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A values based leadership approach to (re)defining Latino manhood and masculinity

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ABSTRACT

Utilizing a values-based leadership philosophy, the authors explored how Latino undergraduate men make meaning of their masculinity and how this meaning shapes their understanding and performance of leadership. The findings highlighted Familismo Leadership as a form of leadership practiced by Latino men related to how they define masculinity as a form of strength, identify the role of provider as a form of leadership, and consider the performance of leadership as direct action. Recommendations include the importance of an approach to research and practice that engages Latino undergraduate men students via leadership development and involvement that is reflective of the way Latino masculine gender identity and leadership performance is socialized within the social construct of familismo.

Although Latino men participate in a wide range of leadership roles, such as peer counselors, resident assistants, and student government, there is lack of literature on campus leadership involvement (Guardia & Salinas, 2018; Garcia et al., 2017; Lozano, 2015; Rodriguez et al., 2017). Primarily, the extant literature has focused on the involvement of Latino undergraduate men within Latino/a and Hispanic student organizations (Garcia et al., 2017; Lozano, 2015) and Latino Greek-letter fraternities (Garcia et al., 2017; Guardia & Evans, 2008). Part of the reason the research on leadership development and the involvement of Latino undergraduate men is limited may be due to the way in which leadership programming in higher education is developed. While institutions of higher education are intentional about creating programming for specific student populations, they often fail to center the programming in a cultural awareness of the students they are trying to support (Guardia & Salinas, 2018). For Latino undergraduate men students, this cultural awareness includes a need for a more informed understanding of how masculinities influence student involvement (Cabrera et al. 2016; Rodriguez et al., 2016a; Saénz et al., 2016), and the role of the Latino family on the socialization of Latino men (Ojeda & Castillo, 2016; Saénz et al., 2016).

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In order to fill the gaps related to leadership engagement and involvement amongst Latino undergraduate men it becomes necessary to consider how they understand the performance of leadership in relation to their masculine gender identity socialization. The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore how Latino men undergraduate students make meaning of their masculinity, and how concepts of masculinity inform their performance of leadership. The following two research questions guided this study:

- (1) How do Latino men undergraduate students make meaning of their masculinities?
- (2) How do concepts of masculinity inform Latino men undergraduate students' performance of leadership?

Literature review

To understand how masculinity may inform and shape the performance of leadership for undergraduate Latino men, it is necessary to first understand that masculinity represents the performance of a specific type of gender identity (Connell, 2005; Pleck, 1976). Boys and men internalize a set of socially acceptable behaviors and values, centered within a cultural and institutional context that reinforces these behaviors and values, that inform their performance of masculinity (Connell, 2005; Henslin & Nelson, 2010; Itulua-Abumere, 2013). In addition to the cultural and institutional dynamics, the performance of gender identity is also created through routine interactions with others that set and reinforce norms (Sallee, 2011). Published literature reveals recommendations to conduct research that focuses on: 1) the need to understand the experience of Latino men from the perspective of masculinity (Cabrera et al., 2016; Sáenz et al., 2016); 2) the need to understand the role of the family (Ojeda & Castillo, 2016; Saézn et al., 2016); and, 3) a lack of literature on campus leadership involvement (Guardia & Salinas, 2018; Garcia et al., 2017; Rodriguez et al., 2017; Lozano, 2015; Saézn & Ponjuán, 2009). Therefore, this study focuses on the three aforementioned gaps to explore how Latino men undergraduate students make meaning of their masculinity, and how this meaning informs their performance of leadership.

Latino masculinity and familismo

The masculinity of Latino men in the United States has been historically characterized by the concept of *machismo* (González, 1996). *Machismo* has traditionally been explained as a form of hypermasculinity that embodies traits such as aggression, antisocial behaviors, emotional restrictiveness, and wishful thinking as a form of coping (Abreu et al., 2000; De La Cancela, 1986). In contrast to *machismo*, the concept of *caballerismo* has been offered as an alternative for understanding Latino masculinity. *Caballerismo* is typified by emotional connectedness and chivalry and has been offered as a more positive form of Latino masculine gender identity (Arciniega et al., 2008). The concepts of *machismo* and *caballerismo*, either individually or through some form of combination, have come to be situated as the hegemonic form(s) of masculinity for Latino men (Abalos, 2005; Casas et al., 1994; Connell, 2005; De La Cancela, 1986; Pleck, 1976). It is important to note that the socialization of Latino masculinity is centered in *familismo*, which is facilitated via

interactions with family members, and reinforces norms associated with the performance of gender identity (Ojeda & Castillo, 2016; Sáenz et al., 2016).

Familismo can be understood as a construct centered in interdependence, a sense of responsibility, solidarity, and loyalty to immediate and extended family members (Falicov, 1998; Marín & Marín, 1991). As a cultural construct, *familismo* serves as a hegemonic core value that shapes the behavior of Latino families (Ponjuan et al., 2015). This construct sets an expectation that Latino men will contribute to the success and maintenance of the family (Schwartz et al., 2009). This characterization positions Latino men as a financial provider, a family leader, as a problem solver, and to prioritize the needs of others before their own (Deyoung & Zigler, 1994; Sáenz et al., 2016; Walter et al., 2002). The association between the prioritization of the family, especially as it pertains to actively serving as the family leader (Deyoung & Zigler, 1994), and the performance of masculinity may serve as a foundation for the ways in which Latino men understand leadership (Lozano, 2015).

