to wonder if young Latino men are as unsuspecting of the potential value of same-sex friendships. In fact, Way finds that urban Latino boys are more likely to maintain their male friendships as they move into adolescent, compared to other ethnic/racial groups in adolescence (Way, Cressen, Bodian, Preston, Nelson, & Hughes, 2014). Young Latino boys articulate that friendships are vital to their well-being (Way, Santos, Cordero, 2011). Further work finds that despite this, Latino boys



lose their deep friendships by young adulthood (Way, 2011; Way, et.al., 2014). Way's findings were specifically about young Latino boys in an urban context. Greene's reaction to their stories suggest that the loss of friendship may be very common among men in general. Yet little is known about whether young Latino men, in the privileged context of higher education, are aware of any psychological and social benefits of friendship and lament its absence when they lack such relationships.

The latest research suggests that young Latino men— even those who go on to attend college— face several personal, social, and professional challenges. Although they are now more likely to enter college than before, they continue to struggle within the college context (Jacobsen & Mather, 2010; Ojeda, Navarro, Morales, 2011; Santiago, Galdeano, & Taylor, 2015). Past studies have looked at social support and peer involvement between Latinos and education at various developmental stages. In middle schoolers and high schoolers, friends create a positive sense of social support among Latino youths during school transitions (Azmitia & Cooper, 2001; Azmitia, Syed, Radmacher, 2013). At the college level, Latinos ability to cope with stress in college is enhanced due to the emotional support provided by friends and family (Alvan, Belgrave, & Zea, 1996). Findings by Crockett and colleagues (2007) suggest that symptoms of anxiety and depression were moderated by support from peers and friends of Mexican American college students (Crockett et al., 2007). Thus, the limited literature on Latino friendships among Latinos suggests that friends do play an important role in the psychological and social adjustment of Latinos in college.

## **Benefits of Friendship Across the Lifespan**

The study of friendship and the importance of differences in gendered friendship behaviors have been discussed at length (Rose, 2007), however research on adult men of Color and their friendships is limited (Greif, 2009; Radmacher & Azmitia, 2006; Thayer, Updegraff, & Delgado, 2008; Way, 2011; White, 2006). Although existing research on friendship is reasonably extensive, it was conducted on mostly white American and European populations, or with samples in which the participants' ethnicity goes unmentioned and unanalyzed. These more general studies have demonstrated the benefits of friendship across the lifespan from preadolescence to adulthood (Erdley, Nangle, Newman, & Carpenter, 2001; Hartup & Stevens, 1997).

**Preadolescence and Early Adolescence Friendship Benefits.** In children, studies indicated that peer friendship and peer acceptance predict psychological adjustment. Studies on white and European, young and early middle school children (2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade) show that friendships facilitate positive transitions into new school environments by increasing levels of academic success (Hartup & Stevens, 1997; Tomada, Schneider, Domini, Greenman, & Fonzi, 2005) and by increasing a sense of school belonging (Erdley, Nangle, Newman, & Carpenter, 2001). In white and European populations, friendships foster the development of social skills, which can alleviate high levels of social anxiety and social adjustment (Erdley, Nangle, Newman, & Carpenter, 2001).

The presence of friends and friendship in early adolescence progressively creates positive outcomes. A comparison study between white and Latino students'

transition from elementary school (6<sup>th</sup>) to junior high (7<sup>th</sup>) showed that at least one friend provided many resources such as emotional support, academic guidance and companionship similarly across both groups (Azmitia & Cooper, 2001). Close friends have been associated with reduced teacher reports of aggressive behavior in the classroom with urban African American youth (5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade) who are in environments that expose them to violence and aggression (Benhorin & McMahon, 2008). Research on Latino youth (7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> graders) using the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health has found behaviorally negative academic outcomes can result from not having a supportive friendship network (Delgado, Ettekal, Simpkins & Schaefer, 2015). Delgado and colleagues' study provided evidence that Latino adolescents who felt they had more friends, and were felt to be others' friends, were more likely to feel they belonged at school and do well in school. Having a close-knit friendship group was associated positively with school belonging and academic achievement, especially for Mexican and Central/South American groups but not for Puerto Ricans and Cubans.

As stigmatized groups, school connectedness becomes very important to academic achievement where certain Latino groups may otherwise be vulnerable to negative academic outcomes and pathways. The research on friendship and school adjustment seems to highlight the similarities and differences in needs and benefits that friendships offer between, across, and within various racial/ethnic groups in early developmental stages.

*Friendship Benefits in Adulthood.* There are variety of factors in adult male friendships that are known to affect the extent to which adult men can reap the benefits of friendship. In overviews of adult friendships in primarily white populations, friends provide positive outcomes during important transitions. This applies to both positive and negative changes, such as normative school transitions and during tragic events such as illness, divorce, or a family member's death (Felton & Berry, 1992; Hartup & Stevens, 1997). According to Hartup and Stevens (1997), studies with adults are not as plentiful when it comes to friendship, and they are usually around "special groups" (e.g. retirees, widows), therefore making comparisons about the normal course of adult friendship is difficult. Some of what is known is that friends can act as additional forms of social support in the absence of other types of relationships during the developmental life course and offer a sense of increased well-being (Hartup & Stevens, 1997). Furthermore, the absence of friendship during preadolescence has been associated with depressive symptoms in adulthood (Erdley, Nangle, Newman, & Carpenter, 2001; Pinquart & Sörensen, 2001).

Disclosure has been identified to be an important aspect of friendship maintenance complicating the preservation of friendship with young and adult men (Erdley, Nangle, Newman, & Carpenter, 2001). Gender differences and meta-analysis, where race/ethnicity was not noted, indicate that in primarily late adolescence and young adulthood, disclosing is less socially accepted in men than women (Borys & Perlman, 1985; Pinquart & Sörensen, 2001). Adult male friendships

tend to differ from female friendships and this means that it might be unfair to compare their usefulness to men in the same terms (Morman, Schrod, & Tornes, 2013). Morman and colleagues (2013) examined the extent to which self-disclosure was affected through gender orientation (masculine vs. feminine) and measures of homophobia in their same-sex friendships with other men. Their results confirm that in a sample of primarily white men (ages 18 to 73), a feminine gender orientation produced better friendship quality with other men when they self-disclosed more, which mediated the effects of homophobia.

In adult men of Color, lack of friendships can lead to negative social and psychological outcomes (Grief, 2009). For example, between young and older men of Color (e.g. Latino and Black) lacking friendships can lead to isolation and loneliness (Benner, 2011; Figueroa, 2002; Greif, 2009). In a qualitative study, Greif (2009) contrasted the friendship interviews of elderly white and Black men and observed that African American men were more likely to value expressiveness (more sharing of thoughts, feelings) and rely on friends more informally as support networks. Moreover, only Black participants compared their friends to family. Alternatively, white respondents were clear about not needing to rely on their friends for help and did not use any kinship language to describe their friends or friendships. Mattis and colleagues' (2001) Black participants used terms of endearment like "brother" and had higher levels of emotional expressiveness towards their friends (Mattis et al., 2001). (Similarly, this poignancy and importance towards friendship is present in Puerto Rican boys; see Way, 2011). Therefore, the limited literature points toward a

qualitatively different perception and way of relating amid racial/ethnic groups that could potentially be culturally shaped.

### **Latino Male Friendships**

The social constraints that men face due to gendered socialization and hegemonic masculinity further determine that having any sort of relationship that might be vulnerable or caring is often seen as a violation of masculinity and manhood, and may be perceived as potentially homosexual—a threat that still looms large for many men (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; Way, Santos, & Cordero, 2011; Way et al., 2014). Furthermore, men’s experiences, relationships, and lives are determined by other categories that interact with their gender (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2002; Galupo & Gonzalez, 2013; Way, 1997; also see Chapter 1) and due to their circumstances, there are consequently multiple factors that may contribute to the friendships of Latino boys and men (Way, 1997).

A paucity of research around Latino male friendships has been previously acknowledged and pointed out by researchers (Way, 2011; Way, Santos, & Cordero, 2011). Research conducted on Latino focuses largely on middle school years (Azmitia, Kamprath, & Linnet, 1998; Azmitia & Cooper, 2001) and among adolescent youth (Benner, 2011; Espinoza, Gillen-O’Neel, Gonzales & Fuligni, 2014; Thayer, Updergraff, & Delgado, 2008; Way, 2011;). Most of what we know about older or young adult Latino men and their friendships come from studies that are designed to examine other research questions and are not focused primarily on Latino

men's friendships (Grief, 2009; Radmacher & Azmitia, 2006; Rodriguez, Ratanasiripong, Hayashino, & Locks, 2014).

Most of the findings that do address friendships among young Latino men have been from studies conducted with urban Latino boys in New York City. They understandably identify the surrounding conditions of poverty, violence, racism and homophobia in which they are being raised as leading to interpersonal distrust and interfering with same sex friendships (Way, 1997). The young Latino men's exposure to precarious environments can influence their own feelings of distrust in others. As Way (1997) explains, "Everyday experience of harassment and racism may also influence these adolescents' abilities to trust their peers. All the boys...spoke of daily harassment from the police, of being watched carefully in every store, street, subway station, school building, and neighborhood they enter. They are watched by adults both outside and inside their own communities," (p. 718). Latino boys' exposure to constant distrust, influences feelings of suspicion in all their relationships, including friendships. To deal with feelings of distrust, Latino boys test their friends to ensure loyalty. Way's studies suggest that Latino boys feared friendships because they were afraid of potential violence, fear and betrayal. The basis for these fears included having friends stealing from them, talking behind their backs, and "taking" away their girlfriends. Yet, mixed in with their expressed fears of betrayal and distrust, adolescent Latino boys also acknowledged a yearning for deep connections with other boys (Way, 2011; Way, et.al., 2014; Way, Santos, & Cordero, 2011).

Way's research also shows that young Latino 9<sup>th</sup> graders in these communities were more likely to have other race/ethnic friends (although same-race/ethnicity is most common) than Asian Americans, and lower levels of close friendship support than girls. This was especially true in a within group comparison between Latino girls and Latino boys (Way & Chen, 2000). However, despite the fact that Latino boys voiced lower levels of close and general friendship support, they were more likely to score higher on psychological well-being. In a longitudinal interview study of close friendships of mostly working-class Puerto Rican Latino adolescent males (Way, Santos, & Cordero, 2011), the authors identified three key components that explained whether they were able to display vulnerability and a desire for deeper male friendships: 1) if they had a close relationship (friendship) with their mothers; 2) had social power (popularity) in their social environment; and 3) could openly express emotion in interpersonal relationships within their own Latino families. These findings highlight the interplay of family, school and ethnicity.

### **Friendship and Loneliness**

Way's participants suffered psychological costs when they did not have, or lost, friendships. Thus, isolation or loneliness among young Latino men had important implications for their psychological and social adjustment (Alvan, Belgrave, & Zea, 1996; Bagwell, Schmidt, Newcomb, & Bukowski, 1988; Chang et.al., 2017; Delgado, Ettekal, Simpkins & Schaefer, 2015; Figueroa, 2002). The concept of loneliness has been defined as a perceived lack of satisfying social relationships, which results in negative feelings (Green, Richardson, Lago &



Schatten-Jones, 2001). As a result, the meaning, closeness, and extent of networks associated with loneliness are key to understanding it and its importance in the context of friendship. Loneliness and depression have been previously associated with lack of friendship in children (Erdley, Nangle, Newman, & Carpenter, 2001). Erdley and colleagues' (2001) research and study of primarily middle class white children obtained evidence that group acceptance strongly predicted loneliness for boys more than girls, therefore making group acceptance especially important for the psychological well-being of boys.

The studies on loneliness tend to lack diversity of population but the research denotes a variety of findings. In a sample of a European-American college age population, it was reported that in late adolescence and young adulthood, disclosing is less socially accepted in men than women, making men more likely to have higher levels of loneliness (Borys & Perlman, 1985). A meta-analysis of loneliness in older adults noted that older men were more likely to communicate lower levels of loneliness compared to older women (Pinqart & Sörensen, 2001). Another study examining different types of loneliness between college age and older adults, described how social loneliness looked different for each age group (Green, Richardson, Lago & Schatten-Jones, 2001). In college age young adults, their size of network was associated with being less socially lonely, while for older adults, the closeness of members in their network was more important. However, for young adults, having one close friend was enough to alleviate the sense of being socially lonely. They conclude that in younger adults, friendships were viewed as more

important relationships when considering loneliness compared to romantic ones as they age.

In Latino populations, the research on loneliness has been linked to academic outcomes and ethnic identity (Benner, 2011; Chang et.al., 2017; Figueroa, 2001). Benner (2011) conducted a study on Latino adolescents (7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade) and the effects of friendships on loneliness and academic performance. The results signified friendship support moderated academic outcomes, especially for those in the chronically high and increasing levels of loneliness (Benner, 2011). In other words, Latino adolescents made better academic progress when they perceived high support from friends. Chang and colleagues' (2017) examined how ethnic identity through acculturative stress and loneliness predicted the risk of suicide among Latino college students. High levels of loneliness predicted the likelihood of suicide risk, even beyond that of acculturative stress which was also linked to suicide risk. Their findings imply that Latinos are vulnerable to a higher likelihood of suicide risk if they lack social connections (Chang et.al., 2017). Observing college friendships is therefore important to Latino men and their potential susceptibility to loneliness.

### **Purpose of Study**

This study addresses a gap in the friendship literature by focusing on young Latino men who are in college. Colleges and universities offer multiple sites and opportunities for students to meet and befriend others who are living under similar circumstances. As boys, these young men may have experienced distrust is a major barrier to developing friendships, especially because they were at the early

developmental stage of becoming men and felt the need to repress emotion and not express vulnerabilities (Way, Santos, & Cordero, 2011). It is unclear whether and how significant that barrier is for young Latino men in college. They have in common the fact that they have embraced school achievement as part of their gender socialization and are in an environment conducive to developing same-gender friendships (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016). The lifestyle available in college facilitates exposure to same-age young men with similar academic interests and the time and resources to develop friendships. Most college students are unmarried and can alleviate loneliness by pursuing friendships (Green, Richardson, Lago & Schatten-Jones, 2001; Pinguart & Sörensen, 2001). For these reasons it may be possible for them to overcome the barriers to friendship that they faced as younger boys.

To better understand Latino men's friendships, I explored how Latino men report and define their current friendships. The existing literature suggests that men yearn for friendship (Way, 2011) but they may have difficulty maintaining them in adulthood (Way, et.al., 2014). In addition, some research suggests that Latino men define their friendships in more masculine terms, fear betrayal, and deny vulnerability (Morman, Schrod, & Tornes, 2013; Pinguart & Sörensen, 2001; Way, 1997). To explore these issues with Latino young men in college, I wanted to understand how they understood friendship and how close they became towards who they befriended (Way, 1997; Way & Chen, 2000), as well as gauging the levels of loneliness they experienced (Borys & Perlman, 1985; Way, et.al, 2014).

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants were 52 Latino men enrolled in one of two participating universities. They were recruited from undergraduate volunteers and the research pool from two separate 4-year research institution campuses in California, who agreed to take the survey for course credit. The institutions are categorized as Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI), meaning that at least 25 % of their undergraduate students are Latino (HSI Fact Sheet, 2018). This sample was chosen from a larger data set and was selected because participants identified as men and as Latino at the time of the study, most primarily self-identified as Mexican American (see Table 1.1).

Most participants were pursuing degrees in social sciences or double majoring in a social science and another field, followed by Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM). A few were majoring in the Arts, Humanities or were Undeclared (see Table 2.1). Almost half of the participants identified their class background as primarily working class (see Table 3.1). Based on the participants' parental education, the majority were first-generation college students (see Table 4.1). Participants' sexual orientations were only slightly varied, with the majority identifying as straight (88.46%), a slight minority identified as gay (7.69%) and bisexual (3.85%).

