

EXAMINING PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS IN MEXICAN AMERICAN
COLLEGE MEN: THE ROLE OF MACHISMO, CABALLERISMO, AND FAMILY

A Dissertation

by

DAGOBERTO HEREDIA JR.

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Chair of Committee,	Lizette Ojeda
Committee Members,	Linda G. Castillo
	Myeongsun Yoon
	Pat Rubio Goldsmith
Head of Department,	Shanna Hagan-Burke

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ABSTRACT

Latino college men remain underrepresented in higher education and often experience significant mental health concerns in the university context. A comprehensive understanding of Latino college men's psychological functioning is critical to help increase enrollment and persistence rates given that mental health problems can interfere with academic persistence. Whereas there exists growing literature on Latina/o undergraduates, few studies have focused on the impact of gender role beliefs on psychological distress in Latino college men. Further, no studies have examined how families influence the relationship between gender role beliefs and psychological distress among Latino college men. A better understanding of these factors is an important step toward addressing the unique challenges Latino men face on college campuses. As such, the present study examined two domains of Latino male gender role beliefs (i.e., machismo and caballerismo), as well as the mediating role of family conflict and family intragroup marginalization, to test a culturally relevant model of psychological distress among 146 Mexican American college men. Path analysis results indicated that traditional machismo was positively associated with family conflict whereas caballerismo was negatively associated with family intragroup marginalization. Further, family intragroup marginalization was positively associated with psychological distress. Lastly, family conflict and family intragroup marginalization did not significantly mediate the relationship between Latino male gender role beliefs and

psychological distress. Implications for counselors, educators, and university administration are discussed.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to *mi 'amá, mi 'apá, mi hermana, y mi nene.*

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Latino college men remain underrepresented in higher education. Compared with other racial/ethnic male groups, Latino college men lag behind in rates of college enrollment and degree attainment (Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2008). This trend is also apparent between genders with Latino college men earning fewer bachelor's degrees (38%) than Latinas (62%; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2008). Although scholars have focused on understanding factors that contribute to high noncompletion rates among Latino college men (Cerezo et al., 2013), it is equally important to examine the sociocultural factors related to psychological distress given that mental health problems can interfere with academic persistence (Hartley, 2011). Further, the cultural norms of the university, and the resulting social interactions, can impact students' adjustment to college (Tinto, 1975; Tinto, 1993). For example, the risk of experiencing psychological distress may be elevated for Latina/o college students given that they are charged with balancing the cultural incongruity that results when institutional values (e.g., egalitarian conceptions of gender) conflict with those of the Latina/o heritage culture (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). Research has found that undergraduate students adopt less traditional views about gender in college (Bryant, 2003), but the process of adjusting to egalitarian conceptions of gender may be taxing for Mexican American men who identify with Mexican culture and hold more traditional male role attitudes (Ojeda et al., 2008). To date, few studies have examined the genderized experience of Latino college men and how both negative

and positive conceptions of Latino masculinity contribute to mental health.

A comprehensive understanding of Latino college men's mental health concerns is critical for addressing their low enrollment and persistence rates. Latino college men face numerous hurdles to higher education that contribute to psychological maladjustment. For example, they are more likely to report fewer on-campus mentors or role models (Gloria & Castellanos, 2003) and face low expectations from university staff and peers (Cerezo et al., 2013). Poverty can also be a major struggle for Latino college men and their families (Fry, 2011) and this problem has continued in light of increased tuition rates. Approximately 53% of Latina/o college students reside in households with an annual income of less than \$50,000 (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009). For Latino men who do enter college, they find that the disconnect between knowledge that students and families have about the financial aid process exacerbates stress related to economic barriers. Furthermore, poor information-sharing on behalf of college administrators about the financial aid process is cited as a common stressor for Latino college men (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2008) who are less likely to seek guidance from university support services (Cerezo et al., 2013). Lastly, Latino men in particular were affected by recent economic downturns (Kochhar et al., 2010) and as a result, most Latino men opt to enter the labor force as opposed to enrolling in higher education (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2008) leaving little opportunity for Latino college men to establish culturally congruent support networks. The culmination of these challenges related to the interplay of ethnic minority status and gender uniquely impact psychological adjustment of Latino college men in higher education.

Scholars have also acknowledged that few academic institutions provide accessible advising resources with culturally diverse mentors to promote the retention of Latino college men (Gloria & Castellanos, 2003; Saenz & Ponjuan, 2011). The provision of culturally congruent support within the university is important given that many Latino college men face discouragement from instructors and peers such as not being recognized as “college material” and are often encouraged to pursue noncollege paths (Cerezo et al., 2013). In response to these concerns, more researchers are looking beyond the university administration’s focus on attendance records and more on the unique mental health needs of Latino college men (Gloria et al., 2009). To date, few studies have focused on Mexican American college men and none have focused on how both positive and negative conceptions of Latino masculinity, along with familial factors, impact psychological distress in academic settings. A comprehensive understanding of the unique role of Latino masculinity on mental health is critical given that Latino men face numerous hurdles to higher education (Gloria & Castellanos, 2003) and are less likely to seek support to cope with academic stressors (Cerezo et al., 2013; Gloria et al., 2009). The present study addresses this gap by assessing various psychosociocultural factors that may confound psychological adjustment. Specifically, we examine the mediational effect of family conflict and family intragroup marginalization on the Latino masculinity–psychological distress link among a sample of Mexican American college men.

Psychosociocultural Framework

Tinto (1975) was one of the original theorists to focus on a social integration approach to understanding how the campus environment impacts college students. He suggests that both intentions and commitment to academic success are continuously moderated by the individual's feelings of integration within the academic setting (Tinto, 1993). Social experiences that engender feelings of disintegration are psychologically taxing and are related to psychological maladjustment and academic nonpersistence (Tinto, 1993). These conceptions describe, in part, how Mexican American college men experience social interactions that conflict with heritage cultural values and beliefs. For example, incongruent experiences occur when students perceive that the academic setting exemplifies goals and values that differ from their own. For Mexican American college men, incongruent experiences may involve a conflict between culturally determined gender role beliefs and those communicated by college mentors, professors, and peers which are more egalitarian in nature.

Although Tinto's social integration theory has strengthened the field's understanding of academic persistence, his theory ignores the cultural factors that impact students of color (Tierney, 1992). This lack of cultural insight is concerning because it fails to capture the unique stressors that Latino men face in higher education (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2008; Cerezo et al., 2013). Further, the social integration framework leaves little room for the exploration of cultural factors (e. g., culturally defined gender role beliefs) and how they impact psychological adjustment in the university context. This is a problematic approach to the study of diverse college students, given that academic

disengagement is often related to the distress associated with culture-based social disintegration.

The psychosociocultural (PSC) framework extends Tinto's work by acknowledging that cultural phenomena should be considered when examining the lived experience of Latina/o undergraduates (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). Using this framework, the university experience is conceptualized using three domains: the psychological, social, and cultural. For example, academic persistence among Latina/o undergraduates involves the interaction of psychological (e.g., self-beliefs), social (e.g., social support), and cultural factors (e.g., cultural fit with the institution). Delgado-Guerrero and Gloria (2013) tested the PSC framework with 115 Latina sorority members and found each of the aforementioned PSC variables contributed to persistence decisions. Furthermore, perception of the university environment was the strongest predictor of academic persistence, suggesting that the presence of culturally congruent support networks can positively influence perception of the institution and commitment to achieving academic goals.

The PSC framework can also aid in examining mental health among undergraduate students of color. The relationship among cultural self-esteem, perceived educational barriers, cultural fit, and coping responses on psychological well-being were examined in a sample of 100 Latino college men (Gloria et al., 2009). Analyses revealed that information seeking and planned positive action were the most commonly reported coping responses for Latino males. Furthermore, cultural-congruity and emotion-focused coping were the strongest predictors of psychological well-being. Together, these

findings strengthen Gloria and colleague's contention that cultural and contextual factors should be considered to develop a comprehensive understanding of psychological adjustment among Latino college men. To date, no studies have examined how cultural factors involving gender role beliefs (e.g., traditional machismo and caballerismo) impact psychological outcomes among Mexican American college men and how this association is influenced by the family context.

