



# The Effect of Non-Cognitive Outcomes on Perceptions of School as a Feminine Domain among Latino Men in Community College

This study provides insight into the relationship between Latino males' perceptions of school as a feminine domain and the following non-cognitive outcomes: degree utility (the level to which Latino men perceive their degree to be worthwhile), locus of control (the degree to which Latino men believe they have personal control over their education), intrinsic interest (the degree to which Latino men are intrinsically motivated to pursue their collegiate goals), and self-efficacy (the degree to which Latino men believe that they can succeed). Findings from the hierarchical multiple regression revealed that degree utility, locus of control, and intrinsic interest were significant predictors of Latino males' perception of school as a feminine domain.

*Keywords:* Latino males, community college, masculinity

College student success has been a topic of increasing importance over the past decade. Most recently, postsecondary educational leaders and scholars have turned their attention towards facilitating successful outcomes for students of color, particularly men in the community college (Bush & Bush, 2010; Flowers, 2006; Harper, 2009; Harris III & Wood, 2013; Sáenz, Bukosi, Lu, & Rodriguez, 2013, Strayhorn, 2012; Vasquez Urias, 2012; Wood, 2013; Wood & Hilton, 2012; Wood & Ireland, 2013; Wood & Palmer, 2013). Such focus has risen to a national platform due to President Barack Obama's current initiative, My Brother's Keeper. The intent of the initiative is to "address persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color and ensure that all young people can reach their full potential" (White House, 2014). While the initiative and the Task Force are to be commended for its efforts, its 90-day progress report illustrates the need for additional development, particularly in the area of higher education. For example, only one of six key mile-

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stones identified by the Task Force as being instrumental to the future success of young Americans addresses postsecondary education. Yet, upon closer examination, such recommendation mainly targeted high school students, emphasizing access to advanced placement courses, financial aid applications, and general college knowledge (Johnson & Shelton, 2014). These recommendations overlook significant gaps in college enrollment and completion outcomes among students in community college, particularly Latino men.

While Latino males are generally underrepresented in higher education (Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009), those beginning their postsecondary education are more likely to attend a community college (Kurlaender, 2006; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2011). According to Vasquez Urias (2012), 71.3 percent of college-going Latino males will attend a public, two-year college, while only 26.4 percent and 2.3 percent will enroll in a public four-year university or a “less than two-year” institution (e.g., career colleges, occupational centers), respectively. Despite these high enrollment rates, persistence among Latino men in community college remains an issue of concern. For example, after their first year, nearly 13 percent of Latino men will have left college without return. This rate increases to 35.2% after two years and nearly doubles (57.6%) after six years (Vasquez Urias, 2012).

Scholars of the Latino male experience in higher education have advocated a number of plausible factors to account for declines in persistence and completion among these men. For instance, Sáenz and Ponjuan (2008) posited that social, cultural, and structural pressures inhibit Latino males from reaching their academic goals. Such pressures include the need to work to support family and contradicting pride in identifying with traditional norms of academic success (e.g., “acting white”, p. 61). In addition, Sáenz and Ponjuan assert that peer and cultural expectations propel mixed messages about identity and gender roles, making it much more difficult for Latino males to internalize positive self-reflections of belonging. Structural influences, such as a lack of Latino faculty (Hagedorn, Chi, Cepeda, & Mclain, 2007), institutional characteristics such as urbanicity and attendance intensity (Vasquez Urias, 2012), and hostile racial campus climate (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005), have also been found to affect Latino student outcomes. Regarding the latter, Carillo (2013) asserts that Latino male collegians whose “bilingual-bicultural identities are often muted by institutions that are not prepared to engage the social and cultural worlds they embody” (p. 196), are forced to disengage with the institution.

As scholars continue to explore these complexities, our understanding of the effects of Latino male identity and masculinity on college outcomes also continues to evolve. This study seeks to add to the extant literature on Latino male masculine identity (Arciniega, Anderson, Tovar-Blank, & Tracy, 2008; Carillo, 2013; de la Canceleda, 1986; Mirandé, 1997; Sáenz et al., 2013; Schwartz, Donovan, & Guido-DiBrito, 2009), particularly for those enrolled in public two-year colleges. The following section describes the theoretical frameworks that guided this study.

