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This chapter provides insights on the community college transfer experiences of Latino men. In particular, we conceptualize how Latino men navigate different spaces (intellectual, emotional, geographical) with the support of family members.

Landing Spaces and Capital: Transfer Resiliency and Knowledge Building Among Latino Men

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Introduction

As the nation prepares for a nearly 29% increase in the Latina/o/x[1] population by the year 2060 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017), educators must consider the implications of this growth, particularly the enrollment of Latina/o/x students in higher education (Crisp & Nora, 2010). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), approximately 68.9% of Latina/o high school completers were enrolled in some form of higher education; this included approximately 46% enrolling at 2-year institutions (Krogstad & Fry, 2015). While Latina/o/x students make up a significant percentage of enrollments at community colleges, data suggest Latina/o/x students are not graduating with bachelor's degrees at the same pace as their peers (Excelencia in Education, 2019). Nearly 80% of students who begin at a 2-year institution express an intent to pursue a bachelor's degree (Rhine, Milligan, & Nelson, 2000), yet only 15% move on to earn their degree within six years (Jenkins & Fink, 2016). This lies in stark contrast to data on students who began at 4-year institutions. Among students who originally matriculated at a 4-year campus, nearly 60% earned a bachelor's degree within the same timeframe (Crosta & Kopko, 2014). Cataldi et al. (2011) further illustrated the importance of community colleges in the lives of Latina/o students, finding that nearly 35% of Latinas/os who earned a bachelor's degree were once transfer students from public 2-year colleges.

While prior research has focused on the collective experiences of Latina/o/x students, scholars have suggested a need to examine their

experiences from an intersectional lens, so as to better understand relationships between gender, culture, and educational experiences (Hurtado & Sinha, 2016). One area in need of further exploration is the role of gender and masculinities within the academic context for Latino men. Thanks to the work of scholars in this volume, there has been an increase of study on Latino men, particularly in the community college. Such research has revealed disproportionate outcomes for these men. For example, 6% of Latino men over age 25 earn an associate degree compared to 41.2% of all men 25 and older; additionally, 10% of Latino men hold a bachelor's degree compared to 32% of all men 25 and older (Ryan & Bauman, 2016; Santiago, Galdeano, & Taylor, 2015). Wood, Harris, and Xiong (2014) also found that only 15.4% of Latino men earn a certificate, degree, or transfer from a 2-year to a 4-year institution within 3 years. These inequities in outcomes underscore the need for more intentional work to support the pre- and post-transfer experiences of Latino men.

This chapter shares insights from a larger study that centered on understanding how Latino men's socialized constructions of gender influenced their transition from the community college to a 4-year setting. Broadly, we sought to understand the participants' overall community college and transfer experiences, with a focus on how gender socialization and masculinities influenced the transfer process. Examining social constructions of gender helps us explore critical aspects of Latino men's experiences such as seeking help or engaging with peers, faculty, and counselors on campus. We situate our findings using Salinas' (2015) crossover capital framework, which describes the ways that participants navigate their academic pathways by crossing intellectual, emotional, and geographical borders. We posit that Latino men gain crossover capital through interactions with family as they transfer from a community college to a 4-year university.

The following sections present a review of literature on transfer and the role of family for Latino men in community college. This is followed by a discussion of the crossover capital framework (Salinas, 2015) as a lens to understand the transfer experiences of Latino men in this study. In this chapter, we conceptualize how Latino men negotiate the transfer process and their social identities in various spaces. In particular, we highlight their experiences and the process of interacting with family as they enroll in and navigate the educational setting. We conclude with a discussion of the findings and implications for future research and practice.

