

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: "THEY'RE MY KRYPTONITE BUT THEY ALSO EMPOWER ME": THE DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD OF FAMILISMO

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The objective of this study is to examine the relations of *familismo* to academic functioning and mental health among non-citizen Latina/o college students. The study utilizes both quantitative self-report surveys to explore attitudinal family obligations, and qualitative interviews to explore behavioral family obligations. One hundred and eighty citizen students ($M = 21.30$, $SD = 2.92$) and 84 non-citizen students ($M = 21.13$, $SD = 2.98$) completed surveys. Correlational analyses found that family obligation attitudes were linked to academic emotional engagement for non-citizen students only ($r = .305$, $p = .005$, $n = 84$). Cluster analyses revealed risk, resilience, and protected clusters from stress and family obligation groupings. Twenty-one non-citizen students also completed interviews. Narrative analysis of the interviews revealed that family obligation behaviors may be linked to motivation and stress. Overall, this study illustrates the complex nature of family obligations and achievement in the lives of non-citizen Latina/o college students.

“THEY’RE MY KRYPTONITE BUT THEY ALSO EMPOWER ME”: THE
DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD OF FAMILISMO

by

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Across the U.S., approximately 65,000 high school seniors struggle with the many implications of being undocumented (Immigration Policy Center, 2010) which include not being able to afford college, get a job, or drive a car (Perez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, & Cortés, 2009). Of the 65,000 undocumented high school seniors each year, only 13,000 enroll in public colleges and universities (Passel, 2006). With the support of such initiatives as the Maryland DREAM Act¹ and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals² (DACA), non-citizen³ students are beginning to have increased access to higher education at in-state resident tuition rates (Morales, Herrera, & Murry, 2009).

In the state of Maryland, 44,000 youth between the ages of 16 and 24 are undocumented (MPI, 2014). In 2012, the Maryland DREAM Act was passed to provide non-citizen youth with the opportunity to receive in-state resident tuition for college. However, researchers estimate that only 435 undocumented students each year will qualify for the Maryland DREAM Act (Gindling & Mandell, 2011). In addition, 25,000 undocumented youth in Maryland may now be able to qualify for the expanded DACA executive action, helping make college more affordable for undocumented youth (Batalova, Hooker, & Capps, 2014).

¹ The Maryland DREAM Act is a state law that offers in-state tuition to qualifying undocumented immigrants. Requirements for receiving in-state tuition include (1) attending a public high school in Maryland for at least 3 academic years, (2) graduating from a Maryland high school, or equivalent, after the

² DACA is a federal immigration policy that provides a path to citizenship by allowing undocumented persons to pay in-state tuition, receive a work permit, and exemption from deportation if they entered the country before June 2007 and before their 16th birthday.

³ Given the statistical power issues involved in having an undocumented-only category and the historical use of the “non-citizen” category in previous studies (see Flores, 2010) and U.S. Census (2010) categories, this study will use the term “non-citizens” to refer to those who are not born U.S. citizens and who do not have permanent U.S. citizenship. This includes those who are undocumented or have temporary legal status. With this categorization comes a limitation: in the original questionnaire, those with legal permanent residents were grouped with those temporary protective statuses. Thus, the quantitative results may capture not just the experiences of those with temporary statuses, but also those with more permanent statuses, who are less at risk for deportation and related stressors.

In addition to enrolling in college at lower rates than their peers, undocumented Latina/o⁴ students are at a higher risk for dropping out of college, relative to documented peers (Contreras, 2009). Many first-generation students that do get the opportunity to attend college experience difficulty accessing and persisting in higher education (Contreras, 2009; Diaz-Strong, Gómez, Luna-Duarte, & Meiners, 2011). First-generation students are less likely to persist in college and attain degrees compared to continuing generation peers. In a study by Nuñez and Cuccaro-Alamin (1998), 57% of first-generation students attained a degree, compared to 73% of continuing generation students. This rate is even lower for non-citizen students: only one-in-four non-citizen students have attended or graduated from college, and only 15% of undocumented students have obtained a Bachelor's degree or higher (Passel & Cohn, 2009).

As a result of these differences, literature has focused on factors that facilitate success in college for these students. While the protective impact of parents' school values and presence on the relation between risk factors and high school GPA among undocumented college students was clear in one study (Perez et al., 2009), less clear is the impact of *familismo*, or the value of maintaining strong familial bonds, on academic functioning and mental health among non-citizens. A study by Stein, Gonzalez, Cupito, Kiang, and Supple (2013) that measured first-and second-generation high school students' *familismo* and mental health found that high attitudinal *familismo* attitudes were associated with fewer depressive symptoms and greater school attachment. However, no study has examined the effects of *familismo* attitudes and family obligations on non-citizen Latina/o college student academic achievement and mental health. Further, no

⁴ The term "Latina/o" will be used instead of "Hispanic" throughout this paper. This decision was made in order to include those who do not necessarily speak Spanish. Additionally, Latina/o specifies a population of persons from Latin America, which is the basis of this sample.

studies have compared the differential effects of family experiences on non-citizens, relative to citizen Latina/o college students. It is especially important to observe *familismo* among these youth, because college is a much more high stakes environment than high school for their futures. As a result, students in college must balance studying well for future success and the remaining needs of family members.

Familismo has multiple associated facets. One facet of particular interest is family obligation, or attitudes and behaviors that encourage support, assistance, and duty to serve family members (Fuligni & Pederson, 2002). Family obligations can be expressed behaviorally, such as helping with chores, translating for parents, and caring for younger siblings. These obligations may have long-lasting implications for academic achievement and mental health. Much like the general *familismo* research, however, no research has been conducted on family obligations and their impact on these factors in Latina/o college students, and no study has examined the specific obligations of male and female non-citizen college students.

Thus, a systematic comparison of both Latina/o first-generation citizen and non-citizen students' *familismo* attitudes and family experiences may prove to be helpful in better elucidating what protective and risk factors exist for both female and male college students who face the challenges of being non-citizens.

The Current Study

This mixed methods study examines the relationship of one key facet of *familismo* (family obligation) attitudes and behaviors on academic functioning and mental health in a sample of non-citizen Latina/o first-generation college students, with a citizen comparison group. Through the application of Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, and

Suárez-Orozco's (2011) Ecological Developmental model for undocumented youth, the study explores the associations of cultural familial obligation attitudes and behaviors with academic achievement and mental health. Using a cross-sectional dataset, I examine (1) the relation of *familismo* attitudes (i.e., obligation values) to academic engagement, college GPA, stress, and depression; (2) the difference in these relations among students non-citizens and citizens; (3) the influence of family obligation on academics and; (4) the influence of family obligation and mental health for non-citizen students. Questions three and four are qualitative, and involve the coding the narratives of (1) how non-citizen students describe their family obligation; and (2) how students describe mental health, and academic performance related to family obligations. This study emphasizes the qualitative results more than the quantitative results, because the specific family obligation behaviors and experiences are much more clearly delineated in students' narratives. The following literature is organized as follows: political and theoretical background, an operationalization of *familismo* with a focus on familial obligation, and a review of academic and mental health literature, related to family obligations.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Deportation and Family Separation Among Latina/o Youth

Family separations have negative mental health and academic implications (Brabeck & Xu, 2010), and such separations may impact familial obligation experienced by students (Hafford, 2010). In addition to the millions of undocumented youth who were brought to the U.S. during childhood, an estimated 4.5 million youth are children of undocumented parents (Fix & Zimmerman, 2001; Passel & Cohn, 2010). These parents are often at high risk of deportation (American Psychological Association [APA], 2012). Children who have parents who are deported often must uphold familial obligations by taking care of younger siblings, while facing the reality that they may never see their parents again.

Millions more live in mixed-status homes where at least one family member is a non-citizen. In mixed-status households, some children are born in the U.S. with citizenship, while other family members are in the process of becoming documented or lack documentation (Fix et al., 2001). Children in mixed-status homes may spend half or more of their childhood separated from their biological parents (Abrego, 2006).

Furthermore, mixed-status families often face denied citizenship, deportation, and/or a long documentation process (Suárez-Orozco, Bang, & Kim, 2011). The combination of these obstacles may lead to family turmoil, with family members potentially residing in different countries. Parents may bring some children along to the U.S., leaving others behind with other family members. Some parents may remain in their countries of origin to save money, while sending children with other family members or coyotes to start a life in the U.S., disrupting the bond between families. If

non-citizen family members come to the U.S. and remain non-citizen, one of three scenarios may occur: (1) the entire family may have to leave the U.S., (2) the non-citizen parent may leave, or (3) the entire family may remain in the U.S. with a constant threat of deportation looming (Fix et al., 2001). Often, children must fulfill responsibilities of a missing parent, such as taking care of younger siblings or preparing meals. These scenarios shed light on the notion that the political-familial context is an important part of students' well-being, in that students may need to take on additional responsibilities to support remaining family members, while balancing school work (Brabeck et al., 2010).

Ecological Theory and Liminality

To integrate the socio-political and family experiences on undocumented Latina/o youth's lives, Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, and Suárez-Orozco's (2011) created the Ecological Developmental model, adapted from Bronfenbrenner's Ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The Ecological Developmental model incorporates both Liminality and Resilience theories to capture an undocumented youth's experience of living in this "1.5 generation," or the generation of undocumented persons who came to the U.S. as children (Abrego, 2011). In Liminality theory, the unpredictability of non-citizen students' documented status leads to stress associated with belongingness and safety threats (Turner, 2002). While children may have come to the U.S. at a young age and feel like they are American, their citizenship status precludes them from feeling like they belong as the threat of deportation consistently looms overhead. This 1.5 generation becomes increasingly aware of the limits of their legal liminality as they become older and face limited work opportunities, discrimination, and lack of funding for college.

Suárez-Orozco et al.'s (2011) model examines forces at the macrosystem, exosystem, microsystem, and individual levels to illustrate the multiple external influences on youth's lives. For these immigrant youth, the macrolevel can include the global economy, country of origin emigration policies, social and cultural conditions, U.S. immigration policies, and attitudes towards non-citizens. For instance, prejudiced, stereotyped, and social exclusion practices may lead to negative mental health in children (García Coll et al., 1996). Within the exosystem, neighborhood and community factors influence youth in mixed-status families. The threat of deportation leads to lowered engagement in public institutions, fear of authorities, and lower use of public resources (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). Chronically poor work conditions for non-citizen parents may also lead to increased economic hardship and psychological distress, less access to resources, and instability in housing that influences students' lives (Yoshikawa, 2011).

At the microlevel and individual levels, more immediate factors influence students' lives. At the microlevel, schools for low-income non-citizen students are typically highly segregated, have inadequate resources, poor achievement test outcomes, and limited college access resources (Ganadara & Contreras, 2008). This level also includes family processes, including family obligations and relationships. Parents who are non-citizens positively influence academic outcomes in that they read to their children and engage in cognitively stimulating interactions at the same rates of documented parents, despite working longer hours (Yoshikawa, 2011). However, fear of deportation, parent psychological distress, and prolonged family separations, and less economic resources among undocumented families may contribute to poorer outcomes in students (Yoshikawa & Kalil, 2011). All of these microlevel factors vary at the individual level,

where some youth may face actual deportation of a close family member, experience discrimination, and face multiple stressors in their daily lives (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). These experiences may ultimately lead to negative socioemotional outcomes for youth.

In order to better understand the multilevel forces that affect non-citizen students' academic achievement and mental health, this study utilizes variables residing in different ecological levels: the macrosystem (e.g., policies like the DREAM Act and DACA, along with the political climate of the U.S.), microsystem (i.e., *familismo*), and individual (e.g., documentation status, generation status, individual vulnerabilities) levels.

Familismo

In collectivist cultures, parents stress the importance of maintaining strong familial bonds throughout one's lifetime. This literature review will explore the current operationalization and research on familial attitudes for one particular cultural group, Latina/os. Additionally, I will explore the positive and negative associations of *familismo* to academic and mental health outcomes among Latina/o adolescents, and ecological theory. I argue that familial obligation, defined as behavioral enactment of obligation, merits more research.

In the Latina/o community, the concept of *familismo* represents strong family values. In general, *familismo* is operationalized as the promotion of interconnectedness within Latina/o families (Knight et al., 2010). This interconnectedness is promoted through strong affective ties, loyalty, family bonds, and commitment within both one's immediate and extended family (Toro-Morn, 2012). Bonds and family loyalty are often expressed through family obligation, one key facet of *familismo* (Sabogal et al., 1987).

Typically, Latina/o immigrant adults have reported that they place high values on *familismo*, and they score higher on attitudinal familismo compared to non-immigrant peers (Knight et al., 2010), suggesting that Latina/o college non-citizen students may also hold similar values.

Operationalization of familismo. In the earliest studies, *familismo* was strictly viewed as a cognitive and attitudinal construct. Currently, *familismo* is conceptualized as both attitudinal and behavioral (Keefe, 1984). Attitudinal *familismo* refers to values and feelings of loyalty, reciprocity, and solidarity among family members. The four components of attitudinal *familismo* have been operationalized as beliefs in *familial interconnectedness*, *family reciprocity* (i.e., familial obligations), *familial honor*, and *family prioritization over the individual* (Lugo Steidel, & Contreras, 2003). Behavioral *familismo* reflects behaviors that promote these attitudes, such as providing direct help to family members (Calzada, Tamis-LeMonda, & Yoshikawa, 2012). Previous research has failed to distinguish between *familismo* values and how those attitudes are actualized through behaviors. *Familismo* scales often measure only attitudes and not individual behaviors associated with the family, indicating further need for behavioral *familismo* research that distinguishes between attitudinal values and lived family experiences.

While some studies have examined family obligation attitudes among Latina/o high school students living at home (e.g., Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002) in the form of quantitative scales, only one qualitative study on Latina mothers has systematically examined overall behavioral *familismo* expression and narratives among Latino/a young adults (Calzada et al., 2012). Calzada et al.'s (2012) work indicates that *familismo* behaviors such as financial support, shared living, and shared childrearing afford

different risks and benefits over time for young Latina/o mothers. For example, providing financial support for others may lead to financial strain for the individual. However, individuals may also receive financial assistance in return when needed. While the discovery of these behaviors may inform future qualitative work with *familismo*, less clear is how these behaviors may be similar to those experienced by non-citizen Latina/o college students.

