Student Involvement & Academic Outcomes

IMPLICATIONS FOR DIVERSE COLLEGE STUDENT POPULATIONS

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MEXICANO MALE STUDENTS’ ENGAGEMENT WITH FACULTY IN THE Community College

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In the past 10 years, research relevant to men of color in postsecondary education has explored factors influencing their success in college (Bush & Bush, 2010; Flowers, 2006; Mason, 1998; Wood, 2012). In particular, scholars have found that men of color who are more academically engaged in college environments tend to perform better than those who are not academically engaged, specifically within academic achievement and persistence (Ingram & Gonzalez-Matthews, 2013; Sutherland, 2011). One important type of engagement often examined in research is that of faculty-student engagement. Faculty-student engagement refers to key interactions inside and outside of the class that students have with faculty regarding academic and nonacademic matters (Wood & Ireland, 2014); however, students’ engagement in any academic environment can be hindered by the nexus of numerous factors.

In this chapter, we examine key engagement experience for Mexican men in community colleges. Due to the nature of this study that has differentiated Latino subgroups as in other comprehensive studies (Navarro, 2005), Mexican was operationalized to refer to men of Mexican, Mexican American, and Chicanx identity in order to distinguish students of Mexican descent from other Latino subgroups, that is, Guatemalteco, Salvadoriano, Hondureño, Costarricense, Panameño, Colombiano, Venezolano, Brasilero, Argentino, Cubano, Puertorriqueño, and so forth. To provide context to this study, we interviewed several Mexican men who had previous experience as community college students. We use examples from one of these
men to illuminate experiences and perceptions that are interwoven throughout this manuscript. The following quote from a Mexican male community college student named Juan Gonzalez (a pseudonym) illustrates this point:

When I was at [a community college], I took an anthropology class and almost the first half of the semester I had an "F" in that class and [professor of color] pulled me to the side and he’s like, “Dude, what are you doing? Do you want to actually go to school? What is your problem, why are you doing bad?” And I told him, “I am working, I have work, and I am trying to do everything, and it’s just tough.” See, he pulled me out in the hall ... not even after class, this was passing by. I was getting lunch and he pulled me to the side ... and he’s like, “You know what? When I was your age, I already had my degree. I’m not trying to be tough...” And I was like, “Look...” I stopped him right there ... “You don’t know what it means to be you. You don’t know what my family is.” And I told him, “You were probably someone that didn’t have a job and stuff...” And we were getting into it. And [professor says], “Look man...” He pulled out something that kind of put me in shock, and it’s like to not judge a book by its cover ... he pulled out his contractor’s license and he told me, “Look man, I know where you’ve been, cause I’ve done the same thing.” He was a painter; he was all of those things ... he would mow grass and do what he can to pay his tuition, and he didn’t have the programs they have now ... he wanted it so bad, that he got it ... and he’s like, “You know what? You need to make your decision, do you want to make money now, or do you want to make money later?” And that put me in a position because I never really thought about it. So, I started doing all of my course work, and I ended the course with an “A” ... And that’s one thing that I feel that there is not a lot of teachers that do things like that. He did that to me ... that was probably one of the best semesters I had and I ended up with higher than a 3.0. I think there needs to be a lot more professors that actually care about their students, because me personally that’s where my discouragement comes from because I see teachers that don’t want to help.

Juan discussed the important effect that employment can have on student success, particularly for men of color, and stressed the challenge of having an outside commitment to working while simultaneously attending to the high demands of his academics. Juan additionally noted that his grades suffered at the start of the semester, but rose by the end of the semester based on a breakthrough encounter with a faculty member. Embodied within this discussion of the significance of employment are the confluent key concepts explored in this chapter, including degree utility and the masculine ideal or pressure to be the family’s breadwinner. In this chapter, we explore the effect of employment on Mexicanos’ faculty-student engagement. We also investigate whether perceptions of degree utility and masculine identity in four domains (i.e., breadwinner orientation, help-seeking behavior, school as a feminine domain, and competitive ethos) has a moderating effect on the relationship between students’ employment and faculty-student engagement.

