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Son Otros Tiempos: Generational Experiences of Male Friendships Amongst Mexican and Mexican American Men

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by

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Abstract

Culturally specific work with Latinx men has also discussed the way Latinx masculinities are being redefined by younger generations. Grounded in Chicana Feminist epistemologies, I use Gloria Anzaldua's borderlands framework to analyze data from 20 interviews with sons and their father figures in understanding experience of masculinities within the context of male friendships. Differences between father's and son's experiences can be attributed to social context in which men are socialized and their borderlands experiences. Findings illustrate how understandings of masculinities represent a melding of cultural values between the dominant individualistic perspective in the U.S. and the collectivist perspective from men's Mexican cultural heritage. Men's understandings of masculinities demonstrate the shifting borderlands, and resistance to fully adopting the dominant culture in the U.S.

For Dani.
For my every hue of the color blue.
Para los atravesados, para los rebeldes.
Con cariño y con coraje.
¡Viva la resistencia!

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Thank you to my family and loved ones. Your support, love, sacrifices, and faith in me means more than I could ever truly express. Soy porque tú eres.

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Introduction

For many Mexicans and Mexican Americans not living in Mexico, values and ideas from their culture and parents are often different from those that are dominant in the culture in which they are living. When receiving opposing messages from these two cultural contexts, those caught between them form a third culture in which they incorporate ideas from both, but do not fit neatly into either. As Gloria Anzaldúa so poignantly wrote, "Cradled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, straddling all three cultures and their value systems, la mestiza undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war" (Anzaldúa 1987:78). This puts Mexican and Mexican American migrants in positions in which they must navigate the values of these two cultures by creating a third culture-one that incorporates ideas and values of both. This third culture crosses the physical and cultural boundaries they each present.

I use Anzaldúa's concept of borderlands to understand Mexican and Mexican American men's experiences of straddling cultures, specifically examining masculinity in the context of male friendships of Mexican and Mexican American men from different generations. This project draws on prior research that has explored how ideas and performances of masculinity shape and influence male friendships (Chu 2005; Migliaccio 2010; 2014; Ramirez 2015), the role of fathers in their son's development and understandings of masculinity (Bucher 2014; Brandth 2016; Brandth and Kvande 1998; Drummond 2016; Flynn 2018; Ide et al. 2018; Jeanes and Magee 2011; Silva 2022; Van Doorn et al. 2021), as well as these ideas as they relate to Latinx men (Arellanes 2019; Cabrera and Coll 2004; Fellers and Schrodt 2021; Glass and Owen 2010; Mogro-Wilson

and Cifuentes 2021; Roubinov et al. 2016; Vasquez 2014). This research seeks to answer the question: How do Mexican and Mexican American men of different generations experience masculinity in friendships? To answer this question, I conducted 20 interviews with Mexican and Mexican American father figures and their sons.

Literature Review

Masculinity in the Borderlands

I frame this research within Gloria Anzaldúa's borderlands theory. The borderlands theory has been used by previous authors in ways that shed light on the experiences of those who live in the margins of society and across and in between cultures and borders. Anzaldúa's borderlands theory also informs understandings of how those in the borderlands understand how to live between two cultures through a mestiza consciousness. A mestiza consciousness is the awareness that individuals are balancing various cultures and identities and navigate the differences by embracing the ambiguity between them in a way that deconstructs the rigid divisions that these different cultures and identities present (Anzaldúa 1987: 78). For example, Gradilla and Bustamante (2020) apply the borderland theory in their research on lowrider culture and aesthetics. Here, the borderlands were defined as two different worlds-a white world and a brown world-that share the same space. Within the borderlands, those who participate in lowrider culture challenge dominant white representations of art in the U.S. that exclude art styles that represent their Mexican heritage. In these spaces, participants of lowrider culture resist cultural oppression and exclusion by creating spaces and communities in which their cultural heritage and identities are represented and displayed. Additional applications of this theory focus on applies the borderlands theory to understand the experiences of women of color faculty in universities during the COVID-19 pandemic (Cho et al. 2022), indigenous queer people (Henningham 2020), and disability models of body politics (Starowski 2017).

Anzaldúa discusses the borderlands as a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary (Anzaldúa 1987). I use this framing to understand how ideas of masculinity are experienced across generations of Mexican and Mexican American men, and how spatial contexts and cultural perspectives create a melting or "border culture" of masculinities that is a result of two merging worlds (Anzaldúa 1987). Through this framework, men in this study are the "atravesados:" those who crossover and go through borders. Their understandings of masculinity move between cultures and borders.

Anzaldúa (1987) explains that borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe. This framework also helps in explaining how Mexican and Mexican American men shape their expressions of masculinity within the margins and boundaries imposed on them. Her discussion of borderlands makes note of how the only "legitimate" inhabitants are those in power-white men and those who align with them (Anzaldúa 1987). In their work, Lennes (2016) proposes that Chicano male identity can be understood as a "borderland masculinity" that can illuminate understandings of how Chicano men negotiate their masculinity in different ways that deal with the borderland. In the following sections, I describe previous research that informs the current project, focusing on scholarship on Mexican migration, Latinx masculinity, and male friendships as a site for masculinity.