Familismo and Youth: Socialization and Values

Since there have only been few studies on Latina/o college students' *familismo*, this review will focus on literature with youth samples.

Latina/o families have been noted to uphold a collectivist orientation that emphasizes familial obligation over individual obligations (Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999). Parents wish to pass *familismo* values down to their children to urge them to stay on “*el buen camino*,” or “the good path” (Azmitia & Brown, 2002, p.78). Latina/o youth are therefore socialized to prioritize family before the self (Calzada et al., 2012; Fuligni et al., 1999; Knight et al., 2010; Updegraff, McHale, Whiteman, Thayer, & Delgado, 2005).

Previous research indicates that obligations may vary by sex. Daughters are often socialized to hold stronger ethnic values than males (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2009). As a result, females are more often and more consistently expected to fulfill both current and future family obligations (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Sy & Romero, 2008; Valenzuela, 1999; Wong & Palloni, 2009). Additionally, the cultural value *marianismo* emphasizes that women should prioritize the family needs above individual needs. As such, Latinas are often expected to be the family caretaker and are expected to leave home only when they are married and ready to start their own families. While young men

are more likely to work outside of the home while attending school to support their families, females are more likely to take care of household chores while attending school (Fuligni et al., 2002).

Familismo: Family Obligation

For the purposes of this study, I will focus on one facet of *familismo*: family obligation. Family obligation is an important part of *familismo* because non-citizen youth and youth of mixed-status families are often called to act upon their obligations and provide support to other family members, which may have implications for the youth's academic functioning and mental health. Children are often a rich source of social capital for their family members, by providing non-English speaking family members with translations and interpretations of important information, services, and resources (Hafford, 2010).

Family obligation definition. In this study, family obligation will be defined as attitudes and behaviors that encourage support, assistance, and duty to serve family members (Fuligni & Pederson, 2002), as measured both by attitudinal statements and qualitative interviews. Family obligation values have included feelings of responsibility to provide economic and emotional support to other family members (Germán, Gonzales, & Dumka, 2009).

The Role of Familismo in Academic Achievement and Mental Health

Outcomes

Family obligation has demonstrated positive and negative outcomes on academic and mental health functioning in Latina/o youth, hence the title of this thesis, “They’re my kryptonite but they also empower me: The double edged sword of *familismo*.” There

is no conclusive evidence that family obligation is exclusively positive or negative for students, but instead there is a mix of both positive and negative outcomes with family obligation. As stated previously, no literature has examined these associations among first-generation, non-citizen Latina/o college students. In Latina/o youth samples, however, *familismo* is typically framed as a protective factor against a wide range of outcomes, including delinquency and externalizing behaviors (Germán et al., 2009), although *familismo* has not been empirically tested as a protective factor via the traditional standard of moderation analyses. *Familismo*'s role as a protective and/or exacerbating factor remains in contention in the literature.

It is important to note that the following studies have mostly been conducted on Mexican Latina/o youth. Given that the heterogeneity within ethnic groups is often larger than the heterogeneity across groups, the findings may not be applicable to Central American youth, who are the focus of this study. For instance, there may be differences in reasons for immigrating to the U.S. Central American youth may have recently immigrated to the U.S. due to extreme poverty, gang violence, and family reunification (Kennedy, 2014), while the quality of life for Mexican youth has increased and has led to fewer immigrants in recent years (Zong & Batalova, 2014). However, very limited and dated work has been conducted with Central American youth, none of which focuses on *familismo*. Thus, literature on Mexican youth will be used as the closest approximation to the experiences of youth from Central America.

Academic Functioning

In this study, academic functioning will be operationalized as academic achievement (i.e., GPA) and academic emotional engagement (i.e., emotions indicating motivated participation in the classroom).

The literature currently demonstrates that *familismo* and family obligations are related to both positive and negative academic outcomes. In regard to positive academic outcomes Mexican-origin adolescents who endorse traditional cultural values such as *familismo* are more likely to be engaged in school (Gonzales et al., 2008) and have higher self-efficacy (Berkel et al., 2010). U.S.-born Latina/o students are less likely to see education as “useful” and “important” and have lower educational aspirations compared to non-U.S. born Latina/o youth who hold traditional values such as familial obligation (Fuligni et al., 1999). Having high *familismo* attitudes has also been correlated with fewer missed classes and greater academic effort among both Mexican- and Puerto-Rican-origin youth (Esparza & Sanchez, 2008).

Further, using their family’s immigration status and low-income status as a motivation, Latina/o students can feel driven to push through the barriers to schooling to make their families proud, and indicate that they would feel guilty had they not taken advantage of these opportunities (Caplan, Choy, & Whitmore, 1991; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995). First-generation citizen high school students, for instance, report feeling motivated to pursue higher education to benefit their families and to make economically wise decisions (Olive, 2008). In a study by Ceballo, Maruizi, Suarez, and Aretakis (2014), low income Dominican citizen youth who reported that they wanted to do well in school to help their parents in the future had higher educational aspirations, educational values, and school effort compared to those who did not.

Citizen students who have high family obligation attitudes also place more importance on being successful in school (Fuligni et al., 2002). High family obligation, operationalized as the extent to which family members feel a sense of duty to assist one another, has been linked to a strong belief in the importance of education because school is viewed as a vehicle through which students can later earn money for their families (Fuligni, 2001; Fuligni & Tseng, 1999). As a result, this belief in the importance of education often leads to later greater academic achievement, engagement, positive emotional well-being, and persistence, especially for those with low and moderate GPAs (Fuligni et al., 2002). In sum, attitudinal familial obligation has been demonstrated to be positively associated with motivation and self-efficacy in Latina/o youth. However, these findings in citizen high school students may not generalize to non-citizen college students, supporting the need for research in a non-citizen sample.

While for some students familial obligation is a source of motivation, for others it may lead to decreased persistence. Children of Latina/o immigrants must often find a balance between school and home life (Hartig & Stiegerwald, 2007; Tseng, 2004). In many Latina/o families, it is expected that children will help their families with chores, provide financial support, and take care of siblings, even when students are not living in the home (Caplan et al., 1991; Fuligni et al., 2002; Fuligni et al., 1999). In middle school students, high levels of family obligation are associated with increased student effort on home obligations, which may take away time and energy from school-related work effort (Henderson, 1997). Thus, students may struggle with trying to do well by their family, while also trying to do well in school.

One study has examined the mixed experience of *familismo* in graduate students. In a qualitative study by Espinoza (2010), Latina doctoral students detailed their experiences with meeting the demands of school and home life to maintain the status of being a “good daughter.” Parents often expect Latina daughters to contribute to the family while pursuing higher education, leading to great role strain and highlighting the “double-edged” nature of *familismo* (Sy et al., 2008). This duality may ultimately lead to conflict and tension when trying to balance the needs of home and culture with the demands of Anglo success (Anzaldúa, 1987).

To cope with these competing interests, some Latina doctoral students balanced expectations by explicitly letting family members know about other commitments and responsibilities, and used their family’s support to achieve academic success. Other students kept both family and academic obligations separate to minimize conflict, but decidedly put family first when feeling role conflict. The containment of distinct spheres of influence may be positive initially, but may eventually lead to a sense of disconnection between the student’s family community and their college community. Espinoza’s (2010) qualitative method of exploring the family and academic success balancing act suggests that using quantitative *familismo* attitudinal value scales alone may not adequately capture the tension between home and school life. Thus, further qualitative analysis of first-generation Latina/o citizen and non-citizen college students is warranted in order to understand the role family obligation-related behaviors play in educational productivity.

In addition to balancing these two domains, students may compromise and choose a college near home in order to be close to family (Desmond & Turley, 2009; Martinez, 2013). Families with dense network ties that are highly demanding and value

group conformity may also decrease motivation and ambition of high-achieving students (Portes, 1998).

Some research indicates that Latina/o students with strong familial obligation value education because it is a pathway to providing for their family. This obligation can motivate students in the present, but it may be less conducive to long term persistence (Elliot, McGregor, & Gable, 1999). Latina/o students may do well in school to avoid the potentially devastating consequences of not doing well, such as seeing their family struggle or avoiding poverty in the future, and avoiding disappointing family, in contrast to doing well to please themselves and attain more knowledge for a love of learning (i.e., academic emotional engagement; Fuligni et al., 2002). One caveat of this notion is, however, that it may be an entirely Western point of view. While intrinsic motivation is an important for school engagement in many Western countries, perhaps it is not as important for more collectivist cultures that derive meaning from putting the group (i.e., the family) before themselves (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999).

For students who have non-citizen parents, the college process may be a source of stress. Students may feel guilt because of the fact that they are able to go to college and achieve while their parents are struggling to survive (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2014). As a result, they may feel pressure to do well in school in order to capitalize on the opportunities that their parents have provided for them and fulfill their sense of familial duty (Fuligni et al., 1999; Suárez-Orozco, 1991). However, having high *familismo* has been linked to having less time for academic obligations if a balance between obligations has not been established (Henderson, 1997).

In sum, demands to balance both family and school life may contribute to less persistence and success in college. Conversely, family obligation may be associated with better outcomes for those who have adopted strategies to juggle the demands of both family and education, and may be viewed as a protective factor in the face of academic challenges. It is important to mention that the majority of these studies were quantitative. As demonstrated in Espinoza's (2010) work, quantitative analysis of family obligation may not fully capture the intricacies and balancing act of school and family obligations. Thus, further qualitative analysis is warranted to explore these experiences with non-citizen Latina/o students.

Gender may also play a moderating role in familial obligations and academic outcomes. While the majority of these studies did not examine gender differences, those that have examined them acknowledged that females may hold higher family obligation attitudes relative to males (Ceballo et al., 2014; Espinoza, 2010; Fuligni et al., 2002). However, only one study has examined the potential moderating effect of gender on family obligations and educational outcomes (Cupito, Stein, & Gonzalez, 2015). This study did not find gender to be a moderating effect on school belonging or GPA. By including sex as a potential moderator in this study, I can see if there are sex differences in outcomes.

One additional, unstudied layer of family obligation is the impact of immigration status on family experiences and values. By including the macro-level factor of immigrant status, this study will explore the implications of the intersection of family experience and academic outcomes for non-citizens, and observe a larger picture of the many influences on Latina/o first-generation citizen and non-citizen college students. I

can then also see if descriptions of family obligations in an academic achievement and mental health context, which is previously unexplored in the literature.

While some studies show a positive association of family obligation and academic outcomes, others show a negative association. It is less evident how this construct may be linked to mental health.

Mental Health

In this study, mental health outcomes will be defined as perceived stress and depression. Generally, research on family obligations and mental health has focused on the effect of caregiving responsibilities on one's mental health. One study has examined gender differences in family obligation's relationship with mental health outcomes, and will be discussed below. However, very little research has been conducted on the connection between *familismo* and mental health.

Family obligation and mental health outcomes. Attitudinal family obligation may be linked to both positive and negative mental health outcomes. In regards to positive mental health outcomes, recent neurological research with Latina/o adolescents, family assistance values have also been associated with increased activation in brain reward circuitry (Telzer, Masten, Berkman, Liberman, & Fuligni, 2011). Mexican students who report that they assist family members have reported higher levels of daily happiness (Telzer & Fuligni, 2009), though one study of Mexican American youth found that those with high levels of caregiving obligation behaviors tend to have higher stress and depression (East & Weisner, 2009).

One study specifically examined the potential moderating effect of sex on family obligation. In this study of mostly Mexican adolescents, researchers reported the effects

of familial cultural values on school outcomes and depressive symptoms (Cupito, Stein, & Gonzalez, 2015). Cupito et al. (2015) found that gender moderated the relationship between family obligations and outcomes. Among females only, having high attitudinal filial obligations was associated with fewer depressive symptoms.

The greatest negative effect of *familismo* on mental health may depend on the degree of obligation that one experiences. In studies with younger students, high levels of obligation may prevent adolescents from connecting with peer groups (Henderson, 1997). While moderate family responsibility was linked to less psychological distress and more positive school attitudes, those who had very high levels of responsibility to take care of younger siblings were more likely to feel alienated in school (McMahon & Luthar, 2007).

While *familismo* has been related to lower depression, lower psychological distress, and higher brain reward activation, the demands of holding high values of *familismo* (e.g., a strong value of helping in the home) may cause role strain, and, possibly, school alienation among first-generation citizen and non-citizen Latina/o youth. However, the impact of behavioral obligation on stress and academic outcomes has not been examined.

Limitations in Latina/o Youth Research

There are many gaps in the current *familismo* literature. The primary limitations relevant to this study are: (a) the limited research conducted on college-aged samples, (b) the limited research on behavioral *familismo*, (c) the limited research on the potential moderating effect of gender on academic and mental health outcomes, and (d) the datedness of some research.

First, researchers have explored how family obligations may relate to positive and negative achievement and mental health outcomes in Latina/o youth. However, no studies have examined these relations among non-citizen and first-generation Latina/o college students, who are particularly susceptible to the obstacles and responsibilities that accompany mixed-status families. Thus, this study will explore these associations within a college student sample to shed light on both protective and risk factors for successful college functioning.

Second, the attitudinal statements that have been used in the literature do not necessarily reflect participants' lived experiences of family obligation (see Table 1). Behavioral *familismo*, on the other hand, has only scarcely been used to examine the lived family experiences of college-aged students via qualitative research. Therefore, the qualitative part of this study will make the novel contribution of exploring how students operationalize and experience behavioral *familismo*, with a focus on how family obligations, education, and mental health intersect. Specifically, I will look at how family obligation behaviors (e.g., going to a college to make one's family proud) may influence academic achievement (i.e., emotional engagement and GPA) in college. This exploration will dissect the complexity of the family experience and its impact on non-citizen students' education, which cannot be captured by simple attitudinal statements.

Next, *familismo* research has largely ignored the potential moderating effects of sex. While authors acknowledge that there may be sex differences in the rates of cultural family attitudes, only one study has examined the possible moderating effects (Cupito et al., 2015). Thus, further exploration of the possible moderating effects is warranted,

especially since these moderating effects may indicate different implications of the research for different sexes.

Finally, while many of the studies on family obligations and mental health are recent, many of the studies examining academic outcomes were published over fifteen years ago. While some of the implications of the findings in the dated literature may still be relevant today, other messages may no longer hold, especially in this ever-changing socio-political context. As a result, a fresh look at how students' family obligation attitudes and behaviors influence academics and mental health may be warranted.