### **Design and Procedure**

The survey was administered anonymously, primarily using SurveyMonkey, a web-based program. Participants came into a research room or classroom and either

took the web-based or hard copy version of the survey. The results presented here come from a larger study on success in higher education that included questions on a variety of topics including friendships (see Chapter 1). On average the survey took 45 minutes to complete. The participants received course credit for their participation in the study.

## **Measures**

**Demographic Questions.** Participants in the study were asked their age, gender, sexual orientation major and race/ethnicity.

**Quantitative Friendship Questions.** Participants reported their number of friends, the degree of closeness to their best friend, their best friend's gender, and the ethnicity of the friends they spent the most time with at present.

**Loneliness Scale.** The participants answered a 6-item scale for Overall Emotional and Social Loneliness (Gierveld & Tilburg, 2006). Half of the items measured emotional loneliness and the other half were social loneliness items. *Emotional loneliness* measured the extent to which participants felt they lacked a close or intimate relationship (e.g. *I often feel rejected*). *Social loneliness* measured their perception of social support and network (e.g. *There are plenty of people I can rely on when I have problems*).

The original scale was on a 0 to 11 scale which ranged from 0 (*not lonely*) to 11 (*extremely lonely*). For this scale, responses were on a 4-point scale (*1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Always*). Alpha's between the original scale validation and the current study were similar. Social loneliness scores were reverse coded. The

average was used to create an overall loneliness score, and emotional and social loneliness sub-scores were also analyzed; higher scores indicate higher levels of loneliness.

**Open-Ended Question.** The open-ended question “How do you define a friend?” was coded and analyzed. Broader themes were created from the codes and analyzed, “A theme was defined as a common thread that continually emerges in the data, although the form of the theme is not always identical (Morse and Richards 2002)” (quoted in Hurtado & Sinha, 2008, p.342). The inter-coder reliability was 75 %. All disagreements were reviewed and discussed to finalize the coding.

**Coding and Thematic Analysis.** Thematic qualitative analysis was conducted to identify how men articulated their definitions of friendship (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Hurtado & Sinha, 2008). Coding categories were inductively derived and developed from the participants’ responses. The responses were provided a code for every different characteristic identified within their definition. A characteristic was considered different if the descriptor explained a new aspect of the relationship. For analysis, only the first three mentions of each of the participants’ responses was used (Hurtado & Sinha, 2008). Each definition had at least one mention coded and no more than three mentions were coded even if more were present. One researcher developed the coding categories, and another analyzed them for fit of data and disagreements. Once categories were finalized, an undergraduate research assistant was trained in the coding protocol and interrater reliability was taken. Mentions were tallied for each

definition. The verified coding categories were then clustered together to create the overarching themes.

## Results

### Descriptive Statistics

**General friendship characteristics.** Table 5.1 displays the general findings from our sample of Latino men and their friendship characteristics. On average Latino men had almost 19 friends ( $M=18.54$ ,  $SD=12.11$ ). The range was very large, with the range existing between 0 to 50 friends. Of note, is that only 46 of the 52 participants chose to answer this question, with some electing to skip or failing to answer the question in the requested numerical format (e.g. “a lot”). Most participants described the racial/ethnic make-up of their close group of friends that they spend the most time with as being mostly Latino (63.46%), followed by about an even mixture of Latino and white (21.15%). The results suggest that Latino men generally tend to have many friends and their friends are mostly Latino.

**Best friend characteristics.** Table 6.1 illustrates the findings on Latino men’s best friends from the study. On average Latino men had about 3 best friends ( $M=3.06$ ,  $SD=1.85$ ). The range in the group was a low of 0 and high of 7. When asked about the closeness that they felt towards one of their best friends, the greatest percentage chose feeling “very close” (40.38%), followed by “extremely close” (36.54%), and “close” (17.31%). More than half the respondents had strong feelings of closeness towards their best friends, and rarely reported that their best friend was less than close. Most of the participants’ best friends were male (69.23%) but more than a quarter were

female (26.92%). The remaining sample specified that this question did not apply to their situation, meaning they did not consider themselves having a best friend.

**Loneliness.** Participants averaged an overall score on the loneliness scale of 2.25 ( $\alpha = .81$ ), on a 4-point scale (See Table 7.1), indicating that on average they rarely felt lonely. The averages of emotional loneliness were higher ( $M = 2.57$ ;  $\alpha = .67$ ), than social loneliness ( $M = 1.93$ ;  $\alpha = .89$ ). In general, the Latino men in the sample did not experience high levels of loneliness. When they did they were more likely to feel emotional loneliness than social loneliness.

### **Participants Definitions of Friendship**

**Overarching Themes.** Table 8.1 provides the descriptive criteria and the types of responses respondents gave based on the coding mentions, and the resulting overarching themes.

***Trust and Social Emotional Support.*** Forty-two of the Latino male participants described their friendship as a relationship that provided trust and unconditional social and emotional support. Trustworthiness in their friendship definitions described a deep sense of trust in a friend as a person and in their friendship, to the extent that they reveal secrets, life experiences, and career plans to them, and describe this person as genuine. The men in our study defined friendship as, “Someone you can be yourself towards, that you can speak openly to. Someone you trust just as much as they trust you”, and provided responses such as, “Someone to talk to you. That's there for you. Shares secrets.” Other participants similarly emphasized, “A friend is anyone who you could talk to just about anything. Your



secrets, faith, life experiences, and career plans. A friend is someone who does not envy of your success and makes sure that you are doing just as good as he/she is...” and “Someone who would do anything they are able to, to help a friend because they would do the same for them. Genuin[e;] and respect as you would want from each other.” Latino men not only define trust in their relationships but are able to articulate the behaviors that register this level of trust. Trust communicates that their friendships are not defined in superficial terms but display acceptance, reliability and support as correlates to their trust and reciprocity. Furthermore, friendship was commonly defined as having unconditional support on some level, such as stating the friendship was mutual and reciprocated, which meant being there for the other person as a support system and being emotionally available. One participant defined friendship in the following way, “Friendship is always trying to be supportive and acting like a support system for other friends. A friend is there both in happy times but also in hard times. A friend to me helps others feel validated in all ways possible and tries to help others out in any way possible.” Another participant described the relationship as, “... It is someone you can talk to when you're having a difficult time and someone who can comfort you in your time of need. Someone who makes time for you somehow, somehow. It's a reciprocal relationship.” These were the most common descriptions of friendship, and emphasize that having a support system, and someone who can be counted on to be present during trialing times is a sought-after feature of friendship.

***Companionship.*** Twenty-five of the Latino male participants mentioned aspects of companionship in their definitions of friendship that included spending

time and having fun with their friends. They mentioned sharing time with their friends in some way, such as in the enjoyment of a friend's company and a person whom they share experiences with. Their definitions emphasized company and enjoyment, such as "A friend is someone who genuinely cares about you and enjoys spending time with you. Someone who makes you laugh or feel good about yourself, and someone who makes you feel comfortable being yourself", and "A friend is someone who you trust to talk about any problems, someone who you have genuine fun with, and someone who you will always click with." This theme encompassed definitions of someone who is fun and makes them feel good about themselves, and who they can joke with. They described friends as people whom they could have fun with, such as someone they "clown with", "A cool person to talk to and have fun", and "A friend is somebody you can talk to and joke around with." For the Latino men in our study conviviality played a special role in their friendships as a form of genuine companionship.

***Disclosure and Intimacy.*** Twenty-four of the Latino participants mentioned aspects of intimacy and disclosure in their definitions of friendship through descriptions of caring and communication. Caring and understanding mentions describe friends as people who care for them and give them advice. These findings were amongst the most revealing among our participants. The Latino men in our study gave statements such as, "someone who is there for you and is able to understand and give helpful advice. Also someone who can just sit with you and not speak but still understand what I am feeling," and "Someone that you have

compassion for and generally care for their well-being.” The statements revealed an undercurrent of compassion and caring in friendship that participants understood as defining. Communication and listening was a common refrain in their responses, “A friend is someone who you can talk to and share experiences with,” and “I feel a friend is someone who is always willing to listen to you and making sure that you are doing well both mentally and physically. I think it is important for a friend to feel genuine feelings and a sense of attachment. Making sure that they listen when you need to be listened...,” or “A friend is someone is willing to listen to you when you are going through something bad, but it is also someone you enjoy having in your life.” and as “some one who is there to talk when you need them, someone who can comfort you...”. These statements reflect the degree to which the Latino male participants’ feel their friends are vital to their well-being. They identified speaking and listening to their friends about their experiences and emotions as an essential characteristic of friendship.

***Traits.*** Fourteen of the Latino participants mentioned a number of specific characteristics that defined friendship for them. One of these was “compatibility”—the notion that friends have shared interests they can relate to. For example, one respondent said: “A friend is an individual in which I have formed a relationship with in which trust, compatibility, and care all exist when interacting with this individual,” which emphasized similarity and compatibility. Other respondents mentioned that friends have respect for them and are different from a mere acquaintance. Other personal characteristics mentioned included qualities, such as

intelligence or independence. For example, some respondents listed: “Trustworthy, Responsible, Caring, Friendly, Competitive, Fun, Intelligent”, “Goal oriented, supportive, friendly, ambitious, kind”, or “Someone who is honest with you.”

### **Discussion**

The initial study was exploratory and intended to learn more about the friendships of Latino men. It examined their friendships in a unique context—college—where Latino men would be likely to find friends who share their general academic interests and in a context that might better foster the development of friendships (Rodriguez, Ratanasiripong, Hayashino, & Locks, 2014). The Latino men in the study provided relevant information about who their friends are and how close they felt to them. The findings showed that mostly straight Latino men are forming many friendships with primarily other Latino men, although a quarter of them stated having female friends. The Latino men in the study reported that they rarely felt lonely. Finally, their definitions of friendship were largely focused on mutual support and loyalty (see reliable alliance; Erdley, Nangle, Newman, & Carpenter, 2001), companionship, and intimacy and disclosure to be the most defining features of their friendship. The implications of the findings are explored below.

#### **Social Characteristics of Latino Men’s Friendship**

The respondents reported that although their number of friends in general may vary greatly, they considered their “best” friends to be at least “very” close to them. Additionally, the Latino men in our study mostly identified as straight and indicated they had formed close to very close friendships regularly with other Latino men.

Mostly straight Latino men are forming friendships with primarily other Latino men, although a quarter of them reported having female best friends. The large number of men reporting best friendships with women can be explained by a variety of reasons. It could mean that men are seeking out women to perform some of this close relationship work. Previous work with Black feminist men has shown that their relationships with women has helped them create more intimate and meaningful relationships (White, 2006). It is not uncommon for Latinas to do much of the care work in romantic relationships, and this caring environment could be something Latino men also seek out in their friends (Valenzuela, 1999) if they are not finding it in their male friendships. Some of the explanation and resulting friendships could be due to the demographics of higher education. There are more Latina women in higher education than Latino men and it could be that men search for other Latinos generally as friends rather than male friends (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2011).

### **Self-Reported Overall Loneliness**

Secondly, perhaps because of the high number of friendships they reported, the Latino men in this study experienced very little loneliness. Previous studies that have more directly measured the relationship between friendship and loneliness among Latino youth have concluded, not surprisingly, that friendships help to buffer loneliness among Latino youth in academic settings (Benner, 2011). In general, our participants had slightly lower levels of social loneliness than emotional loneliness. Participants felt low levels of social loneliness and a stronger sense of having people to turn to. This echoes our main friendship definition findings demonstrating that

Latino men defined friendship mostly in terms of trust and unconditional support. Having a close-knit friendship group was associated positively with school belonging and academic achievement, and as a stigmatized group, school connectedness becomes very important to academic achievement where they may otherwise be vulnerable to negative academic outcomes and pathways (Delgado, Ettekal, Simpkins & Schaefer, 2015). Other possible explanations might be that their family networks (*familismo*, or strong attachment and shared identity with family member) may be explaining the lower levels of social and emotional loneliness in our sample (Crockett, Iturbide, Torres Stone, McGinley, Raffaelli, & Carlo, 2007) but were not measured here.

The fact that social loneliness was less often reported than emotional loneliness in some ways parallels the definitions of friendship the men gave. The men in our sample were slightly more likely to mention companionship in their friendship than intimacy and disclosure, which may lead to greater feelings of emotional loneliness, even among respondents with a number of friendships. This matches previous findings on European-American children stating that peer acceptance weighs more heavily on the psychological well-being of boys than of girls. Boys were more global, and group based compared to girls dyadic or small group friendships (Erdley, Nangle, Newman, & Carpenter, 2001). Companionship has been highlighted to be an important quality in close friendships as a predictor of happiness (Demir, Ozdemir, Weitekamp, 2007) and peers often buffer against harmful effects of depression and loneliness (Benner, 2011; Piquart & Sörensen, 2001). In the present study, this could

help to explain why participants may have lower social loneliness, suggesting they are more likely to have friends and someone to count on, over someone to turn to emotionally. However, given the overall low loneliness scores, and slight difference in themes of companionship over intimacy and disclosure, the participants in our study indicate that they rarely feel a sense of loneliness and value companionship almost as much as intimacy and disclosure.

### **Latino Men Define Friendship and Implications**

Finally, the definitions the Latino men gave as their understandings of friendship were both familiar and surprising. Familiar were the elements of friendship that has previously been discussed in the general friendship literature as important, such as having a reliability (Erdley, Nangle, Newman, & Carpenter, 2001), companionship (Demir, Ozdemir, Weitekamp, 2007), and disclosure and intimacy (Way, 2011). However, most illuminating was the manner that the young Latino men defined and described what friendship was to them. Trust has been chronicled as a contentious issue among Latino boys, often being conveyed as the characteristic that is often essential to the friendship (Way, 1997; Way, 2011).

Our study extends Way's (2011) findings, demonstrating that young Latino men can continue to create strong bonds with other Latino men beyond adolescence (Way, Santos, Cordero, 2011) and into higher education, and beyond an urban context (Way, 2011). Prior research conducted by Way and colleagues (Way, 2011; Way, Cressen, Bodian, Preston, Nelson, & Hughes., 2014,) has chronicled resistance and engagement of the gendered socialization process during the middle school years. To

varying degrees Latino adolescent boys displayed (a) resistance to emotional stoicism or evidence of being emotionally expressive with others; (b) resistance to autonomy or the expression of needing others of being interdependent; (c) resistance to physical toughness or not liking aggression (Way et.al, 2014). Mirandé (1997) previously measured how adult Latino men scored on gender expression and role scale via the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI). Mirandé explains the high loyalty that the respondents scored was likely interpreted it as a highly valued quality associated with interpersonal commitment rather than monogamy or sexual fidelity. According to friendship theorists, reciprocity is critical to the friendship relationship (Erdley, Nangle, Newman, & Carpenter, 2001), making unconditional support and trust a defining feature.

The Latino men's definitions spoke of expressivity, or empathetic concern for their well-being from friends (Thayer, Updergraff, & Delgado, 2008) over similarity or viewing friendship as an instrumental end (McEwan & Guerrero, 2012). Thayer, Updergraff, and Delgado (2008) explored the links between culture, gender, and friendship quality among Mexican-American adolescents, and their findings pointed to cultural values and beliefs being reflected in their relationships. The adolescents in the study were more likely to use solution-oriented conflict resolution strategies to resolve conflict with close friends, and less likely to use nonconfrontation and control less. They commonly practice concern for others (e.g. accommodation, solution-orientation) in non-permanent relationships such as friendships, putting the friendship



above their individual preferences. Latino men's definitions indicate they are continuing to incorporate this concern and expressivity as young adults.