Migration from Mexico

Since this research presents discussions of Mexican and Mexican American men who have immigrated to the U.S., it is necessary to address the way migration influences

men's experiences. For many men, reasons for migration are commonly the need and lack of employment opportunities in their communities (Tucker et al. 2013). However, post-migration, Mexican men are often subjected to exploitation. This can come in the form of reduced wages, dangerous work environments, wage theft, and constrained social mobility (Cobb Clark and Kossoudii 2000; Gleeson and Gonzales 2012; Hall and Greenman 2010;2015; Sheridan 2009). Further exploitation and oppression can also vary based on men's citizenship status, and ability to speak English and how it is spoken (Bacallao and Smokowski 2013; Gleeson and Gonzales 2012; Hall and Greenman 2010; 2015).

Integration into the U.S. presents challenges for Mexican immigrants. One challenge with integration is the invisibility of Latinx individuals and the different forms of discrimination that affect people based on their multi-dimensional statuses and identities (Bacallao and Smokowski 2013; Frank et al. 2010; Golash-Boza and Darity 2008; Gonzalez et al. 2021; Trucios-Haynes 2000). Though various systemic barriers create challenges for Mexican immigrants to integrate into American society, some spaces such as sports and religious institutions have been found to be helpful in this process because they are spaces which promote biculturalism (Painter and Price 2021; Hill et al. 2019). In these spaces, Spanish is spoken, and customs and traditions are practiced and observed thereby providing a sense of shared and collective identity, a sense of community, and transnational bonds for immigrants (Painter and Price 2021; Hill et al. 2019).

For many Mexican immigrants, leaving their home country does not mean abandoning the cultural values they hold. Some of these values include confianza and familismo (Segura and Pierce 1993). Confianza is a system of deep intimacy and trust, so for groups that have been historically exploited and oppressed, trust is only given to few. Similarly, familismo represents a cultural value in which there is a heavy emphasis on family and family solidarity reflective of a collectivist mindset in which family ties provide a supportive community (Mirandé 1985; Segura and Pierce 1993). Previous literature has acknowledged how these values can be understood as strategies for cultural survival and resistance to the racism they experience (Mirandé 1985; Segura and Pierce 1993). Additionally, Segura and Pierce (1993), mention how Chicanas and Chicanos hold onto their unique culture with an emphasis on collectivist ideologies that are often not valued in the dominant culture which emphasizes individualism.

Latinx masculinity and men's friendship as a site of masculinity

Raewyn Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity centers on the idea that masculinities are multiple, complex, contradictory, and constantly changing: masculinity is not static, but responsive to changes in the conditions of gender relations (Connell 1995; 2005; Yang 2020). This research considers this idea of multiple masculinities but applies a borderlands framework to best understand the way Mexican and Mexican American men experience their masculinity in friendships as they occupy marginalized identities and move between cultures. Similar work has applied borderlands theory and masculinity as it relates to understanding how men of color educators reflect

masculinities as mentors (Singh 2017), and in the context of sexual migration amongst Mexican immigrant men (Cantú 2009).

Descriptions of Latinx masculinity, often described as machismo, have been criticized for depicting Latinx men in a negative light. Research has often portrayed Latinx men as domineering and controlling (Ybarra 1982; Mirandé 1985). However, these are characteristics that men in any patriarchal society could exhibit not exclusive characteristics of Latinx men (Mojica Rodriguez 2021). Authors instead have highlighted how machismo is an adaptation and defensive response to the oppression that men experience due to their class status and the structural obstacles that Mexican and Mexican American men face in achieving masculinity in a social world that has continuously and historically marginalized them (Anzaldúa 1987; Baca Zinn 1979; Peña 1991; Hondagneu Sotelo and Messner 1994). For Mexican immigrant men specifically, racism, uncertainty of employment, low paying jobs, and legal status contribute to their low social status in the U.S. (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner 1994). Additionally, research with Latinx men has noted how the Latinx form of masculinity or "machismo" has been undergoing new definitions rooted in cultural values Latinx individuals hold and taking on a more fluid form (Ramirez 2015).

Given that masculinity and patriarchy have such a significant influence on the structure of our society and interactions, one interesting location for studying masculinity is in friendships. In research focused on male friendships, discussions have often found that the strong role of masculinity in male friendships have often created barriers in men's ability to benefit from deep connections with friends (Chu 2005;

Pascoe 2005; Way 2013). Close male friendships can positively affect well-being in ways that include feeling understood, validated, a sense of trust and dependability, mutual love, and provide a source of a judgment free space in which men feel comfortable expressing themselves in more emotional and physical behaviors (Chu 2005; Ramirez 2015; Robinson et al. 2018; 2019; Williams 2015).

Some culturally specific work examines various aspects of friendship amongst Latinx men (Ramirez 2015; Rodriguez 2011; Saez et al. 2010; Thayer et al. 2008; Tassara 2014). Tassara's (2014) work, for example explores the role of friendship amongst Latinx unauthorized youth while masculinity ideologies and conflict resolution amongst Mexican American adolescents was the subject of studies by Saez et al. (2010) and Thayer et al. (2008). The role of masculinity and how it shapes interactions and engagements amongst Latinx men by Ramirez (2015) is especially significant because it focuses on men's relationships with other men rather than men's relationships with women. This previous research has also discussed cultural values such as familismo (the importance of the family) that continue to form part of Latinx men's friendships (Ramirez 2015; Tassara 2014).

Since previous works have identified specific values and experiences that are more present amongst Latinx communities it is necessary to consider these ideas when looking to address the need for understanding Latinx men in their friendship experiences. The existing literature has examined masculinity in male friendships, changes in ideas of masculinity within natal families, and what friendships provide for Latinx men; however, there has not yet been research that examines how masculinity is

experienced differently amongst fathers and sons in the context of their friendships. This research responds to the call for critical and feminist sociology to decenter hegemonic masculinity and approach our understandings from the perspective of marginalized and subordinated masculinities (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner 1994).

