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Disrupted Education?: A Latent Profile Analysis of Immigration-Related Distractions and Academic Engagement among Undocumented College Students

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Abstract: Prior research has established that legal vulnerability disrupts undocumented students' educational experiences. Building on this work, we examine the process through which undocumented immigration status may disrupt academic performance through students' behavioral engagement in their coursework. Drawing on a survey of nearly 1,300 undocumented college students in California, we use latent profile analysis to identify student profiles based on their experiences of immigration-related distractions. We then assess the role of self and family demographics on profile membership, and the relationship between immigration-related distraction profiles and students' educational engagement outcomes. We identify five distraction profiles that indicate a wide variation in frequency of immigration-related distractions and suggest that immigration-related distractions result from both students' own and their parents' immigration-related issues. These distractions are consequential, as those students who are in more frequently distracted profiles are more likely to report negative behavioral engagement outcomes. Ultimately, we argue that academic distractions and behavioral disengagement are key ways in which legal vulnerability disrupts the academic success of undocumented students.

Keywords: undocumented college students, immigration-related distractions, academic success

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Undocumented students make up one in 50 students enrolled in higher education institutions in the U.S., with California being home to 20% of these students (Feldblum et al., 2020). Over the past two decades, California has spearheaded policies to increase undocumented students' access to a postsecondary education as research has demonstrated that legal vulnerabilities linked to undocumented status influence undocumented college students' experiences along the educational pathway, from access and enrollment to persistence and attainment (Bjorklund, 2018; Ngo & Astudillo, 2019). Turning attention to academic performance, scholars have shown that undocumented college students are underperforming in relation to their lawfully-present peers, but also reveal their high academic achievement and resilience (Enriquez et al., 2021; Hsin & Reed, 2020). Building on this work, this paper examines if immigration-related concerns disrupt undocumented students' education through behavioral engagement in their coursework.

Prior research shows that undocumented status may disrupt students' academic engagement in many ways. Financial strains may force students to work, compromising their class attendance or ability to complete assignments as they struggle to balance their commitments (Muñoz et al., 2018; Negrón-Gonzalez, 2017). Further, undocumented status can interrupt students' engagement with academics through fears of being ostracized and marginalized if their status is uncovered (Muñoz & Vigil, 2018). Additionally, anti-immigrant socio-political context can dissuade undocumented students' from participating in classroom discussions (Muñoz et al., 2018). While much of this prior research has focused on the negative effects of students' own immigration status, growing evidence also points to the potential impact of parental immigration status on students' educational experiences. In fact, studies of the citizen children of undocumented parents show that parental undocumented status compromises

children's academic preparation, achievement, and progress (Brabeck et al., 2016; Gonzalez & Patler, 2020; Yoshikawa, 2011). Thus, we turn attention to the potential ways parental undocumented status may also disrupt undocumented college students' education by compromising their academic engagement.

This study investigates undocumented college students' behavioral engagement. Specifically, we examine several ways in which immigration status may disrupt education, such as class distractions, losing study hours, doing poorly on an exam, or missing class. We distinguish between distractions created by students' own status and those linked to family members' immigration status. Using latent profile analysis of a survey of 1,277 undocumented students, we examine heterogeneity in experiences of self and family immigration-related distractions to identify student profiles. We then examine what demographic characteristics, if any, predict undocumented college students' academic distraction profiles. Finally, we assess if distraction profiles differ in their positive and negative classroom engagement. We find wide variation in the frequency of undocumented students' immigration-related distractions. Though most undocumented students report relatively infrequent distractions, those in more frequently distracted profiles are more likely to report negative classroom engagement outcomes. For most, distractions stem from both their own and family members' immigration status. Ultimately, we argue that behavioral engagement is a key way through which legal vulnerability disrupts undocumented students' academic success and educational experiences.

Literature Review

Undocumented youth experience multiple immigration related stressors that impact their access, enrollment, persistence, and college attainment. In California, undocumented students are able to access state financial aid, mitigating some of the financial challenges of pursuing higher

education (Diaz-Strong et al., 2011; Raza et al. 2019). However, students and their undocumented family members have limited financial resources, which exposes students to financial strains like food insecurity and leads some to struggle with balancing work and education (Negrón-Gonzalez, 2017; Terriquez, 2015). Persistent concerns about their own deportation and/or that of family members also disrupt their focus on academics (Millán, 2018; Muñoz et al., 2018). Additionally, deportation fears linked to undocumented status produce feelings of hypervigilance that can impair the development of trusting relationships with faculty, staff, and peers who could support students and mitigate the negative effects of deportation threats (Buenavista, 2016; Cervantes et al., 2015). Further, students often report college experiences of institutional neglect and limited feelings of belonging (Enriquez, Morales Hernandez, et al., 2019).

