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## A Behavioral Process Model of Familism

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### Abstract

Familismo, or familism, an important Latino cultural construct associated with youth adjustment, describes the importance of family regarding support, comfort, and services. Increased research on familism among Latino families in the past decade has called for a theoretical process model of familism that can guide research on familism, family processes, and youth development. In this article, we propose the behavioral process model of familism (BPMF), which identifies proximal mechanisms through which familism is expected to promote youth psychological adjustment. Specifically, we propose that parenting behaviors (e.g., monitoring, discipline strategies) are a mechanism by which parent familism relates to youth familism and psychological adjustment both directly and via their familism-consistent behaviors. We hypothesize direct and mediated pathways in the BPMF and consider how sociodemographic variables modify the described processes.

### Keywords

Adolescence; childhood; familism; parenting; psychological adjustment; youth

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Researchers have identified *familismo*, or familism, as an important cultural construct among Latino families (Parke & Buriel, 2006). Familism emphasizes the importance of referring to family for support, comfort, and services and of placing precedence on family before individual interests. Familism may manifest through bonding with family members, considering family interests in decision making, or maintaining family cohesion (Behnke et al., 2008). A growing body of research has examined how familism and other cultural values are passed across generations through cultural socialization (Knight et al., 2011; Umaña-Taylor, Alfaro, Bámaca, & Guimond, 2009). Findings, mostly cross-sectional, also suggest that familism promotes youth psychological adjustment (see Stein et al., 2014, for a review), including increased self-esteem (Smokowski, Rose, & Bacallao, 2010; Telzer, Tsai, Gonzales, & Fuligni, 2015) and reduced internalizing (Smokowski et al., 2010) and externalizing symptoms (Marsiglia, Parsai, & Kulis, 2009).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>We use the term *youth* to describe children and adolescents.

## Defining Familism

Familism is a multidimensional construct that encompasses attitudes about the importance of family and behaviors that reflect the way in which family ties are prioritized. Baca Zinn (1982) categorized familism into demographic (e.g., family size), structural (e.g., proximity to family), behavioral (e.g., contact with family), and normative or attitudinal domains (e.g., beliefs about family). Researchers further classified attitudinal familism as the endorsement of family as a source of emotional support, personal obligation to family needs, and family as referent when making decisions (Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, Marin, & Perez-Stable, 1987). We focus on attitudinal (i.e., valuing family support, obligations, and referent) and behavioral (i.e., mutual support in the family) familism because these represent the proximal aspects of familism that are most frequently linked to adjustment (Stein et al., 2014) and that youth may be more likely enact. Common measures of attitudinal and behavioral familism include the familism subscales from the Mexican American Cultural Values Scale (Knight et al., 2010), the Attitudinal Familism Scale (Lugo Steidel & Contreras, 2003), the Family Obligations Scale (Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999), and the Hispanic Familism Scale (Sabogal et al., 1987).

At the root of familism is a cultural frame of reference about the centrality of family that is enacted in attitudes and behaviors among those who endorse it. Family-level measures (e.g., family cohesion, family time) are closely related to the conceptualization of familism, and some scholars have used these, as well as parenting domains, as proxies of familism (Behnke et al., 2008; Leidy, Guerra, & Toro, 2010; Romero & Ruiz, 2007). Studies using such measures have found that family cohesion is associated with better youth outcomes, including social problem-solving skills and self-efficacy (e.g., Leidy et al., 2010), and better parenting behaviors such as parental monitoring (e.g., Romero & Ruiz, 2007). Familism also is closely tied to filial piety (e.g., honoring family, caring for aging parents) and communalism (e.g., social relationships with extended family kin networks prioritized over individual achievement), which may be a part of a metaconstruct of family and relationship primacy (Schwartz, Weisskirch, et al., 2010).

## Method

In this article, we propose the behavioral process model of familism (BPMF) to outline the mechanisms by which familism may foster the psychological adjustment of Latino youth. To inform this model, we identified 101 peer-reviewed research articles with the PsycINFO database, up to the year 2015, using the following keyword search: if(familism OR familismo OR family obligation) AND if(Cuban OR Dominican OR Hispanic OR Latino OR Latina OR Mexican OR Mexican-American OR Puerto Rican) AND if(child\* OR adolescen\*). From these articles, 82 included Latino/a child, adolescent, or parent participants, of which we excluded 37 because they were interventions, did not include a focused analysis of familism (e.g., familism was referenced only as being closely related to social support in the discussion), focused on substance abuse outcomes, focused on academic outcomes (e.g., academic motivation, school belonging), or did not include any measured predictor or outcome of familism. Of the remaining 45 empirical articles, 60% of studies focused on psychological adjustment (e.g., depression, externalizing, suicidal

ideation) and 58% on some aspect of parenting or cultural socialization.<sup>2</sup> Given our goal of including representative studies of familism among Latino/a youth, we selected 30 articles (excluding multiple articles from the same research group) that analyzed some aspect of psychological adjustment, parenting, or parental cultural socialization (see Table 1 for article descriptions).

## A Proposed Conceptual Model

We propose the behavioral process model of familism (BPMF), which describes important mechanisms by which familism may foster the psychological adjustment of Latino youth. A majority of research has focused on the direct association of familism with youth outcomes rather than on processes of influence and integration as to how these processes unfold. Furthermore, there is little distinction made between parent and youth familism in existing work; we include both parent and youth familism as separate and important constructs in the family system that inform youth adjustment. Given estimates that Latino adolescents are at heightened risk for mental health difficulties (Child Trends Databank, 2014), outlining mechanisms by which familism promotes adjustment and reduced mental health risk is imperative, as proximal factors in adolescents' lives mediate or moderate resilience processes (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

We focus primarily on Latino youth, given the centrality of familism and family interconnectedness among Latinos (Parke & Buriel, 2006) and the fact that the majority of familism research is based on this population (Stein et al., 2014). Importantly, most existing work on this topic has focused on Latinos of Mexican or Puerto Rican origin (Stein et al., 2014), which has set a precedent for the type of research available for integration in this article. Further, despite the heterogeneity of Latinos in terms of history in the United States (recent immigrants vs. established populations) and sociodemographic variables (e.g., parents' educational level, family income, generational status), this diversity has usually not been systematically considered in past work.