Methods

Data Collection

This research seeks to answer the question: How do Mexican and Mexican American men of different generations experience masculinity in friendships? For this research, I conducted in-depth interviews with ten pairs of Mexican and Mexican American men and their fathers or father figures to gain an understanding of how men of different generations but of the same family experience their male friendships. A total of twenty individual interviews were conducted.

Criteria for participants in this research were that (1) participants had to identify as men; (2) Participants had to identify as Latinx. The intent of this study was to include men of any Latinx background, however all participants identified as Mexican or Mexican American; (3) Participants had to be at least 18 years old; (4) Participants had to live in Chocolate Hills,[1] a small city in Northern California with a total population between 135,000-140,000 residents. Of these, over one-third identify as Hispanic/Latinx. This urban city was selected as the site for research because of my previous connections with individuals who fit these criteria and who facilitated accessibility to the population of interest, aided in recruitment, and allowed for me to build rapport and personal connections with participants.

For initial sampling, I asked close acquaintances who participate in several local adult league sports teams to introduce me to initial participants from those social

[1] Pseudonym.

circles. The men who participate in these sports leagues are primarily Latinx and speak Spanish and therefore this is the language spoken in these settings. Due to the approach in recruitment, participants were referring others who they shared commonalities with. The homogeneity of the sample was a strength as men were in similar places as far as life course, and since men had the same countries of origin, their heritage and immigration experiences were very similar making overall comparisons amongst fathers and sons more visible as a whole. As noted above, sports are a significant space in which migrant men find a sense of visibility and community (Painter and Price 2021). Although some of the older participants did mention being part of religious communities, they focused their conversations about friendships on those who they grew up with and shared years of friendship with. Additionally, when discussing their religious communities, men often referred to these individuals as being more like "close acquaintances," who they had met at a much later point in their lives and did not share as much personal history with. Snowball sampling then allowed for initial participants to refer other interviewees who also met the participation criteria for the research project. Interviews were conducted between July 2022 -September 2022. Seventeen interviews were conducted in-person at participants' home or outdoor seating areas that participants selected, and three interviews were held remotely on zoom. Interviews lasted approximately one hour in length and were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Topical areas for the interview included how Latinx men engage or develop friendships, how they define their friendships, and how masculinity is evidenced within their friendships. The interview guide covered questions about

friendship activities, support experienced in friendships, memories men have with friends, and son's ideas of their father's friendships and vice versa. Participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect privacy and ensure confidentiality.

At recruitment, I recruited sons and their fathers or father figures, as defined by participants (see Table 1). Nine pairs were biological father and son, and one pair was a nephew and uncle (Federico and Jacobo). I include this interview set because this is who Jacobo identified as his father figure throughout his life. Jacobo's responses were analyzed with sons rather than fathers because of Jacobo's age and other similarities to the men in the sons group. Since the analysis focuses on generational shifts rather than on the influence of the father or father figures on sons, I include Jacobo with the other men of his generation. Fathers and their sons are listed directly across each other in the table. As shown in Table 1, nine fathers were born and raised in Mexico and their ages were between 45-67. In the sons' group, eight were born and raised in the U.S. and two were born and raised in Mexico but immigrated to the U.S. with their families during their late high school years (Arturo and Pablo). Son's ages ranged from 20-30 years old. The study participants come from working class backgrounds. All but two of the men in the son's groups lived at home with their parents, siblings, and uncles or other extended family members.

Table 1: Son and father pairs with age and country of birth

Sons			**Fathers or father figures**		
Name	**Son age**	**Country of birth**	**Name**	**Father age**	**Country of birth**
Federico	20	U.S.	Jacobo	27	U.S.
Oscar	22	U.S.	Miguel	45	Mexico
Pablo	22	Mexico	Vicente	53	Mexico
Sergio	25	U.S.	Adrián	53	Mexico

Arturo	26	Mexico	Matías	60	Mexico
Luciano	26	U.S.	Agustín	67	Mexico
Ricardo	27	U.S.	Luis	51	Mexico
Ismael	27	U.S.	Leonardo	64	Mexico
Fidel	27	U.S.	Eliseo	55	Mexico
Francisco	30	U.S.	Felipe	52	Mexico

As a researcher, I find it important to address my own identities and how they may influence my research. As a Latina, I am culturally in touch with gendered ideas that can exist within this specific culture. I can apply my cultural intuition (Bernal 1998) through which I can draw on my own lived experiences as a Chicana to define and understand the cultural concepts I share with my participants. Additionally, as a fluent Spanish speaker, I recognize that I am well suited to conduct interviews with populations that may otherwise not be included in sociological studies due to language barriers. Participants were given the option to have their interview conducted in Spanish or English (11 chose Spanish). As a fluent Spanish speaker, I wanted to ensure that participants could both complete the interviews and discuss their perspectives and experiences in the language with which they felt most comfortable. I will also present findings in their original Spanish quotes and provide English translations. I recognize that as a female researcher, I had to consider gender dynamics in studying male populations. Since men often feel more comfortable opening up to female researchers (e.g. Arendell n.d.; Lee n.d.; Pini 2005), I was able to establish a deep level of rapport with participants that resulted in rich data. Prior connections from having lived in these areas also allowed for initial participants to give an account of me to their family members and

other interviewees, particularly those in the older generation who were initially hesitant to share their experiences with me.