### GUIDING THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

This study draws upon two guiding frameworks. The first is Wood and Harris III and Wood’s (2014) Socio-Ecological Outcomes (SEO) model, which suggests that men of color begin college with a predisposed perception of college life as determined by background characteristics (e.g., age, generation status) and other socie-

tal factors (e.g., racial prejudice, economic conditions). The model highlights four critical domains that influence student success during college. These include: (1) campus ethos (e.g., belonging, campus resources, validating agents), (2) environmental factors (e.g., external commitments, stressful life events), (3) academic factors (e.g., time on task, faculty-student interaction, service use), and (4) non-cognitive factors (e.g., intrapersonal, identity). The SEO model proposes that factors within the environmental and campus ethos domains influence non-cognitive and academic factors. Such interactions, including the bi-directional relationship between non-cognitive and academic factors, influence student success outcomes (e.g., persistence, achievement, transfer). While the model appears to underscore the importance of relationships *between* these domains, this study sought to examine the relationships of factors *within* one particular domain—the non-cognitive domain. As previously noted, the non-cognitive domain includes student identity (gender, racial/ethnic, spiritual) and other intrapersonal factors (action control, degree utility, locus of control, intrinsic interest, and self-efficacy). Using data from the Community College Survey of Men (CCSM), this study focused specifically on variables pertaining to gender identity (also referred to as masculine identity) and its relationship to the SEO model's five intrapersonal factors.

This examination of masculine identity is important, particularly for men of color. While a framework distinctive to Latino men has yet to emerge, this study looks to O'Neil's (1981) framework of male gender role conflict (MGRC) for guidance. MGRC is characterized as a negative consequence of the discrepancies between men's "authentic selves" (p. 29) and the socially and culturally constructed images of masculinity. MGRC identifies several patterns of behavior, which are associated with perceived notions of masculinity. For example, restricted emotionality relates to men's difficulty or unwillingness to express their feelings and their disregard for male femininity. Such restricted emotionality discourages genuine interpersonal closeness between men, which in college, may limit men's interactions with male peers or seek help from institutional agents (e.g., faculty, counselors, staff, administrators). A second pattern associated with MGRC includes socialized control, power, and competition, which relates to men's desire to regulate the situations and the people in their lives. In college, this pattern is demonstrated through sexual relationships with women, seeking status within exclusively male peer groups, and the accumulation of material possessions (Harris, 1995; Harris III & Harper, 2008). Finally, MGRC asserts that the socially constructed expectation of men becoming the breadwinner for their families leads to an obsession with achievement and success. For those men enrolled in college, such preoccupation often increases men's fear of failing and increases pressure to succeed (Sáenz et al., 2013). These responses often lead to negative behavior, including physical and emotional stress and reliance on food, alcohol, and drugs to soothe anxiety.

O'Neil (1981) also asserts that men have been socialized to fear and devalue feminine roles and values, such as associated with education, in order to uphold a "masculine mystique" (p. 205), which holds dominance, power, and control in high esteem. As a result, MGRC assumes that gender role socialization affects gender identity and personal beliefs about the nature of masculinity and femininity—namely, that the femininity is inferior to the so-called masculine mystique. Such notion of inferiority has been associated with school settings, as scholars have postulated that these institutions of learning are venues for socialization (Carrillo, 2013; Harris III & Harper, 2008; Harper, 2004). As gender role conflict can cause psycho-

logical stress (O’Niel, 1981), the impact it can have on Latino men is further complicated by cultural conceptions of masculinity (i.e., *machismo* and *caballerismo*) (Sáenz et al., 2013). While these two factors fall outside the scope of this study, the researchers acknowledge them as added complexities of masculine identity and its affect on a healthy experience in college. This study’s purpose is delineated in the following section.