Despite this shortcoming, research has shown that families play a critical role in the psychological adjustment of Latina/o undergraduate students. For example, increased familial support is an important determinant of academic persistence (Hurtado, 1994) and decreased psychological distress (Castillo & Hill, 2004). However, many Latino college men find that they are unable to visit their families as frequently or attend fewer family events upon moving to college (Ramirez, 2006). This is a stressful experience for Latino college men as it challenges culturally determined notions of Latino masculinity that require men to prioritize the needs of their family (Arciniega, Anderson, Tovar-Blank, & Tracey, 2008).

Although there are many studies examining the factors that Latina/o undergraduates contend with, the manner in which Mexican American college men adhere to culture specific gender role beliefs has received little scholarly attention. Furthermore, the relationship among culture specific gender role beliefs, familial factors, and psychological outcomes has not been explored in this population. Investigating the relationship among psychological (e.g., psychological distress), social (e.g., familial factors), and cultural (e.g., gender role beliefs) factors is vital for psychotherapists and

university administrators who seek to minimize the academic and psychological difficulties that impact this group.

Sociocultural Domain

Gender Research

The exploration of gender has been an integral part of psychological research for decades. Dating back to the 1970's, research in this area has focused primarily on gender role constructs such as masculinity, femininity, and androgyny. It was during this time that scholars began to consider how behavior is influenced by an individual's internalization of culturally defined gender role expectations. Gender role beliefs refer to an individual's attitudes about how men and women should think, feel, and act (Spence et al., 1975). As gender role beliefs are related to expressive behavior (Spence et al., 1975), research should consider the unique contribution of gender role beliefs and how they impact psychological outcomes. Indeed, gender role beliefs influence factors that modulate psychological adjustment including endorsement of negative attitudes and willingness to seek help for mental health concerns (Davis & Liang, 2015; Berger et al., 2005). Unfortunately, most scholars rely on White undergraduate samples when examining this relationship which provides little insight on how these variables impact the mental health of culturally diverse undergraduates. Future work in this area should focus on non-White samples given the marked mental health and educational barriers that impact traditionally marginalized undergraduates (Tierney, 1992). The connection between gender role beliefs and psychological adjustment should be explored for Mexican American college men in particular given that adherence to hypermasculine

gender role beliefs (e.g., traditional machismo) is associated with psychological maladjustment for Latino men (Arciniega et al., 2008). Moreover, a culturally grounded approach to the study of Latino male gender role beliefs may provide a comprehensive understanding of psychological adjustment for Mexican American men in the university context.

Gender Role Beliefs in College

Increased support for women's rights and a shift toward less restrictive conceptions of gender suggest an important change of U.S. public opinion since the 1970's (Brooks & Bolzendahl, 2004; Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004), and this shift has been observed in college students. Bryant (2003) determined that students adopt less traditional gender role beliefs about women four years after their entry into college. Moreover, college men who take women's and gender studies courses support more non-traditional views about women than men who had not taken a comparable course (Bryant, 2003). The shift toward egalitarian views about men and women may be particularly difficult for first generation Mexican American college men who identify with Mexican culture and hold more traditional male role attitudes (Ojeda et al., 2008). Though a growing body of literature has demonstrated that women and men adopt less traditional gender role beliefs through college, few studies have examined the factors that impact gender role beliefs in culturally diverse undergraduate populations, including Latina/o students. This gap in the literature is particularly problematic for Latino college men who are faced with a myriad of challenges in their educational journeys related to

the interplay of gender and ethnic minority status (Cerezo et al., 2013; Saenz & Ponjuan, 2008).

Gender Role Beliefs among Latino Men

Research suggests that the etiology of machismo is rooted in the Spanish conquest of ancient Aztec Indians. According to Mirandé (1997), machismo developed as a result of the conquistadores' exploitation of natives which engendered feelings of emasculation, inferiority, and powerlessness. Recent descriptions posit that this unique historical context, and the resulting cultural norms, makes for a culture-specific gendered experience for Latino men (Ojeda & Piña-Watson, 2014). Scholars have acknowledged that Latino men and women are charged with markedly different behavioral expectations whereby Latina women are viewed as responsible for raising children and serving men, characteristics of traditional marianismo (Castillo et al., 2010; Stevens & Pescatello, 1973; Mayo & Resnick, 1996). On the other hand, Latino men are encouraged to endorse hypermasculine traits such as dominance, aggression, and chauvinism. Termed machismo, this concept has traditionally encapsulated the negative aspects of Latino masculinity (Arciniega et al., 2008).

At first, the field's conceptualization of machismo vaguely described a standard of behavior exhibited by men within the Latina/o culture. The field's conceptions of machismo focused primarily on a narrow range of cognitions and behaviors associated with negative gender characteristics such as hypermasculinity, sexism, and chauvinism (Anders, 1993). Macho men or *machistas* were described as violent, womanizing, and prone to substance abuse. This narrow description of Latino masculinity was prevalent

across disciplines and typically characterized *machistas* as incompetent, domineering, intimidating, and controlling in their relationships (Anders, 1993). Recent studies have argued against the use of negative conceptions of machismo and argue that the approach is oversimplified, restrictive, and based on inaccurate stereotypes of Latino men (Arciniega et al., 2008). Mirande (1988) was the first to acknowledge the positive aspects of Latino male behavior (e.g., pride and honor) that had been neglected, or downplayed, at the time. He argued that the field's negativistic view of Latino masculinity led to inadequate assessment and understanding of Latino men.

A more encompassing definition of machismo was provided by Mirande (1997), who acknowledged more than just the negative aspects of machismo by referencing factors such as nurturance and family-orientation. He encouraged scholars to consider an orthogonal conceptualization of machismo which assesses for both positive and negative characteristics. As a result, current publications in the field of psychology and sociology define machismo as a construct that consists of both positive and negative traits (Ojeda & Piña-Watson, 2014; Mirande, 1997; Arciniega et al., 2008; Feliz-Ortiz et al., 2001). Scholars posit that an orthogonal approach is most accurate because it encapsulates a more balanced and unbiased representation of machismo that includes characteristics such as nurturance, protection of the family, hard work, responsibility, and emotional connectedness (Cases et al., 1994; Mirande, 1988, 1997; Ramos, 1979).

In present studies, machismo more generally refers to the broad concept of Latino masculinity. Additionally, two separate underlying constructs have been identified as integral to machismo: traditional machismo and *caballerismo* (Arciniega et

al., 2008). Traditional machismo is seen as negative and consists of undesirable traits such as individual power and hypermasculinity. Within this construct, men are described as aggressive, sexist, chauvinistic, and hypermasculine (Arciniega et al., 2008). Past research has shown that traditional machismo is related to sex-role dominance, specifically the dominance of men over women. This expectation is regularly reinforced to Latino men, especially within their interactions with peers or family members. For example, men are often expected to hold positions of power within the family. In this role they are charged with exhibiting qualities of strength, dominance, and confidence. This expectation is rarely present for Latina women, who are more often encouraged to be submissive or seek advice or approval from family members.

The second underlying construct, termed *caballerismo*, is seen as positive and consists of more socially desirable characteristics such as social responsibility, emotional connectedness, and nurturance (Arciniega et al., 2008). *Caballerismo* is grounded in the cultural code of masculine chivalry and is associated with the term *caballero*, which is used to describe a Spanish gentleman with respectful manners. This is an important concept in Latina/o culture in that men are expected to behave in a way that falls in line with this expectation, particularly concerning respect, nobility, pride, and justice. Past research has also shown that *caballerismo* is related to more positive aspects of behavior such as affiliation, emotional connectedness, and psychological wellbeing (Arciniega et al., 2008). Further, *caballerismo* has been linked to behavioral expressions that can impact the family system such as nurturance and being family-centered. Promoting these characteristics is important in the Latina/o culture and families often expect their sons to

exhibit these behaviors in their interactions with siblings, parents, and extended family members.