Hurtado and Sinha's (2016) study of Latino identified feminist men found relational definitions of manhood among Latino men to include relational engagements, positive ethical positioning and rejections of hegemonic masculinity. The relational engagements emphasized relationships with family, community, and other groups of people. Ethical positionings emphasized values such as respect, truthfulness, self-respect, confidence in decisions and identity as man, and pursuing education. In their final theme, Latino men rejected hegemonic masculinity through their explicit critiques of dominant definitions of manhood (e.g. valuing personhood over biological sex), rejecting the prevalence of patriarchy and emphasizing the positive elements of manhood over the negative. Taken together, this literature suggests that Latino males resist masculine tropes often attributed to their masculinity. Latino masculinity is more complex (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016) and perhaps capable of sustaining competing characteristics that are not necessarily captured by mainstream measures (Mirandé, 1997), and if located, are not properly explained (Mcdermott & Schwartz, 2013). Therefore, if traditional expectations regarding men's responses are replaced by what more recent literature on college attending Latino men, a more expressive picture of Latino masculinity emerges.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

One of the limitations of this study is that it is unknown if the Latino men had or engaged in the friendships that they defined. The study only asked participants

about their definition of friendship but did not ask them directly as to whether their own friendships reflected the friendship they described. It did not inquire for actual reflections of it in their friendship, but how they define it, allowing them to reflect on what an ideal friendship would look like to them without it seeming threatening. Previous friendship theorists argue that hypothetical questions on friendship can be more telling about how they perceive friendship than asking directly about their current friendships (Hartup & Stevens, 1997). The method may have been the appropriate way to gauge men's friendships due to its anonymous and hypothetical nature.

Despite this limitation, the participants' responses provided a glimpse into Latino men's expectations of friendships. Their eloquence around the topic correspondingly demonstrates that they understand the importance of this relationship and what it is meant to provide on social and psychological level. Contrary to Mark Greene's claim that boys' friendships are "murdered" (Greene, 2017), these findings suggest that, at least this group of young Latino men in college are able to maintain, create or revive friendships with other men. Further research is necessary to explore this line of research and to question whether Latino men's unique set of experiences can provide insight into their friendship patterns.

## Tables

*Table 1.1*

*Breakdown of participants by self-identified Latino category*

Latino Category Identification	Number of Respondents (N=52)	%
Mexican American	17	32
Mexican	13	24
Chicano	9	18
Latino	7	14
Hispanic	6	12

*Table 2.1*

*Participants and type of field of major by number and percentage*

Major	Number of Respondents (N=52)	%
Social Sciences	18	34.62
Science, Technology, Engineering, & Mathematics	17	32.69
Social Sciences & another field	11	34.62
Arts	2	3.85
Humanities	2	3.85
Undeclared	2	3.85

*Table 3.1*

*Social Class Identification of Latino Undergraduates in Study*

Social Class Identification	Number of Respondents (N=52)	%
Poor	7	13.46
Working class	24	46.15
Lower middle class	8	15.38
Middle class	12	23.08
Upper middle class	2	1.92
Rich	0	0

Table 4.1

*Educational background of Latino men's parents (n=52)*

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Educational Attainment	Mother <i>n</i> (%)	Father <i>n</i> (%)
Less than High School	25 (48.08%)	32 (62.75%)
GED, High School Equivalency Or High School Diploma	13 (25%)	9 (17.65%)
Some College, No Degree	6 (11.54%)	5 (9.80%)
Associate Degree	4 (7.69%)	2 (3.92%)
Vocational Certificate	1 (1.92%)	0
Bachelor's Degree	1 (1.92%)	2 (3.92%)
Some Graduate School	1 (1.92%)	0
Graduate Degree (M.A., J.D., M.D., Ph.D.)	1 (1.92%)	1 (1.96%)

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Table 5.1

The number of friends and racial/ethnic make-up reported by participants

Friendship Characteristic	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>n</i>
# of Friends	18.54 (12.11)	46
	%	52

*Racial make-up of close friends*

Latino	63.46
Even mixture of Latino & White	21.15
Mostly white	5.7
Other	9.62

*Notes.* \**n*'s range from 46 to 52 due to occasional missing data.

Table 6.1

*Percentages of Friendship Characteristics of Male Latino Men's Best Friends*

*Responses(n=52)*

Best Friend Characteristic	M (SD)
# of Best Friends	3.06 (1.85)
	%
<i>Closeness of Best Friend</i>	
Extremely	36.54
Very	40.38
Close	17.31
Somewhat close	3.85
Not that close	0
<i>Gender</i>	
Male	69.23
Female	26.92
Not Applicable	3.85
<i>Relative</i>	
Yes	5.77
No	94.23

Table 7.1

*Averages of Overall Loneliness, Emotional and Social Loneliness Scores of Latino Men*

Loneliness Category	Score	$\alpha$
Overall	2.25	.81
Emotional	2.57	.67
Social	1.93	.89

*Note. The responses are on a 4-point scale (1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Sometimes, 4=Always). Higher scores indicate higher levels of loneliness.*



Table 8.1

*Coding Categories Used to Code the First 3 Mentions of Latino Men's Friendship Definition Organized into*

*Overarching Themes (n=52)*

Overarching Themes	Descriptive criteria	# of mentions	%
Trust & Social Emotional Support	This theme was present if the code contained (1) mentions on trust and reliance (2) mentions of mutual and reciprocal social and/or emotional support in their friendship definitions.	42	80.76
Companionship	This theme was present if the code contained (1) the importance of sharing time and experiences with someone (2) the friendship inspiring feelings of comfort, fun, and humor.	25	48.07
Disclosure & Intimacy	This theme was present if the code contained (1) mentions of friendship and friends as someone who cares and understands them (2) emphasized the importance of listening and disclosing	24	46.15
Traits	This theme was present if the code contained (1) mentions of being socially compatible (2) mentioned the friend having a special status (3) or listed characteristics that could be applied to almost anyone.	14	26.92

### **Chapter 3: Friendships Representing a World in Us: Consciousness in the Racial Compositions of Latino Men’s Friendship Group and its Role in Predicting Feminism Attitudes**

“Each friend represents a world in us, a world possibly not born until they arrive, and it is only by this meeting that a new world is born.”

– Anaïs Nin, *The Diary of Anaïs Nin, Vol. 1: 1931-1934*

“No person is your friend who demands your silence or denies your right to grow.”

– Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*, 1983

Friendship can play various roles in people’s lives, they can, as author Anais Nin pointed out, awaken new aspects of the self. Friends have been known to provide various benefits through the friendship relationship, such as offering emotional help and a relationship that allows friends to practice social skills that may be useful in other contexts (Kaplan & Rosenmann, 2014). Disclosure and intimacy are often characterized as important for friendship maintenance, even among men (Mormon, Schrodnt, & Tornes, 2013; Turner & Feddes, 2011). The content of the disclosing conversations and the influence the conversations may have between friends and the possibility of personal growth is rarely explored (Dun, 2008). An important question to consider is to what extent does the interpersonal connection of friendship have with broader social identities and connections (Antonio, 2011; de Souza Briggs, 2007). Conversations with friends could potentially influence behaviors or attitudes about

important social issues. One of the issues that is not often associated with Latino men and their masculinity is their support of feminism. Previous work has shown how close relationships with women (platonic and romantic) have facilitated gender consciousness towards women (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; White, 2006). This has led to men being capable of supporting feminist attitudes through close contact with people they have an important emotional and interpersonal connection with. Other studies have shown that men are capable of transferring what they learned from one male relational context to another. A study by Kaplan and Rosenmann (2014) examined differences in emotional expressiveness in male Israeli soldiers who had faced combat and those who had not, across three different relational categories: other men in their unit, male best friends not in their unit, and girlfriends. Their survey measures revealed that combat soldiers were freer in their emotional expressiveness toward other men in their unit and their nonmilitary best friends, compared to men who had not faced combat; no differences were obtained for girlfriends in either group. The authors imply that the socialization between males (homosocial socialization) allows for emotional expressiveness with other males outside of homosocial enclaves. Perhaps, if men can promote emotional expression between themselves, they can also encourage certain sociopolitical attitudes and beliefs. Men who are in contact with other men that endorse feminist attitudes, or they themselves support these attitudes, can communicate important political attitudes around gender and encourage them in their friendship. This preliminary study explored who comprises Latino men's close friendship group in college, and how engaging with male friends around various

social issues regarding different social identities predicts Latino men's attitudes towards feminism.

### **Friendship Group Composition**

Evidence suggests that ethnic, racial, sexuality, and social class differences play a role in the formation of friendship (Adams & Allan, 1998; Crosnoe, Cavanagh, & Elder, 2003; Kao & Joyner, 2006; Price, 1999; Way, 1997; Way & Chen, 2000; Way, Cowal, Gingold, Pahl & Bissessar, 2001). The composition of friendship groups, whether different or similar across social categories can provide benefits to the friendship depending on the context of the friendship.

**Similarity of Friends.** A study on the importance of friendship and adjustment to college life in Canada has shown that a key process to friendship formation and choosing someone as a potential candidate for friendship is similarity (Buote et.al., 2007). These qualities included similar experiences as the other person, enjoying similar activities, and holding similar values, senses of humor, and hobbies. According to Hartup and Stevens (1997) in their analysis of friendships and adaptation in the life course, sociodemographic conditions are a source of similarity,

Culture restricts social choices to similar individual in two ways: First, it creates individuals who have similar beliefs and attitudes, including the belief that interpersonal similarity optimizes gratification as well as the belief that dissimilarity optimizes tension and discomfort (Rosenbaum, 1986); second, it creates neighborhoods and community arrangements that maximize

opportunities for similar individuals to socialize with one another and minimize contacts between dissimilar individuals” (p. 362).

Thus, the authors argue, social forces such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, age, etc. is one foundation that brings people with similar characteristics together through their environments (e.g. neighborhoods, institutions) that leads to similarities between friends. Past studies emphasize the importance of similarity within friendships, especially in marginalized communities (de Souza Briggs, 2007; Galupo & Gonzalez, 2013; Smith, Mass, & van Tubergen, 2014; Titzmann, Silbereisen & Schmitt-Rodermund, 2007).

More structural analyses of friendships show that neighborhood and school locations are highly determinative of friendships between younger adults, therefore contexts matter when it comes to friendship (Crosnoe, 2000; Crosnoe, Cavanagh, & Elder, 2003; Kao & Joyner, 2006; Zorn & Gregory, 2005). A study by Kao and Joyner (2006) on Asian and Latino adolescents examined their friendship choices according to ethnicity and race, both between and within the two groups. Asian and Latino groups tended to have and prefer friends that are the same ethnicity rather than the same race (e.g. being Mexican and having Mexican friends, over other Latinos), and over different race friends. However, it is more likely for Latinos to be friends with people of different ethnicities, or a different race than adolescents of Asian descent (Kao & Joyner, 2006). The authors propose that similarity in friendship choices is influenced by school context, since the friendships are often formed when there are few members of their own ethnic group within the schools they attend. One reason

this pattern may occur is that developing friendship with others that have similar social identities can provide greater emotional support. Aléman's (2000) observations on friendships between women of color in higher education lead to important racial and ethnic identity development through similarity. Her interview data showed that women preferred to talk to other women of color as a process for determining meaningful identities. Friends provided a substitute for loss of family ties, and a source of racial/ethnic validation away from home, "Through discussions of their family's ethnic or racial identification and cultural values, these women of color engage in a very deliberate process of identity development. This process is characterized by a critical consciousness that helps her define a self that is fundamentally racial and/or ethnic" (p. 140). Consequently, friendships can create a unique buffering factor against negative contextual factors and explain why marginalized groups tend to group together for protection and personal development in unwelcoming environments.

**Differences.** The benefits of befriending others who are dissimilar from oneself are less understood. Difference between friends across different categories create unique changes in belief systems and behavior (Galupo & Gonzalez, 2013; Price, 1999; Turner & Feddes, 2011; White, 2006). Longitudinal work on intergroup friendships has chronicled intimacy and disclosure leading to more positive perceptions of outgroups for those that had an outgroup member as a friend (Antonio, 2011; Turner & Feddes, 2011). Turner and Feddes (2011) studied how friendship affected outgroup attitudes on a group of new undergraduates during the first and

sixth week of the semester. The researchers measured their levels of intimacy, disclosure, and anxiety towards different social groups. For participants who nominated an outgroup friend, intimacy and disclosure lead to more positive attitudes towards outgroups over time. Therefore, contact with someone outside their group through friendship and intimacy, lead to better attitudes towards outgroups during the span of time.

White's (2006) examination of cross-sex feminist friendships between Black men and Black feminist women demonstrates benefits and unexpected side effects (White, 2006). The Black men in the study appreciated the freedoms from masculinity they had with women with whom they were more vulnerable, and consequently made the men question their behavior towards women. The friendships led to behavior changes in the men ranging from sensitivity in communication (e.g. better at accepting sexual diversity), to comfort in expressing new and gentler forms of masculinity (e.g. advocating nonviolence) and challenging gendered practices on a personal and institutional level (e.g. learning to put the seat down or being accepting of women's leadership). The women the men befriended provided critical observations and confronted men's sexist behaviors within the safety of a supportive friendship. Galupo and St. John (2001) studied the cross-sexual orientation friendship in adolescent females within a culture that values heterosexism. Straight and lesbian and bisexual young women in the study reported positive outcomes from their cross-sexual orientation friends. The young women interviewed reported their friendship taught them to contest stereotypes regarding homosexuality and heterosexism, that in

turn lead to increased self-esteem through mutual acceptance from the other friend. The relational context of friendship can therefore lead to a range of cognitive and emotional changes that can lead to shifts in personal behaviors and attitudes.

Nevertheless, differences do not always translate neatly into openness and the benefits of friendships. Price (1999) conducted a study of 44 dyads of gay and straight men's friendships and focused on how they navigated their friendship in an atmosphere that privileges heterosexuality and disparages gay men. Price established that most cross-sexuality pairs tried to ignore the differences in sexuality or struggled with accepting each other's differences. This dissonant approach to their friendship prevented the dyads from avoiding stereotypical perceptions of each other, resulting in asymmetrical emotional support (if any), and the maintenance of power dynamics. This meant the straight male friends expected deference or were thought of as the dominant ones. Nonetheless, some of the dyads transcended many of these problematics, by avoiding stereotypical perceptions of each other and emphasizing in the relationship non-masculinist friendship practices. The few egalitarian dyads were more verbally and physically expressive and supportive of each other than was the case with most of the dyads. The studies imply that when there is openness and a critical lens within the friendship, differences across friendship could be a beneficial quality. This characteristic allows for changes against intolerance and inequality through critical and relevant exposure through the friendship relationship. Alternatively, lack of critical reflection within the friendship results in a continued reproduction of harmful social norms towards others in the friendship.



## **Consciousness**

The idea of consciousness within social psychology holds a distinct definition. It has previously been defined as “a set of political beliefs and action orientations arising out of...awareness of similarity” in comparison to identification which is the “awareness of having ideas, feelings, and interests similar to others who share the same stratum characteristics” (Gurin, Miller, & Gurin, 1980, p.30). According to the authors, identification creates a sense of relationship with others around similarities, while consciousness creates a broader sense of awareness of social position based on their circumstances within society. In Gurin and colleagues’ (1980) study on stratum identification and consciousness, they measured identification, consciousness, and collectivist orientation between Blacks and whites, working and middle class folks, women, and older adults (60 years and older). A comparison between participants based on their stratum identification (superordinate and subordinate) found that Blacks had the highest identification. Consistently, more privileged groups such as whites and the middle class had less power discontent and collectivist orientations. Consciousness was the strongest in Blacks, moderate in the working-class and older people, and weakest in women. Therefore, those that are more likely to have high identification were those in lower-power stratum for class and race, especially along racial lines. This implies that higher levels of consciousness, and to some extent identification, generates changes in political beliefs and collective action based on how one views themselves in relation to others.

A study by Hurtado and Silva (2008) examining a children's television series, *Little Bill*, argues that media with a critical message encompassing multiple social identities can facilitate the early acquisition of consciousness in children. The study discusses how the creation of social identities, or an identity created from belonging to a social group (e.g. Latino; physically disabled), as proposed by Tajfel (1981), leads to individuals belonging to a negatively perceived group (subordinated group) to strive for positive sense of difference. The episode analyzed how a friendship between Little Bill, a young black boy, and Monty, a young black boy in a wheelchair, negotiate play time given Monty is in a wheelchair. Little Bill's father creates a ramp for Monty so that the children can play, without drawing unnecessary attention to Monty's physical limitation, and instead the episode highlights the mutual friendship of the boys and how their playtime was limited very little by Monty being in a wheelchair. According to the authors' analysis, what happens is an illustration of how a physical limitation can be overcome with through compassion and friendship and that "approaching difference as natural or even as an asset...demonstrates resistance to stigma (as it is called in the feminist literature) or resilience (from the psychological literature)," (p. 26). Therefore, the show models how awareness about the difference in others can be accepted and surmounted through a friendship between young boys who are becoming aware of differences from each other and teaching young viewers about navigating difference as well.