Recent work on undocumented college students has begun to explore how immigration status may affect their behavioral engagement. Behavioral engagement has been conceptualized as participation in school, including academic activities like attending class, studying, completing assignments, and engaging with peers and instructors; such engagement is critical for achieving positive academic outcomes and preventing negative ones (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). For example, scholars find that immigration-related issues, such as deportation concerns, immigration appointments, changes to immigration policy, and anti-immigrant socio-political context compromise undocumented students' ability to focus on their academics and participate in classroom discussions (Enriquez et. al., 2019; Muñoz et al., 2018). In addition, Negrón-Gonzalez (2017) demonstrates that students struggle to balance working and school, compromising their ability to attend class or complete assignments. These findings provide clear evidence that a variety of immigration status concerns affect undocumented college students'

ability to remain focused on their academics; however, scholars have yet to fully unpack how legal vulnerability manifests in this process, nor its effects.

Further, little research has explored how family legal vulnerability may affect undocumented college students' educational experiences. Undocumented students tend to have undocumented family members, making it likely they also contend with family-level legal vulnerability. As such, family financial strain may disrupt undocumented college students' ability to pursue or complete higher education as students may need to contribute to family expenses or desire to avoid adding financial burdens to their family's limited finances (Terriquez & Gurantz, 2015). Furthermore, as Enriquez and Millán (2019) demonstrate, deportation concerns also manifest at the family level so that undocumented young adults and students in California are less concerned about their own deportability, but are highly concerned about the threats to their undocumented parents.

Prior research on mixed-status families has established the negative effects of parental legal vulnerability on the academic performance of U.S. citizen children. Having an undocumented parent is associated with lower levels of academic achievement, well-being, and educational progress across childhood and adolescence (Brabeck et al., 2016; Ha et al., 2017). For example, Yoshikawa (2011) finds that parents' undocumented status negatively affects young children's cognitive development via three primary mechanisms: parental stress that hinders skill development, limited learning materials for cognitively stimulating activities, and lower use of center-based childcare. Latino students with undocumented parents also report significantly lower scores on both academic aspirations and expectations, compared to Latino students with documented parents, possibly due to students feeling disconnected from school (Giano et al., 2018). Parental detention and deportation is also associated with an increased

likelihood of grade retention, while also significantly raising the potential of dropping out of school among K-12 Latino children with an undocumented parent (Amuedo-Dorantes & Lopez, 2017; Golash-Boza, 2019). Koball and colleagues (2015) find that students whose parents were detained or deported were disengaged from academics and shifted away from long term goals of attending college. These studies show that immigration status related concerns are shared among family members. However, additional research is needed to understand how familial legal vulnerability is experienced by undocumented college students and the possible role it may play on the path to academic success.

Importantly, a growing body of research has begun to disentangle the heterogeneity of undocumented students' experiences (Enriquez, 2017; Valdez & Golash-Boza, 2020). Student demographics, such as race and gender, intersect with undocumented status to create diverging educational experiences and pathways out of school (Enriquez, 2017). Further, the type of educational institution attended may contribute to differing educational expectations, demands on students time, and resources available to support students (Hsin & Ortega, 2018; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). The specific immigration status, of both students and their family members, may also determine the extent to which distractions emerge. For example, being a recipient of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program creates a different experience of legal vulnerability as it provides access to a work permit and protection from deportation. Indeed, DACA recipients report lower legal vulnerability, including decreased concerns about deportation, improved financial opportunities, and greater social integration (Enriquez, 2020; Gonzales et al., 2014; Wong & Valdivia, 2014). However, former President Trump's attempts to dismantle the program compromised its ability to insulate recipients from legal vulnerability (Morales Hernandez & Enriquez, this issue). This work suggests that demographic factors may

influence the emergence of immigration-related distractions, contributing to undocumented college students' heterogeneous experiences of this process.

This study builds on prior literature to further elucidate the process through which legal vulnerability disrupts undocumented students' educational experiences. First, we focus on behavioral engagement as an important stage wherein legal vulnerability manifests to disrupt academic performance. Second, we advance the importance of examining the role of self and familial legal vulnerability in understanding how the immigration context may be contributing to academic behavioral (dis)engagement and success. Finally, we call attention to heterogeneity in this process by identifying different patterns of disengagement as well as examining differences due to demographic factors.

Methods and Data

This study uses survey data collected online from March to June 2020 with 1,277 undocumented undergraduate students attending California public universities. The survey included questions about educational experiences, wellbeing, political engagement, perceived immigration policy context, institutional context, and self and family demographics. All project activities were approved by the University of California, Irvine IRB.