## Guiding Theoretical Frameworks

Our conceptualization of the BPMF was prompted by a growing research interest on familism in Latino families. As described by Grau, Azmitia, and Quattlebaum (2009), Latino parenting behaviors can be culture general (employed by parents of various ethnic backgrounds) and culture specific (common to Latinos), which informs our proposal that familism (a culturally specific Latino frame of reference) contributes to parenting behaviors, broadly defined. Theoretical and intervention work with Latinos also has proposed that family cultural values, with an emphasis on its match with mainstream cultural values, may have an impact on the family (Pantin et al., 2007). Currently, empirical research on familism lacks an integration of research on the parenting processes typically studied in family functioning and youth development. The BPMF is a call to attend to the processes and mechanisms that facilitate the role of parent and youth familism on youth development. The BPMF is supported by past empirical work on familism as well as by research on attitude–

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<sup>2</sup>Percentages exceed 100% because some studies included overlapping domains.

behavior correspondence (Glasman & Albarracín, 2006), culturally grounded models of parenting and youth development (Azmitia & Brown, 2002; Halgunseth, Ispa, & Rudy, 2006), and family systems theory (Cox & Paley, 1997).

### Key Concepts of the BPMF Model

The proposed BPMF (see Figure 1) focuses on mechanisms linking familism beliefs and values to psychological adjustment, grounded in an extensive record of experimental studies on attitude–behavior correspondence, which suggest that beliefs that closely relate to behavior strongly predict behavior (Glasman & Albarracín, 2006). The BPMF is put forth for researchers to test a set of hypothesized direct, mediated, and moderated pathways. We include self-esteem, internalizing, and externalizing symptoms as measures of psychological adjustment that are typically examined in the literature on familism. We propose that familism (Box 1 and 4, in Figure 1, for parent and youth) promotes youth adjustment (Box 3) via parenting behaviors (Box 2) and familism-consistent youth behaviors (Box 5). We also identify sociodemographic factors (Box 6) that might shape the process of familism in the lives of families.

We incorporate cultural frameworks of parenting and propose that parenting goals and parents' cultural values such as familism (Halgunseth et al., 2006) inform parenting strategies that Latino families engage with their children (Path A), including monitoring and discipline (Azmitia & Brown, 2002; Halgunseth et al., 2006) and ultimately youth adjustment (Path B). In addition, parent familism and youth perceptions of parental behaviors contribute to youths' responsiveness to familism expectations via the familism values that youth espouse (Paths C & D). Further, on the basis of ideas about attitude–behavior correspondence (Glasman & Albarracín, 2006), we propose that youth familism reflects a set of beliefs about the behavioral standards of family members that are the driving force to adjustment (Path E) and familism-consistent behavior (Path F). Finally, familism-consistent behaviors directly contribute to youth adjustment (Path G).

In line with family systems theory (Broderick, 1993; Cox & Paley, 1997), we posit that family factors, such as familism across generations, influence individuals in the family. Furthermore, we integrate theories proposing that culturally related values promote prosocial development (Knight & Carlo, 2012). Specifically, familism values are expected “to promote prosocial behaviors as they encourage an awareness, consideration, and responsiveness to the needs of others, which can facilitate prosocial traits and behaviors” (Armenta, Knight, Carlo, & Jacobson, 2011, p. 108).

In the BPMF, we identify parenting behaviors (Box 2) that are likely to be emphasized or enacted in specific ways on the basis of one's cultural frame of reference and associated parenting goals (Domenech Rodríguez, Donovan, & Crowley, 2009; Grau et al., 2009; Halgunseth et al., 2006). Parental warmth and support, commonly associated with youth adjustment, include parents' affection toward and engagement with the child (Taylor, Larsen-Rife, Conger, & Widaman, 2012). Parental monitoring is the supervision parents enact to keep track of their children's activities, including knowing where their children are and with whom (Azmitia & Brown, 2002; Knight et al., 2010), and of particular relevance for Latinos, monitoring via the extended family (Azmitia & Brown, 2002). Parental

monitoring may be shaped by cultural expectations concerning the extent to which children should be with family compared to nonfamily acquaintances and the restrictions that parents place on children's activities (Azmitia & Brown, 2002). Relatedly, parent communication and closeness can influence parental monitoring (Romero & Ruiz, 2007) and might be part of a bidirectional process (Taylor, Conger, Robins, & Widaman, 2015). Parent discipline strategies are also parenting behaviors likely informed by cultural norms and expectations on how youth should behave (Domenech Rodríguez et al., 2009). For example, the parenting literature generally characterizes Latino parents as exhibiting high levels of controlling strategies (Halgunseth et al., 2006), but these strategies have not always been associated with poor adjustment among youth. Finally, consistent discipline, characterized by parents following through with—rather than not enacting—the discipline they espouse, is one aspect of parenting associated with optimal development (Parke et al., 2004).

We conceptualize familism-consistent youth behaviors, another key concept in the BPMF (Box 5), as a construct that includes a youth's enacted behaviors with family members and others outside the family that are intended to reflect well on and bring pride to the family (Azmitia & Brown, 2002), which correspond with maintaining family harmony. That is, familism-consistent youth behaviors are broadly defined as helping and prosocial behaviors exhibited toward others but not exclusively toward the family (Calderón-Tena, Knight, & Carlo, 2011; Eisenberg, Fabes, & Spinrad, 2006; Knight, Carlo, Basilio, & Jacobson, 2015; Padilla-Walker, Dyer, Yorgason, Fraser, & Coyne, 2015). Additional examples of familism-consistent behaviors include respecting others, associating with prosocial peers, and avoiding negative peers and involvement in risky behaviors (Azmitia & Brown, 2002; Holloway, Park, Jonas, Bempechat, & Li, 2014).

The main outcome of interest in the BPMF is youth psychological adjustment (Box 3), including high self-esteem (i.e., global evaluation of one's worth; Kuhlberg, Peña, & Zayas, 2010) and low internalizing (e.g., depression, anxiety; Bornstein, Hahn, & Haynes, 2010) and externalizing symptoms (e.g., conduct problems; Bornstein et al., 2010). Psychological adjustment can be described as a state of being (e.g., self-esteem), whereas familism-consistent youth behaviors reflect actions enacted by individuals that are aligned with familism values. In subsequent sections, we elaborate on the paths proposed in the BPMF.

## The Socialization of Youth Familism Values

Parenting goals among Latinos include socializing children in family-oriented lifestyles (Azmitia & Brown, 2002; Parke & Buriel, 2006). Cultural socialization, defined as teaching children to be proud of their ethnic background, encouraging cultural values, and highlighting positive aspects of their cultural background (Hughes et al., 2006), is a process informed by parents' own cultural values and has been associated with youth's familism values among Latino families (e.g., Knight et al., 2011). Parental cultural socialization behaviors such as prioritizing family events, visiting extended family frequently, and providing emotional support to family members can reinforce to youth the importance of family and familism in everyday circumstances. Studies show a positive association between a parent and the child's cultural values, including familism (Path F; Calderón-Tena et al.,

2011; Calzada, Tamis-LeMonda, & Yoshikawa, 2013; Hughes et al., 2006; Knight et al., 2011; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2009).