Researchers investigating the experiences of men of color in community colleges have found that degree utility—students’ perceptions of the worthwhileness of their collegiate endeavors—serves as a critical linchpin for student success. Specifically, Mason (1998) examined persistence factors for urban African American male community college students in Illinois and found that degree utility serves as a strong positive predictor of first-semester persistence for these men. In the case of Juan, the faculty member intentionally provoked ideas relative to the student’s current life, such as “Do you want to make money now, or do you want to make money later?” This comment caused Juan to reassess his commitment to school in light of his external commitments to work; consequently, Juan placed greater value on the importance of college and embraced the notion of delayed gratification.

Also evident within these same words is the faculty member’s appeal to Juan’s masculinity. Many men are socialized to serve as primary breadwinners, referred to as a breadwinner orientation. This orientation often suggests that providing for oneself and one’s family is more important for men than women. When taken to extreme, men may in some cases devalue school and place greater importance on work for fear of not fulfilling their masculine duties of providing. Coupled with the expectation of getting a job, financial family obligations, and the desire for financial prosperity (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Harris & Wood, 2013; Palmer & Dubord, 2013; Saenz, Bukoski, Lu, & Rodriguez, 2013; Wood & Palmer, 2013a, 2013b; Wood, Hilton, & Lewis, 2011), men are often encouraged at home to embrace breadwinning (Harris & Harper, 2008, Saenz et al., 2013). As a result, more than 70% of Latino men who are enrolled in higher education are employed and attend school part-time (NCES, 2012); however, a breadwinner orientation is not the only masculine ideal influencing outcomes for men of color. In addition, men may perceive school as a feminine domain, have perceptions of competition associated with masculinity, and may be fearful in seeking out help from faculty and staff, as they may believe doing so will illustrate traits of weakness. Take help-seeking as an example: for Juan, despite his awareness of his failing grade in anthropology, there was no indication of initiated discourse from him to seek out assistance from faculty. Juan was discouraged from help-seeking as a result of negative faculty behaviors, which is an important consideration given that avoidance of help-seeking has been linked to attributes related to traditional masculine socialization reinforced through norms and expectations of gender behaviors (Harris & Harper, 2008).

Furthermore, working male Mexicanos face additional challenges of fulfilling socialized masculine roles to work as soon as they reach adulthood. Comprehending the effect that gender roles have on males’ success in college is essential for facilitating the success of men of color. Certainly it is no surprise that the majority of two-year college students hold some form of employment while in school (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Recent data notes that more than 65% of students work a minimum of 26 hours or more while in school (NPSAS, 2012). For Latino men, research has shown that approximately 66% work a minimum of 26 hours or
more while attending a public two-year college, and 42.5% of Latino males work a minimum 40 hours or more (NPSAS, 2012). Nonetheless, the majority of Latino men begin their academic careers at a community college (College Board, 2011; Hagedorn, Maxwell, & Hampton, 2001–2002; Perrakis, 2008; Sáenz et al., 2013; Strayhorn, 2012); consequently, it is important to better understand Mexican male students’ experiences in this institutional context given their numbers.

In providing additional context to this study, in the next section, we examine select background characteristics of Latino men in community colleges, which does not differentiate between Mexican and Latino men. In addition, the following sections address key concepts explored in this study. The authors have employed insights from the interview with Juan and prior research to help contextualize the experiences of Mexican men. That being said, as mentioned, much of the research on these men do not delineate between Mexican men and Latino men (in general). Thus, what follows is inclusive of literature more broadly contextualized as referring to Latino men and, in some cases, men of color as a whole.

By shedding light on the counter-narratives of men of color, we begin to understand the inner workings of the socialization that takes place within this group. Specifically, in this chapter, we explore the effect of employment on faculty-student engagement and investigate whether perceptions of degree utility and masculine identity in four domains—breadwinner orientation, help-seeking behavior, school as a feminine domain, and competitive ethos—have a moderating effect on the relationship between employment and faculty-student engagement.