Transfer Conditions That Foster Productive Success

Given the growing number of transfer students at 4-year universities, it is important for institutions to consider how they admit and support Latina/o/x transfer students. In fact, Jain, Herrera, Bernal, and Solorzano (2011) urged 4-year institutions to foster a transfer receptive culture, which they define as an institutional commitment to ensure that transfer students

are equipped with the knowledge and resources to successfully earn a baccalaureate degree. Prior studies have documented that students successfully experience the transfer process if they have a support network, have a transfer agent, and their post-secondary institutions assists with the transfer process (Bensimon & Dowd, 2009; Crisp & Nora, 2010; Nuñez & Elizondo, 2013; Starobin & Laanan, 2005). Moreover, the success of Latino transfer students can depend on the viability of transferring to a new university (Rivas, Perez, Alvarez, & Solorzano, 2007). Scholars have also asserted that interactions with faculty inside and outside the classroom, interactions with counselors, and being involved with support programs may ease the transition for Latino students to a 4-year institution (Rodriguez, Jordan, Doran, & Sáenz, 2019; Tovar, 2015). In addition to these institutional support systems, research has also underscored the holistic support that Latino families play in the academic success of Latino men.

The Role of Family for Latino Men in Community College

While scholars have documented the experiences of men of color in the community college (Harris III & Wood, 2013; Vasquez, Vang, Garcia, & Harris, 2019; Wood & Ireland, 2014; Xiong & Wood, 2016), only recently has there been an increase of literature on Latino men within this educational sector (Abrica & Martinez, 2016; Rodriguez, Massey, & Sáenz, 2016; Sáenz, Mayo, Miller, & Rodriguez, 2015; Salinas & Hidrowoh, 2018; Vasquez & Wood, 2015). Among these, a handful of peer-reviewed pieces center the role of family. While not focused specifically on transfer, these studies capture the significance of familial capital (Yosso, 2005) for Latino men in community college, capturing unique differences in relationships with specific family members.

Employing a qualitative approach, Sáenz, García-Louis, de las Mercédez, and Rodriguez (2018) gathered data via twenty-three focus groups with 130 Latino men enrolled in seven Texas community colleges. This study sought to understand the way Latino men described the influence of women in their family on their educational pathways. Similarly, Sáenz, de las Mercédez, Rodriguez, and García-Louis (2017) utilized the same dataset to explore the ways Latino men perceived their fathers' influence on their education. Both studies found that parental guidance, namely *consejos*, served as motivation and instilled resilience for Latino men. The difference, however, was the type of messaging that was conveyed from women family members and fathers. Latino men internalized *consejos* from women (e.g., mothers, sisters, grandmothers) as support, mentorship, and inspiration, while *consejos* from fathers were perceived as life lessons on hard work and persistence.

The latter, although a positive influence, also caused tension between students' commitment to their education and responsibility to family. As noted by Sáenz, García-Louis, Drake, and Guida (2018), *familismo* plays

a meaningful role in the way Latino men interpret and navigate their college experience. On one hand, earning a college degree inspired a sense of pride, not only for Latino men, but also for the entire family. Yet, the weight of choosing a career path with a stronger earning potential to benefit the entire family further complicates the internalized pressure Latino men experienced due to expected gender roles (i.e., breadwinner) (Sáenz et al., 2017; Sáenz, Bukoski, Lu, & Rodriguez, 2013). Latino men must often negotiate conflicting messages, particularly from their fathers, about time spent toward education (e.g., studying, attending class) versus working to contribute financially to their family. Yet, despite this, strong familial ties and positive support from all family members, including extended family, served as a sense of pride and motivation for Latino men to persist.

Such findings support the assertion that family and a sense of community assist in retaining Latino men in community college. Yet, additional research on how families influence Latino men's transition from a 2-year to a 4-year institution is needed. Furthermore, while scholars have written on the transfer experiences of students in general, there is a need to explore the racialized and gendered perspectives of this student population. Salinas' (2015) crossover capital framework considers the way Latino men navigate spaces (intellectually, emotionally, and geographically) and gain intersecting forms of capital. This process is further described in the following section.