Theoretical Framework

Ecological Model

To examine the relations of *familismo* to academic and mental health outcomes among non-citizens, this study relies on Suarez-Orozco et al.'s (2011) Ecological Developmental model. By comparing non-citizen and citizen students, I will be able to isolate student citizenship status as a microlevel factor to identify how family processes and their consequences may be unique to non-citizens. In addition, risk and resilience factors are embedded within different microlevel and individual levels to influence youth academic and mental health outcomes.

This study will also assess the influence of a students' microsystem (e.g., *familismo* and family obligations) on academic achievement and mental health to clarify how outside family forces may push and pull the student, which, in turn, may influence the student's academic and mental health outcomes. This ecological model that I will test in this study focuses on the microsystem of family, with *familismo* as a dynamic construct that may afford different costs and benefits to non-citizens.

My Role as a Researcher

Although I did not engage in collecting the data, I believe that my cultural background and biases still have the capability of influencing my work. Thus, I remain vigilant in being aware of my prejudices as I analyze and make conclusions about the narratives.

As a first-generation college graduate, I am deeply connected to this work that deals with a sample of first-generation students. I have understanding of the issues that first-generation students have in navigating the college process alone, and can empathize with many of the financial barriers to college raised in the qualitative interviews. I am particularly drawn to studying familial obligations because I have always had a strong sense of obligation to my family. I have always pushed myself to make my parents proud, because they have made many sacrifices to get me into the position where I am today. They moved out of a fallen city into the suburbs in order to give me a better life, and I have always felt I needed to repay that debt. This has particularly caused me feelings of both pressure and stress in my college career.

However, I am also quick to acknowledge and understand that my path to college, though difficult at times, cannot compare to the barriers and obstacles encountered by Latina/o youth, both non-citizen and citizen alike. As a high achieving White female, it was expected that I would attend college, and I had the full support of my family and teachers. I knew who to ask for help when applying to college, and someone was always available to assist. Non-citizen youth, on the other hand, often attend schools that may not provide information about paths to college. Latina/o students in schools with

resources about navigating the college system may be faced with teachers with lower expectations of their abilities because of their ethnicity.

Additionally, non-citizen and citizen Latina/o students have much more riding on academic success. Often, these students are not only working to make a better future for themselves, but also for their family members. They are the same students who are working multiple jobs in order to help their family members pay bills on time, and who are also providing caregiving services for younger siblings. However, it is important for me to remember that while I may personally view these responsibilities as sources of stress, Latina/o students may derive motivation and fulfillment from helping their families. As a researcher, my top concern was to make sure that I am not viewing family obligations as a concept with complete negative valence. Rather, family obligations can have different meanings for different people.

Contribution of the Study to the Literature

Due to the limited amount of literature on *familismo* and college-aged Latina/o students, the present study was among the first to examine the potential for family obligation as a risk and resilience factor for non-citizen first-generation Latina/o college students, relative to citizen students. It is especially important to target protective factors that may confer benefits to non-citizens given stressful contextual pressures on their academic functioning.

Additionally, this study expanded upon the limited behavioral *familismo* literature by utilizing qualitative interviews that provided a platform for students to explain the many ways that they experience family and obligation. This platform was less restrictive than the attitudinal statements from the quantitative survey and provided opportunities for

students to bring up complex family experiences and emotions that are not readily measured by simple statements. Thus, this study complemented the previous two-dimensional attitudinal values research by presenting a more dynamic and well-rounded view on the complex family obligations non-citizen Latina/o students face.

A mixed-methods approach was useful by triangulating⁵ the family obligation scale with the behavioral *familismo* experiences that are salient in the narratives of Latina/o non-citizen college students, in order to get a more blended view of these family obligation experiences. This study aims to offer a complete picture of family obligation in the context of achievement.

Questions and Hypotheses

1. What is the relation of *familismo* (family obligation) attitudes with engagement, GPA, stress, and depression in both non-citizen and citizen groups?
 - a. *Hypothesis:* Familial obligation will be positively related to academic achievement outcomes and stress. These relations may differ by citizenship status and by sex.
2. Can *familismo* be viewed as a protective factor? Do groups cluster into resilient (high stress, high *familismo*), risk (high stress, low *familismo*), and protected groups (low stress, high *familismo*)? Do the protected and resilient groups have better outcomes on study variables than the risk group?
 - a. *Hypothesis:* These three groups will emerge into clusters, indicating that *familismo* may indeed be a protective factor for Latina/o students.
 - b. *Hypothesis:* The protected group will have better outcomes on study variables.
3. How do these attitudes and clusters differ for non-citizens and citizens?

⁵ “Data triangulation” is an approach that uses both quantitative and qualitative methods that can be cross-checked by comparing results from both methods. By comparing the results, I can determine if the results on one method complement and validate the results found through the other method (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). This approach is helpful in providing a means of convergent validation of the data.

- a. *Hypothesis:* Non-citizens will hold higher *familismo* attitudes than citizen students. There will be no difference in the cluster groupings for non-citizens, compared to citizen students.

Additionally, the following questions will be explored through qualitative thematic analysis:

4. What is the nature of the interaction between family obligations and academic achievement?
5. What is the nature of the interaction between family obligations and mental health?

CHAPTER III: METHODS

Design

This study is a triangulated mixed-methods, cross-sectional design with data collected from 264 Latina/o college and aspiring college students in Maryland (O’Neal et al., 2016). Data for this study are archival data collected in 2014. Participants were first asked to complete a thirty-minute survey that asks questions about citizenship status, college access, mental health, and academic achievement. After completing the survey, students received the opportunity to participate in an hour-long interview with a researcher to discuss these topics in greater detail.

QUANTITATIVE:

Participants

Students were recruited through various means including disseminating flyers at events tailored towards Latina/o students at University of Maryland, events in the Latina/o community (e.g., Latina/o festivals, DACA clinics), word of mouth, and online Facebook group postings. These students had to meet the following qualifications of the study:

- At least 18 years old
- Self-identified as Latina/o
- Graduated from high school/received a GED
- First member of his/her family to attend college
- Live in Maryland

Over 800 people completed the online survey; however, the research team excluded approximately 500-600 surveys that met any of the following criteria for a non-valid participant: (a) redundant IP address; (b) completion of the survey in 8 minutes or

less; (c) false college names; (d) contradictions in responses; and (e) non-local GPS location (e.g., California). The final pool of survey participants consisted of 264 individuals (see Table 2 for demographic information). As previously stated, students were divided into two citizenship groups: those who are U.S. citizens were categorized as “citizens.” Those who were undocumented, undocumented with DACA, or had temporary legal status/legal permanent resident were categorized as “non-citizens.”

Procedures

The data for this study were collected from January to December 2014. Participants took an anonymous online Qualtrics survey, which took approximately 30 minutes to complete. For those who opted in, students were offered the chance to participate in an hour-long interview with a graduate student (the qualitative portion of the study). Students were compensated with Amazon gift cards for both the survey and the interview. One hundred and eighty citizen and eighty-four non-citizen students completed the survey. One non-citizen student was removed from analysis because they had reported they were from Russia, which is not a Latin American country. Two of the non-citizen students classified themselves as being born in the U.S., however their other responses indicated otherwise (e.g., they described the moment when they realized they were undocumented, had Spanish as a first language, have been in the U.S. for less than their whole lives). Thus, they were kept in the non-citizen group for analysis purposes.

Measures

Demographic information. All participants reported age, sex, country of origin, English language ability, year in school, college GPA, residential status, and other relevant demographic information.

Familismo. *Familismo* was assessed with the Familism Obligation subscale of the Mexican American Cultural Values Scales (MACVS). Familism Obligation measures respondents' perceptions of the importance of obligation to their families (see Table 1). Participants rate 5 items (i.e., "Children should be taught that it is their duty to care for their parents when their parents get old") on a 5 point scale (1 = "Not at all agree"; 2 = "A little"; 3 = "Somewhat"; 4 = "Very much"; 5 = "Completely"). The MACVS familism obligation subscale has been demonstrated to have acceptable reliability and predictive validity for familism attitudes for Mexican American adults (Knight et al., 2010). Additionally, this measure has produced good internal consistency for adolescents ($\alpha = .84$) (Knight et al., 2010). For this sample, the familism obligation alpha was adequate at .75.

Perceived Stress. Perceived stress was assessed with the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10; Cohen & Williamson, 1988). This 10-item scale is a self-report measure of stress, which asks participants to report how often they feel stressed, which is operationalized as how uncontrollable and overwhelming respondents view life situations (i.e., "In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?"). Respondents answer on a 5-point Likert scale (0 = "Never", 4 = "Very often"). The PSS-10 has been demonstrated to have acceptable reliability and predictive validity for psychological, behavioral, and physical symptoms of stress in Caucasian adults (Roberti, Harrington, & Storch, 2006). Additionally, this measure has produced good internal consistency ($\alpha = .89$) (Roberti et al., 2006). For this sample, the Perceived Stress Scale alpha was good at .84.

Depression. Depression was assessed with the Patient Health Questionnaire Depression Scale (PHQ-9; Kroenke, Spitzer, & Williams, 2001). In this scale, participants rate how often they experience nine depression symptoms (e.g., feeling tired or having little energy) within the past two weeks on a 4-point scale (0 = “Not at all”, 3 = “Nearly every day”). This scale was chosen because of its brevity, along with its good internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = .86, .89$) and 48-hour test-retest reliability ($r = .84$) in diverse adult populations (Kroenke et al., 2001). For this sample, the PHD-9 Depression Scale alpha was strong at .90.

Emotional Engagement. Emotional engagement was assessed with the Emotional Engagement subscale of the Engagement Versus Disaffection with Learning scale (EvsD; Skinner, Kindermann, & Furrer, 2009). Participants rate to what extent five statements of emotional engagement in class describe them (e.g., “When we work on something in class, I feel interested.”) on a 5-point scale (1 = “Not at all”, 5 = “Very much”). This scale demonstrated fair to good internal consistency ($\alpha = .61-.85$) and fair test-retest reliability ($r = .53-.68$) on a middle-income elementary school Caucasian sample. For this sample, the Emotional Engagement subscale of the EvsD alpha was strong at .87.

QUALITATIVE:

Participants

Students who indicated on the quantitative survey that they would be interested in an in-person or phone interview for additional monetary compensation were contacted. A total of 21 non-citizens participated in the interview (see Table 3). The average age of interviewed students was 21.6, and there were 9 females and 12 males. Over half of the

students interviewed were either sophomores or juniors. Eight of the students attended community college, and the rest attended Research 1, Regional 4-year, or private colleges. All of the interview participants emigrated from either a Central American or South American country with family members.

Procedures

Individuals participated in a semi-structured, in-depth interview to better understand mental health, stress, and achievement among Latina/o college students (see Appendix B). Interviews were 30 to 60 minutes in length and conducted either in person or on the phone by a graduate research assistant. This graduate student was an active member in Latina/o college student communities, and personally knew many of the interviewees. As a result, interviewees felt comfortable opening up to the interviewer about their very personal experiences about their immigration status, stressors, and college process.

Measures

Interviews. The research team created interview protocols in order to expand upon the survey's descriptive results. Questions asked to interviewees included questions on family history, perceived barriers to college access, perceived stressors and supports, campus experiences, and methods of coping (see questions listed in Appendix B). Because the interviewer was bilingual, interviews were conducted in either English or Spanish. Code-switching was utilized, if necessary. Confidentiality was maintained through the assignment of code numbers to each interviews and pseudonyms. Interviews were then transcribed and verified for accuracy by a research team member.

Mixed-methods Analysis

Analyses are matched to the research questions (see Table 4). Quantitative data analysis involved a mixture of correlations, moderations, cluster analysis, and chi-square; qualitative data analysis was exploratory and theme-driven. I detail the inductive and deductive approach to qualitative analysis below.

Quantitative data analysis. To investigate the first question, *What is the relation of familismo (family obligation) attitudes with engagement, stress, and depression in both citizen and non-citizen students?*, descriptive statistics were run for both the overall sample and the two groups to examine mean and standard deviation levels of family obligation attitudes. Next, the overall bivariate correlations were conducted separately for citizen and non-citizen students to determine if there was a statistically significant relation between family obligation and the outcome variables.

To investigate the second question, *Can familismo be viewed as a protective factor (i.e., can groups cluster into resilient, risk, and protected groups)? Do the protected and resilient groups have better outcomes on study variables than the risk group?* a K-means cluster analysis was used to determine if *familismo* and stress cluster into risk, resilience, and protected groups.

In this process, *familismo* (family obligation) attitudes were treated as a protective factor. Due to the abundance of literature indicating that *familismo* was protective in nature, I tested the theory that having “high *familismo*” would be considered a protective factor. I theorized that those in the protected cluster of high *familismo* and low stress, therefore, would be buffered against the negative effects of stress. SPSS was initially used to determine if three clusters of groups could emerge from the data: those with high stress, low family obligation (risk), high family obligation attitudes and high stress (resilience),

and those with high family obligation attitudes and low stress (protected). By doing so, I was able to determine if these three groups existed in the sample. Then, a chi-square analysis of these groups was used to determine if some groups were more likely to fall into low or high categories of the study outcomes, which are engagement, GPA, and depression.

To investigate the final question, *How are these attitudes and clusters different for citizen and non-citizen groups?*, two different analyses were conducted. First, moderation analysis was used to determine if citizen status moderated the relationship between family obligation attitudes and outcomes. Next, clusters were compared using chi-square analysis to determine if participants of different citizenship status are more likely to fall into particular clusters.

Qualitative data analysis. To investigate the following questions, *What is the nature of the interaction between family obligations and academic achievement?* and *What is the nature of the interaction between family obligations and mental health?*, qualitative data analysis was utilized. An interpretive approach of the data was used.

The qualitative analysis of the 21 non-citizen interviews was completed using NVivo 10 - a qualitative analysis software program -- to provide for efficient coding, analysis, and interpretation. Coding the data was an iterative process including both apriori and inductive coding techniques. I used a deductive/apriori approach first and created a codebook with 5 codes, which were based on the five quantitative family obligation attitudinal statements (see Table 1), and informed by literature. Next, an inductive approach was used to develop the rest of the codes. Interpretive thematic content analyses of the first four interviews were used to develop codes for family

obligation behaviors not specified by the attitudinal statements (e.g., caring for parents, financially helping out others in the family, sharing home with relatives, acting as a role model, and parent sacrifice), mental health outcomes associated with those behaviors (e.g., stress, sadness), and academic outcomes (e.g., motivation for attending school, greater sense of responsibility with schoolwork, and future career-related skills). Throughout the coding process, additional codes were added if they were mentioned in more than one narrative, and previously-coded interviews were re-examined for these codes (see Appendix C for complete codebook).