Our shared cultural background also facilitated a deep sense of rapport between my participants and I. Many of the older participants and their wives began referring to me as “mija.” This term directly translates to “daughter,” and if often used in the Latinx community as a term of endearment reflecting these cultural concepts of confianza and familismo that participants felt towards me. Furthermore, during the time in which interviews were conducted, many participants had peach trees that had started giving fruit. Multiple participants gifted me brown paper bags filled with peaches from their trees and said, “Here, take these for you and your family.” This generous gesture once again reflected this sense of community, confianza, and familiarity I was able to establish with participants.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using an inductive approach to find core meanings of text that were relevant to the research question (Thomas 2006). Throughout the data collection process, I kept a research journal of memos in which I reflected on interviews, interactions with participants, and notes of early themes and ideas mentioned in the data. Multiple readings of the interview transcripts were done with focus to the aspects of conversation that pertained most to the research question. By doing so, I found common themes in discussions of support expressed in participants’ responses. Using ATLAS.ti Data Analysis software version 22.2.0, I systematically applied three codes to the text: economic support, emotional support, and resistance to support. Economic

support responses consisted of when participants discussed giving or receiving support from a friend that had economic benefit, were monetary, or related to an expense or good. Emotional support responses consisted of when participants discussed providing or receiving support to/from a friend in a way that dealt with feelings and emotions. Resistance to support consisted of when participants mentioned not accepting support, reasons for it, or what kept them from receiving support from their male friends. I compared these themes across fathers and sons in the analysis.

Some limitations of this research included difficulty with getting some participants to provide detailed discussions on these topics. Though this was only noted amongst 2 participants, they often mentioned their difficulty in remembering detailed experiences as a reason for which they did not have more detailed responses. Further, this research was conducted on a very specific group of men in a specific area, so I cannot claim that it is representative of experiences of all Mexican and Mexican American men living in the U.S. However, findings from this research are transferable as we can learn the ways that men rely on friendships for support as similarities are likely to exist in other populations, particularly those with borderlands experiences.

Findings

Fathers

Experiences of Friendship

The fathers in this study defined family members and compadres as friends, discussed sports as a place where friendships created connections, and recalled their migration experiences as something that created a strong bond between friends. Below, I explore these experiences of friendships.

Ricardo, a 27-year-old son, offers insight on his father's friends, explaining, "I would say his closest friends and who he spends the most time with is his brothers." Ricardo was always aware that those who his father considered his friends were family members. Other fathers in this study also mentioned siblings, cousins, and other family members as their friends. This idea heavily mirrors the values of family ties that come from familismo (Bacallao and Smokowski 2013; Falicov 1982; Segura and Pierce 1993). Additionally, fathers also described sports as a large component of their friendships:

> En el fútbol pasan muchas cosas y luego dicen, 'ey vamos a ayudar a fulano porque se lastimó' o 'Ey vamos a ayudar a este porque no trabaja' o 'Ey vamos a ayudar a este porque ahorita ocupa.' (Adrián, age 53)
> *A lot of things happen in soccer.*
>
> *They'll say, 'Let's help this guy because he's hurt,' or 'Let's help him because not working right now,' or 'Hey, let's help him out because he needs it right now.'* (Adrián, age 53)

Adrián's response is one that incorporates the idea of collective identity and networks that immigrant men often find after immigrating. In this space, men learned about

teammates' difficulties, and experiences and formed a collective effort to support each other. Sports provide a community for these men in which community ties and bonds are reinforced (Bacallao and Smokowski 2013; Hill et al. 2019; Painter and Price 2021).

One shared experience and knowledge that fathers discussed as significant in friendships was the experience of migrating. Men described in detail how having others who understood and were living the challenges that came with being an immigrant in the U.S. solidified and strengthened their friendships. Luciano, 26, is a son who reflected on his father's friendships. He is aware of challenges both economically as well as socially-such as discrimination-his father many other immigrants face.

> *They [my father and his friends] understood each other's experience. When it comes down to being in a predominantly white town here as an 18-year-old kid and there's no real Mexican families out here yet, there's just a handful of people. I think that's like a different connection that you can make with them because you need them for survival basically.*
> (Luciano, age 26)

Luciano's exchange illustrates how when individuals are faced with such hardships, bonds are strengthened between them. Additionally, this idea of relying on each other for survival draws on the cultural concept of confianza as a strategy for cultural survival and resistance to racism (Mirandé 1985; Segura and Pierce 1993). Though Luciano himself did not share his father's experience of migrating, his response reflects his position within the borderlands in which he is hyper-aware of the different encounters of racism that Mexican men face. Luciano has heard a close account of the racism and hardships his father encountered and understands how his father's experiences have also shaped his own. Here, Luciano's reflection shows how as an atravesado, he knows

he does not rely on friends for survival in the way his father relied on his friends, but he continues to experience racism as a man of color in a white supremacist society. Although Luciano was born in the U.S. and he does not face some of the immediate dangers his father faced as an immigrant man in the U.S., his identity as a man of color places him outside of the bounds of "normalcy" in a society that views whiteness as what is accepted and normal. His identity does not fit neatly into the experience of being a Mexican immigrant, or that of being a white man in the U.S. Furthermore, his understanding of the challenges immigrant Mexican men face allows him to empathize and experience solidarity with other Mexican and Mexican American men.

Experiences of Support

In fathers' narratives of experiences of support, they discussed emotional support mostly during times of grief such as a death and demonstrating support through physical presence as well as through words of affirmation and encouragement. Oscar, a 45-year-old man from Mexico shared how he was present during his friend's recovery from having suffered an accident.