Latino leadership development in higher education

Latino men undergraduate students are involved in a wide range of leadership roles, yet their leadership development in higher education has been understudied. The research that does exist primarily focuses on the leadership engagement of undergraduate Latino men through fraternity involvement (Garcia et al., 2017; Guardia & Evans, 2008), ethnic based organizations (Lozano, 2015), and cultural and racial awareness educational programs (Antonio, 2001). In relation to Latino undergraduate males on college and university campuses, scholars have noted that they undertake leadership position ‘to affect meaningful changes in their often identity-based organizations,’ in addition to their academic, familial, work, and other social responsibilities (Rodriguez et al., 2016a, p. 78). Of particular importance, the literature reveals that Latino leadership is centered on people, and the community’s needs, rather than their own needs (Bordas, 2010).

Latino men undergraduate students have learned to negotiate higher education spaces and ‘found that culturally relevant experiences are of particular importance to their leadership development’ (Garcia et al., 2017, p. 15). Guardia and Salinas (2018) argued that Latino men’s ‘leadership development is holistic, cultural, and utilizes a social justice lenses, [to allow them to] bring their authentic selves to spaces where they are free to experience their surroundings academically, culturally, socially, and personally’ (p. 148). In contrast to Latino undergraduate men who hold leadership positions, those Latino men who do not engage in leadership positions on college or university campuses are less likely to utilize resources, services, and connect with faculty members (Rodriguez et al., 2016b).

Despite the dearth in literature on the leadership development and engagement of undergraduate Latino men students, there are some studies that provide a more meaningful understanding of the ways in which Latinas/os approach leadership. Lozano (2015) explored the journey of Latina/o students who were working to create change at a historically white institution (HWI). In her work, Lozano (2015) explained four broad themes for the Latina/o leadership journey, including: 1) *comunidad* (community); 2) *la lucha* (the struggle); 3) *nuestra fuerza* (our strength); and 4) *urgencia y legado* (urgency and legacy). Lozano’s proposed leadership journey highlights how Latina/o

students defined leadership, and the students experience with leadership development at an HWI. Of the 10 participants in the study, Lozano had six Latino male participants, but their experiences were not assessed separately from their Latina female counterparts.

Bordas (2013) utilized the notion of community as the main focal point of Latina/o leadership and focused on Latino leadership through a collective perspective. Her definition of Latina/o leadership focuses on 10 strength-based principles, centered in her own experiences and knowledge of working in several Latina/o communities (Bordas, 2013). The 10 principles of Latino Leadership include: 1) *personalismo* (the character of the leader); 2) *conciencia* (knowing oneself and personal awareness); 3) *destino* (personal and collective personal); 4) *la cultura* (culturally-based leadership); 5) *de colores* (inclusiveness and diversity); 6) *juntos* (collective community stewardship); 7) *Adelante!* (global vision and immigration spirit); 8) *si se puede* (social activist and coalition leadership); 9) *gozar la vida* (leadership that celebrates life!); and 10) *fe y esperanza* (sustained by faith and hope) (pp. 14–16). In her work, Bordas (2013) interviewed nine seminal Latina/o leaders (five Latino men and four Latina women) to understand how they engage in leadership development. These nine leaders have made an impact in the U.S. government, economics, policy and law and are ‘building on a tradition of people-centered, socially responsible, and community-based leadership’ (p. xviii). While this work highlighted the communal performance of leadership in Latina/o communities, it did not reflect the performance of leadership on college campuses and the leadership experiences had by Latina/o students; particularly Latino undergraduate men.

In order to understand how Latino men undergraduate students understand what it means to be a leader, it becomes necessary to consider how Latino men may understand the performance of leadership. Centered in the concept of *familismo*, the values that are learned as a part of Latino masculinity may inform and shape the way in which Latino men perform leadership (Bordas, 2013). As a form of learned beliefs, values operate as guiding principles for what is good and right (Peregrym & Wolff, 2013). Therefore, this paper is important as the authors aim to explore how Latino men undergraduate students make meaning of their masculinity, and how concepts of masculinity inform their performance of leadership, as conceptualized through a values-based leadership approach.

Conceptual framework

Values-based leadership (VBL) is a leadership philosophy where the leader is not interested in personal gain, but instead is focused on creating value to customers, shareholders and the organizations as a whole (Copeland, 2014). It is a form of leadership where personal fulfillment is realized, and one’s legacy is cemented, through the enhancement and advancement of those being served. VBL is best understood as a construct that incorporates the performance of more than one type of leadership (Copeland, 2014), with a focus that is centered on having a value driven purpose (George, 2003). The development of purpose and values of a given leader reflect the ‘personal history of the leader’, which may include ‘family influences and role models’ (Gardner et al., 2005, p. 344). While there exist multiple definitions of VBL, there are several forms of leadership that are commonly found within the construct (Copeland, 2014; O’Toole, 2008). The forms of

leadership that are often combined to create a VBL approach include: authentic, ethical, servant, and transformational leadership.

The performance of authentic leadership is centered in a commitment to one's true self. By committing to a strong set core of values, beliefs, thoughts, and feelings, the individual can develop a deep sense of purpose (George, 2003). Through the commitment to an established purpose and values, the individual remains resistant to social or situational pressures to compromise one's values (Gardner et al., 2005). The authentic leader is able to arrive, and remain, at their position through regular self-reflection (Kraemer, 2011). Like the authentic leader, the ethical leader develops a moral philosophy and uses this philosophy to center their leadership in decision making that is based on established principles (Treviño et al., 2003). Ethical leaders care about others and aspire to serve as a model to others through their commitment to ethical decision making (Brown & Treviño, 2006).

