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**IDENTITY AND MACHISMO:  
NARRATIVE EXPERIENCES OF GAY TEACHERS IN PUERTO RICO**

A Dissertation in  
Curriculum and Instruction

by

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of gay Puerto Rican with machismo and their sexual identities in the classroom. Using a critical qualitative narrative inquiry, data were collected through in-depth individual interviews and a focus group discussion utilizing the following central questions as a guide: (1) How, if at all, does masculinity and machismo influence Puerto Rican gay teachers' identities? (2) How do gay teachers in Puerto Rico make sense of their identity in terms of ethnicity, educational status, and sexual identity? and (3) What obstacles, if any, do Puerto Rican gay teachers perceive that prevent them from revealing their sexual orientation to their colleagues and students at school? Six self-identified gay Puerto Rican teachers participated in the study. Participants ranged in age from twenty-seven to forty-six. All the teachers were employed full-time at either a private or public school throughout the island of Puerto Rico. Findings were presented in a narrative form using the participants' voices. Three themes emerged (1) Detrimental Machismo, (2) Monitoring Gender, and (3) Shifting Identities in Schools. All of the emerged themes were interpreted through the lens of Latino/a Critical Theory (LatCrit), Queer Theory (Foucault, 1978; Butler, 1990/2006), and Masculinity Identity Paradigms (Connell, 2005), which connect to the overall concept of gay Latino teacher development. A more in-depth and accurate understanding of these experiences would allow schools, educators, administrators, students, other educational faculty members, and male teachers, in general, to proceed from an informed perspective and appreciate the importance of male and gay teachers in schools.

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**DEDICATION**

Para todos los Gay Boricuas que su crianza fue marcada por palabras como  
¡Pato! y ¡Maricón!  
que este proyecto funcione como luz a un futuro donde reclamen el dolor de las mismas  
y sirvan para que sean el arcoíris que necesitamos en nuestra isla.

¡LOS AMO!

## CHAPTER 1

### LET ME TAKE YOU ON A WILD RIDE:

#### WHY PUERTO RICAN GAYNESS AND MACHISMO MATTER

The education profession is an essential and esteemed occupation for many. Teaching is a diverse professional field in which teachers not only represent a variety of ethnic backgrounds and races but also identify within many sexual identities. Puerto Rico, like many Latin countries, is chiefly a heteronormative and very ‘machista’ place. Identifying as anything other than heterosexual is seen as deviant, especially in educational settings in which students are coming into their own identities (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009). For most people who decide to enter the teaching profession, there is a passion for children and a desire to make a change in the world. Ruddel (1995) suggests that teachers are remembered for “their personal attributes, physical characteristics, and teaching style” (p. 454). Also, student-teacher relationships are of the utmost importance on a personal, cognitive, and social level. However, all of these ideas may be threatened by the fact that gay teachers fall outside of what is expected from male teachers, especially in the engrained machismo that permeates Puerto Rican culture.

With this in mind, this study attempts to give a voice to a population that is underrepresented in academic research. Gay Puerto Rican men have always had a complicated relationship with masculinities and machismo. To this day, men—gay or not—who choose to follow the feminized career path of education in Puerto Rico are seen as positioning themselves outside of the expected masculine ideals. This critical qualitative study, informed by a narrative inquiry approach and consisting of data gathered from interviews undertaken with six gay Puerto Rican teachers, provides a more in-depth look at how Latino men negotiate their sexual identities and construct masculinities in their professional and personal lives.

During my years teaching in elementary and secondary schools, masculinity and my identity as a gay teacher influenced experiences with students and pedagogical practices. Identifying as a man has been central to the way I have constructed notions of masculinities and negotiated my professional identity as a gay teacher in classrooms. Throughout my teaching career, masculinity, along with identifying as a gay man, have made me confront intersecting identities that affect both the way I present myself and the way my others receive my presentation in the classroom. I have found there is no one way of confronting and negotiating any distinctive gendered experiences. My collective experiences as a gay Puerto Rican teacher led me to gain a better understanding of how gay male teachers navigate the experiences negotiating identity and the construction of masculinities. Below, I describe my salient identity markers for the dual purpose of providing the context of my positionality as the researcher and to introduce the identity markers I focused on when gathering information from my study participants.

**"I'm gay and that's ok." (Gabriel)** I identify as a gay Puerto Rican cisgender man, bilingual speaker, able-bodied, agnostic, and an educator. As a cisgender Puerto Rican man, I have experienced both privileges as a cisgender male and oppression as a person of color. Socialized within the Puerto Rican community, I was taught lessons on machismo or the idea of exaggerated masculinity, a sense of great masculine pride, and the thought of being overtly 'manly.' Therefore, my privilege, oppression, and gender socialization as a man of color likely parallel the population under study in many ways. Our shared gay identity also positions us as deviant within a machismo framework. Machismo's heteronormative and anti-feminine values (Peña-Talamantes, 2013; Sáenz & Bukoski, 2014), disavow my sexual identity as acceptable. This disruption in the adherence to machismo allows me an alternative lens by which to examine

and interrogate machismo since I am both an insider (as a cisgender Latino man) and an outsider (as a gay and, by some standards of the word, effeminate man) according to the framework.

Furthermore, as a Puerto Rican man, my gender socialization may have been influenced by my contextual upbringing when it relates to Puerto Rico as a place.

As a child raised with military identities, I learned from the multitude of cultures and experiences I was exposed to as a result of being around a diverse group of people who were connected through the military. Such experiences also influenced my gender socialization, as I learned and performed machismo. Another social identity that has significant implications is my Catholic upbringing, although, as of now, I am not an active participant in the Catholic faith. The Catholic Church was a highly gendered space for me and was instrumental in shaping my role as a man. This was especially true when my family attended Spanish mass, and I observed other men in the community performing masculinity. The nuanced social identities of Latino men may have significant implications for how they experience and engage with machismo.

Latino men experience the social institution of machismo in a host of unique ways. From a young age, I was taught to perform masculinity in particular ways and was often reprimanded if I did not do so accordingly. I was told to sit up straight, respect my elders, stand up for myself, firmly shake the hands of men, get married, and have children. During these formative years, I observed the ways of men by listening to my grandfather, uncle, and their male friends as they competed to share stories about their accomplishments in getting a raise, a promotion at work, or experiences in which their voices as men got them ahead in specific situations. I would also look to my mother, aunts, grandmother, and their female friends as they attempted to affirm their boyfriends and husbands exploits by celebrating their male partners' latest achievements and successes. Through observing the storytelling and conversations of the adults around me growing

up, I learned that men had power and used it to stay in control. At the same time, I learned the power of love and compassion from my grandfather as he always instilled in me a respect for women.

Thus, I slowly began to develop a double consciousness around my masculinity. I grappled with the distaste I had with machismo, in particular, because of its lack of respect for women, but I was also intoxicated by the power and privilege it afforded me. As I continued to grow up, my world was shaken when I began to question my sexual identity. If I was not attracted to women—a necessary prerequisite to being able to have the experiences that would result in feats of my own—then I could not be a version of what I had learned in my Latino community constituted a man. It was unacceptable, and I hid the truths about my sexuality from myself for many years for fear of losing both my family and acceptance within my community. After years of struggling with my sexuality and the daily navigation of my relationship with machismo every day, as a gay educator, I was able to be more comfortable with my reality.

Nevertheless, the process of acknowledging my whole-self allowed me to see the flaws and inherent issues associated with machismo more clearly. I could see how it controlled not only me but those around me as well. Through this revelation, I began to challenge myself to deviate from the expectations set upon me by a machismo-based understanding of gender norms and to position myself in opposition to it. As I continued the active process of disrupting machismo and testing how such disruption affected my own life, I saw a need for more research on the topic, especially with the intersection of machismo, sexual, and teaching identities in Puerto Rico.

**“I hope I don’t get in trouble for showing affection.” (Gabriel)** I began my professional career by teaching kindergarten in Puerto Rico. Just out of my undergraduate



studies, I was lucky enough to land a job in a prestigious school in my hometown. The very first week of the school year, a lot of interactions with my students made me think about how to approach the process of developing a relationship with them. I remember a particular situation with a six-year-old boy in my classroom. He was having trouble adapting to school and being away from his parents, and he found comfort in both my teaching assistant and me. He would regularly come up to us, grip our legs, and would want us to pick him up and just comfort him. It was hard for me because my nature is to be comforting and nurturing to students, but I did not want an onlooker to perceive me as gay because actions of providing physical comfort are necessarily thought of as necessarily and overtly feminine.

The idea of having my masculinity and sexuality questioned by others in schools gave me pause before engaging in actions that I deemed reasonable. This experience left me conflicted throughout my first year as a teacher. On the one hand, I was uncomfortable with sharing physical touch with my students and the perceptions that go along with it. At the same time, part of me enjoyed the nurturing aspect that physical touch provides as it is in my nature to be comforting and help my students holistically, not only academically. My teacher preparation program did a great job of developing me for the cognitive and curricular aspects of teaching, such as lesson planning, assessment, and providing intervention; however, they did not prepare me for the challenges imbedded in the gendered environment that is the elementary teaching world. The topic of physical contact with students was never addressed in my preparation as a teacher or during any of my field experiences. The closest we got to the physical aspects of teaching was when we were given a talk on how to dress when you are in the classroom.

I would always have an array of ways to interact with my students from high fives to fist bumps and handshakes. These interactions varied depending on who the students were, their age,

and the relationship we had inside of the classroom. Also, these interactions occurred in order to have a relationship with my students in a way that was deemed to fall into the range of actions expected from a male teacher in Puerto Rico. Engaging with my students in such a manner allowed me to control the masculine narrative around the physical relationship with them. Reflections upon my induction into the gendered space of K-12 teaching has led me to the present study. This dissertation project explores the gendered experiences of Puerto Rican gay teachers by examining their relationship with machismo, along with their sexual and teaching identities. It seeks to bring forth experiences and perspectives currently missing from the field by investigating how Puerto Rican gay teachers interact with their masculinities, sexual identities, and how they influence their teaching experiences.

### **Theoretical Frameworking**

In this study, I employ two frameworks that guide my understanding of the participants' experiences: Latino/Latina critical race theory (LatCrit) and queer theory. Both frameworks help understand how gay teachers think about issues of sexuality and machismo in Puerto Rican education. These frameworks offer different lenses and conceptual tools that guide my identification and exploration as to how the identities of gay male Puerto Rican teachers are contextualized, continually shifting, and unfixed identities.

**LatCrit Framework.** LatCrit stems from critical theory and critical race theory (CRT). Critical theory examines "the oppressive aspects of society in order to generate societal and individual transformation" (Tierney, 1993, p. 4). CRT emerged in the 1970s and 1980s in order to address racial inequalities in the legal system and the slow progress toward race-based societal equities after the Civil Rights movement. Seminal scholars of CRT (Bell, 1980; Crenshaw, 1989; Delgado, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Tate, 1994) examine the role of race and racism through

dominant cultural manners of expression and attempts to undertake systematic racism and its effects on cultural perceptions of race. In education, CRT looks at race, gender, class, sexuality, and other forms of oppression and how they manifest in the educational experiences of people of color. Within education, CRT seeks to challenge the idea that educational systems are neutral and work the same for everyone (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). By exploring, understanding, and analyzing race, racism, and privilege as well as the patterns of exclusion faced by students of color, CRT, plays an essential role in making education more diverse and inclusive.

LatCrit is a branch that extends from the CRT tree (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). LatCrit expanded upon the framework presented by CRT by examining the unique identities and experiences of Latino/a communities (Solorano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). LatCrit allows for a better understanding of the experiences of Latino/a experiences through a more focused examination of the forms of oppression members of Latino/a groups encounter. In education, LatCrit seeks to, "examine that place where racism intersects with other forms of subordination such as sexism and classism" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 479), thus allowing the interrogation of Puerto Rican men's identities with an emphasis on their gender and sexuality. This is important for this study as there is a dearth in literature around Puerto Rican gay men and Latino men in general. LatCrit serves as a framework for this study as I attempt to center, explore, and understand the participant's experiences as Latino men.

Valdes (2005) states four functions that provide an outline of the gains LatCrit allows: (1) the production of knowledge; (2) the advancement of transformation; (3) the expansion and connection of struggles; and (4) the cultivation of community and coalition. These functions allow LatCrit to center the narratives of the participants in the study to present their lived experiences and challenge the social inequalities they experience in society. By using LatCrit as

one of my theoretical lenses, I was able to engage in a fluid, detailed exploration of the experiences shared by the participants with an intentional focus on their gendered experiences concerning the Puerto Rican context that they were brought up in. It honored the intersection of Puerto Rican identities while ensuring their voices were at the forefront of the study.

**Queer Theory Framework.** Queer theory falls within the realm of critical theory first popularized in the 1990s with a direct relationship to gender studies. The novel framework critiqued gender theory's essentialist identity categories along with empiricist methods that claim reality and objective truth (Duggan, 1995). Queer theorists wanted to dismantle particular areas of heteronormativity and gender as being simple social constructions. Emerging from the AIDS epidemic and the social reform movements of queer action groups like Act Up, queer scholars sought to *queer* (used here as a verb) expected heteronormative interpretations into theoretical analysis (Tierney & Dilley, 1998). Teresa de Lauretis (1991) is credited with being the first to utilize the term *queer theory* as a "form of resistance to cultural homogenization, counteracting dominant discourses" (p. iii). Even though Lauretis was the first to utilize the phrase *queer theory*, others like Foucault (1978), Butler (1990), and Sedgwick (1990) are considered foundational in the theorizing of sexuality, gender, and sex. Under the queer theory umbrella, two foundational perspectives are of particular importance for this study: (1) Foucault's discursive production of sexual identities; and (2) Butler's theory of performativity.

Foucault (1978) challenged notions that presented sexual identity as an inherent, stable, and essential aspect of a person's being. Instead, he established sexual identities as a discursive production rather than an essential part of people, which emerged from the idea of power and not from being repressive and harmful but productive and generative. In other words, power makes sexuality seem like a hidden truth that must be brought out and made explicit. Thus, Foucault

refuses the idea that sexuality can be clearly defined and instead directs focus toward the expansive production of sexuality. Foucault posited that identities are neither stable nor essential to the self, but instead discursively produced (i.e., created through a combined act of language and seems to be real because society asserts and agrees upon its existence) within historical, cultural, and social contexts. Acknowledging identity categories as discursively produced allows for the interrogation of "how discourses of sex and sexuality are implicated in the process through which we are made as 'subjects' who are sexed and sexualized in particular ways" (Youdell, 2009, p. 36). Therefore, rather than focusing on what it means to be a person of specific sexuality, the focus of the cultural, historical, and social discursive processes that produce and reproduce sexual identities. By doing this, Foucault's idea becomes a catalyst for queer theorizing as it reveals the construction of an individual's sexual identities and categorizations.

Butler's (1990/2006) theory of performativity disrupts notions related to sex, sexuality, and gender. Drawing from French poststructuralism and Foucault's work, Butler seeks to "deconstruct identity" and "denaturalize" ideas of gender, sex, and heterosexuality through a critical lens (p. 106). Butler seeks to present gender as a construction that is not real but rather performative. Further, through those performative acts, conventional ideas of gender construction are questioned and explored. Butler's notion of performativity builds from the theorization of identity as everyday performances that occur through actions, speech, and behaviors that denaturalize sex, gender, and compulsory heterosexuality. For Butler, gender proves to be performative- that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, "though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist" (p.25). Butler further exposes the regulatory ideals of sex, gender, and compulsory heterosexuality as "a

norm and a fiction” that disguises itself as the law (p. 185). Hence, gender is created through actions (performances) rather than existing as something ontological.

Concerning Foucault’s discursive production, Butler reveals sexualized and gendered speech acts, gestures, behaviors, and enactments as performative in the sense that they “continuously produce a series of effects that fabricate and sustain the illusion of essential sexual and gender identities” (p. 185). Roles around sexuality, sex, and gender are not only performed, but such enactment is performative because it has productive consequences in that it fabricates the fantasy of a natural gendered and sexualized self. The theorization of identity as performances that occur daily through actions, speech, and behaviors denaturalizes sex, gender, and compulsory heterosexuality and successfully suspends the idea of pre-existing, essential, stable, and unitary identities.

Building on this, Butler’s theory of performativity provides new lines of thinking about agency and transformation because “the reconceptualization of identity as effect, that is, as produced or generated, opens up possibilities of ‘agency’ that are insidiously foreclosed by positions that take identity categories as foundational and fixed” (p. 200). In other words, the way we construct sexual and gender identities are created by the repetition of specific acts, which allows identity construction to change and transform through a variation on the way those acts are enacted and repeated. As an example, Butler alludes to the cultural practices of drag, cross-dressing, and the performance of butch/femme identities as occurrences of subversive repetition. Butler maintains that through the performance of imitation of gender, the assumed naturalness of the “original” is presented as a fantasy that is fabricated as an imitation (p. 188). In other words, performances that do not fit into the imposed boundaries of gender, sex, and sexuality are

disruptive, and—in the disruption of what is considered ‘normal’ and acceptable—such performances allow/demand space within which transformation occurs.

Foucault’s and Butler’s work has greatly influenced queer theory. Grounded in the notion that identities are performative and discursively produced and enacted, these two perspectives within queer theory take as their core goal the contestation and destabilization of identity categories through the deconstruction of expected discourse and practices that structure knowledge about gender, sex, and sexuality. As this discussion shows, queer theory engages with many philosophical concepts, such as discourse, identity, and power, that are central to the critical nature of this study. Hence, queer theory allows, understands, and presents concepts that challenge educators to think differently about issues of identity, gender, and sexuality. Both perspectives help in examining how the participants create, make sense, and engage with their identities as gay teachers. LatCrit and Queer theory present concepts such as language, discourse, identity, race, power, and knowledge that are central to critical educational perspectives explored in this study. Both of these frameworks, in different ways, challenged me to think differently about my participants’ experiences as related (both directly and indirectly) to societal instantiations of machismo, masculinities, diversity, sex, sexuality, and gender. This study seeks to join the increase of educational work utilizing both of these theories, which point out the possibilities of engaging in the intersection of both thought and practice in educational research.

#### **A Note on the Use of “Latino”**

This study purposefully utilizes the term Latino instead of Hispanic. Even though the terms are used interchangeably, each has its historical roots. For example, Hispanic, as a term, was created by the United States government in the 1970 census (US Census, 2014). According to Comas-Díaz (2001), the term refers to "all Spanish speakers; it connotes a lineage of cultural

heritage related to Spain" (p.116). This terminology communicates a validation of colonization as the emphasis is unproblematically placed upon the language forced upon the ancestors of many who identify or are identified as Hispanic today.

Conversely, the term Latino recognizes "the diversity of this ethnic minority group used to refer to people originating from or having a heritage related to Latin America" (Comas-Díaz, 2001, p.116). Latino encompasses individuals of Latin American origin or descent (Hayes-Bautista & Chapa, 1986). Moreover, the "adoption of the term 'Latino' could be regarded as part of a broader process of self-definition and self-assertion (Oquendo, 1995, p.98). In alignment with my critical orientation to the world and this work, this study utilizes the term Latino in acknowledgment of communities' use of this term.

The exploration of the experience of Latino gay men in this study and the decision to utilize Latino as the identifier for participants warrants an exploration of gendered experiences and terminology. Although the term Latino comes with gendered biases (i.e., the word ending "o" in this case makes the term masculine as opposed to the word ending "a" which would make it feminine), it is utilized in this study over the term Latinx. The term Latinx seeks to transcend the male privilege that comes with the term Latino and to estrange the term from the significations of gender-ness in Spanish. In her online article, Lisette Rolón (2014) addresses that, "although the use of the term 'Latinx' is relatively new and we may agree, yet, on the usage and strategy of usage, we should recognize that the 'O' does not name all of us." The term Latinx, "has shown Spanish evolving to be more inclusive, and it's more than a middle finger to the patriarchy" (Funes, 2017). I have purposely chosen to use the term Latino as the study examines Puerto Rican participants who self-identify as men. I recognize the importance of



diversity and inclusivity for Latinx populations and hope that this study is understood as a micro look at a macro picture to be studied in the future.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Male educators are caught in a gender bind since education is primarily seen as women's work (Sargent, 2001). Contradictory roles of being nurturing and masculine, while negotiating stereotypes associated with gender, is often involved with understanding their place, or professional identity within education (Jones, 2007). As Latino gay teachers continue to struggle with their professional identities, scholars have attempted to capture their experiences and interpret them in ways that can be helpful and supportive. However, few scholars have explored the implications of masculinity for Latino gay men in education, specifically in Puerto Rico. There is a dearth of literature around the gendered experiences of Latino gay teachers. Puerto Rican men interact with a specific conceptualization of masculinity that is culturally embedded with nuance from the Latino community. Furthermore, gay Latino men interact and interpret ideas of masculinity in ways that are different from their heterosexual Latino counterparts due to their sexual identity.

Machismo has primarily been viewed as a negative construct that embodies masculinity, specifically Latino masculinities. Machismo has traditionally been viewed as men who are hypermasculine and sometimes violent (Anzaldúa, 2012; Arciniega, Anderson, Tovar-Blank, & Tracey 2008; Falicov, 2014). Characteristics like pride, aggression, power, control, male dominance, homophobia, and restriction of emotions have been identified as attributes within machismo (Anzaldúa, 2012; Arciniega et al., 2008; Falicov, 2014; Sáenz & Bukoski, 2014). Traits found in machismo often influence Latino men's actions and behaviors. Studies have

found that machismo allows Latino men to suppress vulnerability (Ponjuan et al., 2012) and resist showing emotions (Sáenz & Bukoski, 2014).

Machismo or Latino masculinity is a construct which has historically been viewed as unfavorable, even though previous research has shown that machismo has both positive and negative characteristics (Anzaldúa, 2012; Arciniega et al., 2008; Falicov, 2014). Some traits found in machismo have the potential to influence Latino men's actions and behaviors. For example, Ponjuan (2012) saw that Latino men avoid vulnerability and resist help-seeking behaviors to adhere to machismo. Other studies have found machismo to be a source of empowerment and pride (Sáenz & Bukoski, 2014), thus demonstrating how machismo could manifest for Latino men. However, there is a literature gap around studies that have looked at how gay teachers, specifically in Puerto Rico, interact and create their notions of machismo and teaching identities. With this in mind, this dissertation study seeks to address the gap in the literature by centering on the voices of Puerto Rican gay teachers and offers them an opportunity to be part of the discussion focused on their personal and teaching identities.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of how gay teachers in Puerto Rico negotiate their masculinity, sexual, and teaching identity in order to provide insight into men's relationships within education. The study was designed to uncover unique stories and experiences of men who identify as gay and teach in Puerto Rico. I explored how the intersections of sexuality, culture, masculinity/machismo, and teaching practices impact the thoughts and experiences of gay male teachers in Puerto Rico to understand how Latino men situate themselves within education. Although this study focuses on a specific population, the participant's experiences as male teachers offer an opportunity to discuss gendered ideas around

masculinity in education. Also, I sought to understand how gay men in this study situate themselves within the feminized culture of education in order to understand the discourse around gender practices as male teachers.

Clandinin (2013) describes the need for narrative inquirers to justify their studies personally, practically, and socially. As the researcher, this study is essential to the ongoing negotiation of identity and construction of masculinities in order to make sense of my own experience as a gay Puerto Rican teacher. Attending to my own story was a necessary first step in this research process. Practically, this research was grounded in need of a deeper understanding of men who made a choice and were successful in negotiating their own gay and teaching identities. Concentrating on the professional histories of men makes visible overarching themes and struggles with masculinities in pedagogical contexts, which is a first step in exploring and understating how gay Latino men make sense of machismo and its relationship with their teaching. Socially, male educators need to be part of the discourse surrounding topics like masculinity, sexuality, and identifying as gay. Few studies consider various identities of gay Latino men in research, especially considering machismo in Puerto Rico. By considering such experiences, a new lens can be applied to how gay Puerto Rican men navigate education.

### **Justification of the Study**

This study responds to a gap in research investigating the lived experiences of gay, male teachers in Puerto Rico. It reveals the unique challenges faced by sexual minorities who often work in environments hostile towards sexual identity differences. Also, this study may instigate new understandings about the experiences of male teachers who, though they do not identify as gay, work in conditions that are similarly hostile to the men in this study due to the feminization of the education profession. By considering the experiences of Latino men as they relate to

machismo and masculinity, a new lens can be applied to how Latino men navigate their identities (Cabrera et al., 2016; Sáenz & Bukoski, 2014; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009) and how gender influences the education of Latino men. Without more research that considers the gender socialization of Latino men, the nuanced barriers and instances of empowerment that are derived from their gendered experiences will be missed.