Sampling and Procedures

Participants were recruited at all nine University of California (UC) undergraduate campuses and nine of the 23 California State University (CSU) campuses; CSUs were selected for similar geographic location to each UC. Recruitment announcements were distributed widely, including emails and social media posts from each campus' undocumented student support services office, faculty teaching large general education courses and ethnic studies courses, departmental and university office newsletters, and undocumented student organizations.

Eligibility criteria included being over age 18 and current enrollment as a CSU or UC undergraduate student. Respondents had to self-identify as born outside of the United States and having no permanent legal status (e.g. no legal status, DACA, or a liminal legal status). The survey was administered via Qualtrics with an estimated completion time of 25–35 minutes. Respondents received \$10 electronic gift card compensation.

Participants

Of the 1,277 responses, 75.31% of participants identified as women, 22.96% identified as men, and 1.73% identified as gender queer, gender non-conforming, or other alternative gender identifications. The average age was 21.82 ($SD = 3.41$). Most (92.63%) identified as Latina, Latino, Latinx, or Hispanic; most were from Mexico (81.52%), followed by El Salvador (4.46%) and Guatemala (3.76%). The majority were DACA beneficiaries (73.84%); 24.90% had no current legal status, and 1.26% had another immigration status (e.g. temporary protected status (TPS), U-visa, pending asylum). For family members' immigration status, 94.59% of participants reported they had at least one parent/guardian who was undocumented (includes those who reported that parents had DACA or TPS). Students who reported that parents had a U-VISA, asylees, or as visa pending were categorized as missing). Their siblings had varying immigration statuses with 54.40% reporting an undocumented sibling (i.e., no legal status, DACA, or TPS). Participants were split relatively equally between UC campuses (52.23%) and CSU campuses (47.77%). As regard to year in school, 16.07% were in their first-year, 14.58% were in their second year, 32.29% were in their third year, 27.27% were in their fourth year, and 9.33% were in their fifth year or higher. Finally, the majority (59.05%) of participants reported that they experienced food insecurity.

Measures

Profile indicators. Eight single-item indicators of immigration-related academic distractions informed the profiles. Four items captured the frequency of immigration-related academic distractions due to the student's own status: “How frequently have the following occurred this academic year because you were dealing with or thinking about an issue related to your immigration status: (a) missed class? ($M = .59, SD = .858$); (b) was distracted in class? ($M = 1.42, SD = 1.185$); (c) lost needed study hours? ($M = 1.25, SD = 1.245$); and, (d) did poorly on an exam?” ($M = .87, SD = 1.005$). A similar question captured the same four immigration-related academic distractions due to family members’ immigration status: (a) missed class? ($M = .46, SD = .812$); (b) was distracted in class? ($M = 1.11, SD = 1.098$); (c) lost needed study hours? ($M = .91, SD = 1.098$); and, (d) did poorly on an exam?” ($M = .66, SD = .951$). A five-point scale was used for all the items (0 = never, 1 = a few times a year, 2 = about once a month, 3 = about once a week, and 4 = daily).

Distal outcomes. Six individual items were used to measure classroom engagement. Two pertained to academic disengagement: how often have you: (1) “Failed to turn in a course assignment?” ($M = .96, SD = .92$) and (2) “Gone to class unprepared?” ($M = 1.37, SD = 0.93$). The remaining items assessed academic engagement; how often have you: “Sought academic help from instructor or tutor when needed?” ($M = 1.54, SD = 1.01$); “Studied with a group of classmates outside of class?” ($M = 1.59, SD = 1.03$); “Contributed to a class discussion?” ($M = 1.95, SD = 0.88$); and, “Communicated with the instructor outside of class about issues and concepts derived from a course?” ($M = 1.47, SD = .995$). A four-point scale was used for all the items (0 = never, 1 = rarely, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often).

Self and Family Demographic Covariates. Gender was recoded as women and men; participants with alternative gender identifications were not included due to the small sample

size. Students' immigration status were recategorized as no legal status or liminal legal status (i.e., DACA, TPS); students who reported having other statuses (e.g., U-visa, pending asylum) were recategorized as missing due to the small sample size. Parental and sibling undocumented status was determined as reporting at least one as undocumented (i.e., no current legal status, DACA, TPS). Parents/guardians who were reported as deceased, living outside the U.S., or having an unknown or other type of immigration status were recoded as missing data (at least one undocumented parent = 1; no reported undocumented parent = 0). We also include measures for Latina/o/x racial identification (Latina/o/x = 1 and non-Latina/o/x = 0) and university system (UC = 1, CSU = 0). Year in school was a continuous variable. We use food insecurity (yes = 1, no = 0) as a proxy for financial strain; it was measured with the 6-item U.S.D.A. food security survey module.