As a part of their commitment to role modeling, the servant leader demonstrates a commitment to the wellbeing of both the individual and the organization. This approach to leadership is inclusive of others, is strongly based in ethical and caring behavior, and enhances the growth of others (Spears, 2010). The performance of this leadership is characterized by an innate commitment to serve; one that sets the needs of others as the highest priority (Greenleaf, 1970). Lastly, transformation is a form of leadership that seeks to lead by example (Copeland, 2014). The performance of this leadership requires a strong authentic and ethical foundation and demonstrates a commitment to the inspiration and motivation of others (Peregrym & Wollf, 2013). Transformational leaders accomplish this through the use of coaching, mentoring and encouraging growth opportunities (Bass, 1985).

The use of VBL as a conceptual model informed this study in several ways. First, as a leadership model, VBL centers the success of the organization and the individuals within the organization. Like the VBL leader who uses a values driven purpose to lead, the Latino family, through the construct of *familismo*, may socialize Latino men to understand the performance of leadership through a specific set of values and beliefs. The similarities between VBL's approach to the organization and *familismo*'s approach to the family unit make it possible to interpret and describe the complexity of the socialization of Latino masculine gender identity and leadership performance through the lens of the Latino family unit. Using VBL as a framework will allow for an exploration of the gaps identified in the literature and provides opportunities to consider previously unstudied and/or understudied implications for the success of Latino undergraduate men.

Methods

This study explored the experiences of 34 Latino undergraduate men in Texas, California, and Florida (Table 1). Utilizing a qualitative approach, this study explored how Latino undergraduate men make meaning of their masculinity, and how concepts of masculinity inform their performance of leadership. More specifically, a phenomenological design was used to describe the structure of their experiences and not simply identify and highlight characteristics shared by the participants (Bhattacharya, 2017; Jones et al., 2014; Polkinghorne, 1989). Through the use of a phenomenological approach, the researchers were able to delve deeply into the meaning making that participants

Table 1. Description of participants.

	<i>n</i>	Percent
State		
California	10	29.4
Florida	13	38.2
Texas	11	32.4
Class Standing		
Second year	2	5.9
Third year	15	44.1
Fourth year	15	44.1
Missing	2	5.9
Enrollment Status		
Part time	6	17.6
Full time	28	82.4
Major		
STEM	16	47.1
Non-STEM	18	52.9
Highest Degree Intention		
Bachelor's	6	17.6
Master's	11	32.4
Doctorate or other terminal degree (Ph.D., Ed.D, MD, etc.)	17	50.0
Mother's Highest Education Level		
Less than high school	13	38.2
High school graduate	5	14.7
Associates degree or some college	8	23.5
Bachelor's	3	8.8
Advanced degree (MA, PhD, etc.)	3	8.8
Not applicable	2	5.9
Father's Highest Education Level		
Less than high school	13	38.2
High school graduate	4	11.8
Associates degree or some college	4	11.8
Bachelor's	6	17.6
Advanced degree (MA, PhD, etc.)	3	8.8
Not applicable	3	8.8
Not sure	1	2.9
Family Income		
Under \$19,999	4	11.8
\$20,000-\$29,999	8	23.5
\$30,000-\$39,999	2	5.9
\$40,000-\$49,999	4	11.8
\$50,000-\$59,999	5	14.7
\$60,000-\$69,999	4	11.8
\$70,000 or higher	4	11.8
Unsure	3	8.8

Note: *N* = 34

attributed to their masculinities and the performance of leadership (Bhattacharya, 2017; Jones et al., 2014; Moustakas, 1994).

Data collection

Through the use of established relationships with administrators and faculty, potential participants were recruited via electronic e-mail recruitment invitations. Eligible participants met the following criteria: over the age of 18; identified as Latino or Hispanic; identified as men; and had previously transferred from a community college (within any state) to a university in Texas, California, or Florida. Each student participated in two, approximately 60-minute, face-to-face interviews, about their understandings of

masculinities, gender socialization, leadership and transfer experiences. Participants were assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity. The goal of the first interview was to build rapport with each participant and to develop an understanding of each participants' overall community college and transfer experiences. The focus of the second interview explored how masculinities, gender socialization, leadership, and identity conflicts influenced the transfer process (Rodriguez et al., 2021). Each transcript was read several times by each researcher for significant ideas and quotations. During the organization of data, and the evaluation of possible themes, differences in interpretation and researcher bias were considered.

Data analysis

After the interviews were collected and transcribed, a multi-step coding procedure was used to organize the data. Data was input, sorted, and coded in Dedoose. This resulted in themes such as: *family masculinity, leadership, male traits, and vulnerability*. In vivo coding was then used to split the first cycle codes into a larger number of codes (Saldanña, 2013). This was done to ensure that the voices of the participants were being centered by using their words, phrases, and perspectives to identify mutual connections and themes (Saldanña, 2013). From this emerged several additional codes, such as: *respect, leadership, role model, direct action, strength, weakness, gender relations, conflict, expectations, defining masculinity, and repercussions*. The third cycle of coding used pattern coding to identify the final dominant categories and themes (Saldanña, 2013). The two dominant categories that emerged were: *ideal man and Latino leadership*.