In addition to a direct link between parent and youth familism (Path C), we propose that parent familism (Box 1) is related to youth familism (Box 4) via parenting behaviors (Box 2), including parent support and warmth, parental monitoring, and consistent discipline. Specifically, parents' endorsement of familism is directly linked to parenting behaviors (see Path A). Parents' familism provides a cultural lens onto parenting goals and expectations that may prompt parents to invest time and engage in specific parenting practices for the continuation of familism in their children (e.g., Calzada, Huang, Anicama, Fernandez, & Brotman, 2012). Prior research has supported the idea that parent familism values inform parenting practices. For example, parent attitudinal familism (i.e., values of family support, obligation, and referent) was related to more parental monitoring among families of Puerto Rican (Morcillo et al., 2001) and Mexican heritage (Knight et al., 2010). Parent familism was also positively and concurrently related to consistent discipline and parental monitoring among Hispanics (Santisteban, Coatsworth, Briones, Kurtines, & Szapocznik, 2012), and Mexican-origin fathers' familism values were positively associated with concurrent father reports of paternal warmth (White & Roosa, 2012).

In the proposed model, parenting behavior is a proximal pathway that nurtures youth familism (Path D). Existing theory and empirical research provides consistent support for the idea that parent cultural socialization efforts promote the development of youth cultural values (Hughes et al., 2006), including the socialization of familism values (Calzada et al., 2013; Knight et al., 2011; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2009). Beyond cultural socialization, Hughes et al. (2006) stated that positive parenting strategies likely enhance the transmission of ethnic values from parent to child. We propose that parental warmth and support, monitoring, and consistent discipline are key parenting domains that are likely to enhance commitment to the family and the continuity of familism values from parent to youth (Path D).

Research linking parenting strategies to youth cultural values, including familism, is scarce. However, there is theoretical basis for why parenting would be associated with youth cultural values. Grusec and Goodnow (1994) proposed that positive parenting behaviors (including monitoring and discipline) provide a context that leads to youth acceptance or internalization of parental values, rules, and regulations. We extend that the same follows for familism. That is, parents who manage to provide a warm and supportive relationship, effective monitoring (e.g., limiting time with friends so that more time is spent with family), and consistent discipline strategies (e.g., parents and extended family members providing fair and stern discipline) may also promote parenting goals to continue familism (Azmitia & Brown, 2002). Parental monitoring, in particular, can be a strategy to safeguard youth as on track with parents' goals, including the socialization of familism (Holloway et al., 2014). Moreover, parents who provide consistent discipline, likely informed by cultural values and collective discipline strategies of family members, may promote the child's belief that the parenting they receive is fair and thus facilitate their desire to adhere to parents' familism values (Grusec & Goodnow, 1994). That is, the child internally processes parents' modeling of familism and accepts the validity of those values, applying them to his or her own

thinking and behavioral choices, especially under circumstances of positive parenting behaviors. Some empirical work supports an association between parenting and youth familism (Knight et al., 2010; Kuhlberg et al., 2010; Milan & Wortel, 2015). For example, Bush, Supple, and Lash (2004) found that warm parenting behaviors were positively and concurrently associated with familism values among Mexican youth. Parental support was also positively associated with Mexican American adolescents' familism values (Tsai, Telzer, Gonzales, & Fuligni, 2015). Together, these studies support the proposed association between parenting behaviors and youth familism (Path D).

## Parent Familism Values and Behavioral Mechanisms Promoting Youth Adjustment

The theorized benefit of familism values has led scholars to examine and report that parent levels of familism (attitudes about family support, obligation, and referent) are negatively associated with child internalizing (White & Roosa, 2012) and externalizing symptoms (Germán, Gonzales, & Dumka, 2009; Morcillo et al., 2001). Missing from existing research is an understanding of potential mechanisms through which parent familism promotes child adjustment. We propose that parenting behaviors is one mediating path that explains the association between parent familism values and youth psychological adjustment. Specifically, parent familism is associated with parenting behaviors, as described previously (Path E; e.g., Calderón-Tena et al., 2011; Knight et al., 2011; Morcillo et al., 2001; Santisteban et al., 2012; White & Roosa, 2012), and these, in turn, contribute to youth adjustment (Path B).

An abundant literature supports the direct association between parenting and youth adjustment (Path B, Figure 1; Grau et al., 2009; Parke & Buriel, 2006). Research on Latino parents, in particular, has integrated the study of culture-specific parenting strategies and broader parenting as important components of child rearing. Parental warmth, as well as maternal monitoring and acceptance, has been associated with higher self-esteem among Latino and Mexican American adolescents (Bámaca, Umaña-Taylor, Shin, & Alfaro, 2005; Ruiz, Roosa, & Gonzales, 2002). Also, Gonzales et al. (2011) found that parental warmth was negatively associated, and parental harshness positively associated, with later externalizing symptoms among Mexican-heritage adolescents. Similarly, consistent discipline and parental monitoring were negatively associated with the concurrent externalizing problems of Latino youth (Santisteban et al., 2012), whereas inconsistent discipline was positively associated with later internalizing and externalizing symptoms in middle childhood (e.g., Lengua, 2008). Thus, existing work suggests that parenting behaviors are associated directly with youth adjustment, which partly supports the mediating role of parenting in the association between parent familism and youth adjustment.

Limited work has considered the proposition that parent behaviors mediate the association between parent familism and domains of youth adjustment (Paths A and B). In one study, parent familism was positively associated with both consistent discipline and parental monitoring, which in turn were negatively associated with concurrent Latino youth

externalizing problems (Santisteban et al., 2012). In another study, parenting behaviors (i.e., parental monitoring, parental warmth) mediated the longitudinal relationship between parent familism and antisocial behaviors among Puerto Rican children of various ages (Morcillo et al., 2001). Finally, Calzada et al. (2012) found that parenting style mediated the association between parent socialization messages of the cultural value of respect and psychological adjustment among preschool children of Mexican and Dominican descent. Specifically, maternal socialization messages of respect were directly and positively related to authoritarian parenting, which in turn was directly and positively associated with children's concurrent internalizing and externalizing problems. Although the cultural values of respect and familism show a positive relationship (Knight et al., 2010), findings from Calzada et al. (2012) suggest the importance of a developmental fit in parenting strategies and how harsh parenting coupled with parent cultural values of respect may be less optimal for younger children (e.g., 5-year-olds). We propose that parent-child relationship quality likely mediates the association between parents' familism values and children's adjustment, but related cultural values, such as respect, warrant further attention. Together, these few studies provide preliminary support for the mediating role of parent behaviors in explaining how parent familism promotes youth adjustment.