To ensure trustworthiness in my qualitative work, I met with a peer reviewer at two different points in the data analysis process to discuss codes and findings. During the first meeting I discussed my codebook with my peer reviewer, a fellow graduate student with qualitative coding expertise who was familiar with the data set. At that time, she asked clarifying questions about my coding scheme and provided suggestions for other themes to code (e.g., sex differences). After this meeting, I added definitions to my codes to clarify some of the points she had raised, and made it easier for a second coder to use my coding system for the purposes of inter-rater reliability. During the second meeting, my peer reviewer examined the themes that arose from my coding and determined that they were clear and relevant in the context of the previous literature on family obligation.

Additionally, another graduate student who was unfamiliar with the project served as a secondary coder in order to calculate inter-rater reliability. I worked through my codebook with the graduate student and thoroughly explained to her the codes and the purpose of the coding. After, we went through two interviews together and jointly coded to ensure that she understood the coding process. After being trained, the graduate

student then independently coded the interviews. Our inter-rater reliability was moderate, at Kappa = .764.

During the coding process, particular attention was focused on statements coded with both family obligation and either (a) references to academic achievement, or (b) references to mental health. In the context of these two categories, quotes were only coded as relevant to “academics” or “mental health” if the participants specifically mentioned how their obligations interacted with academics or mental health in order to avoid making too many inferences about how family obligations may enhance or interfere with the outcomes.

Coded statements were then specifically pulled from the interviews and placed into a separate document. After, the quotes listed under each code were examined and notes were taken that summarized some themes that appeared in multiple narratives. Themes that appeared in multiple narratives were then pulled out and reported (see Appendix D). Under each theme, relevant examples and contextual information are provided.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Quantitative Results

Descriptives

Across the entire sample, family obligation attitudes were high ($M = 3.819$, $SD = 0.680$; Table 5). However, this mean was significantly lower than Knight et al.'s study with citizen ($M = 4.40$, $SD = .52$, $t(263) = -13.883$, $p < .001$) and non-citizen ($M = 4.55$, $SD = .44$, $t(263) = -17.468$, $p < .001$) Latina/o adolescents.

Perceived stress ($M = 22.663$, $SD = 4.758$) and depression ($M = 7.716$, $SD = 6.137$) were also relatively high in the sample. Perceived stress was higher than a similarly-aged representative sample that had a mean of 14.2 (Cohen & Williamson, 1988). Depression was higher than a similarly-aged representative sample that had a mean of 3.56 (Rief, Nanke, Klaiberg, & Braehler, 2003). Emotional engagement in class was high in the sample ($M = 3.804$, $SD = .801$). The average college GPA in the sample was 3.116 ($SD = .511$), which is comparable to other college students (Epstein, 2010).

There was not a significant difference between males ($M = 3.88$, $SD = .567$) and females ($M = 3.79$, $SD = .734$) on family obligation attitudes. Similarly, family obligation attitudes did not differ significantly by immigration status (see Table 5).

Family Obligation, Mental Health, and Academic Achievement

Family obligation was not related to perceived stress, depression, or college GPA (Table 6), which is different than what I had predicted. Only academic emotional engagement was related to family obligation ($r = .144$, $p = .019$, $n = 264$). Within the citizen sample, no outcomes were related to family obligation. In the non-citizen sample, family obligation was positively related to engagement ($r = .305$, $p = .005$, $n = 84$);

however, immigrant status was not a significant moderator of the relationship between family obligation and engagement.

Risk and Resilience Clusters

Family obligation was tested as a protective factor in the face of stress via cluster and chi-square analyses. As expected, K-means clusters based on standardized family obligation (protective factor) and stress (risk factor) resulted in three clusters: (1) protected (high family obligation, low stress), (2) resilient (high family obligation, high stress), and (3) at-risk (low family obligation, high stress). The clustering of these two factors together provides a framework for future analysis of the protective role of family obligations.

Chi-square analyses were used to determine if protected, resilient, and at-risk individuals were distributed differently by citizen status. As expected, results of the analysis indicated that citizen and non-citizen students were proportionately represented in all three clusters. I also expected that those in the “protected” group would have the best outcomes on depression, engagement, and GPA, and that the “risk” group would have the worst outcomes. To determine if these clusters differed on depression and engagement outcomes, a chi-square analysis was conducted (see Figures 1 and 2 for distributions). The results of the analysis demonstrated that the resilient group (high stress, high family obligation) was most likely to fall into the “high” depression category, which consisted of scores above the mean on the depression scale for all students ($M = 7.716$, $SD = 6.137$). Those who were in the “protected” cluster (high family obligation, low stress) were least likely to fall into the “high” depression category. Further, those in the “protected” cluster were more likely to fall into the “high” engagement category,

which consists of engagement scores above the mean engagement score for all students ($M = 3.804$, $SD = 0.801$). There were no differences in cluster distributions of GPA (i.e., no one cluster was more likely to fall into a “high GPA” category compared to the others). In sum, it is apparent that those in the “protected” cluster are more likely to have positive outcomes (i.e., higher engagement, lower depression), and those in the “resilient” cluster are less likely.

Post-hoc correlational analyses revealed that it may be that stress was driving the chi-square results. While family obligation was related to engagement, stress was moderately correlated with depression ($r = .584$, $p < .001$, $n = 264$) and correlated with engagement ($r = -.364$, $p < .001$, $n = 264$) in the directions indicated by the cluster analysis. Since engagement was very weakly or not at all correlated with the tested outcomes (i.e., depression, college GPA, and engagement) it may be that stress was the driving force behind the difference in cluster groups on outcomes.

In sum, family obligation attitudes were found to be associated with higher engagement for non-citizen Latina/o students, and the overall sample. Further, cluster analysis revealed that *familismo* may be a protective factor against the negative effects of stress on depression and engagement, however it is still unclear whether stress or *familismo* was driving these results. A closer look at *familismo*'s influence on academic functioning and mental health in the qualitative results may aid in this distinction.

Qualitative Results

The following qualitative results add to the literature by exploring behavioral *familismo* in a previously untested population – first-generation Latina/o non-citizen students. These interviews uncovered unique family obligations expected of non-citizen

college students, and explored how family obligation may be viewed as a source of stress or strength. When coding the interviews, I paid particular attention to questions that revolved around the family or mental health. For instance, I focused on the questions “Could you tell me a brief family history, particularly as you were growing up?” and “What are the reasons you get stressed?” and found that themes of family obligation were particularly salient in response to these questions. The following qualitative results will focus on (a) a brief overview of the family obligations experienced by students during high school and college, (b) the interaction of family obligation and academics, and (c) the interaction of family obligation and mental health. Representative quotes are included to illustrate the themes derived from participant narratives. Appendix D has a list of the qualitative themes and subthemes.

Family Obligations Experienced During High School and College

Latina/o non-citizen college students expressed that they enacted behavioral *familismo* through obligatory behaviors both in high school and in college. In thinking about Suarez-Orozco et al.’s (2011) Ecological Development model, these family obligations are microlevel contextual factors that influence students’ lives, even throughout college. Non-citizen students may have an inordinate number of family obligations due to a number of macrolevel, systemic factors. These macrolevel immigration issues may influence the microlevel family experiences. Often, non-citizen students have parents who are unable to work in safe and secure employment due to their undocumented legal status. As a result, parents may often work long hours to make ends meet, and may rely on children to take on more responsibilities in the home. Though many students no longer live at home, they reported that they are still expected to

contribute to the family in multiple ways. For some, this may mean working to financially support their parents, or helping with household chores. For others, this may mean getting a solid education to help provide financial support for family in the future. From these expected obligations, it is clear that students had to mature early on and assume the role of an adult, often functioning as a head of the household. In this qualitative analysis, all but one student reported having some familial obligations to fulfill while in school.

Non-citizen students take on adult responsibilities at a young age. During the process of becoming a pseudo-head-of-household, students may assume the role of a parent and take care of younger siblings or work to earn money while their parents are either working or are not in the home. As a result, parents are able to share some of their enormous stress and responsibility with their older children who they view as being capable of managing adult responsibilities. While this responsible role may equip students with maturity that far supersedes that of their peers, some could argue that early maturity may mean less opportunity for children to experience the freedom of childhood.

For Tati⁶ (Sophomore, Community College [CC]), caring for siblings had always been a longstanding responsibility. For most of her life, Tati lived with her father and her four siblings. She described her role as being the “mother” of the house. She stated about her responsibilities:

Well, I had to get them ready for school, especially, I’m the oldest, so I had to get the little ones ready for school, make sure that they had breakfast, and make sure that they have their uniforms on, and that they had done their homework. Then,

⁶ Real names have been replaced with pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of participants

after school, I had to come in and cook their meals. Also, I help out my dad with the cooking and the cleaning, and all of that.

Similar to many of her peers, Tati attended school full time and worked hard to keep up with her work. Unlike many of her peers, Tati found herself also taking on the many responsibilities that accompany parenthood, even though she did not have any children of her own. Filling in for a missing mother, Tati helped her siblings get ready for school every day. Instead of coming home at night and watching TV and relaxing like many students, Tati had to make sure food was on the table. When she felt discouraged about the many struggles of attending college as an undocumented student, however, Tati described using the encouragement and support from her family members as motivation to complete school, stay emotionally engaged, and achieve her goals. She said, “It makes me want to succeed...which just gets me encouraged to keep going.”

Sibling caregiving was not simply a female responsibility. Like other males in the study, Randy (Sophomore, CC) often engaged in family obligation behaviors. Having only immigrated to the U.S. only five years ago, Randy and his parents struggled to find employment. Since both of his parents were undocumented, they had to create their own jobs in order to survive. While his primary goal was to go to college and get his Bachelor’s degree, Randy both helped his mother by working with her at her maid cleaning business, while also babysitting and helping his siblings with their homework. At times, it seemed as though Randy had three distinct roles – a student, an employee, and a caregiver.

Students also reported working a number of jobs. Many students who were immigrants also had parents who are undocumented. As a result, their parents were

limited in employment and must either start their own businesses, or work for a low wage. When asked about their biggest obstacle to completing college, every participant has said that the financial burden of college was the biggest obstacle. Not only do their family members not have enough money to help fund students' college tuition, but also students often worked to provide for both themselves and their family members during college, often limiting the amount of money they have to contribute to their own tuition.

Not only did Antonio find himself being a role model for his younger siblings, but also he was expected to work with his dad's company to help save money. He described his job in the following way:

I was in high school, my Dad when I reached, like, 17 years old, he just started teaching me about, like, the work. He taught me about – the what he does, and I learn it probably in two years. So the way for me to get, like, to pay my stuff is working with him so he doesn't have to hire someone else..... I don't want to say it's just stressful, but I believe that if I was able to get financial help, it would be easier for me just to focus in school.

As an assistant in his dad's company, Antonio worked on large-scale project, ran quotes for customers, prepared proposals, and made many phone calls. These important job roles seem atypical for any teenager, whose part-time job usually consists of working at a fast food restaurant or a store at the mall. Antonio was taking on the role of a full-time, experienced employee while going to school. While this unpaid position was of much help for his family members, Antonio also wished he could get his own job to help pay for college. However, his undocumented status rendered him ineligible for other jobs. This status also brought him a lot of stress because he was unsure about what is going to

happen once he graduates from college, but remains optimistic that his hard work will pay off. Further, it was possible that having less family obligations would allow Antonio to focus more on school, and have less to worry about. However, his role in his father's company was essential to its functioning, so he could not leave these particular familial obligations unfulfilled.

Obligations are heavy for both men and women college students. Individual level factors of gender may interact with microlevel family factors to produce different expectations and obligations for males and females. Previous research has demonstrated that females are more likely to take on a caregiving role, whereas males are more likely to financially contribute to their families. Although it was expected that males and females would have different familial obligations and expectations, both males and females described similar obligations at similar rates and in a similar way. One slight difference may be that while both genders reported having to pay for everything on their own, more males reported having to help relatives financially, compared to females. While this difference in financial expectations exists, only one participant mentioned different expectations for different genders in her family. Elizabeth (Senior, Regional 4-Year), noted that there was a lot of *machismo* in her family. She remarked:

I saw how my mother would help my brother with his studies and stuff. And I would ask her, "Are you going to do that for me?" And one time, I would ask her, and I was a junior in high school, and I was like, I would ask her, "Would you do that for me? Would you do that for me?" And then she, one time she got upset with me, and she was like, "No, your only job is to get married, to find a good husband." And that to me was like a wakeup call. And then in junior year, I began

like scavenging for opportunities because I knew that I was not going to have that attitude from my mom, and I was not going to – I was going to prove her wrong. This was an especially “dark” time for her because her dad lived far away, and had to rely on her mother for support. Elizabeth grew increasingly frustrated with her mother’s low expectations and her mother’s preferential treatment of her brother. Though her mother had expected her to forgo college and get married, Elizabeth persisted in school and showed her mom that she was wrong. Elizabeth credited this moment as inspiring her to push herself more and advocating for her own future. She used this gendered obligation expectation as motivation to go to college and defy any preconceived notions her mother had. Through this experience, her mother’s frame of reference changed and she became supportive of Elizabeth’s dreams.

For students who do not belong to families where children are socialized to hold high *familismo* attitudes, increased sibling caregiving and household contribution responsibilities may seem difficult, especially when trying to balance with school-related work. However, for those whose families did emphasize *familismo* attitudes, behavioral obligations are not resented. Instead, these responsibilities are shared, assumed, and collective. Family members all contribute their skills to serve the good of the whole family and help everyone succeed. As Elizabeth described:

We’re also taught that you owe to your family. Like, you need to be there. You have to be there. Like they always told me, oh, you have to take care of your little sister. Like, you have to. You can’t just leave her there. It’s not just – you’re not just running your own show, you’re also worried about someone else or your siblings. You just can’t leave them behind. And in our family, it’s kind of like

we've always helped each other out. Like my brother, he's the one that buys us the phones or the computers or anything that we need. And then we're there to feed him, of course. Or he would take time sometimes to explain homework to us. What deserves further exploration is how these responsibilities might promote or inhibit academic success.