### STUDY PURPOSE

While scholars have explored gender and masculinity among Latino male collegians, very few have done so within the context of the community college (Sáenz et al., 2013). This study sought to provide insight into the relationship between Latino males’ perceptions of school as a feminine domain and non-cognitive outcomes, which include students’ affective and emotional responses to social and environmental experiences within a college setting. The five non-cognitive outcomes examined in this study included: (1) degree utility (the level to which Latino men perceive their degree to be worthwhile), (2) locus of control (the degree to which Latino men believe they have personal control over their education), (3) action control (the degree to which Latino men believe they are in control of their behavior), (4) intrinsic interest (the degree to which Latino men are innately motivated to pursue their collegiate goals), and (5) self-efficacy (the degree to which Latino men believe that they can succeed). With this purpose in mind, the following research question guided this study:

What relationships exist (if any) between students’ perceptions of school as a feminine domain and the following non-cognitive outcomes: (a) degree utility, (b) locus of control, (c) action control, (d) intrinsic interest, and (e) self-efficacy. The following null and alternative hypotheses were employed in this study:

*Null Hypotheses:* there will be no relationship between students’ perceptions of school as a feminine domain and non-cognitive outcomes.

*Alternative Hypotheses:* there will be a relationship between students’ perceptions of school as a feminine domain and non-cognitive outcomes.

This study is one of few focused on Latino males in public, two-year colleges in conjunction with masculinity. This research seeks to deconstruct the concept of masculinity by exploring the effect of various non-cognitive outcomes on Latino male perceptions of school as a feminine domain. The researchers hope that the findings from this study can be used to initiate further insights about the role that Latino male masculine identity plays in the experiences of these college-going men. The following section will review the existing literature on masculine identity of Latino males in two-year colleges.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

While scholars have explored the concept of masculine identity among Latino male collegians, very few have done so for Latino men in community colleges (Harris III & Harper, 2008; Sáenz et al., 2013). Guided by O’Niel’s (1981) framework of male gender role conflict (MGRFC), Sáenz and colleagues (2013) sought to examine the role of masculinity on Latino male community college students in Texas. Using

a phenomenological approach, the researchers conducted 23 focus groups with 130 Latino men enrolled at seven community colleges across the state of Texas. The authors sought to explore how the masculinity constructs identified by MGRC influenced the educational experiences of Latino men in community college. Findings illustrated three relevant behavioral patterns associated with MGRC, including restrictive emotionality; focus on control, power, and competition; and obsession with achievement and success.

Regarding the first two constructs, Sáenz et al. (2013) found that Latino men avoided seeking help due to their pride, or *machismo*. The participants also appeared to have difficulty expressing emotions that would reveal vulnerability of their academic performance. Yet, the construction of *machismo* represented both positive and negative aspects of their identities as community college students. For example, pride/ *machismo* was considered a source of strength and motivation, which drove their competitive nature to work harder towards accomplishing their goals. On the other hand, participants noted that pride and stubbornness also prevented them from seeking help when most needed. Interestingly, this lack of help-seeking behavior was influenced by a fear of failure. Yet, rather than facing the possibility of failure, Sáenz and colleagues (2013) contended that the men demonstrated fight or flight responses, typically opting for the latter. The preoccupation with achieving social status and financial security for their families pushed many of the participants toward employment, which Sáenz et al. (2013) associated as a cultural marker of manhood. In sum, the Latino males in this study appeared to find difficulty in foregoing markers of masculinity, such as gainful employment.