To conceptualize the participants' shared lived experiences, the title of each finding was structured to reflect a composite like description of the codes that make up each dominant category (Creswell, 2012; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Doing this allowed the researchers to capture the essence of Latino masculinity and leadership performance by using the textural (what) and structural (how) meanings of their experiences to describe the findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Moustakas, 1994). The composite descriptions became the three themes that make up the findings in the next sections. The first two findings describe the category of *ideal man* and the third finding describes the category of *Latino leadership*.

Findings

Each of the three findings helps to create a more comprehensive understanding of how the participants make meaning of their masculinity, and how concepts of masculinity inform their performance of leadership. The first two findings, 1) *Latino men students' (re)defining manhood and masculinity as a form of strength*; and, 2) *being a provider as a form of Latino masculinity and leadership*, provide answers to the first research question by offering insight into how the participants defined their masculinity via an ability to demonstrate strength (e.g. physical and emotional) and how they centered their understanding of leadership as the role of provider to the family. The third finding, 3) *leadership as an action, learning how to be a Latino man*, directly answers the second research question by describing leadership through the performance of direct action.

Latino men students' (re)defining manhood and masculinity as a form of strength

Participants expressed an understanding of what traits defined manhood and masculinity. Several adjectives that were used to describe masculinity, included 'smart, hard-working, confident, and integrity.' Overwhelmingly, many of the participants were quick to associate masculinity with the trait of strength. Both AJ and Abe shared the same response when asked to define masculinity, they both said 'strong.' This was a sentiment shared by other participants. Interestingly, when considered as a whole, the participants described strength as a multidimensional trait that reflected a state of mind, a sense of emotional well-being, and as a position. The multidimensionality of strength was captured well by George when he was asked to define masculinity. George defined masculinity as 'definitely strength, both physical and mental strength . . . emotional strength.' Similar to George, other participants of this study associated masculinity with strength. For example, Carlos discussed a practical definition of masculinity through his understandings of strength:

What I learned from my family, is that a man is someone [who is] obviously strong, not just physically but mentally. Someone who is capable of doing whatever he's asked to do. Somebody who shouldn't be afraid and someone who should be able to handle whatever he needs to handle in order to get things done.

More than one participant shared the sentiment of masculinity in relationship to strength, and how they used this learned sense of strength to endure as a college student. Jordan said:

Strength is just not giving up. There's been times when I've doubted myself, do I even belong here? Am I even doing something right? Can I succeed? As I get it, you're strong enough to do this. You have this strength to carry out anything you want, as well as work ethic and just not giving up on whatever it is that you're supposed to do for that semester. Go part by part and that's how I think all those things have helped me out as a scholar.

David echoes the sentiments shared by Jordan, when he reflected on how he found his strength through school:

I think, in my case, the way I see it, I have gone through a lot of stuff with my family . . . It was something that could have broken a kid down. Maybe I wouldn't have been able to put up with it, but I was able to pull through and make something out of myself . . . I went to school. That's strength. I think I have some of that.

Along with providing clear examples of strength, and what it meant to be strong, the participants were also very clear about what it means to not be strong. As a part of the description of what it meant to not be strong, participants used phrases like 'emotionless' and 'not show sadness.' George described what it means to not be a strong man:

Men should never display weakness. Weakness is not something acceptable in a man. Any kind of weakness. Physical weakness, not to be stepped over by other people, and emotional weakness, especially the fact that men don't cry no matter what. Suppress feelings, suppress emotions. That's a trait that no man should have.

David reinforced this notion of weakness when he said 'men should never display weakness. Weakness is not something acceptable in a man.' One of the reoccurring

examples of showing weakness came in the form of crying. When asked about a generally agreed upon form of weakness, Pepe was quick to say, 'People will tell you ... for instance, men don't cry'. When asked to expand on what it means to be feminine Pierre shared a personal example of when he thinks he is acting feminine:

Again, this is old fashioned. Sometimes I will have arguments. If I have some argument with my mom, or my brother, I get emotional and I'll have tears running down. They have to be strong arguments. Again, there's nothing wrong with crying, but that's something that comes to my mind.

Like Pepe and Pierre, Eduardo used crying to offer insight on what it means to not be strong. When asked why crying is an example of weakness, Eduardo responded by saying 'I'm not sure. It's just the way it is.' Nonetheless, Eduardo goes on to explain why crying is such an offense to masculinity. Eduardo said, 'I always pictured, like, how would your kids see you if you just break down and you're crying? I don't think your kid would respect you as a man knowing that you're breaking down.' Eduardo recalled learning this understanding of masculinity as a child. He said:

I remember being a kid, if something happened to me, the smallest things, like if I fell off a bike and I hurt myself and I started crying, I'd remember my dad, instead of trying to make me feel better, he be like, stop crying. Get up and get back on the bike. Get out there. Little things like that but they have a huge impact when you're that small, you realize that you're not supposed to get hurt. Even if it does hurt, you're not supposed to show it, necessarily.

Overwhelmingly, participants of this study (re)defined manhood and the performance of masculinity by consistently demonstrating the importance of one's strength. It is this ability to consistently demonstrate strength that, for the participants, allows Latino men to serve as a provider to the family regardless of physical injury, emotional discomfort, and personal needs/goals.

