

CHACON-VILLALOBOS, MELISSA M.S. The Association Between Respect for Family and Adjustment in College Among Latinx UNCG Students: The Moderating Role of Family Emotional Support. (2023)

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There are considerable gaps in the literature on college adjustment among Latinx students with respect to the roles of respect for family values, parental emotional support, and their interaction as potential correlates of academic, social, and psychological adjustment during college. This thesis seeks to fill these gaps with a sample of 77 Latinx college students. Informed by Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth framework and Arnett's (2000) theory of emerging adulthood, the study focuses on the familial capital these students bring them to the university setting. Additionally, it recognizes emerging adulthood as a developmental period during which Latinx participants are navigating achieving psychological, social, and academic competence in a university setting that supports independent functioning. Results indicated a positive relationship between parental emotional support and social adjustment. No additional main effects or interaction effects were found. Significant demographic differences in levels of college adjustment emerged for student gender, COVID-19 impact, and student living arrangement. Results have important implications for universities' efforts to support the success of Latinx students.

THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN RESPECT FOR FAMILY AND COLLEGE  
ADJUSTMENT AMONG LATINX UNCG STUDENTS: THE MODERATING  
ROLE OF FAMILY EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

by

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## DEDICATION

Este tesis es para mis padres. Todo el trabajo que hago es para hacer que ambos se sientan orgullosos y para reconocer los sacrificios que hicieron por mí. Gracias por su amor y apoyo incondicional. Los amo con todo mi corazón.

APPROVAL PAGE

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The Latinx population is the second fastest growing minority group in the United States (following Asian Americans) (U.S.) and represented 18.7% (62.1 million) of the U.S. population in 2020. The Latinx population grew 23% from 2010 to 2020 (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021; Jones et al., 2021). In 2017, 22% of Latinx adults had earned a college degree, a 7% increase from 2000 (Schak & Nichols, 2017). As more Latinx college students complete postsecondary degrees, they are shifting to higher skilled occupations (Noe-Bustamante, 2020). The shift from low- to high-skilled jobs could potentially increase both income and social mobility for Latinx college students. People with bachelor's degrees are less likely to be unemployed and earn \$25,000 more than those with only a high school diploma (Schak & Nichols, 2017). Studying factors that contribute to college adjustment in this population is important when thinking about the growing representation of Latinx people in our country and their future financial security.

The Latinx high school dropout rate has decreased (from 16% to 10%) and college enrollment has increased (from 22% to 35%) in the last decade (Gramlich, 2017; Krogstad, 2016). The number of graduating high school seniors in the U.S. who enroll in college increased from 16.9 million to 19.8 million from 2003 to 2017, a 17% increase. Latinx high school senior college enrollment rates increased 14% from 3.5 to 4.0 million during the same period (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022a). The preceding statistics indicate that there have been increases in Latinx students' college enrollment, although these increases are somewhat lower than those for the population as a whole. Given the occupational and economic benefits associated with obtaining a college degree, it is important to identify factors that are associated with postsecondary academic success among Latinx students.

College adjustment is the extent to which a skill, ability or function has been realized in different areas of the college experience (e.g., academic, social, psychological) and it is important because higher adjustment leads to higher completion rates (O'Donnell et al., 2018). For example, greater academic, psychological, and social adjustment have predicted a greater likelihood of college completion in samples of Québec college students and high achieving Black male college students in the U.S. (Harper & Newman, 2016; Larose et al., 2015). College adjustment is typically operationalized as a "primary outcome variable" (p. 116) and it is defined this way to move toward a more general measurement of level of skill, ability, or function (O'Donnell et al., 2018). College adjustment is typically measured with several self-report questionnaire instruments: Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ; Baker & Siryk, 1984), College Adjustment Rating Scale (Zitzow, 1984), and College Adjustment Scales (Anton & Reed, 1991; O'Donnell et al., 2018).

For Latinx college students specifically, scholars have examined a variety of predictors of college adjustment spanning academic, psychological, and social domains. In a sample of emerging adults ages 18-25, immigrant youths' academic motivation was positively associated with family interdependence (family obligation attitudes) and academic achievement was negatively associated with family interdependence (Tseng, 2004). This study looked at interdependence involving parents, siblings, and the family as a whole. Alvan et al. (1996) found a positive relationship between emotional support (from family/kin or friend/other) and both overall and academic adjustment in a sample of Latinx students. Results indicated that when Latinx students perceived higher emotional support, they were better adjusted academically and overall. Castro et al. (2022) found that for Latinx students transitioning from high school to college, there was a positive bidirectional association between experiences of everyday

discrimination and internalizing symptoms. Greater psychological adjustment among Latinx college students has also been associated with less depression, less stress, less acculturative stress, less intragroup marginalization, less ethnic segregation, and lower levels of perceived discrimination. Better psychological adjustment is associated with stronger ethnic identity and positive coping skills (Alvan et al., 1996; Castillo, 2009; Crockett et al., 2007; Iturbide et al., 2009; Lee et al., 2020; Levin et al., 2006; Maiya et al., 2021; Rischall & Meyers, 2017).

Research on social adjustment among Latinx college students has tended to focus on the roles of acculturative stress (Maiya et al., 2021). In general, findings have indicated that large cultural changes can cause acculturative stress which in turn predicts lower levels of social adjustment. Importantly, parental support can moderate the association between acculturative stress and social adjustment. For example, parental support was found to protect Mexican American College students from experiences of acculturative stress (Crockett et al., 2007). Although these predictors of college adjustment are not all unique to Latinx college students, they are indicative of the breadth of factors predictive of college adjustment within this population. The current study will focus on the relationships Latinx students have with their parents as potential predictors of college adjustment in each domain (i.e., academic, psychological, and social adjustment). Specifically, it will focus on students' perceptions of family obligation as a predictor of college adjustment and the extent to which perceived support from parents moderates such associations.

### **Theoretical Perspectives**

My examination of the link between Latinx college students' respect for family values and their college adjustment as moderated by parental emotional support draws from two theoretical perspectives. First, the Community Cultural Wealth framework informs the study by

highlighting the familial capital that Latinx students bring with them to college. This form of capital has been shown to serve as a source of academic support and motivation to Latinx students, which can influence their college adjustment in all three domains (i.e., academic, social, and psychological). Second, the Theory of Emerging Adulthood provides a lens through which the unique experiences of Latinx college students can be viewed. Using this theory, the current study is informed by the conflict Latinx college students face while balancing strivings for independence with continued dependence on parents, while acknowledging the important role of interdependence among Latinx families (Fuligni et al., 1999). The following sections provide a broader description of both theories. However, the current study will draw most heavily on the familial capital component of Community Cultural Wealth and the unique experience of Emerging Adults. For clarification in terminology when discussing theoretical perspectives and throughout this thesis, generational status can have two meanings. The first refers to immigrant generational status, meaning the participants' generational position in the U.S. (e.g., first generation immigrant status). The second refers to the participants' college generational status (e.g., first generation college student). The term generational within this thesis will always be used in combination with either the term immigrant or the term college to clarify these two uses of the term.

### **Emerging Adulthood**

The Theory of Emerging Adulthood (Arnett, 2000) focuses on understanding a period of life that involves unique experiences and challenges. Emerging adults are individuals from ages 18-29 (Arnett, 2004). During this distinct period of life, emerging adults experience changes in educational and residential statuses, a lack of clear roles, and identity exploration. The changes in residential and educational statuses can be a result of leaving home for college. Emerging

adults seek to become increasingly independent, but still depend on their parents for financial and emotional support. Education during emerging adulthood (college) now serves as occupational training. Additionally, college is a time to explore romantic and work identities in more depth (Arnett, 2004).

The Theory of Emerging Adulthood has been used to frame research conducted with college students from a wide range of racial/ethnic groups. When it has been applied to the study of Latinx college students, it has highlighted aspects of their cultural and familial backgrounds that make attending college a unique experience for this racial/ethnic group. This theory emphasizes independence, not recognizing that Latinx families are also characterized by high values of interdependence (Fuligni et al., 1999). Family interdependence has been shown to have both positive and negative impacts on college adjustment among Latinx students. Feeling connected and supported by the family as a whole predicted a greater likelihood that Latina students would pursue Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) degrees (Rodriguez et al., 2021). But greater family interdependence (involving parents, siblings, and entire family) has been demonstrated to have both motivating and debilitating impacts on academic adjustment in college (Tseng, 2004). Ibaraki and Manoogian (2021) proposed that emerging adulthood in Asian American and Latinx cultures reflects an emphasis on family respect and the collectivistic nature of these racial/ethnic groups. Their study looked at sources of parental conflict among Asian American, Latinx, and White emerging adults enrolled in college. Results indicated that family (as a whole) expectations were the source of most parental conflict across all ethnicities. However, female, and second-generation immigrant students in this sample were most likely to express that family expectations were conflict provoking. Together, such findings suggest that even though family interdependence can be a motivating factor for

Latinx college student attendance, the added responsibilities often placed on them by their families can also have a negative impact on their adjustment in college.