Also, the intersecting identities of Latino men concerning their relationship with machismo will be critical in unearthing potential connections that are not considered in the literature. Latino men's masculinity could have negative implications in their experiences as gay teachers in Puerto Rico. These negative influences may be amplified due to the fears of being emasculated or seen as weak (Ponjuan, Clark & Sáenz., 2012). Moreover, due to the negative emphasis of machismo within the Latino community (Anzaldúa, 2012), more research is needed to consider how gay Latino men themselves conceptualize and understand machismo. Thus, further research is necessary to examine the interplay between masculinity and teaching practices.

As a narrative inquiry, this study provides a broad, in-depth illustration of the complexity of the experiences of gay men who have chosen to make teaching their profession. By interviewing six gay teachers in Puerto Rico, I explore narratives from men who regularly negotiate identity and construct masculinities as gay educators in Puerto Rico – adding this study to the literature on the experiences of men to understand the stereotypes and perceptions about the role of gay men in education. It is an essential piece for moving the conversation forward on recruiting and retaining male teachers (Mills, Hasse, & Charlton, 2008). This study provides a unique opportunity to explore identity and masculinities in an often-marginalized population.

## **Research Questions**

The following central question guides this study:

1. How, if at all, does masculinity and machismo influence Puerto Rican gay teachers' identities?

Also, the following supplemental questions help inform, not only the main issue but the study at large:

2. How do gay teachers in Puerto Rico make sense of their identity in terms of ethnicity, educational status, and sexual identity?
3. What obstacles, if any, do Puerto Rican gay teachers perceive that prevent them from revealing their sexual orientation to their colleagues and students at school?

## **Delimitations**

The study investigated the lives of gay K-12 teachers in Puerto Rico. This study included only gay male teachers to allow for a focus on issues faced by gay men within a Puerto Rican context in a way that would not be possible if the sampling pool included heterosexual men or lesbian teachers. While I surmise that issues faced by gay, heterosexual, and lesbian teachers have commonalities, I also assume that differences are extensive enough to justify a more focused study.

## **Limitations**

One limitation of this study is the narrow criteria utilized to select participants. For this study, I chose to explore the lives and experiences of gay men, thereby excluding the experiences of lesbian, trans, and other teachers. A narrative study often involves a limited number of participants, and exploring six Puerto Rican gay teachers constricts the scope of the research.

The goal of this project is not generalizability of findings; instead, the intent is to gather rich content from particular cases (Merriam, 2009).

Another limitation is my relationship with the participants. Apart from our context and sexual identity, I have shared teaching or personal spaces with some of them. My position teaching with some of the participants, doing undergraduate and graduate studies with others, and having personal friendships with some may affect the degree of openness that the participants have during the interview process of the study. The proximity to participants provides access to their participation and experiences, but it may create situational bias during the study, which was conducted by interviewing the participants. This may also affect the openness with which participants share their experiences through the interview process.

Having a previous connection to me might impact the narratives shared by the participants in the data collection process. Given the personal connection between the chosen topic and my own lived experiences as a gay teacher in Puerto Rico, there are various risks to internal and external validity. Certain beliefs that influence my perspective were uncovered by conducting this research. The biggest threat to this study was my personal bias, which occurs “when the researcher has personal biases or *a priori* assumptions that he/she is unable to bracket” from what is gathered from the participants (Onwuegbuzie, 2002, p.19).

Given the personal connection between the topic being studied and my own lived experiences as a gay man, biased threats may exist. Because I am the only researcher collecting data for this study, personal bias may be present in different stages from this project, from data collection to data interpretation to data analysis to final explanation of results (Onwuegbuzie, 2002). As each participant had a voice, so did the author, but that voice never became the

dominant experience in the study. The participants' experiences and narratives were far more significant, and their voices spoke out more loudly.

### **Reflexivity**

My experiences are central to framing this study because the research stemmed from my own experiences as a gay teacher in Puerto Rico. I am interested in the experiences of my participants as gay teachers, but my story comes into play as well. My own experiences may or may not be similar to those of the participants, but it gives us a common starting point. In researching a group of participants of which I am a member, it is important to recognize my reflexivity. As the primary instrument in qualitative research, researchers are human and can have "shortcomings and biases that can have an impact on the study" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p.16). In light of this, my biases, dispositions, and assumptions must be considered in qualitative research. Moreover, an understanding of the researcher's position can help inform readers of how the researcher may have interpreted the data (Merriam, 2009).

Reflexivity is especially vital in critical research when considering the "influence of the researcher's own social identities and the social identities of participants on the research process" (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014, p. 40). Reflexivity requires an interrogation of "our selves regarding how research efforts are shaped and staged around the binaries, contradictions, and paradoxes that form our own lives" (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 124). My own experiences as a gay teacher in Puerto Rico allow me to critically reflect on the shared experiences, as well as empathize with the participants in the study (Jackson, 2007).

Being a member of the population I am researching, I have to be aware of biases or assumptions I may bring to the study based on my own experiences. As the researcher, I have to keep in mind that even though the participants and I belong to the same population does not

mean we share the same experiences. I have to make sure the participants fully explain themselves so that I do not make incorrect assumptions or interpretations of their narratives because we may share similar experiences, nor assumes that I know what they are talking about.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Masculinity.** A place in gender relations, practices through which men and women engage in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality, and culture (Connell, 2005).

**Machismo.** It is a culture of toxic masculinity in Latino countries and contexts in which men and women raise boys to believe they are emotionally and physically tough and, in some cases, superior to women.

**Coming Out.** This refers to the action of revealing to family, friends, and colleagues their sexual orientation. Coming out can become an ongoing process because most people in society assume heterosexuality is the norm.

**Passing.** An actual identity of policing since the subjects are knowingly performing within the expectations of heterosexuality and gendered constructions (Atkinson & DePalma, 2009). The idea of passing occurs when a person who identifies as LGBTQ+ fulfills the heteronormative expectations to fit in the normative world.

**Heteronormativity.** Refers This refers to the assumption that everyone is heterosexual and that being heterosexual is "normal" within society. Warner (1991) establishes heteronormativity as "a viewpoint that expresses heterosexuality as a given instead of being, heterosexuality is widely "accepted" as the default sexuality by both" (p.4).



**Homophobia.** Fear, hatred, discomfort with, or mistrusts of people who identify as lesbian or gay. It can take many forms, including negative attitudes and beliefs about, aversion to, or prejudice against gay people.

**Out.** This refers to a gay person who is open about his or her sexual identity.

**Boricua.** Seen as a synonym for Puerto Rican. It means native from Borinquen (Puerto Rico's original name). It stresses pride in being from the island.

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

Chapter 2 contains a review of current, relevant literature on masculinity, machismo, gay teachers, and gayness in Puerto Rico. Of the utmost importance, the focus is on how gay teachers navigate their sexual identity in and out of school contexts, and to what degree does their sexual orientation and masculinity/machismo affect relationships with students, colleagues, parents, and others. Chapter 3 reviews the methods and procedures utilized to obtain data for this study. The primary focus of this chapter is on qualitative methods and the processes used to collect and report the participants' experiences. This approach gives the reader a complete picture of the experiences lived by gay male teachers in Puerto Rico.

In Chapter 4, the reader is introduced to the participants. There, the reader gets to know the participants, receives a biographical sketch of their sexual identity, finds out about their teaching background and practices, and their interactions with masculinity, machismo, and how they navigate such identities as educators. This chapter provides an intimate look at each participant's thoughts and experiences about being a gay teacher in Puerto Rico as well as looking at the themes that emerged during the data collection phase of this study.

In Chapter 5, I make assertions about the lived experiences of the Puerto Rican gay teachers who participated in this study. The study mainly focuses on those narratives that directly

inform the primary research questions for this study, encompass the discussion, implications of the study, and future research within this chapter. Finally, this dissertation study attempts to address the deficiency in research and literature on gay teachers in Puerto Rico and their negotiation with sexual identity, machismo, and pedagogical experiences.

## CHAPTER 2

### TAKING A LOOK AT WHAT WE ALREADY HAVE:

#### A REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

The literature on issues such as masculinity, machismo, and gay teacher's identity covers a wide range of topics, most of which do not center around the experiences of *Latino* gay men nor Latino gay *teachers*. Currently, available literature includes works written within various theoretical frameworks, including queer theory, which are designed to help us understand gay experiences. A portion of the current literature discusses masculinity in general and Latino masculinity or machismo more specifically. In order to provide context for this study, I highlight in this chapter, some of this literature as it pertains to the various theoretical forms of teacher identity, and machismo. The following review of the literature will touch upon these topics as each relates to the connection of the central participants of this study, gay Latino teachers.

#### Teacher Identity

**“I now have to be aware of how I present myself 24/7” (Theo).** There have been many studies exploring teacher identity and gay teacher identity. This section explores the conceptions of teacher identity as well as the research focusing on gay teachers. Teacher’s identities are produced by their beliefs: a combination of interactions within society and lived experiences (Gee, 2000; Korthagen, 2004; Sutherland, Howard, & Markauskaite, 2010). Others like Beauchamp & Thomas (2009) find teacher identity as an “organizing element in teachers’ professional lives” (p.175), which make meaning on how teachers see themselves concerning those around them. Also, teacher identity concerning narrative research examines “the narratives that teachers create to explain themselves and their teaching lives” (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009, p.175). Such identity creates a discursive space in which roles are negotiated in teaching.

Olsen (2008) sees teacher identity as the analytical lens through which we examine teaching and learning. Closely related to this project is Olsen's idea that teacher identity does examine factors and their impact on the negotiation of multiple identities to create a single professional identity (e.g., Sachs, 2005; Pearce & Morrison, 2011). We can look at factors and motivations that guide how identity is navigated by the teacher and the realization of how these aspects create their identity within the classroom. Teacher educators understand the expectations put upon them when in the classroom. The idea and images of what a teacher should be are always present and correlate with what teachers find essential in their professional settings versus their contexts.

Others, like Mitchell & Weber (1999), look at teacher identity as how teachers reinvent themselves in the arena of educating. One could argue that this is related to narrative research within teacher identity, which Beauchamp & Thomas (2009) define as "narratives that teachers create to explain themselves and their teaching lives" (p.182). Narratives often have a focus that goes beyond established pedagogical lessons; hence, encompassing teachers' personal experiences. It could be argued that teaching and educational events are "...framed within a context of a teacher's life..." giving personal meanings and feelings to established curriculum methods (Carter, 1993, p.9).

Teacher identity also examines how contextual factors impact teachers' negotiation of multiple identities in order to create an identity inside of the classroom (Pearce & Morrison, 2011; Tickle, 2000). Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop (2004) explain that "Influence conceptions and expectations about accepted images in society about what a teacher should know, do and how they should act... [and] also what teachers find themselves important in both their personal and professional lives" (p.107). This study seeks to explore how contextual factors, of machismo and

sexual identity, impact Puerto Rican gay teachers' negotiation of identity concerning their professional settings.

Beijaard et al. (2000) identified four essential components of professional teacher identity. They include professional identity as an ongoing, dynamic process that answers the questions, "Who am I at the moment, and whom do I want to become?" It involves the individual and the context; it consists of sub-identities that can be in harmony or conflict, and agency as an essential factor in professional identity. Teacher identity formation occurs between the interaction of the personal and professional identities, which involve structure (relations between power and status) and agency (influence others, and we have) (Day et al., 2006).

Teacher identity is involved with decisions about the educator's practices, classroom content, and relationships with students (Beijaard et al., 2000). Teachers develop a professional identity based on interpretations and interactions with students, colleagues, school communities, and others, which influence their job satisfaction, commitment, self-efficiency, and motivation (Canrinus, Helms-Lorenz, Beijaard, Buitnik, & Hofman, 2011). Changes in a teacher's identity involve fluctuations in knowledge, voice, self-awareness, confidence, and relationships with colleagues and stakeholders (Izadinia, 2013).

Day and Kington (2008) found an identity to be a composite of the interactions between personal, professional, and situational factors. Professional identity was influenced by competing and conflicting elements of educational policies, social trends, workload, roles, and responsibilities. Teacher identities can change over time due to individual experiences and school contexts (Day et al., 2007). Also, in their teacher identity research, Day et al. (2007) identified six professional life phases describing the commitment, identity development, tensions and transitions, and challenges to sustain motivation teachers experience during the stages of

teachers' professional lives. The research on teacher identity demonstrates the importance of teacher development and personal teacher identities.

**“Can I be gay and be a teacher?” (Adai).** It is vital to explore and understand the process of how LGBTQ+ teachers make sense of their sexual and professional identities because such intersections may affect the way they make decisions inside of the classroom. One may argue that being a teacher should not correlate with your sexual identity; however, authenticity is an integral component of one's identity (Gowran, 2004), and, for many, sexual identity is an integral component of one's overall identity. The lack of acceptance around LGBTQ+ issues and teachers in schools is a reason why many gay and lesbian teachers do not disclose their sexuality (Ward & Winstanley, 2005). There has been literature exploring LGBTQ+ teacher experiences (Atkinson & DePalma, 2008; Ferfolja, 2007; Jackson, 2006; Kissen, 1993; Rensenbrik, 1996); however, much of the literature does not explore Latino LGBTQ+ teaching identities.

In exploring the experiences of gay teachers, there is a big emphasis on the navigation of identities inside of pedagogical settings, teachers' experiences with curriculums, and the relationship between teachers and students once they are “out” in the classroom. In her study, Kissen (1993) described gay and lesbian teachers as living in a “glass closet.” She identified three themes regarding the teachers she examined:

The first involved the teachers' self-definition as lesbians or gay men, their self-concept as teachers, and the intersection of those two identities. The second primary focus was the damaging effect of homophobia on their daily lives in and out of the classroom. A final theme was the need to develop strategies to avoid being fired and to nurture themselves in the face of tremendous pressure and stress. (Kissen, 1993, p.5)

Kissen notes, in her study, that the participants who partially or wholly disclosed their sexual orientation “described self-revelation as dangerous and scary, the few who had taken these risks said that the rewards of self-actualization far outweighed the stresses” (Kissen, 1993, p.7). After

examining gay teachers' experiences, Kissen found there to be significant relief in terms of experiences within the classrooms and curriculums as a result of being partially or entirely "out" in their respective classrooms and pedagogical settings.

In a qualitative study of gay and lesbian teachers, Jackson (2006) sought to explore whether "contextual factors promote or prohibit the constructions and performance of identities as gay teachers" (p.31). Jackson identifies five "major domains impacting participant's process of constructing themselves as gay and lesbian teachers: personal characteristics, family status, gender conformity, professional experiences, and community atmosphere" (p.33). We can discuss, then, that by having the characteristics mentioned above explained and understood, we see the motivation for when and how gay teachers disclose personal information about their sexual orientation.

Jackson (2006) emphasis the fact that the teachers in the study expressed how their experience as a teacher was linked to them being "out" in schools. The coming out process "...is what the participants in this study identify as the source of self-actualization and empowerment" (p.67) and could be considered a renewable and continual process for teachers. The process of coming out is described as one that is a recurrent and continuous process. Much like Kissen (1993), the participants in the study link their coming out process and the relationship with them being out in schools to a sense of agency and legitimacy.

Jackson states that "...studies about openly gay teachers, including this one, found that coming out at school has the potential to enrich teaching." (2006, p.29). Teachers who are open about their sexuality are happier feel more empowered in their classrooms and, therefore, empower their respective students. Jackson concludes that the process of coming out at school is influenced by many factors and not a static process across experiences. She also concludes,

“...coming out as gay or lesbian to one’s students makes teaching more authentic and enriched” (Jackson, 2006, p.50). Bartolome (2004) & Mazer, Murphy, and Simmons (2007), who also explored LGBTQ+ teachers’ identities and experiences, found, like Jackson, that when teachers disclose more personal narratives, it humanizes them in the eyes of their students as well as they may express more course motivation and view the educational process more positively. By coming out in the classroom the teacher is a more original and authentic version of his or herself and, therefore, has the opportunity to adequately perform one’s identity and duties to the best of their abilities

In another study, Ferfolja (2007) explores lesbian teachers’ identities. Ferfolja focuses on the silencing that occurs when teachers’ sexual identity is assumed and how heterosexuality and heteronormativity become the dominant culture in schools. The participants were assumed to be involved in heterosexual relations as all of them had children from previous relationships, even though they identify as lesbian. In contrast, Rensenbrik (1996) conducted a study with a teacher who identified as a lesbian and was out in her school. The freedom afforded to the participant in regards to legal and institutional protections allowed her to be open about her sexuality. However, many teachers are not afforded the same freedom when it comes to her sexuality and being “out.”

**“Teaching is for girls” (Albert).** In Puerto Rico, there is a vast disparity in numbers between male and female teachers. In 2016, there were a total of 28,039 teachers in Puerto Rico, and only 3,937 of them were men, which means that 86% of K-12 teachers on the island were women, while only 14% of teachers were men (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Education has traditionally been seen as a woman's profession because of gender expectations around sensitivity, nurturing, and emoting, which are typically not associated with men. Male



and female teachers who identify as LGBTQ+ have pointed out how education is overwhelmingly a female profession (Ferfolja, 2007; Jackson, 2006; King, 2004; Kissen, 1993; Luginbill, 2016). Male teachers, especially gay teachers, have struggled with the perception that education is considered to be primarily female-centric (Drudy, Martin, Woods, & O'Flynn, 2005). Gendered notions, perceptions, and dynamics have played a role in shaping the landscape of education.

There are significant differences between men and women in education, especially when it relates to power dynamics. Even as male educators are less, masculinity is privileged in education, which creates advantages for men that women do not have (Jackson, 2006; Khayatt, 2006). While I agree with the idea that power differentials come into play with gay male educators, I argue that it is essential to focus on gay male teachers because, as has been my experience, the focus on gay male teachers' performance is scrutinized in ways heterosexual male teachers are not. As a result of their coming out or playing around with sexual and gendered dynamics and norms, gay male teachers do not have the power and privilege heterosexual male teachers do (Ferfolja, 2007). King (2004) describes a challenging social process by which male teachers resemble females in their field and how they navigate similarities and differences. When referring to women teachers, such moral ideas allow that image to become asexual, and of a woman who would not do anything to distort that image.

Male teachers are often perceived as strict disciplinarians who have to present their dominant masculinity (Francis, 2008). If male teachers are seen as being nurturing and affectionate towards their students, their masculinities are questioned. Male teachers need to conduct themselves in ways that do not contradict heteronormative ideas of how men should act in and outside of a school setting (La Fountain-Strokes, 2013). On the other hand, female

teachers are thought of to be nurturing and motherly towards children in schools. The clear divide of gender awareness and gender construction in schools contributes to the separation of ideas for how men and women should and do behave in education (Jackson, 2006; Sumsion, 2000). Men in nontraditional occupations, like education, experience a misalignment of their gendered and professional identities (Lupton, 2000). Gay educators might have a harder challenge because they are expected to show a masculine image to students when in schools, especially when considering their interactions with boys.

Typically, gay teachers are ostracized and face backlash from school personnel, students, and parents who are not comfortable because gay men do not fit into the heteronormative role of how teachers should act (Jackson, 2007). Day et al. (2006) argue, “events and experiences in the personal lives of teachers are intimately linked to the performance of their professional roles” (p. 603). This may be true for those who identify as heterosexual, but for those who do not fit the role of how a normative teacher should look or act, their personal and professional lives are often kept separate (Jackson, 2007). Heteronormative expectations of how a male teacher should act or be are usually the role gay teachers step into (Ferfolja, 2007; King, 2004), frequently putting them back in the closet so they can perform what is expected of a heterosexual male teacher.

While negotiating identities in the classroom, gay teachers perform to conform to established expectations. When gay teachers participate in discussions with students and engage in stories about their life experiences, it is assumed, by the students, that their teachers recount these stories from a heterosexual position. By doing this, students and teachers participate in the reconstituting of their identities. It also indicates the importance of exploring how masculinities and Latino masculinities or machismo influence the identity of gay men teaching in Puerto Rico.

**“Some still think I can be a danger to these kids” (Dallas).** It has been my experience that as an openly gay educator in Puerto Rico, the standards are higher due to expectations of how a male should act as a teacher. In part, because of the narrative that gay teachers are dangerous towards children. The ‘danger narrative’ posit gay teachers as dangerous, deviant, and some parents are under the impression that gay teachers are attempting to “recruit” or even molest their children (Cavanagh, 2008; King, 2004). The idea that males enter education to molest children still permeates (Jackson, 2007; King, 2004).

Male teachers in Puerto Rico are continuously encouraged never to be alone with students; this also happens when teachers are perceived as heterosexual, yet, these conversations contribute to the discourse around how homosexuality is seen as deviant, especially in education (King, 2004). To many parents, administrators, and other teachers, having students taught by gay teachers would be harmful to the societal standards and ideals because there is a fear of moral and sometimes physical harm (Harbeck, 1997). Therefore, gay male teachers modify the way they act in the classroom in ways that allow them to enact identities considered heterosexual or manly. Such measures are of utmost importance in schools, because certain practices that go against heteronormative views of teaching may be detrimental to the perception of teachers and students (Jackson, 2007; King, 2004; Evans, 2002).

Also, such measures emerge because of the idea that homosexual teachers have an “agenda,” which includes recruiting children to be gay. There is an idea that children are meant to be protected from sexual conversations and should not be thought of as “gay” because the image of children being pure should not be distorted (La Fountain-Strokes, 2013). It is a cultural and societal problem to view the child as queer because it is inherent to think of children as innocent and non-sexual. Stockton (2009) presents the notion of not wanting to ‘queer the child,’

which establishes the idea of wanting to create separation between notions of childhood and adulthood, which leads to not wanting to see the child as a queer figure. She asserts, “The child is precisely who we are not and, in fact, never was. It is the act of adults looking back” (p.5). If children interact with homosexual teachers, there is a perception; they would become gay. By considering a child as queer, we imply that they are sexual beings with individual agency and identities while, at the same time, challenging perceptions of sexuality, which are thought of to emerge in adulthood.

Stockton (2009) argues that children can deviate from cultural expectations and that there is not one specific way of growing up by stating, “There are ways of growing that are not growing up” (p.11). Thus, Stockton presents the idea of growing sideways, which entails, “The width of a person’s experience of ideas, their motives or their notions, may pertain to any age, bringing ‘adults’ and ‘children’ into lateral contact of surprising sorts” (p.11). She posits that there is a distinction between the child and the adult by making emphasis on how the queering of the child is the result of cultural construction. This idea becomes a point of contention in society as children are the perfect image of the future and should not be corrupted, in this case, by queer teachers.

These school and cultural, moral standards become a representation of what teacher identity should be, how a teacher should act, and what roles are different and acceptable for both men and women. The idea of ‘danger narratives’ goes back to the notion that education is a gendered profession. Male teachers have to pay attention to the way they enact what is expected from them inside of the classroom. This is even harder for gay male teachers as they have to balance the social expectations of being a man in education in addition to negative conceptions

surrounding homosexuality (Jackson, 2007). For men who are in education, there is an extra layer of scrutiny about their interactions and contact with students.

### **Masculinity and Machismo**

**“You are expected to be very masculine in the classroom” (Nicholas).** Stereotypical perceptions of gay men include that they are effeminate, have high pitched voices, and are incredibly emotional. Gay men are aware of the stereotypical notions due to their sexuality, and those who do not wish to be associated with such stereotypes take steps to hide any characteristics that are seen as feminine in order to be “manly” (Jackson, 2006). Essentialist views around masculinity assume that all behavior displayed by men and boys is the same; therefore, it is considered a natural trait. Gilbert & Gilbert (1998) argue, “those essentialist arguments hold the view that core personalities and characters define masculinity and what all men actually and potentially share” (p.31). Connell (2005) views masculinity, “as a place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality, and culture” (p.71). The concept of masculinity describes a person’s behavior based on the type of person they are and how they do gender in a specific cultural way.

Connell (2005) views masculinity as emerging from the socially constructed notions of power, production, emotion, and symbols that come from the ideas of gender. Gender intersects with school institutions in manners of power relations and emotions. Such intersecting structures allow educational settings to create institutional definitions of what masculinity is (Connell, 1996). Views of how gender and masculinity emerge in professional settings, according to Connell (1996), come from the specific context and understanding of a specific workplace. To be a man in schools is to be considered to hold power (Jackson, 2006). Masculinity strives for an inherent sense of respect from others for the simple fact that you are a man. Although respect is

not exclusive to men, since women also demand and expect respect, this demand is more common on men because of how “they are influenced by societal mechanisms of power” (Ramírez, 1999, p.66). On occasion, power and respect are synonymous with each other. It is crucial then to think professionally and institutionally when it comes to attempting to understand masculinity, especially in schools.