Being a provider as a form of Latino masculinity and leadership

Like the trait of strength, participants made it clear that leadership was directly related to the performance of masculinity. Pepe associates a man with being a 'leader', one who should 'possess an alpha role.' This notion of the 'alpha' is consistent with other participants' thoughts on manhood. As a part of his conversation on defining masculinity, Eduardo said that men:

Should be strong, physically somewhat, but emotionally. You can't just break down every day. You have to show you're strong when you're around your friends and family, you've got to show you're the head of it. Head of the household.

In addition to demonstrating one's masculinity in terms of strength, assuming the head of the household also distinguished one's standing as a man in other ways. When asked if men should be the leaders in a household, Abe said:

I think masculinity has to deal a lot with leadership and maturity. Being able to lead ... I feel like if someone like a man can lead, they're more trusting and people have more confidence in them. Also, doing what's right, which goes along with the maturity, having

a sense of responsibility is definitely something masculine. What I think a real man would be is someone that leads, has goals, and accomplishes them.

When asked about leadership, Pierre makes it clear that he understands the responsibility he has to assume the role of head of his household. When asked if he is a leader, Pierre responded by saying:

Yeah, when it comes to the household, I will have to be to the point . . . My mom doesn't speak the language, she doesn't work. I'm pretty much the one who has to figure things out. If we want to move out, or trying to see how we improve our living situation. For instance, it was at one point that my car was the only one at home. My mom, she doesn't know how to drive. It was because of my means that we were able to move around. I was a big part. I was the main financial support at home. My mom would look up to me. My younger brother would look up to me.

After considering the many references by the participants to masculinity's relationship to leadership and responsibility, it started to seem as if these ideas were centered in a shared values system. Pablo spoke to this directly when he said, 'in the Hispanic culture, the man has to provide for the spouse, for the family, and it's not something that you have to [do] but it's expected as well'. In this sense, leadership and responsibility are strengths that enforce masculinities of Latino men.

Based on the responses from participants, serving as a provider emerged as a form of performing masculinity in the Latino household. Eduardo was very clear about this when he said, 'For a provider, since I'm from Mexico, I feel like the male should provide for his family, provide money, food, stuff like that for his family.' Pablo commented on the idea of provider when he stated 'That's one of the norms that's probably always going to stick around. You have to be the provider.' When asked about expectations related to his gender identity, Mantis said 'to be honest . . . I feel like there's a lot of expectations of me . . . that I should be helping out because I'm Latino.' Pepe suggested that the notion of being a provider was a bit 'old fashioned', but an accepted form of masculinity, nonetheless.

Martin believes that there is an expectation that he acts as a provider by 'putting other's needs, especially your own families, before yourself.' He shared an example of putting others needs ahead of his own by saying:

For example, if you were in a relationship, and instead of your own needs, you should put, say if you have a kid or something like that, and if your kid is sick, rather than you have all the sports games on, you have to take care of that child. Things like that. I've seen it firsthand from my father and that's where I latched on that. Literally he put my mom and us way before any of his needs.

Daniel discussed his internalized understanding of being a provider by discussing the importance of being a provider in a relationship. After having shared some initial thoughts on the traits related to masculinity, Daniel was asked about his girlfriend, and whether or not she would trust him more if he had the masculine traits that he mentioned. To this, he responded:

Well, in certain contexts, yeah . . . If I'm a hard worker, and I have a sense of leadership, and sense of responsibility, she would be able to count on me more. Like if she gave me a task, or like if we're going to have a baby, or anything like that, I feel like she would think that she's in good hands, too. She has another source of support for any time there are bad times, if that makes sense.

Beyond individual relationships, Andres shared why leadership is important to the well-being of the Latino family as a whole. When Andres referred to leadership as a form of masculine trait, he said:

I think the leadership one, that I want to get people together, and not apart. That's why my grandfather always wanted the family to be together, and to work together. If one made more money than the other one, that one should share with the others.

Like Andres, David emphasizes the importance of utilizing good leadership to hold the family together. When discussing the challenges that his family had endured, David characterized his role at home by saying 'I feel like I'm always more of a leader there ... always trying to balance things at home. Always trying to make sure that everybody is calm, under control, that things are going good.' Interestingly, many of the participants not only identified the importance of leadership, and the importance of performing leadership as a masculine trait, but they also discussed at length how they learned about leadership. Daniel spoke to this by saying, 'I think I have been a pretty good leader ... I have always been able to lead based on what I saw from my brother ... and how he led us through hard times.'

Participants of this study made it clear that the performance of masculinity was centered in an understanding of leadership that positioned Latino men as the family provider and within their nuclear and extended households. To this end, the participants were able to learn about what it means to be a leader by observing the way the men in their lives modeled leadership through direct action.