Conceptualizing the Experiences of Latino Men Transfer Students

Over the years, scholars have conceptualized the term "capital" in ways that extend beyond the fiscal sense of the word. Building off Bourdieu's (1977) theory of cultural capital, Yosso (2005) re-conceptualizes this framework through an anti-deficit perspective. Recently, Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth model considers the assets (or forms of capital) that students of color bring with them from home to higher education, including aspirational, navigational, linguistic, social, familial, and resistant (see Yosso, 2005). Rendón, Nora, and Kanagala (2014) noted four additional forms of capital including *ganas*/perseverance, ethnic consciousness, spirituality/faith, and pluriversal cultural wealth. While these conceptualizations focus on students' sociocultural identities, Laanan's (2007) Transfer Student Capital (TSC) focused on the process by which students gained information about the transfer process, including course prerequisites, transfer credits, and college major requirements (see Laanan, Starobin, & Eggleston, 2010). Thus, the more TSC students gain, the more likely they are to transfer to a 4-year university.

These frameworks have provided scholars and practitioners with ways to understand students' funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) from varying perspectives. Adding to this repertoire is Salinas' (2015) crossover capital framework. Salinas posited that Latino men gain capital

through an interactive socialization process, in and out of the academy, that allows them to recognize their privileged (e.g., gender) and oppressed (e.g., race/ethnicity) identities. This new consciousness thereby affords Latino men the knowledge (i.e., capital) to navigate the academy by code switching (Poplack, 1980) in different spaces. Thereby, crossover capital refers to the process in which individuals, consciously or unconsciously, understand when they have crossed intellectual, psychological, emotional, and geographical borderlands when interacting with communities of people, places, and settings (Salinas, 2015, 2017). Drawing on Anzaldúa's (1999, 2007) concept of borderlands, Salinas asserts that as Latino students encounter varying borders, they constantly negotiate their sociocultural identities. The process of crossing visible and invisible spaces leads individuals to move from one *landing space* to another *landing space.* Landing spaces are defined as

> *places where people have created and gained a sense of comfort as a form of knowing like-minded communities. A landing space depicts the concept of having an understanding that people can code-switch, if needed, and adapt to places and environments where they feel supported, safe, and comfortable given the situation, time, and location. (Salinas, 2015, p. 121)*

Salinas (2015) identified eight landing spaces from which Latino men experience the crossover capital process in educational settings, including family influences, family *dichos*, seeking justice and gaining privilege through education, crossing geographical borders, self-identification of ethnicity, linguistics, gender/male privilege, and creating justice and promoting access through action based.

When individuals experience a crossover from one *landing space* to another, they may perform their social identities in accordance with the space. While these eight landings spaces can be viewed independently, they are all interrelated.

About Our Study

To extend our understanding of the transfer experiences of Latino men, we conducted in-depth interviews with thirty-four undergraduate students, enrolled at 4-year institutions in Texas ($n = 11$), California ($n = 10$), and Florida ($n = 13$) (Rodriguez, Vasquez, & Salinas, 2017,). Broadly, the study explored how sociocultural factors impacted engagement and retention among Latino men. Furthermore, we sought to not only understand the meanings that Latino men ascribed to their community college experiences, but also to their success in navigating pathways from community college to 4-year institutions. Participants were over the age of 18, self-identified as Latino or Hispanic, self-identified as men, had transferred from a 2-year to a 4-year institution, and were currently enrolled as undergraduate students at a 4-year university.