Simpson (2004) views gender as socially practiced and masculinity directly related and a configuration of such practice. Hence, the idea of masculinity describes a person’s behavior based on who they are and how their gender identity is enacted in specific settings (Connell, 2005). “Masculinity is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality, and culture” (p.71). It is through these relationships that men create their masculinities. Such relationships emerge from men’s relation to other men and how such relationships are viewed and perceived by the public (Connell, 2005). The relationship established between men and their expression of masculinity influence their behavior and the negotiation that occurs in masculinity (Jackson, 2006).

Masculinity was viewed as the development of traits as natural and culture-free, this was named male sex theory (Smiler, 2004). From this, hegemonic masculinity appeared as a way to rework the binary biological model (Hobbs, 2013). Connell (2005) developed a masculine paradigm, which included four types of masculinity conceptions. These conceptions offer a better understanding of the social constructions around masculinity, how men negotiate societal boundaries, and how professional gendered standards around how men should act are understood and enacted (Brody, 2014). The four types of masculine conceptions are hegemony, subordination, complicity, and marginalization. Hegemonic masculinity refers to the culturally

dominant masculine notions that hold power over others. Subordinate masculinities rank below the hegemonic standard (Connell, 2005). This can be seen in homosexual identities, which historically have been thought of as feminine and on the other hand, heterosexual men can also feel that by not enacting by the expected masculine notions, like being effeminate even though they identify as “straight,” their masculinities are not seen as valid by societal standards.

Connell (2005) shares that most men are not able to meet the hegemonic standards of masculinity; therefore, he created complicit masculinities. Complicit masculinities do not embody the dominant masculine standards expected by society; however, they do benefit from the privileges that come from identifying within the established masculine conceptions. Brody (2014) argues that men in education can be forced into asserting traditional masculine behaviors so they can avoid being identified with subordinate masculinities. Masculinity becomes an interactive process because it involves men's awareness of society's male expectations, challenges in meeting such expectations, and learning to perform masculinities that align with their personal beliefs (Edwards & Jones, 2009). The relationship between masculinities and social structures are located within the gendered experiences of men in society (Brody, 2014). Sabbe & Aelterman (2007) found that society depicts masculinity as successful, competitive, and success-oriented rather than warm, open, and nurturing.

Simpson (2004) explored masculinities by asking men in female-concentrated occupations, including teaching, social work, and administrative workers, to reflect on perceptions of their job and their self-image. Men in her study used different strategies to deflect discomfort centered on their feminized career choice to make their position sound more masculine. Simpson (2005) also explored the conflict between men in nontraditional occupations and their gender roles and identity. Though some men claimed that they had no issues, she found

shame and discomfort to be common themes around masculine ideas of those in the study.

Simpson suggested that internal feelings (how her participants felt about themselves) and the external perceptions (how others perceived them) resulted in difficulty meeting the responsibility and standards expected in their profession amongst the men in the study.

There has been an increase in understanding the connection between masculinity and education (Ferfolja, 2007; Jackson, 2006; King, 2004). Male teachers experience pressure to demonstrate appropriate masculinity or risk being marginalized by the school community (Francis & Skelton, 2001). By distancing themselves from perceived feminized responsibilities, male teachers are working towards the idea of maintaining masculinities and a clear distinction between feminine and masculine aspects that should be separate from each other (Wingfield, 2009). Masculinity is a central issue to the experiences of male teachers in education (Brody, 2014). Both male and female educators find themselves in a pedagogical culture where definitions of masculinity are continually evolving (Jones, 2006). This drives male teachers to negotiate between being a “real traditional man” and being good “nurturing teachers” (Sabbe & Aelterman, 2007, p. 530). Further research is needed to better understand the complexities of masculinities and their impact on gay male teachers.

**“Deja de llorar y actua como macho” (Juno).** Machismo terms the way the construct of masculinity is taken up and embodied within the Latino community. It has traditionally been closely associated with Latino men who are seen as hypermasculine and violent (Anzaldúa, 2012; Arciniega, Anderson, Tovar-Blank, & Tracey, 2008). Consequently, research on machismo has mostly focused on its negative aspects (Arciniega et al., 2008). This section defines machismo, discusses the contextualization of the construct, and explores the socialization of Latino gay men in hegemonic masculinity and machismo.



Machismo has historically been viewed as a negative construct, although it is a complicated term with both negative and positive characteristics (Anzaldúa, 2012; Arciniega et al., 2008; Falicov, 2014). Scholars have identified pride, aggression, power, control, homophobia, and restriction of emotions as negative attributes of machismo (Anzaldúa, 2012; Arciniega et al., 2008; Falicov, 2014; Sáenz & Bukoski, 2014). However, machismo's framework allows for a more flexible understanding of masculinity through its positive traits. Commitment, protecting family, respect, nurturing, responsibility, selflessness, and sincerity (Arciniega et al., 2008; Falicov, 2014) are some of the positive traits Latino men are generally socialized to perform. Unfortunately, these positive traits are typically subordinated in the Latino consciousness, and the negative characteristics of machismo are positioned to the forefront (Anzaldúa, 2012).

Scholars, including Arciniega et al. (2008) and Herrera, Owens, and Mallinckrodt (2013), have challenged the limited definition of machismo as inherently harmful. Arciniega et al. (2008) confirmed that machismo has two independent dimensions: traditional machismo and caballerismo. Traditional machismo encompassed the hypermasculinity and extraordinary power found in the negative traits of machismo. Caballerismo, on the other hand, included emotional connectedness and social responsibility as positive traits. Ultimately, Arciniega et al. (2008) confirmed both the negative and positive aspects of machismo through the two dimensions, traditional machismo and caballerismo. This research allows the disruption of an automatic connection of the construct of machismo to its negative traits and expands how machismo is researched.

As further research is done on machismo, scholars must remember the complicated history of masculinity within Latin America. It is a construct shared among many Latin

American countries due to some historical experiences (Stavans, 1995). For instance, all Latin American countries have been colonized by European powers in their history (Gutmann & Vigoya, 2005). Embedded in that history is the humiliation of being controlled, overrun, and raped by the colonizer (Stavans, 1995). However, the manifestation of machismo as a construct fluctuated in specific countries within Latin America based on cultural nuances in the region and the unique historical events within each community.

For example, Puerto Rican colonization influenced masculinity through Spanish and American ideologies that could be interpreted as "revolutionary machismo" (Chomsky, 2011, p.46). This idea of revolutionary machismo has been seen through different historical moments in the island like: El Grito de Lares which occurred in 1868, Privatization Movement in 1998, and most recently, the 2019 Ricky Renuncia movement which saw the governor of Puerto Rico resign after weeks of pressure from the citizens of the island. All of these events, although massively attended by women, are attributed to the robust organization of men. It is this idea of men standing up and protecting their patrimony that establishes an ideal of 'machos' being revolutionary and "enacting their masculine ideals to the extreme" (Chomsky, 2011, p.53). Also, the various indigenous cultures found in Latin America had implications for the cultivation of differences in machismo for each country.

For instance, Godreau (2013) noted that before colonization in Puerto Rico, the Taíno communities were "specifically divided into masculine and feminine traits" (p. 86). The vocation of Taíno men was to hunt, fight, and subdue enemies while the women would pick cotton, weave hammocks, and prepare casaba (Godreau, 2013). However, these cultural nuances were not present in other Taíno communities within Puerto Rico (Godreau, 2013). Depending on where Taíno groups were geographically located, there was "less documentation of social and economic

functions that can be attributed exclusively to men or women" (Deagan, 2004, p. 87). Such distinction may have resulted in different manifestations of machismo in the Caribbean and within specific areas in Puerto Rico. Thus, indigenous roots in Latin American countries have implications in how machismo is performed.

**“Ser gay y macho en Puerto Rico está cabrón” (Theo).** Machismo and queer ideologies are constructions that create and divide the relationship between genders and cultural spaces (Ramírez, 1999). Views of masculinity and queerness become an essential area of scrutiny, for they are deemed as domestic creations of body and space that not only confines to binary constructions but shows how they are produced. Such ideas become problematic when being presented in specific geographical spaces and contexts, in this case, Puerto Rico. There are many difficulties when undertaking this task: a) the lack of literature on the subject; b) the existent literature is out of date, and c) and the cultural and political changes Puerto Rico has undergone in the last five decades (Ramírez, 1999). It is essential to understand how both machismo and queerness are perceived in Puerto Rico. The intention here to provide an overview of how machismo translates and is understood in the Puerto Rican context as well as how being gay Puerto Ricans makes sense of those identity intersections.

Specific theoretical frameworks, which provide tools to navigate and examine power relations when it comes to sexuality, often do the opposite and reinforce gendered categories, especially for queer people of color (Browne, 2006; Halberstam, 2005; Muñoz, 1999). Within the last decade, heteronormative assumptions (Warner, 1991) have been challenged by queer geographical and cultural analysis. Knopp (2007) defines this phenomenon as "a self-conscious intellectual movement...highlighting the fluid nature of sexual subjectivities, and it reimagines geographical dimensions of these accordingly. Current queer geographies contribute significantly

to the reconceptualization of “queer geographical imaginations” (p.22). It was believed that queerness was understood and the same across cultural and racial identities. However, there have been multiple studies regarding queer identity, how they are formed and perceived in specific geographical spaces (Binnie, 1997; Brown, 2004; Browne, 2004; Valentine, & Skelton, 2003), and each has expanded on the notions that queerness changes and is understood differently and depending on their cultural contexts. Each one intended to examine and deconstruct normative categories in their respective spaces (body and geography) as well as how queer experiences and performances are reconceptualized based on your location.

The term ‘queer,’ as previously stated, is highly contested (Luibhéid & Cantú, 2005), especially when examining queerness in queer people of color, including queer Latinos (Rodríguez, 2003). The researcher embraces this term as one which redefines normative categories of sex, gender, and other marginalized identities. In other words, by embracing ‘queer,’ I seek to challenge heteronormative notions that systematically categorize cultural processes of life (Rodríguez, 2003) in a way that makes it easier for gay Puerto Rican teachers more comfortable with their sexual identities in the classroom.

Binnie (2007) argues that queer sensibilities are often theorized and analyzed through academic, professional, white, and western lenses. She adds that such homonormativity and, “the visibility of affluent white gay men have been accompanied by the marginalization of politics...and highlighted the exclusion of race, class, gender, and disability in queer communities” (p.34). While trying to understand queer Latino spaces, it is essential to contend with the idea that queer is not a term that can be effectively transferred or translated into Spanish (Rodríguez, 2003). Latinos in the United States with transnational border crossing or colonized

mindsets tend to associate 'queer' with white and educated identities and not with their own Latino identity (Viteri, 2008).

This is seen in Puerto Rico as the words 'gay', 'maricón,' or 'pato' is used when having conversations about "queers" (Ramírez, 1999). When the term queer is used, it is seen as a free loaded word. Utilizing 'queer' demonstrates an understanding of identity that a particular person uses to present themselves as educated, which allows the use of a word that softens the conversation around LGBT people (Mazak, 2007). This is understood because conversations regarding queer people may not be the same if words like 'fag' or 'faggots' were used. There is no surprise that such a term equates with affluent white gay experiences as it is common practice in queer theoretical academic projects that such studies are undertaken, overwhelmingly, by white researchers (Binnie, 2007; La Fountain-Strokes, 2009).

Hames-García & Martínez (2011) argue that Latino culture should not be homogenized. They add that clinging to your Latino identity is "key to powerful statements...by creating a sense of cultural richness to the self and cultural identity" (2011, p.148). These transnational identities construct narratives that directly intersect queer Latino men and the cultural factors that may influence such experiences (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). Notions embracing Latino gay identity in the classroom represent a break from the idea that heteronormative cultural barriers are static or fixed in one specific way. Such cultural obstacles complicate the understanding of queer constructions since such dynamics redefine gender, sexual, and familial identities (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001; Rodríguez, 2003). We can see the static and, at one-point, solid concepts of Latino queer men shifting to be more diverse in cultural settings (La Fountain-Strokes, 2013). Different displays of masculinity in society adhere to Latino cultural factors,

whether it is in a traditional Latino context or any other contextual setting, Latino masculine traits tend to stay the same.

Latino queer identity encounters one significant problem referred to as "culture as other," which describes the racial or ethnic group's experiences of Latino queers within cultural settings in which they are the minority (Hames-García & Martínez, 2011; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Messner, 1994). When referring to "the other," in this context, we refer to the way we introduce different perspectives of Latino culture through identity and how it is visible. La Fountain-Strokes (2013) refers to this idea by addressing the Puerto Rican queer diaspora in New York City by stating, "These 'maricones'<sup>1</sup> are leaving their cultural knowledge to battle a new coming out because they are brown, gay but especially, Puerto Rican. It will not be [faggot] but 'that one'" (p.163). When cultural identity is used as a factor in contexts, there is a tendency to create different views of how we see "others" perspectives and use them as our own. Latino queer men find it crucial to adhere to their racial identities to satisfy a personal desire of visibility and understanding, which helps them achieve specific goals and have experienced within their context (Abu-Lughod, 1991; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Messner, 1994; Hames-García & Martínez, 2011).

Adhering to the idea that queer of color identities is essential because of how they are used to question queer sensibilities and experiences as well as an understanding of what queer, as a broader term, looks like, especially since such concepts tend to focus on white experiences. Previous research presents ideas of how the reconceptualization of queer sexualized and gendered cultural constructions occur (Anzaldúa, 2012; Ferguson, 2004; Luibheid & Cantu, 2005). The intersection of Latino queer notions in this study will allow a more expansive

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<sup>1</sup> 'Maricones' is a derogatory term used when mentioning gay men. It is most commonly used in Puerto Rican communities. Complicatedly, and in a similar fashion to the etymology of the word 'queer' in the continental US, it has also been adopted as a form of empowerment by Puerto Rican gay men.

understanding of how gay Puerto Rican teachers construct masculinities, queer performances, and how these intersect in pedagogical settings. Furthermore, it facilitates understandings of how Puerto Rican culture has enforced heteronormative spaces as fluid and temporal, thus, visualizing multiple identities and perspectives of queers in individual spaces. These queer spaces and performances become visible through the understandings of such theoretical intersections. I seek to conduct practices that do not exclude queer of color experiences by challenging such queer limitations.

### **Final Thoughts**

The intersection of masculinities and teaching identities is a point of conversation and a factor in gay teacher's personal and professional lives. This chapter provided a necessary theoretical background in order to ground this study and assist in the situation of the location of this study in a bigger context. The literature discussed in this chapter served various purposes; the first, teacher identity understanding was necessary. This discussion also utilized the construction of gay teacher identity as a parallel for teaching identities in Puerto Rico. Next, the examination of danger narratives towards gay teachers and notions of gendered education were examined in order to present an authentic understanding of teaching identities in general. Finally, this chapter explored the notions of masculinity, machismo, and how machismo is understood for LGBTQ+ people in the Puerto Rican context. This study fills the dearth in the literature in regards to gay teachers in Puerto Rico and how their sexual identities intersect with machismo and are enacted in school contexts. The following chapter discusses the methodology and approach to the study conducted in this dissertation. This is a qualitative narrative study that seeks to explain and understand deeper meaning around a specific phenomenon.

## CHAPTER 3

### CREATING THE STUDY:

#### HOW DID I MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

The purpose of this study was to gather, present, and describe the stories of male teachers in Puerto Rico around issues of machismo and sexual identity to provide insight on how those factors connect between their personal and professional lives. As the literature review (Chapter 2) illustrated, more research is needed on masculinity and machismo in Latinx contexts, specifically, Puerto Rico and, more specifically, on how the embodiment of these concepts impacts gay Puerto Rican teachers' experiences. With this in mind, this study responds to this literature gap by investigating how Puerto Rican gay teachers define masculinity and machismo and how such notions influence their pedagogical identities and experiences. Furthermore, since qualitative research focuses on occurring experiences, the use of narratives capturing participants' personal life stories was suitable for this study. This chapter explores the rationale for a qualitative study, research questions, the researcher's epistemology, research design, and narrative inquiry methodology.

#### **Critical Qualitative Rationale**

The research design for this study is situated within a critical qualitative study umbrella (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Critical qualitative research refers to studies that are "informed by critical theory, feminist theory, critical race theory, queer theory, or poststructural/postmodern/postcolonial theory" and it necessarily includes an interrogation of how societal power is at play in the data being observed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 60). A critical study allows an emphasis on discovery and description, on gathering and interpreting narratives and experiences of participants. A qualitative approach allows rich data constituted by participants' experiences to



be explored and understood by others. The emphasis on how individuals interpret their experiences is suitable for this study because it allows me as a researcher to make sense of identity markers that are positioned by society as conflicting with one another, thus supporting the study's purpose.

As Merriam (2009) explains, critical qualitative researchers, “are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p.5). Also, it allows the opportunity for a deep understanding of the participant's experiences and reality. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) assert that qualitative research involves multiple methods of focus and can provide a basis for interpretation within the field on how the world is understood conducted by notions and beliefs — employing a critical approach for this study allowed for a detailed and holistic account of the experiences of gay teachers in Puerto Rico while giving them a voice about the meaning of their experiences. By carrying out a qualitative approach for this study, the researcher was able to present a detailed and holistic account of Puerto Rican gay teacher's experiences (Creswell, 2013). Employing qualitative research allows for the potential of meaningful insight into the experiences of gay teachers.

Studies involving male teachers have mainly focused on identity (Jones, 2003; Murray, 2013; Parr et al., 2008; Sumsion 2002), and masculinities (Brody, 2014; Cushman, 2007; Richardson 2012; Sargent, 2001). The majority of these studies utilized qualitative approaches, such as narrative inquiries, phenomenology, ethnography, and case studies. By implementing qualitative narrative methodologies, researchers had the opportunity to explore men's experiences in the classroom deeply. However, throughout the existent literature, little to no attention has been given to the experiences of gay teachers in Puerto Rico. This qualitative study

intends to address this gap and explore individual stories and experiences of a sample of gay teachers in Puerto Rico in order to uncover how they make sense of and negotiate machismo and sexual identity as a part of the development of their identities as teachers.

This research was conducted utilizing critical narrative inquiry, which allowed for developing an in-depth understanding of the participant's narratives and experiences (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative research provides comprehensive knowledge through listening, interpreting, and retelling participants' accounts in a meaningful manner (Crotty, 2004; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Glesne, 2016; Maxwell, 2013). A qualitative narrative study allows for the flexibility and openness to retell participant's stories in precise ways, which employs gathering empirical evidence using a systematic approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Flyvberg, 2011; Schwandt & Gates, 2018). This method offers the researcher the flexibility and forum to re-tell the participant's stories and experiences while making meaning out of them. Therefore, qualitative narrative research allows the possibility to "stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, P.14). A qualitative research approach insists that reality is not separate from human experience but rather is constructed with social discourse.

### **Narrative Inquiry**

A narrative inquiry methodology informed this study. Narrative inquiry offers useful formats from which to gain an in-depth understanding of the complexities of a participant as they reflect on their experiences (Fontana & Frey, 2008). Schwandt (2007) defines narrative inquiry as, "encompassing the interdisciplinary study of the activities involved in generating and analyzing stories of life experiences (e.g., life histories, narrative interviews, journals, diaries, memoirs, autobiographies, and biographies) and reporting that kind of research" (p.203). Thorne

(2008) adds that narrative inquiry is, "an accommodation, an eclectic but reasoned and mindful integration of theoretical and technical device to the understandings nurses, physicians, teachers, and other practitioners require to accomplish their respective social missions" (p.12). Utilizing a narrative inquiry approach, I collected critical tales from the participants and attempted to understand their unique experiences about the topic at hand (Atkinson, 2010; Bamberg, 2012; Holstein & Gubrium, 2012).

Utilizing a critical narrative inquiry allowed me to capture the emotions of what was described and discussed through narrative storytelling as I re-storied the participant's narratives during the presentation of the analysis of the data (Bruner, 1990; Sparkes, Phoenix, & Smith, 2013). Making a critical narrative inquiry allows me to understand the human experiences and actions of an underrepresented population better. This study's aim to contribute to descriptive research on machismo further justifies the use of a narrative qualitative approach due to the inductive process it entails (Merriam, 2009). Interviews, documents, and observations can be used to understand the phenomenon with increased precision and to develop themes, categories, and hypotheses. Indeed, Solórzano and Yosso (2001) argued the importance of storytelling and counterstories in raising the voices of Latino students. The narratives in this study were written with "thick descriptions" Geertz (1973) in order to convey the participants' life experiences in multidimensional ways.

Narrative inquiry is often used in studies centered on educational experiences (Chase, 2005; Clandinin, Murphy, Huber, & Orr, 2010). Narrative inquiry involves the exploration of three commonplaces: temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin, 2013). Temporality allows narrative inquiries to explore the past, present, and future of places, people, and events under study. Within sociality, narrative inquiries explore both the personal and social conditions of the

participants. Lastly, place explores the boundaries and restrictions of the physical place in which the inquiry takes place. These commonplaces are explored simultaneously, instead of looked at individually (Clandinin, 2013). By utilizing the narrative inquiry model, this study of six gay Puerto Rican teachers' stories is presented through their own experiences and meanings. The narratives in this study engaged with the participants' experiences and allowed me to examine them and bring them to life critically.

### **Research Questions**

This following serves as the study's central question:

1. How, if at all, does masculinity and machismo influence Puerto Rican gay teachers' identities?

The following supplemental questions provide additional guidance:

2. How do gay teachers in Puerto Rico make sense of their identity in terms of ethnicity and sexual identity?
3. What obstacles, if any, do Puerto Rican gay teachers perceive that prevent them from revealing their sexual orientation to their colleagues and students at school?

### **Researcher Epistemology**

This study is grounded in critical constructivism (Kincheloe, 2005; Merriam, 2009). I view the world as socially constructed; however, this construction takes place within systems of power and oppression, which influence the world in which people live. I believe Latino gay men's realities are both socially constructed and born out of the embodiment of dissonant identity markers, including being men (a marker imbued with social power) and being people of color (a marker associated with oppression). There is an absence of research that documents the experiences of Latino gay men and masculinities in education. In light of this, capturing the

reality of Latino gay men's engagement with machismo through narratives was important. How Latino men discuss and disentangle their relationship with masculinity elucidates the particular ways in which machismo, gayness, and education intersect. Also, such a stance honors the fact that Latino men embody more than just their gendered and racial experiences.

As critical theorists argue, power and oppression are found in various categories like socioeconomic status, sexual identity, physical and mental ability in society (Kilgore, 2001; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Depending on the identities held by individual Latino men, the power or oppression they experience might manifest in different ways. For instance, an openly gay Latino man may not experience or interact with masculinity in the same way as a heterosexual working-class Latino man, even though their socialization around the construct may have been similar. Furthermore, the life of one gay Latino man may not be impacted by masculinity in the same way as another gay Latino man. Therefore, critical constructivism acknowledges the complex interplay between social identities and the social construction of masculinities Latino men engage in as they navigate the world.

### **Research Design**

This study focused on six gay Puerto Rican teachers from various towns on the island and guided by one main research question: (1) How, if at all, does masculinity and machismo influence Puerto Rican gay teachers' identities? And two supplemental questions: (2) How do gay teachers in Puerto Rico make sense of their identity in terms of ethnicity and sexual identity? And (3) What obstacles, if any, do Puerto Rican gay teachers perceive that prevent them from revealing their sexual orientation to their colleagues and students at school? Qualitative narrative methodology implies an emphasis on discovery and description, utilizing objectives on exploring, understanding, and interpreting the meaning of experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013;

Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In this research, I was looking at the subjective experiences from the participants; hence, utilizing narratives with the participant's personal life stories as part of this study. The following section includes a discussion of the participants, data collection, and data analysis.

### **Study Participants**

For this study, purposeful sampling and snowball sampling were used. The first strategy, purposeful sampling, was chosen because I was seeking specific information. Purposeful sampling is considered "information-rich" (Patton, 2002) and was selected to find participants with experiences specific to this study. The second strategy, snowball sampling, entailed asking participants who had been interviewed to invite other individuals who meet the criteria to participate in the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). With clearly outlined criteria, rich data about the subject under study was gathered. Criteria limiting the participant pool included the following: a) identify as Puerto Rican; b) identify as a cis-man; c) identify as gay; d) have worked as a K-12 teacher in Puerto Rico.

Participants were recruited through electronic communications. To recruit participants, I reached out to various teachers I knew from working together in schools and from graduate studies who would fit the criteria and to teaching supervisors who could introduce me to potential participants. Recruitment emails (Appendix A) were distributed to the individual teachers and through electronic mailing lists in two teacher preparation programs by two large university systems on the island. Throughout the recruitment process, interested participants had the opportunity to have a phone call with the researcher in order to clarify any questions and/or concerns about the research project before committing to be participants in the study. This form clarifies the criteria needed to be a participant, and it also helps streamline the process of

information about the participants for the study.