Leadership as an action, learning how to be a Latino man

As a part of this study, it was important to not only understand how Latino men made meaning of their masculinity, and how they understand the performance of leadership, but to also understand the systems that influenced the meanings that Latino men were associating with masculine gender identity and leadership. Like the traits identified in the first set of findings, the participants were able to quickly identify the mechanisms by which they learned about both masculinity and leadership. Overwhelmingly, the participants identified a male figure in their lives. Some participants did not hesitate to endorse the worth of their father as a role model. When answering questions about learned masculine traits, Pierre said 'Well, my father he has always been more of a guidance role. He is the one we go to if we need help ... I'm going to go to my Dad if I need ... guidance throughout life.' David was also quick to attribute his understanding of masculinity to his father. When asked about how he learned about the traits he related to manhood he said 'a big part was from my dad. When it comes to all those lessons of life or, I guess, traits, my dad has always been huge.' In addition to the father, the model for masculinity was also attributed to grandfathers, uncles, and older brothers. In his response to how they learned traits, Manuel identified his role model when he said:

My grandfather. Only because he's been through a lot. He's been exposed a lot as a police officer in Puerto Rico, for living in the Bronx in New York. I can understand the sense of masculinity. I learned it more from him. I didn't really grow up with an actual father. I mean, my stepfather, he's been with us recently for only three years, so my grandfather had to be the one to say, "Okay, I'm going to raise you on how to be a man."

Anthony shared similar feelings, identifying his grandfather as a role model. However, he really got excited when he started talking about his godfather. When asked if there was anyone else in his life that he considered a model for masculinity, Anthony said:

My godfather . . . my godfather is Felipe. He's the one that took us, he took me and my siblings [when we were in foster care], and he had three other kids of his own. When I think of someone I want to be like, as a male figure, a leader, that's the guy I want to be.

For Jordan, his role model was his older brother. When asked about how he learned how to define a man he said:

My oldest brother. He's about ten years older than me, so he's always felt like a second dad to me. He's taken care of us. There's four of us in our family, he's the oldest one and since we made the transition from Mexico, since we immigrated to the states, my parents were always working, and he would stay home and take care of us. Literally everything that he would do I would follow, and he always led us in the right direction. He always wanted to push us forward. He always made me seem like I could do anything. He would push me to do more and more, like be better than I am today . . . He has always been an icon or a symbol of leadership, so I thought, man, my brother. At home he was always our mentor. He was our mentor in that regard, like in the household and doing what's right morally. He would teach me morals.

For some of the participants, there was not just one individual that was identified. For many participants, they spoke to the multiple positive male role models in their lives. Martin captured this sentiment when he shared:

My dad, both of my godfathers, obviously, they were really close. When my dad wasn't there, if he was working or something and I was staying at my cousin's house, same thing. They are your godfathers, so they advise you, in a sense.

The men in the study seemed to not only be able to identify their role models with a specific position in their lives but simultaneously through the actions associated with these positions. As an extension of his answer related to learning about being a man, Dusty identified his 'dad' as his model for masculinity. However, Dusty qualified his statement by commenting on how he learned through his father's commitment to long hours of driving to and from work. Specifically, Dusty said 'but it wasn't direct lessons . . . like he said, "You got to do this." Just by action, like him driving three hours a day. He was driving five hours a day . . . That's a huge sacrifice.' In addition to demonstrating positive masculinity through his commitment to work, Dusty's father demonstrated masculinity through other actions. Dusty spoke to this when he said:

Well, he fixes his own cars. The only time that he's at an auto shop is when we don't have the tools to fix it, which is like big machinery that we don't have. If you're able to do it and you can learn it, you should be able to do it. There's no reason for you not to.

Like Dusty, Ismael also associated the actions of his father to his learned sense of masculinity. When discussing the meaningful lessons that he had learned related to being a man and leader, Ismael spoke to the lessons he observed while working with his father. When describing this, Ismael said 'It would be going to work with my father . . . Those values, he taught me how to be organized, he taught me how to use time'. Beyond individual skill sets, or the examples of self-sufficiency, some of the participants identified their role model as the individual whose approach to life, in general, spoke to a positive

example of manhood. For Anthony, this was captured in his thoughts about his godfather when he said:

He's a great person. He's really funny. He does his own housework . . . he knows how to fix it. He's his own mechanic. He provides for my aunt, my family, for my cousins. He took me and my family, we go dirt biking all the time; he's got a boat. He's that guy that when I see him, I want to be like. That's the guy I want to be like.

Anthony, along with many of the other participants, describe examples of Latino men that conveys a performance of masculinity centered in self-sufficiency. Latino men are successful when they are able to manage their own needs, and the needs of others, gain the skills they need to take care of others, and make family members happy by directly solving their problems.

Participants from this study indicated that they understand leadership as a strong relationship between the performance of masculinity and the Latino family. They understand that the performance of acceptable masculinity requires a deep sense of responsibility to the family. This understanding of responsibility shapes and informs how they engage with others and navigate their day-to-day lives and how they make meaning of their interactions with others. Based on the participants understanding of their masculine gender identity, they have learned both how to utilize their socialized values and beliefs to not only lead as men, but to reconsider what it means to be a leader and still be true to their authentic selves. The basis for leadership development, engagement, and involvement in higher education fails to consider the specific cultural traits that inform and shape the way Latino men understand and perform leadership in higher education settings.

Discussion

The narratives shared by the participants in this study help bridge the gaps in the literature by providing insight into how undergraduate Latino men make meaning of masculinity and how their understandings of masculinity inform their performance of leadership. For these participants, the notion of masculinity as leadership was related to strength, being a provider, and direct action to serve in the role of leader within the Latino family. This narrative is not surprising, given the role of *familismo* as a strong, socializing force in the lives of Latino families (Marín & Marín, 1991).