Gender Role Beliefs among Latino College Men

Gender role expectations are communicated to Latino men from a young age, as the culture sends both overt and covert messages about the value of endorsing traditional male gender role beliefs (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004). In this study, gender role socialization was explored in a sample of undergraduate Latina/os. The author's determined that both men and women report receiving socialization toward traditional gender roles from their parents. Although scholars have taken an interest in gender socialization, it is unclear how these gendered messages contribute to distinct gender role divisions for Latina/os and how they impact psychological adjustment in Mexican American college men. Given the orthogonal description of machismo provided above, it is possible for Mexican American college men to exhibit characteristics of caballerismo and yet endorse many characteristics of traditional machismo as part of their behavior and self-assessment. Conversely, individuals who score high on traditional machismo may still manifest characteristics indicative of caballerismo (Arciniega et al., 2008). Together these findings suggest that Mexican American college males can score high or low on one factor independent of their endorsement of the other. Continued work in this area is needed to determine how endorsement of traditional machismo and caballerismo impact psychological distress in Mexican American college men given the previously reported stressors that impede academic success among Latina/o undergraduates (Ramirez, 2006, Arciniega et al., 2008).

Acculturation Research

The influence of acculturation has also been examined in relation to psychological outcomes (Castillo, Conoley, & Brossart, 2004). The acculturative process encompasses changes in attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, and values that occur as an individual from one culture comes in contact with a new culture (Kim & Abreu, 2001). The process of learning about and adopting the norms of the dominant host culture can be experienced as a stressful process when the cultural norms of both groups are incompatible (Roccas et al., 2000). Latina/o college students in particular face unique challenges associated with acculturation that can impede psychological adjustment (Quintana et al., 1991) and wellbeing (Castillo et al., 2004). For example, research has shown that Latina/o college students are expected to adopt White American cultural values (e.g., independence from family) that contrast with Latina/o cultural norms (e.g. family interdependence; Castillo & Cano, 2008). Similar to Latina/o students at predominantly White institutions (PWIs), Latina/os attending universities with diverse student bodies report elevated levels of depressive symptoms and negative affect related to perceived minority status (Arbona & Jimenez, 2014). The acculturative process can also contribute to psychological maladjustment in college when the heritage and host cultures espouse conflicting gender role beliefs (Roccas et al., 2000).

Past research has explored factors that contribute to distress in Latino college students, including parental income, acculturation, perceived family conflict and perceived marginalization from members of the heritage-culture (Castillo et al., 2008). A total of 194 Latina/o college students were asked to complete surveys that assessed the

aforementioned variables. Their findings showed that acculturation significantly predicted acculturative stress, which supports research that describes the acculturative experience as stressful (Castillo et al., 2004). Family conflict and intragroup marginalization from family members were also found to be a noteworthy source of acculturative stress in Latina/o college students suggesting that balancing family dynamics and behavioral expectations are difficult and place the student at risk of negative mental health outcomes related to minority stress (Castillo et al., 2004; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2011).

In a more recent study, researchers examined the relationship between acculturation and depressive symptomatology among Latina/o college students (Castillo et al., 2015). Utilizing a sample of 758 Latina and 264 Latino college students, the researchers found that acculturative stress mediated the relationship between acculturation and depressive symptoms. They also found that for Latino college men, heritage-culture retention was related to higher depressive symptomatology in light of pressures to maintain Spanish language fluency. These findings suggest that acculturation and acculturative stress contribute to psychological maladjustment differently for male and female Latina/o college students, and supports past studies that found describe cultural adjustment as more stressful for Latino men than women (Crockett et al., 2007).

Interestingly, the literature provides contradictory results with regard to cultural adjustment in Latino college men (Iturbide, Raffaelli, & Carlo, 2009). Researchers studied a sample of 148 Latina/o students from three southwestern universities with

large populations of Latina/o undergraduates. They determined that ethnic identity moderated the relationship between acculturative stress and psychological adjustment differently among men and women. Among Latina/o college men, high levels of orientation toward non-heritage culture groups was associated with enhanced self-esteem at low levels of acculturative stress. The authors proposed that that Latino men receive less pressure to adhere to heritage-culture behaviors and are socialized to be more independent and autonomous; traits that fall in line with White American cultural values (Castillo & Cano, 2008). As a result, Latina/o college men may benefit from less intensive cultural socialization that allows them to exhibit White American traits as needed. However, despite this possible complexity, the majority of studies suggest that cultural adjustment can be a stressful experience for both Latina/o college women and men.

The acculturative process is characterized by learning and adopting the norms of the dominant host culture, and as such a variety of beliefs and attitudes may shift as the individual interacts with individuals of the non-heritage culture. The same holds true for Latina/o college students, whose attitudes and beliefs may become more aligned with those of the White American culture that characterizes their academic environment. To date, research on the acculturative process has relied on unidimensional approaches that fail to examine an individual's response to heritage culture norms (Zane & Mak, 2003). A bilinear approach suggests that individuals can learn and adopt majority culture norms while maintaining those of the heritage culture (Castillo & Caver, 2009). Cano and Castillo (2010) give support to this idea suggesting that Latina/o college students can be

behaviorally acculturated without adopting the values and beliefs of the White host culture. Gender role beliefs are also shaped throughout the acculturative process (Castillo & Hill, 2004), but the literature provides little information on how Latina/o college men respond when the gender role beliefs of the heritage and host culture are incompatible. One study determined that the more a Latina/o college male subscribes to traditional masculine norms, the more likely he is to experience psychological symptoms related to gender role conflict (Carter et al., 2005). Future research in this area should explore how cultural adaptation impacts a Mexican American college man's orientation toward traditional or nontraditional gender role beliefs.

Psychological Domain

Psychological Distress

Psychological distress has been operationalized in a variety of ways. Original measures of nonspecific psychological distress were used as first-stage screens to assess for broadly defined emotional problems (Myers et al., 1975). These measures required participants to subjectively assess cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and psychophysiological symptoms that are typically elevated among people with a wide range of mental health disorders (Dohrenwend et al., 1980). Kessler et al. (2002) indicated that psychological distress is characterized by subjective appraisals of both anxiety and depressive symptoms. As such, recent studies of psychological distress have focused on global assessments based on questions about anxiety and depressive indicators to gain information about the client's current condition and establish productive treatment dialogues (Andrews & Slade, 2001).

Whereas there exists growing literature on the psychological outcomes of Latina/o undergraduates, few studies have focused on the impact of gender role beliefs on psychological distress in Mexican American college men. Further, the extant literature on the relationship between gender role beliefs and psychological outcomes has focused on White college students. Despite this shortcoming scholars can refer to this research to draw conclusions about gender related variables and mental health difficulties among Mexican American college men. For example, the majority of studies suggest a relationship between traditional gender role beliefs and negative psychological consequences for men (Pleck, 1995; Pleck 1981). Men are socialized to internalize restrictive gender role beliefs and in turn experience psychological distress when they do not live up to stereotyped masculine gender ideals (Hayes & Mahalik, 2000). Utilizing a sample of 99 male undergraduates, Hayes and Mahalik (2000) examined the relationship between gender role beliefs and psychological distress. Results indicated that gender role conflict predicted general psychological distress in addition to hostility, social discomfort, and obsessive-compulsiveness. In addition, Thompkins and Rando (2003) explored the association between gender role beliefs and shame among a sample of 343 college men. Results showed traditional gender role beliefs were significantly related to self-reported shame around the expression of emotion or the balance of work/school and family relationships. Similarly, Mahalik and colleagues (2006) examined the relationship between racial identity and masculinity to determine how these constructs impact self-esteem and psychological distress. Utilizing a sample of 124 Black undergraduate men, their findings indicated that self-esteem was positively related to the individual's

internalization of racial identity attitudes and negatively related to conformity to masculine norms. Men who reported more adherence of traditional masculine norms were more likely to report psychological distress (Mahalik et al., 2006). Together these findings are consistent with studies connecting gender related constructs to poor psychological outcomes in White and Black samples (Hayes & Mahalik, 2000). These findings may also impact other groups of culturally diverse college populations, including Mexican American college men. The pressure to adhere to or reject traditional gender role beliefs may be a particularly distressing experience for Mexican American college men who must balance the sociocultural expectations of the heritage family culture and host academic culture (Ojeda et al., 2008). To our knowledge, only one study has examined the relationship between Latina/o gender role beliefs and mental health outcomes Mexican American college men. Utilizing a sample of Mexican American men that included college students, Fragoso & Kashubeck (2000) found that higher levels of traditional machismo and restrictive emotionality were related to higher levels of depression and stress. As such, the present study extends previous research by examining culture specific gender role beliefs, how they impact psychological outcomes among Mexican American college men, and how this relationship is mediated by familial factors.