> Estuve con él como cuando estaba mal. Yendo al hospital, cuando iba a curaciones. Cosas de esas.
>
> *I was with him when he wasn't well. Going to the hospital, rehabilitations. Things like that.*

Here, Oscar demonstrates how he provided emotional support to his friends by being physically present and companying him to appointments and treatments. His response illustrates how during this difficult moment, being present demonstrated support, solidarity, and care for his friend's well-being and recovery.

What fathers often mentioned most often, however, was the economic support they have received and provided in relation to migrating. For example, Vicente, a 53-year-old man from Mexico discussed how a friend offered him support by helping him get a job upon migrating to the United States.

> Cuando llegué yo aquí ya había varios de las amistades aquí. y como ya eran encargados de trabajos y yo necesitaba trabajo y les pedía y me me daban o me ayudaban para entrar a trabajar ahí. (Vicente, age 53)
>
> *When I got here there were already several friends here. Some already had higher positions at jobs and since I needed a job, I would ask them, and they helped me get a job there.* (Vicente, age 53)

Vicente, along with other fathers, described how often upon arriving to the U.S., friends who had already immigrated helped them in ways that helped them establish a level of economic stability. The men discussed economic stability in the form of employment, housing, as well as friends who provided them with economic support to help pay for the process of immigrating and getting to the U.S. The mindset behind receiving and offering this type of support was emphasized by another participant:

> No es común, pero cuando uno recibe ese apoyo como que yo lo recibí, el día donde yo esté en una posición que pueda ayudar a alguien debo de hacerlo para que ese círculo de generosidad siga fluyendo. (Felipe, age 52)
>
> *It's not common, but when someone receives that support in the way that I did, the day that I am in a position in which I can support someone else I need to do it so that circle of generosity can continue flowing.* (Felipe, age 52)

Felipe's explanation is indicative of this idea of mutual and reciprocal support. Many of the fathers explained that when they offered these same forms of support; they were reminded of moments in which others had extended that to them and therefore felt it

was right that they pay it forward. This mindset also resonates with the idea of community and collectivist culture in which individuals support each other and create a sense of community that can work together to support each other. Furthermore, this support from friends can be understood as a side of the borderland in which men feels safe supporting each other as they share the awareness that in the larger U.S. society, they face racism, discrimination, and oppression- the unsafe space.

Resistance to Support

For many fathers, resistance to support was seen most when discussing emotional support. Fathers often discussed how everyday emotional support was not something they felt comfortable engaging in with their male friends. For example, 52-year-old Felipe explains how emotional challenges are not typically discussed with his friends.

> Es difícil porque a los hombres no les gusta pedir ayuda. Es la naturaleza del hombre. El hombre quiere componer todo. Para el hombre no hay problemas aunque traiga esos problemas, pero al hombre no le gusta compartir. Es la naturaleza del hombre.
>
> *It's hard because men don't like to ask for help. It's a man's nature. A man wants to fix everything. For a man there are no problems, even when he has problems. But men don't like to share that. It's a man's nature.*

Here, Felipe draws on his masculinity as a reason for which a conversation of this nature is not common. In his discussion, Felipe also mentioned that this idea of not sharing the emotional challenges men experience is part of ideas of masculinity that have been taught to them with phrases such as "men don't cry." Felipe used the metaphor of "cadenas" or "chains," to describe the restrictive ideas of masculinity taught to many

Latinx and Mexican men. He expressed how this makes change somewhat difficult, but that in his case, he made changes in the way he raised his son Francisco because as he phrased it: Yo no tenía las cadenas marcadas tan fuerte (translation: *I didn't have the chain as heavily marked on me*.) Felipe's response shows how although the ideas of masculinity that he inherited were restrictive, there was room for assessing these ideas in deciding how to teach them to his own son. Felipe recalled how throughout his upbringing he felt deprived of expression of affection both physical and emotional from his father and wanted to ensure that was not something he replicated with his own son. Here, men reflect ideas from prior literature in which intergenerational communication and reflections of earlier generation's experiences are a way in which patterns of masculinity shift overtime (Vasquez 2014). By being aware of their own experiences' fathers began to demonstrate shifts in how they decided to raise their own sons.

While men avoided emotion with friends, they pointed to their wives as a source of where they receive emotional support. Throughout the interviews, multiple fathers would pause in attempting to recall specific experiences and say phrases such as "My wife remembers the details of that better than I do." Comments such as these illustrate how these men entrust the intimate details of their experiences with their wives: people who provide a sense of safety for them. Matías, along with other men in the father's group, discussed that their wives are the ones who they rely on for emotional support, therefore going to their friends is not something they feel necessary.

> Pero yo la ventaja que tengo es mi esposa, ella me da muchas ideas. Me relaja, me dice "calmate," me transmite tranquilidad y pues muchos problemas gracias a dios no he tenido. (Matías, age 60)

> *But the advantage I have is that I have my wife. She gives me a lot of ideas, she relaxes me. She transmits tranquility to me. And well thanks to god I haven't had many problems.* (Matías, age 60)

This response can be seen as having to do with traditional gender relations, while also representing this idea of familismo in which men keep their emotional expressions entrusted within their immediate family circle. and feel comfortable sharing emotional experiences and emotions with them (Segura and Pierce 1993). Additionally, their responses reflect Anzaldúa's (1987) discussion of the borders between the safe and the unsafe. Here, men's masculinity allows for a sense of safety in discussing emotional topics with their wives rather than with their friends. This space however is still within the margins that Mexican and Mexican American exist in as an oppressed group.

