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Rosa Elena Zavala Morales

University of San Francisco, rzavalamorales@usfca.edu

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**DIALOGUES BETWEEN FIRST-GENERATION MEXICAN AMERICAN FEMALE
STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND THEIR PARENTS**

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER IN MIGRATION STUDIES


By: **Rosa Elena Zavala Morales**

May 2023

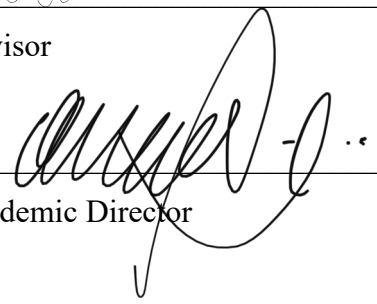
UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members of this thesis project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

APPROVED:



Advisor



Academic Director

5 May 2023

Date

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Date

Table of Contents

Abstract	3
Acknowledgments	4
Chapter I: Introduction	5
Statement of the Problem	6
Background and Need	7
Purpose of the Study	9
Research Questions	10
Theoretical Framework	10
Positionality	12
Definitions	13
Chapter II: Literature Review	14
Introduction	14
Family Achievement Guilt	15
Familismo and Gender Roles	17
Acculturation	23
Summary	26
Chapter III: Methodology	27
Introduction	27
Recruitment Plan	27
Data Collection	29
Data Analysis	30
Plan for the Protection of Human Subjects	31
Chapter IV: Findings	32
Introduction	32
Themes in Students	32
Themes in Parents	45
Shared Theme: Resources	50
Chapter V: Discussion	53
Theme One: Parents' Lived Experiences	55
Theme Two: Understanding Change	57
Theme Three: Family and Responsibilities	59
Conclusion	60
Chapter VI: Conclusion	62
References	64

Abstract

First-generation female Mexican American students are part of the growing Latinx population of students entering American college campuses all over the country. They are students who have had to jump over several obstacles such as traditional gender roles and structures of inequality to attend university on their own. But they are not fully alone. Loyalty to family is a central core value many Mexican American women believe in, making family an integral part of their journey in higher education. Additionally, traditional gender roles, in conjunction with family, play a part in the responsibilities they take at home with their families. These affect their decision-making in regard to their education and path to adulthood. To this extent, this study uses the qualitative method of interviews to examine how first-generation Mexican American female students in higher education communicate with their immigrant parents as they attended university. By interviewing three parent-daughter pairs individually, this study gives insight into how parents and students learned to navigate university alongside each other. Students and parents reported their experiences with regard to their relationships, family obligations, and access to resources that would facilitate understanding this change. Findings suggest that students use their parent's lived experiences to inform their decision-making in attending college while parents reflect on their lived experiences and open communication to understand the changes that occur with their daughter going to college. Additionally, findings reflect on how family and obligations are an important aspect of how students maintain and shape their relationships with their parents.

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Chapter I: Introduction

First-generation college students often have to navigate the journey into university on their own. Some students do not have the generational wealth of knowledge on university admissions that many of their peers have built. Schools can fail in providing guidance for applying to university or encouraging students to continue their education. I was and still am one of those students who had to navigate personal and external changes on my own. This research grew from various conversations I held with classmates and friends both as an undergraduate student and a graduate student. When I often shared about how I felt like I could not explain anything to my parents about school or that I did not feel adequately understood, classmates and friends would share the same sentiments with me. They shared their experiences with family putting down their work in higher education or with parents that could not understand what career path or major they wanted to pursue no matter how much they explained it. I was one of those because I did not follow the traditional career path they wanted me to follow. They say they trust my choices, but I can see that they struggle to understand the choices I have made as a continuing student. I grew to wonder how other students asked and communicated with their parents on these matters.

These conversations inspired me to further look into communication gaps between first-generation female students and their immigrant parents. Many students come from families that were not afforded the opportunity to continue their education back in their home country. Others have parents that are more well versed with the Mexican education system but are unfamiliar with the American education system. When schools fail to effectively communicate with majority spanish speaking families about the opportunities their children have, students and immigrant parents are being failed overall. A lot of the learning that is done on going to

university is self-taught or transmitted by students to their parents; the difficulty of navigating bilingualism, little access to informative materials of school, and little outreach from K-12 schools and universities to immigrant parents and their students complicates these conversations. These are sentiments I have continuously heard from my peers, especially female students. With this in mind I wondered, what is left unheard and unexplained in these communication gaps?

As a researcher with close proximity to the participant population, I have chosen to focus on what is often overlooked in these conversations. Immigrant parents are often left out of these moments where their children express frustration with the communication gap. As a first-generation daughter of immigrant parents in higher education, I am researching how parents and their daughter navigate bridging this gap with special emphasis on seeing the parent's view in this conversation. I am using my privilege as a graduate student to learn from the experiences of my peers and their parents. I am placing importance on the learning curves participants have experienced as they navigated through these life experiences. As they self-reflect and navigate their thoughts I also continue to learn how to communicate with my parents and family.

Statement of the Problem

Immigrant families in the United States typically navigate through many obstacles as they live in a new environment and culture. Immigrant parents and their children who are in more direct contact with American culture typically encounter and accustom themselves differently to these new environments. Several studies show that there are acculturation gaps between parents and their children and that these often result in conflict (Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1993; Smokowski et al., 2008; Marquez et al., 2022; Piña-Watson et al., 2013; Lorenzo-Blanco et al., 2012). Additionally, females in Latinx families typically encounter gender roles that are traditionally from their cultures that can complicate these acculturation gaps. Researchers have

shown that Latina's responsibilities and decision making can be influenced by their traditional gender roles and the importance they place in family (Piña-Watson et al., 2016; Sanchez et al., 2018; Espinoza, 2010; Sy & Britain, 2008). To this extent, this research will examine the relationships between Mexican American daughters and their first-generation immigrant parents in order to offer insight into the intricacies of the relationships held by daughters in an immigrant Mexican household. It aims to give insight into how immigrant parents and their daughters communicate and have learned to adjust to transitioning into university as it is often a new experience for first-generation college students and their parents. How can we facilitate and encourage smoother relationships and communication between the two? Mending and nourishing these relationships are so essential for students and parents therefore they should be a topic of conversation.

Background and Need

Literature on Mexican American female university students and their parents has revolved around the importance and effects of traditional Mexican culture phenomena of *familismo* and *marianismo* (Piña-Watson et al., 2013; Covarrubias et al., 2015; Espinoza, 2010). A study examining the mediator role of parent conflict between marianismo and depressive symptoms in Mexican American college women found that marianismo beliefs are related to parent conflict, parent conflict is related to depressive symptoms, and parent conflict is in the middle of these two results (Piña-Watson et al., 2013, p. 494). The researchers found that parental conflict was significantly related to the distress of the participants because marianismo increased depressive symptoms in situations where the parent-child conflict was examined (p. 494). Latinas who held marianismo beliefs and who experienced parent conflict showed more signs of distress because of the importance they put on family.

Additionally, from this existing literature, the concept of family achievement guilt arises. Family achievement guilt is defined as the “feelings of discomfort with one’s college success, particularly in the context of family members” (Covarrubias et al., 2015, p. 2031). The focus of this concept revolves around how important family is to Mexican descent students. This concept is explained as being the “the socio-emotional experience of pursuing socioeconomic mobility while simultaneously recognizing that this pursuit complicates relationships with family” (Covarrubias et al., 2021, p. 696). This concept showcases how conflict might arise between parents and daughters as differences in obligations and achievements become more visible. Leaving family obligations behind, having more privileges, becoming different, and experiencing financial distress is what family achievement guilt encompasses.

This conflict is showcased in how acculturation discrepancies can occur in between Mexican parents and their children. A study that measured acculturation discrepancies between Mexican American mother-daughter dyads and how they are related to their communication patterns suggests that greater discrepancies in acculturation leads to discrepancies in communication approaches which in turn can worsen communication between parents and children (Marquez et al., 2022, p. 585). These greater communication incompatibilities contribute to worse communication patterns that widen the gap between children and their parents. The researchers found that “higher acculturated daughters perceived lower closeness with their mothers” (p. 585). Reduced family communication, like this, can then contribute to greater family conflict. Acculturation gaps create wider gaps of understanding between the parent-child relationships. This can change the family dynamic and worsen communication, ultimately breaking down the importance of family in this community.

Lastly, it is important to note educational institutions have continuously failed to include parents in understanding the process of applying for university and the importance of higher education. A study that aimed to inquire on how Latino parents acquire “college knowledge,” instrumental knowledge on milestones and prerequisites needed to know for college preparedness, found that two thirds of parents were unaware of college knowledge (Tornatzky, et al., 2002). Although this data is two decades old, the study brought up that resources available to learn about college knowledge were held back by lack of proper Spanish resources (p. 1). What is available is only available in English which creates a language barrier for Latinx immigrant parents. This is an issue that still persists today and that affects how parents are able to support their children in their college readiness.

Purpose of the Study

The objective of this research is to examine the relationships between Mexican parents and their Mexican American daughters who are first-generation university students in the United States. To do this I will explore how female master’s students and their parents communicate and learn to navigate university alongside each other. This study aims to study any possible obstacles that made it harder for them to communicate or how they have learned to bridge these gaps together. This aspect was also asked to parents to determine how they have responded and if there were any changes in communication with their daughters. Parents and daughters were asked parallel questions in order to examine if there were any communication gaps or hesitancy in communicating about a topic. Additionally, I examined the communication gaps between daughters and parents by analyzing female students who experience family achievement guilt, pressure over family responsibilities, and a possible acculturation discrepancy between them and

their families. The result of this study aims to show how daughters and parents have responded to changes and the strength they share together.

Research Questions

These patterns of behavior that affect Mexican descent female students in higher education can ultimately create issues between parents and students who are amidst these changes. We see the point of view of female students and how much distress this can cause on their relationships with their parents but we do not see a lot being said about the point of view parents have in conjunction with their daughters. Because of this, this research is aimed towards examining the relationships between Mexican parents and their daughters who are first-generation university students from both points of view. The following research will answer these questions:

Research Question 1: How do parents understand the transition and pressure students face as first-generation university students? How do they understand family obligations in this context?