The first criteria, identify as Puerto Rican, determines the target population for this study. Then the next two criteria, identify as a gay, cis-man, honors the specific gender socialization experienced by cisgender Latino men. As individuals who have experienced their gender socialization as Latino males since birth, cisgender gay Latino men may have experienced and navigated queerness, masculinity, and machismo differently than heterosexual men, women, or trans individuals. This nuanced experience was critical in exploring how gender socialization influenced their educational trajectory. Also, the criteria for working as a teacher in Puerto Rico was selected due to the focus on this specific population of gay men. The application of these criteria to the sampled pool yielded 6 participants.

Before the first face-to-face contact, each participant received a participant consent form for review. The form was distributed via a secured Google form. It provided information about the study and clearly explained the participation criteria. Moreover, through this process, Latino men had the opportunity to not only disclose their social identities (i.e., ethnicity, language, culture, sexual identity, and others) but also reflect on them. There was also space provided on the form for participants to share other identities about which the form had not inquired. Thus, participants had more agency around self-identification and honoring their whole selves. The social identities shared on the online form were revisited during the interview process to both recognize all of their identities and support deeper reflection on how they intersected with the study.

The participants in the study resided throughout different geographical locations in Puerto Rico. One participant, Theo, resides in the west part of the island; Juno, lives in the southwestern part; Dallas and Albert live in the south part of the island; while Adai and Nicholas

live in the northern metropolitan area of Puerto Rico. Also, all of the participants identify as gay, however, none of them are explicitly out in their schools or work places. All of the discussions and conversations in this study come from the experiences of the participants as closeted gay educators, at least closeted in school contexts.

### **Data Collection**

Twelve semi-structured individual interviews (two with each participant) and one focus group interview were conducted. Table 1 highlights participants' demographic information, showcasing their representation of a wide array of experiences and identities. Each of the six participants currently works in Puerto Rican schools, three work in private institutions, three work in the public-school system, and all participants teach a variety of grades within the K-12 system. Half of the participants had ten or more years of experience at the time of the interview, while the other half had fewer. The majority of the participants identify as agnostic; Nicholas identifies as Catholic, and Theo did not disclose a religious affiliation. All of the participants identified as middle class when asked about their social-economic status, four of them identified as bilingual (English and Spanish), and Albert and Adai identified as trilingual (English, Spanish, and Portuguese and Italian, respectively). All of the participants also identified as able-bodied. Table 1 presents the participants' demographic information.



Table 1. Demographic Information of Study Participants

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Institution Type</b>	<b>Years Teaching</b>	<b>Subject Taught</b>	<b>Social Identities</b>
Nicholas	31	Private, non-denominational, Bilingual Institution	7	ESL, Writing (High School)	Puerto Rican, Gay, middle class, bilingual, able-bodied, Catholic
Juno	46	Private, religiously affiliated, Bilingual Institution	17	History, Political Science (High School)	Puerto Rican, Gay, middle-class, bilingual, able-bodied, agnostic
Adai	33	Public, non-denominational, Spanish oriented Institution	10	Mathematics (Elementary)	Puerto Rican, Gay, middle class, bilingual, working-class, able-bodied, trilingual (Spanish, English & Italian), Christian
Dallas	32	Public, non-denominational, Bilingual Institution	10	ESL, Literature, Public Speaking (High School)	Puerto Rican, Gay, middle class, bilingual, able-bodied, agnostic
Theo	29	Public, non-denominational, Spanish oriented institution	5	Math, Science, History, Spanish (Elementary)	Puerto Rican, Gay, middle class, bilingual
Albert	27	Private, religiously affiliated, Bilingual Institution	6	Spanish, Religion (High School)	Puerto Rican, gay, middle-class, trilingual (Spanish, English, Portuguese), agnostic

The study's data was collected via in-depth interviews and a focus group interview. Since gayness, masculinity, and machismo are both collective *and* individual experiences, interviews allowed individuals to both express and explore their engagement with those mentioned above. Furthermore, due to the sensitive nature of the topic under study, one-on-one interviews, as well as the focus group interview between the researcher and participants, allowed for more vulnerable and open conversations about the issue. This method also allowed participants to share their personal experiences and insights on the phenomenon under study.

**Interview Methods.** Individual in-depth interviews are a fundamental tool in narrative inquiry and were selected as the primary method for data collection in this study. In-depth interviews have the potential to capture a participant's perspective of an experience (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). One of the main advantages of doing interviews is how useful for discovery and gaining insight into the subject they are, as well as the capability to entirely focus on, analyze and describe a research topic (Collis & Hussey, 2003; Shuy, 2002). Interviewing allowed participants to recount narratives through which a sense of their experiences was shared. Seidman (2013) addressed this by stating, "...interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other peoples and the meaning they make of that experience" (p.8).

For this study, Seidman's (2013) structure for in-depth, phenomenological interviewing was utilized. Such a method allowed for the discussion of temporal, personal understandings, lived experiences, and the context in which such experiences occur. Seidman (2013) established a model of in-depth interviews, which include a) interviews focused on life history, b) details of the participant's experiences, and c) reflecting on the meaning of those experiences. The first interview focused on the participant's life up until that present time as it pertains to the topic and

questions at hand and the experience occurring in the present. The second and final interview focused on how they reflect on the meaning of such experiences as well as the emotional and intellectual connection between their life and their work (Seidman, 2013).

**Life history & identity interview.** The focus of the first interview was on the personal and professional experiences of the participants. Life history & identity interviews helped build a relationship with the participants and help with the following interviews. The interviews took place at the researcher's house in Puerto Rico. This place was selected for its privacy, and all the participants agreed to conduct the interviews in that location. These interviews lasted an average of ninety minutes.

**Masculinity/Machismo interview.** The second interview focused on the participant's ideas of masculinity/machismo, their perceptions of such notion, and how the Puerto Rican context influences their views of masculinity/machismo. Such interviews are an effective way to explore the sources of tension and change in how masculinities are constructed (Wedgwood, 2005). These interviews lasted an average of ninety minutes.

### **Individual Interview Protocol**

The individual interview protocol (Appendix C) was created to explore the participants' experiences as it relates to masculinity, machismo, and gayness as Puerto Rican teachers. Also, participants were invited to speak in English, Spanish, or a blending of the two. They were also reminded of their responses to the demographic composition of the initial questionnaire and encouraged to consider how their various social identities manifested in the answers during the interview. The remainder was an intentional effort to encourage participants to interrogate the relationship between their different social identities and machismo. Then the protocol began with

a first question, which asked the participants to discuss why they wanted to participate in the study to help build rapport between the researcher and the participant (Merriam, 2009).

Once the participants shared their reasons for participating in the study, they were asked questions prompting them to share examples of life experiences that related in some way to the constructs of masculinity and machismo. Some of the questions were open-ended to help "yield descriptive data, even stories about the phenomenon" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 121). These narratives helped capture both the gender socialization process and experiences Puerto Rican gay men had in the past and their manifestations in the present. As semi-structured interviews, the protocol was organized around topics with some specific and open-ended questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This structure facilitated a fluid and natural conversation with the participants and ensured the critical components of the study were addressed.

### **Focus Group Interview & Protocol**

Focus groups allow for a group to have conversations focused on specific themes. Focus groups have various uses: (a) to obtain a range of feelings, opinions, and ideas, (b) to understand different perspectives, (c) to uncover and provide some understanding into specific factors that influence opinions, and (d) to pursue ideas that emerge from a group (Mertens, 2010). By engaging in a focus group, it is assumed that a nonjudgmental environment with different perspectives and a range of ideas will reveal a better understanding of specific issues (Patton, 2002). The focus group allowed for the participant's ideas to be shared, explored, countered, and understood by others. Also, it allowed all the participants to share experiences on the same questions asked.

The focus group was done with three objectives in mind. First, it was utilized to supplement the information obtained during the individual interviews. Second, to provide

additional data to ensure trustworthiness and credibility to the dataset as a whole by way of opportunity for triangulation. Lastly, to compare and contrast the participant's experiences with each other. The participants were informed about the focus group at the beginning of the study in order to select a date and time that worked for everyone. The predetermined allotted time for the focus group was two hours; however, it ended up lasting three hours and twenty-three minutes as the participants kept engaging in conversations. All six of the participants participated in the focus group, with one leaving early because of prior commitments. As with the individual interviews, participants were informed that the focus groups would be audio recorded. During the focus group, participants would engage in conversation after a question was asked, and all personal experiences shared were of the participant's own volition. The questions utilized and asked in the focus group emerged from the one on one interviews and were intended to elicit a range of opinions around specific issues (Appendix D).

Although focus groups are of great use, they also are with their disadvantages. The first disadvantage that may occur in a focus group is that of participant disclosure. Full and mutual disclosure may make some participants uncomfortable, and they may withhold full honesty during the focus group. This disclosure was discovered when some participants, when engaging with a researcher questions or a supplemental question from other participants chose not to answer or would not answer the way they did while on a one on one interview. Another disadvantage of a focus group is that one or more participants can dominate the conversation (Patton, 2002); therefore, the facilitator needs to encourage contribution from all of the participants. Luckily, the participants were respectful of each other's experiences, opinions, and all the participants contributed equally to the discussion.

## **Procedure**

At the beginning of each interview, a paper copy of the participant consent form (Appendix B) was reviewed and completed by study participants before the interviews began. The consent form introduced the study's purpose and procedures and explained how confidentiality would be maintained. To ensure participants' privacy, all were asked to select a pseudonym (one name only). Each one-on-one, semi-structured interview lasted between 60-90 minutes. Each interview was transcribed verbatim by me.

Once the transcriptions were finished, they were shared with participants for accuracy as a form of member check (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After going over the raw transcriptions, I sent the participants stated in agreement with what they read in the transcribed interviews. For example, Theo responded, "Everything seems good from what I remember. I have no issues with I went over in what you sent." Also, Dallas said, "I went over the documents you sent, and I feel they are fine. Everything here is what I said." All transcriptions were completed in the original language spoken during the interview, which means there is a combination of data in both English and Spanish. The researcher, being bilingual, ensures accurate translations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). To ensure the participants' privacy and confidentiality, all documents were stored on a password-protected computer or a password protected online platform (i.e., Box).

## **Data Analysis**

The data analysis process took place alongside the data collection since these two processes can inform each other (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Hunches, insights, and tentative hypotheses were continually emerging and informed the data collection process, which influenced the analysis. Also, the simultaneous data collection and analysis of the data helped the researcher avoid feeling overwhelmed or unfocused by the volume of data collected (Merriam &

Tisdell, 2015). Narrative analysis was a useful method for exploring notions embedded in the participant's stories and the way such stories are created. By approaching the data with narrative analysis, I was able to understand how the participants interpreted their lived experiences.

The data gathered during the one on one interviews and the focus group interview were analyzed employing thematic and narrative analysis. Thematic analysis consists of six steps: (1) familiarizing with the text, (2) generating codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The first round of coding occurred after each interview was transcribed. Open coding was employed to allow the possibility of new insights and connections in the phenomenon under study. Upon completion of the initial open coding process of the transcript, axial coding ensued (Urquhart, 2007). The coding of the data included transcripts from both the individual and focus group interviews. After the initial creation of codes and assignments to the data, emergent themed patterns were identified by me. Table 2 presents the codes that were assigned to the data as I transcribed and read them. The table also includes the number of times the codes were assigned as well as a brief description of each code.

Table 2. List and Description of Assigned Codes

	<b>Code</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Number of times assigned</b>
1	Machismo	Mentions of masculinity issues in the Latino context	70
2	Teachers	Mentions about experiences and interactions about being a teacher	64
3	School	Mentions about different educational experiences within school settings	63
4	Identity	References of understandings of identity to race, sexuality, masculinities, and teaching	59
5	Puerto Rican pride	References to the importance of what it means to be Puerto Rican	55
6	Privilege	Mentions of how being a man afford privilege in different settings	49
7	Agency	Mentions of the control they have over their sexuality and actions	43
8	Role Model	References to the expectations of being a male role model in Puerto Rico and schools	40
9	Religion	References to religious notions and how they interacted with their experiences	29
10	Public v. Private Life	Mentions of navigating their identities while in private and public settings	27
11	Family	Mentions of interactions with family members	21



All subsequent transcripts went through the same coding process, and ultimately, themes and subthemes emerged from the data analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Table 3 presents the theme and sub-themes in which the data was arranged as well as a brief description of what each theme entails. They were separated into the following categories: (1) detrimental machismo, (2) monitoring gender, and (3) shifting identities in schools. Throughout the data analysis process, quotes were lifted from transcripts as evidence for the evolving themes and subthemes in the study.

Table 3. Identified Themes and Sub-themes

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Description of Theme</b>
<b>Detrimental Machismo</b>	-Boricua Pride	Participants discussed the negative aspects of machismo, how it limited them, and interacted with their ability to navigate their sexual identity. They expressed how they came to understand themselves as men in Latino contexts.
<b>Monitoring Gender</b>	-Gender Monitoring -Sanctioning -Privilege	Participants discussed their interaction with strict gender roles in Puerto Rico. They expressed how gender interactions occurred directly or indirectly and how men are expected to enact gender in specific ways. They also mentioned how gender became part of their understandings and interaction with ideas of machismo and their teaching identities.
<b>Shifting Identities in Schools</b>	-Male Performance -Stereotypes & Danger Narratives -Personal v. Public Identity	Participants talked about their experiences navigating machismo and sexual identities in educational spaces. Pedagogical content and personal identities intersect and become components in their school experiences.

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness refers to the credibility of a study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In qualitative research, compared to quantitative research, different standards of rigor are needed. To build trustworthiness into my study, I followed the established markers of credibility, dependability, and transferability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). To account for this, I asked participants to take part in two rounds of member checks. The first member check was after the transcription process was finished. I shared the raw transcriptions with my participants and asked if they had questions on anything I misinterpreted in the transcription or anything they would like to expand upon.

The second round of member checks took place after the participant's analysis and discussion of the data was completed. I asked participants to respond to the analysis and discussion of their experiences (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Golafshani, 2003). The participants' responded in agreement to the contents of the transcription, as well as pointing out that the analysis came across as a sincere. For example, Nicholas expressed his gratitude for the sections of interviews I chose and wrote, "I wanted to say that what you wrote is pretty cool. I would never have thought of it the way you wrote it. Thanks for not changing what I meant." Also, Adai stated, "It's weird seeing some of my experiences for someone to read, but I think you put it nicely. Gracias mil por hacerme parte de tu Proyecto."

Another way in which trustworthiness was assessed was to look for consistencies between the different interviews. By using the three-part interview structure, participants' interviews were placed in context, and through that, consistency was established (Seidman, 2013). To further add to the trustworthiness, consistencies across the different participants' interviews were identified because they did share some similar experiences. I also looked at

similarities and discrepancies within individual participants' interviews. Trustworthiness was also folded into the data through the conduct of three interviews with each participant (Seidman, 2013). This set of interviews allows for the discussion of the participant's past and present experiences as well as a profound reflection on those experiences. The in-depth interviews allowed me to get thick and rich descriptions of the participants' experiences of being a gay teacher in Puerto Rico. In some cases, situations were discussed more than once, allowing for further validation of their stories and experiences.

### **Final Thoughts**

A qualitative narrative approach was utilized to present the experiences of gay teachers in Puerto Rico. The intent of this study was not to generalize narrative experiences but to provide a deeper understanding of how gay teachers in Puerto Rico negotiate identity and machismo. Narrative inquiry was chosen due to its "human-centered" approach (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p.103) and the effectiveness of producing genuine life experiences. Purposeful and snowball sampling was utilized to solicit participants along with email recruitment through list servers from two big higher education institutions on the island.

After meeting the requirements to participate in this study, six gay Puerto Rican men were purposely selected. Two data collection methods were utilized, including individual interviews and a focus group interview. A series of three interviews were completed with the participants. These interviews discussed their life history, notions of their identity, and their ideas and interactions with masculinity and machismo on their teaching practices. This chapter covered the following components: research questions, methodology, epistemology, research methods, data collection, data analysis, and trustworthiness. With each of these components in

place, a rigorous critical qualitative study was developed which addressed some of the gaps in the literature on Latino gay teachers.

## CHAPTER 4

### SIT DOWN AND LISTEN, LET ME TELL YOU A STORY

The purpose of this study was to explore Puerto Rican gay male teachers' teaching identities in conjunction with their notions of masculinity. The themes of this study emerged based on my guiding research questions: a) How, if at all, does masculinity and machismo influence Puerto Rican gay teachers' identity? b) How do gay teachers in Puerto Rico make sense of their identity in terms of ethnicity and sexual identity? c) What obstacles, if any, do Puerto Rican gay teachers perceive that prevent them from revealing their sexual orientation to their colleagues and students at school?

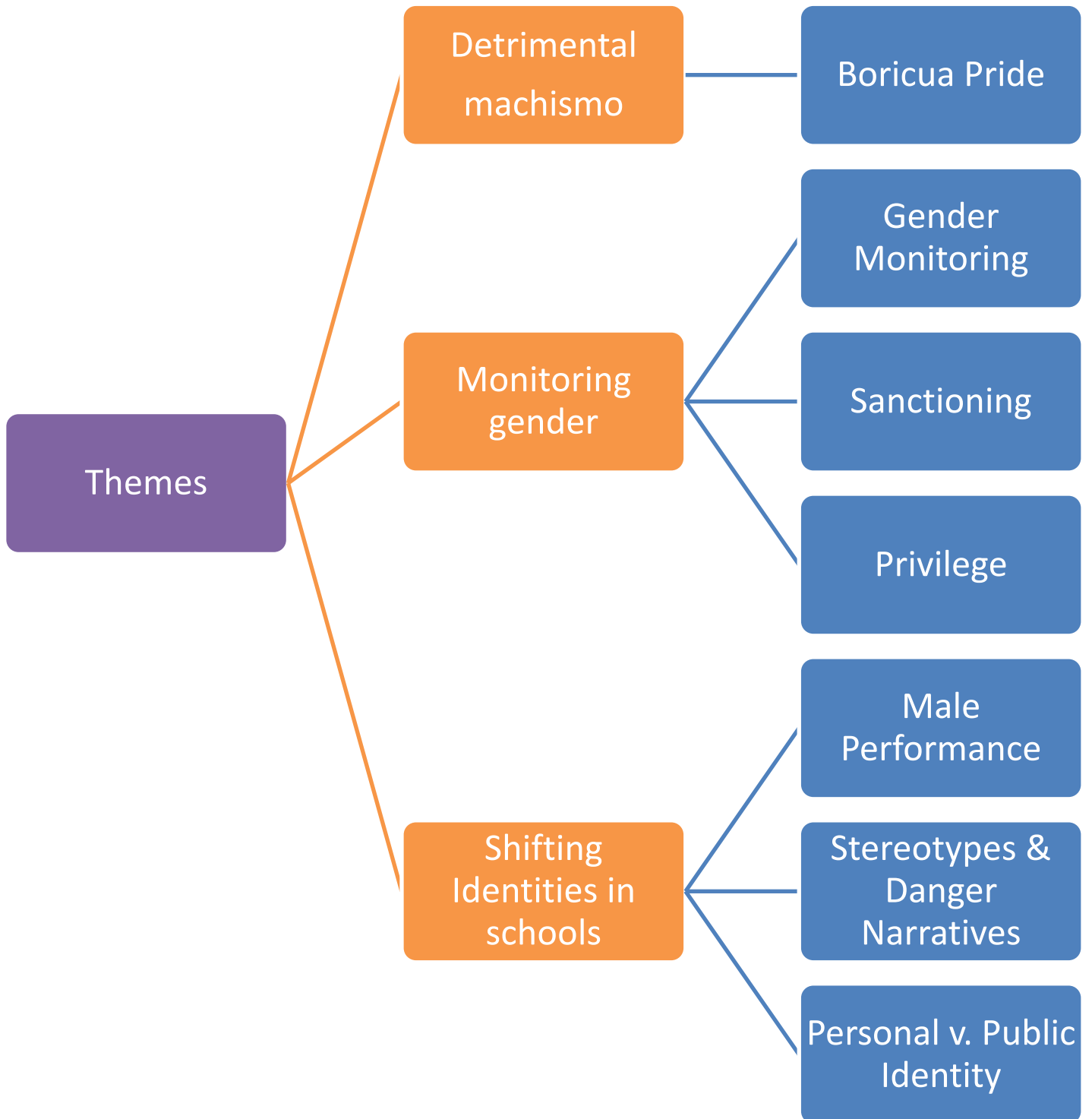
It was essential to present the participant's stories in a way that did justice to the interviews conducted. Chapter four seeks to offer readers a way to experience the participant's voices and to get close to them. Throughout the chapter, the themes presented are explored in a way that compares and contrasts the experiences of all six participants. The comparison of these experiences developed three main themes that emerged from the data collected through the interviews conducted by the researcher. At times the participant's experiences overlapped as their teaching identities were influenced by machismo and their gay identity.

The three main themes that emerged from the participants' interviews were those of detrimental machismo, monitoring gender, benefits of being a man, and shifting of identities in schools. Within the theme of detrimental machismo, ideas of Puerto Rican pride and machismo are discussed. When talking about monitoring gender, participants talk about expected gender roles, sanctioning done by others, and sanctioning of self. In presentation of the third theme, the benefits of being a man, I highlight participant's talk about the affordances given to them as privilege and agency in Latino spaces. The fourth theme, shifting identities in schools, explore

ideas of how male teachers should perform, how others perceive gay male teachers, danger narratives & stereotypes, and how to manage school versus private identity.

Presentation of each theme focuses on participants' narratives to help center their own lived experiences. Additionally, I include a narrative vignette at the beginning of each theme to highlight the complexity of masculinity in the lives of the gay Puerto Rican teachers who participated in this study. The vignettes presented at the beginning of each theme came from the participants. They were asked to do a small written piece about experiences they have had throughout their lives. This was another opportunity for the voices of the participants to shine through in the data presentation. The vignettes illustrate the importance of each theme and the experiences shared by participants during the process of this study. The following graph (Figure 1) shows the organization of the themes and sub-themes.

Figure 1. Themes and Sub-themes Overview





### Theme One: Detrimental Machismo

*“Juno, remember the faculty meeting is at 1:30 pm in the conference room, which means we’ll nap till we can leave at 3 pm,” joked Ana. “I want to sit in the back tables so we can just shop on Amazon while the principal is speaking nonsense like he always does” Ana laughed at Juno’s response and nodded in agreement with that statement. In the afternoon Ana and Juno made their way to the conference room where the meeting was about to be held. As they walked into the conference room, Juno realizes that his colleague Mr. S. was already there in the table he wanted to sit in.*

*They walk towards the table, and Ana starts having a conversation and joking with Mr. S. before the meeting starts. Juno always avoided Mr. S. as much as possible. Mr. S. was openly gay and, in Juno’s mind, too “obviously gay”; the complete opposite of Juno as he was not out to anyone in his job. He was still struggling with the idea of coming out, especially in a school setting. He was afraid of what could become of his career or what rumors would start flying through the school if people knew he was gay.*

*Juno acknowledges Mr. S. with a face gesture but decides to sit in the very place he did not want to, the front tables in the conference room. During the meeting, he glanced over to Ana and Mr. S. a few times, and he had the uncomfortable feeling that they were speaking about him. He could not confirm if they were, but in his head, his fears of being outed made him believe that. He knew that other teachers, students, and parents would start talking about his sexuality and may not respect him if they knew he was gay. He was a prominent leader in the school community, beloved by his students, and was afraid to lose what he had worked for. He felt guilty over the way he reacted every time he was near Mr. S., especially since they had crossed paths in gay bars before, but he needed to protect himself from any rumors. In his mind, having*

*interactions with Mr. S. would prompt rumors of him also being gay, a common occurrence in Puerto Rico. He ultimately realized he could not afford to feel bad for acting the way he did, there was no time for him to be emotional about that, he was still a man, and he needed to act like one, especially in his job. -Juno*

This vignette exemplifies theme one, detrimental machismo, engaging the overarching research question, “how, if at all, do masculinity and machismo influence Puerto Rican gay teachers’ identity?” Participants discussed the negative aspects of machismo and how it limited and complexified how such aspects, to their understanding, have intersected with the way they enact their teaching identities.

#### **Boricua Pride: “What does it mean to be a man and Boricua?” (Adai)**

In the following experiences, the participants expressed how, for them, the importance of being proud in their Puerto Rican identity becomes a factor in their identities. This illustrates the importance of how being prideful and self-reliant as a Puerto Rican can be seen across the table with the six participants. If Puerto Rican men are incapable of being independent and feeling pride in their nationality, then they may be considered fragile and powerless (Ramírez, 1999). Seeking help is not encouraged for men on the island because it displays a sense of weakness. Nicholas’ comment supports this notion:

Well, ...for me, a significant thing about being a man and a man from Puerto Rico is the independence that I have. I mean, I am the guy, so I don't need anyone else to do stuff. It doesn't matter if you're gay or straight, you can do everything by yourself. You don't need someone to take care of you, encourage you, soy Boricua y puedo hacer lo que me de la gana, como me de la gana. That's one of the essential things about being Puerto Rican, my pride, mi orgullo.