Results

To identify profiles of undocumented college students based on response patterns of self and family immigration-related distractions, a latent profile analysis was performed using full information maximum likelihood (FIML) and random starts in *Mplus 8.5* (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2017). Using the manual three-step method (Vermunt, 2010), an unconditional model was first examined with one latent profile, followed by the examination of additional profiles (i.e., two-profile model, three-profile model...six-profile model). To make decisions about the best-fitting model, various model fit-indices were used: The Bayesian information criterion (BIC); Adjusted Bayesian information criterion (ABIC); Vong-Lo-Mendell-Rubin (VLMR); and the bootstrap likelihood ratio test (BLMR). BIC and ABIC evaluate the overall fit of the model. Smaller values of BIC and ABIC indicate a better model. In contrast, the VLMR and BLMR compare improvements among the models by evaluating if the addition of a profile significantly

improves the overall model fit. A non-significant p-value for the VLMR or BLMR indicates that the prior model best fits the data (Nylund et al., 2007).

Table 1 shows fit information for models with one to six profiles. The VLMR stopped being significant at the sixth-profile model, suggesting that a five-profile model best fits the data. A classification diagnostic was performed on the four- and five-profile models to confirm best fit. The classification diagnostics examines students' classification into different profiles while maintaining the assumption that all students have an equal probability of belonging to each profile. Results from the classification diagnostics indicate that the five-profile solution is the best-fitting model. Indeed, the five-profile model showed better profile separation than the four-profile solution with a 95% confidence interval, which was obtained by evaluating the average posterior probabilities (i.e., evaluation of the quality of the classification for each model). More specifically, the posterior probabilities indicated that the five-profile model correctly classifies students into five—mutually exclusive—profiles: profile one = 0.93, profile two = 0.93, profile three = 0.92, profile four = 0.96, and profile five = 0.98. Finally, good profile separation was also demonstrated by the entropy level of 0.91. Figure 1 shows item means for each indicator in each profile of the five-profile solution.

Latent Profile Descriptions

Eight items were used to explore types of self and family immigration-related academic distractions among undocumented students ($n = 1,276$) and five different profiles emerged.¹ Table 2 and Figure 1 provide the item means for each profile; profiles are labeled based on the mean values and response patterns of the models' indicators. The largest profile ($n = 553$; 43%) is comprised of undocumented students who infrequently reported experiencing immigration-

¹ One case was deleted because it did not have responses for any of the eight indicators.

related distractions due to own or family members' undocumented status. As such, we named this profile: *Infrequently Distracted*. The second largest profile ($n = 355$; 28%) comprised undocumented students who reported experiencing immigration-related distractions for self and family members at slightly higher rates than the *Infrequently Distracted* profile, as such we named it *Slightly Distracted*. The third profile ($n = 114$; 9%) was named *High Status Preoccupation, Infrequent Familial Distraction* as it is characterized by students who experienced frequent distractions related to their immigration status but not that of family members. *Physically Present, Cognitively Absent*--the fourth profile ($n = 179$, 14%)--is composed of students who reported feeling distracted and losing study hours due to self and family-related immigration distractions, but infrequently missed class as a result of distractions. Finally, we labeled the smallest profile ($n = 75$; 6%) *Highly Distracted* because it consists of students who report the highest frequency of experiencing immigration-related distractions for self and family members. Overall, across all profiles, undocumented students reported lower frequencies of missing class for both self and familial immigration-related issues, yet being distracted in class, losing study hours, and doing poorly on an exam were reported more frequently; though students may be physically present in the classroom, immigration-related issues are likely to emerge as cognitive distractions.

Demographic Differences in Profile Membership

After identifying the five-profile model as the best fitting model (i.e., *Infrequently Distracted* (45%), *Slightly Distracted* (28%), *High Status Preoccupation, Infrequent Familial Distraction* (9%), *Physically Present, Cognitively Absent* (14%), and *Highly Distracted* (6%)), it was examined with the inclusion of covariates and distal outcomes. Covariates and distal outcomes were included simultaneously (Nylund-Gibson et al., 2019); using the manual

three-step method, the latent profile was regressed on the demographic covariates and allowed for distal outcome differences by estimating a distal outcome mean for each of the latent profiles. Finally, the distal variables were regressed onto the covariates. A Wald test on the overall model was used to examine the association between the class latent variable and distal outcomes; this is the standard approach used in mixture modeling to examine statistical significance of latent profiles and the distal variables (see Nylund-Gibson et al., 2019). To explore whether class-specific mean differences exist, a series of pairwise tests were performed to reveal which profiles significantly differ on the distal variables. The overall omnibus test was significant for the model $Wald_{test} = 137.144 (28), p < .001$. To adjust for Type 1 errors due to multiple tests performed, we used a conservative p-value of 0.01 when examining the pairwise tests.