Thus far, we have proposed that parenting behaviors predict youth adjustment. Yet theoretical and empirical work features the bidirectional effects between parents and children (Patterson & Fisher, 2002). As depicted in Figure 1, Path B also highlights a bidirectional influence between parenting behaviors and youth psychological adjustment. Previous research, mostly with non-Latino samples, has demonstrated that, particularly for youth who may be prone to difficult temperament styles, parents show less monitoring over time (Pettit, Keiley, Laird, Bates, & Dodge, 2007), which suggests that parents may adapt their parenting behaviors to their children's adjustment. Furthermore, some studies show that parental monitoring and discipline have bidirectional associations with externalizing symptoms (e.g., Bradley & Corwyn, 2013; Choe, Olson, & Sameroff, 2013). Thus, continued examination of the possible bidirectional association between parenting practices and youth adjustment is necessary.

## Youth Familism Values and Behavioral Mechanisms That Promote Youth Adjustment

Youth endorsement of familism values has been linked to psychological adjustment (Path A; Berkel et al., 2010; Gonzales et al., 2008; Kuhlberg et al., 2010; Marsiglia et al., 2009; Ramirez et al., 2004; Stein, Gonzalez, Cupito, Kiang, & Supple, 2015). Some studies, however, have failed to find a lasting direct impact of youth familism on some indicators of adjustment (e.g., depressive symptoms; East & Weisner, 2009; Telzer et al., 2015; Updegraff, Umaña-Taylor, McHale, Wheeler, & Perez-Brena, 2012). We propose that in addition to the possible direct link from youth familism to adjustment (Path E), proximal aspects to the youth likely mediate this association. This premise is guided by research on attitude-behavior correspondence, which has suggested that attitudes and values relate to behaviors consistent with the values one endorses (Glasman & Albarracín, 2006).



Youth endorsement of familism values may be an especially important protective factor for adjustment because their internalized ideas on family obligations, support, and family as referent are likely to manifest in behaviors that further promote adjustment. When youth endorse high levels of familism values, this could prompt personal investment in their families so their behaviors are aligned with family expectations and reflect well on the family (Path F). For example, family is one basis for the types of peer relationships that youth form (Grau et al., 2009; Parke & Buriel, 2006), and these peer relationships, we propose, may also sync up with family expectations. On the basis of previous research highlighting the parenting goals of Latino parents (Azmitia & Brown, 2002), we propose that familism-consistent youth behaviors typically place youth in circumstances that promote adjustment (Path G). Thus, in the BPMF, youth behaviors (Box 5) mediate the association between youth familism (Box 4) and youth psychological adjustment (Box 3). As shown in Box 5, we highlight familism-consistent youth behaviors thought to promote adjustment: engaging in prosocial behaviors with family and peers (Armenta et al., 2011; Knight & Carlo, 2012; Knight et al., 2015), associating with prosocial peers (Holloway et al., 2014), and avoiding risky behaviors (Updegraff et al., 2012).

Familism includes a set of behavioral and value expectations that reflect obedience and loyalty to family. Familism values and behaviors, to some degree, urge placing the needs of others before oneself. Thus, familism values internalized by youth, partly a reflection of their parents' socialization (Hastings, Miller, & Troxel, 2015), are expected to promote familism-consistent behaviors among youth, including increased prosocial behavior (Armenta et al., 2011). A few studies have demonstrated a link between youth familism values and familism-consistent youth behaviors (Path F). For example, endorsement of familism values (e.g., attitudes on respect and obligation to family) were negatively related to time spent with friends, possibly limiting exposure to positive friendships but also exposure to negative friendships and deviant activities (Hardway & Fuligni, 2006). Mexican-origin adolescents who reported strong familism values (i.e., support, obligation, and referent) or family caretaking were more likely to demonstrate prosocial behavior toward others (Armenta et al., 2011; Brittan et al., 2013; Calderón-Tena et al., 2011; East & Hamill, 2013; Knight et al., 2015). Moreover, Updegraff et al. (2012) found that familism values in early adolescence are associated with less risky behaviors (e.g., skipping school, getting drunk) in later adolescence among Mexican-origin youth. Thus, youth familism values and familism-consistent behaviors are related (Path F). Although not depicted in the BPMF, research has suggested that parenting strategies are directly linked to youth behaviors (e.g., parenting and prosocial development; Eisenberg et al., 2006; Hastings et al., 2015). Research, however, has yet to examine how parenting, in the context of youth familism, relates to familism-consistent youth behaviors.

In the BPMF, youth's familism-consistent behaviors are further hypothesized to be associated with adjustment (Path G). Past empirical work supporting this path primarily comes from studies with non-Latino samples. In a cross-sectional study with Australian sixth and seventh graders, strong prosocial skills and behaviors (e.g., helping others, playing fairly) were negatively associated with depressive symptoms (Ross, Shochet, & Bellair, 2010). Similarly, prosocial behaviors were linked concurrently to higher self-esteem (Laible, Carlo, & Roesch, 2004). Moreover, prior research suggests that adolescents exposed to

deviant peers are at greater risk for adjustment problems (Mrug & Windle, 2008). Just as youth may select peers who engage in deviant behaviors, they also may select peers who engage in positive behaviors. Associating with prosocial peers and engaging in prosocial behaviors with peers and in the family may promote adjustment and keep youth away from risky situations.

Taken together, studies have demonstrated that youth familism values are associated with youth psychological adjustment (Path E), including higher self-esteem (Kuhlberg et al., 2010) and reduced externalizing (Marsiglia et al., 2009) and depressive symptoms (Zeiders et al., 2013). Yet far more empirical evidence (partly because there are more studies in this research area) suggests that specific social behaviors (e.g., familism-consistent behaviors) exhibited by youth promote adjustment (Path G). Thus, future research should continue to investigate the potential mechanism between youth familism and youth adjustment, as has been examined by some researchers (e.g., Calderón-Tena et al., 2011), to help explain the behavioral processes by which familism is associated with youth adjustment. Moreover, it is important to consider sociodemographic factors that may affect the way which familism contributes to adjustment. We subsequently outline four of those factors.