Excerpts on Latino Men

Reinforcement of gender behavior has been linked to direct or indirect observations of gendered acts learned through one’s childhood, particularly through parents and familial influences (MacNaughton, 2006). As such, from early on, boys begin to associate masculinity as a representation of physical rigor, strength, and power (Harris & Harper, 2008). Harris and Harper (2008) have discussed how masculine identities can conflict with success in college, noting that ideations of manhood are developed at early stages of childhood. The socialization of one’s masculinity is reinforced through “manhood messages” endorsed by family, male peers, and schools; for example, key influences within the home have been reported to reinforce socializations of gender behavior throughout their expected domestic duties (Harris & Harper, 2008). In addition, the father-son interaction plays a critical role to the development in shaping males’ understanding of their own masculinity. For instance, socialized activities ranging from the kinds of toys bought for boys to the enrollment in sports popular among boys affect the internalization of socialized masculine gender roles (Harris & Harper, 2008).

Help-seeking

As noted earlier, some men avoid seeking out help from faculty and staff. They do so because help-seeking can be erroneously associated with weakness and femininity. Such internalization of these traditional masculine notions has led to conflicts between men’s identities and successful practices in college. For instance, men’s perceptions of help-seeking influences whether or not they will engage in academic matters directly related to their success (e.g., accessing campus resources, centers, tutoring services, talking with faculty). For example, two students interviewed in Gardenhire-Crooks, Collado, Martin, Castro, Brock, and Orr’s (2010) study noted the following: “I paid for school, out of my pocket. I pay for my books … I ain’t ask nobody to help me, you know, I ain’t need no help, that’s the type of person I am” (p. 46).

Similarly, Juan reported:

I feel that one thing that I’ve learned from my father and it’s not like bad, I love everything that my father taught me. He’s taught me a lot about pride and it’s something that I have a lot of sense of pride … with that I feel that because of the culture that I have, it’s a lot of that machismo which is the masculinity of not asking for help, of being a man, showing people you’re strong and you can do it. And it’s something that I do have, and it’s something that I know that I don’t want to be a part of, but at the same time I don’t regret because it’s something that defines who I am … when I do graduate, hopefully this semester, to me it’s going to be one of the happiest things in my life because I did it by myself. Not because I asked somebody to help me, not because it was handed to me, but the fact that I did it myself.

Nonetheless, the message behind the usage of phrases such as “I did it by myself” and “I ain’t ask nobody to help me” clearly solidifies their identities as products of socialized gender roles; yet, the frustrations of failure in school permeate a male-gendered identity conflict from the students noted above. Some males are aware of their frustrations in college; however, sometimes males have trouble expressing their need for help among peers, more so with faculty when feelings of faculty disconnect are high. As an example, Juan further demonstrated his own frustrations with help seeking from faculty:

I don’t want people to know that I want help. And I don’t ask my friends for help and they are the same way, “Dude, it’s easy, I didn’t even study for that class and I passed” and I feel so discouraged that I want to ask for help but don’t because it’s kind of embarrassing. And when you finally do ask for help or ask teachers for assistance, the teacher is a gamble whether they want to help you or not if you’re taking their time.

Similarly, another student interviewed by Gardenhire-Crooks and colleagues (2010) expressed his attitude about faculty in community college: “If they don’t care about how I do, neither do I” (p. 25). Akin to what Juan underscored within his passage,
both students seem to have emphasized individualized self-determination. As such, more researchers are turning their attention to factors associated with college success, including socialized gender traits that shape or restrict social skills of men while in college (Ludeman, 2004).

Breadwinner Orientation

In addition to school and work, some Latino men are also responsible for fulfilling family obligations (e.g., caring for dependents, providing financially). Past research indicates that having family obligations is related to lower completion rates and dropping out of higher education institutions (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Harris & Wood, 2013; Wood, 2012). Coupling one's internalization of masculinity with cultural and familial expectations of getting a job can lead to even further pressures for a student. One male student interviewed by Sáenz and colleagues (2013) expressed his unease over pressures of obtaining a job in order to contribute to the household, while still understanding his responsibilities as a student:

[Mother] keeps reminding me, “When are you going to get a job? You have to help us with the income...” And then my mind’s like, “I’m taking all these classes and I have a full course load and everything so I can’t do it.” It’s not like easy classes, they’re pretty difficult classes so... I mean I’ve gotten to understand it, but she always used to remind me, “When are you going to get a job? When are you going to help out?” (p. 14)

Similarly, Harris and Harper (2008) noted that a student in their study had to reduce his work hours by half to make time for classes and studying. Consequently, his girlfriend took a part-time job to supplement their income. Adam recently asked a friend, “What kind of man has two kids and quits working so he can go and read poetry at some damn college?” (p. 31).