Research Question 2: How do students and parents communicate about school and responsibilities? How do they sustain these practices?

Research Question 3: What resources could be helpful for parents to learn and engage in supporting their college student daughters?

Theoretical Framework

This work is situated on community cultural wealth as a framework. Tara J. Yosso (2005) centers Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of social capital, cultural capital, and economic capital as often being misinterpreted under deficit thinking; these encapsulate various aspects of skills and abilities but in short, social capital refers to social networks and connections, cultural capital as

education and language, and economic capital as money (p. 76). Under deficit thinking, these are used to explain the different rates of success between white students and students of color. To this extent, Yosso centers community cultural wealth as a lens that changes this reasoning into seeing the wealth of knowledge that communities of color have and maintain (p. 77). Yosso forms this lens behind Critical Race Theory (CRT), which she defines in education as, “a theoretical and analytical framework that challenges the ways race and racism impact educational structures, practices, and discourses” (p. 74). Using CRT, Yosso counters the cultural knowledge that is widely seen by dominant society as valuable with community cultural wealth (p. 75). Community cultural wealth centers the skills and values of communities of color.

Community cultural wealth sets itself apart by its different forms of capital that communities of color hold. Aspiration capital (maintaining hopes for the future), linguistic capital (one’s experiences with more than one language developing intellectual and social skills), familial capital (cultural knowledges fostered by family), social capital (social networks), navigational capital (knowing how to navigate social institutions), and resistance capital (skills attained from oppositional behavior) are all under community cultural wealth (pp. 77-81). These components along with migration capital, the knowledge and skills learned from the immigrant experiences in the United States (Jimenez, 2020, p. 779), work together to showcase the variety of knowledge and skills communities of colors bring with them. These forms of capital are how communities have learned to resist and excel under racism in society. This is important because it showcases the strengths of communities of color and counters the racist structures that have continuously affected the education of communities of color in the country.

This framework situates this research apart from emphasizing on the deficit and instead aims to highlight the resilience of Mexican immigrant parents and their first-generation

daughters. It focuses on the strengths of community and the wealth of knowledge that is kept within families and communities that is shared with everyone throughout generations.

Community cultural wealth brings to this project a lens of what a family can bring in in this transitional time for the student and the rest of the family. The navigational capital is an example of this because of its emphasis on knowing and learning how to traverse through social institutions that do not usually accommodate communities of color such as Mexican first-generation female students. Students have seen their families adjust and learn how to hold their self-worth in these institutions and are able to do the same in the same capacity in their schools. To this extent, community cultural wealth gives insight into the knowledge that can contribute to the resilience of the participants in this study.

Positionality

My parents are Mexican immigrants. I come from a family of immigrants; both my parents' families have a lengthy history with migrating to the United States. I know where I stand within this lineage as the first born Mexican American in my family. My mom had to leave her education in sixth grade to work in yogurt factories to help her family sustain themselves in Mexico. My dad grew up with the privilege of finishing high school in Mexico but soon after immigrated to the U.S. They were not afforded the privilege to continue their education. Their migration here to the U.S. gave me the opportunities they missed out on. I grew up in a majority immigrant community with many of my peers being second generation immigrants. My experience comes from learning many firsts as the oldest daughter on my own just like my parents who immigrated. I learned alongside my peers how to apply for higher education and learned to rely on each other to succeed. I am a first-generation college graduate and I was

largely able to accomplish getting my bachelors and now master's degree both on my own but also with the immense help of my family and community.

The present study is informed by my own background as the daughter of immigrants and the experiences of my female peers that have confided with me their similar experiences. I bring with me what I have lived through and what I have learned from my friends and Latina classmates. As a researcher, I aimed to not bring my own biases into the stories told by the students and parents and instead focus on highlighting the words of the participants to best represent their struggles and pride. With these experiences, this study aims to bring to conversation the lived experiences of many female Mexican American students and their immigrant parents who have learned to navigate this new aspect of their life.

Definitions

Familismo: A central Latinx cultural value that involves being dedicated, committed, and loyal to family

Marianismo: A Latinx idealized traditional female role that is identified as submissive, selfless, chaste, and hyper feminine

Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

Latinas in entering higher education are a growing community that have surpassed many obstacles to graduate with their degrees. Latinx adults as a whole are less likely to acquire a college degree in comparison to their White peers (Anthony et al., 2021). The numbers start to show great disparity when seeing how only a quarter of Latinas hold a college degree in comparison to over a half of white women who have acquired their degrees; above that, the disparity grows when it is shown that in 2018, only 5.9% of Latinas hold a graduate degree in comparison to 15% of white women (2021). Statistics like these are a result of many structural factors that maintain deficit thinking on communities of color as a whole. Students in underserved communities experience negative academic stereotypes by teachers, counselors, and more; when students are not seen as deserving of higher education or made to feel unintelligent, they will not have the adequate support of their schools to aspire for a college education (Rendon et al., 2014, p. 7; Gonzales et al., 2003, p. 161). Negative racial stereotypes and microaggressions are prevalent and focus on demeaning their academic merit, ethnicity, and cultural knowledge (Yosso et al., 2009, p. 667; Robertson et al., 2014, p. 9). Phenomena like later on affects how students perceive themselves in higher education, giving in to imposter syndrome. Imposter syndrome has students believing they are not intelligent and that they have fooled their way into their positions (Clance & Imes, 1978, p. 241). Overall, these contribute to the obstacles Latinas face in their journey to higher education.

To this extent, this research aims to focus on how the family structure and relationships Latina students hold has shifted with their path in higher education. I am analyzing these gaps in communication by interviewing female students and parents who may be experiencing family achievement guilt, pressure over family obligations, and acculturation discrepancies. The

following will be a review of the literature on family achievement guilt, familismo and gender roles, and acculturation.

Family Achievement Guilt

Family achievement guilt claims that for ethnic minority and first-generation university students, the guilt or discomfort felt by their success in higher education is felt due to being uncomfortable with surpassing the achievements of family members (Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015, p. 421; Covarrubias et al., 2015, p. 2031). This concept came to be from the concept of survivor guilt being applied in the university setting for African American students by Geraldine K. Piorkowski (1983). Additionally, this concept was further developed by Rebecca Covarrubias and Stephanie A. Fryberg (2015) into further including ethnic minority identity looking beyond guilt over community but guilt of their achievements in comparison to their families. Further, into the progression of the concept, Rebecca Covarrubias et al. (2021) further explained the facets of family achievement guilt for low-income Latinx and Asian first-generation students. This progression of thought is important because it illustrates how first-generation students, in particular Latinx students, navigate their feelings as they enter college. It conceptualizes the feelings students often do not know how to articulate.

The foundational work that articulates family achievement guilt includes Piorkowski's (1983) work on *survivor guilt* found in African American first-generation students. This scholarship describes the psychological experiences African American students have experienced due to their hardship as creating survivor guilt in first-generation students who feel guilty for their achievements in comparison to the suffering of their community (p. 620). The need for this concept arose from how these students, who attempted to overcome the oppression they experience racially, economically, and systematically, encountered discomfort in achieving what they think their family and community should also achieve but could not due to oppression

(p. 620). This original scholarship is important because it expands on the feeling of guilt that first-generation students feel upon comparing what could have been for their community and family and their achievements. It explores the feelings that arise and can hinder these students' success.

Building on this foundation, Covarrubias and Fryberg (2015) conceptualize the concept of *family achievement guilt* as it reflects on survivor guilt but adds that ethnic minority first-generation students experience guilt more explicitly related to family than to strangers in their community who are struggling (p. 421). This is related to the work of Piorkowski because it comes from the same survivor guilt concept, but it puts more emphasis on family as the source of guilt in the student. This addition is important because it specifies how ethnic-specific cultural phenomena like the importance of family can affect the views and state of mind of these students. When conceptualizing this theory, Covarrubias and Fryberg anticipated that first-generation ethnic minorities would demonstrate more guilt than their white counterparts; they found that this was consistent with their results and that Latino students reported more family achievement guilt in comparison to the three cultural groups represented (p. 422, 424). From this, we can infer that Latino students experience a considerable amount of guilt that can affect their relationships and transition to university and independence.

Another progression in this field of thought is represented by authors Rebecca Covarrubias et al. (2021) who articulate four facets of guilt within the family achievement guilt concept. They further describe family achievement guilt as “the socio-emotional experience of pursuing socioeconomic mobility while simultaneously recognizing that this pursuit complicates relationships with family” (Covarrubias et al., 2021, p. 696). Furthermore, they expand on the concept as having four facets that it affects: leaving family obligations behind, having more privileges, becoming different, and experiencing financial distress (p. 698-702). Students

reported feeling guilty because they are unable to help with familial responsibilities or were unable to attend family events (p. 699). Additionally, they reported guilt for having more opportunities than their family (p. 699). Following that, they also reported feeling guilty due to growing distant from family as well as becoming different from them (p. 699). Lastly, students reported feeling guilty because they recognize that their family is helping pay for their education or that they cannot contribute financially to their family (p. 699). This addition to the theory is important because it expands on specific aspects that students have identified as creating guilt concerning family and school. These are the aspects that are shaping how students do their decision-making.

In summary, family achievement guilt illustrates the guilt ethnic minority first-generation students might feel due to their connection with family and recognition of privileges. This includes Piorkowski's founding theory of survivor guilt, Covarrubias and Fryberg's conceptualization of family achievement guilt, and lastly the expansion of four facets that are core to family achievement guilt in students. Related to this is a body of research that demonstrates family achievement guilt, the core background of female first-generation Mexican American students in higher education experience is explained in the following overview of the literature on familismo, gender roles, and acculturation.

Familismo and Gender Roles

Research demonstrates that familismo and gender roles in Latinx culture go hand in hand. First, I will explain how they work in relationships. This includes how Latina students cultivate positive and nuanced results from gender roles, uphold family obligations, and find conflict between themselves and family. This is important because these demonstrate how Latina women navigate their relationships with family and gender roles while in university and amidst cultural change.