Sons

Experiences of Friendship

When describing their friendships, men in the sons' group discussed how their friends were considered family regardless of them not being directly related to them. Federico, a 20-year-old Mexican American participant discussed his friends who he defines as brothers:

> *My close friends, we call each other* hermanos*. We call each other brothers. That's our way of showing that you're not just my friend, you're my brother. That's our way of saying I love you. I do have a few that I'm close enough with that we can say I love you in a way that we care about each other a lot. It's as if I were to say it to my actual brother.*

Federico's discussion illustrates how the status of family is one that is not used loosely. Being considered a family member such as a brother means sharing a feeling of love,

affection, mutual support, and closeness. Sons' cultural heritage frames how men understand family as being meaningful and significant. By placing this classification to their friends, sons express the importance of their friendships and the strength of the bonds they feel towards them. Son's discussions also demonstrate a shift from their fathers as they feel comfortable verbally expressing love- something their fathers mentioned not feeling comfortable with. Another participant, Ricardo, 27, concurs, noting, "*They're like my brothers too, you know*." Family is significant in Latinx culture (Ramirez 2015; Tassara 2014), and this classification of friends demonstrates the deep connection and affection men feel towards their male friends. Furthermore, these sons' discussions indicate how this label is not typically applied to all friends, but those whom they feel a strong bond with thereby representing the cultural concept of familismo and confianza (Segura and Pierce 1993). This idea of applying cultural concepts in a way that was different from fathers reflects the mestiza consciousness which Anzaldúa (1987: 78) discusses as the recognition of balancing many cultures and identities and embracing the ambiguity in a way that deconstructs the dichotomies between them. By applying these cultural concepts in different ways, sons bridge their cultural heritage to their experiences from having been born into a U.S. culture and society in a way that hybridizes their two worlds, rather than in a way that divides them.

When discussing activities and time spent with friends, men in the sons' group mentioned how sports are a big part of their friendships as they are something they can typically very easily relate to others through and where much of their friendship bonding occurs. Sergio, a 25-year-old Mexican American man said:

> *I do feel closer to my soccer friends just because we socialize a lot more together. We're all either playing on the same team, or we have soccer practice, or we simply just say 'hey you know what let's go get a beer after the game.' you know we're bonding.*

Sergio's response shows how sports are seen as a space in which they can spend time with teammates, engage, and bond. His discussion also illustrates how this shared area of their lives serves as a gate for further bonding beyond the field and their court. This also illustrates the way men's sports teams allow them to develop close bonds with friends that can be seen as the community discussed in previous literature (Bacallao and Smokowski 2013; Hill et al. 2019; Painter and Price 2021). The way the sons in this research continue to draw on Mexican cultural concepts in their friendships further demonstrates resistance to abandoning these specific values that come from their identities as Mexican American men. This also illustrates this third culture, or borderland (Anzaldúa 1987) in which son's friendships encompass the values from their cultural background despite living in a country with different cultural values.

When fathers discussed the conversations they have had with their sons regarding friendships. These consisted of topics that sons also identified as advice. Luis' quote below about the advice he shared with his son reflects the ideas fathers and sons both described as conversations father had about what friends should be for sons.

> Que no se ofrezcan drogas. Que no consuman esas cosas de hoy en día. Que no anden tomando o tomando y manejando. Me gustaría que entre ellos se apoyarán en esa forma. Que se cuiden. En realidad así debería de ser. Si son

> amigos es para eso. Ser un amigo para estar contigo en las buenas y en las malas, en protegerte, en desearte lo mejor. (Luis, age 51)
>
> *For them not to offer each other drugs. For them not to consume those things from today's days. For them not to drink or not to drink and drive. I'd like for them to support each other, to take care of each other. To protect each other. In reality that's what it should be. If they are friends, it should be for that. To be a friend who will be there through the good and the bad, to protect each other, to wish each other the best.* (Luis, age 51)

For fathers, friends were typically family members who they knew very well, had confianza in, and who they knew for most of their lives. Upon immigrating to the U.S., fathers recognized that they are no longer surrounded by people they fully know, and that their son's friendships could be with others who they do not know much about. In father's discussions of friendships, they are aware of the risk of exploitation, and marginalization they experience as Mexican and immigrant men and view these friendships as potentially dangerous for their sons and use these conversations with their sons as a way to warn them and remind them that true friends protect each other and help keep each other safe. This demonstrates the aspect of Anzaldúa's borderland's theory, in which she says borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe (1987). Here, father's responses also reflect Anzaldúa's (1987: 3) concept of los atravesados in which men must navigate the challenges that men of color face in a society that continues to marginalize and discriminate against them regardless of then having been born in the U.S. or not.

Experiences of support

For many of the men in the sons' group, examples and discussion of support were mainly centered on emotional support. These men offered comfort, and

understanding during moments of loss, disappointment, and sadness. Additionally, their friends provided them companionship, understanding, and a sense of shared feelings. The participants from the sons' group also discussed willingness to return and reciprocate support received from their friends. In one example, a participant described the support he received from his friends after being disappointed about making the soccer team his senior year of high school.