Figure 7.1.   Institutional context and the eight landing spaces students cross. Adapted from Salinas (2015).
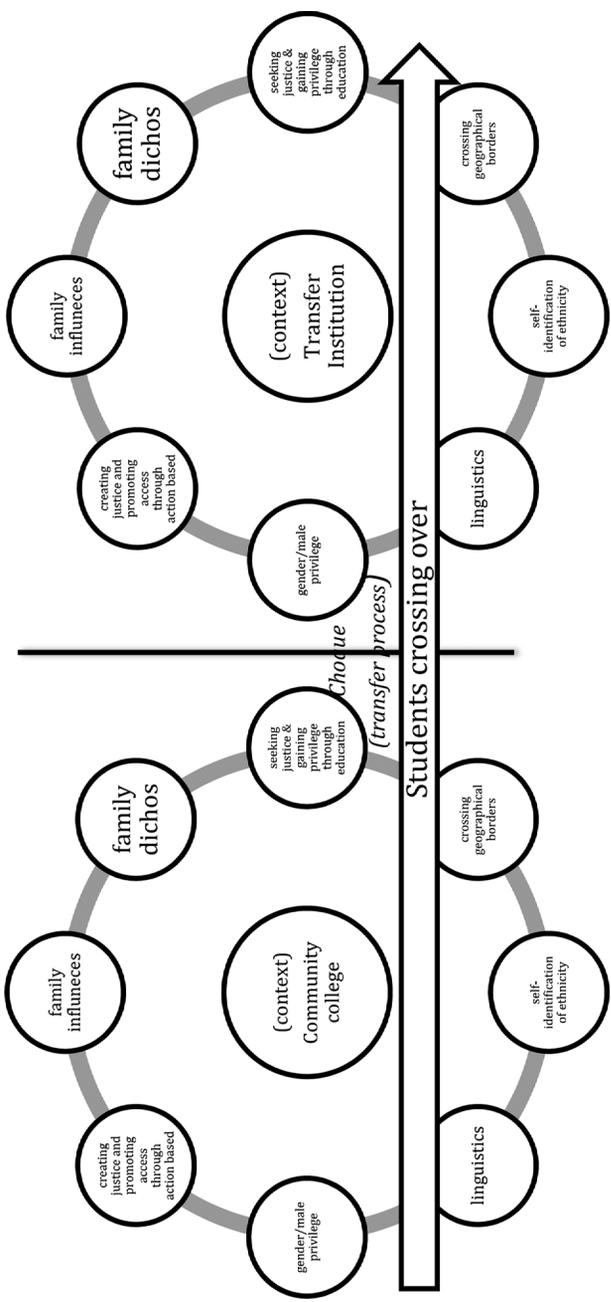
Each participant engaged in two, 1-hour, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews. The first interview sought to understand the participants' overall community college and transfer experiences (e.g., adjustment, engagement, transition), while the second explored how gender socialization, masculinities and identity conflicts influenced the transfer process. Students were also encouraged to share any other information they felt might be relevant to their experience. Most participants were enrolled full-time (82.4%), were of Mexican descent (59%), spoke Spanish at home (41%), were born outside of the United States (69%), and had parents who were born outside of the United States (92%). Students represented a variety of majors across campuses with the most common disciplines being business ($n = 8$), engineering ($n = 6$), natural sciences ($n = 6$), and liberal arts ($n = 5$). The majority (82.4%) planned on earning an advanced degree. The next section presents a summary of our findings.

Findings

As Latino men encountered new academic contexts along their transfer trajectory, they consistently negotiated their sociocultural identities. This crossing between landing spaces provided Latino men crossover capital as they attained new skills and knowledge from the various spaces in which they found themselves. Next, we share three ways in which the participants expressed their crossing over of spaces and how their families played a crucial role in these experiences, including intellectual borders, emotional borders, and geographical borders.

Crossing Intellectual Borders.   In our study, the crossing of an intellectual border meant learning how to understand, navigate, and shift one's ways of knowing to adhere to the norms of an academic setting. For our participants, this occurred at two distinct times. The first was during the transition from high school to community college, and the second was from community college to the 4-year university. Both times, students experienced the crossover between landing spaces (Salinas, 2017), or what Anzaldúa (1999) described as a *choque*, or a cultural collision, in which students found themselves experiencing an incongruence of cultural realities as they entered unfamiliar academic contexts (Rendón et al., 2014).

Many participants spoke of their initial transition into community college as having to cross into new learning environments, a new landing space. For most, navigating this new space was overwhelming, particularly those who were the first in their families to attend college. Without adequate institutional support, they relied on encouragement and guidance from loved ones, including parents, siblings, and significant others. Reflections like this one from Enrique in Florida were common amongst participants:

Family … always being there for me when I need them. Like if I'm studying they'll walk by and be like "Oh do you need anything?" I guess the attentiveness when

I'm actually working is very supportive and them helping me out whenever I need it is also great, like [their] cooking.