In a longitudinal study of an ethnically and racially diverse group of college students, researchers examined the undergraduates' educational trajectories and their

college going motivation (Azmitia, Syed & Radmacher, 2008). Participants at first gave varied levels of importance to their college going motivation and rarely articulated subordinated identity characteristics (e.g. gender, ethnicity, social class) as pivotal in their decision to attend college. The authors suggest the participants viewed college as an equalizer that might have prevented them from mentioning subordinated identities. However, over time, growing awareness from their college courses led to a shift in perceptions throughout their college career. This awareness led to changes in major, and while some were aware their choices were a conscious decision to change perceptions about their subordinated identities and as way to promote upward mobility, others attributed it to an interest in the subject. Participants spoke with friends about experiences of racism and discrimination, and that being exposed to peers who were critically aware of their own personal and social identities also influenced the importance of those identities in their participants. Overall these studies depict how friendships can be a place for social development when friendship creates positive awareness around subordinated social identities.

### **Latino Men's Critical Gender Consciousness**

Latino men's masculinity has been shaped by a complex juncture of socialization, economic, political and cultural expectations (Hurtado & Sinha, 2008; Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; Torres, Solberg, & Carlstrom, 2002; Weis, Centrie, Valentin-Juarbe, & Fine, 2002). Latino men have traditionally been seen in the literature as carrying a negative cultural form of masculinity known as machismo (Torres, Solberg, & Carlstrom, 2002). Machismo is often associated with Latino men,

however, this form of masculinity is practiced and interpreted differently by Latino men themselves (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; McDermott & Schwartz, 2013; Mirandé, 1997). Mirandé (1997) analyzed how Latino respondents defined the word “macho.” The word elicited negative perceptions in most of the men (57%) compared to positive (31%). Those that understood the word as negative tended to define it as a form of compensation for feelings of inferiority (e.g. exaggerated masculinity, male dominance, aggressiveness, self-centeredness). Positive perceptions of machismo reflected an ethical way of being with courage, honor and integrity. The men with more highly educated participants, US born, with professional occupations, and higher incomes tended to view the word more positively. Hurtado and Sinha (2016) have argued that machismo is not a sexist trait specific to Latino men, rather white masculinity has been normalized into the fabric of society which prevents the examination of their cultural sexism. This then makes it difficult to disentangle the sexism present and resisted in either Latino or White men’s differing masculinities. The authors accordingly examined the gender attitudes of Latino men and white men and compared differences and similarities between the men’s views on gender equality. For similarities, both groups tended to hold common views about marriage and the household division of labor, showing equally egalitarian values. However, this was closely followed by support of traditional gender roles. White respondents chose similar measures of a gendered conservatism typically reserved for machismo. White men agreed on the same attitudes to almost the same extent as Latinos (e.g. women deferring professional success to their husbands and expecting their wife’s

acceptance of the husband's last name). The third most common pattern of similarity demonstrated both groups had a personal level of commitment to feminism and its goals. One of the main differences between the two groups of men was the pattern of attitudinal structure of each of the groups. In general, Latino men's attitudes were more nuanced and less homogenous than white men's attitudes. Latino men made distinctions between feminist consciousness, gender-based discrimination, and relational gendered discrimination, while white men's consciousness collapsed many of these categories. The comparison between these two groups illuminated the traditional and progressive views the two groups had in common.

A more recent study specifically looked at intersectional masculinities and gendered political consciousness (Harnois, 2017). This study examined how various social statuses such as race/ethnicity and sexuality are related to beliefs of gender inequality and support of women invested in greater gender equality. Using information from a large federal and national database, the author's analysis showed that Black men and married men are more aware of gender inequality. Men highly aware of social inequalities across other social dimensions such as racial/ethnic and sexuality also tended to perceive higher levels of gender inequality and have more support for women's fight for gender equality. Having a liberal leaning political ideology was the most relevant predictor of support for women and gender equality. Additionally, in a comparison between the Latino men in the study and white men, Latinos perceived higher levels of gender inequality, however they were not much different from whites in their support for women striving for gender equality. In a

different qualitative interview study of 36 working-class, feminist identifying Latino men, the respondents were asked to define manhood (Hurtado & Sinha, 2008).

Latino men tended to identify with significant social identity groups when speaking about gender, often referencing their own race and ethnicity highly in their narratives, followed by social class, and referring the least to sexuality. Latino men are aware of the interconnection of belonging to various social categories and that there is a link to social inequality. Generally, the implication of the findings is that men who are likely to promote feminist values also tend to have a social awareness (consciousness) that is based on their social identity that can facilitate their support of feminism despite their gender privilege. Consequently, the extent to which men engage in critical topics with their male friends and the composition of the friendships could play a large role in support of feminist attitudes.

### **Purpose of Study**

The previous chapter (see Chapter 2) provided evidence that college going Latino men are practicing, or have expectations about their friendships, that are consistent with vulnerability and caring, rather than stoicism and competition. This chapter seeks to observe the function of gender and race within Latino men's friendships and whether it plays a role on feminist attitudes. The study examines the extent to which friendship group composition contributes to Latino men's gender attitudes around feminism using items from a survey. To examine this, the study controlled for key demographics that are highly correlated in this group (year in college, parents' education, and social economic status) (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016).

This allows us to fully examine the extent to which friendship group composition and critical engagement with male friends may be contributing to attitudes toward feminism. I predict that the type of racial/ethnic friendship group a Latino male participant has, can help predict higher feminism attitudes if they have high levels of critical friendship consciousness among their male friends. Those that have primarily more Latino friends and high levels of critical friendships with their male friends (or friendships engaging with social issues) will endorse higher levels of feminism.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

A sample of 105 Latino men was taken from a larger data set collected across two public universities in California. Participants had to identify as Latino and as men enrolled at a 4-year university to be included in the study. Participants were recruited via a research pool and in classrooms to receive course credit as compensation. On average participants took \*--45 minutes to complete the study. Participants in the study averaged 20.27 years of age, with the most common age being 21. In terms of self-identified racial/ethnic background, the majority identified as Mexican-American (38.1 %), followed by Mexican (17.1 %) and Chicana/o (17.1%), and more generally Latino (16.2 %) and Hispanic (11.4%). The sexual orientation of participants was primarily straight (85.7), followed by gay (9.5%), bisexual (2.9%) and one reporting as Other. Participants were about evenly split across class level, and those that identified as Other were students who considered themselves “super seniors”, or students who have stayed longer than the expected 4 years.

## Measures

The measures were taken from a larger survey study. Only key demographics and items on friendship and feminist attitudes were used.

**Demographics.** Basic demographic questions used for this analysis were ethnicity, gender, age, class background, mother's education, father's education, class level in school. All questions were categorical except for age.

**Friendship Group Composition.** A categorical question asking, "At present, the close friends you spend the most time with are:" with 5 options ranging from "Mostly Latino/Mexicano/Chicano", "About an even mixture of Latino/Mexicano/Chicano", "Mostly Anglo/White", "Almost all Anglo/White" and Other. Categories were coded from 0 to 5 for analysis. Other was coded as 0, "Mostly Latino/Mexicano/Chicano" as 1, and so on until "Almost all Anglo/White" was coded a 5. Focusing on Latino and White race and ethnicities in the survey was intentional due to the geographically regional likelihood of the groups, and all other groups were meant to be explained under the Other category. Other category write-ins are listed in Table 3.2.

**Friendship Consciousness Support- Male Friends.** Items were created to measure the extent of consciousness that was present in the Latino men's friendships with other men. The 4-items were developed measuring what led to questioning of privilege across various domains. Examples of items included were, "My friends helped me to become more politically involved" and, "My friends help me think critically about sexism." Responses were measured on a 4-point scale (1-*Strongly*



*Disagree to 4-Strongly Agree*). The mean score was taken, with higher scores indicating higher levels of consciousness ( $\alpha=.73$ ).

**Feminist Attitudes.** Items were taken from a previous study on gender attitudes that has been previously used to measure gender attitudes in Latino and white men (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016). The 6 items were used to gauge the extent to which they agree with feminist issues on a 4-point scale (1-*Strongly Disagree* to 4-*Strongly Agree*). The items included questions such as, “I believe in the goals of feminism,” and “Even though some things have changed, women are still treated unfairly in today’s society.” The mean score was taken, with higher scores indicating higher levels of feminism endorsement ( $\alpha=.82$ ).

## **Results**

My analysis focused on the extent to which friendship group composition and male friendship support around critical identity issues contributes to Latino men’s gender attitudes around feminism. Using regression analysis, I analyzed how the predictor variables of friendship group composition and friendship consciousness among their male friends affect the participants’ feminism attitudes. The study controlled for: class background, grade level and parental education (see Table 1.2 for further information on the listed variables). I predicted that the type of racial/ethnic friendship group a Latino male participant has, can help predict feminism attitudes if they have high levels of critical friendship consciousness among their male friends. Those that have primarily more Latino male friends with high levels of critical

friendship support from their male friends should have higher support of feminist attitudes.

A bivariate regression with controls was conducted using SPSS. The independent variables were Friendship Group Composition and Friendship Consciousness Support-Male Friends. The dependent variable was Feminist Attitudes. The regression thus estimated the degree to which Friendship Group Composition and Friendship Consciousness Support predicted Feminist Attitudes within the Latino men in the study. The results show that there was a weak negative relationship between Friendship Group Composition and Feminist Attitudes,  $\beta = -.125$ ,  $SE = .061$ ,  $p = .033$ . However, friendship support and engagement around social issues, including gender privilege issues and sexism, with their male friends did not uniquely predict feminist attitudes. Table 2.2, shows the small negative relationship between friendship group composition predicting feminist attitudes. Latino men who have mostly Latino friends, or friends of multiple race and ethnicities is associated with higher levels of feminist attitudes. We are 95% confident that Latino men in college who are primarily friends with other Latino men, or with men of multiple ethnicities, will have scores on feminist attitudes between  $-.247$  and  $-.003$ . This range of confidence indicates that it is possible that, given our weak relationship, even friendship composition may not be able to strongly predict feminist attitudes. Therefore, the hypothesis was only partially supported.

## Discussion

This study hypothesized that the type of racial/ethnic friendship group college Latino men have can help predict feminism attitudes if they have high levels of critical friendship consciousness support among their male friends. Those that have primarily more Latino friends with high levels of critical engagement with friends over social issues will have higher levels of feminist supporting attitudes. This hypothesis was only partially supported. This study showed that having mostly Latino friends slightly predicts higher endorsement of feminist attitudes than having mostly white friends. Speaking with friends about social issues, including gender privilege and sexism, did not significantly predict feminist attitudes.

Consistent with previous findings Latinos prefer same-ethnic peers since most participants indicated they were friends with mostly other Latinos (Kao & Joyner, 2006). However, differences were also key, since the findings show that Latino males who described their friends to be of various ethnicities also predicted higher levels of positive attitudes towards feminism. National patterns suggest that it is not uncommon for Latinos to report having multiple interracial relationships, compared to whites, who are more likely to isolate themselves to their own group (de Souza Briggs, 2007). Preferring more similar friends in institutions of higher learning can play a vital role in maintaining well-being in a context that is assimilative and demanding (Zorn & Gregory, 2005). University settings, although providing a haven of information and transformation around traditional values and beliefs (Azmitia & Radmacher, 2006; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Hurtado & Sinha, 2016), can

also pose challenges, such as an emphasis on norms that are not consistent with previous experiences (Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson & Covarrubias, 2012). Having a sense of familiarity and understanding of circumstances through their friend group can create a stronger buffer for success in such cases (Titzmann, Silbereisen & Schmitt-Rodermund, 2007).

### **Implications**

**Friendship Consciousness.** Past work on consciousness implies that lower stratum groups seem to be aware not only of their own lower social status, but also that of other groups (Gurin, 1980; Harnois, 2016; Hurtado & Sinha, 2016). The composition of Latino men's friendships was mostly with others who have had comparable experiences (Titzmann, Silbereisen & Schmitt-Rodermund, 2007). The Latino men in this study indicate that they are mostly first-generation in college who come from working-class or poor backgrounds. It could be that their socially lived experiences and shared background with other Latino men, or men from various ethnicities, reflect their support of women's efforts through the lens of their own experiences (Harnois, 2017; Hurtado & Sinha, 2008; Hurtado & Sinha, 2016). For the men in the study it may not be a matter of how much they help each other think critically, rather they already carry consistent beliefs given their similar backgrounds, and their current similar experiences.

**Friendship Group Composition and Feminism.** The most relevant finding in the study shows that Latino men who are friends with primarily other Latino men, or have a diverse friendship group, tend to have higher levels of feminist attitude

support. Surprisingly, having friends that helped them think more critically or to become more involved in issues around sexism, race, or class, was not predictive of having feminist attitudes. It could be that, at least for these young men, the way they engage with sensitive topics around critical issues may not include shared critical thinking or becoming involved in social action with their friends.

There is also the possibility that unequal power dynamics, which can exist in both male and female friendships, have an effect on the nature of the relationships studied (Veniegas & Peplau, 1997). Unequal power dynamics within the friendship can exist in both male and female friendships. More equal friendships among young adults provide better emotional closeness, self-disclosure, and are viewed as more exciting than friendships with unequal power dynamics. Being in a relationship with a more socially privileged friend, who might not be as actively aware or engaged with critical issues around their identities, would prevent study participants from having engaged in sociopolitical topics with them (Davies, Tropp, Aron, Pettigrew, & Wright, 2011). In addition, friendship composition might have influenced how comfortable the Latino men in the study felt about supporting feminist beliefs when they did not have likeminded friends to encourage them (Azmitia, Syed & Radmacher, 2008). Alternatively, the Latino men, and their same ethnic and diverse ethnicity friends, could be understanding the circumstances around females from other sources that are not their friendship group, such as their classes (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016), or their cross-gender friendships (White, 2006).

## **Limitations and Future Directions**

The current study attempted to examine how friendship group composition and critically engaging with social issues with other male friends could predict positive attitudes towards feminism using regression analysis. The results indicated that being friends with other Latino men or a diverse group of men can weakly predict higher support for feminism compared to those who were friends with mostly white men. However, engaging with male friends around sexism and other social issues did not significantly predict their support for feminist beliefs. Thus, Latino men's male friendships did not necessarily foreclose their support of feminist issues, but the race/ethnicity of the people who comprised their friendship network may have.

The design of the study was limited by the participants' own conceptualization of the nature of the support they sought and received from their friends. Participants may have interpreted the wording of the questions around critical engagement as primarily "talking" to them about social issues and could have prevented the measure from capturing the help their friends do provide. Men's self-disclosure commonly occurs during an activity, or conflict, involving something very intimate and critical self-reflection may require different circumstances (Radmacher & Azmitia, 2006). Men may also have a different way of communicating their support of women that is not restricted to thinking or engaging with critical issues with their friends (e.g. such as through activities or actions) that demonstrates their commitment to feminism with their friends. Latino men's male friends may not be the ones providing the critical

insight necessary for feminist attitude support. This study only measured the social consciousness that male friends provide to gauge if men can teach each other about feminist attitudes, thus it could be their female friends providing this support. Further analysis is needed to determine this connection. Future research should focus on how the gender composition of Latino men's friendships affects their support of feminist attitudes. Additional analyses should employ other measures of consciousness support that is not restricted to only a quantitative measure of friendship contributions to feminist attitudes. Open-ended responses to how their friends help them think or engage critically could greatly inform future survey items on how friends support each other in their consciousness around social issues.