## **Sociodemographic Considerations for Familism Influences**

In the BPMF, we highlight four factors (i.e., socioeconomic status, age, gender, and acculturation) that can shape the overall process by which familism contributes to youth adjustment. We incorporated key literature to delineate how these factors shape the process by which familism relates to youth psychological adjustment, as it is beyond the scope of this article to provide a compressive review linking socioeconomic status (SES), age, gender, and acculturation to all components of the BPMF.

### **Socioeconomic Status**

Socioeconomic structure may be associated with familism values, thus shaping the course of family obligations and support as a means to adapt to family circumstances (Baca Zinn, 1982). Familism values may be expressed differently depending on the socioeconomic conditions and needs of the family (Path H). For example, parent education and family income were negatively correlated with familism values (attitudes about family support, obligation, and referent) among Mexican-origin parents (Taylor et al., 2012) and Mexican youth (Bush et al., 2004). Also, SES was negatively associated with adult, but not youth, familism among Mexican-origin families (Germán et al., 2009; for an exception, see Romero, Robinson, Haydel, Mendoza, & Killen, 2004). These studies suggest that, in general, lower SES is associated with higher endorsement of familism values, possibly because of a greater perceived need to depend on family members for support. However, some studies indicate that familism values do not correlate with parent education levels among Mexican-heritage adolescents (Gonzales et al., 2008; Updegraff et al., 2012). It could be that familism is more solidified and negatively related to SES in adulthood (Germán et al., 2009), when this value carries with it a greater possibility of, and responsibility for, financial obligations and support to family.

Although SES may not be associated with youth familism, SES and familism may jointly relate to different aspects of youth adjustment. For families with few economic resources, high levels of behavioral familism (e.g., working to help the family) may have a negative impact on psychological adjustment if the behaviors are deemed taxing and interfere with other pursuits. A study with youth of Latino, Asian, and European backgrounds, for example, found that assisting parents with work was positively related to distress, whereas general family assistance (i.e., days and time of household assistance) was positively related to happiness and role fulfillment and unrelated to distress (Telzer & Fuligni, 2009). In another study, caregiving hours among adolescents from low-income families was positively associated with distress and disciplinary problems (East & Weisner, 2009). These studies provide insight on the potential role of SES. Participating in family duties, such as assisting with household chores, may be beneficial, whereas assisting parents in work—a potentially more taxing experience common among low SES families—may be problematic if it interferes with alternative positive opportunities (e.g., a college student aspiring to be an engineer leaves college to help parents struggling financially).

Importantly, in families who experience daily struggles in low-paying and long-hour jobs, youth who see value in their parents' efforts may strive to engage in positive behaviors to honor and help their parents (Ovink, 2014), thereby strengthening family bonds. Future work should take into account the role of SES in promoting and inhibiting mechanisms through which familism contributes to adjustment.

### Youth Age

Whereas cultural values are passed on at an early age, age-related changes (e.g., cognitive maturation) from infancy to adulthood are important for the development of familism as well as its influence on youth outcomes. Empirical evidence suggests that familism changes across ages, particularly during adolescence (Stein et al., 2014). Updegraff et al. (2012) found that familism values steadily declined over time among Mexican-origin adolescents. As youth grow, families may expect youth to assume more responsibilities, and some youth may adhere less to familism values with their evolving identities, roles, and desire for autonomy (thereby modifying the extent to which youth behaviors reflect youth adherence to familism). These age-related declines in youth familism can create differential familism orientation between parents and their children (e.g., a parent being more familism oriented than the child). Such a differential familism orientation among parents and children can affect the family processes proposed in the model more so than individual familism levels from parents and children.

However, familism attitudes may increase and possibly become steadier with age. As individuals assume adult responsibilities and form their own families, they may prioritize familism values because of the increased salience of family and possibly view close ties with family as beneficial to their children and growing family (Crockett, Brown, Russell, & Shen, 2007). Family dynamics may change (possibly for the better) as youth transition into adult roles (Aquilino, 1997). Zeiders, Umaña-Taylor, Jahromi, and Updegraff (2015) found that grandmother familism values were associated with support toward their adolescent

daughters as they transitioned into motherhood, in support of a family systems perspective (Cox & Paley, 1997).

It is also important to consider how the effects of familism values may fluctuate by age-related developmental changes. Youth internalize familism cultural values depending on their cognitive maturity and ability to assume the perspectives of others (Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2004). Youth perceptions about their parents' parenting and cultural socialization efforts, for instance, may shift with age, thus modifying the mechanism by which familism is associated with adjustment. Morcillo et al. (2001), for example, found that parent familism was protective against antisocial behavior among 5- to 9-year-old boys but not for 10- to 13-year-old boys. Also, parental monitoring was associated with lower externalizing symptoms in early childhood, whereas externalizing symptoms were associated with lower parental monitoring in middle childhood and adolescence (Bradley & Corwyn, 2013). As suggested in these aforementioned studies, age likely shapes other paths in the BPFM.

### Gender Differences in Familism and Related Processes

As a social organizing construct, gender may shape the role of familism in the BPFM (Path H). Specific gender roles associated with family-related responsibilities (e.g., East & Weisner, 2009; Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004) may contribute differentially to the protective role of familism and its influence on development for boys and girls. Morcillo et al. (2001) found that parent familism was associated with less antisocial behavior among 10- to 13-year-old girls only. Similarly, familism obligation values were concurrently and negatively associated with depressive symptoms for Latina girls, but not for Latino boys (Cupito, Stein, & Gonzalez, 2015). In another study, Latina adolescent girls associated familism obligation values more closely with college attendance and immediate family assistance than did Latino adolescent boys, who tied family obligation values to autonomous behaviors (Ovink, 2014). Furthermore, gender expectations can guide gender socialization practices of familism and parenting behaviors (Path H). Some families may have more traditional gender role expectations for their children (Lui, 2015), which has an impact on family socialization practices across genders. For instance, young Latina women reported more household obligations to the family than did young Latino men (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004). Given that girls are more likely to report familism-consistent behaviors (Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004), the promoting effects of familism on adjustment may be stronger for girls.

Researchers have also documented strict gender roles among Latino families, including restrictions on autonomy for females (e.g., Bámaca-Colbert, Umaña-Taylor, & Gayles, 2012; Crockett, Brown, Russell, & Shen, 2007; Domenech Rodríguez et al., 2009). For example, parents may monitor their daughters more than their sons (Pettit, Keiley, Laird, Bates, & Dodge, 2007), on the basis of gender expectations that daughters are to be kept close to family and sons are to explore their autonomy (Ovink, 2014), expectations that may be partly informed by parents' acculturation levels (Updegraff & Umaña-Taylor, 2015). Therefore, gender socialization practices embedded in parenting may contribute to youth familism and familism-consistent behavior differently for males and females. In sum, gendered expectations for family support may have implications for the promotive role of familism on behavior and adjustment (East & Weisner, 2009).