It is unclear whether Mexican American college men benefit from the endorsement of less-restrictive gender role beliefs about men and women given that past studies have not explored this association in this population. The positive impact of nontraditional gender role beliefs have been discussed in the psychosocial literature in

studies utilizing primarily White samples. Bursik (1995) conducted a study exploring nontraditional gender role beliefs and ego development. Results revealed that integrating gender-related traits typical of the opposite sex as related to higher levels of ego development. Nontraditional gender beliefs may also improve interpersonal functioning. Utilizing a sample of 70 male undergraduates, O'Leary and Donoghue (1978) found that nontraditional males were less likely to be devalued and more likely to be preferred by their peers. Further, men who express nontraditional attitudes toward women are more likely to be evaluated favorably by women (Jackson et al., 1987) and are more likely to report fulfillment of one's fullest potential and spiritual health (Ivtzan & Conneely, 2009). Modern conceptions of gender may also help to improve coping among undergraduates (Cheng, 2005). Researchers used a sample of Chinese undergraduates to explore the relationship between nontraditional gender role beliefs and an individual's response to stressful events. They determined that individuals who endorsed more nontraditional gender role beliefs were characterized by cognitive astuteness in distinguishing among situational characteristics, use of strategies that fit situational demands, and were less likely to be depressed. Future work in this area should explore the psychological benefits associated with less-restrictive gender roles among culturally diverse undergraduate men. For Mexican American college men, it may be that departure from traditionally machista conceptions of gender diminish experiences of psychological distress.

The positive effects of nontraditional gender role beliefs amongst White samples has been acknowledged in the extant literature. The benefits of non-traditional gender

role beliefs can be partially explained by decreased pressure to conform to traditional stereotyped behaviors that celebrate anti-effeminacy. This conception suggests that men benefit from deconstructing learned gender roles and in turn minimizing intrinsic fears of femininity or feelings of anxiety related to violating gender stereotypes (O'Neil et al., 1986). In addition, nontraditional gender beliefs may serve as a protective factor against negative mental health outcomes. A longitudinal study investigating risk factors for mental disorders found that men with high femininity scores reported more feelings of optimism (Wilhelm et al., 2010). Perhaps these protective factors allow men to recognize, seek help, and overcome instances of psychological maladjustment. For example, a man with nontraditional gender role attitudes may be less likely to express negative reactions about seeking help or engaging in psychotherapy (Blazina & Marks, 2001). Similarly, a recent study determined that men with nontraditional gender role beliefs exhibit decreased pressure to appear muscular and are more likely to seek help for problems (Shepherd & Rickard, 2012).

Few studies have sought to examine the potential benefits of less-restrictive gender role beliefs among Mexican American college men. As mentioned previously, the extant research in this area has focused primarily on gender role beliefs in White undergraduates. Despite this limitation, scholars agree that Mexican American college men are at risk of negative psychological outcomes related to restrictive gender role beliefs. Fragoso and Keshubeck (2000) tested this hypothesis utilizing a sample of 113 college men and determined that higher levels of machismo and restricted emotionality were associated with higher levels of depression and stress. Moreover, navigating

between traditional machismo and caballerismo may serve as a stressor for Mexican American college men. Scholars have called for more research that seeks to understand the interaction of racial and gender identities in culturally diverse populations (Hayes & Mahalik, 2000). As such, the present study will strive to adequately assess Latino male gender role beliefs using a culturally specific measure that assess the extent to which the participant adheres to both machismo and caballerismo.

Mediating Factors

Family Conflict

One factor that may help explain psychological maladjustment among Mexican American college men is conflict within the family. Family conflict refers to tension within the home that occurs when differing expectations exist among family members, peers, or university instructors (Lee et al., 2000). When Latina/os enter college, they enter an environment characterized by an individualistic frame of reference that places a high value on academic achievement (Vasquez-Salgado et al., 2015). This cultural context can be particularly stressful for Latina/o undergraduates who are raised to prioritize family obligations (Vasquez-Salgado et al., 2015). Vasquez-Salgado and colleagues (2015) sought to better understand the inner conflicts that arise as Latina/o undergraduates learn to navigate these conflicting home and university values. In their sample, Latina/o college students expressed more inner conflicts when they opted to prioritize academic responsibilities over family responsibilities. Further, these personal conflicts are closely related with family conflicts given that Latina/os are socialized to internalize and prioritize familial obligations (Vasquez-Salgado et al., 2015). Their

conclusions support past research that highlights a relationship between family conflict and psychological distress (Lee & Liu, 2001; Constantine & Flores, 2006). Family conflicts can also escalate in light of intergenerational value differences, especially as the individual becomes more oriented to the values and beliefs of the White host culture (Lee et al., 2000; Lee and Liu, 2001). For example, disagreements related to gender role beliefs can be particularly stressful for Latina/o students who adopt less traditional gender role beliefs as they progress through college. Furthermore, the presence of behaviors consonant with traditional machismo (e.g., power, aggression, sex-role dominance) can lead to tension within the family. For example, a Mexican American college man may be reprimanded by family members for asserting dominance over some portion of the family system (i.e., talking back to or interrupting others). On the other hand, behaviors in line with caballerismo (e.g., family orientation and nurturance) may protect against tension within the family. For example, a Mexican American college man may be valued in the family context for respecting familial expectations.

Family Intragroup Marginalization

Members of the heritage culture group can also contribute to psychological maladjustment. For example, Latina/o college students can experience intragroup marginalization upon displaying cultural characteristics of the White host culture (Castillo et al., 2007). Termed intragroup marginalization, this concept is defined as perceived interpersonal distancing by heritage group members (e.g., friends, member of the ethnic group, and family members) when an individual expresses characteristics of the receiving culture (Castillo, 2009). Interpersonal distancing from family members in

particular can be a significant source of distress for Latina/o college students (Castillo et al., 2008). Family distance of this sort can be partially explained by the cultural group's implicit desire to maintain a sense of social identity with specific attitudinal and behavioral expectations (Tajfel, 1981; Turner, 1991). Members of the heritage culture group marginalize individuals who threaten the group's social identity by displaying characteristics that challenge traditional Latina/o characteristics (Castillo et al., 2007).

It should be noted that family intragroup marginalization is a separate construct from family conflict given that both constructs have been found to contribute to acculturative stress in unique ways. For example, marginalization (e.g., interpersonal distancing) on behalf of family members may occur as a result of preexisting conflicts within the family system (Castillo et al., 2008). Castillo et al. (2008) sought to explore the role of both constructs on reported acculturative stress in a sample of 188 Latina/o college students. Family conflict was found to be a major contributor to acculturative stress which supports past contentions that a relationship between family conflict and psychological distress (Lee & Liew, 2001). Furthermore, family intragroup marginalization uniquely contributed to acculturative stress once perceived family conflict, acculturation, and parental income were accounted for. These findings suggest that family intragroup marginalization is indeed a separate construct from family conflict (Castillo et al., 2008). A more recent study sought to explore the relationship between family intragroup marginalization, cultural incongruity, and depressive symptoms in a sample of 155 Latina/o undergraduates (Cano et al., 2014). Their results also showed

that students who reported more intragroup marginalization from family members were likely to report acculturative stress and depressive symptoms.