Nicholas’ expresses pride and being Puerto Rican, an idea that resonated with and was mentioned by other participants. The notion of autonomy and self-determination was evident among all the participants. For example, Juno recalled a moment in his job in which he attempted

to assert autonomy, but it did not go as planned.

Uno de esos días en que varios maestros faltan a final del semestre por cualquier razón y estamos todos hasta el cuello de trabajo por que hay que preparar notas, records, etc. Siendo la persona que soy yo vengo y digo, "Yo puedo hacer varios de los reportes de algunos de los compañeros que no están ya que toda la información esta online". Una de las maestras me pregunta si necesito ayuda y yo vengo y le digo, "Nah, relax, yo puedo con todo eso, sabes como somos los Boricuas, todo o nada". Llega el momento durante el día que no puedo con tanto trabajo y tuve que pedir ayuda con todos los reportes. Me sentí bien porquería porque no puede hacer todo el trabajo que había dado mi palabra que podía hacer durante ese día. No me gusta decir que puedo hacer algo y después no lo puedo lograr. ¿Que pensará la gente de mi?

In his experience, Juno recalled a moment in his job in which he attempted to assert autonomy, but it did not go as planned. He recalls being at the end of term and feeling overwhelmed with the amount of work he was doing for his block, yet when approached by a colleague that offered help, he turned her down. Juno felt he could do all of that work himself because that is what men do. Also, Adai reflected on the fact that he was single, and many of his friends were trying to get him to date. However, Adai felt that he was losing his independence and his Puerto Rican macho status.

A couple of months ago, I had an outburst with some of my friends because of the whole dating thing. I was tired of them just trying to fix me up with guys or just pushing me to go out on dates with people. It made me feel weird, in a sense, less of a man, just because I was not doing things on my own free will. Like, listen, I'm the man here I know what to do. I was like, "You guys; this needs to stop. I do not need any of you to tell me what to do or who to date or whom to sleep with, etc. So, let's stop being so pushy." I knew they meant well, and they had no bad intentions behind their pushiness, but I felt they were taking away my independence, and, being honest, I felt less of a man every time they did it. I was like no more.

Adai highlights the desire he has to have unrestrained control over whom he dates and what he does in that area of his life. Adai reflects on the desire to find a partner and navigating dating in his terms. After he shared this, I asked Nicholas asked him how that experience challenged or reinforced machismo, especially in Puerto Rico. He responded, "I don't know if it did. I do think it bolstered the idea of being independent and probably any intimidation that

existed towards my masculinity." Adai seemed nervous and scared about losing his independence and what that could mean to his masculinity, even though he knew his friends had the best of intentions. Theo insinuated having similar emotions of nervousness and fear that seemed to derive from their evasion of being perceived as not manly, not Boricua (see definition list, p. 17), or just weak. As a man, he wanted to be autonomous and self-reliant, so he lashed out at his friends in order to defend his masculinity. It could be understood that the participants, especially Adai, feels strongly about being independent and were afraid that his masculinity, as well as the choice and power that come with being a man, was being taken away. These thoughts come from the fear of not being Puerto Rican enough. This shows the struggle Adai has with seeking or accepting help from others because being self-reliant and independent is an inherent trait of Puerto Rican culture.

Dallas, for example, expressed how he was taught as a Puerto Rican man to avoid being considered weak. "Ever since I can remember, I was told not to be weak, not to cry, tú eres un macho Boricua, etc. You have to be strong and tough every day no matter what, even if it means being a jerk." Dallas strongly expressed how, throughout his upbringing, he was taught that his masculinity would be threatened by acts that are not seen as manly. This fear, of Puerto Rican masculinity being threatened, was alluded to by other participants. Certainly, Juno's narrative exemplifies this evasion:

Yo me crié en una familia bien estricta, bien religiosa y bien machista, aunque creo que esa es la realidad para la mayoría de las personas en Puerto Rico. Mi papa siempre me decía que pedir ayuda, especialmente si eres hombre, significa que eres débil. Me decía, "Un hombre no necesita ayuda... puede hacer todo solo." Al criarme en ese ciclo y escuchar eso constantemente me lo creo. No soy la persona de pedir ayuda al menos que verdaderamente lo necesite. Tengo que estar hasta el cuello con cosas para pedir ayuda. Hasta los momentos que verdaderamente la necesito me niego hasta que no pueda mas.

Juno talks about the cycle of hearing over and over how men should act and behave. He specifically talks about how he was told not to ask for help because, since he is a man, he should figure out everything by himself. This experience depicts Juno's struggle with seeking help from others. To be a man in Puerto Rico is to be strong, self-reliant, and independent, yet there are instances in which one needs support from others. Nonetheless, to rely on other people, especially if you are a man, is to show weakness. Such resistance to being weak could be seen in the participant's narratives explaining self-reliance and independence. Many of the participants conformed to the ideas of being self-reliant, strong, and independent in order to evade being viewed as weak by others.

The participants talked about the relationship they have had with machismo throughout their lives. They are aware of how machismo becomes a point of contention to their identities and how they are not able to act in ways they want to because of the expected heteronormative and masculine ideologies that come with being a Latino man. Participants engage in conversations around what is expected of them as Latino men as well as the ways they operate or attempt to work outside the constrictions of machismo. For example, Nicholas points out how his behaviors do not usually fall into what is expected of Latino men when it comes to machismo.

So, being a man entails many things. I always found myself to go against what I was being told by my dad, uncles, or other men around me. I always wanted to help around the house, do dishes, do, what my dad used to call, girly stuff, and I did them. It cost me many screams and spanking on behalf of my dad, but I went through it anyway. It just always felt idiotic that I could not help my mom do dishes or cook simply because I was a boy. It's so ridiculous.

Nicholas reflects on his interactions with men around him and how they engaged in teaching him how to behave like a man. He mentions how punishment was part of his upbringing when he did not adhere to what was expected behavior from him. Consequently, these early interactions with machismo lead Nicholas's actions on how to behave and what to do in any context. Likewise,

Juno stated on how his behavior went against things he was taught in relation to male actions in Puerto Rico. His choice of profession was a deviation from what his father and other family members expected from him. For example, Juno notes:

En mi familia siempre me dijeron cuan importante es tener una educación. Pues, que yo hice, fui a la Universidad y terminé un bachillerato y maestría. Ahora, el problema fue en lo que decidí estudiar. Obviamente soy maestro, pero cuando decidí estudiar educación mi mai y pai se tiraron las peleas mas grandes y lo mas que me acuerdo que me dijeron es que ser maestro no es de hombres. Educar es pa las mujeres, es un trabajo para cuidar y 'babysit' a los niños y eso no es de machos. Y de hecho durante casi todos mis anos de bachillerato siempre me decían que por que no me cambiaba para ciencias u otra cosa que me ayudaría a ser doctor o abogado.

Juno reflects on his decision to become a teacher. When he was going into college, he was told by people around him, especially his parents, that education is for girls, and he should strive to become a doctor or lawyer. For Juno, making decisions about his professional career that went against what his parents believed to be the correct path to take, especially within the confined thoughts of being a Latino man, was challenging their views on what men should do when it came to professions. This is a way in which Juno is disrupting the ideals of masculinity being enacted on him by his parents.

Adai also pointed out how he strayed away from machismo ideals. As a teacher of teenagers, he shared how he liked to talk to his students about what it meant to be a good man.

Teenagers continuously surround me, and I am known for having a good relationship with my students. Another thing I'm known for is being a softy and a crier. I cry at anything in the schools, and that opens the door to have conversations with students, especially the boys, on how it is perfectly acceptable to be in touch with your feelings, even sadness. Teenagers can be cruel, and I have seen my share of situations with the kids, but by me taking the reins and having those talks, I hopefully give them a different perspective to see things. It's up to them if they choose to go about it, but at least I am aware that I am doing something else than just teaching them a textbook.

Adai demonstrates a different type of approach to being a Latino man. It is not customary to engage in conversations around emotional topics, especially coming from a male teacher. By

engaging in conversations about being in touch with your emotions, Adai is exhibiting masculinities that do not necessarily embody negative traits and allow him to be comfortable with his emotions, something that is generally seen as girly and not manly. By engaging in conversations with students around ideas of machismo and how showing emotion should not be seen as a negative aspect, especially in men, Adai demonstrates another way in which he has created an antithesis to the established notions of machismo. By being aware of how imbedded machismo is in Puerto Rican culture, Adai can push away and frame his navigation through such notions. This allows him to make sense of his relationship with machismo and the way he presents himself, especially in the classroom.

The notions of detrimental machismo were prominent in the participant's lives. They all shared stories that illustrated the limitations placed on them as Latino men when it came to the enactment of their own masculinity. The effects of detrimental machismo can be felt in the lives of Latino men ways such as the restriction of their emotions, their dependability on others, and how the view reliance in their relationships. These effects are also harmful because if any deviance from expected machismo was detected, they were made to feel less of a man. The focus on machismo and its detrimental effects were due to the socialization Puerto Rican men experienced.

### **Theme Two: Monitoring Gender**

*Adai is happy as he gets the one thing he had wanted for a long time. When his mom told him that he would be able to take theater and dance classes at an art school close to his house, he was the happiest he had been in a while. The lead up to this event had been a very long road as his father did everything possible to discourage him from taking those classes, and he remembered all the fights that his mom and dad had because of him acting and dancing.*

*One early evening after arriving home from dance class, Juno was still in his dance clothes, which consisted of white top and black tights. While in the living room, his father says, "Mira pa'ya' si ahora lo que tengo es una nena...y que leggings negros...horita sales maricón y cuando lo seas la culpa la tiene tu madre." When hearing this, Adai's heart broke as his father had just called him a faggot. His mother overheard what his father said, and a huge fight ensued between them. Adai was told to head to his room, shower, change clothes, and go to bed.*

*After getting ready for bed, Adai starts thinking about what he will do next, "Yo estaba a lagrima pura, mi propio padre me llamo maricón y me dije que la culpa la tendría mami. Yo, solo quería actuar y bailar porque me gustaba no por alguna otra razón. En ese momento con lágrimas en mis ojos cogí toda mi ropa de baile y mis zapatillas las metí en un bulto y se las llevé a mami." At this moment, Adai stops as it is clear that remembering this story hurts him; he says how his mom questions him, "Pero, porque quieres quitarte de baile si es algo que te gusta?" and Adai responds, "Porque papi me dijo que soy maricón. Yo no soy pato. Yo solo quería bailar y papi no esta feliz. Yo quiero que tu y papi dejen de pelear y si tengo que dejarlo lo hare." There was nothing that could be said to change Juno's decision. It was at this moment that Juno decided never to go back to dance class.*

*After that, Adai goes to his room, cries into the pillow and says to himself, "Yo no soy pato y nunca lo seré. No voy a dejar que nadie me vuelva a decir eso nunca mas. Seré el nene bueno que papi quiere que sea." He assured himself that he would, from that moment on, that he will be the man he was expected to be — no more dance for him. I was no girl! -Adai*

This vignette embodies the second emerging theme, monitoring gender, which was prevalent in the participant's experiences. This theme addresses the research question, "how do gay teachers in Puerto Rico make sense of their gendered identity in terms of ethnicity,



educational status, and sexual identity?" Participants directly stated that they are expected to subscribe to stern gender roles. Their interaction with these gender roles and experiences sometimes happened explicitly, and other times, it was hinted at. The way gender roles are expected to be enacted by Latino men led to the participant's sanctioned experiences with machismo. Latino men are expected to act within the confines of the established gendered parameters set forth by social expectations in Puerto Rico. As participants attempted to comply with notions of machismo, their gendered experiences with such aspects limited their ability to intersect their personal and teaching identities.

**Gender Monitoring: "It's the old cliché. Blue is boys and pink is for girls" (Theo)**

One of the sub-themes the participants pointed out was the strict gender roles in which Puerto Rican men have to adhere to. The participants discussed how they were taught to behave within the parameters of how a man should behave and not stray away into roles perceived to be for women. They all shared how specific moments in their lives informed what was acceptable for a Puerto Rican man to do and steers them away from Latino masculine ideals. For example, Albert shared, "All my life, I was told that, since because I am a man, I am supposed to behave a specific way." Moreover, he added:

There was an obvious distinction on what I had to do in comparison to what my sisters had to do. I always heard from mom and dad that I was meant to be the man of the house, get a good and provide for my future family. However, this was not strictly said to my sisters.

These instances with his parents instructed what was expected of him as a Latino man. Similarly, Adai commented on the way his dad would police and enact strict gender notions.

When I was a teenager, much emphasis was put on the fact that I had to act and look a specific way. I remember the way I looked at being a big part of that. My dad would always be like, "No piercings, no tips [hair color], no weird colors or clothes" because if you present yourself in a way that does not fit a "male" pattern, then you must be a

woman or gay. I remember this was common in my friends as well. Of course, we became rebels and got piercings or other stuff. I mean it was the 90's we had to be cool.

Strict and clear expectations were imposed on both of these participants at an early age to engage in strict parameters that separated the way women and men should behave. These expected behaviors became common expectations of heteronormativity in their gendered expectations. Comparably, Theo commented on how he was instructed on gender roles from a teacher, who was female.

When in school, I was a rocker boy, not emo or a Hot Topic poster boy like the 2000's kids but a real rocker. I would listen to Ozzy, Rob Zombie, and others. Anyway, I used to paint my nails with black nail polish, and between kids, it was not a big thing other than you were a rocker. However, I remember a teacher ask me, "Why do you paint your nails?" "You know nail polish is for girls?", "People might think your different," and after saying that, she bent her hand in a girly way and smirked while doing it. I was in such a shock because she did it in front of other students and it came off as mocking me for having my nails with black nail polish. I hated her after that moment, and I still do.

Clear expectations are set upon young men in order to fall into strict categories of how a Latino man should look or act. Heteronormative gendered expectations are enacted by other people and mirrored in young men and women.

Participants shared experiences in which they noticed a sharp divide between men and women as they learned about gender roles. For example, Dallas shared:

It sounds very cliché, but it's true that in many social settings, we saw a divide between men and women. The men would gather and talk about work, sports, beer, or other while you would see the women, usually gathered inside the house in the kitchen or living room, talking about kids, family, church, or food. Also, you would see how the kids are divided into boys and girls, and everybody has to stay within their group and not stray away from that group.

Adai also noted,

I never learned how to iron until I was about to go to college, and I noticed that my dad either did not know or did not want to do it. Every time I needed a shirt ironed, I would ask him, and he would send me over to my mother or sister so they could do it. Moreover, this was not the only instance that this happened. It was on the most random and regular house stuff that he would send me over to them. I also remember once when I

came over from college to do laundry and spend time at home; he asks me, "How is the dating going? You need to find yourself a woman soon so she can take care of all of these things." I still had not come out as gay at this point, of course.

Both participants show how the reinforcement of heteronormative notions is mirrored on to them as Latino men. Thus, reinforcing heteronormative expectations around relationships, which leads to limiting what they can do as gay men. These expectations fortify ideas of what is expected of men and women within Latino contexts. Through these narratives, participants experience the reinforcement of strict gender roles in the Puerto Rican community.

Participants also shared how gender roles lead to the perception that being a woman and feminine is wrong and should be avoided at all costs, especially if you are a man. The participants seemed to discern that performing in feminine ways is bad and should not be done, especially in Latino contexts. This leads to them policing themselves in great ways in order to steer clear of femininity. For example, Juno notes:

Yo nunca he pensado que soy el mas macho o el menos pato, como decimos acá. Sin embargo, yo estoy bien consciente que la mayoría de los hombres gays tienen algún aspecto que se puede ver como femenino. Yo no tengo ningún problema con eso, pero sí intento lo mas que pueda en que esos gestos no se vean. Cuando estoy en público estoy consciente en modificar mi voz, no ser tan femenino, no hacer gestos con las manos que pueden verse como gay. He intentado por años en modificar ese pensamiento, en parte lo he logrado, pero todavía es algo que sigue presente porque desde pequeño me entrenaron hacerlo que es parte de quien soy. Yo no creo que hay nada malo con tener gestos femeninos, pero es algo que se mira tanto incluyendo dentro de la misma comunidad gay. Hay hombres gays que explícitamente te dicen si eres femenino no quiero nada que ver contigo.

Nicholas also shares that in the classroom policing your femininity is very important:

I've noticed that students are always very aware of everything that you do. I have to be aware of the way I present myself to them because I know that at the slightest show of anything that is perceived feminine, they will turn it into a big deal. I care about my career and perception a lot to let one slight lisp or gesture become a conversation about me being gay.

Also, participants mirrored Juno's thoughts on how femininity is perceived within the gay community. For instance, Albert shared:

Listen that "No Fems" slogan in the gay community is very real. I am not the manliest man out there, but I am not the most feminine either, and many times I have been told by guys that if I don't act a specific way or do specific things they would not go out with me or have sex with me because they were looking for a "man." So, what do I do? I modify my behavior to fit into those ideals. Hey, I don't know if that good or bad, but I want to date guys and have sex. I will do whatever is necessary to make that happen.

Theo also mirrors this:

I would be rich if I could charge for how many times I have been asked, "Are you masc?" [referring to his masculinity] It is ridiculous but so real, especially in the gay community. Oh, and another common saying is, "If I wanted to date a feminine guy, I would date a woman." Being feminine is perceived so negative in the gay community here in Puerto Rico that guys would rather not date or have sex because of their fear of being a feminine guy.

The refusal of feminine actions by men is one of the reasons the word 'pato' (Puerto Rican slang for fagot) is so prevalent in everyday communications. Dallas shared,

I grew up hearing and being called pato by many people, including my father. As a teacher, I hear that word a few times a week from my students, and after having conversations with them, I sit and think how it is assumed that by being feminine, you are right away associated with being gay, and it is perceived as something negative. Yes, being feminine is something terrible. I always ask myself and my students, "So, if being feminine is bad, then your mothers, grandmothers, sisters, and all women are bad?" To my shock, some students answer, yes.

Therefore, Latino gay men avoid being associated with femininity in order to not be seen as less manly. Such avoidances illustrate the subjugation of feminine ideas and actions so that Latino men can retain control of their masculinity and be identified as Latino men.

In addition, some participants emphasized the role women had in their upbringing and the influence they had in conforming to masculine ideals. Participants shared how strict gender roles are not only enforced by men but by women who are conditioned to adhere to such behaviors.

Some of the experiences shared by the participants show the fear Puerto Rican men have in being

viewed less than a man by women around them. The fear of being perceived as anything but masculine became a factor for them to adhere to strong machismo ideals. Thus, some participants engaged in specific heteronormative and masculine behavior due to the fear of being seen as less of a man.

Nicholas, for example, shared an experience he had with his sister in regards to her sons.

It's funny cause my family knows I am gay and they are fine with that fact. However, from time to time, I get these comments about being a man, especially around my nephews. My sister once told me to try and not be feminine or talk in a feminine voice around the kids in order for them to still know that even if you're gay, you're a man.

Theo also shared:

It's funny cause like Nicholas said, I have come to terms with the fact that I have to change some aspects of myself around my family, especially my mom and grandma. My mom knows I'm gay, but we do not talk about it. However, we have had conversations, especially when I came out, around the fact that she did not want me to be "obvious." So, in order to have no issues, I modify my voice and mannerisms around her so she could feel more comfortable around me, especially if there are people around us.

Both of these experiences show the pressure to alter personal traits, that fall into masculine expectations, in order to make other people comfortable. Though their families, especially the females in their families, are content with the fact that they are gay, the asked actions of modification imply the fear of feminization and the idea that men, even gay men, should behave in specific masculine ways.

### **Sanctioning: "Every single day I have to sanction what I do" (Albert)**

Sanctioning was lived by the participants through disdain, angst, censure, and cruelty. Such sanctions were perpetrated by friends, family, and the Latino community at large. The sanctions put upon the participants augmented the strict gender roles expected from Latino men. For instance, Theo recalled a moment when his uncle brought up his role of being a man at a family gathering.

It was just a family gathering on a Saturday where everyone brings food, alcohol, the kids, and we have a beautiful day out. My uncle was in his late 50s, and when I get up to go help my mom and grandmother with the dishes, he shouts to me, "Theo, what are you doing, man? Tu estás loco? You don't have to do dishes, boy, I bet you bought a lot of the things you brought over, you earned money and paid for it. Let them [referring to my mom and grandmother] do their job now. It was a very awkward moment for everyone who heard.

This narrative highlights the uncle's disbelief at his nephew's aversion to being a "man" around his own family. Through this verbal transaction, Theo's uncle reinforces what is expected behavior for a Latino man, while at the same time, to some degree, emasculates Theo in an attempt to force him back to the expected gendered roles for Puerto Rican men. Theo also commented on how this has become a wisecrack within the family any time one of the guys stands up to do the dishes:

Now, every time we are all together, somebody jokes, usually my dad, uncle, or grandfather, "Ok, boys, who is going to help with the dishes this time."

By pointing this out, Theo, emphasizes the banter and humor utilized to embolden machismo. Even though it is said in jest, the intent seeks to make Theo aware of his divergence as a Latino man who does not adhere to strict gender roles.

Similarly, Albert shares a moment when he was a teenager, in which his grandfather asserted strict expectations of him being a Latino man:

I will never forget an instance that I was riding a bike I had gotten for Christmas, and one day I fell, and the bike handle broke. I returned to my grandparents' house crying cause my bike was broken, and grandpa yells at me, "Ay por Dios! Stop crying! You're a young man you don't cry over something like this. You're no girl."

In this memory, Albert, clearly shows that he was being perceived as a girl because of the excessive showing of emotions, in this case, crying. To his grandfather, this emotional outburst goes against what he believes men should do in similar situations. In this specific moment,

Albert's grandfather was teaching him that engaging in behaviors that would label you as being feminine and not a man is unacceptable.

In a conversation with Nicholas, he shared that his mother had once sanctioned him because of his divergence of Latino male boundaries.

Mom started yelling at me for something I had done. I don't remember the reason, but I do remember crying, and as soon as I started crying, she started scolding me by saying, "Why are you crying? Have I hit you? [she raised her hand as if she was going to slap me] Don't make me give you something to cry about? You have to be a man and not cry every single time you're yelled at."

In this instance, Nicholas shared that the threat and use of physical violence were used to reinforce behavior that is understood to go in line with how Puerto Rican men should behave. Even though he did not say if he got physically punished for crying, it was something, he said, that has remained with him because of the aggressive nature used to push for masculine behavior. This, again, illustrates ways in which sanctioning is utilized to reinforce how Latino men should behave.

Moreover, the participants experienced sanctioning in a manner that was self-imposed. This self-sanctioning took place to preserve their identities and comply with the strict gender roles adhered to them by the Puerto Rican context. By way of self-sanctioning and self-regulation their conduct and idiosyncrasies, they are able to avert scrutiny about their masculinity from people around them and above all from themselves. Modulating their behavior eased retention of the participants' status as men in the Puerto Rican community. It was essential for the participants' to confined their actions in ways that would allow them to be seen as less of a man. For example, Juno shared:

¡Está cabrón! Todos los días tienes que pretender no tener emociones, no puedes llorar, no puedo sobre actuar por algo bueno o malo ya que en el momento que lo hagas y alguien te vea con tus sentimientos en la mano ere menos hombre.

Adai also noted that,

I also realized that when I am in the classroom in front of my students, my entire self-changes and not in the typical personal to professional way. My voice, mannerisms, the way I walk, the way I sit, write, move, and others completely change. For example, I had a friend of mine come in to give a workshop on books to my classes; he has known me for over 15 years after the day was done he pointed out how my voice becomes more profound and the tone is more forceful when speaking to my kids and it is true I can't have my voice be delicate or sound gay. I am their teacher...what would the think if a guy has a Minnie Mouse voice. I have become more conscious of those changes, and I have tried to modify them to be more real or me, but I do it without really noticing that I do it. The reason I do it is to not compromise my manhood or masculinity in front of kids and for fear of what would happen if they pick up on any out of the norm things that would identify me as gay.

Additionally, Dallas shared the way he usually acts with friends or family is not the same way he does in front of his students. He does this in order to be viewed as the usual way a man is supposed to be viewed, especially in front of students.