Although not specific to Latino men, a notable study by Harris III and Harper (2008) explored identity development among men at community colleges. Their work provided insight into male students' precollege experiences of gender socialization and conflicts that impeded the development of productive masculinities in college. Also guided by O'Neil's (1981) framework of male gender role conflict (MGRC), the researchers sought to understand the experiences of four community college men in confronting socially constructed gender identity with going to college. Harris III and Harper (2008) presented the profiles of four racially different men enrolled in community colleges, including (1) the working White mechanic, (2) the struggling Asian help seeker, (3) the closeted Black gay achiever, and (4) the Latino homeboy (Erik). Concerning the latter, Harris III and Harper highlighted the role that Erik's peers played in manifesting restricted emotionality and socialized control, power, and competition. For example, for fear of his friends' reaction to successfully completing high school, Erik chose not to partake in the graduation ceremony. In an effort to fit in with a particular group of young men, Erik felt pressured to spend time with them, often engaging in sex with girls and minor illicit activities. After high school, Erik enrolled in community college, but felt conflicted about continuing his education when his father fell ill. His male peers expressed their dissatisfaction with his decision to pursue college rather than getting a job to financially support his family. This too demonstrated the struggle Erik experienced between maintaining a dominant image within his circle of peers and wanting to pursue higher education. Harris III and Harper concluded that across each of the experiences of the four racially different men, all struggled with managing their socially constructed masculine identity while enrolled in community college. While these two studies provided qualitative perspectives on the experiences of Latino men and the concept of masculinity, the present study attempts to examine the role

of non-cognitive outcomes on the masculine domain of femininity via a quantitative approach. The methods used in this study are described in the following section.

## METHODS

Data for this study were collected via the Community College Survey of Men (CCSM), an instrument that serves as an institutional-level assessment tool that focuses on men from historically underrepresented and undeserved backgrounds, particularly men of color. Developed by Wood and Harris III (2013), the CCSM includes 116 items situated in 30 questioning blocks. The population sample was derived from distribution of the CCSM at 13 public, two-year colleges in California, Arizona, and Illinois. Data were delimited to only include Latino male respondents, including men who identified as Mexicano (Mexican/Mexican American descent) and Latino (excluding Mexicano), which produced a final sample of 722 Latino men.

### Variables

The researcher used multiple linear regression analysis to investigate non-cognitive, intrapersonal predictors. These predictors included: degree utility, self-efficacy, locus of control, intrinsic interest, and action control. All outcomes scales were composite variables derived from responses to four items. The scale reliability for each outcome was as follows: degree utility,  $\alpha = .88$ ; self-efficacy,  $\alpha = .90$ ; locus of control,  $\alpha = .91$ ; intrinsic interest,  $\alpha = .89$ ; and action control,  $\alpha = .91$ . These scales have been found to have strong internal consistency and cross-racial/ethnic reliability (Wood & Harris III, 2013).

To isolate the effect of the predictor variable in this study (i.e., perceptions of school as a feminine domain), seven control variables were employed. These included (1) respondents' age, (2) total number of dependents, (3) high school GPA, (4) enrollment intensity, (5) stressful life events, (6) total credits earned, and (7) hours spent working for pay. Respondents' age was ranged on the following scale: Under 18 years old (coded "1"); 18 to 24 (coded "2"), 25 to 31 (coded "3"); 32 to 38 (coded "4"); 39 to 45 (coded "5"); 46 to 52 (coded "6"); 53 to 59 (coded "7"); 60 to 66 (coded "8"); and 67 or older (coded "9"). Total number of dependents referred to the number of individuals (e.g., children, siblings, parents, grandparents) for whom the respondent was financially responsible. Respondents' unweighted high school grade point averages (GPA) were collected to account for prior academic performance. These intervals were coded on the following scale: 0.5 to 0.9 (F to D) ("1"); 1.0 to 1.4 (D to C-) ("2"); 1.5 to 1.9 (C- to C) ("3"); 2.0 to 2.4 (C to B-) ("4"); 2.4 to 2.9 (B- to B) ("5"); 3.0 to 3.4 (B to A-) ("6"); and 3.5 to 4.0 (A- to A) ("7"). Student's enrollment status was delineated as full-time (coded "1") and part-time (coded "2"). Stressful life events referred to the total number of stressful life events experienced by the respondent in the past two years. The following examples were included on the instrument for students to consider: divorce in family, loss of job, eviction, relationship breakup, incarceration, major change at work, illness in family, and death of a close friend or family member. Regarding the variable "total credits", respondents were asked to identify the total number of courses they had completed at the time in which they were administered the CCSM. Such variable

was ranged on the following scale: none yet (coded "1"); 1 to 14 credits (coded "2"); 15 to 29 credits (coded "3"); 30 to 44 credits (coded "4"); 45 to 60 credits (coded "5"); and 61 or more credits (coded "6"). Lastly, the variable "hours worked per week" was used to determine the total number of hours that respondents worked off campus each week. This variable was collected on a ten-point scale ranging from none (coded "1") up through 41 or more (coded "10") hours per week.