Familism, an important part of most Latinx cultures, involves a strong sense of family responsibility and unity (Lee et al., 2020). Membership in cultures that value familism can make the experiences of emerging adults distinctive from the experiences of emerging adults whose cultures place less of an emphasis on this construct. Fuligni (2007) used an emerging adulthood perspective to frame a longitudinal study of adolescents from Asian, Latin American, and European backgrounds. Participants were followed as they moved through middle school, high school, and young adulthood. The participants attended school in the San Francisco area, and many were members of immigrant families, with 30-40% having been born outside of the U.S. Participants were followed up two times after graduation. Results indicated that second-generation immigrant status (and beyond), as well as age, increased the likelihood of participants reporting a strong emphasis on family (i.e., parents, siblings, and extended family) obligation over the course of the study. Participants with stronger family obligation values had higher academic motivation and aspirations.

The current study will focus on Latinx students at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG). These students are adjusting to college at a distinct period during their lives: emerging adulthood. Latinx students' familism values, including their values related to family respect represent a unique and meaningful part of their identities. In turn, these values will impact Latinx college students' transitions from adolescence to adulthood and their college adjustment. The theory of emerging adulthood will be used to guide this research by focusing on predictors of their college adjustment across the transition to adulthood. However, this thesis will

focus on how the culturally grounded values of familism and interdependence among Latinx students are an important predictor of this adjustment.

### **Community Cultural Wealth**

Yosso (2005) created the concept of Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) to challenge the deficit assumption that People of Color (POC) do not have the social and cultural capital that is needed for social mobility. CCW focuses on knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts that POC use to offset the negative outcomes of micro and macro-forms of oppression and achieve higher social mobility (Yosso, 2005). Aragon (2018) described CCW as the “cultural thinking learned in the home” (p. 376). CCW identifies six different forms of “wealth” possessed by POC: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant capital. These different types of capital are discussed below with respect to Latinx families.

Familial capital includes a broader definition of family that encompasses extended family members. It is posited that through these family ties individuals learn how important it is to stay connected to one’s community and resources. Additionally, family members model important behavior that inform students’ moral, emotional, educational, and occupational goals (Yosso, 2005). Huber (2009) indicated that students in their study often mentioned parent support as promoting their academic success. Additionally, participants in this study identified family’s migration histories (recounted by parents) as an example of familial capital that motivated students’ educational goals and success. Finally, Rincón et al. (2020) found that participants in their study of first and continuing generation Latinx STEM college students described changing their career goals based on the needs of their parents, and measured their success based on parents’ well-being. In these ways, familial capital serves as a form of academic motivation and support for Latinx college students. This form of capital can also emphasize respect for family



values that can influence Latinx students' academic, psychological, and social adjustment in college.

Although this thesis will only focus on the role of familial capital, there are 5 other forms of capital that are relevant to the experiences of Latinx students. Aspirational capital is the ability of Latinx parents to model and teach their children to maintain high hopes despite barriers. This involves Latinx parents inspiring their children to achieve higher educational outcomes than they themselves were able to achieve (Aragon, 2018). Linguistic capital can be described as the emotional and social skills obtained through speaking multiple languages. Students of color learn valuable language and communication skills that include storytelling traditions, communications through different art forms, and the ability to use different vocal registers (Yosso, 2005). Social capital refers to the people and community resources that provide instrumental and emotional support to Families of Color (FOC) to navigate society (Yosso, 2005). Navigational capital can be described as the ability to navigate through social institutions like schools, university campuses, and government systems. College students continue to need this support from social connections and outside resources during their graduate school experiences (Espino (2014). Lastly, Resistant capital refers to the knowledge and skills obtained by the incorporation of all the various forms of capital to resist racism and other forms of oppression (Yosso, 2005).

The recognition of the importance of familial capital as a resource that supports the adjustment of Latinx college students informed the choice of variables for this study. The current study will focus on students' family respect values and their perceptions of emotional support as potential sources of familial capital that support positive college adjustment among Latinx students. Latinx college students who are respectful to their parents experience better academic outcomes because by showing respect to their elders (e.g., parents, professors, grandparents, etc.)

they learn from those elders what steps it takes to be successful (Campa, 2010). Respect for family values have also been linked to more prosocial behaviors among Latinx college students (Streit et al., 2020). Corona et al. (2017) reported that when respect for family values is low, Latinx college students experience higher levels of anxiety symptoms. Similarly, more emotional support from parents is associated with greater adjustment in college among Latinx college students (Marrun, 2018). Respect for family values and parental emotional support are two important sources of familial capital that can promote academic success, among Latinx college students.

Informed by the familial capital construct of the CCW framework, the current study will explore the association between Latinx college students' respect for family values and their college adjustment (academic, psychological, and social adjustment). Additionally, it will seek to identify if there is a moderating effect of parental emotional support on associations between respect for family and adjustment in college. More specifically, the CCW perspective frames this research because of the role of both family emotional support and respect for family as potential sources of familial capital that interact to play a critical role in Latinx students' adjustment to college.

## **Literature Review**

### **The Association Between Respect for Family Values and College Adjustment**

Familism is a cultural term that references the value placed on family support, attachment, loyalty, and respect. It is highly relevant within Latinx families and includes attitudinal and behavioral components. Attitudinal familism (more commonly studied) includes placing one's family above oneself and valuing attachment, support, loyalty, and respect in the family unit. Behavioral familism refers to the behaviors/actions that reflect the values mentioned

above. These might include spending time with family, providing financial help to family members in need, and deciding to live close to family (Cahill et al., 2021). For the purposes of the current study, I will focus on attitudinal familism, specifically values related to respect for family.

### ***Academic Adjustment***

Virtually no studies have been conducted to assess the relationship between respect for family values and academic adjustment among Latinx undergraduate students. In a rare exception, Campa (2010) reported that showing respect (to family and professors) contributed to the academic success of Mexican American community college students. In qualitative interviews, Mexican American community college students discussed how they had learned to “play the game” (p.451) by respecting authority figures that could help them achieve their success. This illustrates the fundamental value of respect that is taught to Latinx youth and how it can be used in academic settings to succeed.

### ***Social Adjustment***

Streit et al. (2020) examined the association between family support, respect for family, and empathy among Latinx college students and their prosocial behaviors toward family, friends, and strangers. Prosocial behaviors were measured using the revised Prosocial Tendencies Measure (PTM-R; Carlo et al. 2003). Items asked whether students helped people in different situations and these items were modified to refer to the different targets (family, friends, strangers). Respect for family was measured using the Respect for Family subscale from the Family Obligation Scale (Fulgini et al., 1999). This scale included items that gauged how important respect for family was to the participants. This measure focused on as it related to parents, siblings, grandparents, and family as a whole. Findings indicated that respect for family

was positively and directly associated with Latinx college students' prosocial behaviors towards friends and family more than strangers.

### ***Psychological Adjustment***

Corona et al. (2017) examined whether cultural values (Familism, *respeto*, and religiosity) moderated the negative effect of cultural stressors (acculturative stress and discrimination) on the mental health of Latinx college students. Using the Mexican American Cultural Values Scale, respect for family was measured using the respect subscale (MCVS; Knight et al., 2010). Items in this subscale included questions regarding parents and the family as a whole. Mental Health and Psychological stress were measured using the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). Items assessed how often during the last week participants felt depression, anxiety, and stress. Negative associations were found between cultural values (familism support, familism referents, *respeto*, religiosity) and the mental health outcomes examined (i.e., depression, anxiety, and stress). Respect for family did not moderate the relationship between acculturative stress and depressive symptoms. However, respect for family did moderate the association between acculturative stress and anxiety symptoms. The positive association between acculturative stress and anxiety was stronger among students who had lower respect values than among those who had higher levels of respect values. Results underscore the importance of considering familism values such as respect for family when studying psychological adjustment among Latinx college students.

### **The Association Between Parental Emotional Support and College Adjustment**

#### ***Academic Adjustment***

The literature on Latinx parental emotional support as a correlate or predictor of academic adjustment in college has demonstrated a link between Latinx parents' emotional

support and their children's academic success. Although the literature on this topic is minimal, several studies have directly examined the associations between parental emotional support and academic adjustment among Latinx college students. For example, parents were identified as a primary source of emotional support by Latinx college students in a qualitative study (Sánchez et al., 2005). This study included in-depth qualitative interviews with 10 Mexican American adolescents. Participants were asked "Are there people in your life who are more experienced than you and offer you guidance?" When the participants identified the individuals, the students were then asked if they had respect for these individuals, looked up to them, and felt like the individuals cared for them. Even though this study included more than just parents as possible sources for support, the results indicated that this sample felt cared for and motivated academically by their parents.

Specific types of emotional support provided by parents were examined by Marrun (2018) in a qualitative study that elucidated how family stories, proverbs, and advice-giving narratives aided Latinx college students in academic persistence and success. Semi-structured interviews were administered asking participants about their academic trajectories from elementary school through college and how family life and cultural knowledge shaped these trajectories and college success. Family Stories (*historias familiares*) were generally described by the participants as parents sharing their struggles due to not having a college education. Proverbs (*dichos*) helped develop and maintain cultural values and life lessons needed for Latinx students to develop self-efficacy beliefs. These words of wisdom from family members (including parents) helped participants develop problem-focused coping strategies to support their academic adjustment in college. In addition, advice-giving narratives (*consejos*) were sources of motivation for Latinx college students in this sample and a way for parents and

grandparents to express the consequences of not obtaining a college education. These three forms of family engagement provided emotional support that was instrumental to college students' persistence and academic success. Taken together, the findings underscore the importance of parents' emotional support for Latinx emerging adults' college educations (Marrun, 2018).