My biggest fear of becoming a teacher was having students realize I was gay and what that would entail when it comes to rumors or bullying behind your back. I was called gay a few times while in school, and I did not want this to happen when teaching. Being a gay teacher in Puerto Rico is a big deal. Presenting myself the correct way was and is very important to me. I want my students to see me as 'straight' as they can because I am a male figure to them, not just teaching them how to read and write. I don't want students, parents, colleagues, or others to be whispering, "I think Mr. Dallas is gay" or "Did you hear Dallas is gay." I have to act like a man, and if that means pretending to be 'straight' whatever that may be or however that may look, then so be it.

The experiences mentioned above highlight the self-sanctioning and internal directives that the participants' place on themselves in order to be viewed as men and avoid people emasculating them. There were also clear-cut references by the participants of deliberate endeavors on their part to show that they are true Latino men, and they fall into such category by doing subtle nuances like deepening their voices, changing their mannerisms, avoiding emotions, and regulating their behaviors.

The participants reinforced machismo, in part, due to the way gendered experiences were monitored. Some of that monitoring was due to the strict gender expectations placed on them as



Puerto Rican men by family, friends, and the context around them. The continual regulation of gendered expression became a constant stressor for the participants. They were continually enacting expressions to fit what is expected of Puerto Rican men; therefore, participating in such situations affected their daily life. Also, the participants engaged with gendered expressions while sanctioning themselves in ways that Puerto Rican men are expected to behave. Such sanctioning was a constant process that protected them from any situation that would endanger other's perceptions. Gender monitoring became a complicated experience for the participants as it forced them to reinforce notions of machismo in order to not step outside of the expected boundaries of Puerto Rican manhood.

**Privilege: “I am aware that I can get away with a lot because I’m a man” (Nicholas)**

Privilege and agency became recognized points of discussion by the participants. All of the participants, at various points during the interviews, acknowledged that being men automatically affords them privileges within the Latino community. For example, Theo captured the complexities of being a Latino male while talking about him being a male teacher.

It's fascinating because I know I am bathed in privileged because I am a man, yet, other identity markers detract on my male privilege. I don't mean that positively or negatively, I am just saying what I have experienced. Many opportunities have been afforded to me because I am a man, but would those opportunities have been the same if some people knew that I am gay? Would I be given the same opportunities if I were a teacher in the states [USA], and things like my skin color and accent were factors in decisions? It is horrible to think that I get more chances to talk in faculty meetings, get my pick of courses, and sometimes even student distribution just because I have a penis and not necessarily because of my tenure, years of experience, or others.

Thus, Theo captures the complications of his identity. This experience shows how Theo navigates the complexities and presumptions of how a Latino man should act and the expectations set upon him. Even with such assumptions, he experiences privilege as a man within the Latino community.

Similarly, Albert noted:

It is very accessible to see how we [Latino men] are portrayed or talked about in different environments. Machismo is described as being superior to women, being in control of women, not letting women do anything without male consent, etc. They also go even further as portraying women as sexual objects and just sexual objects to us guys. They [women] are always portrayed as possessions.

Albert acknowledges how women, especially Latina women, as subjugated in comparison to Latino men. He also recognizes his position of privilege due to his identity as a man and how he, as a Latino man, is not characterized in the same manner. Also, Nicholas mirrors how women are dismissed in educational spaces, even though he still views it as a primarily female profession.

We are always told that teaching is a woman's job, yet the opportunities and affordances given to us are often more significant than to women. I have worked with many amazing teachers [women], they have been smart, efficient, and better educators than many male counterparts but sometimes parents, students, principals, and other people think twice about how to address and/or talk about or to them just because they are women. We also see a lot of this in administration roles. It is crazy to me that most principals I know and all of the principals I have had as supervisors are males. I have not worked with the one-woman principal.

In another example, Juno reconciles the privilege Latino men are afforded while thinking about an experience from his past, in which he recognizes how he “mansplained” to a female colleague:

Recuerdo estando en su casa trabajando en la presentación y como buen idiota empiezo a decirle y a poner en la presentación cosas como, “Las mujeres deben vestir de tal manera, siempre estar bien maquilladas, presentarse debidamente ante los padres, etc.” y también mencione cosas como “Las maestras siempre deben tener en cuenta que son madres para esos estudiantes.” Pensando en ese momento ahora es tan estúpida la manera en la que pensaba. Simplemente por ser el gran macho sentí el deber de decirle a una persona como vestirse y presentarse en un salón de clases. A la verdad que fueron comentarios bien machistas de mi parte, pero ahí está el problema...es algo que se ha convertido en parte de nuestro DNA que es bien difícil estar al tanto de lo que uno dice. ¿Las maestras se tiene q vestir o presentar de alguna manera? Claro que no.

In this narrative, Juno realized the privilege afforded to him as a man to the point that he dictates, to a female colleague, what to do, how to dress, and what she should do in class.

Engaging in these power dynamics asserts Juno as an authoritative figure in the school. The experience that Juno had was collective among other participants as they recognized the power and privilege afforded to them in schools. For instance, Dallas noted the way in which he has noted how he and other male teachers engage in conversations in ways that do not allow women to engage with them.

It's really interesting because I do not mean to exclude my female colleagues out of any conversations. I think it is so easy to just go with the flow with these groups of men and women in the schools. Thinking about it, I definitely recount a moment in which we may be in the faculty lounge, and some female colleague is trying to get into our conversation, but we do some small nuances that move the conversation into another topic or in a way that we do not let them speak. I feel really bad, but honestly, it's something that just happens and not something that I am thinking about at that moment.

This experience illustrates the lack of recognition of male privilege in schools and the lack of resistance from individuals when inherent male conducts occur. There seems to be an inherent understanding of male privilege and how those boundaries are not meant to be interrupted.

Similarly, Adai recalled an instance where he acknowledges his male privilege.

I was talking with a couple of colleagues over lunch about a group we all taught. We were all having some issues with a few students, and we were swapping ideas on how to handle them. One of the female teachers shared something about behavioral conduct, and after her, I gave my two cents on the matter. Immediately the other teachers agreed with my point of view and said how they were going to implement or try what I said should be done. It's funny cause thinking about it. I realize that my thought on the matter was taken at face value because I am a man.

Both Dallas and Adai's experiences highlight their recognition of the power and privilege afforded to them as men, to the detriment of other people around them, in this case, female colleagues. Furthermore, agency, highlights the privilege, power, and freedom, Latino men juxtaposed to Latino women. Notwithstanding, this agency is only maintained if and when

established machismo parameters are met. Much to how Latina women are marginalized due to machismo, the participants shared how they are sanctioned if they did not abide by the established societal expectations. Nonetheless, participants were aware of their privilege since they choose to adhere to machismo ideals expected in Puerto Rican society, which leads to benefits afforded to them. For example, Adai points out:

Being a male in a school has its perks. Being the one that the principal calls first in a meeting to hear input, colleagues rely on you with specific responsibilities, parents and students have respect for you in a way that you can see its different from others [female teachers]. Not having to be present myself in a specific way every day, having more liberties in the way I speak to students, and just what I can get away with because I am a man, even a gay man, has its bright side. The same idea of being the man of the house well it is practiced in the school I am one of the men in the school.

I have also noticed how I can also do more without asking for specific permission or letting someone know. Small things like walking into the office, going to the copy room, going to the materials classroom, and taking whatever, I need and want without anyone asking me to fill something out or ask what I am doing. While I have seen some of my female colleagues being questioned or asked to do something before going into any of those places, what really sucks about all of this is that in some instances I have intercepted and told female teachers, "don't pay attention just go grab what you need, don't put your name anywhere" but I know I say that from a place of privilege and power because I may not get reprimanded but they would. There is always a struggle with what, how, when, and if you should say something because I want to be sympathetic, but at the same time, I don't want to lose my privilege and power of just walking into a room looking for something I need. Does that make me an awful person? It probably does I hate thinking about it very profoundly cause then what the hell do I do? *Está' cabrón!*

As Adai shared, he was seen as an authoritative figure in meetings, and fewer restrictions were placed upon him compared to female colleagues. He notes how he can freely move around the school without anyone questioning his motives nor being asked why is he going to specific rooms. By being positioned above his female colleagues, we see how the privilege, power, and agency is inherently given to Latino men. This narrative highlights the freedom and power given to Adai because he is a Latino male. By asserting himself as one of "the men of the school" because of the privileges afforded to him, Adai is placed above colleagues that, thought of in

other contexts, are equal to him in the school. Dallas had a similar narrative when speaking about similar experiences in his school:

I remember that in my second semester of my first year in that school, just several months after graduating from university, I was approached by the principal in the school to lead one of the school accreditation committees. I said yes without thinking about it, but I was also overwhelmed by the fact that I was doing something I had never done and was not aware of any requirements for the committee I was leading. A few weeks later, while talking to some close colleagues, I realized that I was asked to be in the committee because the principal wanted a man to lead all of the committees. Yes, all of the committee leads were men. I did an ok job on the committee, and we got the accreditation. But anyway, after this long story, I wanted to highlight how I got assigned to that job just because I am a man and not because I had the experience to deal with school accreditations.

Dallas's appointment to a committee that he did not have the necessary experience to lead placed a burden on a new teacher. Even with his eagerness to prove himself and show his principal, he could do the job; he understood the type of responsibility placed on him. However, he understood that being a man does not give him the affordance to say no, and he needs to get the job done. Additionally, Theo talked about how difficult it is to work through and manage expectations set upon him because he is a man.

I honestly hate how much pressure is put upon me to act and behave a certain way, especially in schools. Some of these expectations are not explicitly mentioned or said to me, but we know they are there because of all the years growing up in such a mentality. How many times I was told not to let anyone in school know that I am gay. My professional life and my personal life have nothing to do with one and other. To this day, I don't get that analogy; I am one person, of course, both have to do with each other. We are told to act and behave in a specific way in order to fit into the traditional mold of being a man and being a male in schools. It is so ridiculous, but the fact is that we are afraid of losing so much if we do not follow what is expected of us. It's shitty to do so much and to gain so little. Sometimes I do want to throw my hands in the air, scream I'm gay, deal with it, and take it from there.

Theo's thoughts speak to what is expected of gay male teachers and the pressures of having to deal with such expectations. Such pressures are placed continuously upon Latino men even as they experience the privilege and agency afforded to them for that same reason. Albert

responded to Theo's comment in the group interview by affirming how such pressures take a toll on everyday teaching appearances.

For me, the issues are that every day we are actors, we put on a mask and don't take it off until we get back home. It comes with the territory, and I know that being a teacher and having students comes with a sense of presentation that needs to be met yet, the way expectations are put upon us because we are men and the way we need to meet expectations of straight men on top of that is very exhausting. I am aware that every morning at my desk, I have to adjust the way I talk, walk, teach, laugh, etc. just to fall into the parameters of being a manly figure and an educator to my students. I need to continually prove my masculinity in ways that I don't have to outside of the classroom. Not only do I have to prove my masculinity, but I have to prove my straight masculinity because we have to fall into that straight BS box in order to not cause any issues and problems for myself.

We see how machismo ideals within the school context put pressure on Albert to behave in a more masculine and heteronormative way in order to not raise any questions around his sexuality and avoid conversations about his masculinity. For Albert, this also comes with a price because he is dependent on his masculinity. After all, it helps him achieve specific tasks. Although this may sometime become taxing and become a point of contention for Albert, he does recognize that performing in the expected masculine ideals, especially in school contexts, affords him to be successful in professional settings.

By the participants reflecting and exploring notions of power, they recognized the privileges afforded to them because they are men. Throughout conversations, the participants were able to express how their privilege emerges in broad situations and as nuanced examples of how Puerto Rican men are afforded power. Some examples ranged from recognizing their status in schools, having power, and having their voices valued over women. However, the participants recognized that such privilege and power only came to fruition if they adhered to notions of machismo. Such intersections created a complicated arena in which restrictions and privileges were navigated by the participants to navigate Puerto Rican machismo.

**Theme Four: Shifting of Identities in Schools**

*“Protecting Myself” by Theo*

*Teaching is about arts and heart.*

*Teaching is about giving all that you have.*

*Living in a machista society is hard;*

*It has taught me everything has to be done for a purpose.*

*Nothing can be done for the sake of doing it;*

*Just because you want to;*

*Everything will lead to a price.*

*Teaching is not appreciated as I want*

*it is a profession of which many don't feel proud.*

*What is worse is that. Teachers are not appreciated*

*they way they should be.*

*Many things are thought of us without*

*having anyone talk to us first.*

*Exciting place we live in,*

*welcome to Puerto Rico, our paradise lost.*

*An island ravaged by Maria but destroyed by its government.*

*An island where men rule and women follow.*

*Women are misjudged for the simplest mistakes.*

*Men are worshipped for minimum effort.*

*I love my job; I love teaching; teaching is fun.*

*Teaching is also exhausting.*

*Presenting myself is tiresome.*

*I have to talk different, walk differently,  
show no emotions, fit into what they want to see.*

*Is it worth it?*

*To what end?*

*Why should I do this?*

*Simple...to protect myself.*

This creative piece, written by Theo, ties into the fourth emerging theme, the benefits of being a man, which came up in the participant's interviews. This theme addresses the research questions, “how, if at all, do masculinity and machismo influence Puerto Rican gay teachers’ identity? and “what obstacles, if any, do Puerto Rican gay teachers perceive that prevent them from revealing their sexual orientation to their colleagues and students at schools?”

**Male Performance: “Listen, to a degree, all I do in the classroom is an act.” (Theo)**

This sub-theme highlights the participants' thoughts on what is the perception of proper conduct for gay male teachers in schools. For them, the fear of losing their job, privileges, or dealing with the coattails of coming is relevant in how they present themselves in classrooms. Some weighed in on the issue of gay teacher conduct and how they have seen these ideas enacted upon personal experiences. Nicholas notes,

Like I've said before, when you are a male teacher, especially in Puerto Rico, certain expectations come with the territory. In addition to that, factors like machismo and being gay add to the notions of how to conduct yourself in the classroom and around students. I always thought I'd be out in my job because that would help me be more in touch with who I am and would help me in my teaching. But the reality is that I need to "behave" in specific ways. I teach small children, imagine how some parents would react if they knew that a gay man was teaching their first graders. It would open the door for so many unnecessary issues.



Nicholas demonstrates equivocal dealings about how he thought he would be like as a teacher in contrast with who he currently is while teaching. His views indicate confinement in which he views how specific behaviors should be enacted in the classroom. Similarly, Adai adds:

I don't think it is accepted as much that you have gay teachers in schools. By some people, it might be fine, but as a bigger picture, within this machista context, it is not the norm. It is important not to show any kinds of signs that you are gay. I mean, I have in my desk a few pictures with friends that are women, and my teenagers sometimes tease me about them, in a fun and loving way, but I know that behind those comments are ideals that make them think I am straight and I'm dating those women. I simply do not correct them. You could say I'm lying to them.

Adai's attitude indicates how gay male teachers still have to pretend, navigate, and practice heteronormative notions of not coming out even if it is by not correcting students when they are assuming things that are inherently wrong. Agreeing with Adai's sentiment, Dallas shared two experiences that mirror these issues.

Like Adai, I have gone through some of the same things but not with students but instead with some colleagues. We sometimes go out for drinks or other social stuff, and many times that has turned into an inquiry of why I am not dating or when I am going to introduce them to a girlfriend. I always ignore the situation. I instead choose not to engage than entrap myself in a way that they start noticing things like the fact that I am gay.

Dallas also shares,

During my first year as a teacher, I was working with this nice woman who taught Spanish. Other colleagues told me that she liked me, and there was this whole web of work to get me to date her. I declined the invitation from her, and within days rumors started flying around that I was gay for not going out with the hot young teacher. This is all out of a movie, but it so real. In order to stop those rumors, I asked her out on a date. Of course, that went nowhere, but it did help stop everything that was going around the school.

Influenced by what his colleagues were saying and possible repercussions that may occur, Adai and Dallas act on what they believe to be proper behavior for male teachers. Such behaviors become part of the expectation of men in Latino contexts and schools.

Like other participants, Theo has a view of how gay male teachers should behave and act in school contexts. He believes that the more you open up, and the more you are yourself in the classroom, the more honest a relationship with students can be. However, he acknowledges that he has yet to come out in his job due to the fear of what might happen if he does.

I think that if you are gay, lesbian, or whatever, you should be open and be yourself. I do believe that opens the classroom in a way in which hiding yourself does not. But, I contradict myself in a big way because I am not out. I wish I were, but I am afraid of what I could lose by doing so. Starting with respect from students, parents, and other teachers. I have seen other teachers that are openly gay, and everything seems fine. But I don't know if that same experience is what I would go through if I came out.

Unlike other participants, Theo supports a more open posture for gay male teachers in Puerto Rico, but not for himself. He expresses the fear of losing privileges afforded to him by simply being a man who is perceived as heterosexual. This presents different codes of conduct on how to present yourself like a male teacher. These conduct codes are individual choices that do not work the same way for everyone. What remains significant is that each participant has a perception of how they should behave or act inside of the classroom. Each participant chooses what works for them, given their personal experience in the schools and how those decisions work for them.

Part of the process of performing within the confines of maleness in Puerto Rico, the participants crafted a way in which to protect themselves and be viewed as Latino men. Through the act of self-preservation, participants can uphold notions of machismo in order to be viewed as men. This mode of operandi does not allow the participants to be authentically them. For example, Nicholas shared how he feels restricted, to some degree, when in school contexts.

I currently work with a program that deals with potential new students for the school. Meaning, I continually see new parents and students every week. I try hard not to be effeminate, deepen my voice, and work through any mannerisms I may have because I do not want to give them the wrong impression of myself and the school. I am continually controlling how feminine I am and what people may see my feminine traits. It's

something that you have to do, especially in schools. You have to learn how to filter yourself.

Juno also shares the way he filters himself, like Nicholas, as part of his performance in the classroom.

Soy human y a veces traigo situaciones que no tiene que ver nada con la escuela a mi trabajo. Es algo que sucede. He aprendido a no mostrar mis emociones en mi cara. Nunca maestro si estoy triste, enojado, feliz o alguna otra cosa. Trato de ser lo mas indiferente posible. No quiero que me perciban como débil.

In this statement, Juno makes a note of how aware he is of not being overtly emotional in the classroom. Such policing ties back to the idea that being emotional is seen as a feminine trait.

Both Juno and Nicholas express the way they manage their mannerisms, facial expressions, and emotions in order to ensure that others do not point out traits that may be perceived as non-masculine. Furthermore, Adai also mirrors Juno in his policing of emotions.

I am always in the poker face mode. No emotions mean no one is questioning my masculinity, and sometimes I hype up the roughness or aggressiveness in order to be more in line with what is expected of a man in the classroom.

Dallas recollected a situation when he was in high school where he felt he had to act in a certain way in order to be perceived as manly.

I remember that I had a girlfriend in high school and when we broke up my friends and others bad-mouthing her. I did nothing to stop the rumors and comments that were going around the school. One day she confronted me in front of a lot of our friends. What did I do? I stood my ground and overpowered her physicality by standing tall, showing no emotion, brushing it off, and not to show any fear of discontent in front of anyone. After she was done, I said something, I don't remember what it was, but she turned away crying and left. I do remember some of my guy friends being all macho about what I said. On the inside, I felt like shit, but I did, at that time, protect my masculinity and how other guys saw me.

Both narratives highlighted above show the lengths that Adai and Dallas went to in order to preserve their masculinity around people that may perceive them differently if they did not abide by such standards. The participants were also aware of the damage they were causing to other

people by performing in this sanctioning and self-preservation. For example, Theo states:

I know I was hurting people around me by acting the way I am. I started realizing that by not acting the way I truly am or want, I started doing things that came across as standoffish and just plain rude.

Albert also shared that the confines of masculine parameters enacted by him and those around him affect the way he interacts with others and may hurt meaningful relationships he engages in.

I have always had issues with people I am seeing, dating, or just fooling around with. There comes a time that emotions start becoming a thing, and I run away from them. I start acting indifferent and like I don't care about them. This ends up being a moment where things begin to end, and it sucks. Through time I have realized that all of this comes tied to the fact that I don't want to show this vulnerability because of how I think I have to act in a relationship because of my being a guy.

These experiences highlight how Albert and Theo realize that enacting Latino masculine ideals have had a toll on their relationships. Nevertheless, the participant's self-preservation was a process to restrict their normal behaviors and enacting what they think should be done. Juno's consideration exemplifies the reasoning behind self-preservation:

It is crucial to fit in and have no eyebrows raised about your sexuality and your masculinity; however, it is even more important to survive. It is important to come at the other end as a winner but even better if you come out at the end – alive. The truth is you want to achieve much, but at the end of the day, you just wanna go back to your place without a single scratch on you from whatever things you fought that day. As a gay teacher, I just wanna make it.

Juno's self-preservation and adherence to performing in the confines of what is expected of Latino teachers become compliance with machismo, which ensures that the community at large will not punish them. Other participants pointed out how perceptions from other people influence the identities and decisions they enact in the classroom. Participants discussed perceptions of others, being able to identify gay teachers, and how they enact shifting identities

in order to present themselves in specific ways. Juno speaks of this when talking about his first few years of teaching.

Una de las cosas que, como hombre gay yo pienso, es la manera en que la gente me percibe. Yo tengo mucho cuidado en como yo me presento para no darle a nadie razón por la que hablar. Ahora, esto no es seguro siempre, ya que siempre habrá gente que habla o se inventa cosas sin importar como uno se presente. La opinión de los demás importa especialmente cuando eres un maestro. Tu elegiste estar frente grupos de estudiantes todo el día y socializar con padres y comunidades escolares. Así que, tienes que manejar una manera de modificar quien tu eres para que los demás te perciban de una manera correcta. Yo escondo todos mis manierismos y no dejo que nadie los vea.

In this statement, Juno shares how, for him, people's perceptions are important to dictate the way he behaves in the classroom. He is aware that it was his choice to be a teacher and that, in order for his masculinity and sexuality to not be questioned, his behavior and way of acting needs to be modified. This statement reiterates how gay male teachers need to police who they are to fall within the established parameters set in Latino culture.

In another instance, Nicholas shares how relationships with other gay teachers in the school work or are tested in order not to come out,

I worked with a couple of teachers that were gay. Some were out, and others were not. All the gay teachers in the school knew about the other gay teachers. We either socialized outside of school, or the gaydar is a real thing. Anyway, I was not open about my sexuality, so this led me to have no interactions with the openly gay teachers in the school, so people would not associate me with being gay. If we had interactions would be in situations that we had to like faculty meetings. I remember asking one of the gay teachers if that was ok and he said, "I mean, I don't understand it but sure up to you. I don't think coming out would make a difference because you are a great teacher, no matter what." Even with positive feedback, I could not let myself interact with gay teachers in the school.

This avoidance shows the lengths in which Nicholas goes through in order to not be associated with actions that go against what is expected from him. Positioning himself away from openly gay teachers allow him to be perceived as a true Latino male.

### **Danger Narratives & Stereotypes:**

**“Es que piensan que todos somos igual de nenas y eso no me gusta.” (Juno)**

Participants engaged in conversations around the idea of danger narratives. These narratives emerged as a talking point in which participants had to engage within their professional careers. Danger narratives emerge when people are concerned about how gay teachers may behave around students. Thoughts of children being molested by gay teachers or being taught the "gay agenda" are two danger narratives that emerged with the participants. Adai shares his thought on this,

My mom was a teacher, and I remember when I told her that I wanted to be a teacher that I should be cautious about how I handle myself around students. One of the reasons I love being a teacher is the relationship I build with my students and how those relationships can last forever. I am a very affectionate person, and she always told me that I should never hug or be close to any of my students. I am an elementary school teacher, so being close and affectionate with students comes with the territory. While I was doing my B.A., I remember a professor warning us guys on how we might be thought of if someone walked by our classroom, and we were close with any of our students. I asked her flat out what did that mean, and she said that we have no idea what men are capable of, and out of nowhere, she also added, "...especially gay teachers." I was left in shock by the fact that she was insinuating that I might be capable of harming my students in whatever way possible.

Dallas mirrors this thought by sharing an anecdote with his first principal,

When I got my first job at a school, I had a very nice principal. However, during the first couple of weeks of class, she pulled me into her office and said, "You're a new teacher...I just wanted to say be careful in how you handle your kids; people might get the wrong idea". I was taken aback because I had no idea where this comment was coming from. Later, I found out from other male teachers, that she had said the same to them. Interestingly enough, I did not find one female teacher that she had told that too. I was so pissed off that I was being told to monitor my relationship with students because of what others may think. Especially since her comment came loaded with the fact that I might hurt my students in some form or other.

Theo also shared a story in which he policed himself in something that any teacher would have done.