Despite these limitations, this study adds to our understanding of whether and how critically engaging with male friends on feminist issues influences their attitudes about the topics, and how the racial/ethnic composition of Latino men's friendship groups could affect their support for feminist attitudes.

## Tables

*Table 1.2*

*Frequencies and Percentages of Variables Controlled for in  
Regression Analysis*

<u>Controlled Variable</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
<i>Year in College</i>		
Freshmen	27	25.7
Sophomore	25	23.8
Junior	25	23.8
Senior	25	23.8
Other	3	2.9
<i>Parental Education</i>		
<i>Mother</i>		
Less than High School	44	41.9
High School/GED	27	25.7
Some College, No Degree	14	13.3
Associates Degree	4	3.8
Vocational Certificate	3	2.9
Bachelor's Degree	8	7.6
Some Graduate School	2	1.9
Graduate Degree	3	2.9
<i>Father</i>		
Less than High School	52	49.5
High School/GED	25	23.8
Some College, No Degree	8	7.6
Associates Degree	4	3.8
Vocational Certificate	1	1.0
Bachelor's Degree	7	6.7
Some Graduate School	1	1.0
Graduate Degree	5	4.8
<i>Class Background</i>		
Poor	13	12.4
Working Class	46	43.8
Lower Middle Class	17	16.2
Middle Class	23	21.9
Upper Middle Class	6	5.7



Table 2.2

<i>Friendship Group and Friendship Consciousness with Male Friends predicting Feminist Attitudes</i>									
IV	$\beta$	SE	SE ( $\beta$ )	t	Sig.	95% CI			
						Lower	Upper		
Class Level (cont.)	.078	.042	.182	1.86	.066	-.005	.162		
Mother's Education (cont.)	.019	.034	.064	.570	.570	-.048	.087		
Father's Education (cont.)	-.062	.037	-.188	-1.671	.098	-.135	.012		
Class Background (cont.)	-.051	.048	-.113	-1.059	2.91	-.147	.045		
Friendship Group Composition	-.125	.061	-.202	-2.037	.044*	-.247	-.003		
Friendship Consciousness-Male	-.019	.068	-.027	-.273	.786	-.155	.117		

$p < .05$  \*,  $p < .01$  \*\*,  $p < .001$ \*\*\*

*Table 3.2*

*List of Responses under “Other” for Current Close Friend Group Race/Ethnicity  
Composition*

---

<i>Race/Ethnicities</i>
Asian, Latino, white
Asian-American
Chinese
All races
[A]sian or white or ar[a]bic
Mostly Asian
Mix of Black/Latinx
All icelandic
Latino, Middle Eastern
Mexican and Asian/Pacific Islander
Diversity of all ethnics

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## **Chapter 4: “Becoming the Heroes the City Deserves”: Latino Men Transforming through Friendship and Community**

*Another hurdle the founders faced in Hermanos Unidos was their struggle to find role models. .... Marcelino (a founding father of the organization) asks them, “What’s the Batman motto? From the Dark Knight?” He looks at them expectantly from the computer screen through which his face is being projected into the meeting. There is a mumbling of different things and Marcelino leans in towards his keyboard to try to make out what everyone is saying. Eventually someone shouts, “Be a hero for the city!” and Marcelino goes, “Yes! It sounds cheesy, but we had to become ‘The hero the city deserves.’ Marcelino explains to the room that they realized that as leaders of HU they were becoming role models to others, and to new members. They realized they had to change to bridge that, if they wanted leave behind a legacy of Hermandad, and for the collective of HU.*

-Ethnographic Fieldnotes, 2/28/18

Arguments have been made that exclusively male spaces may promote harmful forms of masculinity, even among educated men (e.g. Bird, 1996). In contrast to this finding, Hammarén and Johansson (2014) suggest the concept of “homosociality” — the social ties maintained by people of the same sex (p. 1)— could be expanded in ways that broadened our understanding of the potential of male relationships. They argue that the way male hegemonic masculinity is construed in its relevance to heterosexual homosociality has become limited. Previously,

homosociality has often been associated in defining male relationships and activities only in terms of maintaining patriarchy. In response, the authors offer two ways to theorize about masculinity and homosociality to avoid this unnecessary limitation. On the one hand, they point to *hierarchical (vertical) homosociality*, as a type of hegemonic masculinity that emphasizes male relationships that are based on the conquest of women, competition, exclusion, and exchange of capital (e.g. cultural, social) that maintain hegemonic structures and practices. However, they juxtapose this with what they term *horizontal homosociality*, which they characterize as more intimate and loving relationships within men that are, “a nonprofitable form of friendship” (Hammarén & Johansson, 2014, p.5). Although they concede that these forms of homosociality are not necessarily mutually exclusive, they stress the latter form of homosociality is often ignored in the literature. To date, there also has been little or no research on whether and how homosociality operates among Latino men. I hypothesized that horizontal homosociality might be more prevalent among Latino men because of their unique intersectional status. That is, because Latino men have other experiences and identities that do not categorically entitle them to male privilege they find it easier to deviate from the hegemonic forms of masculinity and formulate their own meanings in their spaces.

Traditionally male dominated events and settings have been found to form positive meanings for men that do not rely solely on harmful aspects of masculinities (Anderson, 2008; Reddin & Sonn, 2003; Thurnell-Read, 2012). A setting traditionally associated with the maintenance of hegemonic forms of masculinity are premarital

stag tours (or a “bachelor party” in the US context). Thurnell-Read (2012) reports in his European ethnographic study of stag tours, that tours more often serve the purpose of strengthening male friendship than upholding harmful forms of masculinity. According to the author, the defining features of the stag tour is to unite or reunite men through a primary activity, therefore leaving with a woman is a violation of group unity. The group realizes it's about the "stag," and they alternate between demonstrating affection and humiliation, with the realization that they are there for him. In parallel, there are often expressions of affection and connection (verbal and physical), even as they avoid perceptions of homosexuality. The trust and loyalty among the group and their activities (e.g. drinking) is seen as more indicative of group acceptance, or friendship connection and trust, than overt heteronormativity. Thurnell-Read argues the stag tour comes to be perceived as a rite of passage from a previous form of friendship to a new one (single to married), and a way of making new memories. This study serves the purpose of pointing to the possibility that competing forms of masculinities can co-exist within exclusively masculine settings.

However, what is missing in many of the analyses of men in male settings is how men who do not benefit fully from hegemonic masculinity (see Chapter 1) fit into the analysis of sites composed by and for men. We have analyzed how interpersonally Latino men are not engaging in their friendships as would be stereotypically expected (see Chapter 2), and how the composition of Latino’s men’s friendship group has implications for endorsing a critical consciousness (see Chapter 3). This chapter expands on the previous studies on Latino male friendships to a space

dedicated to their social identities and how they play out within the context of higher education. How are Latino men “becoming the heroes the city deserves?”

### **The Role of Friendship in Promoting Race and Ethnicity**

The expectations around what friendship looks like have been highly focused on Western modes and practices (Radmacher & Azmitia, 2006; Schwartz, Galliher, & Domenech Rodríguez, 2011). Friendships comprise a highly dyadic and interpersonal relationship based on similarity (Hartup & Stevens, 1997). However, as has been previously suggested, friendship can serve additional functions (e.g. social capital, belongingness) for marginalized communities (Galupo & Gonzalez, 2013; Smith, Maas, & van Tubergen, 2014; Titzmann, Silbereisen & Schmitt-Rodermund, 2007). Friendships are also capable of allowing personal and social identity development (Alemán, 2000). A mixed-method study on women of color in college and their friendships previously found that ethnicity and race play a unique role in friendship creation (Alemán, 2000). The author interviewed and administered questionnaires to 41 undergraduate sophomore and junior women in college who self-identified as African-American, Black African, Latina or Asian American. In her analysis, Alemán found that women who were friends with other women of Color in college used their friendships as sources to develop a positive racial and ethnic identity. The women resort to their friends for negotiation of social identities around race and ethnicity because they do not see their college experience as a place to grow in this capacity. On the contrary, they see it as harmful to these identities. As a result, their women friends are their resource for discussion about racial and ethnic matters that lead to

positive esteem around social identity issues. The women's interactions with others who share their experiences of discrimination and cultural norms lead to a more relaxed interaction. The women felt their interactions with whites led to them educating whites about their culture rather than interacting with them for their own development. Furthermore, the women of color were also a support network in sustaining each other and their academic self-worth. The women viewed their female friendships as helping their performance and grades and as a form of "academic morale" (p. 144), or encouragement they felt they lacked on campus. This contrasts with previous findings with white women friendships (Alemán, 1997), who felt their friends helped them understand course material, but did not improve their academic performance. "Typically lacking the role-models among faculty and staff who inspire and encourage them to work through tough academic spots and to discount and distance themselves from negative racial and/or ethnic stereotypes, these women of color are viable sources of academic affirmation, counseling, and inspiration for each other," (Alemán, 2000, p. 145). Although Alemán's study focuses on the way women of Color's friendships find solace in each other, the same has not been examined within men, who may be navigating similar experiences as non-white and a racial minority within the college context.

### **Men's Organizations and Fraternization**

Most studies that capture the intersection of race, ethnicity and gender among men's organization have commonly been conducted via ethnographic work (Anderson, 2008; Figueroa, 2002). Observing a diverse group of college aged men,

Anderson (2008) conducted an ethnographic study of a fraternity using a socio-feminist theory of masculinity “which maintains that gender is produced through a complex interaction of institutional power, organizational culture, and individual agency” (p.6) to interpret his findings. He came to define his observations as an inclusive masculinity, or a masculinity that emphasizes the inclusion of traditionally marginalized groups (e.g. women and gay men) that are often perceived negatively in hegemonic masculinity. The fraternity, the Troubadours, intentionally attempts to recruit diversity and promote acceptance. The ethnographer saw very few instances of homophobic remarks or misogynistic comments made towards women, and members can be brought to trial by other members if this behavior is present. Although athleticism, drinking, and occasional violence did still occur, there was also a large sense of intimacy and disclosure. When disclosing about sensitive topics (e.g. experimenting with other men or being raped) there were no homophobic or masculinity shaming comments, and lack of engagement in “escapist-comedy or masculine banter” (p.615) following these incidents. They shared anxieties and fears, and it was not uncommon for the men to cry in front of each other, occurrences which happened more frequently than one would expect. Moreover, this study alludes to a more intersectional consciousness (see Chapter 3) that allowed the men to practice a different form of masculinity within their fraternity.

Another ethnographic study has looked at Latino men and organizations. In Figueroa’s (2002) ethnographic study of three Latinos, she chronicles the challenges and experiences of being a Latino male in higher education. Among the coping styles



generated to deal with marginalization on campus the men would join organizations to locate people who were similar, and that emitted a more "family-like" level of comfort to combat feelings of isolation. Furthermore, these spaces were helpful to receiving instrumental help for school from others with similar career goals. This, along with other social networks helped the respondents find stability and acceptance in the marginalized environment. Others have also suggested that Latino male fraternities have the potential to play a role in keeping Latino men in higher education (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). Latino men are consequently creating caring forms of friendship that produces protective factors within their spaces.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this third study is to explore the potential convergence of interpersonal friendship relationship context and social identities through Latino men's involvement in Hermanos Unidos, a Latino, college male organization. This chapter will tie together the previous studies through a case study and give a narrative voice to Latino men and their friendships. Using ethnographic and interview data collected, this chapter will analyze how the context of the Hermanos community, and their form of friendship known as Hermandad, helps members attain a positive adjustment to the college context. They also illustrate how the organization is a place to develop and grow through a unique cultural friendship, and a transformative space that helps Latino men redefine being a Latino male.

## **Context of Study: Hermanos Unidos de UC Santa Cruz**

More specifically, in this chapter I examine the ways in which members from a Latino male organization on a college campus view their space, and how friendships and networks within the organization have helped them navigate higher education. The Hermanos Unidos, de UC Santa Cruz (United Brothers of UC Santa Cruz) organization was chosen due to its demographic and chosen mission on campus: young Latino men who are deemed successful (e.g. attending college) who are working on maintaining success. Understanding the motivation of this group of men, and the organization they have chosen to be a part of, could shed light on the behaviors and experiences that led them to be involved in this type of effort and how this space is assisting their retention.

The Hermanos Unidos (also known as Hermanos, or HU) organization has been established at the University of California, Santa Cruz since 2011. The 2 co-chairs (or the elected leaders of the organization), reported that on average they have 40 to 50 active members in the organization, out of about 60 that are official members (e.g. they paid dues to be in the organization). This means that the majority of the organization's members participate in most of the events hosted by the organization. The organization attracts a diversity of Latinos, some of which identify as gay, or as women. The Hermanos mission statement is as follows:

To create and augment the Chicano/Latino community on the UCSC campus by providing a safe space for Chicano/Latinos to come together, create friendship and establish network amongst the Chicano/Latino community with fellow

undergraduates, graduates, social activists, professors, staff and friends. Our main focus is to create a pipeline amongst Chicanos and Latinos on campus and to facilitate a safe space for Chicano/Latinos to discuss the hard issues and share experiences that affect our Raza, Cultura, y Familia as well as ourselves. It is also a space in where resources for graduate studies can be accessed

(UCSC: Chicano Latino Resource Center, 2015).

Furthermore, their current Facebook “About” section reads,

Hermanos Unidos is a recognized 501(c)3 tax-exempt non-profit organization. First established in 1989 at UC Berkeley, Hermanos Unidos has expanded to 15 universities in the state of California. Hermanos Unidos is dedicated to the advancement of young Latino males into academic scholars, community leaders and young professionals. By instilling the values represented through our three pillars - Academics, Community Service, and Social Networking - our members will work to breakdown cultural stereotypes and strive to become "El Nuevo Hombre." (Hermanos Unidos de UCSC, 2018).

They further expand on the organization at UCSC by stating, “Hermanos Unidos de University of California, Santa Cruz is a Latino male familia based on 3 pillars that are believed to help retain, empower, and educate ourselves in an often-unwelcoming space at UCSC. Our pillars are Academic Excellence, Community Service, and Social Networking with an emphasis on Education” (Hermanos Unidos de UCSC, 2018).

Their self-description by the Hermanos organization point to feelings of exclusion and an awareness about the importance of education to their success. In addition,

these statements also hold a promise of refuge and friendship in an “often unwelcoming space.”

The structure of Hermanos Unidos, de UCSC, is determined by the mission statement that is meant to be universal across all HU’s in the state. As a result, the 3 Pillars and the innovation of El Nuevo Hombre (The New Man) were key to the structure of the organization. However, UCSC also has its own interpretation of Hermanos in their incorporation of the Chicana feminist practice of *conocimientos*. Below I review how the structure of Hermanos is built around their mission statement.

**The 3 Pillars.** The mission statement is clear in stating that the Hermanos organization is formed around Academic Excellence, Community Service and Social Networking, all in the goal of nurturing a quality education. To address these pillars, the members have leadership members in charge of creating events in service of these pillars on a weekly basis. Usually each week is dedicated to an event revolving one or more of these pillars. The statement posted on their Facebook website is spoken at the beginning of every meeting by a pre-selected Hermano. The Hermano is chosen by their Steering (leadership committee), and the Hermano is then asked for their interpretation of this statement. This Hermano recites the 3 pillars statement and takes this time to explain how one, or all the pillars has personally affected them in some way.

**El Nuevo Hombre.** The goal of El Nuevo Hombre (The New Man, ENH) is to “analyze and break down stereotypes in our communities” (Hermanos Unidos,

2017), and to redefine what it means to be a Latino man. ENH is also recited by a different Hermano every meeting after the Hermano's mission statement and their personal connection to the pillars. The selected Hermano narrates the importance of breaking down stereotypes and then speaks of moments of realization and struggle to live up to the expectations of ENH. They relate how they have learned to defy some of the more harmful aspects, or their complicity, that may harm others when they do not act. In a meeting, it was described symbolically by one HU co-chair as, "an image of two serpents intertwined, but with the heads turned away from each other, as if going in opposite directions despite their interconnectedness. [One of] ... the co-chairs interprets this symbolism as the Hermanos using each other to help the others remove the old skin and reveal the Nuevo Hombre, emphasizing the necessity of others in this process, and that one cannot do it alone," (Ethnographic Fieldnotes, 3/14/2018).