Although previous studies have provided some information on the influence of intragroup marginalization on psychological outcomes, the role of both family conflict and family intragroup marginalization as mediating variables has not been systematically studied with Latina/o college students. Furthermore, no studies have examined how Latina/o male gender role beliefs relate to family intragroup marginalization. The presence of behaviors consonant with traditional machismo (e.g., power, aggression, sex-role dominance) may lead to more social distancing from family members when the behaviors challenge familial norms that characterize Latina/o families (i.e., respecting elders). For example, a Mexican American college man may be teased by family members for acting White when they challenge Latina/o familial norms by talking back to or disrespecting elders. On the other hand, behaviors in line with *caballerismo* (e.g., family orientation and nurturance) may protect against intragroup marginalization. For example, a Mexican American college man may experience less teasing from family members when they respect familial expectations or display good manners in public. The present study extends previous research by examining the potential mediating role of familial factors (e.g., family conflict and family intragroup marginalization) on gender role beliefs and psychological distress among Mexican American college men.

Mechanisms of Psychological Distress

Most research on psychological distress fails to consider the role of mediating variables. To date only one study has examined the direct association between machismo

and *caballerismo* to psychological distress (Herrera et al., 2013). As such the pathways by which these variables are associated with mental health outcomes has been less commonly explored. Familial factors may influence the relationship between *machismo* and *caballerismo* on psychological distress given past arguments that suggest that family conflict (Castillo et al., 2008; Vasquez-Salgado et al., 2015; Lee & Liu, 2001; Constantine & Flores, 2006) and family intragroup marginalization (Castillo et al., 2004; Castillo et al., 2007; Castillo et al., 2008) can impact mental health outcomes.

The relationship between family conflict and psychological distress may be partially explained by its direct association with *machismo* and *caballerismo*. One suggestion is that family conflict is directly influenced by factors related to *machismo* due to feelings of resentment that emerge from the pressure to take charge of the family (Cervantes, 2006). On the other hand, Mexican American men with low traditional *machismo* (e.g., those who exhibit more *caballerismo*) may prescribe to more adaptive interpersonal techniques that result in greater familial involvement (Cruz et al., 2011). These findings suggest that a direct relationship may exist between a student's level of *machismo* and *caballerismo* and their experiences of familial conflict. As such family conflict is an important additional factor to consider when examining the role of multiple domains of Latino male gender role beliefs and psychological distress.

In addition to family conflict, the role of family intragroup marginalization should also be considered when examining the relationship between *machismo* and *caballerismo* on psychological distress. For Mexican American male college students, fluctuations of *machismo* and *caballerismo* behaviors may impact the extent to which the

student experiences social distancing from family members. Unfortunately, no research has previously indicated that students who develop a flexible approach to gender role beliefs experience less family intragroup marginalization. As such the present study will explore the uniquely predictive role of family intragroup marginalization and its impact on multiple domains of Mexican American male gender role beliefs and psychological distress.

Present Study

Past research in this area has highlighted the importance of examining gender role beliefs, with the majority of research focusing primarily on White college students (Schwartz, 2009; Raffaelli and Ontai, 2004; Cerezo et al., 2013). The interplay between gender role beliefs and mental health outcomes in culturally diverse communities is not commonly explored and few studies have intentionally examined this relationship for Mexican American college men. Improving the field's understanding of these dynamics is an important step toward addressing the unique challenges Latino men face on college campuses (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2008; Cerezo et al., 2013). As such, the present study examined the relationship among Latino male gender role beliefs (i.e., machismo and caballerismo), as well as the mediating role of family conflict and family intragroup marginalization, to test a culturally relevant model of psychological distress among Mexican American college men.

Theoretical Framework

The PSC framework will be utilized for this study as it posits that psychological phenomena (e.g., psychological distress) cannot be examined without accounting for the

influence of sociocultural factors that impact Mexican American men on college campuses. The PSC model is appropriate for use with this population given that it was developed for the purpose of exploring the lived experience of Latina/o undergraduates. A multidisciplinary approach to the study of psychological outcomes among Mexican American college men, which takes into account psychological (e.g., psychological distress) and sociocultural (e.g., gender role beliefs and familial factors) phenomena, may provide new insight into their academic experiences. By gaining a more comprehensive understanding of Mexican American male undergraduates, administrators and psychotherapists may be better equipped to address the psychological stressors and academic barriers that impact this group.

Hypotheses

Based on research that has examined gender role beliefs and psychological outcomes in culturally diverse undergraduates (Cheng, 2005; Mahalik et al., 2006; Fragoso & Keshubeck, 2000), we hypothesized that: (1) traditional machismo would be directly associated with psychological distress such that Mexican American college men who endorsed more traditional machismo would endorse more psychological distress, (2) traditional machismo would be positively associated with family conflict and family intragroup marginalization such that Mexican American college men who endorsed more traditional machismo would also endorse more conflicts within the family and social distancing on behalf of family members, (3) caballerismo would be directly associated with psychological distress such that Mexican American college men who endorsed more caballerismo would endorse less psychological distress, (4) caballerismo

would be negatively associated with family conflict and family intragroup marginalization such that Mexican American college men who endorsed more caballerismo would endorse fewer conflicts within the family and less social distancing on behalf of family members, (5) family conflict and family intragroup marginalization would be positively associated with psychological distress such that Mexican American college men who reported more family conflict and family intragroup marginalization would also report more psychological distress, and (6) family conflict and family intragroup marginalization would mediate the relationship between traditional machismo and caballerismo on psychological distress. Specifically, individuals with more traditional machismo would endorse more psychological distress in the presence of more family conflict and family intragroup marginalization and individuals with more caballerismo would endorse less psychological distress by way of less family conflict and family intragroup marginalization.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participants were obtained as a part of a larger project examining the influence of cultural identity and psychosocial wellbeing among Mexican American college students. All participants were male, sampled from a four-year Hispanic-Serving Institution in south Texas. Participants for the current study self-identified as Mexican American. The final sample contained 146 individuals, aged 17 to 25 years, with an average age of 19.76 (SD = 1.72). Participants were nearly evenly split across grade, with 38% First year (N = 55), 33% Sophomore (N = 48), 15% Junior (N = 22), and 10% Senior (N = 15), with six individuals who did not indicate their grade level (4%). On average participants had a 2.96 GPA (SD = .59), and the majority identified with being of middle class background (50%, N = 73). Most participants were either second or third generation Mexican American (70%, N = 102).

Procedures

Approval from the Institutional Review Board was obtained prior to this study. Participants were recruited from a South Texas university and given extra credit at the discretion of their professors for study participation. Participants were provided with informed consent, detailing the benefits and risks associated with study participation as well the purpose of the study. Potential participants were also given the opportunity to decline participation. Participants completed the following test items in a paper-pencil

format. Identifying information was not collected; therefore, results were anonymous. The survey took 30 to 45 minutes, on average, to complete. To avoid coercion, participants were allowed to skip any and all questions they chose. Further, because of the sensitive nature of some test questions, referral information was provided to participants should they have any questions or incur stress during survey administration. Although the proposed study had the potential to bring up some negative feelings or concerns for some participants, it was deemed that the data collection did not offer more than minimal risk to participants.

Measures

Demographics

Demographic information was collected from participants for descriptive purposes. Information included race/ethnicity, age, social class, educational level, and major, among other items.

Gender Role Beliefs

The Machismo Measure (Arciniega et al., 2008) is intended to measure the extent to which a Latino endorses negative and position Latino masculinity ideology. It is comprised of 20 items, including two factors: (a) machismo and (b) caballerismo. Items are scored on a four-point Likert-type scale (1= strongly disagree to 4= strongly agree). Higher scores represent more traditional gender role beliefs. Internal reliability was found for the Machismo Measure subscales to be .84 and .71, respectively (Arciniega et al., 2008). The reliability analysis for the current study yielded an alpha of .77 for machismo and .75 for caballerismo.