To begin, research illustrates that traditional Latinx gender roles such as marianismo in conjunction with familismo can work together to result in positive nuanced outcomes for female students in higher education. Evidence of this can be found in the work of Brandy Piña-Watson et al. (2016) who claim that positive pillars of marianismo such as the family, virtuous and chaste, and spiritual pillars were positively associated with positive academic attitudes while the self-silencing and subordinate to others pillars were associated with lower positive academic attitudes (p. 314). These are broken down into two categories named positive marianismo and negative marianismo (p. 308-309). Similarly, Delida Sanchez et al. (2018) demonstrates how informed the coping strategies that Latina college students use are from marianismo gender role attitudes and racial-ethnic socialization. In particular, they add that there are positive links between marianismo gender role attitudes and family and spiritual marianismo pillars to the extent that they provide communal coping resources that help Latina students cope with perceived discrimination (Sanchez et al., 2018, p. 9). The interdependence built from these pillars of family and culture provides female students a method to use to find positive feelings and support about their identity, especially when being faced with societal cultural values that do not reflect theirs (p. 9). These positive connections to marianismo pillars and family provide insight into how cultural gender phenomena do have positive links to helping students navigate marginalization and independence in their transition to university. The effects of gender roles and family are more nuanced than usually understood and this literature shows that it does have good effects on female students.

Melissa L. Morgan Consoli and Jasmin D. Llamas (2013) add to the conversation by contrasting that gender roles did not correlate with resilience but that familismo does in high amounts (p. 5). Family is used as a method to overcome adversity and that is highly acknowledged in the aforementioned studies. The authors pose those gender roles do not

correlate with resilience because the majority of female students who do hold gender roles and values do not attend university (p. 5). After all, at its core and to the authors, it is inconsistent with traditional gender roles (p. 5). This contrasts with the previous studies that showed how positive gender roles in marianismo do positively work in congruence with higher education and can provide places for combating discrimination. In sum, this research articulates how polarizing images of gender roles can be depicted in the context of higher education and positivity.

Related to this, research investigating how Latina students navigate maintaining familial relationships and upholding family obligations shows how students can mediate in deciding what is best for their transition into university. Evidence of this can be found in Espinoza's (2010) work who gives us two ways Latinas manage family and school demands. She notes that cultural phenomena like familismo and marianismo create the "expectation that the 'good Latina woman' will always prioritize family needs above her own individual needs" (Espinoza, 2010, pp. 319). This dilemma serves as a contentious point for Latinas because familismo connects them to their families but it also conflicts with their pursuits in higher education. Espinoza finds that the participants balance school and family by being integrators or separators; integrators manage the expectations of their families by communicating their school responsibilities with their families while separators separate their families from school (p. 322-323). Integrators clarified processes, communicated on school workloads, and made efforts to balance both family obligations while also prioritizing school via negotiation with their family. Separators did not tell their parents about their workload, they kept their roles in their families above prioritizing school and managed to complete both tasks at the same time. These students are juggling maintaining family relationships and family obligations with their education and do so in methods they perceive to be the best to maintain their relationships. These can create shifts that can become contentious under a family achievement guilt framework.

Similarly, Susan Sy and Aerika Brittian (2008) demonstrate the impact of family obligations on Latinas, European American, and Asian American female first-year college students. Latinas showed to more frequently fulfill family obligations than Asian American and European American female students but it did not influence their residential or working plans (p. 735). European Americans who reported fulfilling family obligations were more likely to plan on staying home whereas Asian American students who fulfilled family obligations reported planning to work fewer hours during college (p. 735-736). These results show that for each population the impacts are nuanced, and ethnicity does have a significant impact on how female students take charge of their family obligations and college transition. Latina students mediate their relationships by determining what aspects of their lives will be influenced by their transition. Familial obligations hold to be very influential in the relationships they hold with family. In total, this research on how Latina students navigate their relationships with family illustrates that family still maintains to be important in their decision-making.

A final body of research that contrasts with the positivity of familismo and gender roles claim that parent-child conflict can arise due to different views on these cultural roles. Evidence of this can be found in the work of Brandy Piña-Watson et al. (2013) who claim that “participants who reported holding traditional Latina gender role beliefs experienced conflict with their parents” (p. 494). The researchers pinpointed that parent conflict was significantly related to the distress of the participants; they indicated that marianismo increased depressive symptoms when the parent-child conflict was examined (p. 494). Latinas who held marianismo beliefs and who experienced parent conflict showed more signs of distress because of the importance they put on the family. Similarly, Rebecca Covarrubias et al. (2015) demonstrate by conducting a survey, that all participant college students reported high levels of depressive symptoms and lower self-esteem because of family achievement guilt (p. 2035). In addition to

this, they found that first-generation college students reported a significant amount more of these depressive symptoms than non-first-generation college students (p. 2035). These showed that first-generation students were more likely to show a decrease in well-being because of their guilt. Within these results, although the majority of the participants were women, they found that male students were more likely to report higher levels of achievement guilt (p. 2036). This is likely to Mexican men and their cultural and economic pressures within the family. These show that there are discrepancies in gender and lower mental well-being for participants, but I question what family obligations impact this for women participants.

Researchers Susan R. Sy and Jessica Romero (2008) add to this conversation through their questioning of what family obligations Latina college students have in their immigrant families and conclude that these are about self-sufficiency, voluntary financial contributions, and the role of a “surrogate” parent. First, they find that participants “emphasized that becoming self-sufficient was a means by which they could help the family” (Sy & Romero, 2008, p. 218). The focus was on relieving the financial “burden” of their families by becoming independent enough to sustain themselves financially (p. 218). Participants also felt that they were required to contribute financially although it was not explicitly stated by their parents. They point out that “the children do it out of a ‘culture of concern,’ resulting from years of socialization to respect and value family above personal needs” (pp. 219). Parents were not directly pressuring them to contribute but they felt responsible to do so because of the financial contributions their parents put into the family. Lastly, participants referred to the role of being a “surrogate” or “second” parent as part of their sibling caretaking responsibilities (p. 219). This was the most common among participants with single-parent families while some participants with two parents also reported this same role while others reported not having these responsibilities (p. 220). Nevertheless, those who did report stressed having to have added responsibilities as they took

care of their siblings. They also reported that as they moved on to college, their roles shifted from concrete family assistance to roles that indirectly would help the family (p. 220). Overall, these results showed how there is a barrier to understanding between both Latina students and their parents. There is a communication gap that enforces indirect obligations onto Latina students. When taken together, this research suggests that there is an increase in conflict between parents and their children. It can be seen that there is an often unspoken communication gap between the two that perpetuates stress and mental unease. This research will look into the perspective of parents and how they can bridge this gap.

In summary, research demonstrates that familismo and gender roles work together concurrently in the lives of Latina and Mexican American female college students. This includes how Latina students gather and create positive results from gender roles, continue family obligations, and encounter conflict between themselves and family. Taken together, this body of research justifies that there is stress and conflict that is often unspoken about between parents and their daughters. This arises due to cultural norms and gender roles and to that extent, this research will examine how they navigate this. Related to this are the effects of acculturation on the communication gaps between immigrant parent-child relationships.

Acculturation

Similar to how familismo and gender roles affect communication between parents and their daughters, research demonstrates that acculturation adds another relevant factor that affects their communication. This section includes research that illustrates what acculturation is, research that articulates acculturation gaps, and research that claims parental-child conflict because of acculturation gaps. This is important because it shows that communication gaps can further be altered by acculturation in immigrant families who are adjusting to a new country living and also navigating a daughter entering university.

To begin, research illustrates that acculturation is a significant factor in immigrant lifestyle and identity. Evidence of this can be found in Brenda C. Gutierrez and Campbell Leaper's (2022, p. 260) definition of acculturation as "individuals experiencing new cultural contexts [who] may undergo cultural changes that may vary across various domains (e.g., practices, values, identity)." Similarly, Berry (1994) demonstrates that at the individual level, acculturation touches upon the changes that happen to an individual within the cultural group who is experiencing the phenomenon (p. 222). He includes that at the individual level, the changes that occur are referred to as behavioral shifts and acculturative stress (p. 238). Behavioral shifts include factors such as values, personal identity, and ethnic identity shifting during acculturation (p. 238). Acculturative stress on the other hand is the social and psychological problems that appear due to acculturation (p. 238). In sum, this research articulates that acculturation is an affecting factor in the lives of immigrant families and particular individuals within a culture. Acculturation is about cultural changes and shifts that vary individually as individuals navigate their homeland culture and new culture. Emphasis on the individual rates of acculturation is essential to understand how it can create conflict within a family structure.

Research investigating acculturation gaps articulates that within communities and even in families, there are different rates of acculturation happening. Evidence of this can be found in Jose Szapocznik and William Kurtines' (1993) work where they explain that with the culturally diverse environment that families have across generations, cultural differences and acculturation differences arise and these create conflict between families (p. 403). They pinpoint that differences between parents and children arise in adolescence but that difference in acculturation exacerbated the differences in connections between the two (p. 403). Paul Smokowski et al. (2008) add on to define acculturation gaps as "the result of differences between adolescent and

parent levels of culture-of-origin and host culture involvement” (p. 295). These definitions place high importance on adolescents and parents. In total, this research illustrates that acculturation gaps serve to be a result of varying acculturation levels within immigrant family structures that affect relationships within them.

A final body of research claims that because of these acculturation gaps, there is a conflict that arises between immigrant parents and children. Evidence of this can be found in Szapocznik and Kurtines’ (1993) article that includes that these intergenerational cultural differences work to aggravate intergenerational and intercultural conflict (p. 403). They explain that families are embedded in a culturally diverse context which is essential to understand how Hispanic families navigate different levels of acculturation and how those results in conflict (p. 403-404). Adding on to this parental-child conflict conversation, Becky Marquez et al. (2022) demonstrates that there is a relation between acculturation discrepancies in mother-daughter dyads and communication gaps that in turn lead to greater communication incompatibilities (p. 585). They found that daughters that were acculturated in high amounts in comparison to their mothers reported being less close to their mothers (p. 585). These communication gaps loosen the interconnectivity that is so essential for familism-based cultures that value closeness between family. The closeness that is essential in these relationships only widens and creates misunderstandings that can further on create conflict. These break the connections that are so essential in Latinx familismo culture.