## Acculturation and Familism

The process of cultural orientation involves two dimensions: the acquisition of beliefs, values, and practices of the receiving culture (generally referred as acculturation) and the retention of beliefs, values, and practices of the heritage culture (referred as enculturation) (Bámaca-Colbert & Gayles, 2010; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010). In this sense, familism is culturally informed and embedded in the process of enculturation. Earlier theoretical models posited that acculturation would prompt enculturation loss, but contemporary models support a more nuanced process between the two domains (Schwartz, Unger, et al., 2010). This may help explain inconsistent empirical findings for the association between acculturation and familism. It is generally reported that acculturation is negatively associated with familism (Gonzales et al., 2008; Knight et al., 2010), but some work shows no correlation (Esparza & Sánchez, 2008; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2009; Updegraff et al., 2012) or even a positive association (Zeiders et al., 2013). Thus, acculturation may play a role in the processes described in the BPMF. For example, acculturation has been associated with cultural socialization (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2009), parenting (Calzada et al., 2012; Grau et al., 2009), and developmental outcomes (García Coll & Marks, 2011), as outlined in the BPMF. Furthermore, the stress that emerges from acculturating to the receiving culture (i.e., acculturative stress) may be a key acculturation mechanism that shapes paths in the proposed BPMF. For instance, preliminary findings suggest that parental monitoring predicts fewer, and acculturation stress predicts greater, conduct problems among US- and foreign-born Latino youth but that the association for parental monitoring is most pronounced for US-born youth with greater acculturation stress (Hurwich-Reiss & Gudiño, 2015). More research is necessary that examines the conditions under which acculturation and familism are empirically associated, thus shaping the processes depicted in the BPMF. We identify acculturation in the BPMF because of its varying salience in Latino family experiences (Updegraff & Umaña-Taylor, 2015).

## Future Directions in Familism Research

The positive role of familism on youth adjustment demonstrated in past research solidifies the need to better understand the process by which familism relates to youth development. In the proposed model, we integrate how processes unfold in the association of familism with youth outcomes. Although previous research has addressed some paths of the BPMF, outlining how different factors may function together, in the context of both parent and youth familism, could inform research in family studies, and familism in particular. Future studies based on this model would go beyond existing studies of direct associations to understand the mechanisms that inform the familism–youth adjustment link. Prior research and the proposed BPMF are an important foundation that can guide future research on this important construct in studies with Latino families. We conclude with directions for future research and questions that remain concerning familism that go beyond the BPMF.

## Revisiting the Cultural Specificity of Familism

We focused on research mostly addressing Latino youth and families, given that familism is described as an important construct within Latino communities (Parke & Buriel, 2006). Some research, for example, has suggested that in the United States, familism levels are

higher among adult and adolescent Latinos than among those of European backgrounds (Comeau, 2012; Hardway & Fuligni, 2006; Milan & Wortel, 2015). However, research should critically evaluate the extent to which familism is incorporated into the cultural frameworks of different Latino subgroups (e.g., Mexican, Dominican, Salvadoran) and groups other than Latinos. In the context of Latino groups in the United States, there are different histories of migration, political orientation, and economic opportunity (Grau et al., 2009; Pew Hispanic Center, 2009), which may inform how familism functions. Regarding groups other than Latinos, some work has noted that Latino, African American, Asian American, and European American young adults or adolescents showed similar familism levels (Campos, Ullman, Aguilera, & Dunkel Schetter, 2014; Comeau, 2012; Hardway & Fuligni, 2006; Schwartz, 2007). Thus, future work should explore the possible benefits of familism in families from various ethnic backgrounds, as some researchers have begun to do international investigations on family obligation values in families (Lansford et al., 2016).

### **Familism Beyond the Parent–Youth Dyad**

Familism values are embedded in the family unit, including the family's history of relationships, ethnic and cultural background, traditions, and routines. Familism research has mostly incorporated parents' familism, but other family members (grandparents, aunts, siblings, and cousins) may have equally important roles in modeling and teaching familism values (Killoren, Wheeler, Updegraff, Rodriguez de Jesus, & McHale, 2015; Zeiders et al., 2015). Although siblings report similar familism levels (Updegraff, McHale, Whiteman, Thayer, & Delgado, 2005), the influence of familism values in younger and older siblings may differ as a result of distinct family demands. For example, older siblings may have more demanding family roles and expectations (e.g., taking care of young siblings) than younger siblings. Also, community levels of familism are an important direction for future research, as they have been associated with lower externalizing symptoms among Mexican-origin adolescents (Gonzales et al., 2011). Furthermore, examining familism differences within the family system is of continued relevance. In a meta-analysis, Lui (2015) found that intergenerational conflict, including differences in familism between parent and child, was associated with lower mental health (i.e., higher internalizing problems, lower adaptive functioning) among children. Family systems theoretical perspectives emphasize how factors that affect one family member have an impact on the family system (Broderick, 1993). Thus, the BPFM fits well within a family systems perspective; future research on familism could similarly investigate multiple system processes.

### **Benefits and Costs of Familism**

Endorsing familism may present benefits and, inadvertently, developmental costs to individuals (Calzada et al., 2013; Fuligni & Tsai, 2015). For example, adolescents endorsing values of family obligation spent more time with family (a potential benefit) but less time with friends (a potential cost in relation to positive friends, or benefit in relation to deviant friends) (Hardway & Fuligni, 2006). These associations for familism values and time spent with families could also be leveraged by environmental risk; time spent with families (but not familism values) was associated with lower delinquency among Puerto Rican male adolescents living in high-poverty neighborhoods (Pabon, 1998). High levels of familism values and familism-consistent youth behaviors may also negatively affect psychological

adjustment if activities are too stressful on the individual (East & Weisner, 2009; Gonzales, Jensen, Montano, & Wynne, 2015).

Integrating concepts from family studies is also important for understanding familism and its contribution to youth adjustment. Adultification, or the experience of youth taking on adult tasks, may encourage learning new skills, but the intensity or duration of these tasks may change associated familism benefits to become a liability for well-being (Burton, 2007). Furthermore, betraying a family's sense of loyalty can be costly, such as isolation from the family, especially in enmeshed families (Manzi, Vignoles, Regalia, & Scabini, 2006). As suggested by family systems theory (Cox & Paley, 1997), familism in the context of family dysfunction may be detrimental to health if the family system is disrupted and cannot adapt in healthy ways. Research exploring these related familism influences on youth is warranted and would help elucidate the circumstances under which familism is a benefit or liability (Martinez, Polo, & Carter, 2012).