Ong et al. (2006) examined the influence of protective psychological and family factors that can influence academic achievement among Latinx college students. Most participants were second-generation immigrants, came from very low socioeconomic status (SES), and none had parents who had completed college. In this study, potential influences included demographic factors (ethnicity, gender age, place of birth, etc.), ethnic identity measured by the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 2016; Robert & Unger, 1999), and family influences. Family influences included SES, which was measured by participants' reports of parental education and income. Parental support of education was measured through student completion of a measure developed for the project to assess student perceptions of parents' support, encouragement, and understanding about college experiences and demands. Family interdependence was measured using Phinney et al.'s (2005) 10-item scale measuring the family's values of interdependence, closeness, and obligations. Findings from this study indicated that students who were lower in SES were more influenced by individual (generational immigrant status, demographics) and family (SES, parental support of education, family interdependence)- level factors. Additionally, consistent levels of parental support of education were associated with higher grades in college.

In addition to research with college students, research on Latinx middle and high school students has also indicated that parental emotional support is associated with academic success. Ramirez et al. (2014) measured parental emotional support by creating a set of questions to measure high school students' perceptions of parental emotional support and academic

expectations. The results indicated that greater parental emotional support was consistently associated with higher academic self-efficacy scores in a sample of high school students. In another study using a sample of middle and high school students (ages 11 to 13), Azmitia et al. (2009) measured emotional support by asking students who they spoke to about (1) their friends and (2) their problems and worries. Participants were asked to report the occurrences of these conversations with their chosen caregiver(s) on a scale ranging from (1) *rarely/never* to (3) *always*. Results indicated that participants perceived their parents and siblings to be major sources of emotional support. Greater parental support and guidance were associated with higher math achievement.

### ***Social Adjustment***

No research to date has focused on parental emotional support in relation to the social adjustment of Latinx college students. However, research by Lee and Goldstein (2016) explored whether social support from family members, friends, and/or romantic partners minimized loneliness in a sample of emerging adults and suggests a potential link between parental emotional support and college students' social adjustment. Loneliness was measured using a short (8-item) version of the UCLA Loneliness Scale (UCLA-8; Hays & Dimatteo, 1987). Results indicated that friend support buffered students against stress and loneliness within this sample of emerging adults. Although this study was not specific to Latinx college students or parents, it suggests that emotional support from parents might protect Latinx college students from social risk.

### ***Psychological Adjustment***

Research linking parental emotional support to psychological adjustment has not been conducted among Latinx college students. Kam et al. (2020) conducted research on

undocumented Latinx high school students and whether they disclosed their family immigration status to teachers or friends. The study also examined whether disclosure was associated with depressive symptoms. Received emotional support was measured using a 4-item scale that asked students how often they received support from their friends and/or teachers. Depressive symptoms were measured using the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression scale, created by Radloff (1977). The results indicated that students reported more indirect disclosures to friends than teachers. Additionally, emotional support did not mediate the relationship between disclosure and depressive symptoms. Lastly, (in)direct disclosures to friends showed a positive relationship to depressive symptoms. Although this study does not focus on parental support and psychological adjustment, it suggests that emotional support from parents might be associated with greater psychological adjustment among Latinx students.

### **Family Emotional Support as A Moderator of the Relationship Between Respect for Family and College Adjustment**

No research has been conducted to study the potential role of family emotional support as a moderator of the association between respect for family and college adjustment (academic, social, psychological). Informed by Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth framework and Arnett's (2000) Theory of Emerging Adulthood family emotional support and respect for family values are forms of familial capital that may interact to influence college adjustment among Latinx emerging adults. Studying the possible moderation of family emotional support on the relationship between respect for family values and college adjustment is important because the extent to which Latinx college students value respecting their families occurs in the context of navigating their new identities as emerging adults in a predominantly individualistic culture. The emotional support received from their parents might amplify the relationship that exists between



respect for family values and college adjustment as emerging adults. Support for the possibility that emotional support moderates the association between family values and college adjustment is evident in Auerbach's (2017) ethnographic study of Latino immigrant parental moral support and how it influences children's college education. The parents in this study often encouraged their children to go to college and get an education, while simultaneously emphasizing the importance of respecting and helping those who need it most (especially family members). Parents who were most supportive of their students' educational goals often cleared responsibilities from their children so that children could focus on their schooling. This suggests that an understanding of the ways in which respect for family values is associated with Latinx students' college adjustment must take into account the levels of parental support that contextualize such values. Testing the extent to which parents' emotional support moderates the association between respect for family values and college adjustment would add to the literature on Latinx college student's adjustment by acknowledging that students' respect for family values interacts with emotional support to impact their college adjustment.

Further support for the examination of the family emotional support as a moderator of respect for family values and college adjustment is provided by Sy & Romero's (2008) study of types of family responsibilities and the way they influence the college experiences of Latina college students. Findings from this study suggested that Latina students are often socialized to provide monetary and caretaking support to their families as a form of respect, but that students often felt an extra amount of stress with these caretaking responsibilities, especially in the context of going to college. This study indicated that even though students valued helping their families and viewed this help as a form of respect, it added stress to their lives that potentially could impact their college adjustment. Sy and Romero did not directly examine the extent to

which parents' emotional support may impact how Latinx college students managed the stress they were experiencing or the degree to which such support may offset the impact of their respect for family values on their college adjustment. The proposed study will add to the literature in that the extent to which Latinx college students' respect for family values interacts with perceived emotional support to impact college adjustment will be examined.

It may be that for Latinx students who receive a high levels of parents' emotional support during college that respect for family values are positively associated with college adjustment. Conversely, the hypothesized positive link between students' respect for family values and college adjustment may be less robust or even negative for students who experience low levels of parental emotional support. Although this study will not test the mechanisms by which this process unfolds, it may be that Latinx students who receive high levels of emotional support from their parents are able to successfully incorporate their respect for family values into their college lives more successfully than students who do not receive high levels of emotional support. Those students who receive little to no parental emotional support might experience the enactment of respect for family families as a heavy burden (especially when familial obligation tasks are not developmentally appropriate (Telzer & Fuligni, 2009) which, in turn, negatively impacts their college adjustment. More specifically, these students may find themselves struggling with or questioning their respect for family values, a core aspect of their Latinx identity, and this might negatively impact their college adjustment during emerging adulthood.

### **Potential Control Variables**

A number of other factors that are not the central focus of this study are potentially associated with one or more of the variables of interest for this thesis. Accordingly, they should be considered as control variables. Although COVID-19 impact and how stressful paying for

college is for students are not the focus of this study, it is important to include them as control variables because students who have been more negatively impacted by COVID-19 have experienced decreased levels of college adjustment, specifically psychological (Bisconer & McGill, 2022) and social (Okado et al., 2021) adjustment. Similarly, students with fewer financial resources experience lower levels of college adjustment (Metha et al., 2011). Additionally, living at home during college might be associated with college adjustment. Melendez (2019) found that commuter students reported lower levels of social adjustment during college. However, this might be different for Latinx college students, considering both Latinx students and their families typically prefer for their students to live at home during college (Ovink & Kalogrides, 2015).

Gender is another potential control variable when examining associations among family emotional support, respect for family values, and college adjustment. This is because the meaning and expression of family values differ in important ways for Latinx male and female college students. Latinas are often expected to assist their families of origin while enrolled in college (Ovink, 2013; Sy & Brittan, 2008). Sy and Romero (2008) found that Latina women assisting their families often perceived this to be a stressful task when they were attending college. In contrast, Latino men are typically socialized to prioritize succeeding in college to earn enough income to support their future families (Ovink, 2013). While conducting semi-structured interviews with Latino community college students, Sáenz et al. (2018) explored how these men managed their work, current and future academics, and family obligations. Findings indicated that Latino males relied heavily on their familism values and familial capital as sources of support through community college. This finding suggests that Latino men receive ample support from their families (mothers, fathers, siblings, wives, children, etc.) to succeed in

college. It appears that Latina college students are more likely to be perceived as sources of support for their families, while Latino college students are more likely to be the recipients of family support. Despite the differences in support from family, research has indicated that female students are typically better adjusted academically in general (Voyer & Voyer, 2014). More specifically, female Latinx students are more likely to enroll in high school and graduate (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022b), and are more likely to enroll in college preparatory courses while in high school than their male peers (Boutin-Martinez et al., 2019).