The primary outcome variable employed in this study was students' perceptions of school as a feminine domain. This composite variable included four items: (1) school is structured to serve both men and women, (2) school is equally important for both men and women, (3) being in school does not make me feminine (e.g., punk, sissy, wuss), (4) men and women are equally capable of doing well in school ( $\alpha = .95$ ). Students responded to each statement using a six-point scale of agreement, including: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) somewhat disagree, (4) somewhat agree, (5) agree, and (6) strongly agree. To reduce the potential effect of multi-collinearity among predictor variables, tolerance and variance inflation factors were examined; all were within normal ranges.

### Analytic Procedure

This study employed a three stage analytic process. In the first stage, exploratory data analysis was used to examine key relationships amongst study variables. Primarily these analyses were descriptive in nature, including means, standard devi-

Table 1  
*Descriptive Statistics*

	Mean	SD	N
Feminine	21.8274	3.09099	722
Please indicate your age.	2.76	1.222	722
How many individuals depend on you for financial support?	2.00	1.453	722
Please indicate your high school GPA (on a 4.0 scale).	5.18	1.244	722
How would you describe your enrollment this academic term?	1.43	.486	722
Indicate the number of major stressful life events you have experienced in the past two years.	4.13	2.160	722
How many total credits/units have you earned? (not counting courses you are currently taking)?	3.48	1.590	722
Working for pay off campus	4.91	3.439	722
Utility	20.5672	3.38715	722
Locus	21.3635	3.16198	722
Action	19.3160	3.84746	722
Efficacy	20.2284	3.30397	722
Intrinsic	20.3186	3.34058	722

ations, percentages, and adherence to normal analytical assumptions. Second, Pearson product moment correlation was employed to examine relationships between the control, predictor, and outcome variables, as well as interrelationships among independent variables employed in this study. Lastly, the researcher used hierarchical multiple regression to examine the effect of non-cognitive variables on the outcome. The reported data used beta coefficients and standardized beta coefficients.

Finally, one common challenge associated with secondary data analysis is missing values. While minimal data were missing from the data source, the limited sample size necessitated leveraging all responses. Analysis of missing values indicated that the data were missing completely at random (MCAR). Missing values in the dataset were imputed using the expectation-maximization procedure; as a result all models were tested at .01.

## FINDINGS

This study set out to explore the relationship between non-cognitive variables and school as a feminine domain. To provide an initial indication of potential relationships between the control and predictor variables on the outcome, this study employed a Pearson correlation. Interestingly, there was no significant relationship between any of the control variables and the outcome variables of the study. However, moderate correlations existed between the predictor variables and the outcome. Degree utility was positively correlated with healthy perceptions of school as a feminine domain ( $r = .374, p < .001$ ). This suggests that as students place a greater value on educational pursuits, they are more likely to perceive school as a domain that is equally suited to support both men and women. Next, locus of control also revealed a positive relationship on the control variable ( $r = .392, p < .001$ ). Thus, Latino men who consider themselves having high levels of personal control over their education are also more likely to have positive perceptions of school as a feminine domain. Similar positive relationships were found between respondents' perceptions of action control ( $r = .237, p < .01$ ) and self-efficacy ( $r = .245, p < .01$ ) on the outcome. This finding suggests that the more likely Latino men believe in their ability to regulate their behavior and succeed academically, the more likely they are to perceive school as a significant endeavor for both genders. Finally, intrinsic interest, which refers to the degree that students are internally motivated to pursue education, also reflected a positive significant relationship ( $r = .354, p < .01$ ) on the outcome.