> *I feel like I had really come from a place where I was like not doing the best and I really found some comfort in the sport...I didn't end up making it…. it broke me…I was heartbroken. But I had a lot of friends come through and they showed me support. They told me they would try to do their best to get around it to change the outcome and stuff. I mean, I didn't get the outcome [I wanted], but just them being there for me really meant a lot.* (Oscar, age 22)

Oscar's friends validated his emotions and empathized with him. This could be understood as family solidarity because for Oscar, his friends were people who he defined as his family, his brothers (Segura and Pierce 1993). In a similar manner, Francisco recalled how when his friend's grandmother passed away, he was able to reciprocate the emotional support his friend had extended to him during the passing of his own grandmother years before.

> *I know he was really going through a difficult time…I know that was really difficult for him, but just having someone else understand who's also gone through a similar process- I know I appreciated it when he did it, but I know he also appreciated when I provided the support for him as well.* (Francisco, age 30).

Francisco drew on the memory of when he had to grapple with his feeling of loss years prior and was therefore able to relate and support his friend through it. Pablo, a 22-year-old who immigrated from Mexico with his family during high school, also

mentioned that scenarios in which emotional support is given is during times of grief or severe injury.

> Cuando la muerte de algún familiar. Alguna enfermedad o fractura en la persona o en la vida. Tratar de hacerles saber que cuenta conmigo.
> *During the death of a family member. An illness or fracture in the person or in life. Trying to let them know they can count on you.*

In these instances, men display cultural concepts such as familismo, family solidarity, and community in the way in which they provide a sense of community through shared emotions and display this idea of community often seen in a more collectivist perspective (Bacallao and Smokowski 2013; Segura and Pierce 1993). Here, son's application of collectivist mindsets as they relate to emotional support demonstrate the continual embracing of cultural values that are applied in the son's friendships. This shows how men in the son's group resist leaving behind the values passed down from their cultural heritage despite living in the U.S. The specific values that Mexican and Mexican American men cross borders from Mexico to the U.S.

Resistance to Support

Along with discussions of support in their friendships, men in the sons' group also demonstrated resistance to support. Amongst all the sons who were interviewed, resistance was mentioned in relation to economic support. Sons did mention that they had experienced economic support in what they described as "spotting," in which occasionally friends would treat each other to meals or smaller purchases such as movie ticket; however, they emphasized not relying on or wanting to receive economic support for more significant value. "I just don't do that. I don't like asking my parents for

money, I don't like asking anyone for money, I don't like asking anyone for money. It's not a friend thing, it's a money thing for me." (Ismael, Age 27). Ismael's statement demonstrates how for him, the idea of needing economic support is not something for which he would feel comfortable asking. He makes clear that regardless of the relationship he may have with those close to him, economic support is not something he would feel comfortable asking them to provide. Arturo's remark expands this discussion by demonstrating how needing economic support could make him appear weak to others.

> No se si es en nuestra cultura. Quizás es algo de orgullo. Como no me quiero ver débil. (Arturo, age 26)
>
> *I don't know if it's in our culture. Maybe it's something to do with pride. Like I don't want to look weak.* (Arturo, age 26)

Here, Isamel and Arturo reflect the ideas of a more individualistic culture seen in the U.S. in which our ideas of success are closely understood in terms of financial stability and being able to provide for oneself.

It is interesting to note that Arturo refers to his culture, in reference to being Mexican. His response of both resistance to economic support as well as him drawing on his Mexican heritage can be understood as a space in which collectivist Mexican culture and U.S. culture inter blend and create a borderland that includes the ideas from un "choque" which Anzaldúa (1987) refers to as a cultural collision. Though sons expressed resistance to the idea of receiving economic support, they all made note of how they would feel willing and glad to support economically if they needed it. This idea illustrates another choque in which for sons, accepting the individualistic mindset

common in the U.S. meets resistance from sons as they still draw on a more collectivist perspective in their willingness to provide this form of support to their friends.

Additionally, Ismael and Arturo's accounts reflect how financial and economic status is closely tied to proving masculinity. In his work on criminal justice and Black and Latinx men's masculinity, Victor Rios (2009) discusses how wealthy men can prove their masculinity through their ability to buy things, while for poor young men, their masculinity and resilience is proven through toughness and survival. In a similar manner, the men in this group demonstrate how needing financial support might be viewed as undermining to their masculinity. Men's toughness here is displayed in how they acknowledge that needing support makes them look weak. Simultaneously however, son's responses illustrate this idea of resilience in the way that though they know economic challenges exist for them, they are confident they will overcome them without asking for support.

Discussion

Throughout the stories and experiences men shared, fathers and sons had both similarities and differences in the ways they experienced masculinity and support in their friendships. I illustrate the differences between sons and their father in the table below (Table 2). Overall, masculinity within the friendships of sons and fathers was seen in the way that both encompassed the same cultural concepts that come from their Mexican heritage but applied them differently. For example, the concept of family was seen between both groups of men, but they were defined differently based on blood relationships for fathers, and closeness amongst sons' friends. Fathers also heavily discussed the experience of immigrating that shaped how they experienced economic support, while sons described resistance to receiving financial support from friends. Their reasons surrounded the idea of wanting to be economically independent. For fathers, resistance to emotional support was noted and explained by their relationships with their wives and the role of masculinity in which men were taught to not express emotional hardships to others except in providing emotional support to friends during moments of grief such as loss of loved ones. Sons on the other hand, mentioned expressing everyday emotional hardships they face with their friends to help them find support and comfort in these experiences. These differences shed light on where the boundaries of their borderland masculinities lie, as well as how and where men of different generations negotiate and shape their borderland masculinities within the margins of society, and how they resist shedding the cultural influences they hold and fully adopting dominant culture perspectives of individualism.