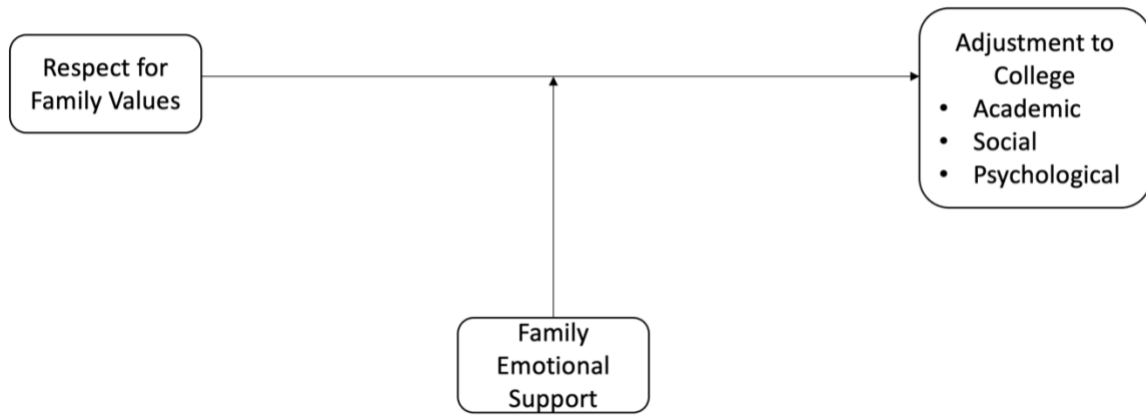
For the reasons described above, COVID impact, difficulty paying for college, living arrangements, and gender should all be considered as potential control variables in a study examining the associations among respect for family values, parental emotional support, and college adjustment.

### **The Current Study**

The purpose of the proposed study is to address three research questions. First, what is the association between respect for family and college adjustment (academic, psychological, and social) among Latinx UNCG students? Second, what is the association between family emotional support and college adjustment among Latinx UNCG students? Third, does family emotional support moderate the association between respect for family values and college adjustment among UNCG Latinx students? Figure 1 depicts the model being tested. It is hypothesized that family emotional support and respect for family will have positive associations with all three types of college adjustment. It is hypothesized that family emotional support will moderate the association between respect for family values and college adjustment in such a way that the positive association between respect for family values and college adjustment will be stronger among students who perceive higher levels of parent emotional support.

## Figure 1. Moderation Model

*The Relationship between Respect for Family Values and Adjustment to College among LatinX UNGC Students, as Moderated by Family Emotional Support.*



## CHAPTER II: METHODS

### Participants

The participants in this study were a subsample of 77 Latinx students who participated in a larger study of 894 undergraduate students attending a medium sized Minority Serving Institution located in the southeastern U.S. Participants were all considered “traditional” students, meaning they enrolled in college during the two years following high school graduation. Inclusion criteria for the study were that participants needed to (1) identify their race or ethnicity as Hispanic or Latinx. Eighty-seven percent ( $n=67$ ) of participants self-identified as female, 13.0% ( $n=10$ ) identified as male. Participants were 72.7% ( $n=56$ ) Mexican/Mexican American, Chicano/a, 3.9% ( $n=3$ ) Puerto Rican, 6.5% ( $n=5$ ) Central American, and 11.7% ( $n=9$ ) other. Two students (2.6%) identified as Mexican and Central American, one student (1.3%) identified as Mexican and other, and one student (1.3%) identified as Cuban and other. Sixty percent of the participants ( $n=46$ ) lived at home, 26% ( $n=20$ ) lived on campus, and 14.3% ( $n=11$ ) lived by themselves off campus. Forty-one percent ( $n=32$ ) of this sample were first year students, 14.3% ( $n=11$ ) were sophomores, 29.9% ( $n=23$ ) were juniors, and 14.3% ( $n=11$ ) were seniors. Nine percent ( $n=7$ ) of participants were first generation immigrants, 85.7% ( $n=66$ ) were second generation immigrants, and 1.3% ( $n=1$ ) was a later generation immigrant. Seventy (90.9%) participants were first generation college students (neither parent having received a four-year college degree), 9.1% ( $n=7$ ) were continuing generation college students. The mean age for the sample was 19.403 ( $SD=1.310$ ). Demographic characteristics of participants are presented in Table B1.

## Procedures

Participants were recruited from a single medium-sized university in the southeastern United States. In 2022, this university had a total of 17,978 enrolled students. Of those students, seventy-nine percent ( $n=14,198$ ) were undergraduate students (The University of North Carolina System, 2022). The university holds Minority Serving Institution (MSI) and a Title III statuses. MSI's are defined based on their undergraduate enrollment of at least 25% of any minority group (UNCG Sponsored Programs, 2017). This university enrolled 29.2% of Black or African American undergraduate students in 2022, making it a MSI for Black or African American students. The next largest minority group enrolled were undergraduate Hispanic or Latino students at 15.4% (The University of North Carolina System, 2022). Title III universities are those with a high number of students receiving need-based aid, such as Pell grants (UNCG Sponsored Programs, 2017). In 2022, almost half (48.8%) of this university's student population received Pell grants, making this institution a Title III university (The University of North Carolina System, 2022).

Procedures and consent forms for the larger study were approved by the university's institutional review board. Participants were recruited using a two-pronged recruitment strategy. First, during Spring of 2021 (January and February), a description of the study and an online Qualtrics survey link was sent to the emails of traditional college students between the ages of 18-26 enrolled in any of three sections of an entry level social science class at the participating university. Students were given the option to complete the survey or write a paper on the topic of the instructor's choice for extra credit. The sample included in this study all chose to complete the survey. Second, a list of email addresses of traditional students enrolled in the university was given to the research team, and all of these students were sent a recruitment email which

included a link to the Qualtrics survey. Consent was embedded within the survey and was obtained before the participants could complete the survey. A drawing for a \$500 visa gift card served as an additional incentive for all who chose to participate regardless of how they were recruited.

## **Measures**

Items for all measures can be found in the Appendix A.

### ***Control Variables***

College students indicated their perceptions of the impact COVID-19 had on their lives using the COVID Impacts Questionnaire. This 9-item scale consists of three subscales: financial, resource, and psychological and each subscale has three items (Conway et al., 2020). Sample items include: “The coronavirus (COVID-19) has impacted me negatively from a financial point of view” (financial), “It is difficult for me to get things I need due to the coronavirus” (resource), and “I have become depressed because of the coronavirus” (psychological). Three items were reversed coded due to their negative wording. Participants respond to items using a 7-point Likert scale indicating how true the statements are with responses ranging from 1 (*not true of me at all*) to 7 (*very true of me*). The Cronbach’s alpha for this measure was 0.809. Scores were averaged to yield a summary score with higher scores indicating greater COVID-19 impacts. To measure how stressful paying for college was for them, students responded to a single question: “How stressful has it been paying for college?” Participants respond using a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all stressful*) to 4 (*extremely stressful*). Participants self-reported their gender by indicating whether they considered themselves female, male, or non-binary - or they were given the option to self-identify. Gender was dummy coded as male (0) and female (1).



Living arrangements were also recorded using participant self-report and were coded as living with parents (0) or not living with parents (1).

### ***Parental Emotional Support***

Students' perceptions of parental emotional support were measured through college students' reports of their parents' current levels of emotional support via the Family Emotional Support Scale (Shaw et al., 2004). Students were asked to identify who they considered to be their primary caregiver. Seventy-one percent ( $n= 56$ ) participants chose their mother as their primary care giver, 25.6% ( $n=20$ ) chose their father, and 1.3% ( $n=1$ ) did not specify the identity of their caregiver. The Family Emotional Support Scale consists of four items that measured the how much students felt both their parents cared about and understood them, and how much they could rely on and open up to their parents. Students were not asked to answer questions with respect to a specific period of time in their lives. The present tense wording of questions suggest that responses should be indicative of students' current relationships with parents. Sample items included: "How much does your parent really care about you?" and "How much can you rely on your parent for help if you have a serious problem?" Responses are on a 4-point Likert scale with response options ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 4 (*a lot*). Scores were averaged and higher scores indicated higher perceptions of parental emotional support. The Cronbach's alpha for this measure was 0.810.

### ***Respect for Family Values***

The importance students placed on respect toward their families was measured using the 7-item Respect for Family subscale of Fuligni et al.'s (1999) Family Obligation Scale. Students report the extent to which they value specific behaviors that are indicative of respect for their families. Subscale items referenced behaviors that referred to parents, siblings, grandparents, and

the family as a whole. Respondents are instructed to indicate “How important is it to you . . . . Sample items include: “Make sacrifices for your family” and “Treat your parents with great respect.” Responses are measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all important*) to 5 (*very important*). Scores were averaged, with higher scores yielding higher respect for family values. The Cronbach’s alpha for this sample was 0.792.

### ***College Student Adjustment***

College adjustment was measured using the College Student Adjustment Questionnaire (CAQ; O’Donnell et al., 2018). Students indicate their adjustment to college in response to 14 statements. The CAQ measures students’ adjustment using three subscales: educational, social, and psychological. Sample items include: “I am succeeding academically” (educational), “I am happy with my social life” (social), and “I feel that I am doing well emotionally since coming to college” (psychological). Five items were reverse coded due to their negative wording. Responses are rated using a 5-point Likert scale with responses ranging from 1(*very inaccurate*) to 5 (*very accurate*). Scores were averaged to yield summary scores, with higher scores indicating greater academic, psychological, and social adjustment in college. Cronbach’s alphas for each subscale were 0.914 (academic), 0.815 (psychological), and 0.850 (social).

## **Analytic Strategy**

### **Preliminary Analysis**

First, I created potential control variables, which included gender, COVID-19 impact, living arrangements, college generational status, and year in school. Second, I created the Respect for Family variable and Family Emotional Support variable. Third, I created my outcome variables, which were social adjustment, academic adjustment, and psychological adjustment. Fourth, I calculated descriptive statistics for the control and predictor variables.