Working off-campus and having family responsibilities are some factors that could negatively impact student engagement and success (Freeman & Huggans, 2009; Harris & Wood, 2013; Mason, 1998). Take for instance, similar experiences echoed by another Latino male student interviewed by Gardenhire-Crooks and colleagues (2010):

It’s like, as a man, I still got to support... She’s not working at the moment. She goes to school. So, I still have to come up with money to help my father pay the rent, pay my car insurance, pay my gas, fix my car and still send money to [her] so I can at least help her out with her cell phone bills, clothes and stuff like that. Even though she lives with her parents, but still, me, as a man, like [I can’t say] “Yeah, live off your father.” That’s not me, you know what I mean? (p. 42)

These students clearly displayed a clear sense of gender- and identity-related challenges and the pressure of contributing at home as well as supporting a significant other posed a significant challenge. These influences from home are the stresses noted in the literature as the “expectation to contribute to family life” (Sáenz et al., 2013, p. 14). Additionally, as mentioned in Harris and Harper, characteristics from this narrative also suggest that these students embody the socialization to embrace the breadwinner role at home, which further suggest the maintenance of traditional male behavior (O’Neil, 1981). In pursuit of fulfilling this role, some men pursue a college degree to fulfill this expectation of acquiring higher paying jobs (Harris & Harper, 2008), adding to the perception among men as breadwinners.

Competitive Ethos

Another integral masculine concept that can influence success is competitive ethos. The competitive ethos subconstruct refers to men's dispositions and perceptions around competition with other men. Successful competition with others can provide men with a sense of control and power over their own lives and an enhanced sense of pride (Sáenz et al., 2013). Boys learn early on from other men (e.g., fathers, brothers, uncles) that their worth as men is tied to successful competition with other men (Harris & Harper, 2008); for example, many young boys are engaged in sports by their fathers and socialized to perceive sports as a domain that is key to their success as men. Socialized messages around competition continue throughout life and can also be reinforced via faculty. This is exemplified by a message that Juan received from his male professor:

Something he had told me that I never really forgot was “nobody in your life is ever going to hand you things and when you see a lot of, everything like today, you’re similar to what America wants with your credit score. If you don’t have credit you’re nothing.” And a lot of the times I feel that’s what [professor] was trying to tell me was that if you don’t have your degree, you’re nothing. You’re in competition with everyone else in the world, and you have a degree, is one step above them.

Competition among men is evident in many domains, including “sexual relationships with women, status within exclusively male peer groups, and the accumulation of material possessions” (Harris & Harper, 2008, p. 30). Competitive ethos can be a critical linchpin to success in college for those whom college is a domain where they exert their competitive efforts. That being said, an excessive focus on competition can also be unhealthy, especially when one perceives that their success in academic matters is tied to their self-worth. Competition can also occur as it relates to college: when men do not succeed in school in relation to other men, they may feel a sense of being lesser than their masculine peers (O’Neil, 1981). As a result, men can withdraw their interest in school and place it in other domains of competition (e.g., sports, women) where they may experience greater levels of success.
School as a Feminine Domain

Men may also perceive school as a feminine domain (Weaver-Hightower, 2003). Specifically, boys of color attend schools where the vast majority of teachers are of White ethnicity and female. Thus, due to the structural composition of school as a White-feminine domain, when boys engage in schools, they also experience a conflict with their masculine identities (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998; Weaver-Hightower, 2003). Thus, boys who excel in school are often referred to (by peers) as being a wuss, sissy, punk, b**ch, or other names that suggest feminization. This notion of school as a feminine domain is typified by the following quote:

Erik decided to enroll in community college to pursue a vocational certificate and an associate degree. His friends from high school offered a perspective on his decision: “School is for girls and sissies. If you need to support your family, be a man and go out and get a real job.” (Harris & Harper, 2008, p. 32)

As evidenced by this quote, school is widely viewed as a domain for women. As noted by Gilbert and Gilbert (1998), “If commitment to schoolwork is characteristic of girls, and if to be masculine requires being different from girls, then boys’ commitment to schoolwork becomes a challenge to their masculinity” (p. 140).