Adding on, Brandy Piña-Watson et al. (2013) demonstrate by using the acculturative family distancing theory, which claims that conflict between ethnic minority families happens because of the differences in acculturation between family members, that parent conflict was significantly related to the distress of the participants; they indicated that marianismo increased depressive symptoms when the parent-child conflict was examined (p. 491, 494). Overall, the

researchers found that marianismo beliefs are related to parent conflict, parent conflict is related to depressive symptoms, and parent conflict is in the middle of these two results. This study shows that acculturation gaps do result in conflicts that only contribute to the stress of students. Similarly, Elma I. Lorenzo-Blanco et al. (2012) found that “loss in gender roles as a result of acculturation and enculturation may increase girls’ vulnerability for depressive symptoms by way of reduced family cohesion” (p. 1361). This provides another angle to understand how debilitating family connections open to more distress for the mental well-being of students. Acculturation gaps essentially create conflict and stress for individuals. Surprisingly in contrast to these findings, Smokowski et al. (2008) found that their evidence showed that being involved in U.S. culture was a cultural asset that instead of creating conflict, is related to higher family cohesion and lower parent-adolescent conflict (p. 304). This is reporting that there is nuance to how acculturation affects familial interconnectivity. When taken together, this research suggests that acculturation can affect heightened depressive symptoms or parent-child conflict while also possibly strengthening familial connections.

In summary, research demonstrates that acculturation is a significant factor that affects communication gaps between parents and daughters. This section included a summary of acculturation, research on acculturation gaps, and the effects of parental-child conflict caused by acculturation gaps. Taken together, this body of research justifies that acculturation is an important factor in the conversations of female students and their immigrant parents. To this extent, we can see the evident communication gaps that are developed between parents and children. This study will cover how female students navigate this with their parents. Additionally, it will investigate the parental point of view in this conversation because the literature largely ignores their input into the conversation.

Summary

This literature review gives an overview of the traditional cultural phenomena affecting Mexican American females. These included familismo and gender roles, and acculturation gaps. Evidence that supports this includes that Latina women in higher education experience a varying level of effect on their decision-making when it comes to their family and gender roles. Additionally, acculturation gaps exist between generations in immigrant households. This claim and the body of evidence address how immigrant female students experience conflict with their parents and how this can be further affected by the transition to higher education. With my thesis, I propose to analyze how parents and students navigate this via communication. In addition to that, I aim to find how possible acculturation gaps and communication gaps can be mended by parents and their daughters.

Chapter III: Methodology

Introduction

This research uses a qualitative approach that is inspired by an ethnographic approach to effectively capture the nuances of cultural phenomena in the conversations held by immigrant parents and their daughters. Ethnography is described as being the “study of the culture of a group” and separated itself from other methodologies due to its specific analysis on culture (Preissle & Grant, 2004, p. 164). Ethnography’s goal is to ultimately prove an understanding of an insider’s view on the culture that is being researched (p. 165). To the degree that previous research has not focused on the conversations held between parent-daughter relationships, the qualitative approach in this research will provide a method to analyze the subtleties of how familial obligations, the transition to university, and gender roles affect first-generation female college students and immigrant Mexican parents in the United States. This research will describe and interpret the perspectives of these two particular cultural groups in the United States in order to understand how both have adjusted to transitional changes into higher education and learned to maintain family ties.

Recruitment Plan

I conducted semi-structured interviews with three parent-daughter pairs recruited by the snowball sampling method, resulting in six one-on-one interviews. The snowball sampling method was implemented by dispersing a flier with the Masters in Migration Studies cohort six and seven in USF, the International & Multicultural Education Department in USF, and social media. I recruited three first-generation Mexican American female students: one current graduate student and two recent graduates. All students completed or are completing their degrees in California. In order to qualify for this study, recruited students had to have a parent who agreed

to participate in this study. Parents accompanying the student were all of Mexican descent and immigrants. Parents did not have to live in California, but they were required to live within the United States; two participant parents live locally in Northern California and one parent in Colorado. In summary, I conducted interviews with six people individually but who represent three parent-daughter pairs. By using a snowball sampling method, identifying potential participants was done via a chain of referrals started by using my personal network as a first-generation Mexican American female student in the Master of Migration Studies program, the International & Multicultural Education Department, and social media. A flier was dispersed amongst my contacts in this program, and they were free to refer students they knew that would be interested in participating in this study. Table 1 depicts the participants of this study.

Table 1

Research Study Participants

Parent-Daughter Pair A	Parent-Daughter Pair B	Parent-Daughter Pair C
Student A	Student B	Student C
Master's student	Graduated with master's degree, current PhD student	Recently graduated with master's degree
On-Campus student	On-Campus student	Commuting student
Parent A	Parent B	Parent C
Mother	Mother	Mother

Data Collection

For this research, I conducted six interviews that were done in one-to-one pairings so that participants felt comfortable to share their experiences individually. Interviews were held either on Zoom, via telephone, or in person at the University of San Francisco in a private space. Interviews were held privately and recorded with their verbal permission. Interviews ranged from 20 to 45 minutes with prearranged questions given to participants. Participants were encouraged to read the questions before the interview to further ensure that they felt comfortable and open to being interviewed. From these prearranged questions, we were at liberty to explore more of their voices and thoughts as we adjusted to their answers. This gave leeway for further clarification on questions and answers within the interview. These questions delved into the conversations participants held together, their ongoing relationships, and their personal thoughts and experiences. Participants faced no risk insofar as they are only divulging their communication styles and patterns. Participants were informed that if they found it hard to answer any question, they were able to retract any information given in the interview. Interviews were recorded for the purpose of transcription and were done so with the approval of participants. Transcriptions were confidential and remained stored in a password protected computer. Participants' identity explicitly remains anonymous and have been assigned pseudonyms to keep anonymity.

The purpose of these interviews is to fully understand the usually ignored perspectives and conversations held by parents and their daughters. Collecting data with this method provides the key nuances of the relationships between parents-daughters and fills in the gaps of sharing the experiences of parents. By interviewing participants, this research will be able to uplift the

voices of participants and find ways students and parents can further nourish the educational opportunities and experiences they encounter via their communication.

Data Analysis

Individual interviews are the sole source of data collected for this research. To this extent, the interviews were properly transcribed verbatim from audio recordings, participants remained anonymous, and analyzed individually and in pairs with corresponding parent-daughter interviews. Afterwards, interviews were analyzed for themes and commonalities through the use of examining the participants' words and frequently explained experiences. These will be part of the coding process. Codes were created from both deductive and inductive strategies. Deductive codes were established from topics from interview questions and literature review such as family obligations and gender roles. Inductive codes were deduced from noticing connections that signal to a broader concept, noticing repetition, and in-vivo phrases. To further develop inductive codes, transcripts were actively read multiple times to deduce appropriate codes and uncover underlying codes. To reduce researcher subjectivity, codes emerged directly from the interviews and existing literature. I acknowledge that complete objectivity is obsolete in this research to the extent of my positionality to one half of the participants. Nonetheless, codes were validated by the following suggested criteria:

- “Relevant to the research topic.
- Represents the issue well.
- Recognized in data.
- Repeated in data (within or across texts).
- Raised by participants.
- Ratified by others in research team.

- Retrieves applicable text segments” (Hennink et al., 2020).

To this extent, I analyzed and coded themes and concepts accordingly, not from my own experiences, but those of the direct words of participants and existing literature and research on this topic.

Plan for the Protection of Human Subjects

The protection of participants is integral to this research. To this degree, participants are given full liberty to retract information shared for the purpose of this research and were provided with adequate resources needed in case of psychological triggering. Additionally, in the Informed Consent Form they were provided with, they were fully detailed on the interviewing process and any concerns they had. With these all in mind, participants were at liberty to determine what they were uncomfortable with answering and sharing and were able to choose where to be interviewed.

Participants were told the methods in which they would be recorded, such as a recording device or Zoom. Names and any personal identifiers were coded to maintain anonymity of the participants in this study. Any information kept from these interviews were held in a privately owned laptop behind a protected password.

Chapter IV: Findings

Introduction

Three parent-daughter pairs were interviewed individually for the following findings. Themes are divided into student themes, parent themes, and shared themes. Each theme encompassed shared ideas amongst all interviewees but for the purpose of this study the findings were divided between the participant groups.

Themes in Students

Three students were interviewed on their communication and transition to university. From these interviews, the following themes on concerns, parent-daughter relationships, and communication arose. Under concerns, students expressed their concern about financial concerns and obligations. When talking about parent-daughter relationships students talked about their parents' encouragement and support, parents' influence on their education, and straying of values. Lastly, under communication, students spoke about gaps in understanding, and open and brief communication with their parents.

Concerns

In their interviews, students brought up concerns they had during their shift to university. Among these, they spoke about financial concerns and obligations.

Financial Concerns

Interestingly and frequently, finances were a point of conversation and concern for students and parents. All the students interviewed talked about their concerns on the financial stress going to university would be for them and their families. Student A described her parents letting her first prioritize her dreams in university admissions and communicating that the financial aspect would be a future conversation to be held after she got admission letters. Luckily for Student A, she received a substantial scholarship for the university she attended, nonetheless

she describes conversations concerning finances as moments where her parents were both concerned about the expenses but fully supportive of letting her choose the university she wanted to attend. Student A's experience was of support yet she still voiced that she was concerned that finances would become a burden for her family.

Student B expressed a similar concern and spoke on the moments of conversations she held with her mother about finances when it came to school. She explains:

My biggest concern was, like finding a place that we could pay for because my mom was, is a single parent. And so, like, I didn't know it, like funding was tuition. Am I going to take out scholarships? I'm going to take out loans.

She expresses that she was worried about how she would accommodate the costs of university.

Under a question on family responsibilities she had before university, she included that she helped her mother during high school so that her mother would not have to pay for every expense. Student B shows that she already had an idea of how university finances could take a toll on their finances. Student B recalls that in their conversations her mom would tell her that Student B did not believe she would be able to have the "opportunity to go to college because of how much it was going to cost." She talks about how she did not know how much would be covered with her mother's low income but she was able to later on see how it was mostly covered and took a few loans. Finances were a big worry for Student B to the extent that it would also affect her mom.