Fifth, I calculated bivariate correlations to examine the associations among study variables.

Sixth, family emotional support and respect for family were mean centered in anticipation of creating the interaction term to test for moderation.

I then conducted three preliminary regression analyses with all potential control variables and both predictor variables entered simultaneously predicting each of the three outcomes. Any control variable that was not a significant predictor for any of the three regressions was eliminated from subsequent analysis.

Descriptive statistics for all variables are presented in Table B2.

### **Focal Analysis**

The focal research questions were addressed in a series of three hierarchical regression analyses, one for each indicator of college adjustment (academic, social, psychological). In each analysis, covariates were entered in block one, followed by the independent variable (centered respect for family values) in block two, moderator variable (centered family emotional support) in block three, and the interaction between the centered respect for family values and family emotional support variables in block four. Significant interaction terms were to be probed using simple slopes and regions of significance.

A probability level of .05 was used as a cutoff for determining statistical significance of main effects. A probability level of .10 was used as the cutoff for determining the statistical significance of interaction effects based on Whisman and McClelland's (2005) recommendation to use a higher probability level for interactions due to the increased level of power needed to detect interaction effects. This was particularly important for this study due to its small sample size.

## CHAPTER III: RESULTS

### Preliminary Analyses

Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS version 28. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients (Table B2) indicated there was a positive correlation between Covid-19 impact and difficulty paying for college,  $r(75) = .346, p=.002$ . In terms of the associations between control and predictor variables, there were no statistically significant correlations. The correlation between predictor variables (respect for family and family emotional support) was positive and significant,  $r(75) = .397, p < .001$ . In terms of the correlation among control and outcome variables, Covid-19 impact was negatively correlated with social adjustment,  $r(75) = -.346, p = .002$ , academic adjustment,  $r(75) = -.292, p = .010$ , and psychological adjustment,  $r(75) = -.449, p < .001$ . Difficulty paying for college was positively correlated only with social adjustment,  $r(75) = .296, p = .009$ . In terms of the relationships among outcome variables, all three variables were positively and significantly intercorrelated. Social and academic adjustment were positively correlated,  $r(75) = .301, p = .008$ , social adjustment was positively correlated with psychological adjustment,  $r(75) = .445, p < .001$ , and there was a positive correlation between academic adjustment and psychological adjustment,  $r(75) = .430, p < .001$ .

Results of t-tests and one-way ANOVAs are reported in Table B3. Gender differences were found in Covid-19 impact with female participants reporting higher impact than their male peers,  $t(75) = -2.387, p = .019$ . Gender differences were also for social adjustment, with male participants reporting higher social adjustment,  $t(75) = 2.230, p = .029$ . First generation college students reported higher levels of Covid-19 impact compared to their continuing generation peers,  $t(75) = -2.079, p = .041$ , while continuing generation students reported greater difficulty paying for college than first generation students,  $t(75) = 2.341, p = .022$ . Results of one-way

ANOVAs indicated an overall significant difference in levels of respect for family values based on year in school,  $F(3,73) = 2.969$  value,  $p=.037$ . Post hoc Tukey tests failed to further elucidate the nature of this difference.

### **Prediction of College Adjustment from Respect for Family Values, Parental Emotional Support, and their Interaction**

Results of regression analyses are reported in tables B4 – B6.

#### **Social Adjustment**

The first regression explored predictors of social adjustment. In Model 1, greater Covid-19 impact was associated with lower levels of social adjustment,  $t(73) = -3.08$ ,  $p = .003$ . Model 1 accounted for 18.5% of the variance in social adjustment,  $F(3, 73) = 5.54$ ,  $p = .002$ . In Model 2, there was no significant effect for respect for family values. Model 2 accounted for 19% of the variance in social adjustment,  $F(4, 72) = 3.15$ ,  $p = .004$ . The change in  $R^2$  was not statistically significant,  $\Delta R^2 = .005$ ,  $F(1,72) = .408$ ,  $p = .525$ . Therefore, respect for family values did not account for a significant amount of variance above and beyond gender, living arrangements, and Covid-19 impact. In Model 3, a positive relationship between parental emotional support and social adjustment was found,  $t(71) = 2.71$ ,  $p = .008$ . In other words, greater parental emotional support predicted higher levels of social adjustment. An additional negative relationship was found in this step for living arrangements and social adjustment,  $t(71) = -2.28$ ,  $p = .026$ . In other words, living at home was associated with higher levels of social adjustment once respect for family values and parental emotional support were taken into consideration. Model 3 accounted for 26.6% of the variance in social adjustment,  $F(5, 71) = 3.53$ ,  $p < .001$ . The change in  $R^2$  was found to be statistically significant,  $\Delta R^2 = .076$ ,  $F(1,71) = 7.349$ ,  $p = .008$ . In other words, parental emotional support did account for a significant amount of variance above and beyond gender,

living arrangements, Covid-19 impact, and respect for family values. Finally, no significant effects were found for the interaction of respect for family values and family emotional support in relation to social adjustment. Model 4 accounted for 27.2% of the variance in social adjustment,  $F(6, 70) = 4.36, p < .001$ . The change in  $R^2$  was not statistically significant,  $\Delta R^2 = .006, F(1, 70) = .585, p = .447$ . In other words, the interaction did not account for a significant amount of variance above and beyond gender, Covid-19 impact, living arrangements, respect for family values, and parental emotional support.

### **Psychological Adjustment**

The second regression explored predictors of psychological adjustment. In Model 1, greater Covid-19 impact was associated with lower levels of psychological adjustment,  $t(73) = -3.91, p < .001$ . Model 1 accounted for 21.6% of the variance in psychological adjustment,  $F(3, 73) = 6.695, p < .001$ . In Model 2, there were no statistically significant effects for respect for family values. Model 2 accounted for 21.9% of the variance in psychological adjustment,  $F(4, 72) = 5.035, p = .001$ . The change in  $R^2$  was not statistically significant,  $\Delta R^2 = .003, F(1, 72) = .260, p = .621$ . Therefore, respect for family values did not account for a significant amount of variance above and beyond gender, living arrangements, and Covid-19 impact. In Model 3, there was not a statistically significant effect for parental emotional support. In other words, greater parental emotional support did not predict higher levels of psychological adjustment. Model 3 accounted for 22.9% of the variance in psychological adjustment,  $F(5, 71) = 3.491, p = .002$ . The change in  $R^2$  was not statistically significant,  $\Delta R^2 = .010, F(1, 71) = .966, p = .321$ . In other words, parental emotional support did not account for a significant amount of variance above and beyond gender, living arrangements, Covid-19 impact, and respect for family values. Finally, no significant effects were found for the interaction of respect for family values and parental

emotional support in relation to psychological adjustment. Model 4 accounted for 23.3% of the variance in psychological adjustment,  $F(6, 70) = 3.538, p = .004$ . The change in  $R^2$  was not statistically significant,  $\Delta R^2 = .004, F(1, 70) = .332, p = .566$ . In other words, the interaction did not account for a significant amount of variance above and beyond gender, Covid-19 impact, living arrangements, respect for family values, and parental emotional support.

### **Academic Adjustment**

The third regression explored predictors of academic adjustment. In Model 1, greater Covid-19 impact predicted lower levels academic adjustment  $t(73) = -3.08, p = .003$ . Additionally, Model 1 found a negative relationship between living arrangement and academic adjustment,  $t(73) = -2.01, p = .048$ . In other words, those who lived at home were better adjusted academically. Gender was not statistically significant, but was very close to significant, with  $p = .052$ . Model 1 accounted for 16.1% of the variance in academic adjustment,  $F(3, 73) = 4.661, p = .005$ . In Model 2, there was not a statistically significant effect for respect for family values. Model 2 accounted for 16.2% of the variance in academic adjustment,  $F(4, 72) = 2.611, p = .012$ . The change in  $R^2$  was not statistically significant,  $\Delta R^2 = .001, F(1, 72) = .111, p = .740$ . Therefore, respect for family values did not account for a significant amount of variance above and beyond gender, living arrangements, and Covid-19 impact. Model 3 found no statistically significant association between parental emotional support and academic adjustment. However, Model 3 did find a positive relationship between gender and academic adjustment,  $t(71) = 2.07, p = .042$ . In other words, female participants were better adjusted academically than their male peers once respect for family values and parental emotional support were taken into account. Model 3 accounted for 17% of the variance in academic adjustment,  $F(5, 71) = 2.889, p = .019$ . The change in  $R^2$  was not statistically significant,  $\Delta R^2 = .007, F(1, 71) = .639, p = .427$ .

In other words, parental emotional support did not account for a significant amount of variance above and beyond gender, living arrangements, Covid-19 impact, and respect for Family values. Finally, no significant effect was found for the interaction of respect for family values and parental emotional support in relation to academic adjustment. Model 4 accounted for 17.1% of the variance in academic adjustment,  $F(6, 70) = 1.838, p = .036$ . The change in  $R^2$  was not statistically significant,  $\Delta R^2 = .002, F(1, 70) = .135, p = .714$ . In other words, the interaction did not account for a significant amount of variance above and beyond gender, Covid-19 impact, living arrangements, respect for family values, and parental emotional support.



## CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the roles of respect for family values and parental emotional support, and their interaction as predictors of college adjustment (academic, social, and psychological) among Latinx college students. Results indicated that higher amounts of parental emotional support were associated with higher levels of social adjustment. Parental emotional support was not significantly associated with psychological and academic adjustment. Respect for family values was not significantly associated with social, psychological, or academic adjustment. No significant interaction effects were found. Female participants were better adjusted academically than their male counterparts. Higher COVID-19 impact was associated with lower social, psychological, and academic adjustment. Those who lived at home were better adjusted socially and academically when respect for family values and parental emotional support were considered.

These findings are important because they indicate meaningful differences in how conceptually distinct indicators of college adjustment may be associated with family level predictors. More specifically, the pattern of findings that emerged in this study were not consistent across the college adjustment outcome variables, with the exception of the association with the Covid-19 impact control variable. The Theory of Emerging Adulthood states that individuals going through this developmental time period are experiencing significant changes that include changes in educational and residential status and increasing their independence while still relying heavily on their parents for emotional and financial support (Arnett, 2004). While this theory highlights the increased desire for independence in emerging adults in general, it does not consider the importance of family interdependence for Latinx college students, which might be both motivating and debilitating for their social, psychological, and more specifically

academic adjustment (Tseng, 2004). It might be that Latinx emerging adults experience more variability in how their academic, psychological, and social adjustment is related to their family experienced because of the additional responsibilities attached associated with their cultural values and the importance they place on family.

**Understanding respect for family values, parental emotional support, and their interaction  
in terms of their relationships with college adjustment**

The findings for parental emotional support partially supported the hypothesis that parental emotional support would be positively associated with college adjustment. Parental emotional support was positively associated with social adjustment, but not psychological or academic adjustment. No previous research has been conducted considering the association between parental emotional support and social adjustment among Latinx students. An important finding from this study was that higher levels of parental emotional support was associated with higher levels of social adjustment among Latinx students specifically. Results from studies enrolling participants from other ethnic backgrounds have also indicated a positive association between parents' emotional support and social adjustment. Smojver-Ažić et al. (2015) conducted a 3-year longitudinal study of Croatian university students examining the impacts of attachment to parents and parental involvement in students' academic functioning (e.g., parental involvement, warmth and support of autonomy during the college years, p. 24) on academic, social, and emotional adjustment in college. Parental involvement in academic functioning was measured using the Parental Involvement in Academic Functioning Scale (Smojver-Ažić et al., 2009). This scale included a perceptions of parental support subscale which contained statements such as "Whenever I need support, I can count on her (parent)." Results indicated that parental support in academic functioning predicted positive academic and positive social adjustment to

college after three years of college enrollment. This study indicates a long-term positive impact of parental emotional support on college student's social adjustment among Croatian university students. Although not related to parents' emotional support per se, Nel et al.'s (2016) focus group study asked South African university students about their experiences related to social and academic adjustment. Focus group data were analyzed using a thematic content analysis. Regarding positive social adjustment themes, participants shared that peer group support/mentorship through their department provided them the emotional support they needed to socially adjust. Taken together, these studies suggest that when university students are given adequate amounts of emotional support, whether it be from parents, peers, or departments, they achieve higher levels of social adjustment. This finding is consistent with Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth framework in that familial capital in the form of emotional support from parents, peers, and other important figures was posited as supporting higher social adjustment in college students.

Students who can rely on their parents for emotional support might feel more open to starting friendships/relationships with their peers, as opposed to those who do not have that emotional support from their parents. Questions from Shaw et al.'s (2004) parental emotional support scale ask students to rate how much they perceive their parents to care about them, understand them, listen to them, and help them. It might be that Latinx college students in this study who perceived higher emotional support behaviors from their parents were better able to and more comfortable making social connections with peers and important figures within their university. This claim is supported by Yoo and Córdova's (2022) study of emerging adults that demonstrated how their sense of intimate safety with parents (e.g., feeling comfortable in presence of parents, feeling comfortable/uncomfortable sharing feelings of anxiety or fear with

parents) and their attachment style with an individual they felt closest to (e.g., turning to this person in time of need, and feeling comfortable/uncomfortable discussing problems/opening up to this person, ) predicted social connectedness feelings (e.g., seeing people as friendly/approachable, feeling understood by familiar people) with others. Accordingly, a sense of intimate safety with parents positively predicted emerging adults' perceived sense of social connectedness with others outside their family (Yoo and Córrova, 2022). These findings indicate that feeling safe, secure, and supported by parents allow emerging adults to feel safe and secure in establishing social ties and friendships in college, which is consistent with the principles of Attachment Theory identified by Simpson et al. (2020).

The lack of findings supporting the link between academic adjustment and parental emotional support was unexpected. Previous research has indicated that Latinx students who receive emotional support from their parents are better motivated academically (Sánchez et al., 2005). Latinx adolescent participants in the Sánchez et al. (2005) study were asked to identify people in their lives who offered them guidance. Then they were asked if they felt cared for by those individuals, and what types of supports they (the individuals offering guidance) equipped them with to achieve academic success. Notably, the measure of social support in the Sánchez et al. (2005) study was specifically focused on support for academic success which differs from the measure of social adjustment for college students in the current study. Additionally, what likely supported academic adjustment among the Latinx adolescents was social support specifically focused on academics rather than more general emotional support that was examined in this study. Further, research has indicated that family engagement in the form of family stories (*historias familiares*), proverbs (*dichos*), and advice-giving narratives (*consejos*) equip Latinx college students to successfully adjust academically (Marrun, 2018). The *historias familiares*,

*dichos*, and *consejos* are forms engagement and social support specifically geared toward academic success that might make more of a difference for Latinx college students' academic outcomes than the type of parent emotional support examined in this study.

Findings did not support the hypothesis that parental emotional support would have a positive association with psychological adjustment. No research has been conducted to examine the relationship between parental emotional support and psychological adjustment among Latinx college students. However, research has suggested that emotional support can be instrumental in supporting Latinx college students navigating the tensions between the individualistic values and beliefs they are experiencing in college and the collectivistic values and beliefs they bring with them from home (Alvan, 1996). Additionally, Roksa and Kinsley (2019) examined emotional and financial support from family members related to college adjustment outcomes in a sample of low-income college students from Wisconsin. Their results indicated that family emotional support was related to the participants psychological well-being, which then in turn lead to better academic outcomes. Although this study was not specifically examining the association between family emotional support and psychological outcomes, it showed that students who perceived more emotional support from their parents reported greater psychological well-being and a sense of belonging of college. One possible explanation for why the current study did not find a similar link between parents' emotional support and students' psychological well-being may be due to the nature of the measure of parental emotional support in the current study. The measure of emotional support in the current study were broad and did not capture parental emotional support specific to helping Latinx college students navigate the potential tensions between home and college environments, nor did the measure address supports specific to college students' psychological well-being. Additionally, it could be that emotional support from parents is one

step in the process of supporting Latinx college students' psychological adjustment, and its effect might be better elucidated through a mediation model that includes a mechanism by which parents' emotional support impacts psychological adjustment.

The hypothesis that respect for family values would be positively associated with college adjustment was not supported in this study, which was surprising considering the research that has been previously conducted on this topic with Latinx college students. For example, one study of Latinx community college students indicated that students were able to attain academic success by respecting authority figures (Campa, 2010). Family members and parents are often considered authority figures to Latinx college students; therefore, it would be expected that respect for family values would have a positive relationship with adjustment in college. The lack of association between respect for family values and social adjustment was surprising, because previous research has indicated that respect for family values fosters prosocial behaviors towards friends and family among Latinx college students (Streit et al., 2020). Similarly, the lack of association between respect for family values and psychological adjustment was surprising because Latinx college students who had lower respect for family values have been shown to experience more negative mental health outcomes (Corona et al., 2017).

The lack of associations between respect for family values and indicators of college adjustment might be explained by the nature of questions on the respect for family subscale of Fuligni et al.'s (1999) family obligation scale and the O'Donnell et al. (2018) college adjustment questionnaire. The respect for family value scale did not assess respect for family values specific to the three domains of college adjustment (social, psychological, academic). Only one question from the respect for family subscale pertains to friendships (social adjustment) -- "how much do you feel you should follow your parents' advice about choosing friends?" In general, items on

the respect for family subscale did not specifically focus on respect for family values related to college adjustment. Additionally, the mean for the respect for family values scale was 4.206 and the standard deviation was .602, this indicates that there was limited variability with respect to this measure. This could also explain the lack of findings. This thesis might have benefitted from a respect for family values measure that more closely focused on the extent to which students respected their parents' advice and guidance relatedly specifically to college adjustment.

Mena et al.'s (1987) measure of acculturative stress might have better assessed respect for family values in a way that would be associated with domains of college adjustment among Latinx college students, specifically the familial acculturative stress subscale. The Social, Attitudinal, Familial, and Environmental Acculturative Stress Scale (Mena et al., 1987) asked participants to rate their levels of acculturative stress on a scale of 1 (*not stressful*) to 5 (*very stressful*). The statements addressed familial stress, attitudinal stress, and environmental stress. Example statements include "close family members and I have conflicting expectations about my future," "I often think about my cultural background," and "It bothers me when people pressure me to assimilate," respectively. A study by Crockett et al. (2007) used this measure and found that acculturative stress was associated with higher levels of anxiety and depression in a sample of Mexican American college students. Inversely, students who scored low on this measure had lower levels of anxiety and depression. Accordingly, it may be that a measure that more closely aligns with aspects of respect for family values that are particularly salient for college students and emerging adults may yield significant findings.