Accounting for Self and Familial Demographic Factors

Undocumented students in the *Highly Distracted* profile are significantly more likely to attend a UC campus compared to students in the *Infrequently Distracted* profile. Similarly, those in the *Highly Distracted* profile are more likely to be UC students than students in *Slightly Distracted* and *High Status Preoccupation, Infrequent Familial Distraction* profiles. Further, undocumented students in the *Infrequently Distracted* profile were less likely to experience food insecurity compared to students in all other profiles. There were no statistically significant differences in profile membership by the remaining covariates (i.e., gender, race, year in school, own immigration status, and parental and sibling undocumented status).

Differences in Academic Outcomes by Profiles

As seen in Table 2, undocumented students in the *Highly Distracted* profile are significantly more likely to fail to turn in an assignment compared to students in the *Infrequently Distracted, Slightly Distracted, and Physically Present, Cognitively Absent* profiles. In turn,

undocumented students in *Physically Present, Cognitively Absent* and *High Status Preoccupation, Infrequent Familial Distraction* profiles are significantly more likely to report failing to turn in an assignment than those in the *Infrequently Distracted* and *Slightly Distracted* profiles. No other statistically significant difference emerged for failing to turn in an assignment. Additionally, undocumented students in the *Highly Distracted; Physically Present, Cognitively Absent; and High Status Preoccupation, Infrequent Familial Distraction* profiles are significantly more likely to attend class unprepared than students in the *Infrequently Distracted* and *Slightly Distracted* profiles. No other significant difference emerged across profiles for going to class unprepared. Finally, our results indicated that undocumented students in the *Slightly Distracted* profile are significantly more likely to communicate with an instructor outside of class than students in the *Infrequently Distracted* profile. No other statistically significant differences emerged.

Discussion

Undocumented college students experience legal vulnerabilities in many aspects of their lives due to restrictive immigration policies and enforcement. In this study, we draw attention to how such vulnerabilities disrupt their education through behavioral engagement. Most studies on undocumented college students examine how immigration status affects their educational experiences and outcomes (Ngo & Astudillo, 2019; Teranishi et al., 2015). We expand on this work by drawing attention to the impact of immigration-related distractions due to both students' and family members' undocumented status. Specifically, our study examined undocumented college student profiles for heterogeneity in experiences of immigration-related distractions and linked these profiles to students' positive and negative behavioral engagement outcomes.

Immigration-Related Academic Distractions

The vast majority of undocumented students reported experiencing all eight immigration-related distractions: missed class, distracted in class, lost study hours, and did poorly on an exam due to both their own and family members' immigration status. These results indicate the importance of accounting for both self and familial immigration status stressors in understanding the impact of undocumented status on educational experiences and academic outcomes. That said, while undocumented college students reported affirmatively to all immigration-related distractions, they did so in varying degrees. Specifically, students fell into five profiles differentiated by frequency in reports for each type of distraction.

The vast majority of participants reported relatively low levels of distraction. The largest profile, *Infrequently Distracted*, consisted of 43% of students in the sample who reported experiencing minimal distractions. That is, their own and familial status did not impede their participation in or preparation for classes. *Slightly Distracted* students composed 28% of the sample; they reported slightly higher values across all indicators of immigration-related academic distractions. Notably, this finding is inconsistent with qualitative research which details that undocumented students experience a deep sense of worry, fear, and guilt while completing their college education (Kantamneni et al., 2016). One possible explanation for these findings is that most students might be relatively insulated from the effects of immigration-related distractions because they occupy protective locations. Enriquez and Millán (2019) show that undocumented young adults are less likely to be concerned about threats of deportation when they occupy protective social locations that shield them from engaging with immigration enforcement, including being a 1.5 generation immigrant, college student, and DACA recipient; our participants share many of these individual protective locations. Further, the California context provides an array of policies that support the integration of immigrants (Colbern &

Ramakrishnan, 2020). For instance, state tuition-equity and financial aid policies mitigate financial burdens that have plagued undocumented students as they pursue higher education (Diaz-Strong et al., 2011; Terriquez, 2017). Participants all attended state universities that provide undocumented student services, including dedicated resources, targeted programming, and social support meant to address immigration-related barriers to pursuing higher education (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2020; Enriquez, Morales Hernandez, et al., 2019). State policies, by providing access to driver's licenses and limiting cooperation with federal immigration enforcement, may also relieve students' feelings that their undocumented family members face immigration-related threats. In addition, this group of undocumented students may have developed coping strategies that help them process immigration-related distractions thereby limiting disruptions to their education (Chang et al., 2017; Kam et al., 2018).