Student C also spoke about finances being a concern for herself. She worried about FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) because she did not know what it was nor did she know how much financial aid would cover for her university expenses. She mentioned how she would often hear how expensive university was and that would be in her mind when thinking about university. Her parents were also low income and her worry was how much financial aid would cover for her studies. She was lucky enough to have enough financial aid for university

and her parents financial support to help her cover extra expenses although she did not think that would be the case. Nonetheless, she expressed her worry and pushed to find more ways to fund her education. She described:

Pero de todos modos como hija you still feel like that responsibility que like or I don't know all that guilt of asking for that additional money que si llegas a ocupar or whatever. So so de todos modos like aunque yo recibía ese, FAFSA deposit y llegaba a necesitar poquito dinero siempre andaba en busca de scholarships.

[But either way as a daughter you still feel like that responsibility of like or I don't know all that guilt of asking for that additional money in case you need it or whatever. So so either way, even if I received it, the FAFSA deposit and I needed a little more money, I would always be in search of scholarships.]

Student C had the concern of financial aid and not knowing what would be covered and when more money would be needed. This concern falls beyond her finances but also includes how this would affect her family.

Obligations

All three students were asked about the responsibilities they had back at home and how these changed or stayed the same during their university years. From these, each student expressed having different degrees of responsibilities with their parents and family. All three students described these instances feeling like they had to juggle both home and school in their daily lives.

Student A expressed having no responsibilities to maintain back home. She maintained that she was expected to perform home upkeep when being home but that there were no responsibilities to maintain or expected of her. When asked about her responsibilities before university she explained:

And just with our culture, like being a girl meant that every Saturday morning, like, my sister and I would help my mom clean the whole house. There's also just always like the dishes or just like housekeeping chores, if you will. So those are really the main things I participated in, but I didn't have any like responsibilities, especially no financial responsibilities outside of just like home keep.

For Student A her obligations fell elsewhere in maintaining familial bonds. When asked about changes that occurred during their shift to higher education, Student A talked about having to adjust to the shift between changing how she would allocate her time between family and school. Her time was increasingly focused on her studies and less on her family. Student A was concerned about how she changed her priorities to focus on school and the shift that would entail with her family.

Student B spoke about the obligations she had back home with her mother. Student B's mom is legally blind and since Student B was fifteen, she has driven her around everywhere for anything she would need. She explains to me that she was initially resentful of how enforced it was for her to have to take this responsibility at a young age but afterwards as she grew older it was a responsibility that she felt was her own to fulfill because "there's nobody else" to fulfill it. She is an only child, so the responsibility fell on her. Because of this, when she was accepted into university and had to live two hours away from her mother, she was concerned about the responsibilities she left behind. During her undergraduate years she would come back home every other weekend to drive her mom around for what she needed. Student B voiced that she struggled with balancing her independence and going back home. She said:

But then I began really having, like, the struggle of balancing between the two, like having to go help my mom or having that feeling that I had to go help her every weekend. And then after I graduated, I lived in Sacramento like a year and I was still going home like almost every other weekend helping her. So finding a balance that was difficult and then moving back home. I was living with her and that was super overwhelming, right? You're not paying rent that you're paying rent with. You're like emotional well-being sometimes.

For Student B, it was hard navigating her independence and balancing it with her responsibilities with her mom. She saw struggling with her independence and living with her mother once again as a moment where she was struggling to adjust between caring about her mom but also being

her own person. Eventually, when Student B moved out of state for her PhD program, her mother was able to find a resource that would give her free Uber rides and help her be more independent in that regard.

Student C also experienced this phenomenon heavily with her responsibilities at home and with school. She explained that she understood that her going to university was an expectation from her parents because of what she described to be the sacrifices and goals her parents had for her to have an education or career. Additionally, back at home, although she clarified that her mother never “communicated” that it was her responsibility to take care of her younger sisters, she felt that as the oldest sister and as a woman, she did feel the *carga* (load) of responsibility on her. She explains:

It just, I don't know if it's human nature or if it's just the conditioning of our culture, you know? Well, yeah, yeah pero si like yo, de todos modos llegue a sentir esa responsibility for my siblings, for the household and y pues si like I had to split my time with that as well.

[It just, I don't know if it's human nature or if it's just the conditioning of our culture, you know? Well, yeah, yeah but yes like I still got to feel that responsibility for my siblings, for the household and, and like yeah like I had to split my time with that as well.]

Student C’s responsibilities fall on both continuing her education and taking care of her siblings at home. Her mom would tell her to help around and did not explicitly enforce it as an obligation, instead Student C described it as a responsibility she felt because of her positions in the household as the oldest daughter.

With this juggling of responsibilities, she felt stress on fulfilling either role. She talks about that this is a time where she was taking on a heavier load of homework and school responsibilities while also having responsibilities at home as she is maturing in age to a woman. She succinctly finalizes these thoughts with:

But yeah, I think I definitely went through like, you know, this, this famous term of an identity crisis you porque as a buena hija and then from a Mexican traditional household

tratas de siempre quedar bien con tus papas o con tu familia and so in the household like I felt like my responsibilities were like cuidar mis hermanitas.

[But yeah, I think I definitely went through like, you know, this, this famous term of an identity crisis you, because as a good daughter and then from a Mexican traditional household, try to always get along with your parents or with your family and so in the household like I felt like my responsibilities were like taking care of my little sisters.]

Juggling both was an important aspect of Student C's transition to higher education. She struggled with both and explained that she felt that responsibility to maintain peace in this regard with her parents so she felt the need to do school and family responsibilities.

Parent-Daughter Relationships

Under this theme, the three students spoke about the encouragement and support their parents displayed, parental influence in their education and straying away from parental values.

Expression of Support and Encouragement as an Expression of Parental Love

When students were asked about their parents' reactions to their decision to apply to university and thereafter their admission, all three students expressed their parents were encouraging and supportive. These were expressions of parental love on their daughters that they noticed and described as pride.

Student A remarked that in her experience, her parents were encouraging of her possibilities. She stated:

I'm very close to both of my parents...So since junior year I had like told them where I want to apply to and they were encouraging me to apply wherever I wanted and they said, you know, like see what you can get into.

The parents of Student A were both aware of her goals early in the university application process and were looking forward to her admissions. Student A mentioned that they were encouraging of any university she would like to attend and were part of the application process. Parent A read her statements of purpose and essays that would be part of her applications to universities.

Student A noted, "But my parents are really like passion driven people, so they were always like, it doesn't matter what you study, just, you know, like just love it." Her experience is described as

an overall positive experience where their encouragement and support was turned into pride. Student A tells an experience of her parents being encouraging, active in her applying process, and encouraging of her goals and interests career-wise. Student A's parents expressed their parental love through their unconditional support and active participation in the application process.

Student B and C told a similar experience where their parents were encouraging of their possibilities and goals. Student B expressed that for her mother, her continuing into a masters degree was “just like icing on the cake” and encouraged her new possibilities because it would be good for her. Student C spoke about the unconditional support she received from her parents. Her parents were happy about each acceptance she received. She explained that in her experience, even though her parents did not “fully understand all the details” it entailed, they were understanding and willing to support her. She shared that she had the support, their approval, and they were willing to support her financially while she focused on her studies. Both students show how their parents were expressing their love through their acts and words of encouragement.

Parent Influence on Education

All three students spoke of their parents' experiences with education. In particular, Student A and Student C spoke about how formative it was on their decisions to continue into higher education. Student A explained, “my parents were both like, they both went to college in Mexico, so they always are like, they have always been big advocates for education.” Student A's parents attended university in Mexico, and they told her about their passions. She explained that because her parents were immigrants they were unable to *ejercer* (to practice) their careers in the United States; she sees them giving up parts of their education as immigrants as a reason

for their support of her studying what she is the most passionate about. Her father studied architecture in Mexico but in the U.S., he worked in construction and later on as an electrician. Her mother studied data processing and eventually in the U.S. became an educator. For Student A, these experiences and the conversations held on this subject, were formative in what she decided to study as an undergraduate student.

Student C was also influenced by her parents educational background. Her parents did not finish elementary school and were afforded less opportunities back home in Mexico. Student C describes:

Porque yo escuche mucho las historias de mis papas their education journey. And just being able to go to like, I don't know, fourth, fifth grade because of, you know, those additional responsibilities in their households are their needs to start to trabajar already and needing to leave their education y tambien economical issues in Mexico just doesn't allow you to continue through your education at times tambien.

[Because I heard a lot about my parent's stories, their education journey. And just being able to go to like, I don't know, fourth, fifth grade because of, you know, those additional responsibilities in their households are their needs to start to work already and needing to leave their education and also economical issues in Mexico just doesn't allow you to continue through your education at times too.]

Student C speaks of her parents' experience with having to leave school at an early age to work for their families. These are conversations that were her motivation to continue with university. The stories of educational loss from her parents and their work and responsibilities were part of their Mexican immigrant story and these were what shaped her understanding of her privileges and possibilities. She acknowledges that her parents' immigrant background offered her United States citizenship, a high school degree, a university degree and that these help her find better paying career opportunities. There is an emphasis on how her parents' stories impacted her decision-making and the importance she places in these.

Different Values Shape Parental Disconnection and Friction

Student A and Student C spoke about their experiences with straying from the cultural norms and expectations their parents hold. These are experiences where they make decisions that are hard to communicate or let parents know about. Student A speaks about her parents conservative values being part of what she struggles to communicate with her parents because of her own more progressive opinions. This student spoke about the differences in opinions she holds with her parents from a religious standpoint to cultural norms. She first spoke about her experience moving in with her partner, a decision her parents did not agree with and that her mother has yet to tell Student A's grandmother about. She mentions that it is one of her biggest struggles she's had with communicating with her parents. Student A also spoke about how she struggled to bring up parts of her self-expression that her parents would disapprove such as tattoos and piercings because she wanted to avoid conflict. On religion, she explains that her family is "very Catholic" and in university she began to stray from it. She explains:

And to this day, it's something I really struggle talking to my parents about just because I don't want to upset them and I don't want them to be offended or anything. So that's just something I don't bring up.

These are topics she has struggled and continues to struggle with as she grows into her own person and still maintains a close relationship with her parents. She does not avoid it but does acknowledge how hard it is to communicate these differences when she wants to maintain peace in their relationship.