In addition to family members, participants often cited significant others as a source of support—offering words of encouragement, ensuring they were enrolled in classes, and serving as role models if they too were in school or had already earned a degree.

The second intellectual border crossing occurred during the transition from community college to the transfer institution. While many participants struggled with their transition, they described ways in which they utilized the knowledge (capital) gained from their time in community college to navigate the 4-year setting. Gilberto from Texas shared:

I think back when I was transitioning…I really put a lot of pressure on myself to be self-sufficient. In a lot of ways, I am. At Community College I did a lot of things that were self-sufficient, but when I transitioned, yeah I really put a lot of pressure on myself…Now, I'm much better and I'm much more comfortable asking for help and I'm okay with that.

Similar to the *choque* that occurred during their transition into community college, participants struggled to adapt to the expectations of a 4-year university. However, unlike their initial experiences at the community college, participants were more likely to seek additional support, visit professors during office hours, and become socially engaged on campus. Students like Carlos from California had gained a sense of confidence in seeking help, commenting, "*I go and talk to the professors or I don't really hesitate to email them and tell them, 'Okay. Can we meet up?'*" At each of these transitional points crossing from one landing space to another (high school-to-community college-to-transfer institution), students demonstrated the capital they gained from a previous experience at their given landing space that they were able to bring over and be more successful.

Crossing Emotional Borders.   In addition to crossing intellectual borders, participants also reflected on the impact that family had on their educational experiences–and did so by expressing emotionality. When asked about their long-term career goals, participants were often contemplative, expressive, and passionate as they described not only *what* they wanted to do, but also *why* they sought to do so. The *why* was often associated with internalized expectations of what it meant to be a "man," such as being the primary breadwinner, and an obligation to improve the economic and social conditions experienced by their parents. However, these gendered and cultural socializations at times conflicted with personal interests. Vic from California captured this *choque*:

For career goals…I'm struggling between something in the public sector and focusing on helping people, and then on the other hand I really want to venture

off into private sector and just make a lot of money. Because [my parents] came here to achieve what they perceived as the American dream, but I think that as the years went by they realized that their options were limited due to not being legal citizens. I feel like part of me I owe it to them to be successful, make some sort of money so that I can take care of them later. I feel like that's the pressure that I have, to find a career, even if I don't like it, as long as it's a steady income, so that's why I have that pressure.

As illustrated by this quote, participants often expressed unselfish reasons, such as the desire to care for family, as the rationale for particular career-choices. However, having to navigate the incongruence of a commitment to self (academia) over family (sociocultural responsibilities) caused emotional friction.

This tension was often alleviated by messaging from family members, such as *consejos* (advice) that emphasized the significance of college. As participants reflected on these messages, there was a nostalgic undertone that expressed more than just the words themselves, and a sentimental significance. Miguel from Florida shared,

He [father] always told me to keep your head straight, just get your degree in what you want to do, go for the job, look for any outside resources that might help you…succeed in your career, just grab onto it and don't let go.

Similar to Miguel, Luis from Texas commented,

My parents, they always said that education was first. They wanted us to keep going, get the highest amount of education that we could. They were always supportive. We were that type of Mexican family that education was always supported.

Participants internalized these messages and used them as forms of educational resiliency during their transfer adjustment. In doing so, they created new emotional landing spaces to cope with the challenges of transfer.

Crossing Geographical Borders.   The third common border crossed by participants was geographical borders. This involved participants physically moving away from home to attend their transfer institution. This was a new experience given that most students chose to enroll at their local community college due to its proximity to home. The responses to this move varied, with some participants struggling more than others. For example, Carlos from Florida found the isolation from family and friends more difficult than expected and shared how challenging the transition was:

Man, that transition had to be the worst, because even though my family supported me, I didn't have that face-to-face support where I can go home at any time I want. It's a blockade, I'm having trouble with it…I couldn't go home, and it's at a point

where it was just me and I didn't know what to do. I didn't have any friends or anything like that.