Although we focused on psychological adjustment, there is some research, albeit limited, related to academic adjustment showing both benefits (Berkel et al., 2010; Gonzales et al., 2008; Taylor et al., 2012) and costs (Fuligni et al., 1999) of familism under certain circumstances. Familism may be more positively associated with academic adjustment for families with low SES than for those with high SES (Esparza & Sánchez, 2008; for an exception, see Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994). Familism may serve a motivational role for youth, especially when economic mobility via academic attainment is perceived a viable option. Research on familism in the broader context of schooling opportunities would bolster this particular area of research.

### **Longitudinal and Bidirectional Associations**

To inform theory, it is imperative to consider the longitudinal associations in the proposed model. Many studies on familism and adjustment have been cross-sectional, which cannot evaluate whether familism at an earlier point in time is associated with development of an outcome. It is also largely unknown whether changes in familism promote well-being. Given that familism has developmental implications, future work describing familism values over time and related constructs will help the field build on existing developmental theories and research.

Youth familism values may inform young people's perceptions of their relationship with a parent (Crockett et al., 2007; Milan & Wortel, 2015). Cross-sectional research with Armenian American adolescents suggests that adolescent familism was positively associated with adolescent perceptions of the parent-child relationship, thus suggesting a possible bidirectional association for Path D (Ghazarian, Supple, & Plunkett, 2007). Similar cross-sectional findings are reported among young adults of Latino, Asian, and European backgrounds; familism was associated with increased perceptions of social support and closeness with family, which were associated with better psychological adjustment (Campos et al., 2014). Thus, perceptions of the parent-child relationship and support are also an important viewpoint to consider (Crockett et al., 2007). Although based on cross-sectional research, the view that youth familism is associated with their perceptions of the parent-child relationship could be explored in future research.

## Conclusions

Research on familism has steadily gained attention given the empirical evidence for the association of familism with youth outcomes (Stein et al., 2014). Presently, however, this growing field of research has lacked a guiding discussion of potential mechanisms by which familism relates to psychological adjustment. Programs partly designed to promote positive family ties, such as Familias Unidas (Pantin et al., 2007; Prado et al., 2013), Bridges to High School (Gonzales et al., 2012), and the Family Check-Up (Chang, Shaw, Dishion, Gardner, & Wilson, 2014), have shown reduced externalizing problems among youth participants compared to those in the no-treatment condition. These programs often integrate culturally specific tailoring to the intervention components, emphasizing the key role of behavioral processes that ultimately affect youth adjustment (Yasui & Dishion, 2007) and incorporating cultural and behavioral strategies, for future interventions.

The conceptual model in this article builds on the strengths of prominent research, describes specific behavioral mechanisms by which familism promotes psychological adjustment, expands our theoretical understanding of familism, and invites future research to continue analyzing related familism processes. Overall, the BPMF synthesizes research on the associations among parent familism, youth familism, and youth adjustment with an emphasis on possible mediating and moderating factors. In the BPMF, we propose that parenting behaviors are one mechanism by which parent familism relates to youth familism and psychological adjustment, and that familism-consistent youth behaviors are another mechanism by which youth's familism relates to their psychological adjustment. Future research testing the pathways in the BPMF will be important for understanding the processes and conditions in which familism values promote psychological adjustment.

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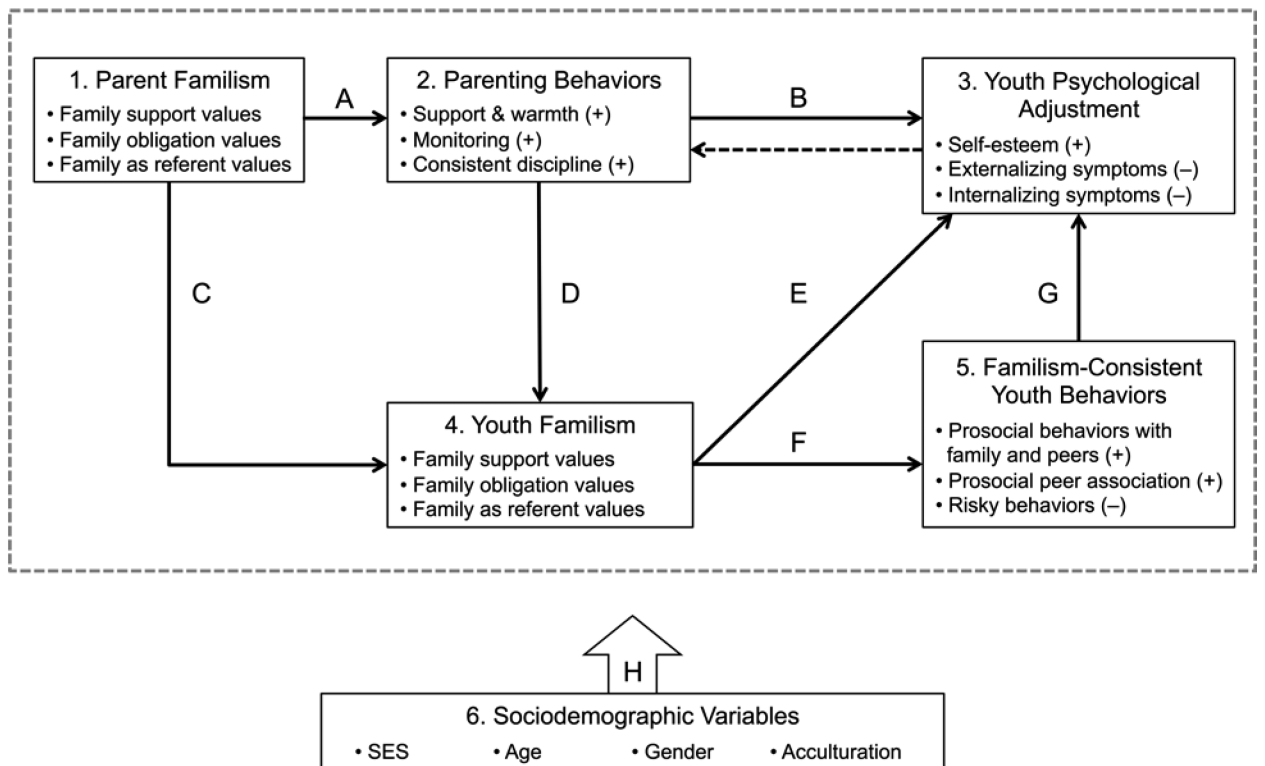
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*Note.* Examples describing the concepts in the BPMF are listed in bullet points, with positive (+) or negative (-) representations of the concepts noted when applicable.