In Student C's interview, she gave insight into how she would begin to "avoid" her home to find time for herself amidst stress. She explains that communication began to only be about school or family obligations and in her time away from these, she would "sprinkle more and more *mentiritas* (little lies)" to keep her space. She gives insight into her feeling guilty about it and avoiding telling her parents what she was really doing:

Because like, oh, si te sientes como que si estoy llendo a la educación a la higher education and like, I know my parents are proud of this, but if I tell them that I need this night, Friday night for a party, it's like you're, you're the worst hija ever, you know? It doesn't fall under the checklist de buena hija.

[Because like, oh, yes you feel like yes I am going to school, higher education and like, I know my parents are proud of this, but if I tell them that I need this night, Friday night for a party, it's like you're, you're the worst daughter ever, you know? It doesn't fall under the checklist of a good daughter.]

Student C in this aspect avoids telling her parents about what she was really doing to avoid being perceived as a bad daughter in her parents' eyes. For Student C, her disconnection with the values her parents hold on what being a good daughter entails, caused her to minimize communication and lie to maintain her own space.

Communication

Students in this theme explored more on their communication with their parents. Here I will highlight possible gaps in understanding depicted by the students and their described open or brief communication styles.

Gaps in Understanding Between Parents and Daughters

Students B and C both depicted moments where there were gaps in communication and understanding about particular aspects of their education and lives. Student B struggled with her mother understanding what she was studying in her undergraduate degree and then after certain career path choices she made. She explained that she felt that weekly she would have to explain her undergraduate degree on agriculture and environmental education. Later on in the interview, she explained that she struggles with her mother understanding that she has a full-time job, a “legitimate job” as she calls it, while being in her PhD program full time. Student B explains:

Sometimes I think there's just like kind of a disconnect because she's not here seeing what my day to day looks like. She hears about it, but she's not seeing it. Like before she knew what I was doing, like I worked in agriculture, I was an agronomist. I was like [in the] fields all day. She like, saw that and then saw me doing schoolwork. So, like, that makes sense to her. I think it's a little bit more. Theoretical, like, oh, like she kind of like reduces

the work of the job. I know it's still a lot of work, still a job, but I'm still working full time and I have a full-time course load for the classes. So I think that's hard to describe sometimes. And like when we're having conversations like that diminish what I'm doing, like no, it's like a lot just me.

Student B explained this with a little exasperation in her voice. Her experience with a gap in understanding of her jobs and education has been something she struggles with but that she tries to explain frequently.

Student C speaks about the gap in understanding about how different university is from her previous years in K-12. Student C recalls not knowing how to explain to her parents how different university was in comparison to the previous years of her education. She questioned how she could explain her schedule and her new ability to choose the classes she would take. She also questioned how she could “translate” when she would need to prioritize more time for her schoolwork instead of attending a quinceañera. She largely attributed some of these issues to not knowing how to translate it to her parents into Spanish and communicate it effectively. She describes her experience:

Explaining it to them like all the nitty witty details of university is is hard now especially as a Chicana, as a *pocha* like I don't know Spanish to, to the detail you know. So translating this language of, I don't know like GE (general education) requirements y todo eso like ‘uh requisitos de, I don't know, educación general?’ Y aunque lo pueda traducir, in translating, you also need that context of like the word and it's it's their meaning. So a lot of the time me quedaba como like ‘no se como explicarlo ma pero es algo really important and I need it.’

[Explaining it to them like all the nitty witty details of university is is hard now especially as a Chicana, as a *pocha* like I don't know Spanish to, to the detail you know. So translating this language of, I don't know like GE (general education) requirements and all of that like ‘uh requirements of, I don't know, general education?’ And even if I could translate it, in translation you also need that context of like word the word and it's it's their meaning. So a lot of the time I would be like like ‘I don't know how to explain it mom but it is something really important and I need it.’]

In this part of the interview, Student C shows how she struggled and still struggles with effectively communicating what she means to her parents and that sometimes she would think

that regardless of her effort to translate it they did not understand her. These are described as gaps of understanding between the two parties.

The language barrier is prominent in her struggles of communicating. Student C says that amongst her sisters, she's the one that speaks Spanish the most in their household but that she is still not perfect at it. She voices frustration on this aspect because she wants to effectively communicate what she is thinking in English, but she does not know how to apply the "contextual translation" of it into Spanish. She says that she tries to bridge that gap by using examples with her parents.

Open/Brief Communication Between Parents and Daughters

All three students were asked to describe the kind of communication they held with their parents. Ranging from open communication to short brief communication, these students explained how they talked, spent time with each other, and how often they talked to each other up until now.

Both students A and B described their communication with their parents as open and frequent. Presently, both students pinpointed that they communicate with their parents daily through phone calls and sometimes facetime. They both currently live states away from their families. They were happy to explain that their phone calls are daily and frequent where they make time to talk to each other about their days, bridging the physical distance between them. Regardless, Student B still believes that she is still figuring out how to communicate with her mom and about bridging gaps.

When asked about what helped her communicate with her parents, Student A described their personalities to be a factor. She stated:

I would say that my, my parents' personalities, like I adore them. If that hasn't come through in this interview, I'll just say it said it out loud. But yeah, like my mom being,

like, never reacting harshly, never like, punishing me for something I said. Yeah. So that helps a lot in, in communicating with with her, with my dad too, is like, even if I say something he might not like, he, he tends to be a good listener.

Student A explains that her parents' personalities and not harsh responses facilitated her open communication with them. The adoration and admiration were evident in this interview. Student A's parents were clear in setting expectations during their conversations with her and she describes them as it being a mutual unsaid understanding that she does not need to be reminded of these.

Interestingly, all students mentioned an emphasis on quality time with their parents. Student A and B commented that they sometimes spend time on their phone calls not talking to each other but instead are immersed in their tasks or spending time with each other. Student C used watching movies or shows as a way to communicate with her parents and spend time with them. Especially for Student C, this was a bridge that would help her reconnect with her parents amidst brief and infrequent conversations during her undergraduate degree.

When asked about communication with her parents, Student C described herself being brief with the conversations she held about school or her obligations with her parents. Conversations around her application process for university were brief and undetailed; conversations about university were taken more seriously once she chose which school she would attend. Student C specified that during her undergraduate years she did not have the time to bond with them or have "significant personal conversations" because of their schedules not matching. These times afforded her little time to bond with her family. She explains that it was until she got into her graduate program that she began to speak and connect with her parents more because of her passion for the topic and her schedule was less busy as before. With her graduate program on Chicana and Chicano Studies in her focus, she explains:

[It's] more focused in your specific field that you know so you appreciate like, ah you do the work like go more menos estresada y más apasionada sobre el topic and and at times I would have these conversations with my parents like 'apa aprendi esto...' so siento que tambien with this field because it's is the Chicanx community like como mis papas como mexicanos like podía hablarle mucho sobre los estaba aprendiendo y ellos me decian sus historias personales. Mhmm. So I feel that through my masters degree, we grew back together. Piece back together they, es de compartir historias and, and, and you know whether it was school related or just personal stories.

[[It's] more focused in your specific field that you now so you appreciate like, ah you do work like go more less stressed and more passionate about the topic and and and at time I would have these conversations with my parents like 'dad I learned this...' so I feel like that also with this field because it's is the Chicanx community like like my parents like Mexicans like I could speak more about what I was learning and they would tell me their personal stories. Mhmm. So I feel that through my masters degree, we grew back together. Piece back together they, it's about sharing stories and, and, and, you know whether it was school related or just personal stories.]

Connecting via storytelling and her new afforded time was significant for her reconnection to her family and parents. Now in retrospect, she wishes she could have voiced her thankfulness to her parents. She attributes not sharing her emotions enough to possibly Latinx household, or just her own, having a hard time communicating emotions. She also pinpoints machismo culture as another aspect that was possibly at play in this situation but nonetheless, she wishes to have voiced that earlier on.

Themes in Parents

Parents were interviewed with similar questions as the students. Different from the students, some parents showed hesitancy being as descriptive or open with their answers. From these interviews parents spoke about expressing their support, parent-daughter relationships, and obligations.

Parents Expressing their Support

All parents spoke about their support of their daughters going to university. Parent A spoke about her daughter's decision to go to university was not much of a surprise but something

they were waiting for. Parent B described that her daughter's dream was to attend university. Parent C expressed that her daughter had informed her about applying for university and recalled it being a positive surprise when told about her admission. All three parents expressed their happiness at their daughters being accepted. Parent B happily said, "I was just so proud of her. You know, she worked so hard to get there and she was admitted. So it was, it was really exciting to see her being excited about it." Parent B was sharing the same excitement as her daughter. Parent C expressed a similar shared joy, describing it as, "Me dijo que estaba aplicando y luego llegó con la sorpresa de que sí la aceptaron y sentí que le dio mucho gusto. Me dio gusto" [She told me that she was applying and then she came in with the surprise that they did accept her and I felt she was very glad. I was also glad]. Parent A also expressed the same sentiments.

When asked about what they would like to tell their daughters in retrospect, they shared the same sentiments in wanting to share more of their support with their daughters. Parent B and C both wished to cheer their daughters on and express pride in their daughters. Parent C expressed that she believes herself and her husband always showed continuous support for her daughter; instead, she thinks she should have given her more freedom and not advise her decisions frequently.

Parent-Daughter relationships

In this theme, parents explored thinking about their experiences as immigrants and their culture, their daughter's independence, and communication.

Parent's Experience as Immigrants and their Culture

All parents reflected on their own lived experiences and how they used these experiences to help them empathize with their daughters and also show pride. Parent A brought into the

picture how her experience was as a university student in Mexico and how different that was for her daughters. She expressed that it took her time to accept the differences but that she got used to the idea by understanding that what made things different were the generational gap and change in culture.

Parent B spoke about putting herself in her daughter's shoes. She described how she saw her experience as an immigrant moving away from her family to be in the United States in a similar viewpoint as her daughter moving away for school. She saw moving away as “part of the deal” and stated that she did the same when she moved to a different country to do better for herself. She said:

I tried to put myself in her shoes. I figure, you know, she move away just like how I move away. And now I know how my mom felt when I move away. So I try to cope that way. You know that she's gone. Just how I did.