While correlations provided an understanding of initial relationships, hierarchical multiple regression was employed to examine predictive utility of the variables in this study. The first model, inclusive of the background and environmental variables, accounted for one percent in the outcome. As a whole, this model was not significantly predictive of the outcome,  $f(713) = .913, p = .51$ . In the second model, which included the predictor variables, the non-cognitive predictor variables accounted for 21.4 percent of the outcome ( $R^2 = .214, \text{adj } R^2 = .200$ ). This represented a significant improvement from the initial model ( $F^\Delta = 36.796, p < .001$ ). As a whole, this model was significantly predictive of the outcome  $f(708) = 14.855, p < .001$ . None of the control variables were significant predictors in the first or second model. However, three of the five control variables demonstrated a significant effect on the outcome. Specifically, degree utility was a determinant of perceptions of school

as a feminine domain,  $B = .157, p < .001$ . Additionally, locus of control ( $B = .265, p < .001$ ) and intrinsic interest ( $B = .182, p < .001$ ) were also identified as significant predictors of school as a feminine domain. Based on the standard beta coefficients, locus of control had the strongest effect on the outcome (std  $B = .271$ ), followed by intrinsic interest (std  $B = .196$ ), and degree utility, (std  $B = .172$ ).

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Of the five non-cognitive outcomes examined in this study, degree utility, locus of control, and intrinsic interest were found to have a significantly positive effect on Latino males' perceptions of school as a feminine domain. In other words, the more that Latino men believed their degree to be worthwhile, believed they had personal control over their academic pursuits, and were internally motivated to succeed, the more likely they were to have positive perceptions of school as a feminine domain. Although these relationships appear evident given that worthwhileness and motivation would drive individuals to enroll in school, these findings also offer another important insight. According to O'Neil (1981), MGRC assumes that men have been socialized to devalue feminine roles, such as association with education, in an attempt to maintain dominance, power, and control. However, the present study's findings indicate otherwise. This research challenges beliefs that men, specifically Latino men, do not value their education or are not self-motivated due to their perceptions that school is not a place suitable for males. These findings are in line with those of Sáenz et al. (2013), in which masculine identity for Latino men was found to be a motivating factor driving their competitive nature to work harder towards accomplishing their goals.

Moreover, of the three non-cognitive outcomes, the construct with the larger beta coefficient was locus of control. This may suggest that Latino men who perceive themselves as focused and driven, are comfortable with their masculinity and do not fear the perception of school being a space only for women. Interestingly, self-efficacy and action control were not significantly related to the outcome. This may suggest that while Latino men believe a college degree is worthwhile and that they have the ability to control internal and external factors for success, they lack an internal belief in themselves to actually achieve success. This outcome may also be complicated by the effects of MGRC's notion of restricted emotionality, in which Sáenz et al. (2013) and Harris III and Harper (2008) each found as hindrances to Latino men's willingness to seek help from institutional agents. These differences are steppingstones for further inquiry.

As previously noted, while Latino men enroll in community colleges at higher rates than four-year institutions, persistence outcomes for these men at public two-year colleges remain low (Vasquez Urias, 2012). In an effort to address such disparity, numerous colleges across the country have developed programs and initiatives targeting men of color. The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) Minority Male Student Success Database presently lists 84 of these programs, all of which intend to improve the success of minority men in the community college. While the findings from this study may not advocate any one particular program or initiative for Latino men, they do suggest the importance of building a positive culture towards practitioner understanding of non-cognitive factors influencing Latino men in community college. For example, rather than assuming that Latino men who do not perform well academically do so as a result of

their own lack of motivation or belief that a college degree is not worthwhile, community college practitioners should work towards strengthening these men's belief in themselves. Small-scale interventions may include additional support from counselors via structured Latino male circles or a self-empowerment course. In addition, small acts from faculty and staff, such as relaying positive messages (both in and out of the classroom), may help Latino males internalize positive self-efficacy beliefs and adopt behaviors that accord with such beliefs.

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