One day my assistant was in the office working through an issue with a student, so I did not have her in my class for a couple of hours. The student couldn't make it to the bathroom in time, and she had an accident. Like any teacher, I would think, would do I

went to the classroom next door asked the teacher to keep an eye on my kids and took my student to the bathroom to help her clean up and change. Nothing happened when it came to other people, but I found myself being very careful about how I managed the situation and what I did and if I went in to help her. I found myself guiding her through the door instead of helping her. I did all of this because I thought to myself, how would somebody react if they saw me help a child clean up and change? What sort of trouble would I get into? And at the same time, I was very mad with myself because I did not help a student, which is my job, by the way apart from teaching them math, just because I have conditioned to think that I may be perceived a specific way if I am alone with students.

In the above experiences, the participants were confronted by perceptions of how and what male teachers could do and how they need to police their behavior around students. Such narratives show how danger narratives exist around gay male teachers in education as teaching is still gendered. If the male teacher allows themselves to perform the feminine aspects for students, they stepping outside the gendered roles of masculinity and allowing themselves to be targeted by other's perceptions. Adai, Dallas, and Theo shared how teachers are required and expected to be caring towards students, but if such expectations are met through physical contact, like hugs, there is a fear of harm by the teacher. Male teachers have to find a way to show affection to their students in a way that does not subscribe to the dangerous narrative of showing affection.

Along with danger narratives, stereotypes around gay teachers were brought up by some of the participants. Albert talks about some of the stereotypes he has been fighting against throughout his career as a teacher in order to not be outed as gay.

I am cautious about what I wear to school. Females wear specific things, and the guys wear other things. I do not wear tight jeans, bright colors, or clothing that may be perceived as gay. Since I was young, I was taught and saw how gay men were pointed out because of what they were wearing. I am cautious in not giving students or other people something to stereotypes me with, in this case, clothes. Also, I am cautious about the way I talk. Gay men are often targeted because of their high pitched or feminine voices. I actively deepen my voice, so I don't sound more feminine, I know this is ridiculous just because you have a high-pitched voice doesn't mean you are gay, but I am not giving anyone a reason to label me as gay. I don't want to feed into that stereotype.

Albert engages in policing and modifying the way he dresses and speaks in order to fit into expectations of how men should act in schools. Mirroring this policing Dallas adds,

I take out all my piercings out, even though in our school, our principal does not mind, and they have a policy about them, I also do not dye my hair, and I never shave my beard. I mention that last one because in the last few years, having a beard has become a sign of masculinity. Don't ask me why, but it has.

Here we can see how Albert and Dallas police and modify their physical attributes and follow the established cultural constrictions that dictate what being a man is. Nicholas adds to the conversation around stereotypes:

One reason I did High School teaching instead of elementary is that when you are a teacher in elementary school, more affection or femininity is expected. With little kids, you have to be "motherly" and more aware that people think you are babysitting. I don't think that's the case, but it is so in my culture than I decide to do the High School track so people would not think that I was gay or feminine because I teach small children. With bigger kids, you can be rougher, more direct, and slip a foul word here and there. Nothing will happen to you, and actually, that will be seen as manlier.

To this, Juno adds:

Yo intento esconder mis manierismos. Yo estoy claro que quizás no sea el mas macho así que tengo que trabajar mas para que nadie se ponga hablar. Mira, yo soy maestro y los estudiantes se dan cuenta de todo, así que trato de darle menos razones para que se pongan hablar.

Both Nicholas and Juno, talk about stereotypes, although from different perspectives. Nicholas talks about his thought on elementary education in which teachers are expected to be more nurturing and emotional. For Nicholas, this allows more room to play around with his masculinity as there might not be such a big magnifying glass on the way he enacts masculine conduct. Whereas Juno acknowledges that he is not the manliest guy, so he is continuously aware of eliminating mannerisms that may be perceived as gay in order for students to not pick up that he is gay. Both of these narratives perpetuate the idea that when you work with small children or are overly feminine, you stray away from establishing masculine paradigms that need



to be enacted by a male teacher. When such notions are not met, conversations of the teacher not being masculine and being gay, begin to occur in a way that puts the teacher's perceptions of how they should act in peril. Male teachers in Latino contexts are positioned as more feminine if they were to show caring characteristics that are often associated with women, utilize materials that may seem too girly or for kids, and as gay if they were to enact characteristics that are deemed anti masculinities like wearing tight clothes. By policing and not enacting these danger narratives and stereotypes, male teachers are afforded a regular teaching lifestyle that otherwise would not exist if they were to act outside of the establish masculine patterns.

### **Personal v. Professional Identity:**

**“No one should care about what I do outside of my work.” (Adai)**

Personal v. Professional Identity emerged as a talking point within the shifting identities in schools. Participants shared what they choose to share and enact in what aspects of their lives they share within educational settings. The participants talked about different variations of separation between their private and public lives. They positioned themselves in ways that allowed them to share whatever they choose to with others around them and the lengths they go to in order to hide specific experiences. For many of them, it is important to be perceived as manly and heterosexual in schools, because this allows them to maintain the distinct separation they desire. For example, Nicholas commented on how important it is for him to maintain a separation between the things he does outside of his job versus how he engages in his work:

I need to keep what I do outside of school apart from my life inside of school. I work very hard to keep those two apart as I don't want anything from my personal life affecting my professional career. Especially anything that has to do with me being gay.

Like Nicholas, Juno talks about the importance of keeping both his personal and:

Yo mantengo mí vida personal separada de mi vida profesional. Yo no permito que mis colegas y mucho menos mis estudiantes y padres de estudiantes estén al tanto de lo que

yo hago con mi vida. Yo no tengo muchas amistades en el trabajo. Tengo muchos compañeros, pero no amigos. Es mi decisión. No me arrepiento y hasta el momento todo va muy bien. La verdad es que no quiero nadie dentro de mi escuela al tanto de mi vida o las cosas que yo haga. Mientras este en mi poder hago lo posible de que sean dos vidas completamente diferente.

For both Nicholas and Juno, it is essential to have a select few colleagues, and in some cases, none at all, aware of their identities, in this case, the fact that they are gay. Juno especially emphasizes how he goes to great lengths to keep his personal and professional lives separate. Also, he acknowledges how tiresome it is to put so much effort into keeping those apart, yet, he is content with having a double life.

This highlights the idea that their professional lives have nothing to do with their personal lives. This separation is evident even when the participants have a significant event that happened in their lives. For example, Juno shared that he got engaged to his boyfriend, but the thought of sharing such news to his colleagues never crossed his mind. This allows Juno to be positioned within the parameters of heterosexuality since he is not out in school, and it is assumed that he falls into the expected parameters of manliness. For Adai the fact that he works in a school that is pretty far from where he lives and spends his time is a huge benefit.

When I first got my job at the school that I am in the traveling that I would have to do every morning and afternoon. However, when you think about how I like keeping my work and my everyday life separate, it works out. The school is nowhere near my house or near places I go out to with gay friends. There is very little chance that I would run into people who are associated with my school in places where I am.

Adai is consciously aware of the factors that come into play when it comes to his workplace with his personal life. I asked him if he would ever look for a job near his house, and he responded, "Nah! I'm good where I'm at." Adai is exercising his agency to choose where he works while at the same time making a big sacrifice in order to keep his personal and professional life separate. This is a systemic injustice that has to be enacted in order to protect his

personal life. By keeping his work and personal life separate Adai allows himself to enact different personas in two different contexts. This compartmentalization allows his colleagues, students, and people in his personal life in a state of disconnect as to not allow his sexual identities to intersect with the private component of his professional life.

For some of the participants, being perceived as gay or straight is not an issue, but rather them feeding into the idea of conversations around the fact that they are gay. They go through great lengths to keep both lives separate, especially from people within their professional lives.

Dallas commented:

To be clear, I have never hidden my sexuality. But, inside of my job, I am nothing but the teacher. People may think I am gay, but they do not know because I have not told them. I go through great lengths to fit into what a male teacher should be in order to keep the whispers to a minimum, one of those things is keeping my personal life as far away from my school as possible. I need to keep the focus on my job and my teaching rather than my sexuality. For me, one has nothing to do with the other.

Theo also adds,

I don't think being gay or straight inside of the classroom is good or bad. But the fact that people make it into a big deal is what bothers me. That is the main reason I go through all the things I go through to not make it a big deal. The furthest my sexuality is from my job, the better, especially from my students. I don't want their perceptions of me to change.

Both Dallas and Theo emphasize the importance, for them, of keeping their sexuality out of the classroom. Neither of them has explicitly denied they are gay, but neither have they come out. In both cases, we see the method employed to distract or not engage in conversations around their sexuality, which is to focus on the job at hand of being a teacher. Whether the school community perceives the participants as straight or gay, I believe that the lengths they go through to keep their professional and personal lives separate show relative ease to fall into the established masculine and anti-gay ideals that exist for male teachers. By separating both of these, the participants can interact with their students and school communities with ease, that

may not be afforded if conversations about their sexuality and masculinities are consistently occurring.

The participants in this study felt that their professional and personal lives should be kept apart to different degrees. They were evident in the fact that they do not wish their personal and professional lives to intersect for the time being. The separation of their personal and professional lives is strongly connected to the school community's perception of their sexual identities' and on the dispositions on how they conduct masculinities in the classroom. In the end, the separation of their personal and professional lives allows the participants to freely interact with their students, colleague, and the school community at large without the fear of being questioned as gay.

### **Final Thoughts**

The themes in this chapter highlight the influence machismo had on the lives of gay Latino teachers in Puerto Rico. The masculine and gendered socialization of the participants was regularly enacted and informed by their intersecting identities. Though many of them practiced and engaged in machismo, they also recognized the problematic notions that come with it and how such notions ought to be challenged. Furthermore, the pressure and stress machismo imposed on gay Latino teachers as they navigate either confirming or challenging it was an additional layer they experienced in their personal and professional settings. Thus, this chapter explored how the gendered experiences of gay Latino men interact with everyday teaching experiences.

In closing, the narratives in this chapter highlighted how the participants defined and interpreted masculine expectations, the influence of their intersecting identities, and the roles such identities play in their teaching identities. The next chapter will examine the findings within

the context of the literature and theoretical framework utilized in this study. The limitations, implications, recommendations for future practice, research, and final comments will also be presented.

## CHAPTER 5

### SO, THIS IS HOW IT ENDS:

#### REFLECTING ON THE PROCESS AND RESULTS

Discussion of the data involved multiple reviews of the transcribed audio from the interviews. The transcriptions and chosen data were read and reviewed several times to represent the participants' experiences accurately. The first chapter provided background, problem statement, research questions, the significance of the study, and theoretical frameworks of LatCrit and queer theory. Four overarching themes emerged from the six participants: (1) detrimental machismo, (2) monitoring gender, and (3) shifting identities in schools. All themes are discussed through the lens of LatCrit's multidimensional identities (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001) and Queer theory (Butler, 1990/2006 & Foucault, 1978), which connects to the overall concept of gay teacher development (Jackson, 2006), social constructions of masculinities (Connell, 2005), and machismo (Anzaldúa, 2012; Falicov, 2014). This chapter outlined the importance of studying the gap in the literature and examined the value in the lived experiences of gay Puerto Rican teachers.

The second chapter examined the relevant literature of teacher identity, masculinity and machismo, and cultural queerness. Each of these frameworks helped establish a foundation for examining gay Puerto Rican's teachers' experiences. The third chapter outlined the rationale, narrative inquiry methodology, research questions, and research design. Furthermore, my epistemology, trustworthiness, and validity were explored. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How, if at all, does masculinity and machismo influence Puerto Rican gay teachers' identities?
2. How do gay teachers in Puerto Rico make sense of their identity in terms of ethnicity and sexual identity?
3. What obstacles, if any, do Puerto Rican gay teachers perceive that prevent them from revealing their sexual orientation to their colleagues and students at school?

The fourth chapter encompassed the themes and sub-themes that emerged in the data collection and analysis process, as shared by the participants of this study. The narratives and findings in this chapter reflect how the participants made sense of how machismo was present in the way their teaching and sexual identity connected. Also, how that connection came into play in the way, they relate to people around them. The fifth chapter will examine the findings through the lenses provided by the relevant literature as well as the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of LatCrit and queer theory. The discussion from this study revealed that all six participants are aware of how machismo is a part of their everyday lives, as well as how it relates to the way they enact their identities inside of the classroom. All six participants gave examples from their lives, thinking back on how their gay identities are maneuvered with masculine ideals in Puerto Rico. Also, the study limitations and implications for research and practice are explored. Chapter five ends with an outlining of final thoughts on the study.

### **Discussion**

This research began with the goal of focusing on how gay Puerto Rican teachers negotiate and make sense of their masculinities and sexual identities. From the interviews conducted with Adai, Theo, Albert, Dallas, Juno, and Nicholas, three main themes emerged. In the interpretation phase, the four themes (detrimental machismo, monitoring gender, benefits of being a man, and shifting identities in schools) that were created addressed masculinity and machismo issues, teacher identity issues, and being a gay teacher. These conclusions address the central research question, which asks how masculinity and machismo influence gay teachers' identities in Puerto Rico. The following conclusions focus on the Adai, Theo, Nicholas, Juno, Dallas, and Albert's understandings of masculinity and machismo in their identities.

#### **Discussion Around Gender and Masculinity: "I have to be a man every single day." (Theo)**

Gender and masculine stereotypes have influenced the perceptions of gay male teachers in Puerto Rico and how their identity constructions in education. Adai, Theo, Albert, Juno, Nicholas, and Dallas positioned themselves in ways that allowed them to navigate their identities in the classroom. For

example, Theo was aware of how his mannerisms changed when in his school and Dallas, was aware of the way he manipulated his walk and voice in order to be seen as manly. They have been able to fluidly navigate and avoid gender and masculine stereotypes like how female teachers are perceived as emotional and the caregivers while male teachers are perceived as aggressive and just a father figure for students. Their narratives offer a way to understand, disrupt, and reinforce their choices (i.e., deepening their voice, acting less feminine, and socializing with more men in schools) when it comes to their identities.

Studies have found that male teachers feel pressured to perform specific kinds of masculinities (Hjalmarson & Lofdahl, 2014; Lupton, 2006). Adai, Theo, Albert, Juno, Nicholas, and Dallas all felt, in and out of schools, to enact specific masculinities in order for their sexualities to not be questioned. The data presented revealed an emphasis on ideas of anti-femininity in how gay Puerto Rican men when discussing machismo and their identities in the classroom. Most of the participants in this study avoided and rejected being overly feminine in order to fulfill their expected masculine roles. Engaging in this avoidance, the participants can, concerning Butler (1990/2006), create their everyday identities through their chosen performances.

Puerto Rican machismo reinforces the idea that women or female attributes are undermined in schools by perpetuating relationships based on power. As seen in chapter four, the participant's masculinities protected and encouraged actions like speaking out, job opportunities, aggression, and decision making as a way that avoided emasculation by others around them, and by engaging in such behavior. The participants' emotional expression, relationship with women, and relationship with students was limited due to this active avoidance of femininity. The participants expressed that they, knowingly, distanced themselves from feminine aspects within their respective schools. All of the participants in this study talked about displaying affection towards their students but in a way that is not considered excessive in order, for them, to not break the expectations of men in Puerto Rico.

Richardson (2012) found that male teachers fought against the feminine perceptions of education by choosing to fall into ideals of hypermasculinity and disassociating themselves from the sensitive and



feminine nature of teaching. For instance, this can be seen in the way Adai, Theo, Nicholas, and Dallas mentioned that they formed their own "groups" or "clubs" in order to highlight that they are not going to be thought of as falling into female notions in education. These interactions show that men create their masculinities through relationships with other men and in response to how they are viewed. Albert, Juno, Nicholas, and Dallas expressed that they have been able to construct masculinities due to being surrounded by a mass of female educators. These masculine constructions fall in line with Foucault (1978) because by creating these so-called groups in schools, the participants can have control over any conversations and actions that arise in that setting, therefore, allowing those identities to discursively produced through their language and interactions. This allows them to build their masculinities through the power created in that specific context. Teaching alongside women with diverse backgrounds helped them understand the masculine and feminine traits of education without having to fall to the stereotypical notions of feminized education.

Also, teaching in a space that allows them to connect with other men in their contexts allows them for the creation of a similar understanding of balancing teaching in a feminized perception. On the other hand, Adai and Theo correspond to what Richardson's study presented. They expressed how they construct their masculinities in schools, in part by creating relationships with other male teachers in their schools. They were able to construct a range of identities by surrounding themselves with, what they believe, are correct masculine ideals such as strength, independence, courage, leadership, which leads to the creation of emotionally detached men, who, in turn, harm their own identities and people around them. Connell (2005) found that men in education adopt hegemonic views of masculinity in order to fit in. This was the case of Juno, Nicholas, and Dallas, who expressed that their masculinities evolved depending on the school context they are working in. They pointed out that their masculinities may vary depending on their interaction with specific students, colleagues, and school contexts.

Also, all six participants have had conversations regarding physical contact at some point during their career as an educator, with children. Nicholas and Dallas expressed their caution when starting their

teaching careers when referring to how much physical contact they should have with students. Adai expressed how he always has a teaching assistant present when meeting with students in order to have a witness if a situation with any student should happen. Adai mentions, “I rely on my assistant when my students have an accident, fight, cry, or anything else happens. My assistant is a female, so that allows me to rely on her if a kid needs to be picked up or comforted for a long time. This is a very Latino, very Puerto Rican way of thinking.” Also, he credits his open window classroom as a way to ease any concerns he or others may have when it comes to physical contact with his students. By allowing the self-interrogation of physical contact with his students, Adai, emphasizes the intersection of gendered and cultural (in this case Puerto Rican) factors in the way his identities are monitored in the classroom which harkens to this LatCrit idea of how race intersects with subordinating factors such as gender and sexuality.

Theo and Albert recount how, when in their teaching preparation programs, they noticed the emphasis on them being males because professors would continuously tell them to be careful about the way they approach student interactions, especially physical ones. As for Juno, who teaches in an elementary school, he mentions how he does approach physicality with his students in the forms of hugs, yet he always kneels in order to avoid any proximity between the children and his crotch area. The innate desire to show affection as a teacher and a role model for your students is essential to show empathy to children. Having a male figure who shows affection and physicality is essential for students who are trying to understand the ideas of masculinity and what machismo is. This harkens to the idea of male Latino teachers constructing a role model figure (Connell, 2005) and engaging in *caballerismo*, which promotes male teachers engaging in physical contact with their students in order to contribute to their cultural thinking of what being a man is.

Participants recognized the intersection between their male identity and their identity as Puerto Rican men. All of the participants recognized their privilege as men but also acknowledged the pressures of falling into the Puerto Rican expectations around masculine ideals. The participants’ identity as men

and Latinos were interconnected in their profession, and they were able to talk about the role of their identities. For example, the participants mentioned how they experience privilege when their voices are being heard over those of female colleagues. However, this came with added responsibilities in their work because such privilege is afforded onto them for being men, which links back to the construction of masculinities and LatCrit, which affords you an inherent sense of respect. After all, they are Latino men and expanding the idea that masculine sensibilities are utilized and privileged through academic and professional contexts. Therefore, the participants expressed they due experience freedoms due to their gender, yet higher expectations are set upon them because of this. If Puerto Rican men deviate from machismo, they risk being perceived as less of a man and susceptible to sanctions from the Latino community.

It is the participant's inevitable relationship with machismo even if they acknowledge the negative aspects and how it relates to their experiences. This study illustrated the participant's perspective on machismo, which mostly centered on having negative influences in their lives. According to the participants, machismo has mostly negative aspects of how Latino men engage with their identities. Although in some instances, the participants mentioned some positive aspects of machismo, they mostly struggled coming up with anything but negative experiences. The data presented shows a distinct tension for the participants in connecting positive aspects to machismo. For example, Theo acknowledges that machismo has given him elements of chivalry, "I was taught that machismo also allows me to be nice to women in small ways like opening car doors but the baggage it brings with it outweighs any small specs of positivity." Mirroring this, Nicholas adds, "I think machismo is thought of as something that should, to some degree, make us a better person and be the pillars of our families, but the way it is enacted makes us be awful men." These examples show the way the Puerto Rican men struggle with the idea of machismo having positive traits. Even though conversations around machismo were mostly negative, the participants did acknowledge that it is inevitable to avoid machismo ideals, especially as gay men, which they do in order to fit into masculine expectations of men on the island. This study seeks to expand the literature by

depicting specific voices, their relationship with notions of machismo, and present analysis on experiences of gay Puerto Rican teachers in order to assert the experiences of Latino men that mostly missing from the field.

**Discussion Around Teaching: “Can I be a gay teacher?” (Adai).**

Pedagogy often marginalizes identities that do not fall into the heteronormative ideals of society (DePalma & Atkinson, 2009; Ferfolja, 2009). For the participants of this study, their teaching identities were managed in different ways. The issue of not engaging in conversations around their sexual identity allowed others to believe they are heterosexual by confirming to established social norms. The participants present how gay teaching identity is fluid and involves personal choice in regards to disclosing their sexual identity. Each of the participants individually expressed the reasons why they engage or not in conversations surrounding their sexualities. Even though the participants shared common cultural space, Puerto Rico, their teaching identities were not predictable, and all of them engaged their identity in different ways.

The identity negotiation of Adai, Theo, Albert, Juno, Nicholas, and Albert continue to be influenced by their school context (Gee, 2000), how they perceive themselves concerning other men and how they think of machismo and being gay in personal and professional settings (Day & Kingston, 2008). Some of the participants shared how they are aware that their identities change over time due to the experiences of each individual and depending on their school contexts. All of the participant's personal and professional identities have been influenced by the context and situational factors around them.

All six participants are aware that their career paths are considered to be a mostly female profession. They also expressed how they have come to terms with that education is perceived that way, and with this understanding, their identity negotiation has helped ease the questioning of their feminine career. All of them mentioned that being surrounded by a large number of females who are supportive and understand how education is perceived has helped them to avoid identity strains when it comes to their

professional identity. Despite the historical nature of education in which men are not expected to become teachers, Adai, Theo, Albert, Juno, Nicholas, and Dallas have become more comfortable in education.

Jones and Hodson (2011) and Sargent (2000) have shown how male teachers have experience contradictions when negotiating identities as teachers and as men. Adai, Theo, and Albert expressed that they have experienced such contradictions while being teachers. You can see this when they expressed how they were expected to be role models for their students, especially for the boys they would have in their classrooms. Adai and Theo embraced the idea of being a role model as they both understood how boys are taught, in Puerto Rico, to look up to male figures. On the other hand, Albert distanced himself, although not entirely, from the idea of being a teacher for the sole purpose of being a role model. In his mind being a role model is linked with being a strict disciplinarian, which he does not see as part of his teaching identity. Some of the participants, in this case, Adai, Theo, and Albert are comfortable with the idea of being in the classroom in order to be a role model while others stray away from such notions. Juno and Dallas are aware of this idea but steer away from it as, according to them, their number one purpose is to teach, whereas Nicholas felt indifferent to this idea.

Sumsion (2002) found that teacher identities are constructed through the connection between their personal and professional lives, which was evident in all six of the participants. As previously discussed, their sexual identities, as gay men, influenced their identities and masculinities in and outside of the classroom. The way they present themselves in classrooms, and the relationship they create with their students continue to be a significant factor in how their personal and professional identities come together. Juno strives to be a personable teacher for the students and has a goal of creating a relationship more than teacher-student. Nicholas works to be outgoing and fun, especially with the classes he teaches, which allow for a sense of fun and creativity. Dallas builds relationships with the students by creating a sense of family in his classes. However, all of the participants expressed how they believe many of these relationships may not happen or be received the same way if students knew that they are gay. Sumsion (2002) mentions how the personal and professional come into play when negotiating identities, and to a

degree, we see that in these instances. Nevertheless, by not addressing their sexuality, an essential factor in their personal lives is left out in the creation of those relationships.

Disclosing sexual identity, for the participants, was a consistent talking point. Sapon-Shevin (2004) argues how the decision to disclose or not to disclose your sexual identity comes with emotional bearing, which involves "contextualized, complex and embedded decisions" (p.73). All of the participants of the study disclosed how they choose not to come out in schools for different reasons. For example, Albert shared, "I don't wanna come out because I do not want to deal with what students would say. Kids can be cruel, and I am not ready to deal with anything that they might say," and as for Nicholas, "I am just worried that parents would make a big deal that their kids have a gay teacher."

Studies have argued that teachers' sexuality is present in the classroom, to some degree, even if intentional or not (Barker & Reavey, 2009; Jackson, 2006). Four of the participants, Adai, Juno, Dallas, and Theo, expressed interest in disclosing their sexuality at some point only if they were sure that such disclosure would hinder their professional standing. Theo shared, "Yeah it would be great to be out, and I probably would share it with my colleagues and students at some point but that day has not arrived" while Adai said, "I have a boyfriend, and someday I would like to be married, and it would be awesome to share that or just have a picture of my husband in my desk. So, at some point, I would come out." All participants, however, acknowledged that coming out in the classroom could lead to more open teaching in the environment for them as teachers and for the students.