Family Obligations as a Source of Positive Motivation

Parental education values create high expectations, pressure, and motivation for non-citizen students. At the microlevel of Suarez-Orozco et al.'s (2011) Ecological Model lie parental values and beliefs, which are often shaped by values held by society at large (i.e., the macrolevel), or their own family's beliefs (i.e., microlevel). In many Latina/o households where parents immigrated to the U.S., parents often see their immigration to the U.S. as a means to help their children have a better life than their own. As a result, parents have high educational expectations for their children. Ultimately, children may internalize these expectations and use them as a source of motivation for going to college. While this can be helpful, it may also put much stress on students as they feel the pressure to succeed and make their family's struggles worthwhile. Non-citizen Latina/o students may feel that the college path is the only path for success, and may feel that they need to go to college because of their parents' expectations.

Most students in this study reported that parents fostered positive education values (i.e., belief in the usefulness of education). In their households, it was assumed that children would end up going to college. Education was viewed as a vessel through which students can secure a better future. For some students, this meant "breaking the cycle," and providing for a better family future and paving the way for generations

(Violeta, Sophomore, Research I). To facilitate student success, families often made many sacrifices, such as decreasing their children's expected family obligations when their children need to study. For instance, Antonio mentioned that while he does work with his father, his family understands that he also has to complete school work. He said:

Like, they put up for everything, like, for me going to college and study. I mean, sometimes I had to help them working or even, like, babysitting. But them – they put up for everything for me to study, not to work... Like, if I had to go to school to study at that time, like, I just tell them, and I can[’t] go. Like, for them their priority is for me to finish school and do well as well.

While families are expecting their children to attend college, undocumented students may be faced with barriers to college that seem impossible to overcome. The weight of their immigration status may cause disillusion and stress in achieving these goals. Joshua (Recent Graduate, Private State College) mentioned:

They, pretty much, indoctrinated me from the beginning. They just told me that I was going to college. I didn't have an option, which I never really thought through until I started to get into college and I started having difficulties with that whole premise of going to college. Prior to that it was just like that's what people do. We work hard, we go to school, we get a scholarship, and then we go to college. But as I was struggling to be able to get there because of my undocumented status – that I started to question that premise and I started to question the notion that the American dream is a reality.

Like other students, Joshua thought that college was the next logical step after high school graduation. His parents pushed him to go to college, and there was no doubt in his

mind that he could go. However, once he started the college application process, Joshua was met with roadblock after roadblock due to his undocumented status, and slowly became disillusioned. Though Joshua's account makes it seem as though the U.S. higher education system is wearing down the wills of students, it does not stop all students from working as hard as they can to achieve their goals and gain a better future. Maximo (Senior, Research I) also commented:

I'm making myself accountable. I'm holding myself accountable to make it happened. Because I understand that my mom had to work three jobs. My grandfather has been working since he came here. So he crossed the border, he's been working since then. My grandma is vice versa. They are in their sixties now and they're still working and I'm like it's not fair that a Latina/o elderly person has to go [to work] until they're eighty, past they're seventies. And this is the culture that we have here. That's why I feel like, that's why with a college degree I can, I have more opportunities.

Throughout his educational career, Maximo's undocumented status precluded him from receiving scholarships and federal aid. Though his path was difficult, Maximo saw college as an escape from the fate of his older relatives. He saw how many jobs his mother worked, and how his grandparents had to work well into their sixties. His motivation of going to college as a path for future success and opportunities pushed him to continue with school and work to achieve his goals, regardless of the barriers he faced. Having high expectations for college success can help motivate students to stay in school and graduate.

Non-citizen students see parental sacrifices and family pride as sources of motivation. For citizen students, it is easy to lose track of the meaning of college.

Students who do not have parents who made major sacrifices for their lives often see college as a moratorium, a relaxed place that prolongs adolescence a bit longer and puts adult responsibilities on the backburner. On the opposite end, non-citizen students see college as an opportunity to build on the path that their parents paved. While the path to college education can seem difficult and, at some points impossible, non-citizen students are motivated to work as hard as possible and attend school by the sacrifices their families made in coming to the U.S. to provide opportunities for their children. Students find themselves motivated to succeed to make their family members proud. Therefore, both parent sacrifices and family pride are two sources of academic motivation.

Parent sacrifices motivate non-citizen students to persist in college in order to make their parents' sacrifices meaningful. Students look to their parents' life obstacles as motivation to do well in school. Over half of the participants mentioned parental sacrifices as a large source of motivation to attend college. Students who immigrated with their family members note their parents' struggles in their home country, struggles in coming to America, and fight to make better lives for their children as fuel for doing well in school. As a result, students felt obligated to go to college and succeed in order to assure that their parents' efforts were not for naught. For instance, Tati commented on what motivated her to stay in college:

I would say just not giving up. Just seeing how my parents overcame the difficulties of what they were going through, over there in El Salvador, and they decided to just make a move and look for something even better, and I have a lot

of my family members in El Salvador, they have completed their education and they all have careers, so I think it's seeing how my family has succeeded in different ways. It makes me want to succeed, also, which just gets me encouraged to keep on going.

Knowing that one of the key reasons why her family members came to the U.S. was to give her a better education helped Tati feel motivated to stay in school, regardless of the fact that she also had to serve the “mother” role during high school. She was inspired by her parents’ strength while moving to a new country to start over in search of a better life, and may have believed that she herself could demonstrate strength by working past barriers to college.

Bundled with parent sacrifice is making the most out of the opportunities that parents have provided, especially when parents have funded one’s education. For instance, Lorena (Junior, Regional 4-Year), was both a role model and caregiver for her younger siblings in high school. While Lorena’s undocumented status prevented her from getting FAFSA for college, her parents never faltered in their support of her educational dreams, and paid the majority of her education. When Lorena wanted to quit school after two years because she felt as if she was wasting her parents’ money, her father encouraged her to continue with school, no matter how many the obstacles. Being conscientious of the use of her parents’ money, along with the struggles that accompanied staying in school, Lorena worked hard to stay in school. Lorena noted that this kind of mentality is not shared among her U.S.-born peers. About her experience, Lorena shared:

Well, I guess that you have to work hard. I feel like a lot of kids take for granted the opportunities that they have just by being born here and I don't really get that

so just that you have to work hard for what it is that you want to do and just to be determined because we are sacrificing a lot of things so just sticking to one thing and really following through.

Instead of taking the opportunities she received for granted, Lorena always appreciated the hard work that accompanied her success. This fostered a sense of responsibility and maturity in Lorena that far supersedes that of her peers. Thus, not only does parental sacrifice motivate students to do well, but also it forces students to realize that education is not something that should be taken for granted.

Non-citizen students are motivated to succeed to make their families proud.

Students are also motivated to succeed in order to bring pride to their family members.

For example, Diego (Freshman, CC) knew that he wanted to go to college senior year of high school. He realized that a high school education would not get him anywhere, and wanted to have more opportunities than his family members. During high school, his mother encouraged him to do well, but he never really put much effort into school.

Diego said, “She always wanted me to go to college. That was like her dream...because it will make her feel proud. Be the first kid of her family to go to college and graduate.”

He continued on to say that his mom singled him out from his brothers because she saw potential in him; she was much more confident in his ability to go to college because he was consistently on the honor roll and participated in more constructive activities in his free time. While his mom helped him with tuition and books, Diego worked hard to make her proud. Rebecca (Freshman, Research I) also noted that her parents were the most important factors that influenced her decision to attend college because she wants to, “make them proud, and support them just like they supported me.”

It is true that non-citizen students are motivated to do well in school to make sure their parents' sacrifices are realized into a meaningful outcome, and to make their parents proud. However, non-citizen students' efforts may also symbolize an underlying struggle. The sacrifices that parents made to get to the U.S. symbolized a heroic quest for the American Dream (Hill & Torres, 2010; Reese, 2002). Adults come to the U.S. heroically; often risking their lives crossing a dangerous border and sacrificing a life they once knew, leaving all their friends and family behind, to make a better life for their children. Non-citizen students realize this and may believe that if they do not succeed in school, not only are they feeling that their parents' sacrifices were for naught, but also they might feel they are shattering any hope their parents had of the American Dream. Not only can parents serve as motivation for children, but children can also serve as motivation for their parents. Students' success in college fosters a sense of parental pride and reminds them that the American Dream is possible, and was worth the sacrifices made long ago (Perez, 2011).

Non-citizen students are breaking ground for younger relatives who are considering college. In addition to taking on increased familial responsibilities, students with siblings felt it was their responsibility to be a role model for younger relatives. Older siblings took it upon themselves to work hard and pave the college path for younger siblings, so that their younger siblings and cousins do not need to work as hard to understand the college process or feel isolated by the process. By seeing older siblings that have navigated through the college system, younger relatives might then feel like college is more attainable and accessible. In a sense, non-citizen students that pave the college path are activists: by helping other non-citizen students complete college. They

are cultivating a sense of possibility for achievement in the non-citizen student community, both family and non-family alike. Many of the interviewed students felt that they had no one outside of their parents who believed in them. By being a cheerleader and trailblazer for younger siblings, non-citizen students are effectively impacting the macrosystem of generations to come. More and more non-citizen students will see that college completion and success is possible, and society at large will start to promote the value of having students of different immigration backgrounds. This movement starts small—within families. Non-citizen students were therefore motivated to work hard in school and be successful so as to inspire younger siblings to do the same.

One student paving the path for younger siblings is Antonio (Senior, Regional 4-Year). At eight years old, he immigrated from Peru with his sister to Maryland, where his parents had been living for three years. The transition to schools in the U.S. was difficult at first for him because he did not understand or speak English very well. At the beginning of high school, he felt that going to college would be impossible. Though his parents always pushed him to do well and provided him opportunities to succeed, Antonio did not have the funds to attend college. After applying for and receiving a scholarship for community college, he found that he was ultimately ineligible for it because he did not score at a cutoff level on an English test. So, he had to take extra ESOL classes one summer in order to receive the scholarship. Though the transition to college was incredibly difficult for him, even more than his transition to high school, he did not give up. On what motivated him to do well in college, he stated:

I was trying to challenge myself as well because nobody in my family went to college. So it was a goal for me to be the first one to, like, to have a better future.

That was the main motivation for me. The second is, like, without knowledge and everything for – after graduating and getting award, tried to help my other – my sisters that's younger than me so they don't have to work hard that way I did when I got into college because of lack of money, or, like, nobody else understand the process of college because now I understand very well. So I can help them out.

Though the stress and obstacles of college seemed hard to overcome at points, Antonio's position as a role model for his younger siblings helped him become the first in his family to finish college. His primary motivation to do well in school was to serve as not only a resource for his younger siblings, but also as a beacon of hope illuminating the college path. By completing college, Antonio would demonstrate that college is possible, and within his sisters' grasp.

Anthony (Senior, Research I) also mentioned that he works hard in college to inspire his younger sibling to do well. He said:

I mean, I guess – I mean, [my role in the family] depends because in regards to my younger brother who is also going to college now, so I try to be like a role model to him. If I study hard, he sees that and stuff like that always since we were little.

Three other participants responded that they too went to school in order to be a role model for younger family members, including cousins and siblings. From these narratives, it is clear that being a role model for younger relatives is an important source of motivation for many non-citizen students.

The Intersection of Academics and Obligatory Behaviors

Academics and familial obligations are two microlevel factors that interact at the mesosystem to influence students' lives. Students did not directly speak often about how family obligations interact with their academics. Therefore, for most non-citizens, school and home lives exist in distinct spheres. In the few instances that they did talk about the two, students either (a) saw obligations as a source of skill for doing well in college, or (b) saw employment as interfering with college.

Students gain practical skills when engaging in obligatory behaviors. In addition to finding sacrifices and pride as sources of motivation, only two students directly mentioned leveraging the skills they gained from their obligations to help them succeed in school. As children, these students often acted as language brokers for their parents, completing bills, and learning about navigating the legal system. These skills were cited as being helpful in the future and providing students with maturity that helped them get ahead of their peers.

When discussing the role that she plays in her family, Violeta noted that she has always been very mature for her age, given the circumstances that she had to grow up in. From a young age, Violeta helped her parents with language barriers, acting as a translator. Even in college, Violeta felt that she has more responsibilities with her family than the average college student. She constantly had her parents on her mind. However, she did not view these responsibilities or thoughts as stressful. Instead, she found that she is able to focus more on her higher education having had all of these responsibilities.

Antonio has found that his obligations have helped him in school. As previously mentioned, he works at his dad's company since high school. In this job, he made quotes for customers, prepares financial proposals, and works on large-scale projects. By helping

his father with his business, Antonio mentioned that he had also fostered math skills that help him with succeed in his accounting major. Antonio helped his dad so he does not have to pay for another accountant for taxes and, in return, received priceless experience.

While other students did not directly mention the skills gained from obligation, the obligations they took on may have equipped them with a sense of responsibility and maturity that contributed to college persistence. At a young age, many of these students served as both role models and caregivers for younger siblings. By taking care of younger siblings, students learned early on how to juggle school and responsibilities, and developed the maturity that accompanied taking on adult roles at a young age.

Some students take on multiple jobs and delay their academic careers. Time-extensive obligations may interfere with optimal student achievement. While most students reported working, most did not comment on how working affected their academics. Only one student who worked multiple jobs to help his family pay for bills reported that there often was not enough time to devote to both school and work. As a result, school was placed on the backburner. Steven (Sophomore, CC) explained:

Well, I always wanted to go to college. I always wanted to help someone.

Medicine was the priority for me. It's something that I can based on what I've seen and researched about that's something I'm not going to be able to do because a) it cost too much money and b) I won't be able to do it if I wanted to I don't have the means to do it. But that being said, I wanted to go to school. I couldn't do it because of all the previous reasons that I explained. I was working two jobs. Actually I was working full time and part time and there was not enough time to do it.

While Steven was driven to work in medicine, he wasn't able to become a full time student because he worked multiple jobs. He then continued:

I immediately started working I couldn't go to school like you know. Even if I wanted to, I couldn't. I had to support my family. In the situation that I'm in I either work or I don't eat. It's that simple. So school was not a priority for me.