In contrast, other participants like Gilberto from Texas managed to maintain communication with their family despite the distance. He stated,

That first semester it was tough, but it ultimately made me stronger, it ultimately made me okay with not always having someone right there. It's made my relationship stronger with a lot of my family because since I don't see them every day, we talk a lot more now. I call my mom, brother, sister, dad at least once a week and we talk.

The distance from his familial support system, although difficult, became an opportunity for Gilberto to grow and create a new landing space at the 4-year institution. This space became a melding of indirect family support and an internal confidence to thrive on his own. In fact, Gilberto shared that this experience had encouraged him to leave the State of Texas for graduate school.

Discussion and Implications for Practice

The students shared their narratives navigating multiple spaces and the *choques* experienced transitioning from one landing space to another. Given this, transfer institutions should examine the ways they onboard transfer students and take into consideration what potential academic, social, and personal clashes they have faced before enrolling. Noted by our colleagues in Chapter 8 (see Carales & Lopez), faculty, administrators, and staff often view these experiences carried over from community colleges to transfer institutions through a deficit perspective. Informed by what students shared, we offer three recommendations practitioners can enact to aid in Latino male transfer success that are embedded through an anti-deficit perspective.

Transfer Student Program.   To be able to acclimate to their new transfer institutions, a cohort-based transfer program is recommended in which students can share their collective experiences and validate one another regarding their intellectual belonging in and out of the classroom. This program should consist of an orientation to the campus and its resources while revisiting expectations of what it means to be a college student as those are very different from high school, to community college, to a university. Because Latino men may often shy away from asking for help, in the endeavor of validating their academic abilities, the program should have a mentorship component where they can all connect with upperclassmen and graduate students who were also transfer students who can provide crossover capital they cultivated by navigating their multiple landing spaces.

Mental Health Support.   Participants of this study shared the ways in which they code switched as they transitioned from one landing space to another. Moreover, they expressed the emotional turmoil they navigated as they processed familial expectations, collegial demands, and self-doubt. This emotional labor should be addressed, particularly with Latino men in mind. Transfer institutions should ensure they make an intentional effort to connect with these students and provide adequate information of the resources available. Many community colleges do not have robust mental health services in the way some 4-year institutions do; therefore, this resource might not be something students seek because they do not know it exists. Making a requirement for transfer Latino men to have a touch point with their mental health services would be instrumental in aiding their holistic wellbeing transitioning into this new landing space.

Family Integration.   For most of the participants, the *choque* experienced entering their transfer institutions was a major moment of reflection because of the educational culture between a 2-year and a 4-year college. Often Latino students choose to begin their journey at a local community college due to familial responsibilities and proximity to family. In addition, community colleges students might be enrolled part time and work full time to aid in family matters. This is a major switch upon entering a 4-year institution, as the expectations are that you are a full-time student with different institutional demands. This shift in institutional demands, and for some of the participants' geographical distance from family, was a point of resiliency resulting in them developing crossover capital. Understanding the institutional culture Latino men are coming from, transfer orientations must include a family component where they are also educated on the new demands and differences from a community college to a 4-year institution.

Conclusion

Community colleges have become essential for Latino men pursuing a higher education (Rodriguez et al., 2016; Sáenz et al., 2013) and have been a viable option for many reasons, such as location, cost, open access, diverse course offerings, and transfer (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). While prior research has provided an understanding of the Latino transfer experience, more research is warranted on this striving population on college campuses. By gaining further insights about transfer student experiences, both scholars and practitioners may be better informed on how to facilitate a more efficient and equitable transfer process for community college students (Laanan, 1996). The framework presented offers a structure to the way we can view the experiences of Latino transfer men in their educational journeys. The eight landing spaces can provide practitioners and understanding of where incoming transfer students might need to be caught through adequate resource allocation, programming, and onboarding.

Note

1. Unless directly citing other research, we use the term "Latina/o/x" to be inclusive of these multiple identities. The term "Latinx" aims to be inclusive of people who do not identify with the gender binary of masculinity (Latino) and femininity (Latina) (Salinas & Lozano, 2019).

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