Family Conflict

The Family Conflict Scale-likelihood scale (FCS; Lee et al., 2000) was used to assess family conflict. The FCS describes ten typical family conflicts which are likely to arise for Asian American families and assesses how likely and serious the participant would rate the conflict. Likelihood of family conflict is measured with a five point Likert-type scale (1 = almost never to 5 = almost always). Scores on the subscale range from 10 to 50, with higher scores indicating greater likelihood. The FCS-likelihood was shown to have strong internal reliability (.89), construct validity, and stability (Lee et al., 2000). Lee et al. found FCS-likelihood to be more important in the concept of family conflict than FCS-seriousness, specifically for parent-child intergenerational and acculturation conflicts. Therefore, this study consisted only of the FCS-likelihood subscale. The subscale was adapted for use with Hispanic participants by substituting key words indicating Asian American for words indicating Hispanic culture, as done in Castillo et al. (2006) who found an alpha coefficient for this adapted version of .95. Alpha for this study was .88.

Family Intragroup Marginalization

Family intragroup marginalization (FIM) was measured using the Family scale of the Intragroup Marginalization Inventory (IMI; Castillo et al., 2007). The IMI is designed to measure the interpersonal distancing that can occur as acculturating individuals are perceived to be adopting behaviors and beliefs of a group different from their heritage group. The Family scale is one of three scales in the IMI and consists of twelve items, with four factors: (a) Homeostatic Pressure, which reflects the family's

desire for the individual not to change and adopt new values; (b) Linguistic Expectation, which assesses the family's expectation that the individual maintains their native language; (c) Accusation of Assimilation, which measures the family's charge that the individual is adopting White American norms and beliefs; and (d) Discrepant Values, which assesses the family's belief that the individual's beliefs are becoming too discrepant from the family's beliefs. Participant responses are based on a seven point Likert-type scale (1= never/does not apply to 7= extremely often) with higher scores indicate more perceived family intragroup marginalization. Reliability estimates have been found to be good with an alpha coefficient of .80, and measures of content, construct, and divergent validity all supporting the validity of the IMI's Family scale (Castillo et al., 2007). Alpha for this study was .75.

Psychological Distress

The Kessler-10 (K10; Kessler et al., 2002) is a measure of global psychosocial distress, primarily addressing individual levels of anxiety and depression. The ten item measure asks respondents to answer the items using a five-point Likert-type scale rating the severity of their symptoms in the last four-weeks (1 = none of the time to 5 = all of the time). Total scores are obtained by summing all of the item responses, with higher scores indicating more severe levels of psychosocial distress. The K10 has been found to have a Cronbach's alpha = .84 (Hides et al., 2007), suggesting good internal reliability. Alpha for this study was .82.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Prior to SEM analysis, a check of the assumptions required for analysis was conducted. Three major assumptions in SEM exist, such that data are assumed to be normally distributed, exhibit homoscedasticity and linearity, and be free of multicollinearity (Kline, 2011). To assess these assumptions, the process as outlined by Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) was completed. Examination of skewness, kurtosis, normality plots, and plots of the residuals all suggested that the data were normally distributed and exhibited homoscedasticity and linearity. Pearson *r* correlation coefficients were calculated for all variables chosen *a priori* and were used to check for erroneous variables unrelated to other variables in the analysis as well as to examine for multicollinearity. This check of bivariate relationships showed no evidence of multicollinearity. However, it was also determined when examining these coefficients that *caballerismo* was unrelated to all other variables. This suggested that at the bivariate level, degree of *caballerismo* was unrelated to the variables in the model. However, as *caballerismo* was hypothesized to contribute to psychological distress via family conflict and family intragroup marginalization, this variable was retained in the final model. Table A.1 presents all Pearson *r* correlation coefficients for the modeled variables.

The model for the total sample is shown in Figure A.1. First, it was predicted that traditional machismo would be directly associated with psychological distress such that Mexican American college men who endorsed more traditional machismo would

endorse more psychological distress. Our second prediction was that traditional machismo would be positively associated with family conflict and family intragroup marginalization such that Mexican American college men who endorsed more traditional machismo would also endorse more conflicts within the family and social distancing on behalf of family members. Third, we expected that caballerismo would be directly associated with psychological distress such that Mexican American college men who endorsed more caballerismo would endorse less psychological distress. Our fourth prediction was that caballerismo would be negatively associated with family conflict and family intragroup marginalization such that Mexican American college men who endorsed more caballerismo would endorse fewer conflicts within the family and less social distancing on behalf of family members. Fifth, we predicted that family conflict and family intragroup marginalization would be positively associated with psychological distress such that Mexican American college men who reported more family conflict and family intragroup marginalization would also report more psychological distress. Lastly, it was predicted that family conflict and family intragroup marginalization would mediate the relationship between traditional machismo and caballerismo on psychological distress. Specifically, individuals with more traditional machismo would endorse more psychological distress in the presence of more family conflict and family intragroup marginalization, whereas individuals with more caballerismo would endorse less psychological distress by way of less family conflict and family intragroup marginalization.

Results partially supported the expected relationships of the *a priori* model. In contrast with our first prediction, the relationship between traditional machismo and psychological distress was not statistically significant ($b = -.08, SE = .08$), suggesting that greater traditional machismo was not related to greater psychological distress. Only one of the expected relationships specified in prediction 2 between traditional machismo and family factors materialized, namely, a statistically significant relationship was found between traditional machismo and family conflict ($b = .24, SE = .08$), such that individuals with more traditional machismo were more likely to experience family conflict. On the other hand, the relationship between traditional machismo and family intragroup marginalization was not statistically significant ($b = .07, SE = .08$), suggesting that greater traditional machismo was not related to greater perceived social distancing from family members. In contrast with our third prediction, the relationship between caballerismo and psychological distress was not significant ($b = .11, SE = .08$), suggesting that greater caballerismo was not related to lower psychological distress. One of the expected relationships specified in prediction 4 between caballerismo and family factors did not materialize, namely, the relationship between caballerismo and family conflict was not statistically significant ($b = .03, SE = .08$) suggesting that greater caballerismo was not related to lower likelihood of family conflict. However, a statistically significant relationship was found between caballerismo and family intragroup marginalization ($b = -.17, SE = .08$) such that that more caballerismo was related to a less social distancing from family members. One of the expected relationships in prediction 5 was not significant, specifically, the relationship between

family conflict and psychological distress ($b = .11, SE = .09$), suggesting that greater likelihood of family conflict was not related to greater perceived psychological distress. On the other hand, the relationship between family intragroup marginalization and psychological distress was statistically significant ($b = .38, SE = .09$), such that greater perceived intragroup marginalization was related to greater psychological distress.

Mediation Analysis

Prediction 6 suggested that family conflict and family intragroup marginalization would mediate the relationship between traditional machismo and caballerismo on psychological distress. Specifically, individuals with more traditional machismo would endorse more psychological distress in the presence of more family conflict and family intragroup marginalization, whereas individuals with more caballerismo would endorse less psychological distress by way of less family conflict and family intragroup marginalization. Examination of the indirect effects within the model partially supported our predicted results. No statistically significant indirect relationship was found between traditional machismo and psychological distress through family conflict ($b = .03, SE = .02$) or through family intragroup marginalization ($b = .03, SE = .03$). This suggested that the amount of perceived family conflict and family intragroup marginalization did not impact the relationship between traditional machismo and psychological distress. Further, no statistically significant indirect relationship was found between caballerismo and psychological distress through family conflict ($b = .00, SE = .01$), suggesting that the amount of perceived family conflict did not impact the relationship between caballerismo and psychological distress. On the other hand, a significant indirect

relationship was found between caballerismo and psychological distress through family intragroup marginalization ($b = -.06, SE = .03$). This, combined with the nonsignificant direct relationship between caballerismo and psychological distress is indicative of a full mediational model. In other words, the negative predictive relationship between caballerismo and psychological distress is explained indirectly through family intragroup marginalization, such that individuals with more caballerismo endorsed less psychological distress by way of less family intragroup marginalization.

The total effects of the model accounted for 19% of the variance in psychological distress ($R^2 = .19$). Further, the model accounted for 6% and 3% of the variance in family conflict and family intragroup marginalization, respectively ($R^2 = .06$ and $R^2 = .03$).