Seeing herself lived experiences reflected on her daughter's help her understand the changes that they were going through.

Parent C expressed a similar reflection but focused more on her pride for her daughter being able to succeed. When asked about how her experience as an immigrant and her culture shaped her opinion on her daughter going to university she said, “Sí, es bueno siendo un orgullo yo hacia ella porque ella sí pudo triunfar. O sea, pudo seguir adelante” [Yes, it's good to be proud of her because she was able to succeed. I mean, she could succeed]. She continued by clarifying that her daughter was able to succeed and that she knew how to.

Their Daughter's Independence and How they Adjusted to it

Parent A spoke about her reflection on her daughter's growth into independence and how she struggled with their newfound distance. She pointed out that the culture differences, generational differences were part of how her daughters experienced more freedom and independence. She said:

Bueno, aparte yo creo que no solamente es como el cambio de cultura lo que se usa en México, [y] lo que se hace aquí, pero también es la brecha generacional, verdad? Bueno, pues yo en mis tiempos diría que aquella [fue la] situación, pero aquí es otros tiempos y se vive otra situación. Y si por ejemplo este... pues yo vi como que mis hijas tuvieron más libertad, tomaban sus, tomó sus propias decisiones muchas veces, por ejemplo [para] nosotros todavía ya era, ya aunque ya estudiamos en la universidad todavía pedimos permiso al papá o la mamá si nos dejaba ir...

[Well, apart from that, I think that it's not only the change in culture that is used in Mexico, [and] what is done here, but it's also the generational gap, right? Well, in my time I would say that [is the] situation, but here it is other times and we live in another situation. And if, for example, this... well, I saw how my daughters had more freedom, they made their own decisions, many times, for example, [for us] it was still, even though we already studied at the university, we still [had to] ask the father or mother for permission, to let us go...]

She saw that her daughter was becoming more independent and making her own decisions and attributes it directly to the changes in country and generations. Parent A also spoke on how she struggled with understanding why her daughter wanted to live in the dormitories when their home was close to the university. Her daughter convinced them but Parent A also includes that she consoled herself with the distance because it was close enough that she could do anything for her daughter if she needed it.

Parent B spoke about her experience with having her daughter always around her but also being a supporter of her independence. She expressed that it was hard for her to let her daughter go but she knew it was for the best. Parent B mentions that she believes that her daughter might have been concerned about her being on her own but she also believed it would not be a reason for her to stress too much about. She explained that she thinks that her daughter was ready to move away from her and be independent. She mentioned that she also consoled herself with the distance of her daughter's university; she expressed that it was not as bad as it could have been, meaning that although it was a drive away from her home, it was close for her to come over the

weekends and that she could have chosen farther away universities. They were still able to maintain a close relationship via their closer distance and a short drive home.

Communication

Both Parent A and B shared that they tried to maintain open communication with their daughters. Parent A explained that they have always tried to have good communication with their daughter. She described that Student A initiated conversations about her school, from her professors to friends. Additionally, as parents, they asked her about her feelings, her plans, and her homework. They maintained these close moments when they would visit each other whether at home or at Student A's university. Parent A agrees that there might have been things that Student A might have omitted from their conversations because they wanted to stay in agreement. Nonetheless she concludes that they maintained a beautiful relationship during her university years.

Parent B spoke about a similar experience. She maintained that they had open communication and that they shared a lot with each other. She would ask about school and Student B would talk about it and Parent B would feel or understand her stress. Parent B explains, "I felt that, too. You know, as mothers, we always feel all you guys, you know, whatever you're dealing with, we're feeling it, you know, as moms. So I felt her stress." She said that she did not feel like Student B hid anything from her.

Similarly to Student C's interview, Parent C concurred that communication was brief and sparse. She explains, "Um, es que ya tanto yo como en mi trabajo y en su escuela casi no había ya tiempo, que no había mucho tiempo juntos" [Um, it's just that there was almost no time with work or in with her school, there wasn't much time together]. Parent C acknowledged that they did not have much communication and opportunities to communicate and these would result in

not understanding each other. Parent C believed there are some things such as about school that her daughter avoided speaking about with her.

Obligations: Family or School

All parents spoke on the obligations their daughters had. First, Parent B acknowledged that her daughter did take transportation as a responsibility. Her daughter would drive her around, take her grocery shopping, doctors appointments, and more. Parent B adjusted these accordingly when her daughter moved to university into an accommodating schedule that would coincide with her daughter coming home and helping her stock up for the time away and other things needed. Parent B thinks Student B did feel responsible for her in some ways back then and still does so today. Regardless, Parent B believes that Student B did take in a doable amount of responsibilities because she was able to accomplish taking in more responsibility at school.

Parent C talked about how her daughter's responsibility was to take care of her little sisters when she would work before her daughter attended university. Parent C explained that after Student C was admitted into university this responsibility lessened because the siblings were older. She continues by saying that the responsibilities were not enforced or explicitly encouraged afterwards either.

Parent A explained not giving any responsibilities to her daughter. She acknowledges that her daughter took on extra responsibilities at school, but she believes she was able to maintain them well and adjust to it because she knew how to.

Shared Theme: Resources

The shared theme students and parents concluded on were on resources and resource availability. All participants spoke about their experience with having or not having resources that helped them navigate the transition to university. Students remarked that there were no resources offered for them. Student B specifically mentioned that her high school did offer some

for herself in high school via a program for first-generation Mexican American students. Student A described the available resources were not directed to parents but instead only students.

Parents described what they were able to attend to learn more about this process. Parent A encountered resources such as a family week with conferences and information about the university. There they were able to learn more about the school and hear advice about how to handle their daughter going to university. Parent A notes that the issue is that although she knows English, she prefers Spanish and none of these resources were available in Spanish. Parent B only had university orientations as a method to learn more about the schools her daughter was thinking about attending. Here she points out that these were helpful for her to see first-hand the experiences her daughter would have in her time there.

Ultimately, they all concluded that universities should offer more especially with Latinx working parents in mind. Parent B maintains that resources should be offered in Spanish because although she speaks English, she knows other parents do not and still deserve to have the same access to information. Parent A brings up that maybe there were translation services in her case, but she was not made aware of it. Parent C wants universities to offer more resources for parents to learn more about what their children are studying in universities and what they are doing there. Student B includes:

Involving the whole family in the community. Right. Because as a first-generation student. So, you don't have that generational wealth about generational knowledge that you would get from like a parent who was born here or, you know, your whole family's been from the United States. They know how to go through that process as an immigrant. Like, my mom didn't know how to do any of that stuff. So it was a lot of guesswork in finding people who had that information.

Student B wants there to be more involvement to share knowledge about this process because a lot is accessed through guessing.

Student C and B also want information to be accessible in methods beyond in person events. They acknowledge that these parents work long hours, are tired, and would find it hard to use these resources under these circumstances. Information should be accessible for them in methods that do not force them to give up work and their income. Student C believes that even with resources being available, they would not be used by parents who are unable to afford taking time out of their jobs to attend them.

Chapter V: Discussion

This study aimed to explore three research questions on how first-generation Mexican American female master's students and their parents communicate, may encounter obstacles that complicate communication, and navigate higher education together. The interviews highlighted the aspects of communication students and parents held with each other that either they struggled with or flourished with. The following paragraphs will address each research question alongside the answers of students and parents. I will describe the common themes that were expressed in the interviews by connecting each pair's experience to a theme: Pair A and parents' lived experiences, Pair B and understanding independence, and Pair C focusing on family and responsibilities.

The first research question is: how do parents understand the transition and pressure students face as first-generation university students? How do they understand family obligations in this context? Regarding this question, parents first considered that being admitted into a university and then attending one was a source of pride for themselves and their daughters. When students shared their goals to apply to university, they showed their support and in some cases students shared that it was unconditional support. Interestingly, some of the students made note that they had to navigate aspects of this journey on their own such as learning to apply for financial aid, understanding how much of their expenses would be covered, and the process of applying to different university systems. Parents did not mention these aspects as being something they knew about their daughters' experience. On family obligations, parents described their daughters learning to adjust into taking on more responsibilities at school which they did while including the ones they possibly had at home. They described that their daughters took on what they could, might have experienced increased stress over them, but that they were able to

succeed. They used terms like, “but she did it”, “lo logro” [she succeeded], “los pudo manejar bien” [she could maintain them well]. Parents saw them taking on more responsibilities above the ones they maintained at home as an effort that was pushed by their daughters, and they were able to succeed against it.

Research question two touched upon: how do students and parents communicate about school and responsibilities? How do they sustain these practices? The answer falls on the relationship dynamics each pair held. Pair A explained their dynamic to include open communication on both sides. Parent A had set clear expectations throughout the conversations she held with her daughter. Additionally, Student A explained that her parents' personalities helped her communicate with them because she did not fear harsh reactions from her mom and she described her father as a good listener. Pair B also shared to have open communication. Parent B described Student B to be open with her answers when Parent B would ask her about school or activities she was part of. On Student B's side she explained that aside from that, she still believed she is still learning how to communicate more effectively and bridging gaps in understanding. Pair C shared having a harder time communicating because of conflicting schedules and issues with translating. Nonetheless, they have been able to become more open by finding common grounds where they can share stories or watch shows, and communicate more with each other.

Question three asks: What resources could be helpful for parents to learn and engage in supporting their college student daughters? In this regard, interviewees showed that there is still a lot that can be done by universities to help parents and students learn how to support each other during university. With the resources they have accessed, they find issues in accessibility, especially for working class, Spanish speaking parents who might be unable to participate in

available resources due to time constraints, loss of income, and being unable to understand the language. Because of this, interviewees urge for accessibility and better methods to share knowledge support amongst each other. This goes to show that language barriers still serve to be an issue that keeps parents from being informed about college readiness for their children.

Theme One: Parents' Lived Experiences

Students reflected on their parents' lived experiences and how these affected their image of entering university. Parents reflected on the same. Student A spoke about her parents' passion for what they studied back home and education and how that was formative for her path towards university. Student B also spoke about her mother instilling the value of education through her lived experiences. Student C described her parents being unable to continue their education back home and how that affected her image of going into higher education. These are students whose paths are influenced by their parents' lived experiences. From these moments of storytelling, students were introspective of their decisions to continue into higher education. Additionally, these experiences informed parents how to navigate their daughters' move to university.