A significant moderation effect of parental emotional support on the association between respect for family values and college adjustment was hypothesized but not supported. No research has been conducted on the moderation effect of parental emotional support on the

association between respect for family values and college adjustment. It could be that since 85.7% of the sample were second generation immigrants, respect for family values was not a salient factor for college adjustment regardless of levels of parental emotional support. Familism includes an attitudinal and behavioral aspect. The attitudinal aspect was the aspect studied in this thesis, and it underscores the importance of placing one's family first and values attachment, support, loyalty, and respect for the family unit (Cahlil et al., 2021). Behavioral familism reflects the beliefs and values mentioned above and can include behaviors like caring after siblings while parents are working or working full-time to support the family financially (Cahlil et al., 2021). Research on attitudinal and behavioral familism has indicated that attitudinal familism can contribute to academic motivation, whereas behavioral familism can serve as a distractor for immigrant college students (Tseng, 2004). Since the sample in this thesis was predominantly second-generation immigrant Latinx college students, participants might exhibit more acculturated behaviors, and thus exhibit less behavioral familism. For the sample of participants in this thesis, respect for family values might not have had an impact on their college adjustment due to their higher acculturation and lack of behavioral familism because of their immigrant generation status. Testing the associations of respect for family values, parental emotional support, and their interaction with respect to college adjustment with a sample with greater variation in immigrant generational status or with solely first-generation students may have yielded different results. In addition, a study exploring the behavioral aspect of familism may have provided different findings.

Differences in acculturation levels have demonstrated differences in college adjustment among Latinx college students. Moní et al. (2018) found that Latinx college students who adopted more integration acculturation strategies had a more positive view of school. Integration



acculturation strategies could be described as having adopted enough of the cultural practices of one's new culture, while also maintaining enough of one's home culture. Adopting more integrated acculturation practices might be especially important, as students might feel like they can successfully navigate both their school and home environments, without parental emotional support to make that happen. Additionally, most of the sample for this thesis was Mexican/Mexican American, Chicano/a (72.7%). A longitudinal study exploring the stability and patterns of acculturation of Mexican American adolescents from high school to college indicated that those who belonged to a stable integrated group were better adjusted academically (Yan et al., 2021). It could be that since the sample in this thesis was largely second generation and Mexican American the students had already adopted a more integration acculturation strategy and were better integrated; thus, parental emotional support did not make much of a difference in terms of moderating the association between respect for family values and adjustment.

### **Demographic differences associated with adjustment in college**

Although not central to the focus of this study, there were some interesting findings regarding demographic differences in levels of college adjustment. Differences were found with respect to gender, Covid-19 impact, and living arrangements.

In terms of gender, male participants reported higher levels of social adjustment than female peers, but female participants had higher academic adjustment than males. This might be because male Latino students are typically socialized to succeed in college to successfully provide for their future families (Ovink, 2013). Latino men have more time and freedom to socialize, unlike Latinas who are socialized to help their families during college. When respect for family values and parental emotional support were considered, female participants were better adjusted academically than their male peers. This could be because female students in

general are better adjusted academically than male students (Voyer & Voyer, 2014), regardless of ethnicity. Research on Latinx female students has indicated that they achieve higher levels of academic achievement and enrolled in college preparatory classes at higher rates than their male counterparts (Boutin-Martinez et al., 2019). Additionally, Latina high school students are more likely than their male peers to be enrolled in high school and obtain a high school diploma/GED certificate (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022b). An additional explanation for this difference might be exposure/experiences of police discrimination that has been shown to impact academic adjustment. For example, results from a study of Black and Latinx adolescents suggested that Black and Latinx males reported experiencing police discrimination at least one time in the last year more often than their White male counterparts. Additionally, within group differences indicated that Latinx female participants were more likely to report that they had never experienced police discrimination compared to their male counterparts (Zeiders et al., 2021). Regardless of gender, however, these results showed that police discrimination was associated with lower academic engagement and grades for all participants in the Zeiders et al. (2021) study. Taken together, these results suggest that Latinx female college students might perform better academically because they are more likely to be enrolled in high school, enroll in college preparatory classes while in high school, complete high school, and experience less traumatic events like police discrimination.

A major finding from this study was that Latinx college students who experienced higher levels of COVID-19 impact experienced lower levels of social, academic, and psychological adjustment. This is consistent with a literature indicating that COVID-19 impact has profound negative impacts on psychological and social adjustment among college students (Bisconer & McGill, 2002; Okado et al., 2021), particularly among students of color (Molock & Parchem,

2021; Tasso et al., 2021). COVID-19 impact has been associated with lower school performance and higher levels of internalizing and externalizing symptoms among Latinx adolescents, especially among those charged with increased childcare responsibilities during the pandemic (Roche et al., 2022). In a study focusing on the impact of Covid-19 on social adjustment among college students, including Latinx individuals, results indicated that those who experienced greater Covid-19 impact were more likely to experience severe negative mental health outcomes, which in turn negatively impacted their social adjustment (Kochel et al., 2022). Overall, Covid-19 impact has been linked with negative adjustment among university students broadly, but also specifically among Latinx college students. More research is needed to explore the impact of Covid-19 longitudinally on Latinx college students and explore the forms of family capital they use to overcome the negative impacts it has had on their academic, social, and psychological adjustment.

Finally, Latinx students who lived at home were better adjusted academically. They were also better adjusted socially, but only when respect for family values and parental emotional support were present in the model. This is a surprising finding, considering research on university students (including Latinx students) has indicated lower social adjustment among commuter students (Melendez, 2019). However, Melendez's (2019) study included college students in general, not considering the importance of familism values for Latinx students, which might have an impact on their social adjustment. This is evident in research indicating that Latinx youth and their families prefer that youth live at home during college (Ovink & Kalogrides, 2015). Additionally, living at home during Covid-19 might have provided students with an additional layer of support they used to successfully navigate social and academic

challenges in the college environment and may also have been more normative during the Covid-19 pandemic than during other periods of time.

### **Limitations**

This study showed that parental emotional support was a predictor of positive social adjustment among Latinx college students and that a range of types of adjustment in college differed based on student gender, COVID-19 impact, and living arrangements. Despite the importance of these findings, the research was not without limitations.

First, because the sample was small it was harder to detect significant main effects, and it was particularly difficult to detect interaction effects. Whisman and McClelland's (2005) suggest using a higher probability level ( $p=.10$ ) to detect interaction effects due to the increased power needed to detect such effects, and that cutoff was set for this study. Despite this, no significant interaction effects were found. A sample of fewer than 80 participants might not have been large enough to detect interaction effects even with this higher probability cutoff. It also might not have been large enough to detect smaller main effects of respect for family values and family support.

Second, this study was solely based on self-reports of college students. This might have resulted in effects being due to common source bias. For example, it might be that students who perceived their parents as highly supportive also tended to perceive their friendships as particularly positive. Thus, associations between parental and support and social adjustment in college might have been due to the manner in which students tended to view these constructs. Results might have been different had we been able to assess predictor and outcome variables using different reporters. In addition, findings would have been richer if we included parent's perspectives on their provision of emotional support as well.

Third, results from this study are not generalizable to college students from different backgrounds. This study was conducted at a mid-sized minority serving university in the southeastern United States where the largest percentage of minoritized students enrolled were Black or African American Students, at 29.2%. This thesis might have yielded different results if the study had been conducted in another part of the country or at a school with higher numbers of Latinx individuals such as a Hispanic Serving Institution or with a much lower percentage of diverse or Latinx students such as a Predominantly White Institution. For example, respect for family values may have been more salient in a different context in which more of their peers found such respect to be important or a context in which Latinx students felt marginalized and isolated.

Fourth, this thesis combined people of all different Latinx backgrounds, not considering within group differences for the sample. People in various parts of Latin America differ greatly. For example, research on Mexican American adults indicated that they vary in response styles (e.g., extreme and acquiescent response styles) based on numerous acculturation and cultural factors, thus their reports of respect for family values, parental emotional support, and college adjustment might be different than that of other Latin American populations (Davis et al., 2011). There is little research from 1993 to 2019 examining the differences of national origins and associations with familism values, adjustment, and family relationships, with the exception of one study that examined the differences between Mexican American and Dominican individuals looking at child adjustment (Cahlil et al., 2021). For this reason, it is important to examine country of origin as a potential moderator of the relationship between respect for family values and adjustment to explore within group differences.

Finally, this study involved a secondary data analysis and might have benefitted from the inclusion of measures that better aligned to research questions. For example, measures could have been added to assess time spent with family and a general family support measure, as these might have been better aligned with academic, social, and psychological college adjustment.