When asked to describe masculinity, and what it means to be a man, the participants understood masculinity to be strongly associated with two important traits – strength and the role of the provider. These two traits serve as guiding values for the performance of leadership centered in their understanding of masculinity. Like the servant leader, the Latino man, through the role of provider, is tasked with the well-being and growth of the communities to which they belong (Bordas, 2010, 2013; Greenleaf, 1970). As a part of this, and central to the tenets of *familismo*, the Latino man, as provider and servant leader, becomes focused on the development of others by putting their needs first (Bordas, 2010; Greenleaf, 1970). The ability to place the good of others over his own self-interest requires the Latino man to practice strength, in order to do whatever may be necessary, even in opposition to his own feelings and needs, to ensure the success of the family. The ability to place the good of others over

his own self-interest requires the Latino man to practice strength, in order to do whatever may be necessary, even in opposition to his own feelings and needs, to ensure the success of the family. As an extension of this sentiment, the men in this study characterized leadership as a direct action. Whether this is demonstrated through a strong work ethic or as the family member who is tasked with controlling emotions in the face of adversity, the Latino family teaches and socializes Latino men how to perform leadership.

The study participants described a form of leadership, centered in an understanding of masculinity that values interdependence, a sense of responsibility, solidarity, and loyalty to immediate and extended family members (Falicov, 1998; Marín & Marín, 1991), that demonstrates a commitment to the maintenance and success of the family unit (Schwartz et al., 2009). Like the VBL practitioner, whose purpose is to create and support success for the organization as a whole by using a variety of value based leadership styles (e.g. authentic, ethical, servant, and transformational) (George, 2003), Latino men in this study described a performance of leadership that relies on a combination of values and actions (e.g. emotional and physical strength, reliability, mentorship, and provider). These values and actions can be further understood through the lens of *machismo* by situating the participants' call for emotional strength as a need to practice emotional restrictiveness (Abreu et al., 2000; De La Cancela, 1986), and though the lens of *caballerismo* by situating the participants' desire to serve in the role of provider to their family through nurturing (Arciniega et al., 2008). As a part of their development and socialization as leaders, Latino men develop a praxis that utilizes leadership styles and values, centered in the collective context of *familismo*, *machismo* and *caballerismo*, to maintain the overall well-being of the family (Marín & Marín, 1991).

The relationship between the identified traits and the performance of masculinity through leadership, as described by the participants' narratives, indicates a strong commitment to a set of internalized learned values and beliefs. This commitment serves as an approach to masculinity and leadership that is authentic. The Latino men in this study, like authentic leaders, conveyed a deep sense of purpose, centered in solid values, and understood their purpose as leaders (Peregrym & Wollf, 2013). This sense of authenticity allows Latino men to perform a form of leadership that is ethical and transformational for themselves, their families, and their community. Brown and Treviño (2006) argued that ethical and transformational leaders, like authentic and servant leaders, are 'altruistically motivated, demonstrating a genuine caring and concern for people' and 'are thought to be individuals of integrity who make ethical decisions and who become models for others' (p. 600). Latino men learn to perform leadership through their interactions with family members. When considered from an organizational leadership perspective, prioritizing the maintenance and success of the family unit becomes akin to the maintenance and success of the organization (Copeland, 2014). When conceptualized within the context of a leadership model or philosophy, the performance of *familismo leadership* by Latino men resembles a VBL philosophy. Overall, *familismo leadership* teaches Latino boys and men to be the leader of the family unit; responsible for being the financial provider, a problem solver, and to prioritize the needs of others before their own.

Implications for future practice and research

The first implication requires that colleges and universities consider the role of the Latino family when considering the engagement of Latino undergraduate men (Ojeda & Castillo, 2016; Saénz et al., 2016). A focus on the Latino family is important due to the relationship between the construct of *familismo* and the development of Latino masculine gender identity (Marín & Marín, 1991; Ojeda & Castillo, 2016). It is through this relationship that Latino men learn their role within a community. When Latino men arrive on college and university campuses, they may encounter a community that is unfamiliar, and lacks the necessary resources to provide culturally responsive student engagement (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). A failure in student engagement on the part of the institution may result in a diminished sense of belonging for Latino undergraduate men (Crisp & Nora, 2010; Zerquera & Gross, 2017). To help bridge this gap related to sense of belonging, institutions should utilize the values of the Latino family to create an environment that helps Latino undergraduate men feel like the campus community is their home; a place that can be an extension of their Latino families (Rodriguez et al., 2016a).

This sense of home could be achieved through the implementation of mentorship programming that utilizes a networked web of communal support (Elliot et al., 2018). Colleges and universities should re-design student support programs as mentoring networks. Through a mentoring network that is more widely facilitated and supported by the entire faculty, staff, and administrators, Latino undergraduate men may increase their opportunities for success by identifying and connecting with individuals that have experiences and skills in multiple areas (Elliot et al., 2018; Salinas et al., 2020). Because *caballerosimo* centers the importance of emotional connectedness (Arciniega et al., 2008), the implementation of a communal based mentorship program could reinforce a sense of communal belonging amongst Latino undergraduate men. This approach to community building for Latino undergraduate men may help to combat a performance of masculinity rooted in *machismo*. Unlike *caballerosimo*, *machismo* is highlighted by a sense of emotional restrictiveness and an unwillingness to ask for help. Creating community in ways that are familiar may help reduce self-isolating and negative help seeking behavior among Latino undergraduate men (Casas et al., 1994; Sáenz & Ponjuán, 2009; Saéz et al., 2010).