When asked about her parents immigrant background and culture affecting her image of higher education, Student A spoke highly of her parents studies in Mexico. She explained that seeing how her parents were unable to practice their careers in the US, she was taught to follow her own dreams and to study something she is passionate about. Her parents made education an expectation for her from a young age and asked her all throughout her childhood about what she would do in university. For Student A who heard about her parents dreams that were unfortunately left in Mexico, due to the US not accrediting their degrees, it was formative to hear about their passions left behind and have them full heartedly support her dreams. Storytelling like this serves as a counter-narrative that allows students to think more critically about the

socio-political aspects that affected the lives of their parents (Nava, 2017). These formative lived experiences shape how students view their education in light of the barriers and struggles their parents have lived as immigrants.

Interestingly, students in this study did not express feeling family achievement guilt in regards to their family's circumstances and their own privileges. In previous studies on this matter, students reported feeling guilty on surpassing their family in achievements and having more opportunities for socioeconomic mobility; these were matters that complicated their relationships with their families (Piorkowski, 1983; Covarrubias & Fryberg, 2015; Covarrubias et al. 2021). Instead of feeling guilty for these privileges, students, such as Student A, reported their parents being a source of motivation and support for their achievements in higher education. Student A's parents were unable to practice their careers, but Student A saw this as an influence behind her pursuing her passions in school. Students reflected on what their parents gave up or lived through as a motivator to continue their education.

For Parent A, these lived experiences helped her understand the changes that occurred with her daughter under American culture and university. Parent A spoke about reflecting on her own university experience in Mexico and how different that is for her daughter in the US. She was able to accept and come to terms with these changes by accepting how a generational gap and move to a different culture changes the way her daughter makes decisions. Between Parent A and Student A, there was an acculturation gap that was perceived by Parent A. She saw Student A make her own decisions and start to be independent. She admits that she was always advising her daughter about the decisions she should make and retrospectively, wishes to have been less involved in that aspect. Student A reflected on the acculturation gap in her interview as well. Acculturation gaps are a result of a culturally diverse environment affecting acculturation

rates between family generations which could result in conflict but Student A tried to minimize these possible conflicts (Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1993). In her interview, Student A spoke about struggling to communicate her difference in values and independent decision-making because she did not want to create conflict between her relationship with her parents and herself.

Nonetheless, she tried to close that gap. In Pair A's instance they both tried to be understanding of each other to maintain a close family dynamic. Parents reflecting on their lived experiences onto their daughters helps them understand the changes they are going through. Parent A was able to find acceptance by looking at her own decision making.

Seeing how Parent A and Student A reflected on Parent A's lived experiences helps see how parents and students use these experiences for their benefit in different ways. Whether it is inspiring in their educational goals or it brings insight into the changes their daughters experience, sharing lived experiences, especially those of immigrants, is insightful in how parents have shown resilience in their journey as residents of the United States.

Theme Two: Understanding Change

Students brought up their independence often when speaking about their shift into university. Student A and Student B spoke about living away from their parents. Student C's independence was not explicitly discussed but could be seen in her taking ownership of her decisions outside of her parents' presence and growing up as a *mujercita* (woman). These are moments where students share a shift onto their own decision making. Concurrently, parents also shared their sentiments about the independence their daughters were experiencing. They shared their struggles with this independence but their understanding that it is a necessary move for their daughters.

Student B shared her appreciation for this independence. She lived away from her mom during her undergraduate degree, then back home for her master's degree and then again independently out of state for her PhD. She brought this up when talking about the obligations she had back home with her mom. This was an immense shift in their lives because they had continuously depended on each other up until Student B moved out of state and her mom was able to move around independently. This part of Student B's life was shown to be a pivotal moment in juggling both her independence and caring for her mom's wellbeing back at home. For Student B the change in how she would take care of her then self-appointed obligations was hard to process and it was not until they were able to find a way to help her mom move independently back home that her worries eased.

Parents B saw this worry and thought about how close their relationship was before university. They would always be together and Student B self-described it as a codependent relationship. Parent B's worry was struggling with seeing her daughter go but she acknowledged that it was important to let her go. She came to terms with this change by consoling herself on how close the school was as well as by how often they would see each other during Student B's visits home. Additionally, they maintained open communication with each other. Student B was an integrator (Espinoza, 2010). She communicated about school responsibilities and activities while also maintaining her obligations back home with her mom. The meditation between still maintaining close family relationships and maintaining her independence worked to console Parent B about the new transition. Now that her daughter is out of state, it is evident that they have gotten used to their distance but continue to bridge it by their daily communication.

This experience exemplifies how parents understand change and console themselves over these changes. The parents in this study found ways to bridge their gap in acculturation in

regards to their children's independence. Familismo in Latinx families maintains that close relationships and dedication to family are important in their family values (Nagayama Hall, 2017). Parents were able to navigate this independence by finding solace in daily communication when separated and maintaining close relationships with their students who were in universities close enough for them to see each other often. Additionally, it shows how students experience personal growth while juggling both school and family which are important in this transition to university. Students are first hand experiencing a shift in priorities and independence while also heavily caring for who they left back home. They prioritize strong family connections whilst navigating changes that could otherwise have created conflict in their relationships.

Theme Three: Family and Responsibilities

All students and parents talked and implied the importance of maintaining family connections and obligations being part of that process. Participants in Pair A both acknowledged not having specified obligations for Student A other than her education but maintained that family connection by communication and being with family was important. Similarly, Pair B did so with responsibilities and daily communication. Pair C spoke about initially struggling with communication but maintaining family dynamics via obligations. Ultimately, family and responsibilities showed how students placed importance in investing time in both as well for parents underlining the want to keep these relationships close.

Student C's experience revolved around feeling responsibility over her family because of her self-described role of being the oldest daughter. She felt responsible for taking care of her siblings although it was not an enforced obligation. Although Parent C described it not being enforced because the siblings were older and able to take care of themselves, Student C still felt the need to fill in the spaces her parents could not due to their jobs. Her responsibilities and

decision were influenced by traditional gender roles she held and familismo (Piña-Watson et al., 2016; Sanchez et al., 2018; Espinoza, 2010; Sy & Britain, 2008). Student C reflected on what it meant to be a good daughter by taking these roles. Student C's sense of responsibilities mirrors other Latina college student's family obligations which include fulfilling the role of a second parent (Sy & Romero, 2008). These responsibilities caused stress for Student C, making her question how good of a daughter she was for later on trying to avoid being home to take care of her family. Parent C did not perceive this stress. The gap of understanding was only widened when Student C described herself struggling with effectively translating what she meant in English to Spanish for her parents to understand. Here, Student C showed herself to be a "separator" when it came to her education and her family (Espinoza, 2010). She kept these aspects separate and it was overwhelming for her.

Student C spoke on how she began to mend these relationships once she began to find more time to be around her parents and hear about their histories and lived experiences. Nonetheless, she experienced stress in juggling two important sides of her life. For Pair C, family was important to maintain but conflict in interest created gaps in communication in the earlier part of their transition.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I addressed the three research questions posited in the beginning of this project. I found that parents supported their daughters in their higher education endeavors and under this context they saw obligations as a maintainable stress their daughters experienced. Additionally, I found that communication varied individually between each pair. Lastly, students and parents expressed the need for better accessible resources for working class Spanish speaking parents. The three themes extracted from the interviews show how students and parents

have adjusted and maintained their communication and relationships with each other. The first theme addressed how the parent's lived experiences influenced students in their higher education journey and parents in their understanding of their daughters. The second theme touched upon understanding how students experienced independence and how parents mediated this. Lastly, the third theme expanded on the importance of family and the importance of obligations in that relationship. The three themes showcase the intricacies of the relationships held between Mexican immigrant parents and their daughters.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

This study examined the relationships between three parent daughter pairs and how they navigated communication and transitioning into university. The three students that reached out to me for this project and their parents who were brought in by their daughters both gave insights into how they navigated transitioning into higher education from their own points of view. Each pair represented a unique relationship that showcased how case by case communication varies. Students were more candid with their thoughts and feelings than their parents but from the interviews that were conducted, we can largely see the bigger picture of what parents and their daughters experienced. In this research we can see the broader perspective of what many immigrant families experience in the United States. From these interviews we can see the importance of family in Mexican families.

This project arose from the experiences of many *mujeres* (women) who shared with me their experiences as first-generation college students. These are experiences that are largely kept amongst ourselves and where we rarely get to see our parents' perspectives. Because of this, I wanted to bring to light how parents and daughters learned to navigate these instrumental changes in a time where adulthood affects many aspects of a family dynamic. From these experiences, we can see the lives of students who lived away from home for university to those who lived at home and commuted. The women who spearheaded these experiences showcased their independence and ability to maintain family relationships.

From this project, I appreciated the most that the resilience and aptitude to change of immigrant families was showcased. All three students reflected on how their families' experiences informed their motivation to go to university and achieve their goals against the structures that keep many Latinxs from continuing their education. The U.S. continues to have

Latinx students face racial discrimination in education and are often underserved by their schools leading to low graduation rates and low college degree acquisition in comparison to their white peers (Anthony et al., 2021; Rendon et al., 2014; Gonzales et al., 2003). To this extent, it is a great feat to see first-generation Latinas go on to graduate with a higher degree. Their resilience should be celebrated as well as their families.

Further research is needed to expand on how varied family relationships influence student decision-making. Specifically, more attention should be on how differing parent-daughter relationships affect how they communicate with each other. This study aimed to gather interviews from both fathers or mothers but only mothers participated. To this degree, further research should look into how father-daughter relationships influence the decision-making and communication of this dynamic. What were the reasons behind low father participation? Additionally, future research should analyze how the relationships of on-campus students and commuting students differ and to what extent they are different. This study includes both experiences, but more should be examined on how they are a result of different relationship dynamics. Lastly, future research that aims to replicate this study should be conducted with the purpose of creating open dialogue between parents and their daughters to facilitate broader communication and encourage intergenerational healing. These recommendations are critical to further bring to light the shared experiences of many immigrant parents and first-generation female university students.

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