

Study aims to (re)define Latino manhood and masculinity

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'Familismo leadership' challenges colleges and universities to reconceptualize how leadership is defined and applied by Latino male college students to support their leadership development and success. Credit: Florida Atlantic University

Latino undergraduate male college students are involved in many

leadership roles, yet how this leadership evolves in higher education has been understudied. Researchers from Florida Atlantic University in collaboration with San Diego State University and Texas A&M University explored how Latino male college students make meaning of their masculinity and how this meaning shapes their understanding and performance of leadership.

The study published in the *International Journal of Leadership Education*, utilized a qualitative method to delve deep into the understandings of the masculinities, gender socialization, [leadership](#) and transfer experiences of 34 Latino undergraduate male students. Using a philosophical approach, the researchers examined how masculinity and manhood were defined by the study participants based on their own life experiences. The research involved two, approximately 60-minute face-to-face interviews with each student.

"The successful retention and completion of Latino men in [higher education](#) must be supported by policy and practice that reflect a clear understanding of the familial and [cultural values](#) that Latino men students use to navigate a variety of intersectional spaces," said Lazaro Camacho, Jr., co-author and an FAU Ph.D. candidate. "By centering how Latino male students have been socialized to understand and conceptualize leadership, colleges and universities can better create engagement opportunities in which these men are able to not only persist, but thrive."

Study participants expressed their understanding of leadership as a strong relationship between the performance of masculinity and the Latino family, as defined by "familismo"—a shared responsibility, solidarity and loyalty within the family construct. Findings reveal that "familismo leadership" is a form of leadership practiced by Latino men, which is related to how they define masculinity as a form of strength, how they identify the role of provider as a form of leadership, and how

they consider the performance of leadership as direct action.

The study participants' fathers served as role models of strength and leadership, qualities that intertwine strong heads of households with providing for the needs of the family as a whole. Grandfathers, uncles and older brothers also were observed by the study participants as reflecting qualities of strength and leadership within the family.

Recommendations from the study include the importance of an approach to research and practice that engages Latino undergraduate male 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."

"'Familismo leadership' is a form of capital that most Latino men and Latin communities learn before enrolling in higher education institutions. It is used as a form of [student](#) success and self-awareness to navigate predominantly white spaces," said Cristobal Salinas, Jr., Ph.D., co-author and an associate professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Research Methodology within FAU's College of Education. "Also, 'familismo leadership' challenges colleges and universities to reconceptualize how leadership is defined and applied by Latino male college students to support their leadership development and success."

More information: Lazaro Camacho et al, A values based leadership approach to (re)defining Latino manhood and masculinity, *International Journal of Leadership in Education* (2021). [DOI: 10.1080/13603124.2020.1862921](https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2020.1862921)

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