The second implication addresses the need to create pointed leadership programming for Latino men. Institutions of higher education have an opportunity to engage Latino undergraduate men in ways they find familiar by creating programming centered in Latino family values (e.g. centering the well-being of the family unit). Like the VBL practitioner, who utilizes an approach to leadership centered in the enhancement and advancement of the organization, Latino undergraduate men may need to feel like they are actively working toward the well-being of others, and the community as a whole, in order to actively engage in leadership. Without a sense of connection and belonging to the greater community, Latino men may not feel obligated, or welcome, to assume a role of leadership (Guardia & Salinas, 2018).

Institutions of higher education can be proactive in their development of leadership programming for Latino undergraduate men by taking advantage of the values related to *familismo* (e.g. interdependence) and *caballerismo* (e.g. emotional connectedness). By utilizing leadership programming that incorporates these values, colleges and universities

could create an environment where Latino undergraduate men may be more inclined to see their campus community as a family. In turn, this could lead to an environment where Latino undergraduate men may be more willing to engage in leadership development, and assume leadership roles (Lozano, 2015). Taking an approach to student programming specifically tailored to the cultural values and norms of a given student demographic reflects an institutions commitment to a fuller and more realized equity agenda (Felix et al., 2015). As a complement to a more culturally tailored approach to the programming of Latino men in U.S. institutions of higher education, scholars and practitioners should also remember to consider a broader understanding of Latino identifying students, particularly as it relates to international and transnational identifying Latino/Latin American students studying in the United States.

The third implication highlights an opportunity for college administrators, and the practitioners that support the day-to-day engagement of students, to consider programming and research that reflects equity minded competencies (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012). Specifically, they must actively consider the understanding of race, and how that understanding may reinforce the barriers that Latino undergraduate men face as a result of structural racism in higher education. To begin to dismantle the marginalizing and oppressive structures in higher education that directly impact Latino men, and other racially minoritized students, institutions, and their staff, must 'accept that higher education as an institution is racialized and that structural racism is produced by everyday practices' (Felix et al., 2015, p. 38). A more clear and honest internal examination of these challenges, amongst practitioners, will make space on college campuses for the support of Latino undergraduate men, realized through leadership engagement, that may better address the low levels of retention and completion among Latino undergraduate men. In general, student engagement has been shown to be a major factor associated with student persistence and degree completion (Kuh et al., 2011). More specifically, student engagement through leadership programming has been identified as a contributor to how Latino men navigate, and successfully complete, their undergraduate experience (Guardia & Salinas, 2018; Ponjuán et al., 2015). When considered together, the direct support of Latino men through an equity minded approach to leadership development and involvement may have a positive impact on the overall success of Latino undergraduate men.

The fourth, and final, implication of this study provides an opportunity to consider the international influence of Latino leadership performance and socialization in the United States. The literature indicates that Latinos in the United States are more likely to identify with their country of origin, or family's country of origin (Cohn, 2012), rather than the labels created by the U.S. government (Salinas & Lozano, 2021). Therefore, when working on Latino leadership practices, researchers must understand that Latino leadership within the United States is based on a set of identifiers and values, which require an understanding of the social context within which these students understand and engage with leadership (Salinas, 2020). As a result of this, international educators and researchers should focus on how values, centered in familial and cultural norms, cross both geographic and educational borderlands and spaces (Salinas, 2015; Vasquez et al., 2020). Because Latino students in the United States serve as a bridge point between their communities, whether, locally, regionally, nationally, and/or internationally (Salinas, 2020), it stands to reason that the

performance of leadership, particularly as it relates to the intersectional socialization of masculine gender identity performance in the United States (Rodriguez et al., 2021), may also cross international and transnational borders back into their respective Latin American countries of origin. Furthermore, these ways of knowing or performing gender informed leadership will become more international due to the United States ongoing practice of imperialism and globalization (Salinas & Lozano, 2021). Paired together, both United States-centric Latino men and the United States as a whole, could reflect an ongoing cycle of Latino leadership performance across international and transnational borders in higher education.

Limitations

It is important to consider several limitations when interpreting this study's results. First, we rely on a sample of Latino men from three states in the United States (Texas, California, and Florida) with large populations of Latin American descent. Future research should explore the extent to which our findings apply to Latino men from regions where they are more underrepresented. The majority of participants come from middle- or low-income backgrounds; future research might disaggregate analyses by income. Similarly, the majority of our participants were Mexican; thus, the findings may not be representative of all Latino men's experiences. Future research should explore the Latino masculinity and leadership using more diverse samples. Despite these limitations, the findings suggest important implications for policy, practice, and theory.

Conclusion

To understand the leadership development of Latino undergraduate men, specifically, and the engagement of Latino undergraduate men, in general, practitioners must understand the leadership experiences of Latino men in ways that are 'cultural' and 'holistic' and allows for an 'authentic' understanding of Latino men (Guardia & Salinas, 2018, p. 148). The purpose of this study, to explore how Latino men make meaning of their masculinity, and how concepts of masculinity inform their performance of leadership, provides an opportunity to critically consider how institutions of higher education understand, and respond to, the needs of their Latino undergraduate men students. Colleges and universities can benefit from an approach to student development and support centered in a values-based approach to leadership. By reflecting on the values of their students and responding in ways that provide appropriate forms of support, colleges and universities can ensure that they are serving their students in ways that are authentic, ethical and transformational (Kraemer, 2011).

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