From the sample, 14% was categorized as *Physically Present, Cognitively Absent*, consisting of students who experienced distractions at a moderate level. This profile differed from the others in the types of distractions experienced. Students in this group were physically present in class (reported low scores for missing class due to both self and familial status indicator), but experienced higher levels of distraction while in class, as they studied, and when completing exams due to both their own and familial status concerns. Extant research on undocumented college students reveals institutional challenges in access to – and process of completing their degree. Indeed, studies have identified barriers such as insufficient financial aid (Enriquez, Morales Hernandez, et al., 2019; Golash-Boza & Valdez, 2018), shame, fear, frustration in navigating higher education (Negrón-Gonzalez, 2013), and marginalizing interactions with faculty and staff (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). It may be that this group of students has experienced heightened marginalization, or been more deeply affected prompting

them to be more distracted by their own immigration-related concerns but not affecting their attendance. In fact, Millán (2018) illustrates the negative impact of illegality on undocumented students' academic experiences in the form of immigration related distractions. Here, these distractions are often induced through a vigilant state of monitoring deportation threats, tracking immigration appointments for self and family members, and broader anti-immigrant socio-political dangers. Students are in communication with family members relaying emerging threats and policy changes. Repeated exposure to such distractions can have a cumulative effect on students as they struggle to balance focusing on academics with monitoring their own and family members' wellbeing.

Finally, six percent of participants reported high levels of distraction, but with variation in the source. For these *Highly Distracted* students, their own as well as parental status played a significant role in students' ability to be present and focused on their academic work. Findings support previous evidence from qualitative studies which establish that family members' lack of status weighs heavy on undocumented students (Gurrola et al., 2016; Kantamnini et al., 2016). However, 9% of the sample was classified as *High Status Preoccupation, Infrequent Familial Distraction*. Students in this group reported high levels of immigration-related academic distraction due to their own status, but infrequent academic distractions due to familial status concerns. It is possible that these students have weaker social ties to family members so that they would be less likely to be in communication and therefore have less frequent familial distractions.

Control Variables and Profiles

We found differences in profile membership by two demographic control variables; university system (UC or CSU) and food insecurity, our proxy for financial strain, were

significant indicators of profile membership. Undocumented students in the *Highly Distracted* profile were more likely to attend a UC and be food insecure compared to other groups. Further, compared to the *Infrequently Distracted* profile, students in other profiles reported higher rates of food insecurity. First, this suggests that undocumented students' experiences are not uniform across educational systems. The UC and CSU educational systems serve approximately 19% of California's undocumented students with an estimated 4,000 attending the UC and 10,000-12,000 the CSU (Campaign for College Opportunity 2018). These two university systems vary across several domains including tuition cost, student experience, and robustness of targeted services provided to undocumented students. Our findings suggest that campus differences matter for undocumented college students' behavioral engagement. Additional research is needed to further examine why and what campus factors are driving such variation. Valadez et al. (this issue) suggest that campus climate and resource use may play a role. Second, our results suggest that financial insecurity is an important indicator of legal vulnerability. The immigration policy climate threatens the economic security of undocumented immigrants as it limits their work opportunities, exposes them to economic exploitation, and prevents them from meeting their basic needs thereby becoming food insecure (Amuedo-Dorantes et al., 2013; Maynard et al., 2019). These financial challenges are detrimental conditions that hinder undocumented students' ability to fully participate in their academics. This suggests that if undocumented students are experiencing high levels of immigration-related stress, it likely manifests across many aspects of their lives such as: financial insecurity, academic engagement, and overall progress.

Academic Outcomes

We assessed differences in positive and negative classroom engagement by profiles

because such behavioral engagement can foster or derail students' academic success. Students in the *Infrequently Distracted* and *Slightly Distracted* profiles were less likely to fail to submit an assignment compared to students in other profiles who reported higher levels of immigration-related distractions. Additionally, students who reported more frequent immigration-related distractions were more likely to go to class unprepared. This is consistent with previous research which establishes that immigration status and legal vulnerability have negative implications for academic outcomes among undocumented college students (Enriquez, Morales Hernandez, et al., 2019; Hsin & Reed, 2020). They also show that familial legal vulnerability impedes the academic performance of undocumented students, expanding upon previous findings that have documented the deleterious academic consequences of immigration policies for children in mixed-status families (Brabeck et al., 2015; Gonzalez & Patler, 2020).