Moreover, school can also be perceived as a White domain as well: young children of color (regardless of gender) are socialized to perceive school as being structured for people other than themselves (Ogbu, 2004). Thus, a student of color who engages in school may feel a conflict with academic success and their identity as a person of color, which is typified by Ogbu’s (2004) notion of acting White. In this notion, students of color are socialized to perceive school as a White domain and, thus, students of color who excel in school are teased for acting outside of the normal expectation of their race (Ogbu, 2004). The confluence of these two concepts, acting White and being feminine, further socialize boys of color to see school as a domain that is not suited for them (Harris & Wood, 2014). While this section has provided contextual support for this chapter in overviewing research on Latino men and masculinities, the next section will describe the methods employed in this study.

METHOD

Data from this study were derived from the Community College Survey of Men (CCSM). The CCSM is an institutional-level needs assessment tool used by community colleges to better understand factors that influence success for historically underrepresented and underserved men (Wood & Harris, 2013). In the past two years, the CCSM has been employed at nearly 40 community colleges in eight states (i.e., California, Arizona, Arkansas, Illinois, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, and Texas). In total, nearly 6,000 men have been surveyed via this instrument. Colleges participating in the CCSM receive comprehension reports on between-racial/ethnic group differences and summaries identifying factors most predictive of student success. Institutional agents use the data derived from the CCSM for establishing benchmarks, monitoring student progress, and identifying areas in need of intervention. The CCSM was designed based on findings from extant research on men of color in community college, college college student success, and racial and masculine identity (Flowers, 2006; Freeman & Huggans, 2009; Glenn, 2003; Hagedorn, Maxwell, & Hampton, 2001–2002; Mason, 1998; Vasquez-Urias, 2012; Wood & Williams, 2013). Prior research has shown that the instrument has strong psychometric properties (Wood & Harris, 2013). Specifically Wood and Harris (2013) found that the instrument has strong internal consistency and reliability across racial/ethnic populations.

Data employed in this study were derived from the final pilot phase of the instrument. This phase was conducted in fall 2013 with 17 participating community colleges. These colleges spanned four states, including Arizona, California, Maryland, and Illinois. A total of 3,781 men participated in the survey. The ethnic breakdown of the sample was as follows: 40% White, 5.2% Asian (excluding Southeast Asian), 2.7% Southeast Asian (e.g., Hmong, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Laotian), 0.6% South Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Sri-Lankan), 0.8% Pacific Islander, 2.8% Filipino, 10.0% Black, 18.4% Mexican/Mexican American, 8.9% Hispanic (excluding Mexican/Mexican American descent), 2.1% American Indian, 1.1% Middle Eastern, 2.2% other, and 4.8% Multietnic. Analyses employed in this analysis were restricted to men identifying as Mexican/Mexican American (n = 337). The next section identifies the variables employed from the CCSM that were used in this study.

Measures and Analysis

The primary outcome employed in this study was faculty–student engagement, which was operationalized in this study to refer to the degree to which students were engaged inside and outside of the classroom in academic and nonacademic matters with faculty. Faculty–student engagement was a composite variable composed of students’ responses to four statements. Students were asked to indicate the frequency of their engagement with faculty (e.g., never, once this semester, once a month, a few times a month, once a week, several times a week) on the following four areas: “talk with professors about academic matters inside of class,” “talk with professors about academic matters outside of class,” “talk with professors about non-academic matters (e.g., personal, family, current events) outside of class,” and “talk with professors about course grade(s).”
The analysis controlled for four potential variables, including respondents' age, total number of dependents, full-time or part-time enrollment, and stressful life events. Respondents' age was collected via class intervals on the following scale: Under 18, 18 to 24 years old, 25 to 31 years old, 32 to 38 years old, 39 to 45 years old, 46 to 52 years old, 53 to 59 years old, 60 to 66 years old, and 67 years and older. Stressful life events identified the total number of stressful life circumstances that the student had experienced in the last two years (e.g., divorce, death in family, eviction, relationship breakup, health concerns, and incarceration).

