

Purpose: Manifest the underlying masculine rules that govern STEM Discourses by understanding how STEM students at a Hispanic Serving Institution **construct and reproduce** gendered expectations of “STEM personhood” in their characterizations of themselves and important people they know.

Discourse, Gendering, & STEM Identity

STEM Discourses in postsecondary settings dictate the STEM-related ways-of-being that are socially recognized as valid identifiers of a “STEM person”. In many relational contexts, these Discourses favor masculine expressions. Students adopt and reproduce these Discourses as they are socialized into STEM by how they judge STEM performances.

Research Approach

How do you think about STEM and interact with others in STEM contexts?

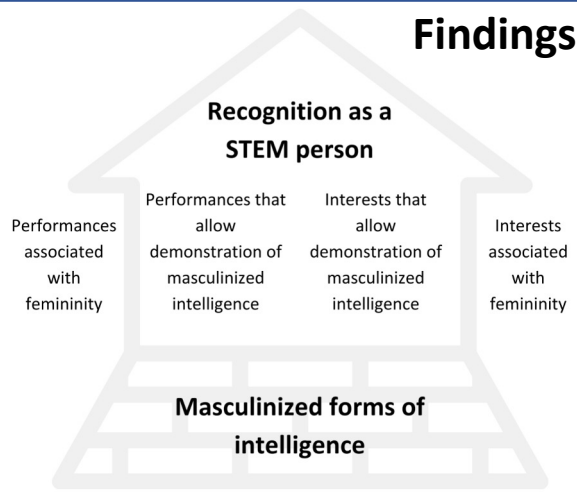


Interviews with 20 students at a Hispanic Serving Institute in the U.S.



When students talk about people in STEM contexts, how do they characterize their competence, performances, and interests to position them as STEM people or not? How do they do this differently when talking about men and women?

Findings & Implications



Students’ descriptions of themselves and others as a “STEM person” suggested that STEM identity is grounded in having STEM “intelligence” that is aligned with white masculinity (e.g., infallible knowledge, white saviorism). They recognized these masculinized forms of intelligence in performances and interests that put that intelligence on display. They often contrasted these characterizations with STEM feminine engagements, like caregiving. They applied these views to STEM subjects and associated jobs, reinforcing hierarchies that prioritize masculine fields (such as physics) as “more STEM” and regarding feminine fields (like biology) as “less STEM”.

- Lean into the importance of “intelligence” by explicitly addressing the value of diverse expression of “intelligence”, especially the ways it shows up in caregiving;
- Embrace the potential of university students as change agents by building into programs that support diverse students in STEM inclusive, Discourse-defying ways for them to recognize others in STEM; and
- Account for students’ notions of “STEM personhood” when carrying out qualitative or quantitative studies of STEM identity, especially with populations characterized by gender and racial diversity..

Masculinized Discourses of STEM interest, performance, and competence that shape university STEM students’ recognition of a “STEM person”

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