**Figure 1.**  
A BEHAVIORAL PROCESS MODEL OF FAMILISM.

Table 1

Description of 30 peer-reviewed research articles in the review that informed the Behavioral Process Model of Familism.

Citation	Participants	Method	Major variables of interest
* Armenta, Knight, Carlo, & Jacobson (2011)	Mexican-American early adolescents (average age: 10.91 years)	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Ethnic group attachment, familism values, prosocial tendencies
* Berkel et al. (2010)	Mexican-American early adolescents (average age: 10.42 years)	Quantitative, longitudinal	Mexican-American cultural values (including familism values), externalizing & internalizing symptomatology
* Bush, Supple, & Lash (2004)	Mexican children and adolescents living in Mexico (average age: 13.35 years)	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Familism values, paternal/maternal monitoring
* Calderón-Tena, Knight, & Carlo (2011)	Mexican-American early adolescents (average age: 10.91 years)	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Familism values, prosocial parenting, prosocial tendencies
* Calzada, Tamis-LeMonda, & Yoshikawa (2013)	Dominican and Mexican mothers (average age: 34 years and 27 years, in two studies)	Qualitative, timing not specified	Familism values, parenting practices and beliefs
* Cupito, Stein, & Gonzalez (2015)	Latino adolescents of Mexican, mixed, Nicaraguan, Dominican, Salvadoran, Guatemalan, Colombian, Costa Rican, and Cuban descent (average age: 14 years)	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Familism values, depressive symptoms
* East & Hamill (2013)	Latino adolescents of Mexican or Central American descent (average age: 14.8 years)	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Familism values, prosocial caring tendencies, academic measures
* East & Weisner (2009)	Mexican American adolescents (average age: 13.9 years)	Quantitative, longitudinal	Familism obligation values, family stress and conflict, depressive and anxiety symptoms, problem behaviors
* Esparza & Sánchez (2008)	Latino adolescents of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Nicaraguan, or Cuban descent (average age: 17.87 years)	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Familism values, parental socioeconomic status, academic measures
* Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam (1999)	Adolescents of Chinese, Filipino, Mexican, Central & South American, and European descent (average age: 17.7 years)	Quantitative, timing not specified	Familism obligation values and behaviors, parent-adolescent relationship quality, academic measures
* Germán, Gonzales, & Dumka (2009)	Mexican-origin adolescents (average age: 12.3 years)	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Familism values, externalizing symptoms
* Gonzales et al. (2011)	Mexican-origin adolescents (average age: 10.42 years)	Quantitative, longitudinal	Familism values, parenting quality, internalizing and externalizing symptoms
* Killoren, Wheeler, Updegraff, Rodriguez de Jesus, & McHale (2015)	Mexican-origin adolescent siblings (average ages: 12.55 and 15.49 years)	Quantitative, longitudinal	Familism values, parental acceptance
* Lui (2015)	Studies with Asian and Latino American participants (age range: 12 to 29 years)	Meta-analysis, qualitative review of cross-sectional and longitudinal studies	Intergenerational cultural conflict (including familism), academic outcomes, mental health outcomes
* Marsiglia, Parsai, & Kulis (2009)	Mexican-origin adolescents (average age: 15 years)	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Familism values, problem behaviors
* Martínez, Polo, & Carter (2012)	Latino youth of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Central/South American, and mixed Latino descent (average age: 11.9 years)	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Familism values, familism obligation values, anxiety symptoms



Citation	Participants	Method	Major variables of interest
* Pabon (1998)	Puerto Rican male adolescents (age range: 12 to 19 years)	Quantitative, longitudinal	Familism values, delinquent behaviors
* Ramirez et al. (2004)	Anglo American and Hispanic American adolescents (age not specified; 4th through 12th graders)	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Familism values, parental monitoring, drug use
* Romero, Robinson, Haydel, Mendoza, & Killen (2004)	Mexican American children (average age: 9.5 years)	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Familism values and behaviors
* Romero & Ruiz (2007)	Adolescents of predominantly Mexican descent (age range: 11 to 15 years)	Quantitative, longitudinal	Familism values, parental monitoring
* Santisteban, Coatsworth, Briones, Kurtines, & Szapocznik (2012)	Latino adolescents (average age: 12.4 years)	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Familism values, parenting behaviors, externalizing symptoms
* Stein et al. (2014)	Studies with Latino American children and adolescent participants (age range: birth to 18 years)	Qualitative review of cross-sectional and longitudinal studies	Familism values and behaviors
* Stein, Gonzalez, Cupito, Kiang, & Supple (2015)	Latino adolescents of predominately Mexican descent (average age: 14.08 years)	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Familism values, acculturative stress, depressive symptoms
* Taylor, Larsen-Rife, Conger, & Widaman (2012)	Mexican American adolescents (average age: 10.8 years)	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Familism values, parenting behaviors, academic adjustment
* Telzer, Tsai, Gonzales, & Fuligni (2015)	Mexican American adolescents (average age: 15.02 years)	Quantitative, longitudinal (daily diary)	Familism obligation values and behaviors, internalizing symptoms
* Tsai, Telzer, Gonzales, & Fuligni (2015)	Mexican American adolescents (average age: 14.99 years)	Quantitative, cross-sectional (daily diary)	Familism values and behaviors, parent-child relationship quality
* Updegraff, McHale, Whiteman, Thayer, & Delgado (2005)	Mexican-origin adolescent siblings (average ages: 12.8 and 15.7 years)	Quantitative, cross-sectional (daily diary)	Familism values, sibling relationship quality
* Valenzuela & Dombusch (1994)	Anglo American and Mexican American adolescents (age not specified; high school youth)	Quantitative, longitudinal	Familism values and behaviors, parental involvement, academic achievement
* Zeiders, Umaña-Taylor, Jahromi, & Updegraff (2015)	Mexican-origin female adolescents (average age: 16.77 years)	Quantitative, longitudinal	Familism values, parenting efficacy
* Zeiders et al. (2013)	Mexican-origin adolescents (average age: 13.02 years)	Quantitative, longitudinal	Familism values, depressive symptoms

*Note.* Participants were living in the United States, unless otherwise specified. For longitudinal studies, average age at the beginning of the study is listed.