### **Conclusion**

This study hypothesized that respect for family values, parental emotional support, and their interaction would be associated with academic, social, and psychological adjustments in Latinx college students. Results only partially supported this hypothesis and indicated that parental emotional support was positively associated with social adjustment. In addition, Covid-19 impact was negatively associated with all three types of adjustment. Although many of the hypotheses were not supported, these significant findings are important because they underscore the importance of parental emotional support in encouraging Latinx college students to create meaningful social relationships in college during the Covid-19 pandemic. Universities should seek to engage Latinx parents in their children's college experience at a broad university level but also at an individual parent-child level. Finally, this research highlights the importance of educating the general public about the impacts of Covid-19 on Latinx families and college students and highlight potential supports to enhance Latinx college students social, academic, and psychological adjustment in the wake of the pandemic.

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## APPENDIX A: MEASURE ITEMS

### **COVID Impacts Questionnaire**

(Conway et al., 2020)

1. The coronavirus (COVID-19) has impacted me negatively from a financial point of view.
2. I have lost job-related income due to the coronavirus.
3. The coronavirus has NOT impacted my financial status at all.
4. I have had a hard time getting needed resources (food, toilet paper, etc.) due to the coronavirus.
5. It has been difficult for me to get the things I need due to the coronavirus.
6. The coronavirus has NOT affected my ability to get needed resources.
7. I have become depressed because of the coronavirus.
8. The coronavirus outbreak has impacted my psychological health negatively.
9. The coronavirus pandemic has NOT made me feel any worse than I did before.

### **Family Emotional Support**

(Shaw et al., 2004)

1. How much does your parent really care about you?
2. How much does your parent understand the way you feel about things?
3. How much can you rely on your parent for help if you have a serious problem?
4. How much can you open up to your parent if you need to talk about your worries?

### **Respect for Family (Family Obligation Scale)**

(Fuligni et al., 1999)

1. Treat your parents with great respect.
2. Follow your parents' advice about choosing friends.
3. Do well for the sake of your family.
4. Follow your parents' advice about choosing a job or major in college.
5. Treat your grandparents with great respect.
6. Respect your older brothers and sisters.
7. Make sacrifices for your family.

### **College Adjustment Questionnaire (CAQ)**

(O'Donnell et al., 2018)

1. I am succeeding academically.
2. I don't have as much of a social life as I would like.
3. I feel that I am doing well emotionally since coming to college.

4. I am happy with my social life.
5. I am doing well in my classes.
6. I am happy with how things have been going in college.
7. I am happy with the grades I am earning in my classes.
8. I feel that I am emotionally falling apart in college.
9. I have had a hard time making friends since coming to college.
10. I am as socially engaged as I would like to be.
11. I have felt the need to seek emotional counseling since coming to college.
12. I am meeting my academic goals.
13. I have performed poorly in my classes since starting college.
14. I am satisfied with my social relationships.

APPENDIX B: TABLES

**Table B1. Participant Characteristics**

Characteristic	n	%	Characteristic	n	%
<b>Gender</b>			<b>Living Arrangements</b>		
Female	67	87	Living at Home	46	60
Male	10	13	Lived on Campus	20	26
<b>Ethnic Background</b>			Living off Campus	11	14.3
Mexican/ Mexican American, Chicano/a	56	72.7	<b>Year in School</b>		
Puerto Rican	3	3.9	Freshman	32	41
Central American	5	6.5	Sophomore	11	14.3
Other	9	11.7	Junior	23	29.9
Mexican and Central American	2	2.6	Senior	11	14.3
Mexican and Other	1	1.3	<b>Immigrant Generational Status</b>		
Cuban and Other	1	1.3	First Generation	7	9
<b>College Generational Status</b>			Second Generation	66	85.7
First Generation	70	90.9	Later Generation	1	1.3
Continuing Generation	7	9.7			

*Note.*  $N = 77$ . Participants mean age was 19.403 years old ( $SD = 1.310$ ).

**Table B2.Descriptive Statistics and Correlations**

	Covid-19 Impact	Difficulty paying for college	Respect for Family Values	Family Emotional Support	Social Adjustment	Academic Adjustment	Psychological Adjustment
Covid-19 Impact	1						
Difficulty paying for college	.346 .002	1					
Respect for Family Values	.050 .663	-.084 .468	1				
Family Emotional Support	-.085 .460	-.204 .075	.397 <.001	1			
Social Adjustment	-.346 .002	-.090 .435	.021 .857	.296 .009	1		
Academic Adjustment	-.292 .010	-.191 .096	-.069 .553	.038 .745	.301 .008	1	
Psychological Adjustment	-.449 <.001	-.263 .021	.020 .860	.158 .170	.445 <.001	.430 <.001	1
M	3.977	2.935	4.206	3.296	2.621	3.686	3.125
SD	1.332	.951	.607	.697	.934	.921	1.001
Range	1-5	1-4	1-5	1-4	1-5	1-5	1-5

Note. Italicized numbers are *p* values. All *p* values are two-tailed. *N* = 77.

**Table B3. Mean Levels of Continuously Measured Variables by Demographic Variables**

T-Test Results

	Gender			College Gen Status			Living Arrangements		
	Male	Female	<i>p</i>	First Generation	Continuing Generation	<i>p</i>	Living with parents	Not Living with parents	<i>p</i>
Difficulty Paying for College	2.6000	2.9851	.235	2.8571	3.7143	.022	2.8261	3.0968	.223
Covid-19 Impact	3.0667	4.1128	.019	4.0746	3.0000	.041	3.8043	4.2330	.168
Respect for Family Values	4.1286	4.2175	.499	4.2143	4.1224	.705	4.2609	4.1244	.337
Family Emotional Support	3.5500	3.2575	.218	3.2679	3.5714	.275	3.3641	3.1935	.296
Social Adjustment	3.2200	2.5313	.029	2.5886	2.9429	.342	2.4913	2.8129	.140
Psychological Adjustment	3.7000	3.0386	.051	3.0821	3.5476	.243	3.1268	3.1210	.980
Academic Adjustment	3.4800	3.7172	.451	3.6493	4.0571	.267	3.5913	3.8274	.273



One-way Anova Results

	Year in School				<i>p</i>
	First Year	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	
Difficulty Paying for College	3.1250	3.0909	2.6957	2.7273	.318
Covid-19 Impact	4.1215	3.0808	4.2415	3.8990	.095
Respect for Family Values	4.3125	4.4525	4.0311	3.9351	.037
Family Emotional Support	3.3750	3.2273	3.2065	3.3182	.830
Social Adjustment	2.5937	2.6364	2.5478	2.8364	.865
Psychological Adjustment	3.1432	3.0682	3.2283	2.9091	.854
Academic Adjustment	3.5578	3.6182	3.8609	3.7636	.670

**Table B4. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Social Adjustment (N=77)**

Variables	(Model 1)			(Model 2)			(Model 3)			(Model 4)		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
Gender	-.348	.309	-.126	-.350	.311	-.127	-.211	.302	-.076	-.227	.304	-.082
Covid-19 Impact	-.242	.079	-.345**	-.245	.079	-.349**	-.235	.076	-.335**	-.229	.076	-.327**
Living Arrangements	-.388	.207	-.205	-.404	.209	-.213	-.459	.202	-.242*	-.467	.203	-.247*
Respect for Family Values				.105	.165	.068	-.083	.172	-.054	-.044	.180	-.029
Family Emotional Support							.412	.152	.307**	.437	.156	.326
Interaction of Respect for Family Values and Family Emotional Support										.136	.178	.087
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.185			.190			.266			.272		
Change in <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.185**			.005			.076			.006		
<i>F</i> for Change in <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	5.538**			.408			7.349**			.585		

Note. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

**Table B5. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Psychological Adjustment (N=77)**

Variables	(Model 1)			(Model 2)			(Model 3)			(Model 4)		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
Gender	-.300	.325	-.101	-.302	.327	-.102	-.247	.332	-.083	-.234	.334	-.079
Covid-19 Impact	-.323	.083	-.430**	-.326	.083	-.434**	-.322	.083	-.428**	-.327	.084	-.434**
Living Arrangements	-.101	.218	-.050	-.114	.220	-.056	-.136	.221	-.067	-.129	.223	-.064
Respect for Family Values				.088	.173	.054	.013	.189	.008	-.018	.198	-.011
Family Emotional Support							.164	.167	.114	-.144	.171	-.100
Interaction of Respect for Family Values and Family Emotional Support										-.113	.196	-.067
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.216			.219			.229			.233		
Change in <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.216**			.003			.01			.004		
<i>F</i> for Change in <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	6.695**			.260			.966			.332		

Note. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

**Table B6. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Academic Adjustment (N=77)**

Variables	(Model 1)			(Model 2)			(Model 3)			(Model 4)		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
Gender	.611	.309	.225	.613	.311	.225	.656	.317	.241*	.664	.319	.244*
Covid-19 Impact	-.268	.079	-.387**	-.266	.079	-.385**	-.263	.080	-.380**	-.266	.080	-.385**
Living Arrangements	-.416	.207	-.223*	-.408	.210	-.219	-.425	.211	-.288*	-.421	.213	-.226
Respect for Family Values				-.055	.165	-.036	-.113	.181	-.075	-.132	.189	-.087
Family Emotional Support							.127	.159	.096	.115	.164	.087
Interaction of Respect for Family Values and Family Emotional Support										-.069	.187	-.044
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.161			.162			.170			.171		
Change in <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.161			.001			.008			.001		
<i>F</i> for Change in <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	4.661**			.111			.639			.135		

Note. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .001$