School was if I had the time and the money I was going to be able to do it.

Since Steven was working to support his family, he was unable to start college until six years after graduating high school. Though he eventually started his college career, many students who do take off time for work may never go back to school. Students without such family obligations are much more likely to go to college straight from high school, without taking any breaks.

The Intersection of Family Obligation and Mental Health

Family obligations may bring stress to vulnerable students. Non-citizen Latina/o students did not directly discuss how family obligations could be linked to positive mental health (e.g., happiness). Many students failed to draw a connection between family obligations and their mental health. The students who reported feeling stressed often brought up stress in the context of paying for college, finishing school, and surviving. It seems as though mental health in non-citizen students represented a sort of hierarchy of needs -- they were not worried about higher order needs, like love and support of their family members. Instead, they were focused on stress drawn from survival, a much more basic and immediate need.

Those few that did mention family obligation and their mental health focused on the stress accompanying obligations. For these students, family obligations were truly a

double-edged sword, bringing both motivation and stress. Stressors for students are wide ranging, and include anything from worrying about paying parents back for college, to the pressure of academic success, to balancing schoolwork and chores for parents. One important aspect to note, however, is that individual-level vulnerabilities in how stressors affect students may interact with the obligations and stressors to create multifinality in mental health outcomes. The below narrative outlines a student's experiences with family obligation and mental health, who had pre-existing vulnerabilities and negative early life experiences (i.e., difficulty adjusting to the U.S., being bullied by peers) that contributed to poorer mental health outcomes. Others may not have as many or the same vulnerabilities that predispose them to these outcomes, and may instead have more positive outcomes associated with stress.

In his narrative, Maximo documented his ongoing struggle with stress. Maximo came to the U.S. at the age of eleven. He began attending a Maryland school and found it difficult to make new friends. As a result of the difficulty he found adjusting to school, he begged his mother to take him back to his home country. She did not send him back, so he attempted to work as hard as he could. Since his mom worked the night shift, he relied on his Spanish and English dictionary and his high school-aged uncle to help him succeed. Eventually, he became more comfortable with his peers and the U.S., and was inspired by his uncle to go to college. In addition to the stress of school, Maximo also came out of the closet to his parents. He felt frustrated at home because he could not talk about his feelings, and felt that no one in his family could relate to or understand him. As a result, he kept his emotions to himself.

College, however, was not easy for him. Eventually, the stress of school led to some difficult problems for him. He noted:

I didn't take a break but I never took winter courses because I needed that time to replenish. I needed to see my friends. I needed to literally sleep. Like sleep is usually, I would, last year I was very sleep deprived. I would probably sleep on average like two hours daily or three hours mostly and in the weekends as well. But it was more, so then I got in to the DUI incident. That made me feel depressed. I went from happy Maximo to just being, I mean I would perform to be happy, perform happiness, which to me happiness equated to being I was busy, to be always cracking jokes. People wouldn't see it in the exterior but when I came home the lack of sleep, the restlessness, the nightmares, the fear of what's gonna happen to me, especially when I went to court. Those were mainly my daunting. I really I thought about is it worth to study for my finals, was it worth for me to come back next semester. I did have those thoughts.

His stress and depression compounded and ultimately led to a failed suicide attempt.

About his attempt, Maximo said:

I remember waking up on a Saturday morning in a hospital bed. And then coming back I was disappointed, I'm not gonna lie. And you know, I was thinking about drinking my cold syrup that I had but then something hap—something deterred me from not doing it.

His overwhelming stressors led to a near death experience, depression, and thoughts of suicide. Maximo discussed his ongoing struggles with depression and relying on friends for support.

At first glance, it seemed as though school obligations were the source of Maximo's depression and DUI. However, he elaborated that the fact that he wanted to make his mother happy and be the son she wanted him to be were the primary reasons why he drove drunk in the first place, and felt stressed. He said:

And even for my mom too, I literally, I didn't tell her the real reasons why I wanted to [drive drunk], why I did it. Like I think she's gonna feel bad if I tell her that, "I was seeking your approval and that's why I hopped in the car drunk, because I wanted to crash the car."

In addition to seeking approval from his mother, Maximo was also stressed that his mother was unemployed. He then had to start working a couple of jobs in order to help pay the bills, until she got a new job. It is clear that for Maximo, a combination of family obligations and school stressors contributed to his poor mental health.

Other students also expressed feelings of stress along with obligations. However, this source of stress may be self-imposed. Julian (Junior, CC) brought up a facet of family obligation that many others experience: lessening his burden on family members. While his parents were willing to help him attend college as much as they can, he didn't want them to. In fact, he wanted to be self-supported. His reasoning is as follows:

Well, after the two years, my parents are a great support for me. So my parents just told me that they would do whatever it took for me to continue my education. But at the same time, as I know, like what I feel sometimes is like – maybe, I guess, a burden to my parents because I don't want them to feel like they need to work extra hard just for me to continue my education. So I guess I put kind of a

stress on me to be able to work hard and earn money, so I can continue my education on my own, rather than having my parents do all the work for me. Julian, like other students, felt guilty that his parents have to work hard to pay for his education. As a result, he pressured himself to work and earn money to continue with his schooling. This sense of being a burden brings stress into Julian's life, but also pushed him to work harder than he might have without the sense of obligation.

Immigration issues may strain family ties and cause further stress. A student's immigration status can also lead to further family-related stress. Elizabeth discussed her feelings about staying in the U.S. While she acknowledged that she has had many opportunities to succeed here, she regretted not being able to leave and see sick family members. She said:

I love my country. I remember what it was like growing up. But I love it here. I love the doors that this country has open. I love the struggle, and then you just fall in love with this country because you earned it, you know. You've sacrificed so much to live here. And then not being able to go back – I mean when we were here, we were not allowed to leave. So during that time, my grandmother passed away from pancreatic cancer. So that's a person you lost. That's time you lost. You couldn't even go to her funeral. It's like a debility, so as a human, you can't leave. You're stuck. And then you can't enjoy the resources that are offered here. So it's like you're in limbo.

Due to the legal policies in the U.S. (i.e., the macrolevel), Elizabeth was unable to visit her dying grandmother without risking re-entry to the U.S. Thus, immigration status can interfere with these feelings of obligation, she was in a legal limbo of sorts: while she

wanted to go visit her dying grandmother, she was unable to do so because she could not leave the country.

Isabel (Sophomore, CC) also shared the stress of her immigration status. She chose to go to a local community college because, “everybody in [her] family is always pushing [her] to go to school.” She continued:

I kind of, I had like a breaking point in high school like especially senior and junior year, I didn't wanna do anything. I didn't wanna go to school. I don't know what happened in those two years but everybody got in a state of depression, too, I think because I wasn't, I didn't have any outlet of, I couldn't work, I couldn't drive until Deferred Action came out. So now it's like it's getting a little better. I have my license. I can work and there's not so many limitations that you can't show other people when you're in high school like everybody's driving, everybody can work and I just couldn't you know.

Isabel believed that it was never an option not to go to college because, “everyone else had been...my mom has said, no matter what, I have to do you're gonna go to school.” Although she was depressed and broken down, she pushed herself because she felt she had to live up to her mother's expectations and go to school. That pressure, combined with her inability to work or do other things her teenage peers could do negatively impacted Isabel's mental health. With the implementation of DACA, Isabel was able to gain some rights, but still faces the constant threat that DACA could one day be repealed and may therefore end up with a college degree and no employment prospects.

Non-citizen students may hide their emotions from other family members.

Some students report that they keep their mental health issues to themselves in order to

minimize burden on their family members. To these students, containing their emotions is a coping mechanism that helps them control their overwhelming stressors and emotions and hide them from others. In this way, non-citizen students are keeping their family microlevel and individual level stressors in two completely different spheres.

Maximo mentioned that while he is able to gain financial support from family members, he refrained from bothering his family with his issues because he knew they have burdens of their own. He stated:

Like my grandparents have burdens, my mom has burdens, my younger sister and my brother. Also, they depend more on [my mom] than I myself. So I try to just keep my burdens to me and move upon it. Like literally just be independent. Also I need that. But I do depend on them for moral support. They are always there when I need something. They're always there. Like I need toothpaste, I need to go home and do my laundry, they're always there. You know they are one phone call away. So they're there and those little things, you know home cooked meal, like my grandma. I call her, "Oh when I get there please can you make arroz, arroz teñido, please can you make, make me this, make me that." They're always there. So they do support me.

By containing his emotions and hiding them from his family, Maximo believed that he was helping his family by shouldering his own burdens and shielding them from further stress.

Jacobo (Junior, Regional 4-Year) also shared these sentiments. Earlier in his college career, Jacobo was rejected from receiving in-state tuition with the DREAM Act and did not know where to turn. With the recent changes with DACA, a local agency that

does outreach with immigrants was busy and could not provide him with individual support. He was very stressed and “mind boggled,” yet he did not want to bother his family with his concerns. He said:

Since the beginning of my parents, they’ve tried so hard. I try to just keep my problems away from them and just smile towards them and say everything is perfect. In reality, I have times where I’m stressed out or worried about things.

It’s all worked out so far.

Instead of asking his parents for help, Jacobo avoided telling them the stress he is facing because he knows that his family was already stressed and concerned with other matters.

Elizabeth also commented on keeping her emotions to herself. She explained:

Most of the time my parents don’t understand what school is. So trying to explain to them I need to study. I can’t help you cook right now, is a little – like they feel like I’m coming off as avoiding chores or something. So I got into a bad habit of studying only at midnight just because it’s like quiet. But that’s not working, so at this point, I’m just learning how to – selective hearing, you know. Just turning off whatever background noise there is. And I guess later on, I’m not going to be too stressed out because I feel like right now, we’re in like survival mode. It’s kind of like we either study or we end up like our parents. Or we just get stuck.

From Elizabeth’s point of view, holding back her emotions so as not to burden her parents and studying at odd hours of the night are both advantageous for survival. She used these adaptive strategies to make the best of her family situation and break free from a cycle of poverty. At the same time, she sheltered her parents from her emotions because

she did not want to provide them with additional things to worry about, since they were already arguing about financial issues.

From the qualitative analysis, it is clear that family obligation is often a double-edged sword. While obligations have the power to motivate students to do well in school, it can also be accompanied by stress and poor mental health. Thus, it seems that family obligation is complex, and can afford benefits and disadvantages to Latina/o non-citizen students.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The following discussion will include (1) a review of theory, (2) a summary of the quantitative results, (3) a summary of the qualitative results, (4) link between quantitative and qualitative results, (5) study limitations, and (6) implications for future research and practitioners. Throughout, I tie the results back to the literature and theoretical model.

Theory

Non-citizen Latina/o college students face a number of factors that influence their academic functioning and mental health. By using Suarez-Orozco et al.'s (2011) Ecological Developmental model, I was able to examine macrolevel, microlevel, and individual factors that contribute to student outcomes. In particular, by looking directly at comparisons between citizen and non-citizen students (i.e., the macrolevel), I was able to determine if the tested relationships differed for non-citizen and citizen groups. Further, by closing in on family obligations (i.e., the microlevel), I was able to see how parent psychological distress and family separations (Yoshikawa et al., 2011) could potentially influence the family obligation values and behaviors that both non-citizen and citizen students espoused. By looking at the interactions between family obligation and academics occurring at the mesosystem in student narratives, I could examine how multiple microlevel factors might interact to influence student outcomes. Additionally, by acknowledging the individual level vulnerabilities students might have to certain mental health outcomes, I could better understand that not all students may have poor mental health outcomes when faced with family obligation. While some may react negatively and perceive large amounts of stress which contribute to poor mental health outcomes,

others might become inspired by the obligation and use it as a source of motivation and encouragement.

In the narratives, I was also able to get glimpses of macrolevel influences on students' lives. The stories of Elizabeth and Isabel highlighted the legal limbo that many non-citizen students face: while they wanted to take advantage of things their peers could do, they felt stuck due to the limits of their immigration status. Thus, in addition to the family obligations students faced at home, their immigration status added another layer of complications to academic and mental health functioning.

By looking at the difference in outcomes between “resilient,” “protected,” and “risk,” groups, I was able to test the resilience portion of the Ecological Development model by assessing if *familismo* served as a protective factor and contributed to positive outcomes. Finally, by looking at the individual narratives (i.e., the individual level) I was able to see how stories and experiences may differ depending on the person.

Quantitative Results

This study tested the relations of family obligation attitudes with engagement, GPA, stress, and depression in both citizen and non-citizen Latina/o FGCS groups. Higher family obligation attitudes were linked to engagement in college, especially for non-citizen Latina/os. I did not find family obligation to be related to mental health or college GPA, as I had expected, though. Further, I did not find sex to be a moderator of the relations between family obligation and any of the studied outcomes. These results mirrored previous results in the literature, that demonstrated that family obligation is often linked to engagement (Gonzales et al., 2008) and motivation (Caplan et al., 1991;

Olive, 2008; Suárez-Orozco et al., 1995), which is often linked to engagement (Appleton, Christenson, Kim, & Reschly, 2006; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

I also used cluster analysis to see if three groups would emerge from the data: one that has high stress/high *familismo* (resilient group), high stress/low *familismo* (risk), and low stress/high *familismo* (protected). These three groups did emerge. Results showed that those who were in the resilient group were more likely to fall into the “high depression” category, and those who were in the “protected” cluster were more likely to be in the “high engagement” category, and less likely to be in the “high depression” category. This analysis was similar to Perez et al.’s (2009) study on resilience factors in undocumented youth. By determining if *familismo* and stress would fit my proposed groupings, and determining the relationship between these groupings on mental health and academic outcomes, I found support for the idea that *familismo* could be viewed as a protective factor. However, it is important to note that post-hoc analyses revealed that these differences may have been driven more by stress than by family obligation attitudes, and should therefore be studied in the future.

Qualitative Analysis

Immigrant families encounter a wide range of stressors. For instance, one parent may not be able to immigrate with their family, and may stay behind to earn money. The other parent may work around the clock to provide for the family that has immigrated to the U.S, and for the family that remains in the country of origin. In other instances, both parents may have immigrated but may be undocumented, and must therefore work extra hours to earn enough money for survival. As a result, the qualitative interviews revealed that most students engaged in some family obligation behaviors.