Regarding positive academic engagement, undocumented students did not significantly differ based on their profile of seeking academic help, studying with classmates, or contributing to a class discussion. Thus, immigration-related distractions do not appear to prevent students from seeking help or actively participating in class. However, undocumented students in the *Slightly Distracted* profile were significantly more likely to communicate with an instructor outside of class than students in the *Infrequently Distracted* profile. It may be that this group sought to manage the impact of distractions by communicating with instructors, while more distracted profiles were less able to deploy this strategy due to cumulative effects of more frequent disruptions.

Implications for Practice and Policy Research

For many undocumented college students, their own as well as family members' immigration status contributed to educational disruptions, though to varying degrees. Notably,

liminal legal status, such as having DACA or TPS, did not contribute to differences in undocumented students' experiences of immigration-related distractions. Thus, federal policy must create a pathway to permanent residency and citizenship for all undocumented immigrants in order to eliminate these educational disruptions and promote students' academic success.

In regards to practice, findings reveal that immigration-related distractions did not prevent students from positive forms of classroom engagement; however, they confronted difficulties in completing assignments and class preparedness. Student affairs practitioners, including those charged with providing services to undocumented students, should be cognizant of the more common academic behavioral disengagement among those experiencing immigration-related strains and severe legal vulnerability. Further, across all profiles, undocumented students reported lower frequencies of missing class for both self and familial immigration-related issues, yet reported more frequency with being distracted in class, losing study hours, and doing poorly on an exam. This indicates that while students may attend class, they are cognitively distracted in and outside of the classroom. Practitioners should work with students to proactively help build coping strategies that can assist in managing cognitive distractions, minimize effects on their academic engagement behaviors, and provide support to help address challenges related to their own or family members' undocumented status. Such support could be provided by campus' undocumented student services (if they exist) and/or academic student services staff who serve the whole student body. While this study focuses on the behavioral engagement of undocumented college students and risks of disruptions to their education, our findings also highlight the need to provide emotional and mental health support to students who experience high levels of immigration-related distractions. Finally, there were several students who reported very low rates of immigration-related distractions, it would be

helpful to learn what enabled these students to overcome the challenges. In addition, an undocumented peer support group or mentor program may offer opportunities for students experiencing challenges to learn from peers who have overcome or negotiated similar barriers. Through an undocumented peer mentor program, students can support one another, share resources, build their networks, and create study groups to minimize the potential for immigration-related distractions to disrupt their education.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although our study makes several contributions, it has some limitations. First, 75% of sample participants identified as women and most were Latina/o/x, predominantly of Mexican origin. It is possible that our sample did not adequately capture the heterogeneous experience of non-Latina/o/x undocumented students and those from other Latin American countries; these groups report diverging experiences of immigration and enforcement policies as well as differing resource availability and community support (see Cebulko, 2018; Enriquez, Vazquez Vera, et al., 2019). Second, the data was collected at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, possibly impacting recruitment. Thus, the pandemic may have posed additional immigration-related academic distractions not captured. Further, the study took place in California, a state at the forefront of pro-integration policy enactment. Additional research is needed to understand how immigration-related academic distractions are experienced among undocumented students across the U.S., including states with less inclusive policies. Finally, the survey's cross-sectional design is limited in identifying causal explanations. Future research should develop longitudinal data to enable investigations of the long-term effects of immigration-related academic distractions on undocumented youths' academic and post-graduation outcomes.

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Figure 1
Conditional Item Profile Means for the Five-Profile Model