**Conocimientos.** A core aspect of the Hermanos Unidos weekly meetings is the time they allot to the practice of *conocimiento*. The process of *conocimiento* in the meetings is one of the foundational elements to creating Hermanos at UCSC. In their meetings the Hermanos begin *conocimientos* by reviewing the reason why they do *conocimientos* and its history along with some basic rules regarding confidentiality, respect, and courage during the *conocimiento*. The *conocimiento* small group conversations is devoted to a topic that reflects their experiences, or a point of struggle as members to reach a pillar goal. For example, one previous *conocimiento* posed to its members asked them how they contributed to, or defied harmful

masculine behaviors considering the many sexual harassment controversies that plagued college campuses.

The process of *conocimiento* was originally conceived by Chicana, feminist, and queer scholar Gloria Anzaldúa. Anzaldúa identified 7 stages in the process of *conocimiento* (Anzaldúa, 2015). The first, is *el arrebató*, the abrupt experience from what is known and safe, and where metaphorical, ideological, and emotional walls collapse. Second, is the stage of *Nepantla*, a space state of being filled with potential through the awareness and openness that has been exposed in the previous stage. It questions the reality that is known and allows the exploration of the psyche of others. Third, is *Coatlicue*, the stage named after a primordial Aztec goddess, a negative state of being caused by the overwhelming weight of the knowledge formed from the awareness of multiple perspectives. Fourth, is a call to action, this pulls the person out of their dysfunctional state and leads to a conversion crafted by the multiple perspectives gained. Next, the need for order and meaning leads to an inner searching that reflects the narrative of the newly realized reality. The following sixth stage is the space to share this new narrative with the world, to “create a dialogue” (Hurtado, 2015), with others that can lead to conflict within and with others. Finally, comes the crucial moment in the process that builds the shift in realities. This final act requires reconciliation between the self and others to produce alliances in a compassionate strategy for common ground, a type of “spiritual activism” (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 123). Anzaldúa (2015), describes the undulations of this process,

Together, the seven stages open the senses and enlarge the breadth and depth of consciousness, causing internal shifts and external changes. All seven are present within each stage, they occur concurrently, chronologically or not. Zigzagging from ignorance (desconocimiento) to awareness (conocimiento), you may in a day's time go through all seven stages, though you may dwell in one for months. You're never only in one space, but partially in one, partial in another, with *Nepantla* occurring most often— as its own space and as the transition between each of the others. Together, these stations comprise a meditation on the rites of passage, the transitions of life from birth to death ... (p. 123-124).

According to Hurtado (2015) the changes caused by *conocimiento* can transform social identities, and allow for the exploration of intersectional identities, thus gaining the necessary awareness that can lead to consciousness and action.

The process of *conocimiento* has previously been used to challenge harmful forms of masculinity (Hurtado, 2015). Chicana feminist scholar and social psychologist Aída Hurtado recounts how the various stages of Anzaldúa's *conocimiento* came in to play in her feminist sisters' and her challenge in teaching her brother how to redefine his masculinity in a caring way that allowed for personal growth. Her brother, José, had been previously incarcerated and he engaged in behaviors in a way that his feminist sisters felt obligated to address. The Hurtado siblings had family meetings where they openly revealed their concerns to each other,

engaging in the process of *conocimiento*, allowing an understanding of their brother's experience in prison, such as,

...the trauma and isolation José had been subjected to and the context in which denigration of others is a way of survival. I especially, came to understand the vulnerabilities that result from a socialization into masculinities, which do not allow men to connect, talk, and explore personal issues either with me or with other women. We all were enriched by the experiences of our monthly meetings..." (p.66).

Hurtado views herself and her siblings as beneficiaries from the process of *conocimiento*. In an integrated analysis, she explains how *conocimiento* can facilitate the awareness of social identities, and how the combination of an intersectional perspective through social identities helps to render effective interventions at the individual level through a cohesive knowledge of micro and macro processes.

Ultimately, this convergence and transformation of Jose's masculinity came from having a central community of progressive feminist women within the relational context of family and finding a physical context where his social identities were central through *Barrios Unidos*, an organization dedicated to a peaceful social justice in the interest of formerly incarcerated Latino men. On a micro level, through personal identity, understanding comes from considering what individual outcomes are. On the other hand, social identity as a macro-process can shed light on how group outcomes based on dominant social categories (e.g. ethnicity, gender, race, class, sexuality, etc.) are recognized, "The distinction between personal and social



identity precludes the treatment of social issues as rooted in individual psychologies exclusively correctable by reshaping individual behaviors and leaving structural forces (macro-processes) unexamined (Hurtado, 2015, p. 74). Hence, Hermanos Unidos de UCSC can be engaging in a unique process within the organization that can be enlightening to their interpersonal friendships within the larger context of Hermano Unidos.

## **Method**

### **Interview Participants**

The members from the case study present in this chapter were recruited from a larger interview set of 10 participants. Members were recruited from the organization Hermanos Unidos de UC Santa Cruz to participate in the study from late Winter quarter of 2018 to the end of Spring quarter of 2018. To participate it was required that the person be a member of the Hermanos organization and be at least 18 years old. Participants had the option of being interviewed individually or with another member. They also chose to have the option of using their real names or a pseudonym. Most chose to use their real names. On average the participants were about 21 years old. A total of 8 of the interviewees were men and 2 were women. Most interviews took an average of 43 minutes but ranged from 28 to 81 minutes. From these interviews, 2 participants elected to be interviewed together as a dyad because they considered themselves to be good friends, had been part of the organization for at least two years, and had both been organization leaders in Steering. They are the focus of this study chapter and I talk about each in turn below.

## **Case Study Participants**

The case study participants indicated they were comfortable with the use of their real names in future references to their responses. Therefore, I honor their choice and use their real and preferred names below and throughout the study.

**David Molina.** At the time of the interview David was a senior in college majoring in Business Management Economics and about to graduate. He was 22 years old. He identified as Latino, heterosexual, and as having grown up poor.

**Jesus “Tony” de la Paz.** “Tony” as he preferred to be called, was a junior in college and was studying Molecular, Cell, and Development Biology (MCD Biology). He was 21 years old and considered himself to be heterosexual, Latino man. Growing up, he felt he had grown up in a middle-class neighborhood.

Both David and Tony attended public schools where the ethnic composition of their high schools was mostly white, although their neighborhoods was described as either mostly Latino or a mixture of Latino and white. Neither identified as being first-generation Latinos in the U.S., since their parents were born and raised in the United States. However, David and Tony were the first in their families to attend college, making them first-generation college students.

## **Design and Procedure**

**Ethnography.** The ethnography took place over the course of 12 weeks. Ethnography is a primarily inductive immerses themselves in a setting describes the social context, relationships and process that are important to the topic being studied (Fetterman, 2010). I personally reached out to the organization co-chairs via a

member whom I knew. The co-chairs were informed of the purpose of the study and were asked for the possibility of attending their weekly meetings. The co-chairs of the organization agreed to having me in the space and informed me of the day, time and location. The ethnography was conducted largely during the organization's weekly meetings. The meetings are often an event new members first attend, as well as attended by Steering (members who hold leadership positions) and the regular active members. It seemed a natural entry point into the organization since it allowed for weekly interaction with members and as a way of staying informed about the organization.

I attended the weekly Hermanos Unidos meetings, along with a few other events that the organization hosted, such as a volunteer event, their election meeting, and their end of the year banquet. The weekly meetings were structured by the Steering members of the organization and were held once a week in the evenings. These meetings were planned every week with other members of Steering, which included Steering members for each of the main pillars of the organization (e.g. academic, community service, alumni), along with other necessary positions needed to run the organization (e.g. treasurer, fundraising). Most meetings lasted about 2 hours (or more). The Steering members lead various activities and made announcements about the organization and upcoming events every week. Co-chairs were charged with beginning, leading, and concluding meetings. After the main announcements were made by each Steering member at the beginning of the meeting, some form of activity followed, such as an ice-breaker, guest speaker(s), or

workshop, depending on the events coming up for the organization. This beginning would take close to an hour and was followed by the *conocimientos*, then a sharing portion of what was discussed in the various groups, and finally more open announcements by Steering and other members. The night always closed with the *Hermanos* circle and *Hermanos Unidos* chant.

I was able to listen and to participate along with other members of the organization during activities and was always transparent with the purpose of my being there. The members of the organization were informed of my professional identity— that I was at the time a graduate student in the psychology department whose work was focused on Latino male friendships and was interested in learning more about the *Hermanos* organization and its members. This open role was not seen as detrimental to entry into the organization due to the organization's openness to being engaged in academics and the context of being at a research institution. After attending the meetings, I typed up keywords and notes, and when able took notes during the meetings. The full fieldnotes of what had occurred during the meetings, or events, were fully typed out within a 24-hour period for greatest accuracy (Emerson, Frets, & Shaw, 2011; Hurtado, Hernandez, & Haney, 2015).

**Interviews.** Recruitment for the interview was made during the final announcements portion of the meeting every few weeks to encourage participation. The interviews took place at a time and day convenient to the organization member in a research office on campus. Participants who came in for the interview were offered snacks as compensation for dedicating their time for the interview. They were given a

consent form informing them they would be audio and video recorded. They were also given the option of using their real name before and after the interview. The interview questions were semi-structured, and asked participants basic demographic questions, and more general questions about their reasons for joining the organization, their experiences on campus, and about the connections they developed within the organization. After the interview, the respondents were given the option of coming in to take an additional survey.

**Hermanos Survey.** Participants that had been previously interviewed were asked to return to take an online survey on success in higher education (see Chapter 1) for compensation. Compensation was a \$10 gift card to a popular coffee shop. The participants who returned to take the survey took an average of 43 minutes to complete the survey. This data is used to complement the interviewees' in-person interviews.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Navigating College and Finding their Place**

*The first guest speaker was Marcelino, a founding father of Hermanos at UCSC, he introduced himself as such and said he was there (via Facetime) to talk to the group about the history of Hermanos at UCSC. He mentioned that when he arrived in 2006, UCSC was not very diverse, and that was why he, and Hector Romo (the other founding co-chair) began Hermanos. He and Hector had met and found each other in Crown college, as being among the few, and only 2 Latino men there. During their time there they were exposed to*

*research by an LALS Professor, who conducted research on Latinos in UCs and UCSC. His findings showed that UCSC often promoted the numbers of Latinos they admitted, but in terms of graduating Latinos, UCSC had the lowest numbers. UCSC was in the end graduating the lowest number of Latino men compared to all other UCs. Through El Centro, they came across these facts via Rosie Cabrera, the center's director. Marcelino mentions that she was known as giving the best hugs and big on celebrating culture and who they were. As interns, and with the knowledge they had learned, she asked them "What are you going to do about it?"*

-Ethnographic Fieldnotes, 2/28/18

The above is an excerpt from the fieldnotes collected from a guest speaker that was conferenced in during an Hermanos meeting. The speaker was one of the original founding members of Hermanos at UCSC, and he describes the events that led him and another member to begin the space. One of the compelling observations and themes within the interviews of the Hermanos members was the reasons they gravitated to Hermanos Unidos. Although the reasons for joining varied, at its core was the need to belong in a place that had brought them all there, but which they felt disconnected from. This striving to belong is reflected in the "culture shock" they receive upon attending the campus, as Tony, the 21-year-old, MCD biology major explains,

[T]he only thing I feel, like I realized, is that it is a big culture shock coming from where ever we may come to Santa Cruz. Like, the campus culture is

completely different than anything anyone has ever experienced before and, you know, it's kind of like (sighs). I don't know what the school can do about it, but it's just kind of like, make it more welcoming to Latino students, 'cus like, I feel like it's way too often that I hear kids say like "I was culture shocked, I don't know where I was, I don't know what to do, I felt lost." I don't know, I feel like I hear that way too often.

When asked if they had personally experienced this culture shock, their previous school life experiences are reflected in their answers. David, the 22-year-old, Business Management Economics major felt that transition to the campus was a continuation of his experiences at a predominately white high school,

So, like when I came here I was like...this feels like my high school... just navigating the way with a bunch of different people and stuff. Um, so like for me I think... cus' I first came in as bio medical engineering major that's maybe... where I kind of looked around there was a room full of, I think it was 25 of us, which isn't big anyways but... I was the only brown person there, so I was like, ah, this is interesting.

David, a person who described his candor as "focus on yourself," shares the incident where, even with his familiarity with being in predominately white spaces, he noticed that within some fields there were stark demographics on campus. Tony on the other hand described his experience more directly,

Yeah. For me, um, it was kind of a gradual realization about the culture shock and it kind of built up around like week 3... week 4... week 5... of my

freshman quarter...So, I was kind of used to it in that sense, um, but at the same time I would go home, and I'd see my family. I'd see a whole group of brown people, so when I came here, I didn't have my family, so I still had the same demographic of students, but it built up on me. And I realized the more I walked around, I was like damn, I don't feel welcomed here, like I don't... It just kind of like a built-up feeling, like say I was in the hallway... I'd be hanging out with some hall mates and I would be the only brown one and they were all white and they're like "you know what I'm talking about right?" And I'm like "No, I don't know what you're talking about actually," and they'd look at me like, shake their heads, and I'm like "why are you judging me like this?"

Their narratives around their experiences adapting to the campus demonstrate that their race and ethnicity became a point of struggle as they navigated the campus. As Tony remarks, these are the stories that he hears "too often."

When asked more directly about their reasons for joining the organization, or their feelings prior to joining, they described their experience as lack of companionship that was impeding their well-being. Finding Hermanos changed that, it was the place where they found their missing piece. David illustrates that although he was considered "successful" because he was doing well academically, there was a kinship that was missing that he was accustomed to,

My...first year, I mean, I was fairly successful. I think I had straight—I was taking nineteen units every quarter, but I had straight A's and with the



exception, I think I had a B plus, forgot in which class, but, ... Um, so my second—my second year, um, I was like... there was something missing. So, in high school—and middle school too—I was involved with, uh, music so I was—I played sax for a long time and in marching band, like, there was this, kind of like familia in the same way that we have familia here. It was, like, that's how it was in high school, except with band people, it's just 'cus you're around them all the time... and I was kind of missing that, and I had friends, like, I had some of my closest—two of my best friends outside of Hermanos, that I met my freshmen year. But I didn't really have, like, that group of people kind of a thing...

David identifies lacking a feeling of “familia” (family), or sense of community, that made him feel like there was “something missing,” and it was not until he was in Hermanos that he could place his lack of completeness. Along similar lines, Tony describes his feelings prior to joining as, “a...gradual feeling that built up of, like, loneliness 'cus I was still homesick when I went to my first meeting.” The negative experiences and feeling they had were in sharp contrast to their experience upon first joining Hermanos. Tony described it as a positive experience that he had not expected, “And it was interesting 'cus I walked into the space and I felt like I was back at home again, you know? Like, I saw people bickering back and forth and roasting [making fun of] each other and I was like, ‘Okay,’ like, ‘This is probably the space for me.’ And you know, I didn't specifically join HU wanting to join HU, it just kind of happened.” David also captures the experience of what it is like to first walk

into the Hermanos space and find a community that not only welcomes him, but where he can also see himself reflected in their leaders,

... when I first got in, I sat down, I was kind of scared 'cus I went by myself.

... Um, but I sat down in the middle of the room by myself and I was like,

“Ahhh, I don't know what I'm doing here, I feel kind of lost.” But as soon as I

sat down, people walked up to me, was like, "Oh hello, what's your name? I

haven't seen you before." You know, it's just—everyone's ridiculously

welcoming, and I was like, “Wow, that's a lot different,” and everyone seemed

genuinely interested and they're asking my name, and what am I majoring in

and, um, so it's kind of something that I replicate now, but seeing that and kind

of—the meeting, how it flowed. And the leadership in Steering... like, one of

my role models in this space ...and he was one of the co-chairs at the time,

and kind of seeing him—and I could see myself a lot in him, so I was like,

“Wow,” like, “This is probably where I want to stick around.