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

The present study examined two domains of Latino male gender role beliefs (i.e., traditional machismo and caballerismo), as well as the mediating role of family conflict and family intragroup marginalization, to test a culturally relevant model of psychological distress among Mexican American college men. The interplay between gender role beliefs and mental health outcomes in culturally diverse communities is not commonly explored and few studies have intentionally examined this relationship for Mexican American college men (Schwartz, 2009; Raffaelli and Ontai, 2004; Cerezo et al., 2013). The risk of experiencing psychological distress may be elevated for Mexican American college men given that many may be charged with balancing the cultural incongruity that results when institutional values (e.g., egalitarian conceptions of gender) conflict with those of the Latina/o heritage culture (Gloria & Rodriguez, 2000). For example, White American undergraduate men and women have been shown to adopt less traditional views about gender in college (Bryant, 2003). The process of adjusting to egalitarian conceptions of gender is taxing for Mexican American college men who are unprepared to negotiate gendered value sets that contrast with those of the heritage culture. Familial factors may also influence the relationship between traditional machismo and caballerismo on psychological distress given that family conflict (Castillo et al., 2008; Vasquez-Salgado et al., 2015; Lee & Liu, 2001; Constantine & Flores,

2006) and family intragroup marginalization (Castillo et al., 2004; Castillo et al., 2007; Castillo et al., 2008) can impact mental health outcomes.

As expected, higher levels of traditional machismo were associated with higher levels of family conflict. In other words, when Mexican American college men demonstrate more hypermasculine or aggressive conceptions of Latino masculinity, they report higher levels of family conflict. This finding is consistent with literature that points to the problematic effects of traditional machismo such as attainment of individual power, aggression, and sex-role dominance (Arciniega et al., 2008). The presence of these behaviors in the family system can lead to tension within the home as a result of differing expectations that arise between family members (Lee et al., 2000). For example, a Mexican American college man may demonstrate behaviors that attempt to dominate or control some portion of the family system (e.g., talking back to or interrupting elders). In turn, family members may reprimand him for expressing these behaviors. From this we can understand that as individuals express behaviors that fall in line with traditional machismo, they begin to experience more tension within the family. Further, although traditional machismo is understood as a common facet of Latina/o culture and masculinity, it can still lead to conflicts within the family unit. This is an important factor to consider as college-aged individuals may begin to feel that they cannot turn to family members for support, an important aspect of Latina/o culture (Castillo et al., 2010). Surprisingly, traditional machismo was not related to higher levels of family intragroup marginalization. The nonsignificant effect of traditional machismo on family intragroup marginalization in the present study makes sense given that

intragroup marginalization theory posits that interpersonal distancing among family members occurs as the individual expresses characteristics of the receiving culture (Castillo et al., 2007; Castillo, 2009). Therefore, perhaps Mexican American college men are not seen as adopting characteristics of the receiving culture when they express machista behaviors since these traits (e.g., hypermasculinity and sex-role dominance) are understood as conventional, albeit negative aspects of Latina/o culture and masculinity.

As expected, *caballerismo* (positive Latino masculinity) was associated with lower levels of family intragroup marginalization. This indicates that Mexican American college men who exhibit more behavior congruent with *caballerismo* (e.g., family-centered orientation, chivalry, and pride) are less likely to experience interpersonal distancing among family members. These findings are consistent with literature that suggests that maintenance of heritage culture values are negatively related to interpersonal distancing among family members (Castillo et al., 2007). Family members of Mexican American college men with higher levels of *caballerismo* may praise the individual for valuing and respecting their family. This is an important factor to explore given that *caballerismo* may engender supportive relationships with family members and in turn protect against psychological distress (Rodriguez et al., 2007). Contrary to our expectations, *caballerismo* was not related to lower levels of family conflict. This finding comes as a surprise given that *caballerismo* includes positive and desirable conceptions of Latino masculinity that are expected to decrease tension within the family. A possible explanation may be that the lack of family conflict is not contingent upon Mexican American college men's endorsement of *caballerismo*. It is also possible

that the measure of *caballerismo* did not capture behavioral characteristics that are relevant to diminishing family conflict. The measure of *caballerismo* provides information on the individual's valuation of family but provides no information about family-oriented support behaviors such as emotional support, companionship, or helpfulness. Future research should attempt to identify these and other factors that inform the relationship between *caballerismo* and family conflict.

Surprisingly, the relationship between family conflict and psychological distress was not significant. In other words, a Mexican American college male's level of psychological distress may not be contingent upon the likelihood of conflict within their family. This finding contradicts research suggesting that family conflict is a stressor for Latina/o college students (Castillo et al., 2008). Given that the university attended by participants in the current study is a commuter institution, a possible explanation may be that the sample likely consisted primarily of students that live at home with family members and thus have more opportunities to resolve familial disputes. It is also possible that Mexican American college men benefit from non-familial support, such as peer support, that helps them cope with familial conflicts. On the other hand, the relationship between family intragroup marginalization and psychological distress was significant, as initially hypothesized. This finding supports literature in which greater perceived interpersonal distancing from family members was related to greater psychological distress (Castillo et al., 2008). For Mexican American college men, it may be that the perceived social distancing from family members is more distressing than the actual presence of conflict within the home. The dissimilar impact of family conflict and

family intragroup marginalization supports studies that describe these constructs as separate phenomena with differential properties. For example, in a study examining family conflict and family intragroup marginalization in Mexican American college students, intragroup marginalization was related to acculturative stress even after controlling for family conflict (Castillo et al., 2008). Scholars should continue to examine these factors separately to gain a deeper understanding of how they each impact psychological distress in Mexican American college men.

As hypothesized, a significant mediation effect was found such that caballerismo was associated with lower levels of psychological distress when family intragroup marginalization was taken into account. This finding suggests that Mexican American college men who exhibit more behavior congruent with caballerismo are less likely to experience psychological distress because they are less likely to experience social distancing from family members. Given the importance of family ties in Latino culture and the positive traits associated with caballerismo (e.g., family-centered orientation), it makes sense that experiencing less social distancing from family members would positively impact Mexican American college men's mental health (Rodriguez et al., 2007). Contrary to our expectations, the role of family conflict as a mediator between Latino male gender role beliefs (e.g., traditional machismo and caballerismo) and psychological distress was not significant. Furthermore, traditional machismo and caballerismo were not directly related to psychological distress. These relationships may not have been supported due to various reasons. For example, the current sample of Mexican American college men reported a relatively low level of psychological distress.

Scores below 20 on the Psychological Distress Scale indicate that respondents are not experiencing notable levels of distress (Andrews & Slade, 2001). Participants in this study had a mean distress score of 18.9 ($SD = 9.6$), indicating low to moderate levels of distress. This suggests that the respective impact of family conflict and family intragroup marginalization on psychological distress may not be as marked for groups with low levels of distress. This may suggest that Mexican American college men do not consider family tension or distancing to be as detrimental to their overall psychological adjustment, especially when their perceived level of psychological distress is low. This may be more likely for the current sample of men, given that participants attended an HSI in which the majority of students live at home and thus have more opportunities to resolve family tension. In other words, when overall distress levels are low, so is the potential impact of family tension or distancing. Our mixed findings support the need for future research that attempts to gain a more comprehensive understanding of psychological distress among Mexican American college men. Further studies should explore other factors (e.g., peer relationships) that impact psychological adjustment in this population. It may also be helpful to explore how these relationships differ for Mexican American college men who attend PWIs versus students in more diverse academic environments.

Limitations

Several limitations should be taken into consideration when interpreting these findings. First, current research on psychological distress includes the predominate use of cross-sectional research designs that cannot identify a causal or directional order of

association with other variables. Longitudinal approaches may provide a more comprehensive understanding of Latino male gender role beliefs (e.g., traditional machismo and caballerismo) given that these beliefs are likely to fluctuate through college. The present study employed a cross-sectional approach given that longitudinal approaches are expensive, require large sample sizes, and necessitate extended data collection periods; however, future research should utilize a longitudinal approach to determine how fluctuating levels of Latino male gender role beliefs (e.g., traditional machismo and caballerismo), family conflict, and family intragroup marginalization impact psychological distress in Mexican American college men.