Table 2. Factors exemplifying masculinity and support in friendships.

Fathers	Sons
Family members were considered friends.	Close friends were considered family
Discussed migration experiences that were linked to experiences of economic support.	Discussed experiences of economic support as "spotting"
Discussed emotional support felt in times of grief or tragic incidents.	Described emotional support as both for everyday emotional hardships as well as moments of grief.
Expressed resistance to emotional support. Mentioned wives as source of emotional support.	Described resistance to economic support. Two sons who immigrated from Mexico described resistance to both economic and emotional support.

Interviewing different generations of the same family allowed me to gain insight on the differences that exist across generations and how father's experiences influence those of their sons. The work of Vasquez (2014), which used interviews with three generations of Mexican American families to explore how changes in masculinities and femininities occur in families over time, found that these changes occur through a process of intergenerational family communication where family members share stories and advice that they pass on to their younger generation family members. In a similar manner, the sons in my research drew on the experiences they knew their fathers had in understanding the differences between their father's friendships and their own. Fathers also applied their own lived experiences in the ways they communicated about friendships with their sons and in how they gave them advice about what a "good friend" should be. The present research builds on the work by Vasquez by looking specifically at men's experiences of masculinity between two generations of father and sons and examining these ideas in the context of male friendships—a popular site for masculinity.

The two sons who immigrated with their families (Arturo and Pablo), show the shifting borderlands of masculinity as they can relate to both the experiences of migration such as those fathers mentioned, but their age at the time of arrival was earlier in life than those of their fathers, thus increasing their exposure to an individualist culture. They both expressed a resistance to economic support and emotional support. This reflects how they, like other men in the sons' group, have recognized that economic independence is valued and admired in the individualistic culture of the U.S. They also discussed resistance to emotional support, unlike other sons but like the fathers, because they felt those conversations are not something they would want to share with male friends. However, it is also important to note that although the two sons who immigrated with their families reflected similar ideas of resistance to emotional support like the fathers did, language could very well be a factor. Sons' who had immigrated mentioned the challenges of making friends because they did not speak English upon arrival to the U.S. This made it difficult to form deep connections with those around them in the same way that sons who were born in the U.S. and grew up learning English had. The findings contribute to prior literature by expanding our understanding of how masculinity is experienced differently amongst fathers and sons in the context of their friendships.

As my findings suggest, fathers and sons both draw on cultural concepts in their friendships, but apply them in different ways that reflect both their collectivist culture and the individualistic culture of the U.S. This was seen in the way fathers and sons both incorporated the idea of *familismo* in their friendships. Fathers considered family

members who they have blood relationships with friends while sons considered friends who they had deep emotional relationships with family. In Segura and Pierce's work on Chicano/a family structure and gender personality, they discuss how amongst Chicanos there is an overlap between their desire to help their community and their wish to attain individual excellence (1993). This was seen in the way that sons all expressed willingness to offer economic support to their friends, but discussed resistance in asking for economic support as it reflected failure to achieve a level of independence that's tied to economic stability.

The experiences of fathers who immigrated reflect confianza and are in line with findings from earlier research that has found how amongst adolescent Latin immigrants who are unauthorized, friendships provided instrumental support that consisted of things such as helping find employment, how family is the main source of emotional support, and how trust in friends was only present "up to a certain point" (Tassara 2014). The fathers in this study reflect similar ideas in which they mention trusting their wives, who they identify as their family, with emotional challenges, and in their discussions of confianza that is only felt with a select few. This idea of trust and confianza that are heavily discussed amongst immigrant groups reflect the dangers and vulnerabilities immigrant groups face in terms of exploitation and oppression (Aguilar 2010; Bacallao and Smokowski 2013; Cobb-Clark and Kossoudii 2000; Gleeson and Gonzales 2012; Hall et al. 2010; Hall and Greenman 2015). These ideas inform how the borderlands that separate the safe vs the unsafe (Anzaldúa 1987) shift according to the marginalizing identities these men hold particularly as it relates to citizenship status.

In sum, by applying a borderlands framework, we can understand how Mexican men's understandings of masculinity draw on concepts from their cultural background and the dominant culture they grow up in or later move to. The sons in this study also demonstrate a third culture, or borderland (Anzaldúa 1987) that comes from a melding of their cultural heritage while also encompassing some of the ideologies from the individualistic U.S. culture. The men in this study reflect ideas from earlier research that discusses how Chicano men draw on family and community in ways that suggest a cultural and political overlap in masculine identity (Segura and Pierce 1993). Finally, though the masculinity borderlands shift in response to factors including the spatial context that men are socialized in, Mexican and Mexican American men's application of cultural concepts in their friendships can be understood as resistance to fully adopting the individualistic culture of the U.S. Previous research on assimilation has discussed how later generations of Mexican Americans continue to experience a world largely shaped by their race and ethnicity (Telles and Ortiz 2008). Though Mexican and Mexican American men's oppression varies based on their intersecting identities (Bacallao and Smokowski 2013; Gleeson and Gonzales 2012; Hall and Greenman 2010; 2015), their position as men of color places them in the margins of society. In their friendships, men continue to rely on collectivist cultural concepts as a source of support and solidarity from the oppression they face and maintain their cultural identity in a space that transmits an opposing perspective. The findings from the experiences of my respondents provides knowledge on how men of different generations' ideas of

masculinity represent borderland masculinities informed by Mexican collectivist values and dominant individualistic values present in the U.S.

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