Typical family obligation behaviors for non-citizen Latina/o college students included taking on adult responsibilities at a young age. Responsibilities seemed to fall equally on the shoulders on both male and female non-citizen college students. These responsibilities ranged from sibling caregiving to contributing financially to the home. Some students reported that these behaviors interfered with academics because they had to work and delay going to school, but others reported that family obligations gave them the maturity and practical skills to succeed in college. For some students, family obligations were truly a double-edged sword. Elizabeth and Maximo both shared struggled with the fact that their parents did not believe in them, but also expressed that they were both always taught to fight for their families. However, these two also mentioned that while they did feel the pressure of owing their families, it also pushed them to put all their efforts into succeeding.

Family obligations also contributed to poorer mental health in some vulnerable students. While some students experienced increased stress as a result of family obligations, others compartmentalized their stress to prevent other family members from learning about their issues. While this emotional containment may be advantageous in the some cases, it may not be adaptive and promote positive mental health functioning for all students (Aldao, Nolen-Hoeksema, & Schweizer, 2010).

More widely experienced, family obligations seemed to serve as a very important motivation for all students attending college. Students were motivated to do well in school because they (a) had parents with high expectations for their children's education, (b) saw the sacrifices their family made to get to the U.S. and wanted to make a better life for themselves and their families, and (c) wanted to make their families proud. Other

students worked hard to pave the college path for younger relatives. These findings fit well with previous research that indicate that students often work hard to do well in school in order to make their family's sacrifices meaningful (Ceballo et al., 2014; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

Linking Quantitative and Qualitative Results

The qualitative and quantitative results were similar in that they both demonstrated that family obligations were an engaging and motivating source for students.

Family obligation attitudes were linked in the quantitative data to increased engagement in school. For non-citizen students, motivation, also sometimes referred to as the “why” behind engagement (Appleton et al., 2006), was a key theme among many narratives. Therefore, parental sacrifice may be the “why” behind the higher academic engagement among students with higher family obligation values. Non-citizen students see their parents' sacrifices as motivation to do well in school, which gives them a greater sense of purpose in schooling, and may foster increased engagement.

I believe that by focusing on the behavioral aspects of *familismo*, I was able to better understand the “why” behind the quantitative results. This is an important factor to consider in future research. While quantitative scales measuring *familismo* are important in assessing attitudes and relating them to outcomes, they do not necessarily capture the complexity of the *familismo* construct and do not offer any qualifying information that could help researchers understand the *why* behind the reported attitudes. Thus, further behavioral *familismo* research is warranted to better understand *familismo* among Latina/o students.

It is clear that family obligations may serve as a protective factor, for some, in fostering student persistence and motivation in college. While, for others, family obligations may serve to be a source of great stress. Interestingly, very few gender differences were revealed in behavioral family obligations experienced by non-citizen youth, and were also not revealed in the quantitative attitudinal family obligation. This is unexpected, because many sources of literature cite females as having more family obligations (e.g., Suárez-Orozco et al., 2001; Sy et al., 2008; Valenzuela, 1999; Wong et al., 2009). One reason behind this might be that Latina students who go on to college may have found successful ways of managing both family obligations and academic demands, making them less salient as stressors (e.g., Espinoza, 2010). Future research could specifically examine how family obligations may be different for Latina non-citizen students who attend college, compared to those who have not.

In sum, family obligations tend to overall have positive outcomes for Latina/o non-citizen youth (i.e., higher engagement, source of motivation), but at the same time may also serve as a source of stress for some students. Thus, for some, family obligations may be a “double-edged sword”—while it affords benefits like motivation, it may also lead to worse mental health outcomes and interfere with college-going.

Limitations

This study was not without limitations. One limitation of using archival data was that questions in the qualitative portion were not specifically asked about how stress and family might relate, or how family and academics might relate. For instance, no questions were asked that were phrased as, “Tell me a little about your family. How is your relationship with them, and are they a source of stress?” Instead, I had to rely on related

questions (i.e., “What is your role in your family?” and “What was your family’s role in dealing with the barriers to going to college?”) to piece together what family obligations the students had, and how they influenced their lives. In this way, I had to explore narratives that were slightly related to family, but did not focus on family. As such, I may not have gotten the full idea of how students view their family obligation’s contributions to their mental health and academic performance

Another limitation of the study lies in the sample. In general, while family obligations did bring stress for some students, family obligations were viewed as positive and contributing to increased persistence and engagement for many others. However, we do not necessarily know if this would be the same story for students who did not go to college. The archival data focused only on students who were successful in balancing the demands of school and family, so much so that they were able to get into college and stay in college. Future research should interview those students who were not able to attend college, and to see if family obligations got in the way of college for those students. In this way, research may then see some of the more negative effects of family obligations.

Another limitation related to the sample drawn from the archival sample is the “non-citizen” sample breakdown. Ideally, this study’s non-citizen sample would have had a larger undocumented student sample, which is an especially vulnerable population where family obligations could be very high. However, the undocumented sample alone was too small to use for analysis. Additionally, the breakdown of “non-citizen” in the archival data included “legal permanent residents,” which could not be separated from the “temporary legal residence” sample. These students may have a different struggle than those with only temporary legal residence status, because they have, for all intents

and purposes, legal residency. Thus, future studies should aim to have a higher undocumented/temporary legal residents sample for a more comprehensive look at non-citizen students.

A fourth limitation lies in the quantitative measures used in the original study. The Perceived Stress Scale, Engagement Versus Disaffection with Learning scale, and PHQ-9 have not specifically been validated with neither a college-aged sample nor a Latina/o sample. Thus, drawing comparisons of the levels of stress, engagement, and depression found in this sample to those found in the samples that the scales were validated on is not necessarily accurate. Thus, further validation of these scales to a Latina/o population may be helpful if these scales are used in future research.

Finally, this research could be viewed as a preliminary study that will inform future studies. Ideally, future research would include longitudinal analyses to further test a resilience framework and see how family obligation attitudes and behaviors may change over time. Since some have proposed that *familismo* is a dynamic construct that has different costs and benefits across time (Calzada et al., 2012), it would be interesting to follow students as freshmen in high school every year until age 22 (both college-going and non college-going students) to see how family obligations may afford benefits in some points of one's life, and costs in another and when family obligations are the most protective.

Implications

Implications for higher education. At a broad level, college counseling and advising staff can use this information to understand the family factors that push and pull the decisions and behaviors of Latina/o students. By knowing that family is important to

non-citizen Latina/o students and that they have many family-related obligations, staff members can cater their counseling or advising sessions to their students to consider not only the student's needs, but also the potential needs of the students' families. Staff can become more sensitive to the fact that not only do non-citizen Latina/o students face the many challenges of a typical college student, but also they are often worried about their families' well-being, and have the sacrifices of their families as a constant reminder as to why they need to push on in college.

Further, because Latina/o immigrant parents did not attend college in the U.S., they may lack "college knowledge," and therefore may not realize the many responsibilities college students might face (Tornatsky, Cutler, & Lee, 2002). By holding a college orientation specifically for first-generation and/or Latina/o families, universities can provide information to families about the college process, and encourage active engagement of families in their children's college experiences. By learning more about the college process, families may be better equipped to help students juggle family and school demands. While families may not be in a position to decrease the amount of responsibilities their children have, they may be more mindful of the many demands that their children face, and more understanding, if they attend orientations to better understand the college-going experience.

Implications for school psychologists. It is clear that families are an important part of Latina/o children's lives. The narratives of non-citizen college students demonstrate that they are often either helping their families or considering their families when making a decision. However, they may feel that family and education lie in two

distinct spheres. Schools can promote the merging of these two areas by providing opportunities for families to enter the school atmosphere early on.

One potential avenue for this blending is conjoint behavioral consultation. School psychologists may use conjoint behavioral consultation to promote family-school connections and interventions (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2009). When undergoing consultation with a teacher about a student, the school psychologist should also encourage the participation of a parent or guardian to facilitate a connection between the home and school environments, and show parents that their voice is important. By becoming engaged in the school system early on, parents may be more likely to feel comfortable in an educational setting and advocating for their child in later years. By having a better grasp on the educational process in the U.S., immigrant parents may be better equipped to help their children manage the demands of both home and school.

Implications for future research. This mixed methods research gives a new look at the attitudinal and behavioral experiences of family obligations for non-citizen and citizen youth. This work with behavioral family obligations is different from the previous research that focuses on attitudinal *familismo* because I explored the actual behaviors and expectations non-citizen students experience, not just the aspirational attitudes they espouse in quantitative surveys. By exploring actual behaviors, I could see the true lived experiences that influence their mental health and academics, compared to the idealized attitudes they hold which may or may not be reflected in their daily actions and may not have an effect on outcomes.

To better understand how behavioral obligation may manifest itself over time, future research should utilize a longitudinal design to track how behavioral obligations

may change from the beginning of college to the end of college. Additionally, future research should consider developing a behavioral obligations quantitative scale, which can be used with a wide range of college students that can be used to directly compare how family obligation attitudes may converge or diverge.

Conclusion

Maximo eloquently summed up his family's role in his life as in the following way: "they're my kryptonite, but they also empower me." This quote rings true for the majority of interviewed students: they care very much about their parents and have a particular vulnerability when around them. Much like Superman carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders, it seems as though sometimes these students carry the weight of their families' stresses, struggles, and histories on their shoulders. Though the weight may be heavy, these students rise above and become stronger, empowered by their families' stories. Non-citizen Latina/o college students may wear the clothes of a regular college student but underneath, they are superheroes.

Appendix A

Table 1

Current Study Familial Obligation Statements

1. Children should be taught that it is their duty to care for their parents when their parents get old.
2. If a relative is having financial difficulties, one should help them out if possible.
3. A person should share their home with relatives if they need a place to stay.
4. Older siblings should take care of and be role models for their younger brothers and sisters.
5. Parents should be willing to make great sacrifices to make sure their children have a better life.

Table 2

Quantitative Survey Participant Demographic Information by Immigration Status

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Immigration Status</i>	
	<i>Non-citizen (n = 84)</i>	<i>Citizen (n = 180)</i>
Age (mean and SD, in years)	21.13 (2.98)	21.30 (2.92)
Immigrant Status (%)		
Undocumented	15.5	
Undocumented with DACA	44.0	
Temporary Protective Status/Legal Resident	40.5	
U.S. Citizen		100.0
Sex		
Female	56.0	68.3
Male	44.0	31.7
Country of Birth		
Colombia	8.3	2.8
El Salvador	31.0	8.3
Guatemala	8.3	1.1
Honduras	4.8	0.6
Mexico	20.2	0.6
Peru	13.1	1.7
United States	0.0	78.9
Other Latin American Countries	11.9	6.0
Missing	2.4	
Type of Institution Attending		
Community College	50.0	40.0
4-year University/College	28.6	51.7
None Specified	21.4	8.3
First Language Spoken		
Spanish	97.4	68.7
English	1.3	27.4
Other	1.3	3.9
Length of time in the US		
Less than 1 year	3.6	
1-2 years	9.6	
3-4 years	2.4	
5-6 years	9.6	
7-8 years	20.5	
9 years or more	54.3	

Table 3

Non-Citizen Qualitative Interview Demographic Information

Non-Citizens	Gender	Age	Country of Origin	Institution	Student Status
Abigail	Female	20	Guatemala	Research I	Sophomore
Andres	Male	24	Peru	Community College (CC)	Sophomore
Anthony	Male	21	Peru	Research I	Senior
Antonio	Male	20	Peru	Regional 4-Year (4-Year)	Senior
April	Female	21	Peru	4-Year	Junior
Clara	Female	19	El Salvador	4-Year	Sophomore
Diego	Male	19	Honduras	CC	Freshman
Elizabeth	Female	23	El Salvador	4-Year	Senior
Esteban	Male	25	Honduras	CC	Freshman
Isabel	Female	19	Chile	CC	Sophomore
Jacobo	Male	22	Mexico	4-Year	Junior
Joshua	Male	22	Panama	Private College	Recent Graduate
Julian	Male	21	Colombia	CC	Junior
Lorena	Female	21	Mexico	4-Year	Junior
Maximo	Male	22	El Salvador	Research I	Senior
Randy	Male	21	Peru	CC	Sophomore
Rebecca	Female	18	Peru	Research I	Freshman
Ricardo	Male	27	Mexico	Research I	Junior
Steven	Male	26	Peru	CC	Sophomore
Tati	Female	23	El Salvador	CC	Sophomore
Violeta	Female	20	Colombia	Research I	Sophomore

Table 4

Assessment Methods for the Current Study

Research Question	Analysis
1. What is the relation of <i>familismo</i> (i.e., obligation) attitudes with engagement, stress, and depression in both citizen and non-citizen students?	1. Bivariate correlations
2. Can <i>familismo</i> be viewed as a protective factor? Can groups cluster into resilient (high stress, high <i>familismo</i>), risk (high stress, low <i>familismo</i>), and protected groups (low stress, high <i>familismo</i>)?	2. K-means cluster analysis
3. How are these attitudes and clusters different for citizen and non-citizen groups? Do the protected and resilient groups have better outcomes on study variables than the risk group?	3. Independent samples t-tests, chi-square analysis (clusters), Moderation by immigration status
4. What is the nature of the interaction between family obligations and academic achievement?	4. Thematic exploration
5. What is the nature of the interaction between family obligations and academic mental health?	5. Thematic exploration

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations by Immigration Status and Sex

Variables	Overall	Citizens	Non-Citizens	Female	Male
Family Obligation	3.82 (0.68)	3.83 (0.69)	3.80 (0.66)	3.79 (0.73)	3.88 (0.57)
Depression	7.72 (6.14)	7.20 (5.75)	8.83 ^a (6.80)	8.57 (6.31)	6.17 (5.51)
Stress	22.66 (4.76)	22.73 (4.66)	22.52 (4.99)	23.72 (4.52)	20.76 (4.60)
Engagement	3.80 (0.80)	3.74 (0.83)	3.94 (0.73)	3.71 (0.84)	3.97 (0.69)
College GPA	3.12 (.51)	3.08 (0.49)	3.19 (0.55)	3.11 (0.53)	3.13 (0.48)

^a Non-citizen students had significantly higher depression scores than citizen peers

Table 6

Correlations of Family Obligations with Study Variables by Immigration Status

	Stress		Depression		Engagement		GPA	
Family Obligation	-.107		-.045		.144*		-.053	
	US	N-US	US	N-US	US	N-US	US	N-US
	-.124	-.038	-.045	-.073	.087	.305**	-.058	-.034