The primary predictor variable employed in this study was hours worked per week. This variable was collected on the following scale: none, 1 to 5 hours, 6 to 10 hours, 11 to 15 hours, 16 to 20 hours, 21 to 25 hours, 26 to 30 hours, 31 to 35 hours, 36 to 40 hours, and 41 or more hours. In addition to examining hours worked per week as a predictor of faculty-student engagement, in this study we also examined whether degree utility and four masculine domains had a moderating effect on the relationship between work and the outcome. As noted, degree utility refers to students' perceptions of the worthwhileness of their collegiate endeavors. The four masculine domains examined in this study included school as a feminine domain, breadwinner orientation, competitive ethos, and help-seeking. These composite variables assessed men's healthy conceptions of masculinities in the areas mentioned above.

Data in this study were analyzed using multiple linear regression. Specifically, the researchers examined the association between hours worked in employment with faculty-student engagement (with controls). The model also explored the interactions of work with degree utility and the four masculine domains on the outcome. Effect sizes were examined using R-squared (R²) and the adjusted R-squared (adjR²). Data are presented in the next section using the unstandardized and standardized coefficients.

RESULTS

The first model examined the relationships between hours worked in employment and faculty-student engagement for Mexican men. This model was significantly predictive of the outcome $F = 6.511$, $p < .001$. The full model accounted for 14.2% of the variance in the outcome ($R^2 = .142$, adjR² = .120). As previously discussed, this study employed four primary control variables, age, total number of dependents, stressful life events, and status time. Age was not found to have a significant effect on the outcome ($B = -.239$, $p = .271$). The total number of dependents had a slight positive effect on the outcome, suggesting that more dependents was associated with greater levels of faculty-student engagement ($B = .353$, $p < .05$). Stressful life event was found to have a positive effect on the outcome ($B = .407$, $p < .001$). Interestingly, this finding suggests that students with greater numbers of stressful life events (e.g., eviction, divorce, death in family, incarceration) were more likely to report higher levels of engagement with faculty members. Time status had a negative effect on the outcome. Given that full-time status was the reference category, this result indicated that part-time students reported lower levels of faculty-student engagement than their full-time peers ($B = -1.337$, $p < .01$). Table 12.1 summarizes the findings.

| Table 12.1. Regression Coefficients for Predictors of Faculty-Student Engagement. |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------|
| Unstandardized Coefficients    | B               | Std. Error      | Beta   | t     |
| (Constant)                     | 10.08***        | .948            | -.056  | -1.101|
| Age                            | -.239           | .217            | -.056  | -1.101|
| Dependents                     | .353*           | .166            | .108   | 2.124 |
| Time Status                    | -1.337**        | .478            | -.142  | -2.795|
| Stressful Life Events          | .407***         | .106            | .183   | 3.847 |
| Working for Pay                | -2.930**        | 1.020           | -.627  | -2.873|
| Work*Degree Utility            | .722            | .753            | .154   | .960  |
| Work*Feminine                  | -.880           | 1.033           | -.188  | -.851 |
| Work*Breadwinning              | 1.727**         | .623            | .368   | 2.773 |
| Work*Competitive Ethos         | -1.768***       | .489            | -.377  | -3.619|
| Work*Help-seeking              | 3.173***        | .754            | .680   | 4.209 |

Note: *$<.05$, **$<.01$, ***$<.001$.

The primary predictor variable employed in this study was hours worked per week off-campus. As hypothesized, this variable was negatively predictive of faculty-student engagement. As a result, the more hours a Mexican male student worked per week, the less likely he was to have engaging experiences with faculty members ($B = -2.930$, $p < .01$). Another important element of this study was examining the effect of several moderating variables on the relationship between hours worked per week and faculty-student engagement. These moderating variables included degree utility and four measures of masculine identity (e.g., school as a feminine domain, breadwinner orientation, competitive ethos, and help-seeking). Of the potential moderators examined, two did not have a significant
effect on the relationship between hours worked per week and the outcome. Perceptions of school as a feminine domain was not found to have a moderating effect in this study ($B = -0.880$, $p = 0.395$). Moreover, degree utility also did not have a significant moderating effect ($B = 0.722$, $p = 0.338$).