Furthermore, the current sample consists of students attending an HSI, which could limit the generalizability of this study to PWIs. Examining the university environment may have shed light on the importance of contextual differences that can impact Latino male gender role beliefs (e.g., traditional machismo and caballerismo), family conflict, family intragroup marginalization, and psychological distress. For example, Latina/o college students attending PWI may be more likely to adopt majority culture values that challenge heritage culture values (Castillo et al., 2004), such as nontraditional gender role beliefs (Bryant, 2003). It should also be noted that our sample consists mainly of Latino college men who live at home with their families and are more consistently exposed to the heritage culture norms. This may bias the results given that adoption of majority culture values (e.g., liberal gender role beliefs) may differ for students who live on campus among majority culture peers. Further studies should attain larger, more heterogeneous samples to allow for the comparison of students who attend

HSIs versus PWIs as well as groups of students who live at home with their families or on campus with peers. Lastly, generalizability of the study may be limited given that the current sample was limited to Mexican American college men. Future studies should seek to explore the interplay of these variables in Latina/o subgroups at various intersections of class, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity. In doing so, researchers may gain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship among Latino male gender role beliefs (e.g, traditional machismo and caballerismo), family conflict, family intragroup marginalization, and how these phenomena impact psychological distress across these lines.

Implications for Research and Practice

The results of this study can be used to inform researchers and student service professionals. First, Latino male gender role beliefs (e.g., traditional machismo and caballerismo) were shown to be related to both family conflict and family intragroup marginalization, but their respective relationships were different than anticipated. Specifically, traditional machismo was related to family conflict, whereas caballerismo was related to family intragroup marginalization. Regardless, these findings indicate that both traditional machismo and caballerismo are important factors to examine given that both can impact family harmony or social distancing on behalf of family members. Furthermore, the present study revealed that family intragroup marginalization is significantly related to psychological distress for Latino college men, which suggests that social distancing on behalf of family members contributes to the barriers they encounter as they adjust to college. Given that psychological distress has been shown to

interfere with academic persistence in students of color (Spenciner Rosenthal & Wilson, 2003), future studies should examine how it impacts Latino college men and how student support professionals can reduce the level of distress they experience.

For example, the present study suggests that it may be helpful to engage students' families in an effort to reduce the student's sense of social distancing from family members. The inclusion of family supports converges with the Latina/o cultural value of familismo, which may help reduce psychological distress in Mexican American adults (Rodriguez et al., 2007). To intervene at the level of family intragroup marginalization, student service professionals should develop culturally responsive interventions that increase positive communication with family members. This level of support is likely to benefit the student as they progress through college. Interestingly, the relationship between Latino male gender role beliefs (e.g., traditional machismo and caballerismo) and psychological distress was mediated by family intragroup marginalization but not family conflict. This is an important finding and suggests that other factors may exacerbate or relieve psychological distress in Latino college men. For example, Mexican American college men who exhibit more behavior congruent with caballerismo are less likely to experience psychological distress because they are less likely to experience teasing from family members for not being Latino enough. Considering these findings, future studies should seek to identify other support variables that reduce psychological distress, such as supportive relationships with peers. Future examinations of Latino college men should consider the joint impact of peers and family and whether these factors reduce psychological distress. Lastly, while the negative

aspects of traditional machismo are commonly understood in the Latina/o community, student service professionals should establish new interventions that highlight the positive aspects of Latino masculinity by introducing students to the concept of caballerismo. Culturally responsive university interventions that intentionally discuss the complexities of Latino masculinity and psychological adjustment may help promote positive mental health outcomes in Mexican American college men.

In conclusion, the present study highlights the importance of understanding Latino male gender role beliefs (e.g., traditional machismo and caballerismo), Latina/o families, and their influence on psychological distress. Scholars and student service professionals should continue to explore these factors to develop culturally relevant initiatives that reduce psychological distress in Mexican American college men. Unfortunately, many institutions have subsumed Latina/o specific programs in favor of more race-neutral (e.g., intercultural or cross-cultural) services that reinforce the power and privilege of dominant cultural groups by diverting attention away from the unique barriers that impact Latina/o college students (Villalpando, 2004). As such, the results of this study should be used to advocate for the creation of culturally responsive services that challenge the race-neutral ideologies that traditionally inform the development of university programs.

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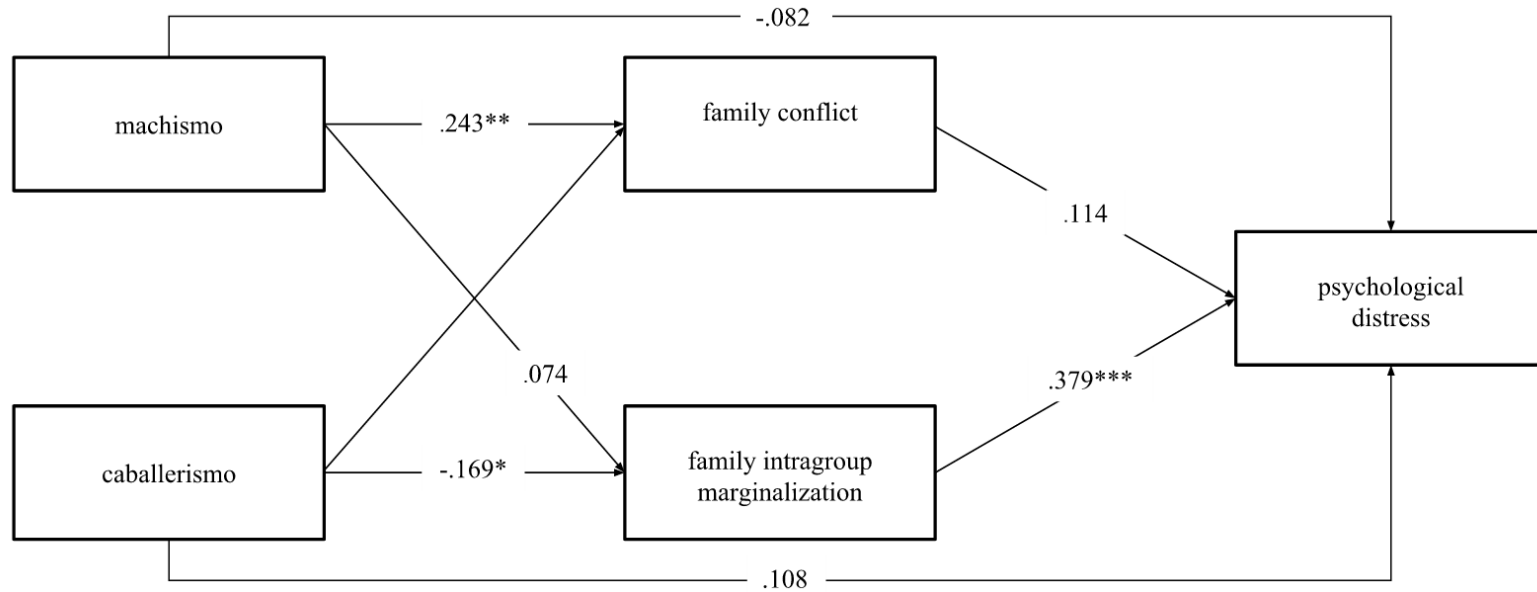
APPENDIX

Table A.1 Pearson *r* Correlation Matrix for Variables in Path Analysis (*n* = 146)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Traditional machismo	-	.12	.25**	.06	-.02	2.2	.48
2. Caballerismo		-	.05	-.16	.04	3.5	.35
3. Family conflict			-	.46**	.27**	2.1	.90
4. Family intragroup marginalization				-	.41**	2.0	.79
5. Psychological distress					-	2.0	.61

Note. **p* < .05, two-tailed. ***p* < .01, two-tailed.

Figure A.1 Structural equation model of the relationship among traditional machismo and caballerismo on psychological distress, mediated by family conflict and family intragroup marginalization. Note. Indirect effects are not depicted.



Note. $*p < .05$; $**p < .01$; $***p < .001$