Clair (2005) grouped into four groups, the motivations to disclose their sexual identity: a) to maintain a sense of self, b) to build or maintain relationships, 3) to accommodate for that identity, 4) to promote social change. For Adai and Theo, their disclosure of their sexual identity would be linked to maintaining their selves. They would like to come out in schools and to their students, but they still believe that Puerto Rico is still retrograded when it comes to accepting queer identities. They both mentioned that being out would make it easier in many ways, but the fear of losing their jobs and being ostracized outweigh the decision not to disclose their gayness. Albert and Juno's decision to disclose their

identities would be tied to building more authentic relationships with their students. They both acknowledge that being open in the classroom might lead to a closer relationship with students as well as discussions of topics around sexuality which, would, hopefully, benefit the school community.

Juno and Dallas view coming out as a way to promote social change in schools. They are aware of students who identify within the queer spectrum and would like to be open in order to have conversations around those topics. However, the fear of retribution or negative talks around their sexuality stops them. Creed & Sully (2000) acknowledge that by disclosing identities in the classroom teacher create a positive environment and build conversations around marginalized groups. On the other hand, Nicholas is unsure if he would come out to his students. He stated that it would be a deep internal conversation he would have even if protections were awarded to queer educators. He acknowledged that way of thinking comes from living in a space that feeds into the notions that being gay and not acting macho is terrible.

**Summary.** During their time as teachers Adai, Theo, Albert, Dallas, Nicholas, and Juno have benefited and also been limited by the social structures and notions of machismo and sexual identity. These factors have contributed to the construction of their masculinities and the way they negotiate their identities, which have been interconnected throughout their experiences as teachers in Puerto Rico. All of the participant's stories reveal them to be caring, nurturing, in love with their professions, as well as teachers who like to build relationships with their students. Also, they reveal to be careful in the way they portray their sexual identities in the classroom and are actively aware of how they enact the expected masculinities in the Puerto Rican context. The participants in this study expressed how fitting into the expected parameters of masculinities and sexual identity in Puerto Rico have hindered and aided their relationship with their identities. Brody (2014), Connell (2005), and Deneen (2011) found that male teachers both hinder and aide their identities when constructing their masculine identities in ways that people expect them to. Their experiences reveal moments in which they are aware of the complicity in drawing in the benefits of being a man, by also acknowledging the subordinate and marginalized nature of

machismo in teaching. They have benefited from the notions of hegemonic masculinities, yet have also been uncomfortable with the ideals they feel they have to fit into in order to fit into masculine expectations as a male teacher.

### **Limitations**

This study has several limitations that could limit its transferability to other settings. First, the context of the study becomes a limitation because all the participants of the study come from a specific geographical region, Puerto Rico. Furthermore, the context has another layer of difficulty as the participants come from different regions and settings within the island. The Latino context could affect the transferability of findings, limiting them to other educators on the island or Latino educators outside of Puerto Rico. Second, the sample size limits the scope of identities in the study. With a larger sample size, a more significant number of experiences and narratives could have been looked at during the study. These participants contacted me to participate after I sent out a recruitment call for the study. This leads me to consider the possibility of other teachers that may have seen the email but was not comfortable in participating in the study.

Another limitation comes from the specific group within the LGBTQ+ community I, as the researcher, chose to look at. Greater diversity in sexual and or gender identities from bisexual, trans, Afro-Latino men, and other identities would have allowed for more vibrant data connections to masculinity in Puerto Rico. Furthermore, though the interviews with the participants provided rich data, their perceptions and recounting of the experiences can shift depending on what they recall and what they remember of such experiences. Even though follow-up interviews were done and previous conversations were brought up by the researcher, narratives come from the participant and what they remember at that moment in time when the interview is occurring.

Furthermore, the analysis process may be another limitation. The interviews contributing to the data corpus of the study was very vast and contained themes that were not chosen to be discussed by the researcher. The researcher was exclusively concerned with addressing the research questions at hand.



Data corpus from the interviews with the participants was not selected as part of this study. Further, an in-depth analysis of the remaining data corpus could lead to interesting information about the participants, yet this was outside of the scope of this study.

Lastly, this study is limited to participant population and geographical context; therefore, the goal is not generalizability, but rather, transferability. Transferability allows for finding to be transferred to other similar settings. The experiences of the participants of this study are not representative of every gay male teacher in Puerto Rico but can be transferable to other experiences and Latinx context in and outside of the island. This study is not intended to be a manual that can be used to every gay Latino teacher in pedagogical contexts but rather as a study that addresses broader pedagogical conversations around masculinity and gay Latino teachers.

### **What's next?**

The findings of this study point to the implications for teaching and practicing classroom teachers, as well as implications for research about LGBTQ+ issues in Latinx contexts. The data in this study illustrates the value of representing the gendered experiences of Latinx gay men in educational contexts. Addressing implications for teachers and researchers will not only improve the experiences of masculinities in education and gay teachers but also improve the opportunities for bringing these populations into research. Based on the narratives of Adai, Theo, Nicholas, Juno, Dallas, and Albert, I present recommendations to improve the experiences of male teachers, gay male teachers, and recommendations on what other research can this study lead to.

**What's next for male teachers?** One of the reasons this study was done was to explore the experiences of male teachers and their experiences in education. Previous studies (Brody, 2014; Cushman, 2007; Erden, 2009; Johnson, 2011; Skelton, 2009) have focused on the experiences of men in education and the shortage of male teachers in pedagogy. These studies have looked at specific cultural experiences and attempts to improve the understanding and experiences around masculinities and their impact in the classroom. This shows the importance, across the literature, to further explore such

experiences. By exploring male teachers and their experiences in schools, this study was meant to explore and approach to better understand how they navigate notions of gender, stereotypes, and masculinities.

The experiences and results that were talked about in this study offer a chance to understand better how power and gender in education are addressed, explored, and understood, as well as presenting an opportunity to address the shortage in research around masculinities in teachers.

In his study, Johnson (2011), suggested focusing on the cultural contexts that affect male teacher's identity expression and the effects that may have in the classroom. I suggest more studies around masculinity as well as the cultural and contextual factors that come into play when male teachers are in the classroom. Although this study focuses on a specific geographical and contextual population, I hope that researchers and teachers around the world can look at this study and relate to the experiences of these participant's and that would lead to further exploration of male experiences in education. Also, more research on men and masculinity from different contexts, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds in education is needed. Although the strength of this study is in the detailed description and narratives that explore a specific group, the lack of diversity in the research around men in education leaves space for future research. Williams (2013), suggests the need to apply intersectionality to the experiences of male teachers in order to get a better picture of what is going in classrooms with masculine ideals — exploring diverse stories from male teachers' offers the potential to better understand how they navigate gender norms and heteronormative spaces in a profession that is innately thought of as a female one.

**What's next for gay teachers?** There are direct implications for gay male teachers in schools. This study seeks to join (Bartolome, 2004; Ferfolja, 2007; Jackson, 2006; King, 2004; Sumsion, 2000) as part of the literature used to give a better understanding of LGBTQ+ teachers in the field. There is a multitude of initiatives that schools can implement to support LGBTQ+ teacher success. For instance, schools should make it practice to support groups that cater to the LGBTQ+ community for students and teachers such as a Gay-Straight Alliance, the Gay, Lesbian, Support Education Network (GLSEN) which directly work with schools in regards to LGBTQ+ issues, and the Human Rights Campaign which also is

known to work with LGBTQ+ communities in schools. The groups mentioned above recognize the necessity of having support, not only for students who identify as LGBTQ+ but for educators at all levels.

There needs to be an outreach program, so these organizations are more prevalent in schools. Also, initiatives and programs that deal with the discussion of masculinity and machismo in pedagogical spaces would be beneficial to not only LGBTQ+ teachers but teachers and students in general. The findings of this study showed the intersecting identities of the participants around masculinity and their sexual identities. They found it difficult to deviate from notions of masculinity in the Puerto Rican context. Creating spaces for gay teachers to talk about, disrupt, and challenged masculinity ideals in schools would be a beneficial experience that would allow them to engage in conversations around it with students and better teaching practices.

**What's next for teacher education.** Masculinity in teacher education, and gay Latinx teaching identities, specifically in Puerto Rico, are understudied areas. The narratives shared by the participants revealed how masculinity intersected with their sexual identities and how that affected their chosen identities when it came to educational contexts. This study allows new areas of research to be explored and expanded. First, this study focuses on the participant's narratives of masculinity and sexual identities, yet it does not explore the impact such identities have on their teaching practices. There is little research that focuses on Latinx gay men inside of the classroom. Therefore, further research is needed to explore the decisions and interactions of gay Latinx men with curriculum, instructional practices, and the ideas that drive their decisions inside of pedagogical contexts.

Moreover, their understanding of masculinity in Latino contexts can help elaborate on the conversations needed with students to engage in breaking misogynistic notions in schools. Also, further research is need on queer Latinx male experiences. Research tends to relegate queers of colors to the side or only mentions them in passing and does not delve into their experiences. It is essential to have a variety of experiences in order to explore the disruption and transgression of heteronormative notions in Latinx contexts. Exploring these populations would enrich the literature and understanding of teacher education.

This study presents the experiences of six gay Puerto Rican teachers who choose not to disclose their sexual identities in school contexts. Also, all of the participants identify as “white” or “light-skinned” Puerto Ricans. As a researcher these two possible routes are of interest to me. I would like to explore the gay identities of Puerto Rican men who identify as Afro-Boricua and how their experiences differ from the participants in this study. Furthermore, the possibility of exploring the identities of “out” gay men is interesting to me as it may change the interactions with students, colleagues, and others teachers. The possibility of exploring both of these populations in the future would provide a further understanding of Puerto Rican queer identities and their relationship with teaching.

### **Final Thoughts**

In 2015, I was teaching at The University of Puerto Rico – Mayagüez, a writing course while working on my Master's. In one of my classes, after my students saw me in a production of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, we had conversations around some of them felt that their perception of me had changed because of what they saw the previous night. They were having trouble understanding how the image that they had seen in class (deep voice, severe, beard, and in their words "manly") was turned upside down in the production because they were seeing me in drag makeup, wigs, heels, and kissing, both men and women. That day I realized that I was, inadvertently, changing my identities when I walked in the classroom. It was when these conversations happened that I realized the importance of engaging in conversations around how gay Puerto Rican teachers make sense of their identities and how they enact them in the classroom.

For me, this research engages in a conversation around how gay teachers in Puerto Rico navigate their identities when it comes to machismo and sexuality within schools. Stepping away from this study, I am committed to having conversations around machismo and gayness in education. This study not only seeks to make a change for Puerto Rican male teachers but to engage male teachers, straight or gay, in conversations around how masculinity can influence decisions in education. A valuable piece of this research was to share spaces with Adai, Theo, Albert, Juno, Nicholas, and Dallas. These conversations

allowed me and them to critically reflect on our experiences with machismo and sexuality on the island.

The months I spent talking to them aided me in becoming more socially and culturally aware of the experiences of other gay teachers on the island. Hopefully, this research is a small step towards bringing the experiences of Puerto Rican teachers into academia.

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## Appendix A

### Recruitment E-mail

Dear Educator,

I hope this finds you well. My name is Gabriel T. Acevedo Velázquez and I am a Ph.D. student at The Pennsylvania State University. For my dissertation study, I am recruiting Puerto Rican males who identify as gay and who are or have been teachers in the Puerto Rican school system (private or public institutions).

The purpose of this study is to investigate Puerto Rican men's relationship with masculinity, machismo, queerness and its intersection with their teaching identity. Participants will be asked to explore the connection between their masculinity, queerness and teaching identity. As well as, considering the ways their intersecting identities (e.g. ethnicity, language, culture, sexual identity, and others) may influence their intersecting identities. The stories and experiences shared in the study will help to illustrate the ways in which Puerto Rican gay teachers continue to strive for a successful place in education.

Participants would participate in a set of in-person interviews in Puerto Rico or the option for online interviews. Your involvement in this study would help in the development of initiatives to support non-normative teaching identities. This study will also allow you to consider how your masculinity and various factors have informed your teaching identity. Such reflection can be a powerful experience, as you consider your successes thus far and what it means to be a Puerto Rican gay educator.

If you are unsure about participating, wish to have a conversation, and ask any questions in relation to the study before making a final decision feel free to text or call me at XXX-XXX-XXXX.

If you are interested in participating, please reach out to me at [gta1@psu.edu](mailto:gta1@psu.edu) for more information, concerns, and to sign up to participate.

Sincerely,  
Gabriel T. Acevedo Velázquez

## Appendix B

### Participant Consent Form

**Project Title:** Identity Narratives: Gay Male Teachers Experiences in Puerto Rico

**Researcher(s):** Gabriel T. Acevedo, PhD. Candidate, The Pennsylvania State University

**Faculty/Dissertation Advisor:** Ashley Patterson, PhD., The Pennsylvania State University

#### **Introduction:**

You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Gabriel T. Acevedo Velázquez for part of his dissertation study at The Pennsylvania State University under the supervision of Dr. Ashley Patterson in the Curriculum & Instruction – Language, Culture & Society program at The Pennsylvania State University.

You are being asked to participate because you meet all of the following criteria:

- a) Identify as Puerto Rican
- b) Must identify as a man
- c) Identify as gay
- d) Must have been assigned male at birth
- e) Has worked as a teacher (private or public institution) in Puerto Rico in any level (Elementary or Secondary)

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

#### **Purpose:**

The purpose of the study is to investigate Puerto Rican men's relationship with masculinity, queerness and their teaching identity. The research has a specific interest in the ways intersecting factors (e.g. ethnicity, language, culture, sexual identity, and others) may influence such identities. As well as, the ways their upbringing, cultural factors and experiences have informed their understating of masculinity and their teacher identities.

#### **Procedures:**

If you agree to the study, you will be asked to complete an in-person set of interviews lasting approximately 60-75 minutes. The interviews will be audiotaped and transcribed.

#### **Risks/Benefits:**

There are minimal risks involved in participating in this research and there are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. For example, you may experience some discomfort responding to some of the questions.

There are no guaranteed benefits to participants who participate in this study. However, the stories shared in this study will support a greater understanding of Puerto Rican gay teachers and masculinity. This study also offers an opportunity for Latino men to explore a taboo topic in many Latino communities, machismo and queerness. Moreover, participants will be able to

reflect on their personal relationship with masculinity and queerness in this study. As well as, sharing their experiences as educators.

### **Confidentiality:**

- a) Participants will be asked to select a pseudonym when they complete this participant consent form. This pseudonym will be used in all recordings and reporting information to ensure your confidentiality.
- b) After the interview, participants will be emailed the transcript (completed by the researcher, Gabriel T. Acevedo) to ensure validity and accuracy of your statements.
- c) All information shared with the researcher will be kept confidential and protected on a password-protected computer.
- d) At the completion of the study, including writing and reporting findings, all data (i.e. notes, recordings, transcripts) will be destroyed.
- e) Do you agree to be audio recorded?  
 I agree to be audio recorded.  
 I do not agree to be audio recorded, so I will be unable to participate in the study.

### **Voluntary Participation:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question(s) or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

### **Contacts and Questions:**

If you have questions about this research study, please feel free to contact:

- Gabriel T. Acevedo Velázquez at [gta1@psu.edu](mailto:gta1@psu.edu)
- Or the faculty/dissertation advisor, Dr. Ashley Patterson at [anp5404@psu.edu](mailto:anp5404@psu.edu)

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact The Pennsylvania State University Institutional Review Board at (814) 863-9580

### **Statement of Consent:**

Your answers and signature below indicate that you have read the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

**1. By checking the box below, you agree to participate in the study.**

I agree

**2. Do you identify as Puerto Rican?**

Yes

No

3. **Do you identify as a man?**  
 Yes  
 No
4. **Were you assigned male at birth?**  
 Yes  
 No
5. **Do you identify as gay?**  
 Yes  
 No
6. **Are you working or have worked as a teacher in Puerto Rico either in a private or public institution (school)?**  
 Yes  
 No
7. **Full Name:** \_\_\_\_\_
8. **Name the current and/or past institutions (schools) you have worked at:**  
 \_\_\_\_\_
9. **Years of teaching experience:** \_\_\_\_\_
10. **What levels have you taught? (Elementary, Jr. High School, High School):**  
 \_\_\_\_\_
11. **What subjects have you taught?**  
 \_\_\_\_\_
12. **Please enter your email address:**  
 \_\_\_\_\_
13. **What days/times work best for an interview (60-75 minutes):**  
 \_\_\_\_\_
14. **Select a pseudonym (another name that will be used instead of your real name for the protection of your confidentiality):** \_\_\_\_\_
15. **You are also invited to watch Justin Baldoni's TED Talk prior to the interview, to support your reflection about how masculinity may influence your life. His discussion on how to be "man enough" is an informative video that shares the influence of masculinity and machismo in our lives as Latino men.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Researcher's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

## Appendix C

### Individual Interview Protocol

Thank you again for taking the time to meet with me today, I really appreciate it. My name is Gabriel T Acevedo and I will be conducting the interview today for my dissertation study. The purpose of this study is to investigate Puerto Rican men's relationship with masculinity, machismo, queerness and its intersection with their teaching identity. Participants will be asked to explore the connection between their masculinity, queerness and teaching identity. As well as, considering the ways their intersecting identities (e.g. ethnicity, language, culture, sexual identity, and others) may influence their intersecting identities. The stories and experiences shared in the study will help to illustrate the ways in which Puerto Rican gay teachers continue to strive for a successful place in education. I am interested in any stories and experiences you are willing to share that will help me better understand these topics.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and should take about 60-75 minutes. I also welcome you in speaking either English, Spanish, or a blending of the two if you wish; so that you are comfortable as you share your lived experiences with me. With your permission, I will also audio record our conversation so I get your words accurately. If at any time during our conversation you do not feel comfortable or do not wish to answer, please feel free to say, "next question" and I will skip to the next question. All of your responses will be kept confidential and the pseudonym you selected will be used to protect your confidentiality. Do you agree to participate, and to allow me to start the audio recording of our conversation?

To begin the interview, I would like to ask you what interested you in the study? What do you think about what this study is about? Do you have any questions about the study?

#### **Gay/Teaching/Personal Identities:**

1. What term do you use to identify yourself and why? How is that identity important to you? Did that change how you talked about yourself? How did it change?
2. What stories can give me a picture of how your identities (e.g. ethnicity, language, culture, sexual identity, and others) come up on a regular basis for you connect to your experiences as a gay teacher?
  - a. What does it mean to be a gay teacher? What images come to mind when one says gay teacher?
  - b. Are there any other memories of identities (e.g. ethnicity, religion/spirituality, sexual identity, socioeconomic status, immigration status, generational status, language, others) that come up on a regular basis for you that interconnect your sexuality, masculinity and teaching? If so what story can you share that can illustrate that?



- c. Any other memories that come to mind when you think about your intersecting identities and how they affect your gay-teaching identity?
3. Are you openly gay in your job? Why did you choose to “come out” or be open about it? If you are not open in your job, why is that?
- a. Do you think there would be a loss of legitimacy or credibility if you were an openly gay teacher?
- b. Have you ever had to present yourself differently from how you might present yourself outside of school? If so, why? How?
4. What, if at all, positive or negative experiences have you had that relate to your gay identity with students, administrators, colleagues, or parents in schools? Can you share a story to illustrate?
- a. Who was involved?
- b. How, if at all, was masculinity or machismo present during this experience?
- c. How, if at all, did this experience reinforce or challenge machismo?
5. Have you ever observed yourself acting out with excessive masculinity or machismo on your job through speech, actions, or behaviors? Is there a story you can share to give me a picture of how this was performed?
- a. If yes, who was involved? Where did it happen (i.e. classrooms, student organizations, administrative meetings, other spaces)?
- b. If no, why do you think that is the case?
- c. How, if at all, do your identities influence how you act out your masculinity in these different settings?
- d. Has there ever been a situation in which you have been pressured to conform to the norm of the environment in which you teach?
6. Describe how, if at all, teaching has influenced your masculinity? Is there a story or memory that you could share that illustrates how it has?
- a. If yes, which spaces have been most influential?
- b. If no, why do you think that is the case?
7. Have you ever handled a situation in which the topic of gayness has come up in your classroom or school setting?
- a. How did you handle it? How do think your beliefs of masculinity and teaching affect

the way you approach such situation?

**Masculinity & Machismo:**

1. What does it mean to be a Latino/Puerto Rican gay man to you? What does it mean to be Puerto Rican to you? Is there a story you can share that gives me a picture of what being a Puerto Rican male is like for you?

2. How, if at all, have masculinity and machismo shown up for you as a Puerto Rican gay man growing up? How about in your teaching experience? Is there a story that you can share that helps depict the ways in which masculinity and machismo have shown up in your gay/teaching experiences?

a. Where did this take place?

b. Who was it involved?

c. Were there any rules or expectations?

3. Have you observed or participated in machismo since you learned about it? Is there a story that you can share that illustrates a time you observed or participated in machismo?

a. Who was involved?

b. Where was it?

c. How, if at all, are machismo and/or masculinity positive or negative?

Now, I have asked all of my questions, but I wanted to leave some time for you to share any other experiences or insights you might want to share with me. You are also welcome to ask me any questions, if you have any.

## Appendix D

### Focus Group Interview Protocol

Thank you again for being part of this study and for agreeing to be part of this group interview. My goal today is to have all of us share about some of the experiences that came up during the course of the individual interviews and see how we all relate to each other. I am interested in hearing your voices as we make sense and relate our sexuality, masculinity, and our teaching.

There are a few questions that I have to guide discussion but the conversation is made up of whatever you guys want to talk about and expand using those questions as guide. These questions serve as guide and other supplemental questions may come up as we are talking. Just a reminder that this group interview is anonymous and I will be recording this interview for the sake of accuracy and transcriptions.

- 1- What factors do you think come up for Puerto Rican gay teachers to not come out as gay in school environments?
- 2- Do you think there is a risk if you come out to your students?
- 3- How do you handle issues around masculinity and masculine role models with your students?
- 4- Why is the idea of masculinity still so visible in Puerto Rican schools?
- 5- Do you think Puerto Rican culture makes it harder for men to be teachers? How does Puerto Rican culture affect your actions as gay men?
- 6- Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences in relation to the topics of this study?

**VITA**  
**Gabriel T. Acevedo Velázquez**

**EDUCATION**

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Fall 2016- present

**Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction, *Language, Culture & Society***

The Pennsylvania State University, State College, Pennsylvania

Dissertation: “Negotiating the Classroom: Identity Narratives of Gay Teachers and Masculinity in Puerto Rico”

January 2017

**M.A. in English Education**

University of Puerto Rico – Mayagüez Campus, Puerto Rico

Thesis: “Discovering your own LGBTQ voice: A Look at Queer Children’s Literature and their use in the Puerto Rican Classroom”

June 2013

**B.A. in Secondary & Elementary English Education and Multimedia Technology**

University of Puerto Rico – Aguadilla Campus, Puerto Rico

Concentration: English Language Arts

**PUBLICATIONS**

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Acevedo, G. (2019). “Gringo or Puerto Rican, Straight or Gay... Simply My Identity.” *Critical Storytelling Book Series: Critical Storytelling: Multilingual Immigrants in the United States*. [Forthcoming]

Acevedo, G. (2019). “Mister yo no sabía que tú eras gay”: A story about being a gay teacher in Puerto Rico. *Cruce Magazine: Pride Edition*. [Submitted]

Acevedo, G. (2019). “You speak Spanglish, I speak Spanglish, we all speak Spanglish”: A Narrative of Being a Bilingual Graduate Student in an all English Institution. *Sábanas Bilingual Literary Magazine*. [Submitted]

**CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS**

---

Acevedo, G. (2020). “Yo me pongo falda para bailar Bomba y Plena aunque sea hombre”: A Narrative Inquiry at Queer Resistance through Dance in Puerto Rico. VIII Colloquium Del Otro Lao: Queer Art and Activism in Contemporary Puerto Rico. Mayagüez, P.R. [Forthcoming]

Acevedo, G. (2020). Queer Nuances in the A-list Actor: A look at Masculinities in Tarantino’s new ‘Hollywood’ Film. 50<sup>th</sup> PCA/ACA National Conference. Philadelphia, PA. [Forthcoming]

Acevedo, G. (2019). Breaking the Colonial Language inside Puerto Rican ESL Classrooms. 50<sup>th</sup> PRTESOL Annual Convention: PRTESOL 5.0: Vision, Voice & Vehicle of a Vibrant Vocation, Guayanilla, PR.

Acevedo, G. (2019). “It’s my turn to teach them”: Future teachers Finding their Voice through Writing. 2019 NCTE Annual Convention Teacher-Writer Roundtables, Baltimore, MD.