The affinity that David found with Hermanos was not merely based on a likeness based on phenotype, instead he could see other Latino men leading and being role models for other Latino men. Similar to the women of Color in Alemán's (2000) study, Latino men were attracted to the company of other Latino men because they found the role models that were absent within the context of the university. David had found academically successful Latinos who welcomed him into the space.

The negative experiences the young men felt and the knowledge about Latino men's place on campus had previously been the impetus in the creation of Hermanos

and continues to be the main reason its members join. Feelings of detachment from the institutions that Latino men go on to attend is not uncommon among first-generation college students, where the individualism professed within American universities can be intimidating for students accustomed to interdependence and community (Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson, & Covarrubias, 2012). They early on describe feeling isolated and lonely on campus prior to joining, to the extent that they not only seek places of familiarity but are then surprised by how welcomed and at home they feel within a space that was designed for them. The warmth that emanates from the organization contrasts sharply to their experiences and feelings interacting with the campus. The members of the organization in turn earnestly offer the support and acceptance that seems to be absent to them outside of Hermanos.

### **Cultural Friendship: Familia y Hermandad**

*At the inception of Hermanos Unidos, HU struggled during their first meetings. Marcelino recounts that in HU's first meetings its members spoke about the struggle to "survive the forest." One of the things they also talked about was their identities, how to negotiate being from "the hood" and being "educated." People at home would tell them "don't change" and at UCSC they struggled to maintain their roots while gaining an education. They felt they could not be fully themselves here at UCSC or at home.*

-Ethnographic Fieldnotes, 2/28/2018

The name Hermanos Unidos (pronounced ER-mon-os OO-knee-dos), in Spanish, contains a gendered basis in the name. Its name implies that it was created

for Latino men. Language has previously been shown to produce closer friendships among bilingual Spanish-English undergraduates, increasing their quality because it provides a positive ethnic identity (Seban, Hernandez, & Alvarado, 2009). The organization itself can appeal to college going men who either already strongly identify as Latino, or struggle with their identification. Therefore, the racial, ethnic, and gendered valence of the organization's name may serve as a siren call for these men.

Within Hermanos the symbolism and choice of what words to pronounce in Spanish, emphasize some of the aspects of the organization that resonates in its members. Finding a family within the college context is often important for diminishing feelings of isolation in Latino men (Figueroa, 2002). The Hermanos call themselves a familia, or family, because they are aware that the people in Hermanos are there for them, either to be a family for them when they are away from home or be the family they never had when they were home. But along with familia, they also have Hermandad. Hermandad is not a term that is formally defined within the space, rather it is said in context. It is literally translated as brotherhood, therefore using the term invokes a deep friendship, bordering on kinship. These terms are consequently culturally relevant to these Latino men, who are struggling to define and find who they are in college. Their racial and ethnic identity brings them a sense of belongingness. When asked how Hermanos helps him stay in college, Tony explains that for him, Hermanos gave him more than just academic motivation,

Yeah, I think, with or without HU, I would graduate college. For me, it's like David said, it's helped me find my identity as a Latino man, and like be proud to say it, cause before, I wouldn't say I was ashamed of it, but I would just kind of avoid it. So, but now I'm confident, and affirming, you know? Like I am a Latino man, and I take pride in my culture, and where I come from, and my family. Um, yeah, it's just kind of like, in retrospect it's empowering to be who I am. The person I was always meant to be.

For Tony (and David), Hermanos generates a positive affirmation about being Latino. Although Tony may have gravitated to Hermanos at first because it gave him comfort in the familiar, what he further found within the space was a sense of pride in being Latino. This positive esteem around his racial/ethnic background the he previously felt he did not need to emphasize, became a badge of honor due to the company of others who felt the same way. This journey was not as straightforward for, David, who was a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Latino, who did not feel comfortable with Spanish, and had attended a predominately white school. Prior to joining Hermanos, and even when he was in the organization, David struggled to find a strong identification within the space due to its racial/ethnic focus. In the end, it was Tony, his friend from Hermanos, and now roommate, who helped and supported him with his personal identification as a Latino,

And I think where Tony has helped me out, is kind of emotionally, and also culturally ... Um, but I remember... it was to Tony that I was like, "I don't know what I am," and Tony just tells me you are what you are... I told him

that “I don’t feel Mexican,” and he was like, “You don’t have to be Mexican enough. You are what you are. There’s no you are, or you are not, just be who you are and let that show.” I was like, “Oh, wow,” and it completely changed my mind, um, kind of changed my life, and kind of how I view myself and my culture, and I didn’t feel as rejected by Latino culture anymore, so that kind of helped my personal growth too.

The Hermanos organization allowed David and Tony a community where being with similar others yields a source of growth and development through their identity as Latinos. Alemán (2000) chronicled this phenomenon within her study, showing that friends can be crucial allies in the development of and sustaining racial and ethnic identity. Moreover, it was through a strong interpersonal relationship, in this case a close friendship with another Hermano that caused this shift. Hermandad facilitates this process, where its members act as brothers to each other, and, as the ties of kinship dictate, because they are all brothers, as an organization, they are a familia. This relational culture facilitates a sense of acceptance that merges their racial/ethnic ties with their new context, therefore bridging their roots with ongoing transformation. Hermanos gives Latino men the space to be whole heartedly Latino and academically inclined, and not feel like they are losing who they are, and instead hybridizing their personal and social experiences.

### **Community and Transformation: El Nuevo Hombre y Hermandad**

*Marcelino spoke about the beginnings of Hermanos. He and Hector established Hermanos, and at first it began with perhaps 10 members, half of*

*which were interns at El Centro [the campus' Latino ethnic resource center]. To the founding fathers, it seemed to them to be a failure, and at first it was hard for them to open up within the space. When they did, what they found was a lot of diversity within their group of men. They found themselves as often placed in a box: as machistas, homophobic and unsuccessful, but in their conversations, they found themselves challenging the man box.*

-Ethnographic Fieldnotes, 2/28/2018

One of the most defining aspects of Hermanos, de UC Santa Cruz is their openness to all who would like to join. The organization's leaders and its members advocate an open-door policy. This policy is mandated by the university to all organizations, but it is a mandate that the Hermanos have embraced. The consensus and narrative around this acceptance is that anyone interested in the advancement of Latino men should be welcomed, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, class, or sexual orientation. The organization and its current members reflect a diversity of phenotypes and ethnicity within the Latino community, along with embracing women wanting to join the organization. Hermanos is primarily comprised of Latino men, but women are also a sizeable portion of its members. They tended to be at least a quarter of the members present at each meeting.

Early in the history of Hermanos allowing women into the organization caused conflict, but now it has begun to embrace female Hermanos (they call themselves Hermanos regardless of gender). The women greatly contribute to the space, especially in the form of El Nuevo Hombre (ENH), which seeks to eradicate

the negative stereotypical behaviors of Latino masculinity. ENH's purpose is to eliminate many of the stigmas and stereotypes such as machismo, homophobia, and the perception that Latino men are not academically successful. The women are not only members of Hermanos, but also leaders and role models to their male Hermanos. Tony talks about the integration of women in the space and how he has personally been mentored and influenced by a female Hermano,

Um, so yeah now we have reached a point in our familia where we... I mean everyone is welcomed. Everyone, as long as you're here to support the mission statement, which is the retention and support of education of Latino men... I feel, especially, since one of my biggest mentors... is a female in space ...she was a fourth year, and I was a first year, when I joined that was her last year. And I became her mentee my winter quarter, I believe and ...I learned through a female what it means to be an Hermano. She's the one that really taught me what it meant to be there for another person, to help another person in their time of need, um, to stand up for people, to make sure you're helping your community, to make sure you're giving back to your family, you know, she was great ... also because she's pursuing graduate school, she introduced me to "Hey graduate school is an option," yeah.

One of their female and senior active members, Ashley, gave further insight on what it was like to be a female in the space and her own misgivings about staying. For her, being in the space is strictly about having found the family she wanted on campus, despite her decision to also join a sorority for a female sisterhood, "I felt like, as an



Hermano um, obviously the guys are super loving they, they're so caring and stuff but, personally I didn't— like, I always felt like I didn't belong in the space ... But like being able to join and then seeing like how much everyone cared for each other made me stay, and so I feel like I invested a lot of time to where like, I didn't wanna leave." She also shares how male members have previously expressed concern when half the members were women and she was asked to justify her presence and appease doubts that she wasn't there for the "wrong reasons,"

I felt very attacked and what not so... you know, you had the men in the space who were very angry at the fact [that there were so many women]...[and] these other men are just like, "Are you serious? Like, do you know how much like, the women do for you, like, do you know how much you, la da da", and then it's just re-occurring so like, (*sighs*)... When I was on Steering we did have that conversation of like, okay so, you know, why are y'all here, like, why-why did you choose HU? ... I would- I would always express how like my first year like, I would always have to work, like double, like go above and beyond like, just so I could be at the same level as [a Male Member]. Because, he was a guy, he was entitled to the space already, and so I had to find myself- I had to find myself to be an Hermano, to like, prove myself, to be like, um... truly down for the space where like, all he really had to do was show up... you had to prove yourself to be an Hermano because...you wanted to let people like, you know, "I'm not here to date, I'm here because like, like I'm missing my familia and this is like the familia that I found."

Valenzuela (1999) has previously chronicled the “checkin’ up on my guy” practice that Latinas engage in on behalf of their men. Young, high school aged Latina women devote time and energy to making sure the men they are in a relationship with are succeeding, or at least surviving their academics. Although the women in the space are not in a romantic relationship with these men, like the women in Valenzuela’s ethnographic study, the men in the space can also fail to see how the young women’s labor is being exploited or choose to accept it because of traditional gender roles. However, there is progress and credit to be given to these men, since some men in the space are willing to advocate and point out all the work that is being done by the female Hermanos in the organization. It seems that coming to terms with women joining the organization is now just becoming a narrative within the space, since none of the men in their interviews expressed concern about women being in Hermanos. Some of the men themselves are aware of that conflicting history and would allude to it in their responses.

One argument for the continued presence of female Hermanos in the space is their contribution to the mission statement of the organization around ENH. When asked about whether he has any privileges because he is a man, Tony responds that he feels he has some within Hermanos, compared to the female Hermanos,

Yeah, no doubt. Um, I don’t get questioned on everything that I do. I feel like that’s a big one, and that’s one that we struggle with right now, I feel. Because one of our members brought it up she said, “The guys get away with a lot more stuff than the girls do.” ...I don’t know if it is because there’s just less

girls, or it just gets thrown on to girls because they're not guys... We come from a position of power, so we can say and do more than the females can. Just in general, yeah.

One of the most powerful roles the women in the space have is to openly question the privilege of the men. However, rather than fully dismissing the female Hermanos' claims, the endeavor to become ENH allows for its members to consider alternatives. For example, Tony is able to provide explanations for why a female Hermano would make a critical comment about the men, such as being male creating the perception of credibility and how the women being a minority demographic in the organization might make them not be taken seriously about their concerns. The concept of ENH and the women providing critical feedback, while the men struggle to modify their behavior is reminiscent of White's (2006) practicing ground. Men are using the Hermanos organization and ENH to practice the modification of their behavior as what they know to be better behavior catches up to their actual behavior.

The Hermano's undertaking of ENH comes with accepting more traditionally feminine traits, and modeling vulnerability and care. David, in Tony's presence, unknowingly demonstrates the growth he has made toward ENH by describing the respect and growth Tony has modeled as El Nuevo Hombre,

Like I can even talk about Tony, like kind of seeing him. I knew him as freshmen, but I didn't really know him though, but kind of like his idea of... 'cus we use El Nuevo Hombre all the time, and his idea of El Nuevo Hombre then, it hasn't completely changed, but it's been a lot more advanced, and kind

of getting to see the way he explains El Nuevo Hombre now, versus then um, kind of getting to see the growth in people, like “oh wow” ...I was there for that too. So, I mean, it’s those kinds of exercises of comradery that I’ve gotten to see Tony grow so much. Even in our year in Steering too... going from—uh, I guess, kind of like quiet in the background to more like, okay asking questions that none of us saw that angle too, and kind of like, just making sure everything is okay, and like getting to see him grow as a professional, then like, um, really like in turn the way he grows, really shows me what it’s like to be a man ... Tony wears his emotions on his sleeve and I don’t do that very well, and kind of like just see him grow doing that, it’s like “I can grow in the same way too.” So, having that, I think positively getting to see other people grow, kind of really makes you reflect like “okay as a professional I’m doing all this stuff, but like in HU, where am I not growing that I should be growing?”

David openly admits to learning how to be more vulnerable from his friend Tony, and his own struggle with accomplishing El Nuevo Hombre. In an ironic twist, having the characteristics that defy masculine norms is a source of admiration and progress as ENH. El Nuevo Hombre is not always an easy task for its members, but it is an undertaking they feel is key to their evolution, where they can “shed their skin.” The transformation is not meant to be taken alone, rather other Hermanos, male and female alike, are there to continuously model and challenge each other to reach this characteristic of the organization. Anderson’s (2008) own ethnographic work echoes

these findings, that demonstrate that diversity within fraternal settings benefits all involved, not just those whose it is meant to address. In addition, the continued role of women being a transformative force for men willing to change harmful masculine behaviors continues to be asserted (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; White, 2006).

The legacy the original founders of HU hoped to leave with Hermanos was that of transformation, to “become the heroes the city deserves.” This meant they expected the men in the organization would adapt to the needs of their community (“the city”). The members themselves have identified their nemeses: the difficulty of ensuring Latino college retention, preventing isolation on campus and in their professional lives, and combating harmful cultural stereotypes. To become “heroes” the members of Hermanos encourage and challenge each other by modeling their transformation, and by continuing to fight against these external and internal foes together.

### **Conclusion**

The goal of this study was to provide an in-depth illustration of the potential for Latino men’s friendships to be deepened and enhanced within the context of a gendered and racialized college organization. Using ethnographic data and observations and interviews with organization members, the study illustrates the ways in which these Latino men in particular found solace, friendship and redemption as a result of their membership in a unique organization, Hermanos Unidos. The nature and meaning of their friendships were significantly shaped by their membership in the organization.

Several findings were notable. First, the members of *Hermanos Unidos* acknowledged the isolation and disappointment that can be felt by Latino men who decide to attend higher education. The men in this study may have felt compelled to attend the organization for a variety of reasons, but the underlying origin was that they did not feel connected to the university in a way that was satisfying and advanced their well-being. Locating a sense belonging has long been reported as a factor in success and adjustment for Latino students in academic settings (Delgado, Simpkins, Schaefer, 2015; Figueroa, 2002). This has implications for their retention and the importance of finding spaces that address or converge on the various social identities embodied by Latino men in college. Second, it was apparent that friends in this organization served as sources of transformation and consciousness, even when they belonged to the same marginalized identity (Alemán, 2000). In fact, friendships based on race, ethnicity, gender (or other unifying social statuses), may generate stronger and stable identities that buffer against some of the detachment felt on social identities that have been derogated in the past. Traditional quantitative approaches to this phenomenon may not capture the extent to which it occurs (see Chapter 3). In addition, the ethnographic observation underscored the way that Latino men's masculinity (or friendship) can transcend stereotypes commonly associated with Latino men. It also re-emphasizes that women are critical players in helping men overcome harmful forms of masculinity (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; White, 2006). Future studies should investigate the connection between women and the role in the transformation of Latino men's masculinity directly.

This study also identified the potential for the interpersonal element of friendship to serve as a conduit for change, utilizing the trusting and caring format of friendship to help shape new and revolutionary behaviors and attitudes toward masculinity and thereby increase positive social identification. In addition, it broadens the definition of what friendship means to Latino men by demonstrating that friendship does not need to be limited to a dyadic unit, rather the interdependence that they are accustomed to shows that building a community may be more important to adjustment in a marginalized context than having only a few similar friends.