Breadwinner orientation was also found to have a significant moderating effect in this study ($B = 1.727$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that healthy conceptions of breadwinning (or diminished) the negative effect of hours worked per week on faculty-student engagement. In contrast, competitive ethos had a different moderating effect in this study. The negative relationship between hours worked per week and faculty-student engagement was intensified (i.e., made worse) for men with more healthy conceptions of competitive ethos ($B = -1.768$, $p < 0.001$). As such, men who perceived that being successful in academic competition—that is, in reference to the subconstruct, competitive ethos—was core to their self-worth (in an excessive manner) benefited from this unhealthy disposition. The last moderator examined was perceptions of help-seeking behaviors. As with degree utility and breadwinner orientation, this variable lessened the negative effect between hours worked per week and faculty-student engagement ($B = 3.173$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, when men in the sample had healthier perceptions about their ability to seek out help, the negative effect of work on engagement lessened.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE**

We set out to examine the relationship between work and faculty-student engagement with a focus on how degree utility and four domains of masculinity can influence that relationship. Four salient findings emerged from this study. First, increased hours working per week have a negative association with faculty-student engagement. As such, the more a Mexicano male student works, the less likely he is to engage with faculty. Possibly, working impedes the time that a student has available to have engaging experiences with faculty. Given that many Mexicano men work while attending school, this finding is disappointing and could explain (in part) disparate outcomes experienced by these men in college.

With respect to practice, during the admissions process (e.g., initial advising appointment, orientation) college personnel could encourage working students to limit the amount of time they will be working to a point that will allow them to effectively balance both their work and school commitments. Moreover, given that research has shown that the negative association between work and school is mitigated when students’ employment is tied to their academics (Wood, Hilton, & Lewis, 2011), personnel should also encourage working students to find work that is related to their academic pursuits. One strategy that could be employed is to identify working students during initial advising and counseling sessions that could be referred to career services for counseling on how to find a job directly in their field of interest.

Second, healthy conceptions of breadwinner orientation mitigated (or diminished) the negative association between hours worked per week and faculty-student engagement. Thus, working while attending college was not as detrimental on students’ engagement with faculty for men who perceived that breadwinning was a responsibility that could be shared by men and women. With respect to practice, faculty could be encouraged to convey positive messages about breadwinning as it relates to the academic success of male Mexicano students. Specifically, faculty should convey the importance of attaining a college degree as a long-term strategy for successfully providing for oneself and one’s family. Third, healthy perceptions of competition among men served to worsen the negative effect that hours worked per week had on faculty-student engagement. As a result, men who focused excessively on competing with others and tied that competition to their self-worth actually benefited from that unhealthy conception of masculinity. For these men, unhealthy dispositions around competition reduced the negative relationship between work and faculty-student engagement.

Finally, healthy perceptions of help-seeking reduced the negative effect of hours worked on engagement. As such, men felt comfortable seeking our help from faculty and believed that asking for help did not threaten their manhood. However, faculty should initiate engagement in the classroom in order to ensure that students, regardless of their perception of help-seeking, are being provided with the help that they need. Faculty should engage in “intrusive instruction,” ensuring that interactions with students (in and out of class) are built in as a component of the course; for example, faculty could make attending office hours a mandatory part of the course. This could ensure that students, regardless of disposition, are getting necessary feedback on their progress in the course.

**CONCLUSION**

Examining the four key bodies of masculinity in this particular study has surely contributed to the understanding of factors influencing college success for Mexicano men. While we understand that the role each subconstruct (i.e., help-seeking, breadwinning, competitive ethos, and school as a feminine domain) plays for Mexicano men is very different from one another, practitioners could take note to how these four domains could influence engagement differently. As mentioned earlier on in this chapter, Mexicano men are likely to attend a public two-year college, while more than 60% are both working and attending school. In fact, more men struggle than women when it comes to completion rates. Thus, more than ever,
faculty are needed who can help engage men within their academics while conveying the importance of completing and attaining a degree. With this support, perhaps more men of color will feel empowered throughout their educational pursuits to succeed academically.

REFERENCES