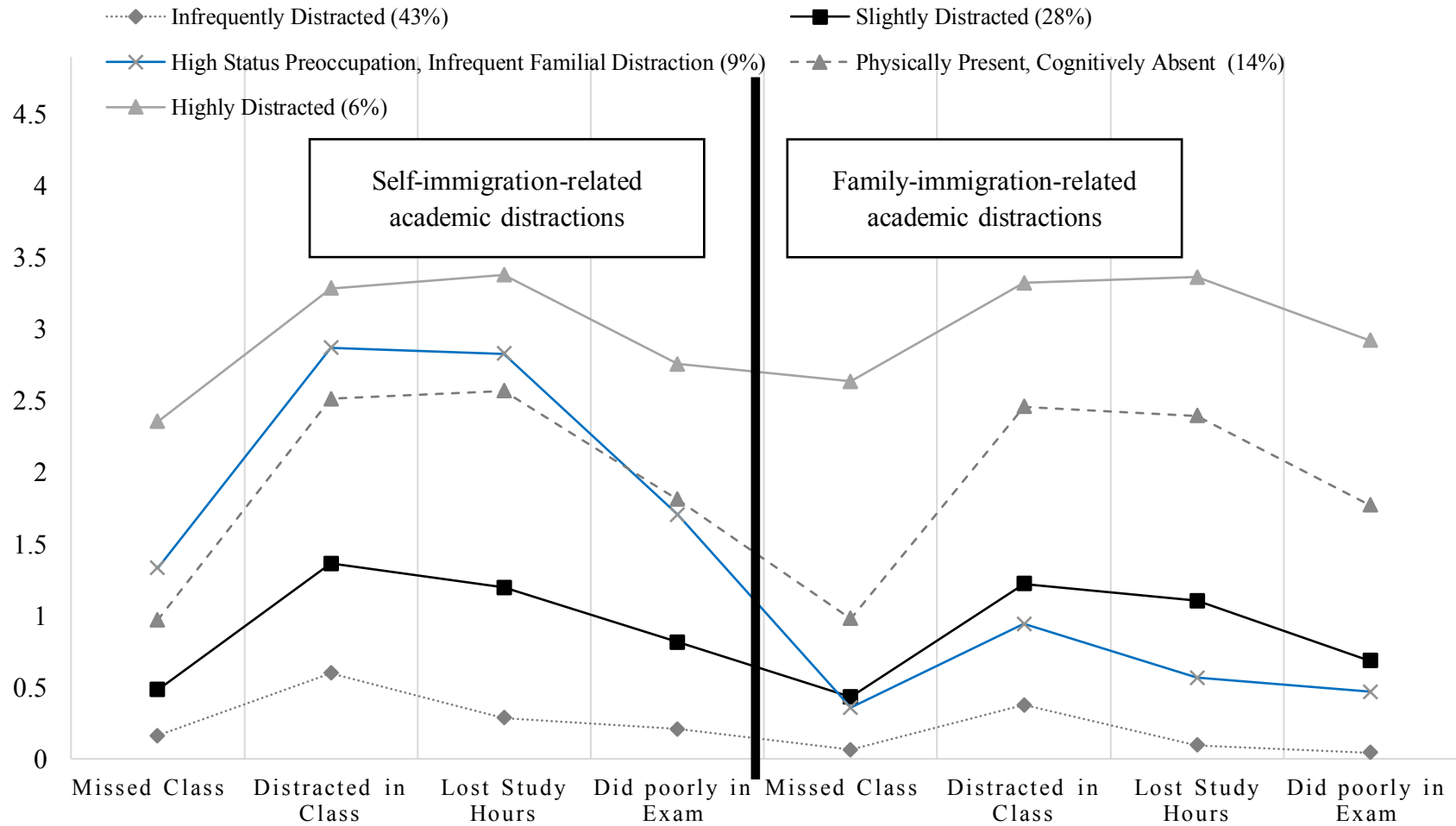


Table 1*Fit Indices for LPA Models with 1-6 Profiles*

Model (K-profile)	Log likelihood	Number of free parameters	BIC	ABIC	VLMR-RT (<i>p</i> -value)	BLRT (<i>p</i> -value)
1-profile	-14628.905	16	29372.23	29321.41	–	–
2-profiles	-12103	25	24384.85	24305.43	.000	.000
3-profiles	-11371	34	22985.147	22877.15	.0061	.000
4-profiles	-10968.4	43	22244.34	22107.75	.001	.000
5-profiles	-10655	52	21681.8	21516.62	.0048	.000
6-profiles	-10577.187	61	21590.615	21396.85	.4639	.000

Note. BIC = Bayesian information criterion; ABIC = Adjusted Bayesian information criterion; VLMR = Vyoung-Lo-Mendell-Rubin; BLMR = bootstrap likelihood ratio test, VLMR-RT, and BLRT are not available for a one-profile model.

Table 2*Latent Profiles' Mean Differences across Distal Variables*

<i>Distal Variable</i>	<i>Infrequently Distracted</i>	<i>Slightly Distracted</i>	<i>High Status Preoccupation, Infrequent Familial Distractions</i>	<i>Physically Present, Cognitively Absent</i>	<i>Highly Distracted</i>
1. Failed to turn assignment	0.769 ^{ABC}	0.921 ^{DEF}	1.286 ^{AD}	1.165 ^{BEG}	1.692 ^{CFG}
2. Gone to class unprepared	1.137 ^{HIJK}	1.344 ^{HLMN}	1.746 ^{IL}	1.704 ^{JM}	1.908 ^{KN}
3. Sought academic help	1.524	1.628	1.499	1.51	1.492
4. Studied with group of classmates	1.562	1.619	1.651	1.525	1.634
5. Contributed to a class discussion	1.906	2.025	1.915	1.943	1.95
6. Communicated with instructor outside of class	1.395 ^O	1.612 ^O	1.366	1.49	1.636

Note. Mean values with the same letter are significantly different from each other ($p < .01$). Demographic variables were considered as control variables when examining mean differences.