Note: US = Citizens; N-US = Non-Citizens

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

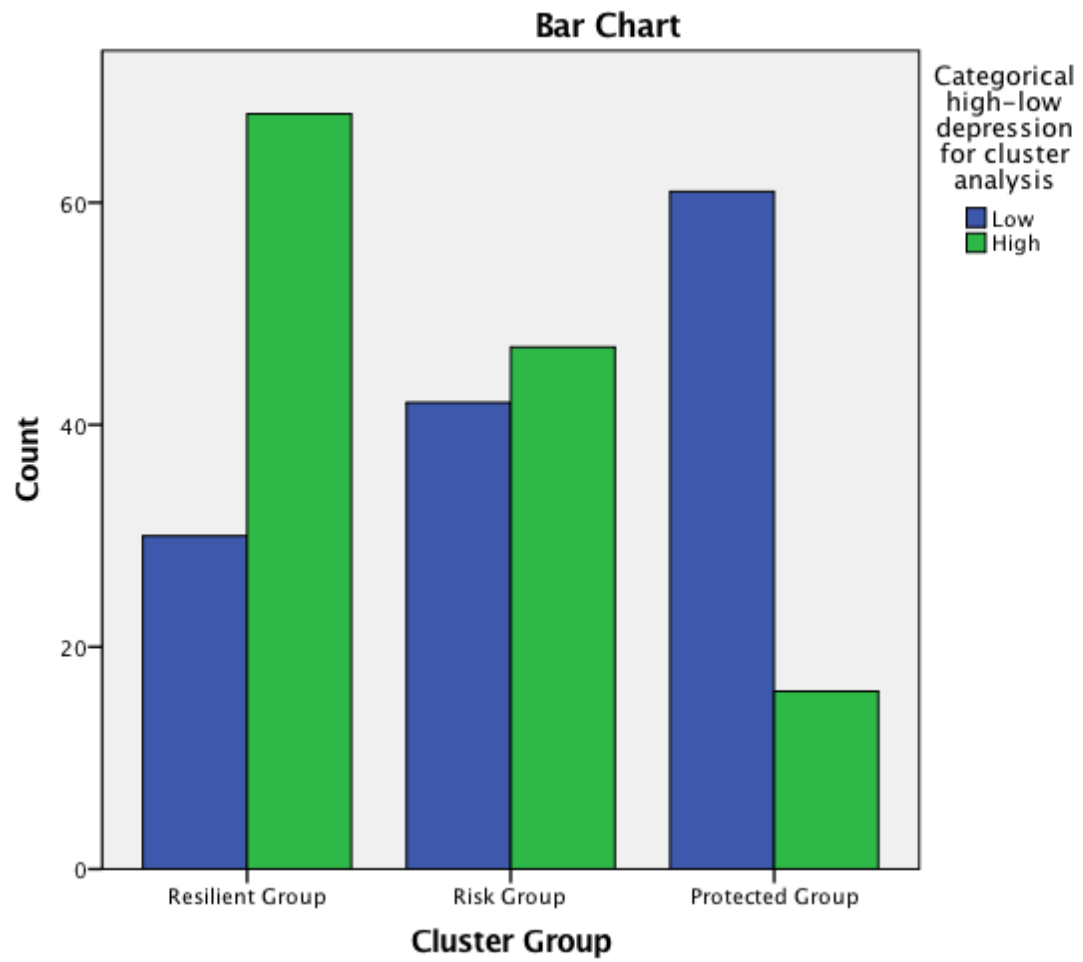


Figure 1. Cluster Groupings and Depression Outcomes

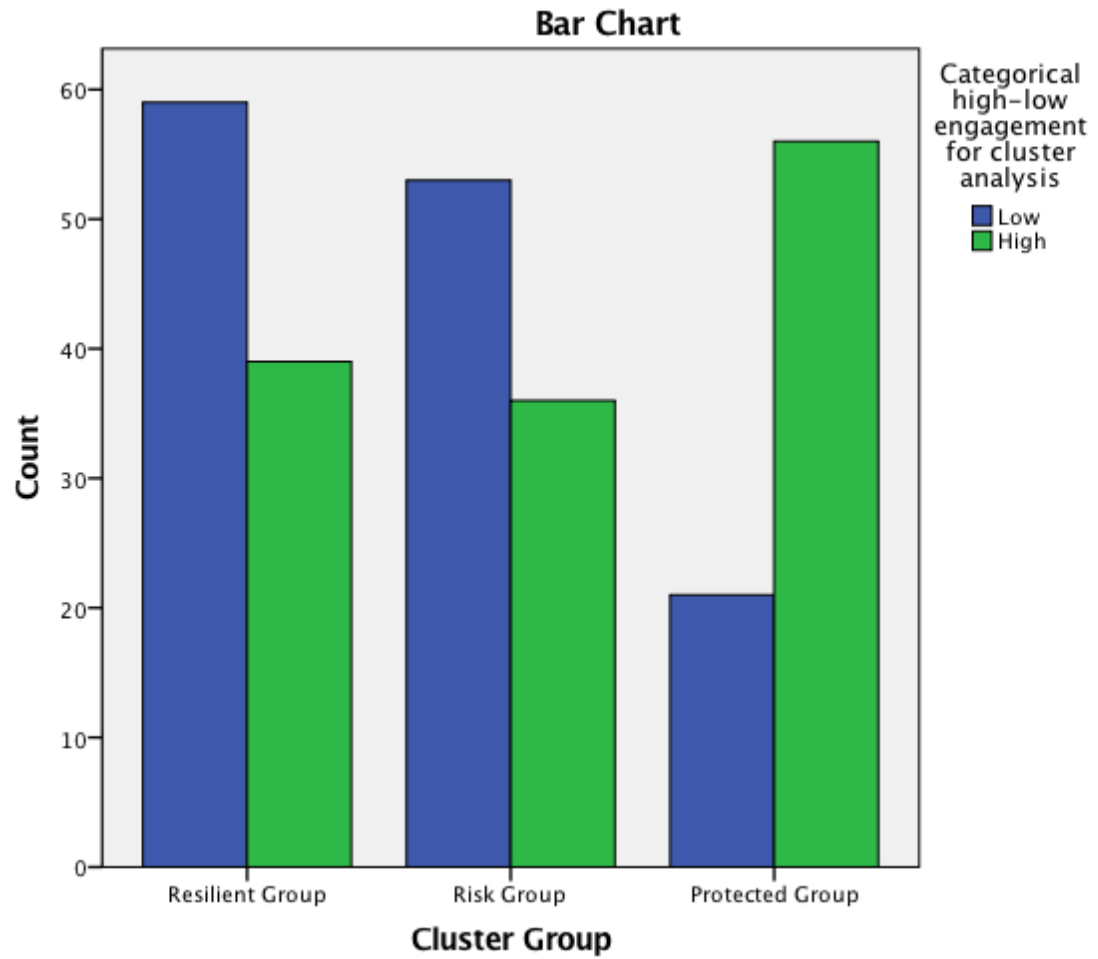


Figure 2. Cluster Groupings and Engagement Outcomes

Appendix B

Student Interview Protocol

1. Could you tell me a brief family history, particularly as you were growing up?
 - a. Who makes up part of your family? (Parents/Siblings/Extended Family/Co-parents, etc.)
 - b. How would you describe your role in your family?
 - b. How long have you and your family lived in this area?
 - c. Could you tell me about your family's immigration history?
2. When did you first **know you wanted to go to college**?
 - a. What are your family's beliefs about education?
 - b. In what ways, if at all, did your family shape your interests in going to college?
3. Did you feel there were any **obstacles or barriers** to *believing* that college was possible for you?
 - a. How did you deal with these barriers?
 - b. What role(s) did your family play as you dealt with these barriers?

For those currently attending college:

4. Could you describe the process that you took to apply to college?
 - a. How did you choose the college you are currently attending?
 - b. Who helped you apply to college, if anyone? How did they help you?
 - c. What types of resources did you use as you were applying to college?
 - d. What were the most important factors that influenced your decision to attend your college? (ex., financial aid, siblings, close friends, interactions with faculty/staff, etc.)
 - e. If you could give advice about applying to college to a student with similar experiences as you, what would you say?

For those currently in college:

5. Do you feel there are any obstacles or barriers to *finishing* college?
 - a. If so, how are you dealing with these barriers?
 - b. What role(s) does your family play in helping you deal with these barriers?
 - c. At any point, have you wanted to take a break from college?
 - i) What caused you to want to take a break?
 - ii) How did you deal with it?
6. You stated that your family [describe immigration history here].
 - a. To what extent do you believe that your immigration status or history has affected your ability to **go to college**?
 - b. To what extent do you believe that your immigration status or history has affected your ability to **pay for college**?

- c. Based on your immigration status or history, are there particular **community resources** that you use to help you **stay in college**?
- d. Based on your immigration status or history, are there particular **individuals on campus** that you can rely on to help you **stay in college**?
- e. What lessons from your immigration experiences and family experiences have you used to help you **apply to college and stay in college**?

For Everyone:

- 7. What are the reasons you get stressed?
 - a. What do you do when something unexpected happens in your life? Can you give an example?

For U.S born/Naturalized/Protective Status Student:

- 8. Can you describe what it is like to be a Latina/o student on your campus?
 - a. To what extent is your **campus supportive** of Latina/o students? **Give examples.**
 - b. To what extent are your **faculty supportive** of Latina/o students? **Give examples.**
 - c. To what extent are **administrators and staff** members supportive of Latina/o students?
 - d. To what extent are **fellow students** supportive of Latina/o students?
 - e. When you need help with **academics**, where on campus do you go for support, if at all?
 - i.) How does your **family** help you, if at all?
 - ii.) What **community resources** do you use, if at all?
 - iii.) Are there **individuals outside of your immediate family** that you talk with, if at all?
 - f. When you need help with dealing with **personal issues**, where on campus do you go for support, if at all?
 - i.) How does your **family** help you, if at all?
 - ii.) What **community resources** do you use, if at all?
 - iii.) Are there individuals outside of your immediate family that you talk with, if at all?
 - g. If you could change one thing about **how Latina/o students are treated on campus**, what would you change?

APPENDIX C

Codebook

1. Financial Obligations	
a. Paying for college/own expenses	a. Working and paying for college/expenses because he/she doesn't want to be a burden to family
b. Paying for family expenses/giving money back to family	b. Working to pay for family bills, rent, and other expenses for the family (this does not include paying for one's own expenses)
2. College choice	
a. Staying close to home	a. The student indicates that he/she is staying close to home to be near family (not staying close to home for financial reasons)
b. Parent(s) influence decision to go to college	b. The student's parents encourage the student to go to college, and/or the student cites this encouragement as a reason why he/she is attending college.
c. Parent(s) influence decision on where to go	c. The student's parents influence where he/she decides to go to college. This may include directly telling the student where to go to college or hinting at where to go.
d. Siblings influence decision to go to college	d. The student's siblings encourage the student to go to college, and/or the student cites this encouragement as a reason why he/she is attending college.
e. Siblings influence decision on where to go	e. The student's siblings influence where he/she decides to go to college. This may include directly telling the student where to go to college, hinting at where to go to college, or inspiring the student to follow in his/her siblings' footsteps to attend their alma mater.
3. Sibling obligations	
a. Being a role model for younger siblings	a. The student views his/herself as an inspiration or role model for younger siblings. This may include the student attending college and overcoming barriers to show his/her siblings that it is possible to attend college, even with a disadvantaged background. This role modeling can be a source of motivation to stay in college.
b. Being a caretaker for younger siblings	b. Taking care of younger siblings includes cooking meals, helping siblings with homework, and adopting a

	motherly/fatherly role towards their siblings.
4. Academics	
a. <i>Obligations</i> interfere with academics	a. Attending to obligations leads to less time to focus on academics, or may even lead to a delay in education
b. Obligations enhance academics	b. Attending to obligations has benefits in regards to academics. This may mean increased students' skills for academics, increased focus on academics, and skills for future jobs.
5. Mental Health	
a. Negative mental health	a. Obligations have been associated with poorer mental health outcomes. To code for this variable, the student needs to say that obligations have caused them stress, depression, or other negative outcomes.
6. Ambitions	
a. Obligations as a source of motivation	a. Students see their obligations as a source of motivation to do well and persist in school.
I. Family pride	b. Students want to attend school to make their parents proud or gain approval from parents.
II. Family makes sacrifices	c. Students see that their parents have made great sacrifices in order to give them a better life, and are motivated to succeed as a result.
b. Obligations as a hindrance of motivation	d. Obligations lead student to be less motivated (e.g., make students exhausted, jaded)
7. Internalizing family education values	
a. Positive education values	a. Parents think that school is important.
b. Negative education values	b. Parents do not think school is important.
c. Neutral education values	c. Parents do not have any strong feelings about school.
8. Care obligations (non-siblings)	
a. Care for parents in the future	a. Students that say they are going to college to break the cycle and change the future of their families, or to provide financial support for families in the future.
b. Share home with relatives	b. Students share home with relatives.
c. Build skills to help family survive	c. Building skills for family survival may include learning English or learning how to maneuver the legal system that help parents with household tasks.

APPENDIX D

List of Qualitative Themes

1. Family Obligations Experienced During High School and College
 - a. Non-citizen students take on adult responsibilities at a young age
 - b. Obligations are heavy for both men and women college students
2. Family Obligations as a Source of Positive Motivation
 - a. Parental education values create high expectations, pressure, and motivation for non-citizen students
 - b. Non-citizen students see parental sacrifices and family pride as sources of motivation
 - i. Parent sacrifices motivate non-citizen students to persist in college in order to make their parents' sacrifices meaningful
 - ii. Non-citizen students are motivated to succeed to make their families proud
 - c. Non-citizen students are breaking ground for younger relatives who are considering college
3. The Intersection of Academics and Obligatory Behaviors
 - i. Students gain practical skills when engaging in obligatory behaviors.
 - ii. Some students take on multiple jobs and delay their academic careers.
4. The Intersection of Family Obligation and Mental Health
 - a. Family obligations may bring stress to vulnerable students
 - b. Immigration issues may also strain family ties and cause further stress
 - c. Non-citizen students may hide their emotions from other family members

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