## **Chapter 5: Understanding the Meaning of Latino Men's Friendships**

Friendship is the hardest thing in the world to explain. It's not something you learn in school. But if you haven't learned the meaning of friendship, you really haven't learned anything.

– Muhammad Ali

“What's in a friendship? In an increasingly diverse and unequal society, quite a lot,” (de Souza Briggs, 2007, p. 263). Researcher de Souza Briggs (2007) begins his paper by posing this exact question behind the meaning of friendship in relationship to society. He explicitly relates the implications of such an interpersonal friendship in a broad and social way. Although de Souza Briggs asks this question regarding cross-racial friendships and how they can change attitudes towards others, his question is equally important within groups and with respect to their friendships. Why, when there is so much diversity, would people continue to seek homophily, or like with like? Why does this trend continue to be seen most among those persons who feel a mismatch between themselves and their environment? Furthermore, despite the reassuring similarities among these friends, when and why would they challenge themselves to go outside the comforts of their friendship and translate interpersonal connections in ways that challenge broader societal injustices? In the case of the study chapters discussed here, I wondered not only how the interpersonal friendships among Latino men could be used to challenge ethnic and masculinist stereotypes, but also whether their friendships could be a force for change that helped them transform



their masculinities from within. In this chapter I will discuss the implications the implications and future directions for studying Latino men's friendships.

### **Summarizing Latino Men's Friendships**

This section is devoted to discussing the findings and connections between the three studies presented in the previous chapters. Using a multimethod approach to study Latino men's friendships, I addressed various research questions that were meant to demonstrate an intersectional understanding of Latino men's friendships. I began with a more focused and classic view of Latino men's friendships and how they defined them with the intent to expand the literature on friendships focused on Latino men (Chapter 1). I then expanded to Latino men's friendship group composition and their effects on feminist attitudes (Chapter 2). The concluding study expanded on the previous studies by observing Latino men redefining masculinity and identities through a gendered and racialized organization (Chapter 3). I discuss the contributions of each study in turn.

### **Review of Latino Men's Friendship Studies**

Chapter 2 featured the study, *"Being There for You": College Going Latino Men's Experiences of Loneliness and Definitions of Friendship*. Designed to address a significant gap in the literature on Latino men's friendships (Way, 2011) the Friendship Definitions Subset (FDS) asked 52 college going Latino men a simple question: "How do you define a friend?" It elicited responses from participants that reflected what they wanted from their friendships as well as their personal experiences with their own friends. They revealed a complex emotional, vulnerable,

and supportive inner world of Latino men. The answers are in sharp contrast to the broader literature on Latino men who are often portrayed as hyper-masculine, with strong tendencies to dominate others, and favoring independence as a sign of strength (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016). Surprisingly, given the previous research, Latino men defined friendships as a web of relationships characterized by interdependence. Trust and loyalty were mentioned often, demonstrating that Latino men's friendships do not differ sharply from friendships in other groups (Hartup & Stevens, 1997). Latino men can develop, or at least articulate, the need for friends and friendship and reject an independent existence free from emotional entanglements. The participants' friendship networks are comprised of mostly other Latino men, but still can generate meaningful friendships with women. Latino men seek community, by maintaining a large number of friends, and stay connected to avoid loneliness and ensuring having someone to turn to for good times and support in bad times.

In Chapter 3 *Friendships Representing a World in Us: Consciousness in the Racial Compositions of Latino Men's Friendship Group and its Role in Predicting Feminism Attitudes*, I examined how the ethnic/racial composition of Latino men's friendship group, and critical engagement with their male friends could predict their attitudes towards feminism. Latino men socially gain privilege within society through their gender (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), but are marginalized by their racial and ethnic identity. This places them in a unique intersection that allows them to be capable of sympathizing with other marginalized groups such as women (Harnois, 2017; Hurtado & Sinha, 2016). The Critical Friendship Masculinities Subset (CFMS)

Study applies regression analysis to data from 105 Latino men's responses to their descriptions of their friendship group's racial/ethnic composition, the extent to which they engage critically with their male friends, and attitudinal statements about feminism. The results show that Latino men's ethnic and racial friendship group composition can potentially predict the endorsement of feminist attitudes, such as believing that although some things have changed, women are still treated unfairly in today's society.

The racial/ethnic composition of Latino men's close friend group was a more significant predictor of their feminist attitudes. Being friends with other Latinos or having a racially or ethnically diverse group of friends was more likely to lead to feminist sympathies. However, this predictive characteristic was not strong. Latino men's male friends (regardless of race and ethnicity) were not especially helpful in prodding them to consider broader social issues, including sexism.

If racial/ethnic group composition indeed predicts feminist attitudes, then there are multiple implications. For example, it demonstrates Latino men can be in solidarity with a group outside their own. Women are a group which Latino men are often associated with dominating and subjecting. Furthermore, it illustrates that their interpersonal friendships with other men of Color help, rather than hinder their support of feminist issues. In other words, the personal relationships of men are somehow affecting their belief systems. More to the point, friendships with other men does not prevent feminist support, rather it may reflect similarity of values among marginalized groups (Galupo & Gonzalez, 2013; Smith, Mass, & van Tubergen,

2014; Titzmann, Silbereisen & Schmitt-Rodermund, 2007). It is similarity of values and experience that often attracts individuals to others to form friendships and this is also true for sociopolitical beliefs (Galupo & Gonzalez, 2013). Alternatively, if friendship group is not influencing feminist attitudes, it could be that because Latino men's friends are primarily other men, men lack the language to engage with or encourage feminist attitudes. Ultimately, men may not understand how feminism helps them, and therefore do not encourage this stance among other men.

Chapter 4 presents the final study, "*Becoming the Heroes the City Deserves*": *Latino Men Transforming through Friendship and Community*. This study fused how the social can affect the interpersonal on the ground through a unique form of awareness (conocimiento) within a male dominated organization. Conocimiento describes a 7-stage process of internal strife upon becoming aware of knowledge that challenges the recipient (Anzaldúa, 2015; Hurtado, 2015). The internal discord eventually leads to recalibration and integration of the new knowledge into action. The Hermanos Subset study used data collected from ethnographic observations in a Latino men's organization, Hermanos Unidos, de UC Santa Cruz (United Brothers of UC Santa Cruz), and interview data from a dyad friend pair from the organization.

Building on the findings from the previous studies, this ethnography provided an in-depth, real-world example of what can be achieved by Latino men in fraternal and racialized setting. The case studies detailing the experiences of two young Latino men who belonged to the Latino male organization I studied added additional dimensions to the analysis. The young men revealed that what draws them to the

space is the relational aspect of the organization which they expressed was missing to them throughout the rest of the campus. Friendship was found to be a site of critical engagement around gender and race/ethnicity. The participants demonstrated that bidirectionality can occur between a strong friendship and social identities. Social identities are tied to attempts to bring positive affirmation to disparaged social identities (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Since the Latino men felt out of place on campus because of their race and ethnicity, the organization's male-focused and racial/ethnic setting allowed them a positive evaluation of their identities by directly addressing the lack of Latino male success and focusing on their retention. The members challenged each other in the space through questioning of male privilege by the female members and their open attempts to achieve *El Nuevo Hombre* (The New Man) as a tenet of the organization. Another point of challenge was the acceptance of their Latino identity and roots through conversations with close friends from the organization. Finally, Latino men emphasized the importance of maintaining connections and how they avoid individualism as form of coping. Next, I review some of the connections between the studies and their findings.

### **Integrating the Findings from Latino Men's Friendships**

The section above summarized the main findings of the studies presented in the previous chapters. In this section, I further integrate the findings between the studies and discuss the overlapping patterns between them. For clarity, I will refer to the studies based on their data study name [e.g. Chapter 2: Friendship Definitions Subset Study (FDS); Chapter 3: Critical Friendship Masculinities Subset Study

(FMS); Chapter 4: The Hermanos Subset]. Overall, the studies have implications for building a community for Latino men, the importance of having a space to explore and develop social identities, and to highlight how women play a role in their gender consciousness, thereby transforming their masculinities.

The studies presented reveal Latino men's friendships can promote positive changes and adjustment within the college context. According to the findings from the FDS and the Hermanos Subset, Latino men want and seek many friends to form a sense of community. Group acceptance is important for young boys (Borys & Perlman, 1985), and for Latino men it can be a very tangible way of coping with loneliness in college where clashes between their context and ethnic identity can put them at risk (Chang, et.al., 2017; Dueñas & Gloria, 2017).

Interpersonal relationships within a community can help Latino men change and counter negative social stigmas by providing a “practicing ground” (White, 2006). The FDS, CFMS, and Hermanos Subset studies all pointed to Latino men challenging stereotypical notions of Latino masculinity. Latino men relate to each in their definitions of friendship through trust and loyalty, the same way women and non-Latinos relate to each other (Radmacher & Azmitia, 2006). The men emphasized a support system that highlighted caring and vulnerability that is rarely associated with Latino men (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; Way, 2011). The CFMS and Hermanos Subset studies hinted that Latino men associating with others that are like them may help them engage more with their gender privilege and support feminist attitudes. This association was stronger within The Hermanos Subset study, as the CFMS failed

to fully capture how engaging with critical issues with their male friends could contribute to the support of feminist attitudes. In contrast, The Hermanos case study participants, David and Tony, articulate how they grapple with their gender privilege and racial/ethnic identities in their friendship and within the Hermanos organization.

Overall, these studies advance research on how social identities can be strengthened and reconsidered through friendship (Alemán, 2000; Hurtado & Silva, 2008). Latino men's friendships demonstrate the intersectional value of maintaining connections between identities, not addressing only their maleness or their Latino background, but multiple identities at once (Galupo & Gonzalez, 2013; Harnois, 2016). They underscore how their race and gender affect Latino men within college and how they begin to integrate the shift in identities from home to the university context.

The emphasis on Latino male friendship was important to the studies, but it would be remiss to ignore what appears to be a significant relational pattern in Latino men's friendship and their gender consciousness. The "centrality of women," or the learning of feminisms from female family members and acquaintances through every day acts, serves as an important force in transformations and beliefs in young Latino men (Hurtado, 2003; Hurtado & Sinha, 2016). About a quarter of participants in the FDS named women as their best friends and about a quarter of the men expressed highly valuing disclosure and intimacy. The data was not linked to those responses in this study, but the question lingers the extent to which female best friends contributed to the Latino men's definitions of friendship. The Hermanos Subset data further

placed women as valuable resources to becoming El Nuevo Hombre in their feedback to the men about their behaviors. It could be that women are driving the changes in gender consciousness being chronicled in the studies.

It is not uncommon for men to translate the behaviors and lessons they learn from family and their romantic relationships to their friendships (Robinson, Anderson, & White, 2017; Way, 2011). Men's socialization through their "contradictory intersection" appears to also affect their friendship patterns (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016). The care they receive at home can be contributing to their ability to both maintain their male privilege and be caring in their friendships. Hurtado, Haney and Hurtado (2012) argue that home privilege can be considered a protective coping mechanism within the household for the poverty and discrimination that Latino parents are unable to protect their sons from:

Latino families are deeply aware of their sons' harassment by the agents of the state and of their potential vulnerability to violence and death. The terror of losing their sons may lead to overindulgence in the intimacy of family relationships; a "boys will be boys" mentality may prevail, in which they are allowed to dominate the household with no requirements or rules as possible compensation for the extreme surveillance they suffer in public spaces (Hurtado, 2003). From the perspective of poor families, if they cannot protect their boys from violence and death, at least they can comfort them and even pamper them within the home- a dynamic especially salient in female headed households (pp.111-112).



A male privilege socialization in the home, although done out of care, can also create problems for young men. Valenzuela's (1999) analysis of young Latinas monitoring young men's behaviors towards success at the expense of their own, emphasizes that Latina women continue the comfort and indulgence for Latino men's functioning in school. Way and Chen's (2000) analysis of friendships in adolescent African-American, Latino, and Asian American from low-income families suggests there may be a relationship between quality of life at home via the family and the types of friend relationships that boys have. They feel that culture plays a role, with girls being encouraged to have deep friendships that enables girls to create them without having a supportive family home, while boys, being less encouraged, may not be able to without a quality home life, "Boys reported having supportive friendships when their relationships at home were supportive, whereas girls reported having supportive friendships even when they did not have such relationships at home" (pp. 293). The interplay between gender expectations, family life, and context emphasizes the importance of an intersectional understanding of the friendships Latino men are building in college.

### **Implications**

Taken together, these three empirical studies make important contributions to the existing literature. First, this research addresses a gap in the literature by exclusively focusing on Latino men's friendships in the college context. The evidence presented here demonstrates that men are engaging in friendships that can defy the "man box", or the societal assumptions placed on men regarding their masculinity

(Robinson, Anderson, & White, 2017). The harmful behaviors and stereotypes about Latino men that are heavily perpetuated in larger society do not capture the diversity within the male Latino community (Noguera, Hurtado, & Fergus, 2012). Viewed within the confines of male friendship, Latino men's masculinity demonstrates that negative behaviors are not intractable. Behaviors can be shaped by the relationships they develop and with the help of the appropriate community context (Hurtado, 2015; Hurtado & Sinha, 2016; White, 2006).

Friendship plays a critical role in Latino men's educational outcomes. The literature is consistent in findings that friendships are beneficial for psychological adjustment in school contexts and this extends to the college environment (Chang et.al., 2017; Figueroa, 2002; Way, Santos, Cordero, 2011). These studies extend those findings by underscoring the degree to which Latinos aspire towards a sense of community, not just the typical dyad friendship. Establishing a community that they can view as a familia (family) away from home can have a strong impact on Latino male retention. In the end, it is within the realms of feminism to encourage male spaces and friendships that seek to resist and improve upon traditional masculinity towards tolerance and egalitarianism.

Masculinities are often defined in contrast and through the subordination of women (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The men in this study benefitted from their friendships with each other and women. Men realized the bravery that comes from defying masculine expectations and that it does not make them feel less like men, but rather a way to become new men. Men should be encouraged to rescue and

locate pride in other aspects of their identities that can push them towards improvement and equality with others, rather than leveraging their privilege (Adu-Poku, 2001).

### **Limitations and Future Research**

In this section I propose three future directions for studying Latino men's friendships based on the findings from the three studies.

- 1) The first course of interest would be to broaden the analysis of intersectionality in men's friendships. The studies here began preliminary research about men's friendships by considering two main categories, race/ethnicity and gender. The FDS was limited to personal definitions of friendship but did not include an intersectional analysis of broader categories directly, rather it was limited to the discussion of race and gender. The CFMS controlled for many of the social categories of intersectional analysis in favor of viewing how the friendship group's race and ethnicity and critical engagement would contribute to feminist attitudes, again, only the race/ethnicity of the friend group and their gender were examined. The Hermanos Subset focused mostly on a case study of two male members of Hermanos and how they struggled with their race and gender as first-generation men on campus. Future studies would incorporate other social categories in the analysis which were not directly analyzed in these studies, such as class and sexual orientation.

- 2) The second area of research comprises expanding the analysis of The Hermanos Study. Multiple interviews were conducted with other members of Hermanos, survey data was collected from other members, and weeks of ethnographic notes were written. Developing further exploration of the Hermanos Study and how members of the Hermanos organization relate to each other and create community would be a productive line of research.
- 3) For the third line of research, I would like to continue following the Hermanos Unidos organization in a different academic institutional context. The present study only examines Hermanos Unidos in a relatively recently conferred Hispanic Serving Institution and research focused university. The Hermanos Unidos organization has multiple chapters (or familias) across the state that can be having a different impact in state-level institutions with a more diverse student body and faculty. Overall, there are still many points of interest that can be developed moving forward based on the data collected and early findings produced here.

The Latino men I studied echoed the sentiments of boxer and activist Muhammad Ali, whom I quoted earlier. Explaining friendship is a difficult but essential task. The explanations they provided demonstrated that friendships are extremely valuable to young Latino males who are adjusting and achieving in the challenging context of higher education. Those friendships have the potential to transform them and enhance their chances for future success.

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